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**LUCY POWELL: 'GIVE US REASONS FOR WCAT CHOICES'**

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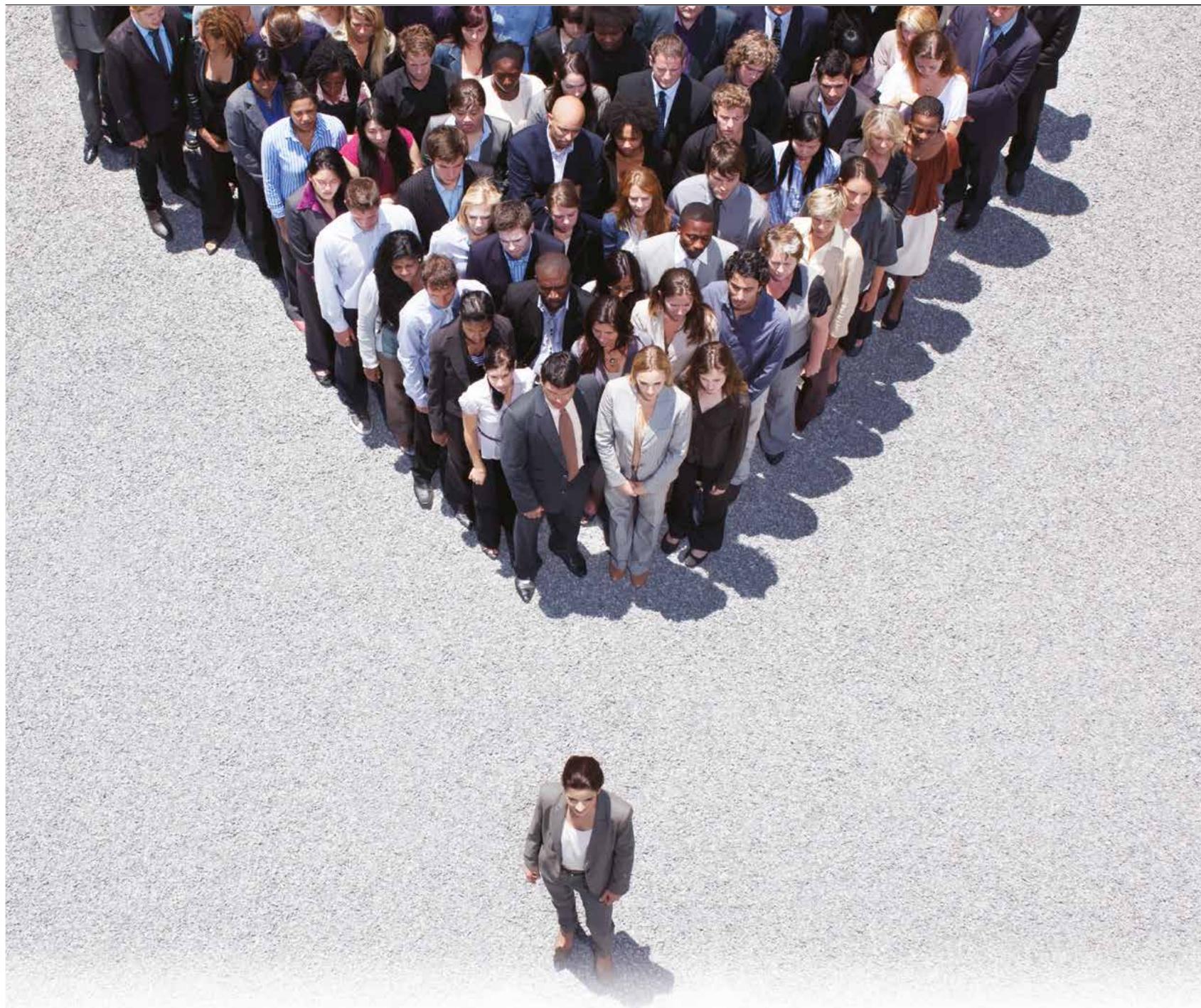
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2017 | EDITION 123



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### Headteachers' Roundtable



FRIDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2018



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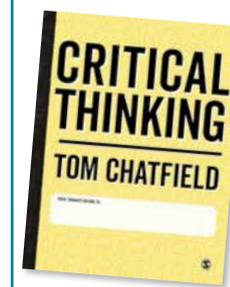
**JEN PERSSON**

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## NEWS

## WCAT successor trusts' credentials questioned

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

The government needs to explain why it picked certain trusts as sponsors for the schools that belonged to the collapsed Wakefield City Academies Trust, a former shadow education secretary has said, after it emerged the trusts have variable records of school improvement.

WCAT announced it would close in September, and that its 21 schools would be handed to new sponsors as it could not meet the required levels of quality.

Eight academy trusts were tentatively named in October, but Lucy Powell – who now sits on parliament's education committee – said the communities served by WCAT's schools needed assurances that the new sponsors have track records of improvement.

One of the sponsors is Inspiring Futures, which was set up only seven months ago, and will take over the 'inadequate'-rated Willow Academy in Doncaster. The school was put into special measures in 2013, after which WCAT adopted it, but it fell back into the category again late last year.

Crucially, however, Inspiring Futures has no website and

there is limited information that's publicly available.

The trust is registered on the government's performance tables as having two schools: Bentley High Street Primary School and Rosedale Primary School, both in Doncaster. But it only names one accounting officer, its executive headteacher Janis James. No other information is recorded, and information on the group's trustees is totally absent.

*Schools Week* repeatedly tried to contact both schools but has received no response.

Bentley High Street was rated 'outstanding' two years ago, when Ofsted complimented the progress of poorer pupils and its headteacher's "energetic drive".

Rosedale, meanwhile, was in special measures two years ago but was said by Ofsted to be "taking effective action" towards improvement last year.

It will not be inspected for a further three years now, so there is no formal record of school improvement to show Inspiring Future is able to turn around a failing primary.

Christine Bayliss, an education consultant and former policy advisor to the Department for Education, said the lack of information

about Inspiring Futures could be the "thin end of the regulatory wedge". She believes WCAT should instead have been improved rather than wound up.

Powell echoed the sentiment, and wants the regional schools commissioners to publish clear evaluations of potential sponsors, with Ofsted ratings, governance and attainment data using a "point-scoring" system.

The largest block of WCAT's schools will go to Outwood Grange Academies Trust, a flagship turnaround trust which received £1.4 million of government funding to take over failing schools in the north.

But none of the eight schools it will absorb are 'inadequate'. Of the five primary schools it will take on, three are 'good' and one is 'outstanding'.

Martyn Oliver, its chief executive, said it had been asked by the RSC to absorb the schools nearest to them, and that the group had taken on a total of 18 other schools rated 'inadequate', of which 13 are now either 'good' or 'outstanding'.

"Any suggestion that OGAT has chosen to not support schools in an Ofsted category would be nonsense given this track record," he said.

Four schools are also due to be passed to Delta Academies Trust, once known as the Schools Partnership Trust, and which rebranded

after a focused inspection in 2016 detailed poor performance.

However, the appearance of Delta as a preferred sponsor for the four schools, three of which were previously rated inadequate, represents a turnaround in the government's views since then.

So far this year, three of Delta's 23 schools have been inspected; two received a 'good' rating and one 'requires improvement'.

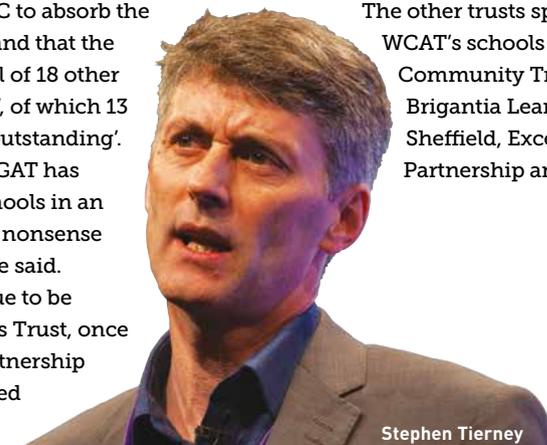
Stephen Tierney, chair of the Headteachers Roundtable, said that the new sponsors must "absolutely" have demonstrated positive outcomes for pupils before taking on additional schools.

But if evidence of school improvement is limited, the government should check whether a trust has schools similar to the one it is taking over, and see if these have a good record instead.

The other trusts sponsoring WCAT's schools are Aston Community Trust, Astrea, Brigantia Learning Trust Sheffield, Exceed Learning Partnership and Tauheedul.



Christine Bayliss



Stephen Tierney

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## NEWS

## IN brief

## ESFA BOSS ORDERS TRUSTS TO JUSTIFY EXECUTIVE PAY

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has written to the trustees of academy trusts with just one school asking them to justify any salaries of over £150,000 a year.

The letter, from ESFA chief executive Eileen Miller, pointed to the “considerable scrutiny” over taxpayer-funded executive salaries and reminded trusts they are responsible for ensuring value for money.

The academies financial handbook now requires boards of trustees to ensure executive pay decisions “follow a robust evidence-based process and are reflective of the individual’s role and responsibilities”.

“In line with this new requirement, I would be grateful for further information on the rationale for the level of pay you set and the due process followed,” Miller wrote.

The letter includes a form for trusts to fill in, asking for the roles, responsibility, and “level of challenge” for anyone in a high-pay job.

Trusts in receipt of the letter have told they must respond by December 15.

## FLOREAT ACADEMY TRUST SEEKS EMERGENCY MERGER WITH AVANTI SCHOOLS

An academy trust founded by a government minister is considering a merger with another chain as it cannot continue running its three primary schools.

The Floreat Education Academies Trust, set up by Lord O’Shaughnessy, a health minister, is in talks with the Avanti Schools Trust.

If going ahead, Avanti’s five primary and two secondary Hindu-ethos schools will become a mixed multi-academy trust, joined by Floreat’s three secular primary free schools.

O’Shaughnessy, a Conservative peer, told *Schools Week* that it was “very difficult” to run Floreat using money from the three free schools which would not be full for several years and so had limited funding.

“Of course, we would have liked to have stayed independent, but I think in the end we have to provide reassurances about sustainability to parents, to pupils and to teachers,” he said.

In a joint statement, Avanti’s chair Mike Younger and its chief executive Nitesh Gor said the chain’s has always wanted to include non-denominational schools.

## £10M AVAILABLE TO CHECK NEW PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The government is looking for a company to check the quality of new national professional qualifications for teachers, with up to £10 million available for the winning bidder.

The Department for Education has advertised for a “single national provider or consortium” to provide “quality assurance to National Professional Qualifications throughout England” between March 2018 and March 2021. The contract is valued between £6 million and £10 million.

Reformed national professional qualifications for middle and senior leaders, headteachers and executive heads launched in September, and are offered by 41 providers across England.

*Schools Week* understands the government intended the National College for Teaching and Leadership to assure the qualifications but is now seeking an alternative after its decision to close the college.

If the full value of the contract is paid out, it will mean that the DfE has spent as much cash quality-assuring the qualifications as it has made available to support teachers in hard-to-reach areas to take them.

## Every school to get a ‘mental health lead’

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA\_AK

Pupils will be treated in the classroom by “thousands” of new mental health support workers under significant reforms announced this week.

The government’s green paper on children and young people’s mental health includes a £310 million package to help young people with mental health problems get better treatment.

The majority of the funding, £215 million, will be spent on new mental health support teams.

The government will recruit “several thousand people” over the next five years to work with the NHS and offer treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy within schools.

The remaining £95 million will fund the appointment and training of new mental health leads, equivalent to around £4,000 per school.

The government wants to see a member of staff in every school in England trained to develop mental health policies and give pastoral support by 2025.

Ministers have been increasingly under pressure to improve mental health support.

In April, a survey by the NASUWT union found that three in four teachers felt unable to access support to tackle their pupils’ mental health issues.

And in August, the DfE’s own research found that schools could not afford to

establish sufficient mental health support for pupils.

The chief executive of the Young Minds charity, Sarah Brennan, warned of a “mental health crisis”, and of long waits for access to services.

“It is crucial that services are given the resource to match the true scale of need, so that all children and young people in need of mental health support are able to get it,” she said.

The government hopes its policies will bridge the long-standing gap between outside mental health services and schools.

Justine Greening (pictured), the education secretary, said the proposals would “strengthen the links between schools and the experts who can give young people the support they need”.

The government is also proposing several other mental health initiatives.

Mental health will form part of the new curriculum for relationships education, due to become compulsory in all schools from 2019, and new research will be commissioned into how best to support vulnerable families.

Awareness training for teachers will



also be offered to every primary and secondary school in the country, and a pilot scheme will attempt to cap the waiting time for child and adolescent mental health services at four weeks.

Although the green paper has been widely welcomed, some have questioned whether its ambitious goals can be achieved with the limited money allocated.

“We remain extremely concerned about the difficulties which exist in accessing local child and adolescent mental health services for young people who require specialist care,” said ASCL’s general secretary, Geoff Barton, who specifically wondered whether the four-week waiting time was achievable.

“We will be discussing this with the government, but we suspect that significantly more funding will be required to ensure that specialist services are resourced to match need.”

## ... AND ‘POCKET CHANGE’ FOR A CAREERS LEAD TOO

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA\_AK

As well as mental health leads, the new careers strategy should see every school appoint a “careers leader” – but there are serious questions about the funding available for such an ambitious plan.

When the skills minister Anne Milton unveiled her vision of a career-oriented future, it included just £4 million to train careers leaders in at least 500 schools and colleges, on Monday.

One of the goals is to have a careers leader in “every school and college” in England, but this works out at around £8,000 for each school – and it seems not to include money for new staff.

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), which has already received around £70 million from the government, will also become the self-proclaimed “backbone” of a £5 million scheme to set up 20 “careers hubs” in disadvantaged areas of the country.

The CEC will also implement eight career benchmarks in all schools, which require an embedded programme of career education, linking curriculum to careers, as well as personal guidance and access to career information.

Other policies announced for schools include £2 million for career trials in primary schools and a requirement for a “meaningful” business interaction in every year of secondary school.

The former chair of the National Careers Council, Dr Deirdre Hughes, described the plans as a “careers experiment” rather than a strategy, and asked which evidence it had been based on.

“The CEC has already had two years to cover all of the Gatsby benchmarks, with £70 million of government funding behind them. We will watch with interest to see how it covers the benchmarks now,” she said.

“Every school has a careers coordinator already, so 500 extra careers leaders is a drop in the ocean compared to what is really needed.”

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden said the government had “belatedly put together a jumble of ideas without the necessary funding or resources” and accused it of promising a “mammoth” but producing a “mouse”.

Describing the funding as “pocket change”, he added: “It is so typical of this government that they are hanging their hat on new careers leaders but offer no incentives to already over-worked teaching staff to take on further responsibility. Once again this government has failed to



adequately deliver the extra funding and resources necessary for a successful careers strategy.”

The general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, Paul Whiteman, welcomed the focus on careers guidance, describing the introduction of careers leaders as an “excellent” initiative, but warned it remained to be seen how the government would support “over-stretched and cash-strapped schools” take on new responsibilities.

“We know that schools are already struggling to resource careers guidance and these additional responsibilities will tip them over the edge,” he added. “It’s a great strategy but it must be funded.”

The strategy, which was first promised in 2015, was finally launched at the Careers Development Institute conference in Solihull at the start of the month.

During a question-and-answer session at the end of her speech, Milton dismissed concerns about schools in deprived areas that could not access a careers hub.

“I will get push back from teachers who will say ‘we’ve got a lot to do already, surely we can’t do this,’” she said. “Well, what are you educating children for if it’s not actually to improve their lives?”

“It’s lovely to think that education is good for its own sake and some people might have the luxury of that, but actually embedding this through schools is really, really important.”

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## NEWS

# MANCHESTER STUDIO SCHOOL FACES CLOSURE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A studio school in Manchester that has been plagued with financial and performance problems since it opened in 2014 is now facing closure.

Vicky Beer, the schools commissioner for the area, has written to everyone involved with the Manchester Creative Studio to inform them of a consultation on whether it should be closed or passed to another sponsor.

However, she warned turnaround would be a "challenge" for any new management teams.

If closed, it will be the eighteenth studio school to shut, leaving just 34 open.

Originally, Beer had planned to rebroker the school and its sister institution, the Collective Spirit free school in Oldham, in January, after Manchester Creative Studio was handed a financial notice to improve and Collective Spirit was placed in special measures.

But Collective Spirit closed in the summer and the Manchester Creative Studio, which is also in special measures, deliberately avoided taking on new pupils in September, in preparation for a potential closure.

Both schools were founded by Raja Miah, a former charity head, and has received support from another chain, the Laurus Trust, for the past six months.

However, Martin Shevill, who took over as chair of the school's board in July, said it had become "increasingly clear" the school "does not have the capacity and resources" to sustain its future.

"The option that is being strongly considered is that the school will close at the end of this academic year," he said.

In a letter from Beer, seen by the Manchester Evening News, the commissioner said the school would need a new sponsor "that could reverse its falling pupil numbers to make it financially viable".

"We have therefore decided to consider the possibility of closure of the school, subject to conducting a 'listening period' to gather views on the proposed closure," she wrote.

The Manchester Creative Studio is not the first institution of its kind to run into problems.

Studio schools are specialist 14-to-19 institutions with a vocational focus. Backed by significant government investment, many nevertheless struggled to recruit the necessary number of pupils to be financially viable.

Since the project's inception, 17 studio schools have closed, leaving just 35 open nationwide.

The rate of closure has reportedly caused unease at the Department for Education, and *Schools Week* revealed earlier this year that the former academies minister Lord Nash met officials from the programme to discuss a review of the model's concept.

Meeting records show that Nash met the Studio Schools Trust (SST) in March, with the purpose of the meeting listed as being "to review the concept of studio schools".

However, after he was approached by *Schools Week*, SST's chief executive David Nicoll denied the concept of studio schools was even discussed at the meeting.

# Schools get 2 years to prep for Ofsted follow-ups

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA\_AK

Ofsted has confirmed it will give schools up to two years to prepare for a follow-up inspection after it raises concerns about the quality of education, leadership or management.

The regulator is pushing ahead with three proposals it set out in September, which aim to give 'good'-rated schools in danger of slipping down a grade more time to improve before inspectors return.

If Ofsted has concerns about the quality of education, leadership or management at a school, but there are no "significant issues" with safeguarding or behaviour, it will publish a letter outlining areas for improvement rather than converting a short two-day inspection into a longer one, as it does at present.

Full inspections will instead take place within two years, giving the school time to "address weaknesses". In the meantime, the letter will make it clear the school's overall rating has not changed.

Similarly, if inspectors believe a school is moving towards 'outstanding', Ofsted will publish a letter confirming the school is still 'good' and setting out how it can improve. A full inspection will take place within the same timeframe, although schools will be allowed to apply for an early inspection.

If there are serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, the inspectorate will still convert



short inspections into full ones within 48 hours.

However, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) said the move "lacks support" either from school leaders and inspectors.

Its general secretary, Paul Whiteman (pictured), said it was "deeply disappointing" that Ofsted was pushing the changes through "when so many senior voices in education are clearly sceptical about their plans" and warned that a "cloud of uncertainty will linger" over schools awaiting their full inspections.

"The uncertainty about the quality of education provided could become the single biggest barrier to improvement that the school in question will face," he added.

"Ofsted's focus should be on getting inspection right the first time rather than putting schools and their communities through unnecessary and unhelpful periods of uncertainty."

The watchdog said it ran its consultation after receiving feedback that short inspections immediately converting to full

inspections were challenging for schools and inspectors.

Sean Harford, its national director of education, said the new arrangements reflected Ofsted's aim "to act as a force for improvement through inspection, and to catch schools before they fall".

The move makes for a further overlap with the regional schools commissioners, who also provide recommendations for improvement to academies. Ofsted hopes it will reduce its resourcing difficulties, as it sometimes struggles to ensure staff are available for extended inspections at short notice.

Chris Keates, the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters & Union of Women Teachers, is worried that schools may respond "inappropriately", and use a pending full inspection as an opportunity to "impose significant additional workload burdens on staff".

She wants Ofsted to work with her union to "explore alternative ways forward that will not exacerbate the excessive workload burdens already being faced by the profession".

The Association of School and College Leaders' general secretary, Geoff Barton, supported the decision to follow up short inspections at a later date, and said Ofsted must make clear that a school remains 'good' ahead of the full inspection.

Ofsted's consultation into short inspections ran from September 21 until November 8, and gathered more than 1,500 responses.

The watchdog previously ditched plans to give schools up to 15 days' notice of inspections.

# THE PHONICS ROADSHOW RIDES AGAIN

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

Investigates

The Department for Education is looking for an organisation to deliver a new round of phonics roadshows next year.

A for-profit phonics company, Ruth Miskin Training, has so far delivered 22 of these roadshows, having won previous contracts, including one worth up to £50,000 in 2016, according to a report in *The Guardian*.

The company did 10 roadshows, which promote "effective practice in the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics", in 2016, and 12 further events this summer. It has also extended its contract to 12 more in spring 2018.

But an "early engagement" process is now open for a new round of roadshows, and other suppliers have the chance to bid.

The DfE has not announced the value of the latest contract, but said the workshops should "bring into scope reception year and how schools can encourage pupils to read for pleasure".

The procurement process will begin between now and February, a representative told *Schools Week*, and the contracts will be awarded in spring 2018 and run until March 31, 2020. An engagement event will take place in January.

Phonics has been one of the central pillars of the government's primary school reforms, and the number of children

passing the phonics screening test has risen from 58 per cent in 2012 to 81 per cent this year. There are a number of private companies offering phonics teaching programme that schools can buy.

The phonics roadshows delivered by RMT so far have included a presentation from one of the company's own consultant trainers, though a spokesperson for the company said this is "non-programme specific" and includes "no references" to its own 'Read Write Inc' phonics course.

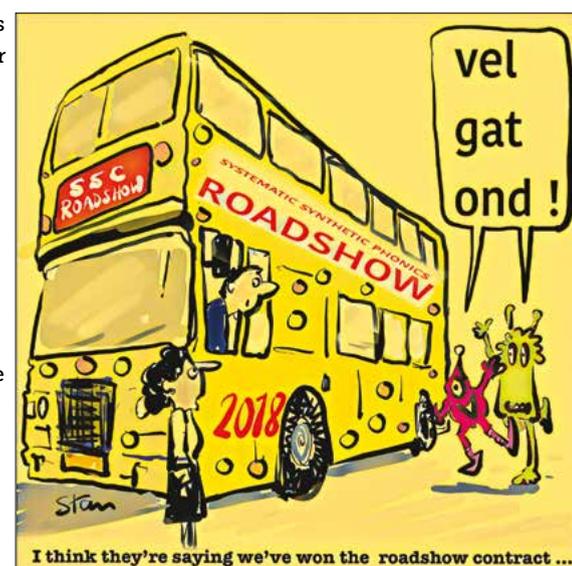
The events also include a presentation by the headteacher of the host school, and a presentation by another visiting school that teaches an alternative phonics programme.

*Schools Week* understands that the University of Reading's Institute for Education also ran phonics and reading workshops funded by the DfE earlier this year.

Janet Downs from the state school campaign group Local Schools Network is sceptical of the value of more roadshows.

"The evidence the DfE cites to support synthetic phonics actually promotes systematic teaching of any phonics method," she said.

"A report from the Education and Endowment Foundation on Key Stage 1 literacy found there wasn't enough



evidence to recommend one phonics method over another, but the DfE continues to push one method alone.

"Instead of spending money on roadshows and the like, the DfE would be better leaving decisions about methodology to teachers."

But a spokesperson for RMT said the company had received positive feedback from the roadshows it has delivered so far. He claimed that the 2017 attendees said it was "valuable to see phonics in action and to hear about strategies to get every child reading by six", and that 98 per cent of participants said the events would "have an impact on phonics teaching practice in their school".

## NEWS

## BRIGHT TRIBE IN TALKS OVER NORTHERN SCHOOLS

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA\_AK

Exclusive

The Bright Tribe academy trust is in discussions with the government about walking away from all five of its schools in the north of England, the national schools commissioner has revealed.

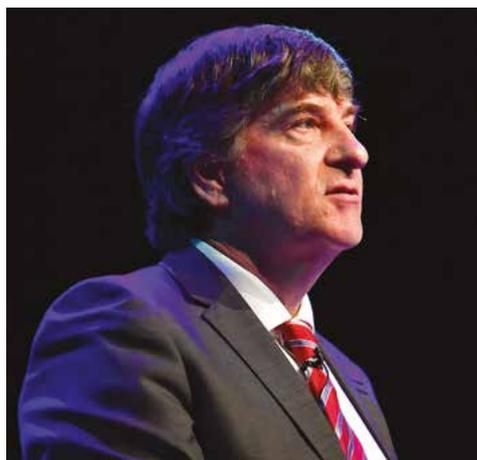
Sir David Carter (pictured) told MPs that "conversations about Bright Tribe moving out of the north" began in September, and would continue following the trust's decision to walk away from Whitehaven Academy in Cumbria.

Stockport-based Bright Tribe currently runs five schools in the north: Whitehaven in Cumbria, Grindon Hall in Sunderland, Werneth Primary School in Oldham and Haltwistle Community Campus lower and upper schools in Northumberland. The rest of its schools are in Suffolk and Essex.

The trust announced last week that it intends to give up Whitehaven, which has been at the centre of a bitter dispute with parents, staff and the wider community over the quality of education and the state its buildings.

MPs and union activists now want a wider review of Bright Tribe's activities, while Cumbria Police have begun investigating the trust.

Bright Tribe insists it is "committed" to its remaining schools in the north of England, but it intends to make a more detailed



statement about their future "pending further discussions".

"Bright Tribe remains committed to its current schools in the north and continues to provide support to the strong leadership teams in each of those schools in order to drive up standards and secure the best possible outcomes," a representative said.

"Pending further discussions with the trust board, we are unable to make any comment at this stage and will make a further statement in due course."

Bright Tribe has faced mass criticism after staff at Whitehead Academy signed an open letter criticising the trust, and campaigners organised a community meeting to discuss a forced removal of the trust.

The local Conservative MP Trudy Harrison, an education select committee

member, meanwhile claims she was physically escorted off site when she went to check on flood damage last month.

Bright Tribe also recently lost its chief operating officer Mary McKeeman, who resigned after less than 10 months in the role.

Cumbria police confirmed this week that its officers are "conducting preliminary enquiries" into the trust, and the GMB union has called for education authorities in the east of England, where Bright Tribe has five academies, to investigate whether the trust is "fit and proper to run these schools".

John Woodcock, the Labour MP for the Cumbrian constituency of Barrow and Furness, also said there should be a "formal investigation into Bright Tribe's suitability to remain a sponsor of any academy".

Questions have also arisen about £1 million in government "northern hub" funding handed to the trust in 2015, especially after the trust announced it was backing out of a deal to sponsor Haydon Bridge High School in Northumberland.

When asked by north-east MP Ian Mearns about the funding, Carter said he would report back on the trust's activity in the region.

"The conversation about Bright Tribe no longer being a presence in the north includes that conversation," he said.

The Department for Education declined to comment.

## ACADEMY TRUSTS WILL APPEAR IN JANUARY'S LEAGUE TABLES

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Next year, the public will be able to see for themselves how well multi-academy trusts are doing in the school performance league tables for the first time.

From January 25 next year, academy trusts will be included alongside individual schools on the Department for Education's website, as it seeks to make information about trusts more available to parents.

Launched in March 2016, the online school performance table tool allows users to search for any school in the country and view its test results, Ofsted reports and financial information.

The government has written to trust bosses to inform them of the change, which it hopes parents and staff will use to hold them to account.

The government has published trust performance measures for several years, but these have always been separate to the individual school-level data.

The results of disadvantaged children, and the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate, will also be published at trust level for the first time.

In its response to the parliamentary education committee's recent inquiry into the work of academy trusts, the DfE said the move to release trust performance measures in this manner was made "based on feedback from users and to accommodate new performance measures".

"We have now published multi-academy trust-level educational performance measures for 2014, 2015 and 2016 results and will now publish the measures each January alongside the performance tables," it wrote.

"As a longer time series builds up and more MATs have enough schools with them for long enough to be included in the measures, these measures will become increasingly useful in assessing MAT performance."

The government has also disputed claims that the quality of MATs' provision is not fairly evaluated, as debate continues into whether Ofsted should be allowed to inspect academy trusts.

This week, Lord Agnew, the new academies minister, warned the education committee that direct inspection of MATs would cause "confusion" in the school system.

However, the DfE said it recognises that trust-level assessment and accountability will need to "evolve".

"This is why the department is working closely with Ofsted as the chief inspector considers possible changes to the current model for reviewing the quality of education provision across a MAT," it said.

The last release of trust performance measures in January showed that more than half of established multi-academy trusts fell "significantly below" the average for pupil progress, and a host of the country's largest trusts are among the worst performers at secondary level.

The data also revealed that the lowest-performing chains included many larger trusts, that most secondary trusts with poorer pupils perform way below average, and that trusts with a mix of academies seem to perform better.

## No nationality data for 1 in 4 pupils

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools failed to obtain nationality data for a quarter of their pupils this year, indicating a significant resistance to the controversial new requirement to collect it from school staff, parents and pupils.

New government data shows the information was successfully collected from around three quarters of the 8.1 million pupils who were registered in January.

But data for 22.5 per cent of pupils – around 1.8 million children – was "not obtained" – meaning it had not been collected by schools when the forms were submitted. In 2.1 per cent of cases, parents or pupils pointedly refused to provide the data.

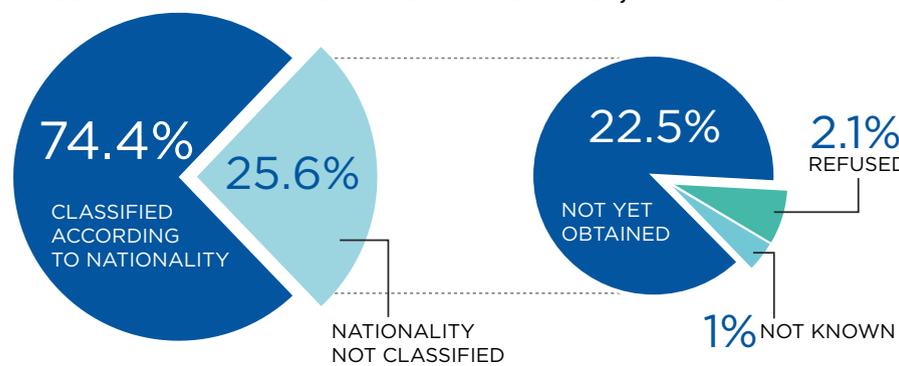
The release is based on data taken during the spring census in January, and shows that the government now holds nationality data on more than six million pupils, and birth country data for almost 6.2 million.

Schools have a duty to ask parents and pupils for the data, but they are allowed to refuse to provide it.

Where data is listed as "not yet obtained", it could be either because the school refused to or failed to collect the data. Country-of-birth data is yet to be collected for 20.6 per cent of pupils. These figures decreased between the autumn and spring census.

Campaigners last year asked schools and parents to resist the controversial data collection, which began last October after legislation was rushed through parliament

## ALL PUPILS NATIONALITY RESPONSE RATES, JANUARY 2017



during the summer recess.

Even though it initially claimed the scheme had nothing to do with monitoring immigrants, the Department for Education was forced to admit it had planned to share the data with the Home Office for immigration control purposes. It subsequently dropped this aim amid the backlash.

The response-rate data was released on the same day that campaigners seeking to halt schools from collecting it requested a judicial review of the policy in the High Court.

The campaign group Against Borders for Children, represented by the human rights charity Liberty, will focus its legal argument on whether the policy infringes the rights of pupils. The groups also argue the policy serves no "educational purpose".

The change to the school census sparked a huge backlash from parents after some

schools overreacted to their new duty, demanding copies of pupils' birth certificates and passports.

In one notorious instance, only non-white pupils were chased for their data, while in other cases, parents were told they had a legal duty to provide the information, when no such requirement exists. Vague government guidance, which was recently criticised by the Information Commissioner's Office, has been blamed.

Against Borders for Children launched a crowdfunding campaign for its legal bid last month, and has so far raised £4,000.

Lara ten Caten, a lawyer for Liberty, said the process was "toxic" and turned "sanctuaries of learning and development into places of fear".

"The government cannot even explain why it needs to know children's nationality and country of birth in order to educate them," she said.

## NEWS

## 6 things we learned from Carter and Agnew

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The parliamentary education committee spent almost two hours grilling the national schools commissioner Sir David Carter and the academies minister Lord Theodore Agnew on Tuesday.

It was Agnew's first appearance in front of the committee since his appointment, and Carter's first hearing for at least a year.

Here are the six most important things we learned.

### 1. Giving WCAT 14 struggling schools was a "mistake" and an "impossible ask"

Carter was asked by the former shadow education secretary Lucy Powell about what went wrong with Wakefield City Academies Trust, which announced earlier this year that it is to give up all 21 of its schools.

The schools commissioner said the Department for Education had handed WCAT 14 schools in special measures over the course of 32 months, which was an "impossible ask" for the trust.

He admitted there were "lessons learned" from the debacle and that RSCs would not make the same mistakes again.

### 2. Ofsted inspections of MATs will cause "confusion"

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector

of schools, said in October that she wanted Ofsted to directly inspect MATs, rather than carry out "focused inspections" of their schools.

But Agnew, who became academies minister in September, did not agree. He told MPs that inspections of MATs would "cause some confusion" if implemented.

Carter agreed and questioned Ofsted's capacity to carry out the inspections, but not its expertise.

### 3. "Discourteously" escorting MPs from school sites is "inappropriate"

Trudy Harrison, the MP for Copeland, claimed she was escorted from the site of the struggling Whitehaven Academy by staff from the Bright Tribe academy trust last month when she tried to inspect flood damage.

Robert Halfon, the chair of the education committee, asked Carter and Agnew about the "unacceptable" incident in Cumbria.

Carter said he had not spoken to the trust to verify the details but, if Harrison had been escorted "discourteously" from the site, then that behaviour was "inappropriate".

### 4. Huge MAT executive pay rises "can't be justified"

MPs asked about executive pay in multi-

academy trusts, pointing to some leaders who received pay rises of up to 141 per cent last year.

Agnew insisted that the "dramatic" rises were the responsibility of the individual trusts' boards.

But Carter does not think they are justified: "I restate what the minister said, that this is a responsibility for the boards, but if you're asking me, no I don't think you can justify that in the current climate, no."

### 5. A revolving door between RSCs and trusts is "natural"

Asked about how RSCs frequently leave their posts to run academy trusts, Carter claimed it was a "natural consequence" of their desire to make a contribution to both the national policy environment and on the ground in schools.

He reassured MPs that such moves, like when Tim Coulson become head of the Samuel Ward academy trust, are always signed off by the lead civil servant at the Department for Education, Jonathan Slater.

However, he did admit that it was "not ideal" when his colleagues left within a year of taking on a role.

"The RSC revolving door is probably a natural consequence of people wanting to come into the role, make a contribution to the wider system and then use that



David Carter and Theodore Agnew

experience to continue improving the life chances of children," he suggested.

### 6. The cost of RSCs and their offices will now 2stabilise"

MPs queried the £31 million spent on the nine schools commissioners and their teams. The costs have leapt by 550 per cent from when the programme first started.

Agnew said the amount worked out at around £4,000 per academy, and was justified, given the number of academies created in recent years.

"This is a huge process of trying to clean up some of the most disadvantaged schools, so I really don't feel the £31 million is an exceptional amount of money," he said.

Carter told MPs that he now expects the cost of the programme to "stabilise", because there are "no plans" to broaden the role of the commissioners.

However, Agnew said there were still around 1,000 academies "in the pipeline", so a slight increase in costs may materialise.

## WANTED: SCHOOLS TO TRIAL 'RAPID-MARKING'

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

The Education Endowment Foundation is looking for around 500 schools throughout England to take part in four new trials involving teachers "rapid-marking" in maths, and using handwriting techniques that help disabled patients improve their coordination after accidents.

The programmes, launched today, have spaces available for 60,000 pupils at 515 primary and secondary schools.

The Realistic Maths Education programme draws on techniques from schools in the Netherlands to train key stage 3 maths teachers in the use of modelling and problem-solving in their lessons.

The trial will involve 24,000 pupils at 120 schools, and maths teachers will use contexts with techniques that are meaningful to pupils, to help them gain confidence in their problem-solving. For example, a teacher might introduce the idea of sharing a baguette with friends, to help pupils learn to compare and combine fractions.

The next programme, Diagnostic Questions, is an online assessment tool developed and delivered by the Behavioural Insights Team, a company that researches the impact of small changes on people's choices. The tool helps maths teachers quickly identify and address pupil

misconceptions.

Teachers will set quizzes for their classes and provide feedback so any misconceptions can be quickly addressed. Around 26,250 key stage 4 pupils at 175 schools will take part.

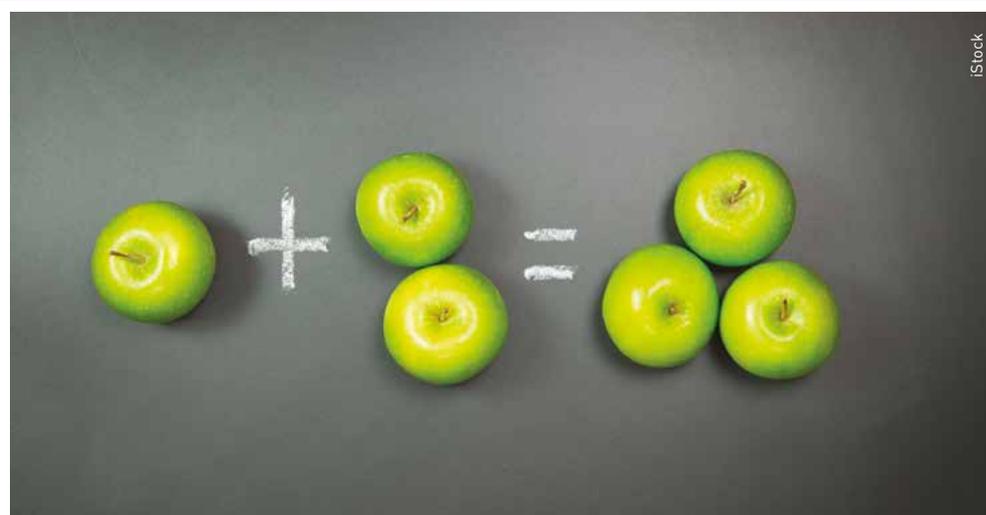
In the Same Day Intervention trial, pupils will be given a 40-minute maths lesson in which they answer questions independently and then have 15 minutes away from their teacher (attending assembly or a teaching assistant-led activity) while their work is marked using a "rapid marking" code.

The remaining 20 minutes of the lesson then focuses on interventions, where the teacher will group children together based on how they answered the questions, in order to efficiently address any errors.

The overarching aim is to prevent an achievement gap from forming, by use the additional support to ensure that all children reach a certain level of understanding by the end of the school day. This trial will involve 5,400 year 5 pupils at 120 schools.

Finally, Helping Handwriting Shine is an intervention that will train teachers and teaching assistants to use approaches from occupational therapy to boost pupils' handwriting skills. Occupational therapists offer strategies to help people perform activities in their everyday lives if they are struggling, for example as a result of result of injury, illness, or disability, and teaching ideas will be drawn from the profession.

Delivered by Leeds University, this trial



will work with 5,500 pupils at 100 schools, teaching them to plan, do, and then reflect on their writing. It follows evidence presented in the EEF literacy guidance which suggests that if handwriting is slow or a lot of effort, children are less able to think about the content of their writing.

When the programmes are completed they will be independently evaluated through large randomised controlled trials to test their impact on academic attainment. The four trials are available on the EEF's website today.

The EEF recently launched a series of other trials looking at whether skills like music, drama and journalism can boost children's achievements at primary school.

In October, the EEF and the Royal Society of Arts announced five trials to test the impact of different "cultural learning strategies" on academic attainment and behaviours like resilience, self-confidence and creativity.

These programmes formed part of a Learning about culture scheme, which will be rolled out to 9,000 pupils across 400 primary schools from September next year.

"With schools increasingly accountable for the impact of all their spending decisions on pupil attainment, there is a urgent need for more and better evidence on the relative benefits of different approaches and strategies," Sir Kevan Collins, the EEF's chief executive, said at the time.

## NEWS: PIRLS

## England comes 8th in the world for reading

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4



10-year-olds completing comprehension tests.

England came joint eighth with an average 559 points for reading achievement, the same score as Norway and Chinese Taipei. This score was better than the 2011 score of 552, which put England in joint tenth place with Ireland.

The top three places were secured by the Russian Federation, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Scores among the 50 countries involved ranged from 320 to 581.

English pupils performed better in "literary" reading than in "informational" reading this year, with average scores of 563 and 556 respectively.

Passages classified as "literary" are more fictional, with questions involving theme, plot events, characters, and settings, while "informational" passages contain facts for pupils to identify.

The difference between English boys'

and girls' results was 15 points this year, narrowing the gap by eight points. Boys' average score improved by 11 points between 2011 and 2016, while girls' rose by only three points.

Overall, the average amount of experience year 5 teachers have in England is 11 years. Across all the PIRLS 2016 countries, teachers' average experience was 17 years.

However the impact of that experience is inconsistent: pupils did worst if their teacher had between 10 and 20 years' experience, but scored just as well whether their teacher had between five and 10 years under their belt, or more than 20.

Thirty-six per cent of pupils in England have a headteacher with less than five years' experience, though the average is nine years. The international average is 10 years, but headteachers' qualifications were not compared to pupils' results.

The PIRLS 2016 data also appeared to show that teachers' continuing professional development has little impact on pupil achievement.

The average score of pupils whose teachers had spent 16 hours or more on professional development related to reading in the past two years is actually worse than that for pupils of teachers who had done no CPD at all – at 551 points compared with 566.

Again, however, the scores were not straightforward. Those who had a medium amount of CPD (six to 15 hours) did better than those who had done less than six hours, suggesting there's a sweet spot in the middle.

## BIG SCHOOL LIBRARIES DON'T SEEM TO BOOST YEAR 5 LITERACY

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

A well-stocked school library has little impact on English pupils' reading skills, according to a major international literacy study.

Year 5 pupils at schools with no library achieved almost the same reading scores as those whose schools have more than 5,000 books, according to the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

PIRLS 2016 tested over 300,000 10-year-olds across the world on their reading skills, and also asked teachers, pupils and parents about literacy learning.

Year 5 pupils in schools without a library scored an average of 562 points in the test, while those at the other end of the scale scored an average of 565.

This pattern was not borne out across the world, however. In the US, pupils in schools with no library scored just 515, compared with a score of 556 for those in schools with the biggest libraries.

And for every participating country, the average reading achievement in schools with the largest libraries was 525, compared with 494 to 501 for schools with a smaller or no central library.

School libraries have been under threat in England in recent years. *Schools Week* reported in April 2016 that the School Library Association's membership had dropped from 3,000 to 2,500 over the last decade.

At the time, the SLA's director Tricia Adams said schools were increasingly deciding they didn't need libraries anymore and choosing to concentrate on e-book collections instead.

Stronger reading skills were linked to the type of books pupils read. PIRLS 2016 found that English pupils given longer fiction books with chapters to read once a week achieved higher scores, earning 561 points on average, compared with 554 who read this type of book less than once a week.

In contrast, pupils given short stories or plays at least once a week did not score better than those assigned these texts less often. Similarly, reading more nonfiction books did not correlate with higher scores.

In reading lessons, 97 per cent of teachers claimed to use mixed-ability groups, and 97 per cent said they teach reading as a whole-class activity.

Over half, (55 per cent) of pupils had access to computers for reading lessons, but once again, this did not result in higher scores.

Reading results for primary pupils in key stage one (aged seven) have risen in England in recent years. 2017 assessments show that 76 per cent of pupils meet the expected standard this year, up from 74 per cent in 2016.

## 25% OF 10-YEAR OLDS TURN UP TO SCHOOL HUNGRY

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4



the charity Magic Breakfast, which provides healthy breakfasts to school children in England, said pupil hunger is "a real drag" on the UK education system.

"I think England could get into the top five if we fed every hungry child," she said of the PIRLS 2016 data.

"We know that in this country there are at least half a million children going to school hungry and the 25-per-cent stat doesn't surprise me at all."

Magic Breakfast currently supports 500 schools, but it has a further 300 on its waiting list.

"With a national school breakfast programme, or with funding for the schools that are hunger hit, we would see big improvements. The government is saying it wants to do something about it," she said.

Last month the government advertised for an organisation to "kick-start or improve self-sustaining breakfast clubs" in 1,500 schools.

A funding pot of £24 million is available for the breakfasts, and the money is prioritised

for schools in the 12 opportunity areas.

Sir Kevan Collins, the chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said breakfast clubs are "a relatively cheap and straightforward way" to tackle the "national scandal" of pupil hunger.

A year-long trial involving 106 primary schools was funded by the EEF between 2015 and 2016, and found that pupils made an extra two months' progress when a free breakfast club was introduced.

"Hungry pupils are more likely to struggle with concentration and behaviour in the classroom," he said.

The Conservative Party was burned by topic of free breakfasts in May, when it proposed a badly undercosted manifesto pledge to tackle hunger in primary schools.

*Schools Week* reported that the party had set aside £60 million – amounting to just under 7p per meal – to fund the idea of free breakfasts for all primary pupils.

After the election in July, the children's minister Robert Goodwill had to announce that the idea had been axed.

Lindsay Graham, a campaigner on UK child food security said that the government should commit to a more comprehensive study of pupil hunger, as the PIRLS 2016 data is only "a snapshot in time".

"We need to be looking longer term," she said. "We still haven't got enough research on the impact of food insecurity on learning, it's difficult to draw conclusion without trends. It's an area that has been long underfunded."

A quarter of year 5 pupils are arriving at school hungry nearly every day in England, according to a massive international survey.

According to the international Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016, a startling 25 per cent of English pupils reported feeling hungry every day, or almost every day.

These children showed poorer performance in the global study's reading tests than their peers, achieving an average score of 534, compared with 579 for children who said they were never hungry at school.

However, England is far from alone in the hunger stakes: 27 per cent of children in Australia and 41 per cent of Maltese children have the same problems. The lowest proportions were recorded by Lithuania (13 per cent), though the international average was 26 per cent.

Juliet Sizmur research manager in the National Foundation for Educational Research's Centre for International Comparisons cautioned that as the results were from a student questionnaire, they do have "the usual limitations of self-reported data".

"Cultural and economic differences" must also be taken into account she said. "The differences may simply be due to different perceptions in different contexts."

Carmel McConnell, the chief executive of



## EDITOR'S COMMENT

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# Beware the strains of the 'safeguarding hour'

If you're reading this on a Friday, and you're a headteacher, you'll likely be gearing up for what I recently heard someone call "safeguarding" hour. As the weekend rumbles into view, children with desperate home lives start to get jittery (sometimes lashing out) and parents who know they are unable to cope on their own all weekend begin the phone calls. By 4pm, heads are used to the routine of calls to the authorities, police or anyone else they need to get involved.

One might think this a dire sign of the times. Blame Brexit, or Theresa May, or our high-stakes exams system. Any far-off bogeyman that makes us feel better about the fact that family life, across all eras and all people, is just sometimes downright fraught, and kids have always got caught in the maelstrom.

Better mental health services would help and the government's promise to plough a substantial amount of cash – more than £300 million – into mental health training and teams is a positive step.

But, as with the new careers strategy, which requires schools to start giving every child a "meaningful interaction with a business" each year, additional

tasks are being loaded onto schools at a rate of knots and we know how this ends.

Between 2007 and 2010, the education secretary Ed Balls changed the department to encompass Children, Schools and Families. The 'Every child matters' agenda made schools a partner in children's wellbeing. It was a holistic way of thinking about children: their housing, their physical health, their emotional wellbeing, and so on.

In many ways, it was a brilliant moment in time. It was also expensive. As Jonathan Simons, then an advisor to Gordon Brown, told me in a recent interview, money was flying around the department. Millions could be sneezed out at the stroke of a junior civil servant's pen, not always wisely.

So why did Michael Gove destroy it all in 2010 when he got into power? He wanted to make things cheaper, but he also believed the agenda had distracted schools away from thinking about difficult academic issues. Where was the discussion of a strong curriculum? How closely were teachers looking at reading techniques?

Gove's destruction of the 'Every child matters' structures was pure

vandalism; it shouldn't have been destroyed as it was. But he was right that eyes were veering off the learning ball. Not because teachers were lazy, but because their professional bandwidth is inevitably limited by the inconvenient fact that everyone is human.

Now however, in 2017, we seem to have a pincer move in which the education department is telling schools they must be responsible for careers, and mental health, and safeguarding hour, and research, and school improvement, while Ofsted is simultaneously demanding curriculum improvements, and Ofqual is overseeing a much more difficult exam season.

If the danger in 2010 was that school leaders were getting distracted, the danger in 2018 will be that they pop out of existence from exhaustion.

So, what to do? Throw our hands in the air and give up altogether? That's just not how this sector operates.

What it might require is patience: old-fashioned, unsexy calm, the sort that you have to train yourself to remember when a child is asking for the 56th time why it isn't assembly today, even though the day

changed two years ago and you've told them every week since.

I think there's a plan in all of this. When Justine Greening was minister for international development she became very used to trialling methods, seeing which worked, and scaling them up. She saw the effectiveness of having people train and support each other in parts of the world facing more severe issues than we are today; I've heard her say "if we could solve Ebola, we can solve this".

Greening also oversaw, and could cope with, failure. Trialling ideas means letting the rubbish ones fall by the wayside. If the careers lead thing is bad, schools need the guts to ignore it. If you think being a teaching school is a distraction, don't become one. Apprenticeship delivery too difficult? Don't bother with it. That has to be the mantra in the New Year for everyone.

And if the mental health teams do work, they could be genuinely transformative. But if it requires additional workload from schools then the plan won't work. Leaders simply don't have the capacity, their Friday nights are already stacked.





# Southwark Teaching School Alliance Director

**Job title:** Director

**Location:** Charles Dickens Primary School, London

**Terms:** Fixed term for 2 years, with the possibility of extension.

We are committed to flexible working and this role is open to applicants wishing to work full-time, part-time or as a job share. We would also be willing to consider secondments.

**Salary:** Competitive headteacher-level salary depending on experience.

**Reporting to:** Strategic Board (with day-to-day support and challenge from Cassie Buchanan, Headteacher at Charles Dickens Primary School)

## About Southwark Teaching School Alliance

Southwark Teaching School Alliance was established in January 2015 and brings together schools and selected partners committed to working together to achieve our vision for an education system where children and young people are nurtured and challenged to flourish in all aspects of their life – academic, cultural, personal and social.

At the heart of our Alliance is a commitment from our members to learn from, with and on behalf of the richly diverse schools in our borough and beyond, and to extend their impact beyond their own school boundaries for the good of all.

Our inclusive Alliance is open to all schools, regardless of type or where they are in their improvement journey. In 2016/17 the Alliance worked in some way with teachers or leaders from more than half of the schools in the borough, and many more beyond Southwark's boundaries.

Southwark Teaching School Alliance has grown rapidly in the last 15 months. In September 2017 we launched five professional development programmes, through which we are providing leadership development to almost 90 aspiring and serving leaders and executive leaders, and professional development to a growing group of early career teachers. We are currently seeking to recruit 40 trainees to the next cohort of our School Direct programme, led by the John Donne partnership.

With funding secured in the first round of bidding to the Strategic School

Improvement Fund (SSIF), we are delivering a school improvement programme for 12 schools seeking to narrow the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers. Further school-to-school support and challenge is delivered through a peer review programme currently involving 22 schools, and we are designated a Schools Partnership Programme (peer review) hub.

## The role

The departure of our current Executive Director to a CEO post has created an exciting opportunity for someone with the vision, ambition and entrepreneurialism to lead a successful and growing organisation through its next phase of development. The new Director will be responsible for building on the success and rapid expansion of Southwark Teaching School Alliance to take it to new heights of impact and influence on outcomes for children and the wider education system.

The Director will work with the Strategic Board to provide vision and leadership to the Alliance, developing and implementing a strategy for further growth, as well as overseeing effective delivery of existing programmes. The Director will lead a small central team, comprising a Programme Manager and an administrator. They will work closely with the headteachers, leaders and partners represented on our Operations Board and as Strategic Partners and Members to further develop our suite of programmes and activities covering initial teacher training, continuing professional development, school-to-school support, and research and development. These activities should meet the needs of schools, staff, leaders and the children they serve, as well as delivering financial sustainability.

## How to apply

To apply for this exciting opportunity, please provide:

1. a CV of no more than 3 pages; and
2. a written statement of no more than 2 pages, setting out how you meet the requirements of the role and the person specification.

Please send these to [kate.chhatwal@southwarktsa.co.uk](mailto:kate.chhatwal@southwarktsa.co.uk) no later than noon on Monday 18 December. Please include in your covering email details of two professional referees, one of whom should be your current employer. We will only contact referees if you are successful at interview. Please also indicate in your application whether you wish to apply on a full-time, part-time, job-share and/or secondment basis.

**Closing Date:** Noon on Monday 18 December  
**Interviews** will take place on 8 and 9 January.

Southwark Teaching School Alliance is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by following best guidance and practice and expects all staff to share this commitment. A DBS check is required for the successful applicant.

Southwark Teaching School Alliance is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

If you would like a confidential conversation before applying for this role, please email the current Executive Director, [kate.chhatwal@southwarktsa.co.uk](mailto:kate.chhatwal@southwarktsa.co.uk).

# Headteacher

**The Pines Primary School**

Red Lodge, Suffolk



**Start: April 2018 Salary: To be negotiated**

We are seeking an inspirational leader to be the Headteacher of a new school. The Pines Primary School opens in September 2018. Situated between Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge, the school will be at the heart of its local, growing community. Initially opening with Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and a pre-school, the school will reach capacity in 2022 with plans to expand to two form entry.

This is an unique and exciting opportunity for an experienced Headteacher or ambitious senior leader to shape the inception of The Pines from the pre-opening phase to its future success.

CHET is a vibrant, cross-phase multi-academy trust that is committed to inclusive and inspiring education that enables all children to thrive and flourish. Enriching learning experiences and collaborative relationships are integral to the Trust's values. We welcome applications from colleagues that share our passion for and commitment to exceptional, holistic education.

**Application packs can be downloaded from [www.thepinesprimary.co.uk](http://www.thepinesprimary.co.uk). Please contact Nichola Connor for further information about the role: [pines@meadow.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:pines@meadow.cambs.sch.uk) or call 07914 675748**

[www.chetrust.co.uk](http://www.chetrust.co.uk) @CHETeducation **Closing date: Noon, 12th January 2018 Interviews: 22nd and 23rd January 2018**

**Recruitment event for The Pines Primary School: 6pm, Tuesday 16th January 2018 at Meadow Primary School, Balsham, CB21 4DJ**

CHET is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all employees to share this commitment. All appointments are subject to enhanced DBS checks.

## Director of School Workforce



The Education Policy Institute is looking for an experienced quantitative analyst, economist or statistician to lead our work on teachers and the school workforce.

**Contract type:** Permanent (with a 6-month probation period).  
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The Director will oversee this crucial programme of work and will present our research in the media, to Parliamentary Committees and at conferences and seminars. There will also be an opportunity to recruit a small team over the medium term.

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The successful candidate will report to the Executive Director. Because our independence and political neutrality is crucial to us, there are some restrictions on party political activity for permanent members of staff.

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The Education Policy Institute is looking for a motivated, dynamic and outgoing candidate to raise our profile, establish relationships with key partners and fundraise to support our research.

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- Enable students to achieve high expectations through good

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# READERS' REPLY



EMAIL



TWEET



FACEBOOK



WEBSITE

## Ofsted backtracks on controversial headscarf policy

**Jessica Russell // @JessicaMRussell**  
Clumsy of Ofsted to issue guidance before considering a full range of stakeholder views. Personally, I'm deeply uncomfortable about the thought of inspectors questioning primary school children about anything other than their learning.

## iGCSE loophole allows schools to teach one religion

**David Webster // @davidwebster**  
The actual opposite of what good religious studies should be.

**Carol Acheson // @CarolAcheson**

I wonder how long before it's banned? I have one student whose parents only want her to study one religion.

## Ability grouping in primary schools - a 'necessary evil'?

**West Midlands NAHT // @WMnaht**  
This is what happens when the consequences of accountability are so punitive for teachers and schools. Time to focus on what is best for children – not politics and votes.

**Kate Mole // @katemole1979**

"Grouping by ability is easier for the teacher ... helps classroom management... and highlights differentiation to senior leaders." We need higher expectations, to refuse to take an easy option and to train teachers and school leaders to understand how to differentiate by depth.

**Dave Grimmett // @daveg5478**

At any age before year 10 I'm opposed to setting, but at this age I am appalled.

## Summer-borns suffer from phonics streaming

**Jamie Fries // @jamief\_**  
So this piece on phonics streaming: mixed feelings. If a child arrives at school with phonics locked down, should they learn phonics with total beginner?

**KT Thompson // @thepetitioner**

Feel like I've been saying "Stop streaming for phonics!" for last few years to a huge brick wall.

## Debbie Hepplewhite, address supplied

I know of only one reputable phonics programme that organises the provision based on homogenous grouping. Other programme authors do not recommend such grouping. Further, the "six phases" are a feature of the Letters and Sounds phonics programme (DfES 2007) and these steps are not necessarily in other phonics programmes. The phases were only ever meant as a means of chunking up the alphabetic code, not for means of differentiation. This is teachers' interpretation.

## No staples and pins this Christmas in case of asbestos

**Stephen Foster // @MrSRFoster**  
Blu-tac? Other brands are available.

## How to avoid school social media scandals

**Brian, address supplied**  
Of course there is always the option of acting honourably, ethically, appropriately and with integrity in the first place.

## Primary school kitted out with new science lab

**Beverly Smith // @Bev\_at\_STEMCrew**  
Brilliant initiative! Something primary schools are crying out for is the ability to perform practical science in a suitable environment.

## Clarification

In a story last week, 'Island school finally gets a sponsor', we did not make clear it was the trustees of Venture MAT who could not agree on conditions for taking in Five Island Schools. The governors on the Interim Executive Board of Five Islands Schools were not involved in the decision to select a sponsor.

Five Islands School is also the only school on the Isles of Scilly, not merely the only secondary school. It is, as the second paragraph stated, an all-through school. No other primary provision is available.

## Ability grouping in primary schools - a 'necessary evil'?

### REPLY OF THE WEEK

**Rose Keating // @rosemkeating**

So while secondary schools are making the move to mixed-attainment maths many primary schools are moving to setting.

## Reply of the week receives..



## A SCHOOLS WEEK MUG!

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020 3051 4287

## PROFILE

LAURA MCINERNEY

@MISS\_McINERNEY

**Helena Marsh, executive principal, the Chilford Hundred Education Trust**

**H**elena Marsh is scouring the SSAT conference programme looking for a suitable interview time. She's one of the opening keynote speakers, wearing a yellow dress that her assistant head said would allow people to recognise her afterwards and ask questions.

"It's worked," she says with glee.

Poring through the events, she is pained at the prospect of missing a single moment.

"This is when I need Trusty Tim, my deputy head," she says, still digging through the brochure. "The other week, my husband was in hospital and needed picking up, but it was at the exact same time as the year 11 GCSE certificate evening. So I asked Tim – do you want to give a presentation to a huge audience of parents or do you want to get my husband from hospital? Off he went, hoping he could recognise him!"

She finds a short timeslot and implores a colleague to take notes if she misses anything.

She's the youngest member of the Head Teachers Roundtable – a campaigning group of heads which has been a thorn in the side of government since 2012. But Marsh, 36, has sometimes been in the shadow of more "famed" members like Vic Goddard, the head from the Educating Essex series, and the beloved author John Tomsett.

But her quietly determined nature has seen her move from her first deputy job three years ago to become the executive principal of a trust with three schools, which has another on the way.

"What tipped me into headship? A lot of soul searching, I think?" Marsh was only in her deputy job for a few months before the principal announced she was leaving. "I was not even planning to be a head. So it wasn't an obvious decision. It took a while to decide."

Instrumental in the decision was her involvement with WomenEd, which she helped found, and which runs leadership conferences for women.

"How can you go around telling other women to take on leadership positions but then not do it yourself?" she asks, as if waiting for an answer.

There's a refreshing hesitancy in this tale. Often, the story is of school leaders who naturally felt they were ready, but Marsh epitomises the WomenEd spirit, that you need to jump – and build your wings on the way down.

This deliberate thoughtfulness pervades her backstory. Born in Bosnia, she moved to England aged two with her mother, before her father and grandparents followed later. Her mother had trained as an architect's assistant in the former Yugoslavia, but had to give it up when she arrived in Northampton due to her limited English. Working in care homes and juggling several jobs at once, she brought her daughter up as a single parent on the Thorplands council estate.

"I had a few friends killed in various police activities and murders. It wasn't a particularly nice place, but we didn't live there for very long. We moved a few times, I went to a few primary schools, and then she remarried and I grew up in a different part of Northampton," she recalls.

"By coincidence, my mum ended up working for the local authority, after she built up her experience of English, in the education buildings department. I ended up doing summer jobs there, working out which roofs and things all the money should be spent fixing."

Her father's job as a car paint sprayer was interrupted

## "HOW CAN YOU GO AROUND TELLING OTHER WOMEN TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP POSITIONS BUT THEN NOT DO IT YOURSELF?"

when a motor accident left him badly injured and he used the insurance payout to open a hair salon which he ran for years.

"Cars to hair!" she giggles. "You can see I'm not really from a traditional education family."

Indeed, her successes at Northampton School For Girls, where she became head girl, were so outside her parents' experience that when a teacher first suggested she attend Oxbridge her mother looked alarmed and asked "where is Oxbridge? Is it far?"

A waiter interrupts her telling the story. He settles down our drinks and Marsh thanks him four separate times. He is pleased to be noticed, and beams back.

He sets down a small, ambiguous silver bowl with the teapot. Marsh looks at it brightly; "I'm not sure what that is, but I had my ketchup in one at breakfast?"

Both her gentle encouragement and her amusement at the poshness are tiny clues to why she ultimately didn't apply for Oxbridge.

"I just felt I wouldn't fit, because of my background. Even at Warwick University, that first term was a cultural shock. It was a lot of people who had been to private schools and grammar schools, and they were very confident and very assured. I do remember, in a few seminars, being quite blown away by their strength of opinions."

Throughout university, she toyed with going into teaching, but she remembered a former teacher telling her she "could do better" and the thought niggled. In her final year, she attended a recruitment fair where the Fast-Track Teacher Scheme, the government precursor to Teach First, stood out as it gave comprehensive training, a coach, access to conferences and professional development. It was the prestige she yearned for.

"There were only 10 institutions that had PGCEs for Fast-Track, one of which was Cambridge. So I did end up going there in the end," she says.

Again, however, her self-effacing nature arose: "You had to have a souped-up interview at the Faculty of Education, where I remember the tutor asked 'what makes you better than all those other people sat out there' and I looked and said 'hmmm'."

She passed anyway, perhaps as a result of, rather than despite, her humility.

After completing her training year she took her first job at Soham Village College, which was then still reeling from the murders of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells by the school's caretaker, Ian Huntley.

"My tutor group were Holly and Jessica's friends," she remembers. "The staff were under a lot of pressure."

Marsh also found herself outflanked by much older colleagues who did not wish to modernise the department and dismissed her ideas for improvement.

She enjoyed her next position at the Helena Romanes School in Essex, but the long commute was wearing, so when a position came up nearer to home just six months later she asked the head, Simon Knight, if she should go for it.

"He said 'absolutely. You've done loads since you've been here. You'll be a head one day.' That was the first time I even thought about it. I thought he was joking at first. It was a great pat on the back," she says.

With the headship seed sown she moved on to become a department head, then into senior management, until

eventually joining Linton Village College in 2014 as its deputy and then head. Although she talks of her initial difficulty with balancing teaching with having children, there's a sense, as she sits talking with a calm elegance, that she finds the whole thing almost... easy?

"Easy isn't the right word," she suggests, looking away in thought. "It's that I find it enjoyable."

One thing that helps, she admits, is having Jill Berry, a former head and one of *Schools Week's* blog reviewers, as a coach. Talking over decisions are a critical part of making the "right" decision, something she holds dear.

"Also, I'm not afraid of losing my job. If we had to sell up tomorrow and downsize, then we would. I won't do things from fear. I have literally stopped people using Ofsted and the word 'outstanding', as it's not healthy. My staff know what the right thing to do is, because they are great professionals."

She believes the right thing is giving children a holistic education – including PE and performing arts – and recognising the challenges of deprivation.

"I know that one because I've lived and breathed it," she says. "I can also think of better ways to spend money on professional learning than mass buying PowerPoints and going along to conferences learning how to jump hoops to someone else's tune."

"Don't get me wrong, being savvy with data is fine. But over the last 10 years teachers have lost faith in

HELEN



# HELENA MARSH

themselves. The rug was whipped from under their feet through all the curriculum and assessment change.

"But people don't join the profession to become cover supervisors and I worry that's what's happening. Here's a recipe, a script, a diktat. People come in as teachers because they are passionate about children and their subject. I'm not saying you can go in with raw ingredients every lesson but to suggest you hand over power to others rather than develop your own skills? I don't agree."

Her strident commentary demonstrates that her values-led determination is not something that can be easily shaken, but she demurs as I mention life outside work. At home, she likes to be "off-duty", enjoying family time with

her husband and two children, with whom she enjoys doing "anything" – "drawing, going to the park, going for coffee."

Is she quietly determined there too? She shrugs and smiles, "Yep. What you see is what you get with me."

As the short time-window for our interview closes, she says "thank-you" again and zips back towards the conference. The waiter brings me the bill and glances wistfully at her empty chair. I think he wished he'd encountered a teacher just like her.



Helena and her husband

Helena with her mum



Helena and her children



Helena as a child



Graduation

## IT'S A PERSONAL THING

### What is your favourite book?

I don't have favourites. I am a fan of Jeanette Winterson and Margaret Atwood, probably because of my feminist traits. So *The Penelopiad* or *The Passion* are on my list of Christmas gifts if people say they haven't read them. (They should!)

### What animal are you most like?

I have a thing about flamingos. I and Rachael Snape, who is a headteacher in Cambridge, organised an education conference based around a theme of "flamingos of hope, not lemmings of doom". So now people keep buying me flamingos. They are elegant, graceful, bold, but they're also bright pink and they look a bit stupid...

### If you could only shout one sentence to a gathered crowd?

"There's more that unites us than divides us."

### What could I not pay you any amount to do?

That's an odd question! Be corrupt? All that stuff about academy trust dodginess – not even if you could make millions of pounds. Because I don't have a problem sleeping at night, and I don't want to have one.

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

Slope off and do something indulgent. I don't think I'd be nosy. I'd probably just go off to a spa day and enjoy the anonymity.

### What do you eat for breakfast?

I'm not good at breakfast. I normally get up, have a cup of tea, see the kids, dash to work, and at some point find Carol, who works in the kitchen, and buy a cereal bar.

# SSAT DAY ONE

Manchester, Jess Staufenberg collected the

## Pupil development flows from teacher mindset

Teachers should change their own “fixed mindsets” rather than focus on developing children’s, according to a research initiative completed in one London school.

When teachers are told their pupils are on the cusp of performing well in school, they tend to change the way they treat those pupils in an effort to help them achieve better results, research has suggested.

Two senior leaders at Blackfen School for Girls in south London told delegates at the SSAT conference how they had been influenced by research from US psychologists Robert Rosenthal and K L Fode. The research has also been linked to contemporary psychologist Carol Dweck’s idea of a “growth mindset” now popular in education circles.

The research, first carried out in 1963, involved telling teachers their pupils were going to take the ‘Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition’, which would supposedly predict which pupils were on the cusp of an academic “blooming”.

The teachers were then told which pupils – actually chosen at random – had scored in the top 20 per cent. The research found that pupils improved if they had been classified as one of these academic “bloomers”.

Linsey Hand, deputy headteacher at Blackfen, said she shared this research on the “expectancy effect” with her staff to change a fixed-ability mindset about pupils.

But the school found that unless classroom teachers changed their habits of teaching,

pupils didn’t end up feeling more capable.

Her school piloted a year-long programme which advertised the idea of “growth mindset”, as developed by Dweck, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, throughout the school. The growth mindset concept holds that people who believe their abilities can be developed, rather than are innate, are more successful.

Year 7 pupils were asked to rate how much they believed in their own abilities at the start and at the end of the year, after assemblies and materials were posted around the school about “growth mindsets”.

But the school’s analysis of their responses showed little change between start and finish, said Hand. So in the second year of the programme, teachers were encouraged to change the way they taught and report back on the findings instead.

For instance, one teacher paired higher prior-attainment pupils with lower prior-attainment pupils. The teacher then gave verbal feedback to the lower pupil, which the other pupil took down as notes. That latter pupil then talked through the feedback with their peer. The teacher reported a noticeable increase in motivation in both.

Another teacher regularly set pupils “surprise exams”, which at first caused some to disengage because they felt unconfident or stressed. After each exam, she taught her classes a technique to revert negative thoughts by asking themselves questions about what they knew out loud. Pupils’ scores



Linsey Hand

improved as they answered more of the test, the teacher found.

Simon Neil, an assistant headteacher, said the second year of the programme had been successful because “the focus was on teachers and changing their habits”.

“It’s difficult to change the fixed-ability mindset as a teacher, as most of us think like that,” he said

The session followed a set of speeches at the SSAT conference which focused on excellence in schools. Diana Osagie, a former headteacher and leadership blogger, said “a culture of high expectations” is critical for all children.



Diana Osagie

## Ofsted: Think ‘impact’ of safeguarding, not compliance

Ofsted wants its safeguarding procedures to have “impact”, rather than merely checking that schools are “compliant”, an inspector has said.

Lee Northern, a specialist advisor on inspection policy, hopes his employer will do away with its “compliance-checking function” and move to “an impact-checking function” in future.

Safeguarding, he told SSAT delegates, is like marking, and has been an easy target for inspectors to check the correct processes were in place.

“We’ve got increasingly drawn down a list of statutory functions around safeguarding we’ve felt obliged to check,” he said.

However, focusing on this “checklist” has “cut into opportunities to test the impact” of safeguarding, he said. Schools have become accustomed to showing inspectors their safeguarding procedures are merely compliant with requirements.

“There’s a lot of effort in schools that goes into demonstrating compliance,” he said. “Yes, that’s important, but it really should be about what those policies are doing.”

The government’s statutory guidance on safeguarding, which schools must follow by law unless they have good reason not to, is described in ‘Keeping children safe in education’, last updated in March last year.



Lee Northern

Schools should all have a safeguarding lead and all staff should be able to identify pupils who might be at risk and report them to the lead. The safeguarding lead should know the proper referral process with the local authority and should follow up with the local authority if the pupil’s situation does not change.

But the guidance does not specify the processes schools should have, and as Northern reminded the audience, neither does Ofsted.

“There is no Ofsted template checklist,” he said.

He was speaking in a wider presentation about the ways in which schools should not seek to appease inspectors, but how they must instead have proper processes in place.

For instance, inspectors have no right to judge the exact ways in which schools choose to mark pupils’ work. Like safeguarding processes, marking methods should simply “be working” for the school.

Ofsted has previously been more prescriptive about how marking should be done, Northern admitted – which has had knock-on effects for teachers.

He said the inspectorate realised that what

it had previously “said about marking has driven workload considerations in schools”.

“We recognise that and that’s a position we’ve backed off from substantially,” he said.

Three years ago, Ofsted published a “myth-busting” document that clarified the inspectorate did not require any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback.

But a year ago, Sean Harford, Ofsted’s national director of education, told inspectors that he was still concerned some of them were reporting on or recommending methods for marking.

His words were echoed by Northern last week, who said it “drove him mad” when inspectors mentioned types of marking. Marking should only be raised as an issue if it is inconsistent with a school’s policy or presents a workload problem, which usually means leadership should be investigated rather than marking.

As with safeguarding, schools should be prepared to challenge inspectors if they appear to be looking at marking through a “narrow” lens.

“If inspectors have turned one of these things into a high-stakes activity, and are making a far-reaching judgment from a small base of evidence, challenge them and question them,” he said.

## best talks from the SSAT conference 2017

REPORTING BY JESS STAUFENBERG



## HOW THE HILLSBOROUGH DISASTER CAN TEACH CRITICAL THOUGHT



Sue Williamson



Teaching pupils to think critically about "truth" is as important as ever, according to a top academic who investigated corrupted evidence during the inquest into the Hillsborough football disaster.

School leaders heard about the immediate aftermath of the tragedy in 1989, in which 96 people died at a football stadium in Sheffield, and the long-term lessons about "breaking silence and recovering truth".

Professor Phil Scraton of Queen's Belfast University, who was a member of the Hillsborough independent panel, demonstrated that much of the media accepted the police line that Liverpool fans were responsible for the deaths.

"Within minutes, a lie emerges," he said, describing how David Duckenfield, the former chief superintendent of South Yorkshire Police and the match commander, incorrectly told FA officials that Liverpool fans had forced a gate before stampeding down a tunnel.

"This broadcast was sent around the world, before the last bodies were even taken from the pens."

What really happened was at about 2.30 pm on April 15, Liverpool supporters built up outside turnstiles, and thousands were unable to get through as the match kicked off.

Amid increasing safety concerns, Duckenfield ordered the gates opened, leading to a tunnel to two pens just behind the pitch. The fans streamed in, until those at the front became pressed against fences.

While some managed to escape the crush, 96 people died of compressive asphyxia while standing, and 400 were injured. Some

survivors have since committed suicide or suffered other trauma.

Scraton quoted the coverage that appeared in the media over the following days, from the false report that "many fans did not have tickets" and that "Scouse killed Scouse" to the idea that "Liverpool can't accept that some of its troubles might stem from its own people".

In particular, the police encouraged the line that fans had been drunk.

Scraton said the treatment of the bereaved was "dreadful", with relatives asking about their loved ones' drinking habits.

"Many of us think only *The Sun* carried that story, but it was carried throughout the media," he said.

As late as 2004, Boris Johnson wrote in *The Spectator* that *The Sun* had become Liverpool's "whipping boy" over Hillsborough – an insult he was later forced to apologise for.

Eventually, in 2012, the Hillsborough independent panel concluded that Liverpool fans were not responsible and the lack of police control had been at fault. It also concluded that 164 witness statements had been altered – the "biggest corruption of police evidence I've ever seen".

He told school leaders they played a key role in helping pupils be critical about accepted versions of events, and that holding institutions to account, particularly in the era of Brexit, was as important as ever before.

Scraton said teachers did not need reminding that most knowledge was "passed downwards, not upwards", meaning people are handed "regimes of truth". Instead, pupils needed to be helped to understand the "view from below" and be critical about the relationship between ideology and power.

# SSAT DAY TWO

## Teachers must be able to articulate their curriculums

**T**oo many schools in England are vague about their curriculums and teacher training programmes, leading to a "lack of direction" across the education sector.

School leaders should follow the example of two overseas education figures, who are more dogmatic about the principles they use to train teachers, according to Matt Hood, the director of the Institute for Teaching.

In research from his organisation, coming out next year, school leaders were asked whether they thought it was more important to develop the "knowledge and skills" or "beliefs and behaviours" of trainees.

But too many school leaders did not know the answer.

"In one interview with staff, which should usually take an hour or so, they took well over three hours because the team spent most of their time tearing chunks off each other," he told delegates.

By contrast, when researchers asked two leading education figures, Shaheen Mistri, the chief executive of Teach for India, and Mike Goldstein, the founder of Match charter schools in the US, were able to clearly articulate which of these views they held and why.

When Mistri's staff were then interviewed, their principles also "totally aligned" with her vision that developing beliefs and behaviours was paramount.

Similarly, Goldstein's staff held to his view, that knowledge and skills are more important.

Hood reckons which one the leaders picked was less important than the "alignment" of the staff, when it came to the success of their organisations.

But "too regularly as a profession", teachers in the UK do "everything we can to avoid" difficult decisions which may send a curriculum or ITT course in one particular direction.

"Making these design choices is really hard because we often have to stop doing good things, to do great things," he said.

"What's great about Mike and Shaheen is they know they have limited resources, a limited amount of time for delivery, and they know [they have to] choose this deliberate technique."

Many teachers are unwilling to pay the "opportunity cost" of focusing on certain methods or subjects, which means other legitimate focuses are dropped, he claimed.

Such direction is important because otherwise trainee teachers and pupils can experience a "myriad of contradictory bets", meaning "opportunities for coherence" are lost. His new research shows the best training schools make clear decisions about



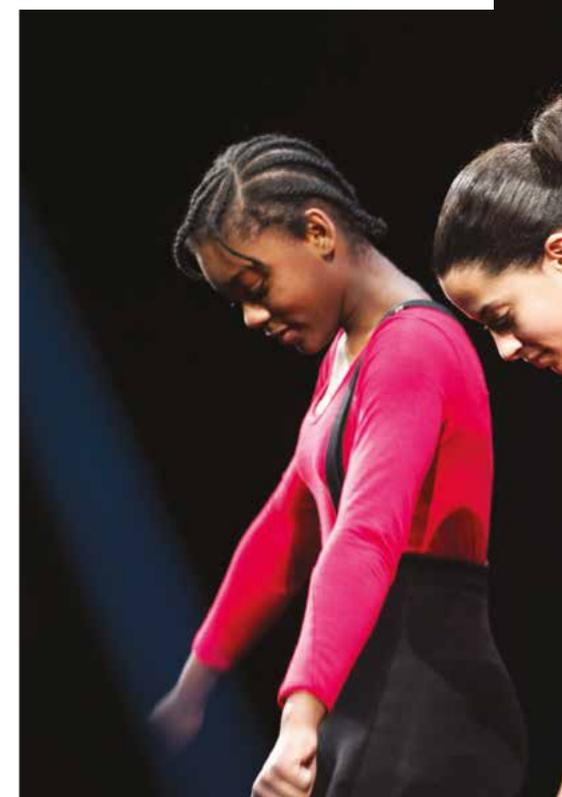
Matt Hood

what and how they will teach.

Hood's words follow Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector, who wants schools to review their own curriculums and be able to explain in clear terms to inspectors why they have chosen particular types of content.

Sean Harford, Ofsted's national director, has previously said inspectors will increasingly look for evidence of "strategic decision-making" in school curriculums, and the requirement is likely to form part of a new common inspection framework in September 2019.

Hood admitted that schools don't have conclusive evidence for what types of training programmes or curriculums are best for trainees or pupils, but that the evidence showed making a "strong bet" in a particular direction was itself beneficial.



## DON'T FORGET THESE MEMORY TIPS

**T**eachers should use a "rich and complex" understanding of memory to improve how pupils learn – throwing out rote-learning in favour of testing immediately after they've digested new information.

Dr Ashok Jansari, a cognitive neuropsychologist at Goldsmiths University, gave teachers tips for helping pupils consolidate their knowledge using memory research.

First, he warned, memory is "not a passive store" into which information can be poured.

Instead, pupils make use of two different kinds of memory, which are then divided again: short-term memory, which lasts for about a minute, and long-term memory, which is anything longer than that.

Longer-term memory is then split into procedural memory, which is for skills and automated actions, and declarative memory, which is for facts. Fact-based memory breaks down once more into episodic memory, which remembers events, and semantic memory, which recalls factual information.

If schools wish to focus only on factual information, then evidence shows that pupils do not retain it well if they learn by rote.

A study of students in east Asia found those who learned purely by memorising performed worse across reading, maths and science than those who used learning strategies such as elaboration, where other information is attached to facts, such as by creating a phrase or analogy.

"Constant repetition isn't sufficient," said Jansari. "There is thinking in education that the main way to teach is by memorisation. We know that's not the case."

Another study showed that students remembered words better for longer if they attach meaning to words, rather than arbitrary facts about them.

A list of words was presented to three groups of students. One group was told to look for words with a particular letter in, another for words which rhymed with a sound, and the third group for words that meant something, such as an animal. Half an hour later, the students told to remember the meaning of words remembered them better than the other groups.

How pupils initially engage with information is "what increases the chances of remembering it later on", he told the audience, with context helping it stick for longer.

But one of the most effective ways of helping pupils remember information in the long-term is to test them immediately afterwards, in a phenomenon called the "testing effect" discovered by US psychologists a decade ago.

Two groups of students were given prose to study. The first group was allowed to read it again. The second group was tested immediately on remembering the prose.

Five minutes later, both groups were tested on recalling the prose. In this immediate aftermath, the group which studied the prose a second time performed slightly better than the group tested straightaway.

But two days later, the group that was tested straightaway remembered the prose better, and after a week that margin had increased yet more significantly.

The act of "working with the information"

straight after learning it "strengthens the memory process", Jansari explained.

Research also shows pupils' abilities to plan and control their behaviour will not fully develop until their early 20s because the frontal lobe responsible has not finished growing until then – meaning teachers should use learning strategies which do not rely too heavily on self-regulation.

More schools should also show pupils how to meditate as a way to "regulate and organise themselves", as research shows it helps preserve these abilities.



Dr Ashok Jansari

REPORTING BY JESS STAUFENBERG

## USE YOUNG STAFF TO PUSH STRICT BEHAVIOUR RULES



Peter Lee

**H**aving “very young members of staff” who are prepared to implement a new system of behaviour management has been crucial to a new school’s success.

Peter Lee, the head at Q3 Academy Langley, a free school outside Birmingham, said his young staff were willing to employ methods drawn from other free schools, which allowed the senior leadership team to build the school up “from scratch”.

These strategies include the “SLANT” directive used by Michaela Community School in north-west London, which requires pupils to sit up straight, fold their arms and track the classroom leader with their eyes, when the teacher says the word.

Lee was impressed when he visited the school, although his staff only use it for two minutes at a time – whereas he once observed it deployed for 45 minutes at Michaela.

Pupils can also receive a five-minute detention for every item they forget from their pencil case. After working in another school where pupils didn’t bring pens to exams, Lee decided to provide pupils with pencil cases in year 7, with star rewards for having the full set and a punishment for forgetting anything.

“This works,” he said. “You say it at parents’ evening, and they think you’re the devil incarnate, but it works.”

During transitions between lessons, pupils are given 15-minute detentions if they turn

around, clip another pupil’s heels, or talk beyond saying good morning.

Pupils are also required to call all adults on site Sir or Miss, make eye contact and smile.

Mobile phones are collected at the start of the day and locked away, following one experience in which he spent seven hours trying to find a stolen iPhone before finding it hidden inside a pupil’s shoe. Pupils would also text their parents to complain about teachers, who would then turn up to have a shout at staff.

Meanwhile, a tight lunch process has ensured two-minute slots between eating sessions for the year 7s and year 8s, who are currently the only pupils at the school.

“People have called it militaristic, and I get that – perhaps that’s my police background,” said Lee, who trained as an officer before switching to teaching. “But it has to be.”

The “biggest single determiner” of a school’s success is behaviour, he suggested, having worked at those rated ‘outstanding’ through to ‘inadequate’.

When the school first opened in September 2016, Lee was expecting heads of subjects from other schools to apply but instead it attracted mainly newly qualified teachers or recently qualified teachers.

But the young team have enabled him to lay down behaviour and other policies without resistance.

“A lot of our systems and processes would have probably only worked with very young members of staff,” he said. “If I had become a head in a fully-functioning, established school, would I have been able to do some of the things we’ve done? I don’t think the answer is yes.”

He has also implemented a family lunch, having seen it at Michaela, so parents can attend and discuss suggested topics, from politics to ethical issues, with pupils and staff.



## OPINION



# MARY MYATT

Education consultant,  
speaker and author

## It's time to put an end to ability setting at all ages

**Classrooms will inevitably feature children of very different ability levels, but keeping them apart helps none of them, argues Mary Myatt**

There are a number of problems with setting by ability and the first is the term "ability" itself. It is fraught with difficulty: all we can talk about with any confidence is prior attainment: in other words, whether it's low, middle or high.

The second is that setting by ability means that pupils are often given a different academic diet. Those in lower sets are provided with work that is often scaffolded and doesn't make sufficient cognitive demands, which means the gap between low and high prior attaining pupils is more likely to widen.

**“Children self-identify with the level of work expected of them**

In many schools, a higher proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds populate lower tables in primary and the lower sets in secondary. As a sector, are we saying that ability is related to postcode? Are we really serious about closing gaps? If we are, we need to give this some serious thought.

This is a sensitive topic. In every classroom there are children with different levels of prior attainment who have differing capacities to engage with the work. However, labeling them through setting will limit their learning.

Pupils are often placed in groups that determine the level of work they are expected to do. Whether they are on a table called leopards or lizards, children are remarkably astute at knowing what it means.

The problems emerge when the labels stick. Children self-identify with the level of work expected of them. This is not helpful for kids of any ability: high-attainers see themselves as worthy of greater challenge and more able than others. That might be the case, but if

their work drops and they are allocated a different label they are likely to see themselves as failures. Similarly for the other groups, children who have the lowest labels (and they do know they are at bottom) feel that they cannot tackle more demanding work. They are often supported by an adult, which may be appropriate, but will sometimes become dependent on the adult to help them, even when they don't need it.

Alison Peacock, in Assessment for learning without limits, has this insight into children's views on setting: "The 'more able' loved it; the middle group were annoyed that they didn't get the same challenges as the other group – they wanted to try harder work but had worked out they would never be moved up as there were only six seats on the top table. The 'less able' were affected the most and felt dumb and useless."

Many of the lower groups do not have the same expected of them and as a result, don't make the same gains as their peers. This extends the gap in their knowledge and attainment. The paradox is that by giving them easier work, you can often close down their capacity and opportunity to do more.

Some schools have done away with naming tables or groups. Instead, they promote teaching to the top, rather than putting a lid on what children might produce by preparing materials which only allow them to go so far. The mastery approach to teaching maths in primary schools means that the whole class is taught together about the main ideas, and those who need additional support are given this through guidance and discussion by an adult. Those who are early graspers are kept on the same material but are expected to work on aspects of greater complexity and depth.

It means that all children are exposed to the material at the same time. There will always be exceptions, but for the majority of children in most classes, the expectation is that by teaching to the top – and providing additional support for those who need it and challenge for those who are capable – everyone is exposed to a rich and demanding curriculum.

We do not truly know what anyone is capable of until they are given interesting and difficult things to do.



# TIM OATES

Director of assessment R&D,  
Cambridge Assessment

## Primary schools are the key to success in 'big, fat' GCSEs

**The expanded GCSEs may seem tough, but once pupils have been through the new primary curriculum, they will be much more accessible, writes Tim Oates**

We have new, demanding GCSEs at 16. Combined with all the other stresses in the system, it's clear that our schools are feeling the pressure. However, I'm confident that, supported by current systemic changes, they are up to the challenge.

The BBC recently featured a pen-pal scheme between Franche Primary School in Kidderminster and local care homes. The item, on Radio 4, showed year 4 pupils discussing language forms, expressive style and clause structure, entirely at ease with the formal aspects of "language about language" in the 2014 national curriculum. The school has not done anything expensive or wrapped in complex technology; it has supported very young children in writing letters, and done some brilliant formal teaching of grammar around it – and the children love it.

So should all schools do exactly what Franche is doing? No, that's missing the point. It has engaged in a complex and effective exercise in curriculum development, identifying an activity that is simple in form, not complex to manage, but educationally and socially rich.

It works brilliantly in this school but in a different context, with different pupils, it may not be the right activity. And that's the key point: the importance of curriculum development results in turning the national curriculum, which isn't a curriculum at all so much as a list of desirable outcomes of schooling, into a compelling and engaging school curriculum.

The 2014 national curriculum was internationally benchmarked through extensive scrutiny of other frameworks from around the world. It wasn't an exercise in naively borrowing things from other systems; it helped inform what was humanly possible for all children to attain at specific ages.

Analysis suggested that we should increase expectations in key areas of the curriculum, which was put in place. It was inevitable that the national curriculum should look like a list of expectations – that's desirable, not a problem. It is for schools to turn these statements into compelling activity. That's a large curriculum development load, but it's the right approach in every setting to get to a school curriculum that links to the interests and needs of all children.

Developing a school curriculum can and

should be supported by a variety of processes – spontaneous innovation by teachers, digging out forgotten things that worked brilliantly in the past, sharing practice within and between schools, polishing existing learning activities through lesson study and observation, using paper and digital resources of the highest quality, and working in a context supported by inspection and targets.

**“Curriculum development in schools is essential and needs to be supported**

This last point is vital. The very best systems align all their parts: curriculum content, textbooks and materials, assessment, funding and inspection. Curriculum development in schools is essential and needs to be supported, not contradicted by the accountability framework. That's why the chief inspector's focus on curriculum is so heartening. Amanda Spielman absolutely understands the relationship between the national curriculum and a school curriculum, and wants England to achieve the kind of "curriculum coherence" we see in high-performing systems. Curriculum development in schools is essential to achieving this.

Franche is a great example, and it's not a one-off. I have been into primary schools where children are reading earlier and more competently, and love it. I have been into secondary schools where teachers are saying to parents "...we have had to increase our expectations of children in key stage 3, but we have been surprised by how pupils have been able to respond; we may have set targets too low in the past".

Children taking the new GCSEs have not benefitted from experiencing a pathway through the entirety of the new national curriculum and its accompanying assessments. Not every part of the system is yet in sync, but we're getting there. We have started on a process of improvement, and initial signs on standards and learning are really positive. Of course there remain many controversial and pressing issues in education but what's happening in the school curriculum, as a result of the national curriculum, feels like a reason to be cheerful.

**The government needs to stop and think before rushing into an expansion of the alternative provision census, argues Jen Persson**

From the disastrous effects of the Universal Credit on children and the pupil premium, through the SEN crisis to the upbeat people of edTechUK, we constantly hear the call for more data. But more isn't always better.

The Department for Education will start recording pregnancy, mental health or young offender status forever as new items on the Alternative Provision census from January, and distribute it to third parties without the pupil's consent.

Nick Gibb has told parliament that the census already collects a range of information about individuals, so there is no new privacy risk. He's wrong.

The privacy impact assessment ahead of any change in data collection is an opportunity to stop and think. Without it, the government is making mistakes in its directions on data.

The main pool that almost every child ends up in at the DfE, is made up of over 20 different datasets: the National Pupil Database. It holds the named records of 23 million people aged 36 and under, who have been state educated since 1996, as well as private pupils who have sat exams. It is now one of the richest datasets in the world.

The DfE gives these records away, but for how many children since 2012, it doesn't know. According to our analysis, it's in the order of millions every month.



# JEN PERSSON

Director, defenddigitalme

## Data, data everywhere but not a stop to think

After five years, it's shocking that the government has still not told every family in England that it hands our children's personal confidential data out to people we've never heard of. Identifying information has been distributed over 1,000 times since March 2012 to a wide range of recipients. They are sent, but promise not to publish pupil-level data. A private tutoring company and commercial data consultancies are among the uses registered.

There is no transparent oversight of how the DfE responds to research requests, how they are ethically applied, or the societal benefit of how the data is used.

There are real risks with labels for life.

Algorithms use data to predict the risk of becoming a NEET and target children

for intervention. With consent, it might be beneficial. But as academics have identified, there is a risk in the troubled families programme that "any family could be made to fit". The same data has been requested by researchers for use in predictive policing. A request from the Ministry of Defence for pupil-level information for targeted recruitment marketing was one of only 23 ever refused.

The government isn't collecting statistics, but the personal life stories of millions of children aged two to 19, adding more each term throughout their education, then joining it to student loans, tax, and DWP records to create "destinations data". What policy is this shaping, and with what error rate?

The handling and transparency of pupil data

must change, as NHS patient data did in 2014 after an audit found our confidential records had been given to reinsurers, and that some uses never recorded.

**“ The government hands our children's personal confidential data out to people we've never heard of**

First, the distribution model must be made safe. The sector also needs a review of data collection, its value and costs. Is school census data turned into useful knowledge? Is it necessary and proportionate to store hundreds of attributes on every pupil at national level forever, and copy and distribute them thousands of times, for millions of children? Everyone needs to be told exactly who has their personal confidential data and why. Our rights to access and correct errors must be restored.

Mistakes in school-collected data harm pupils and families. Children's confidentiality is not a commodity. Their digital integrity will be necessary for trusted interactions throughout their life.

The government needs to stop and rethink the expansion of its Alternative Provision Census as a matter of urgency.

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## REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS  
OF THE WEEK

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



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

### Fostering respect for diversity in a climate of fear and misunderstanding: the case for a religious education

@alicesmcneill

My first choice this week is a post from Alice McNeill, head of Partnerships at Bedales School, which appeared on the ISC blog a couple of months ago but has only come to my attention recently. It presents a powerful argument for the value of Religious Studies in the present climate.

Alice discusses the importance of "religious literacy" and her concerns that subjects outside the EBacc increasingly have to fight for their place within the curriculum. As she says, the subject focuses on "our shared humanity" and celebrates diversity. In the face of current challenges "there is a stronger case than ever for making space for religion within the curriculum in order to avoid a rootless youth, a decontextualized value system and fertile ground for extremist religious mentalities".

### Sleep

@teachgratitude1

As we limp towards the end of the longest and arguably the toughest of the three school terms, many teachers will be relishing the opportunity the holidays present to catch up on their sleep. In this post, Jamie Thom discusses the importance of regular and healthy sleep habits, and the danger of failing to get sufficient rest.

He speaks from experience: "I know what a profoundly depressing and difficult thing it is to survive on very little sleep, and how it can lead to a vicious cycle of anxiety and poor functioning." He goes on to offer some specific, practical advice as to how we can ensure we get sufficient sleep, including

interesting and useful references and suggestions for further reading.

### Life inside the bubble:

@EnserMark

In addition to his day job as a head of geography, Mark Enser is a prolific writer on a range of educational subjects. This is the second part of his consideration on how well-informed and forward-looking teachers are, as he debates whether individual professionals, and indeed whole schools, are inside or outside "the bubble". Those who are within connect with, learn from and support the learning of other educators, which is in Mark's view essential if you are to be a confident and well-informed leader.

He asks whether some schools are genuinely committed to improvement, while others are content simply to create the impression that they are. When I tweeted the link to this post, it clearly struck a chord because of the number of retweets and comments it generated. You may agree or disagree, but I suggest it will make you think.

### Effective debate in edchats

@Effortfulduktr

Blake Harvard, a US educator, explores the issue of edchats on Twitter, and what he considers to be acceptable and unacceptable online behaviour. He reflects on his own experience of using Twitter and blogging, and discusses some of the differences between the ways online chats tend to operate in US and UK.

Blake welcomes healthy and polite dissent, but suggests that if we are to derive the greatest benefit from online debate with fellow educators, we should perhaps follow certain guidelines. He concludes: "Remain polite – no matter what, be polite. There's no reason to insult another edchat participant. Remember, these are teachers who are using their own time to try and better themselves." He suggests that if we follow some simple guidelines we are far more likely to succeed in our goal of "thinking, learning, growing".

### What kind of feedback moves students on?

@HFletcherWood

My final choice this week comes from my fellow *Schools Week* blog reviewer, Harry Fletcher-Wood, who deals comprehensively here with the subject of feedback, and what kind successfully moves student learning on. Harry concedes that "feedback is hard to get right", but claims that "if we are intentional about the level of change we are targeting, and make links between one level and the next, it is far more likely to be effective". Wise words and useful advice, Harry.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Critical Thinking

By Tom Chatfield

Published by SAGE Publications

Reviewed by Tim Jones, academic  
deputy head, Sevenoaks School



This generation of school-age students is bombarded with an overabundance of information. Social media, the decline in trust of print media, and the ease with which information can be accessed by smartphones compounds this saturation. Information is not knowledge, however – students need to know how to put it in context and sift the bad from the good, as well as how to give weight to competing arguments and save themselves from drowning in the ocean of data.

Our school teaches critical thinking across all our year groups. We look at the different systems of belief that influence perspectives and customs, how to detect editorial bias in the media and identify the most powerful and transformative ideas in the history of civilisation. We are also conscious that we have a responsibility to teach our students how to present arguments clearly and fairly, how to keep themselves safe online, to avoid dangers ranging from email scams to radicalisation, and how to find space for reflection and recreation away from the stresses of an information-saturated society.

As well as being a first-rate introduction to the field, Tom Chatfield's *Critical Thinking* contains sensible, grounded examples, illustrations and help on all of these topics. It serves as a useful primer to the subject and could even serve as a class textbook.

Chatfield uses some very old ideas – the section on rhetoric, and the use of the modes of persuasion, "ethos", "logos" and "pathos", were first introduced by Aristotle. He also uses very new ideas – definitions of "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles" are included as part of the section on researching and avoiding misinformation online.

He elsewhere addresses the broad challenge of being reasonable in an unreasonable world. He looks at the structure of arguments, paying close but unpedantic attention to the logical fallacies that can distort clear argumentation.

He makes sensible points about how empirical evidence and the use of primary and secondary sources can strengthen an argument.

However, we all know that it's not always the best argument that wins the day, and in the second part of the book, he looks at the tools of rhetoric: how they can clarify arguments, and, conversely, be used by the unscrupulous to confuse, obscure or deflect.

Identifying bias in arguments is important, just as vital is to recognise unconscious bias in oneself, and Chatfield is particularly impressive when he comes to interrogate different heuristics and how for example oversimplification and lack of insight can lead to trouble.

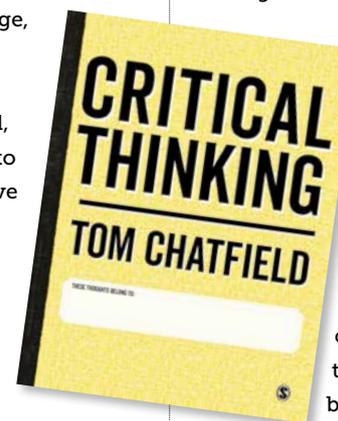
The design of the book is both its most striking and useful component. Key terms are highlighted, margins are wide for notes, and illustrations are bold and clear. He doesn't skimp on the detail in his explanations, but mixes a formal and detailed approach with up-to-date examples and clever use of social media – chapters include links to YouTube summaries and participation via Twitter is encouraged.

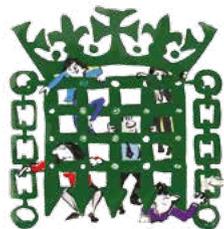
Structuring the book around the tongue-in-cheek "10 commandments for critical thinking" gives coherence to the distinct elements of the book, making it a usefully self-contained course.

There is also plenty of material here to support a school's study skills programme. In common with the advice on reasoning and arguments, Chatfield's advice on how to study and learn are practical, clear and relevant.

This is a book happy to be written on, queried and argued with. The exercises sprinkled throughout are well judged and encourage a deep reading. Overall the book is written with a clear perspective, from the ground up. The consistency of tone and design make it an impressive achievement, bringing light and clarity to an area which can present as murky and vague. I recommend it strongly. It will certainly be a useful addition to the teaching materials my school already uses, but its appeal goes well beyond classroom walls due to its breadth, depth and the clarity of its outlook.

I would be very happy to see students and colleagues alike walking around campus with dog-eared, annotated and bookmarked copies of *Critical Thinking*.





# Week in Westminster

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

## MONDAY:

Security for the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) was very tight this year. A strict 9am embargo was enshrined in a forcefully-worded agreement that journalists and ministerial aides had to sign, and swear themselves to secrecy, if they wanted advance sight of the data.

But the shroud was broken, not by a journalist, but by the schools minister Nick Gibb.

A glowing opinion piece from Gibb in *The Telegraph*, telling everyone how clever he was for bringing in phonics, was published at 9.30pm. On the day before.

It's unlikely Gibb pushed the publish button himself – even he's not that much of a control freak, right? – but it's ironic that the breach came in the form of an opinion

piece from a minister, not long after the department was rapped over the knuckles by the UK Stats Authority just last month, for being careless with secret information in... er... opinion pieces by ministers...

## TUESDAY:

Sorry Social Mobility Commission, your madcap scheme to put RSCs in charge of the world won't be happening any time soon.

Before the commission's members resigned en masse, there was time for one last grenade – suggesting that responsibility for teacher supply be added to RSCs' already groaning plates.

But Sir David Carter is refusing to catch.

At the parliamentary committee this week, he said he didn't want an increase in workload and even criticised the idea as "mission creep", which he had seen

someone say on Twitter about his own role.

Week in Westminster reckons teachers may feel the same about the new

requirements to appoint mental health and careers leads from within their fold. Can they get out of the whole thing by claiming mission creep too?

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Westminster, a government minister and early proponent of the free schools programme, was busy trying to foist his own three schools onto another trust.

Lord O'Shaughnessy, a health minister and ex-aide to David Cameron, admitted the schools operated by his trust Floreat Education in London and Berkshire can no longer function on their own. Funnily enough, the per-pupil funding for a handful of primary school pupils isn't enough to sustain a central services team of three full-time employees. Who'd have thought it?

Still, O'Shaughnessy insists this isn't about a problem with the free schools model. So that's good. After all, it would be totally awkward if you'd built and harped on for years about how good the free schools programme was, and were then forced to admit your own schools opened by that exact method are unsustainable. That would be terrible.

## THURSDAY:

In case anyone hasn't noticed, Toby Young is the head of the New Schools Network, and we've been granted a rare insight into life at this government department... sorry... we mean "charity". (Did you know that around 50 per cent of its funds come from donors? If you didn't we'll forward you the complaint letter we get when they see this...)

Before then, however, Christmas has come early for us all in a column he wrote about decorating his new abode. Not only does he explain how he heroically commandeered his office from an unsuspecting charity worker, but we also get to hear about the length of time he spent wondering what objects would make him seem most important as a boss.

Shame he didn't get in sooner. The infamous Vera Wang tea set bought by academies minister Theodore Agnew's trust would have done nicely.

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News

It's official. The UK's phonics revolution has dramatically improved school standards

NICK GIBB

8 DECEMBER 2017 - 9:30PM



**Name** Rachael Hallam

**Age** 38

**Occupation** Deputy headteacher for teaching, learning and assessment

**Location** Oldham

**Subscriber since**

January 2017

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*?

Everywhere! Mainly on a Saturday morning when I like to catch up on the week's events in education. The online version is something I dip into at the end of the school day, when I have some time at home.

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

I enjoy the news section the most as it summarises the key educational issues that are important to know about and be aware of.

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

Education funding cuts are a curse to schools. The most disadvantaged students are becoming even more disadvantaged; larger class sizes, less teachers, workload for staff are all linked to the cuts. Finding smarter ways of working are becoming more of a challenge and the increasing pressure to do this has a detrimental effect on wellbeing and mental health for staff and students.

### Who is your favourite education secretary of all time?

Ed Balls. I met him at a previous educational establishment and he seemed genuinely interested in the welfare of our students. The *Strictly* appearance was also a highlight of his career!

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

Recently, I enjoyed the report on general annual grant pooling. I work for a multi-academy trust that uses this way of funding and it was interesting to read how it is being used in other trusts across the nation.



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

It goes in the staff room at school for other staff to read and share.

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

Hand the reins to kids.

### Favourite memory of your school years?

The extracurricular events, such as sport and school exchange trips were always a highlight but I loved school. I loved being there every single day, learning, being with friends and seizing every opportunity!

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

Repping in Ibiza! I almost went in 1997 but personal circumstances stopped me and I've never looked back.

### Favourite book on education?

*The Advantage* by Patrick Lencioni. It's about building and developing teams, as opposed to education but every word is a gem.

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

Networking opportunities and events for teaching staff to attend – which are free – to share best practise and build stronger networks for teachers to moderate, consolidate and share ideas. This is happening more and more, and Twitter has been revolutionary in disseminating information in education, but regional and national events would be even better.

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

This year, Theresa May on election night. Other than that it would have to be someone literary.

# School Bulletin *with Sam King*

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



## Commemorating the Great War at Parliament

### FEATURED

A group of school projects commemorating World War One have been celebrated at an awards ceremony at the House of Lords.

Among the projects on display were film documentaries, a poppy-planting initiative, and plays based on poems written during the Great War, all conceived and executed by secondary school pupils across England, following visits to major battlefields through the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme.

Six schools were crowned winners at the event for their Legacy 110 projects, which encouraged students to share their post-tour experiences with at least 110 members of their local community.

One of the winning schools, Helsby High School in Cheshire, started a research club inviting younger students to explore their family's involvement in the war following two year 11 pupils' visits to battlefields in Ypres and the Somme.

"The club we ran gave KS3 pupils an insight into the reality of war and the real lives affected both at home and abroad," said Katie Jones, a history teacher at Helsby High. "One pupil said to me that the names on our local church memorial now seem to have much more meaning."

Fellow winners Hall Green School in Birmingham shot a film about the war which was shown at half-time during the Premier League football fixture between



Pupils visit the site of the Battle of the Somme



Winners from Maiden Beech Academy

West Bromwich Albion and Chelsea earlier this month.

The £5.3 million First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme is a government initiative to commemorate the war, jointly funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education.

It gives two students and one teacher from every state secondary school in



The winning trio from Helsby High School

England the chance to visit battle sites from the war.

"The programme is all about providing students with a tangible insight into the lives of those who fought in the First World War," said Simon Bendry, the programme's director. "It is great to see so many students continuing their study of the conflict with such enthusiasm once back at home."



Gates with reigning Young Person of the Year, Gregor Gilmour

## SHINING A LIGHT ON SLCN

Nominations are now open for a national competition celebrating those who help and support young people to develop their speech, language and communication skills.

The sixth annual Shine a Light awards are open to teams, teachers, schools, settings and individuals in England who support young people with speech, language and communication needs.

Categories in the 2018 awards, which were launched through a partnership between the Communication Trust and Pearson, include 'primary school of the year', 'secondary school or college of the year', 'SEN school of group of the year' and 'the Pearson outstanding achievement award'.

The awards ceremony will take place in London on March 22, and a celebrity host will be revealed nearer the time.

Last year's guest of honour was singer Gareth Gates, who has publicly struggled with a stammer and is now a qualified speech coach and course instructor.

"The awards show how lives can be enriched with dedication and commitment, particularly for the one million children and young people with long-term speech, language and communication needs," said Octavia Holland, the trust's director.

Applications for the awards close on January 12. To apply, visit: [www.shinealightawards.co.uk](http://www.shinealightawards.co.uk)



Composer Alexander L'Estrange leads the chorus at Southwark Cathedral

## United Learning's Christmas miracle

More than 1,000 students and staff from United Learning schools have performed a brand new carol at London's Southwark Cathedral and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

Written especially for the occasion by composer Alexander L'Estrange, the song 'Wassail! Carols of Comfort and Joy' was commissioned by the United Learning Partnership Fund to introduce students to choral singing.

Students from 28 of the trust's schools had been rehearsing their parts of the song since the beginning of term, only coming together as a full choir on the day of the

performances, with the northern schools' choirs performing in Manchester, and the southern schools at Southwark Cathedral.

"The sound of 1,000 students from across the country singing together has been truly moving," said Catherine Barker, the trust's head of music and performing arts. "Not only has this project introduced our students to a vast array of different types of music, it has given them the chance to collaborate with their peers from across the country."

The choral project has recently been shortlisted in the 'best classical music education initiative' category at the 2018 Music Teachers awards, sponsored by Classic FM.

## UTC Leeds has lift-off



(L-R) Feel the burn: Leo Foltier, 14, Jasmine Thapa, 14, and William Snadden, 15, at the launch of Rockets Week

Pupils at UTC Leeds have met experts from NASA who taught them how to design and launch space vehicles during a week of rocket-themed activities.

312 students and 158 visiting primary school pupils took part in Rockets Week, hosted at the UTC, meeting experts from space, technology and engineering backgrounds who hosted interactive workshops.

Some pupils got to design experiments that might be carried out on a NASA mission into space, while others attended demonstrations on the chemistry of rocket propellants and the way the angle at which a rocket is launched can affect the height and distance it travels.

Representatives came from NASA, the International Space University and CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research. The chief executive of Starchaser Industries, Steve Bennett, even brought along an eight-metre rocket which he parked in the college's car park.

"We are thrilled that so many world-renowned experts have shared their knowledge with us to inspire the next generation of engineers," said Mark Kennedy, the UTC's principal. "Our students develop cutting-edge technical skills because employers and industry experts work with them as part of the curriculum preparing them for exciting careers. This initiative is testament to that."

## MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



**CHRIS  
LEGG**

Headteacher, Upottery  
Primary School

**START DATE:** November 2017

**PREVIOUS JOB:** Assistant headteacher,  
Littletown Primary

**INTERESTING FACT:** At the start of his teaching career, Chris went to buy an acoustic guitar to use in assemblies. He managed to buy a purple semi-electric six-string which he still uses now.



**DAWN  
LUSZCZAK**

Head of sixth form,  
Alder Grange School

**START DATE:** September 2017

**PREVIOUS JOB:** Senior achievement leader for  
KS4, Alder Grange School

**INTERESTING FACT:** Dawn was a pupil at Alder Grange herself, and is delighted to now be head of sixth form 19 years later.



**KATE  
CHHATWAL**

Chief executive,  
Challenge Partners

**START DATE:** February 2018

**PREVIOUS JOB:** Executive director, Southwark  
Teaching School Alliance

**INTERESTING FACT:** Kate once played international football as a defender in a mixed, pan-European team from the Florence-based European University Institute, where she did her PhD.



**JON  
NUNES**

Headteacher,  
Backwell School

**START DATE:** November 2017

**PREVIOUS JOB:** Interim headteacher,  
Backwell School

**INTERESTING FACT:** As a student Jon represented Oxford University at darts.



**KEITH  
MORROW**

Headmaster,  
Hallfield School

**START DATE:** September 2018

**PREVIOUS JOB:** Headmaster, The Elms School

**INTERESTING FACT:** Keith is an avid fan of  
*The Archers*.

### 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](mailto:news@schoolsweek.co.uk)

# future



# future



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## SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

Solutions:  
Next week

## Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

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.