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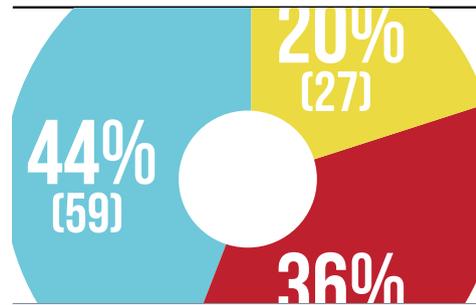
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NEWS

Digi-team to solve workload woes

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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A crack team of digital specialists will be set up in the heart of government to encourage education technology startups to solve problems faced by schools, such as teacher workload.

The new "GovTech Catalyst" unit will get £20 million over the next two years to provide match funding to public bodies wanting to commission tech companies to come up with "innovative fixes" to public sector challenges.

This "small central unit based in the Government Digital Service" will help schools and other public bodies identify challenges "that could be solved by new digital technologies", the Treasury said.

It is intended as a way for businesses and innovators to gain access to the schools community, and make it easier to collaborate on public sector challenges, which specifically include "freeing up teachers' time".

Education tech startups have had "huge growth" in investments in recent years.

The innovation charity Nesta, which supports them with grant funding, has reported a boom in companies solving public problems using technologies.

"Nesta has seen huge growth in the number of startups in this field over the last two years," Joysy John, Nesta's director of education, told *Schools Week*.



"We hope the clear access point to government promised by the new GovTech Catalyst will help these startups overcome one of the biggest challenges they face: bridging the gap between the tech community, teachers and schools."

But Dan Keller, the head of business development at Unifrog, an online platform which helps teachers manage pupil applications to university, apprenticeship and training courses, said "EdTech" companies face a range of challenges in engaging staff.

Most teachers have little time to respond to phonecalls and emails, and even if they are keen, a senior leader must get behind the initiative otherwise it will be "axed" before having time to embed, he said.

Match funding for EdTech companies would help school engagement, but only if tendering processes are not too complex, he added.

Workload: is EdTech the solution?

According to the Department for Education's own research, workload is the "most important factor" cited when teachers leave the profession, and education unions have repeatedly asked for help.

Ben Gadsby, an education policy expert, said the government's specific mention of workload in the announcement showed officials were now serious about tackling the issue.

"Hopefully this unheralded announcement will lead to some bright spark coming up with a clever way of using technology to reduce workloads," he said. "If it works out, teachers may end up looking back on this news with fondness."

The chancellor, Philip Hammond, said last week that Britain was "a world leader in digital innovation" with "some of the brightest and best tech firms operating in this country".

"Working with us, they can provide technological fixes to public sector problems, boost productivity, and get the nation working smarter as we create an economy fit for the future," he said.

In his budget speech on Wednesday, Hammond spoke about his vision to increase the number of tech startups being founded in Britain.

"A new tech business is founded in Britain every hour," he declared. "And I want that to be every half hour."

GET YOUR PENS OUT: NEW 'BAKER' RULE STARTS 2018

New laws requiring school leaders to publish their plans for letting colleges, apprenticeship providers and leaders from University Technical Colleges talk to pupils will come into force in January.

The rule also requires schools to have a plan for how they will arrange the visits, which must occur at "important transition points" in the school year.

Guidance published by the Department for Education this week on the new rules, known as "the Baker Clause" as it was created by former education secretary Kenneth Baker, said it will come into effect on January 2.

Lord Baker, who served under Margaret Thatcher, has said he expects the move to be "met with great hostility in every school in the country".

Every secondary school "must give education and training providers the opportunity to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13 about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships", the guidance says.

Schools must publish a policy statement outlining how providers can access pupils, and establish rules for granting access, and what providers can expect once it is granted.

Lord Baker, the architect of the UTC programme, proposed his amendment while the technical and further education bill was passing through the House of Lords in February.

He accused schools of "resisting" those trying to promote vocational courses and insisted that "every word" of his proposed clause was needed because it would be "met with great hostility in every school in the country".

The amendment was not challenged by Lord Nash, the academies minister at the time.

Teacher recruitment tougher at all levels, NAHT finds

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Schools are increasingly struggling to recruit senior leaders, with the proportion of heads failing to hire a new assistant head or principal almost double what it was last year.

The NAHT union's annual recruitment survey has found that 19 per cent of leaders failed to fill one of these vacancies this year, up from 10 per cent in 2016.

The percentage of heads who failed to recruit a new business manager has also increased to 13 per cent this year, up from 11 per cent last year and seven per cent in 2015.

James Bowen, director of NAHT Edge, the union's middle leadership section, said the trend was "extremely worrying" and would have "significant consequences" if not addressed.

"We shouldn't forget that the middle leaders of today are the senior leaders of tomorrow – we have a duty to encourage and support them," he said.

"However too many being put off from stepping up or are leaving as the excessive workload, long hours and high pressure gets too much."

Overall, schools continue to struggle with recruitment for all roles.

Of the more than 800 school leaders surveyed, 81 per cent reported difficulties

with general recruitment, the highest rate in the four-year history of the survey. Sixty-three per cent said it was a struggle to recruit, while 18 per cent admitted they had failed completely.

The government has recently announced a series of measures to get more teachers to join and stay in the profession.

These include larger bursaries for new maths teachers, a flexible working trial, student loan forgiveness in 25 areas of the country, and the Teaching and Leadership Development programme, which funds professional development.

The government will also launch a trial of its new national teacher vacancy website, in the spring, which it hopes will cut schools' advertising costs.

But union leaders say more needs to be done. Nick Brook, the NAHT's deputy general secretary, warned the recruitment pipeline is "leaking at both ends", with insufficient numbers of newly qualified teachers coming into the system and "too many experienced teachers leaving prematurely".

"Today's graduates are attracted to other professions, and current teachers are leaving in search of other careers," he said. "Budget cuts mean that pay rises and professional training are not

keeping pace with teachers' expectations. They don't ask for much but they are getting even less."

The union also asked leaders to say why their colleagues left the profession. Eighty-four per cent named workload, and 83 per cent said it was a desire for a better work-life balance that forced staff out.

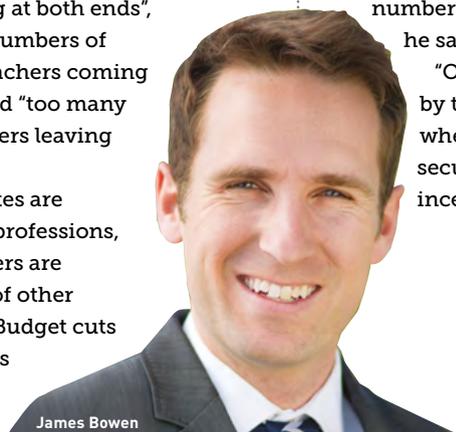
There has also been a steep rise in the percentage of leaders who blame budget pressures for recruitment problems, from nine per cent in 2016 to 33 per cent this year.

NAHT members have also spoken out.

Robert Campbell, chief executive of the Cambridge-based Morris Education Trust, said recruitment had "never been so challenging" in his 15 years as a leader.

"Geographically more isolated schools, such as we have in rural Cambridgeshire, too many posts are filled by a rolling number of supply or temporary staff," he said.

"Of course, all this is made worse by the dire funding situation where we lack the resources to secure teachers and leaders with incentives."



James Bowen

CENTRAL SUPPLY TEACHER POOL 'READY BY 2018'

A new national pool of trusted supply teacher agencies should be ready for schools to use by next September, Nick Gibb has said.

The schools minister confirmed in writing that the new service, designed to help schools source supply teachers, is in its planning stage, and is "anticipated" to be ready next year.

The framework "will be aimed at providing improved terms and conditions, promoting better agency conduct and offering improved pricing for schools".

In May, *Schools Week* reported it was being developed as a joint project between the Department for Education and the government's buying arm, the Crown Commercial Service.

The service is being developed in response to concerns about schools' soaring supply teacher bills, which rose from £918 million in 2011-12 to £1.2 billion in 2014-15.

The latest news has been welcomed by Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of the headteacher's union, NAHT.

"Well over £1 billion a year is spent by schools on supply staff as head teachers struggle to plug gaps left by the recruitment crisis in schools.

"Supply teachers play a crucial role in addressing short-term gaps, but an increasing number of school leaders are having to rely on them more frequently and for longer. It is right therefore that government takes steps to ensure the highest standards of professional conduct by supply agencies."

NEWS: BUDGET

£600 for every additional pupil in post-16 maths

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Schools will get £600 for each extra pupil who signs up for a post-16 maths qualification, the chancellor has announced.

This new "maths premium" will receive £80 million of funding over the next two years with no cap on numbers, making it one of the most significant education announcements in the Philip Hammond's budget speech on Wednesday.

Under the scheme, schools will get £600 for every extra pupil who takes maths or further maths at A-level or core maths. For example, if a school increases its numbers studying maths A-level from 100 in one year to 105 in the next, it will receive an additional £3,000.

There are still unanswered questions about exactly how the scheme will work. For example, it is not clear which year's pupil numbers the government will use as a baseline to calculate the increase, or how the government will guarantee that additional pupils complete their studies.

Around 95,000 pupils currently study maths at A-level every year, while 16,000 take further maths and around 5,000 sit core maths qualifications, which are for pupils who want to study the subject beyond 16 but who did not get top grades at GCSE.

The money allocated for the maths premium in 2018-19 and 2019-20 could cover payments for more than 130,000 pupils, although it is not known whether any unspent cash will be carried forward into future years.



The subject-specific nature of the incentive has also raised questions, and union leaders are worried it might prompt schools to push pupils into higher-level maths study, even if it is not right for them.

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of the headteachers' union NAHT said schools needed "system-wide investment rather than a piecemeal approach".

"The important thing is that young people are supported to make the choices that are right for them, given their interests, aptitudes and aspirations," he said. "Maths is important but it is already the most popular A-level subject. Attention should also be given to English and arts subjects that have seen declining numbers in recent years."

Geoff Barton, leader of the ASCL leadership union, said any investment in 16-to-19 education is welcome because it is "so poorly funded", but questioned the focus of "very limited extra funding at one subject area".

"We are concerned that the focus on

funding exclusively for maths students creates a perverse incentive to enter students on to maths courses which might not necessarily be the best option for them," he said.

"And it would be very unfair if this funding applies only where there is an increase in the number of students taking maths, as this would penalise those institutions which have already worked hard to increase maths entries."

The premium is one of several measures announced as part of a £177 million investment in maths education.

This includes grants of £350,000 for every new specialist maths free school that opens across the country over the next few years. The government has budgeted £18 million for the scheme, which could fund up to 50 new schools based on a model used by the Exeter and King's maths schools.

Also announced this week was a £27 million investment to extend the Teaching for Mastery maths programme, which is based on methods seen in Shanghai, to a further 3,000 schools.

The government will also establish new Further Education Centres of Excellence to train maths teachers, funded with a further £40 million, while an £8.5 million pilot will test "innovative approaches" to improve GCSE maths resit outcomes.

The investment in maths has been welcomed by Charlie Stripp, the director of the National Association for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics and chief executive of Mathematics in Education and Industry.

"Schools and colleges would like to offer more students the chance to study maths at beyond GCSE level, but lack of funding has meant they have been finding it increasingly difficult to offer further maths, and most were unable to offer core maths at all," he said.



Teacher Development Premium pilot offers £1,000 CPD grants

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Teachers in regions that have "fallen behind" will get grants of £1,000 to pay for continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities under a trial scheme announced by the chancellor.

Philip Hammond has allocated £42 million to pilot a new Teacher Development Premium, which will hand cash to teachers in deprived parts of the country over the next four years.

The pilot will test the impact of an extra £1,000 for "high-quality professional development".

"This will support the government's ambition to address regional productivity disparities through reducing the regional skills gap," said the Treasury in a statement.

Funding estimates suggest the scheme will reach up to 10,000 teachers in 2018-19, 15,000 in 2019-20 and 2020-21, and 5,000 more in 2021-22.

The pilot has been broadly welcomed by David Weston, the chief executive of the Teacher Development Trust, who said it would pay for CPD for "teachers in some of the most challenging schools".

However, he said it is important that the CPD is "fully aligned" with national standards, and "fairly allocated".

"This funding needs to make teachers feel empowered, not 'done to'," he said.

"We must acknowledge that the background funding for schools is still tight and that there is still work to do to implement a fair national funding formula. Nevertheless, we welcome Justine Greening's continued commitment to teacher professionalism and evidence-informed development."

Russell Hobby, the chief executive of Teach First, also responded positively.

"As Britain heads towards Brexit it is crucial that we have the very best teachers in our classrooms to prepare the next generation," he said.

"We welcome the announcement today for the Teacher Development Premium for those that work in areas left behind. Teaching in disadvantaged areas can be as challenging as it is rewarding and we need to ensure that these teachers are supported to thrive and give their pupils the best chance in life."

The money comes on top of £75 million already allocated for development in the government's 12 social mobility "opportunity areas" through the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund.

It is not yet known how the government will select schools for the Teacher Development Premium pilot.

NEW 'NATIONAL CENTRE' TO HACK COMPUTER SCIENCE CRISIS

ALIX ROBERTSON

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A new National Centre for Computing will help train an additional 8,000 computer science teachers by 2022, but a subject expert does not believe it will solve the country's struggle to provide effective computing education.

In his budget speech on Wednesday, Phillip Hammond committed the government to "ensure that every secondary school pupil can study computing". This will be done by "upskilling" 8,000 existing teachers, in order to increase the number of trained computer science teachers from 4,000 to 12,000.

The £84 million project will include work with industry leaders to set up a new NCC, which will produce materials and support for the training.

But Bob Harrison, who chaired an advisory group to the Department for Education on computing in 2013, warned of a "crisis around computing in schools", and said a "range of qualifications available across the spectrum of computing" were needed if it was to be solved.

"Right at the heart of this is confusion," he said. "Ministers don't understand the difference between computing and computer science."

Digital literacy, information technology, and computer science – all part of the broader discipline of computing – need to be addressed, but the government has focused too much on



GCSE and neglected other levels.

In January, the shortage of computing teachers was officially recognised when the subject was added to the "shortage occupation list" by the Migration Advisory Committee. This lifted restrictions on hiring subject specialists from outside the EU.

A previous attempt to use additional government funding to recruit more computing teachers fell well short of its target.

The British Computer Society (BCS) was handed £3 million to train 400 "master teachers" by March last year. But only 350 had actually been trained by this June, and they only reached around only 18 per cent of schools.

The government has yet to explain how it will ensure the new programme will reach every school.

David Evans, the director of policy at BCS, said he was looking forward to seeing more details about the proposal, but did not confirm how BCS would be involved.

"In order to succeed, any future centre for computing education will need the support of all stakeholders, such as schools, universities, employers, and charities," he said.

NEWS

Unions' fury as Hammond dodges teachers' pay

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Lacking additional funding for schools and sixth forms, the budget has been labelled a "missed opportunity" and a "disappointment" by angry voices across the sector.

The chancellor has not impressed education unions after his speech offered none of the extra cash that the sector requires to fund pay rises and other cost pressures.

The government actually lifted the one-per-cent cap on public sector pay rises earlier this year, and Justine Greening will soon write to the School Teachers Review Body setting out the remit for its recommendations on teacher pay for next year.

The STRB has itself spoken of the need for more money for teachers, but schools are worried they won't be able to afford such an increase without help from Phillip Hammond, as even a one-per-cent rise costs the schools community £250 million.

Earlier this month, education unions came together to request a five-per-cent raise, along with extra cash to pay for it. They now say they are "bitterly disappointed".

"The chancellor has failed to reverse the real-terms education cuts, failed to provide new money to fully fund all areas



Kevin Courtney

of education, failed to level up funding to address historic underfunding and failed to guarantee the investment needed for future years," said Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union.

He warned that the government had chosen to "ignore the anger" of parents and "clear evidence" from schools of the problems being created by real-terms cuts to education.

Chris Keates, the general secretary of the NASUWT union, said the budget's failure to significantly improve teacher pay would "further demoralise" teachers and make teaching "an even less attractive career option for graduates".

"The chancellor has failed to grasp the nettle and come up with the solutions needed to address the systemic problems affecting the education sector," he said.

School leaders have also criticised the budget for not going far enough. Paul Whiteman, leader of the NAHT union, said the chancellor had done nothing to alleviate the pressure on schools, whose budgets are "at breaking point".

"It is impossible to claim that this is a budget which embraces the future when it doesn't contain any new money for schools or young people," he said.

"Education is the jewel in the crown of this country's public services. At its best, it shines, and it allows those who work in it and learn within it the chance to shine as well. But the government's failure to find any new money today means the jewel is at risk of being dulled, and the successes of recent years replaced by uncertainty."

Despite some additional money for sixth forms that encourage pupils to study maths at a higher level (see page 4), the budget has also been dubbed a "missed opportunity" to address historic underfunding in the post-16 sector.

James Kewin, the deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, which represents such institutions, said the government's priority should be to ensure that schools and colleges receive the funding they need to provide all young people with a rounded education – "irrespective of the subjects they choose to study at A-level".

NOTHING FOR PRIMARY OR EARLY-YEARS SCHOOLS

The government has ignored early-years and primary schools in its budget, and instead prioritised investment in older pupils.

None of the initiatives announced by Philip Hammond for the education sector on Wednesday are specifically aimed at primary or early-years education, although primary school teachers could theoretically benefit from the teacher development premium pilot.

Deborah Lawson, the general secretary of teaching union Voice, said she was "deeply disappointed" that the "fundamental funding, staffing and workload crises hitting schools, colleges and the early years – and those who work in them – have not been addressed".

"While investment in technical education is welcome, other areas of learning – many of which support the most vulnerable in our society – have been scaled back. This piecemeal budget has failed the dedicated professionals who work in education and the early years."

According to Lawson, the budget also did not do anything to address the frozen funding, rising costs and staff shortages in early years and childcare.

"A career and national pay structure is desperately needed to support the government's early-years workforce strategy," she said.

Neil Leitch, chief executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, has also spoken out, accusing the government of risking plunging the early years sector further "into a funding crisis".

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NEWS

UK TEENS BETTER AT COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING THAN ENGLISH OR MATHS

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The UK has finished 15th in new world rankings of collaborative problem-solving for 15-year-olds.

PISA's study involved 125,000 15-year-olds in 52 countries and found that the UK performs similar to Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States.

Singapore topped the chart, followed by Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

The result is a boon for Singapore, which also topped the charts for reading, maths and science in last year's international rankings for more traditional subjects. The country's approach to maths has meanwhile informed the "maths mastery" textbooks officially approved by the British government last year for use in English primary schools.

The UK's ranking is also good news, as its pupils finished higher than they did in reading (22nd) and maths (27th). The nation also ranks 15th for science.

However, the gender gap between girls' and boys' performances was much higher in the UK than elsewhere.

Researchers found a 34-point difference in the scores on collaborative problem-solving between boys and girls, but only 29-points on average across other OECD countries taking part.

Girls in the UK said they value relationships more than boys do, and 90 per cent claim to be good listeners, compared with 83 per cent of boys. Ninety-two per cent of girls said they enjoyed seeing their classmates succeed, compared with 87 per cent of boys.

However, 71 per cent of boys reported that they prefer working as part of a team, compared with 66 per cent of girls.

Around 12 per cent of pupils in the UK achieved a level 4, the top level of proficiency in collaborative problem-solving. To reach level 4, pupils must be able to carry out "advanced problem-solving tasks" with high collaboration complexity, as well as maintaining an awareness of group dynamics.

They must also demonstrate that they can take the initiative to "perform actions or make requests to overcome obstacles and resolve disagreements".

On average, across OECD countries, just eight per cent of pupils can perform at level 4.

The UK also has a below-average proportion of pupils performing worse than level 2, with 22 per cent coming in below. The OECD average is 28 per cent.

Pupils performing below level 2 are "at best" able to complete tasks with "low problem complexity and limited collaboration complexity".

The study also found there were "no significant differences" in performance between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, or between immigrant and non-immigrant pupils, once elements like performance in core subjects were taken into account.

Ofqual: 3 in 10 vocational exams are too hard or too easy

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Nearly a third of exams set for certain vocational qualifications are too easy, too hard or not reliable enough, Ofqual has warned.

The exams regulator has released a report looking at how trustworthy the exams for technical and vocational qualifications are, and found that 29 per cent do not stand up to scrutiny.

In recent years, questions have arisen over the rigour of vocational qualifications prompting more stringent criteria for their inclusion in government performance tables.

In response, several exam boards introduced externally-assessed examinations – including BTECs, one of the most popular forms of vocational qualification in schools and sixth forms.

Ofqual checked a sample of externally marked exams across 27 vocational qualifications, all of which count, or will count, in the 16-to-19 performance tables.

Most were level one or two certifications, but some were at level three, in subjects such as health and social care, carpentry, hospitality, digital media, and applied science.

Out of the 49 exams Ofqual scrutinised, 14 are not "functioning" as a trustworthy reflection of pupil performance, it said.

These 14 exams were largely either too easy or too hard, though some also had too many or too few questions for the time limit.



Sally Collier

For example, the average proportion of total marks achieved by pupils varied from 23 per cent in one exam, meaning it was too difficult, up to 80 per cent in others, meaning it was too easy.

Easy tests with too many pupils scoring highly "would be unlikely to provide adequate differentiation between students of different abilities".

The exams are also less reliable than GCSEs on average, the research revealed. Where GCSE exams have a reliability measure of 0.8, on average these exams had a reliability measure that was slightly lower, at 0.74.

A reliability measure of 0.5 is generally considered too low, yet eight per cent of the vocational and technical exams scored below this threshold.

In fact, three exams had lower levels than any seen in a previous study of reliability for GCSEs and A-levels.

The report said the "technical functioning" of exams is very important because unless the questions and design of exams are "trustworthy", they will not lead to "valid

interpretations of individual pupils' marks and grades."

Stephen Wright, the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, an association for technical and professional awarding organisations, said it was "good to see" that the majority of qualifications demonstrated good assessment performance, and that there were not significant numbers of "easy qualifications".

Ofqual's report is evidence that awarding organisations are "competing on recognition and the quality of their qualifications rather than the mythical 'race to the bottom'", he said.

However, although developing high-stakes qualifications appears easy, it is actually "deceptively difficult". He acknowledged that there are some "outlier" assessments that need to be reviewed.

Overall, seven awarding organisations had samples of their exams looked at by Ofqual. Each one has received reports on how their tests fared, but Ofqual has refused to share their identities with *Schools Week*.

The report was released to coincide with an Ofqual event in London, which focused on vocational and technical qualifications and will discuss the challenges and opportunities of reforming them.

Sally Collier, the body's chief regulator, said she wanted to "listen to what users of qualifications have to say" about them, as well as ensure employers are "confident that vocational and technical qualifications meet their needs".

NEW BASELINE TESTS WILL COST £10M TO CREATE

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

The new baseline assessment for reception pupils will cost £10 million and begin in 2020, according to documents released by the government as it searches for a company to run the test.

Education secretary Justine Greening announced in September that children joining primary schools would soon be required to take a baseline test when they started school – even though the policy has been abandoned several times already, costing millions.

This new version is likely to affect the 2020 intake at primary schools, and will involve an "age-appropriate" assessment of mathematics, communication, language and literacy carried out by teachers or teaching assistants.

It will also introduce for the first time analysis of "some form of self-regulation", such as "persistence with a task or following multi-step instructions".

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of headteachers' union NAHT, said early self-regulation can be a "key predictor of both current and later academic achievement".

But gathering this kind of information should be carried out in a way that avoids "unnecessary burdens on teachers or anxiety for young children", he added.

The Education Endowment Foundation



Justine Greening

is currently researching a series of early-years interventions. Kevan Collins, its chief executive, has noted the challenges of measuring self-control and children's ability to manage their behaviour.

"It will be important that any additional baseline test for reception pupils is truly valuable and helps teachers to identify and support the children who are behind on these skills at the beginning of school," he said.

The government has previously abandoned three different baseline assessments, with millions spent on development and implementation.

Introduced in 2014, schools were allowed to pick their own provider, though the majority opted for teacher-observation assessment offered by Early Excellence. Test-based options were provided by Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring, and by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

However, a DfE study in February 2016 was concerned that the tests were not

adequately comparable, meaning it was difficult to compare the progress of pupils in different schools on a national scale.

By April 2016, the government said it would no longer require schools to take the tests, effectively ditching the project.

Companies that wish to run the new baseline must not use an observational assessment carried out over time, according to the tender documents.

Schools minister Nick Gibb has said the baseline assessment "will form the baseline for primary progress measures".

Julie McCulloch, a primary specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the reintroduction of the tests was a positive step.

"We feel that the current approach, where progress is essentially only tracked from halfway through primary school, is unhelpful and ignores those first really crucial years of education," she said.

Mark Lehain, a former headteacher who now leads the Parents and Teachers for Excellence campaign, said the assessment would help teachers "know who and what to focus on with pupils".

The contract for the new assessment is expected to be worth up to £9.8 million and will cover any trials that are needed in 2018/19, a national pilot in 2019/20, and two years of delivery to all reception pupils in England in 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Department for Education may choose to extend the contract until August 2023.

NEWS

'Downsize me': Why one academy is shrinking

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A secondary school in Warrington intends to reduce its intake, blaming the arrival of an award-winning free school on its patch.

Birchwood Community High School, an academy in the Birchwood area of Warrington, is consulting on a proposal to reduce its intake by 40 pupils from September 2019 after the King's Leadership Academy Warrington, a free school, completed its move to a nearby site.

For five years, Birchwood has had a large intake of 210 pupils, mostly due to the closure in 2012 of Woolston High School.

Moira Bryan, headteacher at Birchwood, told the Warrington Guardian the school planned to reduce its numbers "now that King's Leadership Academy is fully open in Woolston".

It is one of the clearest examples of a free school prompting a reduction in places elsewhere. Advocates of the free school policy said such changes would happen as a consequence of competition working to drive up standards, but opponents worry the changes destabilise local schools.

For its part, King's has challenged the assertion that its move into Woolston is to blame for the downsizing.

"We were mystified by this statement to be honest," principal Shane Ierston told *Schools Week*. "None of our children come from the Birchwood catchment area.

"Due to popularity, our catchment has



contracted to 0.7 miles around the academy. We take in predominantly from four local primaries with around 40 per cent arriving under the sibling rule."

Ierston said the school had deliberately set its annual intake at 120 so as not to harm other schools, but had been inundated with applications every year.

"Every year since 2014 we have received around 400 applications. The Great School Trust [which runs King's] is committed to high-quality education. We believe education to be a civil rights issue and see our purpose to improve social mobility by providing a free, non-selective alternative to the independent sector."

But Helen Jones, the Labour MP for Warrington North, said the government's free schools policy created unnecessary competition between the schools.

"I have not been informed about the reasons behind this decision but it seems that the choice of school places for my constituents in the north of Warrington is

being reduced yet again," she told *Schools Week*.

"Instead of encouraging schools to cooperate to provide the best provision for young people the government's policy has introduced an era of cutthroat competition."

The King's Leadership Academy Warrington opened in 2012 on its original site in Seymour Drive, Warrington. It was rated 'good' at its first Ofsted inspection in 2014.

In 2015, the school was named as the winner of the Department for Education's character education awards, and has since been praised by ministers for its approach, which includes the use of "King's passports" in which character education is logged.

In the school's first set of GCSE results this summer, 86 per cent of pupils achieved five A* to C grades including English and maths. In a subsequent interview with the Warrington Guardian, Ierston described his school as "Eton without the £45,000 fees".

The Leadership Academy's new site is less than two miles from Birchwood, and under a mile from its original site.

Birchwood Community High School became an academy in 2013, and is part of the Birchwood Community Academy Trust, which also runs Birchwood College. It was rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in May this year.

The school's consultation will remain open until Friday December 22, and can be found online at birchwoodhigh.org/our-consultation

MP wants Bright Tribe to give up local academy

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

Investigates

A coup is brewing in Cumbria as parents and an MP demand a controversial academy trust hand over a failing school.

Trudy Harrison, the MP for Copeland and an education select committee member, wants the Bright Tribe Trust to step aside from the 'inadequate'-rated Whitehaven Academy, after accusing it of "neglecting" its responsibilities to the school.

At present, academies cannot remove themselves from a sponsor, but a sponsor can hand one of its schools to another trust.

However, Bright Tribe has no plans to abandon the troubled school, a spokesperson told *Schools Week*.

The Bright Tribe Trust took over Whitehaven Academy in January 2014, and was given a slice of £5 million government funding in 2015 as a "top-performing sponsor" to help drive improvements in northern schools.

However, an Ofsted inspection in October 2016, published in December, condemned the school as 'inadequate' and placed it in special measures.

In November 2016, *Schools Week* reported that more than 50 members of staff signed an open letter criticising the trust and issuing an official vote of no confidence in Bright Tribe's ability to

improve Whitehaven.

In the year since, staff confidence has remained at rock bottom, and there's a community meeting scheduled next week to discuss what should be done about the school.

An Ofsted monitoring inspection in May identified "effective progress", but the provisional Progress 8 scores for 2017 show Whitehaven scored well below average on -1.4, and just 11 per cent of pupils reaching grade 5 or above in maths and English GCSE, compared with a local authority average of 41 per cent.

And, according to Harrison, the school building itself is "not fit for purpose". Large areas are out of use for safety reasons, and all year 12 pupils are now completing level two qualifications after GCSE results were too low for A-levels.

Although Harrison acknowledged the trust had "taken on a difficult school" and commended the work of teachers put in "an impossible situation", she said she had now run out of patience waiting to see "some kind of demonstrable progress".

Harrison said she has been in talks with the regional schools commissioner and the Department for Education about appointing a new multi-academy trust to take



over from as early as Christmas.

"These young people's hopes and dreams have been spoiled and every day Bright Tribe Trust is running that school is another day we are failing our students," she said.

A spokesperson for the trust said it had deployed "positive measures" including new leadership which showed in improved A-level results this year.

She also disputed Harrison's claim that the trust does not visit the school, insisting that a representative visits every week, and claiming it is carrying out "numerous works" to fix the problems with the school buildings.

"As part of the Trust, the school leadership team intends to continue working with staff and the wider school community to continue these improvements and see Whitehaven Academy become an outstanding school for the area," she added.



Trudy Harrison

IN brief

KENT SCHOOL SLAMMED FOR SETTING UP 'UNSAFE SPACE'

A grammar school in Kent criticised last year for inviting the far-right media personality Milo Yiannopoulos to address its pupils has now established an "unsafe space" in which its older students can discuss sexism and gender without being "criticised for the wrong use of language".

But Dr Matthew Baxter, headteacher of the Simon Langton Grammar School, near Canterbury, has denied that the scheme would allow pupils to express "racist, sexist or xenophobic" views after a pupil tweeted about the school's plans, saying it was "legitimising fascism".

Baxter said the "unsafe space" is a "place where older students - usually those preparing for university - are able to discuss ideas not found in the conventional curriculum.

"These are topics which sixth-form students routinely discuss in their own time and ones which they should be able to discuss with adults in a school which encourages free speech in all the highest academic traditions of such a phrase."

LIBERTY CROWDFUNDS LEGAL COSTS FOR PUPIL DATA BATTLE

A campaign group is raising money to take the Department for Education to the High Court over its decision to collect data on school pupils' nationality and country of birth.

The human rights charity Liberty will represent Against Borders for Children, which believes the data collection serves no useful purpose.

Campaigners have launched a crowdfunding campaign to cover their legal costs, and have already raised more than £1,500 of their initial £3,500 target.

Controversial changes to the school census last year sparked a backlash from parents after some schools overreacted to the duty, demanding copies of pupils' birth certificates and passports.

The government reissued guidance clearly stating schools do not need to see such documentation, however the campaign group wishes to see data collection dropped altogether.

The crowdfunding campaign will run until December 20.

SCHOOLS FLOODED BY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Schools are "inundated" with children suffering from poor mental health, the children's commissioner has warned MPs.

Anne Longfield told the parliamentary health committee that schools were "desperate to get extra help" with pupils' problems and that children prefer to get help from their schools "first and foremost".

They want a "trusted adult" to talk to, "someone they could get to know, someone who had a specialist knowledge but also someone who that was there and was accessible to them".

While schools are "desperately keen" to provide this support, most are "struggling to do so with very limited budgets".

In August, a Department for Education study found that schools were hampered by a lack of funding for mental health support.

The prime minister promised in January that every secondary school in England would get free mental health training.

But in June it transpired that the £200,000 will only 3,000 secondary teachers over three years.

NEWS

Sexual impropriety dominates teacher bans

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

Three quarters of teachers banned from the profession for life last year were excluded for sexual misconduct – with the remainder committing fraud and exam malpractice, or intentionally misleading job applications.

Schools Week analysis of the 135 hearings carried out by the National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) between September 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017, showed 36 of the 49 teachers kicked out for good had faced allegations of sexually inappropriate behaviour, ranging from watching pornography in class to having sexual relationships with underage pupils.

The others were given lifetime bans for misdemeanours including fraud (three teachers), exam malpractice (two), and intentionally misleading in job applications and other documents (four).

A total of 60 teachers faced accusations of sexual misconduct, 16 of whom did not face any kind of ban from the NCTL. The remaining eight teachers received temporary bans ranging from three and nine years.

Sexual or inappropriate comments were included in allegations against 55 teachers, and of these 45 (82 per cent) were made via social media.

Fourteen teachers were accused of exam malpractice. Two primary school headteachers were given lifetime bans, nine teachers were temporarily banned for between two and five years, and two teachers were not prohibited.

Alyson Smith, head of Phoenix Junior Academy in Chatham, was prohibited from teaching after she was accused of assisting pupils inappropriately during exams, removing low scoring papers, and keeping test papers in her office to make tallies of possible marks.

Meanwhile, Adele Simpson, head of Moorside Community Primary School in Halifax, was given a lifetime ban for not ensuring that exam papers weren't opened early and answers weren't changed.

She was also accused of allowing improper use of school funds, including first-class travel to London and hotel stays.

Other teachers prohibited, but not totally banned, included the head teacher of South Norwood Primary School in London, Della Williams, whose entire SATS cohort had their exams annulled after she was accused of altering papers and failing to investigate maladministration.

And Kim Thomas-Lee, a maths teacher at Selston High School in Nottingham, was accused of giving excessive assistance during exam and inflating students' grades. The marks fell by 50 per cent when moderated, with the average class grade falling from a B to an E. Both teachers were prohibited for two years, when they will be allowed to appeal.

Of the 135 teachers, 80 per cent received some kind of prohibition order and 68 per cent (93) were men.

The average age of teachers was 43, with the youngest accused of misconduct a 23-year-old who lied on his application form to a primary school on the Isle of Wight and the oldest a 72-year-old who faced historical allegations of sexual contact with young boys dating to his time at a primary school in Rotherham. Both received lifetime bans.

Thirteen teachers faced the NCTL after receiving criminal convictions, including four based on sexual offences.

Other convictions included Suzanne Lee, who taught at Darton College, a secondary school in Barnsley, and pleaded guilty to assaulting door staff in a Sheffield night club and possessing 1.3 grams of cocaine before she was struck off.

The majority of teachers (52 per cent) facing hearings were employed at state secondary schools, with 29 based at 11-16 schools and 41 at secondary's with sixth forms, while 32 (24 per cent) were from primary schools.

Eight teachers facing allegations of misconduct were from independent schools, and seven taught at special schools.

Other notable hearings included Nicholas Hall, an RE teacher from Soar Valley College in Leicester who was struck off for allegations including repeatedly attending Britain First marches, and the headteacher of Rosewood Primary School in Burnley, Ian McCann, who received a three year ban after it was alleged he falsely took time off with stress in order to take part in a charity bike ride in Cuba, an event he had already been refused annual leave for twice.

HEARINGS IN NUMBERS

135

Hearings in 2016/17

Average age



43 (23-72)



Resulting in prohibition order

108
(80%)49
(36%)

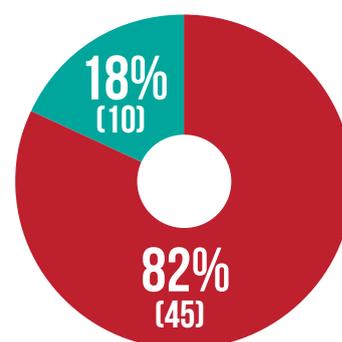
Resulting in lifetime ban



Number involving men

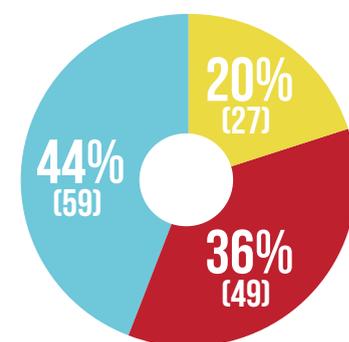
93
(68%)

PROPORTION OF TEACHERS ACCUSED OF MAKING SEXUAL/INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS AND MESSAGES WHO USED SOCIAL MEDIA OR TEXTS



● SOCIAL MEDIA ● NO SOCIAL MEDIA

HEARING RESULTS



● NO BAN ● LIFETIME BAN ● TEMPORARY BAN SUBJECT TO APPEAL

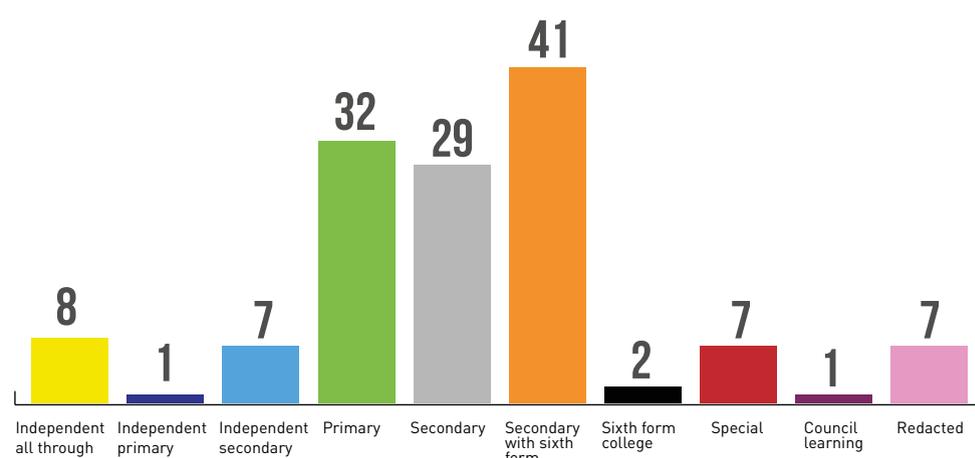
REASONS FOR LIFETIME BAN

Sexual/
inappropriate
behaviour36
73%Exam
malpractice2
4%Aggressive
behaviour2
4%

Safeguarding

2
4%Fraud
(money)3
6%Fraud
(falsifying
documents)4
8%

TYPES OF SCHOOLS



NEWS

Cautious schools can join academy trusts as 'associate members'

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Exclusive

The national schools commissioner is offering schools the option to join academy trusts as "associate members" so they do not have to relinquish their legal independence.

Sir David Carter (pictured) said the move was a response to hurdles some schools face in joining academy trusts, at a training event held by the Church of England on Tuesday.

Associate membership allows a school to join a trust in a more flexible arrangement, accessing shared resources and leadership, but it does not legally transfer into the trust.

In some cases the school will pay into the trust's central funds via a "top-slicing" arrangement, where a fee is taken for each pupil in the school. However in other cases the membership may be free, especially where the school is able to offer training support to others in the trust.

In both instances, the school retains the right to leave the academy trust if the arrangement is unsatisfactory.

"The arrangement could last for something like two years, on the basis that once the time is up school and trust leaders will know if it is the right thing for them and are likely to sign up," he said.

He believes the change is a positive way forward for small schools which otherwise



might struggle to be taken into trusts, or which fear they might be closed after formally signing over all their powers. It also helps church schools wishing to work with a local non-religious academy trust in a way that enables their original ethos to stay intact while still drawing on resources for school improvement.

"A partnership gets around some of the ideology problems, but it helps people improve," he added.

It is also a way of encouraging governors to allow headteachers to work with a local academy trust without having to give up their powers.

The policy marks a shift in views over flexible arrangements for academies. One of the first types of academy chain, umbrella trusts, enabled schools to retain their own legal status but pay into a central trust which helped with shared resources. The arrangement was gradually phased out

in favour of multi-academy trusts, which required schools to give up their individual legal status and became part of one central organisation.

However, a more cautious approach to joining trusts was still needed, especially where schools had complicated financial arrangements. In response, a "try-before-you-buy" scheme developed last year, allowing academy trusts to sign schools up for one year using "a service-level agreement".

Steve Taylor, the executive head at Robin Hood Academy Trust, which has used the scheme, said one-year deals provided stability while schools sounded out a formal partnership with a trust.

"It provides a transparent way of working that allows the impact of what has been done to be measured before a commitment is made," he said.

Carter's new plan looks to extend this option further, as commissioners shift away from worrying about "structures" to a focus on "school improvement", but it does not replace the multi-academy trust model and would likely only be allowed for short periods.

"It is about allowing good schools, or small schools, to dip their toe into the water and see if it works for them on the basis that they will become academies in the future," he said.

WAKEFIELD COUNCIL ON WCAT WARPATH OVER MISSING MILLIONS

Local councillors are referring Wakefield City Academies Trust to the police over alleged financial irregularities.

Wakefield city council voted on Wednesday to demand that £1.5 million the trust took from three local schools are returned.

Councillors want central government to repay the funds after the trust collapsed shortly after it took the schools over and removed the surplus money.

Minutes from a council meeting earlier this week show that councillor Peter Box plans to discuss his concerns about the missing money with the police.

Wakefield City Academies Trust is in the process of being wound up, and all 21 of its schools will be transferred to other sponsors after it admitted it did not have the capacity to improve them.

Councillors across parties, including Labour and Conservative, supported the motion that the Department for Education should return £436,000 to Hemsworth Arts and Community Academy, £800,000 to Wakefield City Academy, and £300,000 to Heath View Primary School.

The council claims the trust transferred the money to its central accounts as loans, but had "made it clear" it will "refuse to honour these liabilities" now that it is being closed down.

The chief executive of Wakefield council, Merran McRae, will now write to the education secretary demanding the money is returned.

Justine Greening this week promised local MPs a "forensic analysis" of the trust's collapse by auditors.



Cambridge Assessment



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

#CamEdLive cambridgeassessment.org.uk/questioning

NEWS

Exclusive: Free schools costs special



Legal advice:	£10.5 million*
Property advice:	£18.2 million*
Technical advice:	£64.4 million*
Capital costs:	£2.5 billion*

* Over past three years

Revealed: DfE spent £93m on external free schools advisers

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

The government has spent almost £100 million on advice for free school projects over the past three years, according to documents obtained by *Schools Week* which reveal for the first time the huge, hidden costs of the programme.

The figures, provided by the Department for Education in response to our Freedom of Information requests, show a month-by-month breakdown of "advisor" costs, which until now have been buried in its overall expenditure for free schools.

£2.6 billion has been spent on free schools in total, most of which went on the cost of buildings and land.

However, these new figures show £93.2 million has been spent on legal, property and technical advisers – most of whom are private contractors – over the past three years, for advice on buying up potential sites and old buildings.

According to the FoI data, £64.4 million went on "technical advisers": project managers who secure and oversee building contractors.

Next most expensive were "property advisers", who oversee due diligence and planning permission for sites, at a cost of £18.2 million.

Finally, more than £10.5 million seems to have been spent on lawyers, though new accounting rules, which change the way the

DfE counts legal costs, mean the true figure is likely to be even higher.

But even though the DfE appears to have spent almost nine figures on external advisers, they could also be driving savings.

Simon Webber, a partner at accountancy firm Kreston Reeves, who has helped set up free schools, said by hiring outside staff as technical and property advisers, the Education and Skills Funding Agency saves on the cost of employing them all year-round, he said.

He also said the ESFA had driven cheaply when tendering for building contracts, so that the offer on the table could be "unrealistically low".

For example, on one school project, the ESFA had to re-tender three times before it set a price in line with the market and was successful. Although this shows the ESFA's commitment to getting the best value for public money, by the time a contractor was found, thousands of pounds had been spent on multiple tender processes over two years.

"Ironically, money can be wasted elsewhere on these projects where inflexibility stops the ESFA from being sufficiently reactive to situations," he said.

Earlier this year the National Audit Office said the lack of expertise at the ESFA was preventing it from driving deals when purchasing sites and buildings – often meaning it paid "above market price" when it needn't.

The DfE set up its own private property

company, LocatED, to hire more experienced staff, in 2016 (see case study, right).

At £10 million over three years, the legal costs are relatively lower than for other advisers, but *Schools Week* was told the figure relates to the ESFA's own "legal panel" and does not include the fees paid to external commercial lawyers.

Dominic Swift, head of property and chair of education strategy at law firm Browne Jacobson, said the ESFA was advised by a special panel of lawyers who "make sure a proper process is applied" to quotes for building contracts, thereby trying to keep costs down.

Four years ago, legal costs were much higher: publicly available data on free school spending showed costs of up to £30 million per month, but open release of this data stopped in April 2014.

A footnote in an NAO report from 2013 reveals that between 2013 and 2014 a change occurred in the way "contractor costs" were dealt with in accounts.

Previously, legal contractor costs were part of project management costs but from 2014 onwards they were "capitalised and included in capital spending".

After this time, expenditure on lawyers dropped from upwards of £10 million per month to under £1 million.

Schools Week asked the department to clarify if the costs provided to the paper included all money spent on lawyers, as was

requested, or if some legal contractor costs were hidden within the capital costs. The DfE said the costs for legal advice provided to *Schools Week* are correct.

Toby Young, a champion of free schools and co-founder of the West London Free School, defended advisor costs, saying it would be "impossible" to complete new schools without project managers.

In his experience setting up four free schools, the DfE's procurement process for employing these advisers was "robust".

He also noted that free schools were 29 per cent cheaper to build in 2015 than schools developed under Labour's Building Schools for the Future Programme, as was reported by the NAO earlier this year.

But he acknowledged it was hard to say whether free schools are good value for money by comparing them to the BSF programme, as this had been "extravagant".

Determining if these hidden advisor costs are comparable has proved almost impossible. *Schools Week* approached the Local Government Information Unit, the NAH and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for advice both on how much a school should cost to build and for advisory costs, but was told no such target has ever been set and that no breakdowns were available.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said these costs were galling when budgets in many schools are "at breaking point".

Heron Hall Academy: £40 million

This secondary school, which belongs to the Cuckoo Hall Academy Trust (CHAT) in London, opened last year in new buildings with a hefty investment from the Department for Education.

The trust told parents in a letter in 2015 it had secured £40 million to buy the land and build a new secondary school in Enfield in north London – one of the highest amounts ever reported for building a new free school.

The funds were threaten when the trust had to suspend its executive headteacher over allegations from staff, including over bullying and HR procedures. Some of these were upheld, such as staff starting at school without a DBS, but other allegations were overturned and the executive head was reinstated in January 2015.

David Barry, a member of Local Schools Network, which campaigns against free schools, said at the time that the investment might “not be prudent to pursue”.

But the government gave the go-ahead to find a new location for Heron Hall academy, which was already open on a temporary site, and asked CHAT to choose from several sites in the local area. The trust chose a derelict 1930s building last used as a campus by Middlesex University, which needed extensive refurbishment before opening as a school.

The green light came despite the Education



and Skills Funding Agency issuing the trust with a financial notice to improve in February 2015, on the grounds family members had been employed improperly and conflicts of interest weren't declared. There were also “serious concerns on governance”.

This school has now been built, with 535 pupils in attendance this year, projected to grow to 1,600 in the next four years, a spokesperson for CHAT confirmed. Ofsted rated the school ‘good’ in all categories at its last inspection in 2015, when it was still in temporary buildings, in particular noting strong governance and the headteacher’s “strong vision for excellence”.

The site was chosen partly because it is in the catchment area of the trust’s other four primary schools, and is one of the most deprived boroughs of London, they added.

Cambourne Village College: £20 million

Cambourne Village College, part of the Cam Academy Trust in Cambridgeshire, ranks as the most expensive free school in the government’s out-of-date spreadsheet on free school costs.

The DfE has not updated its data on “capital funding for open free schools, UTCs and studio schools” since March 2016. Even then, there are only 55 schools on the list and the most recent was built in 2013.

According to that data, Cambourne Village College cost the most, with the local authority also having to cough up millions of pounds.

The secondary school, which opened to hold 750 pupils, cost £20.36 million in total, including acquisition, construction, legal, property and technical fees, a spokesperson for the DfE confirmed.

The ESFA covered only £6,000 of the legal fees, while the remaining £20,350,000 was covered by the local authority from its basic needs funding.

A council spokesperson said the DfE approved the proposal for Cambourne Village College but that free schools are not automatically funded by the DfE.

Instead, the DfE told the sponsoring trust it should “seek capital funding for the new free school from the local authority” because the school was “providing new places in response to an increase in demand” as the village of



Cambourne grew in size.

Because the local authority also has a statutory duty to meet the basic need for schools places, it funded all the costs apart from the legal fees to enable the school to open in 2013.

It was £5 million more expensive than the next free school on the list, an all-through school called Gildredge House in East Sussex, which cost £14.6 million to buy and build.

However, the most expensive free schools built in more recent years are double the cost. For instance, Harris Westminster Academy was given £45 million funding to open as a selective sixth form by former education secretary Michael Gove in 2014 – which occasioned all the sixth-form college headteachers in London to write to him in complaint.

New Schools Network: £3.4 million

The government has given almost £3.5 million to the New Schools Network (NSN) to provide advice for new groups opening free schools.

The NSN charity, headed by free schools champion Toby Young, offers two strands of advice to applicants hoping to get their free school off the ground. It has received government funds of £3,450,465 since 2014, and has matched this with charitable donations.

General support for school founders includes a one-to-one meeting with an advisor for an hour, as well as resources available on the website and further advice via email and phone.

Groups which move to a higher-level programme are also offered a “named adviser”, a personalised support plan and written feedback on draft applications. They will also be helped in meeting educational specialists and given a mock interview if their application is shortlisted by the DfE. Prior to their school opening, the successful group will also be able to ring or email a hotline service with any questions, and are given “pre-opening resources”.

Overall, 4,500 groups have sought advice, 976 advised groups have applied to open a free school, and 442 (45 per cent) have had their application approved.

Founded in 2009 to support new free schools, the NSN has been a key ally of the government



in its rapid expansion of the academies programme.

Former staff include Nick Timothy, who was a director before taking up a permanent role as advisor to Theresa May in 2016, until he lost his post after this year’s general election.

The former Liberal Democrat schools minister David Laws, who is now chair of the Education Policy Institute, was also appointed to the NSN’s advisory council last September, along with ex-Ofsted chair Sally Morgan.

Toby Young, whose school in west London was the first free school to sign a funding agreement with former education secretary Michael Gove, said: “About half the groups we have worked with on our Development Programme have been approved to open schools. We think that represents good value for money.”

LocatED: £2 billion + unknown annual accounts

LocatED is a private company wholly owned by the Department for Education, which was set up in July 2016 to find new sites for free schools.

According to a job advert put out last summer, the company needed staff to oversee a £2 billion funding pot to “spend on land and buildings” for the 500 new schools David Cameron pledged to build by 2020.

The advert also said the budget for individual acquisitions ranges from £500,000 to more than £50 million, “depending on the exact requirement and local market conditions”.

The company “operates at pace” and has exchanged contracts in 14 days, its official website claims. It will become “one of the largest purchasers of sites” in the UK.

The DfE said £869,900 had been spent on developing the company over the course of a year up to September 2016.

Meanwhile its own budget for 2016-17 was £2.6 million. However the actual costs that the company incurs will be confirmed in its annual accounts and laid before parliament before the end of the calendar year.

However the company’s annual accounts for last year, which would show its budget spending, have still not been published. The DfE told *Schools Week* they would be published soon.

Its responsibilities include finding and buying sites for new schools, as well as managing



vacant sites being held for schools. It manages mixed-use developments, where the site might be used for purposes other than as a school.

LocatED also provides “advice” to the DfE and other stakeholders in relation to school property.

The company announced its first project two months ago, a primary academy in south London which will be run by a trust with two other primary schools nearby, and will open in September 2019.

A spokesperson for the DfE said LocatED was “saving the taxpayer money” by providing specialist commercial and property market expertise to secure sites quickly and at good value.

“This will help us secure new free school sites to help deliver more good and outstanding school places for families.”



EDITOR'S COMMENT

@miss_mcinerney | laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk

That's the best you can do on maths, Phil?

A few weeks ago in this column I wrote that Justine Greening was taking us back to the future with YTS-style apprenticeship schemes and social opportunity areas that look an awful lot like children's plans from 2009.

This week the chancellor is up to the same tricks, only he appears to have been rooting around in Poundland, looking for some cheapo policies, and instead accidentally happened upon the year 2000.

I keep trying to imagine how the conversation went last week at Number 11, when advisers decided the latest innovation schools needed was a £600 voucher for every extra kid doing post-16 maths.

"Now chancellor, what about schools?" asks the latest 12-year-old official.

"Do we need to worry about schools?" replies his boss, peering over rose-coloured glasses. "I thought everyone was clear we aren't spending any more money on children?"

"Bit awks, that," says the official, desperately texting his friend to see if there's any places in the cool Brexit unit rather than slogging through the nightmare that domestic policy has become. "There's a lot of concern about schools. They're somewhat pushed for cash given the big changes to living wages, and apprenticeships, and the flexibilities in the pay cap and, well, all

that terribly inconvenient educating of children they have to do."

"Ah yes," says Spreadsheet Phil, opening his massive book of jokes. "Maybe we can find something in here to distract them..."

Ugh.

Let's be clear, promoting maths for all pupils up to the age of 18 is a good idea. One of the few things we know with reasonable certainty in education is that doing A-level maths is linked to much higher earnings later in life. As a country we also import a lot of people for their mathematical skills. In a post-Brexit world, that may be less easy. So more young people learning maths is a smart move.

Here's what's not a smart move: replicating a policy that repeatedly failed from the 1980s onwards – getting kids to do certain qualifications in return for a one-off payment. Key skills programmes have been tried over and over again. Their most recent incarnation appeared in the early 2000s, and had post-16 pupils taking a qualification worth a small number of UCAS points in five key areas.

It was awful on multiple levels: the teaching was bad, and schools and colleges gamed the system to extract the cash. Reading the BBC reports about it at the time is like watching a slow-motion car-crash from start to end.

Strap yourselves in, then, because

it's all about to happen again. The fact the £600 is only for additional pupils – rather than every pupil – is going to cause all kinds of quirks. For example, if you're a school where everyone already does a maths qualification, it will be in your best financial interests to cancel everything for a year and then start again the following year. And if the chancellor thinks the cash sums are too small to provoke that sort of behaviour, he desperately also needs to consider why he thinks they're big enough to prompt positive behaviour.

Then there's the classic problem of maths teachers: there already aren't enough. I have some sympathy with the Chancellor on this one. Ultimately, we are never going to have enough maths teachers unless more young people study maths at higher levels.

So how do we square that circle?

Here's an answer. Instead of spending £80 million chucking tiny £600 cheques at schools, why not spend 10 per cent of that, around £8 million, creating an amazing online platform for 16-to-19 pupils along the lines of something like Hegarty Maths, the incredible programme used by thousands of schools to set maths homework?

Then simply make participation compulsory for all pupils. How? By

making funding for the pupils' other qualifications reliant on them taking part in the maths learning. This is precisely the way that GCSE resits work. Pupils who don't get a grade 5 at 16 in English and maths must resit. If they are not on a course allowing them to do this, their sixth form does not get money for them – end of. Likewise, you could have an online platform that pupils are required to spend a set amount of time on per week, or the sixth form loses funding.

Would it cause problems? Sure.

Would it lead to gaming by some kids? Undoubtedly. Do I think those problems are going to be worse than the ones caused by the £600 offer? Nope. And this system has the benefit that it could be used for kids at all levels in maths. There's no need for them to pick an option – core maths, or A-level, or further, or whatever-else-gets-made-up for this policy.

Everyone would just be doing maths at a personalised level suitable for them. It also would cost £72 million less than the policy on the table. Maybe Phil could use the savings to buy himself a new joke book.



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About The David Ross Education Trust

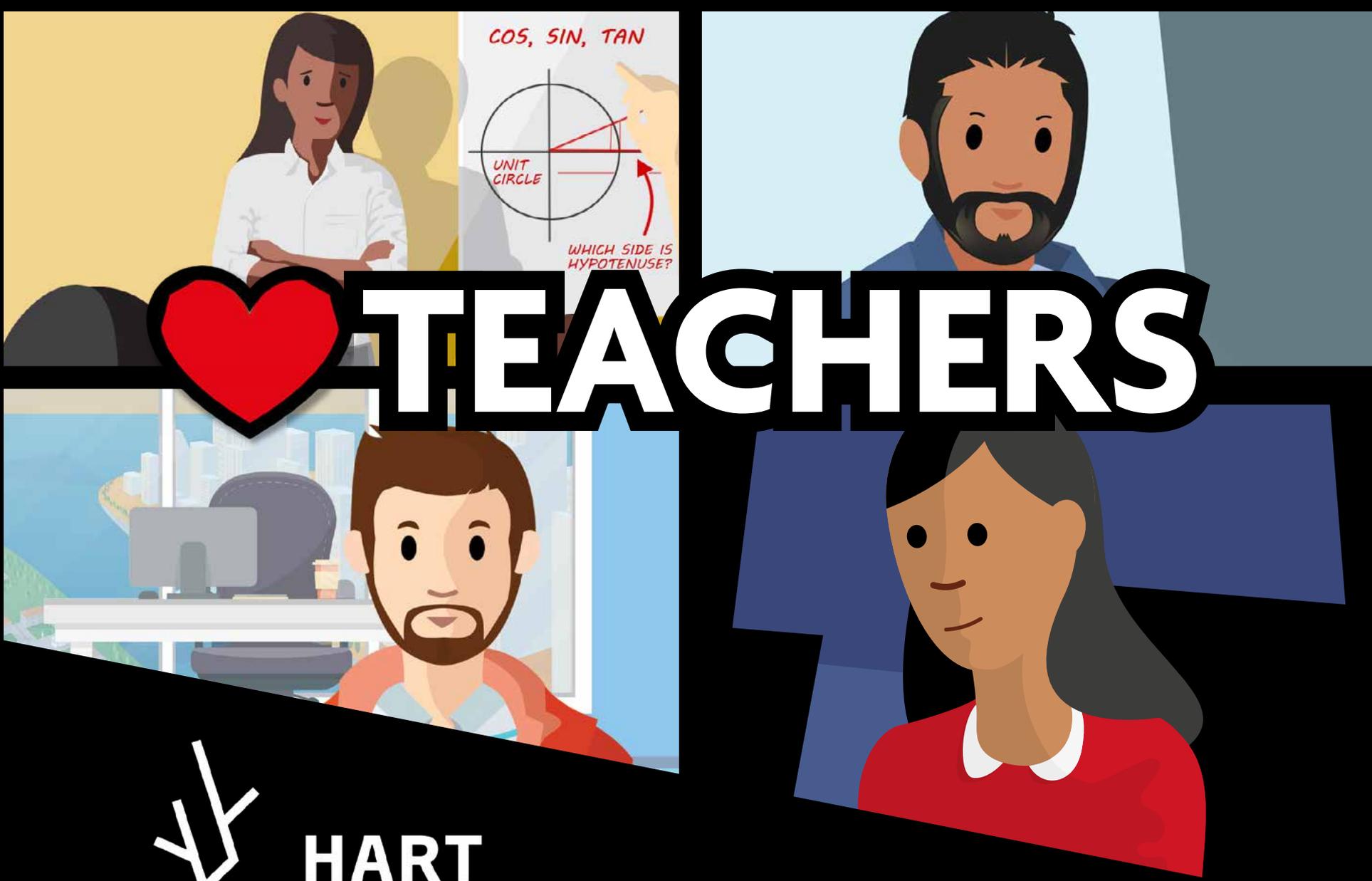
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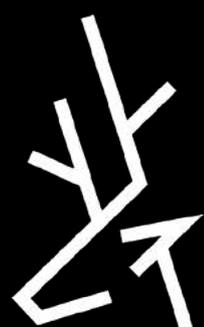
While each academy is unique, we share common goals, aspirations, values and methods that enable us to work collaboratively and collectively to achieve our mission. We operate regional hubs, whereby academies work with other schools who are part of the Trust so we can share skills and knowledge, allowing them to benefit and learn from each other. We offer high quality programmes for CPD and Leadership Development delivered through our Teaching School Alliance to support our practitioners to deliver high quality teaching and learning across our academies.

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READERS' REPLY



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The schools clamping down on Twitter trash talk

Mark Watson, Gloucestershire

A really interesting subject. One clarification though – the article says “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.”

I presume everyone agrees schools can set rules for teachers; this is clearly an employment relationship. But the article then starts quoting people supporting or opposing rules governing pupils' use of social media. To be clear, are there schools clamping down on social media use BY PUPILS?

If so that's genuinely interesting – how are they trying to do this, and what are the consequences if pupils breach the rules?

Stephen Foster // @MrSRFoster

Just like Star Wars – one minute good, the next minute it goes over to the dark side. Often unconsidered posts without true factual information create a disproportionate amount of work and harm.

Lawrence Corbusier // @LarryCorbusier

What about (self-styled) “leading educationalists” complaining on social media: a force for good or damaging to the reputation of those schools associated with them?

NSPCC: We need urgent new cyberbullying laws

Ben King // @MrBKing1988

I don't know what more we can do, schools already spend huge amounts of time discussing bullying and conduct. How can we improve on this when children are out of school? Is it down to us or should parents be doing more?

Why we joined medics to sign the evidence charter

Chris Webb // @WorldWebb

Love this – far too many “flavour of the week” policy roll-outs in education over the years, so vital that when we use the term “what works”, it is backed up by objective, independent (where possible) research evidence.

Education State, address supplied

All well and good, but the interpretation-equipment and evidence-engagement

must be much more than having some resources available through membership of the college and gurus followed on social media. To equip and to engage teachers meaningfully they require educating in research. So, in particular, education research methods and philosophies should be central to initial teacher education programmes.

This means teacher training schemes of a mere five or so weeks, such as the one Dame Peacock represents, or schemes based predominantly in schools, for example, just won't do.

Want to improve Ofsted? Develop youth inspectors



Nigel M Taylor // @nigelmtaylor

This might be an interesting idea for Ofsted to consider, if recruits to such a scheme were as articulate and perceptive as this author.

Lisa Humphries // @LisaHumphries17

Surely Ofsted speaks to young people when they visit and so its voice should already be heard? I think in reality this would be impossible to organise.

Performance-related pay will solve retention crisis



The Provoked Pedagogue // @Provokedpedagog

PRP is not the answer and neither are increased, ill-conceived business imports. Pay teachers properly. Reduce workload and recruitment and retention problems disappear. PRP adds to workload and places financial gain above pupils.

Ed Cadwallader // @Cadwalladered

I disagree with this, using pupil progress to inform PRP is misguided and will probably backfire

MATs get performance boosts from EAL pupils

REPLY OF THE WEEK



Sameena Choudry // @EquitableEd

Caution needed. EAL pupils are not a homogeneous group. Their attainment varies considerably when combined with languages spoken. There are many groups of EAL pupils who are underperforming both nationally and regionally.

REPLY OF THE WEEK
RECEIVES A SCHOOLS
WEEK MUG!



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PROFILE

**"I WOULD CALL
KNOWLEDGE
ORGANISERS
A FAD"**



CHRISTINE COUNSELL

CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

**Christine Counsell, director of education,
Inspiration Trust**

Norfolk-based Inspiration Trust is proud of its reputation as a "knowledge-based" multi-academy trust - evidenced by one of the mission statements fronting their slick website: "Securing literacy and learning through a knowledge rich curriculum".

But if you think that will make it easy to squash their director of education into an ideological box, think again. Labels don't easily stick to Christine Counsell. She dismisses the knowledge-skills dichotomy as "just nonsense", insisting that her own "very expansive" notion of knowledge "actually embraces the notion of skills".

Christine Counsell is not an ideologue. She may be an idealist, however. The former teacher-trainer at Cambridge University is on a mission, gradually assembling a dream team of high-profile subject nerds to write an entire curriculum, from primary through to key stage 3, which will solve the problems of children unable to interpret texts about dodos in their year 6 SATs, or analyse a romantic sonnet at GCSE.

"I feel quite passionate about the broad curriculum in key stage 3 serving attainment in GCSE" she explains.

As it turns out, this is something of an understatement.

The divisive ED Hirsch is one of the theorists upon whom she draws, an educationist who seems to have the power to cleave the community into two camps.

Depending on which side you sit, Hirsch is the antidote to years of child-centred learning gone mad, in which knowledge was deprioritised and pupils were encouraged to come up with their own interpretations of debates they barely understood. Or he advocates rote learning and a narrow (white, male, middle-class) cultural canon, imparted through direct instruction from the front of the classroom to unquestioning children sat obediently in rows.

Despite her admiration for the man, Counsell sits uneasily on either side of this overly-polarised debate.

It's his psychology of background knowledge that is important, she insists, in an attempt to disassociate him from "that list of names and facts and statements in the back of his 1988 book, *Cultural Literacy*, and the subtitle of the book: "What every American needs to know."

"Before you know it, you've got some kind of, you know, American cultural imperialist project," she says. "But that's not what the book is chiefly about."

The most important thing to take from him, she insists, is the idea that "knowledge is sticky" and forms "schemata, which are lots of subsurface associations". When people read, the words take meaning because of underlying associations we have accumulated.

She gives the infamous example of the year 6 SATs in 2016, where some primary teachers kicked up a fuss about a passage on the dodo, saying it was inaccessible to pupils.

The problem wasn't the test, she maintains, it was the fact that too many schools have narrowed their primary curriculum in the false belief that focusing intensively on literacy and maths will be the best preparation for SATs. Her "slogan" for how Inspiration manages the competing demands of test accountability versus good education is "broaden the curriculum in order to do well in the tests".

"They need to do lots of history, geography, RE, science, music and art - masses of it," she insists. "Otherwise, they're not going to spot the words 'paradise' or 'dodo'."

She is wary of the danger of drifting "into a horrible instrumentalism" and is adamant that curriculum design must not aim solely at test success.

"They need to do those things because they're wonderful in their own right, and that's what primary education should be all about; understanding the world," she says. "We have to at some point stop throwing the kitchen sink at year 6 and year 11."



"THE PERFECT, DIVERSE HISTORY CURRICULUM IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE"

Echoing Amanda Spielman, who is currently spearheading Ofsted's review into what makes a great curriculum, she exudes optimism that a broad, balanced education will also lead to test success, believing that accountability measures and good curriculum delivery are "ultimately compatible".

"To say that children should be studying EBacc subjects in key stage 3 in order to do well at the EBacc is a classic case of very, very poor curricular theorising," she explains. "A curriculum doesn't work like that. The way in which curriculum works is through the indirect manifestation of knowledge."

But what knowledge? The new GCSE curricula have been criticised for being too old-school, upper-middle class, establishment-English, too culturally narrow.

At this point she insists we need to "go beyond Hirsch" to Michael Young, who posits knowledge as something that "escapes its origins; it's there for everybody. It isn't just the preserve of the people who hold it."

She advances the argument that we must teach the established canon to give pupils the chance to reshape it: "They can't become part of the argument if they don't know what they're arguing against."

To keep questing after "the perfect, diverse mixture of literature, or the perfect diverse history curriculum" is "almost impossible". The "most crucial truth" however, is to make sure pupils understand that "what I'm teaching you now is not all there is".

Her vision of knowledge and teaching, and the eternal evolution and malleability of the canon as part of our constant "pursuit of truth" is infused with hope, and echoes her description of the best kind of teacher, who leaves you with two emotions: "Awe at the expanse of human knowledge that we don't yet know, and humility at our limits to know."

Counsell read history at Edinburgh before training as a teacher in Cardiff and working at comprehensive schools in her home county of Gloucestershire, and specialises in teaching history in post-conflict zones. She has done a lot of work in Lebanon and Cyprus "helping communities of history teachers after a terrible conflict or continuing latent conflict to work out how to teach history in that context."

She attributes her success in this area to the way she teaches history, "with a strong emphasis on the disciplinary

as well as the substantive, and handling the fact that it has to be about argument and debate. And you can't avoid the fact that there is no mono-narrative."

Counsell was recruited to Inspiration Trust in 2016, relocating from Cambridge with her orchestra-conductor husband. The job was appealing for the chance to "pull various strands together that don't often get pulled together: curriculum, teaching and learning, teacher training".

Prior to that, and after a spell as a local authority advisor responsible for primary and secondary schools in Gloucestershire, she worked for 19 years at Cambridge University, training up experienced teachers "as curriculum theorists, as people who are knowledgeable about research, as about people who are passionate in building subject communities", a role she says is not dissimilar to what she's doing now.

Her current responsibilities include curriculum, teaching and learning, teacher development and teacher training.

Pedagogy and curriculum shouldn't be separated, she explains, as how you teach is necessarily different for each subject. "You're in a disaster zone if you start trying to have a homogenous approach to teaching and learning."

Direct instruction, for example - a teaching technique developed by an education professor called Siegfried Engelmann - works very well in some contexts, such as catch-up work around literacy or imparting basic components of mathematics, but "would not be very helpful at all for teaching secondary school history".

"If I'm trying to understand, for example, an empire in history, then it gets really quite tricky," she explains. "What you want to be doing in history teaching is problematising a word like 'empire'. You want children to understand how the word gets used and how slippery and interesting it is by getting them to question and ask."

This doesn't eschew the need for knowledge, however. Quite the contrary. "I think teaching often goes wrong if we plunge into getting children to have an argument about something and they don't know enough."

While rejecting my attempt to pass off direct instruction as a "fad", she's happy to apply the term to other practices: "I would call knowledge organisers a fad". This is not to deny they can be "quite useful in some circumstances, but they're about one per cent of

PROFILE: CHRISTINE COUNSELL

"WE HAVE TO STOP THROWING THE KITCHEN SINK AT YEAR 6 AND YEAR 11"



the business of thinking about knowledge".

Their potential dangers include confusing "the core and the periphery", turning learning into "something quite arid and dry" or oversimplifying complicated concepts, particularly in the arts and humanities.

The core knowledge you want pupils to remember is supported by an equally important "hinterland", she explains.

"The little examples, the stories, the illustrations, the richness, the dwelling on this but not that, you know, and the times when you as a teacher go off-piste with your passion".

Brilliant teaching and learning "that just lights children up and makes them receptive because it's so fascinating" is partly about getting the right balance "between input from the teacher, and the child responding and acting and doing and applying," she says.

But are the new GCSE exam specifications not so packed with knowledge that it must be crammed, leaving little time for debates of this kind?

"I don't buy that at all," she retorts. "It's perfectly teachable within two or three years, but more crucially it's more teachable if you've got lots of background knowledge. That's the point."

But what options are open to teachers whose pupils have not progressed through a perfectly designed all-through curriculum?

She accepts that students must be prepared for the "fiddly demands" of standardised tests, but is still sceptical that making test preparation the primary focus is a successful strategy.

"It is confusing the exam mark scheme and the things that you have to do to pass the test with a progression model," she says. "It's imagining that by practicing those things a lot you're going to get better, when what's really going to make you better is that subsurface stuff."

"If you imagine a child in year 10 and for whatever

reason they haven't been taught well or enough, and they're facing having to comment on an Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem. Do you just drill over the features of sonnets for two years? Do you drill them in that particular sonnet?"

She references one of her English subject specialists, Summer Turner, who would advise that the answer is "actually to read a few more sonnets".

Counsell's team comprises two English staff, two history, two science, one RE and one music director, with other subjects planned for next year. She intended to recruit Ebacc subject specialists first, but "found a really stunning RE and philosophy person" and ended up hiring them instead.

The teachers have a dedicated curriculum centre in which to work, but are often out and about in schools, imparting training, working with subject teachers, and building "the kinds of vibrant, scholarly, active subject communities" that they hope will inspire teachers to get really excited about their subject, and their profession.

The pupils attending Inspiration Trust's 14 schools are no more privileged than those in other areas of the country. In fact, they span one of the opportunity areas that have been marked out by the education secretary due to various deprivation measures.

So is it really the case that the new "fat" GCSE specifications are too demanding, or does it just need a dream team of dedicated experts working tirelessly to crack the formula?

Spielman seems to have faith in Counsell, having invited her to be part of a select advisory panel to her curriculum review that includes *No More Marking's* head of education Daisy Christodoulou and Sam Twiselton, director of Sheffield Institute of Education.

And at least with this approach they won't need to redesign their entire curriculum the next time some education secretary decides it's time to reform standardised testing.

IT'S A PERSONAL THING

What's your escape fantasy?

Borneo. I've been there before but I'd like to go back. It's one of the few places I've been in the world where it's completely silent. And also the orangutans are rather wonderful to look at. We stayed in the jungle. At night, there is this silence that like nothing else.

What was your position in the family growing up?

I was the youngest, so I was the little annoying sister. I'm much, much younger than my brother and sister, so I was very spoiled. And I think I was very lucky because my parents gave up, in a good way, by the time the third child came along. They were deliciously relaxed. So my brother and sister had all the battles, and I think I had a much better time.

Favourite thing about Norfolk vs Cambridge

Thetford Forest and Holkham Bay, definitely. Oh, and the A11 is a much nicer road than the A14.

What would you have done if you hadn't gone into education?

That's easy; I would have been an astrophysicist.

Who was the teacher who most influenced you?

Mr Walker, my English teacher when I was nine, at St Johns-On-The-Hill prep school in Chepstow, Monmouthshire. We just sat in the library every lesson while he talked passionately about particular books and made us read them. He lived joy in reading and made it feel normal.

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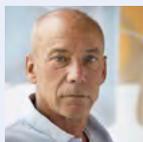
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OPINION



MARY CURNOCK COOK

Independent educationalist and former chief executive of UCAS

Making the best transition from school to university

The narrow A-level curriculum is leaving more and more new undergraduates unable to cope with the rigours of university, says Mary Curnock Cook

Earlier this autumn, over 330,000 young people made the leap from school or college to higher education. Many of them will have been ill-prepared for this transition, which involves a fundamental change in social and educational norms.

Preparing students was the topic of a lively roundtable discussion recently hosted by Sir Anthony Seldon. As vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham and a former head of Wellington College, he is unusual in having first-hand experience of teaching at schools and universities. He reminded us that at each transition in young people's lives, institutions often blame each other for the deficits that make the change difficult to manage.

"Most students know they are going to have to manage an enormous social change

“ I just wish they'd arrive at university able to do percentages and fractions, and structure a decent paragraph," lamented Dr Jones. Even students with strong GCSE grades in maths might have had little cause to practise their numeracy skills for two years before they start their degree courses.

The discussion also picked up differences in the levels of students' preparedness for university depending on which qualifications were studied. Most agreed that the International Baccalaureate is the best preparation for higher education with its six subjects, including maths and a language, plus a project and core curriculum. But only a few thousand UK students apply to university with the IB each year.

A-level students might have good knowledge in specific subjects, but suffer from a narrow curriculum. The increasing number of students progressing to university with BTECs or similar applied general qualifications often have lower levels of literacy and numeracy, and flounder when faced with exams, synoptic learning and assessment, and the extensive reading and research that accompanies many degree programmes.

Universities, recruiting in a competitive market, are moving quickly to remedy these deficits. Many have introduced foundation years for weaker students and all recognise that supporting students to make the transition in the early weeks and months of their degree programme is vital to support success and reduce drop-out rates.

Schools and colleges, while acknowledging the importance of preparing students for this important transition, say they simply cannot find the extra resources to support it. And without more funding, this doesn't seem likely to change.

as they become responsible for their own budgets, laundry, shopping and cooking, as well as launching themselves into an entirely new social group," said Dr Harriet Jones, a prominent expert in transitions to higher education. "But few understand that there is a different teaching and learning model at university and that this can be even more challenging than the social transition."

Students who are used to a curriculum driven almost entirely by an assessment model struggle when there is no formula for passing an exam and they are expected to have more agency in their learning. Now that nearly 50 per cent of undergraduates are the first in their family to experience higher education, more and more students are taken by surprise by the need to find their own motivations, to question and challenge, think

in depth and develop the more open and enquiring mindset demanded for successful higher education.

Contributors pointed to the narrowing of the sixth-form curriculum that has resulted from the return to linear A-levels, as many students study just three subjects post-16. Squeezed sixth-form funding mean there is little resource for enrichment programmes, and take-up of post-16 maths programmes, such as core mathematics, has remained low. In many schools and colleges, the extended project qualification is the only exposure that students get to independent enquiry and learning, and much of the rest of the curriculum is relentlessly assessment-driven.

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SIMON BURGESS

Professor of economics, University of Bristol

Don't jump to conclusions on teacher peer observation

A recent study on the effects of peer observation found it made no difference, but there may be a reason for that, argues one of the researchers

In a recent *Schools Week* article it was reported that a recent trial in which teachers observed their peers did not raise pupil attainment. I was part of the team that conducted the study, and, if you'll allow me, I'd like to show you that it should not necessarily be written off.

First, a brief detour into study design. The analysis adopted the "intention to treat" format that Education Endowment Foundation uses for all its studies, which measures not what each teacher does, but whether or not they were offered the intervention. In the context of schools, since teachers cannot be forced to participate, and accurate monitoring is often problematic, this is definitely the right approach to take.

So in this case, instead of asking "do students taught by teachers who participate in peer observation have better outcomes?" the study asked, "does a policy of offering teachers peer observation lead to improvements in students' outcomes?"

In this approach, the evaluation can give a null result for two reasons. At one extreme, the intervention might truly be ineffective: all those eligible for the treatment took it, but it made no difference to the outcome. Alternatively, it might be that no-one eligible for the treatment took it up, so the evaluation compares two untreated groups and again finds no difference.

Returning to our own intervention, schools that were randomly selected for treatment were provided with observation software licences, iPads and training, and were asked to carry out a set number of lesson observations. While we could rapidly observe whether an observation had taken place through the software, we had no leverage to ensure that they did. Even persuasion was diluted – we had no direct access to teachers, so our messages went indirectly.

In fact, the number of observations carried out was very low. A third of teachers in the treatment group were involved in none at all, and less than a quarter of the schools got all the relevant teachers involved. Non-participation may be a major explanation for the lack of impact: the evaluation compared outcomes for a control group with a "treated" group that was, in reality, barely treated. That raises questions about why so few

observations were done, which we discuss below.

Can we still learn anything about the potential for teacher peer observation from this study? Yes, we can. The provisional (unreviewed) results – found by myself, Shenila Rawal from the Oxford Partnership for Education Research and Analysis and Eric Taylor of Harvard University – show that schools which carried out some observations did see significant and sizeable increases in maths and English GCSE scores. If these provisional and preliminary results are confirmed, then these gains are definitely worth having for an inexpensive intervention.

“ **Non-participation may be a major explanation for the lack of impact**

It is important to note that these effects may not be all causal – and our future analysis will use standard statistical approaches to address this. But the results suggest that we should not give up on peer observation yet.

We return to the question of why so few observations were carried out. Even though only one or two 20-minute observations per half-term were required, using a simple interface on a networked mobile device, teacher workload could still be a factor. Second, while an experimental setting usually gives an intervention a better chance than real life, it was not so in this case. Our research grant contained no funding for teaching cover, so schools had to organise it themselves. We were also working under strict anonymity conditions and could not contact teachers directly. We had a teacher acting as project liaison in each school, but those people were typically not senior.

So before we ditch forever the idea of teacher peer observation, we would urge caution in responding to the headline results. We do not argue that the NFER report is wrong; we confirm the results. Our aim in writing this piece is not to claim that peer observation definitely works. It is to claim that we cannot say for sure from this study that it does not.

Will Millard recently visited Japan, where schools assess pupils' curiosity and confidence. Can it help the UK, he asks

I recently had the pleasure of visiting schools in and around Tokyo for a week, speaking to teachers and educationalists about assessment for LKMco and Pearson's forthcoming report, 'Testing the water'.

It is no secret that students in Japan perform very well indeed academically; the country has historically always performed well in the OECD PISA rankings, and in 2015 it came second only to Singapore overall. To my surprise, though, I found teachers and principals wanted to talk less about academics, and more about the considerable time and energy they spend developing and grading pupils' "soft skills".

As LKMco and Pearson's report will highlight, many teachers and parents in England are concerned that statutory tests and exams narrow the curriculum, and that soft skills are sidelined. We want to know whether our teachers should begin grading and reporting pupils' soft skills to redress this balance, Japan-style?

The soft skills that Japanese teachers assess depend on the curriculum area. However, most teachers take into account pupils' willingness to study, curiosity and confidence. At a school I visited in the Tokyo ward of Sumida, subject teachers use their professional judgement to award pupils with A to C grades in each soft skill, in each subject. As a teacher in Kunitachi explained, students' grades in these areas are non-



WILL MILLARD

Senior associate, LKMco

Should we grade young people's soft skills too?

trivial and can affect which high school (and, on rare occasions, which university) pupils are accepted into. Many teachers therefore see assessing pupils' soft skills as a way of counteracting the impact of university entrance exams, which are very much focused on academic knowledge, and in particular on language and maths.

So would grading pupils' soft skills be something worth adopting here? On reflection, I think not. While I think the rationale for doing so in Japan is laudable, I had reservations about some of what I saw.

Although the government has published guidance that provides criteria for what a B might look like in each skill in each subject, it is up to schools and teachers to decide what constitutes an A or C. As our report

explains, using level or grade descriptors to make judgements about pupils' work can lead to unreliable results. Indeed, a number of the teachers I spoke to talked about the difficulty of ensuring their judgements tallied with their colleagues'. Many schools mitigate against this through moderation, with teachers coming together in subject teams to compare judgements, although this rarely happens between schools.

Furthermore, some school teachers and university staff explained how, in practice, there is often a close correlation between pupils' soft skills and academic grades. In other words, achieving an A grade in maths will in most cases reflect a combination of strong subject knowledge and a willingness to study, curiosity, and so on. It would also be

difficult (and likely undesirable) to improve a students' confidence in a subject without their academic grades improving, so the separation of these could be misleading.

“**There is a close correlation between soft skills and academic grades**”

Yet, even if grading soft skills were objective and reliable, and provided meaningful information on top of academic grades, I found myself wondering whether this is the point. Like their counterparts in Japan, many teachers in England feel the curriculum is overly influenced by narrow, high-stakes tests. But the answer to this is not to keep grading more stuff. When we publish our report next week, we hope it will show some of the ways schools can use different assessments to support pupils' development and how educational assessment can be reformed so that it helps all pupils achieve their potential.

"Testing the Water: How assessment can underpin, not undermine, great teaching" by LKMco and Pearson will be published on November 30, and next week's edition of Schools Week will feature exclusive new data analysis from the report.

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Agenda and speaker announcements will be published in Jan.



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REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

To view individual blogs visit
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Our blog reviewer of the week is Iesha Small, an educational researcher, teacher and commentator @ieshasmall

How Facebook figures out everyone you've ever met

Kadmir Hill, Gizmodo.com

"Behind the Facebook profile you've built for yourself is another one, a shadow profile, built from the inboxes and smartphones of other Facebook users."

Like over 650 million others, I have a Facebook profile. However, I've stopped using it regularly as I was starting to get irritated by colleagues friending me and then receiving what I considered inappropriate friend requests from pupils or parents who were part of their wider Facebook network.

This article outlines the extent to which Facebook makes connections between even the briefest of acquaintances. It also reveals how little control you have over this process. Reading it, I immediately thought of the ramifications for teachers. Most teachers wouldn't use their personal mobile or email address to contact parents, but how many of us check our work email on our phones? This article is a thought-provoking read for educators in considering who has our personal and professional data, how we may unwittingly share it and how it's used.

Breaking heads – how far is too far?

@Oldprimaryhead1

"To become the Headteacher I am today I have had to be allowed to fail."

This post outlines many of the reasons that as an assistant head I decided that headship wasn't an attractive destination for me and that ultimately I needed a change of direction. The author, a headteacher with 16

years' experience, speaks honestly about the stress of the job and the increased demands from parents and external agencies, as well as the impact of the teacher recruitment crisis and declining teacher wellbeing.

He discusses the time that he was so unaware of his own stress that his body informed him, via impotence. I wish this head luck, and the many others like him who are working hard in schools across the country to find solutions, while wondering if it's only really a matter of time before their luck runs out.

The real way to instill a love of learning

@iQuirky_Teacher

"We will stop at nothing to ensure that your child is a fluent reader."

Whoever the Quirky Teacher is, they have my vote with this blog. As a secondary maths teacher my life is made much easier with the pupils who come in at year 7 who can read extremely well. It unlocks the keys for learning in all subjects. As a parent of a seven-year-old who loves to read, I can see that it has given him the freedom to learn and teach himself things that will never be on the school syllabus.

The Quirky Teacher argues that we should be aiming for a love of learning beyond school, which can only happen if children can access learning themselves by reading without a teacher. They also remind us that it takes hard work and nothing worthwhile is ever easy.

Disagreements don't have to be disagreeable

@KateBV

"I welcome those who disagree with me. I purposefully seek them out."

In our increasingly partisan and tribal online age this is a refreshing view from Kate Bowen-Viner. It can be easy to stay in our real-life and online siloes and then to be shocked or even rude when others disagree with us. This could be the reason why so many centrist or left-leaning southerners (a group to which I probably belong) were so shocked by the leave result at Brexit. Kate makes the case for widening the pool of voices we listen to and discuss educational (and wider) ideas with. She also suggests that any disagreements that do arise can be done with good grace and that status, real or perceived, should not put anybody beyond challenge.

Born to fail? Social mobility: A working-class view

By Sonia Blandford

Published by John Catt Educational

Reviewed by Jaz Ampaw-Farr



Sonia Blandford shares powerful and concise insights into the questions surrounding social mobility in her new book.

She immediately engages readers by outlining, then solving, the quandary of growing up working class but presenting as a middle-class adult, by insisting she will always be working class in her actions and deeds: "My moral compass was set at birth."

Growing up as a working-class, disadvantaged, mixed-race foster child, my own disengagement from school was down to the feeling that education was a tribe I didn't belong in. School culture was middle class and presented as the norm but it seemed alien to me.

One teacher made it quite clear that how I thought and felt were irrelevant, because my only chance of success was to change what I said and did to be more, well, middle class!

Sonia discusses this mismatch throughout her book and suggests teachers need more time to reflect on translating the curriculum, and their own values and beliefs, into a meaningful learning experience, which is important in creating an inclusive and accessible culture.

Whether facing a secondary history curriculum consisting mostly of work by dead white guys, or a primary literacy curriculum obsessed with the correct use of a semicolon, teachers need to be free to start by asking better questions. Those who begin with "what's wanted and needed to engage these learners?" are onto a winner.

Small steps that schools can take include not castigating pupils who persistently arrive late but instead training reception staff to welcome and reassure them. Similarly, instead of wasting "precious lesson time" focusing on the things they don't have – for example a pen – teachers should focus on what they have got: "time, in the classroom, with a teacher."

Blandford eloquently outlines the need for middle-class teachers to switch from

"rescuing to valuing" the people they are trying to help. She does this through the concept of "mutuality", which is about valuing people and "allowing them to develop in their own way, where they are now, or where they want to be."

Mutuality also includes "resisting the urge" to make the number of working-class children going into higher education our primary measure of social mobility. Blandford thinks government should "focus on what can make life better for everyone, rather than focusing on policies that aim to rescue the talented or the worthy from

one sector of society and find them a place in another".

Valuing allows for personal growth in a way that rescuing doesn't. The teachers who modelled that for me in school used questioning to allow me a window to a world that had seemed inaccessible. By valuing and acknowledging me first, just as I was, they gave me

what I lacked: the belief that I could access it. Education became more valuable when I was given autonomy to make choices rather than being told what the right way to think and feel was. Those teachers embedded the language and behaviour Sonia outlines as "I CAN, I DO, I HAVE, I AM".

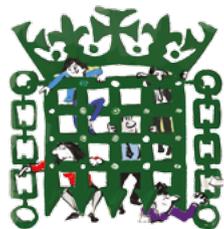
"I CAN" is an understanding that you can achieve. Facilitating "I DO" involves removing the barriers to learning in the classroom. "I HAVE" is understanding the knowledge you possess and finally, "I AM" is the "feel-good factor", which will give them "a desire to engage with a future educational journey."

Sonia's insights into the challenges teachers face are highlighted by the culture of "calling out the fear" in our education system. She describes the teachers who are asked to do more with less, while living under the constant fear of judgement, feeling their only option is to complain and compete.

But what's also true is that crisis brings an opportunity to recalibrate, and Sonia offers many practical solutions to this trap through creativity and collaboration. This is not only more conducive to the self-worth of teachers, it can also be less expensive. I recommend that all educators and policymakers read her advice and act upon it.

BOOK REVIEW





Week in Westminster

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

BUDGET SPECIAL

WEDNESDAY:

Hilarious Hammond

Philip Hammond seems to think maths is a joke.

Fresh from his cringeworthy jokes about popular culture (he managed to mention *Top Gear* and *I'm A Celebrity...* without knowing what either of them are), "Spreadsheet Phil" decided to make a gag about maths being boring. Oh, the irony.

After announcing a tranche of piecemeal policies aimed at boosting maths education, which were supposed to distract from the lack of anything actually inspiring for schools in the budget, Phil said his new mantra was "more maths for everyone".

"Don't let anyone say I don't know how to show the nation a good time," he grinned, as the nation rolled its collective eyes.

Not only is this joke "hilarious", but it also helpfully perpetuates the myth that maths is boring. That'll really help get loads more kids to sign up for A-level. Cheers, Phil.

A tale of two tweets

While Phil had us giggling in the gallery, the Conservative Party fired off tweets about his announcements, showering itself in praise.



But Week in Westminster was baffled by a tweet about the £600 maths premium, which Phil had said would be for every extra pupil studying A-level maths.

The party, however, put out a massive advertisement claiming the £600 payments would be for "each student who decides to study maths beyond GCSE".

This is not the case. We know, because Week in Westminster spent several hours flagging the inaccuracy both to Conservative HQ and to the Treasury. While someone at the headquarters



admitted that "yeah, the Treasury is probably right", we note the inaccurate tweet from the Tories was still online at the time of going to print.

In case of any doubt: this cash is only available for every additional pupil studying maths. If you've already got loads of them

doing maths, you're screwed.

Don't worry, we're sure good-time Phil has a joke ready to placate you.

The vanishing £16 million

The budget can be a hectic time for government, so they can be forgiven for occasionally losing track of a policy or two. But to lose £16 million at once just looks careless.

The Treasury briefed the media over the weekend that it would allocate £100 million to boost computing education, with a new National Centre for Computing set to train an extra 8,000 computer science teachers.

However, by the time the budget rolled around, there was just £84 million put aside for that purpose, leaving schools wondering where their extra £16 million went.

Still, at least it justifies all the extra spending on maths education. Maybe future chancellors will be less clumsy.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



Name Andy Samways

Age 46

Occupation

Director of research and teaching schools, Samuel Ward Academy Trust

Location Suffolk

Subscriber since June 2017

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*?

I try to get a quick skim through the digital copy at home on Thursday, and then browse the paper copy on Friday when it's delivered to our offices.

Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?

The news is always so well informed and highlights the very latest on such a wide range of emerging and pertinent issues.

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

Not policy as such, but my current wish would be for all of us involved in bidding for the strategic school improvement fund to know the outcomes of round 2 bids before the window for round 3 bids opens. That way, teaching schools, MATs and LAs could go into this funding round fully informed on their capacity to deliver.

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

Those recently that were so informative around the ever-changing pathways and processes of initial teacher training. The infographic was a perfect illustration of an ever more complex landscape.

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

I share the paper copy with colleagues by putting the copy on tables in the reception of our trust offices. I've increasingly highlighted particular articles to specific staff as they are always so current and informative.

What would you do if you were editor of *Schools Week* for a day?

I'd shine a light on and celebrate the passionate, determined and hard-working staff of local schools.

Favourite memory of your school years?

At secondary school it was the great friendships, being our first school team to successfully complete Ten Tors Expedition, and the brilliant teachers who were so influential in my school life and steps to university.

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

It would be crops, trees and tractors all the way! I'd love to be enjoying the fresh air and hard work of organic farming and training to become a tree surgeon.

Favourite book on education?

I keep coming back to *What every teacher needs to know about psychology* by David Didau and Nick Rose. It contains a wealth of illuminating evidence informed practice for teachers at all stages of their career.

What new things would you like to see in *Schools Week*?

Research round-up: A feature providing a summary of evidence on a salient topic within education, which highlights effective practice to raise attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Not quite an office, but if I'm allowed it, the training grounds of England RUFC with head coach Eddie Jones.

School Bulletin *with Sam King*

If you have a story you'd like to see featured in the school bulletin, email samantha.king@schoolsweek.co.uk

Modern medical miracles **FEATURED**

A national science competition in which school pupils attempt to solve global health problems has announced the 20 projects that have made it to the final round.

Run by the British Science Association with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Youth Grand Challenges initiative asked 11- to 19-year-olds in schools across the UK to invent innovative ways to mitigate infectious diseases.

Thousands of schools took part, with projects ranging from curing mosquito-borne diseases to transporting medicines in the developing world. Fourteen-year-old student Blaise Cloran from Our Lady of Sion School even came up with a new, quicker method of diagnosing hepatitis by combining an ELISA test with silk fibroin.

Pupils entered one of four categories: discovery, requiring five hours of work; bronze, requiring 10 hours and focusing on transferable skills; silver, requiring 30 hours on a project; and gold which took up 70 hours on a project that contributes something new to the scientific or technological community.

A silver finalist from Sheffield High School, 15-year-old Lucy Pirzada, created a website to help educate people on the importance of vaccinations.



Blaise Cloran

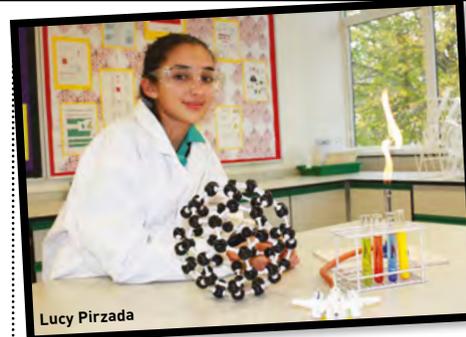
"I really enjoyed carrying out my project," she said. "It has helped me see how technology is used in a medical way to help combat so many infectious diseases, and the massive impact vaccines have on global health."

The final projects will be judged by Dr James Logan, a TV presenter and academic from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, former Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq, and Alexandra Rutishauser-Perera, the head of nutrition at Action Against Hunger UK, at the grand final on December 7.

Prizes include a fully-funded place at a two-week science and enrichment programme, the London International



Bronze finalists attempt to find alternatives to soap



Lucy Pirzada

Youth Science Forum, a £1,500 travel bursary, the chance to work as a field scientist through Anturus, and a visit to a research institute of the winner's choosing.



This year's participant shares some CPD

FANCY A TRIP TO SIERRA LEONE OR LIBERIA?

An international teacher training programme wants teachers to spend their Easter or summer holidays in west Africa next year.

The programme, run by the charity Street Child, sends qualified UK teachers to Sierra Leone or Liberia for two weeks to help build the confidence of local teachers through workshops.

Successful applicants will pay £145 per week to take part, which covers the cost of accommodation, lunch, project-specific transport and airport transfers, with one fully-funded place up for grabs for the first time this year.

Teachers are also asked to commit to a minimum fundraising target of £1,000, and the charity will provide support and resources to help to reach it.

"I learned more than I taught," said Joanna York, who travelled to Sierra Leone earlier this year. "The trip is a fantastic way to continue professional development by exchanging experiences and learning about teaching in different settings."

Trips will commence on April 1, July 28 or August 12. Applications should be completed by December 31.

To find out more, visit: www.street-child.co.uk/international-teacher-training-programme/



Out of this world: The group visit NASA

Bromley girls rock it to NASA

A group of pupils from Harris Girls' Academy in Bromley have paid a visit to NASA on a trip encouraging more girls to pursue STEM careers.

The team of 28 travelled to Cape Canaveral in Florida, where they learned about the logistics of a space launch, climbed an anti-gravity wall and took a spin in a multi-axis trainer.

Pupils also had the chance to visit the Kennedy Space Centre and speak to Jon McBride, the veteran astronaut who piloted the Orbiter Challenger during an eight-day

mission into space.

The trip was open to students from all year groups, and one year 11 pupil, Verity, said the "once-in-a-lifetime" trip had shown her "the fun in science."

"We know that it is important, especially as an all-girls school, to offer these kinds of inspirational extracurricular experiences in the world of STEM," explained David Astin, the school's principal. "We believe our students will be among the brilliant mathematicians, engineers and scientists of tomorrow."



Luke St Clair and Emily Santos meet BBC TV presenter Steph McGovern

'Rolls Royce' of work experience

Two year ten pupils attended a Jeremy Corbyn press conference and received careers advice from a BBC presenter while on a journalism work experience trip with *Schools Week's* sister publication, *FE Week*.

The students, from Southfields Academy in London, were shadowing journalists at the Association of Colleges national conference in Birmingham last week.

Emily Santos and Luke St Clair approached BBC breakfast presenter Steph McGovern while they were interviewing conference delegates during the break, and she encouraged them to pursue their own interests before going into journalism.

"For example, I studied engineering first," she told them.

They also attended a question-and-answer

session with the Labour leader at a local college, where they jumped in to ask questions.

"I asked him whether a more leftist Labour that gets into power less often is better than a more centrist Labour that gets into power more often", said Luke. "He said a government with socialist principles is important."

Engaging in meta-conversations on Twitter about the keynote speeches was the best part, according Emily.

"I liked quoting what they were saying and challenging what people were commenting on," she said. "It made me focus more so I gathered more information from it."



Visit to South & City College, Birmingham



Year 5s bring steel to Youth Proms

FEATURED EXTRA

Almost 3,000 school pupils have performed at London's Royal Albert Hall as part of the annual Music for Youth Proms.

The three-night event welcomed talented young performers from schools across the UK, with music ranging from acapella choirs, jazz bands, and full-scale orchestras to a six-piece alt-rock band.

The pupils that took part in the event, on November 13, 14 and 15, were selected to perform in London after taking part in regional and national heats hosted by Music for Youth earlier in the year.

Among the performers were the energetic St Ann's CoE Primary School steel band, which was made up of 15 year 5 pupils.

The group first performed at the MFY Festival in Camden, and were then invited to take part in a national festival at Birmingham's Symphony Hall before taking to the Royal Albert Hall stage last week.

"The St Ann's Steel Band started up in April 2016. We entered MFY and I saw the band go from strength to strength. Now at the beginning of year 5 they will be performing at the Royal Albert Hall," said Alicia Brown, the school's steelpan



The grand finale

teacher. "I have never in my 20 years of teaching the steelpan seen a group develop so fast. I am immensely proud of them."

Music for Youth provides free performance opportunities for young people aged 21 and under with help from Arts Council England, the Department for Education, Creative Scotland and the Department of Education

for Northern Ireland.

"MFY believes in the power of music to transform young people's lives," said Judith Webster, the charity's chief executive.

"Inspirational performance opportunities play an incredibly important part in motivating young people to progress in their music making."



St Ann's CoE Primary School Steel Band

Photo: Alick-Cotterill



Keeping the beat

Photo: Alick-Cotterill



JAMES SPICER

Head of school,
Tilstock Primary
School

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Head of school, St. Thomas' C of E Primary School

INTERESTING FACT: James wrote, produced and directed an outdoor nativity play for children at his school, which included real-life animals.



MATTHEW PARR-BURMAN

Executive headteacher,
Carisbrooke and
Medina Colleges

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Principal, Fakenham Academy

INTERESTING FACT: Matthew is a keen triathlete and has competed in over 100 races in the past 25 years.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



SARAH HOWELLS

Principal, King's
Academy Binfield

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Headteacher, Frogmore Community College

INTERESTING FACT: Sarah was at university with comedian Caroline Aherne. Caroline called her Cathy due to the similarity of Sarah's perm'd 80s hairstyle with that of Cathy Beale in EastEnders.



NICK HUDSON

CEO, Ormiston
Academies Trust

START DATE: November 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Interim CEO, Ormiston Academies Trust

INTERESTING FACT: Nick loves adventure, and once travelled by train from Todmorden in West Yorkshire to Marrakech in Morocco.



JO BULL

Headteacher, High
Arcal School

START DATE: October 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Interim headteacher, High Arcal School

INTERESTING FACT: Jo's proudest achievement is climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

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

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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

Spot the difference
to WIN a **Schools Week** mug



Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

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

Solutions:
Next week



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