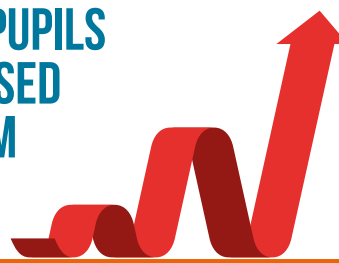


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WITH SIR DAVID
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SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

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Choristers at Christmas PAGE 22

National funding: Greening (finally) lays out the plans

FREDDIE WHITTAKER &
JOHN DICKENS

More than 10,700 schools will get extra cash under the government's new fairer funding formula, but upwards of 9,000 will lose out, documents finally released this week reveal.

The second stage of a consultation on proposals for a national funding formula was announced on Wednesday by education secretary Justine Greening.

Originally due earlier in the year, the delayed consultation sets out how the government plans to limit damage on schools facing losses as historical gaps in funding between different geographical areas flatten in the coming years.

Schools will continue to have

a minimum funding guarantee preventing losses from being more than 1.5 per cent of their budget each year.

A new overall cap will additionally mean no school will lose more than 3 per cent of its funding as a result of the new measures for at least the next two years. Beyond 2020, further changes to the formula could happen.

The amount of money schools can gain under the change will also be capped at 3 per cent in 2018-19 and at 2.5 per cent the following year.

The changes mean 10,740 schools, 54 per cent of the total, will get additional money, while 9,128 will see funding levels decrease.

Launching a 14-week consultation into the plans on Wednesday, the government said it would adopt

the nine factors for calculating per-pupil funding set out in the first stage of the process earlier this year. Elements include additional funding for population sparsity, local deprivation and the low prior attainment of pupils.

Extra cash for pupils moving in and out of a school mid-term was initially ruled out – but will now also be included in the formula.

Documents released by the government show schools in London are the most likely to be adversely affected by the new measures, with boroughs in the capital making up nine of the ten local authority areas that stand to lose the most money in 2018-19, the first year of the scheme.

The council areas set to benefit most include Derby, where there

will be a 2.7 per cent increase in funding in the first year, and York, Torbay, Somerset and Barnsley, which will get a 2.4 per cent rise.

Greening said the reforms would mean "an end to historical unfairness and under-funding for certain schools", but Angela Rayner, her Labour shadow, said the government was "simply moving inadequate sums of money around".

Greening said: "We need a system that funds schools according to the needs of their pupils rather than their postcode, levelling the playing field and giving parents the confidence that every child will have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential."

The consultation closes on March 22.

More funding details on page 2



YEAR IN REVIEW

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NFF: the winners and the losers

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JOHN DICKENS @JOHNDICKENSSW

The Department for Education has released data showing the impact of the proposed changes to funding on every school and local authority in England, with a function allowing schools to search for their own information.

It shows that when the new formula comes into effect in 2018-19, schools in inner London and urban areas will lose at the highest rate as the new formula takes into account more recent 'levels of deprivation' figures. The proportion of pupils in low-income families has slumped in the capital from 28 per cent to 17 per cent, according to figures presented to parliament.

Schools with low prior attainment, small rural schools and those with pupils from "just about managing" families fare better, however, with extra cash.

The government said it had received strong support for an "area-cost adjustment" to the per-pupil funding to reflect the variation of labour market costs. It will be calculated using a model that takes into account general labour market trends and salary variations within the teaching workforce.

This adjustment is applied to allocations once the rest of the formula has been totted up – meaning it can make a big difference – government documents state the adjustment will provide for increases of up to 18 per cent.

However, further details of the multiplier in each area were not published on Wednesday. The documents state the information will be in a technical note that

the Department for Education website says will be "published shortly".

The multiplier factor has not gone down well with everyone.

Mike Parker, director of Schools North East, said it was the "single greatest thing that prevents this from being a fair funding formula.

"The whole formula is made on making sure a child in Canterbury, for example, is funded the same as a child with the same needs in the north east, but then if you find it is a bit more expensive to buy a house in Canterbury, therefore we will give the Canterbury school more money, it ceases to be fair on that basis."

The government also acknowledged that some schools are being pushed to the brink under PFI contracts requiring them to repay hefty sums for their buildings – and said schools in the worst PFI areas will be some of the biggest winners.

Schools getting the largest per-pupil increases are in Knowsley, Barnsley and Derby which have all been "heavily affected" by PFI.

The formula allocates more funding through its low prior attainment factor than at present. Schools with the highest numbers of pupils with low prior attainment will gain an average of 1.8 per cent.

Schools outside London with high numbers of pupils living in the top 25 per cent of most deprived postcodes – termed by the government as "just about managing" families – will get an average rise of 1.4 per cent. Schools in areas with historically low funding for low prior attainment will gain an average of 3.6 per cent.

Schools in areas identified as rural by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will also gain, on average, 1.3

THE WINNERS...

Derby	2.7%
York	2.4%
Torbay	2.4%
Somerset	2.4%
Barnsley	2.4%
Plymouth	2.3%
Lincolnshire	2.3%
Bracknell Forest	2.2%
Bath and North East Somerset	2.2%
Milton Keynes	2.2%

AND THE LOSERS...

Hackney	-1.4%
Camden	-1.4%
Lambeth	-1.4%
Lewisham	-1.4%
Haringey	-1.4%
Newham	-1.4%
Manchester	-1.4%
Southwark	-1.4%
Tower Hamlets	-1.4%
Hammersmith and Fulham	-1.4%

Based on illustrative percentage change in schools block funding in 2018-19. Source: DfE

per cent more – mostly through proposals for a lump sum and sparsity funds. The government said some of these schools are in local authorities that never recognised the additional need of sparse populations in the past.

Despite being affected by some of the highest reductions, inner London schools will still be funded at the highest level of all schools. Nottingham, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester will be the highest-funded areas outside the capital.

NAO raps department for hiding budget cuts

JOHN DICKENS @JOHNDICKENSSW

The Department for Education has been rapped for failing to adequately inform schools they must find £3 billion of savings by 2020 amid the worst budget squeeze "since the mid-1990s".

A major study by the National Audit Office has confirmed schools must now find £3 billion of savings to cope with the changes – something that it said the department had failed to clearly communicate.

Schools have claimed for some time that planned "flat cash" budgets meant a real-terms cut of around 8 per cent in their funds once national insurance and pensions increases were taken into account alongside inflation.

The report confirms the scale of the cost and a sharp rise in the number of schools spending more than they earn.

Last year three in five secondary schools spent more than they received.

In 2011, just over a third of local authority-maintained schools spent above their income. That rose to nearly

60 per cent last year.

The average deficit at council-maintained schools has shot up from £246,000 in 2011, to £326,000 last year.

Over-spending academies also rose sharply from nearly a third in 2013 to 60 per cent last year.

Malcolm Trobe, interim general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the government's lack of plans for achieving the "enormous cuts" was putting at risk "the life chances of young people" and urged the government to ensure funding keep pace with rising costs.

Despite the calls, however, no additional cash was announced on Wednesday under the government's new national funding structure for schools.

The report said schools could be funding their over-spending from reserves, but the department had no analysis to support this explanation. It also found the department had not evaluated its own interventions when schools fell into financial trouble.

A total of 322 trusts have been added to the national concern list over financial problems. However the NAO found 70 of these had ended up back on the list even

after receiving Education Funding Agency intervention.

More than half of the 70 fell back into trouble for the same financial problems they faced originally. The NAO said the EFA's interventions – which includes financial notices – may not "always result in trusts successfully addressing financial issues".

Amyas Morse, head of the NAO, said the government needs "effective oversight arrangements that give early warning of problems, and it needs to be ready to intervene quickly where problems do arise".

The EFA is now developing a new system that it hopes will flag up trusts before they fall into difficulty, so preventative support can be provided.

The new tool will use projections for up to five years. It will be piloted in January, and rolled out in March next year.

A DfE spokesperson said: "We recognise the increasing cost pressures schools are facing and will continue to provide advice and support to help them use their funding in cost effective ways, and improve the way they buy goods and services, so they get the best possible value for their pupils."

NEWS

Councils digging around to fund special needs

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Exclusive

More than half a billion pounds must be found by 2025 to top up an already unsustainable special needs budget and fund an "unprecedented" demand of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

A *Schools Week* investigation has found scores of councils proposing top slicing from other school funding pots to recoup multi-million pound shortfalls in their high-needs' budgets.

Headteachers describe it as a "time bomb" for the most vulnerable children and warn that job losses are inevitable.

Simon Knight, director of education at the National Education Trust and a former deputy head in a special school, said: "The ongoing financial pressure being faced by the high-needs' funding block across the country, coupled with the Department for Education's (DfE) own predicted increase in demand for places in specialist settings, is having a hugely detrimental impact on some of society's most vulnerable young people."

The DfE currently distributes nearly £5.3 billion a year to local authorities for high-needs' pupils – children with learning difficulties and serious physical disabilities in mainstream and special schools.

The funding takes into account the overall 7.3 million pupils in the country, but an analysis of government projected figures shows that will grow to 8.1 million by 2025.

Assuming that the number of high-needs' pupils grows proportionate to that total, an extra £600 million will need to be found in the next decade.

This projection, however, doesn't account for any increase in the number of children born with special needs, meaning that the true figure could be higher.

Special schools are expected to face a



Jarlath O'Brien

15 per cent jump in demand for places from 2016 to 2025.

Jarlath O'Brien, head of Carwarden House community school in Surrey, said that with ongoing financial pressures, this had created a "time bomb" for the country's most vulnerable pupils.

A *Schools Week* analysis of local authorities' high-needs' budgets, which are given as set amounts by the government depending on how many special needs pupils each council caters for, also reveals many already struggling to cope.

Devon county council, facing a £4.5 million shortfall this year, is proposing to move £55 per pupil from its schools block – funding for pupils in mainstream schools – into its high-needs' budget.

Lorraine Heath, headteacher of Uffculme school, in Devon, said the

reallocation would cost her school £56,265, "which I have not budgeted for".

She said the only way to meet the cut would be to reduce staff numbers and increase class sizes.

East Sussex county council said it has a £4 million deficit and is exploring a "range of actions" to plug the gap, including tapping into its schools block.

Liam Collins, head of Uplands community college in East Sussex, warned any clawback from other budgets would "mean more job losses for many of us".

Similarly in Bradford, the council has a £6.8 million shortfall in its high-needs' budget.

Bradford schools are now in discussion with the council, which is proposing a further 1.5 per cent cut in their schools block budget.

Dominic Wall, chief executive of

Southfields Grange trust, which runs two schools in Bradford, said his mainstream school could lose £122,000 in one stroke.

The picture is just as bleak in Surrey, where the council has a £10 million deficit. Bristol is battling a £4.8 million shortfall, and Birmingham has a £17 million black hole in high-needs' funding.

O'Brien said with high-needs' blocks "under significant and sustained pressure", a "perfect storm" was brewing for special educational needs and disability funding.

He added that "alarmingly", there had been no "central follow-up planning" from government for extra places in existing schools, or to build new schools to cope with "unprecedented" demand.

The DfE said it trusted local authorities to distribute high-needs' money. A spokesperson added that the new funding formula for schools and high needs would help to address the "historic unfairness in the system, so areas with the highest need attract the most funding".

A consultation on high-needs' funding, published this week, said that no area would experience reduced high-needs' funding in the coming years and that local authorities "due to see gains on high needs" would get increases of up to 3 per cent in each of the next two academic years.



Simon Knight

Charity appeals for help to get shipshape again



BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Schools Week is making a Christmas appeal for our readers to help an education charity that was left "shipwrecked" after a car crash destroyed its boat-themed building.

Hackney Pirates, in east London, has run literacy sessions since 2010 for pupils who are "both falling behind and facing disadvantages in their personal circumstances".

A group of 12 workers, including three former teachers, run "targeted and preventive intervention" for 160 pupils through the "weird and wonderful" building, known as the "ship of adventures".

The boat-themed teaching space includes a deck, navigator's office and ideas room.

But disaster struck on Saturday when a car crashed into the building's front,

leaving it "smashed and destroyed".

Catriona Maclay, Hackney Pirates founding director (also known as the captain), said: "It has left us shipwrecked."

Staff were at work when the car crashed into the building at 12.40pm. "We were fortunate the car didn't go further in," Maclay said. "Nobody was injured luckily, but it has left us in a disastrous situation."

The building also includes coffee facilities and a bookshop that displays and sells the work of pupils who learn with the charity – just days before the busiest time of the year.

"Like with any major incident, we are only working out the implications now," Maclay said. "But there are costs to the charity and our facilities.

"It is catastrophic for the trading activities and the shop because it is a gift shop and it is closed a week before Christmas. It is having a big impact on our time and ability to get on with teaching our pupils."

Schools Week is calling on the education

community to help the charity get back up and running in time for their next sessions at the start of January.

"We are desperately asking for donations to help us to catch up or just to get back up to speed," Maclay said.

"We need people to donate to help us keep going over Christmas and to start 2017 ready to support young people.

"Please do get in touch with us about activities. We really don't want people to see us as the charity that had the car crash."

She said the group had been "deeply humbled" by offers of help.

"Any further support will help us and the young pirates to get back on track to make sure we can make lots more adventures and



The crew of educational charity Hackney Pirates stay positive. Top row from left: Andrew McWhirter, Anthony Mensah, and Kara Furlong. Bottom row from left: Catriona Maclay, Carmen Nasr, Sev Gunduz, Lily Eastwood, and Emma Henry

learning in 2017."

Hackney Pirates has set up a dedicated webpage for donations and to explain what the charity does.

For more information, go to hackneypirates.org/unsinkable

NEWS

It's official: steer clear of isolated academies

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Investigates

The government has issued its firmest statement yet that trusts should avoid running geographically isolated schools, raising serious questions over who will operate the far-flung academies that nobody wants.

The first "good practice guide" for multi-academy trusts (MATs) was published last week, revealing what conditions trusts must meet to expand.

The guidance also revealed that trusts wanting to "remain small" (fewer than 2,000 pupils) will face closer scrutiny of their finances from regional schools commissioners (RSCs).

The official guidance on isolated academies could prove troubling, with the report saying that "experience shows the geographical isolation of schools within a trust should be avoided" as "isolation makes it more difficult to reap many of the collaborative benefits of being in a MAT as it becomes difficult for leaders and staff to work together in person".

Schools Week reported last month how a cash-strapped academy on the Isle of Portland, off the coast of Dorset, was ditched by the new academy trust founded by its sponsor. The academy is now searching for a sponsor with "better local resources".

The government is also searching for a sponsor to take over the only secondary school on the Isles of Scilly, which is facing academy conversion after being put in special measures.



The island is 28 miles off the south-west coast of Cornwall and only accessible by a three-hour ferry journey or a 15-minute helicopter flight costing at least £100 each way.

Mike Cameron, a school governor and former teacher, said: "There are schools so isolated that they don't have anybody reasonably near to collaborate with them.

"The ideal situation is a family of schools [in a MAT] – a secondary with feeder primaries. But there are so few areas where that is realistic. I'm not sure there is a simple solution."

Academies minister Lord Nash (pictured) has previously said schools in trusts would ideally be within an hour's drive of each other.

The MAT report says there is "no 'right' geographical spread or upper limit of distance or travel time between schools that determines whether a MAT will be successful or not".

But it says that most trusts find splitting schools into local hubs is best practice – highlighting a case study where schools are a maximum of 30 minutes from one another.

In response, RSCs will now be encouraging "strong local trusts to take on more schools" so isolated schools are not left without a suitable sponsor.

Commissioners are also keen for trusts to expand to be "financially sustainable", with the guidance stating primary trusts need at least 1,200 pupils, and mixed or secondary trusts at least 2,000 pupils.

Commissioners will be "more cautious" and in future will ask for more detailed plans from trusts wanting to "remain small".

One proposed solution is "MAT mergers", which national schools commissioner Sir David Carter has indicated are increasing.

A *Schools Week* analysis of headteacher board minutes from June to August, published last week, show commissioners considered at least four applications for MAT mergers.

In October, Floreat Education academies trust, founded by former David Cameron aide Lord O'Shaughnessy, said it was looking at merger options after financial sustainability concerns.

David Carter profile, page 10

STANDARDISED TEACHING METHODS FAVOURED

Academy trusts that heavily prescribe teaching methods have been singled out as examples of good practice, again leading to questions as to whether academy status really grants headteachers more autonomy.

The multi-academy trust "good practice guide" highlights "a number of effective trusts" that insist on standardised teaching.

The report says that this level of prescription can "reduce teacher workload".

Outwood Grange trust is highlighted for its specific formula for curriculum staffing levels and class sizes that is rolled out across all its schools and that can involve cutting staff numbers to make costs sustainable.

However, the guidelines may be used to shoot down ministers' early claims that becoming an academy would lead to more freedom for school leaders.

When questioned earlier this year about a lack of autonomy in academies, former education secretary Nicky Morgan told *Schools Week* the debate was "a bit like" the EU.

"There are benefits to working together. And you might give up a bit of sovereignty, but what you gain from the trust - or what you gain from the EU - is that ability to collaborate and have somebody to help you with additional resources."

The MAT guidance also states there is "no expectation" that all academies or trusts should have the same school improvement approach.

MORE STAFF WARNED ON EXAM CHEATING

The number of staff warned or penalised for helping pupils to cheat in exams has risen nearly 50 per cent, while the number of penalties issued to schools and colleges has fallen.

New Ofqual figures show 388 teachers or invigilators were warned or issued penalties for malpractice during GCSEs and A-levels this year, up 48 per cent on last year.

But penalties given to schools and colleges fell 41 per cent, from 288 in 2015, to 169 this year.

In most cases staff were censured for "inappropriate" assistance, although the report does not spell out what this might be.

Most were given a written warning – 185 cases, a rise of 113 per cent compared with 2015, when 87 warnings were issued.

The second most common penalty was suspension from involvement in exams or assessment – 113 penalties in 2016, up from 91 in 2015.

For pupils, 2,430 penalties were issued by exam boards this year, resulting in 1,300 losses of marks, 690 warnings, and 450 disqualifications.

Students were mostly caught using a mobile phone or other electronic device during exams – up 15 per cent from 790 last year, to 900 in 2016.

Lodgers move into empty UTC site

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Exclusive

Young professionals are living in a disused Walsall university technical college site, which is not the only failed college no longer used for education.

Seven of the flagship institutions will have closed by the end of this academic year, and although the government aims to ensure their sites are still used for "educational purposes", a *Schools Week* investigation has found this isn't always the case.

Part of the former £9.5 million Black Country UTC, in Walsall, is used by members of a "live-in guardians" scheme, which offers cheap accommodation to professionals and students.

The £8.6 million Burton and South Derbyshire UTC, in Staffordshire, which did not open because of recruitment problems, is also empty, but the de Ferrers Trust, a local academy trust, is hoping to relocate sixth-form provision from its flagship de Ferrers academy into the UTC's "world-class" facilities.

Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, accused the government of having "no strategy for dealing with abandoned sites.

"*Schools Week's* timely investigation lifts the lid on the waste caused by the failure of UTCs to recruit pupils," she said.

"Rather than experimenting with our children's future, the government really

needs to concentrate on the issues that matter – proper funding, motivated teachers, smaller class sizes."

Most UTCs were built to accommodate up to 600 pupils, making them too small for many secondary schools. They also do not suit primaries as they were designed for pupils aged 14 and above, and for a more vocational curriculum.

Walsall council said live-in guardians were being used to "secure the building" at the Black Country UTC. The council's outdoor pursuits team is also based at the site.

The council is renting the rest of the site to the Sneyd Community Association. Specialist equipment left behind following the closure was "redistributed by the EFA", officials said.

Meanwhile, Steve Allen, chief executive of the de Ferrers trust, said the Burton and South Derbyshire UTC site was the "perfect environment" for a 16 to 19 institution.

"In other UTCs they have relocated the furniture to other schools, but we would like to utilise the building with the furniture, and that's part of our bid."

Meanwhile, buildings on the site of Hackney community college, which were used by Hackney UTC between 2012 and 2015, continue to be used for education, *Schools Week* understands, while the engineering block and main building at



the £6.49 million Central Bedfordshire UTC, which closed this summer, are used by Bedford college.

Two other UTCs are set to convert to other forms of educational institutions.

Tottenham UTC has requested permission to become the second London Academy of Excellence, while Greenwich council has confirmed plans to spend £13 million converting the Royal Greenwich UTC into a secondary school.

The status of the site that once housed Lancashire UTC in Burnley is unknown.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Where UTCs have closed, we have undertaken a full assessment of the site and aim to ensure that it continues to be used for educational purposes."

NEWS

Autism diagnoses rise by a quarter in four years

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Investigates

PRIMARY TYPE OF NEED

Specific Learning Difficulty	4.0
Moderate Learning Difficulty	13.4
Severe Learning Difficulty	13.1
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	4.5
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	12.3
Speech, Language and Communications Needs	14.0
Hearing Impairment	2.7
Visual Impairment	1.5
Multi- Sensory Impairment	0.3
Physical Disability	5.8
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	25.9
Other Difficulty/Disability	2.4

STATEMENT OR EHC PLAN

4.0	█
13.4	█
13.1	█
4.5	█
12.3	█
14.0	█
2.7	█
1.5	█
0.3	█
5.8	█
25.9	█
2.4	█



CHILDREN ONCE SEEN AS HAVING BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES ARE INSTEAD RECOGNISED AS AUTISTIC

But pupils with an autistic condition as their primary need on their statement or Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) now make up 25.9 per cent of all pupils with statements, compared with 24.5 per cent in 2015. Since 2012, there has been a 25.5 per cent increase in the prevalence of autistic conditions on statements overall.

In the inspection letters, Bolton council near Manchester was told providers in its area were "struggling to meet the demand for referrals and diagnosis for autistic spectrum disorders", with a knock-on effect for behaviour in schools.

North Yorkshire was also told to improve post-diagnosis support following

"a large increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism", and in Nottinghamshire a group of schools was said to be "identifying a rise in the number of children and young people diagnosed with autism".

Gloucestershire county council told *Schools Week* there had been a 35 per cent rise in children with autism over the past three years, while there was a 39 per cent increase since 2012 in the Greater Manchester combined authority.

Enfield in north-east London was congratulated for addressing rising levels of diagnosis.

Across 13 inspection letters from July to

December – which are "narrative" rather than graded judgments – autism was mentioned more than 30 times.

Only one council's letter, Stoke, did not mention it.

Other special needs such as dyslexia, anxiety, attention hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Down's syndrome and hearing impairments were infrequently mentioned, with *Schools Week* finding one instance of dyslexia, one of Down's and two of ADHD.

Autism was possibly "the most complex of all special educational needs" because it varied so much between individuals, according to Dockery, yet it was hard to get funding because of some pupils' high cognitive ability.

"Every pupil with dyslexia has a very similar profile, whereas with autism you can't repeat your provision for one pupil again and again because they're all so different."

Rochdale borough council was told to submit a "written statement of action" after Ofsted and the CQC criticised high waiting times for autism diagnoses and a "lack of ability and expertise of mainstream schools" for pupils with autism.

Two of the council's four areas of "significant weakness" related to autism. A spokesperson for Rochdale said rising diagnoses was "in keeping with a wider national and regional trend.

"We are aiming to put an 'autism champion' in every school to help to ensure the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils who need support.

"Additionally, despite the fact we are faced with the challenge of meeting increasing demands with limited resources, we are now completing a new SEND strategy that includes a significant increase in autism support."

Schools are "struggling" to provide for autistic pupils following a 25 per cent increase in autism diagnoses in the past four years, according to government data and local area inspection letters.

The first published inspections of councils' "local offers" for special education needs and disability (SEND) provision warn of rising autism referrals and lengthy waits – with a nearly 40 per cent increase in pupils with autism statements since 2012 in one area.

Of the 13 joint inspections carried out by Ofsted and health watchdog the Care Quality Commission (CQC), only one did not mention autism in their final letter – and 11 referred to "rising" demand for autism diagnoses or issues with service delivery. One letter was positive.

Sweeping reforms to SEND provision under the Children and Families Act of 2014 means children are now less likely to be seen as having behavioural needs and are instead recognised as autistic, said Kat Dockery, SEND co-ordinator at Greenwood academy in Birmingham.

"Pupils used to get statements for behaviour and it would be presented as a behavioural difficulty. With that category gone because of reform to the SEN code, they now look at it and think, 'it might be autism'."

The number of pupils with special educational needs – although not necessarily an official statement – reduced by 72,660 between 2015 and 2016, according to the government's most recent census. The overall figure has dropped from 1.3 million to about 1.22 million.

Half of free special schools specialise in autism

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Autism-specific schools make up almost half of all special needs free schools.

The "more complex" requirements of autistic pupils compared with other special needs have led to high exclusion rates and a rising demand for specialised school places, experts told *Schools Week*.

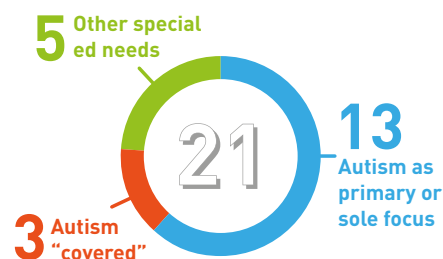
Of the 44 special needs free schools set to open or already opened in the past five years, 21 (48 per cent) primarily or solely focused on autism, according to figures from the New Schools Network, a charity that helps groups to open new schools.

A further eight of the 44 schools also catered for autism pupils.

Teaching geared towards the condition's combination of high cognitive ability and sensory or social discomfort was not possible in most mainstream settings, said Barry Payne, chair of the Wherry School Trust, which is opening an autism-specific school in Norfolk next September.

Payne, who is also executive headteacher at the Parkside special needs school in

Special needs free schools opened since 2011 to date

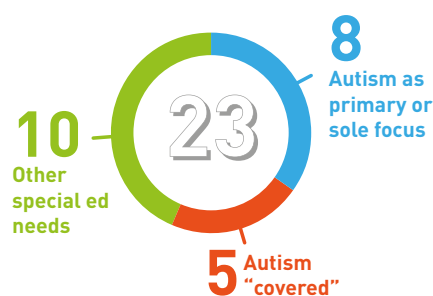


Norwich, said a general policy of "inclusion" could not cater for autistic pupils.

"We talk about inclusion, and if everyone had the funds, you could produce the ideal school with all the facets to allow an autistic child to thrive. But what actually happens with limited funds is we try to fit them into the system and they suffer.

"I am fed up turning away children from our complex-needs special school who are able but autistic. Many have been excluded

Special needs free schools approved for 2017 and beyond



or are out of school and being home-schooled."

The Wherry school will open with 48 pupils and grow to 100, teaching both an "academic" and "social" curriculum, he said.

Yet other experts said some autistic pupils benefit from access to a mainstream school.

Ed Archer, a director at Ambitious About Autism, a charity that helps to run the Autism Schools multi-academy trust, said the Rise school in west London, which

caters for autistic pupils, shared its campus with mainstream secondary Springwest academy.

"This enables pupils to access learning and social opportunities alongside their mainstream peers, whilst receiving the specialist support they need."

Angela O'Rourke, principal of Endeavour academy in Oxford, an oversubscribed autism special school for pupils aged 9 to 19, said access to mainstream settings would suit some young people, but knowledgeable staff and smaller numbers of pupils in specialist schools allowed for tailored timetables. Endeavour mainly took pupils excluded or "in danger of exclusion" from other special needs schools, she said.

Just over half of all pupils excluded permanently or for fixed periods have identified special educational needs, the most recent Department for Education (DfE) data shows.

And autistic pupils had the second highest exclusion rate among pupils with special needs statements, only behind those with "social, emotional and mental health" needs.

IN brief

SECURE SCHOOLS LIKELY FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

The government will adopt proposals for new "secure schools" to educate young offenders after a review of youth prisons revealed problems with violence, curriculum and staffing.

Two schools will be piloted, one in the north of England and one in the south.

The announcement follows a review by behaviour expert Charlie Taylor who said schools must be created for detained children.

Taylor said children in youth offender institutions received an average 15 hours of education a week, with an ambition of 30 hours prevented by "staff shortages and rising levels of violence".

The report also said children in custody were often unable to finish courses or sit exams they had worked towards for years.

The government said it shared Taylor's vision for new secure schools.

The proposals suggest commissioning the secure schools in a similar way to alternative provision free schools, and for them to be governed and inspected in the same way as schools.

SIX AREAS MEET GRAMMAR CRITERIA, SAYS STUDY

Six areas meet government criteria for new grammar schools, according to a new study.

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) research found only Solihull, Essex, North Yorkshire, Dorset, Northamptonshire and North Somerset meet the government's "expansion principles" for new grammars as proposed in its consultation document.

Areas must show sufficient pupil numbers and clear parent demand for grammars, which should not be detrimental to non-selective schools.

But EPI found that the six areas that met the criteria had fewer poorer children than the average, throwing shade on the government's view that such schools would help those in low-income families.

The government dismissed the report as "highly speculative".

"We held a consultation to help us to establish how we can create more good school places for children of all backgrounds by removing the ban on grammar schools. This report is a crude attempt to second-guess what that consultation will conclude."

SCHOOLS CONSIDER COURT ACTION OVER PFI BILL

Two schools are considering high court action to settle a row with their local authority over a disputed PFI bill that they claim has stalled their academy conversion.

Rokeyby school and Lister community school, in the London borough of Newham, want to form a multi-academy trust, with plans to take over the Newham Collegiate sixth form.

However, the schools say that their conversion has been delayed 18 months while negotiations drag on over £500,000 that Newham council believes the schools should pay towards private finance initiative (PFI) repayments.

The council says repayments were clearly set out in a contract signed in 2008.

The school has now sent the council a letter stating a high court resolution be sought unless the council ceases to demand the payments.

NEWS

Lessons in how to deal with the media

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Councils are running classes for school managers on how to deal with the media in a crisis, while academy trusts are calling in consultants for up to £450 a day, a *Schools Week* investigation into the cost of public relations has revealed.

The recent government investigation into the Perry Beeches academy trust in Birmingham revealed how the chain had employed a communications team to handle media operations for £450 a day.

The trust called in professionals following revelations of poor financial mismanagement.

The findings give an insight into how academies are dealing with intensified media and public interest. Information shared with *Schools Week* by the country's largest trusts reveals how PR has become an integral part of their operation.

Ormiston spends nearly £2,000 a year per academy on handling media enquiries, including a round-the-clock crisis helpline, so that staff can stay focused on educating pupils.

Ark has spent about £50,000 in the past two years, mostly on media training for new and existing principals. The trust, which runs 35 schools, has an in-house team that supports schools, including a part-time PR manager, but is also training its school leaders.

A spokesperson said: "Public relations is an important part of our work, to ensure we are engaging with, and communicating with the communities that we serve, and responding



Liam Nolan

promptly to queries from the media."

Some trusts use agencies to run their communications. For example, the Academies Enterprise Trust is known to use the Champollion agency, which specialises in crisis management.

Meanwhile local authority maintained schools continue to regularly make use of council press offices.

Slough borough council, for example, has a crisis communications agreement with schools – which is also open to academies. Schools pay up to £2 per pupil per year and it works like an insurance policy, with the council on-hand 24-hours a day to deal with the media.

Slough has also started running free training sessions for schools spokespeople.

Executive training courses run by the

Ambition School Leadership charity are training trust chief executives how to "manage the media", alongside other skills in brand management, stakeholder engagement and digital communications.

REAch2, which runs 55 academies and is opening 22 new free schools, spent £92,000 on communications last year, including marketing and stakeholder engagement.

Cathie Paine, deputy chief executive said the communications team "plays an important role in communicating the benefits to schools of being part of a high-performing academy trust".

The government investigation into Perry Beeches concluded it was "reasonable for the trust to use public resources to purchase professional services support where required".

School leaders in the trust said they did not "have the time and expertise" to deal with media requests, and outsourcing PR meant they could focus on pupils. The firm was used for four days a month.

However, the government was critical there was "no evidence of a formal procurement process".

Other trusts have also fallen foul over their PR spend. The government accused Durand of breaching the academies financial handbook when it paid more than £240,000 to PR and political lobbying firm PLMR.

But Sir Greg Martin, Durand's chair of governors, told *Schools Week* the trust did not break rules, adding that the Education Funding Agency had confirmed the work was done at cost.

Sixth-form college plans merger with academy trust

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

The first merger between a sixth-form college and an academy trust is on the cards after the submission of plans for a "pioneering" partnership.

Ninestiles academy trust, which runs seven academies across Birmingham and Solihull, hopes to bring The Sixth Form College Solihull into the trust from the start of the next academic year.

If approved, the move would involve the sixth-form college converting to academy status after joining the trust.

It follows a trend of sixth-form colleges starting to consult on becoming academies, although those to have publicly declared so far either plan to lead their own multi-academy trust (MAT) and sponsor other schools or become a standalone academy.

The Solihull merger would be the first sixth-form college to blend into an existing trust.

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said the planned merger was "an exciting and innovative proposal.

"Having a high-performing sixth-form college at the centre of a MAT means that students will receive a seamless, specialist education at all levels.

"This makes a lot more sense than



The Sixth Form College Solihull

secondary academies establishing their own sixth forms as we know that many lack the expertise or scale to thrive."

But the two groups require final approval from the Department for Education (DfE) before they can join on August 1, 2017.

Ninestiles and the college first began talks in early 2015. Later that year the government also recommended the two combine following a review into post-16 provision in Birmingham and Solihull.

At separate meetings held simultaneously this week, the boards of both voted to continue with their plans and will now jointly submit a formal application to the DfE, requesting the college convert to academy status and join the trust.

Martyn Collin, interim chief executive at Ninestiles, said the merger would enable the trust to offer pupils a unique "learning pathway that will lead them on a journey remaining within one network of educational establishments from the first

day of their academic experience aged 3 right up until they are 19."

Paul Ashdown, the college's principal, said he believed the merger brought together "complementary strengths" that "would drive and sustain a system of excellence".

Other sixth-form colleges to submit formal proposals for academy conversion include Priestley college, in Warrington, Hereford sixth-form college, Rochdale sixth-form college, and New College Pontefract.

It follows former chancellor George Osborne's announcement last year that becoming an academy would allow a sixth-form college to avoid paying VAT, currently at an average of £317,000 per year for colleges.

Schools Week's sister paper *FE Week* reported in October that 70 per cent of the 93 sixth-form colleges in the country were exploring academisation as "plan A or B" following recommendations in the nationwide post-16 area reviews.

NEWS

PRIMARY SCHOOLS DO BETTER THAN EXPECTED IN TESTS

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Fewer primary schools fell below the new "floor standards" this year compared with last – overturning the government's expectation that hundreds more would drop below because of the new "tougher" tests.

Just 665 schools fell below the standard, according to new figures on key stage 2 assessments for 2016 released this week by the Department for Education (DfE).

Not only is that 11 fewer than last year – when 676 primary schools fell below standard – but it is nearly 180 fewer than expected by the former education secretary Nicky Morgan back in May.

After the government's introduction of "more rigorous" tests for 7 and 11-year-olds, Morgan reassured schools that any rise in the number of schools falling under the benchmark would be capped at "1 percentage point", meaning the number of failing primaries could only rise from the 676 of last year to a maximum 843 this year.

Yet that prediction has failed to materialise, with those under the bar amounting to just 5 per cent of all state-funded mainstream schools.

This is despite experts expressing concern over the "undue complexity" of the tests announced in 2014 by former education secretary Michael Gove after the DfE said that "previous expectations for children were too low".

They were first rolled out in 2015.

Tim Oates, who chaired a government-commissioned review on the new

curriculum, said testing primary children on subordinate clauses and fronted adverbials was unnecessarily demanding.

Parents who felt their children were being put under excessive pressure also protested by removing them from school for a day in May. Some 40,000 signed a petition called Let Kids Be Kids.

But Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted's chief inspector, backed the tougher tests. "Those who oppose this testing need to consider England's mediocre position in the OECD education rankings," he said earlier this year.

"As I have long argued, children who fall behind in the early years of their education struggle to catch up in later years."

There were 35 local authorities with no schools below the floor. But in 13, at least one in 10 were below the standard.

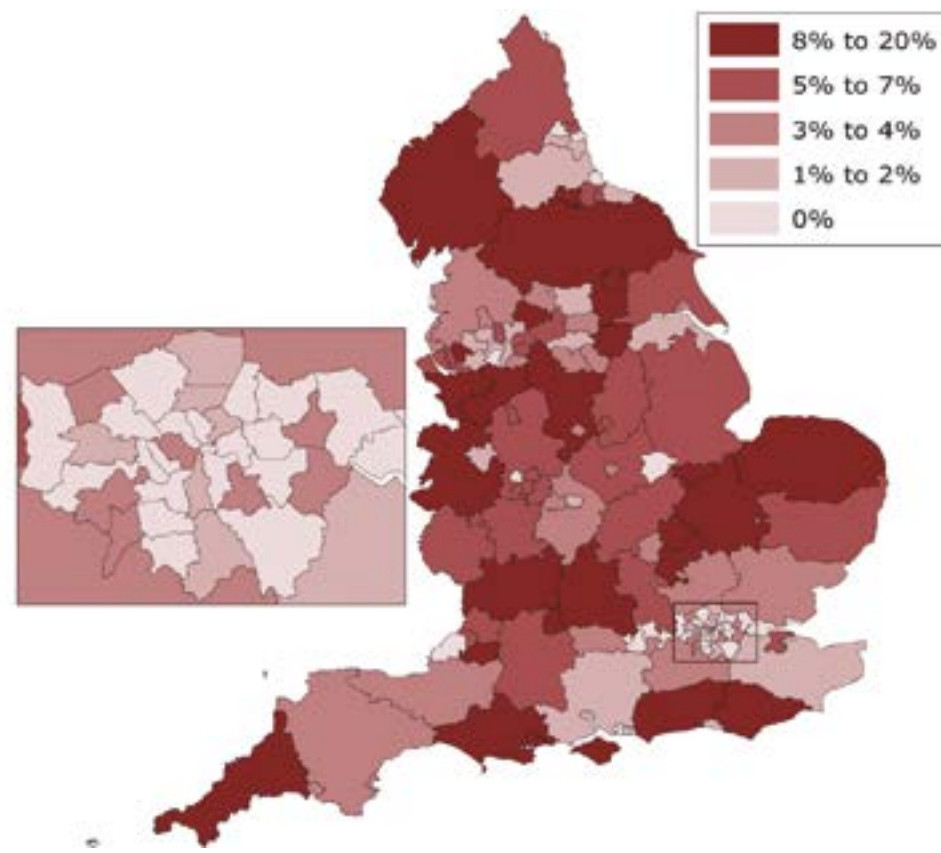
The standard is calculated using a combination of a school's attainment and pupil progress measures. A school will be above the floor if at least 65 per cent of pupils meet the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics under the new tests, and the school gets "sufficient" progress scores in all three subjects.

The spread of the low-performing schools varied "considerably" by local authority across the country.

Bedford, in the east of England, had the highest proportion of schools below the standard at 20 per cent (4 out of 20).

In Dorset 18 per cent were below the standard, 15 per cent in West Sussex and central Bedfordshire, with the report noting that these were "high levels".

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS BELOW THE FLOOR STANDARD BY LOCAL AUTHORITY ENGLAND, 2016 (STATE-FUNDED MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS ONLY)



In terms of progress measures, the biggest difference between local authorities was in maths, with -2.3 progress scores in some compared with +2.9 in others.

Nationally, 53 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. More than half (56 per cent) of schools had attainment of at least the national average.

Schools that fall below the floor standard are classed as failing.

The government's data came from the 14,930 state-funded mainstream primary schools with key stage 2 results in 2016. Some 82 per cent were local authority maintained, 12 per cent were converter academies, 6 per cent were sponsored academies and just 28 were free schools.

TEACHERS URGE MPS TO 'RETHINK' PRIMARY ASSESSMENT

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

The implementation of primary assessment reforms has been "some of the worst ever seen" despite "strong competition" for the label, teachers and unions told the first education select committee consultation on the issue.

MPs today held the first hearing into primary test changes after teachers demanded an inquiry following numerous alterations, security breaches and a national parent walk-out on schools.

"More rigorous" tests for primary school pupils were rolled out in 2015 after the Department for Education (DfE) said in 2014 that "previous expectations for children were too low".

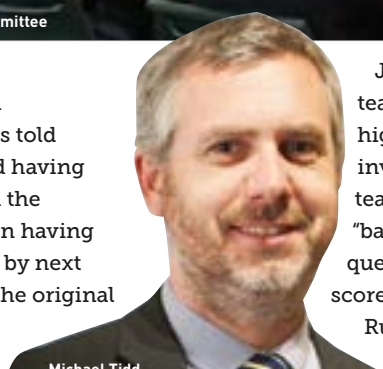
These tests saw SATs levels scrapped and replaced by parents being able to see their child's 'scaled score' so they could compare to the national average.

Children who did not reach the expected level were originally told they would re-sit them at secondary school - but Justine Greening U-turned on this measure in



October.

At the hearing on Wednesday teachers told MPs they welcomed having two years to "bed in the changes" rather than having to implement them by next September, as was the original plan, but urged an overall rethink.



Michael Tidd

Juliet Nickels, a primary school teacher, told the committee that the high number of teacher assessments involved in the new regime meant teachers were in the position of "basically judging yourself" and questioned the reliability of the scores.

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the



Russell Hobby

NAHT, suggested sample assessments would be better, in which data was sampled from the pupil population in order to track a school's performance, rather than all children required to sit the tests.

Special needs pupils were said to be particularly poorly served by the new tests with the "pass-fail" model of the writing assessment said to be deeply demotivating.

The use of a "secure fit" system – in which pupils have to meet all the criteria to be awarded a standard – was failing to recognise pupils' strengths, especially those who might be dyslexic or have other educational needs.

"You can be outstanding in your competition and creativity of the work, but if your spelling and handwriting are not effective, you are forever barred from [passing]" said Hobby.

Further inquiry sessions will be held in the new year.

Derby, York, Torbay, Somerset,
Barnsley, Plymouth ...



EDITOR'S COMMENT

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

Did you guess 2016 would go like this? Ho, ho, NO

If someone had said this time last year that by the end of 2016 I would be on the same side as Nicky Morgan and Lucy Powell and we'd all be trying to stop the first completely comprehensively-educated secretary of state from bringing back grammar schools I would have laughed in their face.

2016 has, quite simply, been ridiculous. It is now amazing to think that when George Osborne announced back in March that all schools would be made into academies the uproar would not only be rapidly pointless - as he recanted on his words quicker than the DfE scraps a leaked test - but also that it wouldn't come close to the uproar over the government's later green paper.

As Liam Collins says in his headteacher review of the year, though, there have been some oddly positive things. The primary school results described on page 7 this week is one of them. After all the furore over the difficulty of the tests, it appears schools did rather well at them. Fewer are under the minimum standards this year than last - even though the tests are supposed to be "more rigorous".

Is that because the figures were probably a bit fudged somewhere in a backroom? Weeellll, maybe. But even that thought is quite comforting. It's nice to believe that a sensible mind or two are having a quiet word in the education department about the damage another unnecessary smack in the face would do to schools versus the benefits of going easy for a touch.

The release - finally! - of the national funding formula was a relief, although the fact it coincided with the National Audit Office (NAO) telling the education department off for its obliqueness around the scale of cuts facing the sector was ironic.

It is fair comment from the NAO, though. The government have been so busy sticking to the line that schools were not going to be worse off in terms of funding they failed to help leaders prepare. This is why we are now in a situation where schools are spending more than they have in their coffers - a situation which cannot last indefinitely. While local authorities were previously able to spread cash around in order to cover lean times, standalone academies and those in

small trusts simply don't have the reserve to do so. They are having to turn to Treasury coffers which won't keep handing over cash on the never-never.

So what to do? A major problem of public services is that they cannot stop because of bankruptcy. Will the government really close a school if it can't afford its heating bill? Where is the limit at which class sizes and staff cuts affect safety? And will more cash be forthcoming then?

Over the past few years I have often sat with politicians and businesspeople telling me the country "cannot afford" to spend so much money on schools.

This is of course a nonsense. All government is a series of choices and affordances can, and always will be made for the pet projects of favoured ministers. If war came tomorrow, we would afford it. Brexit is going to cost us dearly. Funny how no one is saying it won't happen though.

Good quality

education is expensive and that isn't going to change. Smearing the cash around, like a child trying to pretend they've eaten their dinner, doesn't hide the truth that the money is running out and there's absolutely no plan for what to do next.

This is bad for everyone but it is particularly problematic for children with complex needs, as Billy Camden's investigation shows on page 3. And there are likely to be increasing numbers of children with special needs in future as medical interventions continue improving the survival rate among premature babies who carry lifelong conditions with them into childhood.

If there is a small advent calendar door of hope, however, it is that this year showed we can never really know what is coming in the next. I couldn't possibly have imagined Brexit, or grammars. Perhaps next year has greater, happier things awaiting than our brains can yet conceive.



READERS' REPLY



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU
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Wandsworth's solution for new arrivals

@BarbaraBleiman
Seems like a rare case of serious and sensible planning! A model to be shared more widely?

@JamesJkbowen
Really positive story. Great to see schools leading the way.

@DiLeed
Active provision for #EAL refugees is positive but why a withdrawal model? Lots of legacy expertise for full inclusion @SchoolEquality

Sex education 'a priority' says minister

Wilf Parsons, (address supplied)
Many religious groups are beginning to change their stance on SRE. Hopefully any reluctance is based on out-dated ideas of where public opinion is and will change.

Trust runs sessions on how to restructure staff

@ian_andrews
I remember the day the Chair showed the SLT the restructure of my school! I then noticed the absence of my post!

Parental leave is a career opportunity

Sunshine Frankie
Unfortunately sums up exactly why I'm not a classroom teacher anymore. Shouldn't have to sacrifice your family for your career and vice versa. Would love to go back but also want to spend time with my children. Feel like I have to wait 7 years for my youngest to start secondary school so that I don't miss his school plays, sports day and do the school run. Shame.

@MrBenWard
Excellent column from @maternityCPD in @SchoolsWeek - I've often wondered why no phased return after maternity as with long term absence?

Russell Group sticks by its 'informed choices' guide

Nick Duff,
Narrow minded and quite frankly appalling!!!!

Don't put all your faith in superheads, others count too

@ty_goddard
Good from @HargreavesBC - clearly it has to be collaboration with a purpose. Like the way this is positive about UK education.

@g_roche5
Good, sensible stuff here from Andy H. We are way ahead when we collaborate

We're going to focus on the broader picture, says Ofsted

Rosie Eccles
What do they expect with so much weight placed on SATs results? Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

@EOSLTP_UoC
"Curriculum had "narrowed" over past few years because of drive for standards in maths & reading" Good to see recognition of this problem

To become education secretary, you should be privately educated, child-free and summer-born

@DocMacaulay
What a relief that I don't qualify. I can sleep well at night now!

@adelekilby
No wonder 'education policy' often feels alien to state-educated parents.

REPLY OF THE WEEK
RECEIVES A
SCHOOLS WEEK MUG!



DO YOU HAVE
A STORY?

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

news@schoolsweek.co.uk
020 3051 4287

We're going to focus on the broader picture, says Ofsted

IAN TAYLOR, BRISTOL

What is all this meddling with the school curriculum actually achieving? We used to talk about having a balanced curriculum and tried to achieve that. Then we went overboard on literacy and numeracy. We had CPD in how to teach literacy in maths lessons for God's sake! This meant we forgot science and languages in primary schools.

In secondary schools we have driven out music, art, and technology. Will we be asking for their return when we have no musicians, artists, or technologists? We forced manic marking on teachers. Now we are told not to. We had 3 part lessons enforced on all teachers for every lesson. We had children writing down lesson objectives every lesson.

We had learning styles enforced, CPDed, and inspected. Now we must not have learning styles. We are told teachers must be researchers. (Why not just have teachers as teachers?)

We were to be like Finland. Now we must be like Singapore! We have turned the curriculum into an every changing grey porridge of the latest fad.

As Donald Trump might have said, "Let's stop all this until we can work out what the hell is happening!"

Contact the team

To provide feedback and suggest stories please email news@schoolsweek.co.uk and tweet using @schoolsweek

To inform the editor of any errors or issues of concern regarding this publication, email laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk with Error/Concern in the subject line. Please include the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is.

PROFILEA portrait of Sir David Carter, a middle-aged man with wavy brown hair, wearing a dark grey suit, a white shirt, and a red and blue striped tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. A pair of glasses with blue frames is visible in the bottom left corner.

SIR DAVID
CARTER

LAURA MCINERNEY

@MISS_MGINERNEY

David Carter, national schools commissioner

It's been an 11-month wait for an interview with David Carter, the lead kingmaker in the new world of education.

Since *Schools Week* started we've tracked the eight regional schools commissioners, civil servants who control all decisions on school and academy trust openings, closures and significant changes.

The national commissioner, their leader, is the most powerful.

After 11 months of pestering I have 25 minutes to find out his life story and his views on controversial policies. Hmm.

Escorted to an anonymous glass cube in a far-flung corner of the education department's central London offices, I can see across the rows of desks that Carter is waiting. He looks a little like a detainee about to face a detective inspector, but is friendly and welcoming when I enter.

The recorder goes on. The press officer points out again that we have limited time.

Watches are calibrated. GO.

"What three words describe you at age 7?" I ask, on the presumption Aristotle really was correct to say that a boy at 7 essentially reveals the man.

Carter looks taken aback: "Erm... Busy? I think I was caring as I had two younger sisters... And enthusiastic? I threw myself into everything."

He was at Marlborough Road junior school in Cardiff, his father was a professional musician and his family ran a butcher's stall in Cardiff market. From an early age he learnt piano and violin — and loved it.

By 14 he was at Llanedeyrn high school (now closed), in its second comprehensive intake.

"It was a tough school," he says, admitting that his penchant for the violin did not typically make for strong street-cred in 1970s south Wales.

"So I got street cred from my sport — my football, rugby and my cricket. I balanced my life that way."

By 21 he was doing a music degree at Royal Holloway and hadn't given a moment's thought to teaching until completing a music education module in his final year. "I completely got into it... I wanted to teach kids to play and compose."

He signed up to a PGCE at the Institute of Education and completed his training in London before taking a post in a school in Canterbury, which he believed was a borough in south London. It is 58 miles away.

"I remember going to the interview and thinking, 'This is a really long train ride!'. But I got offered the job, so stayed for two years."

He quickly cycled through promotions until, aged 35, he took a deputy headship at Cirencester Deer Park school, in Gloucestershire. Only things didn't go to plan.

"I rocked up and at the end of my first week the head announced he was taking a post abroad. There were two deputies. Me, who had been there a week. And my colleague, who was about to go on maternity leave. By September I was head."

How did he feel about the sudden promotion?

He stops for a second before smiling broadly: "Errr... busy, caring, enthusiastic?"

"To be blunt, at Easter I had been a head of performing arts. So... I just built a really strong group around me that would help me."

What advice does he have for people who find themselves in the same situation?

"Be visible. You're only going to get more worried if you stay in your office. Get out around the school. Work with your staff, work with the kids. It wasn't a hardship to go do lunch duty every day. I'd go and play football with the kids

"HOW BIG CAN A TRUST GET? I AM RELAXED IF THEY REACH ABOUT 80"



and referee their matches.

"If you're going to love this job you've got to remind yourself why you do it. Being with the kids and staff was a very big part of that."

His style of management hasn't changed now he presides over every academy in England. Later in the afternoon he is heading to a conference where delegates already know the presentation he will give, having seen it at his regional roadshows, briefings, keynote speeches. Yet he delivers it every time with the same zeal that the best English teachers can deliver *Of Mice and Men* to another new year group, despite having taught it every year for three decades.

"I have loved it!" he says, when asked about his job.

"I've never had to read so much stuff in my life, but I do it because I need to be well briefed. It's political, and I enjoy the challenge of working in this environment. The thing I enjoy the most is the test of whether or not I can make it work."

This is where I know we are going to start to butt heads. We circle the transition into policy questions carefully.

Carter explains he wants to deliver "harder messages" to the sector. How so?

"Well, about standards ... it is an area where sometimes we think if we share some best practice, that's good enough and it's not..."

From this term, academy trusts are subjected to so-called "health checks" in which commissioners will check whether or not they have the capacity to take on more schools.

"You have to make sure you work first for your kids already in the school," Carter says, needling trusts that have sometimes expanded before they were ready.

Now, he says, this doesn't happen. Commissioners looking at new trusts see if it has a serious plan for helping its schools to improve, alongside others.

So, how big could a trust get?

"Our largest trust at the moment is AET with 66 academies. If REAch2 is successful in opening the free schools it is approved to, it will overtake that, but REAch2 has created a really strong leadership model and really



Weston Favell academy, Northampton
October 2016



In 1985 at Bulmershe school in Reading, during his first term as head of music

strong governance model — it has a school improvement strategy that goes within and across its regions."

There is a beat.

"I'm not saying you ever approve them to 150, but I am relaxed about them growing to 80 when I know they have got the structures right."

More interesting for him are the growing number of "mentor MATs" in which a more established trust works with a smaller group, perhaps sharing back-room functions while the smaller trust gets financially stable.

"Super-MATs" also cannot be ruled out, he says, in which a larger academy trust sucks in one or more smaller trusts via a merger — indeed, several of these have been agreed in the past few months.

Would commissioners ever step in to break up a trust if it became a monopoly in an area?

"I think [monopolies] are a risk," he says, nodding. "I remember feeling very strongly when I was doing the south west regional commissioner job that in some areas where there was only one option, we were kind of creating the risk that could happen."

He reveals that when he was leading the Cabot Learning Federation, a medium-sized trust, he sometimes advised the board to turn down taking on new schools to avoid such a situation.

"I suppose the other side of the argument is, if the trust is really, really good at improving standards, you back parents who say 'this is good for my kid'. You've probably got to get

PROFILE SIR DAVID CARTER



the balance right between what's good for the school and the children, versus parent choice."

Clock ticking, and the final 10 minutes looming, it is time to approach transparency.

Regional commissioners are unusual for having a power directly delegated from an elected politician and yet to have no requirement to hold their meetings in public – as would be expected of a local council, or local health commissioners.

The meetings in which they make decisions about schools, advised by members of their "headteacher boards", are held in secret, with no advance notice of decisions made and scant minutes published months later. No justification of final outcomes is ever made public.

Carter doesn't flinch.

He feels the meetings must be private so advisers can be critical about trusts and honest about reasons for turning down requests to take over a school.

"If we were open about why we said no – and it's the no answers that would be a problem – there is a danger that people wouldn't come forward and wouldn't run the risk of taking on difficult schools."

More detailed feedback is given to schools and trusts making applications, he says. "And there are lots of examples of decisions that have been revisited two or three times to help people to get to where they want to."

If we want evidence, however, we are going to have to wait some time.

We move to a final point of contention: conflicts of interest.

From January, regional commissioners will have funds to buy improvement services for under-performing academies. But this means commissioners will be responsible for deciding a school is not doing well, picking and paying for someone to improve it and then judging its effectiveness. How can we expect them to be impartial in the final judgment when they have been so involved in the first two parts?

This is precisely the sort of problem Ofsted ran into when it tried to do school improvement, and is the sort of conflict that local authorities were accused of when politicians pushed the academy model in the first place.

So why do it?

Carter's first answer is wishy-washy. There is lots of chat about "visible strategy leaders" and something around bringing in teaching schools, and holding them accountable, and "diagnosis and analysis".

It is unconvincing and long-winded. Why spend so much effort trying to hold loads of people accountable? Why not just give a school six months

to sort itself out and rebroker it if it can't?

For a second, he is skewered. But his second answer is sharper. And sort of brilliant.

"I worry that if you jump to rebrokerage as your first and only solution, and I've overseen a number of those as you'd expect, then it is incredibly distracting and really destructive to a school. And the people who feel it the most are the staff and the kids. The leaders and the governors – those who have failed – actually, they get out of the situation. But the school continues. We have to look at how we give the school an opportunity to improve quickly without having to rip the whole thing apart.

"From day one schools need to be aware, and they are made aware, that whether they are a single or multi-academy trust, the end point will be rebrokerage. But I would worry if our default was to go straight to that."

Somewhere a local authority worker scratches their head asking why all failing non-academies haven't been treated this way. But it's a fair point.

To hammer this home, Carter gives an example of a trust he is working with where pupil standards are high, but there are serious issues in finance, leadership and governance.

"I'm not sure that saying that 'by Easter you are going to be in another trust' is the right answer. Maybe what we do is leave the school where it is and bring in new trustees and leadership to put right the things that have gone wrong."

I'm sold and want to ask him so much more: how do we solve isolated MATs, how do we encourage new trusts to open in the north, which is the best sport, cricket, football or rugby?

But it is midday, and like a diurnal Cinderella, Carter is away. Our 25 minutes is over.

As I leave the building I wonder why it has taken 11 months for such an interview. If Santa brings anything to the DfE this Christmas I hope it will be the wisdom to let him speak more often and openly. He can certainly handle it.



IT'S A PERSONAL THING

What is your favourite film?

The Italian Job – the original with Michael Caine.

If you were invisible for a day what would you do?

Play centre forward for Cardiff City, no one can see me, I score a hat trick.

What was your favourite toy as a child?

A Subbuteo football game. I played it virtually every day between the ages of 11 and 14.

Which animal are you most like?

A Welsh dragon.

If you were given billboards across the country, what slogan would you write on them?

Life is not a rehearsal. Live every day as if it were your last. Having lost my sister when she was way too young, this really resonates.

What do you eat for breakfast?

Fruit 'n Fibre with Greek yoghurt.

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Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust

Director of Finance

Salary range: £55,000 - £60,000

Location: Exeter



The new Director of Finance role offers an exciting opportunity to join the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust, driving the development of its finance function during a period of growth.

This challenging role will involve working closely with the Executive Head and Chief Operating Officer, and will be responsible for all aspects of Finance within the Trust and Family of Schools. With experience of working in a change environment, you will lead and manage a small team to develop an efficient and effective finance function, being personally involved in both strategic issues and day-to-day operation.

The successful applicant will be a fully qualified Accountant who is commercially astute and is able to translate visionary concepts into practical implementation plans. You will be responsible for the detailed accounting processes and have extensive experience of developing and applying financial models, strong negotiation skills and be aware of legislation impacting on Multi Academy Trusts - such as those affecting the financial framework, payment of salaries, pensions and provision of benefits. Education or Charity experience would be advantageous.

You will be an enthusiastic and motivated leader who is committed to the transformation of lives through education, ensuring that the Trusts finance function enables delivery of its vision to deliver outstanding outcomes for every student.

There will be an opportunity for potential candidates to meet members of the senior leadership team and further discuss the role on:

4th January or 9th January 2017.

To book a visit or request an application pack, please contact **Alison Layton-Hill** by email at: alison.laytonhill@tedwraggtrust.co.uk

The **closing date** for applications is Thursday 12th January 2017 (5pm)

The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post

Northern Education Trust is a not-for-profit education charity and sponsor of 20 academies, ten primary and ten secondary, throughout the North East and North West of England. A nationally recognised and trusted academy sponsor, Northern Education Trust has vast experience of school improvement together with a wide range of expertise with additional specialised experience to call upon. The Trust's academies are located in diverse communities, some of them located in and serving some of the most deprived communities in England. Whatever the area, we believe that with high quality teaching, the right help, and high expectations even the most vulnerable children can transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

VICE CHAIR

The Trust is now looking to recruit an experienced strategic player to join the high performing Board as an additional Vice Chair to strengthen leadership capacity and help lead the strategic direction of the Trust into the next phase of its development.

We are seeking an exceptional individual with significant experience in a senior strategic thinking role with strong intellectual and analytical capabilities and experience at Board level.

Download the recruitment pack or go to www.northerneducationtrust.org for further information. Closing date: Friday 13th January 2017 at 12 noon.

For informal discussions about the role please contact Christine Hopkins PA to the Chair of the Trust Les Walton CBE on 0191 594 5239.

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Closing date 12 noon Friday 13th January 2017

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Andy Thom can be contacted on **0191 594 5149**



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Salary: £49,300 - £57,100

Location: Cambridge

What it's about

The Senior Education Specialist is expected to provide technical and expert input into Cambridge English consultancy services delivered to Ministries of Education worldwide and enhance organisational reputation as an inspiring expert in English language education. Working with a team of international education experts within the organisation and in its overseas operations, the Senior Education Specialist is expected to lead on the development of new opportunities in a specified region resulting not only in education contracts and income growth but also improving the English language education system within a specified country.

What you'll be doing

Key accountabilities are:

- to provide technical and expert input into consultancy services related to English language learning, teaching and assessment, namely, language strategy, curriculum, formative and summative assessment, pre-service and in-service teacher development, institutional capacity building, monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment.
- to raise organisational profile and credibility across regions as a world leader in supporting educational reform.
- to develop initiatives for education reform or governmental English language education contracts.
- to provide support in contract management for individual contracts and contribute to the overall process for education contract management.

What we're looking for

The ideal candidate is an educationalist with business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit. The post holder must have an MA in English Language learning, teaching or assessment while a PhD would be desirable. They must be able to provide evidence of inter-cultural competence, ability to devise credible educational solutions that inspire confidence and meet stakeholders' needs, analytical and evaluation skills and negotiation skills. Specialist knowledge of English language curricula and assessment systems as well as experience working with governments' clients and designing and delivering reform projects is essential. Experience in the business development process conducting conversations that explore needs and position potential solutions and negotiating contractual obligations is desirable. The ideal candidate should be able to demonstrate a positive can do attitude, a creative approach to problem solving, an ability to gain stakeholders trust, to identify innovative opportunities to expand with new and existing stakeholders. He or she may be required to travel internationally on a frequent basis.

Who we are

Cambridge English Language Assessment (www.cambridgeenglish.org) is a division of Cambridge Assessment (www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk), a not-for-profit department of University of Cambridge. We develop and produce the most valuable range of qualifications for learners and teachers of English in the world. Over 5 million people in 130 countries take our exams every year. Around the world over 20,000 universities, employers, government ministries and other organisations rely on our exams and qualifications as proof of English language ability.

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The **closing date** for receipt of applications is **8 January** and interviews will be held on **26 January 2017**.

To find out more about this role please view the job description or to apply by typing this link: <https://padlock.link/cambridge-assessment>

As part of your recruitment process you will be required to undergo a background screening. This will be carried out by our selected supplier, Credence Background Screening Limited.

ALDRIDGE EDUCATION



We are seeking outstanding senior leaders to join our growing trust for the following positions:

- **Executive Principal** - South East Cluster (Brighton/Newhaven)
- **Principal** – Darwen Aldridge Community Academy (Lancashire)
- **Principal** – Darwen Vale High School (Lancashire)

Aldridge Education is a charitable trust whose non-selective, entrepreneurial community schools and colleges help young people to reach their potential. We work in different regions across England where often the opportunities and prospects for young people are often most limited, and where the introduction of our entrepreneurial approach to education can have most benefit. To find out more about our academies, support and resources please visit www.aldridgeeducation.org.

We really want to hear from you if you are an experienced leader who is able to demonstrate passion, determination, creativity and outstanding team working skills. You will also be an excellent practitioner and looking for the next significant challenge in your career.

Executive Principal Brighton

We will see the first three academies join our newly formed South East cluster in February 2017. The academies are based in the Brighton and Newhaven area – Brighton Aldridge Community Academy, Portslade Aldridge Community Academy and UTC@harbourside. Each has its own substantive Principal.

We seek an Executive Principal to provide outstanding leadership of the SE cluster - building on the significant successes to date, securing benefits of working across academies, strategically growing the regional cluster and building strong relationships with key stakeholders in the area. You will actively promote Aldridge Education and be part of the development of not only the cluster but also the Trust more generally and be a key component of its senior leadership.

Closing date: Monday 9th January 2017 (9am)

Interview date: Monday 23rd & Tuesday 24th January 2017

Shortlisted candidates must be available to attend on both days.

Salary in the region of **£110-130K** negotiable depending on circumstances and experience.

Principal posts Lancashire

The following two Principal opportunities are both based within our North West cluster and the successful applicants will be supported by the NW Executive Principal whose wider remit is to develop the cluster and secure improvements across the region.

Principal Darwen Aldridge Community Academy (DACA), Darwen

This exciting opportunity arises as a result of the founding Principal's promotion to Executive Principal of the North West cluster. This is a highly successful 11-19 school rated Good by Ofsted (2013) and with rapidly improving numbers (1340 students in 2016 from 735 in 2008) and a thriving sixth form. DACA is based in an iconic, state of the art building in Darwen.

Closing date: Monday 9th January 2017 (9am)

Interview date: Monday 16th & Tuesday 17th January 2017

Shortlisted candidates must be available to attend on both days.

Salaries in the region of **£70-90K** negotiable depending on circumstances and experience.

Principal Darwen Vale High School, Darwen

This position arises due to the retirement of the previous Principal. This improving 11-16 academy currently has around 770 students and is based in a well-resourced and impressive building within Darwen which has impressive facilities. Vale converted to become an Aldridge sponsored academy in 2014.

How to apply (all posts)

You can apply for more than one post in the same application. For job descriptions and application details please visit www.aldridgeeducation.org/about-us/our-people/vacancies

To apply please submit the documents below and clearly state which post(s) you are applying for in your covering letter:

- A completed application form
- A personal statement describing why you think you have the skills and experience for the advertised role (2 sides A4)
- A Curriculum Vitae

All posts are subject to enhanced DBS checks.

Please submit your application by the published deadline to HR@aldridgeeducation.org.

Further information:

Potential candidates can also speak informally to Chris Tweedale, Chief Executive of Aldridge Education, or Andrew Weymouth, our Education Director. Please contact HR@aldridgeeducation.org or call **0207 297 0340** to arrange a time.

Early Years Workforce Trainer/ Assessors



Salary: £23 per hour plus bonus payments & holiday pay (approx. 32 hours per apprentice)

Location: Torquay, Middlesbrough, Bradford

We are a national network of 66 primary, special and secondary academies. We are passionately committed to inspiring children and young people.

We firmly believe that all young people deserve to become world class learners - to learn, enjoy, succeed and thrive in a world class educational environment, which has the best facilities, the best teaching and the most up to date resources available to them.

We hold a large employer contract with the Skills Funding Agency and operate our apprenticeship programmes across the England within our academies.

We are looking to appoint Trainer/Assessor(s) to train/assess Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices for the Early Years Workforce. You will manage the delivery of individual Apprenticeship programmes including the planning and delivery of induction, learning and assessment, reviews and recording of progress ensuring timely achievement of qualifications. You will visit apprentices every four weeks in their workplace. The successful candidate will hold Level 3 qualification in relevant area of work and will hold CAVA, A1 or D32/D33 Award or be working towards this. Experience of using Smart Assessor or a similar e-portfolio system would be an advantage.

The positions are required as soon as possible on a casual basis.

Closing date: Monday 16 January 2017

We reserve the right to close this vacancy early should we receive an overwhelming response. All candidates are advised to refer to the job description and person specification before making an application.

For further information on this position and to make an application please type this **link:** <https://padlock.link/trainer-assessor>

We are committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. A Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate will be required for all posts. This post will be subject to enhanced checks as part of our Prevent Duty.

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YEAR IN REVIEW: OPINIONS

Matthew Wheeler

Head of professional standards, National Association of School Business Management



BUSINESS MANAGER

The ups and downs have been exhausting to watch

It's been a bumpy year, with school leaders left wondering who to watch for the next flurry of activity, says Matthew Clements-Wheeler

As I write this, my daughter is happily bouncing with her friends at a party in a nearby indoor trampoline park. This group of teenagers is the perfect metaphor for education policy, ministerial careers and academy trust fortunes in 2016: plenty of enthusiastic jumping, with some falls, collisions, competition and injured pride along the way.

Bounce... at the start of the year, Frank Green was replaced by David Carter as national schools commissioner and Green's airport analogy about multi-academy trusts became Carter's "stages of MAT-readiness" for growth. Bounce... the Treasury took the lead on education policy, with the former chancellor announcing every school would be an academy and money to lengthen the school day would be found.

Bounce... the prime minister and chancellor were out of office and with them, Nicky Morgan and Sam Gyimah. Bounce... Justine Greening took over and Labour fielded enough shadow education secretaries that many of us wondered when it would be our turn to have a go? Bounce... the white paper was replaced with a green paper. Bounce... Perry Beeches and Durand academy trusts fell from grace, with other notable trusts and their chief executives.

Bounce... the government avoided rushing headlong into phase 2 of consultations on the national funding formula. Bounce... academy trust governance was the solution to, or the cause of, all manner of problems in the system.

This year has been an unpredictable, contested space in education and school

operations, with school leaders left wondering who to watch for the next flurry of activity. Should we watch the DfE, Downing St or the Treasury for a clue as to the next major policy announcement?

At 2016 closes, we are less clear on the direction of travel than before, more uncertain and more dependent on our own networks and partners to chart a course for our schools and our pupils. Perhaps this somewhat unsettling feeling is what a school-led system feels like?

In that case, we need the DfE to decide if it is going to stand next to the trampolines as a coach who helps us do better. David Carter's model of identifying and sharing good practice is a good example of this coaching style. What we don't want is the department acting as an overbearing parent, micro-managing and telling us what to do every step of the way.

Connections are vital. Not just between schools but between schools, businesses, and the third sector. These become a safety net that flexes through good times and bad to support individual pupils, families and communities, but also a trampoline that magnifies the outcome when pupils make an effort.

But there are worrying gaps opening up in the trampoline. Whole communities are without a safety net; toxic finances or persistent problems prevent their local academy from being rebrokered. Take Baverstock in Birmingham, where financial issues and long-term underperformance have made finding a new sponsor difficult, with closure on the horizon. Without a good school, how can pupils succeed?

The trampoline has become threadbare in places

Elsewhere, the trampoline has become threadbare; headteachers in West Sussex warned that lack of funding was forcing them to consider cutting opening hours. Across the country, union leaders and heads reported recruitment problems. Although some parts of the trampoline have been well maintained, thanks to successful condition improvement fund bids, others were wearing out as the remaining maintained schools tried to patch things up from devolved formula capital.

With the second phase of the national funding formula consultation outstanding, and the DfE's "softer" approach to full academisation still to be fully understood, it is perhaps naive to ask for a level playing field for all schools in 2017. So I'll stick to the trampoline analogy and suggest that, if we all hold hands and stick together, at least no one will fall off.

Liam Collins

Headteacher Uplands community college, East Sussex



HEADTEACHER

Trying to find reasons to be cheerful

It hasn't been easy, but Liam Collins is determined to keep "the positive energy up"

I wanted to be more positive this year. So I wrote a list, and one side was much longer than the other. Still, I'm going to try to keep the positive energy up. To help, let's take the classic structure of three positives of the year and a wish for the future.

First up, the Headteacher's Roundtable grew under Stephen Tierney's care and leadership this year. I pulled myself away a bit because funding has left me with a rapidly reducing senior leadership team so I can't be away from school too often. But there are so many more heads involved and especially across age ranges, which is really great.

Trying to work out what difference the Roundtable makes to other teachers is difficult. Honestly, I don't know if it does.

But we are in a bit of an odd position at present in which the National Association of Head Teachers has moved towards a slightly more confrontational stance, with which I agree, whereas the Association of School and College Leaders is mixed up in its completely bizarre leadership campaign.

A second positive this year is that collaboration across schools is finally working. Around me, at least, I see a genuine desire for school leaders to try to improve the quality of outcomes for all pupils in their area — not just the ones in their own school.

There seems to be a desire to work together for the best of all kids and not just the few. Clearly, schools have also

Politicians used to listen to social media. Now I wonder if we are just in an echo chamber

been shoved together in some parts of the country because of the white paper earlier this year. Being told we had to become an academy kick-started conversations across many schools and even if the plans are now changing, there's a lot more sharing across schools — we go to see each other's departments, etc.

Possibly this is because of the introduction of Progress 8, the new way of measuring schools that means all pupils' improvement across many subjects matters.

Though, I have to say, ours is bonkers. The inclusion in our figures of a pupil who was educated elsewhere drops our FSM Progress 8 score by -0.45. It is crazy that one student can have that impact.

On the other hand, I can't imagine an Ofsted inspector looking at the figure, with the way we have explained it, and not coming out and saying "OK, yes, that's one student with a disproportionate impact" — which feels like an improvement on times past.

The third real positive of 2016 is Education Datalab. Have you seen its amazing work? The way it investigates school data is mind-blowing and has changed the education discourse. It is now evidence-led.

That evidence is important because I worry about the social media bubble among school leaders. At one time social media was driving change as it was listened to by politicians. At times I wonder now if we are just in an echo chamber.

However, I've been asked to meet our local MP Nus Ghani and appear to have managed to arrange that meeting with Nick Gibb. And being able to take all the evidence from Datalab rather than just going up on my own and moaning is vital.

He is going to be well-briefed and he will pretend that PISA tells us that grammar schools are needed, but I can use Datalab's statistics to show the reality.

In terms of a wish, well, the obvious one is: leave us alone! But also we need more funding.

High-needs' funding, in particular, is an issue with millions spent on transport alone. When schools are not funded adequately for high-needs pupils it is no wonder that, increasingly, parents are being told a school cannot take a child with such needs.

Can it be right that we can find the money for potholes but not for children with high needs?

Naureen Khalid

Secondary school governor



GOVERNOR

Schemes of delegation are vitally important

This year has brought some much-needed clarity to the issue of multi-academy trust governance, says Naureen Khalid, as well as some more predictable back-and-forth on parent governors, governor pay and mandatory training

This was the year when one of the multi-academy trusts, E-Act, took the step of renaming its local governing bodies (LGBs) somewhat more honestly, as "academy ambassadorial advisory groups." "This move highlighted the need for everyone involved with multi-academy trust governance to understand the role of the trust board and LGBs. Indeed, there is growing consensus that LGBs should be called local advisory councils (or similar) to emphasise that people serving on these councils are not actually "governors" and that real power rests with the trust board. Any power the LGBs have is at the discretion of, and delegated by, the trust board, which is why schemes of delegation are of vital importance.

We return to some governance topics every year. Payment for governors never totally goes away! The chief inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, spoke about this in 2015 and returned to the theme this year when he addressed the think tank CentreForum, declaring "we need governors who will hold schools properly to account, not who are largely concerned with furthering vested interests. And if that means paying for expertise, then we should consider paying them".

Another recurring topic is skills versus stakeholder governance. The Educational Excellence Everywhere white paper proposed removing the requirement to have elected parent governors, which did not go down well! Most governors (and the National Governors' Association) agree that having

both stakeholder group representatives and people with the appropriate skills on the board are not mutually exclusive. This proposal was dropped later in the year.

Real power rests with the trust board

Training is also often discussed. The NGA/TES 2016 survey reported that of the 5,000 governors who responded, only 4 per cent disagreed that induction training should be mandatory for new governors. So governors will no doubt have been happy to read what Ofsted had to say in its updated inspection handbook: inspectors will consider governors' commitment to their own professional development when making their judgment.

The aftermath of Brexit reached the education world too, when Justine Greening became captain at the Department for Education (DfE). Nicky Morgan had previously engaged with governors and spoke at an NGA event and we hope that this will continue with Ms Greening at the helm. This is especially important as the above-mentioned survey showed that more than half of respondents (increasing from 31 per cent in 2015) were "very negative" about the direction of government policy.

Two years on and ripples of the Trojan

Horse case continue to be felt. Two of the Birmingham schools have been upgraded from inadequate to good; the schools placed in special measures have had changes of leadership and governance and are now "generally improving". However, when he wrote to then education secretary Morgan, chief inspector Wilshaw emphasised that the situation remained fragile, with heads in East Birmingham reporting that the situation had "gone underground". This was probably why the DfE now requires details of governors to be published on websites and uploaded to Edubase. Academy directors were already required to be DBS checked and maintained school governors now require enhanced DBS checks as well.

Although most boards work diligently and within the law, some academy boards did hit the headlines this year following related-party transactions and financial irregularities. Boards will have to tighten up their processes here, as these cases give the whole sector a bad name.

Ofsted is due to publish its report "Improving governance: governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances" any day now. It will be interesting to read what it says about governance and whether we agree with the conclusions.

To end on a happy note, 2016 was the year NGA celebrated its 10th anniversary, as it continues to work tirelessly to ensure that the views of governors are fully represented in the national arena.

HEADTEACHERS' ROUNDTABLE SUMMIT 2017 | ENABLING SCHOOLS TO THRIVE & FLOURISH

Join the Headteachers' Roundtable for a one-day summit. Be part of an authentic educational voice; building ideas which will enable all people in our schools to thrive and flourish. The Summit will further develop the Headteachers' Roundtable Alternative Green Paper ideas focused on assessment & accountability, recruitment & retention and structures & agency.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE: REBECCA ALLEN | GEOFF BARTON | CHRISTINE MERRELL | SEAN HARFORD | JARLATH O'BRIEN | DAME ALISON PEACOCK | SAM TWISTLETON | MORE SPEAKERS TO BE ANNOUNCED.



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REVIEWS

RESEARCH REVIEW 2016

Stuart Kime

Director, Evidence-Based Education



Lifting the lid on a layer of delights

Stuart Kime carefully picks out his favourite pieces of research for 2016. He enjoys them all, but the publishers of academic journals and the funding streams of higher education leave him with a bitter taste

My experience of reading education research is similar to my experience of eating Quality Street: the purple ones are things of beauty, joys forever, yet the abomination that is the coconut éclair (as if calling it an éclair makes it any better) lurks at the bottom of the box, promising only fibrous disappointment: the confectioner's woodchip wallpaper.

Undeterred by the inevitable potential for a coconut chewfest, I now dip my hand into the 2016 selection box of education research delights, and give you: Kime's Top Five Purple Ones.

1. A big study with big messages

First out of the box is a piece of research by Professor Christine Merrell and her group from Durham and Nottingham Universities; they gave us *A longitudinal study of the association between inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity and children's academic attainment at age 11*.

This makes the list for two reasons. First, it's about something really important – the link between inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity in 5-year-olds and their academic attainment six years later. Second – and for a methods geek like me, perhaps most importantly – this is a strong study with a massive sample of children (46,369) in 1,812 English primary schools.

The main findings were that inattention at age 5, but not hyperactivity, was substantively related to attainment at age 11; impulsivity at the same age showed a weak positive correlation with later attainment.

2. We need to talk about marking

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) commissioned a review of the evidence on marking this year: *A Marked Improvement?* What did it find? Well, that the evidence on marking is thin, flaky and wholly incommensurate with the burden of responsibility it bears. Does this mean we should bin marking? Absolutely not. It means we need to know more about effective marking.

Hot on the heels of the Department for Education's workload challenge, the EEF has raised the bar for evidence in this important area; the National College of Teaching and Leadership's recent grants for small-scale research on marking (and other areas) are just one way in which the tide of research engagement appears to be turning from the esoteric to the pragmatic. Finally, and if all that weren't sufficient, Ofsted's latest "School inspection update" cites the EEF's report in its message to inspectors, urging them not to report on marking practice until better evidence on its impact is available.

3. What works in primary schools?

I've long admired the delicate beauty and brute force of Stephen Gorard's work. In alliance with Beng Huat See and Rebecca Morris, Gorard has attended to a growing need by writing clearly about the most effective approaches to teaching in primary schools, in a book usefully entitled *The most effective approaches to teaching in primary schools: rigorous evidence on effective teaching* (Gorard is a vocal critic of academic nonsense jargon). This review looks at a huge swathe of evidence and offers summaries of what works, what doesn't and what is harmful, but it does something that other reviews of this sort fail to do: it acknowledges that there are differences in the effectiveness

of interventions, associated with children's ages. Read this book.

4. Battle hymn of the tiger researchers

Most children are average. Average height, average weight, average ability... But no parent wants to hear this, ever. So when the mighty Kou Murayama of the University of Reading got together with colleagues (and we're talking

big guns in the world of research here) to investigate the link between parental over-aspiration and children's mathematics learning, I took note.

This piece of research is a corker. First, with a good degree of confidence, the authors claim their findings suggest that "while parental aspiration is an important vehicle through which children's academic potential can be realised, excessive parental aspiration can be poisonous". Second, this is research that firmly links home and school, and there simply isn't enough high-quality research in this area; it provides the basis for a conversation about how parents might more effectively support their children, and acknowledges the counter-intuitive damage that can be done by parental aspiration and over-aspiration. Tiger moms, look out: Kou & co have something to say.

5. Evidence from the ground up

Technically, the Research Schools network isn't a piece of research. It's much, much bigger than that, and I'm not letting a mere technicality beat me. Research Schools are set to become the hubs for evidence-based practice in their regions; the first five are already in operation and the second five will be announced soon. The idea behind them is to place schools at the heart of the evidence-based education agenda, and it's for this reason that they make my list.

The EEF is a glorious organisation, a national treasure. Its ambition to create sustainable and evidence-based change in the English education system truly is world-leading and the vision of the 15-strong team (I always think there are more of them) unparalleled. This isn't hyperbole – the global interest in the work done by them and the schools with which they work (which has to be most of those in England) brings evidence to the fore of decision-making in schools. Research Schools recognises that there is



no educational silver bullet and, instead, takes the long view of sustained school improvement from the ground up.

And finally

Having written merrily about a handful of great research from 2016, I draw to a close with lingering disquiet. While there is great work being done by researchers around the world, the publishers of academic journals and the funding streams of higher education have created a massive problem for teachers, school leaders and anyone else who is interested in education research, but lacks access.

When an individual journal paper costs £30 to download (despite the research that generated it often supported by public funding) and when the careers of academics are heavily linked to their publication record in so-called "high impact" journals, the real-world impact of evidence-based policy and practice get shortchanged. So while I feel buoyant about the research I've listed, I feel angered by the continued manipulation of public knowledge for private gain, and the incentivisation of "publication impact: rather than real-world impact on valued student outcomes. And that has to change.

The first five research schools

- Aspirer teaching school alliance, based at Ash Grove academy, Macclesfield
- Huntington school, York
- Kingsbridge community college, Devon
- Kyra teaching school alliance, based at Mount Street academy, Lincoln
- Shireland collegiate academy, Sandwell

YEAR IN REVIEW: SEND

Anita Kerwin Nye

Chair, Whole School SEND Consortium



educational needs and disabilities (SEND) these issues can be magnified.

In February, think tank LKMCo and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation made the case that poverty is both a cause and effect of having a family member with SEND.

Meanwhile, the progress gap between children with SEND and their peers remains both high and highly variable depending on location. Ofsted's most recent annual report highlighted that "the proportion of pupils in receipt of SEN support who make the expected level of progress varies between 37 and 74 per cent across local authority areas".

The summer announcement on grammar schools and subsequent lack of mention of SEND in the Schools that Work for Everyone green paper did little to reassure on this front, raising significant concerns about the place for children with SEND in an even more selective system.

This year marked the half-way point of the SEND reforms arising from the Children and Families Act, whereby statements are being transferred to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). The first set of Ofsted and CQC SEND reviews of local authorities reveal many strengths, but also several local authorities that urgently need to improve.

Special school provision remains exceptional – 93 per cent of maintained special schools are rated good or outstanding. However, significant concerns have been raised about the capacity of these schools to meet the needs of the increasing number of children with severe and complex needs,

often reflecting improvements in neonatal care. Marc Rowland of the National Education Trust recently argued in *Schools Week* for improvements in recruiting and training staff to work in special schools, where recruitment challenges are even more acute than across the mainstream sector.

Inclusion has – perhaps more than ever this year – been a question of debate: not just how, but sometimes even whether to include. Concerns have also grown about exclusion by indirect means, with parents not uncommonly reporting being told to apply to another school better equipped for SEND provision. More disturbingly, perhaps, Jarlath O'Brien highlighted the illegal use of fixed-term exclusions in his recent book, *Don't Send Him in Tomorrow*.

for each child, rather than setting blanket benchmarks and targets.

There are other green shoots of change. Remarkable champions have emerged: O'Brien's above-mentioned book should be required reading for all aspiring school leaders, while Nancy Gedge's *Inclusion for Primary Teachers* offers invaluable practical help for all primary NQTs. Across education media – in a large part championed by *Schools Week* – SEND has become a headline issue rather than an also-ran.

The Whole School SEND Consortium, launched in May 2016, has more than 500 schools committed to improving their SEND provision. Including several large academy trusts, teaching schools and networks of schools, with third-sector bodies such as the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN), the consortium is focusing on practical support for schools. Working with Simon Knight and the National Education Trust to develop support for teachers at classroom level, and with Rob Webster at UCL to support schools in teaching assistant deployment, the consortium – hosted by the London Leadership Strategy – is building capacity into schools across the country.

There are significant challenges to ensuring that pupils with SEND are visible and included in the schools within their communities. There is no reason that many shouldn't be achieving the same academic success as their peers. How we support our learners with SEND should be the marker of how we run our education system as a whole.

SEND has become a headline issue rather than an also-ran

There have been a few low points, but champions for pupils with SEND still emerged this year, says Anita Kerwin Nye

Many of the same variables have impacted learners with special needs in 2016 as other children: system restructure; the downplaying of lower-level and non EBacc qualifications; teacher recruitment and austerity.

But for young people with special

There are great examples of inclusion working

On the upside, there are great examples of where inclusion is working. Most often these are schools that, rather than assuming they hold all of the answers, are outward facing, work with humility and engage critically with developments in practice. They see parental contribution as an asset rather than an inconvenience, and they take time to define what high expectations really look like

Cartoon of the year



REVIEWS

BOOKS OF THE YEAR



Chosen by *Schools Week* features editor Cath Murray

Don't Send Him in Tomorrow

By Jarlath O'Brien

Special schools are awesome – and Ofsted seems to agree – but no one's shouting about it, so Jarlath O'Brien made it his mission to do just that.

1



The beautifully written *Don't Send Him in Tomorrow* rails against the "cloak of invisibility" over people with learning disabilities and suggests that every mainstream teacher should spend time in a special school.

Lest you fear this be a preachy tome, however, rest assured: with characteristic hang-out-your-underwear-in-public nonchalance, O'Brien employs fabulous phrases such as "blissfully unaware and completely uninterested" to describe his own prior relationship to the sector he now expounds.

He tells stories, marks out clear themes, and includes diplomatically titled sections such as "Some suggestions for the secretary of state for education" and "Some suggestions for headteachers". Tongue in cheek, or the height of diplomacy? It's hard to tell, which is just one of the many features that makes this book such a gem.

A Christmas gift for anyone with a heart and a brain

I Find That Offensive

By Claire Fox

This is a fun one, as well as encapsulating, in some ways, THE theme of the year: when does free speech become hate speech?

And when does refraining from offence reach the point where people feel they cannot open their mouths to express an opinion without being hounded for it?

It's precisely the bind in which western society finds itself, and Claire Fox's *I Find That Offensive* does a grand

2



job of addressing it. In fact, combine this book with Ian Hislop's recent Orwell lecture: *The Right to Dissent (and the left too)* and you've got your pub philosopher's (or dinner party) conversation starters for the next six months.

Free speech, Claire Fox says, means allowing people to hold and express racist, sexist and homophobic views. This doesn't mean everyone's opinion is equally important, but it does mean offence will happen as a by-product of uncomfortable ideas.

And if you know someone who might be horribly shocked by that, you might have just found them the perfect present.

A Christmas gift for mouthy people, and (if you dare!) the easily offended

High Challenge, Low Threat

By Mary Myatt

3



Who doesn't want to learn how to be a better leader? (And after reading *High Challenge, Low Threat*, who wouldn't want Mary Myatt as theirs?)

Myatt's eagerly awaited book on relationship-building as the essence of good leadership just had to make it on

to this list. It lays out a simple premise, but one with the potential to transform work environments: if you create a low-threat environment, then set people hard tasks to do, they will rise to the challenge.

And reassuringly, she told us, nobody really sets out with the intention of doing a crappy job, but sometimes we just do.

"Dripping with humanity and common sense" – as put so beautifully by our reviewer Iesha Small – and with chapters titled "Human beings first, professionals second" or "Management by wandering around", Myatt's is a very human book on leadership.

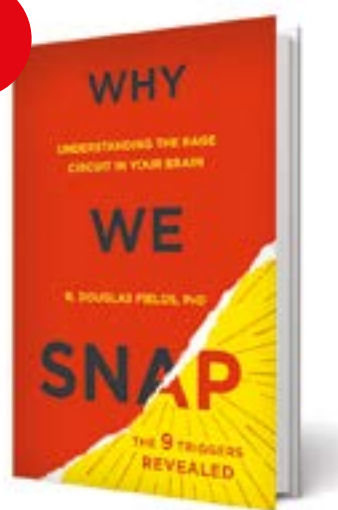
And really, this quote alone should surely be enough to earn it a place on the best of 2016: "In high functioning settings people want to be held accountable for their work, but they don't want to feel like a muppet. Nobody wants to be made to feel like a muppet."

A Christmas gift for school leaders. Or aspiring ones.

Why We Snap

By R Douglas Fields

4



Why do our bodies' "aggression circuits" kick in, sometimes unexpectedly, to the extent that "ordinary" people can snap and do or say horrific things?

Written by a neuroscience expert, *Why We Snap* lays out and explains "nine triggers", which anyone working with children will probably want to know – whether to help to keep their own temper under control, or understand the reasons why pupils lose theirs.

Fields describes the "mate" trigger as one of the most powerful rage switches, as well as the "tribe" trigger, which is at the root of racial prejudice.

More positively, the flipside of snapping in anger, we learn, is that the

same parts of the brain can also trigger heroic behaviour. Hooray!

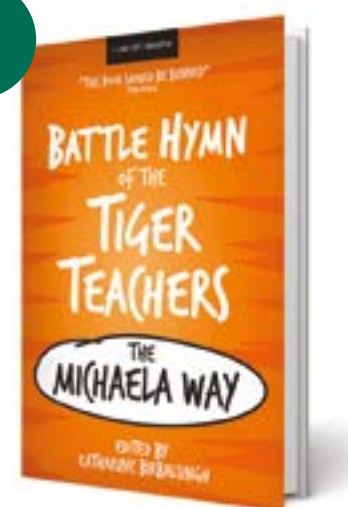
And even if understanding how our amygdala and prefrontal cortex react in situations of stress doesn't immediately fix how we handle stressful situations, at least it might offer the possibility of later analysis, which, if we're honest, is surely a good place to start.

A secret Santa gift for anyone who ever loses it, or works with kids who do

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers: The Michaela Way

By Katharine Birbalsingh

5



If you're active on social media, you'll have seen that this was THE education book of early December. Michaela free school in west London has courted publicity since the get-go and the launch of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers* didn't disappoint.

And while our review (by Jules Daulby) will be in the first edition of the new year, we had to get a mention here, as really, who wouldn't like a copy of this in their Christmas stocking?

With each chapter written by a loyal staff member touting the virtues of the "Michaela way" – making bold statements such as "We don't mark books" or "We ban Captain Underpants from the library" – it's nothing if not evangelical. Having read the book, however, watched its live-streamed launch and followed the ensuing debates on Twitter with an unhealthy fascination, what we can say is that it's certainly got people talking about pedagogy.

So while Michaela may be like Marmite, if you think there's something to be gained from a heated exchange of ideas – and we do – then you have to admire the way the entire Michaela army has nailed their colours to the mast... then stood firm, prepared to field the onslaught.

A Christmas gift for teachers who have to be up with the latest trend

TOP BLOGS OF THE YEAR



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



Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate director of knowledge development for Teach First @HFletcherWood



Emma Mattinson-Hardy, former primary school teacher and union organiser @emmaannhardy



Jill Berry, a former head, now educational consultant and Twitter addict @jillberry102



Andrew Old, teacher and blogger @oldandrewuk

This year the **Learning Scientists** (learningscientists.org) take the top slot. Drs Smith, Weinstein, Wooldridge and Kuepper-Tetzel founded the blog, which goes a long way to respond to two perennial challenges: "How we can make research available to teachers?" and "How can we induce teachers to read it?". Their frequent blogs summarise underlying principles of cognitive science or discuss individual studies, alongside guest posts. A particular highlight this autumn was their creation of a series of posters to popularise six key strategies that research has demonstrated are particularly effective in schools, and have now been translated into a range of languages, with the artful aid of Oliver Caviglioli.

Toby French, aka **Mr Histoire** (mrhistoire.com) has found time to blog more often this year, combining insightful discussion of specific aspects of history teaching with more general reflections on his own classroom and life in schools generally. His redesign of classroom discussion made me re-evaluate practices I had spent several years perfecting (I thought) and I particularly enjoyed his explanation of the way that improved subject knowledge, around topics as esoteric as collectivisation in Ukraine, helped him to explain particular concepts. Alongside this are moments of brilliance, such as his discussion of how he uses "Our good friend, Robert Peel" to help students hang on to key ideas.

My honourable mention goes to **Andrew Old** (teachingbattleground.wordpress.com), who reached his tenth anniversary as a blogger recently. Whether you agree with him or not entirely, occasionally, or not at all, it is hard to understate the effect that his persistent blogging has had on education writing and on Ofsted and schools more generally.

Sometimes the things you fail to notice are the things staring you in the face. When considering my favourite blogger, I thought about whose timeline I always check, whose blogs I always read and who I recommend to others and the answer was obvious, it's **Debra Kidd**. Her passion for teaching is contagious and the lens through which she judges the latest fashion in education is always guided by her steadfast principles; she is never swayed by who said them.

She does not court controversy, but will always challenge ideas that don't fit with her principles, even when they can appear to be the Twitter hegemonic view on education. She combines the traits of being warm, friendly and compassionate with a steely determination to ensure that Every Child Matters. Her blogs make you feel angry, determined, amused, inspired or challenged; I can't think of a single reason not to read them.

My runner up is **Michael Tidd**. Last year the Department for Education (DfE) proved it was as helpful and as useful as a chocolate fireguard. Primary teachers were left desperately searching for guidance about primary assessment and many turned to Michael Tidd who blogs at michaelt1979.wordpress.com. His detailed analysis of primary assessment, sometimes crowd-sourced on Twitter, offered the much needed clarification. His constant challenges to the DfE to prove itself worthy of government became a battle cry during the chaos of last year and I'm delighted that he shows no signs of changing.

My honourable mention is a bit of a cheat because it is a blog with many authors. **Reclaiming Education** (reclaimingschools.org) provides the educational research and evidence needed to challenge the government's rhetoric in bite-sized chunks.

My choices this year are all English specialists, although what they write about goes far beyond their specialism.

My first choice is **Helena Marsh** (@[HelenaMarsh81](https://twitter.com/HelenaMarsh81)), an executive principal who still finds time to blog for [staffrm](http://staffrm.com). I have followed her journey into headship then through the early months, with a combination of avid interest, admiration and profound respect. In her posts, she explores the challenges and the rewards of headship; discusses the role of women in educational leadership and what they bring to and gain from it; and shows how her own leadership philosophy is firmly grounded in her strong core values and clear vision. She is an excellent role model for leaders at all levels and of all genders.

Second, I have enjoyed the writing of **Alex Quigley** (@[huntingenglish](https://twitter.com/huntingenglish)), both in his blog, theconfidentteacher.com, and his book, *The Confident Teacher*, which came out this year. He covers a range of subjects, including feedback, managing workload and the importance of developing confidence as we hone our craft in the classroom. His writing reflects his clear judgment, contains practical strategies and grounded advice, and is always succinct, balanced and readable. Alex is committed to, and knowledgeable about, the power of research to inform and strengthen practice, but he wears his considerable learning lightly.

And my honourable mention this year is **Andy Tharby** (@[atharby](https://twitter.com/atharby)), whose blog reflectingenglish.wordpress.com is gold dust for English teachers, but whose insights would benefit all teachers. He exposes myths, explores issues such as what makes for effective questioning and powerful analysis, and offers inspiring examples of work that often make me wish I were an English teacher again.

My blogger of the year is English teacher **James Theobald** who writes "**Othmar's Trombone**" (a Peanuts reference). While he does not blog that often, the arrival of his latest post always feels like a major event. He has a knack for finding perfect analogies and examples to illustrate educational issues, and an ability to present them graphically in amusing ways. This is the only blog where you are going to see the College Of Teaching presented as a Choose Your Own Adventure book; Shakespeare with headlines designed by education journalists; recent education debates reimaged as a Christmas hamper; or education policy as a Monty Python sketch. He is also capable of identifying fashions and crazes in education that deserve to be challenged, such as "takeaway homework" or criticising schools for being like factories. I don't know of any other blog that is so carefully crafted or so frequently original.

My runner-up is **The Quirky Teacher**. Written by an anonymous primary teacher, it is a polemical account of primary teaching and the illogical practices she has encountered. She is scathing about attitudes to maths and science, and the priority given to creative activities and play. She describes poor management and excessive workload, and criticises low expectations. She argues for firmer discipline and for a greater priority to be given to academic subjects at a young age. She is particularly interesting when talking about gender and the expectations teachers have for boys in an environment with very few men.

My honourable mention is veteran blogger, **Tom Bennett**. This year he returned to publishing his own blog and was immediately involved in several major controversies, most memorably over the relevance of Minecraft to the classroom.

YEAR IN POLITICS



Natalie Perera

Executive Director, Head of Research, Education Policy Institute



Who would have thought it possible?

What would have seemed more likely at the start of the year, asks Natalie Perera. Brexit, more grammars or a new prime minister? Twelve months on and you've got the lot

It's been a tumultuous year in politics. In generations to come, GCSE (or whatever the equivalent will be) students will be sitting exams and writing essays on how 2016 transformed domestic and international politics, policy and society. There will be dissertations on how and why such a transformation occurred over just 365 days.

Education policy has not been unaffected by the reverberations of these sharp changes. This time last year, if we (researchers, the sector, perhaps even the Department for Education) had been asked which of the following was most likely: i) the UK voting to leave the EU; ii) Cameron and Osborne no longer resident at Nos 10 and 11, or iii) the government proposing on how, not whether, to remove the ban on new grammar schools; the first two would perhaps have seemed the most likely of a radical set of options.

Yet, the first led to a domino effect that resulted in the final becoming a reality. In fact, when we at EPI toyed with the idea of doing new research on grammar schools last year, we quickly dismissed it. Surely no current or relatively future government would want to "open up that can of worms". Twelve months, two ground-breaking research reports on selective education, one consultation response and countless lost hours of sleep later, proved we were wrong.

But how have education policies been affected by the leadership changes both at No 10 and the Department for Education?

As 2016 dawned, the political debate was largely focused on forced academisation. The 2015 Autumn Statement announced plans to end the role of local authorities in running schools and we braced ourselves for a radical white paper and a consultation on a new national funding formula (NFF). We weren't disappointed. As predicted, the DfE published its consultation on the NFF in early March, closely followed by the Educational Excellence Everywhere white paper, which set out plans to force all schools to become academies by 2020. It also committed to place up to 1,500 teachers and middle leaders into under-performing schools through the national teaching service. Nicky Morgan, once seen as the antithesis to ideological reformer Michael Gove, began to emerge as an even more radical politician about to change the school landscape for ever.

No government would want to open that can of worms

In response, many parts of the sector, along with parent groups, galvanised and revolted. On May 6, Morgan made a u-turn, promising that schools would not be forced to become academies unless it became locally unviable for them not to do so or if the local authority was found to be under-performing.

Her climbdown was welcomed by many unions and other education groups, but pressure was building over primary assessments and the lack of further information on the NFF (the former exacerbated by the accidental uploading of a key stage 2 test to a secure website the day before it was administered to year 6 pupils).

For several weeks after the Brexit vote of June 23, business at the DfE seemingly continued as usual. In a decision that was not without controversy, Amanda Spielman was appointed to take over from the formidable Sir Michael Wilshaw as chief inspector next year.

But as the new prime minister made radical changes to her Cabinet, there was almost an inevitability that Nicky Morgan's time in Sanctuary Buildings was drawing to a close. Not only had Morgan already set out her own blueprint for the future of schools, she was also an ally of Cameron and a moderate Remainer – leaving her vulnerable to a new administration seeking to mark their own territory on education policy.

Against the backdrop of No 10 on July 13, Theresa May spoke of the burning injustices of poverty and inequality of opportunity – shifting the political focus definitively

to families who are "just about managing". The following day, Justine Greening was appointed as the new education secretary.

While her boss's support of lifting the ban on grammar schools was widely understood, Greening was clear in those middle days of summer that she was considering a range of opportunities to improve social mobility. However, on September 12, the DfE published a seemingly hurried consultation document that included controversial proposals on how, not whether, to allow new grammar schools to open and to lift the 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions in faith schools. The DfE was widely criticised for putting out a document entitled Schools that Work for Everyone, while making not a single reference to children with special educational needs.

Once again, the education sector almost unanimously galvanised in protest against

Nicky Morgan emerged a radical politician

the consultation document with evidence pouring out of organisations, including mine. So far, the DfE has stood its ground and has even been chastised by the Office for National Statistics for putting out misleading statistics.

As the year drew to a close, yet more of Morgan's legacy, the Education for All bill and the national teaching service were canned. But, now that the Schools that Work for Everyone consultation has closed, it remains to be seen whether Greening and her team will, like Nicky Morgan, concede to the mounting pressure from the sector or whether they will implement their plans and prepare to take a precarious and controversial bill through parliament.

ED SECS AND SHADOW ED SECS 2016



Ed secs' favourite books (as told to *Schools Week*)

Nicky Morgan: *North and South*, by Elizabeth Gaskell
Justine Greening... still to be revealed
Lucy Powell: *Us*, by David Nicholls
Pat Glass: we never got a chance to ask
Angela Rayner: *Stark*, by Ben Elton



NICKY MORGAN
EDUCATION SECRETARY

**JULY 15, 2014 –
14 JULY, 2016**



JUSTINE GREENING
EDUCATION SECRETARY

**14 JULY, 2016 –
PRESENT**



A Year in Westminster

Your seasonal guide to what went on in central government during 2016

WINTER



Like a painful harbinger of doom, the festive season ended with a reactionary row about the changing of exams timetables for Ramadan – heralding 2016 as a year when we would all get very upset about everything.

It was also a good time for avoidable photo gaffes, as Nicky Morgan (remember her?) strapped on a BBC micro:bit computer at the Bett conference just days before its nationwide rollout was delayed.

The Advertising Standards Authority finally ruled the Department for Education did not mislead the public in its advert for new teachers when it claimed they could earn “up to £65k”. Fair enough. It is possible to earn that much as a senior teacher in inner London. AND, according to DfE figures, 485 people do. So we should all calm down and accept teaching defo is a well-paid profession.

It now seems years since we were discussing coasting schools, but the education and adoption act, the legislation that gave us that now infamous descriptor, finished its passage through parliament in the first months of this year.

SPRING



As the weather brightened, we learned of the government’s (OK, George Osborne’s) plan to make all schools become academies by 2022. Or so the Educational Excellence Everywhere white paper said until it was unceremoniously shelved less than two months later.

Schools Week also got a taste of things to come as He Who Shall Not Be Named, Nick Timothy (oops), the man who would later become dark lord adviser at No 10, told us that he’d dreamt of bringing back grammar schools since he was 4, or something. Now he’s in charge he can finally realise his childhood dream. Maybe.

Civil servants don’t really have a reputation for saying it like it is, but Sally Collier, the new chief regulator of Ofqual, proved she may be one of a kind when she admitted during a grilling by MPs it might take her “months” to understand the qualifications and assessment system. We know how she feels.

Into union conference season, and Nicky Morgan decided (and instantly regretted) to address a teaching union conference only to find herself subject to heckling. Still, when she was asked if the schools minister was secretly in charge of the Department for Education she swatted back by saying the question was sexist. Touché.

SUMMER



Just when we were thinking we were in for a nice quiet summer (what now?), Britain voted to leave the European Union. Cue a long-running reshuffle on both sides of parliament, neatly smashing our contacts book, dammit.

Lucy Powell departed as shadow education secretary in protest against Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, only to have her successor, Pat Glass, resign in a record-breaking 40 hours.

Angela Rayner was duly promoted, but had only one chance to face Nicky Morgan at education questions before she was shuffled off to the back-benches in penance for backing Michael Gove for the Tory leadership.

New PM Theresa May – now advised by He Who Shall Not Be Named – ushered in Justine Greening who may or may not be the first comprehensive educated secretary of state. (Let’s just say it’s complicated, but on a series of technicalities she totally is).

In response, Powell began earning herself another title – shadow shadow education secretary – as she continued to do the job in tandem with Rayner, with the pair making quite the scary double-act given their combined six children, northern accents and general bolshy manner. Which was a good job because...

AUTUMN



A new term and a new trauma. The new permanent secretary, Jonathan Slater, began his job as the most trusted civil servant in all of education land by accidentally displaying in front of cameras the government’s plan to bring back grammars. It was typed out neatly, by the way, just in case you thought he was sloppy with his notes.

Cue the world caving in as, well, everyone in education pointed out that being in favour of grammar schools, given the overwhelming evidence against them, is akin to being a climate change denier.

Never fear, evidence-led schools minister Nick Gibb gave a speech, the day after the revelations at ResearchEd, explaining how he would look at all the data. He ummed and ahed a few weeks and then seemed to get over it very quickly and was suddenly espousing the greatness of grammars, right at the moment as he got a seat on the Privvy [sic] Council. Quelle coincidence!

Finally the year ended with Justine Greening bringing in another consultation on the overly long-awaited National Funding Formula. It has taken six years to get to this point. We can only assume 2017 will slide by without any further progress. Let’s hope the same happens with grammars.

Merry Christmas y’all!



LUCY POWELL
SHADOW EDUCATION
SECRETARY
13 SEP, 2015 -
26 JUNE, 2016



PAT GLASS
SHADOW EDUCATION
SECRETARY
27 - 29 JUNE, 2016



ANGELA RAYNER
SHADOW EDUCATION
SECRETARY
1 JULY, 2016 -
PRESENT

School Bulletin with Sam King



Headteacher Fiona Rimmer conducts the choir as they sing for parents

Speech therapist on school's wishlist

Children at Oak View academy in Cheshire have recorded a cover of I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday to help to fund a speech and language therapist at the school.

With numerous children starting at the school's nursery well below the national average in communication, a school governor decided on the novel way of covering the cost of a therapist.

Kevin Hassett, who is also a volunteer at the charity, Speak First, has seen first-hand the benefits of having speech therapists in nurseries.

The school hopes the single will be able to raise the £100,000 needed to fund the new member of staff for a minimum of three years, and improve pupils' communication skills as a result.

The track will be released today and will be available for download on Apple iTunes, Googleplay and Amazon.

Just two years ago, Oak View was ranked as the second worst school in the country, but according to government league tables, is now in the top 5 per cent for progress in reading.



Year 6 pupils with some of the senior citizens

School hosts annual Christmas bash

Year 6 pupils at a Somerset school recently hosted an annual Christmas get-together for local pensioners.

The pupils from Brookside academy in Street served tea to 100 guests during an afternoon of entertainment and socialising, with a buffet also on offer.

The event, funded by Street parish council, has become an important part of the social calendar for anyone aged 70 or over.

One local resident, now 80, has been

attending since the event began ten years ago. "This is a good opportunity for residents of Street to get to know their parish councillors and catch up with friends," she said.

Brookside academy business manager Sandra Bartlett said: "Our annual Christmas tea is an important part of the community calendar. It brings together the generations and is a great chance for a catch-up."

For those without transport, the school also arranges minibuses and car sharing.

The secret life of choristers at Christmas

FEATURED

The annual Christmas Eve BBC radio broadcast of carols from King's College, Cambridge marks the start of the festive season for many, but the young choristers in choirs across the country work tirelessly for weeks before the celebrations.

There are 44 specialist choir schools across the UK that combine regular choir practice and performances with everyday schooling. Choristers are expected to juggle their studies alongside their singing.

They are all expected to work across Christmas, with their busy schedules prompting many families to defer their celebrations to Boxing Day.

At Westminster Abbey, parents of choristers join the children for a quick celebration after their Christmas Eve carol service, before they go to rehearse for another service performed just before midnight. Christmas Day involves two more services, before the children go home for what many refer to as their "second Christmas".

Hereford Cathedral follows a similar schedule, with two services each night on December 22 and 23, an evensong on Christmas Eve and three services on Christmas Day.

Despite the hard work, many choristers see the Christmas season as the best part of the year, with opportunities to perform on television, at royal events, and in



Westminster choristers



St Edmund's school choristers



Norwich cathedral choristers



A chorister is projected onto Windsor castle



Westminster choristers

the case of Portsmouth cathedral choir, aboard a Royal Navy ship.

There are other unexpected bonuses too: images of Windsor choristers will be projected on to the Garter tower of Windsor Castle as a Christmas decoration for the first time this year.

Max Broad, head chorister at St George's chapel, Windsor Castle, said "A very unique

thing of being a chorister is that we get to walk up the 100 steps that connect the school with the chapel in the castle. It's magical when we walk down from midnight mass to open our presents."

Choristers can begin their musical training from the age of seven, and depending on when their voices break, can stay through to the age of 13, with female choristers able to stay in some choirs until the age of 18.

And not all choir schools are independent; Bristol Cathedral academy, King's School Peterborough, Southwell Minster school, London Oratory and St Edward's college in Liverpool are all state schools and members of the Choir Schools Association.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

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

Luke Tryl, former special adviser and chief of staff to Nicky Morgan, has been appointed director of Public Policy Projects (PPP).

PPP is a policy advisory service and meeting place for practitioners and policymakers led by the former health secretary, Stephen Dorrell.

Tryl will oversee PPP as it expands into a policy body with a focus on public service reform, alongside developing its existing health policy subscription services.

Speaking of the challenges he will face, Tryl emphasised the importance of making sure the "domestic agenda" was spoken about in a post-Brexit Britain, as well as picking out key policies. "There is so much you can focus on, it's deciding where to focus."

Tryl worked with Morgan, the former education secretary, for just over two years, working closely on the education white paper, education adoption bill and curriculum reforms.

He began as an education researcher straight out of university at Reform think tank. He was also head of education at LGBT charity Stonewall, a role he says was "genuinely one of the most rewarding things I've ever done".



Luke Tryl



Sarah Lewis



Andrew Alsbury

Sarah Lewis, the headteacher of St Mary's C of E junior school in Oxted, Surrey, has been appointed a national leader of education.

The DfE-funded scheme encourages leaders from successful schools to share their expertise.

Lewis, who is head across St Mary's and the neighbouring infant school, Downs Way, has seen both schools improve under her leadership, achieving outstanding and good Ofsted ratings respectively in recent inspections.

In her role as a national leader, she will offer guidance to schools that request extra

support. "I have a lot of good senior and middle leaders in my school who are eager to have some more experience outside their own school. It's going to be a really nice opportunity for them."

She says the biggest challenge will be balancing the responsibilities of headship alongside helping others. "You can't do so much that your own school suffers, so we'll take it steadily to begin with."

The new Chartered College of Teaching has appointed **Andrew Alsbury** as its chief operating officer.

Launching early next year, the college is an independent chartered professional body for teachers.

Alsbury joins from Willmott Dixon, the UK's largest builder of schools, where he has been the company's education sector director for nine months.

Before joining Willmott Dixon, he was a senior leader in the Education Funding Agency where he was responsible for the maintenance of more than 20,000 schools in England.

He spent nearly 10 years working in central government focused on education capital. Before that he worked at Hackney and Greenwich councils in London.

Speaking of his new role, Alsbury said, "The college will be centre-stage in the development of a world-class professional development route for England's teachers. The new knowledge and research platform will be a central portal and a genuinely independent space for teachers to share the latest in research and best practice."

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

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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.