



THANKS, BUT NO THANKS: NO ONE WANTS A LETTER

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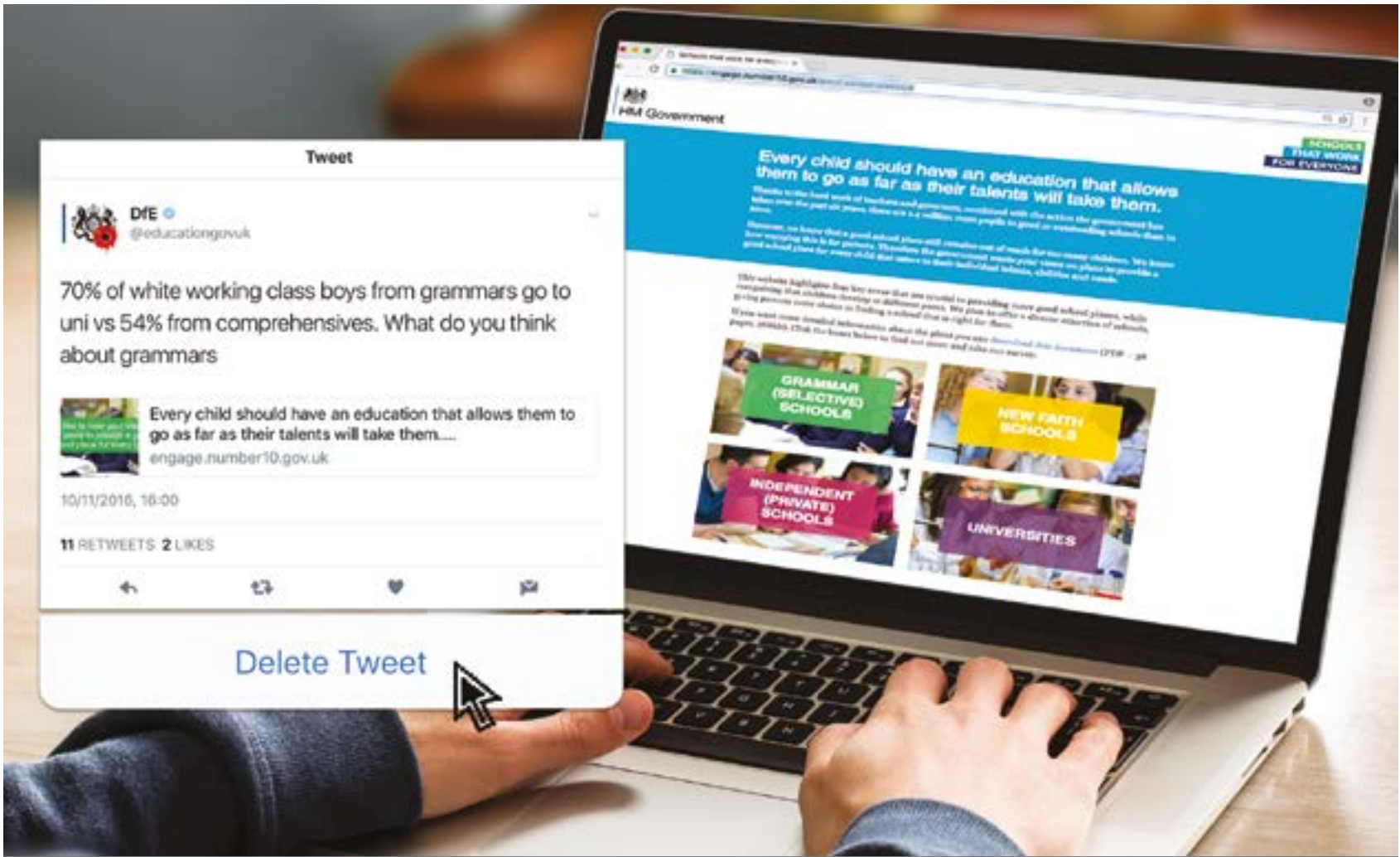
GRAMMAR SCHOOLS: DO SELECTIVE AREAS GET BEST RESULTS?

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SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK

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Tweet reveals shadowy No 10 grammar survey

➤ Statistics Authority says DfE tweet “not a fair representation” about selection

➤ Government website quietly offers quasi-consultation targeted at parents

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Investigation

The government has been accused of using misleading statistics and leading statements to guide parents into registering support for plans to increase the number of selective schools.

The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) wrote to the Department for Education (DfE) last week after a tweet from its official account claimed “white working-class boys” performed better in grammar

schools than in comprehensives.

The tweet concluded with the phrase “what do you think about grammars?”, and linked to a No 10 webpage aimed at parents and containing a survey on the government’s plans.

Ed Humpherson, the director general for regulation at the UKSA, said the statistic used in the tweet, which was swiftly deleted, had two misrepresentations – falsely labelling white male pupils on free school meals as “white working class”, and failing to recognise that

selection within grammar schools meant the outcomes could not be fairly compared with comprehensives.

A DfE spokesperson said the text was “tweeted in error and was subsequently taken down”.

But critics have said it is another example of a “skewed” grammar consultation, with leading statements in the online survey the tweet prompted social media users to view.

Jonathan Portes, principal research fellow at the National

Continues on page 2

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NEWS

Tweet on selection used misleading statistics

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Institute of Economic and Social Research, suggested the tweet breached the code of practice for statistics and the wider civil service.

He told *Schools Week*: “That the DfE should deliberately exploit the lack of statistical knowledge of the general population to mislead them into thinking that grammars improve the educational outcomes of white working-class boys is disgraceful.”

The tweet, posted on Thursday last week, read: “70% of white working-class boys from grammars go to uni versus 54 per cent from comprehensives. What do you think about grammars”.

The statistics watchdog sent a letter to the DfE the following afternoon saying that it was “disappointed” in the tweet and questioning why Iain Bell, the department’s director for data and education standards analysis, was not consulted before it was published.

Rachel Gooch (pictured), a national leader of governance, said the DfE should have a “genuine desire to seek out the views of those it is consulting”.

But she said the department had now “misused statistics to present a misleading picture of the success of grammar schools. I would be shocked, if I were not now inured



to the politicisation of the department’s communications.”

The selective school survey, hosted on a No 10 webpage that the tweet was linked to, also appears to flout new government principles on consultations.

The webpage allows users to take what are described as “surveys” on various aspects of the grammar school proposals. However, it appears the results will be included as answers to the ongoing consultation on the plans to increase the number of selective schools.

The webpage uses leading questions to highlight the positive aspects of reintroducing grammars, pointing out pupils do well in academic subjects and a high number attend university, but does not

highlight possible negative impacts.

The latest government guidelines into consultations – published in January this year and overseen by the head of the DfE at the time, Chris Wormald – say consultations should provide “validated assessments of the costs and benefits of the options being considered”.

Michelle Doyle-Wildman, policy and communications director of Parent Teacher Associations UK (PTA UK), said it was difficult to evaluate the benefits of “one type of school in isolation of others available to families.

“The merits or otherwise of what is on offer should be weighed up and considered if every child is to have the most positive school experience for them as individuals, whether that is a grammar school or otherwise.”

PTA UK has already lodged an official complaint about the grammar school consultation being too complex for parents.

However Anthony Wells, research director at YouGov, batted away concerns. “Consultations are not supposed to quantify public opinion that way opinion polls do – they are just supposed to get feedback from as wide a group as possible to highlight any concerns, arguments or ideas that may have been overlooked.”

He added it was “positively good” to put open links to consultations on social media, “as the more responses they get the better”.

DfE changes its mind on two-day warning

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The government has rowed back on a demand that academics give civil servants two days to look over research they plan to publish from the national pupil database (NPD) – or be banned from accessing the data.

An email sent to academics earlier this week, and seen by *Schools Week*, acknowledged there had been “some concern” about changes relating to any analysis that used statistics from the database.

But the government now says that academics should only provide a “notification of intent to publish” two days in advance “where that is possible”.

The retreat comes a month after Schools Week revealed the new requirement and follows a backlash from the academic community, which feared the move would shut down rapid scrutiny of government policy.

The revised set of terms and conditions for use of the NPD now says there is “no requirement [for researchers] to share the analysis or findings”. Instead they are told to send a summary of their report.

The move is likely to be welcomed by academics working to tight deadlines.

But Professor Stephen Gorard, from the school of education at Durham University, said: “For me this is less of a U-turn and

more an attempted clarification that does not work.”

He said the proposed changes did not address his concerns that, as an academic, he did not always know exactly when a paper or chapter would be published.

“I have started simply sending the Department for Education (DfE) all pieces of writing involving NPD as soon as they are written (which may be up to two years before publication). I’m not sure how helpful this is and have never had any response or acknowledgement.”

The department originally said it was introducing the two-day rule to ensure policy officials and press officers were not “caught off guard” when data was published.

It followed publications quickly turned around by organisations such as Education Datalab and the Education Policy Institute after the government announced its intention to remove the ban on grammar schools.

Their findings made use of the NPD and were widely reported across the media, which proved awkward for the government as they cast doubt on claims the policy would improve social mobility.

Schools Week was told that organisations failing to give the department two days to digest their research before publication would be banned from accessing national data, or told to delete their post.

But this week’s email, from the



department’s national pupil database and data sharing team, said that while the original changes were thought to be a “clarification of existing rules”, they had caused “some confusion”.

The national pupil database contains data from almost 20 million pupils and is accessible to businesses and researchers by request, although there are strict conditions on what is released to preserve anonymity.

NEWS

Admissions watchdog rejects 'Catholic certificate'

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

The school admissions watchdog has ruled that a new certificate used to confirm a pupil is from a "practising Catholic family" when applying for a school place is "unfair and arbitrary".

The certificate of Catholic practice was introduced by dioceses this academic year to provide a more consistent way of judging a pupil's religious faith, replacing other methods such as attendance at mass.

But the initiative, backed by the Catholic Education Service (CES), has received a major blow after the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) upheld several complaints that the form – signed off by a priest – breaks the admissions code.

The OSA upheld objections from two councils and at least one parent on cases spanning five schools, ruling the certificate did not meet requirements for "reasonable, clear, objective and procedurally fair" admissions practices.

It also ruled that the certificate breached rules that "parents can easily understand how any faith-based criteria will be reasonably satisfied".

The certificates are signed by parish priests and decisions can be flexible to take into account an individual's circumstances, in contrast to previous criteria-led systems

for deciding a pupil's faith.

But Rob McDonough, a headteacher who sits on the Department for Education's working group on school admissions, said: "The vicar saying you're a jolly good egg is not fair enough."

But he admitted the situation at the schools was likely a "genuine mistake" that had exposed how difficult the code could be to understand.

The OSA upheld objections against St Paul's Catholic college, St Michael's Catholic primary school, Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic primary school and St Ignatius Catholic primary school, all brought by Surrey County Council.

It also ruled against St Richard Reynolds Catholic college, in Richmond, west London, after a case brought by a local parent and Richmond council.

The OSA ruled that the certificates were "in the gift of an applicant's parish priest" and agreed with objectors who said the lack of criteria could lead to "different priests applying different measures of practice".

Jay Harman of the British Humanist Association, which runs the Fair Admissions Campaign, urged the government to "think very carefully" before going ahead with plans to drop the existing 50 per cent cap on religious selection,



adding it would only "pave the way for far more manipulation of this kind."

"It's bad enough for state-funded schools to be discriminating against and dividing children on the basis of their parents' religious or non-religious beliefs, but to do so in such an arbitrary and unaccountable way is even more unacceptable."

The CES, which had worked with dioceses to scrap current school admissions arrangements and introduce the certificate, told *Schools Week* it was working out "the best way to respond to the adjudications".

A spokesperson said the certificate ensured other inequalities within the previous system – such as when a pupil attended mass without his or her parents – were accounted for.

"This ensures that the measures used to determine Catholic practice are the same across diocesan boundaries."

The spokesperson added the "central issue" hinged on the determination of who should decide whether a pupil was a practising Catholic. "Within the Catholic community it is accepted that priests are the correct authority."

No thanks to 'reward' for retiring teachers

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Exclusive

The government has written one thank-you letter to a retired teacher in the past four years, despite launching a campaign to reward their contribution.

The Department for Education (DfE) unveiled a scheme in 2012 in which outgoing teachers who made an "exceptional contribution to education" could be nominated for a personal letter of thanks from the education secretary.

But a Freedom of Information request reveals that the government received just four nominations from 2013 to 2015 – and only one letter of thanks was sent.

However, interest in the project has picked up this year with eight nominations submitted. The department said seven were now under active consideration. One was turned down.

The department did not provide an explanation as to why there had been a spike in nominations, but it updated its

thank-you letter webpage at the end of last month for the first time since 2012, which prompted a notification to subscribers of gov.uk alerts.

A government spokesperson said the update was simply to add Justine Greening's name to the page, in place of former education secretary Nicky Morgan.

The department would not comment on why three of the four initial letters were rejected.

However, Avis Gilmore, assistant general secretary at the National Union of Teachers, said the low take-up could be because many teachers held the DfE responsible for issues such as low morale, excessive workload and "rushed and ill-thought-out" initiatives.

Gilmore said that, for some, the thank-you letters may be "the last thing they would wish to see on their retirement".

The DfE guidance suggests nominees could be teachers who have held after-school and weekend classes, been involved in education in the community, or helped to turn round a failing school.



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NEWS

The hidden world of APPGs

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

Beginning this week, *Schools Week* is revealing its first investigation into all-party parliamentary groups (APPGs), uncovering how they influence education, set up meetings, and how they can label a report as “all-party” – when in reality it is the work of a single external body.

Q: When is a report by MPs not actually a report by MPs?

A: When it has been written by another organisation, but is presented as a cross-party publication by MPs and has politicians’ names smattered across it.

There are 19 education APPGs, but the financial education APPG, whose secretariat is the charity Young Enterprise has the highest amount of needed resources – between £34,501 to £36,000.

The figure does not indicate wrong practice, but is symbolic of what Young Enterprise estimates it costs for marketing and PR for the APPG.

The costs are covered by Young Enterprise’s supporters, which include a wide number of partners including J.P. Morgan, Asda, and the Department for Education.

While the estimate is tens of thousands higher than most other education APPG costs (usually about £3,000) the financial education APPG is also one of

the largest with 195 members.

Speaking to *Schools Week*, a Young Enterprise spokesperson said the funding was the estimated cost of publicising the APPG, but said not all groups were as transparent about their costs.

“A number of groups with external secretariats do not register their salary costs – despite members of their staff working on the group’s activities – but in the interests of transparency we chose to include this as part of our annual registration of estimated costs.”

Since starting in 2011, the financial education APPG has produced four reports: three while its secretariat was Pfeg (Personal Finance Education Group) and one under Young Enterprise (which took over Pfeg in September 2014).

Three of the reports linked financial education to specific school practices: one on curriculum, one on further education, and one for vulnerable young people. The most recent report was a retrospective, Financial Education in Schools: Two Years On – Job Done?

The reports influenced financial education becoming a compulsory part of the secondary curriculum, and its insertion into the new mathematics and citizenship curriculum.

Yet, *Schools Week* learned that while the APPG labels its reports as an

“all-party parliamentary” report, they are completed by another body.

Its first three reports were researched and written by Money Advice Service, a government debt advice service; its last by Young Enterprise. A footnote on the latter acknowledges this, but the document still is presented as an all-party report.

Other APPGs, such as one on sixth-form colleges, choose not to badge work done by the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) as all-party parliamentary report and keeps them separate.

James Kerwin, deputy chief executive of the SFCA, said: “We use our research to brief APPG members, rather than produce joint publications.

“This is not something I would rule out, but

the model we use at the moment is simple and works well for us.”

Funding for the report is not included in Young Enterprise’s estimated costs, but counts as “non-staff costs” that were directly funded by the Money Advice Service and Money Saving Expert.

Money Advice Service contributed £12,000, while a poll of secondary school teachers for the report was funded through £10,000 from Martin Lewis, founder of Money Saving Expert.

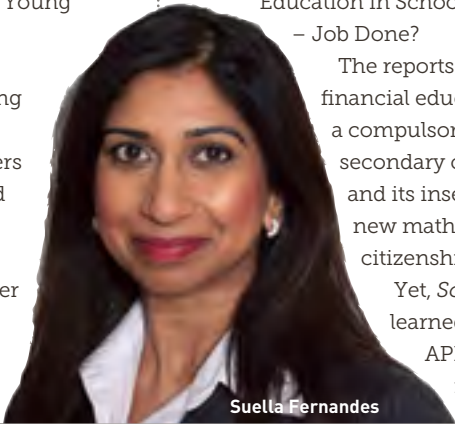
The group has produced more reports than the overarching education APPG, whose secretariat estimates an annual cost of £22,501 to £24,000, yet has produced just one report in six years.

Follow the story next week to find out more.

APPG FINANCIAL EDUCATION REPORT: ACTIVITIES FUNDED BY MONEY ADVICE SERVICE		
Date	Item	Cost (inc. VAT)
30/03/2016	Stenographer and transcripts	£1,658.88
05/05/2016	Envelopes for sending out reports	£21.49
17/05/2016	Designing report and printing costs	£3,685.08
24/05/2016	Photographer for launch event	£400.00
24/05/2016	Launch event in Parliament	£2,524.16
24/05/2016	University of Birmingham – policy support	£4,800.00
	TOTAL:	£13,089.61*

*£12,000 met by Money Advice Service; the outstanding £1,089.61 met by Young Enterprise

APPG FINANCIAL EDUCATION REPORT – ACTIVITIES FUNDED BY MARTIN LEWIS AT MONEY SAVING EXPERT		
Date	Item	Cost (inc. VAT)
March 2016	Polling of secondary school teachers	£10,000.00
	TOTAL:	£10,000.00



Suella Fernandes

PHONE APP CLOSES ADVANTAGE GAP

A mobile phone app that encourages parents to play games at home with their children has shown promise in closing the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils before they start school, a new study has found.

A randomised control trial of 144 families by researchers at the University of Oxford found the EasyPeasy app boosted children’s “cognitive self-regulation” – the capacity to persist with difficult tasks and make independent decisions – as rated by their parents. Self-regulation has been linked in other studies to better school performance.

Ideas for games such as “Band Practice”, where a parent asks their child to drum with them and to stop when they stop, also led to better boundary-setting at home, according to research published by the Sutton Trust.

Jen Lexmond, founder of EasyPeasy, said: “We’ve used technology as the channel to get the ideas and inspiration to parents who are busy and time-poor.”

Local councils, schools and children’s centres in Bournemouth signed up to the app, which was rolled out over 18 weeks to selected parents with children aged 2 to 6.

Games were sent to parents’ mobiles once a week. Seventy-four families were included in the final data analysis.

Parents felt their children were more able to self-regulate their thoughts after using the app, but their ability to regulate their emotions was found not to be affected.

Ugandan schools with link to Greening forced to shut

JOHN DICKENS @JOHNDICKENSSW

A firm running low-cost private schools in Africa, part-funded by the government when Justine Greening (pictured) was international secretary, has lost a high court appeal against the closure of all its schools in Uganda.

Schools Week reported in August that the Ugandan government planned to close 63 schools run by the for-profit commercial private school chain Bridge International Academies (BIA) after safety breaches in hygiene and sanitation.

Education secretary Justine Greening was in charge of the Department for International Development (DfID) when a £75 million impact fund was set up and invested in BIA.

Other investors include Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, the founders of Microsoft and Facebook. Pearson, the publishing and education company, is listed as a minority investor.

BIA’s attempt to overturn the decision has been thrown out by the high court, which ruled the schools provided unsanitary learning conditions, employed unqualified teachers and did not have proper licences.

Tanvir Muntasim, international policy manager for education at ActionAid

International, said the court’s decision should act as a “cautionary tale for countries planning to allow commercial schools without appropriate regulation or oversight in place” He also said investors should be wary of funding chains that “premised on low-standards to maximise profit”.

Schools in the UK cannot be directly run to make a profit, although IES Breckland free school is run by a for-profit making company.

Greening moved from DfID to education in July. That same month, the international development committee launched an inquiry into DfID’s involvement with groups such as BIA, asking whether the department should support low-fee private schools in developing countries.

The Ugandan government has said it will transfer Bridge pupils to other schools. However, the firm plans to appeal the high court ruling.

A spokesperson for Bridge said it was in the process of licensing all its schools.

Godwin Matsiko, the liaison officer for BIA Uganda, said: “We are extremely disappointed for our pupils and disagree with this ruling that affects the 12,000 Ugandan children in our schools, who have just finished their mid-term exams.”

He said more than 20,000 Ugandans send their children to Bridge schools. “They do



PA/WIRE

this because they want an affordable, quality education. They want the best for their children, and this court ruling throws that into doubt.”

DfID owns all shares in Commonwealth Development Corporation, a public company that provided cash through the DfID’s impact fund to the venture capitalist firm Novastar. Novastar invests in BIA.

A DfID spokesperson said it did not directly fund Bridge academies.

“We are encouraged that the schools will remain open this term, but we are still concerned about the longer-term implications of this judgment on the 12,000 children receiving education through these schools.”

Fewer requests from sick GCSE pupils approved

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

Seriously ill pupils are less likely to be granted special consideration in their GCSEs since the shift to linear assessment.

According to a recently released Ofqual report, pupils unable to sit exams because of illness are increasingly rejected when they request special consideration.

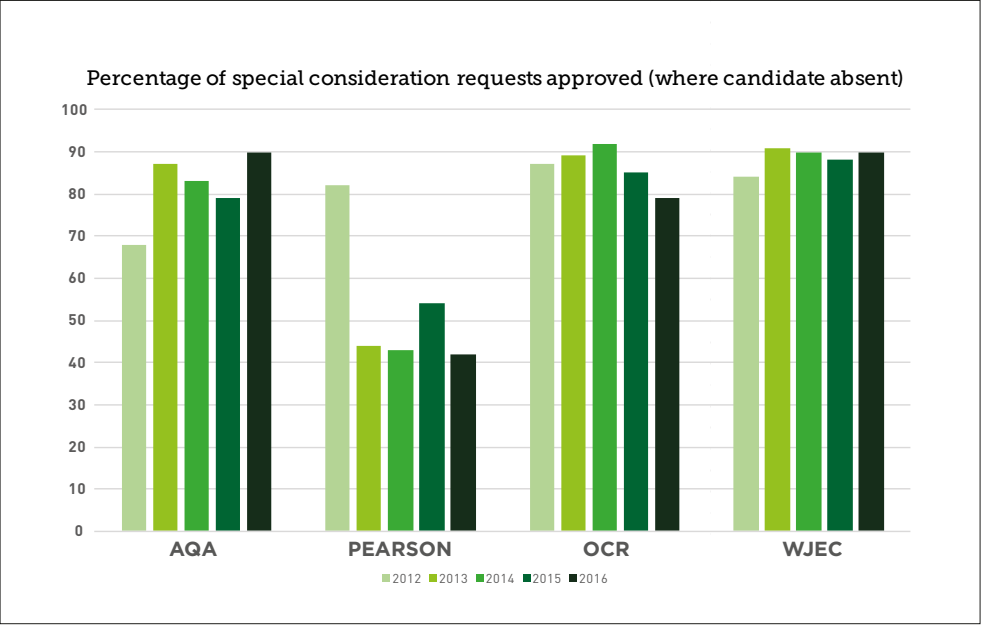
The report blames the introduction of a linear GCSE without modules or resits, which has prompted exam boards to approve fewer requests for special consideration because there is no other measure to predict a pupil's possible performance.

Candidates must have completed 40 per cent of the assessments required under a board's qualification for special consideration for a missed module.

Under the new linear system – in which GCSEs have more exams and fewer coursework elements – sick pupils are likely to miss several exams that often are held within days of each other.

Special consideration is a post-exam adjustment that makes up for circumstances that could disadvantage a pupil.

In 2016, 70 per cent (25,500) of special consideration requests were approved, slightly down on the 76 per cent of 2012.



That drop was driven mostly by exam board Pearson, which approved just 42 per cent of its requests. Meanwhile, AQA approved 90 per cent of requests, WJEC 90 per cent, and OCR 79 per cent.

Pearson approved 82 per cent of requests in 2012.

The board, which bought qualification body Edexcel in 2005 and is the only profit-making board, said its lower approval rate was the result of looking at requests on a “case-by-case basis”.

A spokesperson said: “Exam boards do not seek to reach a certain threshold of percentages of special consideration approvals each year, but consider each request on a case-by-case basis and apply the Joint Council for Qualifications [industry] guidelines to each one, ensuring a fair system for all.

“Now that qualifications are linear, with all the assessments at the end of the year, candidates are less likely to be able to meet the exam boards’ requirements for this type

of special consideration.”

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said the findings showed a “material and pervasive injustice for those students that will stay with them all their lives”.

She said fewer approvals for special consideration were an “entirely foreseeable consequence” of the government’s new exam focus.

“This just demonstrates what I’ve always argued, which is that if you only go for one method of assessment, a timed exam, then you don’t have any other evidence, other forms of assessment, to award the right grades. We will see instances of this more and more.”

Meanwhile, the Joint Council for Qualifications said the drop in approval rates was part of a GCSE and A-level structure that was fairer on all students, despite some losing out.

“Since 2013 all GCSEs and A-levels in England have been linear, which may mean more students fall beneath the cut-off. This is, of course, very disappointing for the individual but necessary to maintaining a robust system that is fair to all students.

“Exam boards review each case and provide support to schools and colleges so they can best support their students.”

Ofqual gives marks for examiner consistency

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Ofqual will use marking consistency metrics to monitor the performance of exam boards, but will not release the findings because of fears that boards may attempt to game the measures.

The exam watchdog’s first major study into marking accuracy, published this week, revealed the probability of a pupil being awarded the “correct” mark on a particular exam paper by subject.

It used questions given a definitive mark by an experienced moderator, then marked by every examiner to ascertain how often they veered from awarding the correct score.

In English literature nearly half of pupils were not awarded the “definitive” mark, which was attributed to marking inconsistencies and the design of tests.

The watchdog has now established five metrics as part of its drive to examine the quality of marking.

It has told boards how they have fared and will next work on developing benchmarks of variability for each subject.

However, the metrics for each board will not be revealed publicly because of concerns it may tempt them to game the measures, a source told *Schools Week*.

Further research is also planned to discover if changing question types might reduce marking differences.

Michelle Meadows (pictured), Ofqual’s

executive director for strategy, risk and research, said the organisation wanted “a wide-ranging discussion about the current state of marking in England, and if and how it might be improved”. She urged heads, teachers, academics and exam boards to contribute.

Delegates at Ofqual’s autumn symposium on Monday heard how marking in some subjects was more consistent than others.

Examiners in physics were 95 per cent likely to agree with the definitive mark for each question, compared with 50 per cent in English.

At the whole paper level, these variations affected how likely a pupil was to be given a “definitive” or “true” mark for the paper.

In English literature, the probability of a pupil getting the definitive overall mark was just over 50 per cent; in history it appeared to be just over 62 per cent.

That compared with probability rates of more than 85 per cent in physics, Spanish and French.

However, the watchdog told *Schools Week* this did not mean GCSE and A-level grades overall were inaccurate, as the data only related to individual exam papers.

The large inconsistencies in some subjects is likely to draw criticism



from the education community, especially as the government’s move towards linear exams means a pupil’s grade depends solely on exams, rather than additional coursework.

The report also shows the probability of receiving a definitive grade is “significantly influenced” by the location of grade boundaries – which are drawn up by exam boards.

Where grade boundaries are close, the marking consistency “will have a more profound impact” on the definitive grade probability. Therefore, the wider the grade boundaries, the greater probability of candidates receiving the definite grade.

The report says that “this is a very important point” as the design of the test “might be as important as marking consistency in securing the ‘true’ grade for candidates.”

ECDL impacts on Progress 8

Schools that enter large numbers of pupils into a fast-track ICT qualification could see Progress 8 scores drop if Ofqual or the DfE recalibrated grades to reflect more closely how pupils score in other GCSEs, a new analysis has claimed.

Education Datalab has investigated the potential impact on Progress 8 in schools that teach the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

Nearly one in five pupils at key stage 4 studies the qualification, which is the equivalent of a GCSE and is counted in performance league tables.

Datalab has previously found that pupils score the equivalent of an A grade in the ECDL, despite achieving an average score below C across their GCSEs. The qualification can be taught in just three days.

As part of a new analysis the data organisation rescaled the Progress 8 points awarded to ECDL pupils based on their average point score in all GCSEs, rather than their actual score in ECDL.

The study found 123 schools in which the score dropped more than 0.15, with scores dropping almost -0.2 for some schools with large number of ECDL entrants.

Datalab said the findings showed the need for greater comparability in performance measures of different subjects.

Exams watchdog Ofqual also said this week it was reviewing the teaching time of the ECDL. A report will be published in the new year.

NEWS

TWO-YEAR WAIT FOR GUIDANCE ON EXCLUSIONS TO BE REPLACED

JESS STAUFENBERG @STAUFENBERGJ

Guidance on pupil exclusions originally published in December 2014 and set for implementation in January 2015 was pulled from the government webpage in February on the grounds of “issues with process” – but has yet to be replaced 23 months later.

The government has now been urged to develop new guidance handing schools greater statutory responsibility for the futures of pupils they exclude, and warned that an increase in selection could see less detectable “informal exclusions” also rise.

Anne Heavey, policy adviser at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said that schools already had mechanisms for keeping pupils out of lessons – including running extraction lessons.

She also said that grammar schools were more able to reject children with additional needs.

“Those selective schools are in a position to say this is the brand, this is what they [children] signed up for, so they don’t fit – when it’s really so much more complex than that.”

The current 2012 exclusion guidance deals mostly with “formal” permanent or fixed-period exclusions. It says exclusion can occur only where there has been a serious or persistent breach of behaviour policy, or where the pupil would “seriously harm” the welfare of other pupils.

On informal exclusions, it adds: “‘Informal’ or ‘unofficial’ exclusions, such as sending pupils home ‘to cool off’, are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers.”

Figures from 2014-15 show that 3,130 pupils who had an SEND statement or SEN support were permanently excluded from primary and secondary schools, despite strict guidance that punishment must not be more severe in cases where pupils have additional needs.

A Department for Education spokesperson told *Schools Week* it was planning to “make schools responsible for securing alternative provision for excluded pupils”.

Morris Charlton, a former headteacher of a pupil referral unit, agreed that schools should be expected to ensure the transition out of the school “is the best it can be”.

“If that doesn’t seem to be working, making it a legal responsibility would seem to strengthen that responsibility. But then if illegal exclusions are already happening, how can we be sure even that will work?”

This has not yet become a statutory duty, but was in the last white paper and appears set to be brought forward. The spokesperson added permanent exclusions were “still extremely rare”.

Teach First should shun London

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

Training provider Teach First should ditch London and instead place its top graduates into schools in the country’s ten lowest-performing local authorities, says the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

The recommendation formed part of the commission’s fourth annual “state of the nation” report, published this week.

It said the government’s current approach to school-led teacher training was “not working” and called for the government to run a single “front end” to send trainee teachers to schools.

The commission claimed a widening divide between “the big cities” and areas left behind economically and “hollowed-out socially”.

The commission wants the government to focus future contracts for teacher training providers, including with Teach First, on “areas of greatest need” and highlighted ten areas where more than one-fifth of children were in failing schools: Blackpool, Knowsley, Northumberland, Doncaster, Reading, Stoke-on-Trent, Oldham, Bradford, Telford and Wrekin, and Central Bedfordshire.

Teach First – which recruits university graduates with 2:1 degrees or above –

exclusively sent its teachers to London schools when it was set up in 2002.

More now go to regions outside the capital, but the provider still has firm roots in London.

Brett Wigdortz, its chief executive, said he agreed some areas in England had been “left behind for too long”.

But he added that Teach First was already working with schools in most of the areas identified by the commission.

Teach First changed its eligibility criteria in 2014 to ensure trainees were sent to struggling regions.

Overall, the percentage of Teach First graduates in London fell from 44 per cent in 2013, to 39 per cent last year.

The commission’s report also called for a new national system to provide central marketing, applications, screening and initial interviews for school-led training.

At present, prospective applicants must apply to each school that has vacancies.

The report said: “The provider of this service could work with school partners to develop a process matching schools to candidates, heavily involving the schools themselves and ensuring a fair distribution of quality candidates.”

Russell Hobby (pictured), general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers,

welcomed the proposal as “central management and co-ordination would be helpful”.

However, he said the system needed to retain a “diversity of ways into teaching”.

Martin Thompson, executive director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers, also warned that one was in to school-led initial teacher training would not be able to “carefully consider local and regional teacher supply needs”.

The report also recommended that student loans should be written off for teachers after they had worked in challenging schools for five years and that schools in the ten struggling council areas should be forced to take part in improvement programmes so that none was rated “inadequate” by Ofsted and all progressed to “good” by 2020.

Education secretary Justine Greening announced in October a £60 million pot for school improvement, teacher support and other schemes in six social mobility “coldspots” – Blackpool, Derby, Norwich, Oldham, Scarborough, and West Somerset – only two of which overlap with the areas identified by the commission.

A government spokesperson said it would consider the recommendations.



Ofsted should judge well-being in schools, says EPI

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

Every school should be inspected on pupil well-being, a high-profile commission has recommended.

The Education Policy Institute’s independent commission on children and young people’s mental health this week warned that confusing geographical boundaries and staff workload left schools struggling to engage with health services.

In its report, *Time to Deliver*, the commission called for a “prime minister’s challenge on children’s mental health” to include statutory PSHE, a mental health lead in every school and evidence-based training for teachers.

The commission echoed calls for well-being to enter the Ofsted inspection framework. A *Schools Week* investigation earlier this year showed how inspectors commonly identified good practice in mental health provision, but rarely called out schools for poor practices.

The findings have been backed by school leaders, who have called for a focus on early intervention, and by former care minister Normal Lamb, who has warned of a “treatment gap” in which specialist services are turning away one in four of the children referred to them by their GPs or teachers.

Health trusts in areas visited by the commission reported “difficulties” in engaging with the education sector because of school boundaries that did



not “easily overlap with NHS organisational boundaries”. Schools had to interact with several mental health services to resolve issues.

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: “School leaders agree that there needs to be closer working between mental health services and schools, focusing on early intervention rather than waiting until children reach crisis point.

“We would urge the government to fund both schools and mental health services sufficiently and to provide the required training to enable this close working to take place.”

The report warned that the reduction in the role of local authorities resulted in the “proliferation of multi-academy trusts” and a “more fragmented” education sector in some areas, which confused health partners.

Schools did not always have “easy access”

to the NHS, the report said, quoting one health commissioner as saying “some schools don’t even know who their school nurse is”.

The report highlighted the pressure schools were under and said health leaders found school staff often did not turn up to meetings.

Funding was also a key problem. Of £250 million of additional cash expected to be allocated for children’s mental health services last year, just £143 million was released and only £75 million reached local clinical commissioning groups.

For 2016-17, £119 million has been allocated, but has not been ring-fenced, leading to fears it could be spent on other priorities.

The report said that while it was unclear how much of this funding had reached frontline services, mental health providers had indicated that they “have not yet seen this increased investment”.

Schools Week has revealed in the past the lack of accurate, up-to-date figures on mental health disorders of those aged under 18 – leaving policymakers floundering as to what provision to fund.

NEWS

'High-attainers do worst in fully selective areas'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Exclusive

Pupils with low and high prior attainment are less likely to pass five GCSEs in fully selective areas, a *Schools Week* analysis of government data can reveal.

High and low-attaining pupils had higher GCSE pass rates in areas without selection or with partial selection, calling into question the reliability of using the blunt pass rate to push for grammar schools.

Schools Week crunched the numbers after Conservative MP Graham Brady requested the GCSE pass rate for selective, partially selective and non-selective areas.

Selective areas have the highest pass rate – a fact used in subsequent parliamentary discussions on grammar schools.

But Nick Gibb, minister for school standards, refused to release the information following a written question from former shadow education secretary Lucy Powell, stating it was not “government policy” to publish the data.

Our disclosure comes just weeks after ministers seized on a report by ResPublica think tank into education in Knowsley, Liverpool, which found grammar schools could boost the performance of “poor but bright” pupils by almost 10 per cent.

But Powell, a high-profile critic of the



Proportion of pupils (%) achieving 5 A*-C grade GCSEs including English and maths				
	All pupils	Low-ability pupils	Med-ability pupils	High-ability pupils
Fully selective areas	60.6	6.8	60.6	89.1
Partially selective areas	58.4	7.2	52.4	89.9
Non-selective areas	56.6	7.8	51.7	89.6

government’s plans to open more grammar schools, said *Schools Week*’s analysis showed ministers would “absolutely fail” to tackle the education gap between low-attaining pupils and their peers “if they do not follow the evidence and champion policies that improve attainment for all.

“As this data shows: a comprehensive education in a non-selective area helps low-attaining children the most compared with their peers in fully selective areas. High-attainers also do worst in fully

selective areas compared with their peers in other areas.

“Rather than take us back to the past and fixate on selective education accessed by tiny, tiny numbers of disadvantaged pupils who are already high-attainers, ministers must work to ensure we have enough excellent teachers with the proper resources to benefit all children.”

The data shows that in non-selective areas, 7.8 per cent of pupils who achieve below a level 4 in key stage 2 tests go on

to achieve the five GCSEs benchmark, compared with 7.2 per cent across the partially selective areas in England and just 6.8 per cent in fully selective areas.

On average, 60.6 per cent of pupils of medium ability – those who reached level 4 at key stage 2 – achieved the benchmark in fully selective areas, compared with 52.4 per cent in partially selective areas and 51.7 per cent in non-selective areas.

Of high-achieving pupils – labelled as such because they achieved above level 4 – 89.6 per cent achieved five GCSEs in non-selective areas and 89.9 per cent reached it in partially selective areas. The proportion meeting the benchmark in fully selective areas was 89.1 per cent.

A Department for Education spokesperson said grammar schools had a “track record of closing the attainment gap between children on free school meals and their better-off classmates, and 99 per cent of grammars schools are rated good or outstanding.

“We want all children, whatever their background, to have access to an education that will unlock their talents. That’s why we will scrap the ban on new grammar schools and make more good school places available, to more parents, in more parts of the country.”

Head succeeds in bid to challenge for ASCL post

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

School leaders face a landmark decision that will shape the future direction of their union as either a professional association or campaigning force after a headteacher won the right to challenge the leadership favourite.

Head Geoff Barton will challenge Chris Kirk, an education consultant, for the top job in the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), a move described as “unprecedented” by former general secretary Brian Lightman.

Barton, who will quit as headteacher of King Edward VI school in Bury St Edmunds next Easter, has passed the official threshold of 75 nominations from 10 different branches to challenge Kirk, the association’s preferred candidate.

The organisation’s 18,000-plus members will now be balloted before a winner is unveiled in February.

The election is likely to be as much a choice about the future direction of ASCL – arguably one of the more moderate and pragmatic unions – as it is a toss-up between two experienced candidates.



Geoff Barton

Barton, an outspoken opponent of government policy who has said his decision to stand is sparked by rage at the government’s grammar school plans, is likely to want ASCL to campaign harder than it has in recent years.

Kirk, who has a history of working closely with government organisations such as the Careers and Enterprise Company, is believed to see it more as a professional association than a union.

It is the first time in ASCL’s history that a candidate put forward by its nomination committee has been challenged by another member. But, if Kirk wins, it also will be the first time ASCL has been led by someone who is not from a teaching background.

Under union law, neither of the candidates is allowed to make an official pitch to the media before the final details of the election are agreed on November 28, but plenty of information about them is already in the public domain.

According to ASCL, Kirk was selected following an “executive search” and



Chris Kirk

has experience of leading education programmes nationally and globally in senior posts at PricewaterhouseCoopers and GEMS Education Solutions.

He has also worked on national projects to improve the supply of future school leaders, behaviour improvement strategies and managing teacher workload.

Sian Carr, ASCL’s president and chair of its nomination committee, has said that Kirk would be able to provide leadership to enable the organisation to “take forward our vision of a school-led, self-improving system that creates the conditions in which every child and young person can realise achievement, no matter what their social background”.

Barton, who taught in Leeds before moving to Suffolk, told *Schools Week* last month that his campaigning background could help to ensure the union was “robust enough in rejecting some ideas”.

He told the East Anglian Daily Times in September that the “time was right” for him to leave his post of a decade and a half.

A fierce opponent of academisation, Barton wrote in *TES* magazine in March that he would have to be “dragged kicking and screaming” to become the head of an academy.

Funding formula consultation: just in time for Christmas?

The government is facing mounting pressure to launch its second consultation on the national funding formula amid concerns it could choose a date just before schools break up for Christmas.

The education secretary Justine Greening and her team faced questions on their funding plans in the Commons earlier in the week and pledged to launch the second consultation “shortly”.

A new national funding formula for schools, initially planned for implementation in 2017, will not be brought in until 2018.

The government’s response to an initial consultation held in March and April was due to be published, with a second consultation, in the autumn.

But Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the consultation would now be later with final decisions made “in the new year”.

A lack of clarity over the timetable has sparked speculation the consultation could be launched next month, leaving schools to organise their responses during the Christmas break.

Jonathan Simons, head of education at right-leaning think tank Policy Exchange, warned on Twitter: “Given there’s only four weeks left of term, [there] will be a lot of work doing responses over Christmas.”

Paul Hanks, a sixth-form funding and performance data consultant, speculated that a three-week consultation could be launched from as late as December 16.

Gibb told MPs the government was committed to introducing a national funding formula in 2018 so that “schools in all parts of the country are funded fairly and consistently”.

NEWS

RSCs: where are we now?

East of England and north-east London: Tim Coulson

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Tim Coulson has been highly visible at events and committee hearings over the past two years, but his proactive behaviour has not boosted the number of academies in his region.

East of England and north-east London is highly disparate: Coulson (pictured) is one of three commissioners with a part of the capital in their patch, but his also spreads to Great Yarmouth.

London has not embraced the academies programme with as much vigour as other areas in the past two years – in part because some areas had already increased academy numbers in the early days; in part because the rest don't see any reason to jump now.

The overall proportion of academies in the region, 32 per cent, therefore is lower than one might expect, given the increase in academies in areas such as Norfolk and Suffolk.

Excluding the London boroughs, which under Coulson's stewardship have had a small increase in the number of academies, almost 36 per cent of schools are academies – a more promising proportion.

In Norfolk, the number has risen 97 per cent since 2014, from 69 to 136. In Suffolk, it has increased from 54 to 114, a rise of 111 per cent.

In November last year, Coulson's office

went through a frenetic period, issuing seven schools with warning notices in the space of five days.

And a landmark judicial review case was settled out of court this month.

The Association of Colleges joined with Havering sixth form college to challenge a decision by Coulson to fund a new sixth form at Abbs Cross academy and arts college, in Hornchurch, Essex.

They claimed Coulson failed to follow the government's own rules when approving the request from the Loxford school trust, which took over the school in February.

The rules state that sixth forms should only be created in schools that expect to enrol 200 students or more.

The planned high court hearing was settled behind closed doors after the school said the evidence it had submitted to Coulson was not up to standard and asked that he renege the decision.

Coulson's headteacher board is a who's who of "superheads". Among the most prominent are Sir Steve Lancashire, the chief executive of the Reach2 trust, knighted for services to education in 2014, and Stephen Munday, the Comberton academy trust boss who chaired the government review into teacher training.

Also on the board is Dame Rachel de Souza, chief executive of the Inspiration trust.

She recently made headlines with the



launch of the new Parents and Teachers for Excellence campaign group, set up with David Cameron's former adviser Rachel Wolf and her husband James Frayne, a former director at influential think tank Policy Exchange.

Initially co-opted to the board, de Souza and Lancashire have the lowest attendance, appearing at 23 and 22 meetings respectively out of a possible 35.

Other members of the board include head Margaret Wilson and executive heads Caroline Haynes and Debbie Rogan. Mark Jeffries, from the education specialist law firm Mills and Reeve LLP, is a co-opted member. Roy Blatchford, the head of the National Education Trust, left this summer.

As of last September, Coulson was paid a basic annual salary of between £130,000 and £135,000.

NORTH-EAST LONDON AND EAST OF ENGLAND			
	OPEN SCHOOLS	OPEN ACADEMIES	
	2016	2014	2016
Barking and Dagenham	60	5	12
Cambridgeshire	259	62	82
Essex	556	150	207
Hackney	79	9	14
Haringey	87	19	19
Havering	82	21	29
Newham	99	12	20
Norfolk	424	69	136
Peterborough	77	20	22
Redbridge	77	10	12
Southend-on-Sea	53	14	27
Suffolk	323	54	114
Thurrock	52	34	39
Tower Hamlets	103	10	12
Waltham Forest	79	24	30
Total			
Region	2,410	513	775
England	21,932	4,419	6,189

Headteacher board

32%
OPEN ACADEMIES

28%
NATIONALLY

2014

Chair: Tim Coulson (RSC)

Elected

Caroline Haynes (Tendring technology college)

Stephen Munday (Comberton Village college)

Debbie Rogan (Wickford Church of England school and Briscoe primary school)

Margaret Wilson (The King John School academy trust)

Appointed

Roy Blatchford (National Education Trust)

Mark Jeffries (Mills & Reeve LLP)

Co-opted

Dame Rachel de Souza (Inspiration trust)

Steve Lancashire (Reach2 academy trust)

2016

Chair: Tim Coulson

Elected

Caroline Haynes, attended 27 of 35 meetings

Stephen Munday, attended 29 of 35 meetings

Debbie Rogan (HEARTS academy trust) attended 27 of 35 meetings

Margaret Wilson, attended 29 of 35 meetings

Appointed

Rachel de Souza, attended 23 of 35 meetings

Steve Lancashire, attended 22 of 35 meetings

Co-opted

Mark Jeffries, attended 28 of 35 meetings

It's been two years since the first regional schools commissioners and their headteacher boards were appointed. To keep you up to date, *Schools Week* is running four updates in which Freddie Whittaker looks at two RSC areas each week. Who's new, who's still there – and how they are doing on those all-important academisation rates.

WEEK TWO: East of England and north-east London; south-west England

South-west England: Rebecca Clark

The vast rural patch across which Sir David Carter once darted is now in the hands of Rebecca Clark (pictured) after two years of significant growth in the number of academies.

Stretching from Chipping Campden in the north of Gloucestershire more than 250 miles down to Land's End on the most westerly point in Cornwall, the south-west of England is the longest of any of the eight commissioner regions.

About 38 per cent of schools in the region are now academies, up 12 percentage points since 2014. This compares with a current national figure of 28 per cent.

Carter presided over much of the growth before his promotion to national commissioner in February. Clark, once England's youngest headteacher and latterly a national director for Oasis Community Learning, was appointed in April.

Academy growth rates between local authority areas in the south west are diverse. While the number has doubled in some areas since 2014, the percentage increase is in single digits in others.

In North Somerset, which has 77 schools: 27 are now academies, an increase of 125



per cent on 2014, when 12 were academies. In Poole, 30 of the 41 schools are now academies, up 114 per cent from 14 in 2014.

In Bristol and Gloucestershire, two areas in which Carter made his name as a head, growth has been slower – with increases of 17 and 11 per cent, respectively.

The area's headteacher board has been relatively stable for the past two years.

Roger Pope, from Kingsbridge community college, attended his last board meeting in September, but the three other original elected members, Dave Baker, Lorraine Heath and Lisa Mannall, remain in post.

Appointed members Nick Capstick and Brian Hooper are also still on the board with new members Alun Williams and Joy Tubbs co-opted last autumn. Their appointment

boosted membership from six to seven.

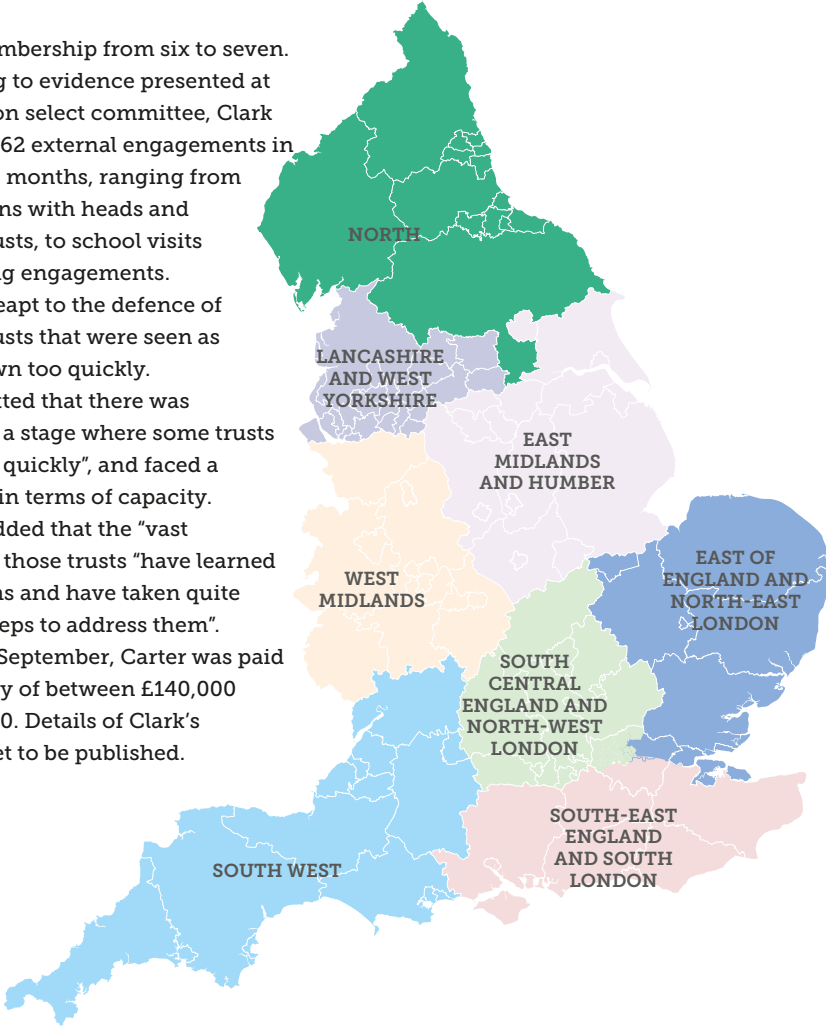
According to evidence presented at the education select committee, Clark undertook 162 external engagements in her first five months, ranging from conversations with heads and academy trusts, to school visits and speaking engagements.

She also leapt to the defence of academy trusts that were seen as having grown too quickly.

She admitted that there was "absolutely" a stage where some trusts "grew really quickly", and faced a "challenge" in terms of capacity.

But she added that the "vast majority" of those trusts "have learned those lessons and have taken quite definitive steps to address them".

As of last September, Carter was paid a basic salary of between £140,000 and £145,000. Details of Clark's salary are yet to be published.



Headteacher board

2014

Chair: Sir David Carter (RSC)

Elected

Dave Baker (Bradley Stoke community school and Abbeywood community school)

Lorraine Heath (Uffculme School)

Lisa Mannall (Trenance Learning academy trust)

Roger Pope (Kingsbridge community college)

Appointed

Dr Nick Capstick (The White Horse Federation)

Brian Hooper (Tregonwell multi-academy trust)

2016

Chair: Rebecca Clark (RSC)

Elected

Dave Baker (The Olympus academy trust) attended 35 of 35 meetings

Lorraine Heath, attended 31 of 35 meetings

Lisa Mannall, attended 30 of 35 meetings

Appointed

Dr Nick Capstick, attended 30 of 35 meetings

Brian Hooper (former CEO of Ambitions academies trust) attended 29 of 35 meetings

Co-opted

Joy Tubbs (Salisbury diocesan board of education) attended 8 of 14 meetings

Alun Williams (Midsomer Norton schoolsPartnership) attended 11 of 13 meetings

38%

OPEN ACADEMIES

28%

NATIONALLY

SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND			
OPEN SCHOOLS		OPEN ACADEMIES	
	2016	2014	2016
Bath and North East Somerset	80	17	29
Bournemouth	41	21	36
Bristol	152	54	63
Cornwall	278	103	161
Devon	366	74	117
Dorset	173	25	56
Gloucestershire	302	72	80
North Somerset	77	12	27
Plymouth	98	29	49
Poole	41	14	30
Somerset	266	62	77
South Gloucestershire	115	14	24
Swindon	81	38	41
Torbay	42	24	30
Wiltshire	236	54	79
Total			
South west England	2,348	675	899
England	21,932	4,419	6,189



EDITOR'S COMMENT

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

Why the views of 12 million parents matter – to the government

Official statistics show there are more than 14 million parents with dependent children in the UK. About 12 million of those have school-aged children.

If you were a politician, and your main aim was to get votes, aiming to impress the 12 million parents, as opposed to half a million teachers, is more likely to bag you a win.

Also, if you're canvassing for opinion, that pool of 12 million gives you much more scope for finding out what you want to hear.

The half a million teachers have a vested interest in keeping their jobs easier. They don't want to do a bad job; but no sensible person wants to make their job harder. Also, teachers are reasonably well informed about their job. If you want to get a simple policy validated, then asking teachers is not your best bet. Instead, you ask people who are rushed and time-poor.

All of which explains why No 10 is focusing its efforts on canvassing parents over grammar schools.

As our front cover story reveals, a campaign has been created to find parents and push them to answer a few questions about selective schools. The webpages on which they do this provide information that gives the government's reasons for introducing the policies, without a nod towards the stacks of

evidence against it.

The generous explanation of why No 10 wants more parents to fill in the consultation is that parents matter. Their taxes pay for schools. Their children spend hours in them each day. What parents want is important, and they have every right to give their views.

The cynical explanation is that No 10 knows that parents are often poorly informed about schools policy, too tired and busy to find out more, and if dangled a shiny prospect are unlikely to say they are against the idea, especially if no one tells them that the shiny prospect has serious downsides.

We know "parent demand" can be whipped up easily because we saw it during the early days of free schools. Prospective founders had to show that parents wanted the school to open, leading to turf wars in which parents were offered all kinds in return for signatures.

What we also know is that parents didn't necessarily vote with their feet. Which is how we've ended up with a third of free schools more than 20 per cent empty, even after several years (that's according to the National Audit Office).

Many have also felt stung by the school that eventually opened. I've lost count of the people who have told me it didn't live up to expectation.

As I used to say to free school advocates

– including those now influencing government – if you asked parents if they wanted a new Lamborghini, free, outside their house tomorrow, I reckon 100 per cent would say yes. Does that mean we should give every parent a Lamborghini? No. Not unless we want to bankrupt the country for no good reason.

Parents should have a say. But we must be aware that preference does not equate to sensible policy. And we must be even more wary when the government is leading those preferences by putting out misinformation.

Although the Department for Education deleted their tweets about grammar schools, which the statistics authority labelled as "disappointing" and "not a fair representation", they remained online for several hours. That misinformation is out there.

The department's website is also constantly pumping out other messages that seem equally misleading. For example it tweeted, "selective schools are almost 50 per cent more popular than non-selective schools" – which is based on a fairly spurious comparison of the way parents fill out admissions forms sent to local authorities.

[Given that parents who get their child into a grammar school usually have only once choice available one in the area, whereas

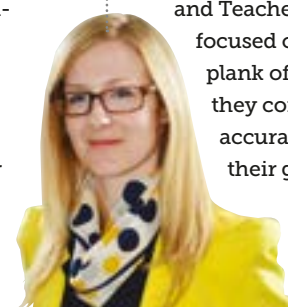
parents using local schools may choose between several outstanding schools, what this really represents is that parents in selective areas actually have less choice, but I digress...]

As this paper went to print, it was unsurprising to hear that "post-truth" has been designated as word of the year by the Oxford English Dictionary.

It has been a year of being told that "experts" are not to be trusted. That "the public" is "taking back control". In the case of schools, that means the opinion of the 12 million are, likely, going to outweigh the voices of the half million – however badly informed or misled the former, however wise the latter.

And it will be hard for anyone to stand up against it. Saying the half a million are better informed will be painted as arrogance. Saying the 12 million are being manipulated will be painted as condescension.

If there is a hope, it's that the new parent-led campaign group, Parents and Teachers for Excellence, are focused on knowledge as a central plank of education. Let us hope they commit to spreading accurate knowledge among their grassroots and refuse to perpetuate such unfair and "disappointing" representations.





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|||

SCHOOLS**WEEK**

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New group to boost status of ethnic minority teachers

Andrea Stephens, address supplied

I think this is a fantastic idea. BAME heads need this network of support.

We need to get over the taboo of talking about race

Jay Gee, address supplied

Discussing disadvantaged students is not the same as discussing staffing. I was assumed to be a "dinner lady" on duty, although I am an assistant head. Why was that? Why is it that in the schools in which I have taught, middle leaders more or less represent the populations they teach, but senior leaders do not? Why is there over-representation in minorities in low-paid associate roles? These questions have to be addressed and tackled

Naureen Khalid, Bromley

What is also crucial is to let BAME people know that if they speak against the majority view of this minority, then that's OK too. Too often BAME people are made to feel that they can't question or disagree with the "party line".

Councils cut support – while boosting reserves

Elizabeth Nicholson, Sussex

It's a shambolic system that needs to be shaken up by the boot straps. Our most vulnerable disabled children need these supports to have any chance of enriching their lives or gaining independence as adults.

Five days' notice for joint special needs inspections

Sunshine Frankie

This is already happening. We just had ours and it didn't cause any major issues. Gave enough time for all provisions to organise themselves and to organise meetings with key staff across provisions.

Non-teachers could fill vacant headships, says report

Deborah Carr

No no no! We have CEOs instead of principals in FE now and they run education establishments like businesses. They have no idea what teaching entails. This is all so bad for education.

Jonathan Jones, Nottingham

The reason many talented teachers – including deputy heads – do not want to step up to

headship is the high stakes culture. It is a football manager situation without the football manager salary (despite what some people would have you believe). If you have a mortgage and young children, why risk everything to become head of a school that may well get into trouble with Ofsted? Yes the reward and satisfaction would be great if you turned the school around, but it's very difficult and takes up huge amounts of time and personal resources.

Janet Downs, Bourne

Why not carry this suggestion to other areas where there are shortages? Untrained personnel working as medics or midwives. People from business taking on adult social care (unlikely, minimum wage for this essential job isn't going to attract those with business expertise).

But then we've entered the era of the "non-expert". So why not have non-experts driving trains, building houses, demolishing old chimneys, doing electrical wiring and plumbing, laying tarmac, selling insurance, flying planes, becoming US president...? Wait, that's just happened.

Joe Dunn, address supplied

What will these executive heads do when they are faced with an educational problem and are asked for their input by parents. I cannot imagine how awful it would be when the head looks totally blank and says it is out of his or her area of expertise. What has this country come to if this is a serious proposition. No wonder teachers are leaving in vast numbers. Other countries would laugh at a suggestion such as this.

Profile of Tuesday Humby

@_EllieWhitehead

Brilliant to hear of Ormiston Chadwick academy being turned around through great leadership

@martincampbell2

I loved the interview with Tuesday Humby. Nice to see good news in Widnes.



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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.

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020 3051 4287

Council scrutiny can fill the gap in accountability

MARK WATSON,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

So the Centre for Public Scrutiny thinks that local government should have a bigger role, and presumably receive some form of funding to do so. Would this be the same Centre for Public Scrutiny that has three founder members, one of which is the Local Government Association and one of which is the Local Government Information Unit?

If the roles were reversed and a body set up by multi-academy trusts was arguing for a bigger role for MATs these pages would be filled with comments about conflict of interest, hidden agendas, intentional obfuscation etc. Transparency should work both ways.

Contact the team

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PROFILE

LAURA MCINERNEY

@MISS_MCINERNEY

Louise Holmes, founder of EdCentral

It is the small moments in schools that turn a child's life. A kind word, the winning of a race, the way a best friend sticks up for you during a fight – or doesn't.

In the case of Louise Holmes, 56, founder of EdCentral, the day her maths teacher humiliated her in front of a class was the day that changed everything.

"I remember it as if it was yesterday," she says, as we eat in a small restaurant near Paddington, west London. "It was my second year at secondary school, the last period before lunch. The maths teacher wrote an A-level question on the board, called me up to the front of the class, gave me a piece of chalk and announced nobody was leaving the classroom until I had solved the correct working-out.

"He wanted to make an example out of me, he said. I didn't have a clue where to start. I couldn't do it, but – in my defence – neither could the brightest girls. They objected on my behalf. Also objecting were the girls from other maths classes who were waiting outside so they could put their books in their desks before lunch."

The deadlock continued. She stood there for 20 minutes, panicking, not knowing what to do. The maths teacher told the class she was responsible for their missing lunch.

"My parents taught me to be respectful of authority, but something snapped. I handed the teacher the piece of the chalk, told him I didn't deserve to be humiliated and walked out.

"He followed me shouting. He was red in the face. I can remember how angry he was. I ignored his request and headed towards the headmistress's office to give myself up."

She was punished. The maths teacher refused to teach her anymore and she was transferred from the O-level to the CSE class. Then it all went downhill.

"From that point I stopped trying to be liked by my teachers and focused on my new popularity."

A group of "naughty girls" idolised Holmes for walking out and took her into their group. Work was shunned in favour of messing about.

"By the time I entered my third year (year 9), most of the teachers had given up on me."

Years later, after she left school, had learned to touch-type and had a job in a bank, she stopped into school and bumped into the maths teacher who again made a disparaging remark, but this time she questioned his behaviour.

She stops as she tells the story and then looks out the window for a moment.

"I'm not citing him as the reason I squandered my secondary education, it probably would have happened anyway. But that humiliating maths lesson and the way he singled me out was what changed my attitude. My instinct after was to put my energies into being liked and accepted."

Those energies helped in the world of work more than she may have realised: with her career moving from banking, to retail, to journalism. At one point she wrote full-time for Conde Naste (including *Vogue*) as a specialist in the design of shops, which meant she was regularly dispatched to review glamorous stores, hotels and restaurants.

It was a job that connected her to her mum, who had once worked as an assistant buyer at Kendals, a fancy department store in Manchester.

"She was very glamorous," Holmes says. "Even after she married my father she would set her alarm to wake up before him and wash her hair and put on lipstick so that

"BY YEAR 9, MOST TEACHERS HAD GIVEN UP ON ME"

LOUISE HO

when he woke up she looked gorgeous. Can you imagine? She'd never go out without make-up. To this day if I don't have mascara on, I feel naked."

She pauses, "Mum died in 2009. A massive brain tumour. I thought she'd lost interest, because I'd tell her things and she'd forget. But it wasn't that; she had a thing growing in her head."

After having her two children, who she talks about often and with a great deal of love, Holmes became a freelance writer and PR specialist, with education becoming one of her areas of interest.

Given her experiences as a child, it seems a strange choice. But she loved primary school and a visit to Newham, then a deprived part of London, reminded her of that.

"The staff had to do a sweep of the grounds every morning to make sure no used hypodermic needles had been thrown over the fence overnight. Despite this, the school was an oasis – a calm, safe place."

It was at that point she realised she wanted to do something that could help to bring teachers together more, and give back something to the education community.

From the start of her company, On Tap, she ran a daily email bulletin linking to education stories across the press. Subscribers in schools picked it up as it saved them time scouring through newspapers and linked them directly to the stories they wanted.

Over the years Twitter became important as she noticed

teachers gravitated towards sharing stories there and in other social media, such as Facebook. But the public and sometimes hostile nature of the online environments put other teachers off.

"So we built EdCentral, which is an online platform bringing together research, education policy and the news, and giving teachers a place to talk to each other.

"Instead of going through Google and searching for everything, we put it in one place to make it time-saving. People fed-back on the research and said: 'This is really good, I found this useful'.

"Also, on Twitter, you can see something, but finding it half an hour later can be tricky. It's all noise. We are trying to get through the noise and filter things.

"What they can also do is talk about issues in a way that is secure and completely private. They decide who they do or not do want to invite in."



HOLMES



Haynes (centre) in 1960 with her parents, sister Katrina and brother Michael



As a baby in 1960...



IT'S A PERSONAL THING

What is your favourite book?

The Little Prince. I've done paintings of it and one is hanging in my best friend's house. When I was a child in Salford, my mother didn't want to me have a Salford accent and sent me to elocution lessons. We used to go to this lady who lived in Monton and she gave us *The Little Prince*. I've still got the original copy, which cost 2s 6d; it's falling apart. She said: "This is a wonderful book". I looked at it and I thought: "This is a child's book, I'm too grown-up for this". I picked it up a few years later and was blown away. It's just so beautiful.

If you could live in any period of history, when would it be?

Ancient Egypt because they were very civilised, although I would definitely have to be within some sort of noble family. It would be horrible to be a slave, or to be buried with someone.

If you could have a billboard across the country with a slogan on, what would you choose?

Always look on the bright side of life.

If you were invisible for the day, what would you do?

I don't think I'd want to be invisible, because that would mean I was doing something clandestine. Spying on somebody or fly on the wall somewhere? No.

If you could be any animal, what would you be?

I love elephants, they're just so beautiful and gentle, but they are hunted. I'd be an eagle or something, so that other birds wouldn't try to kick me out of the nest. I could soar and fly and go wherever I wanted. That would be wonderful.



Haynes on her wedding day in 2013 with her children Harry and Elizabeth



...and in 1965 aged 6

In essence, the plan is to make the internet nicer and less scary for teachers and school professionals who want to be in on the conversation, but find social media platforms too lairy.

"It's the lurkers we're after," she says, referring to the people who normally sit on the sidelines and watch social media conversations taking place.

It's not a big money endeavour: the company operates as a not-for-profit social enterprise. Most of the content on the site is free, including the daily news digest. A premium package is available for people wanting to access extra features.

But there is no hard sell from Holmes. There is a sense

that if she could find a way to give away the product free, she would.

"I think education matters, that's the thing. At best it opens up the world for all children, wherever they live and whoever they are. At worst, it gives up on them," she says, and trails off, as the long-shadow of her maths teacher looms in the background. ■

The EdCentral platform can be accessed at EdCentral.uk - it is free to access for teachers and school leaders, and a discounted premium package is exclusively available for Schools Week readers using the code SCHWK when registering.

OPINION



SARAH
NEWTON

Youth worker, author and speaker

To help mental health, get your pupils talking with peers

Putting more money and resources into current mental health provision is a pointless exercise if the children who need help are rejecting the system, says Sarah Newton

The Institute for Public Policy Research recently recommended that all secondary schools have guaranteed access to at least one day a week of on-site support from a mental health services professional. But while increased access is to be welcomed, simply providing more child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) advisers to young people seems somewhat akin to placing a sticking plaster on a gushing wound.

"Why would they want to put money into a system that isn't working?" Milly, 16, asks. I met Milly a year ago; she was hysterical, pleading with the pastoral care team not to refer her to CAMHS for the fourth time. She felt "completely disempowered by the whole process".

It's like sticking a plaster on a gushing wound

Exasperated with the system, Milly and her friends — all suffering with anxiety and depression — formed their own support group, using Facebook Messenger and lunchtime meetings to share their thoughts, feelings and tactics.

You may dismiss this as anecdotal, but in my experience it represents reality. Countless bright, intelligent and aspirational young people are turning their backs on the system and finding ways to support themselves and each other.

During my 26 years working with youth, I have learned that young people are far more capable of helping each other than we give them credit for.

Peer-to-peer support has been shown to provide tremendous benefits for early intervention, lessening the severity of mental health issues and need for specialised services later on. Looking beyond cost savings, peer-to-peer support also empowers those in the trenches, including schools, teachers and pastoral staff, to help support children and adolescents before they get lost in a system already under pressure.

Perhaps it is time we started to empower our youth to have a hand in their own path to mental well-being. Yet we seem reluctant to consider that peer-to-peer support can help.

Amber started her own support group after listening to a school assembly on self-harm because she felt the adults explaining the issue "didn't get it". She later explained that most girls she knows self-harm because Tumblr romanticises it, not because they feel bad or angry, something missed by the invited speaker and her two rounds of CAMHS support.

There are alternatives. There are meet-up groups for people with mental health issues, where they can talk without fear of judgment. They are simple, easy to implement and help to lessen the stigma of mental health in young people.

If schools were to encourage peer-to-peer support, they would simply need to provide a meeting place and an interested adult to supervise and let the young people do the rest. Leaders in the group would naturally develop and these groups would be able to self-regulate. Pastoral care teams could then direct students to the group for initial support, or as extra support while waiting for a referral. Eventually these groups could replace the lower levels of CAMHS referrals (tiers 1 and 2), freeing the system to concentrate on the more serious tiers 3 and 4.

Implementation could be simple as:

- The government adopting an already successful peer training programme and making it easily accessible to all schools.
- School leaders discussing mental health peer groups within their school community and identifying members of the management team to lead and implement such groups.
- Committed teachers and pastoral care workers identifying students to be part of a pilot group that would identify and empower natural leaders.
- Implementation of pilot groups under the supervision of an adult, but led by the students.
- Quarterly monitoring and evaluation based on objectives set by the students.

We need to start listening to the young people who are turning their backs on the very system created to support them. I think Katie says it best: "I often pretend I am fine when I could really do with some support; I just don't say anything because I don't want them to refer me."



JOHN
DEAVILLE

Development director,
Key Schools Academy

What schools need to know about the apprenticeship levy

Don't think that the new levy is all about big business, warns John Deaville. All schools, regardless of size, will feel its impact

Most people are — at least vaguely — aware that the apprenticeship levy, which will be introduced in April 2017, is a payroll tax to fund apprenticeship training, paid by any organisation with a payroll bill of more than £3 million a year.

But not many realise that all schools, regardless of size, will be affected; how so depends on their size and status.

For **grant-maintained schools**, the levy will be paid by the local authority (as an organisation with an annual payroll bill of more than £3 million), which means the levy will effectively be a 0.5 per cent tax deduction from the school payroll costs. Most local authorities are starting to plan how they can get some value from the apprenticeship levy that they will pay and many will turn to schools, who for many authorities are a major part of the headcount and payroll.

It's a similar story for **multi-academy trusts** (MATs), the majority of which will have a combined payroll bill of more than £3 million. MATs will be assessed as a single entity for the levy, hence even though individual schools may have a payroll below £3 million, the overall MAT will be subject to the levy and the 0.5 per cent tax deducted. So many MATs are busy planning how they can use the levy to get maximum value and return on investment.

Small MATs or single academy schools (with free and independent schools) may not pay the levy if they are below the £3 million payroll bill. However, the introduction of the levy is accompanied by a new apprenticeship funding model for smaller organisations, such as these schools.

Under present funding arrangements, most apprenticeship training, regardless of learners' age or whether the learner is a new apprentice or existing member of staff, is free for the school.

From April next year, these schools will need to "co-invest", or in other words "pay" for a proportion of the apprenticeship training. This is being set as a 10 per cent payment which, whilst not huge, may be troublesome for stretched school budgets.

The only employers who will not have to pay either the levy or co-invest in apprenticeship training costs, are employers

with fewer than 50 employees who employ a new 16 to 18-year-old apprentice.

So some small schools, probably rural primary schools, may still get free apprenticeship training. There are changes even for these schools, however. Under present arrangements these schools can often claim a £1,500 grant from the government; this will be replaced by a £1,000 contribution from April 2017.

The enterprise bill, another piece of legislation coming into force in April 2017, is

Use the levy as a chance to review staffing needs, current and future

a double "whammy" for many schools. It contains a new requirement for all public sector employers, including schools of all types, to employ a minimum of 2.3 per cent of apprentices as part of their staff.

The only exceptions will be schools with fewer than 250 employees; but again, for grant-maintained and academy groups it is the bigger entity that will be used to assess size, so only independent or academy schools with fewer than 250 staff will be exempt. Organisations not complying with this regulation will be named and shamed and required to submit a plan to come into line.

This all may sound like rather negative, but there is some good news. Many falsely believe that apprentices must be new staff, mainly youngsters, in new job roles, and primarily in trade occupations. However, apprenticeship training is available to existing staff of all ages, in a wide variety of occupations — and increasingly at advanced and higher levels — provided they have a skills need.

Schools can therefore use the levy as an opportunity to review their staffing needs, both current and future, and identify areas where apprenticeship training could help to improve the skills of existing staff, or help to plan for future requirements. Apprenticeships, when well planned and delivered, can benefit the employee, the school and, in the long term, the pupils.

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REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

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Our blog reviewer of the week is Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate director of knowledge development for Teach First



Three posts on a theme

Drowning in the shallow:
The handshake
@ImSporticus



Anonymous blogger ImSporticus writes on the power of the handshake – beginning his meditation with a “planned act of unsportsmanlike conduct” on the part of a player from another school’s team, and the opposition coach’s response, a shrugged “boys will be boys”. ImSporticus introduced the ritual of handshakes for practice and games alike: “My sessions start and end with a handshake, to show them I’m pleased to see them and to thank them for their continued commitment.” Match days begin and end with handshakes: “It’s also the last thing I do before they leave, telling them how much I enjoyed coaching them, refereeing them or watching them play.” Students are expected to shake hands with the referee, the opposition coach and their own parents. And, of course, with the opposition “mainly because without the opposition’s cooperation they could not have the opportunity to play the game”. What does an act of unsporting conduct mean? If “better people make better players, have we failed as youth sports coaches if all we teach them is the sport itself?”

Reading all the books: Hillbilly Elegy
Jo Facer

Jo Facer reviews *Hillbilly Elegy*, J.D. Vance’s story “of how he beat the odds of poor ‘white trash’ kids in the US and ‘got out’”. Facer discusses his experience in the Marines,

which offered him discipline, and the support and challenge his grandmother provided. “Fringe success stories are one thing,” Facer notes, “but how do we replicate that success for all children?” She identifies three features that she believes schools can provide: being a “reliable presence”, instilling discipline and pushing “kids harder”. Facer intertwines Vance’s experience with her own, noting the disquieting questions that the book leaves her with: “Social mobility isn’t all positive; it’s also moving ‘away from something’. My mum certainly experienced that when she was at grammar school, and I felt something similar when I was the only cousin at a private school.”

The white flight of Derek Black
Eli Saslow

This long read profiles the education of an unusual American. Derek Black was brought up a racist, the son of Don Black, creator of the internet’s first and largest “white nationalist” site. Black was seen as heir to the movement, speaking and broadcasting publicly from an early age. He was home-schooled, but went to a liberal university to study medieval history. His identity was discovered in his second semester, and made public. So far, so unusual.

Over the next few years, however, two powerful influences affected Black: inclusion within a community, and the study of history. Matthew Stevenson, one of Black’s peers and the sole orthodox Jew on campus, invited Black to join his weekly Sabbath dinners. Black began to attend – and to listen. His new friends began to challenge his ideas, sending him research into environmental causes of racial disparities in IQ and the effect of discrimination on job performance and mental health. He was exposed to similar disconcerting influences when his study of medieval history revealed the absence of a history of Western European genetic superiority and the impressive culture of medieval Islam.

Black renounced his beliefs publicly, concluding that: “I can’t support a movement that tells me I can’t be a friend to whomever I wish or that other people’s races require me to think of them in a certain way or be suspicious at their advancements. The things I have said, as well as my actions, have been harmful to people of colour, people of Jewish descent, activists striving for opportunity and fairness for all. I am sorry for the damage done.”

Black now enjoys rap music, liberal newspapers and Hollywood; he drinks tap water and travels extensively. He remains estranged from his family: while Derek believes, in his father’s words, that “family ties are separate from politics”, Don says that this can’t be true for a family “centred around political activism”.

BOOK REVIEW

Managing Teacher Workload

Edited by Nansi Ellis

Published by John Catt

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Reviewed by Bansi Kara, assistant headteacher, teaching and learning

★★★★☆

Not a week goes by without someone mentioning the ever-increasing volume of work that teachers have to endure. So you cannot help but be acutely aware of the irony of adding to your own workload by agreeing to review a book on workload. So imagine my delight when a remarkably slim book landed on my doormat.

Managing Teacher Workload is a compilation of essays from contributors gathered by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). The contributions are intended as a starting point for discussion on excessive workload and how to begin to tame the beast.

Each chapter has a different focus. Mary Myatt provides a necessary overview of the government’s emerging reports on tackling workload, and issues relating to teaching, data and marking.

Joe Pardoe, with a warm and readable style, addresses the ways in which initial teacher training can best equip those new to the profession with the skills they will need to cope with the pressures of the job. His assertion that “it is important that the reflection element of teaching is reformed to focus not only on the pressures of the job, but also reducing less effective work” lands the responsibility for decreasing workload back in the laps of training providers. It is not an unreasonable suggestion: start by training teachers to understand what effective work looks like. Then, the baton can be handed to schools themselves.

Ellis then guides us through chapters on designing assessment systems and the curriculum in a climate of rapid change, making time for professional development and a detailed, useful guide to well-being from Julian Stanley, the chief executive of Education Support Partnership. The book ends with an often overlooked aspect of managing workload: the way in which governors can contribute to a healthy teaching workforce by breaking the Sisyphean labours of their workload. Is this book going to solve all your

workload problems? Probably not. It is far from being a listicle offering tasty titbits. While the quick guides that punctuate the book do contain immediate strategies that classroom teachers may find useful in daily practice, the focus is very much on the philosophy and leadership of schools.

In fact, I would suggest that it lends itself far more to the school leader than it does to the new classroom teacher. This is exemplified in Lee Card’s chapter on designing assessment systems and

curricula – while I appreciate his depth of detail, I am left having to eke out the ways in which effective systems reduce workload. They are there, it just takes a while to get to them.

It is, in any case, packed with ideas. Do not be fooled by its brevity. Those attuned to the traditional vs progressive debate may spot the variation in approaches by individual contributors – Toby French’s chapter stands out starkly as a flag-bearer for traditionalism as he writes

cogently on managing behaviour to reduce workload. In doing so, he inadvertently signposts one of the difficulties in dictating systems to help teachers cut down on workload – the dichotomy between providing autonomy for teachers and providing structures that eliminate variation and uncertainty.

Rather than being a chapter that sticks out uncomfortably, it serves as a reminder that workload is not a partisan issue. As one can expect from a union publication, the content fairly represents the spectrum of teacher identity and belief and, in that sense, is all the more stimulating.

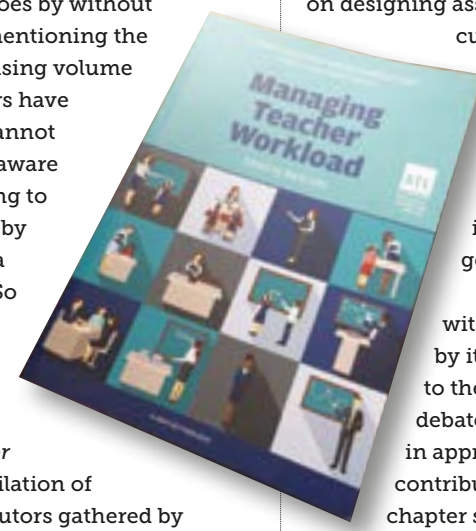
Perhaps in my cynicism about union publications, I expected a call to arms against government policy. The final note from general secretary Mary Bousted leaves the reader with a clear sense that ATL believes workload can only be tackled through a combined effort between teacher, leader and national government. While *Managing Teacher Workload* does not absolve government of its responsibility to decrease workload, it does not absolve the teacher either. How refreshing!

Next week

Liminal Leadership

By Stephen Tierney

Reviewed by Dave Baker, CEO, The Olympus academy trust



Last weekend, *The Sunday Times* published a lengthy article about Michaela, the north London free school that styles itself as “the strictest school” in the country. As one of its teachers tweeted: “When we say strict, we mean strict.”

The rights and wrongs of this austere approach are not the concerns of this column. What history shows, instead, is that the school’s leaders are not the first to tread this path.

Michaela’s laser-like focus on routines, procedures, and discipline all have precursors in the monitorial schools opened by Joseph Lancaster in the late 1700s.

According to Richard Aldrich in *An Introduction to the History of Education*, Lancaster was hailed “as amongst the supreme benefactors of the human race” when his schools came to prominence.

Using a “factory model”, pupils were taught in one room by a system of impeccably delivered routines, using semaphore delivered by one headmaster at the front of the room. A teachers’ thick “manual” gave specific instructions about activities. At certain times, a bell would ring and slate blocks, fashioned aloft the classroom, would flip and reveal the next activity.

Drill, repetition and practice – buzzwords at Michaela – were also beloved of Lancaster. Though he also believed in co-operation and competition. Aldrich describes how Lancaster devised an “elaborate system of rewards” including

THE PAST WILL MAKE YOU SMARTER



MICHAELA'S BUZZWORDS FROM THE 18TH CENTURY

LAURA MCINERNEY

“merit badges... balls, kites, even silver pens and watches”.

(Is this the earliest known example of a merit badge? Write in if you know of earlier ones.)

Michaela came to prominence over the summer when newspapers, ours included, ran a story about its choice to place a child

in “lunch isolation” after his or her parent failed to pay for a mandatory school lunch. If this seems outrageous, it may come as a source of relief that the free

school is not employing Lancaster’s favoured method of isolating offenders: suspending them from the ceiling in a basket or sack,

often with signs attached naming their misdeed. In the case of detention, Lancaster advocated tying children to their desks so that they were adequately fixed in place while teachers went home.


The system was wildly popular, particularly in the US, and attracted many visitors who often left open-mouthed at having seen rows and rows of children working so obediently.

However, Aldrich says that “like many other educational innovations, before and since, it was in vogue for some 30 years” but then started to fade.

Historians differ on the reasons for the decline. Some say it was because the implementation of the manual depended on the greatness of the teacher and, without a focus on quality training for a wide range of teachers, there simply were not enough to go around. Others note that Lancaster, himself, was one of the greatest marketers of the idea – paid handsomely to move from one place to another, implementing the scheme – but when he died (run over by a horse carriage), the passion that drove the consistency died with him.

The system influenced much of what came next, however, with the shape of classrooms and their activities at least echoed in the schools we see today. In some, like Michaela, more than others.

If Aldrich is correct, however, and an educational idea is often in vogue for about 30 years, then I suspect “strict schools” will be here until at least 2040 – and their influence, for even longer.



A week in Westminster

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

THURSDAY:

We watched a lot of Trump. That wiped out Friday too.

MONDAY:

With a new remit that includes universities and adult education, you would think MPs might get more time to grill Department for Education ministers on policy.

Alas, the regular education questions slot in the Commons remains as short as it was when it was solely for schools and early years.

Monday's session pointed to a bleak future, with specific schools-related questions taking up just nine of the 24 questions. Further and higher education got 10. (Five were early years.)

Week in Westminster wonders if this advantages the government, whose ministers were much more adept at taking on questions of further and higher education than when asked about the dire state of funding for schools and nurseries.

What do Amanda Spielman and Donald Trump have in common? No, this isn't a joke about their wavy pale locks. Instead the pair are both said to be facing decorating dilemmas over their new offices.

WiW spies heard today that the incoming Ofsted chief inspector has been asked for her paint preferences before she moves in next year. (It hasn't had a lick for at least ten years.)

Alas our source did not reveal what colour she has chosen to wash away the doom and gloom of Wilshaw's tenure, sorry, wallpaper ... but a quick glance at Dulux's autumn colour palette gave us a few ideas.

Given that the education committee said the new Ofsted chief “lacked passion”, one might expect her to pick a muted grey – though she would have the last laugh by selecting fetching new colour “Wishing Well”.

Alternatively, there is the softer “Found Fossil” (although this may be a precursor for Wilshaw turning up in a few months buried in a cupboard somewhere).

Or she could plump for “Burning Ember” to show solidarity with perma-tanned Trump.

TUESDAY:

All eyes were on former New Schools Network director-turned prime minister's chief of staff, Nick Timothy, as Channel 4 revealed he is now embroiled in an investigation into election expenses for a parliamentary seat in Kent.

Questions have been asked about Timothy's role in the Conservative party's successful 2015 campaign in South Thanet, where some dude you are unlikely to have heard of beat Nigel Farage, and whether the cost of a nearby hotel used as headquarters for the campaign was correctly declared.

The party denied Timothy worked on the campaign, but Channel 4 broadcast a tweet by Timothy appearing to confirm that he ran the campaign.

On July 5 last year a user tweeted: “Great to see @nickjtimothy [Nick Timothy], who ran @cmackinlay [dude you won't have heard of] campaign in Thanet, is to lead the New Schools Network”, Timothy tweeted: “thanks, Peter! See you soon.”

The plot, like Nick Timothy's beard, thickens.

WEDNESDAY:

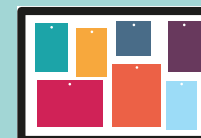
A report by think tank ResPublica for Knowsley council, which found new grammar schools would improve the prospect of white working-class boys in the area, was seized on today by prime minister Theresa May to defend her plans to expand selection.

In response to a question from Lucy Powell, the former shadow education secretary, about the government's plans to – as she puts it - create an “even more elite education for those who are already elite”, May threw the Knowsley report back at her.

We suspect it's not the last time we'll hear politicians use this report, despite concerns over its flimsiness and the fact it only focuses on one small, albeit important, part of the country.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

School Bulletin *with Sam King*



Children meet Andy Lapthorne at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre

Rio medallist shows off tennis skills

Primary school pupils from across London met Paralympic medallist Andy Lapthorne at the first Disability Tennis Festival.

About 90 pupils aged between 7 and 11, with a variety of intellectual and physical impairments such as autism and deafness, turned up at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre in east London for the chance to play tennis at the purpose-built Paralympic venue, which was used in the London 2012 games.

They were coached through four tennis-

themed activities across the centre's indoor courts, with each game adapted to meet their varying needs.

Lapthorne, a silver and bronze medallist, also showed off his Rio medals and shared some of his tennis techniques.

He said: "Being able to connect with such young pupils, all keen to learn about my own experiences in the sport and willing to have a go at playing tennis to the best of their ability has been a great experience.

"It's great that they have this opportunity to try out this wonderful sport."



Pupils at Bulford St Leonard's primary school

Trust launches glossy magazine

A multi-academy trust is celebrating the launch of its own glossy magazine, with senior staff at the helm and the trust's chief executive acting as editor.

Connected, created by Salisbury Plain academies trust, will be available free to pupils and their families, staff and stakeholders.

The trust is made up of four schools across Wiltshire: Durrington All Saints infant school, Bulford St Leonard's primary, Avon Valley college and St Michael's primary.

Covering everything from the latest news from schools to staff profiles, the magazine aims to keep its schools connected and to

maintain a sense of community.

Funded through sponsorship from local businesses and services, it will be published three times a year – with the next issue out in February 2017.

Helen Mathieson, the trust's chief executive, said: "We are a busy group of schools, there's so much going on and so much to say. *Connected* is an ideal publication for us to communicate our schools' progress, plans and successes.

"The magazine has been created to carry our message across our area, informing parents, families and businesses as to what the future of local education is shaping up to be."

Clinton campaigners consider political careers

FEATURED

Two sixth-formers who went to the US to campaign for Hillary Clinton say their experiences have made them consider a career in politics.

Bethan Atkinson and Adam Brammer, from Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews academy in Staffordshire, joined the presidential campaign as interns during its final two weeks (*Schools Week*, September 16).

On the Clinton trail they attended numerous rallies, went door-knocking and made phone calls to voters, working with a team of about 16 other sixth-formers from across five schools in the UK.

Bethan said: "As a group, we made 11,000 phone calls in two days. We ended up having a running competition with the other schools, so we had a chalkboard of who did the most phone calls each day and it got quite competitive."

Their involvement with the campaign followed a successful application to the Inspire US 2016 competition organised by the Transformation Trust. Their school's application was one of more than 50.

As a result of the trip, the two students (part of a team of four) say that they have discovered a passion for politics and are now reconsidering their future career paths.

(L-R) Nathan Jarvis, Bethan Atkinson, Korben Ward, US Senator Marco Rubio and Adam Brammer, far right



(L-R) Nathan Jarvis, Adam Brammer, Korben Ward and Bethan Atkinson from Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews academy

Bethan was set on becoming a teacher, but is now not so sure. "I think I want to go down a different route. It's generally difficult to get into politics, but easier if you have the right connections.

"We met someone who works with Barack Obama who started out as an unpaid volunteer, then she was an unpaid intern and then she worked her way up and now

she's got a full career working for him. So you just have to do the unpaid work and have connections with people in high places."

Adam added: "The trip has given me an insight into how to get into politics and join a political campaign. I'd enjoy going into politics when I'm older, but only for the right party."

TWITLIT PROJECT ENCOURAGES FICTION WRITING

An academy in Essex is using Twitter to develop pupils' writing skills by getting them to tweet six-word and 50-word stories, known as "flash fiction".

New Rickstones academy launched the Twitter account "NRA_TwitLit" to give pupils the challenge of putting what they want to say into as few words as possible.

Pupils will post poems and short stories, with year 7 facing the challenge of writing a 50-word story, then having to cut it down to exactly 30 words.

The TwitLit, or Twitterature project, was inspired by Ernest Hemingway's famous six-word story, "For sale, baby shoes, never worn".

Matt Davies, head of English, said: "The idea behind this was to get some really succinct creative writing from students in response to the six-word story. We challenged them to get across emotion in very few words or characters.

"Twitter, for a lot of English teachers, is an invaluable tool as it gets you thinking concisely about what you want to say. It inspires a love of literature, which is a win in my book."

MOVERS & SHAKERS

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

Rae Potter is the new headteacher of Sarah Bonnell school in east London.

The school, founded in 1769, is one of the oldest schools for girls in the UK and a member of Newham community schools trust, alongside Lister community school and Rokeby school.

Potter joins from the Ofsted-rated outstanding Clapton girls' academy in Hackney.

Before Clapton she was director of the Hackney teaching school alliance, where she was responsible for whole school improvement through developing the quality of teaching and leading on collaboration to improve achievement for children.

She says she is most looking forward to "working with the whole school community", as well as "building on the success of students" both at the school and within the trust.

"Sarah Bonnell, like Lister community and Rokeby, is an excellent school and working as part of the new academy trust will only help it to become even better."

Amy Finch has been appointed private secretary to the new Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman.



Rae Potter



Amy Finch



Sally MacDonald

She will head Spielman's private office and the group of people that assist the chief inspector with strategy and day-to-day running of the office.

She was research manager and head of education at the Reform Research Trust, where her responsibilities included deciding on what reports were written, and what education events the company would run.

She first joined Reform as a researcher in 2014, working her way up to senior researcher and then research manager.

Before joining Reform, Finch began

her career working as an assistant parliamentary researcher to Stephen Williams MP, and then parliamentary researcher to Simon Wright MP.

In the new role, she says that she is most looking forward to making a difference in education, "to being closer to what happens on the ground."

"At Reform you write things and then see changes in government policy, but it's quite

slow. Sometimes it's quite intangible, and really difficult to say that it was me that did that."

Sally MacDonald has been appointed permanent head at Greythorn primary school in Nottingham.

The school is a member of The Flying High Trust, a primary multi-academy trust that it joined at the beginning of this year.

She steps up from acting head, a position she has held since February 2015 – but says there is a marked difference now that she is officially at the helm.

"As acting head, you don't feel like you can really make your stamp on the school, whereas being permanent gives you the go-ahead. It's the knowledge that the school is ultimately my responsibility."

She joined Greythorn as a teacher 15 years ago, before working her way up through the ranks.

She says that she plans to develop writing skills throughout the school. "In every other area we were above the national data last year, but writing was the one area where we weren't, so we're working very hard on that."

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

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

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference
to WIN a *Schools Week* mug



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