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FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2017 | EDITION 102



PA/WIRE

## Corbyn fails to dish up evidence on free meals

- Research that Labour pledge will boost attainment and health 'doesn't exist'
- Party fails to mention that packed lunches (with fruit) can be good for pupils

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
@BILLYCAMDEN

**Investigates**

Jeremy Corbyn's claim that councils that provide free meals to all primary pupils are boosting

attainment and health has been dealt a hammer blow after local authorities admitted no such evidence exists.

The Labour leader has pledged to charge VAT on private school fees to raise £1.5 billion to pay for

an extension of universal free school meals to all primary pupils, should his party win next month's general election.

Shortly after announcing the policy, Corbyn told *The Telegraph*

**Continues on page 3**

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## ELECTION WATCH

## Corbyn promises councils their old powers

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Exclusive

A Labour government will let councils open new maintained schools and take over academies, Jeremy Corbyn has told *Schools Week*.

After his speech to the annual conference of the National Association of Head Teachers in Telford on Sunday, the Labour leader expanded on plans set out by the shadow chancellor John McDonnell to "restore" the role of the local education authority.

Council powers to oversee new schools were removed by the Coalition government. All new schools were given to academy trusts, apart from exceptional circumstances, with responsibility for overseeing the quality of those trusts going to regional commissioners.

Town halls retained responsibility for ensuring all children in their areas have school places and for special needs provision.

When asked whether he would allow councils to set up and run new schools, Corbyn said he would, adding that he was "not in favour of expanding free schools".

"At the moment if any area needs a new school, which some do, the council cannot, as a local education authority, build one even if it wants to. It has to be a free school that is built, and that seems to me to be dictatorial on the councils.

"What I want to do is give them the authority to build a new school if one is needed," he said.

Labour later clarified that it would allow councils to "open maintained schools where new schools are needed".

Corbyn also said councils would be allowed to take over academies "where



they want to", but would not be forced to do so.

The ban on councils opening new maintained schools has been a bone of contention among local authority leaders, who say they need additional powers if they are to be able to meet their statutory responsibility to provide school places.

Richard Watts, the leader of Islington council in north London and chair of the Local Government Association's children and young people's board, said in March that councils "must have a role in determining where new free schools are created".

"Councils have a statutory duty to ensure every child has a school place ... but they fear that they will no longer be able to meet the rising costs for the creation of places if they aren't given the money or powers to do so, and have to continue to rely on the secretary of state to take all the final decisions.

"Local authorities know their areas best and are eager to work with applicants with

a strong track record to identify potential school sites."

Councils are currently able to use the free school programme to fund the opening of new schools if they can show a need for places and are willing to run a competition for an academy trust provider to run the school.

Labour has backed a return to a system of local education authorities since Corbyn's election as leader.

In his first conference speech in charge of the party, he committed to making all schools "accountable" to councils.

However, critics have warned that the mass exodus of council education staff since the expansion of the academies programme has left many town halls ill-equipped to set up and oversee schools.

In February, the education select committee called on the government to allow councils to run multi-academy trusts, but the government insists that its free schools programme is still the best method for opening new schools.

## He'll reverse school budget cuts too . . .

Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to plug a £3 billion hole in school funding if he becomes prime minister.

On Sunday, the Labour leader told delegates to the NAHT annual conference that he believed he was "brave enough" to reverse cuts to school budgets, a result of unfunded cost pressures.

School funding is expected to fall in real terms by 6.5 per cent by 2019-20, which the National Audit Office estimates leaves schools having to make savings of £3 billion in the coming years.

But reversing the trend would cost the equivalent of putting 1p on the basic income tax rate or moving 3 per cent of the National Health Service budget, according to Luke Sibieta of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, writing in *Schools Week* today.

Labour promised to give schools more cash when John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, told the National Union of Teachers' annual conference in Cardiff

last month that his party would "fully fund" schools and give teachers a pay rise.

However, Corbyn's confirmation that he would fill the £3 billion funding gap represents a more specific commitment of increased spending if the party wins the general election.

Corbyn made the commitment in response to a question from a delegate at the Telford conference.

When asked whether he was "brave enough" to reverse the real-terms cuts faced by schools, he said: "I believe we are brave enough to do it. I see education as a priority and that is what I want to achieve."

However, he told delegates that he was not ready to set out his detailed plans for education, which would be included in the party's manifesto, although he hinted that spending might be funded through corporation tax rises.

"I can't give you a sneak preview of the full Labour manifesto today, but be

assured if it's a choice between a tax giveaway to the largest corporations paying the lowest rates of tax in the developed world or funding for our schools, Labour will make very different choices from the Conservatives."

During his appearance at the conference, the Labour leader also pledged to "put an end to the continual attacks on the teaching profession" and "end the downward pressure on pay and conditions". Labour also would lift the cap on public sector pay that has affected teachers.

Russell Hobby, the association's general secretary, welcomed Corbyn's comments. "We want any future government to commit to fully and fairly funding the education system and there are encouraging signs from what Mr Corbyn said today that this is a priority for Labour.

"We will await the details when they are set out in the party's manifesto."

**Luke Sibieta's expert view, page 14**

## NEWS

## RESEARCH FAILS TO BACK MEALS CLAIM

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDENCONTINUED  
FROM FRONT

that that "very popular" idea was backed by research from councils that already provided the service. The research purportedly showed free meals tackled obesity and improved grades.

But two pioneering councils – Newham and Islington, both in north London – who introduced free school meals for all primary pupils in 2010, have told *Schools Week* they have carried out no research that would support Corbyn's claim.

When asked to provide the evidence, Labour pointed towards an Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report from 2012 based on a separate two-year pilot of the scheme in Newham, Durham and Wolverhampton.

However, this report showed no increase in child health and concluded further research was needed before any link to improved attainment could be claimed.

Labour said that an earlier survey in 2009 showed pupils taking school lunches were more likely to choose water, salad and vegetables compared with children who ate packed lunches.

However, the party failed to add the next sentence from the report that said packed lunches contained more fruit.

The report also does not examine the benefits of universal free school meals.

Andy Jolley, a school governor and education blogger, said it was "difficult to comprehend" how any officials reading

these reports would "choose to use them to justify spending billions of pounds on universal free school meals".

Other critics have said that extending the programme would "divert money from squeezed budgets to pay for children whose parents can easily afford them" and called on the Labour leader to provide the evidence that he suggested exists.

Universal free school meals were introduced in 2014 for children in the first three years of primary school to ensure they had at least one hot nutritious meal per day.

The initiative already costs the taxpayer more than £600 million a year. Corbyn says an expansion to all junior primary pupils would cost between an extra £700 to £900 million a year.

The Labour leader told *The Telegraph*: "All the evidence from those councils that do provide free school meals is that there are high levels of attainment, better levels of concentration and better health for all of the children."

A spokesperson for Islington council, which is within Corbyn's constituency, said teachers have told the council that children's behaviour and concentration "have improved" as a result of the policy, but admitted the authority had not conducted any specific research.

Newham has now stopped delivering the scheme to all primary pupils. The authority had not carried out any research for the free school meals policy, aside from being included in the 2012 IFS report.

Analysis of the pilots in Islington and Newham last July by *The Mail on Sunday* suggested children could even be getting fatter as a result of the scheme. National Health Service figures showed pupils classified as obese who left primaries in both areas rose by more than 1 per cent from 2011 to 2015.

Pupils reaching the required standard in English and maths SATs increased by about 15 per cent from 2011 to 2015. However, the rises were in line with those across London as a whole.

The 2012 IFS report found that although children who received free meals ate fewer fatty and sugary items, they ate more roast potatoes and chips.

Pupils involved in trials in Newham and Durham made between four and eight weeks more progress over the two-year pilot than pupils from other areas, but no improvement was found in Wolverhampton.

The report's authors said the reason for improvements in Newham and Durham were "not clear". Child attendance, behaviour and health had not improved.

Labour's Sharon Hodgson, chair of the all-party parliamentary group for school food, said that Corbyn's policy allowed "for all children to reap the educational, behavioural and health benefits that come from having a hot and healthy school meal".

But Jolley said: "The IFS report states quite clearly they found no evidence of health benefits. Anyone who claims evidence of health benefits is badly mistaken."

## ICT QUALIFICATIONS FOR 2019 STILL WAIT FOR APPROVAL

JESS STAUFENBERG  
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The Department for Education has given teachers conflicting messages about when an approved list of 2019 technical and vocational qualifications will be finalised, leading many unable to prepare their courses.

The approved list of qualifications, which can count towards performance tables, was meant to be updated in March, but some qualification bodies are still waiting to find if their subject has made it through.

Last updated in February, the government dropped the controversial European Computer Driving Licence from future league tables, although many pupils were already signed up to the qualification.

Pupils on other courses also could find their results do not count in league tables if the updated list is not published soon. Teachers have said they are being chased by their senior leaders about whether courses are going ahead, but "can't answer them".

The government might now delay the list until after the general election with the fate of several qualifications in ICT still hanging in the balance.

An email exchange seen by *Schools Week* between an exam board and the qualification reform team within the Department for Education (DfE) showed that civil servants acknowledge the list should have been updated in March.

It said the published list was now expected "early in the summer term" with a final update due in August.

Facebook and Twitter messages posted by teachers claim the DfE has told some of them the list will be published before June 8 as election purdah did not apply to approving exams.

A qualifications expert told *Schools Week* that purdah should not stop the government from publishing the list, as approved qualifications did not count as a policy document.

But a spokesperson for the DfE said no fixed date could be given for the list's publication, saying it would arrive "in due course".

Kay Sawbridge, head of computing and ICT at Caroline Chisholm School in Northamptonshire, said she had "the senior leadership team on her back asking what ICT course we're going to do, and I can't answer them".

Courses in ICT for exams bodies OCR, AQA, TLM and CIDA were all waiting to hear if courses had been approved or not, she said.

"It is unacceptable to be asked to prepare courses you don't know are going ahead."

Chris Keates, general secretary of the teachers' union NASUWT, said the reform of qualifications had been "characterised by short timescales" that gave schools little preparation time.

She said the delay to the updated list was another example of teachers getting information about qualifications "late in the day".

## RSCs working as 'reinvented local authorities'

JOHN DICKENS  
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Exclusive

Regional schools commissioners are writing to coasting schools to identify specific support, leading critics to suggest they are now operating as reinvented local authorities.

Nearly 800 schools "failing to ensure pupils reach their potential" have been identified as "coasting" under government measures introduced earlier this year.

The schools send outlines of their improvement plans to regional schools commissioners (RSCs), who then decide if further intervention is required.

RSCs have now responded to schools, telling some they need external support in specific departments and generic leadership support. The interventions will be decided by the RSC, *Schools Week* understands.

Geoff Barton (pictured), general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the intervention "smacks of system managerialism".

"The government advocates a self-improving system, but then involves RSCs in school improvement, almost akin to the reinvention of roles previously undertaken by local authorities."

The move is not unexpected. The national commissioner, Sir

David Carter, previously announced a pot of cash from which commissioners could procure improvement services.

However, critics say accountability concerns mean the RSCs should steer clear of delivering school improvement.

Robert Hill, a former government policy adviser, called for clarity. "Are RSCs the regulator, or a school improvement co-ordinator?"

"The two can be combined, but RSCs should draw the line at being involved in commissioning support. That must be for the trust [or local authority]."

At present, if the improvement service provided by the RSC does not work, the academy trust or local council overseeing an underperforming school will still be held to account by Ofsted and the commissioner, who could forcibly convert or rebroker the school to another trust.

In a previous interview with *Schools Week*, Carter defended the school improvement approach as it gave schools an opportunity to improve quickly in specific areas, rather than RSCs immediately rebrokering a school in trouble and "having to rip the whole thing apart".

James Bowen, director of the middle leaders' union, NAHT Edge, also

welcomed the RSC support plans, which he said showed a "shift in tone" from "punitive punishment" to "constructive partnership".

Bowen also agreed accountability for the success of the support should rest with the school. But he added: "We expect there to be a genuine partnership between the RSCs and the headteacher about the kind of support that will work. The school also has to be comfortable with the support, which shouldn't be imposed."

If the support didn't work, Bowen said school leaders should inform commissioners immediately – something that hinged on a constructive relationship.

However, he conceded that the capacity of RSCs to have such relationships with growing numbers of schools remained the "ultimate challenge".

"It can only work . . . if there is that capacity from the RSC and their teams."

In January last year the education select committee warned the government to closely monitor the "significant increase" of schools RSCs were now expected to oversee.

Department for Education guidance says support could be delivered through teaching school alliances, or partnerships with high-performing local schools.

The RSC will monitor a school's progress and can take further action if it has not made "sufficient improvement" within a set timeframe.



## NEWS

## JUST FOUR REFUGEES TAKE UP FREE PLACES IN BOARDING SCHOOLS

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
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A scheme aimed at providing free education for more than 80 Syrian refugees at some of Britain's prestigious boarding schools has struggled for takers with just four places used, *Schools Week* can reveal.

About 50 boarding schools offered the places, worth about £1.5 million in fees, more than 18 months ago.

But the government has only sent two refugee children to take them up, with a further two having approached one school directly after press coverage of the scheme.

Last year, *Schools Week* reported that none of the places was taken within the first seven months of the offer, despite praise from the Department for Education and prime minister David Cameron when the places were announced in September 2015.

Leo Winkley, head of St Peter's school in York and chair of the Boarding Schools Association (BSA), used his speech at the association's annual conference this week to attack the government for its "ineptitude" over the lack of take-up.

"There is, in our sector, a long-standing and genuine readiness to reach out," he said. "BSA member schools were swift to offer free places to unaccompanied children fleeing from civil war-ravaged Syria.

"A great and injurious shame it is, then, that the instruments of government have thus far been so manifestly inept in taking this, and similar offers, up."

Winkley has welcomed the news that an extra 130 unaccompanied child refugees will come to the UK, but feels this "does not go far enough to help those in need".

"Our offers remain on the table, as does the proposal made by many of our schools to help provide up to 10,000 partly-funded places."

Under the terms of the offer, boarding places have been made available for Syrian refugees on top of existing places for other pupils. They are fully funded, with some schools raising money from parents to help with the costs.

The government's approach to taking unaccompanied child refugees from Syria and other areas affected by conflict in the Middle East and north Africa, plus those currently residing in camps in other European countries, has been heavily criticised.

School leaders have expressed particular frustration about the sporadic way in which vulnerable young people are brought into the country, arguing that the education of pupils who arrive mid-way through the school year can be badly affected by delays and other bureaucratic issues.

Ministers recently had to agree to take the further 130 children under the so-called Dubs amendment, after admitting that a mistake had led the government to underestimate the number of places available.

# Pupils travel 40 miles to school

JOHN DICKENS  
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Exclusive

Children are travelling up to 40 miles to school as the government's benefits squeeze pushes families outside the capital.

Keven Bartle, headteacher of Canons High School in Harrow, north London, said more pupils faced long journeys or were leaving his school because their families could not keep up with soaring London rents as job security and benefits were cut.

The government capped welfare benefits at £26,000 per household in 2013, falling to £23,000 last year. Various reports have found that more London families now cannot afford their rent and face temporary accommodation.

Figures released in January by the homelessness charity Shelter suggest that five families are made homeless in England every hour, a rise of 32 per cent over the past five years.

A lack of affordable housing in the capital is pushing London councils to place homeless families in cheaper temporary accommodation elsewhere.

"We see pupils being bounced from house to house," Bartle said. "Many of our families are really struggling to meet their rent – particularly when it gets hiked."

Some of his pupils now commute from East Essex or Milton Keynes – up to 40 miles and three bus rides away – after being placed in temporary housing.

"A lot of kids turn up late, which is normally how we find these things out. Because the homes are temporary, parents still keep their kids in school. School is the one sense of community stability for them."

But other pupils are joining schools in their new areas. Bartle said the number of pupils not returning at the start of term rose from 29 in 2014-15, to 36 last year.

Thirty-two have not returned in the first two terms this year – a trend reported by other heads in Harrow.

The problem may be heightened by further cuts last month, which include child tax credits reduced to the first two children in a family.

However, there is a lack of data showing the impact of welfare cuts on schools.

An Education Datalab study published last year found the number of pupils eligible for free school meals had fallen by more than 7 per cent in London since 2013, the year the housing benefit cap was introduced.

But further investigation found only a marginal rise of pupils on free school meals moving to other regions from the capital that year.

Report author Dave Thomson said it was too hard to separate the effect of one policy



from others going on at the same time.

*Schools Week* approached two regions regularly cited as receiving large numbers of London families – Essex and Kent – to see if any pupil influx had impacted their in-year admission numbers.

The results were mixed. While in-year admissions had risen in Essex (from 10,284 in 2013-14, to 12,518 last year), they dropped in Kent (6,483 in 2013-14, to 6,001 in 2014-15). The councils said a number of factors could be behind the fluctuations.

Bartle called for better data on the impact of homelessness on schooling. In the meantime, he said schools' work was about "damage limitation".

"We need to provide as much help as we can to help people to get the right support."

Canons runs a community heartbeat initiative, which includes evening meals for families, and Citizens Advice Bureau sessions for parents.

## Teachers prepare for election battles

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

The teacher union activist and *Schools Week* blog reviewer Emma Hardy (pictured) is among several education professionals selected to run for parliament on June 8.

Hardy will be fighting to retain the former education secretary Alan Johnson's old seat of Hull West and Hessle for Labour.

A former primary teacher who left the profession to work as an organiser for the National Union of Teachers in Yorkshire, Hardy has put education front and centre of her campaign.

Hull's schools face cuts of almost £14.5 million by 2019, while East Riding schools will have to save almost £15 million.

Labour policies such as the extension of universal free school meals to juniors have proved popular, she says. Hull was one of the first authorities to introduce universal free meals in 2004, later scrapping it in favour of encouraging schools to provide meals for 50p. "I've not met a single person who isn't supportive of the idea."

Johnson won with a majority of more than 9,000 in 2015, but his would-be successor isn't taking the relative safety of the seat for granted. "I don't think anyone should be complacent. You have to fight for it, and that's what I'm going to do," she said.

In Leicester West, 24-year-old teacher Jack Hickey has been selected by the Conservatives to fight former Labour



leadership contender Liz Kendall, who is defending a majority of more than 7,000.

A graduate of De Montfort University, Hickey trained through School Direct at St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy in Leicester, and is now primary education lead in the National Conservative Education Society, a group that advises the government on policy.

Meanwhile, in Barnsley East, Teach First alumna and former secondary teacher Stephanie Peacock will defend a Labour majority of more than 12,000, while in Colne Valley, former headteacher Thelma Smith will try to overturn a Tory majority of more than 5,000 to unseat Jason McCartney.

Julian Critchley, a former teacher and Department for Education (DfE) civil servant, is Labour's candidate on the Isle of Wight, where the current Conservative MP Andrew Turner has stood down over claims he told school pupils that being gay is wrong.

Christine Bayliss, also a former DfE civil servant and founder of Tenax Schools Trust, is standing as the Labour candidate in Bexhill and Battle.

Both will have to fight to win. Critchley faces a Tory majority of more than 13,000 in a constituency where Labour came fourth in 2015 behind Ukip and the Green Party. Bayliss needs to overturn a 20,000 majority.

Laura Smith, a former teacher who is a prominent member of the parent-led Fair Funding For All campaign, is standing in Crewe and Nantwich in an attempt to unseat the children's minister Edward Timpson.

With a majority of 3,620, Timpson is the only one of the current education ministers in a marginal seat.

Schools minister Nick Gibb won in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton by almost 14,000 votes at the last election, and the education secretary Justine Greening had a majority of more than 10,000 in Putney.

Shadow education secretary Angela Rayner and shadow schools minister Mike Kane both won the last election with majorities of more than 10,000.

## NEWS: Investigation

## Headteacher boards face chaos as elections loom

JESS STAUFENBERG

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The upcoming elections for headteacher boards (HTBs) are "frankly amateurish" and beset with issues, including delays, the potential for all experienced members to lose their seats at once and unregulated lobbying.

Members of the powerful boards, which advise regional schools commissioners (RSCs) on the opening, closure and rebrokering of academies and free schools, face re-election as their three-year terms end in September.

However, *Schools Week* has learned that an invitation to run the elections has only recently been issued to three organisations, including the Electoral Reform Services, and a winner has not yet been confirmed.

This could mean the new boards are not ready for September with current members having to remain in place longer than intended – potentially until Christmas, according to sources close to the process.

But a Department for Education spokesperson denied the newly elected board members would not be in place on time. "Obviously the elections would need to be before the autumn."

The snap general election's purdah period, which limits civil servant activity, means the board votes could not take place until at least June – a "tight turnaround" according to the sources.

Decisions have also yet to be made on whether current board members should be re-elected, if the name "headteacher board" should change, and who should be eligible to stand and vote.

Mary Bosted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said the election processes were "amateurish" as a result of the boards' hasty establishment three years ago.

Rosamund McNeil, head of education at the National Union of Teachers (NUT), agreed, claiming that HTBs were "undermining the role of democratically-elected local authorities" and had only been created to "force schools into academy status".

During the first elections in 2014, only the heads of outstanding academies were eligible to stand for the boards, which advise each of the country's eight regional schools commissioners.

All academy heads were eligible to vote for their preferred members.

After the elections, regional schools commissioners also appointed several academy trust chief executives, business directors and consultants to join the elected heads.

But the boards have proved controversial, with members who leave replaced by appointees rather than elected members.

Heads are also increasingly outnumbered by chief executives and consultants. Of 56 members across the eight boards, 19 are chief executives, with two retired CEOs. There are 24 active or executive heads, and six retired.

To reflect the changing nature of the roles, *Schools Week* has been told the name of the boards might also change. Education secretary Justine Greening is said to favour the current name, but "RSC advisory boards" and other titles are being considered.

The role of chief executives was not outlined during the last election. In 2014, only heads could stand and vote. Discussions have taken place within the education department about allowing CEOs to stand and vote in this year's elections.

Bosted is particularly concerned the boards could become a "gravy train" for multi-academy trusts if chief executives "captured" the majority of seats. "These boards could become a vehicle for CEOs to determine what happens to their schools."

Trusts and other organisations also can lobby to get their candidates on to the boards, with no regulations surrounding their campaigns. This allows unions and education campaign groups, such as the Headteachers' Roundtable or Parents and Teachers for Excellence, to work together to get candidates elected.

Sir David Carter, the national schools commissioner, is said to be "alert to the risk" of lobbying.

Current board members have also told Carter they are concerned that considerable experience will be lost if all members are removed in September and new members elected.

Carter has agreed it would be "a shame" to lose all academy expertise at once. But a RSC could use their appointee slots for former board members if none is re-elected.

Editorial, page 10

## HTBs WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY WORK



	ELECTED	APPOINTED	CO-OPTED (VOTED BY BOARD)
 <b>JENNY BEXON SMITH</b> EAST MIDLANDS AND HUMBER	Chris Beckett (Cambridge Meridian trust) Christine Linnitt (former head Holywell primary school) Geoff Lloyd (former head of Tuxford academy)	Chris Abbott (Hunsley trust) Andrew Burns (Redhill academy) Estelle MacDonald (Collingwood primary school/Hull Collaborative)	
 <b>VICKY BEER</b> LANCASHIRE AND WEST YORKSHIRE	Jane Acklam (Moor End academy) Pamela Birch (Hambleton primary school) Martin Shevill (Consilium academies trust)		Karen Bramwell (St Paul's Church of England primary school) Tom Quinn (St John Plessington Catholic college)
 <b>REBECCA CLARK</b> SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND	Dave Baker (The Olympus academy trust) Lorraine Heath (Uffculme School) Lisa Mannall (Trenance Learning academy trust)	Dr Nick Capstick (The White Horse Federation) Brian Hooper (former CEO of Ambitions Academies Trust)	Joy Tubbs (Salisbury diocesan board of education), Alun Williams (Midsomer Norton schools Partnership) Michael Larsen (senior MD, Harbert Management Corporation)
 <b>TIM COULSON</b> EAST OF ENGLAND AND NORTH EAST LONDON	Caroline Haynes (Tendring Technology college) Stephen Munday (Comberton academy trust), Debbie Rogan (HEARTS academy trust), Margaret Wilson (The King John School academy trust)	Rachel de Souza (Inspiration trust) Steve Lancashire (Reach2 academy trust)	Mark Jeffries (Mills & Reeve LLP, legal firm)
 <b>DOMINIC HERRINGTON</b> SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND AND SOUTH LONDON	Rhona Barnfield (Howard Partnership trust) Ian Bauckham (Tenax schools trust) Andrew Carter (South Farnham school)	Angela Barry (Woodland academy trust) Nikki King (Isuzu Truck UK Ltd and Greenacre academy trust)	Alison Beane (Solent academies trust) Mark Ducker (STEP academy trust) Karen Roberts (Kemnal academy trust)
 <b>MARTIN POST</b> SOUTH CENTRAL ENGLAND AND NORTH WEST LONDON	Richard Edwards (former head of Nicholas Hawksmoor primary school), Sir Michael Griffiths (former head of Northampton School for Boys), Claire Robins (Sir John Lawes school) Teresa Tunnadine (The Compton school)	Dame Yasmin Bevan (executive head of Chiltern Learning Trust) Tony Draper (Lake Academies Trust, former NAHT president)	Peter Little (Bedfordshire schools trust and Reach4 academy trust) Seamus Oates (TBAP multi-academy trust)
 <b>CHRISTINE QUINN</b> WEST MIDLANDS	Mike Donoghue (John Taylor high school) Billy Downie (The Streetly academy) Sally Yates (former head Deanery CfE primary school)	Mark Grundy (Shireland academy) Linda Davis (Wistaston academy)	Peter Rubery (Fallibroome academy trust) Kate Brunt (St Clements Church of England primary school)
 <b>JANET RENOU</b> NORTH OF ENGLAND	Zoe Carr (Wise academies trust) Chris Clarke (Queen Elizabeth school) Nick Hurn (Cardinal Hume Catholic school) Lesley Powell (The Academy at Shotton Hall)	Andrew Bayston (Northern Stars academies trust)	Elizabeth Horne (Horizons specialist academy trust) Sir Michael Wilkins (Former CEO, Outwood Grange academies trust)

## NEWS

## Kent 11-plus 'loaded dice' for poorer pupils

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Poorer pupils with the same SATs score as their wealthier peers are much less likely to pass the 11-plus, according to new research by Education Datalab.

The study found that the Kent Test, the grammar school entrance exam in Kent, was a "loaded dice" against pupils on free school meals as they were not coached for the exam, unlike their better-off peers.

To make the tests fairer, poorer pupils should be given extra marks and headteacher panels, which reconsider the fate of pupils who fail the test, should be scrapped, the researchers conclude.

The findings come from a detailed look at 21,800 pupils who started secondary school in Kent in 2016. It found the 11-plus only weakly predicted scores on other tests and appeared to grant grammar school places "arbitrarily".

Most significantly, free school meal (FSM) pupils who got the same SATs score as non-FSM pupils received an average 8.7 points lower on the 11-plus test – showing they struggled more with its style.

If selected purely on SATs scores, about 16 per cent of FSM pupils would get one of the 5,200 places available in grammar schools, the report found. At present 12 per cent of poorer pupils get a place.

Poorer pupils should therefore be

"awarded extra marks" on the 11-plus to account for the disparity between 11-plus and SATs' marks, the authors said.

They said FSM pupils might struggle because they were "not prepared for the reasoning component" of the test.

The 11-plus in Kent tests aptitude rather than subject knowledge, and is centred around three papers on English, maths and reasoning. To gain a grammar place, pupils must score 106 or above on each paper, and get a score of 320 or above across all three papers.

Because primary state schools in the county are forbidden to prepare pupils for the 11-plus, the authors believe poorer pupils were unused to the reasoning paper – while pupils in private schools, or whose parents paid for coaches, were "familiar" with it.

Robert Coe, professor in education at Durham University, said the test should be "better aligned with the key stage 2 curriculum" so FSM pupils were not disadvantaged by the unfamiliar reasoning paper.

Datalab agrees, calling for all pupils to receive "10 hours of preparation" in reasoning to pull them up alongside their privately schooled peers.

Phillip Bosworth, treasurer for the National Grammar

Schools Association, agreed state primary schools should be allowed to use practice papers to prepare pupils for the Kent Test.

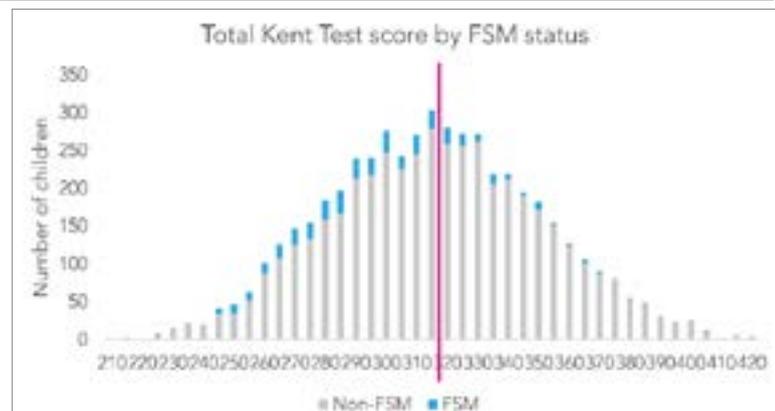
The report also found the 11-plus only weakly predicted pupils' later SATs scores.

A different cohort would enter grammar schools if its "arbitrary" measures were slightly tweaked.

Researchers looked at what would happen if pupils got a grammar school place by achieving the overall pass mark of 320, without having to hit a pass mark in each paper; or if they could get in with just one "high performer" mark in one paper; or if they didn't have to sit the English paper.

Under those choices, between 800 to 1,300 children who get in under the current system would not get places and an equivalent batch of children who currently don't get in would replace them.

Dr Rebecca Allen, director



\* Red line shows 11-plus pass mark

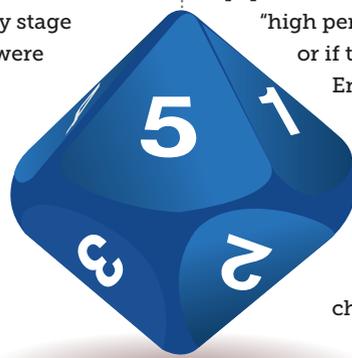
of Education Datalab, said parents should know how much the current system in Kent "risks misclassifying their children".

Finally, the report found that heads did not put enough FSM pupils in front of the panels that reconsider pupils who have failed the 11-plus. These panels were "expected" to counterbalance the test's disadvantages, but did not manage to do so.

The report said the panels should be scrapped and the pass mark brought down.

Rebecca Hickman, vice chair of Comprehensive Future, a campaign group for non-selective education, said it was "highly ironic" that the 11-plus, which was meant to be fairer than a content-based exam, was proving to be less fair than SATs.

"The 11-plus likes to trumpet the fact that it isolates ability from social opportunity. Clearly it's doing the opposite."



## Bucks goes back to an old grammar test provider

Exclusive

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Grammar schools in Buckinghamshire have sacked their high-profile 11-plus test provider and reappointed their former "discredited" supplier.

GL Assessment, which delivered the 11-plus test for all Buckinghamshire grammar schools before 2013, will replace the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) in providing selective school entrance exams for the area from 2018.

It comes five years after Buckinghamshire heads complained the GL Assessment test was not working. It was "widely discredited" as favouring pupils from more advantaged backgrounds.

The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS), which manages and administers 11-plus testing for all 13 grammars in the area, made the decision to change providers but the reasons remain unknown.

CEM, based at Durham University, claimed its test was "tutor-proof", but analysis by campaign group Local Equal Excellent found the tests made little difference to the number of state school primary pupils accessing grammars.

Documents released in November 2015 also revealed CEM generated £1 million from its contract.

Rebecca Hickman, spokesperson for Local



Equal Excellent, said the shifting of provider was a case of "shuffling deckchairs on the Titanic".

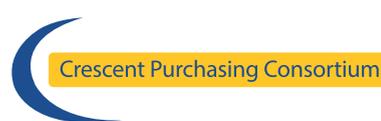
"Buckinghamshire grammar schools are just replacing one discredited test with another. What's more they have offered no explanation as to why they have reintroduced a test that they previously said was causing significant unfairness because of its susceptibility to tutoring."

The tender document for the new provider shows that the contract is worth more than £2 million, with in excess of £1.1 million going to the test provider.

Hickman added: "It's scandalous that more than £2 million of taxpayers' money is being wasted in Buckinghamshire on the discredited 11-plus test.

"In non-selective areas, this money is spent on teachers, books and better facilities. In Bucks it is spent on separating our children into winners and losers."

CEM, TBGS and GL Assessment were approached for comment, but were unable to provide answers by the time *Schools Week* went to print.



### Crescent Purchasing Consortium Acquire Tenet Services

National education purchasing consortium Crescent Purchasing Ltd are delighted to announce they have acquired procurement services provider company Tenet Education Services Ltd. The two companies will continue to run independently but this new collaboration means members can now receive an end to end procurement solution.

Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) is owned by the FE sector and is the only national purchasing consortium dedicated to supporting FE Colleges, Schools and Academies. CPC promotes a member-driven ethos, while Tenet Services provide procurement solutions to drive value for money.

CPC Chairman David Pullein said: "We are delighted to secure the acquisition of Tenet to complement the services currently provided by CPC. This will enable Crescent to provide a complete service to the education sector and continue the excellent work of Tenet Education Services."

Currently CPC has over 4000 members and a portfolio of approximately 60 frameworks covering a wide variety of products and services, two specialised websites and purchasing training programs. Tenet specialise in service contract consultancy offering tailored services which suit individual requirements and budgets from one off tendering to onsite procurement services. Both are now available offering members a unique one-stop procurement solution.

Outgoing Tenet Chairman, David Thoms said: "I and my fellow directors are excited by the sale of Tenet to CPC, as this will enable us to achieve our ultimate aim of being able to offer and provide the widest possible range of procurement solutions to both our existing clients and the education sector"

www.thecpc.ac.uk

www.tenetservices.com

## NEWS

## Ofsted 'doesn't understand' secondary moderns

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Ofsted inspectors have received no training on secondary modern schools, despite them operating in some of the toughest conditions in the country.

Laurence Reilly, a headteacher who is also an Ofsted inspector, said HMIs had not been trained to recognise a "secondary modern" as a non-selective school sitting within a selective area.

His comments at the National Association of Secondary Moderns annual conference in London last weekend came after the association's founder, Ian Widdows, called on Ofsted to recognise the "sometimes difficult context" in which teachers at secondary moderns worked.

Instead of acknowledging the often lower academic ability of pupils compared with those in grammar schools, Ofsted judged them both on the same criteria, delegates heard.

Sean Harford (pictured), director of education at Ofsted, responded by telling *Schools Week* the inspectorate "recognised the difficulties some secondary moderns face", particularly the impact of local grammar schools selecting brighter pupils.

But all schools must be "fairly judged" on "the same inspection criteria", he said.

Schools should provide the "very best education for all pupils, regardless of their background" and it was not fair on pupils to judge schools according to different



criteria, he said.

He denied inspectors did not understand the context of schools.

"All our inspectors receive regular training to help to update their skills and knowledge in inspecting schools, taking full account of their context."

Widdows told delegates at the annual conference, the association's fourth, that he wrote to Harford in 2015 to express concerns about Ofsted's understanding of secondary moderns.

He received a response from Robert Pike, Ofsted's chief statistician, which said it stood by the judgments made of secondary

moderns and grammar schools.

In that letter, Pike admitted it was "harder" for schools with lower-ability pupils to get the two top ratings from Ofsted. Across the country, secondary moderns were less likely than grammar schools to be rated "good" or "outstanding".

He said it was "probably easier" for schools with advantaged intakes to be awarded good or outstanding. But he also said the higher ratings given to grammar schools might be because their teaching was "more effective".

"You've got a circular argument here," Widdows told *Schools Week*.

"They're saying the reason they have higher-calibre teachers is because those schools are judged outstanding, and they are outstanding because of their higher-calibre teachers.

"The teachers in my school have to have so many different tools, strategies, competencies that they employ all the time, without thinking. I think they are incredibly high-calibre teachers."

Ofsted inspectors are required to have a degree, qualified teacher status, as well as five years' leadership experience at a senior level, according to a HMI job specification.

When *Schools Week* rang Ofsted about secondary modern schools, a spokesperson asked "whether secondary modern was still a label" applied to schools. But the term is an official designation within the government's Edubase data on schools.

## DFE REFUSES TO RELEASE REPORTS ON TWO TRUSTS

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Exclusive

Ministers are refusing to release finance investigations into two high-profile academy trusts – one a government "top-performing" chain and the other now defunct.

The Department for Education has refused under the Freedom of Information Act to publish financial management and governance reviews into the Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) and the Lilac Sky Schools Academy Trust (LSSAT).

WCAT was one of five "top-performing" sponsors named by the government in 2015 and given £500,000 additional funding to take over failing schools in the north of England.

Documents seen by *Schools Week* show the WCAT review highlighted related-party transactions, projected deficits and concerns over the removal of trustees.

But the government said it would not release the WCAT investigation as it was "likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the trust" by affecting its "bargaining position with contractors".

No further information was given on the contractors' identity or which commercial interests were being protected.

A similar investigation into Bright Tribe – another of the government's "top-performing" trusts – was published last year after Peter Lauener, chief executive of the Education Funding Agency, admitted there was extensive public and media interest in the report.

Micon Metcalfe, finance director at Dunraven School in south London, said it was unfair that some reviews were published, while others were not, but said publication could be "unhelpful in terms of an academy's ability to improve", and that similar internal audits of maintained schools were not regularly published by councils.

WCAT has since said that it has tightened its internal procedures.

However, Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, said the refusals highlighted a "worrying lack of democratic oversight" of trusts.

"Greater regulation and transparency is needed to ensure public confidence that all multi-academy trusts operate effectively and in the public interest."

Meanwhile, LSSAT's report has also been suppressed. The chain's nine schools were forcibly handed to other trusts last year, and it is now in the process of closure.

Ministers refused to release the investigation as it was still in draft form and releasing into the public domain could be "misleading". The department did not say when the investigation would be concluded, or if it would be published in its final form.

In a response to *Schools Week*, Tanya Arkle, a deputy director at the Education Funding Agency, said that it was in the public's interest to be fair and transparent over how public money was spent, and reports would be published "where it is appropriate to do so".

LSSAT's founders also had a government contract to help regional schools commissioners judge the quality of struggling schools.

## Challenge of Brexit will cost schools dear

JESS STAUFENBERG

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Brexit will be one of the "top challenges" for schools in the next few years, hitting recruitment, funding and costs, says the head of policy at exam board Pearson.

Steve Besley says that leaving the EU will mean fewer languages teachers, the end of European funding for local projects, and rising prices for resources and utilities.

Eighty-five per cent of modern foreign languages (MFL) assistants, and 30 per cent of MFL teachers, are European nationals, Besley told delegates at the National Association of Secondary Moderns' annual conference in London last week.

Not having easy access to more teachers from Europe, plus some of those already in England considering a return to their home country, would place pressure on headteachers already struggling to find languages staff, he said.

The removal of £3 billion of European Structural Funding (ESF), which funds local projects with young people, as well libraries and adult learning, would also affect schools when its three-year period "dries up" in 2019.

"It is unlikely the government will plug that hole."

Micon Metcalfe, director of finance at Dunraven School in south London, said a

"significant minority" of MFL teachers at her school were French or Spanish citizens, while Polish staff taught other subjects and human resources had a French manager.

The government's proposal that non-EU citizens must earn above £35,000 to remain in the country could also mean teachers recruited from outside the EU, such as New Zealand and Canada, would become more expensive.

David Owen, head of teacher education at Sheffield Hallam University, said some schools might now see European languages as less important, leading to less time for French, German and Spanish.

Classes in non-European languages such as Mandarin and Arabic were still small and therefore not financially viable for schools to run in place of European languages, he added.

Besley said schools also faced a rise in the cost of their resources.

Following the vote to leave, Microsoft announced a 22 per cent rise in the price of its software services. Apple also said last autumn its computer and laptop prices were up by about 20 per cent because of a slide in the value of the pound.

Last year *Schools Week* reported how a primary school sent letters to parents claiming a hike in lunch costs were due to a "post-Brexit" inflation of food prices.

And Metcalfe said that third-sector



Micon Metcalfe

organisations that partner with her school, such as charities tackling knife crime, had "also seen their funding end since Brexit".

The school also had not been able to reorder window blinds after the supplier said uncertainty surrounding Brexit left it in the dark about when they would be restocked.

Stephen Morales, chief executive of the National Association of School Business Management, said a hard Brexit could have "huge implications" for schools.

More limited access to European markets could make goods and services from abroad more expensive, which would "trickle" into an education system already under budget pressure.

## NEWS

# 'The cuts are driving us crazy'

Unrest over funding dominated the National Association of Head Teachers' annual conference in Telford last weekend

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

## Industrial action

**Headteachers are threatening a four-and-a-half-day school week in the face of swingeing funding cuts.**

Following a key vote, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) will now consider action that could include the reduced week and refusing to submit budgets to local authorities or the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Graham Frost, head of Robert Ferguson primary in Carlisle, insisted the proposals for action were a last resort, but the union needed to be prepared for "any eventuality".

"We are saying we don't want any of this to [come to] pass. We want properly funded schools and we want the government to stop peddling this denial.

"It's driving us crazy. We seem to be getting nothing but a recorded message back any time anyone questions this crazy assertion that schools have got loads of money."

Clem Coady, head at Stoneraise School, also in Carlisle, said: "The four-and-a-half-day week must be seen as the very last resort, but there's got to be a way of opposing these government imposed cuts.

"They have to overturn it. What they are expecting school leaders to implement is simply not workable."

The union will now examine its options for industrial action while continuing talks with the government about funding. It will also need to clarify how the proposed action would be carried out.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the National Association of School Business Management, said that although many of his members would sympathise with the "spirit" of the proposed action, it would place them in a "difficult position".

"As a protest, it will certainly get the attention of the general public," Morales told *Schools Week*.

"You're not going to square your budget by going to a four-and-a-half-day week, but certainly parents will start to listen."

He warned that academies refusing to submit budgets to the EFA risked breaking their funding agreements and could face financial notices to improve or imposed leadership changes.

"By not submitting returns you are breaking your contract with the secretary of state. Professionally, that's quite dangerous. I suppose if all heads did that en masse, the government would have a bit of a problem on its hands, but if an individual tried to do that they would be in all kinds of trouble."

Morales also said that if local authority-maintained schools run deficits on purpose, then councils will have to plug the gap from their limited funds.



Russell Hobby

## Hobby's last stand

**Russell Hobby, the union's outgoing general secretary, used his last conference speech to warn of the significant impact of the cuts – claiming that school leaders "aren't sleeping at night".**

Hobby told delegates on Sunday that cuts could not be avoided through the efficiencies promoted by the government. He mocked a recent intervention by Nick Gibb in which the schools minister wrote to an MP claiming schools should buy cheaper photocopiers and switch energy suppliers.

"You can't find £3 billion by renegotiating a few photocopier contracts. The bulk of education spending is on people. As it should be. These cuts will mean cuts to staffing.

"The majority of our members tell us that they will not be able to balance their books without significant cuts. School business leaders aren't sleeping at night. The majority of secondary academies are already spending more than they receive and increasing numbers of our members are having to close their sixth forms."

Hobby claims the "most significant source" of education inefficiency is in central government not in schools, and points to expensive "failed projects and abandoned schemes".

"Vanity projects for the few are at the expense of the many. Constant change burns through money in government and in schools. Doing a few things consistently well would not only be cheaper; it would deliver higher standards too."



Jeremy Corbyn talks to NAHT delegates



## Election outfall

**The association also warned that the upcoming snap election could mean the national funding formula (NFF) is "delayed or abandoned".**

Expected changes to primary testing could also be disrupted as the inner working of government closes up shop to allow for political campaigning before

June 8.

Valentine Mulholland, the union's head of policy, said the implementation of the NFF – planned to change disparities in regional funding for schools – will have to be pushed back to April 2019.

She said the association had campaigned for "many years" for funding changes, but worried it would now be "at best delayed, but at worst abandoned".

## NEWS

# Year 6s harshly marked, study finds

JOHN DICKENS  
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Teachers at high-performing schools mark the work of their lowest-performing pupils more harshly in their SATs assessments, suggests a new study of primary marking.

Meanwhile, the writing of high-flying 11-year-olds who attend the lowest-performing primaries are marked "too conservatively", which could mean that bright pupils get lower marks than they deserve.

The findings are part of a new pilot into comparative judgment marking – a system in which teachers compare two pieces of work and decide which is better. In conventional frameworks, each piece is judged on its own.

Under comparative judgment, once teachers have compared each essay enough times, a computer puts them in rank order and standardises the grades.

More than 1,600 teachers from 199 schools took part in the study led by No More Marking, a company that produces comparative judgment software. The writing portfolios of more than 8,500 year 6 pupils were judged.

The study used statistical tests to judge the reliability of the method, and found it produced "objective and highly

reliable results".

However, the report also revealed interesting insights into the way schools differed in their interpretation of key stage 2 writing standards.

After teachers ranked the 8,500 pieces of marked work, researchers created a national scale of writing split into the three standards: "greater depth", "expected standard", and "working towards".

The scores were then compared against those given by schools in the previous year.

Teachers from highly performing schools were found to be "relatively harsh" in their judgment of their low-attaining pupils.

By contrast, poorly performing schools marked their high-achievers more "conservatively". This was an unexpected finding for the researchers, who had theorised that such children might be over-marked.

Dr Chris Wheadon, No More Marking's founder, said the finding backed up concerns that "we are very bad at absolute judgments".

"If teachers have never seen what [a piece of writing at] 'greater depth' looks like, they don't know they are looking at it.

"Teachers see so little writing from schools elsewhere in the country, they don't know the child's work they are looking at is that good."

When asked to explain the harsh

marking of high-attaining children in lower-performing schools, Wheadon said he believed there was "a reluctance to say that work is really good and fear of the moderator".

While teachers marked most of their own pupil's work, every fifth judgment included work from other schools. The report says that teachers who took part benefited from a "wide exposure to a range of writing and writing approaches across the country".

The study also encountered some anomalies. For instance, some pupils received much higher or lower marks in the comparative judgment process than their results based on the interim frameworks.

The report said this was usually because pupils had written very good pieces that missed out key parts of the framework, or "very formulaic" pieces that nevertheless ticked many of the framework's boxes.

However, researchers admitted the project added to the workload of year 6 teachers and that "long-term success of a comparative judgment approach depends on it replacing existing approaches rather than being an addition to the process.

"Overall, however, this project shows that teacher assessment of writing can be used to produce objective, highly reliable results ... [and] cannot be undermined by schools seeking to improve their writing results for accountability purposes."

## Budget cuts rein in mental health services

An increasing number of schools have reduced their mental health provision as a result of budget cuts, according to a report by parliament's education committee.

Witnesses told the cross-party MPs who sit on the committee eight in ten surveyed headteachers said that increased budgetary pressures were creating barriers to providing adequate support for young people in need of mental health services.

The committee's report recommends that the next government reviews the impact of constrained school budgets on mental health services. It also wants more training for teachers and a greater Ofsted focus on well-being.

In January Theresa May pledged money to train every secondary teacher in mental first aid. In 2015, the government also pledged an additional £1.25 billion for children's mental health services.

But the committee suggests the measures do not go far enough to ensure a timely delivery of services. *Schools Week* has revealed how the average waiting time between referral and "first contact" has increased from 7 to 28 days in less than a year.

In 2015, *Schools Week* also revealed how no data had been collected on children's mental health since 2004, which limited provision planning.

When asked by the MPs about the sparsity of data, Edward Timpson, the children's minister, said the government was now undertaking a "comprehensive national mental health provision survey in schools and colleges".

# Shun annual data when judging primaries, say MPs



FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Judgments of primary school performance should be based on a rolling three-year average of key stage 2 SATs results rather than annual data, says the education committee.

In one of its last reports, the outgoing committee of cross-party MPs argues the government should change the data reported in annual performance tables to help to avoid a narrowing of the curriculum.

An inquiry into primary testing followed last year's chaotic season in which parents and teachers complained about new, harder tests, and the government faced questions over blunders such as the leaking of the key stage 1 spelling and

grammar test.

Now the committee is calling for performance data changes and wants Ofsted to ensure it inspects the whole curriculum when visiting primary schools, rather than tested subjects.

Witnesses called to the inquiry warned that schools are judged too heavily on their test results. A poor showing could trigger a forced takeover by an academy chain.

The high-stakes nature of these outcomes has meant a "narrowing of the curriculum with a focus on English and maths at the expense of other subjects like science, humanities and the arts", according to Neil Carmichael, chair of the committee.

The inquiry followed announcements that ministers are considering scrapping key stage 1 SATs in favour of a new baseline test for reception pupils.

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**Friday 12 May 2017**

## NEWS



**It's gone to a recount.... She's recounting to the RSC how Ofsted got it wrong and how her academy is really outstanding .**

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

@miss\_mcinerney | [laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk](mailto:laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk)

## These boards are corrupt, self-serving and secretive

Headteacher boards are the most baffling and stupid part of the schools system. They are also corrupt, self-serving and secretive. Think that's unfair? Prove it. Only you can't. Because of that secrecy.

What I can say is that they aren't democratic. Democracy means rule by the majority. Problem is, the headteacher boards (HTBs) aren't voted for by most people. They are only voted for by existing academy trust leaders – even though they advise regional schools commissioners (RSCs), who now oversee all schools and whose decisions affect everyone in the country.

Another thing: not everyone is eligible to stand. In England, about the only thing that stops you standing to be an MP is if you have more than a year to run on a prison sentence. You can even stand while still in prison. In the realm of headteacher boards, however, you are ruled ineligible for office if – shock, horror – the school you lead is *less than outstanding*.

Plus, democracy doesn't end at the ballot box. Rules, which include writing minutes or allowing questions, stop elected people from diddling us once they acquire power. HTBs, however, can whisper sweet nothings to the RSC about which school should or shouldn't be allowed to join a trust, open a school, close a sixth form (and so on), without the rest of us hearing what they say or even able to defend ourselves.

All of which adds up to a massive problem. Because if people haven't been able to see what the boards have been up to for the past three years, how in the Lord of Chalkboards' name are they supposed to know who to vote for? That lovely head up the road who is telling you he's right on your side for an expansion of your pupil admissions numbers could, in fact, be telling total porkies and slugging you off to the commissioner.

And then – if all of the above wasn't enough – we have the added ridiculousness that half the members of some democratically elected headteacher boards are neither elected NOR HEADTEACHERS.

Take the board that advises Dominic Herrington in the south east. The drop-outs since the 2014 election mean it now only has three elected members but FIVE non-elected ones, instead picked by Herrington and his advisors.

Nikki King, the former managing director of Isuzu Trucks, is one of those. She has never been a head. While over on Tim Coulson's board in the east of England, there is someone from a legal firm with an arm that specialises in converting maintained schools into academies. He also has never been a headteacher.

I expect the point of the non-headteacher members on boards is to

bring useful business advice; the sort of skills used by school governing bodies across the land. And that's no bad thing. But governing bodies are open, and transparent, and very clear about whether organisations the governors work for are benefiting from contracts with the schools. This is not true of HTBs. Which raises eyebrows and makes it hard for us to assure people on conflicts of interest. We simply don't know.

Still, who cares? Maybe all this flexibility means good decisions are made more quickly and even if a few people might get a boon for their favoured academies, what's the harm?

Problem is, good decisions aren't always made. The fuff over schools in Redditch – which were allowed to change their entry age range, then weren't, then were – is a classic case of how the boards are sometimes wrong. (There are many more.)

Given the situation the boards operate in, this is not a surprise. They cover huge areas. The information given about schools on which to make a decision is sparse. No one is trained in the job – in large part because ministers have wilfully refused to allow proper analysis of decision-making around free schools and academies, so no one even really knows *how* to make good decisions.

And don't even get me

started on the lack of rules governing lobbying – either of the election itself or of decisions. It is an environment made for corruption to flourish.

Still, this is the bit where I tell you the upside. The sparkle of good. I do have one, but it has to do a heck of a job to erase the mess.

It is simply this: of the many board members I have spoken to at various times, most are entirely conscientious. They are as baffled, concerned, affronted as the rest of us. It doesn't help, then, when the Department for Education tells them they can't speak to the press (as it did this week) nor when meetings continue to be secretive.

These are headteachers (mostly). Not puppets. They are independent charitable employees, not civil servants. They are responsible, good people who believe in what they are doing and want to tell the world about it. There is no harm or shame in wanting to help make good decisions in education. What there is a great deal of shame and harm in is the totally bonkers processes around the HTBs and the people working to keep them that way.

The system is corrupt, self-serving and secretive. I dare you to prove me wrong.



# READERS' REPLY

REPLY OF THE WEEK  
RECEIVES A  
SCHOOLS WEEK MUG!



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TWEET



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

## Most UTCs are half-empty as pupil numbers dwindle



@Mackers1969

How much money has been spent on this?

@EnserMark

They need to switch their focus to 16 to 19-plus with a focus on adult education/reskilling in STEM.

## A-level languages adjusted to correct under-grading



@Ju5tinDelap

Shame no movement on GCSE, perhaps an opportunity for review after next year's new specs take root.

## Trusts fail to take on struggling northern schools



Tim Warneford, Bedfordshire

This method for dispensing funds perfectly illustrates how the Department for

Education functions. Why it did not go through a due diligence process so as to accurately ascertain costs and incentives on a case-by-case basis is beyond belief. What fool pays upfront for something that is not yet defined or costed?

## Gove's thwarted dreams for a country of mathematicians



@teachingofsci

Worth reading for science teachers too. Many similar issues.

@SchoolDuggery

This succinct piece is quietly devastating.

@1066Chris

Anecdotal supporting evidence from my eldest child (predicted a grade 7) who was considering studying A-level maths and now says no way.

@ivorclargo

The worry, concern for our pupils and the frustration in a system is clear to see.

## Profile: Jonathan Simons



@Rachel\_deSouza

Great piece on Jonathan Simons. He's smart, funny, fair and one of the good guys. It will be a lucky multi-academy trust that finally gets him as its leader

@dandoj

Lovely piece on everyone's favourite pantomime villain Jonathan Simons (who's quietly added being somewhat reasonable to his expertise).

## Parents, it's not that we don't care about you... we just don't have time for you



Stephen Fowler, Manchester

You will find little sympathy from people who work every day until 6pm or later when you tell them there are no slots between 3:30 and 6pm to see them for 10 minutes as this is your important preparation time that cannot be interrupted. Not a single one will think: "Oh, yes, I see, it would be unreasonable for me to see you after the children have gone home at 3:30, sorry for asking."

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- "One of the key things it's made me aware of is the language within the books that we have within the school is not that easily accessible to most students" Teacher, Science
- "I think it just shifts your focus slightly, so as well as the subject that you're getting across or the skill that you're getting across, I'm just more aware of what language they are going to use" Teacher, History
- "...staff are starting to recognise ..(the need to be..) explicit about academic words and academic language... we've been able to intertwine the curriculum and teach grammar... it's drip, drip, every day" Facilitator

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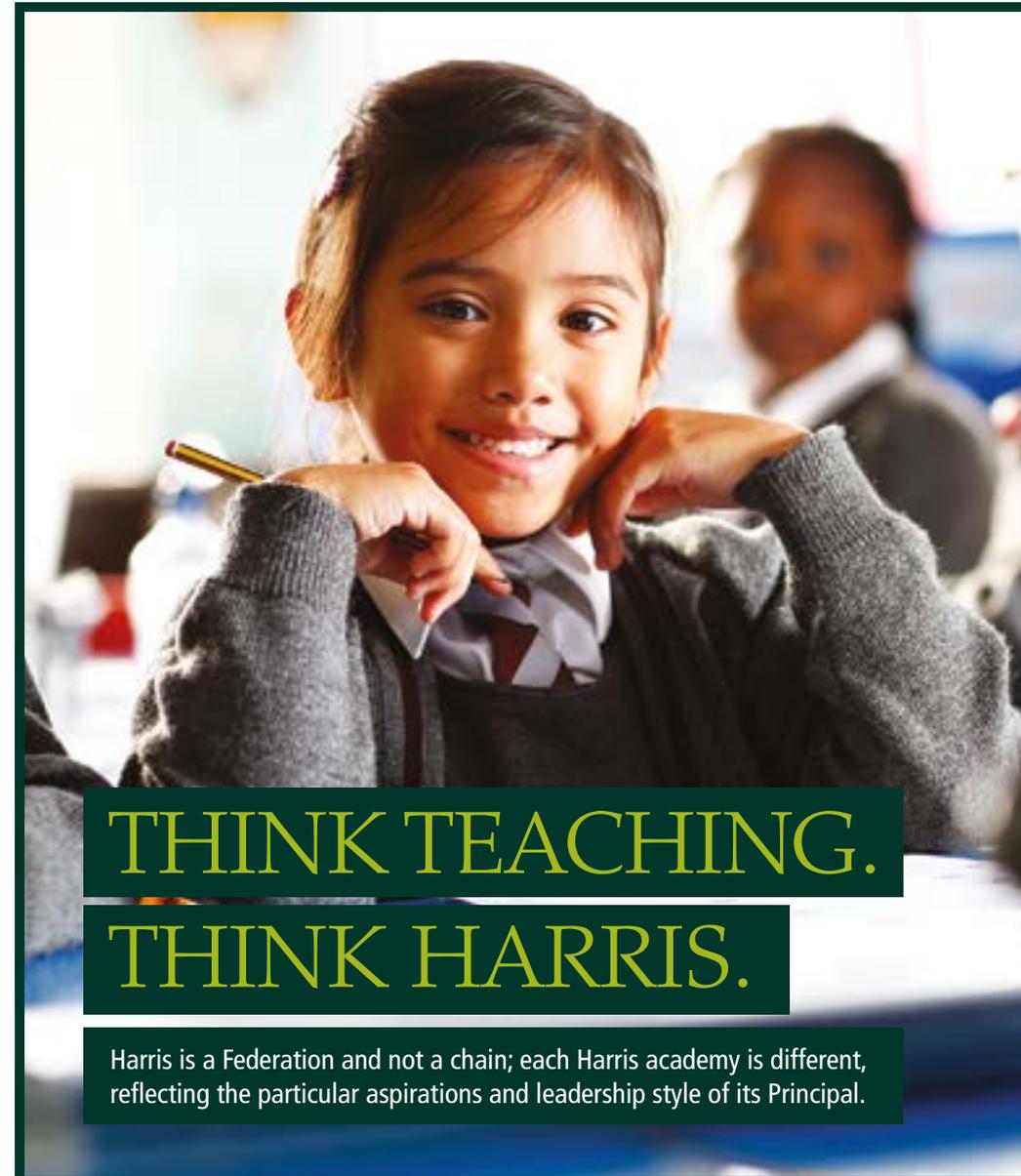
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**THINK HARRIS.**

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**Interviews: Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Harris Federation, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Norfolk House, Wellesley Road, Croydon CR0 1LH

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**Closing Date:** 16th May 2017

**Interviews** to take place w/b 22nd May 2017

Higher Lane, Rainford, St Helens, Merseyside, WA11 8NY

**Telephone:** 01744 885914 Fax: 01744 884642

**Email:** [info@rainford.org.uk](mailto:info@rainford.org.uk)

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**Closing date:** 19 May 2017

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- You will have access to research and development grants to case study best practice.
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## PROFILE

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

**Ian Widdows, founder of the National Association of Secondary Moderns**

For a man who almost named his organisation the Society for the Prevention of Attacks on Secondary Moderns just to be able to abbreviate it to SPASM, Ian Widdows' views on grammar schools should surely be straightforward.

He is against them, right? Secondary moderns are the poor neighbours who take in the 11-plus failures, OK? Which means that he and his fellow members of the National Association of Secondary Moderns (NASM: less fun, but more sensible) are surely campaigning against more selection? Especially when led by a Stockport man, schooled at a comprehensive, the first in his family to go to university, who is "not interested" in teaching at a selective school.

Well, not necessarily. In a debate polarised sharply into those against selection (almost everybody) versus those

who advocate it (Justine Greening, maybe, and a few others), Widdows and his gang, all heads of secondary moderns, arguably have the most interesting take of the lot.

But first, how to define a secondary modern? Just getting them recognised is a struggle, and NASM's raison d'être. When Widdows organised its first conference four years ago he invited heads who didn't even know they led secondary moderns. According to education think tank Datalab, while 117 schools call themselves secondary moderns, the figure is closer to 281. They are defined as non-selective schools that recruit from the same neighbourhood as a grammar school and, as a result, take in fewer pupils who achieve top levels in their SATs.

Recognising the difficulty of working in that environment by saying you're a "secondary modern" does few heads any favours, however – particularly with parents. Hence NASM's second mission is to encourage politicians to recognise the excellence of secondary moderns.

Widdows, who is head of the Giles Academy secondary modern in Lincolnshire, a selective authority, said many of his neighbours call themselves comprehensives "probably because there's a stigma with the term secondary modern". But, he says, "comprehensive would suggest we've got all abilities; we haven't, we're missing a certain group that got into grammar school."

Widdows, who refuses to reveal his position on grammar schools, is more angered at the denigration of secondary moderns and the promotion of grammars as "the best kind of school", than he is bothered by their expansion. Speaking to NASM delegates at their annual conference in London last weekend, he noted that even grammar school critics are culpable of this. Labour's conference material says the Tories want grammar schools for the few and a "second-class education for everyone else". "That's my school they're talking about," he rants.

So he has a tip for education secretary Justine Greening: rather than defending grammar schools by promising more secondary moderns will not be the result, say "we will have grammar schools, and our brilliant secondary moderns will be even more brilliant."

The government has tried this argument with university technical colleges and studio schools, but many of these costly projects have failed.

One politician who is both pro-grammar and pro-secondary modern is Matt Warman, Widdows' local

# "THERE'S A STIGMA WITH THE TERM SECONDARY MODERN"

Conservative MP for Boston and Skegness, who helped the group to hold its first House of Commons reception. But instead of following Warman's line, most politicians have said they will "make sure the grammar school heads are supporting the other schools".

"It's really insulting," Widdows says.

So where did this man, defending such an obvious yet overlooked viewpoint, come from? Widdows describes himself as a northerner. Born to Beryl, a secretary, and Sid, who worked up from the shop floor into the offices of an engineering company, he gained a place at Imperial College University in London.

Feeling rather lost in a "big city", he studied for his PGCE in York, but worried his shyness left him "not cut out" for teaching. So he hitchhiked around Europe and Africa, including a stint in Zimbabwe. His interest was piqued after a stay as a 13-year-old with his uncle in Kenya during an attempted military coup. "There were planes flying over, talk about people dead on the streets. That was quite an experience."

Teaching followed after he left to join his would-be wife Anita Fox, whom he met while doing his teacher training in Lincoln. His first job was in a comprehensive where he became head of science, and later he got a deputy headship at Giles Academy. The school was one of the first to convert to academy status.

One way Widdows believes secondary moderns can get a better reputation is by recognising that their teachers may be better than those in grammars. He has a TV-esque suggestion – Staff Swap. Like *Wife Swap*, he envisions his team moving to the local grammar and all its teachers moving into his school for a week. His staff may need to delve more into "subject knowledge", he says, but "we'd be up for that".

He also wants Ofsted to understand secondary moderns better. Both Staff Swap and a stern letter to Sean Harford, Ofsted's director of education, were sparked by an inspection at Giles in 2013. After talking to inspectors about the context of the school like a "dripping tap for two days", Widdows' team was told that while the school appeared to be outstanding, if it was graded as such the report would be sent back from head office because its data remained too low for that rating to be plausible.

"That didn't seem right," Widdows growls. Even after challenging inspectors, Giles was given only a praise-filled "good" overall with "outstanding" for leadership and behaviour.

A grammar school is 30 times more likely to be rated good or outstanding than a secondary modern. An

IAN W

Ofsted inspector at last weekend's NASM event said inspectors have no training on secondary moderns. The inspectorate also has no idea how many exist, because no definitions, including Datalab's, are in consistent use. Widdows told Harford inspectors must admit grammar schools have better data because they select, not because they have higher-calibre teachers.

"I think personally he probably thinks like me. But he's got to stand by those inspections." Widdows wants Harford to admit they are unfair, and to put context at the fore of Her Majesty's Inspectors' minds.

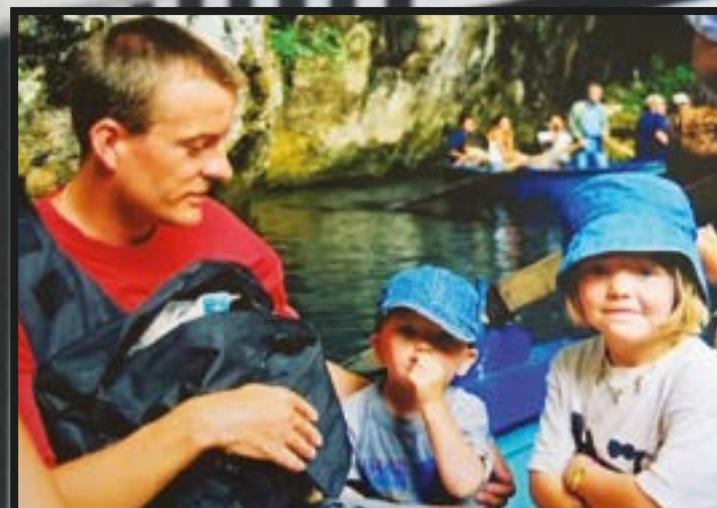
But Widdows has a struggle on his hands. Politicians will not leap to endorse schools whose Progress 8 measure is an average of -0.05, compared with -0.01 in comprehensives and 0.34 in grammar schools. Progress data for high attainers also remains low at his own school, a fact picked up by Ofsted in 2013: "In a few lessons,

# WIDDOWS

questioning is not sufficiently probing for all students, particularly the most able."

He also has a less glamorous membership base for NASM than its equivalent, the Grammar School Heads' Association (which has free membership of the elite Lansdowne Club in Mayfair as one of its perks). Indeed, many heads could not afford to attend the conference last week.

Yet though he plays his cards on grammars close to his chest, Widdows' wider argument is hard to deny: more secondary moderns are coming, so we'd better understand them properly and realise they might be doing some of the best jobs in the country.



Ilan, with daughter Ella and son Gabriel on holiday in Kefalonia



Ilan as a child



Ilan and his wife Anita in Cornwall



Ilan at the Giles Academy in April 2016



Daughter Ella and son Gabriel in Cornwall, summer 2016

## IT'S A PERSONAL THING

### What's your favourite book?

*Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak. It's not an adult book, but it kind of is. When I read it to my children, I was reading a slightly different, slightly sinister story.

### What's your most precious possession?

My wedding ring. I had them made so there's only two like it in the world. It's a Celtic knot, a symbol of two threads coming together. I have an interest in folk music and go to a lot of folk festivals. If I lost it, I'd be distraught.

### What's your greatest flaw?

I'm quite shy. People taking photographs of me is hard work, getting me to smile in a photo is quite difficult. As are certain settings, such as parties and small talk. I'm better, but it's not my strong point.

### What's the naughtiest thing you did at school?

I broke a window. I threw a stick into a tree when it had been snowing to get the snow down. The stick slipped and hit the window. As it smashed, I could see the teacher behind it. There was no way it was anybody else. It was clearly me.

### What are you proudest of?

What my kids do. My son Gabriel is 19 and doing dance at De Montfort University. My daughter Ella is 22 and finishing a masters in maths and physics at York.

### Who do you most admire?

My wife. Strongest person I know. Anita Fox.

gilesacademy  
Mr Widdows  
Headteacher

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Ian Widdows  
Giles Academy

## OPINION



## LUKE SIBIETA

Education programme director,  
Institute for Fiscal Studies

# The cost of protecting your school spending

**Protecting schools from cuts will not come cheap, says Luke Sibieta, so the political parties must be clear on how they will fund their manifesto promises**

Schools in England currently face two main funding challenges: squeezes on overall funding levels and a changing allocation across schools. What would it cost to ease these pressures?

English schools are part way through their first real-term cuts to spending per pupil since the mid-1990s. Plans imply spending per pupil falling by 6.5 per cent between 2015–16 and 2019–20 after accounting for general inflation, or by 8 per cent if you account for the rising costs that schools have faced in recent years (such as employer pension contributions and national insurance).

Such cuts would leave school spending per pupil at about the same level in 2020 as it was in 2010, undoing the small increases delivered during the 2010–15 parliament. This would still leave spending per pupil much higher than before the rapid growth over the 2000s, when spending per pupil rose by 5 per cent a year on average, over and above inflation.

School funding reform is certainly needed and it is to their credit that the outgoing government came forward with detailed proposals for a national funding formula.

Such a reform would always produce relative winners and losers. However, with the current funding situation so tight, it means that schools facing the biggest losses from a national funding formula (a 3 per cent cash-terms cut in funding per pupil between 2017–18 and 2019–20) would likely receive a real-terms cut of 10 per cent between 2015–16 and 2019–20 when you account for average cost pressures.

We don't yet know the details of what each of the political parties will promise at the upcoming general election for the total schools budget. But what would it take to ease the burden of overall cuts on schools?

Researchers at the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) have estimated that it would cost about £2 billion to protect spending per pupil between 2017–18 and 2021–22. That

would amount to a 5 per cent increase to the total schools budget.

If a government wanted to compensate schools for the additional costs they have faced in the past two years, that would cost at least a further £1.7 billion, according to figures from the National Audit Office. That makes a combined figure of £3.7 billion or a 10 per cent increase in the schools budget.

Protecting schools from real-terms

“**Delaying funding reform will just make it harder down the line**”

cuts would therefore require significant additional public spending: £3.7 billion is the equivalent of 1p on the basic rate of income tax or 3 per cent of the NHS budget in England.

Preventing any real-terms cuts from a national funding formula would cost even more. If overall spending per pupil were frozen in real terms, then losers from a national funding formula would necessarily have to receive real-terms cuts to spending per pupil. Preventing any real-terms cuts would therefore be even harder to deliver.

This does not mean we should necessarily abandon reform of the school funding system, particularly as delaying it will just make it harder to implement further down the line. It does, however, imply a need for openness about the kind of losses some schools are likely to face, and why they are thought necessary.

In summary, a promise to protect schools from cuts will not come cheap. If any of the political parties promise to protect schools from cuts, they should be clear about exactly what they mean and how such a promise would be funded. If such a commitment is not thought to be affordable, politicians should instead be up front with schools about the cost challenges they are likely to face in the coming years.



## ALISON CRITCHLEY

Chief executive,  
RSA Academies

# Academies, we need to talk about members

**Those in charge of multi-academy trusts are not power-mad, says Alison Critchley – but government needs to be clearer about how trust governance should be structured**

If you work in an academy, do you know the “members” for your trust? And, most importantly, do you know what they are responsible for?

No? Well, you're not alone. In a world of academy governance that is sometimes (unkindly) described as shadowy, members are the least visible element of all.

The trustees (sometimes called directors) are responsible for strategic direction, but it is the members who have the power to hire and fire those trustees and are therefore the ultimate decision-makers.

The concept of members comes from company law and, in a business context, it makes sense. Take this example: friends decide to set up a business. They invest the initial capital and are therefore the owners – “members” – of the business. In this situation, the notion of two or three people having ultimate control is unproblematic; after all, they had the idea, put the investment in – it is, in all senses, theirs.

Returning to the school scenario, a small group – perhaps the head and one or two governors, or a sponsor – may well have proposed the school becoming an academy. Often these individuals were and are the members. But the notion that this small group of founding members “own” a publicly funded school or group of schools in the same way that the founders of a business own a privately established company is problematic.

“But academies are charitable companies,” you may say. Good point!

The charity sector provides interesting alternative models. For example the RSA, as a charitable company, has a trustee board and it has members. Everyone who subscribes to the charity is also a member and is therefore invited to the AGM where they receive the annual report and can question the trustees.

So, what needs to happen to introduce more accountability to school governance?

First, the Department for Education (DfE) should be much clearer about the number of members and the separation in personnel between members and trustees.

The latest version of the *Academies Financial Handbook*, which says more about the role of members, is oddly reluctant to say directly what must or must not happen. For example, it states that:

- “While members can also be trustees, retaining some distinction ... ensures that members ... provide oversight and challenge”;
- “DfE encourages trusts to have at least five members”; and
- “Governance structures in which members are also employees are not considered by DfE to be best practice.”

Why the woolly words? It would be much more helpful if the DfE set out its requirements, then gave all trusts a timescale, perhaps 12–18 months, within which to comply.

Without this, many trusts will continue to work from outdated articles, not due to the power-mad tendencies of those in charge, but because changing legal documents is costly and complicated and most of us working in education would rather be spending our money and energy elsewhere.

Clearer direction, however, would still leave an unaccountable group of people effectively “owning” our schools – albeit a separate group of people to those making strategic decisions.

More ambitiously, to rebuild local accountability we should rethink who the members are and how they are appointed. For example, members would be drawn from (and elected by) the school's parental body, and from staff and the local community. Church schools would have one or two members appointed by the church; sponsored academies would have a similar arrangement, and so on.

“**Local accountability is missing from the current model**”

More radically still, we could explore a charity model, where all of those with a stake in the school became members.

Thus all parents with children attending the academy or academies would be members, invited to the AGM to receive the accounts and have the opportunity to ask questions of the board.

Where things are going well, attendance and participation in the AGMs would be minimal. But where difficulties arise, this model would reintroduce a level of local accountability that is missing from the current academy model.

**The messages that teachers and school leaders give students about the value of GCSEs does have an impact, says David Putwain – although it may not be the impact intended**

For the past decade I have been researching how students interpret and respond to messages about the value of GCSEs; what sense they make of such messages and, importantly, whether these messages have any impact on motivation, engagement, and achievement.

Many teachers and school leaders communicate to students the value of GCSEs for their future life trajectories. This could be about realising aspirations, getting the right grades for entry into a sixth form or apprenticeship or simply about performing to their potential. The motivation behind these kinds of messages is not under question. Students will be entering a competitive job market; educational failure is associated with poor physical and mental health in adulthood and increased likelihood of crime and substance dependence.

However, two factors are key to understanding how students interpret messages.

First is the personal importance a student attaches to GCSEs. Although students may understand, in a superficial sense, why GCSEs are important, it is only when they have a personal connection that they pay attention to value messages.

Students who do not see any personal significance to their GCSEs tend to ignore



## DAVID PUTWAIN

Professor of education, Liverpool John Moores University

### How to motivate your GCSE students

and disregard these messages; they fall on deaf ears.

Second are student beliefs about ability and expectations for success. If a student believes they have the ability to succeed, they respond to messages positively (achievement-focused). If, however, a student is not confident about their ability, they respond to messages negatively (failure-focused).

It is important to remember here that we are referring to *beliefs* about ability rather than *actual* ability. Many students in high-ability sets will be low in confidence about their ability to succeed.

The research also asked whether value messages impact student motivation, engagement, and achievement. Here, the answer depends on how students interpret messages.

Put simply, students who interpret messages positively are more motivated,

engaged, and achieve higher grades; those who interpret messages negatively are less motivated, engaged, and achieve lower grades.

It is important to highlight that the statistical modelling used to establish these points does control for prior achievement. These findings are not simply an artefact of student ability (or ability grouping).

What are the key points for school leaders and managers?

First, what teachers and school leaders say to students does have an impact, at least for the majority. It will not, however, necessarily be the impact intended. Students will differ in how they interpret and respond.

Messages to whole-year cohorts, or even whole classes, about the value and importance of their GCSEs will lower the motivation, engagement, and achievement of those who react negatively.

However, it may be impractical to advise

against using whole-cohort or whole-class messages. It is therefore important that supportive messages are also conveyed to students about how the strategies the school will be using in years 10 and 11 will help them to achieve their best. The low-confidence students, in particular, must know they will be supported.

“**Students who interpret messages positively are more motivated**

Second, the pressures put on teachers to raise attainment, as well as other accountability incentives such as performance-related pay, should not filter down to students. There is a danger that such pressures can creep into the language that teachers use around exams, as well as the general class and school environment. Students can, and do, pick up on these pressures and respond to them in a similar way as they would to a value message from a teacher or school leader.

Managing these pressures effectively to avoid impacting negatively on students, is partly about creating effective staff support mechanisms, and partly about the ways in which a strong school ethos is enacted through all levels of the organisation. Staff, as well as students, must know they are supported.

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## REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS  
OF THE WEEK

To view individual blogs visit  
[www.schoolsweek.co.uk/reviews](http://www.schoolsweek.co.uk/reviews)



Our blog reviewer of the week is Jill Berry, a former head, now educational consultant, author and Twitter addict @jillberry102

### How do we equip youngsters today to cope with the often quite pernicious effect of 'fake news'?

@HeadDurham

My first choice is from Kieran McLaughlin writing for the Schools Northeast blog. He explores the challenges inherent in the current political climate where adults need to discriminate between reliable and unreliable sources of information and asks how we can best prepare the young people in our schools to do the same. "Knowledge" is key: "Our youngsters need the bedrock of science principles and laws that they can use to critically evaluate evidence on climate change; they need the historical knowledge in order to assess the reliability of claims from modern sources; they need the cultural and literary hinterland which allows them to appreciate the richness of modern art and media." This is a thoughtful and well-written piece.

### People can't be radiators if their leaders drain them and give them nothing to radiate

@ThatBoyCanTeach

This blogger considers the idea of staff members either as radiators, giving out energy, or drains, sucking out energy. He looks at this from the perspective of middle leaders whom he considers here to be the

"boiler room" (rather than the "engine room") of the school. He considers that leaders can only bring out the best in those they lead if they themselves radiate positive energy. If leaders drain their colleagues, and he gives specific examples of how they might do so, then what their teams can achieve will inevitably be constrained. He uses this analogy to reflect on his own effectiveness: "As a leader I have to constantly evaluate how my actions will impact on my team, and whether they will drain them of energy or energise them." This is good advice for leaders at all levels.

### My students don't know how to have a conversation

@MindfulStew

I discovered Paul Barnwell's post in *The Atlantic* through a reference in a 12-minute TED talk from Celeste Headlee (@CelesteHeadLee), which I would also recommend: "Ten ways to have a better conversation" (May 2015).

The idea behind the TED talk and *The Atlantic* article is that conversations are key to positive relationships – and that we need to be mindful that the young people in our schools may need support at practising the art of conversation, given that many of them currently seem to be so much more comfortable with virtual interaction. Barnwell, a teacher in the US, reflects that "conversational competence might be the single-most overlooked skill we fail to teach students". He considers why confident face-to-face dialogue is so crucial to future success (personal and professional) and how, as teachers, we need to be mindful of opportunities to help students to develop the capacity to sustain productive conversations.

### Libraries R Us

@RealGeoffBarton

Barton retweeted this post from 2013 on this year's National Libraries Day.

He writes about his father, who was county librarian for Staffordshire, and about his own childhood, as he describes it, in "a house full of books". This is a great tribute to his father, and to the importance of developing literary awareness and cultural capital. Barton says: "I can't go anywhere without a book. Books and stories define me. Reading and talking about reading are what we do as a family. Holidays are full of reading. Stories shape us and ideas come to me most directly when written in a book."

Reflecting on the legacy of his father, and on the crucial part books and reading have played in his life, he considers how his identity has been shaped by his parents' influence. Sidney Barton would, I am sure, have been very proud.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Invisibly Blighted: The digital erosion of childhood

By Sandra Leaton Gray and Andy Phippen

Published by UCL IOE Press

Reviewed by Cath Murray



There's something incoherent about how this book is presented that I'm struggling to articulate.

Perhaps it's that its cover photo of a 16th-century "child-eater" statue makes it look like a guidebook to the Swiss city of Berne. It could be the pathos-laden title: *Invisibly Blighted*, or the subtitle's apocalyptic tones: *The digital erosion of childhood*. Whatever it is, it has the authors swimming against the tide from the start.

It's a credit to them, therefore, that they manage to engage. I expected another tome on how technology is destroying kids' lives. Instead I read a concise overview of the state of safeguarding legislation and practice, interspersed with the wisest musings of teenagers, digested and fed back to me as eruditely formulated theses (a product of the authors' work in schools).

It's an academic text so kicks off with a dull but presumably necessary chapter on definitions. We then dive into a meatier discussion, with a provocative edge, introducing ideas such as "moral panic" (roughly put, an increased awareness of, rather than an actual increase in risk).

As someone who raised a family in settings where natural disasters and lack of hospitals were real concerns, I breathed a sigh of relief at the authors' description of the UK as a "particularly extreme case study of collective parental anxiety regarding risk". They raise a theme that is developed later: that those in positions of authority should be careful not to overstate risk to gain a "tactical advantage".

A chapter on identity and biometrics asks schools whether they are guilty of "convenience at the cost of privacy". (Were pupils informed of their rights when they uploaded their fingerprint to the school database? Are schools adequately safeguarding this personal biometric data?) In characteristically measured tones, the authors write: "The matter of how school administrators become complicit in widespread, digitised child surveillance – not always compliant with the law – merits examination."

Chapter four develops this idea,

lamenting a lack of education on social issues and warning of "a serious risk the next generation of our society develops in a way that makes them think they have no right to privacy".

The authors' insistence on framing the issues as "social" is the book's most interesting theme.

Schools are overly reliant on technology

(filters or monitoring software) to address social problems, they argue.

But not only will young people find a way around the barriers adults put in place to restrict their access to information, they will also disseminate the work-arounds to their peers (described in this exquisitely academic phrase: "situated cognition in action in a collective sense"). Young people need to be educated and empowered, not

simply restricted.

We are alerted to gaps in legislation that could allow third parties to use data from schools for commercial purposes, if a school has not "paid sufficient due diligence to where it is stored" (EU law doesn't cover data stored in the US).

The chapter on sexting is eye-opening. It points out the gross disparity between how adults are treated under the law ("revenge porn" legislation, which criminalises the third party sharing intimate images of the "victim") and how minors are treated in the same scenario (children can be prosecuted for sharing indecent images of themselves).

By using scare tactics, we are pushing teen sexting underground, it claims, and reducing the likelihood children will seek help from adults when needed.

The book ends with an eminently sensible manifesto, containing gems such as "to place all the of the curriculum attention on technology is as bizarre as placing a topic such as drugs awareness in the chemistry class".

There is much more in this book. So read it. I recommend it for school leaders, safeguarding officers, parents, teacher book clubs.

And to the publisher: how about a lay person's version? It would do the young people of this country a great service.



Next week:  
Reboot

By Jay Ashcroft

Reviewed by Charles Wiley



# A week in Westminster

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

## THURSDAY:

An election looms (in case you haven't noticed), which means ministers have been out promoting the government's education policies.

Lol, just kidding.

The snap election forces ministers to cancel official visits, so education secretary Justine Greening was pulled from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) conference, in case she got a heckling.

This meant that she didn't get the chance to promote her incredibly popular policies of opening new grammar schools and cutting school funding. Shame.

## FRIDAY:

Far be it from us to suggest the government is not being entirely upfront about the problems with its grammar schools policy, but the government is not being entirely upfront about the problems with its grammar schools policy.

Analysis released by former shadow education secretary Lucy Powell (remember her?) shows that half the schools sponsored by grammar schools currently require improvement or are inadequate. And these inspection grades were gained after the academies were sponsored by the grammar school – so none of that “woe is us, it's all a legacy issue” nonsense.

WiW also noticed that the data came from figures published on the day the election was announced. What could the government stand to gain from publishing such damning data on a day with SO MUCH OTHER NEWS? We will never know.

## SUNDAY:

Greening was in hiding, but Jeremy Corbyn decided to swoop into the glamorous Telford International Centre for a speech to the NAHT conference.

Met outside by loud fans, the Labour leader almost missed his official welcome party, walking past the association's general secretary Russell Hobby.

Corbs was suitably apologetic, Hobby

characteristically upbeat. “I wasn't shouting as loudly as they were,” he said later.

After announcing that he would “reverse” the £3 billion education cuts, Corbs kept reporters waiting because he was busy shaking headteachers' hands. Man of the people? Or a fool to spurn a crowd who buy ink by the barrel? That's for you to decide. On June 8. Did we mention there's an election on the way?

What he did say when he landed in the reporters' nest was he would give councils the opportunity to take over academies again. We look forward to seeing how that legislation works. (That's a lie. It would be hell of a complex one to report on).

## MONDAY:

Sleeping off the NAHT and reading the education committee's primary assessment report (page 7 – go look).

## TUESDAY:

Uh oh. Confusion in the Labour ranks. That £3 billion funding hole that Corbyn

gave a guarantee to plug, perhaps through rises in corporation tax?

Turns out, Diane Abbott, a trusted Corbyn ally, has other ideas.

After a crash of an interview about spending the tax on police officers, the shadow home secretary said the proposals on schools were not policy promises, but merely “illustrations”. What next? A finger-painting in place of a manifesto?

Meanwhile, the Standards and Testing Agency wrote to schools reminding them to keep key stage 1 test materials “secure” until the end of May to “maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the tests”.

This is the agency that was responsible for the security breach last year when its spelling, punctuation and grammar test was inadvertently uploaded to its own website.

## WEDNESDAY:

Is it June yet? Calendar says no. Ugh.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



**Name** Carol Davenport

**Age** 46

**Occupation** Director, NUSTEM (formerly Think Physics)

**Location** Northumberland

**Subscriber since** edition 2, September 2014

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



## FLY ON THE WALL

**Where do you read your copy of *Schools Week*?**

Friday night, at home with my feet up and a glass of wine in hand.

**Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?**

Week in Westminster.

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

Just one? Free schools, university technical colleges and forced academisation. Too much time and money has been (and is being) wasted on changing school structures when it's what goes on inside that is important.

**Who is your favourite education secretary?**

David Blunkett, for doing well against the odds (at the time) and for introducing Sure Start.

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

Any involving data. I thought that the focus on secondary moderns during the August exam reporting was well done.

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

Recycle it.

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

Buy a bright jacket.

**Favourite memory of your school years?**

Sitting in the physics lab at lunchtime talking science and life with Mr Duffy.

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

I can't image not working in education.

**Favourite book on education?**

Not quite on education but *Delusions of Gender* by Cordelia Fine has had a big impact on how NUSTEM has developed.

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

Any of the regional schools commissioners. It would be good to know what goes on in their meetings.



# School Bulletin *with Sam King*

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



## STOMPing their way to better health

FEATURED

Primary pupils from a north London school took to the stage in the West End as part of a Camden council initiative to encourage local children to become more active.

In a bid to increase their heart rates, 15 children from Argyle Primary School joined the cast of the hit show *STOMP* at Ambassadors Theatre for on-stage brushing and stomping exercises.

The event was part of an initiative by Camden council to increase the exercise taken by local young people and residents.

Fraser Morrison, *STOMP*'s casting director, said: "Our show is based on movement and activity, so it was a natural link to join forces with Camden and with Argyle school for a campaign to get people more active."

*STOMP* – which celebrated its 25th anniversary last year – uses objects such as bin lids, brushes and shopping trolleys to create a beat.

"We cover several miles on stage every night, in which we try to convey the fun, excitement and exhilaration of physical exercise, whether you are sweeping the floor briskly with a broom or zipping through the supermarket on your shopping trolley," Morrison said.

Camden council recently implemented the daily mile project in local schools, which aims to get every child spending 15 minutes per day running, jogging or walking on top of their regular PE lessons.



Pupils take to the Ambassadors' stage



Argyle pupils walked from their school in King's Cross to the West End theatre to complete their daily mile quota.

Jemima Wade, Argyle's head, described it



as a "daily mile with a difference for our pupils. Physical education, culture and arts are all something we are passionate about and it was fantastic to have been able to combine them all."

Stephen Morales



## NEW GROUP WANTS HELP FROM BUSINESS STAFF

A new organisation wants school business professionals to help to shape the group's future direction.

The new Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) wants school business managers, bursars, finance directors and finance officers to share their thoughts – particularly around school funding.

Its call follows the announcement that the National Association of School Business Management (NASBM) is set to become the ISBL in November.

The new organisation will give school business professionals a more formal representative body with an emphasis on stronger professional development and quality assurance.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of NASBM, said: "We believe that the new institute will better support its members and the sector at large. For us to do this effectively, it is vital that school business professionals share with us what they see as priorities for their professional body. This will enable us to serve them effectively from day one."

To share your views, visit <https://www.nasbm.co.uk/About-NASBM/The-Future.aspx>. The survey will remain open until the end of the summer term.

## Recycled products win prizes



Daniel Clamp



Daniel's winning entry, a trowel Candle holder

A year 7 pupil from Altrincham Grammar School for Boys has won a national competition on innovative uses for unwanted materials.

Daniel Clamp, 11, took the top prize in the secondary schools category with a candle holder that amplifies light through a polished trowel head.

More than 500 schools took part in the competition, part of Waste Week 2017, which aimed to raise awareness of how to reduce waste by giving unwanted materials a new lease of life.

Beaulieu primary in Jersey won the primary category with a water exploration

board for their foundation and key stage 1 pupils to use in their outdoor learning area.

The competition, run by EDF Energy, was judged by head of digital innovation at the company, David Ferguson, and Katy Newnham, the chief executive of social enterprise, Wastebuster. Each of the winners received a £300 Amazon voucher.

"Daniel's upcycled candle was an innovative design, and we are delighted that he has been rewarded for his efforts," said a staff member from Altrincham grammar. "The whole class really enjoyed taking part in the competition, and we'll definitely look to take part again in future."



Aurora Hanley School

## Specialist school to open in Stoke

The Aurora Group is opening a new school in Stoke for youngsters with Asperger's syndrome, ADHD and mental health issues.

Aurora Hanley School, which opens this month, will offer day and residential places for students between the ages of 6 to 16 with complex language, communication and social difficulties.

The group behind the school is a provider of education and care for children, young people and adults with special needs. Its chief executive, Stephen Bradshaw, opened Farleigh College in Somerset, one of the first specialist schools in the UK to support children with Asperger's.

Facilities at the new school, which has been designed to help students to engage

with their environment, include a sensory garden, quiet room, food technology space and a library.

Headteacher Kate Reeves said it would help those struggling in mainstream schools or out of education completely.

"Many of the children we support face challenges around their emotional and mental health that create barriers to learning and impact on their behaviour – but with the right help they can thrive.

"Our students will need an educational environment that supports their specific learning needs and enables them to work at a pace that is right for them."

When fully operational, Aurora Hanley will provide 25 residential and 15 day places.

# MOVERS & SHAKERS

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

**M**ichael Tidd has been appointed operational headteacher at Medmerry primary school in West Sussex.

The school is a member of the multi-academy trust Schoolsworks, which has five primaries: Medmerry, Rose Green junior, Edward Bryant, River Beach and Rustington community primary.

Tidd, who writes a weekly column for *The TES*, is currently deputy head of Edgewood primary school in Nottinghamshire.

Speaking of his appointment, he said: "I am very pleased to be taking my first step into headship and am excited about getting to know Medmerry's pupils, staff and the wider school community."

"I started my teaching career in West Sussex, and am looking forward to returning to the area in the coming months."

**Richard Hadfield** is the new co-principal of the Temple Learning Academy in east Leeds.

The school – which opened at the end of 2015 – is a free school for 4 to 16-year-olds and will welcome its first cohort of year 7 pupils in September.

The school initially opened to 60 reception children and is expected to reach full



Michael Tidd



Richard Hadfield



Lisa Fathers

**Lisa Fathers** has been appointed to the new Greater Manchester Children's Health and Wellbeing Board.

She takes up the position alongside her current roles as co-principal of the Bright Futures Educational Trust and head of Teaching School at Alliance for Learning, a network of primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities across the north west of England.

Fathers does extensive work surrounding health and wellbeing; she currently chairs the Greater Manchester Headteacher Alliance for PE, Sport & Health, is a Youth Sport Trust ambassador headteacher and a mental health first aid Instructor with Mental Health England.

In her role at Alliance, Fathers has also been assessing schools' approaches to mental health and wellbeing in the north west, and is helping them to teach mindfulness.

She said that she is "really pleased" to become a member of the board. "I look forward to joining forces with partners to improve the lives of our children and young people in Greater Manchester."

capacity in 2021.

Hadfield was vice-principal of Nottingham University Samworth Academy. Before this he was assistant head and deputy head at Westfield School in Sheffield.

Commenting on his appointment, he said: "With a cross range of educational knowledge and experience, together we will lead on all aspects of building our innovative and successful all-through academy."

He will work alongside co-principal Matthew Browne to ensure a smooth

crossover between the primary and secondary phase at the school.

Browne, said of his new colleague: "We joke that we are long-lost twins because we think the same way: we are ambitious for change and we have the same vision for building a world-class school at the heart of our community and with the community in our heart."

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

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### SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

Solutions:  
Next week

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

### Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

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.