

#### SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

# Conservative conference round-up

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# **Academies face** council scrutiny

Local boards may summon CEOs of vulnerable trusts Too many chains at the bottom of the tables, says Laws

#### FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

Councils could soon have scrutiny powers over academies similar to those they already have for health bodies as the government seeks to boost mechanisms for intervention in schools.

Schools Week understands that the Department for Education (DfE) is in talks about replicating the work of council "health scrutiny boards" to address fears about the quality of some academies and the

trusts that run them.

**PENSIONS:** 

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**SUPPORT STAFF** 

**SCHEME DEFICITS** 

It follows warnings from union leaders that councils are powerless to intervene when they hear about educational underperformance and poor attendance in academies, and after MPs questioned the accountability of the government's network of schools commissioners.

Existing scrutiny boards or committees allow councils to hold local health bodies to account. They can interrogate those responsible for health services in their area **Continues on page 3** 



**ELIN DE ZOETE: HOW TO DO PR** 

**AS A SCHOOL** 

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**NEWS: CONSERVATIVE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 2016** 

# Theresa May

Theresa May's conference pledge to lift the ban on new grammar schools appears to pre-empt the outcome of a consultation on the controversial plans.

The prime minister promised the Conservative party conference on Wednesday that she would scrap the ban introduced by Tony Blair's government in 1998 – which she described as a "scandal" that deprived "ordinary working-class people" access to "good, popular, lifechanging schools".

Her insistence that the ban will be lifted comes as consultation on her school reforms continues and as she faces a real possibility that she could lose a vote in parliament on the proposal.

But the PM appeared undeterred, claiming that the ban only reinforced the belief of working-class people that there was "one rule for them, and another for everyone else".

"That is a scandal and we – the

Conservative party – must bring it to an end.

"Where there is demand from parents, where they will definitely take pupils from all backgrounds, where they will play a part in improving the quality of all schools in their area – we will lift the ban on establishing new grammar schools."

The prime minister's comments make a tough floor-fight in parliament almost inevitable, with the government's thin majority in the Commons already looking shaky.

Lucy Powell, the former Labour shadow education secretary, has said more than 30 Conservative MPs oppose the move to bring back selection, while others are said to have misgivings about other elements of the green paper.

Schools Week understands that opponents to the grammar plan are now "working on getting more [Conservative MPs] out of the woodwork". Opposition peers in the Lords have already pledged to block any legislation overturning the ban.

PANNIRE

The announcement has sparked questions about the value of the government's consultation on its plans, which runs until December 12. Education secretary Justine Greening has insisted, however, that the government intends to use it to "take stock" of the public and her own party opinions on grammar schools.

"This is an area of education where for a very long time we've really put it on one side and in the meantime, of course, largely thanks to the reforms we have brought forward over the past six years, the rest of the education system has dramatically transformed," Greening told the BBC's World at One.

"We were always going to at some point have to ask ourselves where grammar schools fitted in and how they could play a role in a 21st century education system."

## ATL questions legality of grammar 'get-out clause'

# GSCHOOLSWEEK Exclusive

Unions are considering a legal challenge over the government's grammar school getout clause after *Schools Week*'s revelation last week that streaming into different school sites by ability is "permissible" in academy trusts.

Lawyers at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) are looking at the legality of the claim that multi-academy trusts (MATs) can filter their brightest pupils to other sites.

Last week experts said the government could use this streaming by ability to dodge the need for new laws to allow grammarstyle schools.

The education green paper proposes to encourage trusts to move their brightest pupils into a single "centre of excellence", something the paper stated is "already permissible" under the current system.

But Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the ATL, told a fringe event at the Conservative party conference on Tuesday that her union was "looking at the legality" of the government's stated interpretation of the 1998 school standards and framework act.

"I don't think the act will bear the weight of that interpretation," Bousted said.

"I don't think that was intended in the act that abolished any more selection and I don't think that's how it can be interpreted." She hinted that the National Union of Teachers might join the action, which Schools Week understands could eventually take the form of a judicial review.

However, Sam Freedman, a special adviser to Michael Gove when he was education secretary, said the 1998 act applied only to local authority maintained schools.

According to Freedman it is the education act 2002 that applies to academies and MATs. It says that MATs operate under the same framework as a single academy.

However Heath Monk, executive director of the King Edward VI Foundation, a grammar school trust in Birmingham, said the 2002 act "can be stretched to cover just about anything".

Earlier this year a legal challenge was brought against the Dean trust in Manchester after it proposed to bus pupils with special educational needs to another of its schools because of limited resources. James Betts, education solicitor at Simpson Millar, which represented parents

of the Dean children, said there was nothing to prohibit a trust offering educational opportunities at another of its schools, provided parents agreed.

The Dean trust had not got parental permission so "backed down" over the plans,

Betts said. The Department for Education (DfE) stated that streaming has always been allowed in academy trusts "to help teachers to give every child an appropriately

stretching education".

A spokesperson said: "Multi-academy trusts have always been able to pool their resources to deliver these benefits on a larger scale and across different sites within the trust, and we want to see more do this."

The spokesperson said the law was clear that trusts must not select pupils by ability at the point of admission, and said streamed pupils "must continue to receive some of their education at the school they are registered to".

However, it is not clear how much education the pupil would still have to receive at their registered school.

# £60m opportunity areas may not stop cash shortfalls

#### FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

Schools in Blackpool, Derby, Norwich,
 Oldham, Scarborough and West
 Somerset will receive extra money and support from the government to reduce inequality, the education secretary has announced.

But the National Union of Teachers says the same areas face cuts of almost £50 million as a result of plans to introduce a national funding formula.

Justine Greening revealed the "opportunity areas" in her speech at the conference on Tuesday. The six council areas, ranked among the worst-performing for social mobility, will each get a share of £60 million priority spending.

Four other areas will also be selected in the coming months for money to be spent on building teaching and leadership capacity in schools and improving access to careers advice.

The 10 areas will also have access to a wider £75 million "Excellence in Leadership and Teaching fund", which appears to be the expansion of another proposal from the white paper – the Excellence in Leadership fund – which was aimed at encouraging trusts and other providers to boost innovations in leadership.

Derby, Scarborough and West Somerset will also receive support through the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, delivered with higher education organisations, which runs summer schools, school visits and



academic mentoring.

Greening told delegates that children in the areas needed "the right knowledge and skills, advice at the right time, and great experiences" and that her department would work with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure these were delivered. A report by the Social Mobility

Commission (SMC) in June revealed areas of England with poor performance among disadvantaged pupils, as well as low average salaries and a lack of good early years' places.

Greening told the conference that the

"opportunity areas" were chosen based on the SMC's index, but each faced a specific set of issues. *Schools Week* understands the initial six places were picked because of the variation in the problems they faced, and because they represented a fairly even geographic spread.

For example, Norwich and Scarborough are among the 20 worst areas for schoolrelated indicators, while West Somerset and Oldham score badly on early years. The union has claimed that when

adjusted for inflation, estimates from the f40 group of councils – which has led the charge for a fairer school funding system – show that the six areas already face cuts in education spending totalling almost £50 million between them.

The union is predicting that Oldham alone could lose more than £19 million, with cuts of £14 million expected in Norwich and almost £6 million in Blackpool.

Kevin Courtney, the union's general secretary, said the proposed spending was a "drop in the ocean" compared with the 8 per cent real terms funding cuts of the next few years, which he claimed would remove £2.5 billion from education.

"The six areas identified for additional funding and support will themselves, individually, lose phenomenal amounts through the current cuts. This extra money will not go far compared with the impacts of the worst funding crisis in decades for all schools and sixth-form colleges. It is misleading in the extreme to present this funding as somehow 'extra'."

# Vulnerable academies face council scrutiny

#### FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

and investigate the claims of constituents.

CONTINUED

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, told a Conservative party conference fringe event, hosted by *Schools Week* and the Education Policy Institute (EPI) on Wednesday, that the DfE's "latest thinking" was that it should "reinstate in local authorities the same functions that they have for health".

She blamed a lack of "real accountability" for a situation in which councils knew of problems in academies, but "cannot get into that school".

Extra powers would allow them to summon chief executives or heads of underperforming academies or those not taking their fair share of hard-to-reach children, and make recommendations that it could pass on to the education secretary.

"I know that [Justine Greening] is looking at that because the secretary of state is concerned about those vulnerable schools, and I think she's right to be concerned. I do not think the current levers are strong enough."

But it is not just the teaching unions that have expressed concerns about the



powers of local and national government to intervene in failing academies and multiacademy trusts.

In a report on the work of schools commissioners, released at the beginning of this year, the education select committee called for better "transparency, accountability and working relationships" in the system, which members warned could be seen as "undemocratic and opaque".

David Laws, the former schools minister, has also described problems with dealing with "failing multi-academy trusts", and claimed that the DfE had gone through a period of hoping that converting schools to academies alone would be a recipe for school improvement.

"If the department was good at dealing with failing MATs, we wouldn't expect them to be over-represented both at the top and the bottom of performance tables – and they are at both primary and secondary," said Laws, who now leads the EPI.

"When I was a minister, about a third of individual academy schools were a cause of some DfE concern, either because they had a low Ofsted rating or low progress scores.

"All these things suggest to me that we've gone through a period where the department rather hoped that academisation by itself would deliver improvement.

"What we're discovering, some may say unsurprisingly, is that a mechanism that puts the right leadership, governance and teaching quality into schools, and not just thinking that moving them automatically away from local authorities, will transfer their performance."

# NEWS

## HMC supports languages centre

Private schools have pledged to support a new national teacher training centre for linguists to stave off a "crisis in modern foreign language skills", *writes Jess Staufenberg*.

The "innovative" school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) will be led by the Silverdale multi-academy trust and is set to open in Sheffield next year.

The centre was announced during the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) this week.

Peter Hamilton, chair of HMC's academic policy committee, said: "Independent schools want to be part of the solution to the critical problems of capacity faced by school language departments across the country.

Mike Buchanan, HMC chairman, called the centre a "ground-breaking collaboration" that showed the private and state sectors could use their individual strengths to "build a better education system".

However, he earlier criticised Theresa May's plans to force independent schools to work with state schools or face having their charitable tax status withdrawn.

He said the relationship could not work "with a gun pointing at our heads".

"Sustainable partnerships also require some down-to-earth, practical things to be in place, such as proximity. [...] Forcing independent and state schools together is fraught with practical difficulties.

"Quite frankly, we cannot solve the structural problems in education that taxpayers entrust to the government – to the tune of £86 billion each year – nor should we be expected to."

# 25% of Cameron's 'landmark' free schools still to open

#### **JOHN DICKENS** @JOHNDICKENSSW

ENSSW Exclusive

More than a quarter of free schools approved by David Cameron under a "landmark" wave of applications had to delay opening this year, *Schools Week* can reveal.

Figures released under Freedom of Information laws show at least 14 of the 49 wave 8 free schools announced last year pushed back opening their doors, originally scheduled for last month.

Ten of the schools are in London boroughs, which face huge pressures to deliver more places to meet population increases. Most of the delays have been caused by a failure to find suitable sites.

But despite the backlog, the government has ploughed on with its free school programme – waving through another 108 schools this year alone.

Angela Rayner, Labour's shadow education secretary, said: "The Tories' free school plans are in chaos and their promises of more to come are worthless when new sites cannot even be found for them."

The government said the "landmark" wave 8 approvals took the number of school places created since 2010 to almost 250,000, "making this policy the most successful new schools programme in national history with schools being created more quickly than ever before".

But Rayner said the government would be better to focus on helping the "majority of children in our schools" by reducing class sizes, reversing school cuts and developing a



strategy to increase teacher recruitment. Schools Week has previously reported how delays, particularly in London, were disrupting the programme. More than 50 free schools had to postpone opening before July last year.

It is likely some would have opened this year, but the new delays will put further pressure on councils needing to find school places.

The delayed schools in wave 8 include Harrow View primary school, in Harrow, north London, and Stationers' academy, in Greenwich, south London, which will now open in 2018.

Figures released by the Labour party last year revealed that the borough of Harrow could have 5,271 more pupils than places in 2018. In Greenwich there could be a 4,046 shortfall.

Constant delays have prompted the Department for Education (DfE) to overhaul

how it awards opening dates for new projects.

A government source said dates were normally set by those applying to open the school, but a new "common sense" approach would ensure sites were bought and planning permission granted before a date was set.

The government has also set up a private firm. LocatED. to take over its responsibility for purchasing new sites, which it hopes will secure sites more quickly and cheaply.

As well as delays, *Schools Week* has previously reported how free schools have had to fold because of the problems finding sites.

The proposed Harperbury free school, due to open in Hertfordshire, was cancelled this year, despite the government having already spent £1.9 million.

The DfE confirmed this week that cancelled schools would not count towards the government's pledge to open 500 new schools by 2020.

It also said a document detailing the amount spent on free schools would be updated soon.

It was last updated 18 months ago. Most schools featured in the list opened in 2011 to 2013, with just one school from 2014.

The DfE said it has a "rigorous assessment and pre-opening process" to ensure only the best projects were approved.

The spokesperson said nearly 350 schools had opened since 2010, adding that "schools open only when we are confident they are in a strong position to provide an excellent education to all pupils from day one".

# FLOREAT'S FINANCIAL WOES FLAG SMALL TRUST CONCERNS

#### JOHN DICKENS @JOHNDICKENSSW

Financial difficulties that have forced an academy chain founded by one of the government's education advisers to consider a merger have prompted warnings about the viability of primary schools trusts.

The Floreat Education Academies Trust, founded by former David Cameron aide Lord O'Shaughnessy, is proposing to join another trust after financial problems in its second year.

Two primary free schools opened last year and another this September. However, another three schools have had to delay opening by at least a year, leaving the trust without expected per-pupil funding. They were due to open last month.

Now a leading primary school trust head has warned more mergers could follow – unless trusts can expand to run more than 25 primaries.

Hugh Greenway, chief executive of the Elliot Foundation academies trust, told *Schools Week*: "I would be surprised if there weren't more mergers in the future, just because of the simple maths."

The Elliot Foundation is the second largest all-primary trust in the country, running 22 schools. But Greenway said funding cuts meant it would have to have 10,000 pupils to guarantee "long-term sustainability".

The trust plans to reach this target by

taking on up to five more primaries by Christmas next year.

"I'm not saying you can't run with fewer than 10,000 pupils, but the only way you can maintain it in the long term is with volunteers or fundraisers – or people you're not quite paying for all the work they are doing."

Martyn Rose, chairman of Floreat, said that operating a small trust was "challenging, especially when the schools involved are newly opened".

He said the trust's main focus was delivering an academic and character education. "For that reason, the board is looking at what is the best path for Floreat, whether that is continuing with our own development plan or merging with another trust."

One of those is said to be Avanti Schools, a Hindubased faith ethos trust, which runs five schools.

Floreat was founded by O'Shaughnessy in 2014. The former director of policy at No 10 stood down as managing director of Floreat in January this year after becoming a Conservative peer, although he remains a senior adviser.

Sam Freedman, a former political adviser to

Michael Gove during his time as education secretary, is also listed as a trust member. Latest accounts for Floreat only cover

the period before it opened any schools (2014-15), so do not give any indication of its financial footing.

But Greenway said the move is indicative of a wider problem over the financial viability of small primaries – many of which are yet to convert into academies.

He said the only feasible route for those schools to convert would be to join large trusts that also ran secondary schools "unless the government finds a way to fund the system costs".

That does not always safeguard schools, though. Weston primary, in the Isle of Wight, converted to an academy in 2011. But the 56-pupil school was closed last year by

sponsor Academies Enterprise Trust, one of the country's largest trusts.

Greenway, who said his foundation could no longer accept primaries with fewer than 400 pupils, added:

Hugh Green

"We're lucky our ethos is attractive for people who are good at what they do and getting people for less than they are worth because they believe in what we are trying to achieve. At a national level, we need a system that doesn't rely on this."

# REAch 2 director joins struggling chain

A regional director of the country's largest primary-only trust has joined the board of a struggling chain, *writes John Dickens*.

Simon Wood, regional director for East Anglia at REAch2, has joined the Seckford Foundation Free School Trust as a non-executive director.

REAch 2, which runs 55 schools and which was last month given approval to open another 21, said the move is an example of its "collaborative approach in the local community, sharing expertise and experience with other schools".

The Seckford trust, which runs three free schools in Suffolk, was given a warning notice in October last year over "unacceptably low" pupil performance at Saxmundham and Beccles schools.

In 2015, 29 per cent of pupils at Saxmundham achieved five A\*-C GCSEs, including English

and maths, with 43 per cent at Beccles. One of the terms of the warning notice was to raise standards at both schools, but results at Beccles reportedly fell to 31 per cent this year,

with Saxmundham yet to confirm its results. It's not clear if the trust has faced any sanctions from the government over its

performance. The Department for Education would only say it was working with Seckford to "secure rapid improvement".

A Seckford spokesperson said the decision to recruit Wood was initiated by the trust.

# **NEWS** Support staff pension deficits slump up to £68m

**JESS STAUFENBERG** @STAUFENBERGJ

Investigates

Multi-academy trust pension deficits for support staff are soaring into the tens of millions, with schools facing another hike in employer contributions, experts have warned.

The largest trusts, one of which has a deficit in their Local Government Pension Scheme [LGPS] in excess of £68 million, might seek to balance costs by outsourcing non-teaching staff to private companies, say pension and school finance experts.

And Schools Week has been told that taxpayers would have to step in to cover an academy's deficit in the case of closure without a new sponsor.

Paul Hamilton, an actuary and head of higher education at consultancy Barnett Waddingham, said continuing poor economic conditions, including market uncertainty after Brexit, and people living for longer meant 20 years of investment returns on pension funds were currently "missing".

As a result, a three-yearly evaluation of the LGPS looks set to recommend a hike in employer contributions in April.

"Pensions are very long term. You've got people now going in at 20 and not dying until 100. The idea is you review it regularly to keep nudging the estimates on track," he said.

"Now that idea hasn't worked so well, because things have moved so quickly."

He said changes in government bond yields, worsened by Brexit, meant "20 years of investment return is missing that we've got to try to make up from employers".

An analysis of academy accounts by Schools Week found the deficit for the LGPS, a defined contribution benefit scheme for non-teaching staff including school business leaders and teaching assistants, is



growing every year as chains expand and returns on investment fail to improve.

The deficit at United Learning, which runs 41 primary and secondary academies, increased from £20.8 million in 2014, to £34.2 million in 2015. The pension deficit at REAch2, which

runs 55 primaries, rose from £12.6 million in 2014, to £18.4 million last year. Academies Enterprise Trust, the country's largest academy chain, has a pension deficit of £68.6 million, down from £71.9 million the previous year, when nine of its academies were merged, closed or moved to other trusts.

But academies have "no real voice" to combat their employer contribution rate because it is calculated by their local pension fund authority according to the average age of staff and value of investments across all of its schools, Hamilton said.

And with the nationally fixed employer contribution rate of 16.4 per cent for the Teacher Pension Scheme also expected to rise, school leaders are warning more costcutting measures may be on the cards.

Micon Metcalfe (pictured), director of finance at Dunraven School in south London, said: "The numbers look big, but it's the sensitivity around the contributions for employer costs that has the real impact.

"If your salary costs rise and your budgets remain the same, we're finding it much more difficult because most of our costs are staff."

ACADEMY TRUST	NO. OF SCHOOLS	PENSION DEFICIT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME				
		2015	2014	2013		
Academies Enterprise Trust	68	£68,598,000	£71,939,000	£61,877,000		
Ormiston Academies	32	£35,390,000	£27,033,000	£15,405,000		
Oasis Community Learning	47	£34,306,000	£29,048,000	£16,420,000		
United Learning	36	£34,258,000	£20,877,000	£10,649,000		
School Partnership Trust	45	£29,970,000	£27,651,000	£21,919,000		
Greenwood Academies	31	£27,903,000	£24,563,000	£13,874,000		
ТКАТ	40	£27,107,000	£24,308,000	£19,813,000		
E-ACT	24	£20,526,000	£19,878,000	£21,974,000		
REAch2	55	£18,453,000	£12,596,000	£3,914,000		
Harris Federation	41	£18,165,000	£15,931,000	£13,642,000		
David Ross Education Trust	33	£17,631,000	£11,443,000	£5,653,000		
Ark Schools	35	£14,940,000	£13,166,000	£6,788,000		
Plymouth CAST	35	£10,021,000	£8,699,000	N/A		
Lilac Sky Schools Trust	9	£1,320,000	£2,971,146	£1,776,320		

Outsourcing support staff to private companies would create savings, Metcalfe

said, claiming that some schools had already approached her to sound out if this

was possible. Although existing staff would retain

right of access to the LGPS, new staff could be enrolled on the company's own pension terms.

There is no legislation to prevent a group of employees being outsourced, but the government blocked AET when it tried to transfer all its non-teaching employees to PricewaterhouseCoopers two years ago.

And while the deficit remains with academy trusts, several pension experts said the government would ultimately have to cough up should a trust collapse without a new sponsor – something described as a "extreme circumstance" by John Wright, head of public sector at pensions firm Hymans Robertson.

The Department for Education (DfE) refused to confirm whether this would be the case.

But the Education Funding Agency stepped in last year to pay Hampshire County Council a one-off settlement, believed to be in the millions, to prevent pension liabilities of cash-strapped Totton college being transferred to its new sponsor, social justice charity Nacro.

However the pension deficit of £1.3 million at the Lilac Sky trust, due to be wound up this year, could be transferred to the new sponsors taking over its nine schools.

A DfE spokesperson, while not able to direct *Schools Week* to specific advice for schools, said: "We know that academies face increasing costs to cover their pension obligations and we are working with colleagues across government to address this. Pension funds have a duty to ensure costs are affordable."

# FOUR-DAY WEEK THREAT AS BUDGETS HIT 'BREAKING POINT'

**BILLY CAMDEN** @BILLYCAMDEN

School budgets at "breaking point" are forcing headteachers to take "drastic measures", a union leader has warned.

Heads of primary and secondary schools across West Sussex sent a letter to parents last week revealing funding cuts may result in a four-day week.

The county is one of the lowest funded in England with, according to local campaign group Worth Less?, pupils receiving £44 million less than the national average this year.

Peter Woodman, head of the Weald school in Billingshurst and chair of the West Sussex Secondary Heads' Executive, told the *Mail on Sunday*: "What is frightening is when you start saying 'do we have enough money to open five days a week?'

"We're not saying we're going there yet. We're saying on a range of things: absolutely everything needs to be explored."

By law schools are required to educate pupils for 190 days in each school year, meaning they would need to be open for 48 weeks on a four-day timetable.

But Malcolm Trobe, interim general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it was "inevitable" that schools would have to make further cuts of a "similar nature".

"The reality is that school budgets in many areas of England are at breaking point and there is no alternative but to consider drastic measures."

It was also reported this week that Latymer grammar school, in north London, had asked parents for donations of up to £600 a year to meet a "very significant shortfall".

Schools Week has also found two other grammar schools – Tadcaster, in North Yorkshire, and Tiffin, in Surrey – have previously asked for parent donations.

Robert McCartney, chairman of the National Grammar Schools Association, said there was an ongoing "bitter war" about funding in grammar schools, which felt the same budget pressures as other state schools.

Investigations by the British Humanist Association last year uncovered 100 state schools asking for financial help from parents.

Trobe said his union has pressed the government for "transitional relief" for schools in the lowest funded areas of England after the government delayed the introduction of a new national funding formula from 2017 to 2018.

The Department for Education said it had "protected the schools budget so that, as pupil numbers increase, so will the amount of money for our schools".

# **NEWS**

### **IN** brief

#### **'HEALTH CHECKS' FOR GROWING TRUSTS**

Academy trusts that want to expand will be subject to "health checks" from January, schools commissioner Sir David Carter has said.

Carter plans to pilot the checks in up to 40 trusts this year, before the full programme is rolled out. They will measure whether a trust is fit to expand and take on more schools.

Carter, in a termly update to schools, said the checks were "integral to enabling trusts to grow strategically and with confidence".

It follows criticism of chains such as E-ACT and AET for growing too quickly. Both have been banned from taking on new schools. The commissioner has also reassured

primary schools after provisional key stage 2 figures released earlier this year showed just half of year 6 pupils had met the government's new expected standard.

The results raised fears that regional schools commissioners would use them to take over more schools under the new "coasting" intervention.

But Carter said RSCs would be "proportionate" in their response to 2016 results, and would take into account scores from 2015 and 2014.

#### £30,000 FOR WORKLOAD RESEARCH

Schools can apply to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) for funding to carry out in-house research on the best ways to reduce staff workload.

A grant of up to £30,000 is available for schools to run their own research projects on how to "effectively" reduce either marking, planning or data management.

Funding comes from the NCTL's existing research and development budget for "school-led research programmes".

It is a continuation of former education secretary Nicky Morgan's "workload challenge" – a major consultation of teachers aimed at reducing workload.

The latest initiative is meant to help schools 'take the principles and recommendations" from the workload's findings to "develop long-term solutions".

Applications for the NCTL funding must be completed by Wednesday, November 9. Schools will need to show previous experience in qualitative and quantitative research and can partner with professional researchers as part of their bid.

Go to www.gov.uk and search workload challenge to find out more.

### EEF £2.5M FOR **RESEARCH HUBS**

Five schools across England will be given a share of £2.5 million to become education research hubs.

The new "research schools" will receive the funding from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to build support networks between schools in their areas to help teachers to better use evidence.

The hubs include Aspirer Teaching School Alliance, based at Ash Grove academy in Macclesfield; Huntington school in York; Kingsbridge community college in Devon; Kyra teaching school alliance in Lincoln: and Shireland collegiate academy in Sandwell.

The EEF said the chosen schools will support 1.000 schools across the country.

# PHONICS SCREENING SCORES 'UNRELIABLE'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

The government's phonics screening check needs an "urgent rethink" after new figures show "something dodgy" with scores, a policy expert has warned.

Investigates

Figures published last week show 81 per cent of year 1 pupils met the "expected standard" in phonics checks this year, up from 77 per cent in 2015.

But the reliability of results has been questioned after mark distribution data showed a steep rise around the pass mark of 32 (see graph).

Data for key stage 1 teacher assessments. also published last week, shows fewer pupils reached the expected standard in writing last year, with 74 per cent of pupils at the expected level for reading.

Anne Heavey (pictured), education policy adviser at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said: "Sadly the phonics and key stage 1 results this year demonstrate one thing and one thing alone - something dodgy is going on with these assessments and they require an urgent rethink."

This year's phonics data showed the spike in pupils attaining the pass mark of 32 is actually less severe than the first two years of the test - when teachers were told the pass mark before the test.

The government now reveals the pass mark after the test, resulting in the spike smoothing out around the 32 mark.

Dorothy Bishop, a professor of developmental neuropsychology from the University of Oxford's department of experimental psychology, told Schools



Week the data reveals a "deep problem" that teachers "clearly don't like classifying children on a 'pass/fail' basis".

She said this could be down to concerns that such a tag could damage pupils psychologically, or that teachers' own work may be evaluated on the results.

Along with the rise in year 1 scores, figures show the year 2 phonics pass rate also rose from 90 per cent in 2015, to 91 per cent this year.

The government has celebrated the rise. and academies have highlighted the value results offer for helping target intervention. But critics question the data's reliability.

the National Association of Head Teachers. told Schools Week: "Any test that is used for accountability gradually loses its value as a diagnostic.

"The results of the phonics screening check are increasingly used in this way meaningful about progress in early literacy is eroding."

The data released last week also shows a continued underperformance in phonics

of pupils eligible for free school meals or

with special educational needs, and those from certain ethnic backgrounds, such as gypsy or Roma children, or those of Irish traveller heritage.

Bishop said that "any test result is

imperfect" and that scores close to a passfail boundary are unreliable. But there is

"some value" in identifying children who are "struggling with a key component of reading

so that they can be given extra help". Heavey added: "It is time for ministers to

accept that their new assessment system requires significant improvement, and must not be run again this year without major modifications."

A Department for Education spokesperson

said the government would take action if

there was any evidence of maladministration.

# Grading change will hamper GCSE comparisons

#### JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

The new grading system and a raft of government reforms mean GCSE results will not be comparable until at least 2022, a headteacher has warned.

Liam Collins, headteacher at Uplands community college in East Sussex, said moving to the new 9-1 GCSE grading system meant parents, teachers and inspectors would struggle to compare the performance of a GCSE cohort against previous groups.

While all GCSE results would be graded within the new system by 2019, performance within a school could only be reliably measured after another couple of years, Collins said.

And with a possible boycott of new key stage 2 SATs this summer, that could stretch to 2023.

"Because of all the reforms that have come through, the first opportunity to see whether it shows all the improvements the government is hoping for is 2022 - and if there's a SATs' boycott this year, then it will be 2023." he told Schools Week.

New GCSEs in English and maths have been taught in schools from September last year, with pupils set to get their numbered results in August 2017. More subjects then follow.

But Collins said parents could become reliant on schools to understand how many pupils passed the equivalent of A\* to C. "How does a parent judge two schools when their league table position is not

clear? It will come down to which school is best at marketing." The government's reforms were intended

to make GCSEs more difficult. Yet the same drive for a tougher curriculum in SATs recently led former education secretary Nicky Morgan to say parents and schools "should not try to compare this year's results with previous years".

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). said the grading upheaval would be a major problem for accountability.

"Nick Gibb is meant to be in charge of school standards. He's at risk of being minister for 'no standards'"

Collins said that schools might also find it harder to get an Ofsted "outstanding", a measure that places emphasis on progress and attainment over time.

But both Ofsted and Ofgual have said

schools can clearly translate the new system of nine numbers on to the old system

of eight letters using "anchor points" where grade G is a 1, grade C is similar to a 4, and grade A is a 7 – which will allow comparisons with the old system from one year to the next.

Both bodies expect a similar proportion of pupils who currently get a C and above to get a 4 and above.

Jo-Ann Baird, professor of educational assessment at the University of Oxford. said: "It often takes years for exam changes to be fully understood, usually until the people who took the exams become parents themselves."

But she said the threat of a SATs boycott in May would have little statistical impact.

"It depends which group is boycotting exams. But if it's spread right across ability, and if you've got a big enough cohort, it doesn't really matter."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Assessments at all key stages are designed around the new, reformed national curriculum, which ensures continuity, and the new Progress 8 measure will reward better teaching of all pupils, whatever their starting point."

# Russell Hobby, the general secretary of

and therefore its ability to tell us anything



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# DFE 'DRAGS ITS FEET' ON ACADEMIES REPORT

### JOHN DICKENS

Ministers have been accused of dragging their feet over the publication of a key academies document that will reveal how schools commissioners are judged.

Education secretary Justine Greening is bound by law to produce an annual report on the performance of academies, which must also be laid before parliament.

The government has published the document, Academies Annual Report, in either June or July for the past four years, but this year's report is yet to surface.

Schools Week has been told it will outline the key performance indicators used by the government to judge how well its regional schools commissioners (RSC) have done in their second year. It is the first time the government will have published the measures.

The disclosure is potentially contentious as it could show that RSCs are still judged on how many schools they convert into academies, a criterion criticised as a conflict of interests after it was first exposed by *Schools Week* in 2014.

Janet Downs, a campaigner for local schools, said: "It's hard not to believe ministers have something to hide when key reports aren't published when expected.

"It's not the first time – the Department for Education appears to be dragging its feet on releasing the costs of academy transfers... so much for transparency."

The department refused a freedom of information request in June by *Schools Week* for a list of the RSC's performance indicators.

Its response, received in August, said the refusal was on the grounds that it was not reasonable to release "piecemeal information in advance of its planned timetable and planned publication.

"If the government were to release this information as requested on different occasions, this would result in partial information being released over a protracted period leading to confusion and inaccuracy."

However, when asked this week when the document would be published, the department would not confirm a date, saying it would be "released soon".

It did not respond to questions about the delay.

The department has been criticised about the report in the past. While investigating a separate data issue, the UK Statistics Authority found the 2013-14 academies report included statistics that had not previously been released, with the source data unpublished.

Ed Humperson, director general for regulation at the authority, said not releasing the statistics made impartial comment difficult.

The annual report must be presented to parliament, and so will appear in the appendix to the formal record of proceedings in the Commons and the Lords.

# Schools shun Osborne's cadet clubs

#### **JESS STAUFENBERG** @STAUFENBERGJ

Just five state schools have opened cadet clubs since former chancellor George Osborne announced a £50 million grant last year to boost the number of units five-fold. Figures obtained under a freedom of information (FOI) request reveal 129 state schools in England run the after-school cadet clubs, up five from the 124 recorded in 2015. The total is an aggregate so more could have opened, but some would also have shut over the year.

In his summer budget last year Osborne announced a £50 million pot, raised through fines levied on banks, to create cadet forces in 500 state schools by 2020.

But the new figures suggest the government will struggle to meet its Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) target, with about 100 cadet forces needed to be set up in state schools each year.

Critics of the scheme have said the slow uptake proved a lack of demand for the government's "military ethos" in schools.

Emma Sangster, a coordinator for campaign group ForcesWatch, which scrutinises Army recruitment policies, said money pledged as part of the scheme should not be ring-fenced for the CEP, but made available for other extracurricular activities.

However Michael Fallon, secretary of state for defence, announced at the Conservative party conference this week that 25 new schools have been approved to open units over the next 12 months.

On Tuesday he visited Rockwood academy in Birmingham, one of the schools that

opened a unit this **Exclusive** September.

The school, previously named Park View, was at the centre of the Trojan Horse scandal over allegations that Muslim hardliners were trying to take over. Fallon said: "These new school units will help young people to get on in life, raising their aspirations

and motivating them to succeed in their education. With the schools approved today focused in areas of high deprivation, this is part of our plan to build a country that works for everyone."

More than 40 pupils have signed up to the new cadet unit at Rockwood.

Gary Newbrook, a contingent commander with the Combined Cadet Force [CCF] who is now based permanently at Rockwood, added: "The CCF is designed to instil values in young people that will help them get the most out of their lives, and to contribute to their communities and country.

"This means students developing qualities such as self-discipline, loyalty and respect, strong leadership, teamwork and resilience." But Sangster said the figures obtained by *Schools Week* showed there "isn't the demand the government is suggesting there is".

The FOI request also revealed the total number of cadet units in state schools has increased by just 69 since 2012 – when David Cameron announced an earlier £10



million scheme to boost numbers.

Sangster added: "As a parent, I'd also be concerned about how the presence of someone in a military uniform at the school affected the environment.

"Often there are people in the community that come from all kinds of backgrounds, like refugees. Such visibility is worrying." The Ministry of Defence said the

government was on track to meet its target. It previously said "some months" were needed to process and approve applications and then set up the units.

A spokesperson added: "The rich leadership and development opportunities offered in the cadets, which are quite separate from recruitment into the armed forces, speak for themselves."

STATE SCHOOLS WITH A COMBINED CADET FORCE	YEAR
60	2012
71	2013
87	2014
124	2015
129	2016

# UTC SWITCH TO SECONDARY SCHOOL COSTS £13M

#### **BILLY CAMDEN** @BILLYCAMDEN

A south London council is facing a £13 million bill to convert a university technical college in financial trouble into a secondary school to help it to meet demand for places.

Royal Greenwich UTC (pictured) will become Greenwich trust school from next September, just two years after it opened as a 14 to 19 institute.

Government data released earlier this year showed the college, which has a capacity for 600, has 257 students on roll - a 35 per cent drop from 397 in 2014-15.

Greenwich council now needs to pay hefty conversion costs so it can meet its statutory obligation to provide enough school places.

A spokesperson said: "The Greenwich UTC sadly did not attract the expected numbers; as seen with colleges nationally, some students were hesitant at switching to a technical course at the age of 14.

"Therefore, it is only right that we invest in the school and change its learning provision to better meet the needs of students and the community."

The college, which according to its website cost £10 million to set up, will instead cater for 11 to 18-year-olds. The new school will offer 150 places in



each of years 7 to 9 from next year. The government has already agreed to the expansion.

Most of the £13.7 million bill will be paid by the council, but £200,000 will come from its section 106 payments – money that a developer pays to a council to reduce the impact of a development.

The council would not comment on the £13 million cost. Greenwich UTC did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

A lack of financial viability because of low pupil numbers has been a common trend for UTCs since their conception in 2010.

Research by Schools Week's sister paper FE Week in February revealed that student numbers had fallen in 40 per cent of UTCs that opened between 2010 and 2013.

UTC Lancashire, Central Bedfordshire

UTC, Hackney UTC and Black Country UTC have all closed, citing low student numbers.

The Department for Education confirmed last month that a proposed UTC developed in partnership with Burton and South Derbyshire College would not open, despite the government spending more than £8 million setting it up.

Just last week, Heathrow Aviation Engineering UTC was issued a financial notice to improve due to an "apparent loss of financial control".

The UTC, which opened in north London in September 2014, failed to balance its budget and has suffered cash flow problems since 2015, the Education Funding Agency said.

The college must now get approval from the agency for all its transactions and launch an external governance review.

Former education secretary Nicky Morgan has also admitted to concerns about the UTC model, conceding the institutions should admit pupils from the age of 11.

At a fringe event on educational inequality at the Conservative party conference this week, she said: "I would ... like to see them admitting pupils from the age of 11, because I think that would mean they would have a stronger, more sustainable pipeline of students."

# Kent schools ignore council 11-plus tutoring ban

#### JOHN DICKENS AND JESS STAUFENBERG @SCHOOLSWEEK Exclusive

Independent schools in Kent are openly advertising their success at coaching pupils to pass an 11-plus test, against their council's ruling banning such tutoring.

An investigation by the anti-grammar campaign group Kent Education Network (KEN) found that some independent primaries in the county admitted they prepared pupils to pass the grammar school test.

That comes despite Kent County Council — the area with the most selective schools in the country — warning its schools in the state and independent sector, that coaching is "not permitted".

The council, which administers tests, previously warned schools it could ban them from hosting tests or stop sending them test materials if it had evidence of coaching.

The KEN findings have now been passed to the council.

Theresa May promised this week to end the ban on grammar schools. However, the apparent widespread coaching of pupils in private schools will fuel concerns that new grammars will continue to disadvantage poorer bright pupils.

KEN chair Joanne Bartley said: "This means that the Kent test is more about coaching and practise of test paper skills than it is a fair and true test of ability.

"It's completely wrong, they [schools] literally promise that 'we'll get your child to grammar school'."

Bartley asked the region's independent primary schools whether they tutored pupils for the test.

She found some schools openly stated on their websites that they prepared pupils for the grammar school test.

However, other schools, responding in an email, outlined details of how they prepared pupils for the test, including some running after school clubs.

Only one of the schools that responded pointed out that schools should not be coaching pupils for the test, claiming it was "not ethical"

Dr Michael Collins, KEN's head of

research, said it was clear that coaching was "denying grammar school places to children from poorer families.

"There should not be one rule for parents who pay for education, and another rule for parents who cannot afford it."

Kent council altered its 11-plus in 2014 in an attempt to make tutoring "less effective".

But Bartley said: "Tutoring for the test is a massive industry here. I know people on low incomes who have felt pressured to pay for a tutor for their child, and then the child failed the test."

She also accused the council of "turning a blind eye" to coaching in schools.



A spokesperson for Kent council confirmed it had received the network's findings, but did not comment further.

Schools Week reported last month that St Christopher's school, in Canterbury, had been rapped by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for exaggerating its 11-plus successes.

The school advertised a 94 per cent pass rate for last year's grammar school exams on its website and banners on doubledecker buses

But the ASA ordered the school to remove or alter the branding after a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from Bartley revealed only 53 per cent of its pupils actually passed the exam, with others passing on appeal.

#### GRAMMAR PLAN 'WILL WIN US VOTES'

One of the Conservative's fiercest grammar advocates has said the policy is not only the morally "right thing" to do but is also a "winning formula" for gaining voters.

Speaking at a fringe event on Monday at the Conservative party annual conference, MP Dominic Raab said that meritocratic principles would help restore the public's belief that the government could be trusted with their "hopes and dreams".

He added that ideas such as grammars were also a "winning formula for retail politics" – that is, a type of politics that appealed to a wide number of voters on the doorstep.

In 2014, Raab published the "Meritocrat's Manifesto" in which he pushed for a wider reintroduction of grammar schools, but on Monday he said the first tranche ought to be placed within disadvantaged communities.

"Our message does need to go out that grammars are there to be spread beyond the middle-class preserve to the kids on the council estates or the rural backwater who want the chance their parents never dreamt of."

But he admitted the plan was not a silver bullet and needed to work with other policies for meritocracy, including a "radical" idea for opening access to elite universities.

"Why not allow anyone to take an Oxford or Cambridge degree course if they are willing to be paid for it be marked, without having to go to university, pay the tuition fees let alone amass all the student debts?"

"I wonder how many people going through would actually get 2.1s or firsts? I think the results would shock people."

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# NEWS



# EDITOR'S COMMENT

Greening knows that she can't defend grammar schools

As another party conference season ebbs away, this is usually the part where I write a column about the education secretary. For the past two years I spent the Conservative conference at fringe events stalking Nicky Morgan – turning up at the parties she was at, springing questions on her during debates – and taking stock of what this might mean for the way she would handle events over the coming year.

This year my energy was high and my scribbling pad ready. But where was Justine?

Fringe event after fringe event had a sad, empty chair where she had been invited to sit. At one we were told she had been "urgently" called away by the prime minister. At another I was informed ministers were all on lockdown, for fear they might say something before Greening's big speech.

On the one hand, this is no big deal. Greening made a speech, she went on Radio 5 and Radio 4, and handled her interviews with aplomb.

On the other hand, it's a shirk. Every working day of their lives teachers go out and face difficult crowds. On the days when you know 9JD is going to be moany, and tiresome, you man up anyway because that's what the job involves. An education secretary unwilling to face furious questioning over her selective school plans won't garner sympathy or respect from the chalkface.

What is perhaps more interesting for the schools community, however, is what the lack of public engagement signifies.

There are two possibilities for her noshows.

One is that the education secretary knows she can't defend the policy of grammar schools, even to her own party members. It was noticeable that in every fringe event the room tended towards being anti the policy rather than for it. Even when party members only were straw-polled the room was at least 3 to 1 in favour of freezing or having fewer grammars, as opposed to having more.

A second possibility is that she is more of a CEO education secretary than a political one. As a trained accountant her background is in business and strategic change. Colleagues who worked with her at DfID uniformly speak of her ability to grasp details, make good decisions, and bring people along with her. A civil servant who attended her opening speech at the DfE, made the day of her appointment, said she had staff eating out of her hand as she talked about making it a great place to work.

That she has chosen "opportunity areas" as a first reform to champion gives an indication of the way she might operate. Each area is facing different challenges and will be a test-bed for ways to improve social mobility. If that sounds familiar, it's because it reflects the sort of "pathfinder" model of the Labour years, in which needs were identified, resources given and outcomes evaluated before widely rolling out new reforms.

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, supported this view of Greening as a 'management-style' politician at an event this week in which she said the minister is determined to work out what the real priorities are for schools and focus solely on those. It's Bousted's hope (and many others' too) that policies such as SATs resits for year 7s might fall by the wayside during this rejig of concerns.

This sort of boring-butimportant version of politics is precisely what the sector needs. But it comes at the price of sexy headlines and items to sell on the doorstep. If Justine Greening manages to deliver a consistently good education system for all by 2020 that would be an incredible thing making an actual difference to millions of children. But the average Joe won't care. "Hi, I'm Justine Greening and I made all schools good," will sound a lot like "I just did what I was supposed to do".

Theresa May knows this. So she is using the return of grammars to play the long, political, soundbite game on Greening's behalf.

The problem is that it ends up with a slightly split-personality version of education policy, where no one believes the good stuff being done on the ground because the big message is of a revolution that no one wants.

Justine Greening is early in her role and, if the way she was hobbling around in her heels by the end of conference is

anything to go by, she is still getting used to filling its shoes. But I hold out a glimmer of hope, that she has more steel and courage, and is far smarter than she has been allowed to let on at this year's conference. Let's hope that by this time next year, we've seen it shine through. **EDITION 79** 

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The closing date for receipt of completed applications for the Associate Director: **Public Services is 9am** Thursday 6 October 2016.

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You'll lead a team of dedicated and hard-working staff. Together, they have a strong team spirit and provide a high standard of education for our children. They encourage great behaviour and have an active enjoyment of school life.

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A strong leader, you will motivate and encourage staff. Our supportive group of parents and governors wants the school to do well and will support you in your ambitions for the school.

References will be sought for short listed candidates prior to the interview date. The successful candidates will be required to complete an enhanced DBS disclosure.



**EDITION 79** 

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Responsibility for ensuring that the finance system is developed and

prospects which ensure effective accountability and provide a robust

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lead on the development and implementation of financial policy and

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Establish, maintain and develop systems for budgeting, financial

sustainability centrally and for academies.

procedures centrally and for academies.

The successful candidate will hold a professional accountancy qualification (ACA/ ACCA/ CIMA/ CIPFA) and have experience and knowledge of strategic planning. An understanding of the education sector with knowledge of the EFA would be viewed favourably but not seen as essential. This role would suit a versatile and fast paced individual as well as someone adept at juggling consecutive time lines and priorities. They would value someone who could enhance the school's reputation by sharing their experience of good practice.

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# **READERS'** REPLY

#### Schools face action over bogus **Ofsted logos**

#### Simon Hepburn, address supplied

Utterly bonkers. Ofsted has a major reputation problem among teachers and heads, and parents aren't using Ofsted reports as much as they would like. So it picks a fight with schools who are just happy to tell people they got through an inspection OK and stops them pointing parents to the inspection report.

#### 97 independents failed test to set up free schools

#### Janet Downs, Bourne

•••

••• Any discussion of GCSE performance pre- and post-conversion from independent to statefunded free school is meaningless without knowing the ability range of the cohort. It's quite possible that new recruits into year 10 were high ability - this would keep GCSE results high. On the other hand, if the intake contained more middle or low-attaining pupils, then it would be expected results would fall. Neither scenario would necessarily reflect the quality of teaching

#### Grammar get-out clause confirmed: selection 'permissible' within trusts

but would reflect the quality of intake.

#### Mr Chas, address supplied

...

This scenario already exists at Crown Woods school in the Royal borough of Greenwich and the school is massively oversubscribed

(selection takes place AFTER the intake is decided). Granted, it was purposebuilt this way but it has a "collegiate" campus with three "schools" (separate buildings) one of which is "classed" as a grammar school. I believe there is just one sixth form.

#### Sarah Thurlby, address supplied

 $\bullet \bullet \bullet$ 

I think this would be an unattractive option for schools because the children, regardless of where taught, would remain on roll at an

individual school that would be accountable for their

#### educational outcomes. Also, any transport arrangements would have to be funded by schools themselves rather than from the local authority's home to school transport budget so would be a drain on financial resources. I am surprised to hear that they would need consent from parents because there are quite a lot of federations and split-site schools moving children already from site to site - as far as I am aware none of them has sought parental permission to do this and I am not sure on what basis it would actually be required from a legal point of view.

#### DfE faces legal battle over RSC's decision

#### David Marriott, Wiltshire



These RSCs are SO much better than those awful LAs, aren't they?

#### Angela Rayner: Full text of Labour **Conference 2016 speech**

#### Roger Titcombe, Cumbria



Angela Rayner is an example of why grammar school selection is not just educationally and morally wrong, but a shocking waste of talent and

potential contributions like hers to the benefit of society. Her success, despite multiple disadvantages and an unpromising start in education, is why we need not just high quality comprehensive schools, but funded access to fully comprehensive further and higher education too.

#### Reforms blamed for 'record backlog' in special educational needs tribunals

#### **Clare Taylor, address supplied**



Government making right old mess of education. Should concentrate on needs of kids rather than vanity projects like free schools.

#### @suzyg001



What happens if you introduce significant changes at the same time as cutting budgets? Change itself incurs additional costs

# **REPLY OF THE WEEK RECEIVES** A SCHOOLS WEEK MUG!



# **DO YOU HAVE A STORY?**

However big or small, if you have information or a story you think our readers would be interested in, then please get in touch. For press releases make sure you email our news email account, and don't be afraid to give us a call.

### **Multi-academy trusts** could be the saviour of education in the north

## **REPLY OF THE WEEK**

...

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TWEET FACEBOOK

#### **Mark Watson, Gloucestershire**

I completely disagree. Harris and Ark have done well precisely because they limit themselves to areas they know well. One only has to look at larger chains to see what happens when an expand-everywhere-at-once approach is adopted.

You are absolutely right that the north needs good MATs. But it should be creating its own. We are moving away from the world of MATs backed by external organisations/individuals (such as Ark, Harris etc) towards MATs created by groups of schools.

This is what should be happening in the north - groups of schools with a vision for the future coming together and forming their own trusts that will support each other. A "northern MAT powerhouse" would be a great thing, but it must be its own thing.

020 3051 4287

# PROFILE

LAURA MCINERNEY @MISS\_MCINERNEY

# Libby Nicholas, chief executive, Reach4 academy trust

Reach4 is a wild experiment. It is the first spin-off academy trust: distinct from its parent company Reach2, but part of the overall "Reach" family. It's a slightly odd way to think about schools but it's no different, really, than the way Virgin Atlantic is its own company, but sits under the Virgin brand.

Its chief executive is 37-year-old Libby Nicholas, a fast-track teacher and author, who started her career in recruitment and then John Lewis.

Unnervingly professional, dressed immaculately and speaking of values, promises and experiences, she is more reminiscent of a *Dragons' Den* entrepreneur than the rough-and-tumble teacher hero of *Dangerous Minds*. This is perhaps a consequence of having an entrepreneurial father whose businesses included music, radio and television.

But she is also self-aware enough to know corporatism doesn't always wash well in education. "It can sound cold," she says. But she sees herself, and the work of Reach4, as being very different to the profit-driven bottom-line focused corporate business world.

After studying English and philosophy at the University of Bristol, Nicholas's first job was in headhunting after her father pushed her to earn well and get a mortgage.

"He had started his first business with £600 from his father... He always encouraged me to, you know, get a mortgage. It should be by the time I was 22, that sort of thing, which at that age is quite scary."

Realising her headhunting job focused more on profits than people – which made her uncomfortable – she applied for the John Lewis leadership scheme that combined her need to earn with the values of "cooperative working and co-ownership".

She enjoyed the scheme's extensive training but gained most satisfaction from a secondment to the Prince's Trust, working with young people not in education, employment or training.

That satisfaction prompted her to enrol on a PGCE delivered through a collaboration of south London schools.

"When I first walked into a classroom, I was home," she says. "Looking back I realise that when I was a child I used to do summer school for my sisters and their friends. I wasn't a very popular sibling. I actually set them homework!"

Nicholas talks fondly of school, the independent Sutton High School in south London, which she attended with her two sisters (she is the middle of three), and is also the alma mater of former education secretary Nicky Morgan, who left as Nicholas arrived.

Nicholas would return there as an assistant head, somewhat awkwardly line-managing the teachers who had taken her on skiing trips.

"They were wonderful about it. It must have been strange for them. I'm sure they must have been surprised, but we worked well. Great group."

During her teaching years she rose quickly to become a head of year, head of key stage, at Sutton she became deputy head and from there, to quench her thirst for learning more about leadership, she applied for a "helicopter" role at the Girls' Day School Trust as deputy director of education. It involved looking across the organisation's 26 schools, identifying good practices, uncovering weaknesses and then connecting groups across the schools to help to accelerate change.

She found the transition from a school to a central office role tricky, but her retail experience came in useful.

"A head office and a family of schools is not that different to the Waitrose head office and a group of supermarkets or

# "WHEN I FIRST WALKED INTO A CLASSROOM, I WAS HOME"

department stores – there's always a tension between the politics of the centre and the business end.

"So it's about developing a shared language, developing a shared culture, developing best practice, but in a way in which it belongs to the heads as opposed to it being top down."

Nicholas raises language a number of times and it is noticeable when she talks of Reach4 that she persistently comes back to the values and promises the organisation wants to deliver for parents and pupils. It's not trite, though. There are specifics – for example, one promise is that every child will sleep under the stars, another is that they will experience a trip abroad.

But an issue for communities used to local schools with a particular ethos is that when an organisation such as Reach4 turns up, its language can feel alienating if it is overly corporate.

Nicholas agrees this can be a challenge, but says her experience of takeovers from her time working at the largest academy trust, AET, suggests parents are really more concerned about practical issues.

"What they focus on is the school day, Is it going to change? How's it going to impact on my school run?" For her, the moment when parents start to understand trusts is when they can see how the school experience is changing for their child. That's what needs to be communicated quickly. The values and promises are a means to that end for staff and parents.

If that sounds a little dewey-eyed, Nicholas is aware that narrative will not persuade everyone.

As part of a leadership programme, she was asked in her early years of teaching to gather feedback from her pupils. One child wrote: "Miss inspires us through words and emotions and stories. But it might also be useful for her to think about those one or two people in the class who are inspired more by facts and figures."

# LIBBY

Nicholas laughs. As an English teacher she admits to a love of stories, but as a chief executive she knows that more is needed.

To that end, she has spent the past two years studying for an MBA, which has forced a greater focus on numbers. The course involved accountancy exams – she can now read balance sheets in detail, a vital skill given that trust chiefs are expected to be the accounting officer for their organisation.

"People at CEO level certainly should certainly study business. But everyone in education should do exams again because that really made me think. I can technique exams. But there were some people on the cohort who, for whatever reason, had been getting much higher marks than me during the course but then didn't have the technique. It makes you ask questions about exams."

During her studies she was involved in a group of



#### IT'S A PERSONAL THING

#### What is your fayourite book?

Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy. Apart from being searingly beautiful prose, it's about the complexity of human emotions. Angel starts out the hero, the goodie, and ends up being somebody you're conflicted about; Alex starts out being the swarthy devil, and actually you end up being quite conflicted about him as well.

#### If you went invisible for a day, what would you do?

(Long pause). Observe lessons without causing a disturbance. When you visit a school as a CEO, you see the best, and I'd like to really know what my children are seeing and experiencing.

#### If you could have a bus with a slogan written on the side to drive around the country for a week, what would it be?

It's probably quite revealing about me, but I'd have, "There's nothing to be afraid of. Everything's fine." I think so many people and so many organisations lose things because of fear. It's never as bad as you think it's going to be.

#### If you had to have an animal tattooed on to you, what would you pick?

Probably something to do with a bear. I call my daughter Cub.

#### Final one, if you could live in any period in history, when would it be?

Probably Chaucer's England, because I loved reading Canterbury Tales when I was young and I still sometimes speak Middle English to my daughter to really freak her out.

#### Can you speak some Middle English now? No, because you're recording me. That would freak me out.





Libby with pupils at Coloma School in Croy





conversations with multi-academy trust leaders about the way school groups could expand, especially into other areas of the country, but avoid some of the problems that come with over-expansion. She was interested in the Virgin brand, and the way it had a family of companies, each working autonomously, but with similarities running across them.

She spoke to Sir Steve Lancashire, head of the Reach organisation, about the idea – and it percolated.

"I was really inspired by Sir Steve as a leader. He's hugely courageous and relentlessly optimistic, and makes me a braver leader. I was delighted and surprised and privileged to be asked to apply for the post of CEO, and then took it up in January."

On the day we meet Reach4 has been given 12 schools to

start running from this academic year, and another will open the next day. Going from 0 to 13 schools is not for the faint-hearted but Nicholas believes the support across the Reach organisation will help to ensure it is done well.

Aware that this cadre of schools is awaiting her attention, and our time is ticking down, I ask what she thinks is the most important thing for Schools Week readers to know. She pauses.

"It's so interesting to me how sometimes adults can be so good with children and yet talk completely differently to adults when actually it's the same psychology. People will unfurl their brilliance if you believe in them, like children do.

"There is a book I wrote with Professor John Burnham-West, in which I talked about the 'reservoir of hope' and how we have to have conversations with each other within the profession, across the profession, to fill our reservoir of optimism and hope because it's a really difficult life's work. But I still believe that it is the best life's work."

#### SCHOOLS WEEK

# **OPINION**

18



🔰 @SCHOOLSWEEK





education PR agency, PLMR

# **Reputation matters: How** to do PR as a school

Issues management should be as much a part of forward planning in schools and trusts as the annual prospectus, says Elin de Zoete.

any moons ago business magnate Warren Buffett said: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and five minutes to ruin it"... and that was before the days of lightning-quick social media. The language of reputation management and crisis communications used to be an alien lexicon in schools, but as the chain infrastructure keeps growing and scrutiny intensifies, education institutions need to equip themselves to share their successes and to manage any issues professionally

If we take an imagined chain of 15 secondary academies of average size (939 students), that is some 14,000 young people and hundreds of teachers who are acting on behalf of that trust every day. In institutions this big it is inevitable that issues will arise and - as many readers will have experienced when a media crisis hits, it can quickly throw an organisation into chaos. Bad news stories ducked or handled poorly can have a lasting negative impact on recruitment and retention of students and staff. So here's some basic advice

## It is inevitable that issues will arise

Design an issues-handling protocol that all staff are aware of A staff member speaking off the cuff before the full facts have been established, or indeed someone picking up the phone to the media and saying "no comment", can be damaging.

Developing a simple system where enquiries are noted, with deadlines, and passed to the appropriate person, ensures much smoother handling. This gives the team time to assess the inquiry, get to the bottom of what has happened and consider a full response. By finding out the deadline at the start, it also gives journalists or stakeholders what they need, when they need it.

Nominate a person within each academy as vour media liaison There is often not the resource to bring in a full-time employee at school level dedicated to press and marketing, but staff members - teachers or members of the admin team – are often interested in taking this on. Having one point of communication for press enquiries in an academy makes it simpler for journalists wanting to get in touch – and easier for coordination - if there is an issue that needs to be escalated up to trust level.

Be ready for your media moment Sometimes it is right to say no to media opportunities, but usually it is better to have your voice represented rather than enabling others to put words in your mouth. If you don't respond to media enquiries, speculation will fill the information vacuum and you lose control of the story. So be ready to speak to media, both on and off camera. Speaking into an inanimate box with a microphone in your ear is a strange experience for even the most polished presenter, so invest in broadcast training and familiarise yourself with TV and radio techniques. This will help you to represent your organisation in the best way when the pressure is on.

#### Decide who is responsible and who is

on call We all know that the old shtick about "short days" and "long holidays" couldn't be further from the truth. However, there are some hours that even teachers do not work. A key part of successful reputation management planning is to model out what would happen in a variety of scenarios at different times of the day, and check whether you are covered. It is important to have a regularly refreshed outof-hours and holiday procedure, and it is also vital to have clarity on who has the authority to made decisions during all of those times. When an issue erupts you need to know who needs to be informed, who can approve the suggested approach and ultimately, who will speak to the media if needed.

Then, with all of your preparation in place, your spokesperson can put all of his or her training to good use, have time to think about responses and then confidently champion the brilliant work that goes on in our schools every day.



# Let's subvert the 'centres of excellence' policy

Following Schools Week's revelation that the government will allow MATs to stream to a different school site by ability, Ros McMullen suggests trusts be creative in how they do this

ast week Schools Week ran a front-page story about the possibility of selective grammar schools developing within multi-academy trusts (MATs) without the need for any legislation. The new green paper proposes MATs create "centres of excellence" for the brightest students, with the government arguing this is already permissible in the current system.

The Department for Education (DfE) also seems to have backtracked on its previous position that moving students between academies on the basis of ability would breach the school admissions code. Such reversals of guidance come as no surprise to me: the one thing I have learned over the past decade is that guidance changes regularly according to political whim.

Internal selection will undoubtedly happen if MATs see it in their best interests to do so. At present I don't think that there are many (if any) trust CEOs who believe that doing this will be in the best interests of their students, but that is likely to change. Sir Dan Moynihan of the Harris Federation said in a recent interview that "tactically" he might have to open a selective school.

I see the pressure coming in two ways. First, as trusts wish to expand, open new schools and bid for extra resource, all proposals are assessed for approval. Anyone who believes these processes do not include an assessment of how far the trust is "meeting government expectations for delivering choice and excellence" is extremely naive. It has long seemed to many of us that the easiest way to gain a fayourable decision is to be seen as completely on message with government policy and priority.

It would be a very courageous decision for a trust to decide to disregard the wishes of ministers while bidding to open a new school

Second, once one MAT in an area develops a centre of excellence for the "most able students", the pressure will be extreme for the others to do so: it will become a bidding war for the most aspirational parents and students. In our cities, where a number of MATs operate, parents will be seduced by the possibility of their child being selected for

a particular trust's "centre of excellence"; it will be a mechanism for choosing selective education without risking 11-plus failure. It would be a very brave trust that allowed another trust to steal a march on marketing to the most aspirational.

These two factors will pressurise MATs to open centres of excellence – despite selective education not being in the best interests of our students and despite the trusts effectively making secondary moderns out of their academies

## It will become a bidding war for aspirational parents and students

But before we get too despairing, I suggest we begin to subvert the policy in the best interests of our students and avoid the creation of "secondary modern academies" There is nothing intrinsically wrong in students on roll at one school attending another site for part or all of their education - this has been done for alternative provision and vocational specialisms for many years, and large numbers of schools operate shared sixth forms in this way.

As being "selected" is something we want all children to experience, I would advocate:

- considering what we mean by "excellence" and developing a centre that selects for academic, technological, creative and sporting ability and aptitude;
- additionally selecting for "excellence" required in catch-up programmes (for students who require "excellence" in the content and delivery of intense catch-up work for literacy and/or numeracy);
- having no students on roll there but at their "home academy";

 planning for all students to be "selected" and attend the centre at some time. Getting this right will require moral courage, strategic thinking and greater cross-trust collaboration than at present, but simply creating an academically selective academy is so likely to be disastrous for the other academies within the trust, it is something that I think chief executives and their boards may find attractive.

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# REVIEWS

# TOP BLOGS OF THE WEEK

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



Our blog reviewer of the week is Emma Mattinson-Hardy, former primary school teacher and union organiser @emmaannhardy

Whether we agree with it or not, education is a political issue. The widespread opposition to the prime minister's plan for more grammar schools is evident. But there is a much deeper debate we should all be having about the type of education we want our children to experience, in our schools and universities and through the curriculum we offer.

#### #EducationNotSegregation: no to grammar schools

This is a summary of the best tweets, for and against the grammar school protests on Saturday. It also provides links to various articles and argues: "Education not segregation isn't 'lefty drivel'. Neither is it 'banal' or 'facile'.

"Education is a right not a privilege... it's as true now as when it was first said. Unfortunately, it's a privilege that seems to earn the right to an academically focused education – be that through moving house, paying exorbitant termly fees or hiring a tutor."

#### Pause for thought on rural schools @John4PCC

As someone who went to a village school that had 60 pupils at its peak, John Howson's blog on rural schools caught my eye. He highlights how a national funding formula could make small rural schools unviable, forcing them to close. "I am not sure whether Kielder first school in Northumberland is still one of the smallest primary schools in England, but with just 15 pupils according to Edubase, it probably remains one of the most expensive on a per pupil basis and shows the challenge facing those wanting to introduce a national funding formula. Without a significant block grant element to such a formula... such schools as this would close because they would not be financially viable...North Yorkshire, with 227 rural primary schools in the DfE's list, would be hit even more if its schools were affected by a formula that didn't somehow take account of the importance of our rural primary schools for many communities."

#### Good for the soul @sandistock.plus.com

This made me smile. It argues that education is about personal development and that sometimes the only motivation you need to learn something is that it is "good for the soul".

"Whatever the technical debates about this or that policy, education remains for some people fundamentally a matter of individual personal development of the most intimate, profound, reflective sort. I think it is the same experience of something completely intrinsic, intellectual, even spiritual in nature that perhaps drives enquiring minds to a far greater extent than those obsessed with ticking boxes ever realise..."

#### **University Gold** @eddieplayfair

There are times when I feel like I've stepped into a satirical comedy. The proposal to rank universities into gold, silver and bronze had passed me by and I wonder if Mrs May spent too much time watching the Olympics. Perhaps she misses all the medal ceremonies.

"The proposal to classify English universities as gold, silver or bronze is a stroke of genius. So obvious, one wonders why we're not already doing it...Look at any university and you know straight away whether it's top, middle or bottom. The gold universities are full of gold students with gold grades in gold-standard qualifications in gold subjects being taught by gold academics on gold courses. There's really no need to pore over statistics on retention, employment rates and student satisfaction when it can all be summed up in a single word...In education as in life, there's a top, a middle and a bottom...There are top universities just as there are top people and we can't all be gold can we? We'd have nothing to aim for without a nice simple ranking where we all know our place."

# BOOKREVIEW

Grow

Author Jackie Beere Publisher Crown House ISBN-10 1785830112 ISBN-13 978-1785830112 Reviewer Jonathan Rice, headteacher, South Wootton junior school, King's Lynn

### ★★★☆

Initially this book seemed a bit bland and it was a while before I began to fully take in what I was reading – like someone who sits next to you on the train that you don't notice initially, but they keep talking and by the time you near your destination, you are engrossed in what they are saying. And somehow, while I was reading, the author's voice did make it into my head and into my psyche.

By the end, the question I asked was: if we can all become better thinkers, better learners, better teachers – better people – by training our brains, why don't we all focus on it every day?

Moreover, why has there never been a definitive guide on personal growth for those of us who have spent most our lives labouring under the misapprehension that we have been dealt certain cards (a set level of intelligence, talent, ability) and are stuck with them? Here is a book about getting better at stuff just by thinking differently – and it's in simple language with clear ideas organised into usable sections (and yet still with the reassurance of those little academic references at the bottom of the page).

It leans heavily on the work of Carol Dweck, Daniel Goleman and Carl Jung and, to a lesser extent, Malcolm Gladwell and Matthew Syed. If that sounds like your kind of reading list, but you're struggling for time, it may be a useful gateway to their research and ideas. It includes a little about almost everything anyone has ever told you about personal development – growth mindset, neurolinguistic programming, mindfulness, brain science, coaching – plus the book's central idea: "thinking on purpose".

The added value for people working in schools is in the final two chapters, which are specifically about "coaching others" and "helping our children choose to grow". Here you will find really useful lists of growth mindset language to use with pupils, strategies for building a growth mindset culture with children and (here's an interesting test for us all to try) a list of questions for parents to ask their children, to discover whether their school has a growth mindset culture. Forewarned is forearmed.

I have since found myself often using its strategies and language. So when my threeyear-old sent a cup of blackcurrant squash



sprawling across the kitchen table, which then dripped slowly but insistently into a puddle around my feet, I heard a voice in my head telling me that I needed to reframe my reaction into a learning experience about drinking from a grown-up cup. "Aha," I thought. "I am exercising my internal locus of control."

# This is a book about getting better at stuff just by thinking differently

This book is very personal in the way it talks to the reader, in the questions it asks of the reader's life, and in the author's frankness. She uses examples from her own life to illustrate philosophy and techniques, from her early adult life as a single parent, through her career as a headteacher, to the extraordinary story of her hurling a leg of lamb at her daughter in a fit of temper. By the end, you feel that you know Jackie Beere very well, and somehow, that she knows you too.

This book has become my friend. Its thoughts and ideas have become part of my world, and I recommend that they become part of yours, too.

### Next week

Don't Send Him in Tomorrow by Jarlath O'Brien

**Reviewed by Jane Friswell** 

#### What have you been working on?

We've been researching and evaluating two programmes - one in Liverpool and one in Cumbria – that support families with complex needs.

While schools are key partners in the process, both programmes take multiagency approaches. One is funded by the local authority and the other by a voluntary organisation, but both are related in part to the government's Troubled Families programme.

We looked at vulnerability, as research suggests there is a risk of disadvantaged children being viewed as somehow being at fault, or a nuisance. Yet there is growing evidence that vulnerability is associated with negative outcomes later in life, such as poor mental and physical health, and economic underperformance.

#### What methods have you used?

They've been mixed, taking a casestudy approach backed up by looking at programme data. We have also interviewed professionals in all kinds of areas related to vulnerability.

#### What were your main findings?

One of the best ways to help children is to help the whole family. The evidence suggests that narrowly focused programmes that address single issues are unlikely to deliver the desired outcomes. However, early intervention

#### RESEARCH CORNER

Q&A

## **MICHAEL JOPLING**

Professor in education. **Northumbria University** 

# How can schools best help 'vulnerable' children?

across the age range and focused on the whole family improves wellbeing, protects children and makes financial sense.

In general we found that in schools there is a need for more holistic, nonjudgmental, family-centred approaches.

One device that worked well in Liverpool was to create a family support service that worked as an intermediary between schools and families - that seemed to be really powerful for communicating with families and keeping children in schools.

#### What's new about your findings?

Government policy has quite a narrow definition of what "vulnerable" is; this research shows that it's important to have a broad base to think about vulnerability.

We've also seen the value of consistent support, having the same people working with families. Relationship-building between professionals and schools also proved really important, with schools and families having consistent contact with the programme workers.

#### What can schools learn from your research?

Something needs to change as the Troubled Families initiative is problematic with the government saying that families are costing them millions of pounds. A broad multi-agency approach is essential.

School staff should understand that vulnerability may be displayed in very subtle ways. Assessment frameworks should be used flexibly, and listening to and responding to the voices of vulnerable children and parents should be part of this assessment.

This will also help schools to identify potential strengths and supports in children's lives that may protect them from vulnerability.

Schools also need to recognise the importance of building relationships. both with families and other agencies. When schools have built relationships with support workers over time, they are able to work together more effectively, to concentrate their attention on the disadvantaged children and families.

The research was carried out by Michael Jopling and Sharon Vincent of Northumbria University, and presented at the British Education Research Association's annual conference



# A week in Westminster

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

Phonics data is out and schools minister Nick Gibb is talking about how it shows everyone is reading better. Which is weird, because when GCSE exam results were going up and up, Gibb was convinced it was because the tests were dumbed-down. WiW wonders what he thinks is different about these phonics tests, which he introduced and staked his political career on? Beats us.



Nap before the Conservative get-together.

First day of conference and where is Justine Greening? She is a no-show at two schools-related fringe events that have her name next to them.

Never fear, Nick Gibb is about. He tells a capacity audience that it is absolutely

unacceptable to put children on different tables to teach them differentiated maths. Putting them in different schools, however, is fine, he implies with his support for "selective

schools". although WiW notices that everv time he says the phrase he says it slightly quieter, the way a grandmother whispers when she swears. Bless. Nicky Morgan

spot at another fringe event, affectionately declaring that it is like old times

takes Greening's

- what with education journalists in the room and two government whips at the back making sure that she says the right things.

Bullish Morgs refuses to play along. Not only does she say that bringing back grammars is a massive distraction from

much-needed school reform, she also steals Greening's thunder and announces the next day's big policy reveal: social opportunity areas.

#### The lesser-

spotted Justine Greening is sighted in the Hyatt's bar. But she has still not attended a fringe event, cancelling several more. and pulling ALL ministers from speaking at them. Why so afraid of a Schools Week question?

The education secretary finally takes to the stage to deliver her first propaganda rally since taking office. Starting with her own story of growing up in Rotherham in the 80s where all she wanted was a "level

playing field" in life, she stutters into an unconvincing push for selective schools. If her words seem passionately in favour, the red streak growing up her neck suggests slight panic. We'd love to see her repeat that speech on a polygraph.

Another fringe, another empty chair for J-Green. Rachel de Souza, chief executive of the Inspiration Trust, is almost another no-show. She turns up only to find she has not been accredited to get into the conference's secure zone. Using her characteristic determination, she manages to get the security guards to do an instant police check and waltzes in with a pass ten minutes later. Russsell Hobby, head honcho at the NAHT union, is less lucky. Without a pass he is unable to get past the guards and misses the event. We guess people in the know don't call her de Schmooza for nothing.

# DNESDAY:

The conference world is hungover. We let them be. We can always poke politicians again next week.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEEKLIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

carborough Norwich Oldham ackpool I think we need to add another

couple of Opportunity Areas...

#### **SCHOOLS WEEK**

FRIDAY, OCT 7, 2016

# School Bulletin with Sam King



# Marathon challenge for primary pupils

programme by charity Kids Run Free aims to get primary pupils running the equivalent of four marathons a year – and has the thumbs-up from Olympians Emily Diamond and James Dasaolu, recently returned from Rio.

Both attended the recent launch of Marathon Kids in east London and ran a celebratory lap of the Newham Leisure Centre with local pupils.

The scheme, which aims to tackle childhood obesity, has already engaged

two million children in the US. Incentives called "Nike rewards" – after the programme's partner company – include t-shirts, shoelaces and wristbands for each

marathon milestone reached. Track and field athlete and Olympic bronze medallist Diamond, said: "Any sport involves running so this is a great starting point to get kids moving. It also helps children to make friends and develop a variety of skills that will be useful later in life, whether that's sports-related or not."



# Please mind the skills gap

scheme to get year 12 and 13 students to come up with innovative ways of solving challenges in the transport industry is underway. The Innovate TfL scheme from Transport for London will test students on everything from their creativity and presentation skills to project management abilities.

Students at Uxbridge College in Middlesex won last year with a travel planning app, while the runners-up pitched a concept for a concertina bus that adjusts its length depending on the number of passengers. TfL hopes the challenge will give

participants an appreciation of the range of

FEATURED

careers in the transport industry, and the pathways open to them if they choose STEM subjects. It is hoped it will also help to plug the skills gap in the engineering sector.

All teams shortlisted for the final will get the chance to undertake work experience with TfL, including sessions on marketing and engineering, and the opportunity to spend three days shadowing one area of the company. They will also get employability support, including help with CVs and interviews.

Finalists will be announced in January, with the winners crowned in February at a ceremony in central London.

## FROM STUDENTS TO STOCKBROKERS

A national competition that encourages students to invest in the stockmarket is now accepting applications.

The Shares4Schools challenge invites year 12 students to invest £1,500 into stocks, shares and funds of their choice. The winning team will bethe one that makes the greatest profit by May next year – with schools keeping anything they've earned.

The competition is run by The Share Centre, an independent stockbroker that set up the competition in 2003 as part of a drive to make investing easier and more straightforward.

Students will have access to the centre's advice team and to newspapers, specialist publications and the internet to help them to decide which shares will make the greatest profits.

Kevin Murphy, a business studies teacher at Kingdown school in Wiltshire, which won the 2015-16 competition, said: "When I'm teaching business theory I can refer to the real world and the shares that students have bought."

Schools that want to take part must raise an investment fund of £1,500 and register on the Shares4Schools website no later than October 17.

### Technology boosts classroom performance

he use of technology in the classroom has boosted pupils' performance at Bede Community primary school in Gateshead.

Bede was part of a three-year programme backed by Samsung that involved equipping 15 primary schools in disadvantaged areas with tablets, interactive whiteboards and laptops, alongside technical support and training for teachers.

Bede implemented the digital classrooms with year 5 and 6 pupils, and has reported a marked improvement in performance.

Andrew Riley, a key stage 2 teacher at the school, said: "At Bede we feel there is a very clear relationship between academic achievement and the digital classroom, with every pupil who has taken part in lessons in the classroom progressing by at least two levels.

"Pupils are now more open and ready to learn in the classroom, which has meant the pace of learning has increased."

Almost 90 per cent of the 3,000 primary pupils involved in the scheme reported feeling more equipped and confident for future study.

Samsung research also recorded improvements made between the start and end of the 2015-16 academic year, with 89 per cent of pupils saying that they felt using the equipment had helped

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them to learn new skills. Most said they now found it easier to carry out tasks on computers, and claimed they worked better with their classmates.

Almost 60 per cent of pupils said they were now writing code more fluently and frequently, compared with just 28 per cent at the start of the scheme. Pupils who needed extra support and motivation in the classroom also said they felt more confident in the classroom, with dyslexic children helped through the use of reading apps, and those speaking English as a second language assisted with digital translation tools.



#### Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

ulia King, Baroness Brown of Cambridge, has been appointed chair of STEM Learning.

The company aims to improve and enhance the knowledge of teachers, technicians and support staff about teaching science, technology, engineering and maths, and improve how it is taught.

King has extensive experience across STEM education and industry, and spent 18 years as a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

She has been a lecturer of material science at the University of Cambridge, a member of senior management at Rolls-Royce and was principal at the faculty of engineering at Imperial College London.

In 2004, she joined the Technology Strategy Board, which supported the development of innovative technologies and products, before becoming vice-chancellor of Aston University. She became a crossbench peer in 2015.

Speaking of her appointment, she said: "Inspiring the next generation of young people to study, and go on to exciting careers in STEM, is essential for the economy of the UK, and is something I am passionate about."



Julia King Michael Clark

Michael Clark is the new headteacher of

part of the Burnt Mill academy trust in

December 2013. Clark joins from Park

primary in east London, where he was

His priorities for the school include

establishing relationships with the Roydon

community, as well as asking pupils what

The school dates back to 1876, becoming

Roydon primary in Essex.

they want for their school.

assistant head

Janet Royall

He is also keen to reinstate nonuniform days and implement an enriched curriculum.

David Huse

"As soon as I came to visit Roydon, I fell in love with the school. It is the complete opposite of what I'm used to. I've come from a buzzy, ethnically diverse, inner city school to here, where we have a pond, a field, three football pitches and a woodland area. "It is something that excited me and looked like a challenge."

The youth social action charity, City Year UK, has made two new appointments to its board of trustees.

Janet Royall, Baroness Royall of Blaison, and David Huse join the board as the charity plans an expansion across the UK.

City Year UK recruits young volunteers between 18-25 and trains them to be mentors, tutors and role models for pupils growing up in disadvantaged communities.

Royall said: "My passion for education, social inclusion and social mobility means that I have long admired the work of City Year UK. It is a real pleasure and a privilege to join the board and to be part of an organisation that is making a real difference to the lives of young people in disadvantaged communities."

Huse said of his new role: "Mentoring young people to achieve their full potential is highly rewarding, and it is an honour to be part of this growing organisation that aims to tackle social mobility and open new opportunities for children in disadvantaged areas."

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

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

									Difficulty: MEDIUM
	1						8		
	8	4	6		5	2	3		
		2	9		3	8			
			7		2				
	6						4		
6	9			3			1	4	
		5	1		6	7			
	3						2		Solutions
									Next week

 In the local bound of the local bound o

How to play: Fill in all blank squares

Difficulty: EASY

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

Difficulty: MEDIUM **Spot the difference** to WIN a **Schools Week** mug



What's the caption? tweet a caption @schoolswee



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