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Loophole in voting causes headteacher election farce

JESS STAUFENBERG
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EXCLUSIVE:

The "unfair" reason why Harrop Fold School can't become an academy

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NEWS

Multiple votes allowed in head board ballot

JESS STAUFENBERG

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Exclusive

Executive headteachers are able to vote more than once using a loophole in the headteacher board elections, *Schools Week* has discovered.

And if they're standing, they are potentially able to cast multiple votes for themselves, plunging the fairness of the whole system into doubt

The elections opened this month, to elect panels which will then advise commissioners on the opening, transfer and closure of other academies.

There have been concerns throughout the process hanging over their transparency, the lack of consistency in who is eligible to stand, and the short voting timeframe.

But *Schools Week* has now learned that executive heads who oversee more than one school are able to vote several times.

The Department for Education sent emails to every academy this month which included a unique code allowing people to cast their vote on the election site, addressed to the "headteacher or executive headteacher".

However, sources familiar with the system have realised that where an executive headteacher is the point of contact for every academy in a particular trust, they "could be returning a vote on any number of schools" – and potentially voting



John Fowler

for themselves many times.

John Fowler, a policy manager at the Local Government Information Unit, described the set-up as "crazy", and said it showed the DfE was making up "how to do the elections as it goes along".

A letter sent to senior academy leaders urging them to vote, told them to "check your academy's email inbox for your voting pack and unique code". This code "will authenticate your visit to the secure voting site", but the system has no way to tell whether the same person is voting more than once.

The rules do not explicitly bar a person from voting in this way as votes are attached



Paul Whiteman

to academies rather than individuals.

The DfE said it was up to heads and senior leaders to "decide who should cast the vote".

"These are not the standards to expect for an election," said Fowler. "You have billions being spent [on the academy system], controlled by a fantasy franchise and electorate, and no approval by Parliament."

Schools Week also understand turnout in elections has been worryingly low so far.

The headteacher board elections had been facing problems before the loophole was exposed, including delays to their timeframe, and the fact that few candidates were standing in some areas.

The DfE was forced to confirm last

week that while anyone with "executive headteacher" or "headteacher" in their job title could vote, CEOs who do not hold one of these titles were ineligible.

However, a source pointed out that "CEO" and "executive headteacher" are often interchangeable terms at many small trusts, and some CEOs have been arbitrarily barred from voting according to how they are listed in the government's database.

Despite this, although CEOs cannot vote, they can still stand as candidates – around half the candidates have CEO in their title.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, wants the DfE to review the CEOs voting issue, as "leadership roles are changing rapidly" and there is often significant overlap between the roles.

But Stuart Lock, the principal of Bedford Free School, believes the policy was a "sensible" attempt to ensure every school was allocated just one vote each.

"If CEOs were also allowed to vote, a trust with just two schools could get three votes for two headteachers and a CEO", he said.

The election is being run this year by UK Engage, an electoral services company. Electoral Reform Services ran the previous election held three years ago, and bid unsuccessfully for the contract this year.

Voting closes on September 22, and results are expected before the autumn half-term.

EDUCATING... TV SERIES SCHOOL FACES 'UNFAIR' DEBT PROBLEMS



Drew Povey

Exclusive

The school featured in a major Channel 4 series this year is struggling with historic debt of over £3 million, which its headmaster claims is "unfairly" preventing it from becoming an academy.

Harrop Fold, the subject of this year's *Educating Greater Manchester* series, fell into debt in the middle of the last decade after it was put into special measures and was forced to spend substantial sums on

turnaround support.

Paying back the debt in the face of stagnating budgets caused class sizes to balloon to 36 in some cases, while staff numbers have fallen by more than 60 per cent since 2010, which is "impinging on life chances", according to its head Drew Povey.

"I never played the lottery until I found out about this debt but now I play it every

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NEWS

Costs mount for excluded pupils sent to private schools

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

Multi-academy trusts spend three times as much on private alternative provision as they do on local authority alternative provision – even though many private providers have never been checked by Ofsted.

Schools Week asked the largest multi-academy trusts to give details of the private alternative providers they have used to educate their pupils over the last four years.

The sixteen trusts we spoke to spent a total of £2.94 million sending children who could not be served in mainstream schools to private alternative providers, but just £1 million on local authority places, because, they said, council-run provision had been closed or private provision was “better tailored” to pupil needs.

However *Schools Week* found that half of the 154 private providers used by the trusts do not have individual Ofsted reports, raising serious questions about the quality of provision on offer relative to its cost.

Among those which were graded, just over half were ‘good’, and around 15 per cent were ‘outstanding’, but the rest were still paid despite receiving grades three or four.

Dave Whitaker, the executive principal of Springwell Learning Community, an AP school in Barnsley, said Ofsted tries to check independent providers during their inspection of schools.

But these checks can be brief, and many private alternative providers might never be visited at all, he said.

Under government rules private providers are only inspected if they are providing full-time education to five or more pupils of compulsory school age, or they educate one pupil who is looked after or has special educational needs or a disability.

Given this, Whitaker suggested that some trusts could be “hiding kids in non-



compliant alternative provision”, hinting at a “can of worms”.

The Diocese of Coventry MAT uses Bilton Evangelical Church for alternative provision, a body that does not appear on Ofsted’s list of inspected providers.

Meanwhile Wakefield City Academies Trust, which is to fold later this year due to concerns over quality and finance, has used the Impact Centre, a private provider which costs £65 a day per pupil and was rated ‘requires improvement’ by Ofsted in May.

Among the trusts we spoke to, private alternative provision has become increasingly popular and the proportion of pupils sent to one has more than trebled over the past four years. The proportion sent to PRUs only doubled in the same timeframe, showing a preference for using non-council provision.

Reasons for the increase vary by trust. The Diocese of Coventry MAT claimed that Warwickshire council closed all of its pupil

referral units in 2012, forcing it to seek private alternatives. Five other trusts said local council provision was full.

Both the Collaborative Academies Trust and LEAD Academies Trust said their local authorities did not run a form of alternative provision allowing pupils to return back into school when ready, whereas private providers did.

And the Harris Federation said private providers had less “complex referral processes” than councils and often produced better academic outcomes than local PRUs, which can have in their care “some of the most troubled young people in the borough”.

The Cabot Learning Federation said it preferred the smaller class sizes of private provision.

But the choice to send pupils to private schools is expensive for the taxpayer: in the last two years, Harris has spent £779,000 sending 125 pupils to 34 private providers.

The Collaborative Academies Trust spent

£179,700 in 2013-14 placing two pupils in private provision, compared with the £25,000 it spent on two pupils at the local council referral unit in the same year.

Meanwhile the Diocese of Coventry MAT spent £73,861 sending 29 pupils to private schools over the past four years, but nothing on three pupils who went to local PRUs, because costs were covered by the council.

Not all trusts are making use of private alternative providers, however. The Tauheedal Education Trust sent 39 pupils to PRUs in 2015-16, a figure which rose to 48 last year, and sent just two to private AP – and then only due to a “lack of space” in local provision.

Kiran Gill (pictured), founder of The Difference, a programme that trains teachers in alternative provision, said she was hearing that schools which “struggle to stay in the black” could not afford to use private providers, even as a preventative measure to avoid permanent exclusion.

Private providers collecting a fee have less incentive to return pupils to mainstream schooling, claimed Rob Gasson, the CEO of the Acorn Academy Trust, which runs alternative provision in Cornwall, so pupils are kept out of the mainstream for longer than is necessary.

A spokesperson for Ofsted said government guidance defines a school as an institution which provides education for at least 18 hours a week. Non-associated independent schools covered by this definition are inspected.



'If I won the lottery, I'd pay the debt back'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Saturday,” he told *Schools Week*. “Honestly, if I win this weekend, I’d give the money to Harrop to get rid of this debt and I’d be back in work on Monday. I wouldn’t think twice about it.”

Povey took over as head when aged 32 at the turn of the decade, making him one of the youngest school leaders in the country. The deficit had already reached £3.1 million, and the school was told it must repay the amount. It has now returned £1.4 million, but more than half of the debt remains.

“We didn’t cause this debt, but I accept it, and I think we should pay it back to the local authority but I am frustrated that it is stopping us becoming an academy, and that is impinging on us doing our job,” he said.

Harrop Fold has been supported for more than two years by Consilium Academy Trust, which wants to absorb it into its chain, but the Department for Education has refused the application on account of the debt.

“I totally get why people don’t want big

deficits brought across, or multi-academy trusts laced with deficits from schools,” he said.

“But I think ours is different given the make-up of the debt, and I think we need special dispensation. We will pay it back, all we need is agreement on the terms.”

Schools which fail Ofsted inspections and are forcibly taken over by academy trusts can have their debts written off. Figures released last week showed the government handed millions to academy sponsors, in some cases to wipe out deficits at schools they took over. Bolton Wanderers Free School, located less



than a mile from Harrop Fold, also closed over the summer with over £600,000 of outstanding debt which is expected to be written off.

“If our school was so bad that it had to be closed, or taken over by someone else, we could get ourselves out of this debt,” said Povey. “But I can’t do that to our children. I won’t do a bad job just so that we can avoid this problem.”

But without becoming an academy, he said the school cannot build the sort of central capacity other schools are developing, especially in terms of curriculum support – which is especially necessary

given so many new exam specifications.

“I think a loan should be created, and then we’ll pay it back to the local authority, one way or another, but to stop us from being able to become an academy and stop life chances of kids because of a debt we didn’t create and therefore we can’t convert seems wholly unfair,” he said.

Povey has been pleased by the positive reaction of the public since the television series started last month.

“I think it is because we’ve created this culture where it is safe for pupils to be who they are. It’s safe for them to come into school and feel part of something. We do have some challenging kids, but they leave that at the door,” he said.

“It sounds all a bit cheesy, but I also want the *Educating* series to be an honest depiction. I want people to see the hard edge of what kids and staff go through on a daily basis. This thing we call education is a tough game.”

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NEWS

TOP LONDON SIXTH FORM 'EXCL

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Investigates

Another top London sixth form has been accused of "effectively excluding" pupils at the end of year 12 because they did not get high enough grades, even though the government recently blasted another school for doing the same thing.

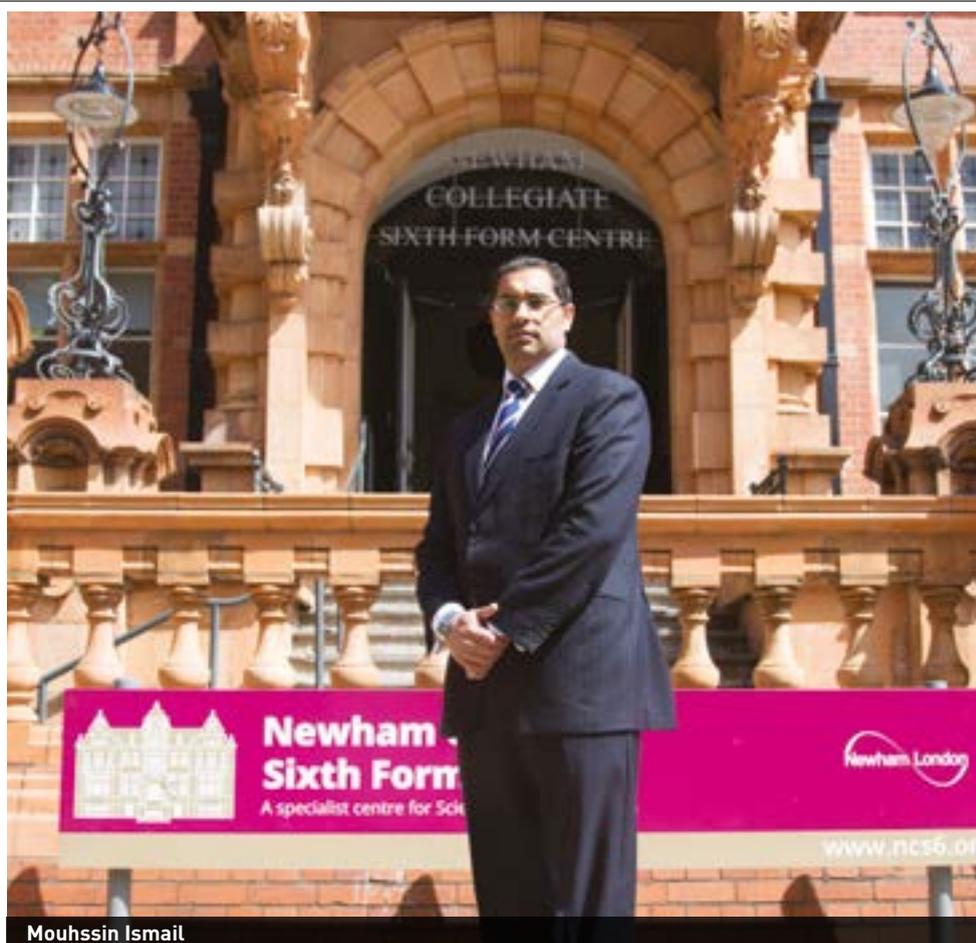
Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, led by former City lawyer Mouhssin Ismail, did not issue timetables for this term to 19 pupils following their AS results, and told some they could not retake year 12, according to evidence seen by *Schools Week*.

The school was widely praised on results day for achieving top grades despite its location in a deprived area of east London.

It boasted on its website and in press releases that 99 per cent of A-level grades were between A* and C at the college, but pupils have told *Schools Week* they could only continue into the second year of their A-levels if they received a C or above, an "expectation" outlined on the school's website.

Schools Week understands that 214 timetables were sent out before exams, but only 195 were sent out afterwards, implying that at least 19 pupils were barred from continuing into year 13. At least some of these pupils were unable to continue due to missing the expected grades.

One pupil, who met Ismail after failing to get adequate grades in one subject, told *Schools Week* that he "kept emphasising I was being 'allowed' to continue into year 13, but only in two subjects".



Mouhssin Ismail

They continued: "No-one can take two subjects, because you can't get into university like that. He's effectively excluding us."

The pupil has a medical condition which a consultant at a London hospital said, in an email to the school seen by *Schools Week*, "could affect [their] ability to revise and pass [their] exams".

In another email, Ismail acknowledged the condition but continued to deny the pupil the

chance to continue in the three subjects they needed for university.

The school's website claims that "consideration will be given to students in exceptional circumstances" if pupils don't hit C grades.

This isn't the first high-flying school caught preventing students from carrying on into year 13. St Olave's Grammar School in south-east London hit the headlines after it

told pupils to leave if they did not get at least three B grades at AS.

The government dragged St Olave's over the coals, declaring the practice illegal and forcing it to U-turn and readmit the pupils it had dumped.

This apparently encouraged Bourne Grammar School in Lincolnshire to write to year 13 pupils it had ejected for similar reasons and invite them to re-enlist, for fear of legal action.

A second pupil at Newham Collegiate told *Schools Week* that the school had forbidden them from continuing with any subjects, despite achieving a C in one subject, and getting a U grade in only one other.

Both pupils asked to retake year 12, but were told they would have to reapply with applicants from other schools.

"I was completely in tears and my mum was very upset as well," they said.

Nearby sixth forms have now taken the pupils in to restart year 12, but they will find themselves funded at a reduced rate next year, as 19-year-olds are apportioned less money.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said the Newham Collegiate counted as a further education provider and that "clear guidance" states "that once a student is enrolled, the institution is expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the student can complete their programme" as a condition of funding.

However, Newham council, which currently oversees the college as part of its "adult education" services, said it will be opening as an academy "later this year".

Schools Week has repeatedly approached the school for a response.

CASE STUDY:

"I should at least be allowed to carry on with three subjects"

A pupil who got one C grade, with other grades below that "Being kicked out of college has left many students stranded, forcing them to have to retake the whole year at another sixth form or college, or desperately scavenging for year 13 places.

"I only got a U in one subject out of the four I took. This means that I should at least be allowed to carry on with three subjects. However, my college did not agree on this matter.

"Another horrendous option [the college] was offering to some students who got two grades at C or above was to continue only two subject courses and drop the remaining one.

"But this leaves students with only two A-levels, meaning that they will not be accepted into university.

"When we joined NCS, there was no formal discussion or assembly of such where any of the grade requirements were discussed.

"Some of us did find out from the year 13 students at the time about required grades to move on in NCS. The teachers informally told me, through conversation, that we need three Cs to carry on, but only about halfway to three quarters of the year through.

"By then it was too late to change schools."

CASE STUDY:

"Essentially the headteacher has made them leave"

"Essentially the headteacher has made them leave"

A pupil who got two Cs, with other grades below that. "Students who didn't get a C have been given a timetable with only two subjects, but no one will take that because no one can get into university like that.

"So when they leave, it looks like it's of their own volition.

"But essentially the headteacher has made them leave, without directly making them leave.

"They also don't let you retake the year. Mr Ismail said there's not space and if I want to reapply you have to go into the pool of 500 people who are also waiting.

"He just would not budge at all. He said you will not do that subject at this school regardless of what you say. We've got no space for you in year 12.

"My parent said 'but he's already a student here' and he said 'no, if he was to reapply we would have to reassess to see if he's good enough for the school.'

"The school advertises the 99 percent A*-to-C but this is only after you take the best students in East London, kick 20 out at AS-level and focus only on the rest."

CASE STUDY:

"NCS was not the sixth form that I expected it to be"

A pupil who got a B and a C, with other grades below that.

"I've been the victim of the same situation at Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre as some other students.

"It's caused a big problem for me in terms of continuing my education as an A-level student. I am one of the few who was able to find a place at another sixth form.

"Unfortunately, NCS was not the sixth form that I expected it to be, and that I was told about by the headteacher.

"I felt as if the sixth form wasn't really working with me to reach my full academic abilities, but was just threatening me with losing my placement in year 13 instead."



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NEWS

'DUBIOUS' KIDS WITH LOW GRADES

NEWHAM COLLEGIATE'S 'DUBIOUS' LEGAL STATUS

Experts say Newham Collegiate Sixth-Form Centre still has "legally dubious" status both because it opened unlawfully, and because it counts neither as a further education college nor a school.

Schools Week reported in 2014 that Newham council cabinet members concluded the school was "likely to be unlawful" because it had been opened by the council itself without any legal basis.

After an investigation, the council announced it would be converting to an academy.

Three years on, the sixth-form centre is finally going to open as a 16-to-19 free school before January, to be sponsored as part of the City of London Academies Trust.

The council insists that the college has been operating lawfully in the interim, but independent education lawyers claim it has been on "dodgy legal grounds" since 2014.

The sixth form has also been criticised for claiming that Ofsted rated it 'outstanding', since its unusual legal status means it has never received an individual inspection report.

Russell Holland, a barrister in the education team at law firm Michelmores, pointed out that because it was neither an FE college nor a school, it occupied an unclear legal category.

"It must have the authority to enter pupils into exams and so on, so it will be like a school but not actually technically legally a school or a college," he said. "By becoming an academy, they're sorting out the legal mess they're in."

In fact, it doesn't actually appear in the DfE's online performance tables, which are typically used by the public to compare schools and colleges, and so its celebrated results cannot be verified.

It had been subcontracted to a charity, the Newham

Foundation, under a "commercial, legal agreement" devised by the council. However, now it has been caught asking pupils to leave at the end of year 12, NCS appears to have broken a key condition of its funding as a further education "institution", according to the Department for Education.

Further education funding agreements state that "once a student is enrolled, the institution is expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the student can complete their programme".

However, the Department for Education refused to say whether it would take further steps against the college.

The sixth form centre claims on its website that this year's results "validate the 'outstanding' judgment reached by a team of Ofsted inspectors who visited in 2016", but it has never been individually inspected.

Instead, its services were

"considered" as part of a wider inspection of the Newham Adult Learning Service, Ofsted told *Schools Week*. The DfE said NCS could therefore describe itself as 'outstanding' based on inclusion in this report.

Inspectors noted at the time that "almost all of the year 12 AS-level learners have progressed to their A-level programmes".

Inspectors are meant to consider retention and exclusions data when doing full inspections on further education providers. It is not clear whether inspectors were aware that some pupils were not accepted into year 13.

The City of London Academies Trust confirmed that NCS would become a "legal school" under its sponsorship, but a spokesperson would not comment on whether its controversial demand for at least three Cs at AS-level would continue, passing the buck back to Newham council and the NCS' board of governors.



No concrete plan for playing field sell-offs

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Exclusive

Schools are not using money raised from selling playing fields into new sports facilities despite promises to the contrary, a *Schools Week* investigation has revealed.

Schools and councils with surplus land, including disused playing fields, can seek government permission to sell it off but, in most cases, are obliged to use at least some of the proceeds to fund new outdoor education facilities.

In 2014-15, the Department for Education signed off on 23 so-called land disposals – giving rise to headlines that playing fields were being sold at a rate of one every fortnight.

But, of the 14 projects for which *Schools Week* received updates, we found seven had not yet gone ahead and one had been abandoned altogether, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Banbury Academy in Oxfordshire had hoped to sell part of its playing fields for housing, and the sale was expected to pay for new facilities including an artificial sports field, a climbing wall and a refurbished sports hall.

But the land did not attract bids high enough to make the sale worthwhile, even though the school's sponsor, the Aspirations Academies Trust, spent around £400,000 on the project.



"Sadly when the sale came to market, the land did not attract bids of the level we had been led to believe it might, and the proceeds would not have covered the agreed investment in sports facilities that Sport England made a condition of sale," Steve Kenning, AAT's chief executive, told *Schools Week*.

"The sale understandably did not go ahead, though if land values do pick up significantly we may well revisit the idea in future years."

According to documents seen by *Schools Week*, AAT has "no way to recover" the

£400,000 it spent on "supporting the project", nor various "unrelated costs allocated against the anticipated receipt".

Of the remaining seven projects still in the pipeline, three have been delayed by planning issues.

At William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School in Lincolnshire, leaders are "awaiting further instructions" from council officials on plans to sell land around its sports field which will be used as a cycle path.

The school hopes the path will give pupils a safer cycle route to school, while proceeds

are earmarked for better cricket facilities.

"Unfortunately the project has not started so far as there are additional plans to change some of the roadways around school, so we await further instructions from the local authority," said Trevor Hughes, the school's business manager.

Meanwhile, Epsom and Ewell High School in Surrey is "still in discussions" with the council over the sale of an underused playing field. This was supposed to fund three new all-weather pitches, two tennis courts and a new sports hall, but according to a spokesperson, "we have made no concrete progress to date".

At Plume School in Essex, a playing field half a mile from the school site was to pay for a new multiuse games area and other sports facilities.

The land remains unsold, due to issues with the council's "local development plan" – a document that governs housebuilding in the area.

Gillotts School in Oxfordshire and Kirkby Stephen Grammar School in Cumbria also face delays in their plans to sell land, and while leaders gave no explanation when contacted by *Schools Week*, in both cases they want to proceed with the sales.

Murton Nursery School in Durham, which closed in 2006, has still not had its playing fields sold by Durham County Council.

NEWS

PRIVATE SCHOOLS CUT ARTS GCSE AT HIGHER RATE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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A higher proportion of pupils are being entered for at least one arts subject at state schools than at private schools, but the overall decline in popularity of arts subjects isn't letting up, according to new research from the Education Policy Institute.

On average, state secondary schools entered 51.3 per cent of pupils for at least one arts subject at key stage 4 in 2016, while private schools entered 47.6 per cent.

This is despite new accountability measures for state schools that favour academic subjects, like the EBacc, and funding cuts that have seen some state schools cut back on their creative offer.

Pupils at independent schools take part in a great number of artistic activities outside of the public exam system

The figures represent a decline in entries into arts subjects among private school pupils since 2012, when the proportion entered for at least one arts subject peaked at 53.8 per cent.

In state schools, entries in creative subjects hit a high of 53.7 per cent in 2013, but have declined sharply since then, reaching their lowest level of the decade in 2016.

Barnaby Lenon, who chairs the Independent Schools Council, said private school pupils take part in a "great number of artistic activities outside of the public exam system".

"When you consider that most independent school pupils take a modern foreign language at GCSE and many do classics, [and] that most take three separate sciences alongside English language, English literature and maths – plus at least one humanities subject – that leaves little room," he said.

"Given so many pupils are already learning about the arts through extra-curricular activities, some may choose not to study these subjects in the classroom too."

According to the EPI, provisional data for 2017 shows a continuing decline in the number of children enrolling into arts GCSEs.

This is said to be partly down to new accountability measures for schools, like the EBacc and Progress 8, which encourage schools to emphasise a set of GCSEs that do not include the arts.

However, Progress 8 includes an "element of protection" for arts subjects because, of the eight subjects which count towards it, three can be creative subjects.

The report also claims that "wider financial issues" are putting pressure on arts entries, though this varies between school leaders.

"Our analysis shows that entries to arts subjects are currently declining, following several years of slight increases," said Becky Johnes, the EPI's senior researcher.

"This recent drop in arts entries is driven by several factors, including changes to the way school performance is measured, financial pressures on schools, and, of course, local decisions taken by school leaders."

The report has provoked a fresh round of calls for the government to review the EBacc.

Petition against teacher widow inequalities

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

Investigates

A petition to force the government to equalise the way teachers' pensions transfer to their partners is gathering strength.

Under the current system male teachers who accrued pension between 1972 and 1988 can pass 50 per cent of the final amount to their wives if they die after retirement, but this privilege does not extend either to husbands of female teachers or individuals in same-sex relationships.

A landmark ruling made by the Supreme Court has however recently left the door ajar for a change in the rules.

Judges ruled in favour of John Walker, an employee at the chemicals company Innospec, who argued that if he died, his male partner should receive survivors' benefits based on the total number of years he paid into the company pension scheme, rather than on just his service from December 5, 2005, when civil partnerships were first introduced in the UK.

The court agreed with him that this would have been the case had he been married to a woman, and declared a certain clause in the 2010 Equality Act as "incompatible with EU law".

Following the decision, campaigners have launched a petition to convince the government to "equalise survivor benefits for widows and widowers in the Teachers Pension Scheme".

Shena Lewington, who set the petition

up, said she was motivated by "incredulity" after she found such inequality in public sector pensions.

"The Supreme Court's ruling means it is possible that it will be force of law that makes the Department for Education changes their lines about teacher pension equality," said Lewington, who worked as a primary teacher for 30 years.

She has written to Nick Gibb, who is both schools minister and minister for equalities, to call for a review of pensions for teachers over 50.

She received a response from the teachers' pensions policy team, which said the issue was being looked at with teaching unions and confirmed the Walker vs Innospec judgment was already under discussion at various government departments.

They admitted "the outcome of this case may affect all public sector pension schemes".

A spokesperson at Wesleyan Assurance Society, which provides specialist financial advice and services to teachers and medical professionals, urged the government to investigate "as a priority" in light of the ruling.

The National Education Union told Schools Week it would raise the issue with the DfE "whenever we can", but claimed



there were clear financial barriers to a change in the rules.

"I think even the government would acknowledge that this is unfair, but the cost of redressing the imbalance would be huge," a spokesperson said.

"When you consider the economic climate we are in, I can't imagine for one moment that the government is going to have the funding available to make this alright."

Jeff Houston, head of pensions at the Local Government Association, said the case was pushing matters in the right direction, but that it is unlikely changes would be made for teachers alone.

"I can't see the Treasury saying yes we'll change the rules in the teachers' scheme but leave them as they are for the health service or the armed forces," he said.

English GCSE mismatch could affect university offers

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

Investigates

Pupils are in danger of missing out on higher education due to a "mismatch" between university expectations and the new GCSE reforms, *Schools Week* has learned.

Schools were previously judged on pupils' achievements in English language at GCSE level, but this year's changes to the exams now see English literature used as an equal mark of success.

However, many universities are still looking for a standard pass in English language experts say schools must not de-emphasise the subjects.

Pam Tatlow, chief executive of MillionPlus, the association for modern universities, told *Schools Week* that the government had created "a potential mismatch with university entry requirements".

"Schools, as well as universities, will need to give clear guidance about this," she warned.

New measures introduced in 2016 permitted pupil performance to be gauged in either English language or literature GCSEs, rather just on language results.

Under this system, teachers can choose to prioritise literature over language in their teaching if a pupil is stronger in that subject. If the pupil does poorly in language but achieves a C/4 grade in literature, the school



Stock image

may decide they do not need to resit their language exam.

But a minimum C/4 grade in English language is still an entry requirement at a number of universities across the country, including Warwick, Manchester and Kent.

"It depends on the course, but there's no doubt about it that universities do use English language as a kind of filter," said Tatlow.

Steve Adcock, of the academy chain United Learning, is concerned about this mismatch and wants to appraise school leaders of the problem.

"As schools grapple with exam reform we must continue to prioritise the interests of our students, and ensure that they leave our schools with the qualifications they need

for their future, regardless of whether this shows up on performance tables or not," he said.

Most universities told *Schools Week* that they would be sticking with the current requirement.

A spokesperson for Kent said it had "no immediate plans" to change its language requirement, though he conceded the university was aware of "the possible impact" of the reforms, and that it would consider applications "in the round".

A spokesperson for Warwick also said there were no current plans to make changes, but admitted the situation was under observation.

Simon Bullock of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, an independent quality body, said that while "universities are free to set their own entry requirements", they should keep "up to date with what's happening in schools" to ensure prospective students have "the best possible chance of success when they apply".

Entry figures for both English literature and language rocketed by around 50 per cent last year, though according to Ofqual this was because many private schools had ditched international GCSEs.

A Department for Education spokesperson said there was "no reason" why the current reforms "should make it harder to progress to further study or employment".

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NEWS: INTERVIEW

Angela Rayner: 'Labour should move on from academies debate'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Exclusive

The Labour Party should "move on" from the debate over academies and focus on campaigning for greater controls over the way they are run, the shadow education secretary has said.

Speaking to *Schools Week* ahead of the Labour Party conference, Angela Rayner no longer wants to get "bogged down" in debates on the merits of certain types of school, and will instead pursue the government on the use of public money.

This marks a departure from the party's strident anti-academies stance and raises questions on the role local authorities would play under a future Labour government.

The MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, who has been in post for 14 months, still believes in "local accountability and local say" over where schools should open, but she is not "fixated on local authorities" as the solution to all problems in the system.

"I'm not going backwards – I'm going forwards," she says when we meet in her Westminster office. "Most parents, including me, are interested in a good school that their kids can go to. They don't care what it's called, quite frankly."

Despite this very obvious softening of Labour's position, it is clear that to Rayner, the academies system is still far from perfect. She rails against the government for allowing situations like the recent one in Yorkshire, where Wakefield City Academies Trust shrugged off all 21 of its schools.

"They're just handing back the keys in Wakefield," she says, in disbelief. "Where was the accountability there? Where was the secretary of state?"

"She cannot oversee the system that she's created, unless she sits there at night literally looking at a fiefdom of academies thinking, 'how do I look after these multi-academy trusts and these standalone academies?'"

With academies now making up two thirds of secondary schools and a quarter of primaries, it was almost inevitable that Labour would eventually have to give up on the idea of returning them all to council scrutiny.

But Rayner's comments, coming so soon after an election campaign in which her party pledged to allow councils to "run schools", provides welcome clarity on Labour's priorities at a time of great political uncertainty.

With talk of another general election in 2019 or even sooner, Rayner has to convince the public that she is an education secretary in waiting. For her, this means ditching some of the anti-academy rhetoric that has been at the heart of Labour's campaigning for over half a decade.

On the party's last election manifesto, and the universalism behind her proposals for a new National Education Service, Rayner is candid but stubborn, as she defends party policies on universal free school meals and tuition fees.



“Most parents, including me, are interested in a good school that their kids can go to. They don't care what it's called, quite frankly”

She admits the manifesto, which *Schools Week* was the first to publish, "wasn't perfect", and puts this down to the timing of the election, but insists it reflected "Labour values" about "making sure that everyone gets all opportunities".

"We had literally a couple of weeks to pull all the things together that we'd been working on for some time," she admits.

"Is the National Education Service fully envisaged with all the fine minutiae? No. There's always room for improvement."

Rayner also rejects accusations that her party's policies on free meals and tuition fees were simply handouts for better-off families.

"Above the threshold where you get these free benefits, there is a whole wave of working poor that I believe would benefit from this as well," she says.

"You have to be on £16,000 a year or less to get free school meals. I'd challenge anyone with a child to live on £16,000 a year, it's a really low income."

So why not just raise the threshold for

free school meals? Rayner says she "hears the argument", but wants to help all families, and give every primary school pupil a "good, nutritious dinner" every day.

This is also about reducing the stigma that she faced herself as a claimant of free meals during her school days.

"I asked my dad for a picture of me from

school for when we did the GCSE results this year, and they gave me a picture that he's kept in his wallet of me, and it's on my school dinner token, which I thought was quite apt.

"You knew you were free school meals kid, and you got a lot of stigma for that. I don't believe we need to do that, and I think helping working families is really important."

Is she bothered by the lack of analysis of the impact of existing universal primary free school meals policies in Islington and Newham?

"The benefits are clearly there," she says, although she acknowledges that the evidence is incomplete.

"There is anecdotal stuff," she says. "I'm sure that evidence will come along as well."



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and his shadow education secretary Angela Rayner

NEWS

DfE silent on massaged transfer figures

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

The true cost of transferring academies between trusts is likely much higher than the £7.1 million figure claimed by the Department for Education last week – because many payments were simply left out.

The transfer market for schools is expanding; the figures showed that 165 schools were passed from one academy trust to another last year. By comparison, just 15 were moved in 2013-14.

The DfE claimed that these 165 academies received funding totalling £6.2 million, up from £4.2 the year before, with another £900,000 spent in legacy payments.

But campaigners have accused the department of massaging the figures, as they don't include costs relating to redundancies or deficit payments which take place when a school in financial difficulties is taken over.

Also missed were capital costs, such as ICT hardware or building works, as were payments resulting from so-called "diseconomies of scale", for instance when a school is in an area on its own or has a small population.

Janet Downs, from the state school campaign group Local Schools Network, told *Schools Week* that the DfE's omission of these factors changed the headline figure "by quite a bit", and that the real cost of transfers would have been much higher.

"Things like deficit payments are huge for some academies," she said.

Deficit and diseconomy funding were also excluded in previous years, but redundancies and capital costs were factored in.

Schools Week asked the DfE why these costs had been excluded from the data, but there was no response despite repeated enquiries over several days.

Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, criticised the decision not to publish the complete data, saying it was "disgraceful" that there had been no justification for the move.

"It can only speak to a mindset in the government where they know that

something is rotten," she added, suggesting it was "the DfE's second attempt to cover up the cost of academy conversion".

A *Schools Week* investigation in May revealed that the academies minister Lord Nash had asked DfE officials to present figures in a way that might obscure high rebrokerage costs.

He wrote in leaked emails that if publishing the information in one format was "not found to be particularly suitable", then other options should "be explored".

Bousted said: "It speaks to an embattled, defensive DfE, who know that spending is out of control on academy conversion costs and know that they don't have the ability to gather



the information accurately; either that or the figures are so excessive that they don't want people to know."

THE STRANGE CASE OF INDEMNITIES

Money is also flowing into the academy system via indemnities, a form of underwriting which protects schools against problems.

In December 2016, *Schools Week* reported that the DfE's accounts showed it had provided an indemnity of up to £2 million to protect the Inspiration Trust in East Anglia against the potential closure of its Great Yarmouth High School, should the school find itself unable to continue using its site.

An indemnity of £5 million was also provided to the Church Commissioners of England in relation to the lease of an academy site.

Schools Week has meanwhile recently been made aware of an indemnity given to the Aspirations Academies Trust.

According to AAT board meeting minutes from March, the DfE asked AAT to take on the Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy, a failing school that the trust thought it was "able to support".

We understand that as part of the takeover, the DfE guaranteed that "any debt" from taking on the school would "only have to be repaid if the school can afford this", and that "even then this would be capped at £150,000 per year".

This stands in contrast with other maintained schools, where substantial historic deficits of over £1 million remain on the books and must be paid down annually, with interest, by the school leadership.

DfE recruiting staff to learn what it's doing wrong

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

New "delivery managers" are to visit schools and identify problems with the way the Department for Education works, it has emerged.

Job adverts published last week are seeking managers to join a DfE programme called 'Building our department together'.

Three people will be paid up to £71,000 a year to talk to schools and "ask them what problems they encounter" when working with the department.

This is part of the DfE's new drive to build a new school improvement function which it hopes will tackle the problem of underperformance in some academies.

The campaign was launched last June as a transformation programme to explore "better ways to deliver the department's activity with schools".

However, officials admitted they "do not yet know" which activities they want to improve, though it will likely include school efficiency and financial health, as well as teacher sufficiency and safeguarding.

The delivery managers will trial improvement activities, first in "small pockets" of south-east of England and south London.

A DfE spokesperson said the programme was part of an "internal infrastructure" project, and would be delivered at "no additional cost to the taxpayer".

But Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said the move was a "desperate attempt" to counter recent criticism, adding that the advert was unclear, and "badly written".

"The DfE doesn't know which way is up," she said. "They have been criticised for not knowing about issues around teacher recruitment and retention, and having no proper idea about how academies are spending their money."

"This is just an admission that the department is completely detached from the schools it is now overseeing. It's more of the same, appointing civil servants to oversee a detached and fragmenting school system."

She wants to see more "democratic regional oversight".

These are the latest in a series of new school-facing posts the DfE has created at regional offices in recent years.

One of the most notable changes resulting from academy growth has been the creation and rapid expansion of the department's regional schools commissioner group.

There are eight RSCs, whose teams and power have grown substantially as the number of academies has increased.

Last year, *Schools Week* reported that 19 deputy directors had been appointed to support the RSCs, while earlier this month, the DfE put out a call to recruit "school improvement" roles at an RSC's office.

As of May this year, the DfE employed 3,519 people, up from 2,323 in May 2016.

The increase is partly down to the arrival of some staff who used to work at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills after a shakeup last July, but the DfE won't say exactly how many people moved over. Some of the staff increase is understood to be linked to the DfE's increasing involvement in schools.

HALFON LAUNCHES INQUIRY INTO PRIVATE PROVIDERS

The Commons education committee has launched an inquiry into alternative provision after several significant *Schools Week* investigations revealed shocking standards.

Robert Halfon, chair of the committee, says MPs want to establish whether pupils in pupil referral units and other types of alternative provision are "receiving the best possible support".

During the course of the investigation, MPs will quiz government officials, councils and schools before creating recommendations.

"Students in alternative provision are far less likely to achieve good exam results, find well-paid jobs or go on to further study," said Halfon. "Only around one per cent of young people in state alternative provision receive five good GCSEs."

The debate over the quality of alternative provision has grown louder in recent years, as the rate of permanent exclusions from schools has increased.

In May, *Schools Week* revealed that multi-academy trusts specialising in alternative provision were being asked to expand and take on new schools as council-run services found themselves squeezed by demand.

The research organisation Education Datalab earlier this year found a substantial number of pupils removed from schools during exam years, prompting calls from school leaders for clarity over a proposal to make schools responsible for the pupils they exclude.

Ofsted has also warned that schools do not always seek adequate alternative provision for pupils educated off-site.

The education committee is asking for written submissions on the quality of teaching, educational outcomes and destinations of pupils in PRUs.

NEWS

IN brief

LocatED ANNOUNCES FIRST NEW FREE SCHOOL

LocatED, a private company set up by the Department for Education in July 2016 to find sites for new free schools, has named its first project: the GEMS Kingston primary academy in south London.

The company was handed a £2 billion war-chest and took over the responsibility of acquiring and developing land for new schools, which was previously held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The new project will be a two-form entry primary with the capacity for 420 pupils and 11 residential units in the town centre of Kingston.

Jodie Croft, chief executive of the GEMS Learning Trust, said the group was pleased to have secured planning permission for the site, which "straddles two conservation areas".

LANGUAGE SKILLS MAKE FOR BETTER SCIENTISTS

Literacy skills are the most important factor in determining how well pupils do in science subjects, new research has shown.

The analysis, undertaken by researchers at Oxford University, used results data from across all key stages in national science exams and other subjects to compare achievements in different groups.

Reading and writing skills were found to be particularly important for helping pupils to understand scientific vocabulary and prepare their own scientific reports.

The research also revealed that allowing pupils to design experiments that test out theories can help develop their scientific reasoning abilities.

The Education Endowment Fund will use the report to inform guidance on science teaching, which is due to be published in spring 2018.

UNIVERSITY MAT SINGLED OUT FOR OFSTED PRAISE

Ofsted has praised the University of Chichester Academy Trust for "rapidly" improving its schools, bucking the trend for poor performance among university sponsors.

The watchdog noted that all schools inspected since they joined had been judged either 'good' or 'outstanding' in leadership and management.

However, it said sharper and "more consistent" reporting on pupil achievement was needed.

The letter makes for more positive reading than others issued to university-backed trusts this year.

Education Central Multi Academy Trust, run by the University of Wolverhampton, was ordered to improve its teaching and school improvement "urgently", while the University of Chester Academies Trust for low standards.

Headteacher success study under fire

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Rival researchers have condemned a new study that recommends controversial ways headteachers can turn failing schools around – accusing its authors of "confusing correlation with cause".

The study suggests significant staff turnover of between 30 and 50 per cent as one measure for success, as well as 95-per cent pupil attendance and establishing all-through schools. In total, the project identified nine indicators of long-term success, several of which sent shockwaves through the sector.

Management researchers Alex Hill and Ben Laker analysed data from 411 leaders at 160 failing secondary academies, and found 62 heads whose methods steadily improved GCSE results and fostered a healthy budget. If six of the nine indicators were met, they claimed, test scores improved continually after three years.

Other researchers have criticised the study, however, and suggested that the sample of headteachers was unknown and not replicable.

Karen Wespieser, head of impact at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said it was "worrying" that headteachers and governors might make decisions based on the study when "so little is known about how these conclusions have been reached". She wants Hill and Laker to

clarify the "detail of their sampling methodology, data collection approach or analysis techniques".

Hill told *Schools Week* that the heads were categorised according to their beliefs on why schools failed. Five typologies emerged – which the pair labelled as 'architects', 'surgeons', 'accountants', 'philosophers' and 'scientists'. Architects for instance focus on the importance of the community around the school, while surgeons concentrate on exam results and passing the school into new hands after a few years.

They were given access to all the data in the schools' management information systems, including exclusions, staff sickness, exam results, finance, and parents' evening attendance, all of which were used to establish the nine indicators.

GCSE results improved most sustainably at schools run by architects, and continued to do so even after those heads left. However, board meeting minutes showed that they were also the most likely group to have their position reconsidered by governors after two years, usually because exam results were not improving



Ben Laker



Alex Hill

early enough.

The study is therefore an attempt to give heads and boards better indicators to see whether their schools are on the road to improvement, said Hill, who claimed he was "putting forward theories" to allow others to follow up "in even more detail".

Critics have complained that correlations the research draws between the nine indicators and school turnaround do not allow it to make such "bold" recommendations.

This is not the first time the two have been criticised. Last year, they were flooded with criticism after they released a poorly worded document that appeared to recommend schools "exclude poor quality students" which went viral. It was quickly deleted with assurances that it hadn't meant to encourage such exclusions, but the sector has stayed somewhat sceptical of their work since then.

New academy trust vows not to employ unqualified teachers

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

A new sixth form-led academy chain has announced it will only hire qualified or trainee teachers in a bid to shake off the negative history of the academies programme.

The Challenge Academy Trust, which runs five schools and a sixth-form college in the north-west, has even signed an agreement with teaching unions to guarantee this promise.

Under the terms of the agreement, first revealed by The Warrington Guardian, the trust will only take on teachers with QTS, or those working towards it through School Direct or other salaried teacher-training routes.

National rules on hiring unqualified teachers were relaxed for academies in 2012 by the education secretary Michael Gove, who said it would allow more "professionals", including scientists and musicians, to become teachers.

This Challenge took shape earlier this year when Priestley College became one of the first sixth-form colleges to convert to academy status, and promptly formed a trust with local schools.

Matthew Grant, who is both the trust's chief executive and Priestley's principal, said reservations were raised during consultations with the local community about the takeover of their schools.



Matthew Grant

"It was a question that was asked by parents, that's why it's a statement we wanted to make," said Grant. "It wasn't even just parents, but pupils – primary school pupils – who were asking that question as well."

"I think it goes back to the very early days of academies, when they were first set up. But I think that lesson has been learned now, and [hiring unqualified teachers] actually isn't going to help sustain a professional workforce across the country. It's history in terms of the agenda, but it is still something we are being asked about."

Schools and trusts are permitted to pay unqualified teachers far less than those with QTS – which is why unions have been so keen to secure such a guarantee.

Outside London, the pay range for an unqualified teacher starts at £16,626,

compared with £22,917 for those with QTS.

"We are not going into this to make quick savings," said Grant, who doesn't agree with the rationale behind Gove's rule change in 2012. He believes experts in fields outside teaching are not deterred by the need to train for professional qualifications while on the job.

"We have a number of people with industrial experience, including ex-Royal Marines, engineers and bankers, and they have all trained in order to do the job," he said.

The move is supported by the new National Education Union, which decided earlier this year to allow unqualified teachers to join its ranks.

Previously, the NUT, which recently amalgamated with the ATL to form the NEU, had refused to admit them.

Shaun Everett, who signed the agreement with the trust on behalf of the NEU, told The Warrington Guardian both two sides had "established a relationship that is based on trust".

The Challenge Academy Trust currently consists of the 'outstanding'-rated Priestley College, one primary school and four secondaries, though a further primary is due to join this year, and another is in talks.

The trust hopes to add more schools in the near future, and Grant says the commitment on qualified teachers will extend to the rest of its schools as it continues to grow.

NEWS

Ofsted to leave 'not good' schools for 2 years

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Ofsted is abandoning plans to give schools a maximum of 15 days to prepare for a follow-up visit when it suspects they are no longer 'good', and will instead give them up to two years before a second inspection.

Schools that do not have serious safeguarding and behaviour issues will be given "typically one to two years" – or longer under certain circumstances – before they are reinspected, even if they are at risk of being downgraded from a 'good' grade.

The watchdog will instead publish a letter "setting out the school's strengths and areas for improvement". The same approach will be applied to schools that inspectors believe could improve to 'outstanding', but "requests for early inspections will be considered" for these.

One union claimed this will effectively create an unofficial additional rating which will confuse parents and disrupt school leaders' efforts to improve their schools.

Ofsted insists that the change gives schools more time to improve using "detailed feedback" from a short inspection.

Short inspections for schools rated 'good' at their previous inspection typically last one or two days. A lead inspector can call for a full inspection when they feel a school



may not keep its rating, or where it could improve to 'outstanding'.

This happens in around a third of cases and a full inspection is then conducted within 48 hours.

"Under the new proposals, 'good' schools will get detailed feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, and they'll have more time to improve following a short inspection" said the watchdog's national director of education, Sean Harford (pictured). "In this way, we hope to catch schools before they fall."

The National Association of Head Teachers has criticised the proposals, claiming it will "in effect" create an "unofficial additional rating" which will "confuse parents and disrupt school leaders' efforts to improve their schools".

"For the most part, parents, staff and governors understand the current four ratings," said Nick Brook, the NAHT's general secretary. "If, after a one-day visit, inspectors are not able to determine that a school is still 'good', they will now mark it out for reinspection."

He said the fact that schools would then potentially not be inspected for up to three years would mean "an unacceptably long delay".

"A cloud of uncertainty will linger over the school until Ofsted can arrange a return," he warned.

But the Association of School and College Leaders has welcomed the approach

"It's our view that there is a potential benefit in introducing an interval between the two inspections," said ASCL inspections specialist Stephen Rollett. "It would give schools the opportunity to recover from the initial shock of conversion and prepare themselves for the full inspection."

A consultation on the proposals has just opened, and will run until November 8. If approved, the changes will take effect next spring.

LAS SPENDING LESS ON HIGH-NEEDS PLACES AS ACADEMIES EXPAND

Local authorities are spending £43 million less on high-needs places this year as schools converting to academies take on the costs, new government data shows.

Councils are planning to spend £20 million less on special school places, £17 million less on pupil referral unit places and £4 million less on hospital education places.

Outgoings are falling because schools are converting, though there are also changes in how "some local authorities recorded their expenditure", according to the Department for Education's report on planned local authority spending for next year.

Whereas councils planned to spend £1.03 billion on high-needs places this year, they are expecting to pay closer to £985 million next year.

Schools Week analysis also shows some regions are expecting to spend less of the national total than they did last year – especially on PRU places.

Whereas councils in the east of England planned to spend 10 per cent of national expenditure this year on PRU places (£14.4 million), they are taking less of the pot next year, at eight per cent (£10.5 million).

Outer-London councils also predict spending less next year, dropping from nine per cent of national expenditure (£13.7 million) to six per cent (£7.7 million).

But expenditure plans for special needs places mostly rose: councils in the south-east, north-west and outer London are all predicted to spend more of the national total for next year.

Private school rebrands as 'grammar'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

A private school in the West Midlands has taken the unusual step of rebranding as a "grammar school", and will focus on training its primary pupils for the 11-plus test.

St Dominic's Brewood, an all-through independent school in Staffordshire, has changed its name to St Dominic's Grammar School and introduced the 11-plus for new pupils hoping to join in year seven.

The school educates girls from the age of two to 18 and boys aged two to 11, and leaders intend to use the change to "focus on the 11+ in the preparatory end", and teach younger pupils to pass the controversial test.

According to headteacher Peter McNabb, a new "strict program of study" will enable children to "access surrounding grammar schools", whether they are fee- or non-fee-paying.

The school will also use a "rigorous mentoring system" for all GCSE and A-level students, to ensure they reach their potential, he said.

Although it is common for private schools that used to be selective state schools to continue to use the name "grammar school", it is rarer for one that has not previously used the 11-plus to undertake such a rebranding.

McNabb said the change comes on the heels of the school's

three successive years at number one in Staffordshire for the EBacc GCSE, and insisted it has been welcomed by parents, in spite of the unpopularity of the government's recently scrapped plans to open new grammar schools.

"The name change has been popular amongst parents. None have shown or expressed concerns," McNabb told *Schools Week*.

St Dominic's has recently undergone a change in ownership, after the charity that used to run it ceased trading earlier this year.

According to the *Express & Star*, the school is now run by St Philip's Care Group, a firm co-owned by Gary Hartland, whose two daughters are pupils at St Dominic's.

The school's buildings were already owned by Hartland's firm, which stepped in two years ago to fund a refurbishment of the school's tennis courts, dining hall and ICT suites.



St Dominic's Grammar School

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FEATURE

RESEARCH SCHOOLS: HOW

SAMANTHA KING

@KINGSAMANTHA_

There are now 22 research schools across the UK, and 11 are in government-identified social-mobility "cold spots".

Samantha King takes a look at why they were created, how they function and how your school can get involved

What are research schools?

The Research Schools Network is a partnership between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE).

Despite their name, research schools are not separate institutions, so much as hubs based within existing schools or academy chains.

Their job is to build and strengthen networks of schools and help them access decent education research and implement it in everyday classroom practice.

What research do they do?

The "research" part of their names can be a little misleading, as these hubs are not primarily dedicated to conducting research.

Research schools have three key aims: communication, training and innovation.

Communication They keep in regular contact with schools in their network, for example by sending out monthly newsletters – supported by content provided by IEE and EEF – detailing interventions that have been proven to work.

Training They run conferences and provide training and professional development to teachers and senior leaders in their local areas.

Innovation They support schools in developing new ways of improving teaching and learning, in evaluating the impact of these innovations – and in applying for research grants, such as the IEE innovation evaluation grants, which are awarded three times a year.

This year, the EEF introduced a small team of developers whose job it is to guide schools and facilitators in formulating plans to expand and develop their networks. They each have different areas of expertise, some with university research backgrounds and others from the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

How were the research schools set up?

They were first conceived by the EEF in 2015 after a number of discussions with schools that were already at the forefront of driving evidence-based school improvement.

The leader of the RSN is James Richardson, a senior analyst at the EEF.

"In that respect, the model for research schools already existed," he explains, "but the EEF's role was to formalise it into a network of schools to ensure that all schools have the external support to understand and make use of evidence to improve attainment."

Original a project jointly funded by the EEF and the DfE, the IEE got involved after the government withdrew its part of

the funding.

"They put out a call, schools applied, they shortlisted the schools – and then the DfE withdrew the money – so the EEF didn't know quite what to do; they were floundering a little bit," says IEE director Bette Chambers.

At that time, the IEE was in the process of separating from the University of York but its funder, the Bowland Charitable Trust, stepped in to provide money for the project to continue.

The first five research hubs in England – based in schools with prior research experience – launched in September 2016. The second wave of six was announced in April 2017, and the third wave, all located in opportunity areas, of 11 schools was confirmed in July. Waves two and three launched this September (see map opposite).

How are research schools funded now?

Each research school is funded for three years by EEF and IEE, receiving approximately £200,000 in total. The 11 research schools opening in opportunity areas are to be cofunded by the EEF and the Department for Education.

It is hoped the research schools will become "self-sufficient" after three years, according to IEE director Bette Chambers.

Who can become a research school?

Schools have to apply to become a research school, with successful applicants shortlisted

and interviewed. Applicants need to have the capacity and reach to connect with up to 200 schools in their respective regions.

Research schools are constantly looking to grow their networks through conferences and events, and actively encourage schools in their area to get in touch (see map).

"If we're going to reach all corners and not just preach to the converted, we're going to need to amplify more," says Alex Quigley, director of Huntington Research School.

Are there research schools anywhere else in the world?

While the RSN did not model itself on any specific initiative, similar evidence-based education projects exist in the US (see box-out), and the English project is now being watched with interest from abroad.

The EEF has been sharing information with educators in Australia, and in September a group of Swedish headteachers will visit Huntington Research School.

"Our focus is local – Yorkshire – but there is an interest far wider," says Quigley.



Alex Quigley

International research school initiatives



Research Schools International

The Research Schools International (RSI) project partners researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education with schools around the world.

It is currently linked with 20 schools across the globe, six of which are in England and comprise four secondary independent schools, one comprehensive and a free school.

RSI provides them with research-based innovation, which they also share online to reach schools outside their network, as well as running CPD events.

RSI was founded by Christina Hinton, from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who developed the model around 10 years ago and launched it officially in 2012.

She says the group is currently looking at reaching out to the Research Schools Network.

Evidence for ESSA, Maryland, USA

John Slavin, the former director of the IEE who now directs the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University, set up Evidence for ESSA for US schools.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires schools to examine the evidence if they want federal funding to support their work.

The resource provides information for schools on programmes that meet the ESSA evidence standards, and draws on previous work carried out by the IEE in the UK on their Evidence 4 Impact database.

Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE), Washington DC, USA

Made up mostly of academics, SREE looks at how to get evidence-based research used in schools, through connecting with the research community, policymakers and educational professionals.

One of its main aims is to disseminate and consolidate research findings on educational causes and effects, and to this end, sponsors the peer-reviewed *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.

Reflecting on year one

The directors of Aspirer, Shireland and Huntington research school chatted to *Schools Week* about their motivations for being involved

Megan Dixon from Aspirer Research School on the power of research...

"In 2009 Ashgrove Academy [where Aspirer is based] was on the point of closure. The local authority was going to shut it down because it was not in a good place. In a last-ditch effort, we got a new head and a new team to run the school. In 2013 it was 'outstanding' in all areas.

"Every decision that was made, and every process we went through, was informed by looking at the research. Back then it wasn't as easy either, because we didn't have a nice guidance report written up by the EEF.

"The research is a mirror on your practice. It gives you a lens through which to go 'Really? Do we do that?'"

Nicola Jones from Shireland Research School on the best thing about becoming a research school...

"The best thing is the communication with other teachers and schools, and the support we can give. As a research school we share the evidence

for what actually has an impact, and support schools to then make best use of this evidence to support their improvement.

"I don't think anyone enters the teaching profession not wanting to make a difference, and as a research school we can support schools to really make a difference in the classroom."

Alex Quigley from Huntington Research School on peer-to-peer support...

"Schools listen to other schools. If the DfE or Ofsted say something, people listen. When it comes to Ofsted, people will make significant changes, but they're often superficial or short-term. With research schools, what we're trying to give is support for teaching schools and schools to make good, longer-term choices based on the best available evidence, and where there isn't evidence, we're trying to generate it.

"As a system we are good at understanding Ofsted and we're savvy about data, but I don't think we are very knowledgeable about the very broad complexity of evaluation."

YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

WHERE'S YOUR NEAREST RESEARCH SCHOOL?

Research schools want to reach out and build local networks – find where your closest one is and what they're up to.

YOU CAN FIND CONTACT DETAILS FOR ALL THE SCHOOLS ONLINE AT RESEARCHSCHOOL.ORG.UK



Key

- **Research schools**
Launched Sept 2016
Funded by EEF/IEE
- **Research schools**
Launched Sept 2017
Funded by EEF/IEE
- **Research schools**
Linked to opportunity areas
Launched Sept 2017
Funded by EEF/DfE
- **DfE-designated "opportunity areas"**



ASPIRER RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Ash Grove Academy
Contact: **Megan Dixon**

BRADFORD RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Dixons Academies
Contact: **Judith Kidd**

OLDHAM RESEARCH SCHOOL
by The Greetland Academy,
supported by Teamworks TSA
Contact: **Dr Jo Pearson**

BLACKPOOL RESEARCH SCHOOL
at St Mary's Catholic Academy
Contact: **Phil Naylor**

MEOLS COP RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Meols Cop High School
Contact: **Leon Walker**

STOKE-ON-TRENT RESEARCH SCHOOL
by The Keele and North
Staffordshire Alliance
Contact: **Diane Swift**

DERBY RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Wyndham Primary
Contact: **Angela O'Brien**

SHIRELAND RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Shireland Collegiate Academy
Contact: **Nicola Jones**

WEST SOMERSET RESEARCH SCHOOL
at The Blue School
Contact: **Tom Colquhoun**

KINGSBRIDGE RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Kingsbridge Community College
Contact: **Lorwyn Randall**

SHOTTON HALL RESEARCH SCHOOL
at The Academy at Shotton Hall
Contact: **Louise Quinn**

HUNTINGTON RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Huntington School
Contact: **Alex Quigley**

NORTH YORKSHIRE COAST RESEARCH SCHOOL
by Esk Valley Alliance
Contact: **Mari Palmer**

DONCASTER RESEARCH SCHOOL
by Partners in Learning
Contact: **Helen Bellinger**

KYRA RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Mount Street Academy
Contact: **James Siddle**

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND FENLANDS RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Littleport CP School
Contact: **John Cattermole**

NORWICH RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Notre Dame High School
Contact: **Niki Kaiser**



SAMUEL WARD RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Samuel Ward Academy Trust
Contact: **Andy Samways and Chris Dale**

SANDRINGHAM RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Sandringham School
Contact: **Caroline Creaby**

DURRINGTON RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Durrington High School
Contact: **Shaun Allison**

HASTINGS RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Ark Blacklands Primary Academy
Contact: **Lorraine Clarke**



ROSENDALE RESEARCH SCHOOL
at Rosendale Primary School
Contact: **Marc Rowland**

UPCOMING EVENTS

DURRINGTON RESEARCH SCHOOL
LAUNCH EVENT
DURRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER 27, 5-7PM

ASPIRER RESEARCH SCHOOL
EARLY YEARS CELEBRATION CONFERENCE
ROMERO CONFERENCE CENTRE, MACCLESFIELD
SEPTEMBER 29, 9.30AM-3.30PM

SANDRINGHAM RESEARCH SCHOOL
LAUNCH EVENT
SANDRINGHAM SCHOOL
OCTOBER 3, 4.30-6PM

DONCASTER RESEARCH SCHOOL
LAUNCH EVENT
HUNGERHILL SCHOOL, DONCASTER
OCTOBER 13, 2-5PM

HUNTINGTON RESEARCH SCHOOL
EVIDENCE IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE
YORK UNIVERSITY
OCTOBER 20, 9.30AM-4PM

NEWS



One of our pupils went back to mainstream yesterday so we're not technically a school this week.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

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

This is bigger than we thought...

In the past year, our determined reporter Jess Staufenberg has discovered:

- An increasing proportion of children with special needs entering private provision
- An increasing proportion of children educated at home, where they are privately taught by tutors or their parents
- An increasing proportion of excluded pupils entering private alternative schools

In each case, expenditures are significant. Private provision is often three or four times more expensive than when it's provided by local authorities, whether at special needs schools or pupil referral units.

We've known for years that seven per cent of the population are educated at straightforward, mainstream private schools – but when you add the pupils above, it's starting to look as though between 15 and 20 per cent of England's young people are privately educated at some point in

their school careers.

This is a huge and quite unexpected finding.

There are often good reasons for this. In some areas, school leaders no longer have any council-run special provision available. In others, the private provision is better and allows pupils to move back into state education when they're ready. When a young person has mental health problems, for example an eating disorder, it may be appropriate for them to move into a private residential education system for a while before they re-enter the mainstream.

This is not a complaint about using the private sector, but there are two major issues: cost and quality.

From what we can tell, many private providers are not subject to inspection at all.

When Jess told me that around half the private providers that academy trusts use to educate their most vulnerable pupils had not been inspected, I didn't believe her. We spent hours trawling websites and

making calls, checking this was true.

And as far as we can see, she is correct. The Department for Education told us this week that education providers are only inspected if they teach five or more pupils full-time. If they teach 20 pupils for less than 18 hours, there is no inspection. If they teach four pupils, there is no inspection. We believe this relates to the definition of a "school" in law, which is all Ofsted is allowed to cover.

This is a baffling state of affairs. And it's made even worse by the fact the provision is so expensive.

Of course, the education of pupils educated outside the mainstream is more complicated. In the case of special needs, a child may need adaptive equipment, 24-hour assistance, lifting and escorted travel. Likewise, where children are in alternative provision due to depressive episodes, they can also require constant (and expensive) monitoring.

But the costs of private provision are sky-high compared with what local authorities were previously able to offer, and no-one has a clear sense of what's appropriate. Is there enough information about the options? Do school leaders really know what's available in the marketplace? Many smaller academy trusts are now forced to make decisions on complex cases with almost no experience.

It is therefore entirely welcome that the parliamentary education committee has announced an inquiry into the private alternative sector. Our research demonstrates that the time has come, and we

look forward to hearing their recommendations and will, of course, help in any way we can.

In the meantime, if there is anything more on this issue you think we should be investigating please do get in touch with the team.



Principal at Greengate Lane Primary Academy



Salary: Competitive Salary plus Benefits

Date Required: Asap

“This is a school aiming high and looking to the future”

Astrea is a national family of academies, unswerving in our ambition to raise attainment and achieve excellence for all pupils. The Trust includes schools at all stages of development. We are committed to enabling individual schools to flourish with a high degree of autonomy whilst benefiting from a strong culture of support and collaboration.

The Astrea Academy Trust has the highest expectations of pupil attainment in national assessments, but aspires to go beyond the concept of “schooling” and to educate instead, through valuing an all-round development of the individual through arts, sports, leadership opportunities, enrichment and community.

In order to deliver our mission statement we need exceptional staff across the organisation, and we believe that the quality of our staff sets us apart.

Do you want to be part of our leadership team which is passionate about making a difference to the lives of pupils?

Do you have the passion and motivation to inspire others, and the ability to lead change and deliver excellence?

If so, we are looking for a forward-thinking, inspirational leader who has a demonstrable track record of inspirational leadership and the proven ability to deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning across the school. You will have experience of supporting schools through periods of change; specifically driving improvement through the modelling of outstanding teaching.

The successful applicant will need the drive and enthusiasm to lead this school into the future and create a learning environment that inspires our students and helps them to achieve their full potential.

This is a challenging and exciting role and a fabulous opportunity to become part of our journey to excellence. In return we would offer a competitive salary plus pension, great career progression and development opportunities with many other benefits.

Application Process: Please send all completed applications to ingrid.chambers@astreaacademytrust.org

Closing date for applications: October 9, 2017

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people we expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Posts are subject to enhanced DBS checks.

Maths Lesson and Resource Designer



Call to arms...

Do you teach the “Butterfly Method” for adding fractions? How about “Float and Ping” for solving equations? If so, don’t apply for this role.

Is a consistent, coherent, well-scaffolded and well-sequenced approach to teaching maths your way? Do you relish the intellectual challenge of thinking through such approaches and making lessons and resources for teaching that align with this principle? If so, please apply for Lesson and Resource Designer at HegartyMaths where this will be your full time job.

What you’ll be doing...

You will create lessons and content that will be used by thousands of students and teachers. As such, you will play a crucial role in development of our existing resources that support the teaching and learning of maths across multiple key stages.

What we’re looking for...

- An exceptional knowledge of the primary and secondary UK maths curriculum;
- A clear understanding of scaffolding maths lessons;
- A strong track record for assessment design;
- A passion for creating first class resources to support the teaching and learning of maths;
- Excellent time management and organisational skills with an ability to prioritise a heavy workload;
- Laser focus and remarkable attention to detail;
- Superb IT skills across a range of softwares (Excel,

- Smart Notebook, Desmos, Word);
- Excellent standard of spoken and written English and first-class communication skills;
- Experience teaching KS2/KS3/KS4/KS5 students desirable (at least 3 key stages essential);
- HTML and Latex knowledge desirable.

Remuneration and benefits...

This is dependent on your experience, skill set and current salary/role.
27 days’ annual leave plus bank holidays.
Every day you will be making a difference.

Who we are...

HegartyMaths is an online maths platform with a mission to positively and materially change maths education at scale in the UK. HegartyMaths was designed by practising teachers and each day we continue to work and abide by our founding values:

‘we strive to provide any student, no matter their background or prior attainment, access to world class maths support whilst also saving teachers time to do what they do best - deliver high quality maths

lessons and inspire their students to be hard-working and successful young people.’

We are a rapidly growing edtech company and now support over 10% of UK secondary schools and in excess of 400,000 students and 5,800 teachers. Even bigger things are still to come...

How to apply...

Please send a CV including cover letter to jenn@hegartymaths.com by **midday Friday 13th October 2017**.

Interviews will take place in w/c **Monday 16th October 2017**.



St Paul's Primary School

Deputy Head Teacher

Newcastle upon Tyne

NOR 264 (including Nursery) **Group 2**

L7- L11 £45,743 - £50,476pa



Required for April 2018, or sooner, a deputy head:

- who is an experienced teacher with high expectations of achievement and behaviour;
- who is a team leader with effective inter-personal skills and the ability to challenge, inspire, motivate, and support colleagues; and,
- who will have a positive commitment to the clear Christian character of the school.

St Paul's School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Subject to DBS enhanced plus disclosure and other recruitment barring checks.

For details and an application pack please contact:

The Administrative Officer, St Paul's C of E School, Victoria Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7JU

Phone: 0191 273 3667

Email: admin@stpauls.newcastle.sch.uk

Closing date: 6 October 2017

Transformational Leadership Opportunities

Executive Principal **Norfolk Academies**

Salary: Circa £110k **Closing Date:** Friday 6th October

Transforming Education in Norfolk (the TEN Group) is looking for an Executive Principal to lead its multi-academy trust, Norfolk Academies and our University Technical College Norfolk. This is a new role and will have Group-wide academy responsibilities, for one junior academy, three secondary academies, and a university technical college.

An experienced school leader, preferably with experience of leading more than one school/academy, you will have demonstrated your abilities to improve the performance of schools under your care with evidence of sustained improvements in outcomes over time. You will also be an excellent people motivator and have the right skills to lead and develop your senior team of academic colleagues.

Principal **Fakenham Academy Norfolk**

Salary: Circa £80k **Closing Date:** Friday 6th October

The TEN Group is looking to appoint an experienced school leader who will relish the challenge of moving Fakenham Academy Norfolk from Good to Outstanding. A dynamic individual with experience as an existing head, you will be a great people motivator, with a real desire to make the difference in young peoples' lives. You will have a track record of success in school leadership, experience in improving student outcomes and able to evidence school-level performance improvements you have led.

Fakenham Academy Norfolk is an improving school with over 750 students, rated Good by Ofsted, with improvements in results over the last 4 years delivered through its membership of the Norfolk Academies multi-academy trust (MAT).

See www.tengroup.org.uk/senior-vacancies for full details and online application.



Customer Relationships & Sales Manager



Who are we?

HegartyMaths is an award-winning online maths platform with a mission to positively and materially change maths education at scale in the UK. HegartyMaths was designed by practising teachers and each day we continue to work and abide by our founding values:

'We strive to provide any student, no matter their background or prior attainment, access to world class maths support whilst also saving teachers time to do what they do best - deliver high quality maths lessons and inspire their students to be hard-working and successful young people.'

We are a rapidly growing edtech company and now support over 10% of UK secondary schools and in excess of 400,000 students and 5,800 teachers. Even bigger things are still to come...

Where will I fit in?

You will be our Customer Relationship & Sales Manager and your primary role will be to grow the new sales pipeline whilst providing unbeatable support for existing customers.

What will I be doing?

We care about scaling our programme responsibly so that each school gets outstanding customer service and training in how best to ensure HegartyMaths delivers value to students, teachers and the entire schools. Day to day responsibilities will include:

- Providing schools with an exceptional journey from call to outstanding user;
- Conducting demonstration calls (via online webinar with either the head of maths or entire maths department);
- Work independently to develop new leads;
 - Through relationships within current customer network.
 - By building relationships outside the current customer base.
- Report to the directors with regular sales / renewals updates;
- Providing unparalleled customer support;
- Complete various tasks alongside directors within the following arena's:
- Reporting and analysis of data and the impact of HegartyMaths;
- Marketing and brand awareness;
- User experience and helping us to build a fantastic CRM system.

What skills do I need to have?

- Have the same passion and drive to provide exceptional customer service as we do;
- A personable and friendly telephone manner;
- Ability to build and uphold strong relationships with people;
- Speak confidently to school decision makers, whilst explaining the unique benefits of HegartyMaths;
- A team player who is enthusiastic with a "can-do" attitude to work;
- Extremely competent with Excel and have the confidence to deliver high level analysis / reporting to

- the directors as well as customers;
- Have the ability to critically analyse our current sales processes and to not be afraid to suggest improvements to the directors;
- Learn from your failures / knock backs and turn them into successes;
- Understand the benefits of working in an environment where a consultative approach to sales is preferred.

What's the earning potential?

Starting basic salary £25,000.
Very generous sales-based bonus scheme on top of basic salary.
Opportunity for salary increase as you bring value to the organisation and help us grow.
27 days' annual leave plus bank holidays.

How to apply...

Please send a CV including cover letter to jenn@hegartymaths.com by **midday Friday 13th October 2017**.

Interviews will take place in w/c **Monday 16th October**



Deputy Headteacher

Salary: L5-L7 (fringe)

Salary Type: Leadership

Hours of work: Full Time

Start Date: January 1st 2018



Weyfield Primary Academy
Expectation - Opportunity - Success
School Close, Woking Road, Guildford,
Surrey, GU1 1QJ

Phone: 01483 598956
Email: jayne.thorne@weyfield-tkat.org
Website: www.weyfield-tkat.org

Our vision is to provide every child with an outstanding education, so that they can develop in to confident young people with a sense of self-worth, who believe they can make a difference in the world.

Weyfield Primary Academy is a unique Surrey school with 46% Pupil Premium, significantly above the Surrey average of 13%. Our community is diverse with 25% of our pupils speaking English as an additional language and almost 20% with recognised special educational needs. We are looking for a Deputy Headteacher who wants to make a real difference to our families' lives and who is committed to making each school day count for our children.

The Deputy Headteacher will play a major role in delivering the school vision, establishing a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring excellent outcomes for all pupils. The successful candidate will have an integral role in driving forward the next phase of our transformation from good to outstanding, building on strong EYFS outcomes and in-year progress across the school to secure better attainment at KS2. This is a real opportunity to advance the quality of teaching and learning and further develop a rich curriculum offer, working with autonomy and creativity to achieve impact.

The Deputy Headteacher will mirror the role of the Headteacher, so this is an ideal post for anyone aspiring to headship in the next 2-3 years.

We invite you to visit and a warm welcome is guaranteed. For an application pack or to arrange a visit, please contact Miss Lim, Headteacher via the school office. Please forward completed application forms together with a letter of application to the school office marked for the attention of Jayne Thorne. Electronic applications are welcome.

Weyfield Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its children and expects all staff to share this commitment. All appointments will be subject to full safeguarding checks as well as satisfactory references.

Closing Date: 6th October 2017

Interviews: 17th October 2016



Assistant Principal - with responsibility for English

Highly competitive and negotiable salary for an exceptional candidate

Do you want to be a leader in a forward thinking, dynamic and supportive school that is rapidly growing in reputation?

If so, then Oasis Academy Oldham is the school for you.

We are on a strong trajectory. Results are strengthening and, following a 20 percentage point increase in our combined results in the last two years, we are amongst the most improved schools in the North West. Ofsted has praised the progress that is being made and our ethos and outstanding £30 million state-of-the-art facilities ensure we are a vital hub for our community.

Our ambitions are high. We are looking for a talented and inspiring Assistant Principal with responsibility for English to help us continue this progress and ensure that we are developing respectful and confident learners to achieve excellence for all.

This is a role in which you will be able to make a real impact. You will be a member of a committed, driven senior leadership team whilst supporting and leading a dedicated and talented English faculty looking to embrace new ideas. The role requires someone who has a clear vision and will be able to lead and develop the faculty at a strategic level on our journey to outstanding.

The school is dedicated to meeting the needs of our community, but excellent transport links to Manchester and our proximity to the M60 mean that our staff are able easily able to reach us from a much wider area.

Through Oasis Community Learning, the opportunities to further your career are significant. Oasis has, for example, recently been successful in a bid to open a secondary free school within Oldham. This partner school will enhance the career opportunities available - making this a very attractive position for someone committed to furthering their career in education.

We are looking to appoint a colleague who will:

- Demonstrate strong leadership skills and prove to be a dynamic and supportive member of the Leadership Team
- Provide professional leadership to secure high quality teaching through improved standards of learning, progress and attainment for all students.
- Be responsible for the development of the English faculty, providing clear direction and a sense of purpose.
- Engage, enthuse, motivate and challenge students to raise achievement at all levels, and provide the very best educational opportunities for the students
- Be an inspirational team player and have a passion for enabling change for students and across the wider community.

In return you can expect:

- A highly competitive salary and benefits including a generous pension scheme and access to our outstanding onsite gym, which is free to staff members
- Excellent and extensive opportunities for professional development
- The opportunity to join an organisation with a national reputation for consistently improving results and facilitating community transformation.
- Regional and national support towards career progression
- A supportive and encouraging Senior Leadership Team who prioritise staff and value every individual.

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READERS' REPLY



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SATs scrapped for seven-year-olds by 2023

Stephen Fowler, address supplied

It would help if the tests were simplified, e.g. no open ended questions. This would save time on marking and save a few trees as well, as the tests need only be three sides of paper instead of 23. And the marking scheme need only be one side long.

The same applies to KS2 tests. Exactly the same amount of testing can be achieved with questions that are not open ended. CEM make some good tests used for the 11 Plus. They could adapt that model.

Laker and Hill: Change at least a third of staff to get turnaround success

Debra Kidd, Oldham

I don't even know where to start. But I'll have a go. What do Laker and Hill mean by "turning a school around?" Do we mean improving results? In which case, how much of this is down to drilling, moving children on who might not pass, bringing in staff who are already lined up to support your culture? How many "turned around" schools have simply changed their roll? Are the authors aware of the staffing shortage that exists in teaching? I challenge any school to get rid of 50% of their staff and be successful in recruiting 50% who are better than those who left. What of Dylan Wiliam's research that shows that the vast majority of staff can be supported to improve? What about all the research on shame and how ranking/ embarrassing children damages them? Does turning a school around encompass measures such as wellbeing and mental health? I suspect not. I wonder how much time these two have ever spent in a school.

Summit Views // @Summitviews1
No teachers there to replace the third sacked.

How to fix the academy transfer system

Douglas Cowie // @DouglasCowie
Getting rid of academies and returning schools to LGA control, with appropriate funding levels, would be a good solution.

Sarah Dodds // @CllrSarah
Schools can be left in limbo during this period. Shocking failure of the academy system.

Matthew Elton Thomas // @MatAndEltTho
What about schools where no MAT exists or no academy is interested? Ideology over education.

Is it time to bring back the EdTech quango Becta?

Rebecca Stride // @rstride_stride
Budget cuts have made schools more cautious with technology – much less experimental and much more focused on tech to aid the learning process.

Book review: Taught Not Caught: Educating for 21st Century Character

Gemma Wood // @Gemma_Lass
Really good, balanced and thoughtful piece – exactly the kind of political maturity needed for a debate about what schools are for #education

Becky Poynter // @flyinggov
Perhaps against 'gut instinct' I have ordered this on strength of Lucy Powell review! Here's hoping for some real insight.

School partners with local care homes to launch pen pal scheme

Carrie Tracy // @CarrieTracy96
Love this. Provides an opportunity for students to write to an authentic audience, learn from those who have experienced history AND serve the community.

Summer Macer // @SM_HRTC
OMG I love this!! Makes me think back to Channel 4's Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds...FAB!

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

news@schoolsweek.co.uk
020 3051 4287

Carter: Is your school an 'improving decliner?'

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Michael Griffiths,

It is difficult to understand how large trusts in particular will be able to fit into this new model proposed by Sir David Carter for improving and declining schools. Surely it is those who run the trust that should analyse themselves and use a continuous-improvement model across their organisation and within individual schools? We have had two or three decades of individuals producing models and announcing them at conferences: Michael Barber, David Hargreaves, David Hopkins et al. Toolkits, models, analysis tools are all very well but you don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows. Such things are usually "emperor's clothes" and will only last until the next person that should be listened to produces another painting by numbers process. We are like farmers who continuously find new ways of weighing the pig, when it is really down to the farmers to feed it!

REPLY OF THE WEEK
RECEIVES A SCHOOLS
WEEK MUG!



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PROFILE



CHRIS JANSEN

LAURA MCINERNEY
@MISS_MCINERNEY

Chris Jansen – Cognita Schools, chief executive

Cognita Schools is a rare thing: a turnaround private school chain.

Turnaround is a phenomenon more commonly discussed in relation to state schools than the independent sector. But back in 2015 Cognita featured in *Schools Week* for aggressively bankrupting parents in order to claw back fees it was owed. Having taken over several small private schools in previous years, the chain seemed to be spiralling out of control.

Enter Chris Jansen, a business specialist with a rollcall of brands to his CV to make Alan Sugar weep. As director at British Airways and then British Gas, Jansen oversaw the gradual turnaround in reputation of both. Next, he oversaw the £1.4 billion sale of the AA as its chief executive.

Now, in the two years since he took over as chief executive at Cognita, the company has changed dramatically. Its prior purpose as the “low-cost” private school chain, given to it by the controversial former chief inspector Chris Woodhead who founded the group, is gone for good.

Instead a row of clocks sit above the entrance to Cognita’s minimalist central London office, nestled just behind the glitzy shops of Oxford Circus, showing the different timezones occupied by the schools it owns across the world.

Jansen starts our chat with results. International Baccalaureate scores were strong in Asia and improving in Latin America this year. In Europe, he is now tracking progress of every child and value-added scores in England are moving upwards (he has introduced value-added league tables to motivate and inform the groups’ headteachers). In Hong Kong, the group has just opened a new school.

“We opened with 350 children, which is great. We have 33 teachers, and 11 of those came from within the Cognita group, including the head and superintendent,” he says, very keen to stress the international opportunities for staff who join the company.

If it sounds clinical, it’s tempered by Jansen’s boyish enthusiasm for high performance. With an uncanny physical similarity to *Dragon’s Den* presenter Evan Davis, he also smiles, motions and speaks articulately enough to be his doppelganger.

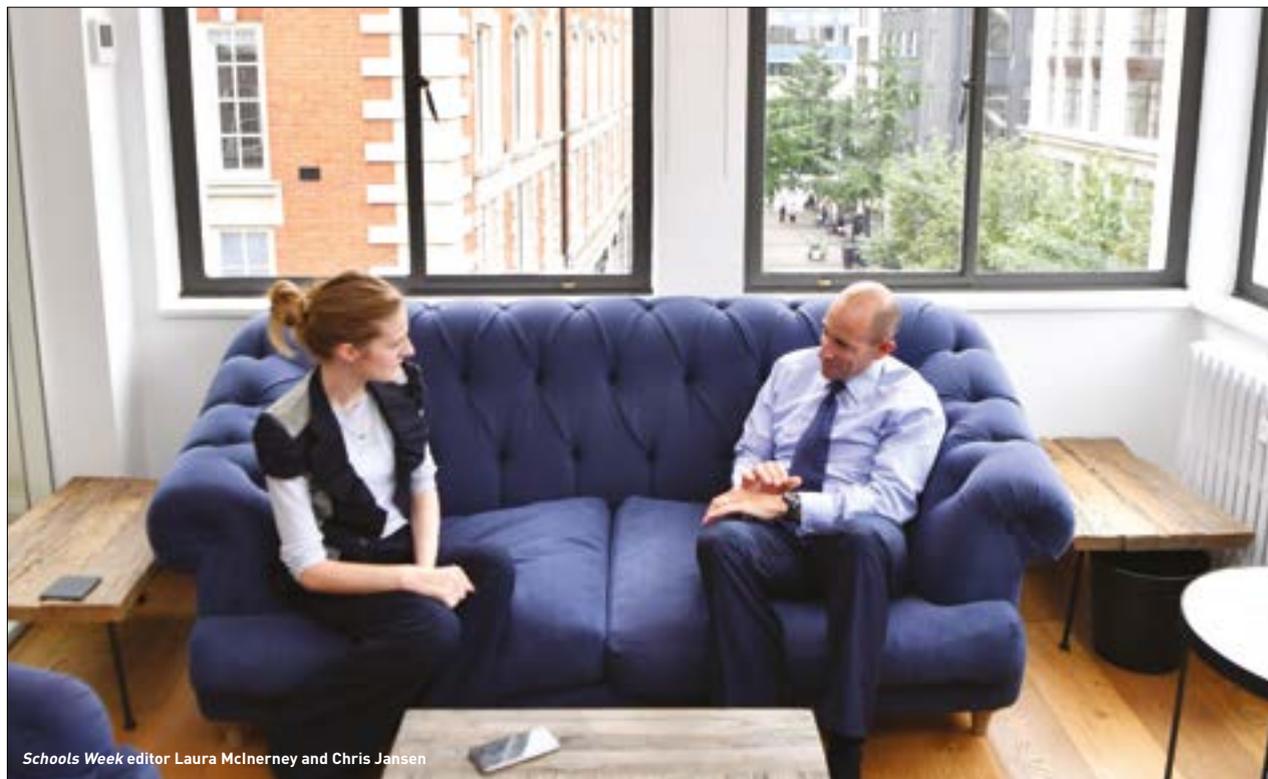
“Leadership is fundamental to all organisations but I have never been involved in a situation where it’s more important than a school,” he says. “School leaders are absolutely critical to everything that is happening. Leadership comes with a clear vision of what you want to achieve, of having the right team, of everyone being clear on what we’re trying to achieve, what the expectations are, what success looks like.

“With clear targets we can then think about how we motivate people, how we manage people, how we inspire them, that’s how we create a culture of success, of honesty, of transparency.”

This is not pie-in-the-sky strategy - it is about specifics. At British Gas, Jansen focused on the length of time customers waited to get phone calls answered (10 minutes) and on staff turnover at call centres (50 per cent). Those were simple metrics that told a bigger story about the organisation. Changing them meant turning around a culture which eventually turned around performance.

Jansen is aware that schools may not be so simple: “We can’t be the McDonald’s of education. Education is complex, it’s long-term, it needs to be thoughtful. This isn’t about creating an inflexible model.”

But there are certain factors driving performance, such as ICT, staff recruitment, staff development, all of which



Schools Week editor Laura McInerney and Chris Jansen



Clocks showing school timezones across the world

can be improved to get better outcomes for pupils. And indicators such as employee, pupil and parent satisfaction are helpful in working out whether the needle is moving.

“Sometimes in education people separate into ‘teaching staff’ and ‘non-teaching staff,’” he explains. “The most fundamental thing is the quality of the teaching that happens in the classroom, sure. But all of the people around that, not just the teacher, are important too. So the ICT has got to work, the facilities managed, the right HR, admission, safeguarding systems.”

Does he make this emphasis because he’s not from an education background?

“I’m just a facilitator. I’m... look, people say to me ‘you don’t know anything about education’. And I say, ‘you’re right’. And, actually, when I was at British Gas, we used to fix seven million boilers a year and I still can’t fix even one,” he points out.

“I can’t run a maths lesson, but what I can do is try and contribute to an environment where people can contribute freely and give their views and use their experience to get us to a better place.”

But how is he starting to pull together a cohesive, well-supported school chain given the constraints of timezones and geography? After all, the academies minister Lord Nash believes that schools more than 30 minutes away from each other are too difficult to manage. For Cognita, there’s around 30 hours of travel involved in getting from the school in Chile to the one in Hong Kong.

Jansen explains that the company works regionally in the first instance – with directors for each region. Core principles are the same everywhere, however, and those are communicated via an intranet system and a series of key metrics that the group is building.

And each year, in November, the leaders of the schools also come together for a conference.

“We talked about education for the whole week. They

didn’t know what to expect the first time we did it. I think they were expecting us to talk about admissions or how to run their school financially. We didn’t speak about that at all. Every talk was about education and leadership,” he says.

“What was fascinating was that, by the end, headteachers were saying ‘I would really like to know how to manage the school commercially’ and I said ‘don’t worry about that – focus on the quality of improving education.’”

Jansen himself was educated at St George’s College Weybridge, an independent day school in Surrey. It was a boys’ school when he attended but it admitted girls from the late 1990s. He is now a governor there, a role his father – who died suddenly aged 58 – had also once occupied.

At school he was easily bored, somewhat mischievous and focused more on sport than academics, but it was a talking to by his tutor, Dr Peter McLoughlin, during his A-levels, which changed everything.

“I remember exactly where it was,” he says. “I was sat on a radiator outside the staff room, it was a grey day behind me, and he said ‘Chris, you’ve got a choice to make. Either you knuckle down and do some work and get some good grades, or you’ll be lost to the world, and goodness knows what happens then.’”

“He was a tough man, but he cared. And I think he got through to me by genuinely caring. He fundamentally changed my life. That’s why I’ve very keen that we care for our teachers so that we look after them, and in turn,” he looks almost surprised for a moment, “then they give their best care to the children.”

There is no getting away from the fact that such care comes at a cost. Cognita schools are not hitting the £40,000-a-year highs of the top public schools, but fees come in at around £10,000 a year in England. Does he feel that reflects the low-cost dreams of Woodhead’s original intent?

PROFILE CHRIS JANSEN

"WE CAN'T BE THE MCDONALD'S OF EDUCATION. EDUCATION IS COMPLEX, IT'S LONG-TERM, IT NEEDS TO BE THOUGHTFUL"



"It comes back to value," he says carefully. "We're not the most expensive, we're not the cheapest. We're middle of the pack. But when a parent pays an enormous amount of money, and it's a lot they're paying, then you have to respect that and be certain they are getting good value. For me, it's not about ten versus twenty or fifty thousand pounds, it's whether parents are satisfied with the way their child is developing.

"There are many children that perform below expectation, or below their potential, in our education system. And what I'd like to guarantee, and I think we can now, is that the vast majority of children at Cognita will at least perform to their potential or above. And that means doing well academically but developing as people as well."

In a country like England, however, where academic grades are increasingly constrained and where value-added measures are zero-sum, does he feel improving Cognita will affect state schools which don't have the same resources available?

"It's an interesting one," he says, again guardedly. "When I was at Procter and Gamble, we were trying to sell more boxes of Ariel than Persil because it was a zero-sum game. There are only so many boxes of detergent sold; we wanted to have the greatest share.

"In education there are seven per cent of parents who are in a fortunate position – and they make a lot of sacrifices to do it – that they can afford independent education. It's been seven per cent for a long, long time. It's never going to be eight per cent, it's never going to be 10 per cent.

"So one of the reasons I wanted Sir Kevan Collins from the Education Endowment Foundation to come work with us on a network we are building, is because I said to him that he can take anything he learns from us and open source it into education.

"Sometimes, in the maintained sector, which is massive and complex, driving change in thousands of schools is difficult. We've only got 70 schools globally. We can do things in six months you can't do elsewhere. And other schools can

learn from that.

"So what I'd like us to do is learn how to run better networks of schools and then openly share that. In a sense, I don't see it as competitive, like the detergent. I want us to be better for our children, but I want everyone to be better."

At present, for example, Cognita's school in Vietnam is running a daily TV news bulletin anchored by a rotating fleet of pupils who choose the stories, write the scripts, and produce the show, which is then distributed via screens in the school. It's a neat way of improving literacy and general knowledge, and he wants to try it in other schools. If it works, people are free to steal the lessons they learn of how to make it successful.

Recently, Jansen wrote to Dr McLoughlin, the tutor who changed his life.

"If you are a British Gas engineer, you fix a boiler, and the heat instantly returns, and you are a hero. In education, teachers have a massive impact, but the chances are that you never know. So I wrote to him, and he wrote back – I was in tears reading it," he confesses.

As I leave he challenges me to call anyone in the organisation to ask for their feedback: "Seriously, call anyone. I'd love to know what they'd say in fact."

Despite this he emphasises that Cognita is still very much "a work in progress".

"We have a healthy dissatisfaction for where we are, but I know today that the quality of education in our schools is getting better – it's better than it was last year, and next year it will be even better," he insists.

"Cognita hasn't always been the organisation we'd aspire to be. We really haven't. And we're not there yet. But, really, we are now one step closer."

IT'S A PERSONAL THING

What's your favourite book, and why?

Tour de France Legendary Climbs as this book inspires the cycling I love to do with my wife, family and friends.

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

I would go into our classrooms and just listen, learn and think how we could do even better.

Growing up, what job did you think you would do?

A Grand Prix driver.

What do you eat for breakfast?

Plain porridge – my wife Lucie is a nutritionist and has banned honey.

Which animal are you most like, and why?

A dog: very committed and loyal but can be influenced by food.



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OPINION



EMMA KNIGHTS

Chief executive,
the National Governance Association

Hold on! There's no need to start paying governors

Emma Knights explores the latest thinking in school governance

Like a number of binary debates in English education, the discussion on skills and stakeholders that school governance has been bogged down in for the past five years is sterile, limited and sometimes even immature.

Can we please just agree that we all want skilled, competent governing boards, and then consider how we can best achieve them?

A scoping report entitled 'Who governs our schools: Trends, tensions & opportunities' published this month by the Royal Society for the Arts should help move the discussion on.

As the report says, "building on locally contextualised knowledge... is not a block on good governance; it is often the route to it". In other words, people recruited as stakeholders (parents, teachers or others from the local community) can of course bring skills and knowledge to the table. Many headteachers recognise the added value that links with the community bring. Moreover, given recruiting and retaining volunteers can be difficult, we need every route to interested, committed people.

Who or what gives us the right to govern?

But effectiveness is not even the whole conversation; ethical guardianship and legitimacy are also important. Who or what gives us the right to govern?

Listening to a broad range of parents, pupils and staff is fundamental to good governance, whoever is on the board, and we need to do it better. The National Governance Association has suggested to Justine Greening that this should be recognised as a fourth core function of governing bodies in the Department for Education's governance handbook.

Becoming a school governor is one of the most popular means of formal volunteering in the UK and this should be celebrated. Any move that undermines either this purpose or its participative spirit should be viewed with caution.

The report recommends a pilot for potential remuneration which seems slightly at odds with this spirit. Pay for those governing schools has been debated

by NGA's membership for five years, and support for remuneration amongst serving volunteers has stalled at 27 per cent.

Although there is paid governance in many other sectors, there is no evidence to show it improves practice. Attendance does seem to improve, but impact is more difficult to decipher.

We do need to improve the diversity of boards, and to recruit more people under 40 and from ethnic minorities. The RSA recommends that the same standards of practice should be used when recruiting governors as for the appointment of paid staff. There is NGA guidance on exactly this, and though the number of governing boards formally interviewing candidates is increasing, it's not happening fast enough.

Boards struggling to find candidates to interview should try Inspiring Governance, a free online service that connects schools and trusts with skilled, interested volunteers.

The theme on improving induction and training for school governors is rightly widened by arguing that teachers and particularly school leaders need to have a better understanding of governance. Where governance is weak, it is unlikely to improve if senior leaders do not know what "good" looks like, or simply do not accept its importance, viewing it as a distraction from the task of improving teaching and learning, rather than central to sustained school improvement. At the heart of good governance lies trust and respectful relationships between the non-executives and the executives.

As the report's author wisely observes, "the governing board, in a sense, transcends the professional leadership of the school or group of schools because of its institutional permanence and overarching responsibilities. While individual governors and heads come and go, the institution of the governing board remains a permanent feature, appointing successive heads and carrying the organisation's ethos and tradition over time."

The report also explores the effect of changing school structures, which I wrote about in *Schools Week* last year: moving decisions "upstream" in multi-academy trusts to boards of trustees and the line management of heads from governing bodies to a paid executive.

Unsurprisingly I am fully behind the conclusion – "how we govern our schools should be an education policy priority, not an afterthought". The more people saying that, the better.



STEPHEN GORARD

Professor of public policy,
Durham University

Too many summer-born pupils are labelled SEN

There's a huge difference in the attainment of older and younger pupils in the same year, and it's too often misdiagnosed, says Stephen Gorard

It is well known that summer-born pupils leave school with lower grades than their peers, but research has now shown that they are also diagnosed by schools with special educational needs at a significantly higher rate than the older children in their year. It is time government took action to address both problems.

In England, the oldest child in a year group is born on or near September 1, and the youngest up to 12 months later, until August 31 the following year. How old a child is relative to the rest of their year group has been strongly linked to attainment, later-life outcomes, and wider personal development. In England, 49 per cent of summer-born children who start school in September having just turned four achieve a "good level of development" in their first year, compared with 71 per cent of autumn-born pupils, who are nearly five when they start.

The younger children in any cohort are less likely to pass the entrance test for a grammar school, are entered for fewer examinations, and are 10 per cent less likely to go to university. By the age of 18, they have had 12 or more years as the youngest, least mature, and maybe the smallest person in their year. The summer-born pupils are less likely to be picked for competitive sports, more likely to be bullied, and to have lower self-esteem. Age-in-year clearly matters.

These differences in outcomes cannot be explained by most other characteristics. Younger children are no more likely to be boys, or from less-educated families, specific ethnic groups, or poorer areas, for example – all of which are also factors related to differences in attainment. They are, however, more likely to be labelled as having SEN.

New research presented at BERA 2017 showed that a pupil's precise age ought to be given more consideration in identifying 'special educational needs'. SEN is a legal term used to describe "children who have a difficulty or disability which makes learning harder for them which calls for SEN provision to be made available" (Section 20: Children and Families Act 2014). In order to have a statement of SEN, the

specific challenge and ensuing provision is agreed by a combination of the school, local authority, social services, doctor and/or educational psychologist. Alternatively, SEN without a statement can be agreed by a smaller group perhaps including the school and parents.

SEN labelling without statement is over 60 per cent more common for the youngest pupils than for the oldest in any year.

Precise age-in-year is not being taken into account sufficiently

The same happens to a lesser extent with labelling as SEN with statement, and as not having English as a first language.

There is no reason to believe that genuine SEN are distributed across the population like this. It is far more likely that children with lower results at school tend to be considered for SEN labelling, which means their precise age-in-year is not being taken into account sufficiently. The distortion by age is worse when schools make the decision to label as SEN (without statement), and better when a doctor or educational psychologist is involved.

Younger children in any cohort will tend to struggle more on average, and so become visible as apparent under-achievers.

Changing the cut-off date for entry to school or allowing parents to delay starting school for their child would not solve all the problems with the system. These unfair artefacts of the school system should be amended by the age standardisation of all results, which would then form the official record for educational decisions by schools, universities, employers, individuals and family.

This study is based on two ongoing ESRC-funded studies and was originally presented at BERA 2017.

Co-author Nadia Siddiqui is Assistant Professor at Durham University

We must stop rating reading skills on a bell curve – it lets us leave struggling pupils behind, says James Murphy

It is alarming that so many students arrive at secondary school not reading well enough to access the curriculum. It is even more alarming that we don't believe these students can catch up.

The assumption that most secondary leaders work on is that low attainers are also low ability – that is, students who begin school further behind have less potential and will therefore stay behind.

The move to adjust Progress 8 points so that progress in the highest grades at GCSE was worth three times as much as progress in the lowest grades is a case in point for. The government claimed the change "protected" schools from being disadvantaged by large numbers of low attainers.

This move did nothing for the students concerned, however, and in many ways it has made matters worse. The message to school leaders is to focus on maximising the progress of the most able if they want to lift the school's Progress 8 score. If you could put resources into extending 10 bright students or accelerating 10 weak students, which group would you invest in?

Under the incentives of the new regime, the weaker students would only generate half as much bang for your buck. Which is all a bit odd, since, if it's so hard to get progress from low attainers, shouldn't it be their progress that is double-weighted?

Secondary schools are particularly prone



JAMES MURPHY

School partnerships director,
Thinking Reading

Every child can read – don't write them off

to a passive approach to reading problems.

While the 'Read On. Get On' campaign identified that 20 per cent of children arriving at secondary school are not reading well enough, the OECD identified that 17 per cent of 15-year-olds were at or below the lowest standards of literacy, and in a separate report found that the UK is the only country in the world where our 15- to 24-year-olds are less literate than their grandparents' generation. A longitudinal study currently under way at Royal Holloway University has found that the reading gap between different attainment groups largely remains constant throughout secondary school.

The widespread belief in secondary schools that struggling readers cannot catch up is a myth. There is now clear evidence that all children, except those with the most severe disabilities, can learn to read well. Reading is the richest area of educational

research, and that research is converging around how best to ensure that all children learn to read, even – or especially – those for whom reading does not come naturally. It appears that the processes of learning to read are very similar at any age. If we teach students explicitly and systematically, applying a high degree of rigour to our own practice, they can catch up.

One reason for our systemic assumption of reading failure is our fixation with the bell curve. Because reading scores can be arranged on a normal distribution, we assume that students at the lower end cannot be good at reading. But this is not the case. For example, over three years, my previous school in north London ensured every student could read. In my current work, we typically see gains of several years over a few months, in students with a long history of struggling to read. That's not to say it's easy

work, but reading is too important to neglect.

For critical skills – such as driving cars or flying planes – we use a proficiency test, not a bell curve. Reading is critical to life chances, so we need a minimum standard of reading proficiency that all children must reach before sitting their GCSEs, and for which schools are held accountable. Yes, we would still have a bell curve in terms of relative abilities, but the whole curve would move to the right, so that the proportion of children who really couldn't read was tiny.

Currently poor literacy is estimated to affect six million adults in the UK, and to cost our economy between £23 billion and £31 billion per annum. That's at least half

“ **The widespread belief that struggling readers cannot catch up is a myth**

of the annual schools budget. If the system were to genuinely prioritise reading so that every child leaves school reading fluently, we would transform not just the educational landscape, but our whole society.

Can it be done? Certainly, with the political will, and the humility to learn how. The political will is required at the policy level, but humility is needed at the coalface.

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Our blog reviewer of the week is Iesha Small, an educational researcher, teacher and commentator @ieshasmall

Humiliating children: ust because it's your tribe doing it, doesn't make it ok

@Disidealist

This is a short and powerful blog which will divide many teachers and school leaders. Disappointed Idealist outlines some practices that they strongly believe to be wrong in schools. In their view, there are some things which are unacceptable wherever you identify yourself on the left-right, permissive-authoritarian ideological spectrum.

I imagine it was prompted by recent reports coming out about strict behaviour policies at some secondary schools, which are linked to in the article.

I do not agree with humiliating children; I do not agree with humiliating anyone. I have, however, taught in schools where it was hard to recruit teachers and where behaviour was not only a barrier to learning but – on too many occasions – completely unsafe for staff and children. It is difficult to speak about schools that you haven't visited and comment on teachers that you haven't seen teach. I am also wary of anything that has the whiff of a witch hunt – possibly stirred up by journalists or parents with an axe to grind – because I can empathize with how I would feel as teacher or leader at a school receiving a barrage of negative press that detracted from the job of actually trying to improve the school.

However, I do whole heartedly agree with Disappointed Idealist's point that if we see something we feel or know to be wrong we should act. For me, this action should be in the real world not only as a social media activist. Silence or looking the other way is not a solution "otherwise, by our inaction, we do not just tolerate it, but foster it".

Red17 blogs, presentations, video links

@5N_Afzal

ResearchEd is becoming one of the biggest dates on the educational conference calendar. I have never attended one – it's rare for me to go to educational events at the weekend due to personal commitments – but I know that for many teachers and people involved in education it has become a must-visit event.

Saturday 9 September was the date of the 2017 conference. Naureen Afzal, one of the attendees, has helpfully curated a list of blogs written about the event as well as videos and streams of talks. If, like me, you have never been to a ResearchEd, her list is a useful starting point. For example, I watched a video of Alex Quigley talking about subject-specific language which I found interesting.

Youth Homelessness: It's people that need a place to call home

@KateBV

"At times, it was challenging. I came away from the workshops feeling physically and emotionally drained." This could be the description of any teacher's full teaching day: as I sit here writing this article on a Friday afternoon, trying to meet my deadline having taught all day, I can empathize with the sentiment. However, it's not about teaching. In this blog, Kate Bowen-Viner is writing about a research project, 'A place to call home', that she has been working on to explore youth homelessness and its links to education.

Kate reflects in a very personal nature about what she has learned now that this phase of the project is over. Organisations like ResearchEd and the newly formed College of Teaching are keen to make teaching a more evidence-informed profession. Kate reminds us that some more qualitative research can be used to "step into a world that is otherwise hidden". I had the pleasure of project-managing this research for LKMco and I loved reading Kate's blog because she articulates so well that research can be used to improve things for young people, either in our classrooms or wider society, and that it should be a tool that makes us start to listen rather than close off debate.

Orchestrated leadership... consistent vs coherent

@ROptimism.

Relentless Optimism is a pleasure to interact with on Twitter and is always full of interesting takes on school leadership adapted from a variety of fields. Here they consider leadership via the prism of conducting an orchestra; it's well worth a read.



BOOK REVIEW

Taking Control: How to Prepare for Ofsted Inspection

By: Paul Garvey

Published by: John Catt

Reviewed by: Antony Witheyman,
CEO of Innovate MAT



I head up a small, multi academy trust focusing on village schools in the Northamptonshire countryside and formed in 2014. For the most part the sun shines brightly for our schools. However, there were darker clouds this summer, as every single one of our schools was inspected during a period of 14 weeks. As CEO I was involved in every inspection, as was one of our headteachers, and it was one of the most stressful and relentless periods I have experienced in 18 years of teaching.

So the question I hoped to have answered by this book was whether or not it would have made a difference to have read it in advance.

The answer? Most definitely.

While Paul Garvey's book doesn't tell you anything revelatory about the process or what to expect, the calm, precise and professional way in which it is written will certainly help senior management teams, governors and staff take control of the inspection process. My recent experiences have led me to agree: taking control of your inspection is the key to the whole process.

The book takes you through the entire Ofsted journey, from how to write an effective self-evaluation form, through the initial phonecall to the analysis of data that Ofsted will expect (or not expect) you to have prepared. Garvey discusses the language schools should use in their SEF, and highlights ways in which these can be used to run school improvement during the entire cycle between inspections. The process of writing a SEF is broken down separately for

primary and secondary schools. Not only does this prove invaluable in preparing for an inspection, but seeing the self-evaluation as cyclical means it becomes a job with purpose and not just one you perform for your Ofsted visit.

One section focuses on the physical inspection from an inspector's point of view, which for me is the most interesting part of the book. I am surprised – as is the author – that Ofsted has never published this kind of document itself, as it really helps understand the why, when and how of inspections. From the documents to which the lead inspector has access prior to inspection, to which

questions you will be asked in the first call, to how the inspection timetable is crafted, the author has given schools a real insight into the pieces of the Ofsted puzzle and how they all fit together.

For most schools the notion of the unknown is the biggest concern and this book helps dispel myths and drops in little nuggets of information to help guide thinking throughout the process. The author continually refers to the "Ofsted framework", and in my experience, this is another vital aspect of taking control. Knowing

that framework inside out means that as senior leaders we can understand decisions made by inspectors and challenge where necessary. Taking Control highlights the areas that schools should be aware of.

“
A real insight into the pieces of the Ofsted puzzle and how they all fit together

It doesn't matter which Ofsted category you are in, or whether you are primary or secondary, as the book is differentiated accordingly. Until recently, Garvey was an Ofsted inspector and it is for this insider knowledge that I believe this book is an essential read for all schools awaiting the call. If taking control is the key to a successful inspection, reading Garvey's book will help school leaders understand exactly how to do it.





Week in Westminster

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

MONDAY:

Yawn, snoooooze, snore. Parliament is out this week so most shenanigans have ceased.

But never fear, because Week in Westminster has some exciting news. Longtime readers of the column will know we have been waiting since Easter 2015 for the most recent minutes of the Department for Education's board meetings.

The last ones were brief to say the least:

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION BOARD: SUMMARY OF MEETING 27 JANUARY 2015

Welcome

The Secretary of State opened the meeting by welcoming all Board members.

Note of discussions

The Board held discussions on the work of the department during the Parliament.

Since then, nothing. So, after a wrangle involving the law, (rights under the law that is, not the actual police), we got copies of more recent meetings. Joy.

Only, it appears that while the department has at least made the minutes more detailed, they are still not going to let us see them.

Our favourite extracts include:

3. TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Suzy Jenner, Head of Communications and Elin Jones, Deputy Director, Teaching and Leadership joined the meeting.

<redacted>

The Board welcomed the analysis.

<redacted>

And, under a section titled 'Achievements in Parliament'

<redacted>

The Secretary of State concluded that it had been a very helpful discussion

<redacted>

Sigh. Some things never change.

TUESDAY:

We were excited today to learn the DfE is hiring people to find out what the civil service can do better (see page 11 for more). Our favourite line from the job advert was where it said "we do not yet know exactly what 'activity' we want to improve and how we will do it". That's the sort of honesty we like to see!

It's a shame that the title for these people – who will be paid over £60k each – is "delivery manager" though. Is it just us or does it sound like they're about to drop your shopping off?

WEDNESDAY:

New guidance was issued to schools today on the use of adrenaline auto-injectors (otherwise known as epi-pens) for emergency use on children at risk of anaphylaxis. For anyone who has ever had the horror of watching a child struggle to breath because of an allergy, this is very good news. Seriously. We don't have a sarcastic comment to make. Go get one and make a policy for it.

THURSDAY:

Yawn.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



Name Chris Shepherd

Age 54

Occupation Biomedical engineer and governor

Location Swindon

Subscriber since March 2016

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



FLY ON THE WALL

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

In Costa Coffee while having lunch on Fridays, on my iPad.

Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?

The news section is great. It has a broad perspective that I find useful as a governor. I always make sure I read the blogs and book reviews on the lookout for new ideas.

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

Fair funding for schools; we have suffered from long term underfunding in Swindon.

Who is your favourite education secretary of all time?

I can't choose from a pretty lacklustre bunch.

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

There have been many but the investigations into MATs are certainly interesting.

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

It usually goes straight to the recycling from the wrapper since I prefer to read it electronically. I did share one of my free lollipops with the wife though.

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

I would institute a campaign to get more consistency in school funding.

Favourite memory of your school years?

Performing Millikan's oil drop experiment and getting the right answer to the charge on an electron. How cool is that?

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

I don't work in education, but wish I had tried to become a primary teacher.

Favourite book on education?

Playing with fire: Embracing risk and danger in schools is a thought-provoking read about what is possible.

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

A section for governors/trustees/members.

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

Rebecca Clark, when she was regional schools commissioner for the south-west. I might find out what is actually going on, though as a fly I might not understand it all.



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



South Yorkshire launches massive mobility project

FEATURED

NAME YOUR SCHOOL'S UNSUNG HEROES

A government-backed initiative to raise the educational attainment and aspirations of young people in South Yorkshire was launched last week.

South Yorkshire Futures, a social mobility project led by Sheffield Hallam University, will support disadvantaged young people in the region from early years as far as further and higher education, in an effort to close the attainment gap and better life chances.

The project will focus on preparation, performance and aspirations of pupils in local schools, with a strong focus on finding ways to increase teacher recruitment and retention in the region.

South Yorkshire Futures has already received support from the government for its plans for the opportunity area, with the project's director, Greg Burke, on secondment from the DfE.

"What we're trying to create is a spirit of optimism," Burke explained. "We've got lots of data that says South Yorkshire doesn't perform very well on educational stuff, and it's trying to get people to come together and say actually, we can do something about this."

"We've identified a significant area where we can add value in teacher



The minister for children and families Robert Goodwill, left, with Chris Husbands, vice-chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University



Professor Sam Twiselton, the director of Sheffield Institute of Education

recruitment and retention. South Yorkshire is a major supplier of the teacher workforce. We've been developing a partnership with the University of Sheffield and three school-centred ITT providers to develop a collaborative approach to marketing and recruitment."

Research from the Sutton Trust in 2015 revealed that of the 14 South Yorkshire constituencies, 10 had very low or low social mobility, and pupils in the region are less likely to achieve good GCSEs and remain in

education than their peers in other parts of the country.

To tackle the problem, part of the project will involve looking at schools who don't get involved in external initiatives, and analysing why and how that can be changed.

"We're particularly interested in engaging with schools who don't get involved in things like initial teacher training," he said. "We want to work out why they're not involved and what would be the things that might enable them to get involved."

The initiative is currently open to all schools in South Yorkshire. Interested schools can contact southyorkshirefutures@shu.ac.uk for more information.

Sir Daniel Moynihan, the chair of the education honours committee, is calling for more schools in the north of England and the midlands to nominate their staff members for awards.

Subject leaders, long-serving teachers, support staff, site managers and lollipop ladies are among those the committee wants to see put up for a nomination, alongside senior leaders.

So far, the committee has received a number of nominations from the south-east of England, but only a small number from elsewhere in the UK.

"We want better representation from different regions," said Moynihan. "Schools are collegial places and sometimes there's a reluctance to nominate, but when we've seen people get honours in schools, it has lifted everybody. It's recognition not just of an individual, but of the team around that person."

Schools can nominate staff year-round through gov.uk. The process involves filling in a form to say why someone is worthy of an honour and then gathering letters of support testifying why the nominee does a good job.

Honours are awarded biannually through the new year's honours list, which is announced on New Year's Day, and the Queen's birthday list, announced in June.

Nominations submitted now will be eligible for the Queen's birthday list.



Leedon Lower School pupils see the wood for the trees

Forests 'can improve poetry skills'

A study undertaken with a Bedfordshire primary school has revealed the positive impact of the outdoors on children's creative writing.

One group of year 4 pupils from Leedon Lower School entered a forest, and another group looked at laminated images of woods, before writing a poem.

Led by researchers at Curtin University in Australia, the study revealed the group that went out into the forest used more vivid language – and twice as many similes and metaphors – in their poetry than their classroom-based counterparts.

"There was a much higher and richer level of imagery amongst the poems crafted by the 'outdoor' group compared to the 'indoor', which suggests that learning in natural environments could enhance creativity and language development," said Dr Paul Gardner, a researcher at Curtin University's school of education.

Some of the students' descriptions about their natural experiences included evocative lines such as "it was like walking on marshmallow ground", "sharp pine cones like grenades" or "crows that bark like a dog", reported one of the researchers.



Not a crow in sight

Scarecrow project eases back-to-school transition

A primary headteacher has launched a cross-curricular scarecrow-making project to get pupils back into work mode after the summer holidays.

The project had pupils from reception to year 6 at Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy in Suffolk using their design, English, science and maths skills to design and build a scarecrow.

"The purpose of the project was to reinforce behaviour, teamwork and cooperation, but also consolidate the academic skills they'd already learned, such as measuring with a ruler, as well as introducing some new concepts," said headteacher Lisa Tweed.

Teachers in each class were encouraged to come up with their own hook to get pupils

interested, with one placing straw on desks, and another using a book about a scarecrow marriage.

One finished creation had an iPad for a face, which played a video of pupils talking, and one cardboard box scarecrow reached the ceiling.

"Sending the message to children that maths can be done through measuring a scarecrow, and science by looking at the materials that can be used to create them – it's a different slant of thinking on education," said Tweed.





TONY SMITH

Founding headteacher,
Katherine Warington
School

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Deputy head,
Roundwood Park School

INTERESTING FACT: Tony has two classic cars, a Jaguar and a Morris Minor, and used to DJ on Xfm.



CLARE HODGSON

Head, Bohunt Sixth
Form

START DATE: September 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Assistant headteacher at
Bohunt School

INTERESTING FACT: She played violin as part of an orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



EMMA HOLLIS

Executive director,
National Association of
School-Based Teacher
Trainers (NASBTT)

START DATE: September 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Head of educational strategy at the Inspiring Futures Through Learning MAT, and head of the Milton Keynes Teaching School Alliance

INTERESTING FACT: Emma is a PADI-qualified advanced open-water diver.



PAUL DODDRIDGE

Principal, Oasis
Academy Woodview

START DATE: September 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Headteacher of
St George's CE Academy

INTERESTING FACT: Paul is a huge music fan: he plays piano and guitar, and sings in a local Birmingham band, The Mandrills.



JULIAN APPELYARD

CEO of the Pontefract
Academies Trust

START DATE: April 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Executive principal and CEO,
Rochdale Sixth Form College

INTERESTING FACT: He is a huge Paul Weller fan, and has been to see him countless times.

Get in touch!

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

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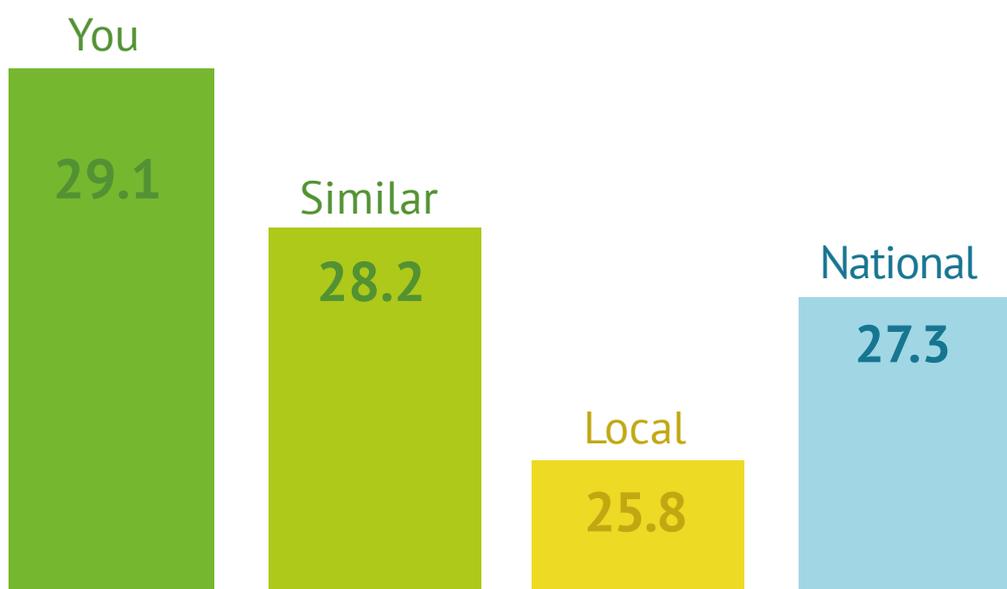
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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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.