

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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REVEALED: OAK BOSSES' BID FOR £41M PAYDAY



The full story of founders' foiled plans to sell online school for £100m, [pages 9-10](#)

£11bn bill to get schools up to scratch

- DfE finally publishes building survey data two years on
- Price tag for repairs is almost double previous figure
- Heads demand more funding and more transparency

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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No recovery plan, no 2022 exams plan: but have a book on the Queen



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Revealed: £11.4bn bill to get school buildings up to scratch

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Repairing or replacing all defects in England's schools will cost £11.4 billion, the Department for Education has admitted. It is almost double a previous estimate for bringing the state up to satisfactory condition.

The government has finally published key findings from its condition data collection, which ran between 2017 and 2019 in 22,031 schools.

Its publication follows repeated calls in this newspaper for transparency over the collection.

However, the DfE is still refusing to publish individual schools' reports, claiming they are confidential.

The report concluded the modelled cost of "remedial work to repair or replace all defective elements in the school estate" is £11.4 billion, with the average secondary school needing £1.6 million worth of work.

The DfE is likely to rely on the figure in its negotiations with the Treasury about future budgets rounds.

The last spending review allocated just £1.8 billion to "maintain and improve" school buildings this year, although the DfE has also pledged to fully or partially rebuild 500 schools over the next 10 years.

A previous property data survey by the department had estimated it would cost £6.7 billion to return all school buildings to satisfactory or better condition. According to data provided to MPs last year, DfE capital spending fell by 44 per cent between 2009-10 and 2019-20.

Paul Whiteman, from the NAHT school leaders' union, said: "The government has stated that it wants every pupil to receive 'a superb education', a key part of this should be a schools estate that is fit for purpose."

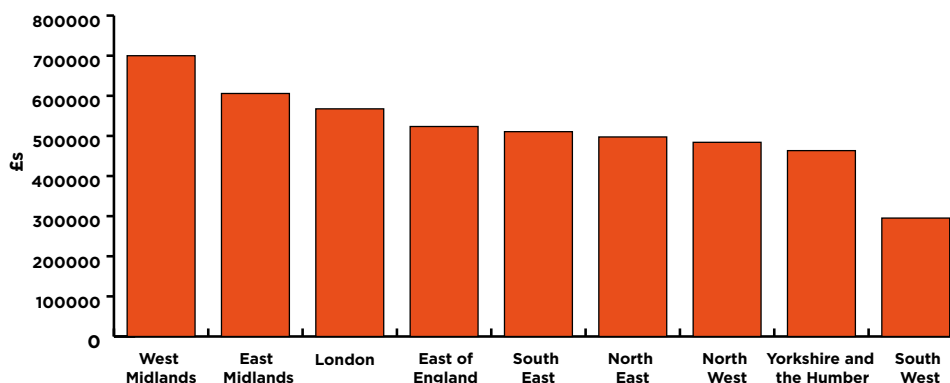
The DfE's report shows the average school in the West Midlands needs £700,000 spending on it, more than double the £300,000 average cost of repairs at schools in the south west.

Meanwhile, eight per cent of the school estate comprises blocks built before 1900, while 9 per cent comprise blocks dating back to the first half of the 20th century.

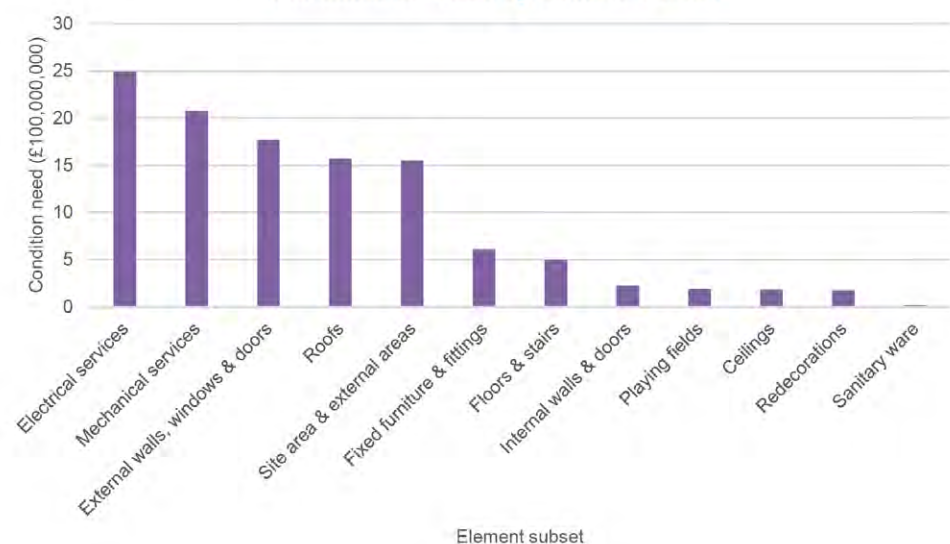
But it isn't the oldest blocks that have the highest cost need.

Twenty-three per cent of the estate's condition

Average condition need per school



Total condition need by element subset



need is in blocks from the 1960s alone, and blocks built between 1951 and 1980 represent over half of the money needed between them.

Secondary schools have an "average condition need" of £1.6 million, while all-through and 16-plus settings have a need of around £1.3 million. This compares to around £300,000 for the average primary school and pupil referral unit, and around £500,000 for the average special school.

Electrical services represent the greatest condition need, with an estimated cost of £2.5 billion for things like mains switch panels, lighting and IT infrastructure.

Mechanical services, including boilers, pipework and air conditioning is second, at around £2 billion, while fixing external walls, windows and doors will cost around £1.75 billion. Repairs to roofs will cost around £1.5 billion, as will improving site and external areas.

The DfE still faces calls to publish the full slate of school condition reports. Heads told *Schools Week* earlier this year that publication of all reports would let them compare their condition to that of other schools, enabling transparency over how rebuilding projects were being selected.

It has also been suggested that the reports could enable ventilation firms to help schools identify minor upgrades needed to help combat Covid.

Transparency would also give leaders some sense of where on the priority list they sit, they said, enabling them to avoid costly maintenance work if a rebuild is on the cards.

Jane Balderstone, the DfE's deputy director of school rebuilding, told a webinar this week that the department's "aim is to get to the point where we're able to tell responsible bodies where they'll be in a school rebuilding programme if a building is at the point where it needs to be replaced".

News

Spielman gets two more years at Ofsted

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Amanda Spielman has been given two extra years as Ofsted chief inspector.

Schools Week revealed earlier this month that the government had agreed the extension, but was awaiting Privy Council signoff. The Department for Education confirmed on Thursday that it is going ahead.

Spielman (pictured) joined the watchdog in 2017 and was originally due to complete her five-year term at the end of 2021. But it is understood she was eager to extend her reign to ensure the changes she introduced in her new education inspection framework have an opportunity to bed in.

The DfE said Spielman's new two-year term will start on January 1 next year and will run until the end of 2023.

Her seven-year stint will put her on track to become the longest-serving chief inspector. Sir Chris Woodhead lead the

watchdog for six years during the 1990s.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said Spielman had a wealth of knowledge and experience from her five years leading Ofsted "that will be invaluable as we work to support the education sector to make sure every child is able to recover from the impact of the pandemic".

"I am grateful she will remain in place for a further two years to oversee a smooth reintroduction of a full programme of inspections, providing vital constructive challenge and reassurance to parents and families."

Spielman said she was "delighted to have more time as chief inspector" and was "determined to spend that time acting in the best interests of children and learners".

"As the country emerges from Covid restrictions, the education and care of our children has the highest priority - and there has never been more focus on the skills agenda as we re-energise our economy."



Absence rates show schools struggled with second wave

Pupils missed 33 million days of in-person education during the autumn term last year, as schools grappled with the second wave of the pandemic.

Official figures show the schooling of most pupils – 60 per cent – was affected by the need to self-isolate or shield, often in classes or bubbles, with the average pupil missing five days of school.

The Department for Education says absence rates are typically between 4 per cent and 5 per cent in the first term of the academic year.

This year the rate stood at 11.7 per cent, or 55 million days, including 7 per cent resulting from Covid self-isolation or shielding.

A 4.7 per cent absence rate was for other reasons, amounting to three days per pupil and 22 million lost school days.

The latest information, based on school census data, shows absences due to illness actually fell year-on-year, despite the pandemic, down from 2.8 to 2.5 per cent.

Public Health England analysis suggests cases of flu and other respiratory illnesses fell as a by-product of Covid restrictions

and precautions. Absences for holidays and medical appointments also fell.

The figures underline the scale of disruption to schooling as Covid infection rates picked up in the UK's second wave after strict lockdown restrictions were lifted in most areas over the summer.

Previous DfE data indicated relatively high attendance in the first half of the autumn term.

But rates "fluctuated more widely after half-term and generally followed a downward trend, particularly in the final two weeks", according to a House of Commons research briefing.

Official estimates suggest attendance varied across the country, falling as low as 67.2 per cent in London in mid-December.

Many groups wanted schools to close as more infectious Covid variants began to spread. The DfE held firm, however, controversially ordering Greenwich council to revoke its request to schools to close early for Christmas.

DfE to give book on the Queen to every primary kid

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Queen Elizabeth II

The Department for Education wants to send a commemorative book marking the Queen's platinum jubilee to every primary school child in the United Kingdom.

In a procurement notice published this week, the DfE said it intended to commission production of books for primary school children by May 2022.

The government would pay for its production, but the early engagement document does not give funding estimates. There are 4.71 million primary aged-pupils in England's state schools alone.

The DfE also wants to commission resources for primary and secondary school teachers to "assist them in delivering a lesson and/or assembly on the Queen and her reign" in the run-up to jubilee celebrations.

A £20,000 contract for a consultant to advise the DfE, including helping them find a suitable publisher, has also been put out for tender.

The consultant would be required for 35 to 39 days, at a maximum day rate of £500.

Next year will mark the Queen's 70th anniversary as monarch – the first time any British monarch has reached this milestone.

The government has scheduled an additional bank holiday for a four-day "weekend of celebrations" in early June.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of heads' union ASCL, said the idea seemed like "a good one" as the jubilee is an opportunity for children to think about the United Kingdom's history.

Warning over DfE evidence backing longer school day

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

Studies cited by the government to support its proposals to extend the school day need “optimal conditions” or schools risk “making things worse”, says the chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching.

The Department for Education’s exploration of how extra time in school could benefit students will be included in the long-awaited education recovery plan, expected next month.

It forms one of education recovery commissioner Sir Kevan Collins’ three Ts – tutoring, teaching and time – which he says are crucial to help children catch up.

A DfE document sent to stakeholders this month, seen by *Schools Week*, cites ten studies to show how extra time and support can help schoolchildren to recover.

A 2019 study by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), published as part of its toolkit, includes international evidence on teaching 5 to 16-year-olds.

The DfE said the EEF “estimates that pupils can make two months additional progress per year from extended school time, particularly through the targeted use of before and after school programmes.

“There is also some evidence that disadvantaged pupils make closer to three months additional progress.”

But the department did not mention the study’s suggestion that any increases in school time “should be supported by both parents and staff”. It concluded the policy as “low impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence”.

This week a YouGov survey, carried out for *The Times* found that 60 per cent of almost 3,000 parents were opposed to extending school hours.

The EEF research also acknowledged that attracting and retaining pupils for before and after-school programmes was an issue, especially for secondary schools.

The DfE also cited a 2012 study by Victor Lavy, which concluded that evidence from a sample of 15-year-old pupils from more than 50 countries consistently showed that “additional instructional time has a positive and significant effect on test scores”.

The study suggested that the first two hours of teaching had the “highest effect”. After that the



impact on results began to drop, but only in small amounts.

PISA evidence in 2018 showed that a “positive association” with learning time in regular English lessons and reading performance weakened when students spent more than three hours a week in those lessons. UK students already spend more than four hours a week in English lessons.

It also found that on average across OECD countries students in schools that offered additional lessons did not score better or worse in reading than students who did not have them.

Alison Peacock, the chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, said the evidence was “more nuanced” and was “based on every school needing to have optimal conditions”.

“So the idea of having less than that, if we are trying to improve academic learning, feels risky at best. If we get this wrong and it’s taken out of the hands of schools, we risk making things worse.”

Most of the evaluations on extending school time come from the US, the EEF said in its research, where the school year is shorter by about two weeks. Evidence from the UK is “relatively scarce”, they add.

OECD research from 2014 shows that children in England already have more hours of teaching at primary and lower secondary - 7,904 - compared to the average in organisation countries of 7,475.

The DfE also cited its own 2017 research showing “countries identified as having high-

performing technical education systems are characterised by relatively high number of teaching hours – on average this is equivalent to 1,000 hours a year”.

But the report’s introduction said it was not an evaluative assessment and looked only at vocational education.

Collins has previously said that extra time in schools could be used for play and other activities, not just academic work, and has suggested it should be compulsory.

Plans on how extra time in the school day could look are still being bashed out, with *The Sunday Times* reporting earlier this month that the Treasury was at loggerheads with Boris Johnson over funding. Collins has said £15 billion is needed.

But Peacock says a “decision must be made” as the sector has been hearing “endless rumours” about the plans, with a “constant slow drip of information”.

An EEF spokesperson said the research suggested that lengthening the school day could be “effective at accelerating pupil outcomes in some settings”.

But they added that success was dependent on “crucial factors”. If it were to be part of education recovery, supportive measures needed to be in place “so that it is impactful and does not present further challenges for teachers”.

A DfE spokesperson said it would share further details on the education recovery plan in “due course”.

Voucher extension risked legal challenges

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EXCLUSIVE

The government's last-minute U-turn on providing free school meal vouchers over the summer holidays risked exposing it to legal challenges that would have a "medium to high" chance of success, internal documents reveal.

However, Department for Education officials said that as the £191 million contract extension for Edenred – awarded without a tender – was about "feeding children", it was "unlikely to attract challenge".

Documents obtained by *Schools Week* also prove the summer holiday voucher extension was "in response [to] Marcus Rashford's campaign", the Manchester United footballer who lobbied the government over child poverty.

It strikes down claims by Conservative MP Tom Hunt who said this week the idea free school meal support was "cobbled together at the last minute because of Marcus Rashford is false".

Meanwhile, Vicky Ford, the children's minister, refuted allegations the government had to be dragged "kicking and screaming to do something for children in the holidays".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said government "flip-flopping" over meal vouchers "left it without the time to carry out an open procurement process".

An accounting officer assessment of the extension, obtained via a freedom of information request from free school meals campaigner Andy Jolley, reveals the pressure civil servants were under to provide provision for vulnerable children after the government U-turn.

Following the closure of schools in March last year, Edenred was chosen to run the free school meal national voucher scheme to support about 1.3 million children in need.

The contract was initially worth £78 million, but increased to £234 million after an extension to June 22.

Ministers were resolute



the scheme would not operate over the summer holidays. But on June 16, Boris Johnson finally succumbed to the Rashford campaign and announced vouchers would be provided.

An accounting officer assessment from June 22, the final day of the scheme, said it needed to be extended "in response [to] Marcus Rashford's campaign".

The assessment said it was "not considered feasible" in the available time to run open procurement. So "in order to meet the government's public commitment", the Edenred contract was extended.

The accompanying contract variation form states the contract increased by £191 million to £425 million – however, the assessment puts forward a £120 million contract.

The DfE did not confirm which figure was correct.

The assessment said there was a risk the extension would "expose the department to legal challenge", but the risk was

considered low because of the "nature of the contract, i.e feeding children".

However, the Government Legal Department (GLD) assessed that any challenge

would have a "medium to high" probability of success, which would

result in "financial exposure".

But it advised it was lawful to extend the scheme as there were "credible arguments" the variation was "not substantial" under regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Richard Moore, a procurement expert and partner at Clarke Willmott, explained this was because the variation did not materially alter the character of the initial contract.

Regulation 72 sets out reasons why contracts may be extended without tender, including that they were brought about by circumstances a "diligent contracting authority could not have foreseen".

"What they've done is extend an emergency contract. While it was an emergency in the broad sense, it wasn't one that was unknown," Moore said.

But Meg Hillier, the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, said the DfE's Covid response had been characterised by "late decisions and U-turns after the event".

"The U-turns by ministers mitigated against bringing any normal procurement into play because they were last-minute decisions – by then they were an emergency".

The DfE refused to release some information requested within the permit of the FOI as it would "inhibit ministers' ability to provide frank views and advice to officials on matters of importance in future".



Vicky Ford



Tom Hunt



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Investigation

The £100m sell-off plan for Oak – and how bosses would have made millions

JOHN DICKENS

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EXCLUSIVE

Oak bosses would have been in line for a £41 million payday under their preferred proposal for the future of the online school.

A Schools Week investigation revealed last week how Oak's management team submitted plans to turn the taxpayer-funded online school into a private company. The proposal was withdrawn after being deemed 'unworkable'.

We can now reveal the full details of the controversial proposal, which would have given Oak bosses 80 per cent of shares in the Sapling company.

This means management would "retain control" of the organisation even after going through two investment rounds. The goal was to sell Sapling for £100 million after at least four years.

A document detailing the proposal, seen by Schools Week, shows that it would have handed "founding employees" a £41 million windfall.

This is more than treble the £13 million that would be returned to a trust set up to own the rest of the company. This cash would have been "redistributed to partners and public as appropriate".

The findings expose an incorrect Oak statement last week that there was "no option in which the management team would have had a majority share" (see box out: "How Oak's story changed").

The plan was submitted in March to the Reach Foundation, which incubates Oak, before a crunch board meeting to resolve the online school's future.

Oak wanted to bid for a £15 million government catch-up resources contract that had been put out for tender. A private company called Sapling was also set up by an Oak director that month.

Oak Management

- Own 80% of shares in Sapling, vested over time
- Take 2 Board seats on Sapling Board

Confidential - Internal use only

Oak 3.0 Proposal

March 2021



Return under different best and worst case scenarios

Sapling is unsustainable and closes after 1 year (value <£3.2mn)

Sapling goes through two 20% investment rounds and sells for £100mn (at least 4 years)

It has also emerged this week that the proposal was pulled after the Reach board voiced discontent.

Ed Vainker, the foundation's chief executive, said: "When this proposal was discussed it was clear that it was not going to be acceptable to the Reach Foundation board."

Reach has set up a new independent charity to take Oak forward. But its future is still up in the air as funding has yet to be secured. The government has also since pulled the £15 million catch-up contract.

An Oak spokesperson said: "Oak has always been a project about supporting pupils and teachers. It has never been about individual gain."

'80 per cent shares enable management team to retain control'

The document, "Oak 3.0 Proposal", was submitted to the Reach board by Matt Hood (pictured), Oak's principal. The former Department for Education adviser was awarded an OBE last year for his work on the online school.

The "3.0" relates to the next phase of Oak after

taxpayer funds run out later this year. "Oak 1.0" was the start of the organisation, while "2.0" relates to this academic

year – its first full year providing lessons.

The proposal sets out the "return under different best and worst-case scenarios". Under the "best case", Sapling "goes through two 20 per cent investment rounds and sells for £100mn [sic]". This was listed as after "at least four years".

A breakdown of the returns shows that, following investment rounds, "founding employees" would be left with 41 per cent of shares, leaving them in line to make £41 million. Oak claimed the term related to all employees.

One of the "objectives" relating to Oak management described "financial return if future value is created reflecting future efforts to grow the organisation".

Under the "worst case" scenario, "Sapling is unsustainable and closes after one year", the document added.

'No return unless Sapling is successful'

One of the project's objectives was to "do the right thing, preventing personal gain on existing work". Oak bosses proposed their plan met this because "invested shares for Sapling team, mean no return unless successful if [sic] establishing the organisation long-term".

Oak's "brand and platform assets" would remain with a newly formed Oak Trust, which would initially own 20 per cent of shares so they "cannot be sold for profit by

Shareholder Type	Foundation	Post-Vesting	Post Series A	Post Series B
Investor A			20%	16%
Investor B				20%
Investor C				
Oak Trust	20%	16%	13%	10%
Founding Employees	80%	64%	51%	41%
Employee Options			20%	16%

Matt Hood

Investigation

Sapling team”.

Lessons would also be “heavily restricted to prevent commercial exploitation by any party”.

Scores of teachers gave their time free to record lessons. Their schools own the copyright of those lessons.

Oak was given nearly £5 million of taxpayer cash after being set up at the height of last year’s first lockdown. The money was awarded without a tender process because it was part of the pandemic response.

Trust would be ‘public face’ of Oak – but only have one-third control

Under the plan, the “Oak Trust” would own 20 per cent of shares, which would be halved after the investment rounds. The trust would be the “public face” of Oak. It would get a licence for the brand and platform “in perpetuity”, ensuring the classroom “stays free”.

The proposal also detailed how “preference shares” of £3.3 million would be given to the trust to recognise the “value already created” by the online school’s lessons. This could have been “redistributed to curriculum partners”.

Alongside the equity stake, this would amount

to a £13 million return for the trust, which would hold one of three board seats. The document stated this gave it a “clear voice to influence the future direction but leaves majority control with the management team”.

Oak top team ‘likely to leave’ if charity established

The Sapling proposal included a page detailing “Why don’t other options work?”. The “failing” listed under establishing a charity, which is the solution chosen by the Reach board, states an “inability to deliver vision at scale, explore international options etc”.

There would also be a “challenge in generating sufficient revenues to create sustainability without further investment”. The “full year” cost of Oak was listed as about £4 million, including £1.6 million on staff costs.

An alternative put forward under this section was a “rapid downscaling to skelton [sic] maintenance of classroom at run cost of “£1mn per year”.

But this would lead to a “likely loss of key organisational talent, incl. management team, and risk to winning DfE bid”, the document stated.

Oak is now “committed to” the independent charity solution, a spokesperson said.

DfE ‘lukewarm’ on nationalisation

Another proposal was to nationalise Oak. This was “discussed with the department with lukewarm response”, the document said. It added: “Timeline to operationalise now near impossible.”

Other options considered, but found to be “failing”, included having a golden share or multiple share classes structure, sale to a third party or for Reach to “invest directly”.

Oak said the management team’s aim was to “find a way to keep Oak free for teachers and pupils. Since the outset, we have always protected the social purpose of Oak and respected its founding as a pandemic response.

“Twelve wide-ranging options were developed, and it’s sad to see what was a thorough due-diligence process being described in this way.”

Does the proposal meet our objectives?

Objective	Input
Oak Management Team	
Control over Oak’s future in the long-run , including after dilution through future investments	80% shares enable management team to retain control of the organisation through 2 investment rounds
Financial return if future value is created reflecting future efforts to grow the organisation	Employees receive financial return if the organisation is successful in the long-term

How Oak’s story changed

CLAIM 1: THERE WAS “NO OPTION IN WHICH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM WOULD HAVE HAD A MAJORITY SHARE”

The document shows the on-the-record claim last week from Oak was incorrect.

The “proposal” page on the document states “Oak management” will “own 80 per cent of shares in Sapling, vested over time”.

In total, there are six mentions in the document of Oak management maintaining control of the organisation.

A “detail of proposal” page instead uses the term “employees”, outlining that £41 million will be “returned to employees” if “Oak is successful in creating a £100mn valuation”.

However, the “explanation of figures” table on the following page shows that “founding employees” will, in fact, own the 41 per cent after investment rounds.

“Employee options” only make up 13 per cent of shares.

Oak said: The word “management” was used in error on this document. All the social purpose company models were only ever about all-employee ownership.

CLAIM 2: OAK WORKED UP A “VARIETY OF SIMILAR MODELS” / CONSIDERED A “DOZEN OPTIONS”

Oak did consider a range of options through the six-month process. But what is clear from the document is that this was the management team’s preferred proposal for the future of Oak [something Oak originally denied to Schools Week].

A “Does the proposal meet our objectives” page in the document has positive comments on each criteria. One of them states that the proposed structure is the “simplest we’ve tested so far that meets other objectives”.

Another page is also dedicated to “Why don’t other options work”. It lists seven options and their “failing”.

Oak said: There have been a dozen or so models for Oak’s future developed. By the time of the board meeting the options had been narrowed down to two broad ways forward: a social purpose company or a charitable model. Everyone agreed that the charitable model was the right approach to take.

CLAIM 3: THE SAPLING PRIVATE COMPANY WAS NOT ESTABLISHED FOR THE PROPOSED “SOCIAL PURPOSE COMPANY”

Oak said last week the private company plan submitted to Reach was not worked up at the time Sapling was established. It said the limited company was set up to “keep options open” for “a number of social purpose company options being considered”.

However, throughout the plan submitted to Reach the proposed organisation is called “Sapling”. The term “Sapling” is mentioned 11 times through the eight-page document.

A private limited company called Sapling Education Limited had been established in March by an Oak director.

Oak said: Time was extremely limited to bid for the Department for Education tender. We therefore set up a private company that would be ready to take forward any of the social purpose organisations that were being considered if they were viable.

News

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Government won't say if mental health 'first aid' training started for primaries

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

The government is refusing to say whether its wellbeing "first aid" training for all primary schools has started.

The roll-out is an important strand of its promise to transform children's mental health.

In response to the 2018 green paper on young people's mental health, Matt Hancock, the health secretary, and Damian Hinds, then education secretary, committed to providing the training to every secondary school by 2019 and every primary by 2022.

While it was rolled out to secondary schools, the flagship scheme appears to have stalled for primary schools, with heads saying they need help "today and not tomorrow".

The Department for Health and Social Care this week did not answer repeated questions from Schools Week about whether the training had begun.

A spokesperson said they were "aware of the question asked". But instead they repeated a generic answer promising to "continue to work with the Department for Education to ensure teachers, pupils and all schools can access the wellbeing and mental health support they need in response to the pandemic". Chris Dyson, the headteacher of Parklands primary school in Leeds, said that while the

Mental health awareness training in schools

We remain committed to providing mental health awareness training to every secondary school by 2019 and every primary school by 2022. In the first year, we invested £200,000 in the training, and have achieved the first milestone of training a member of staff in a third of secondary schools (1,000). By this time next year we will have reached a further 1,000 schools. We are scoping delivery of our commitment to rolling out mental health awareness training to primary schools which we hope to begin soon.

government's offer of training was to be applauded, "we need this in schools today as opposed to tomorrow".

"Schools like mine have found our own mental health training packages, funded from our budget, as we simply can't just wait."

The introduction of mental health "first aid" training for teachers in every school by the end of parliament was in Theresa May's 2017 Conservative manifesto.

The training will equip a staff member from each school with the skills to spot signs and symptoms of mental ill health, and to signpost and support positive approaches to promoting mental health.

When the secondary school support ended in March last year, just 2,710 of the 3,456 state secondary schools in England had completed the training.

But there has been no news on the primary

schemes.

After the pandemic hit, an £8 million "Wellbeing for Education Return" scheme offered training to every school and college in England to support "pupil and student wellbeing, resilience and recovery" in the context of Covid-19.

More than 90 per cent of local authorities used the scheme, but Schools Week understands it was not meant to be a replacement for other pledges.

A new £7 million recovery package was announced this month for further training for school staff and pupils.

Margaret Mulholland, the SEND and inclusions specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said "making training more easily accessible is a critical next step and we expect the government to honour the promise it made to primary leaders in its green paper".

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

£800,000 wellbeing support scheme for heads due later this year

The Department for Education is looking to spend £800,000 on "tailored mental health and wellbeing support" to school leaders across England.

A prior information notice published by the department refers to a "potential upcoming procurement" of a new mental health and wellbeing support scheme modelled on a limited pilot currently working with up to 385 schools.

It is the DfE's intention to "undertake a procurement exercise to appoint a suitably experienced organisation to deliver this provision from autumn 2021", the notice states.

Few details about the project have been published, but the DfE confirmed it would

be based on the current pilot run by the Education Support charity.

It said it was looking to provide £800,000 for the wider project over 18 months. The intention was to make the service available to all primary and secondary schools.

The cash boost follows an extra £62,000 for Education Support to reach another 160 schools. With initial funding of £95,000, the charity said it had already helped 225 headteachers through online peer and telephone support.

The DfE is "now assessing the next phase of this provision, which will build on the evidence from the pilot and aim to offer tailored mental health and wellbeing support to school leaders, as part of the

department's response to the Covid-19 pandemic".

According to Education Support's teacher wellbeing index survey last year, 77 per cent of teachers reported they were stressed, but this jumped to 89 per cent for senior leaders.

The charity has not said whether it would apply to run the wider project.

The notice issued by the DfE states that procurement is "expected to commence in mid-June, with a contract awarded by September 2021".

However, the notice is for "information only and is not a call for competition". The department could decide not to begin a formal procurement process or award a contract.

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DfE report delays let trust bosses 'get away with it'

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government has admitted that reports on financial scandals in three academy trusts have been gathering dust for more than 18 months - while refusing to confirm when they will be published.

School finance experts and campaigners say the delays mean those responsible have not been held to account. The lack of deterrents or lessons learned also risks similar problems engulfing other trusts.

Schools Week asked the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for copies of its investigation reports into Bright Tribe, Lilac Sky and SchoolsCompany trusts.

All three were stripped of their schools between 2016 and 2019 after investigations into financial mismanagement, scrutiny that fuelled wider controversy over academisation itself.

Each of the defunct trusts faced a review over payments to companies linked to them or their founders. Bright Tribe allegedly claimed hundreds of thousands of pounds for incomplete works, while *Schools Week* revealed safeguarding breaches and unsafe premises at SchoolsCompany sites. Problems at Lilac Sky included staff being rehired the day after receiving severance payments.

But the ESFA refuses to give a date for releasing the reports. Work on the Bright Tribe and Lilac Sky reports was still "in progress", while the SchoolsCompany report was due for "orderly" publication.

A DfE spokesperson said it took "strong action" on mismanagement, but investigations were complex. "It is right that we take that time to make sure the right outcomes are reached," a spokesperson said.

Yet the ESFA admitted in response to our FOIs that none of the reports had been updated since September or October 2019.

The DfE refused to release or even



acknowledge any correspondence with Elias Achilleos, the former SchoolsCompany chief executive. It said revealing information about parties under investigation risked them seeking to "conceal evidence".

Schools Week was unable to contact Achilleos for comment.

The government first promised its Lilac Sky report by summer 2019. However it will now only say it will be published "when legal due process has concluded".

The ESFA confirmed Bright Tribe's new management had ordered 22 investigations into capital grants and Salix loans. These were due for completion by Christmas 2018.

But it said releasing reports risked prejudicing crime detection, prosecution or civil proceedings.

Fraud police have dropped inquiries into Bright Tribe because of "insufficient evidence", and no charges are known to have been brought over SchoolsCompany, despite a reported police investigation.

Julie Rayson, a campaigner who helped reveal Bright Tribe's failings, said the delays suggested reviews were "on hold".

This meant anyone who might be found responsible for wrongdoing could "get away with it".

Hilary Goldsmith, a school finance consultant, said similar problems at other trusts could worsen, while honest employees could not clear their names.

Meg Hillier, the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, said processes for tackling "egregious" financial or other mismanagement appeared "painfully slow and lacking transparency".

"There's a gap in the system when stuff goes badly wrong. It disappears into Whitehall and nobody gets sight of it - MPs, parents, other schools."

Anne West, an education professor at the London School of Economics, said the government's renewed push for more academies meant there was "no political imperative to act speedily".

A spokesperson for SchoolsCompany said it could not comment as investigations were ongoing, but its interim leadership condemned "unacceptable" past actions and had successfully rebrokered schools within a year.



Trusts censured for shared CEO's double salary

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

Two academy trusts face strict government spending controls after accounts revealed their joint chief executive earning a double salary for working the equivalent of 8.3 days a week.

Experts said trusts considering similar controversial arrangements should consult regulators first, but defended the value of sharing staff.

Newton Academy Trust received a financial notice to improve last week over failings in "regularity and propriety", and oversight of finances, executive pay and related party transactions.

All Saints MAT, another trust in the north west, received its own notice over financial and governance failings in December.

Patrick Ferguson, an award-winning headteacher, led both trusts in 2019-20. He earned £142,925 that year as chief executive and principal of Newton's single school Hope Academy, according to annual accounts.

But All Saints accounts say it too paid him £150,000 pro rata for "not less than 3.3 days a week", on top of his "full-time" Newton role.

It suggests combined earnings that put him among the highest paid academy chief executives.

The two roles also overlapped briefly in 2019 with a six-month executive headship at a third trust. St Francis Xavier's College paid Newton £123,984 for the services of Ferguson and other staff. It is not clear if or how this affected Ferguson's remuneration.

Michael Boland, the chair of governors at Newton, said the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) described the relationships with both trusts as "novel and contentious".

Ferguson told *Schools Week* he only worked 16 hours for All Saints, however, saying his contract "clearly stated 3.3 days or 16 hours".

He said his employers were always "more than happy" with his salaries, which were decided by governors based on their views on "the benefits I would bring".



ESFA began investigating both trusts in February last year. Ferguson left All Saints in August and retired from Newton in November, the same month ESFA again reviewed its finances.

An All Saints spokesperson said it responded swiftly, with a new chief executive and chief finance officer "leading with swift and vigorous change".

Ferguson told parents he left Newton to spend time with family, and told *Schools Week* it was "not linked in any way to any other matter".

Boland called Newton's notice "unusual" and unrelated to day-to-day procedures or finances, citing a "healthy" surplus, but saying it would work closely with ESFA.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, a former chair of the Institute of School Business Leaders, said trusts could avoid problems by consulting ESFA before making "clearly complicated" arrangements.

He said trusts could "never be too transparent" in justifying leaders' pay, consultancy or support for other trusts, but high salaries and leading multiple schools had become "completely normal". The safest way to do external work was through an employer, he added.

Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, cautioned against taking external salaries on top of full-time employment.

She recommended either secondments, in which seconding trusts received the income, or becoming a part-timer to work

part-time elsewhere - if the arrangement suited all parties.

David Carter, a former national schools commissioner, said well-handled staff-sharing could be an "intelligent and quick solution for leadership".

It is not the first time Ferguson has held more than one role. He joined Newton while still executive head of Liverpool's De La Salle Academy for part of 2015.

Ofsted called his work at De La Salle "outstanding", but rolls fell by almost a third in four years. The watchdog's 2016 accounts state this caused a deficit. Robust financial procedures were lacking and governors not informed over cashflow concerns.

They also report its former leader had approved capital spending without the finance committee's knowledge, in a "significant management override of internal controls". Trust policies were tightened up as a result.

De La Salle then received a financial notice to improve in 2017. Ferguson said he could not comment as it came "some years after I left", and he was unaware of any outstanding issues or regulatory breaches while he was in post.

He also declined to explain why Newton's accounts record payments to a company he launched while at the trust. He previously called himself a "consultant for Arley Fairchild" in separate Newton documents, but told *Schools Week* it never provided consultancy - or received payment from the academy.

New Covid variant forces schools to close

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

INVESTIGATES

Schools are closing on-site provision and switching to online learning after a surge in Covid rates linked to the Indian variant.

While some have shut to all but keyworker and vulnerable children, others have sent home whole year groups and have allowed parents to keep their children off school in the run up to half-term.

It comes after the government altered travel advice to the eight areas hit by the variant, first asking that all non-essential travel be avoided.

This was later amended to minimal travel in and out of the areas.

Switch to online a 'welcome relief'

Bedford Academy, part of the Heart Academies Trust, announced last Thursday it would switch to remote learning for the final week of half-term. A third of the school's 1,200 pupils are isolating.

Bedford is one of the eight areas in which the Indian variant is spreading fastest.

Between May 15 and 21, there were 194 cases per 100,000 people. The national average is 12.

Chris Deller, the academy's head, said the school averaged six new cases each day. A large number of pupils were sent home and staffing was affected.

Closures need DfE's 'explicit approval'

School and trust leaders had daily meetings with local Public Health England (PHE) officials, Bedford borough council, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care. The DfE then approved the move on Thursday.

Deller said it was reassuring the government was "listening to unique circumstances" and the move had been a "welcome relief for the community" as parents were worried about the safety of their children.

It was hoped restricted attendance would control the outbreak.

The DfE's contingency framework states attendance restrictions should not be implemented without "explicit approval" from the department.

Ministers previously came under fire after



issuing a legal order under the emergency Coronavirus Act 2020 to force the Royal borough of Greenwich to rescind its plan to close schools.

In areas where Covid variants of concern are identified, schools and colleges will be offered surge PCR testing. This is put in place by local public health directors.

But Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the "lack of clarity" over areas involved in restrictive measures was unhelpful. She urged the government to provide schools with the "clear instructions they need to ensure they can respond appropriately".

'Virus is being transmitted between students'

Abbeyleigh primary in Gloucestershire closed this week following confirmed Covid cases.

Pupils last week were asked to isolate after coming into contact with a member of the National Tutoring Programme who tested positive.

On Tuesday, Haslingden High School in Rossendale, Lancashire, announced it would close and move to online learning.

In an open letter to parents, Mark Jackson, the schools' head, said the number of positive cases had "increased considerably and it is clear that the virus is being transmitted between students in school".

Rossendale recorded 113 cases per 100,000 people last week.

The decision to close was made following discussions with Lancashire County Council's

public health team and was "in the best interests of all members of our school community", the head's letter added.

Kings Academy in Middlesbrough closed on Tuesday. David Dawes, its principal, said the school had "acted quickly in response to a small number of cases" and would "always put the safety of the wider community first".

Parents choose to keep children at home

Elsewhere, in a letter to parents and carers last week, Rockmount primary in London acknowledged that some parents wanted to keep their children at home for the final week of term, following positive cases at the school.

It said that if children were kept at home because of "a physical or mental health concern relating to Covid-19", no referral would be made to educational welfare and a specific code would be applied to their attendance record.

The number of schools closed is still, however, very low. The DfE's latest attendance statistics found 99.9 per cent of all state-funded schools were open on May 20, similar to the previous week.

The data also reported less than 0.1 per cent of pupils were absent last week because their school had closed for Covid-19 related reasons. However, any rise this week will not appear until next week's figures are released.

James Bowen, the director of policy for the National Association of Head Teachers, said it was "clear that we are far from out of the woods when it comes to disruption to education".

Speed read

Lessons from lockdown: 5 takeaways for the DfE

The Department for Education seems “surprisingly resistant” to the idea of conducting a “proper lessons-learned exercise” on its early response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a group of MPs has warned.

The public accounts committee (PAC) has published a report on support for children’s education during the pandemic. Here are the recommendations.

1 DfE NEEDS ‘SYSTEMATIC’ LESSONS-LEARNED EXERCISE

During a PAC hearing earlier this year, DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood told MPs there was no plan to publish a specific review of the department’s response to the pandemic.

She said the department would look at lessons learned “in concert with the work that’s going on across government”.

But the PAC said the DfE should carry out a “systematic lessons-learned exercise, to evaluate its response to the pandemic and identify departmental-specific lessons.

“It should then write to us, setting out its main findings,” MPs added.



2 PLAN FOR FUTURE IT PROVISION

The government has distributed around 1.3 million devices to assist with remote learning since the first lockdown.

But the committee found the DfE had “no vision for building on the investment it has made in IT equipment for vulnerable and disadvantaged children”.

The PAC asked the DfE about its plan for remote education in the future “since the laptops that had been distributed would need replacing in due course”.

The DfE acknowledged there was an “appetite” for support from government, but said there was a “balance to be struck between doing things centrally and allowing schools the autonomy to make their own choices”.

MPs said the department should set out a plan “for how it will ensure that all vulnerable and disadvantaged children have access to IT equipment to support their learning at home”.



3 ‘CLEAR METRICS’ TO MEASURE CATCH-UP PROGRAMME

The government has announced a series of measures aimed at helping pupils recover education lost during the pandemic, including grants for schools, the National Tutoring Programme and summer schools funding for secondary schools. Further announcements are expected soon.

But the PAC warned the department has “not set out how it



will judge the effectiveness of the catch-up programme in making up for the learning children lost as a result of the disruption to schooling”.

MPs said the department should write to them setting out “clear metrics that it will use to monitor the catch-up learning programme, and what level of performance would represent success”.

4 ASSURANCES NEEDED ON TUTORING ‘QUALITY AND QUANTITY’

The government expects the tuition partners element of the National Tutoring Programme to reach 250,000 children this academic year, with a focus on disadvantaged young people.

However, MPs noted that as of February this year, only 44 per cent of children receiving tutoring were eligible for pupil premium funding.

The DfE should set out how it intends to gain assurance on the “quantity and quality of tutoring and mentoring provided” under the NTP.

Its response should “cover in particular how it intends to ensure there is adequate tutoring and mentoring provision in areas of the country where educational attainment is lower”.



5 WORK NEEDED TO ADDRESS IMPACT ON VULNERABLE PUPILS

The committee pointed to low attendance rates among vulnerable pupils (those with a social worker or an education, health and care plan) during the first lockdown.

MPs are also concerned about the impact of the lockdowns on referrals to children’s social care services, which according to the DfE are down by around ten per cent year on year.

The PAC said the DfE should work with the Association of Directors of Children’s Services “to understand why the number of referrals to children’s social care services remains below expected levels, and take action in light of the findings to make sure children are being effectively safeguarded”.

The DfE should also work with the Department of Health and Social care to identify “specific actions needed to help children with SEND recover from the damage caused during the pandemic”, MPs said.



Speed read

Exam entries rise, but AS-levels lose their appeal

Entries to GCSE and A-levels continued to rise this year, although subject-level data has revealed big changes in some subjects.

Exams have been cancelled, with teachers instead determining grades. Exam boards will quality assure their results.

Here we look at some of the key trends in Ofqual's provisional entry data.

1 GCSE AND A-LEVEL ENTRIES UP...

There were about 5.3 million entries to GCSEs this year, a rise of 0.4 per cent on 2020.

But there was a sharper increase in entries from year 11 pupils, from 4,756,135 to 4,847,140, a rise of 1.9 per cent.

Ofqual said this was likely to be partly due to a 2 per cent increase in the number of 16-year-olds in schools this year.

The increase is offset by a dip in entries from younger and older candidates.

Entries in higher tiers increased slightly. For example, in biology, 88 per cent of entries were in higher tier compared with 85 per cent last year.

A-level entries increased 2 per cent – from 731,855 in 2020 to 756,230 this year. Again, Ofqual said this was likely to reflect the change in cohort size.



2... WHILE AS ENTRIES KEEP FALLING

Entries for AS-levels have fallen dramatically again this year, reflecting the continuing impact of the move in 2015 to decouple AS-levels from A-levels.

There have been 53,300 AS-level entries this summer, down 33 per cent from 86,970 in 2020.

Since 2017, the number of AS-level entries has fallen 91 per cent.

3 STATISTICS GCSE ENTRIES PLUMMET 31 PER CENT

Entries to GCSE statistics fell the most, down 31 per cent from 25,845 in 2020 to 17,950 this summer.

Engineering entries also fell 11 per cent, design and technology 8 per cent and physical education 5 per cent.

English language entries dropped for the first time in at least five years, by 2 per cent.

At A-level, design and technology entries also dropped 9 per cent, English literature 6 per cent and media, film and TV studies 3 per cent.



4 BIG DROP IN 'OTHER' MODERN LANGUAGES

There were just 25,225 entries to "other" modern language GCSEs this year, down 23 per cent on 2020.

The category includes Italian and Polish, but not French, German and Spanish. Entries in those are reported separately.

German GCSE entries continue to decrease, as they have since 2018. Between 2020 and 2021, entries fell 10 per cent from 41,320 to 37,035.

There was a similar pattern at A-level, where German entries dropped 8 per cent and other modern languages 17 per cent.

French GCSE entries stayed the same, but increased 1 per cent at A-level.

Meanwhile, Spanish entries increased 4 per cent this year – at least the fifth year in a row that numbers have been up. In 2017, 85,380 pupils entered for the exam, compared with 109,655 this year.

Likewise, there was a 3 per cent increase in Spanish A-level entries.

5 BIG RISES IN A-LEVEL GEOGRAPHY, LAW AND COMPUTING

Entries to A-level geography rose 16 per cent this year, with law and computing also rising 14 and 10 per cent respectively.

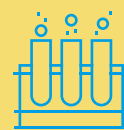


Psychology and sociology entries have also continued to rise with an increase of 8 per cent each.

Economics and business studies entries have both risen 6 per cent, religious studies 7 per cent.

6 SCIENCE, FOOD AND BUSINESS GCSES GET MORE POPULAR

Entries to the three separate science GCSEs have all increased, with biology entries up 3 per cent, and chemistry and physics up 4 per cent.



Geography GCSE entries increased 4 per cent, and English literature 2 per cent.

Food preparation and nutrition GCSE entries increased 5 per cent and business studies 4 per cent.

7 EBACC ENTRIES CONTINUE TO SLOWLY RISE

Entries to subjects that count towards the English Baccalaureate increased by 40,580 – 1 per cent – while entries for non-EBacc subjects decreased by 21,255 – 2 per cent less than in 2020.

This continues a recent trend in which the proportion of EBacc entries has increased from 76 per cent of all entries in 2017, to 82 per cent this year.



EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Why can't government just be honest about pandemic mistakes?

When looking back at the stumbling steps the Department for Education took in the weeks after the pandemic struck, its free school voucher scheme was arguably its least egregious venture.

While it got off to an infamously bad start, it provided food for millions of our most vulnerable children, something one could argue is the least a conscious government could do.

But, an important part of this has been the government's reluctance to keep feeding children in the holidays.

That Marcus Rashford forced the government to U-turn on this is clear as day. It is utterly bizarre that Conservative MPs Tom Hunt and Vicky Ford this week tried to rewrite history, painting the U-turn as some grand masterplan.

Our story this week proves the truth. The DfE had to risk facing legal action – and was more likely to have lost any challenge – because it had no other choice after being caught out.

It's time politicians started being honest about their pandemic mistakes, and stop taking us for fools.

Long-awaited school building bill reveals true scale of underfunding

Around two years after its mass survey of school buildings was completed, the government has finally published summary data based on the collection.

Unsurprisingly, it makes for grim reading. The £11.4 billion price tag for bringing schools up to scratch dwarfs the maintenance cash allocated in successive spending reviews. Parliament's own data shows DfE capital spending fell by 44 per cent over the past decade.

This week's new data is a welcome step, and will hopefully aid the DfE in its future negotiations with the Treasury.

However, until the reports for individual schools are in the public domain, the department will still be falling short of its commitment to transparency and open government.

All eyes will be on the DfE as it gears up to name the remaining 450 schools that will be rebuilt over the next 10 years. It is essential that headteachers have the means to check they are not being short-changed.

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Oak Academy scrambles to secure future as privatisation plan pulled

Joshua Perry, @bringmoredata

Big story! I'm more relaxed than the *Schools Week* editors that a "private" option was considered – there have been successful transitions from charitable/public to private ownership. And all options surely had to be explored! But yes, ultimately charitable seems best way forward.

Susannah Hares, @susannahhares

Is it a big story? "Organisation considers its future" seems something every organisation should do quite a lot of the time. And considering a range of options is always a smart thing to do. Non-story in my mind.

John Rendel, @john_rendel

Raises lots of public interest points about charitable status and governance. Ultimately and generally, a person who might privately benefit from a decision made by a charity shouldn't be involved in that decision or in advocating for it.

DfE report: schools in big MATs shun moves to share responsibility for excluded pupils

Eric Fairchild

This has echoes of the ESN scandal documented in last week's BBC documentary *Subnormal – A British Scandal*. Big MATs should have the skills and resources to devote to children with additional educational and emotional needs without passing them on to local authorities to school them. There has to be a suspicion that academies are chucking out these children in order to boost their attainment ratings.

Janet Downs

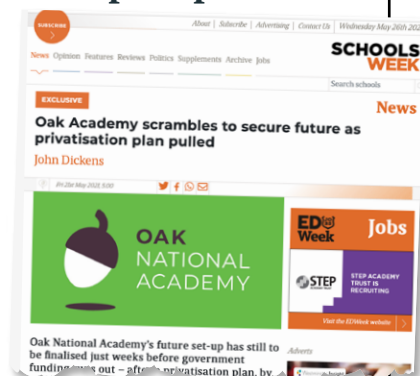
The Academies Commission (remember that?) warned in 2013 that the academy system could result in academies turning their backs on excluded pupils. This could undermine LAs' ability to deal fairly with such pupils, making them hard to place. The then government ignored this report because it raised questions about academisation. But those questions remain.

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Rachel Gooch, @schoolduggery

Oak Academy scrambles to secure future as privatisation plan pulled

Exploring all options is wise, but as *SW* editorial says, any option that would lead to excess personal profit should never have made it to paper. But let's move on and find a solution to keep the spirit and success of Oak.



Exam boards don't deserve the criticism they're getting

Roisin Davison

I would wholeheartedly support earlier comments made about the appalling lack of support given by exam boards. For History we received NO resources at all – Edexcel/Pearson merely reissued the previous few years of exam papers (all of which we already had).

Our school spent a whole day entering data on to weighted spreadsheets to generate grades prior to in-school moderation. This was 90 teachers spending five hours – so 450 person hours, and this is just one school. This, after marking all the assessments and moderating them. Personally, I marked 240 GCSE exam papers and ten A-level papers, and moderated GCSE and A-level papers.

We received no support from the board whilst we did this.

Teachers are on their knees and have year 10 mocks and year 12 mocks now to look forward to after half-term.

Somebody has cashed in this year and it hasn't been the teachers. Perhaps the boards could pay the teachers the money they have saved from not paying external markers?

Ofqual consults on coursework and fieldwork changes for 2022 GCSEs and A-levels

Sharon Leggett

They must remember that no matter what, year 10 have missed a large amount of work and time at school. This has affected their confidence and their mental state, and this needs to be taken into consideration.

DfE considers buying 360,000 abacuses to aid maths catch-up in schools

John Hartley

This really had to be a late April Fool!



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JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



'The finances were horrible, the local governing bodies were awful'

Julian Drinkall took on the biggest trust turnaround job going. Here he talks about constraints, innovation, bravery - and why he removed every single chair of governors

Julian Drinkall, chief executive, Academies Enterprise Trust

Julian Drinkall, departing chief executive of Academies Enterprise Trust, was asked to hurry the heck up and start his post early. He was scheduled to begin in March 2017, and instead was told by the Department for Education to get into the trust for December.

"I literally stepped red-eyed off a plane

from New York [...] I walked into Sanctuary Buildings and got a bollocking. They said it was an absolute shambles," he tells me, referring to the then-failing trust, the biggest in the country and a terribly awkward symbol for the government's flagship academisation policy. "I thought, I've got to get in fast - this thing could collapse."

Drinkall was leaving a seemingly different world behind him. As CEO of private schools chain Alpha Group, he'd just been in

Manhattan opening a school based on one in London that has Princes William and Harry as alumni. Now he was taking on a trust widely regarded as having taken on too many struggling schools in the most deprived areas of England, too fast.

Nor was he a straightforward educationalist. His CV is a crash course in change-making at big organisations before moving on. Highlights include head of financial and commercial strategy for the BBC for three

Profile: Julian Drinkall



Drinkall and his siblings in childhood

years; a director of strategy at Boots for two years; CEO at Macmillan, the education publishers, for three years; and at Alpha for two and a half years. It will be four and a half years when he steps down at the end of this year – AET has demanded his attention.

Drinkall is heading off to lead Aga Khan Schools, part of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which works across Asia and Africa. He will oversee 250 schools and wants to turn it into a “super global education agency”.

With parents in the Foreign Office, Drinkall has the kind of restless-yet-focused, horizon-scanning energy of someone who's not spent their entire professional life in England. His mother was born in Morocco, his father in Myanmar, his two sisters in Cyprus and his brother in Brussels, and he, the odd one out, in London. Having seen plenty of continents and contexts, he talks, talks, talks – ideas and stories spill out from him. Given this, it's surprising in some ways Drinkall hasn't had a bigger national profile as a mega-MAT leader. But in other ways, it makes sense – it's not a system he appears hugely impressed by, or desperate to ingratiate himself with.

“I don't think we're terribly bold about education in this country,” he explains. “For me personally, I've felt very constrained... I don't think there's enough boldness, innovation, R&D, trying to do new things. There's not enough value placed around practitioners, teachers and educationalists, and I worry because the sector is backward when it comes to finance, HR, technology. I think the whole thing is quite conservative. It's wrapped up in its own language.”

Perhaps only someone with this kind of relish for dismissing creaking, ineffective approaches would have dared to take on AET



Drinkall and his siblings celebrating his mother's 90th birthday

“I found a lot of smart, clever, junior people and I elevated them to the top table”

in 2016. It could have been career-ending. An Ofsted trust-wide inspection in 2014 to then-chief executive Ian Comfort said progress at all phases was below national levels and disadvantaged pupils were “well behind” their more affluent peers. By 2016, another inspection warned only 59 per cent of academies were ‘good’ or better, with eight schools having actually got worse. The trust had been banned from taking on new schools and 90 per cent of schools were operating deficits.

Drinkall moved fast. “I changed the whole management team, just one person stayed. I found a lot of smart, clever, junior people and I elevated them to the top table. A lot of the old deadwood, they went. The finances were horrible, and the local governing bodies were awful.”

Here Drinkall made his first more controversial decision: *The Times* quoted him as saying “playground bully parents” would no longer be allowed to sit on school governing bodies. Instead, only people with expertise in education would. The National Governance Association said removing parent governors was an “own

goal”; but, undeterred, Drinkall had removed all 64 chairs of governors by his seventh month in post. “That allowed us to exercise more control of the schools. It meant we had a management team doing school improvement, and a governance team making sure that school improvement was landing.”

Parental engagement is important, he says, but governors who aren't educationalists don't always act in the best interest of a school. For instance, when the trust was allowed to accept a primary school in Essex in 2018 (its first new school in five years) “the governing body only agreed because the parents and staff put so much pressure on them that the old buffer-tufters had to agree”.

A hugely energetic and engaging streak in Drinkall must have helped him get away with it – he can carry people with him. With educators on his governing bodies, he now persuaded some of the biggest names in education to the top table. It reads like an edu-royalty list: last year, former national schools commissioner Sir David Carter became a trustee, as did Jane Ramsey, with a background in health and care and

Profile: Julian Drinkall



Drinkall at Lea Forest primary academy in Birmingham



Drinkall at Newington Academy in Kingston upon Hull

wife of former permanent secretary to the DfE, Jonathan Slater; Adam Boddison, national special educational needs leader; and Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation. They joined Matthew Purves, deputy director at Ofsted for curriculum.

Drinkall also managed to persuade the biggest heavyweights: the DfE. "The DfE used to send a person to every single board meeting, they didn't trust us an inch, and we managed to get them off us after a year," he chuckles. He'd presented then national schools commissioner Sir David Carter and then academies minister Lord Nash with a five-year plan, which had cut the mustard.

By April 2019, the ESFA had agreed to provide up to £16.1 million to the trust. To MPs' great annoyance, ministers wouldn't say

exactly how it would be spent. Lucy Powell on the education select committee pointed out for local authority schools, "it would be forced academies like that [she clicked her fingers]. There would be no turnaround time, no cash injection."

With the mob baying, next month the education unions accused Drinkall of failing to listen to staff over proposed restructuring, and called for a motion of no confidence in the trust. The 2017 accounts show £2.5 million was spent on staff restructuring costs and £1.4 million last year. At the same time, staff numbers fell from 6,380 in 2017 to 4,962 last year. Meanwhile, Drinkall's salary was £285,000-£290,000.

However, the vote of no confidence was called off - likely because many of the changes were working.

"So many school leaders play it by the book. The obsession with the rules, it's ridiculous"

"We didn't draw down half the amount," he says of the ESFA cash injection, adding the actual loan drawdown came to £5.7 million, a "good value offer" given the crisis his team averted. The accounts show a £1.4 million operational surplus and no in-year deficits.

Meanwhile, 72 per cent of academies are 'good' or 'outstanding', up from the 59 per cent in 2016. Not every measure is mindblowing: three schools are still inadequate, and the progress 8 score across the trust remains just below average at -0.33.

But perhaps this is why Drinkall is interesting: he didn't pour all his energies into boosting government-sought scores. He appears to genuinely want his students and staff to look into the outside world, like he does. The trust launched an unusual goal: for every child to "choose a Remarkable Life."

"I'm keen on traditional education measures, but I'm much more interested in, where are our children going?" he says with force. He's brought in careers expert Ryan Gibson, who helped implement the Gatsby benchmarks, and wants destinations data on alumni collected. There are weekly "pulse" surveys of staff to gauge job satisfaction, which once only ten per cent used to fill out but now two-thirds do so, he says.

In a way, the AET story, through Drinkall, reveals a few things. First, any schools can probably improve if you bring in a brilliant thought-leader, the best minds in education and a cash injection: in other words, if the DfE is keen to save you.

Secondly, the system itself remains too constrained to keep someone as interesting and internationalist as Drinkall. He's off to Geneva, to headquarters beside the World Bank and the United Nations.

"Many school leaders here, so many of them play it by the book," he says. "The obsession with the rules, it's ridiculous.

"Education is old as humanity, and most of the rules have only come from the last ten years. We should remember that."

Opinion

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

The DfE has been challenged like few others by the pandemic, writes Meg Hiller, but its response and other longstanding issues make it a department of concern

As I outline in my annual report this week, the Public Accounts Committee's examination of the Department for Education's performance has inevitably focused on the impact of Covid. The DfE has been at the centre of some of the most challenging and controversial decisions around the pandemic, but ongoing concerns around funding, accountability of academies and support for special educational needs remain issues of concern.

Overall, the department has made it onto my list of departments of concern, not just because of Covid but because of wider systemic pressures.

Jonathan Slater, who was Permanent Secretary up until August 2020, had a realistic understanding of the risks and challenges. Taking over a department in the middle of a pandemic was never going to be easy (and I question the wisdom of removing an experienced departmental chief at such a critical time), but the tone recently has been more defensive and there seems to be a lack of engagement with stressed frontline school leaders.

After a decade of school budgets being squeezed, we now see schools faced with the challenges and costs of Covid. While there has been money from government for some of the immediate costs and support in kind such as laptops for pupils, there is still a huge bill ahead.

In March, we pressed the department about how schools would fund laptops in future (assuming that these will now be required learning tools for pupils). We were told that schools would be expected to fund them from their own



MEG HILLER
MP

Chair, Public Accounts
Committee

The DfE must show it is inclined to learn from its mistakes

budgets.

So the pupils who can afford their own equipment will manage, while schools struggle to maintain and replace laptops for poorer pupils. This hardly feels like the much-vaunted levelling up agenda. And, as my

required to deliver online learning.

One of the most visible challenges was how to provide laptops to pupils. The department chose to adopt centralised purchasing and distribution – an approach which characterised much of its response.

“ We need to see a firmer grip by the department on what has not worked

committee colleague Shaun Bailey MP highlighted, a laptop in a family of seven is not good enough.

From the outset, despite government plans for pandemics including the potential closure of schools, there was little guidance for those suddenly

Undoubtedly, late decisions by ministers created challenges. But whether it was the delivery of laptops, free school meal vouchers or the national tutoring programme, the department seems by default to prefer centralised programmes of delivery.



And, while central support has been important, some schools and local authorities may have fared better supporting their own pupils rather than waiting for the machinery of Whitehall to creak into action.

One of the long-tail legacies of Covid is the impact on the most vulnerable children, which is only just being understood. It is frankly shocking that, despite only 11 per cent of those classed as vulnerable attending school between 23 March and the end of May last year, and only 26 per cent attending in an average week in the remainder of the summer term, there is not yet a clear plan about how to support them.

Aside from Covid, the PAC has repeatedly raised concerns about the long-promised and still unpublished review of SEND. Our report in May 2020 highlighted an ongoing gap in funding impacting children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans. These young people have also been hit by Covid delaying many EHCPs.

But nearly a year on, when pressed on what evaluation the department was undertaking, the Permanent Secretary told us that she wants to think about this in concert with the rest of government.

We now know when the public inquiry will begin, but this will be too slow. The DfE should follow the example of departments such as HMRC and the DWP which have admitted the risks of their early pandemic approach and worked to mitigate those and alter their course.

This is particularly vital, given that catch-up plans and the tutoring programme are still sketchy.

We need to see a firmer grip by the department on what has not worked so that it can start bridging the gap now.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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New Teach First research reveals the extent of educational disparities. Our manifesto aims to put them right, writes Russell Hobby

Bilbo Baggins doesn't often feature in education policy, but this quote feels particularly relevant to our schools today: "Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right. I need a change, or something."

More is not always better; particularly if it means the same resources are simply spread thinner and thinner. We know that Covid has exposed and widened chasms in our education system. We have a chance to do something about it, but we also have a chance to get to the root causes of those gaps.

New research from Teach First released this week reveals some stark findings. For example, twice as many teachers at schools with the poorest pupils believe most of their pupils are behind in their attainment compared to teachers at schools with the most affluent pupils.

We have a huge task ahead. But asking for more without also giving more will result only in stretch and sparsity, rather than the depth and abundance that our most vulnerable and disadvantaged need and deserve. And that, indeed, can't be right.

The quality of teaching that children receive day-to-day is fundamental. So we need to begin by giving more to teachers who face the most difficult tasks. Our research found that two-fifths (39 per cent) of teachers believe that teacher and leader development would help make the most difference to support their pupils in the future. So we need to use extra time to up our



RUSSELL HOBBY

CEO, Teach First

Recovery can't be achieved with thinly spread resources

game on professional development, using the frameworks provided by the ITT core content, ECF and NPQs.

And the pandemic has shown that schools are delivering so much more than learning. They are at the heart of their local communities, holding a unique relationship with families.

need to resource this properly or transfer the responsibilities to other agencies.

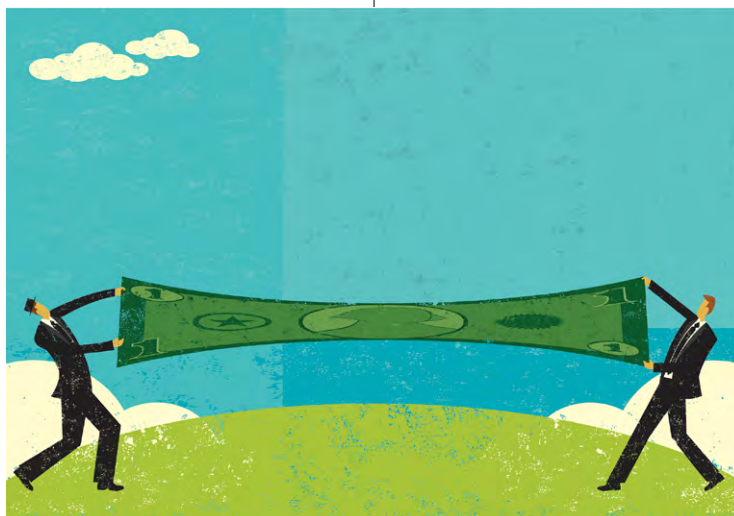
Teachers are clear on the need for those extra resources. When asked what would make the most difference to support students in the future, the most popular choice from teachers

“Asking for more without giving more will result only in sparsity

They have plugged the gaps left behind by the withdrawal of other services. If we want schools to do this, and still provide excellent teaching, then we

was funding and access to social and mental health services (61 per cent).

Half of teachers working in the most disadvantaged communities



believe time spent supporting pupils emotionally and socially is one of the greatest barriers to engaging in long-term planning at the moment. Yet that long-term planning will be vital to ensure schools not only recover but thrive in the years ahead.

Importantly though, if we want to achieve more without stretch, we need to ask those who work in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities what else stands in their way. Because clearing these barriers is what will secure a sustained recovery and allow us to build back better.

So on Monday we released a draft manifesto setting out our initial proposals in response to our research. Our next step will be to build on them with those working on the frontline, and especially those in schools serving disadvantaged communities. Only then will we feel the proposals are ready to take to policymakers.

In the meantime, there's one thing we are already clear on: school leaders need clarity about funding to allow them to plan effectively to overcome the challenges ahead. The government has made welcome commitments to levelling up our country, but the success of that ambition depends on levelling up our education system first. That's why we are suggesting a minimum five-year funding increase for schools serving disadvantaged communities.

We should be immensely proud of what our schools have achieved in the pandemic. But schools who face the hardest challenges have been stretched like butter spread over too much bread for too long. They need a change. We have a chance to reward their commitment with a new deal, and we should take it.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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A spike in ransomware attacks on schools should be spurring leaders – and the DfE – to pre-emptive action, writes Hayley Dunn

Since February, there has been a disturbing rise in ransomware attacks on schools, prompting the National Cyber Security Centre to issue an alert to the sector in March. So while we welcome the government's announcement that it is responding with training and guidance, we are concerned that they are simply not doing enough relative to the size of the risk.

A faceless crime, ransomware is a type of cyber attack that prevents users from accessing their IT system and/or the data it holds. Usually, large amounts of data are encrypted, but fraudsters may also steal or delete it. An initial attack will be promptly followed by a threatening demand for funds in the form of cryptocurrency to release or restore the compromised files.

As those who have been attacked will attest, ransomware has a devastating impact. Restoring services to their usual capacity and functionality can take weeks, if not months, of work. And imagine the burden of responsibility on the individual – staff or student – who unwittingly clicked the link that triggered the attack.

Cybercrime is nothing new to the sector, but attackers have become more devious. Their previous modus operandi of blocking access and locking users out of their data was largely thwarted by the move to offsite backups and cloud-based technologies, which protect information and reduce the impact of disabling hardware.

Now, they have moved to focus on confidential and sensitive information. They target networks using remote access systems and virtual private networks, often using convincing



HAYLEY DUNN

Business Leader Specialist, ASCL

Your money or your data! The costs of ransomware

phishing emails designed to catch out unwary employees to deploy their ransomware. These are aimed at exploiting unpatched software vulnerabilities, weak passwords and lack of multi-factor authentication processes. Most mobile phones, for example, have only one-step

levels of stress and anxiety for school leaders is unimaginable. After all, publication of highly sensitive information can put lives at risk or derail legal processes.

And then there's the financial impact of ransomware. According to reports in the IT press, this has more than

“Realistically, few schools would even have the means to pay

authentication via a passcode.

The NCSC reports the new trend is to threaten to publish stolen sensitive information. Given the volume of highly sensitive pupil and workforce data schools are required to hold, especially in relation to safeguarding and child protection, the resulting

doubled this year alone, and we aren't even halfway through. The costs, which include system downtime, lost efficiency, new devices, new network infrastructure, lost opportunities, possible third-party claims and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) fines, are potentially devastating.



A key element of the recovery of these costs (and the speed of reparations) is how much cover schools get from their insurers. Yet specialist cybercrime insurance is out of reach for most, leaving them adrift and potentially exposed by inadequate cover.

The DfE is supporting the National Crime Agency's advice on ransom payments, rightly advising leaders not to consider or action payment of any ransom demands. Realistically though, few education institutions would even have the means to pay.

So what are schools to do in the face of this new strategy from fraudsters?

It may be impossible to entirely eliminate the risk of a successful attack, but the good news is that there are ways to prevent compromise and reduce the impact of an attack when it does happen.

Helpfully, the NCSC has published useful advice. It recommends treating the cause, not just the symptoms, with a “defence in depth” strategy. In practice, this means schools should have an incident response plan that will reduce the risk and enable effective recovery, including regularly backing up systems offline and practising their emergency response protocols.

In the face of Covid, it may seem like an exaggeration to say that cybercrime is one of the most significant risks facing school leaders. But it's the truth, and our increased reliance on technology to get through the pandemic has only increased that risk.

So more advice is on the way, including at ASCL's Business Leaders Conference in a week's time. But in the meantime, leaders should be taking what steps they can, and the DfE should be looking at how it can better support leaders to protect themselves.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The data is clear: the progress gap can't be closed. But there are reforms that could help us build a better picture and a better system, writes Sammy Wright

When I joined the Social Mobility Commission in 2018, I had a kid-in-a-sweetshop kind of moment. I was (and still am) vice principal of a large 11-18 school in Sunderland, so my day job involves a lot of pounding the corridors and glaring. The thought of a parallel life of research and policy, enriched by vast reams of national attainment data, was mouth-watering.

So I started with some basic questions. Like, 'Are schools with affluent catchments more likely to be rewarded by Ofsted?'

Yes.

I moved on to 'How many secondaries in the north-east are both over 20 per cent FSM and outstanding?'

4. (In London there were 60. That's six per cent, compared to 30 per cent.)

And then, 'How many schools actually close the progress gap?'

This one took more time. We commissioned some research and, after some pandemic-related delays, it's now published. The answer?

11.

Only 11 schools have a consistent trend of a positive progress 8 gap over three years. Of those 11, six are grammar schools with vanishingly small pupil premium numbers, three are former grammar or independent schools, and one was investigated in 2017 for high levels of off-rolling.

So we delved deeper and looked at what strategies have made some difference, even if they haven't closed the gap. Then we analysed those to come up with recommendations for the government and school leaders.

A key finding is that the picture is



SAMMY WRIGHT

Schools and HE lead,
Social Mobility Commission and
vice principal, Southmoor Academy

The progress gap can't be closed. So what now?

extremely volatile. Nationally, there has been a clear widening of the gap every year since 2016, but there's little evidence of a universally applicable approach to tackling this. Nevertheless, one essential function of the project was to provide practical help to schools, so we created a taxonomy of different kinds of school with a diagnostic tool

schools are closing the gap, and none of them is doing it in circumstances such as those currently faced by the vast majority of teachers and school leaders across the country, then the gap can't be closed.

Stark, but there are two possible responses.

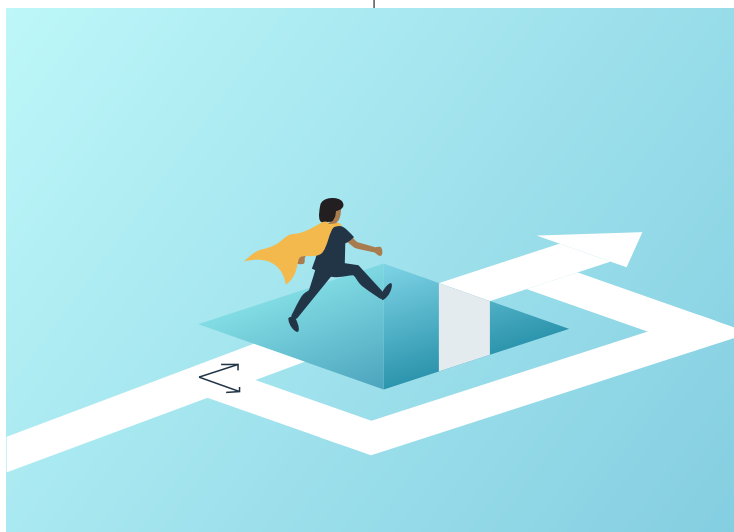
The pragmatic response is to say

“The sad truth is that some damage can't be undone

and a prescription tailored to each specific context.

But we need to be honest. If only 11

we need to tear up the qualifications system and start again, designing a more level playing field. Lots of



brilliant educationalists are thinking about this at the moment, and I hope something great comes out of the debate. The challenge here is ensuring that in levelling the playing field we are, to borrow a phrase, levelling up.

The realistic response is to recognise that education is not a sufficient lever to tackle inequality. That instead of obsessing about the data, we just need to do the best for each child in our care. And while part of me rebels at this, and demands the same expectations for all, another part recognises the sad truth that some damage can't be undone.

The thing is, though: where we are right now is uniquely destructive, and uniquely nonsensical.

It is a fact that disadvantage, in the simplistic sense captured by FSM, makes it harder to achieve in our current suite of qualifications. It is a fact that the gap is the same in outstanding schools as in inadequate ones. And yet we judge schools with four per cent FSM in exactly the same way as those with 60.

Which brings us to two further responses, both essential.

Pragmatically, we must stop penalising schools for having disadvantaged cohorts. To do that, we must recognise disadvantage and its nuances properly in our accountability measures. FSM needs to be reformed from a blunt instrument into one that picks up persistent and temporary disadvantage, and distinguishes between those who are just about managing and those below the poverty line.

And idealistically, we have to stop paying lip service to an ideal of fairness that is palpably untrue. Until we do, it's the idea of building an education system that works for everyone that will remain a pipe dream.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The Future of Teaching: And the Myths That Hold It Back

Author: Guy Claxton

Publisher: Routledge

Reviewer: Mary Hind-Portley, assistant subject leader (English), Hillside High School, Bootle

This book claims to explore the future of teaching through Claxton's critique of a range of practices he categorises as 'trad' with some comparisons with those of 'progs'. These terms dominated social media debate for a while but now seem passé. Yet they proliferate in the book, which didn't endear this reader to the debate Claxton wishes to present. While it is right to challenge current thinking and to present robust arguments for and against popular teaching and learning approaches, Claxton's arguments appear personally rather than professionally driven.

The book begins in a Shakespearean fashion, but Claxton's prologue affords little dignity to the house of 'trads'. The tone is vituperative and invidious, with those in favour of a knowledge-rich curriculum taught through direct instruction referred to as 'DIKR'. He offers some criticisms of 'prog' approaches, but it is 'DIKR' that Claxton writes acerbically about, referring to its "half-truths" pulling back teachers and leaders, "rather than encouraging them to move forward".

Claxton also states that we need to explore the "misconceptions that have taken hold in the DIKR movement, so that we might allow the tide of necessary innovation to pursue its course". But will Claxton support the reader to do this?

The opening chapter isn't promising. Titled 'Punch and Judy' (a fighting metaphor that rather trivialises the book's overall message), it names several current influential educators

and, rather than presenting a rigorous, academic criticism of the theories they favour, quickly descends into pejorative comments. He dismisses one as a 'young English teacher', and refers to a school as 'notorious'. Claxton maintains that he "has tried to be as even-handed as possible so far", but this reader could only see the author as disingenuous, given the clear bias in his linguistic choices.

Chapter 2, ironically named 'Values', introduces us to the 'river of learning' and an overview of 'progs and trads'. It is hard to ascertain what the takeaway might be for the busy leader and/or teacher here. 'Trads' are presented as "less inclined to have the difficult, delicate conversations about what the outcomes ought to be, if they are to equip all young people to rise to the considerable...challenges of life in the mid- to late-21st century". The charge could be levelled at this book so far.

From here, Claxton moves us through 'Knowledge', 'Thinking', 'Learning and learning to learn', 'Memory' and 'Teaching'. After that, it's on to chapters called 'Reality - getting out more', 'Research - but what kind?' and finally and eponymously, 'The future of teaching'. These titles promise much but seem to deliver little more than an ongoing critique of the 'DIKR' approach. That would be fine, as far as it goes, but the arguments seem

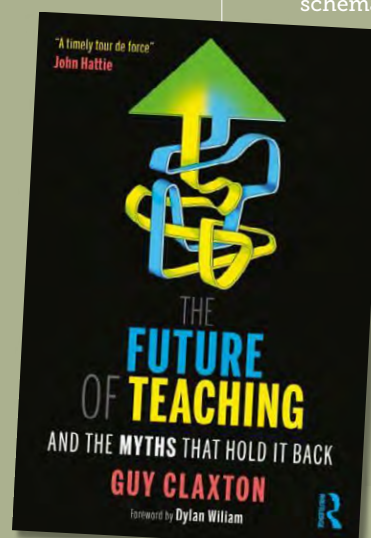
more intent on criticising the supposed singular approach of the 'DIKR' collective than in presenting a nuanced unpicking of specific aspects.

The comments on memory in Chapter 6 are hard to follow and hard to relate to the work and research on memory that has supported many teachers and leaders over the past few years. It would have been beneficial for the reader for Claxton to explore other theories of memory to support reflection on current pedagogy. The section on 4E cognition could have been an interesting area of thinking for readers if it had been a focus of the chapter.

In Chapter 7, Teaching, the criticisms Claxton puts forward about supposed 'DIKR' classrooms are contrasted with single examples of classrooms on the whole. Claxton also seems to assume that thinking is not part of a so-called 'DIKR' classroom, yet practitioners in knowledge-rich classrooms consistently maintain they use knowledge to build schema to support rich thinking.

This comes across as another missed opportunity for genuine synthesis.

Overall then, *The Future of Teaching* is a diatribe against 'DIKR' as a single entity rather than a positive exposition of its author's approach. "Education is a complicated enterprise", he says, rightly. Which makes the reductive approach that follows sadly ironic.



Reviews



Penny Rabiger takes over our 'blogs of the week' slot once every half-term to point to the best of the education podcasts

@Penny_Ten

Are You Convinced?

This new podcast series sees UK Youth CEO Ndidi Okezie and Teacher Tapp co-founder Laura McNerney taking on some meaty issues and trying to come at them from a different angle to each other.

I have chosen the episode *We still don't know how to address youth mental health issues*, featuring the Centre for Mental Health's Kadra Abdinasir, with Mental Health Media Charter founder Natasha Devon. The panel discusses whether the system is too crisis-driven, how more opportunities need to be made to address inequalities in mental health for Black and Asian young people, as well as those that identify as LGBTQ+.

Each episode also includes a young person's view on the matter, and we hear from a 23-year-old medical student and a 20-year-old with experience of the mental health system.

Becoming An Antiracist

This podcast series is hosted by Dr Muna Abdi and looks at a range of topics around racism and anti-racism in education. The



series aims to support teachers on their journey to becoming an antiracist. It offers a space to listen, reflect, engage and learn.

I have chosen an episode which centres the voices of Black women and girls in the education system – voices that are often never asked for, or that are silenced. Their stories here highlight the lived reality of racism in the school system. It's definitely worth a listen if you want to understand what school can be like for young people of colour.

Intractable

Having spent a decade in Jerusalem schools trying to bridge some of the divides in this challenging city, this podcast, in its very name, is close to my heart. *Intractable* is a storytelling podcast that combines history, news, personal narratives, expert interviews and audio artifacts to tell one of the most complex narratives of our time: the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This episode is about the next generation and looks at the way young people communicate with one another amid this conflict. Host, Skyler Inman interviews an Israeli professor with a revolutionary idea, and sits in on an event that brings young women from Israel and the West Bank together for the task of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In Jerusalem,

she talks to parents and children at Hand in Hand, a groundbreaking school that envisions generational change through mixed Jewish-Arab education in Arabic and Hebrew.

There's something for each of us to learn here about education's role in healing and recovery.

Young and Homeless in These Covid Times

During lockdown, 81 per cent more under-25s were sleeping rough in London compared with the same period last year. In this podcast, young people talk about the impact of having nowhere safe to stay. Their powerful, inspiring stories are packed with resilience, wisdom and thoughts on how to tackle youth homelessness.

I've chosen Apple's story: her immigration status means Apple can't access benefits or housing. She explains how homelessness and having no recourse to public funds are affecting her mental health, and why counselling is so important to her.

For all those working with young people who could be, or could end up, in the same situation, it's so important to hear about the lived experience of the homeless and the hidden homeless.

We Can Change the World

Ending on a delightful note, this BBC podcast focuses on ordinary young people who are achieving exceptional things in their communities – and even worldwide. Here, Isy Suttie hosts the amazing Amika George. When Amika found out girls were skipping lessons because of their periods, she created an online petition demanding free menstrual products for all girls on free school meals. A media storm and 275,000 signatures later, the government committed funding to tackle the issue.

If you think small acts don't make a difference, this podcast is the inspiration you need.

Research

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

What are the potential consequences of TAGs?

Billy Huband-Thompson, junior associate, CfEY

Following last year's results day botch job, Gavin Williamson has promised to "put our trust in teachers, rather than algorithms" this summer. The slogan sounds superficially attractive. But in practice, teacher-assessed grades (TAGs) have passed the buck to schools and insulated the government from any fallout come August.

The rationale for TAGs is that considerable teacher-collated evidence will give pupils, parents, education destinations and employers greater confidence in awarded grades. However, this "Ofqual are coming, look busy" approach is the worst of both worlds, keeping the pressures associated with high-stakes accountability without the benefits to reliability and validity.

TAGs have received widespread criticism, with concerns about workload implications, bias in teacher assessment, insufficient support from exam boards and inevitable variation between schools. However, there is another part to this story. Research evidence casts doubt on whether TAGs can emulate the important signalling role that regular exam grades play for young people and the destinations they apply to.

Grades are a key influence on young people's post-16/18 decision making. Academic achievement continues to be a key determinant of higher education (HE) participation. That said, this causal mechanism may be complex. In their 2013 analysis, Chowdry et al. noted that if, for instance, a pupil feels that HE is "not for people like them", these anticipated barriers may affect school achievement and, in turn, HE participation. Moreover, even once we control for grades, a gap remains between the HE attendance of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils



and their peers.

Nonetheless, grades are central to HE participation and any disruption or appeal-induced delay could thwart young people's post-18 progression.

Exams' signalling quality may be particularly important for pupils who are less represented in higher education. A recent series of interviews with Oxbridge students from under-represented backgrounds found that national assessment assured young people that their university was for them. As one working-class student explained, "I've always been smart for my school... and then I had this, like, countrywide validation for it." So while UCAS experienced a surge in accepted applicants last year, it is unclear whether TAGs will give young people the same sense of grade affirmation or what this might entail for post-16/18 decision-making.

Grades are also a common requirement for internships, employment and other routes, with a GCSE grade 4 in English and Maths a widespread prerequisite. And concerns about TAGs have also reached the labour market.

In a series of focus groups

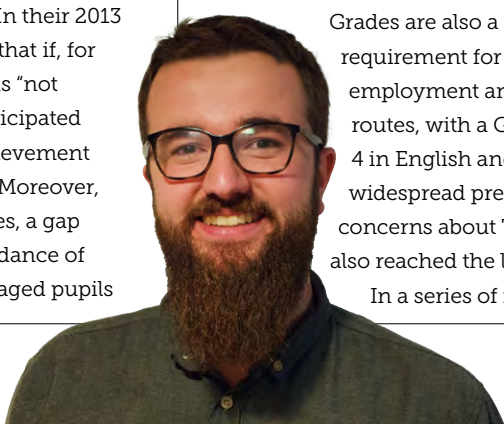
conducted by Public First, some young people were anxious that "employers might look at their grades differently than other years because they did not sit exams".

To allay these fears in a challenging labour market, we must emphasise a more positive story, recognising the character pupils have displayed to continue learning in such challenging circumstances. At The Centre for Education and Youth, we saw these qualities first-hand during a student roundtable co-hosted with the Education Policy Institute.

We are currently researching how young people have been supported with post-16/18 decision-making during the pandemic. Throughout our fieldwork, commissioned by Aspire to HE, we have seen schools draw on their understanding of their communities to help pupils make informed choices about their futures. So while the uncertainty surrounding the value of TAGs means that it has fallen on schools to reassure pupils of their achievements, there are also reasons to be confident about their next steps.

Our exams system is far from perfect. One mark can make the difference between a first-choice post-18 destination and uncertainty; between meaningful work and unemployment. There are also important questions about graduate credentialism and the importance we attach to grades. These issues require our attention in the longer term.

More immediately, however, the above evidence suggests that burdensome TAGs will fall short of the signalling quality exams provide. So in the first instance, plans should be put in place to offer young people wide-ranging support with post-16/18 transitions in preparation for any fallout. Then, while recognising the extraordinary efforts teachers have made, we must ensure they are never put in this position again



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

The coronavirus pandemic has ushered in new ways of working for everyone, including MPs who join parliamentary debates.

Many have been "Zooming in" to proceedings, although earlier this year education select committee member Jonathan Gullis came unstuck when he tried to contribute from a moving train. Unfortunately no ones could hear him.

Fellow committee member David Simmonds had more success this week when he participated in a Westminster Hall debate on child food poverty – seemingly from the inside of a car.

Many MPs were full of praise for Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford (pictured) during Monday's Westminster Hall debate, after his petition to end child poverty amassed more than a million signatures.

But some wanted to caveat their adulation, lest it be seen as an acceptance that the government seriously underestimated the scale of food poverty - and public opinion - in responding to the pandemic last year.

Conservative MP Tom Hunt, a member of the education committee, "commended" Rashford for his campaign, before pointing out the national food strategy was already looking at the issues raised.

"The idea that all this support was cobbled together at the last minute because of Marcus Rashford is false," he told MPs. "Although his role needs to be highlighted,



Billy Huband-Thompson @billyhubt · May 25

Why not send out commemorative abacuses and kill two birds with one stone?

SW Schools Week @SchoolsWeek · May 25

The Department for Education is considering paying for the production of a commemorative book marking the Queen's platinum jubilee that it can send out to primary schools schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-considers-...

it is incorrect to say that was not part of the government's plan, because it absolutely was."

Errr, not strictly true Tom (see Wednesday).

TUESDAY

More widespread confusion over government advice on travel (or lack of it) in areas with high Covid infection levels, such as Bedford.

As local headteacher Stuart Lock points out, it's a bit rich for the government to be advising against travel when its own Ofsted inspectors are busy visiting schools in the borough.

After last week's furore over plans to send "Rekenrek"-style abacuses out to a third of primary schools, the Department for Education is plotting another giveaway. This time it's a commemorative book to mark the Queen's platinum jubilee next year.

While we're all still waiting for the much-hyped recovery package, as well as plan for exams next year, it's good to see the government focusing on its priorities!

But Billy Huband-Thompson, from the Centre for Education and Youth, appears to have hit upon a neat idea to mark

the anniversary.

"Why not send out commemorative abacuses and kill two birds with one stone?" he tweeted.

To be honest, sending out abacuses with the Queen's face on each bead sounds exactly like something Gav would do.

WEDNESDAY

This week's big national story was the explosive testimony of Dominic Cummings, a former adviser to the PM, about the goings-on in Downing Street over the past year and a bit.

During the hours-long hearing, Cummings - a Gove adviser during his DfE days - told MPs how Boris Johnson was warned against "picking a fight" with Marcus Rashford over free school meals.

He described a litany of communications and policy issues throughout the campaign, including "the whole thing with Rashford".

He said the prime minister "decided to pick a fight and then surrendered twice". Afterwards everyone had called government communications "stupid".

We wonder if Tom Hunt wishes to revisit his remarks from Monday's Westminster Hall debate...

THURSDAY

The DfE has somewhat belatedly launched a survey requesting feedback from leaders on its Covid-19 email updates and guidance.

A great idea, but perhaps leaders should have been consulted on whether they wanted to receive midnight emails about 15 months ago...



REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER - EAST MIDLANDS AND HUMBER

Salary up to £110,000 per annum

Location Sheffield with regular travel within the region, and attendance at meetings in London and other RSC regional offices.



Department
for Education

Dedicated to delivering first-class education to children and young people across England, the Department for Education is a stimulating and rewarding place to work. With over 9500 open academies and free schools, we're looking for an outstanding leader with a track record of significant achievement and delivery, commitment to and passion for diversity and inclusion, and a good understanding of the education landscape both nationally and locally.

You will be part of a strong team of commissioners, making important operational decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State for all academies, free

schools and sponsors in your region. That means monitoring performance of academies and free schools, driving improvements in underperforming schools, facilitating multi academy trust development and growth, and leading on the opening of new free schools. You will also lead a Civil Service regional team that plays a key role in Covid response work, wider school improvement plans and sufficiency of pupil places. Engaging effectively with trust leaders and stakeholders is key, as is commanding respect in support and challenge in the sector.

Please visit CS Jobs and search for Regional Schools Commissioner.

Senior Finance Business Partner

Flying High Partnership

Are you looking for a new challenge?

Are you an outstanding finance professional who is looking for a role where you can see that what you do makes a real difference?

Do you want to make every day count and have an impact on the lives of over 6500 children? If so, then we want to hear from you!

At the Flying High Partnership, we are relentless in our pursuit of excellence and we want you to share in our mission to make every day count for the children within our schools.

For details on our Senior Finance Business Partner please visit Senior Finance Business Partner (North Hub) (flyinghighpartnership.co.uk)



BPET Director of Operations

Bellevue Place Education Trust (BPET) is an ambitious multi-academy trust with eight primary schools across London and Berkshire, with a long-term plan to sustainably grow to 15 schools.

We are seeking to appoint an ambitious **Director of Operations** who has a successful track record of performance and delivery as part of the BPET Central Senior Management Team. Provide leadership over HR, health and safety, risk, contract and asset management and legal support across BPET.

The ideal candidate will:

- have a track record and managerial experience having successfully delivered a range of projects/services against contractual requirements within the education sector
- have ability to think clearly and plan, anticipating 1 to 3 years ahead.
- commitment to delivering the ethos and values of Bellevue Place Education Trust

To apply, please complete the application pack and form is available on the [BPET website](https://www.bpet.co.uk/careers/currentvacancies/)

Deadline for applications being **12 (noon) on Monday 14 June 2021**.

To discuss this role further, please contact Mark Greatrex, Chief Executive on mark.greatrex@BPET.co.uk or call **020 3108 0363**.

To Apply Visit: <https://www.bpet.co.uk/careers/currentvacancies/>

Chief Finance Officer



Start Date: September 2021 or earlier if possible
Location: Cheshire
Salary: Grade 12 - £45,125 - £51,768 (pro rata) to be negotiated depending on qualifications and experience
Contract type: 0.6 FTE in the first instance, with the opportunity to increase the fraction as the Trust grows and develops
Contract term: Permanent

This is a unique opportunity for an enterprising and inspirational leader to join the Senior Leadership Team at what is currently a four school multi academy trust with an exciting growth plan.

The role requires strong financial acumen and the ability to prepare and maintain accurate monthly management accounts, annual budgets, and all the statutory audit reports in accordance with DfE regulations, VAT accounting and payment, responsibilities to HMRC, pensions and other regulatory bodies.

Application documents can be found on the HFNCAT website:

<https://www.hfncat.org.uk/copy-of-work-with-us>

Completed application forms should be sent to ed@allhallows.org.uk



Digital Skills Programme Manager

Do you think that your socio-economic background should determine your career prospects? upReach's vision is of a society in which everybody has an equal opportunity to realise their full career potential. We help young people from less-advantaged backgrounds achieve their career potential by providing an intensive programme of support that addresses socio-economic barriers to graduate employment.

upReach is seeking to hire a **Digital Skills Programme Manager**, an exciting opportunity for an individual to design a comprehensive training programme for students who are interested in careers in the Technology sector. They will also design an enhanced set of Digital Skills training opportunities that will be available for students across upReach's range of programmes, to increase their employability skills for all sectors regardless of their career preferences.



Discover more and apply now:
www.upreach.org.uk/vacancies

Join one of the UK's largest education services businesses in our HR and Finance Partner roles

We're embarking on an exciting period of growth and are looking for HR and Finance professionals across all levels of experience to join us on the journey.

As part of a successful business, whose performance in the market has been (and continues to be) exceptional, you'll be part of something special with the company's full support to reach your potential and career goals.

Whether you're an experienced HR or Finance professional, ideally (but not necessarily) with sector experience, or you're just at the start of your career, gaining experience and developing your skills, we would love to hear from you!

This is a great opportunity to work for an entrepreneurial company that is forward-thinking and fast-paced, with the added flexibility to work from home or the office. In return you'll receive a competitive salary, plus excellent benefits and holidays.



If you are interested in finding out more about the roles, please visit www.epm.co.uk/epm-careers

For an informal chat contact:

Tierney Jeffs (People Partner)
Tierney.Jeffs@epm.co.uk

To apply send your CV to:

PeopleTeam@epm.co.uk
 by 8th June 2021.



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/>



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).

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

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