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DAVID BENSON: 'IT WASN'T THE TIME For Email Debate'

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Government to consult on free meal changes

Schools Week campaign prompts quick action from ministers

But expert says it will leave pupil data 'useless and incomparable'

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GOLDEN TICKET

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NEWS Free lunch reform is a 'dog's breakfast'

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

A "triple track" of changes to free school meal entitlements proposed in the government's benefits reforms will render school data "useless" for years, experts have warned.

The Department for Education is consulting on plans to restrict children's eligibility for free school meals if their parents claim universal credit, the new onesize-fits-all system that will replace several other benefits from 2022.

The department's original plan, as reported in the last edition of *Schools Week*, was to extend the meals to every child of a family that claimed any part of the universal credit, something charities argued would "poison" national data on disadvantaged pupils, for which free meals eligibility is used as an important yardstick.

But the government's newly proposed changes won't come in until April, too late to prevent the corruption of data on thousands of pupils due to be collected in the January school census.

The number of pupils on free meals is one of the main indicators of disadvantage used by schools. It affects GCSE results data, pupil premium funding and other important statistics.

Universal credit is being rolled out gradually, and will reach around 80 areas of the country by January.

As the roll-out begins, any child in a family gaining the credit will be eligible for free meals. Due to the complicated nature of the



benefit, some pupils in households with incomes of up to £55,000 will be therefore become eligible for meals, while the income cut-off point for those in neighbouring boroughs still awaiting reforms is as low as £16.200.

This discrepancy will still be the case when the census is carried out in January, despite the new plans.

Only from April next year, when the government's newly suggested fix kicks in, will things change. After that time, universal credit claimants will only be entitled to claim free school meals for their children if their net income before benefits is less than \pounds 7,400 per year. Such households can expect to have an income of between £18,000 and £24,000 once benefits are added in – a slightly more generous criterion than at present.

It is therefore expected that 50,000 more pupils will get free school meals than currently.

Robert Goodwill, the children's minister, said the proposals would see "thousands more benefiting" from free school meals.

But Andy Ratcliffe, the chief executive of the private equity philanthropy charity Impetus, which funds education projects, says the plan means some pupils will gain and then lose eligibility for free school meals within the space of a few months, at the same time as the census data which informs exam results and school funding is collected.

"Children will be recorded as eligible for free school meals who wouldn't have been under the old system, but then they will not be eligible when the new system is introduced next year," he said.

Ratcliffe, a former education adviser to Gordon Brown, explained that even if a family is only eligible for a small tax credit, they will receive universal credit during the trial period and will therefore receive free lunches until April.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that in some areas, the old earnings threshold of £16,200 will remain in place until 2022.

The DfE will therefore be operating a "triple track" of eligibility criteria, which Ratcliffe described as "a dog's breakfast". He predicted that the January census data on free school meals would be "completely useless" for the next seven years as the government will no longer be able to compare the performance of poorer pupils with previous year groups.

If the system is not sorted out in time for the census, the government will have "poisoned the well for the most critical measure" for tracking poor pupils, he said.

John Fowler, a policy advisor at the Local Government Information Unit, suggested the government use historic data on free school meals until the new system "settles down".

Becky Allen to lead UCL's Centre for Education Improvement Science

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER @SCHOOLSWEEK

Dr Becky Allen is to leave the datagroup centre she founded, Education Datalab, to start a new education research at the UCL Institute of Education.

Allen, a former academic at the institute, returns as director of the new Centre for Education Improvement Science, tasked with developing a "scientific understanding" of education using methods such as laboratory experiments and classroom observation.

For the past three years, she built Education Datalab, a one-of-a-kind research unit, using large open data sets such as the National Pupil Database to highlight hidden issues.

The group's 'Who's left' report kick-started a nationwide conversation on the scale of "off-rolling", the practice of informally excluding pupils so their results do not appear on a school's performance tables.

She was also at the forefront of the grammar schools debate, regularly using government data to show how selecting children at 11 is inherently unstable. In response, the Department for Education threatened to remove her access to its databases unless researchers agreed to pass their findings through the government's press office first. This rule was later scotched after a successful campaign

by Schools Week. In her next endeavour, Allen hopes to build "a firmer scientific basis for education policy and practice".

According to the website for Improvement Science London, which is also based at UCL, "improvement science" involves the recognition of "the gap between what we know and what we put into practice" and uses the "practical application of scientific knowledge" to identify what needs to be done differently.

It works to encourage an "evidenceinformed approach" to improving services, and is currently focused on the health sector.

Professor Becky Francis, the IoE's director, said the new centre would create researcher posts and doctoral studentships as it becomes "a cornerstone of the IoE's work and ambition".

"I want the IoE to be at the forefront of understanding the challenges that education faces and in providing their solutions," she added.

The Centre for Education Improvement Science will launch in January 2018.

PUSHY PARENTS AND UNMANAGEABLE WORKLOADS AT PRIVATE SCHOOLS

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS @PIPPA_AK

Private school teachers have spoken about their "unmanageable workloads" and "exhausted" colleagues, and a third report they are expected to respond immediately to parents who contact them at home.

A survey conducted by the National Education Union found that one in five teachers at private schools are spending an extra working day a week on administration and marking.

The union's join general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted (pictured), said the requirements to speak to parents out of work hours was "unacceptable".

"Teachers' workloads are already unmanageable without the added pressure of being expected to respond to emails from parents during evenings and weekends," she said.

From 1,157 teachers and leaders of private schools surveyed last month, 45 per cent said their school does not have a policy in place to deal with parents contacting them outside of hours, and 29 per cent said they are expected to respond immediately.

One teacher from the north-east told the NEU that emails can arrive "up to midnight" and during weekends and holidays, and parents become "impatient and critical" if they have to wait until school hours to receive a response. Another from the south-west said teachers were required to send "a full,



recorded response" to parents within 24 hours, regardless of their teaching schedule. The poll also revealed that 22 per cent of staff spend the equivalent of two extra working days (over 15 hours a week) on activities related to their job during evenings and weekends.

One teacher from the east of England told the NEU that in the week before the October half-term they worked 17 hours a day, while another from the south-east warned the workload was "increasingly unmanageable" and staff are "exhausted.

Workload in the state sector has been a key focus for the government in recent years over concerns for retention, but this is one of the first times the spotlight has been turned onto the private sector.

OFSTED TO HIKE FEES ON SMALL PRIVATE SCHOOLS (AGAIN)

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

Plans to hike the fees small private schools must pay Ofsted are just the start of a programme of increased costs, according to a leading civil servant.

Exclusive

Last month, non-association private schools reacted unhappily when the inspectorate announced it would consult on increasing what it charges to inspect them. Some could face paying £3,800 more per inspection.

But the Department for Education may not stop there, according to Peter Swift, its head of independent education division, who told Schools Week that more rises are likely to follow.

The current proposals only "move towards full-cost recovery" for each inspection, he said. To reach a point where Ofsted can fully recover its costs, hikes may have to happen "several times".

Of the 1,080 non-associated private schools that Ofsted looks after, 42 per cent are special schools. The rest break down into 302 faith schools and 320 non-faith schools. Of the nonfaith schools, there are 437 boarding schools, 38 preparatory schools, 24 international schools, 17 Montessori schools, 12 tutorial colleges, six children's homes and one Steiner school.

The median size of the schools is 80 pupils, so the largest schools will have to cross-subsidise the fees of the smallest ones under the current formula. Without this, smaller schools could not afford to cover their costs.

"But moving towards full-cost recovery has to be the right direction," he insisted. "Why should the taxpayer subsidise the inspection of independent schools?"

However, Kevin Avison, a senior advisor to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, described Ofsted as "unwieldy", and claimed its failure to cover its own costs was an "embarrassment".

"I suspect that, even with regular hikes in charges, Ofsted's costs will expand to exceed its income: that is the nature of the organisation." he said.

John Richardson, who covers independent schools for the National Education Union, said that small private schools might be happier about increased inspection fees if they felt Ofsted worked collaboratively.

He claimed Ofsted had closed a "spate" of private schools "overnight".

"We need more of a sense from inspectors that they're working towards improvement with these schools, rather than giving them a rap over the knuckles," he added.

However, he agreed that while inspection should be more collaborative, the inspection framework also needed to "tightened up" in certain areas, especially when checking that school management in both private schools and academies is strong enough.

More coasting secondaries on the horizon

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

The government's definition of a "coasting" school" remains unchanged for 2017, but analysis of results suggests more secondary schools could end up in the category this vear.

For local authority-maintained schools, Department for Education interventions can include a forced takeover by an academy sponsor, while coasting academies may be rebrokered to a new sponsor.

This year, secondary schools will be considered coasting if they received a Progress 8 score of less than -0.25 in both 2017 and 2016, and if less than 60 per cent of their pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and maths in 2015. The government will not however publish

details of the number of schools deemed coasting until final school performance data is released in January.

But analysis of this summer's provisional GCSE results data suggests that there may be more secondary schools on the list come 2018

This year, 1,209 secondary schools had a Progress 8 score lower than -0.25, compared with 1,122 in 2016, an increase of around eight per cent.

Last year, 327 secondary schools and 479 primary schools were coasting, roughly 10 per cent of secondaries and 3.5 per cent of primaries, which are categorised using a different set of measures.

This year, primary schools are considered coasting if in each of the past two years,

average progress

are excluded from the measure if they have fewer than 11 pupils at the end of key stage 2. or fewer than 50 per cent of pupils had key stage 1 assessments that can be used to establish which prior attainment grouping the pupil should be allocated to.

They will also be excluded if there is not "sufficient key stage 2 attainment information" to produce progress scores because there are fewer than six pupils with key stage 2 results for a particular subject, or if the school closes within the academic year.

Secondary schools are excluded from the measure if they have fewer than six pupils at the end of key stage 4, or less than 50 per cent of pupils have key stage 2 assessments that can be used as prior attainment in the calculations of Progress 8, or if the school closes within the academic year.

The prospect of a rise in the number of

coasting schools has unsettled school leaders. Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the headteachers' union NAHT, said the definition was an "unhelpful" and "narrow" measure of accountability that is used to "sanction schools"

"Defining a school as coasting casts a shadow of fear over school leaders, creating pressure that makes little positive difference to the pupils in those schools," he told Schools Week

James Bowen, who runs NAHT Edge, the union's middle leadership arm, said the measure "no longer serves any meaningful purpose".

"It is based on the erroneous and outdated premise that school performance can be judged on data alone," he added. "The best thing the government could do is to quietly drop this unhelpful measure."

'£10m for Mandarin lessons? Give it for Arabic too!'

JESS STAUFENBERG **@STAUFENBERGJ**

Arabic is one of the top languages the British Councils wants pupils to learn, even though just five per cent of schools in England teach it.

New research identifies it as the fourth most important language for future job opportunities, after Spanish, Mandarin and French.

But unlike the many secondary schools offering Spanish and French, and the government's expansion of Mandarin over the past three years. Arabic has received relatively little attention - and teacher recruitment is a major barrier.

The British Council wants ministers to replicate the government-funded Mandarin Excellence Programme, which trains teachers at the Institute of Education to work in both primary and secondary schools.

The Qatar Foundation International, which promotes global Arabic education, has already pledged £400,000 in funding for Arabic teaching in the UK, and has instituted a foundation teacher training course at Goldsmiths University. This is much smaller, however, than the £10 million the government spent on Mandarin teaching.

Arabic's importance was determined by



analysing job adverts, export markets and language on the internet to determine the most important languages of the future.

They found the proportion of companies citing Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish as useful for applicants had risen, while fewer demand French and German. Job adverts asking for proficiency in Arabic, Mandarin and Japanese have also overtaken demand for the previously popular Russian and Portugese over the past five years.

The Saudi Arabian economy is expected to grow faster than the Eurozone until 2020, and GCHQ is recruiting for specialists in Arabic, Russian and Mandarin.

Unlike in China, people in the 25 countries that speak Arabic tend to have "low or very low proficiency in English", meaning language fluency is required to do business.

Nevertheless, just five per cent of secondary schools in England teach it, partly because headteachers are held back by the "considerable

risk" of running the subject, said the report. The rise in pupils learning Arabic is

"almost entirely due to the expansion of Muslim faith schools".

"Very few non-Muslim children have opportunities to learn the language." researchers concluded.

Arabic became a GCSE subject in 1995, with 1,182 entries. By 2016, this number had nearly quadrupled to 4,211. The A-level was introduced in 2002, with 299 entries. Last vear, entry had increased to around 700.

Teaching Arabic could "improve negative attitudes" towards Islam, researchers noted. The Qatar Foundation project will involve

Horton Park primary in Bradford, the Westborough School in Essex, the Anglo-European School in Essex, and another school in London.

Geoff Barton (pictured), the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said policymakers have been "slow to realise where the influential languages are".

His union will approach the DfE with proposals for changes to primary school language learning after Christmas, he said.

It will suggest pupils learn about different cultures through a range of languages, so as to "build a real appetite" for languages by the time they enter year 7.

Stan Putting their KS2 results through that doesn't make it insufficient attainment information



Primary schools

NEWS The schools clamping down on Twitter trash talk

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

^{@PIPPA_AR} Investigates

At the start of November, a certain corner of Twitter was flooded by posts from outraged teenage girls at Brentwood County High School in Essex, complaining they had been sent home for violating the school's uniform policy without good cause.

The teenagers posted photos showing the lengths of their skirts, which were seized upon by news outlets, as were their complaints they had been "completely objectified", "sexualised" and "sent home by a 50-year-old man for wearing this".

Other social media-fuelled furores this year have included concerns about strict behaviour policies at a school in Norfolk and an infamously incorrect question about Romeo and Juliet from the GCSE English literature exam.

But some schools are now clamping down on social media. Teachers are reporting that they have been banned from mentioning their workload or school policies in a negative light.

Alison Ryan, the chief policy advisor at the National Education Union, told *Schools Week* that just as other employers do not allow employees to make negative online posts about them, nor should a school have to put up with a pupil doing the same.

She wants schools to write clear behaviour



policies for students, detailing what is unacceptable online, including "damaging the reputation of the school".

The ASCL's general secretary Geoff Barton also supports the idea that no-one should have "carte blanche" online. He suggested that pupils are representing their school when they use social media, in the same way they do when they wear the uniform.

Barton, a former headteacher, also wants to dissuade parents from "bringing the school into disrepute" on social media, but acknowledged schools must do more to educate students about the consequences of their actions online.

"Anything they post is going to be there almost in perpetuity and that's something

a lot of young people still don't understand fully," he said. "We really need to work harder to show young people they have a responsibility to their future selves."

However, other figures see pupils' use of social media as a force for good, or even a force for change.

In 2015, Twyford School pupil Jessy McCabe made headlines after she blasted the exam board Edexcel for failing to include any female composers in its A-level music syllabus.

Inspired and supported by the feminist organisation Fearless Futures, Jessy gathered support on social media for her campaign, which ended in a personal apology from managing director of Pearson, which owns the board, and assurances that the course would change.

Fearless Futures' chief operating officer, Rachael Curzons, said Jessy's campaign was just one of many examples of pupils using social media to enact "social change". She described it as a "strong force for good" that allows them to "express some of the injustices they experience on a day-to-day basis or in school".

She denied that the relationship between schools and pupils is comparable to an employee/employer relationship, as she said education is a "fundamental human right". "It's a question of freedom of speech," she said.

Mark Lehain, the director of the Parents and Teachers for Excellence campaign, supported her view but claimed "the onus is on the school" to build relationships that are strong enough to render such outbursts unnecessary.

When Lehain was the head of Bedford Free School, he gave every parent his mobile phone number in case of emergencies, and insists "feedback is always useful" even on social media.

Children, parents and teachers "need to understand that people could be offended by what they say".

"But Twitter would be boring if everyone agreed all the time," he said. "You just have to do it properly."





What are the best kind of *questions* to ask?

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THE ISLE OF WIGHT WANTS SHORTER SUMMER HOLIDAYS

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS @PIPPA_AK

The Isle of Wight is consulting on plans to shorten school summer holidays even though several other councils and academy trusts have abandoned similar trials when they found it only increased pupil absence.

The council is seeking to cut its summer holidays by one or two weeks and replace them with longer half-terms in October, February or both.

But Tall Oaks Academy Trust, which runs three academies in Gainsborough, abandoned its altered holiday pilot in June, as the lack of coordination caused problems for families with children at different schools. Many parents ended up taking their children out of school to coincide with their siblings' term dates.

Barnsley council also approved plans to reduce the summer holiday last year, but threw the proposals out after local heads revolted. A spokesperson for the council told *Schools Week* that although "a narrow majority" of parents favoured the change, there was "less support within schools".

Brighton and Hove city council shortened the summer holiday and extended half-terms for its schools for the first time this academic year, and all the city's academies agreed to do the same.

The results of the experiment remain to be seen. The council will continue the pilot into 2018-19, but academies are yet to confirm whether they will carry on.

Paul Brading, the council cabinet member for children's services on the Isle of Wight, said the aim was to give families "more choice" over when they take their holidays, while making terms a more even length.

"Our unwavering aim is to further improve attendance which will then drive up educational standards so we have all our schools rated 'good' or better by Ofsted," he said.

The consultation will seek the views of people with and without children, as well as teachers and governors, and from the tourism and business sectors.

Teacher Tapp, an education polling company, recently asked over 1,200 teachers for their views on holidays. Seventy-nine per cent said they would prefer a two-week October halfterm, although they preferred a longer school day to shorter summer holidays.

The Isle of Wight has been embroiled in a legal battle over term-time holidays after a parent, Jon Platt, refused to pay an £120 fine for taking his daughter out of school in 2015.

Although Platt was initially successful, the supreme court ruled against him in April, reasserting that councils have the right to fine parents for taking their children on holiday during term.

Government absence figures published in May showed the number of pupils taken on unauthorised family holidays rose from 270,220 in autumn 2015, to 328,555 in autumn last year – a rise of 22 per cent.

The Isle of Wight consultation will begin on November 24.

Tory donor's large MAT told to improve

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

The David Ross Education Trust, named after its billionaire founder, has been told by Ofsted it must improve pupil progress and strengthen its governance, just months after several leaders, including former education secretary David Blunkett, resigned.

The trust has been operating for 10 years and has 34 schools across the country, clustered in the east Midlands and the northeast, though one school opened in London this academic year.

Inspectors visited 13 of the trust's schools in September for a focused inspection, rating two 'inadequate' and five 'requires improvement'. Six were rated 'good'.

Ofsted said pupils were too often underachieving at the end of primary school and during their GCSEs. Attendance across the trust is also below the national average.

Directors and leaders were meanwhile not held rigorously enough to account in the past, and the chain did not have clear structures for intervening in struggling schools.

It has an eventful year for the organisation: its chair, Lord Blunkett, resigned in March, along with its chief executive Wendy Marshall and two other senior figures. Neither the trust, nor those who resigned, gave any explanation for their departure.

The trust also cut around 40 support jobs



this year after admitting it faced financial difficulties, prompting fierce criticism from unions. It created a new "shared services centre" to make the redundancies possible.

Ofsted said governance arrangements at the trust had not been "sufficiently clear", and members of local governing bodies had failed to "restrict their work closely enough to the aspects for which they are directly responsible".

The trust also failed to "effectively support" its schools on recruitment, meaning some struggled to appoint permanent, high-quality teachers.

Directors were not held accountable with "sufficient rigour" until recently, Ofsted said. However, recent changes have resulted in trustees, including the chair, placing a "greater emphasis on holding leaders to account for pupil outcomes".

Of the trust's 34 schools, 17 have seen their overall effectiveness improve since they joined, while two have declined. Overall, four are 'outstanding', 20 are 'good', seven are 'requires improvement' and two are 'inadequate'. The newest academy is yet to be inspected.

David Ross, the billionaire Carphone Warehouse founder and Conservative Party donor who sponsors the trust, is now its chair of trustees, and a new chief executive, Rowena Hackwood, was appointed in May.

Hackwood was previously a trustee of academy chain Reach2 and former education director at Capita, a private technology company which runs school information services.

A trust spokesperson said Ofsted's recommendations were being "systematically addressed", and pointed out that inspectors had acknowledged "many of the positive actions taken and changes being made under the direction of the trust's new leadership team".

The chain is one of several trusts to have benefited from significant financial donations from a philanthropist sponsor in recent years.

A Schools Week investigation last year found that the David Ross Foundation had donated £4.2 million to the trust over the previous two years.

The trust opened its 34th school, the Bobby Moore Academy East London, in September.

MATs get performance boosts from EAL pupils

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

The largest multi-academy trusts have far more pupils with English as an additional language – and could be benefiting from having more children who are "easier" to progress.

Researchers have identified 13 academy trusts responsible for 12,000 pupils or more, which are dubbed "system leaders" under a new system used by the national schools commissioner.

The government uses many of these trusts as examples of the supposed benefits of academies working in large clusters, due to their reduced back-office costs and, in some cases, strong exam results.

But the researchers from the Education Policy Institute found that most "system leader" trusts have noticeably higher proportions of pupils who don't have English as their native tongue, and are more likely to have high proportions of pupils on free school meals.

Across medium-sized trusts (5,000 to 12,000 pupils), around 14 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. Among system leader trusts that figure shoots up to 24 per cent.

Likewise, in the large system leader trusts, 37 per cent of pupils receive the pupil premium against 28 per cent in mediumsized trusts.

Academic research from Simon Burgess, a



professor of economics at Bristol University, recently showed that pupils with additional languages tend to make more academic progress than other groups and that good exam results in London "did appear to be accounted for" by the increased number of pupils with English as an additional language.

But Jon Coles, the chief executive of United Learning, which has 40,000 pupils, reminded *Schools Week* that EAL pupils were considered problematic 15 years ago.

"It's true that some of the groups we worried about then have made more progress, and now others who've had less attention are our top concerns," he said. A former head of standards at the Department for Education, Coles cautioned against easy "causal" links between pupil composition and results.

The idea that "area X is doing better than area Y" because it "has a different pupil population which gives it an advantage" is inaccurate, he said. "That was the wrong story 15 years ago, and it is now."

The EPI research, commissioned by the Ambition School Leadership charity, also reveals that one of the most vulnerable groups of pupils – those with special needs – do not make it into leading academy trusts in such large numbers.

Across all trust types, SEND pupils make up about 12 per cent of pupils, or 13 per cent at system leaders.

Anita Kerwin-Nye, the managing director of the London Leadership Strategy, said this shows SEND pupils have been left out of the drive to "rescue the 'bright' poor".

"But to say they cannot catch up is not to say that education isn't valuable for them," she said. "Indeed, of course, it is likely to be more valuable."

She suggested schools might think it is easier to make progress for EAL pupils but see those with special needs as requiring more expensive intervention.

"It would be a brave trust that would promise to transform the educational attainment of SEND pupils," Burgess added.

mance boosts from the state of the state of

Wakefield council votes on forcing DfE to repay £800k

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ Investigates

The council that watched the collapse of Wakefield City Academies Trust will vote on whether the government should honour the trust's outstanding debts that were owed to some of its schools.

Wakefield council members are to consider a proposal to demand the Department for Education return nearly £800,000 to the Wakefield City Academy, a founding school of the trust, after it extended loans to the trust that have never been fully repaid.

Kevin Swift, a councillor who chairs the academy's governors, tabled the motion, and said the DfE should take responsibility for the trust as a "creature of its own making".

Swift told Schools Week that the academy issued two loans to the central academy trust in 2014 in order to help it expand, one worth £50,000 and one worth £812,000, with a "schedule of repayments", on the understanding that they were only "temporary".

While WCAT repaid the first loan in a few weeks, £780,000 of the second loan is still outstanding. More importantly, the trust had "acknowledged the debt" and promised to repay it until recently.

The council will vote on the motion on Wednesday 22 November, If passed, it will demand the DfE repay the money before the school is rebrokered. A new sponsor has not



yet been found.

Although the legal basis for such a claim is in doubt, a leading finance expert has backed the council.

Micon Metcalfe, head of growth at multiacademy trust United Learning, insisted that the schools under WCAT should be "put back into the position they were in at the year's end" before joining the trust, whether in surplus or deficit.

"If the school had an expectation it was going to be able to retain its surplus, it should be able to have it, because it will have had plans for it," she said.

"The DfE may think not. But why should a school suffer because it was academised by a badly-run group?"

She added that as the "regulator", the DfE "must hold some accountability" for the plight of the schools under WCAT.

Other schools also lost their reserves to the trust's central accounts, the council said. £436,000 is outstanding for the Hemsworth Arts and Community Academy, and £300,000 from the Heath View primary school.

Phil Reynolds, a specialist in academies at accountancy firm Kreston Reeves, said the government would refuse to make any payments because schools within a trust are considered one legal entity.

"I can see where the local authority would be coming from, but the schools and trust are one entity - so if that money has gone, it's gone." he said.

In the proposal, the DfE is accused of "undermining the educational provision" in the area by allowing the trust to expand when in financial difficulty.

"Far from demonstrating vigilance on behalf of children, WCAT and its dramatic failure is a creature of the DfE's own making," it reads

And rather than being allowed to "sweep the issue under the carpet", it demands that the DfE investigate the financial mismanagement at WCAT before the trust is dissolved.

A spokesperson for the DfE said a "failing academy trust must never profit from the rebrokerage of its schools", and that it was working with WCAT to transfer its schools to new trusts "ensuring each one has a secure financial basis, as well as the necessary funding to move forward and improve".

IN brief

HARRIS ASKED TO TAKE ON DURAND

The Harris Federation, one of England's largest academy trusts, has been asked to take on the troubled Durand Academy in south London.

The government announced in June that it was seeking a new sponsor for the single school owned by Durand after the trust repeatedly refused to address financial concerns and potential conflicts of interest. or sever ties with its former executive headteacher, Sir Greg Martin.

The trust was criticised by MPs in 2015 after it emerged that a proportion of Martin's £400.000 salary came from a company that also runs the school's leisure facilities.

The ownership of these leisure facilities, co-located with the school by privately owned, is likely to cause complications during the rebrokering process.

Harris is one of the largest trusts in the country, with 44 schools currently open across England. All are rated good or outstanding.

GET FATHERS INVOLVED TO RAISE BOYS' PROGRESS

National programmes that involve fathers in their children's education can help tackle boys' underachievement in schools, new research has found.

Recent exams data shows that boys' performance continues to lag behind that of girls at both primary and secondary level. At key stage 2, girls outperformed boys in all areas this year, beating them by seven percentage points in the reading test. And despite evidence that they are closing the gap in some subjects, boys remain behind at GCSE.

The research, commissioned by the World Innovation Summit for Education, found that fathers can make a difference by reading to their children more often, as this helps dispel the myth that reading is a feminine activity. Reading schemes for fathers that begin when their children are babies could be run by local schools, hospitals, or community health

TECH MUSTN'T DOMINATE SOLO CLASSROOM TIME

centres, it suggested.

Children should not use technological devices alone in lessons and should work instead in groups of two or more, according to Anva Kamenetz, the lead digital education correspondent for America's National Public Radio.

Kamenetz, speaking to Schools Week at the WISE summit in Doha, Qatar, said that discussions with peers increase the benefits of technoloav.

"Technology can connect us to the world, can enable us to learn any topic, to follow our own curiosity," she said.

But she warned it should be a "resource" rather than a driving force in the classroom and traditional teaching methods still have their place.

"However good a resource it is I still think of it as a resource – there's always going to be an invisible human support network around it," she said.

"While the roles of teachers might change, I don't think we're ever going to squeeze out the human aspect."

Failed National Teaching Service was developed 'in a hurry'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

The most senior official at the Department for Education has admitted the failed National Teaching Service was developed "in a bit of a hurry" and did not adequately incentivise teachers or schools to take part.

Jonathan Slater, the DfE's permanent secretary, told MPs this week the service failed because it did not offer teachers enough money to take part.

The NTS was abandoned last December after just 24 teachers accepted jobs under the scheme, which launched just ahead of the general election 2015 as a flagship policy.

The scheme offered up to £10,000 for teachers or middle leaders with at least three years' experience to relocate to struggling schools, and was due to launch in the north-west in January.

But the policy failed even after the deadline for applications for the trial in the north-west was extended by several months

Just 14 people applied by the original deadline in August 2016, and a further 10 applied after.

Slater told the parliamentary public accounts committee on Wednesday afternoon that the experience taught him the incentives were not strong enough.

"Number one, we found that a £10,000 relocation sum didn't incentivise enough



people to move," he said. "Number two, we found that there were more people wanting to move than there were schools wanting to receive them.

"So while 24 people were reallocated successfully, there were 29 people who wanted to, but the schools in question didn't want to receive them."

This reluctance among schools came down to issues with the particular subject specialisms of the teachers or the phase they taught.

"I suppose the final thing we learned is we did it in a bit of a hurry, to be honest," he admitted.

The findings from the failed trial have since occasioned a change of tack. according to Paul Kett, the DfE's directorgeneral for education standards, with

money now flowing to schemes aimed at developing teachers already working in hard-to-reach areas.

is that instead of trying to move teachers, we should be investing in those teachers. in those areas so they go and get the development and go into leadership," he said.

These efforts include the £75 million Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund, which Slater said focuses on the "parts of the country where schools need it most".

An evaluation of incentives for new teachers is now underway, with findings due for publication next summer.

The government recently increased the amount offered to new maths teachers by £10,000 but extended the amount of time they must work before earning it. Some will now receive up to £35,000 on top of their salaries, but only if they teach for at least five years.

However, in a damning report published in June, the National Audit Office warned the effectiveness of bursaries had not vet been properly evaluated, despite almost £1 billion being spent on them.

This "detailed evaluation" is now underway. Slater said this week.

"It finishes in April; we'll publish it in the summer," he said. "It will then give us the ability to compare and contrast, but clearly we need more support for schools on retention."

"The fundamental learning we've applied

NSPCC: WE NEED URGENT NEW CYBERBULLYING LAWS

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS @PIPPA_AK

The NSPCC wants the government to act on cyberbullying after the number of children seeking counselling for online abuse doubled over the last five years.

Its Childline service delivered 5,103 counselling sessions to children suffering from online abuse in 2016/17, up from 2,410 in 2011/12 and 12 per cent more than the 4,541 delivered in 2015/16.

The figures show that girls aged between 12 and 15 are the most susceptible, but the charity said children as young as nine had contacted it for help.

It has now asked the government to "draw up a rulebook enshrined in law" that would require social media companies to introduce regulations to prevent online bullying.

These rules include cyberbullying alerts, which flag bad behaviour to moderators and send notifications to young people being targeted, as well as stricter default privacy settings, clearer reporting processes and specially trained child-safety moderators.

However, the think-tank Demos is not in favour of overregulating social media and argued that the focus should be on developing positive character traits in young people to dissuade them from acting in negative ways online.

Its report, "The moral web', was published in October and suggests that the government reinvigorate its "character agenda" in schools, and introduce "digital citizenship" to help young people develop the necessary traits to establish right from wrong on social media.

The study, which focused on why 16- to 18-year-olds act the way they do online, argues that more time is needed to develop the "moral sensitivity" of teenagers through citizenship studies in school, particularly boys, who were found to be more likely to engage in negative or passive behaviours.

It also wants schools to do more to help parents become more digitally literate and able to engage with social media, and for providers such as Facebook and Twitter to develop ways of "disseminating information that supports good character online".

One of the authors of the report, Peter Harrison-Evans, told *Schools Week* that developing particular characteristics like empathy would help young people make the right decisions, and said schools should work with students to establish correct online behaviour and draw on their "expertise" of the world of social media.

"Online communities that young people operate in are spaces of independence in a world where a lot of aspects of their lives are highly regulated," he said. "Overintrusion from parents or teachers into that world could just be counterproductive."

Prevent referrals up, but little action taken

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

More than 2,500 anti-extremism Prevent duty referrals were made by schools, colleges and universities in the first year of its operation, but action was taken in fewer than 150 cases.

They were responsible for the highest number of referrals in 2015-16, ahead of the police and local authorities, new data published by the Home Office reveals.

Launched in July 2015, Prevent requires teachers to identify pupils at risk of radicalisation and report incidents they believe are linked to extremism or terrorism. Although some regional referrals data has been released in the past, this is the first time national figures have been published. In total, 2,539 cases were referred by education institutions between April 2015 and March 2016 representing a third of all

and March 2016, representing a third of all referrals. However only 398 of these were

"discussed" by a government panel, and interventions occurred in just 139 cases. Intervention takes the form of government support for individuals referred, but participation is entirely voluntary.

The large numbers of cases where no further action is taken has been described as "worrying" by Dr Martha Spurrier, director of the human rights charity Liberty, who warned children were



"overrepresented" in the figures, and called for further analysis of the "potentially devastating and stigmatising effects" on those incorrectly referred.

Although concerns about Islamic extremism prompted five times as many referrals as extreme right-wing views, a much greater proportion of far-right referrals resulted in government action.

There were 313 cases of extreme right-wing views referred by education institutions, and 37, or 12 per cent, resulted in support for the individual referred. Of the 1,566 cases of suspected Islamic extremism reported, 92, or six per cent, prompted intervention.

Last year, the parliamentary joint committee on human rights, chaired by the former Labour deputy leader Harriet Harman, warned that young Muslims felt targeted by "overenthusiastic" teachers, simply because of their faith.

However, it is impossible to tell from the

Home Office data how many Muslim pupils were referred by schools under Prevent, because the figures are not broken down by the religion of the individuals concerned.

"Religious groups, teachers, students and cross-party politicians have all raised serious concerns that Prevent fuels racial and religious discrimination – yet the government has failed to publish any figures on the religion or ethnicity of those referred," said Spurrier.

"How can ministers even begin to command public trust in Prevent without real honesty and transparency about its impact?"

Anna Cole, a parliamentary and inclusion specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, agreed further analysis was needed, and said schools needed to be "fully supported" in meeting the "new and complex" duty.

Last year, the parliamentary human rights committee called for an independent review of the duty after hearing that teachers faced a "twofold worry" that if they do not report concerns they would fall foul of the law but, if they report mistakenly, they risk "eroding the relationship between the school and the community".

In January, further concerns were voiced by the Conservative MP Lucy Allan, who warned that teachers were being forced to "monitor and scrutinise what children are saying, with suspicion and mistrust".

Children's commissioner to act on bad behaviour policies

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

The children's commissioner wants to write to all schools to remind them that behaviour policies must respect children's rights, after hearing an example in

which quiet pupils were labelled as "not that bright".

Anne Longfield told a parliamentary committee on Tuesday that she intends to ask the Department for Education to take action on school policies that "don't have regard to children's own needs".

She was responding to questions from Emma Hardy, a Labour MP and former National Union of Teachers activist, who read out a behaviour policy which states that pupils who talk quietly or with their heads down, eyes averted or hands over their mouth "come across as lacking in confidence, immature and not even that bright".

The policy also says that "little baby voices that no-one can hear waste everyone's time" and demands pupils have "confident, professional projection".

The MP claimed the policy violates the UN convention on the rights of the child – and Longfield agreed.

Article 28 of the convention states that governments should take "all appropriate measures" to ensure school discipline is administered in a manner "consistent with the child's human dignity".

Longfield said she would take up Hardy's



suggestion that schools be reminded of their duty to consider those rights when writing behaviour policies.

"I think that is a very strong idea," she said. "It's something I will recommend to the DfE". She also said that she would be willing to co-author the letter along with government officials.

The children's commissioner also expressed wider concerns about exclusions, warning that schools are increasingly "gaming the system" by off-rolling certain pupils into alternative provision or home education to improve their results.

These pupils were often "encouraged to leave" because of behaviour problems, rather than officially excluded, she said.

"We are in a position at the moment of seeing children moving wholesale out of schools, especially those with special educational needs. There will always be children who need specialist provision, but I think at the moment this is something which seems to be benefiting schools more than the best interests of children," she said. She wants schools to remain responsible

for pupils placed into alternative provision. During the hearing, she also revealed

she had put pressure on the government to release "firm plans" for compulsory personal, social, health and economics education (PSHE) in all schools.

Currently, there is no requirement for any schools to deliver PSHE lessons, although local authority-maintained schools are encouraged to teach the subject through the national curriculum.

But, earlier this year, parliament passed a law giving Justine Greening the power to introduce compulsory PSHE at some point in the future.

However, unlike compulsory sex and relationships education, which the education secretary now has a duty to introduce in 2019, there is no timeframe for the implementation of compulsory PSHE.

Longfield told the parliamentary education committee that there was a "matter of urgency" in the need for the extension of PSHE teaching to all pupils, and said she had asked to see "firm plans" from the government.

These plans should be for "consistent" and "high-quality" PSHE, taught by "specialist individuals".

She also repeated her calls from earlier this year for pupils to be trained in "digital literacy", to help keep them safe online. This should form part of the new PSHE curriculum, she said.

NEWS Free teacher job advert site to pilot next spring

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

The government's long-promised national teacher vacancy service will launch early next year in an attempt to reduce recruitment costs for schools.

First proposed in a white paper last year, the free job-advertising service for schools was one of the few policies to survive the change of prime minister last year, appearing in the Tory election manifesto in May. It committed the government to creating a "single jobs portal for schools to advertise vacancies in order to reduce costs and help them find the best teachers".

This week, Paul Kett, the Department for Education's director-general for education standards, told MPs that a prototype of the website is already up and running. A full pilot is due next spring.

A recent blog by the department's digital service describes the site as a "free publishing channel" for schools. Officials are also looking to improve the quality of the listings, so schools receive "more applications from suitable candidates".

The prototype has been designed by a dxw, the private company that's also currently redesigning the NHS Jobs platform, which launched in 2003 as a similar cost-cutting exercise. Five years



later, the Department of Health estimated it had saved the sector more than £1 million per week.

The schools vacancy platform follows research involving 16 schools and several commercial job listings providers.

Government researchers also reviewed the School Recruitment Service, a government-sponsored jobs board that ran between 2009 and 2012 but which was axed

after low take-up. As well as helping schools cut costs,

the site is expected to give governments



an "accurate, official list" of all permanent teacher vacancies in the English schools system, enabling it to make decisions on teacher recruitment "based on real-time data".

The National Audit Office has criticised the DfE in the past for its lack of information on jobs, which limits its ability to accurately target hiring initiatives.

The idea of a government-run teacher vacancy website was first mooted by Nicky Morgan in March 2016, when she told a union conference she was "very interested" in the idea to avoid the high costs of using supply agencies.

Headteachers have complained for many years about the high cost of advertising their vacancies and of using recruitment firms.

This week, Holly Hartley, the head of Thistley Hough Academy in Stoke-on-Trent, warned the public accounts committee that the cost of recruitment was "spiralling out of control".

"It is incredibly expensive, particularly when you've got to recruit somebody fast, and you might be drawn to using one of the private agencies," she said.

Hartley said her school was already "having to be more creative" in the ways it sources staff, warning that the national recruitment and retention crisis was "breeding competitiveness between schools".

She believes a national strategy to tackle the problem is an "excellent idea".

Unions have warned that schools are often forced to pay fees equivalent to 15 to 20 per cent of a new recruit's salary, at times racking up bills of £60,000 to £100,000 a year. Teachers are also falling victim to aggressive tactics from agencies, such as cold-calling, which the government has pledged to investigate.

Last November, a survey by headteachers' union the NAHT, found that although the proportion of heads admitting to using agencies dropped from 56 per cent in 2015 to 44 per cent in 2016, the average spend still worked out at £3,221.50 per vacancy.

SEND pupils need 'golden ticket' for support

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

Pupils with special needs have better outcomes if they have an education health and care plan (EHCP) or statement – but those without statements are being let down, Ofsted has warned.

Children categorised as needing "SEN support" are more likely to have their needs overlooked, be excluded, and achieve less well than those with a legally binding EHCP, a report on local area inspections has concluded.

Three years ago, changes were made to how pupils with special educational needs were categorised. Prior to the Children and Families Act, pupils were listed in three tiers: 'school action', where their school supported them, 'school action plus', where a local authority also supported them, and a full statement of special educational needs.

But the 2014 act had just two categories: pupils whose needs exceed the £6,000 a year of funding that schools receive, who can then apply for a legally binding 'education health and care plan' (ECHP), and those with less severe needs who require 'SEN support', whom schools help according to nonstatutory guidance.

However, SEND experts are now suggesting that pupils with no statement are more at risk.



Malcolm Reeve, the executive director of SEND and inclusion at the Academies Enterprise Trust, said that pupils with EHCPs have the "protection of a statement", but those in the other category are forced to rely on how their schools interpret the SEND code of practice.

This code guides schools on supporting special needs pupils, but it is "more variable" in what it requires of teachers, and is not legally binding.

"The Department for Education is starting to realise we really need to improve our practice for these pupils," he said.

His words echo a report on SEND provision at local authorities by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, which oversees health and social care. The two organisations carried out joint inspections for the first time this year, looking at how schools and other services link up to help special needs individuals. Their report, released last month, found that schools are informally excluding pupils who require SEN support "too readily", and that as a group they are particularly prone to being excluded.

Inspectors also found "compelling evidence" that pupils with EHCPs do better than those on SEN support, making EHCPs a "golden ticket" in the eyes of many parents.

Anne Heavey, a policy advisor at the National Education Union, said that since 2014 "no-one really understands" the SEN support category, either "what it's meant to do or how it works."

There are many more pupils with SEN support than have EHCPs. 242,185 pupils have a statement, but one million are on SEN support, according to DfE statistics. Of those needing SEN support, only 2,860(0.3 per cent) are in special schools.

Pupils in special needs schools have far better opportunities than mainstream schools, Ofsted's report found. Staff assess the needs of pupils more accurately and give them better access to specialist experts.

So far, 45 local authorities have undergone the new joint SEND inspections, which visit a sample of each area's schools.

Of the first 30 reports published, nine ordered councils to produce a written statement of action because their SEND provision was so poor.

GOODBYE NCTL, HELLO TEACHING REGULATION AGENCY

The National College of Teaching and Leadership is to cease operations next year as a new organisation, the Teaching Regulation Agency, takes over misconduct hearings from April.

The NCTL was formed in 2013 through a merger of the National College for School Leadership, responsible for professional development, and the Teaching Agency, responsible for teacher recruitment and disciplinary hearings.

Its teacher recruitment function will now be absorbed by the Department for Education, while the hearings will stay with the new executive agency.

This completes a long period of winding down for the college, including the closure of its flagship £28 million training facility in Nottingham.

Roger Pope, the NCTL's chair, said it was right that the education sector "adapt" its approach to teacher support.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the move would enable the DfE to build on work already underway to "invest in the profession and better support teachers in the classroom".

The department said it will "work closely with staff, unions and stakeholders in the education sector" to deliver its plans.

Malcolm Trobe, the deputy general secretary at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the change was a "logical move" which "rightly keeps the current regulatory function of the NCTL as a distinct organisation" while bringing delivery of teacher recruitment into the DfE.

NEWS: FREE SCHOOLS



9 THINGS WE LEARNED ABOUT FREE SCHOOLS THIS WEEK

LAURA MCINERNEY, EDITOR OF SCHOOLS WEEK

SCHOOLS WEEK

A new report from the Education Policy Institute has analysed the latest data on free schools to assess whether the controversial programme has been successful.

Free schools appear to be less popular with parents, and disadvantaged pupils are less likely to attend them even when they are located within their catchment areas.

But to what extent do the findings ring true? *Schools Week*'s editor Laura McInerney takes a look at the finer details

The six key findings

1. There are hardly any free schools!

Free schools make up just two per cent of all state schools. Most areas (two thirds) don't have one within a reasonable distance. So although they take up a lot of oxygen and headlines, they just aren't that numerous.

2. Not enough data exists to reach *robust* conclusions about the effectiveness of free schools

This needs repeating over and again. Given the small number of free schools, the changes in Ofsted frameworks, the current complications with test data, it is *impossible* to tell how good or bad free schools are on the whole.

At one point, the EPI report spends eight pages trying to control for various factors in order to adjudicate on whether secondary free schools are doing well. It's pointless. Whatever you do with the data, in the end, it's a mixed picture; the data has serious limitations and is massively volatile. Anyone who wholeheartedly claims there are factual conclusions to draw about free school quality from this report is simply wrong.

3. The tentative Ofsted outcomes are mixed

The research comes to some very limited and heavily caveated conclusions, which are:

- a. Free primary schools are more likely to be 'outstanding', but equally likely to be 'good' or above
- b. Secondary free schools are about the same as other secondary schools in Ofsted terms
- c. Special needs and alternative provision schools are less likely to be 'outstanding'

4. Free school pupils are more likely to speak English as an additional language but less likely to have special educational needs

This works to a free school's advantage, as EAL pupils tend to have higher progress throughout their schooling, whereas special needs pupils tend to have lower progress. Taking more EAL pupils therefore gives a lift to results. There is no suggestion this is by design; it is more likely because lots of free schools are in London.

5. Free schools aren't letting in enough pupils from poorer backgrounds

In the most disadvantaged areas, around 32 per cent of pupils are on free meals, but only 24 per cent of pupils attending free schools in these areas get free meals. Which means free schools are being set up in disadvantaged areas but "they are not, yet, attracting a representative number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds" at present. The report looks at a whole raft of numbers on this. But just about any way you cut it, there are fewer kids from poorer families in free schools than you'd expect given their location.

6. Free schools don't serve their local area as much

Nationally, 50 per cent of kids attend their nearest school. When that's a free school, the proportion drops to 22 per cent. This is not surprising; as the report says, many free schools were built to be different. For example, the first Sikh schools opened under the programme. Where people near the schools were not Sikh, they sometimes did not want to send their child – hence the reduced local number. What the figure does show is that free schools have fragmented the local offer in places where they exist. In rural areas, where transport is only given to the nearest school, this has caused some furore.

Three other findings to watch carefully

1. More places were built in areas that had good schools

The original plan for free schools was that they would drive up standards in poorly-performing areas. Hence, it may seem annoying that free schools have so often opened in places where most provision is already good. BUT, this is largely because far more free schools have opened in London than elsewhere. And why was that? Because the capital had the highest place need.

One of the main criticisms of the project was that it would be a waste of money to place schools in areas that didn't need them. Hence, many schools were built in London because the capital needed places. Unfortunately, the city also has a lot of highlyperforming schools. It's therefore slightly unfair to jibe the goverment for opening free schools in areas where provision was already good, if the alternative was opening them in poorly-performing towns with already half-empty schools

2. Free schools are the least popular with parents

It's easy to think that because free schools have fewer applications from parents compared with other schools, this shows something profound about their popularity. Actually, all new schools, of all types, struggle to win over parents who already have children at another school. Hence, first cohorts tend to be stuffed with eldest and only children. Where a free school gets lucky in an area with a huge place need, they can be oversubscribed. But it's not alarming to see free schools initially struggling to get applicants. Logic would predict it.

3. 'Things are getting better'

The more recent free school cohorts seem to be better targeted. But the report never mentions that the definition of free schools has changed in recent years. New academies opened by local authorities also now count as free schools. It's not clear if things are getting better because councils actually now make better choices or because the government finally knows what it's doing.

NEWS: FREE SCHOOLS

Neither side is completely right or wrong in the free schools debate, explains Natalie Perera, but what is clear is that there is no quick fix to improving outcomes

ree schools have been politically divisive since their establishment in 2010.

To their supporters, they are a helpful disruption to the schools market, improving competition, choice and quality. To their detractors, they are a distraction and a further step away from local democracy and accountability. This debate, as with so much in education, has lacked evidence and impartial analysis.

Today, the Education Policy Institute fills that gap. Our report is the first of its kind – bringing together data on where free schools are located, whether they are popular with parents, and how they serve disadvantaged children. The report also provides a more scientific approach to any early findings on the impact of free schools on pupil attainment and progress.

No surprise then, that both sides of the debate have expressed a particular interest in our report. It is unusual in the research space for both the proponents and opponents of a policy to be equally nervous about the results; they usually have a hunch.

Our report proves that neither side of the argument is completely right or wrong. Free schools are helping to meet the need for new



NATALIE PERERA Head of research at the Education Policy Institute

The good and the bad of the free school project

places and are more likely to be located in disadvantaged areas of the country. But they are not being set up in parts of the country dogged by poor schools and they are less likely actually to admit a representative proportion of poor children in the areas they do serve.

One of the widely contested statements made by supporters is that they are popular with parents. Our report finds that this is certainly not the case (yet). In fact, pupils are more likely to travel beyond their nearest school if it is a free school, than they would if their nearest school were not a free school. But this potentially reflects an intended

It does offer something different to pupils

feature of the programme. Free schools can be set up precisely because their founders want to offer something different to what is available at other local schools. Take the Michaela free school in North London, for example. It's been described as "Marmite" due its strict behaviour and traditional teaching policies. I've visited and neither love nor hate it, but it does offer something different to pupils, which will inevitably attract or deter parents depending on what they are looking for from a school. That being the case, these schools may never expect to be the default local school for many, while other parents may be willing for their children to travel to reach such a school.

We also have to remember that a large proportion of free schools are located in London, where choice is plentiful. If free school supporters really want to be gamechanging, they need to look far beyond the capital.

It is too early to judge conclusively whether free schools are having a positive impact on outcomes. What our report does show, however, is that simply comparing free schools with other schools does not give you the full picture. Pupil background needs to be taken into account and this can only be done through rigorous statistical analysis.

While we can draw some conclusions about the free schools programme from our report, we show that change takes time. Parents are understandably wary about a new offer to their children, free schools are struggling to make an impact in poorperforming areas of the country, and we are yet to see any discernible improvement in outcomes. In other words, there is no quick fix.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT The discontentment simmering with SEND

Discontent comes in two forms: simmering and boiling over. The latter is the kind we see more often: protests, petitions or lots of shouting. But a brewing pot of bubbles also needs watching.

In recent weeks several people, including MPs, have raised the problem of children with special needs who are getting little support despite being on their school's register. But how could this be the case? If you are identified as having special needs then support ought to be available; it's an entitlement. Except it's not that simple.

In 2013 the system for identifying children as having special needs changed. The introduction of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) meant that children with disabilities and additional needs could get a single detailed assessment. It was easier for parents, and while there have been delays in the system, and the plans are not always matched by resources at each school, the change was widely considered good.

But there's a catch. In many cases, children can only get an EHCP if their needs go above and beyond the budget a school has to deal with them as a mainstream pupil. If their need is financially less then they aren't always covered.

The 2013 overhaul also changed the way schools did internal registers. Now, they must have a "support" list for children not covered by EHCPs but who teachers recognise as having special needs. In some areas these children can still access additional funding for their education from the local council. But in others there is nothing: just a yawning chasm between what the school can figure out from its own resources and the additional substantial benefits of cash and rights that come with having an EHCP.

It's therefore no wonder that we are starting to see growing discrepancies in the treatment of children who are considered in need of special "support" versus those with plans - not just in terms of outcomes but also in terms of exclusions.

As budgets among local councils are squeezed ever further, the once-

generous boroughs are becoming less so, suggesting this issue will get worse.

What's most dismal is that, long-term, it may not be any cheaper. As parents start realising an EHCP is the 'golden ticket' for their child, more clamber to get one, and so more money is going into assessments – especially as they must be done within a statutory timeframe.

Where once a few phone calls could get a small amount of cash to help support a child with dyslexia, now it involves a hefty process to get an EHCP, all in the name of efficiency.

The simmering problem, then, is where you draw the line on who is or is not a child with special educational needs when budgets are tight – and how efficient is it to put the barrier so high?



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READERS' REPLY

There is such a thing as too much peer observation, research suggests

Rest is History // @SouthfieldsHist Is there any substantiated research that suggests lesson observations of experienced teachers ever has any impact on exam results?

Josh Wright // @HCC_JWright

What a great bit of research. Why didn't peer observation work – could it be subject, workload, surface observations – what are the next steps for the profession?

Cheryyl-kd // @cherrylkd

I've always doubted the effectiveness of observations. You do well if you teach in same way as your observer. It's far too subjective to be effective.

Who topped the annual Regional Schools Commissioner League Tables?



Michael Griffiths, Midlands

Anybody in the education world with any knowledge of these measures would have predicted whoever was in the north on these measures was likely to be bottom. In fact the pattern of the table is predictable. As Bob Dylan said "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the weather blows". More nonsense and babblespeak from a similar source as such things as the "improving-decliners", etc. What percentage of the whole education budget is spent directly at the DfE? Colossal. Most taxpayers would be shocked.



Chris Knowles // @csk240701

What a terrible way of measuring performance. EVERY job is wider and more challenging than KPIs indicate and all have contextual challenges that data can't reflect. I don't care what job people do – we shouldn't judge performance like this.

Former education secretary launches programme for pupils in care



Paul Hodgetts // @PRUWarrior

Why is this not a nationwide initiative? Surely every child in care deserves this support not just those in six London boroughs? What's the plan?

Universal credit is a 'disaster waiting to happen' for FSM kids

private companies making money out of these school meals. Charging £2.50 for a sandwich, which is most kids' daily budget.

The curious case of the missing grammar school



Sean Fitzsimons // @CroydonSean Croydon South MP Chris Philp doesn't come out of this very well. Either he was confused or making it up over a new grammar school.

Bookworms blow the school budget



Book budget? Crikey, haven't had one of those for years!

There is such a thing as too much peer observation, research suggests

Mr Hulse // @MrHulsePhysics I'd imagine that in the cases where peer observations worked, the teacher-observer had a clear focus for development and took time to consider how what was observed could manifest in their own classroom. Focus, reflection and evaluation are key for me when observing.

Does competition law apply to academy trusts

Karl Caslin Surely it does, as it is a business!

Profile: Daisy Christodoulou



Joe Treacy // @JoeTreacy I really enjoyed this. They are one of my favourite things to read.

Rachel Gooch // @SchoolDuggery Why isn't everyone doing comparative judgement?

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DfE swerves new Scottish safeguarding policy

FACEBOOK

REPLY OF THE WEEK

TWEET

FMAII



I only have experience of safeguarding in a primary school, albeit one in a deprived area where some of the children have complex issues. Some of these are long-standing (eg domestic violence), some temporary (eg bereavement). It's hard work and involves all members of the school. Safeguarding issues take priority over everything and the proper process has to be followed - no exceptions. I'm not sure having a named individual for every child would help at these ages where the class teacher has special relevance (compared with secondary school, where pupils have many teachers). Nevertheless I'm very interested in how the system works out in Scotland.

REPLY OF THE WEEK Receives a *schools Week* Mug!



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PROFILE

DAVID BENSON

LAURA MCINERNEY @MISS_MCINERNEY

David Benson – principal of Kensington Aldridge Academy

his isn't supposed to be a story about Grenfell Tower. It's supposed to be the story of David Benson, a poster boy for the Teach First mission, who eschewed his high-flying Cambridge-educated family's vision of him as a lawyer, academic or media guru, and instead worked for over a decade as a teacher in tough inner-London schools until he saw, and jumped at, an advert to open a school in the deprived neighbourhood next to where he grew up. A place, by the way, that's so deprived almost 70 per cent of his pupils have taken free meals at some point.

So, yes. That was my intention as I went to meet Benson at the temporary site the Kensington Aldridge Academy now occupies, after its former home – metres from the Grenfell tower – had to be abandoned after the fire that stunned the country this summer.

We walked around the school for an hour (the pupils are smart, and interested, and so well-behaved it baffles the photographer) and chat for almost 30 minutes about his life. But when the talk turns to the evening of June 14, and the disaster that led to the loss of four of his pupils (and one former pupil), it becomes clear the tragedy is so incomprehensibly awful there is no way to back into it later in this piece. It can't be a footnote or a squashed paragraph. The profile has to start there. And it has to be in his words.

Benson knows the moment is coming where I will asked about the fire. He's ready for it. I ask one question: how did he find out?

"My deputy head lives nearby. She called me at 3.30 in the morning. She just said 'you need to get down here'. And that's what I did. I got up. Had a shower really quickly, and went there from about 4am," he recalls.

"The immediate thing that morning, when we got there, we looked up and said ... [he shakes his head, speechless]... The people on the ground were myself, Anna my deputy, and a number of office staff who happened to live close by.

"We knew we had to try and establish the children who lived in the tower and figure out what was going on with them. We quickly set off hotspots on our phones. We had our laptops with us, and we could access the school information system. We were able to quickly run a report to see who lived in the tower.

"And then we started ticking them off: 'I've seen soand-so, he's fine', we'd tick him off; 'I've phoned this person, they are okay'. We started to figure out who was missing, because we couldn't get any other information any other way. No one knew what was going on.

"The next thing we had to do was get a plan to move the AS-level exam which was, completely madly, that same morning, with 60 kids in it.

"We rang Burlington Danes [a nearby school], to see if they would take them, and then we emailed the students the advice about that.

"We liaised with Edexcel, as all the papers were locked in the school building and we couldn't get access. I can't quite remember what happened, because I have such a good leadership team I just said to them 'you are on this' and they did it. Either they couriered one of the exam papers over and we photocopied it, or they allowed us to photocopy a Burlington Danes one. It was all completely



MY DEPUTY HEAD LIVES NEARBY. SHE CALLED ME AT 3.30 IN THE MORNING. SHE JUST SAID 'YOU NEED TO GET DOWN HERE'

not what was supposed to be done. But what can you do? It's a national disaster going on. So we had to start the exam 20 minutes late.

"That day I sent three emails to staff. I see them sometimes in my emails, it pops up when I search for things. There was one at 5am when I said school is closed, we are working as best we can on what has happened to the kids, and we are sorting out the exam. There is another one at lunchtime with an update. And then there was a long one at 6pm that said: 'this is what's gone on and this is what we are going to do'.

"At that point the most important thing was getting opened as soon as possible. In the end, we were closed for two days and that was because we had to re-timetable and understand what had to be in place from a therapeutic point of view for the kids. But we were told one of the most important things was keeping a sense of normality.

"So that day, about 4pm, I sat down with the head of Burlington Danes and we talked about whether they could take us in. And we spoke to Latymer Upper [another nearby school]. I wrote a short paper for the governors to say I wanted to move us. They set up a small emergency group of key local governors, because they are brilliant and they knew it was too big to do another way. They approved the plan to move. They approved everything we did in that five weeks before the end of school. Then it went back to normal. But we couldn't do it any other way. It wasn't the time for debates over email.

"Our motto is 'intrepidus' [Latin for fearless and unshaken]. I wanted a Latin motto when we opened the school because the fact it was Latin meant the pupils had to translate it to understand it. But I always thought, and Delia Smith [the headteacher he formerly worked under] taught me this, that it's frustrating when you speak to a group of kids stood underneath the school motto and they say they don't know what it means, because it's 'aspire to achieve' or something long like 'respect, tolerance and whatever it is'. "If it was in Latin, I couldn't make it too long. If it's

'success for the stars' which would be – my Latin is hopeless – 'aspirer ad astrea'? Something like that?

"Intrepidus was about boldness and bravery, and linked to our learning culture, our values and to resilience – which when we opened in 2014 was very cool – but although we knew it would help us build a great school, we had no idea how important those values would become.

"That night, before we went back to school, I wrote an assembly and I could fall straight back on the values. Because they make sense to the kids, they know them, they can talk about them.

"Our pupils say a pledge every lesson. People think those pledges lose meaning because kids say them all the time but Delia always said to me the test of a school culture is not how shiny the prospectus is, it's whether you can walk up to any child and ask them to explain what it means to be a KAA student. They'll be able to tell you more eloquently than the teacher. And don't think you can rehearse them. If you do that, and a visitor asks, they will say 'my teacher told me to tell you."

He softens at this point. Two weeks earlier, the head boy of Kensington Aldridge Academy, 17-year-old Kai Chappell, told over 6,000 people at Wembley Arena about the power of the entire school saying that pledge in the wake of the tragedy.

The pledge goes like this:

Today and every day I will be the best that I can be. Every challenge I will rise to every setback I will come from. Every moment I will seize.

"We spent ages on that pledge, Laura. I can't tell you. We had no school building at the time so I remember spending hours in Westminster library going through a Latin dictionary trying to come up with a one-word motto. But I wouldn't change a word of it now. It works. And it's so 56

PROFILE: DAVID BENSON

hadn't seen the Kensington Aldridge advert. I thought 'I could wait an entire career and no-one is going to build a brand new academy in a really cool part of London that I know really well with a really great sponsor and a really effective local authority, starting from just year 7'. I had

to go for it."

His choice to become a teacher was a little surprising to his parents, who had pushed him academically and who had high-powered careers at the BBC and trade unions, but there is an educational history in his family. His maternal grandmother was the head of a special needs school, and his grandfather the editor of the NUT's magazine for members.

After studying English at Cambridge he worked for a few months at a media consultancy.

"It was really cool. The two partners were very clever guys and I learned a lot from them. But I remember thinking I needed to be challenged. Teach First had the benefit of being really good training, and CV-enhancing, without committing me to a particular thing, and it sounded like fun," he says.

"At the consultancy I could get to lunchtime and have very little interaction with anyone else. What I loved about teaching is that you have hundreds of interactions every day. It's never boring. You never look at the clock and think 'where did the day go?'"

That said, as we edge towards the end of day, a large wrist watch is calling Benson to attend gate duty. Something I was told from the start the interview must It's not where you **come from** in life, it's where you **get to** that counts.

Sir Rod Aldridge OBE

not interfere with. His last thoughts?

"The results; we don't have many yet as we are still new, but I do know that the kids getting Bs at GCSEs are getting Bs in their AS grades, and that's good. That puts us near the top for value-added.

"It's ... well... it's always been the same challenge: we've got five years until the school is full, and we'll see what our results are. Then it's 10 years to get stability. Because we want excellence, Laura. Long-term."

And with that, he is gone. The living embodiment of intrepidus, indeed.

powerful when you hear the whole school say it in an assembly."

*1

We walk the corridors of the temporary school site a mile or so from the old one. It was built in less than two months, and is known by all as KAA2. Benson pops us in and out of lessons with pride in his staff and the children. Sixth-formers discuss their university plans; a year 10 class tell me they miss the larger dining hall of the old school, but the smaller outside area gives more chance to look out for needy year 7s. There's not the slightest sense of pity. Intrepidus, in spades.

"This building is part of our story now," says Benson, "as will be the next bit where we make our way back to KAA1".

One of Benson's notable characteristics is that he constantly talks up the achievement of others. As we traverse the school he talks of his first teaching experience, at Eltham Green School, in glowing terms. Serving the Ferrier Estate, one of outer London's toughest social housing projects, (since demolished), a triumvirate of leaders served him well.

"It was run by the brilliant Anne Barton, who now works for Future Leaders, and an incredible deputy head called John Sullivan, who is still the best teacher I have ever seen. And then I had a really good head of department, John Wilkins. Between the three of them they intensively mentored me to become a teacher."

After this he moved to Burlington Danes, where he spent four years under Dame Sally Coates, who told him that even if he didn't think he wanted to be a headteacher he should still act as if he did, just in case he changed his mind. "Smart advice," he notes. Finally, he helped set up Ark Wembley Academy, led by the formidable Delia Smith, whose name he relentlessly references.

"To be honest, I wouldn't have left Wembley if I

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PINION

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Member of youth parliament for Southend-on-Sea

Why we joined medics to sign the evidence charter

With a more solid understanding of research, we will be better prepared to challenge poorly-evidenced policy proposals, says Alison Peacock

ast week, I was invited to join a police chief constable and presidents of a range of royal medical colleges to sign an evidence declaration. This declaration commits us to promoting evidence-informed pedagogy and leadership.

Using the best available evidence to inform decision-making at every level seems an obvious idea. For too long, however, access to useful research has been limited for teachers. Pseudoscience or research of dubious validity is too often popularised and erroneously cited as justification for unhelpful classroom practices

The Chartered College of Teaching is committed to supporting teachers to engage with research, and build their research literacy. Members have access to an extensive research database, receive our termly journal and participate in regional networks.

Teachers are best placed to identify strategies that will work in their particular context, and it is their professional judgement that decides whether and how to trial new approaches in the classroom. This allows them to reclaim their professional judgement. Being informed by the best available evidence and having the skills to interrogate and interpret it - enables teachers to articulate what they are doing and why

Teachers are ideally placed to educate young people about the importance of interrogating evidence

In this way, professionals can identify and resist certain practices that have limited, if any, effect on student learning. I have seen many great examples recently of headteachers who have reduced teacher workload by overhauling their schools' assessment policies by recognising that many time-consuming marking habits are ineffective

It also means that when powerful organisations, such as the Department for Education, Ofsted and others, assert that

teachers and schools should be held to account for certain policies, we have the confidence to respond in a manner that places professional judgement informed by evidence above mere compliance.

Too often, funding has followed policy hunch, and while I recognise that there may be other influences on both school and national decision-making, evidence should not be ignored.

In some cases, evidence does not yet provide the answers. In these situations it is better to value questions, and embrace the fact that we do not know what works, rather than retrofit evidence to policy. In other cases, research outcomes are mixed, and there is a risk of confirmation bias, which must be accounted for.

Perhaps most worryingly, however, is where evidence appears to be either ignored entirely or used selectively to justify policy decisions. The government's attempt to expand grammar schools is one example, though the fact that it was firmly rebutted should be celebrated. Ofsted's removal of graded lesson observations is another such success.

At a time of fake news and proliferating assertions that deny evidence, it is increasingly important that wider society understands the importance of challenging rhetoric and understanding facts. Teachers are ideally placed to educate young people – and thereby wider society – about the importance of demanding and interrogating evidence. Skills of statistical analysis, synthesis of data and the capacity to challenge prevailing views are all too rare, even among academics and learned professionals.

We often hear that those of us in education have a great deal to learn from doctors, and we should emulate the authority and respect they command. Interestingly, when signing the evidence declaration, the discussion focused on the vital contribution needed from the education sector. Teachers are in a unique position to teach young people how to interrogate assertions as fact. We cannot expect teachers to do this, however, unless they are equipped to interpret research findings, and unless we learn to engage with evidence at all levels in the education system.

The biggest challenge of all is building research literacy. We do not know enough yet about how to move robust ideas around the system. We need to nudge, keep it simple, adapt and review. The CCT is here to help make research accessible to busy teachers who in turn will gain agency and respect through clearly articulating not only what they are teaching but why. When policymakers can do the same we shall know that we have made progress.

Want to improve Ofsted? **Develop youth inspectors**

Students and teachers alike know the lie behind their schools' "Ofsted lessons", says Isreal Genius, who wants to implement peer inspections

s the focus on grades increases and school budgets decrease, we have all experienced the phenomenon of schools shifting their focus from learning to passing

In this instance, I'm not talking about GCSEs or A-levels, however, but Ofsted.

It's not uncommon for school policy to change in order to optimise Ofsted rankings rather than improve the lives of the students. The focus on grades can encourage schools to abandon students who need help, in order to get better league table places. And as we all know, lessons delivered during "Ofsted week" are completely unrepresentative of the status quo.

There are dozens of articles exploring the faults of Ofsted so I'm not going to go into them here. My purpose, rather, is to propose a solution: young inspectors.

The best people to judge schools are surely those who experience the education system on a daily basis, and young people are well placed to gather the information Ofsted is neglecting - and may even be desperate to collect.

Adult inspectors have difficulty judging how the average student genuinely feels about their school, and students and staff alike often view Ofsted as "the enemy". Having young people on the inspection team would help students feel comfortable enough to be honest about their school.

Furthermore they would be able to see what works heuristically, rather than using an easy-to-manipulate checklist. Young people are almost immune to the charade of "Ofsted lessons" and immediately see through such obviously orchestrated drama performances and Orwellian newspeak lesson objectives. This would allow them to get to grips with the genuine nature of the school, a more frank descriptor of the challenges faced by the everyday student.

In terms of how to implement a system like this, we would need to group schools by geographical area. Each team should ideally be made up of one pupil from each school to ensure fairness and reduce bias, as the team would then have diverse backgrounds and experience.

The young inspectors would visit each school for a few days, joining existing students in lessons (ideally in their own

year group) and at break, lunch and any free periods for frank and honest conversations. The qualitative data could be supplemented with wider surveys for quantitative data.

These different methods of engagement will shed a new light on the experience of students at the school and thus improve the extent to which Ofsted ratings communicate wellbeing and student satisfaction.

After an inspection, the young people could even work with the school or local authority to try and make improvements. With the brutal separation of many schools from local authorities, the new inspectors would need statutory powers.

The best people to judge schools are those who experience the system on a daily basis

This is to avoid situations like the one in my constituency, where the borough council, the charity Healthwatch and I were ignored when we tried to access school mental health policies.

Southend Youth Council originally wanted to set up a similar system, but after conversations with borough council staff and councillors we discovered how little control the borough council (and by extension the vouth council) has over academy chains. It means that youth inspectors under current rules would only be allowed in at the whim of the headteachers of each academy. This would give the system an innate weakness, as inspectors giving a negative review may not be allowed in on subsequent occasions.

After learning this, we thought it best to focus our resources on a similar but much more achievable goal - we are going to be publishing student wellbeing and pupil opinion reports for each school

I am fully aware of the radical nature of my young inspectors proposal, and the intricate difficulties of creating such a system. However, a statutory organisation run regionally by young people for young people is the only way to bring such an idea into fruition

SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

EDITION 120

To keep talented teachers from quitting, you have to pay them according to how well they do, says Lee Miller

In almost all walks of life, employees are rewarded for excellent work. It motivates them to stay with their employer and continue to perform well, which in theory, leads to even higher pay in future. It is a virtuous circle.

Teaching, however, does not usually operate like this, and it is no secret that we are in the throes of a teacher recruitment and retention crisis. Thirty-one per cent of the teachers who qualified in 2011 had quit within five years. Over 27,500 teachers who trained between 2011 and 2015 had already left their job by last year. This is not just down to pay, but getting the pay framework right will help.

It is therefore imperative progressive pay structures are developed to reward teaching talent. The current national pay framework is no longer fit for purpose. At the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we have developed a new structure to transform the way teachers are paid.

At its heart is a simple aim – we want to properly reward teachers for their hard work, so they are incentivised to stay in the profession and, yes, stay with us. IIt's very encouraging that 93.5 per cent of National Education Union members were in favour of it earlier this term.

So what does it look like?

The day before th

Firstly, newly qualified teachers get a stable financial platform for the beginning of their career, guaranteeing a minimum



LEE MILLER Deputy chief executive.

Thinking Schools Academy Trust

Performance-related pay will solve retention crisis

starting salary of at least £25,000 from September 2018 – more than £2,000 above the national average.

All progression, including at the upper pay levels, is based solely on performance, so teachers move up the main pay-scale based on excellent teaching.

It rewards teachers at the top of the pay-scale, recognising those who exceed performance objectives through a three-percent non-consolidated pay award – in short, a bonus. This protects the financial viability of the structure while establishing a rewardbased culture for those who otherwise would not benefit from exceptional performance because they are at the top of scale.

It provides a financial incentive for teachers to continue delivering the best standards of education, giving great teachers a reason to remain as teachers rather than taking the management roles which come with larger salaries and less classroom time. This chimes with what the education secretary spoke about earlier this month.

We are also removing the bureaucratic barriers to teachers receiving these rewards. Whereas those in the national system have to go through the arduous process of submitting an application to access the upper pay-scale, TSAT's teaching staff will be automatically entitled to these rewards from 2018, so long as their performance merits it.

All of our staff are set objectives on pupil progress, teaching standards and professional development, and this is checked against our performance management cycle of meetings that happen throughout the year. The criteria for meeting these goals have been approved by the National Education Union. And while teachers on the upper scale working in the national framework have to wait two years before their pay is reviewed, we are introducing annual incremental increases, to recognise teacher performance in the year it has been achieved.

All progression, including at the upper pay levels, is based solely on performance

We acknowledge that teachers in their first three years of teaching, at NQT +1 and NQT +2 level, are still developing their skills, we are therefore introducing different, still stretching, objectives for them, as well as offering targeted support to guide them.

By providing an environment in which teachers can be financially secure, our new pay model directly benefits students through the excellent standard of teaching they will continue to receive.

TSAT's model may not be the exact path other academies choose to go down. Different academies face different circumstances and need to adapt their practices as a result. But a system based on financial security, reward and fairness will provide immediate and tangible benefits for both teachers and students.

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REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS OF THE WEEK

To view individual blogs visit www.schoolsweek.co.uk/reviews



Our reviewer of the week is Andrew Old, a teacher and blogger @oldandrewuk

What can 'iballisticsquid' tell us about teaching writing? @HeatherBellaF

Should feedback be specific to the task at hand or general so that it can be used on other work in the future? Heather Fearn takes inspiration from how her son learns to play computer games, from the example of other players he watches on YouTube. Examples are a very good way to learn, and if that's going to be used in feedback, it will have to be examples that are specific to the task at hand.

The real way to instill a love of learning @iQuirky_Teacher

According to this primary school teacher, one of the things many primary schools attempt to do is instil a love of learning in their students. She challenges the idea that there is any reason to think that this is working. Her claim is that students come to love things like learning only by being successful at them, and that this should be the aim of their teachers.

How not to prepare for reading tests @AnthonyRadice1

Can students actually be prepared for reading tests? According to this English teacher, there is only very a limited amount that can be done. As long as students can decode text, and have become familiar with the style of questioning, then the most important aspect of reading will be having the knowledge and vocabulary to understand the text, and this means that the knowledge students learn in school will be far more important than test drills.

In defence of depth @grumpyteacher17

A former history teacher discusses why he always wanted to teach the Arab-Israeli conflict as part of the iGCSE course, and why others rejected the idea. A new topic area creates work for teachers but he discusses why he thinks students would have gained from learning about such a complex subject, which in his view allowed for more controversy and debate than many of the other topics studied in history.

A little rant on, you guessed it, behaviour @mw_history

This blogpost on behaviour by a new teacher shares the insight that what we should be discussing is whether we should accept that poor behaviour is inevitable for new teachers. "Am I being set up to fail now, all so that at the end of the year, someone can come and observe me to say that I've finally mastered the fine art of behaviour management, when really it was just a matter of spending the year building up my reputation and relationships with the students?" She suggests that Ofsted make an effort to visit new teachers when they inspect.

How to manage "0-60" in our behaviour system @Rosalindphys

Another post about behaviour, this one discusses how to use a system of sanctions, without simply escalating quickly from one sanction to another. She suggests ways of avoiding arguments and reminding students why the discipline system exists.

The tyranny of command verbs @mfordhamhistory

Here, a history teacher discusses essay questions. He points out that boards setting exams for schools "specify what command verbs they are going to include, and then set out in the mark scheme what a response to that particular command verb looks like". He contrasts this with the much greater variety used in exam questions used by universities

The best-laid plans: 101 reasons why lessons go wrong @joeybagstock

This is remarkably entertaining for a list. It is a fairly comprehensive summary of the things that can disrupt a lesson, from wasps to visitors from Denmark. The ingenuity of the list, and the way one item leads into the next, provides much of the amusement, but more than anything this is a reminder for experienced teachers of things that will have happened to every one of us at some point (except, perhaps, for the visitors from Denmark).

BOOKREVIEW

(Tarrent

MISSING PIECE

TOM RAVENSCROFT

The Missing Piece

By: Tom Ravenscroft **Published by:** John Catt Educational **Reviewed by**: Kristopher Boulton, director of education, Up Learn



Schools are the only institution through which – with limited exception – every single citizen is guaranteed to pass. Therefore, as soon as some problem is perceived in society, schools are the place to go to fix it.

The Missing Piece is a book about a perceived problem

and how schools can fix it, born out of the author's experience establishing and growing a social enterprise that works with schools.

Despite my apparent scepticism, I'm deeply sympathetic to its cause.

The book kicks off with a scene familiar to any teacher, lamenting that through a fixation on grades alone, the author's pupils "were unable to work together, they could not communicate effectively, and they gave up easily. They had never been asked to set their own goals."

I went into this an open-minded sceptic, excited that I might be convinced we can teach these essential life skills, and that I might finally learn how to do it.

I was disappointed.

There is no analysis of how children who do effectively demonstrate these skills happen to develop them, so no compelling evidence that these "skills" are teachable in the way the book suggests, beyond the personal assertion of the author.

Where research is cited, it is often opinion surveys; at one point the statement "research suggests" is made without any citation, and at another a rather bold statement begins "there is growing evidence in management academia..." which references Jim Collins' 16-yearold book, Good to Great, now mostly remembered because nine of its 11 supposedly "great" companies have since failed or underperformed.

The book felt like a rehash of something

I would've read 10 years ago. As ever, it speaks to a problem we all feel and describes it well, but fails to articulate a compelling solution. Despite a clear effort to provide structure, I felt lost amid the waffle: long lists of poorly defined, frequently repeated words that broadly mean the same thing.

> While he stops short of repeating the now debunked claim that "65 per cent of future jobs haven't been invented yet", the author does write "I have lost track of the number of times I have been sagely advised many of the jobs our children and young people will do in 10 years haven't been invented yet."

It reads as if the burgeoning cognitive revolution of the last few years never happened. There are frequent references to Anders Ericsson, and Dan Willingham pops up in the bibliography, but other than

that, work that would be important to the fields of learning and measurement is missing. For example, what role might David Geary's biologically primary and secondary learning play in unpicking whether or not these skills are teachable? I've no idea: it's not discussed.

At one point, the book manages to spectacularly mispresent the debate about knowledge-led curriculums, successfully framing "teaching knowledge" as the preserve of political conservatives.

Then come levels, reinvented. If I tried hard to divine the purpose of this book, I might suggest it's to sell the reader on yet another reinvigoration of the old level system, with all its problems and illusions. For example, level nine in listening equates to "I can use strategies to listen for a specific purpose", which is apparently more advanced than analysing how a speaker uses gesture and language to engage an audience.

There are many moments of real hope: The question of university and employer responsibility is raised, as is the question of whether level descriptors represent real progression. Each time this happened I eagerly read on, expecting to have my scepticism quashed and learn something new. Each time, what came next was unconvincing, and left me feeling that the missing piece was right here.

I can't recommend anyone read this, and I'm not even sure it would benefit the social enterprise if they did.



Week in Westminster

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

FRIDAY: Pub. MONDAY:

You can tell a lot about someone based on which horribly depressing book they enjoyed reading as a child, and we've certainly learned a lot about our education ministers this week.

As part of Child Book Week, the Department for Education tweeted details of each minister's favourite childhood read.

Nick Gibb's favourite book, it turns out, was *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. This is not surprising at all. Of course Nick Gibb chose a Dickens book. Of course he did.

Anne Milton, the skills minister, liked Charles Kingsley's moral fable *The Water Babies* best when she was young. Wikipedia describes it as "extremely popular in England, and was a mainstay of British children's literature for many decades, but it eventually fell out of favour in part due to its prejudices (common at the time) against Irish, Jews, Americans, and the poor". Yikes. Robert Goodwill meanwhile chose the beginner book series *Robert the Rose Horse*, presumably because it has his name in it.

Finally, Justine Greening's pick book was Watership Down by Richard Adams. She says she liked it because it "didn't shy away from very serious twists and turns". It's also a story about rabbits following a leader who has visions of the imminent destruction of their homeland. We're not at all sure what Greening could find intriguing about that...

TUESDAY:

Farewell NCTL, we hardly knew ye. The government's announcement this week that the National College for Teaching and Leadership would finally bite the dust next year is the death knell for an organisation that has been on life support for some time.

Things looked shaky for the college way back in July 2015, when the government took the decision to close its flagship teacher training centre in Nottingham. Earlier this year, a Schools Week investigation cast doubt on whether the NCTL was fit for purpose following the collapse of the Trojan Horse trial.

The NCTL's recruitment and retention activities will now move in-house at the DfE (hurrah, more centralisation), and a new executive agency, the Teaching Regulation Agency, will take on the its regulatory functions.

Does it sound like the General Teaching Council to anyone else, just to us?

WEDNESDAY

Another day, another appearance by DfE head honcho Jonathan Slater in front of the powerful parliamentary public accounts committee.

Slater is now a regular at hearings, and seems to enjoy his appearances, often squirming with delight as he is questioned.

THURSDAY:

Schools should be raiding their surpluses to pay for pens, according to Nick Gibb.

The schools minister responded to a front page story in the Daily Mirror about a school

in the prime minister's own constituency which has been asking parents for £1 a day to pay for "basics" including pens.

The story has made Gibb grumpy, and he told the National Association of School Business Managers conference in Birmingham that it was "not right" for heads to ask parents to pay for classroom items when their schools have surpluses worth billions. Somewhere, stationary wholesalers are rubbing their hands.

The new EPI report on free schools (page 10) meanwhile gives some tentative conclusions about the programme but David Laws, the chair of the organisation, specifically warned against using the findings to draw big conclusions. Of course, that didn't stop Toby Young, the head of the New Schools Network, which is paid to promote free schools, taking to social media to tell everyone how the data shows the schools are fantastic. Tell us Toby, was your favourite children's book by any chance about a wooden puppet who wanted to become a real boy?

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEEKLIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



Name Liam Collins Age 47 Occupation Headteacher Location East Sussex Subscriber since October 2014

Fly on the Wall is a chance for you, the subscriber, to tell us what you love (and hate) about *Schools Week*, who you'd like to spy on and, of course, what the world of education would look like if you were in charge...

FLY ON THE WALL

Where do you read your copy of Schools Week? On my phone or electronic device.

Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?

The news and some of the comment sections. Sometimes they get me thinking, sometimes angry, but it is always interesting.

If you could wave a magic wand and change one education policy, which would it be?

Accountability and the wider social expectations on schools. I would also fund alternative provision properly and have thriving collections of schools working on it.

Who is your favourite education secretary of all time?

I don't have one in the UK. In general they have all made a complete mess of education. However, from my reading into the subject, my favourite one internationally is Jukka Sarjala [who reformed Finnish education].

What is your favourite story or investigation reported in *Schools Week*?

Grammar schools and school funding have been comprehensively dealt with.

What do you do with your copy of *Schools Week* once you've read it?

I put the paper copy in the staff room.

What would you do if you were editor of Schools Week for a day? Write the whole thing badly, miss any deadlines, run around in ever decreasing circles and finally ring Laura.

Favourite memory of your school years?

I loved playing sport and Mr Allen, my form teacher in my 4th year, transformed me from someone floating towards failure and put me on the right track. It involved a lot of detentions and copying out hymn 555.

If you weren't working in education, what would you be doing?

When I decided I needed to retrain in 1999 it did come down to a choice between plumbing and teaching. So realistically I would hope that I would have made huge amounts of money as a plumber.

Favourite book on education?

I can't get it to one, so: Professional capital: transforming teaching in every school by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan Finnish lessons by Pasi Sahlberg Why don't students like school by Daniel Willingham

If you could be a fly on the wall in anyone's office, whose would it be?

Paul Barber, the CEO of Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, during the transfer window.

SCHOOLS WEEK

FRIDAY, NOV 17, 2017

Bulletin with Sam King

A new meaning to grub's up! FEATURED

lapton Girls' Academy learned all about entomophagy by tucking into mealworm burgers, crickets and grasshoppers in preparation for a new GCSE

The menu of edible insects, which included black ant and cheese pâté on bread, and cricket and cauliflower pakora, was presented to students taking up AQA's food preparation and nutrition GCSE. which will be sat for the first time in 2018.

Also up for grabs were mealworm burgers, cricket and grasshopper tarts served with spinach puree, and cricket crepes in a chocolate sauce for dessert.

Part of the new GCSE exam specification requires students to learn about the environmental impact and sustainability of food, with insects considered an environmentally friendly and nutritious food source for their lowfat content, high levels of protein and the vitamins and minerals they contain.

"Our students will be some of the first in the country to take the new qualification, and we are keen for them to experience as many food cultures as possible," said Susan Gakunga, food preparation and nutrition teacher at the school. "It's great to help them learn how and why different insects are eaten across the world and we this will help them understand the benefits of alternative food sources." Food was provided by pest control

company Rentokil as part of their



be used to provide texture, crunch, and decoration or even used in the form of insect flour.



(L-R) Teaching ambassadors Hafiz Ullah, Louise Morg Sparkes and Aamir Hassan.

BRADFORD BIGS UP TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Ten teachers and school leaders in Bradford are heading up a campaign to improve teacher recruitment and retention in the area.

Funded by Bradford council and coordinated by the Northern Lights Teaching School Alliance, the Bradford for Teaching campaign will promote opportunities to train and work in the area across social media.

As part of the campaign, 10 teaching ambassadors will share their own experiences of teaching in Bradford and the impact their work is having on pupils.

"Bradford is an exceptional community: diverse, ambitious and culturally rich. It is a city which deserves teachers who are truly values driven and want to make a difference," said one of the ambassadors. Luke Sparkes, the executive principal of Dixons Trinity Academy.

Bradford council has committed to invest £660,000 over three years into recruitment, and recently arranged bus tours to take teachertraining students into local schools.

To find out more about the opportunities to train and work in Bradford's schools, visit: www.bradfordteaching.org



Garden therapy for forces families York's schoolchildren step it up

n Oxfordshire school has received £2,500 from the Ministry of Defence to set up a therapeutic garden for pupils from forces families.

The new garden at Crowmarsh Gifford Primary School, which is close to RAF Benson, aims to help pupils with parents serving in the air force relax by learning about nature.

With a general student population of 208, the school has between 10 and 20 pupils from forces families at any one time.

"If parents are deployed at some point, it can create strain in families and stress for the kids," explained Flora Barton, the headteacher. "It's really just a chance

for them to get outdoors, focus on their wellbeing, and do something that they enjoy - and get messy!"

tasty meal using edible insects,

really creative with the way insects are

incorporated within a meal and they can

Holcroft said. "You can be

The idea for the garden, which was officially opened by RAF Benson's group captain, Hamish Cormack, was put forward by pupils in the school's RAFters group, where those with serving parents can talk openly about their experiences.

The group is now going to host an assembly about the purpose of the garden and why it's there, and will designate a raised bed to each class.

"We've got a load of raised beds, but there's always going to be one just for the RAFters," Barton added.



rchbishop Junior School in York has won a city-wide competition that egged pupils on to walk, scoot or cvcle into school.

Twenty-five schools in the area took part in this year's 'walk to school week' the city puts on every year, which encourages pupils to swap buses and cars for a more active alternative.

The junior school had the highest percentage of pupils taking healthier routes to school. Carr Junior came in second, and Dringhouses Primary was in third.

The winning school has been awarded £200 to spend on sporting equipment, as 🖕 well as the Jack Archer Award, named in

memory of the former lord mayor of York. Jonathan Green, the headteacher of the winning school, has ditched his car in favour of cycling to school in recent months, and hopes his pupils keep up their own active commutes.

"Kids are pretty active at our school and they like to win things. We take part in this every year and the closest we've come is third previously, so we're delighted," he said.

"You obviously get kids who can't take part because they live out of the catchment area, but what we try and do is get them to park somewhere in the village where they can then walk to school."

EDITION 120



Primary director, Inspiration Trust

START DATE: 2018 (pending his replacement)

PREVIOUS JOB: Headteacher at West London Free School

INTERESTING FACT: Hywel is a keen road cyclist and takes part in ultra-endurance Alpine events.



CHAS PARKER

Director of IT. Academies Enterprise Trust

START DATE: November 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Head of IT, CRI

INTERESTING FACT: David has a pedigree Hungarian Puli dog called Sabi who is now 11 vears old.

future

MOVERS A SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



BECKY ALLEN **Professor of Education,** UCL Institute of Education

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Director, Education Datalab

INTERESTING FACT: Becky's middle name is Frances, which means she almost shares the same name as her new boss - Becky Francis.

Get in touch!

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your school, local authority or organisation please let us know by emailing news@schoolsweek.co.uk



ELROY CAHILL

Headteacher, City **Heights E-ACT** Academy

START DATE: October 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Vice-principal, E-ACT's The **Crest Academy**

INTERESTING FACT: Elroy was the first person in his family to go into higher education.



NICOLA BULL **St Edmund Girls** School

START DATE: October 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Deputy headteacher, St Edmund's Girls' School

INTERESTING FACT: Nicola has designed a system for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that gives staff autonomy over their teaching.

future

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Last Week's solutions

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6			1	4	8				Difficulty:
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		7	4	6	2	8	5	9	3	1
		9	5	8	7	3	1	6	4	2

olutions: Difficulty: MEDIUM Next week

Spot the difference to WIN a Schools Week mug





Spot five differences. First correct entry wins a mug. Tweet a picture of your completed spot the difference using @schoolsweek in the tweet.