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FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2018 | EDITION 126



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SO YOU WANT TO SAVE ON YOUR TAXES?

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- Loophole avoids national insurance costs worth thousands

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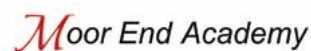
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NEWS

'Ban energy drinks to improve pupil behaviour'

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

There are fresh moves afoot to make energy drinks illegal for anyone under 16, as one school resorts to bag searches for caffeinated drinks and sugary snacks to improve pupil behaviour.

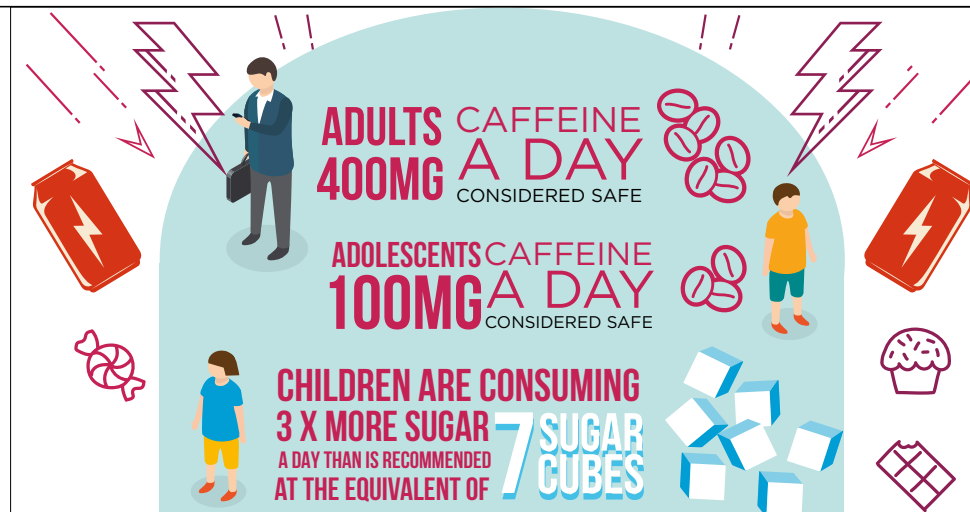
A public health nutritionist wants to ban the sale of energy drinks, which can have more caffeine than a filter coffee, to pupils, so schools do not have to enforce strict policies. Her words follow celebrity chef Jamie Oliver also urging the government to introduce a ban.

Teesside University's Dr Amelia Lake warned that drinks like Monster and Red Bull have detrimental effects on pupils' behaviour and sleep patterns, and can be addictive.

Her words were backed by Tom Bennett, the government's behaviour tsar, who said the health implications of the high-caffeine content made energy drinks a "child protection issue" as much as a behaviour issue.

"Children need to be supported in developing healthy lifestyles, as well as protected from exposure to known addictive substances," he said.

Bennett also applauded the Charles Dickens School in Kent, which faced a backlash from some parents last week after it began confiscating all energy and fizzy drinks, as well as sugary snacks and unhealthy food,



from pupils' bags. One parent accused the school of being a "boot camp".

But he insisted that schools have a right to ban contraband on their own premises, be it drugs, knives or food. If the policy is effectively communicated to parents, they "can't claim not to know why items have been confiscated".

Staff can search without consent for "any item banned by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for", according to updated government guidance released on Thursday.

Pupils at Harris academy trust in London have decided to campaign against the drinks themselves after starring with Oliver in a Channel 4 programme about the dangers of energy drinks (see Bulletin).

Dr Lake, who is also associate director at the Fuse Centre in Newcastle, which researches public health, claimed pupils in some schools are smuggling energy drinks into school in unmarked bottles.

"I've read the toxicology reports on these drinks. Children under 16 should absolutely not be able to have them," she said, as it is "very challenging for schools to have to police this on top of everything else".

If energy drinks are banned for under-16s, as they are in some other European countries, the situation for schools would be "much clearer," she said.

Energy drinks were also raised at prime minister's questions last week. Maria Caulfield, the Conservative MP for Lewes, said the family of a 25-year-old constituent

who took his own life were certain that his escalating energy drink habit, which had reached 15 cans a day, had contributed to his anxiety and death.

She asked Theresa May whether national legislation would be changed to match Waitrose, Aldi and Asda, which this month banned the sale of drinks with more than 150mg of caffeine per litre to under-16s. The prime minister replied that the Department of Health was looking at the scientific evidence on the matter.

Certain European countries have already changed their laws. Lithuania led the way almost four years ago by banning energy drinks for anyone under 18, followed a couple of years later by Latvia. Back in 2012, Canada reclassified energy drinks from "natural health products" to "food" which allowed the government to limit their caffeine content to 180mg.

For most adults, 400mg of caffeine a day is considered safe, but for adolescents it is 100mg.

Meanwhile, Public Health England, an executive agency running within the DoH, has said pupils should not have more than "two snacks a day" coming to more than 100 calories each.

Research has revealed children are consuming three times more sugar a day than is recommended, the equivalent of seven sugar cubes, meaning a third of pupils leave primary school overweight or obese.

ELITE LONDON SIXTH-FORM WILL NO LONGER EXCLUDE BASED ON Y12 GRADES

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

A celebrated sixth form with top A-level results has been forced to stop kicking pupils out for low grades after it converted to academy status in order to shed its uncertain legal status.

The Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre in south London was widely praised because 99 per cent of its pupils achieved A* to C at A-level last year, placing it in the top one per cent of sixth forms in the country and attracting media plaudits for its principal, former City lawyer Mouhssin Ismail.

But a *Schools Week* investigation in September found that a number of year 12 pupils were "devastated" after they were refused entry to year 13 in subjects they didn't get Cs in – an "expectation" outlined on the sixth form's website.

At the time, the website said pupils who didn't hit Cs at AS-level would only be allowed into year 13 "in exceptional circumstances". Pupils could not retake year 12, and up to 20 pupils without the right grades left and started again at other schools, a practice in place since the sixth form opened in 2014.

The law states exclusion due to academic results is illegal in schools, as proved by the infamous case of St Olave's grammar school, but further education institutions have more say over their admissions and exclusions policy.

The school has now been forced to end selections, however, after it joined a multi-academy trust.

A spokesperson confirmed on Tuesday the school has joined the City of London academies trust. Newham councillors have been working on the transition ever since an investigation by cabinet members nearly four years ago found it was "unlawfully" opened by the council and must join a trust.

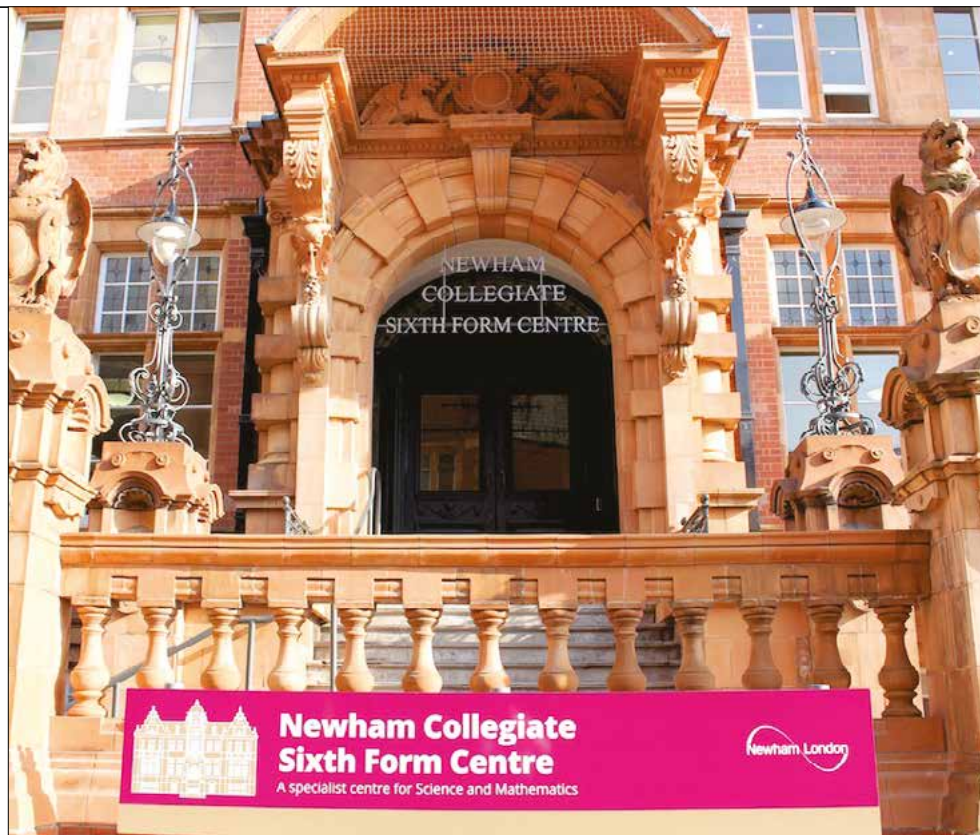
Its admissions policy for year 13 has now been "revised", according to a CoL trust spokesperson, who said the expectation for year 12 pupils to get Cs has been removed from the school's website. Pupils must only now get 56 points in eight GCSEs (equivalent to an A in each subject).

Andrew McMurtie, the chair of the trust, said he was "delighted" the school is joining and would "ensure the sixth form continues to deliver outstanding education, helping students to reach their full academic potential".

There are questions over whether the school will be able to maintain its results now that pupils with lower grades are able to sit A-levels.

The continued selection of pupils entering year 12 has been opposed by other post-16 providers in the area; one claimed this "highly selective" policy puts the rest "in jeopardy".

Eddie Playfair, the principal at the nearby Newham Sixth Form College, said in a recent consultation that he could not support the



school's continued existence in the borough. He believes it is "clearly inaccurate" that Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre will have opportunities for "all abilities", given its exclusive GCSE entry threshold.

One former pupil who wishes to remain anonymous has said he is "relieved" that the practice of removing pupils before year 13 has been scrapped.

Ismail has defended the old policy, saying "every decision we take is always in the best interests of our students".

But the Department for Education has warned other schools with such practices they must "provide a high-quality education to every pupil" and reiterated that "students enrolled in a sixth form cannot be removed because of academic ability".

NEWS

Apprenticeship recruitment agency encourages NI tax loophole

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

Exclusive

A schools apprenticeship and graduate recruitment agency stands accused of advising schools how to become "better off" by exploiting tax incentive rules, following a joint investigation by *Schools Week* and *FE Week*.

Qualified Schools proudly states on its website that schools can make "significant in-year budget savings" if they enrol existing staff under the age of 25 onto apprenticeship training, as they will no longer have to pay national insurance contributions.

During a Qualified Schools webinar held on Monday, a representative of the firm advised schools that converting their employees into apprentices would make significant savings because while employers must pay a contribution to the training cost of apprentices, this will be offset by no longer having to pay employer national insurance contributions for apprentices aged under 25.

However, a spokesperson for Qualified Schools, which is owned by Education Placement Limited, insisted it does not "provide financial advice about employer's NI".

Since April last year, the government has collected an apprenticeship levy from

employers with a payroll greater than £3 million, including large multi-academy trusts and councils. Monies collected are then allocated back to employers to spend on training their staff through apprenticeships.

The law changed in April 2016, meaning that anyone employing an apprentice under the age of 25 on an approved apprenticeship framework is not required to pay employer's NI contributions on earnings below £43,000 a year.

The spokesperson said the company "simply makes schools aware of government guidance documents and ensures they know all the options available to them so they can make an informed decision about how to spend the [apprenticeship] levy."

But during Monday's webinar, which *Schools Week* and *FE Week* heard in full without the company's knowledge, participants were advised that regardless of whether or not schools are a levy-paying employer, they can save money by moving existing employees under the age of 25 onto apprenticeships.

Schools are eligible to offer several apprenticeships including business administration and the new teacher training apprenticeships. Qualified teachers can also be enrolled onto management apprenticeships.

On the webinar, a Qualified Schools

employee gave an example of a school that wants to train two teaching assistants at a cost of £5,000 for the two, for whom the government will co-invest 90 per cent of the fee, leaving the school with a bill for just £500.

The employee calculated that by training up existing young employees schools can make employers' NI savings of £1,633 per person, where the cost of the apprenticeship to the school is only £250 per person.

By training two people the national insurance saving becomes £3,266 and, with the £500 fee for two apprentices factored in, a school would end up £2,766 "better off" using the system.

"So while investing in training you're actually making savings rather than spending, and even when you are spending you're in a surplus rather than a deficit because of the amount of money you generated from the levy," he told viewers.

The advice given by Qualified Schools is not illegal. However, the National Education Union's joint general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, warned that the company should not be "encouraging" schools to "avoid paying national insurance".

"We should also be concerned about any incentive to inappropriately badge

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existing school staff, who may have no say in the decision, as apprentices," she added. "On initial inspection this can be seen as corrupting the apprenticeship brand and is arguably a tax avoidance scheme, which has the potential for so much harm."

However, the spokesperson for Qualified Schools insisted the company "does not provide financial guidance".

"The core of the business is the recruitment of apprentices and graduates," she continued. "Existing staff training and any related savings are not the focus of Qualified Schools but are simply part of a rounded discussion in line with informing schools of their options."

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NEWS

Hundreds of schools demand answers after Carillion collapse

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Hundreds of schools have been left in the dark following the collapse of the outsourcing firm Carillion.

The company, which runs catering, cleaning and other facilities management services in schools across England, announced on Monday that it will go into liquidation after it failed to reach an agreement with officials to try to save it.

There is uncertainty over exactly how many schools have contracts with it. On its website, Carillion claims to provide facilities management at 875 schools and other mechanical services at 683. The firm also claims to hold cleaning contracts for 245 schools.

However, David Lidington, the government minister leading on the issue, said on Monday that just 230 schools held direct contracts with Carillion.

Lidington also reassured Carillion employees that they will continue to be paid and should go to work as normal. The government has confirmed that public funding will be provided to maintain the public services run by Carillion.

"Staff that are engaged on public sector contracts still have important work to do," Lidington told the BBC.

The new education secretary Damian Hinds has since come under pressure to release information about the consequences for schools.

In a statement, the government said it had



Kevin Courtney

been working with councils and academy trusts since before Christmas to "make sure contingency plans are in place".

But Robert Halfon, the chair of the parliamentary education committee, has written to Hinds requesting further details for each part of the country.

Halfon said the committee was aware of specific issues in some areas, including Gateshead in the north-east, where his committee colleague Ian Mearns is the MP.

"It would be helpful if the department published an analysis by constituency or local authority level of

where the impact of Carillion's collapse will be felt," he wrote.

A DfE spokesperson said it would offer support to schools to "help minimise disruption for pupils" via its designated advice service.

Concerns linger over the debts owed to Carillion for its private finance initiatives (PFI). According to its website, Carillion has PFI deals in place for at least 15 school-related projects, many of them new schools built under New Labour's school-building programme.



Damian Hinds

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, warned the firm's collapse had put a strain on schools.

"Headteachers and other school staff face another strain on their excessive workloads as they try and make short-term contingency plans and new arrangements for the long-term," he warned.

"While the government must protect the employment and pensions of Carillion's public sector workers, it must also take a long hard look at its encouragement of private sector involvement in schools and the unnecessary risks being taken with children's education and wellbeing."



Oxfordshire county council's Carillion contingencies

Councils across England were forced to take action to keep services for schools running after Carillion entered liquidation.

In Oxfordshire, the county council announced early on Monday morning that it had taken over most of the services previously provided by Carillion, and even had the fire service on standby to feed pupils.

The company was responsible for feeding around 18,000 pupils at 90 schools in the county.

The council was already in the process of transferring most of its contracts with Carillion back in house following an agreement made last July "in response to the council's changing property and estate needs".

However, Carillion was due to continue to provide a number of services, including facilities management relating to school meals, until March.

Following Monday's announcement,



the council brought forward the transfer of around 250 catering and cleaning staff to its own ranks.

"We expect school staff will be in work as normal today but if this doesn't happen we will provide school lunches to schools needing support, and the fire service are on standby to deliver them," said Alexandra Bailey, the council's director for property, assets and investment.

"We are confident no child will go hungry at school."

The academy trust that dodged a bullet

The executive head of an academy trust previously run by Carillion has spoken of the "timely decision" to break away from the firm earlier this year.

Karen Burns (pictured), executive headteacher at the Victorious Academies Trust, told ITV News the decision to begin "decoupling" from Carillion Academies Trust was taken last year after profit warnings about the firm.

Its two schools, Discovery Academy in Hyde and Inspire Academy in Ashton-under-Lyne, moved into the newly-created Victorious Academies Trust.

"It was a timely decision because with the profit warning they were stripping back to core business," she said.

"I felt it was the perfect opportunity for us to move on with an educational focus without the commercial sponsorship."

However, the government had not updated its records online and on Monday still listed Carillion Academies Trust as the sponsor for the two schools,



causing concerns about their future.

Burns wrote to parents to confirm the change after she received "a few queries", and insisted the Victorious Academies Trust is now "independent of commercial sponsorship".

"This really is an incredibly exciting development and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you to create something really special for your children across Tameside," she wrote.

NEWS

MPs on warpath over academy trust accountability

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government should publish "scorecards" for academy trusts and base decisions on whether they are allowed to grow both on educational and financial performance, an influential group of MPs has said.

The parliamentary education committee has warned of a "lack of joined-up accountability in the school system", particularly over failures like the doomed Wakefield City Academies Trust, and is demanding improvements to the way their performance is assessed by officials and communicated to parents and staff.

In a letter to Lord Agnew, the academies minister, committee chair Robert Halfon (pictured) said parents, staff and pupils had been left "in the dark over who is running their schools", and claimed decisions were being taken "behind closed doors".

He said parents had "seemed to be the last people to know" about the imminent collapse of WCAT, and pointed out this had happened in other cases.

"The lack of transparency is particularly evident in the relationship between regional schools commissioners, Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. We believe that the overlap between these three tiers of accountability is a major cause of confusion," he said.

Halfon said the WCAT case demonstrated this lack of accountability. The DfE and the regional schools commissioners had "very serious and major concerns" about the trust as early as September 2016, but bosses were still able to make "significant and unwarranted transfers of assets" up until the time of the trust's collapse.

"We believe that a more robust system of oversight could have prevented this," said Halfon. "We are particularly concerned by the extent to which failing trusts are stripping assets from their schools. It is not clear to us that all schools are benefiting from joining MATs, or that trusts are



providing value for money."

He acknowledged that the government was warming to the idea of Ofsted inspecting trusts, but wants RSCs to begin to publish "scorecards" for chains in the meantime.

These would, he said, combine "financial and performance information in a single location which they transparently use to determine the suitability of a trust taking over a school".

"These scorecards could complement the growth checks which our predecessor committee was told would be in place for all trusts from 2017," he went on. "We encourage you to develop a way of communicating the performance of trusts to improve the information publicly available on MATs in a way that is accessible to parents."

WCAT announced its intention to shed all 21 of its schools last September, but it has since become the subject of intense

scrutiny, especially given the large amounts of money transferred from schools to the chain's central finances.

Last month, Sir David Carter, the national schools commissioner, admitted to the education committee that the government had made a mistake and presented WCAT with an "impossible ask" when it handed the chain 14 schools in special measures over the course of 18 months.

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

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector, has spoken of her desire to have the watchdog inspect multi-academy trusts, rather than carry out focused inspections of a handful of their schools, as it does currently.

Last month, Agnew warned this would cause confusion, but it is understood that the government is working with Ofsted on a different approach.

IN brief

HALF OF WCAT'S SCHOOLS HAVE FOUND SPONSORS

Sponsors for 11 of the 21 schools run by the failed Wakefield City Academies Trust have been confirmed by the government, but officials are still trying to formalise deals for the remaining 10.

Delta Academies will take on Goole Academy, Montagu Academy and Morley Place Academy, while Astrea Academy trust will take on Waverley Academy.

Inspiring Futures, a trust with only two schools, has been confirmed as the sponsor for Willow Academy, despite concerns about its relative lack of expertise in improving schools.

Tauheedul Education Trust will receive High Craggs Academy, Barkerend Academy and Thornbury Academy, while Aston Community Education Trust will take on Rotherham's Brookfield Academy, as planned.

Carr Lodge Academy in Doncaster will be taken on by Exceed Learning Partnership while Brigantia Learning Trust will run Yewlands Academy in Sheffield.

HEAD BANNED FOR HUGE SAFEGUARDING FAILURES

The head of an unregistered private school in Birmingham has been banned from teaching after inspectors repeatedly raised safeguarding issues at his school over a number of years.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership has released the report of its professional conduct panel investigation into Naveed Hussain, head and director of Bordesley Independent School.

The investigation found staff were not subject to DBS checks, and that safeguarding issues were not appropriately dealt with. In one instance, a girl in year 10 wrote a story about being raped, but the school produced no evidence that a report had been filed.

Inspectors also raised concerns about the state of the school site itself, warning that the toilet area in the school had no running water and classrooms were "unkempt, cold and inadequate".

Ofsted also found evidence that the curriculum taught at the school was too narrow. Religious education "dealt only with Islam to the exclusion of any other religions".

ACADEMY TRUST BOSS DEFENDS £1.5M IN PAYMENTS TO FAMILY FIRM

ALIX ROBERTSON

@ALIXROBERTSON4

An academy trust chief executive whose family business made almost £1.5 million in consultancy fees in two years has defended the deal, claiming it has been "instrumental" in improving her schools.

Janet Marshall, the founder and chief executive of the EMLC Academies Trust, which runs seven schools, is also director and a shareholder of Third Wave Enterprises.

The trust's accounts reveal that service-level agreements between the trust and the consultancy have been in place since the trust was established in 2012, and that EMLC is a 14-per-cent shareholder of Third Wave.

In 2015 the trust appointed Third Wave to provide school improvement on a "non-profit basis", after carrying out a "competitive" tender process.

After this, the amount paid out to Third Wave increased more than fourfold – leaping from £93,439 in 2014 to £404,380 in 2015.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trust paid Third Wave £1.44 million for its services. This was on top of payments for professional services of £198,735 in 2013 and £278,255 in 2014.

A website for Third Wave says the company offers "bespoke" solutions and offers seminars and events – but has no upcoming events listed.

Marshall defended the set-up, telling Schools Week the work Third Wave has done for EMLC "has been instrumental in securing improved outcomes for pupils across all the trust schools".

"The trust has a policy of being open and transparent in all of its dealings," she said. "Matters involving connected parties are disclosed in the trust's annual accounts and

on our website."

Several members of Marshall's family have links to the

trust and Third Wave. Her daughter Kerry Batten is also a director of the consultancy, while her daughter-in-law Kelly Marshall is an employee. Marshall's husband Keith Marshall also serves on the academy trust's board.

According to Third Wave's most recent financial statements, the company paid £57,362 in dividends to its directors in 2016-17. Marshall holds 28 per cent of the shares, while her daughter holds 30 per cent.

EMLC Academies Trust runs Shepherdswell Academy in Milton Keynes, Castle Academy, Hardingstone Academy, Stimpson Avenue Academy and Northampton International Academy in Northampton, and Prince William School in Oundle.



PERRY BEECHES TRUST WOUND UP FOR GOOD

The crisis-hit Perry Beeches Academy Trust has officially been wound up, after its five schools were rebrokered to new sponsors.

The transfer of four academies to the CORE Education trust and one to Ark trust, marks the end of the Birmingham chain, which is the subject of a government investigation into financial irregularities from almost two years ago.

CORE, which was set up to take on two of the Birmingham schools enveloped in the Trojan Horse scandal, will take on Perry Beeches The Academy, Perry Beeches II, Perry Beeches III and Perry Beeches IV.

The schools have been renamed as Arena Academy, City Academy, City Academy Birmingham and Jewellery Quarter Academy.

Meanwhile, Perry Beeches V, an all-through school, will become the Ark Victoria Academy, named after its new sponsor and a nearby park.

NEWS

Revealed: Low pupil numbers forced n

JUDE BURKE

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Exclusive

Almost all the university technical colleges have missed their recruitment targets and were overpaid by the government last year, leaving them with a combined debt of over £11 million, FE Week can reveal.

In fact the Education and Skills Funding Agency is attempting to claw cash back from 39 of 44 UTCs still open in 2016/17.

Alarming, 15 of them – owing a combined total of £5.7 million – couldn't afford to refund the cash on the ESFA's usual timescale, and one even admitted it would be three years before the government would get all its money back.

Despite this, the Department for Education has refused to say whether it expects all the funding to be returned.

While FE Week has reported extensively on UTCs' ongoing struggles to recruit students, this is the first time the huge debts they've racked up in the process have been made public, courtesy of a Freedom of Information request shared with FE Week & our sister title *Schools Week*.

A National Audit Office report has meanwhile found that £192 million has so far been spent on the UTC project, even though many have "failed to establish their position in the educational landscape".

UTC funding is based on their estimated student numbers of 14- to 18-year-olds, so if their actual enrolment is lower than predicted, they have to repay money by the proportion they missed these targets by – a process known as "pupil number adjustment".

The money is usually paid back in three monthly instalments – sometimes extended to six – starting in September of the next academic year.



According to the information FE Week received, 22 UTCs took this approach: 16 paid the cash back by November, and a further six are due to settle up next month.

But where repaying the cash over six months would cause a UTC "significant financial difficulties" it can arrange a "deferred recovery plan", extending the repayment period by months or even years.

Fifteen UTCs have agreed such plans, including three with debts of more than £500,000: Derby Manufacturing UTC, Cambridge UTC (now known as Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology) and UTC@Harbourside.

Andrew Hutchinson, chief executive of Parkside Federation Academies, which took over the Cambridge institution in September,

said it had agreed a repayment programme "which will operate over the next three years".

It owes £603,117 from its 2016/17 allocation alone, a figure that Mr Hutchinson blamed on failing to achieve "growth targets" that were set before it joined the federation.

Richie Wheatcroft, principal at Derby Manufacturing UTC, said its debt of £638,835 was based on an under-recruitment of 132.

This includes 35 in the sixth form – roughly a third of the 90 predicted students on which its 2016/17 16-to-19 funding allocation was based.

Other UTCs with massive debts include UTC Bolton and University Technology College Norfolk, which owe £678,131 and £599,917 respectively, to be paid back over six months.

"We have agreed recovery plans in place for most university technical colleges that have pupil number adjustments, and we are in discussion with the others about terms for recovery," said a DfE spokesperson, who refused to confirm whether all the money is expected back.

But Charles Parker, chief executive of the Baker Dearing Trust, which backs UTCs, insisted that "UTCs will pay back amounts owing".

He outlined a number of measures put in place by the government that would help boost UTC recruitment, including an extra £200,000 in "transitional funding" they can use to offset PNA debts.

"All these are having a positive effect and UTCs are filling up at KS4 [GCSE], which will feed through as these students stay on at UTCs for four years," he said.

Eight UTCs have so far either shut down completely, or converted to become schools after failing to attract enough students to be financially viable.

These include Greater Manchester Sustainable Engineering UTC, which had its 2016/17 debt of £193,460 written off after it wound up at the end of the year.

A previous FE Week FoI request in April last year revealed that learner numbers at around two thirds of established UTCs had dropped in 2016/17 compared with the previous year.

The struggle to recruit students will not have been helped by Ofsted, which has so far rated more than half of the UTCs it has visited as less than 'good'.

And last February, Michael Gove, who launched UTCs when he was education secretary, wrote in *The Times* that the project had failed as "other schools have seen them as destinations for underperforming children".

Are Government measures having a 'positive effect' on recruitment?

The struggles of UTCs to recruit enough students to balance the books are well publicised.

FE Week's reports in 2016 and 2017 revealed that many UTCs open for at least three years were, on average, operating at around 50-per-cent capacity.

Eight have so far closed out of a total of 57, including three of the first four to be established in 2011 and 2012, citing low students numbers as the cause for their demise.

So how can they hope to turn this around?

Three measures introduced by the government are having a "positive effect" on recruitment, according to Charles Parker, the chief executive of the Baker Dearing Trust, and three of the UTC principals we spoke to.

We look at each of these measures and the impact they could have.

1 TRANSITIONAL FUNDING

In April last year the Department for Education quietly announced – via an update to its guidance on UTC funding – an additional £200,000 in "transitional funding" for the 14-to-19 institutions.

This cash – which is on offer for three years from 2016/17 for those UTCs open at the time, and from 2017/18 for new institutions – effectively writes off a portion of their under-recruitment debt.

"The funding from year two will be net of any debt UTCs owe to the ESFA; UTCs will not receive additional income in future until any debts built up in the first year have been cleared," the guidance says.

The funding is "subject to UTCs meeting annual conditions related to improving educational and financial performance".

Based on the 49 UTCs currently open, this transitional funding will cost the Education and Skills Funding Agency almost £10 million in 2017/18.

2 LOCAL AUTHORITY LETTERS

In early 2017, the DfE changed its school information regulations to require all local authorities in England to write to parents of pupils in year nine to inform them about UTCs.

The first letters went out in February and March, and in June the Baker Dearing Trust claimed this had led to a surge in demand for places.

The trust shared figures that showed applications in some UTCs for year 10 had almost doubled from the previous year, a change it attributed to the letters.

Mr Parker said last year that he'd been pressing the government to make the change for some time.

"The local authority letter carries weight and essentially gives parents and children permission to consider a change at 14 which they did not know was possible before," he said.

3 THE BAKER CLAUSE

The so-called Baker clause, which came into effect this month, is expected to have a similar effect on recruitment according to Mr Parker and the principals we spoke to.

It is a section introduced by Lord Baker, the architect of the UTC programme, in the Technical and Further Education Act, which forces schools to allow FE providers to speak to pupils.

"Schools must have clear arrangements in place to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to hear from providers of post-14, post-16 and post-18 options at, and leading up to, important transition points," according to guidance published by the DfE in November.

Lord Baker insisted that "every word" of the clause was needed in the act because it would be "met with great hostility in every school in the country".

early every UTC to hand funding back

Academic year	Total UTCs	Negative PNA	% with negative PNA	PNA recovered (complete)	% PNA recovered (complete)	Agreed deferred recovery	% Agreed deferred recovery	Discussing recovery with ESFA	Approved adjustments: Write-off
2013/14	16	15	94%	14	93%	1	7%	0	2
		-£2,984,289		-£1,779,576	60%	-£816,853	27%	£0	-£387,860
2014/15	30	24	80%	20	83%	3	13%	1	3
		-£8,806,693		-£4,273,351	49%	-£1,748,724	20%	-£446,187	-£2,299,782
2015/16	38	34	89%	23	68%	9	26%	2	2
		-£10,404,582		-£4,541,758	44%	-£4,711,247	45%	-£449,269	-£698,784
2016/17	44	39	89%	23	59%	15	38%	1	1
		-£11,142,694		-£5,236,163	47%	-£5,712,581	51%	-£490	-£193,460

Top 10: 2016/17 Negative Pupil Number Adjustment (PNA)

UTC name	Pre16 adjustment	Post16 adjustment	ESG adjustment	Total PNA	Write-off	New balance	Status
Bolton UTC	-£381,071	-£287,512	-£9,548	-£678,131	£0	-£678,131	Recover: Sept 2017 to Feb 2018
Derby Manufacturing UTC	-£458,861	-£170,196	-£9,779	-£638,835	£0	-£638,835	Agreed deferred recovery plan
UTC Cambridge	-£201,981	-£390,742	-£10,395	-£603,117	£0	-£603,117	Agreed deferred recovery plan
University Technical College Norfolk	-£306,860	-£283,971	-£9,086	-£599,917	£0	-£599,917	Recover: Sept 2017 to Feb 2018
UTC@Harbourside	-£334,248	-£220,275	-£8,239	-£562,762	£0	-£562,762	Agreed deferred recovery plan
Heathrow Aviation Engineering UTC	-£214,386	-£271,632	-£8,701	-£494,719	£0	-£494,719	Agreed deferred recovery plan
South Wiltshire UTC	-£182,646	-£294,238	-£7,623	-£484,506	£0	-£484,506	Agreed deferred recovery plan
Lincoln UTC	-£247,673	-£187,701	-£6,314	-£441,689	£0	-£441,689	Agreed deferred recovery plan
elutec	-£194,329	-£222,662	-£5,544	-£422,535	£0	-£422,535	Agreed deferred recovery plan
Sir Charles Kao Utc	-£75,617	-£325,772	-£7,546	-£408,935	£0	-£408,935	Agreed deferred recovery plan

Source: Department for Education response to a Freedom of Information Request

Note: Figures for Bristol Technology and Engineering Academy, UTC Swindon, Tottenham UTC (closed end of 2016/17) and Silverstone UTC were not included in the Fol data

UTCs have 'failed to establish their position', spending watchdog says

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The government's multimillion-pound university technical colleges have "failed to establish their position in the educational landscape", and other new institutions are at risk of going the same way, according to the National Audit Office.

An investigation into the delivery of science, technology, engineering and maths skills by the government spending watchdog found that £192 million has so far been spent on UTCs – 14-to-19 institutions that offer technical courses alongside academic GCSEs and A-levels.

However, despite the government's investment and continued support for the programme, many UTCs have "struggled to attract enough students", the NAO warned.

The warning is timely, given the findings this week of a *Schools Week* investigation into UTCs, which found that they have racked up £11 million in debt after overestimating their pupil numbers.

Since the project's inception in 2010, eight UTCs have either closed completely

or converted to become schools after experiencing poor levels of recruitment at 14.

The NAO is concerned that history will repeat itself, and warns that new institutes of technology – regional institutions offering technical courses equivalent to A-levels, diplomas and degrees – will run into the same problems as UTCs.

"Involvement of employers from the outset should help them align provision with local skills needs, and IoT status will be awarded competitively," the NAO said.

"However, recent plans to link the IoTs to universities has caused concern about whether they are further education or higher education providers. As new institutions being introduced into an already crowded provider marketplace, there is a risk they will fail to establish themselves in the education landscape."

Mike Kane, the shadow schools minister, is worried by these findings, and insisted UTCs would only work if they opened with the blessing of local councils and with "adequate spatial planning" to prevent them from opening where they are not needed.

"The key thing about UTCs is they're not a bad idea, but have been imposed

on local areas without recourse to local authorities and without any spatial planning framework," he said.

Among the "challenges" the NAO said are limiting the growth of STEM subjects in England is the financial disincentive for schools to promote further education routes like UTCs.

Funding follows pupils, so it is not in the best interests of schools to encourage them to leave early to pursue more specialised options, the report found.

Despite its dim view of the UTC programme, the NAO was more positive about other programmes aimed at boosting STEM learning.

In particular, the report praised the government's efforts to improve STEM teaching in schools. It said better training and attempts to attract former teachers back to the workforce had shown "some positive results".

"Early-stage research indicates that the £67 million maths and physics teacher supply package, aimed at recruiting an additional 2,500 teachers and improving the skills of 15,000 non-specialist teachers in these subjects, is having a positive impact."

But elements of the programme have

been less successful, it said. For example, the government's return-to-teaching pilot has recruited just 428 teachers against a target of 810. Just 330 of the participants completed the training provided.

The NAO also warned that government departments with shared responsibility for STEM policy, including the Department for Education and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, have a "complex challenge".

Although some initiatives run jointly between departments have had certain positive results, there "remains an urgent need for a shared vision of what they are trying to achieve and coordinated plans across government".

"The absence of a precise understanding of the STEM skills problem means the efforts of DfE and BEIS are not well prioritised and a better targeted approach is needed to demonstrate value for money," the NAO concluded.

Research by the NAO also found that the DfE uses different definitions of STEM depending on context. Without clarity on the matter, meaningful comparisons of progress across different policy areas "will always be challenging".

NEWS

PFI schools can cost up to 40% more, NAO finds

ALIX ROBERTSON
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Schools can cost up to 40 per cent more to build under a private finance initiative than they would government borrowing, the National Audit Office has revealed.

Its recent report examined both PFI, a funding method first implemented in the early 90s, and its successor PF2, a reformed version introduced in 2012, and revealed that there are currently over 700 operational deals, which will cost around £199 billion to pay off.

PFI involves private companies paying for new public buildings such as schools or hospitals and taking an equity stake in the site. The taxpayer then makes payments over a contract term (typically 25 to 30 years), which cover debt repayment, financing costs, maintenance and any other services provided.

The Department for Education currently has 46 school rebuilding projects being financed through PF2 contracts, and has "estimated the expected spend on PF2 schools compared with a public sector comparator".

PF2 costs "are around 40 per cent higher



Stella Creasy



Credit: Colin Lane, Liverpool Echo

than the costs of a project financed by government borrowing" said Sir Amyas Morse, the NAO's auditor general, in the report.

The NAO identified "operational inflexibility" as one of the main drawbacks of PFI, as changes in contracts become expensive when "lenders and investors charging administrative and management fees". Such deals can also lock the buyer into a contract for services it doesn't need any more.

The report cited Parklands High School (pictured), which is now empty but is still being paid for by Liverpool city council at a

cost of around £4 million each year.

"Between 2017-18 and the contract end in 2027-28, it will pay an estimated £47 million," the report says. "The school cost an estimated £24 million to build."

The NAO report was also unable to find data that helped it assess the actual efficiency of PFI.

"We have been unable to identify a robust evaluation of the actual performance of private finance at a project or programme level," it said.

Schools Week reported on other problems with PFI in 2016, when crippling costs were passed on to schools after equity stakes

were sold on through a process known as "flipping".

The revamped PFI initiative, PF2, was launched by former chancellor George Osborne to solve some of these issues. Under new rules, the government would become a minority equity holder in new projects, with a 10-per-cent stake.

However, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, which manages the government's stake, informed the NAO there is no guarantee these wouldn't be sold on in the future.

The chair of the parliamentary public accounts committee Meg Hillier criticised the government for relaunching PFI "under new branding, without doing anything about most of its underlying problems".

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *Today Programme*, Labour MP Stella Creasy demanded "a windfall tax" to recoup the "excessive profits" made by companies through PFI contracts.

"These companies, these types of contracts, really are the legal loan sharks of the public sector, it's like a payday loan or a hire purchase agreement to build a school or hospital," she said.

Creasy explained that some companies have also benefited from "a massive cooperation tax bonus", due to corporation tax falling from around 30 per cent when many PFI contracts was signed to 17 per cent under the current government.

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SCHOOLS WEEK

NEWS

CEC doubles down on employer-mentor diversity

ALIX ROBERTSON

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The Careers and Enterprise Company is taking a second shot at recruiting a more diverse range of employer-mentors for young people, after its first attempt left many industries "still significantly underrepresented".

Its #UnexpectedMentor campaign launched in October 2017, to attract a new set of employer-mentors who represented the whole population.

But despite investing £4 million in 39 mentoring programmes across England so far, the CEC has found that "significant gaps remain in many industries and employment sectors".

Research has revealed that manufacturing accounted for just four per cent of employer-mentors, while transportation and retail were both at just two per cent. In contrast, around 21 per cent of existing employer-mentors are from the financial and insurance services.

Analysis of the latest information shows this trend has not changed, a spokesperson told *Schools Week*, in spite of the campaign's attempts to improve diversity of sectors and backgrounds.

The CEC is now specifically targeting underrepresented industries, particularly through social media channels.

"We wanted to react immediately to the learnings from the campaign before Christmas – particularly since January is



traditionally a good time to appeal to people to volunteer," a spokesperson said.

The company was unable to provide a figure for how many mentors have been recruited so far. A spokesperson said this is because it has worked to link prospective mentors with mentoring organisations in their local areas, such as the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, but does not hold data on how many then go on to work in schools.

Pippa Morgan (pictured), head of education and skills at the Confederation of British Industry, said it is "vital" that more businesses get involved, to make sure young people understand the range of careers available to them.

"The CBI will encourage companies in these less represented industries to join the #UnexpectedMentor campaign," she said.

The campaign is part of a wider

government target to match a further 25,000 young people with an employer-mentor by 2020.

"Businesses need to work with schools and colleges to genuinely achieve diversity in their workforces," said Claudia Harris, chief executive of the Careers and Enterprise Company.

"There is a huge opportunity for a much more diverse set of mentors across England and we are calling on people to sign up now, to help our young people to prepare for brighter futures."

The Education Endowment Fund is working with the company to try to understand the best ways for employers to engage effectively in education.

Its latest findings recommended that employers provide the kinds of knowledge that will help with the transition from school to work, such as understanding how school subjects can lead into a profession, how recruitment processes work, and why problem solving and team building skills matter.

"We know how important it is for young people to have access to information about a broad range of careers and sustained mentoring can be a valuable tool for doing this," said Eleanor Stringer, senior programme manager at the EEF.

"It is good that the Careers and Enterprise Company is widening its pool of mentors. Doing so could give more young people the knowledge they need to make the best decision for them."

COMPULSORY SATURDAY LESSONS FOR GCSE STUDENTS

JESS STAUFENBERG

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Investigates

A school has made it compulsory for some pupils to come in on Saturdays to drive up GCSE results – but a union leader has said five-and-a-half-day weeks are "not sustainable" for staff.

Royal Docks Academy in east London is open from 9am to midday on Saturdays, including the holidays, and has a longer school day under a new plan to give pupils a "quiet space to work" and improve standards.

The measure, introduced by the Burnt Mill Academy Trust which took over at the start of this month, is designed to raise the number of pupils achieving strong passes in English and maths GCSE above the national average and achieve a positive Progress 8 score, from a current position of -0.09. The school was rated 'requires improvement' last year.

But union leaders, while sympathising with the pressure for better results, have warned that staff should not be asked to do unpaid "voluntary" work at the weekends.

Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said she appreciated schools were trying to help pupils with "difficult circumstances" at home, but said teachers would burn out by working Saturdays "on top of a 55-hour working week".

Workload is the main reason teachers are leaving the profession, and school leaders should prioritise reducing stress as their "first concern", she said.

A spokesperson for the trust, which has eight schools, said senior leaders would run the sessions to begin with – but that "a programme of additional teaching is being scheduled". Saturday sessions will also run throughout the February half-term and Easter holidays.

Some pupils have been "targeted" to attend, but because of demand more than half of year 11 are turning up. The school day has been extended from 7.45am to 5pm.

Geoff Barton (pictured), the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it was "not uncommon" for schools to make the day longer especially for year 11s working towards exams.

He pointed out that "schools take these decisions in the best interest of their pupils".

Meanwhile the Education Endowment Foundation published research last November which found that extended school time or targeted programmes result

in two additional months' progress for pupils, and that the poorest pupils make half a month of progress more on top of that.

It's not the first time longer working hours for schools have been mooted as a solution for boosting performance.

Nearly five years ago, then-education secretary Michael Gove argued that England should emulate east Asian countries which have longer school days and shorter holidays. He said England was currently "running this global race with a significant handicap."

But the Schools Teachers' Review Body, which advises the government on pay and conditions, rejected his calls to remove regulations on teachers' hours and holidays.

Then two years ago, then-chancellor George Osborne provided funding for at least a quarter of schools to run longer school days to allow extracurricular activities, though this was scrapped in favour of Justine Greening's capital scheme to build new sports facilities.

John Blaney, the executive headteacher of Royal Docks Academy, said he wanted all his pupils to have the chance to go to any university in the world or embark on apprenticeships.

"I know that through an excellent education, our pupils will be able to reach their full potential," he said.



IN brief

GRENFELL SCHOOL TURNS IN AN 'OUTSTANDING' PERFORMANCE

Leaders and staff at the school next to Grenfell Tower have been praised by Ofsted for their "determination, resilience and commitment" in the wake of the tragedy that killed four of its pupils and one alumnus.

Kensington Aldridge Academy has been rated 'outstanding' in all categories by Ofsted, just months after it uprooted almost 1,000 pupils to a temporary site where they are expected to remain until this September.

According to Ofsted, pupils make outstanding progress in almost all subjects and their behaviour is excellent. Staff morale is "exceptionally high", and SEND leadership is "highly effective".

"The challenges of helping pupils and staff manage the emotional and psychological consequences of the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire have been carefully managed," Ofsted said.

"Counselling and therapeutic sessions for staff and pupils continue so as to ensure that effective support is provided."

UNIONS DEMAND COST-OF-LIVING PAY RISE FOR ALL SCHOOL STAFF

A coalition of teaching unions has called for an urgent review of teachers and leaders' pay, demanding a fully-funded "cost of living" pay increase for all school staff.

The National Education Union and Voice have teamed up with leadership bodies ASCL and NAHT to make a joint submission to the School Teachers Review Body, which makes recommendations to the government on teacher pay.

This year, the STRB has been given flexibility to recommend a pay rise for teachers above the one-per-cent public sector cap that has restricted increases for school staff since 2011.

However, unions are worried that even if the STRB recommends more of a rise, and it's granted by the government, schools won't be able to afford to pay.

Any rises must apply to all teachers and leaders, and not just be based on their "career stage, setting or geographical location", and be fully-funded, the unions said.

SMALL SCHOOLS LIMIT LEICESTER TRUST'S IMPROVEMENT DRIVE

A church-led academy trust in Leicester has been warned it has "limited capacity" to improve its schools because many of them are "very small".

Ofsted said the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust is not improving pupil outcomes fast enough, and has failed to establish a "clear purpose and direction" for its schools, after a focused inspection of six of its schools.

Pupils' outcomes at the trust are improving, but they are not doing so quickly enough to bring them into line with national averages, Ofsted said, although inspectors acknowledged that three schools had actually improved since they joined the chain.

The watchdog visited six of the trust's academies in November 2017. It found that the overall effectiveness of two schools had declined since they joined the trust. However, three schools had improved since they joined, and the chain's sole 'outstanding' school kept its grade.

Many of the trust's schools are very small, which has funding implications and has limited the trust's capacity for school improvement, Ofsted said.

NEWS

Free schools in £2m debt after getting pupil numbers wrong

JESS STAUFENBERG

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Investigates

Two free schools racked up almost £2 million in debt after the Department for Education repeatedly allowed them to over-predict pupil numbers for three years without any plan for dealing with the deficits.

Perry Beeches III, part of the now-defunct Perry Beeches Trust in Birmingham, and Robert Owen Academy, a vocational free school in Hereford, consistently predicted they would recruit more pupils than they actually managed between 2014 and 2017.

Government rules require free schools to predict how many pupils will attend so per-capita funding can be allocated. If schools over-predict, the government takes back some of the money, or writes it off.

Information obtained by *Schools Week* shows that hundreds of free schools rack up these debts, because over-predicting a few pupil places can amount to thousands of pounds in extra funding, but that the majority return the cash or have a plan to do so.

From 2014, Perry Beeches and Robert Owen Academy over-predicted their



numbers each year but were only ever listed as "discussing" their recovery plans.

Both schools racked up considerable debt: Perry Beeches III had to hand back more than £1 million and Robert Owen academy more than £660,000.

But both schools have now hit the buffers. Perry Beeches III moved to the CORE Education trust last week, after its own trust closed down amid financial misconduct among its senior leaders.

Meanwhile Robert Owen Academy was told last year that it would have its funding withdrawn. It has since said South

Gloucestershire and Stroud College will take over the school as its sponsor.

Micon Metcalfe (pictured), a fellow of the Institute of School Business Leaders, said it was difficult for schools to return cash to the government.

A new school "will have recruited staff for the numbers of pupils they hoped to recruit, not the actual number they did", she explained, which means schools may have spent "at least a proportion of the money that is clawed back at a later date".

The DfE listed both schools in "discussion of a recovery plan" every year, but there's no clear indication of whether a plan ever materialised.

It is not known whether Robert Owens will clear its debts before it joins a new sponsor. *Schools Week* contacted it but received no response.

It has struggled to recruit pupils to its vocational 14-to-19 centre, which also takes in children excluded from other schools. It was judged 'inadequate' at its first inspection in 2015 and was then issued with a financial notice to improve, after which two of its senior leaders left.

Last April, *The Hereford Times* reported it had been driving two minibuses with MOTs

three months out of date.

Then in November Christine Quinn, the regional schools commissioner for the area, withdrew its funding. There are now plans to transform it into a "cybersecurity college".

Perry Beeches III was also labelled 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2015 but move up to 'good' a year ago. It has now moved with three other academies to CORE Education trust, led by Adrian Packer.

Perry Beeches II, III, IV and V also appear on the list of schools which had funding taken back in both 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Packer said the former Perry Beeches schools "should continue to repay any pupil number adjustment repayments", but said pupil numbers at the newly branded schools were now more "positive".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that the figures show free schools aren't always built where there is greatest demographic need.

His words were echoed by Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, who said place-planning powers needed to be returned to local authorities, to ensure new schools didn't just open "at random".

IS ORACY THE NEXT CURRICULUM BATTLEGROUND?

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Traditionalist "chalk and talk" pedagogy is pushing oracy skills out of the curriculum to the detriment of poorer pupils, according to an MP who was once a primary teacher.

Emma Hardy, Labour MP for Hull West and Hessle, said that schools favouring Victorian-style teaching methods in which pupils are "seen and not heard" is harming their ability to debate and criticise.

She is now using her platform to back a campaign to train teachers in oracy – the art of teaching children to speak well.

Voice 21, a charity dedicated to promoting oracy, has recruited 27 teachers from across the UK onto its oracy leaders programme. The year-long programme involves a two-day residential stay at Cambridge University at a cost of £1,250. Teachers run their own projects in school and feedback at the end of the year.

The participants also visit School 21 in north-east London, a free school run by Peter Hyman, a former policy advisor to Tony Blair, who has implemented an oracy-based curriculum.

Hardy, who supports the programme, told *Schools Week* that she is now trying to raise the status of oracy at Westminster.

The education select committee has shown an interest, and Hardy said she would like

it to launch an inquiry into "the effects of strict behaviour policies and traditionalist teaching" on pupils' ability to flourish in independent learning environments such as university.

"What matters hugely for pupils' life chances is oral communication," she said. "But instead there's been this move towards a chalk-and-talk model of teaching that's quite traditional."

Ministers have previously acknowledged the importance of speech, but feared that raising its profile could "encourage idle chatter in class", according to a paper by Cambridge education professor Robin Alexander, who first spoke to the Department for Education about including spoken language in the national curriculum in 2012.

At the same time, other ministers have praised schools such as Michaela Community School in north-west London, which require silence in corridors and have teacher-centric classrooms.

But the headteacher of a school which uses similar methods to Michaela, Peter Lee at Q3 Academy Langley near Birmingham, said staff and pupils eat together at a "family lunch" which "implicitly models oracy" through a daily discussion of a political or ethical topic.

Meanwhile, the SLANT instruction it uses, in which pupils fold their arms and track the teacher with their eyes in silence, is used to "ensure pupils are actively listening",

another element of oracy.

Martin Robinson, an education consultant, believes the classical teaching model should actually have rhetoric and debate "at its core". Sometimes the model is "misunderstood" and becomes a "one-way" communication from the teacher to the pupil, often as a result of exam pressure.

But the best use of the traditional model should treat pupils as "active, engaged humans" who can express themselves in considered academic terms, he said. Allowing pupils to speak in an unstructured

way may give them too much say over the content of lessons, however, as seen in some "progressive" styles of teaching.

Voice 21 is also launching an oracy development programme in each region, with 30 teachers on each, starting this year with the north-west, north-east, the Midlands and London.

The results of a pilot with the Education Endowment Foundation, looking into the effects of Voice 21's oracy training on pupil outcomes at 12 schools, will be published soon.

CASE STUDY: REBECCA WANT

Rebecca Want, an assistant headteacher at Huntingdon primary academy in Nottingham, is on the programme this year. Pupil outcomes in reading and writing have improved using certain techniques, including the "onion formation": an inner circle and outer circle of pupils. Each pupil has learned about a topic, and explains it to the next

as the circle rotates, helping consolidate their own knowledge. In maths lessons, she has placed greater emphasis on pupils explaining their reasoning out loud as part of maths mastery. "It's about modelling to the pupils that their voice is important", though the techniques also "make for fantastic teaching".

CASE STUDY: SARAH HANCOCK

Sarah Hancock, literacy lead at City Learning academy trust in Stoke-on-Trent, joined the programme after worrying that some pupils were giving "one-word answers". Hancock has used a technique known as a "Harkness circle". After learning about a book, for instance, pupils sit in a circle to discuss it. This is tracked with a visual representation:

pupils' names are written around a circle, and a line is drawn between them as each makes a contribution. "They realise when they aren't talking," she said, and quieter pupils now speak up more. "If they can't articulate themselves properly, how on earth can they write well?"



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NEWS: Westminster Education Forum school funding seminar

New funding rules will increase SEND segregation

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

New funding rules will create a “perverse incentive” for schools to “over-identify” pupils as having special educational needs and disabilities, a policy expert has warned.

Brian Gale, the director of policy and campaigns at the National Deaf Children’s Society and a former council pupil support director, fears a rule-change due in 2019 will see more pupils sent to special schools.

Education funding for under 16s is divided into two blocks: the schools block for mainstream school pupils, and the high-needs block, used to pay for pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

At the moment, money from the schools block can be transferred into the high-needs block when pupils are moved into specialist settings like special schools or alternative provision. But new rules will see the schools block ring-fenced from next year, preventing any cross-subsidy.

Speaking at a seminar on school funding in London on Tuesday, Gale warned that this protection would mean mainstream schools would be more likely to push pupils into special schools.

“It gives schools a licence to move

pupils into special schools without having to face the funding cut,” Gale told *Schools Week* after the event.

He also warned that council cuts to how much schools receive for high-needs pupils could exacerbate the problem. Under current rules, mainstream schools educating high-needs pupils have to pay for the first £6,000 of their teaching, which is then topped up by councils.

“I am aware of a number of local authorities which are beginning to cut the top-up payments in an effort to balance their books. There is a risk that if you reduce the top-up to make savings, you’re increasing the problem that schools will say that they can no longer meet the needs of certain children,” he said.

The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs or EHCPs attending special schools has increased steadily over the past seven years, from just over 40 per cent in 2010 to almost 50 per cent in 2017.

At Tuesday’s seminar, Gale said the whole approach to educating SEND pupils was “inherently flawed” and should be reviewed.

“We wait until the child has reached a certain point of failure before you put them on an EHCP. I think that’s a flawed model. And what you end up with is all your money going into restorative work with the child, rather than the



Stewart King

preventative work,” he said.

The event also heard from serving council officials, who warned of the pressures of the current system.

Stewart King, from Gloucestershire county council, said high-needs requirements were becoming



Brian Gale

“unmanageable for local authorities”, and claimed there was a “widespread feeling the system is clogged with EHCPs”.

“There are many children in my area who I would say do not need an EHCP,” said King. Instead, these pupils need “effective early intervention”.

DfE funding director: ‘Schools must plan 5 years ahead’

Planning finances up to five years in the future is “not rocket science” for schools, according to the government official in charge of education funding.

Tony Foot, who directs the education funding group at the Department for Education, set out seven characteristics of “efficient” schools at a seminar on school funding on Tuesday.

The list, which Foot said was based on “a lot of research with the sector”, includes longer-term financial planning. He believes schools should be able to plan their finances between three and five years in advance.

“There is nothing in here that is rocket science,” he said as he presented the list, which also refers to the “effective and efficient deployment of staff”, reducing spending on non-staff costs and “transparent financial systems and process”.

When challenged on the longer-term financial planning issue, Foot said he recognised that this was “challenging in an environment where school funding effectively operates year-to-year”.

However, one of the benefits of the government’s new national funding formula is that it allows “flexibility to make that planning ahead somewhat easier”.

Delegates at the



seminar also heard from Ben Durbin, from the National Foundation for Education Research, who said that although Britain spends a lot more on education than most other countries, the its impact is not

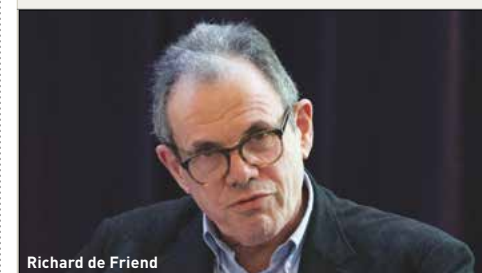
necessarily getting through to the front line.

“On the one hand, schools in England are actually relatively well-funded, and yet headteachers in England report difficulties with their resources,” he said.

In fact, Durbin said headteachers in this country are more likely to report a lack of resources or a shortage of teachers as a hindrance than their counterparts in other countries with less funding. Schools should not “lose sight” of the importance of value for money when talking about funding.

“We have high levels of funding, and yet the experience on the ground seems to be rather different,” he said.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF CUTS AND WORKLOAD



Richard de Friend

The chair of governors at a school run by one of England’s most successful multi-academy trusts has spoken of the “challenge” facing his school and his concerns about teacher workload in the face of funding cuts.

Richard de Friend, who chairs the board at Ark Evelyn Grace Academy in Lambeth, south London, said his school had a deficit of between £350,000 and £400,000, and faces cuts in income due to decreasing pupil numbers and rising costs.

De Friend said the school expects to go from having 61 teachers to 47 over the next three years, resulting in an increase in its pupil-to-staff ratio from around 12:1 to 16:1.

“We’ve got a new head, we’ve got a new senior leadership team, and what they are doing is producing a new curriculum delivery plan which will take account of these possible changes to our pupil numbers,” he said.

The issue for governors is working out whether “pretty challenging” attainment and safeguarding targets can be met with a 25-per-cent reduction in key staff numbers. One area of concern is teacher workload.

“At 12:1 we think it’s acceptable, at 16:1 we’re not sure how it’s going to work out,” he warned.

THE DFE’S SEVEN STEPS TO SCHOOL EFFICIENCY

1. FINANCIAL PLANNING BASED ON DELIVERING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES THAT’S NOT A SEPARATE, BOLT-ON CONSIDERATION
2. STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR THE LONGER TERM (THREE TO FIVE YEARS)
3. EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DEPLOYMENT OF STAFF
4. REDUCED SPEND ON NON-STAFF COSTS
5. ROBUST CHALLENGE FROM FINANCIALLY SKILLED GOVERNORS AND HEADTEACHERS
6. SKILLED STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING FINANCES
7. TRANSPARENT FINANCIAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESS, WHICH ENCOURAGE CONSTRUCTIVE CHALLENGE WITHIN AND BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Specialist teacher training hub attracts single recruit (so far)

Alix Robertson

@ALIXROBERTSON4

Exclusive

Specialist teacher training hubs set up to tackle teacher shortages in languages, physics and maths are struggling to sign up recruits. One centre has even begun to target downsizing businesses in the hope that laid-off employees might switch to teaching.

The national mathematics and physics school-centred initial teacher-training (NMAPS) programme, led by Wycombe High School in High Wycombe, was set up in September 2017 and will place teachers in the classroom from September this year.

So far, however, it has only recruited one trainee, even though it is aiming to sign up 40 recruits by the summer.

Meanwhile the national modern languages school-centred initial teacher-training (SCITT) programme, led by Silverdale School in Sheffield, started last September and has 14 trainees on roll for this year, with a target of 50 for 2018-19.

Teacher recruitment is an ongoing concern across the board, but some subjects have been hit particularly hard. Statistics released in November 2017 showed the government failed to train enough teachers for any of the Ebacc subjects except history last year.

The government only filled 79 per cent of its places for maths teacher-training in 2017-



Gaynor Jones and trainees at Silverdale School, Sheffield

18, and physics managed just 68 per cent.

The new national SCITTs offer teacher training focused on their subject specialism and both target new graduates and career changers to get into languages, maths and physics teaching.

But drumming up interest has been difficult, even though they offer the unique chance to train at both state and private schools in different regions, as well as significant bursaries and scholarships.

Sarah Yarwood, the director of NMAPS, acknowledged that hitting recruitment targets this year is going to be "a challenge".

"It is going to be a slow and gradual process of getting the information out there," she said. "We're hoping that because we have such a good subject knowledge and pedagogy offer, that people will be attracted to it."

There are few financial resources available, Yarwood said, making it tough to get the word out.

NMAPS has tried strategies such as

contacting businesses that are "downsizing or restructuring", in the hope that "their employees might be interested in a new career".

Gaynor Jones, the director of the national modern languages SCITT, said a national marketing budget will be needed "if we are intending to grow this at the rate of the desire for it to grow from government".

The SCITT had "a little bit of start-up funding in the first year", but its only other source of money is the £9,000 fee that trainees pay. As a result it has relied on support from its partner schools, in trying to grow the project.

"My independent school colleagues have been really supportive with time and resources," Jones said. "Sheffield Teaching School Alliance, Dulwich College and Bolton School are contributing to the scheme far beyond the financial remuneration than any of us are able to get."

Barnaby Lenon, the chair of the Independent Schools Council, has worked with both SCITTs. He said the ISC is keen to back projects designed to "support the training of good teachers based in the best schools".

"This is very much just the beginning," he said. "Both programmes, which are the result of pioneering partnerships between the state and independent sectors, are of a high quality, and everyone involved is confident they will grow."

UNIONS: SCHOOLS NEED MORE HELP FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Alix Robertson

@ALIXROBERTSON4

The unions want schools to have more help to deal with complaints, after the government ended a useful customer satisfaction survey that ran for just three years.

The Department for Education's 'Complaints about schools' survey ran from 2012 to 2015, and examined how the department was dealing with problems when a local response had not been sufficient.

But despite its usefulness, a spokesperson for the DfE insisted the survey had only been scheduled for a three-year period, and would therefore not be carried out again.

Malcolm Trobe, the deputy general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, told *Schools Week* that it "would be a good idea" to have an annual report about complaints which are escalated to the DfE.

According to Trobe, schools would benefit from research that helps them understand how to manage problems more effectively, "so that they can adjust their processes and be aware of the major issues that cause complaints".

"The customer satisfaction survey run by the department was not the right format for doing this as it was more of an internal procedure over the department's handling of these complaints," he said. "But schools take complaints very seriously and we would welcome any insight which helps resolve them."

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said sharing conclusions drawn from looking at schools' complaints processes would be "a sound principle of transparency" that the NEU would "fully support".

"It promises to help schools avoid slip ups and complaint procedure problems, which we know can take precious time, energy and funds away from their core teaching and learning focus," she added.

In the three years the survey ran, there was a significant increase in the number of complaints made to the DfE about schools. The figure tripled from 1,500 to 4,500, while respondents demanded better communication and more feedback.

The final survey showed that just under two thirds of complainants were "dissatisfied overall" with how their concerns were handled. Independent research agency BMG Research, which conducted the surveys, found respondents felt the DfE should be more transparent.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, told *Schools Week* any system over and above schools' complaints procedures should operate "in close collaboration with school leaders", to ensure it provides "additional, independent support for both parents and schools".

A spokesperson for the DfE said that an annual customer satisfaction survey running for three years had been part of an agreement made when it established a new School Complaints Unit in 2012.

Now this agreement has concluded, the department would not be publishing or conducting any more surveys of this nature, she confirmed.

£10M TO GET KIDS CLOSER TO NATURE

Pippa Allen-Kinross

@PIPPA_AK

A government promise to give schools £10 million to help children get "close to nature" has been given a "cautious welcome" amid criticisms that it isn't enough money to make a difference in the face of cuts.

The '25-year environment plan' announced last week includes pledges to help primary schools "create nature-friendly grounds" and support more contact with local natural spaces, especially for children from disadvantaged areas.

The 'Nature-friendly schools programme' will create "school grounds that support learning about the natural world and also keep children happy and healthy", and plans for the first schemes will be rolled out from this autumn.

Another programme, which will support schools and pupil referral units in disadvantaged areas to establish "progressive programmes of nature contact", will be opened to schools from autumn 2019.

However, the plans have been met with concerns over funding and allegations of "tokenism" due to the amount of money being pledged.

The English Outdoor Council (EOC), an umbrella body for more than 300 organisations involved in outdoor learning, gave a "cautious welcome" to the proposals. Its boss Martin Smith was "pleased"



the government had recognised both the "importance of connecting children to the outdoors" and concerns over the "limited and inequitable access" to nature, but warned that the initiative had to "sit alongside an accountability framework" for schools that "values and supports" outdoor learning.

"Through our members we reach nearly all schools in the country and we know that teachers are doing amazing work to bring children the benefits of outdoor spaces," he added.

"But we also hear how they are struggle with accountability measures and, although £10 million has been allocated with the plan to support this work, there are still tremendous funding pressures felt by schools."

One primary school that has already placed an emphasis on outdoor learning is the Christ Church CE School in Battersea,

which has spent almost a decade creating outdoor areas in which its pupils have lessons at least once a week, learning about gardening and nature as well as providing spaces for workshops with visiting authors and artists.

Its headteacher Colette Morris said the garden appealed to different children in different ways, with more able pupils keen to challenge themselves and learn new skills, but giving confidence to those who are less certain in their learning and allowing a "safe space" for those with emotional challenges.

However, she is concerned that the plans represent "tokenism". She believes it would be more helpful if money were specifically set aside in school budgets for outside learning.

"It depends what they are going to do with that £10 million exactly. It's not very much," she said. "Sometimes they just put money into something but they don't seem to know what the outcome is they want."

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' plans also include attempts to make it easier to take children on school trips and support the educational outreach work of community forests.

It will also expand of "care farming", where farms are used to provide health, social or educational services, by 2022, with an aim of trebling the number of available places for children and adults to 1.3 million a year.

Do you need help cutting up your burger?



EDITORIAL

Will this elite London school keep up now it can't select?

Three years ago, a school opened in London on strange legal footing that meant it wasn't really a school at all but a further education provider. This loophole meant it could require pupils to achieve at least Cs at their AS-levels in order to complete their A-levels proper, simply because the government only "advises" FE providers that all pupils should be able to complete their courses. It meant their practice of turfing pupils out for low grades wasn't illegal, as it would be if the school had been, er, a school. Being an FE provider meant an exclusions policy in year 12 could be rebranded as an admissions policy to year 13.

Last term a devastated young man told this paper how he and up to 20 others were no longer able to study at their own school because of the policy.

It's also the same policy St Olave's Grammar School was raked over the coals for in public this summer, the headteacher of which has since stepped down.

Yet the headteacher at this London school is still being applauded for its results. And Ofsted, which only inspected the college as part of Newham council's services because of its flimsy legal status, briefly noted that "almost all" year 12 learners seemed to have progressed to year 13. But that was it.

Now, however, a new trust has taken over the college and has scrapped the school's year 13 "admissions" policy.

Among the many questions this paper has about the situation, one in particular stands out: after several years posting brilliant grades, will the school get the same shiny results next year?

Teaching hubs not helping 🙄

The new education secretary will find it difficult to deny the existence of the teacher recruitment crisis once he learns that the education department's whizzy specialist teacher training hub has only signed up one trainee and is so desperate for recruits it's writing to downsizing companies to bring over their staff.

In fairness, the country has the lowest employment rate since the 1970s. A demographic drought of young people means graduates are sparse.

But these excuses don't mean

children can go home. Classes must go on, and a warm body must be put in front of them.

One way to resolve the problem is to gradually inflate class sizes, something which heads are already doing in order to deal with constrained budgets.

Hence, when parents complain in a few years that their child is one of 38 in a classroom made for 30 it will all be down to pesky full employment, rather than squeezed budgets. How convenient.

The PFI crisis won't let up on its own

The National Audit Office's report on PFI this week bring to light the crippling financial situation that some schools have been dealing with for years. *Schools Week* has warned of the heavy PFI contract burden as far back as 2015, when we reported on schools in Stoke-on-Trent, like Birches Head Academy, struggling to pay more than £380,000 a year in PFI costs.

The charges it faced increased by more than £125,000 in just four years

– the equivalent of three teachers' salaries. The academy's consultant headteacher said at the time that the situation was "unsustainable", while her message was echoed last week by Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy, who described the impact of PFI and PF2 deals as "devastating".

It is imperative the government now finds a way to help schools mired in these costs to adequately cover them.



Brighton Aldridge Community Academy



Principal

Brighton Aldridge Community Academy

Looking for your next significant challenge in a successful innovative, growing school?

Brighton Aldridge Community Academy is a thriving 11-19 school rated Good by Ofsted (2016). The Academy's much improved outcomes are matched by a significant rise in popularity; sixth form numbers have doubled and it is projected that Year 7 will be over-subscribed for the first time in September 2018. Our £30m campus close to Brighton and Sussex Universities boasts superb sports facilities rarely seen in the state sector.

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A great opportunity has arisen at **Marston Vale Middle School**

HEADTEACHER

We seek a dynamic and positive leader for our school. We want a leader to inspire our pupils, to inspire confidence in our parents and who can work alongside our staff and our Trust to continue the huge improvements at Marston Vale.

The school is a rural 9-13 Middle School on the Bedford Borough and Central Beds border. The children are positive and well-behaved. Our staff and Governors are highly ambitious for the school and know more work is needed. This is a brilliant challenge for an exciting school leader.



A great opportunity has arisen at **Marston Vale Middle School**

PASTORAL WORKER

Marston Vale Middle School are looking for an enthusiastic Pastoral Support Worker to work in our School.

This is a new role and will report to the Senior Leader for Behaviour. Working in collaboration with the existing Behaviour Support Worker you will be responsible for supporting pupils that do not wish to engage with their learning in order to help them achieve their potential.

A first point of contact for Parents and Carers your communication skills must be to a high standard and you must have a versatile approach to communication, both written and verbal.

Supporting our Heads of Houses, Teaching Staff and families as well as external agencies, this role requires someone who is highly organised and can build good strong relationships with identified pupils quickly to ensure they are able and willing to engage with their learning.

Support outcomes for identified pupils to ensure they are progressing and reaching their identified potential.

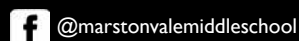
CLOSING DATE: Monday 22nd January 2018
INTERVIEWS: Week commencing 29th January 2018

If you would like any further information or to organise a tour, please contact **Adrian Rogers, CEO** via arogers@chilternlearningtrust.org

For full details and an application pack please visit:
www.marstonvalemiddle.co.uk

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service. CVs will not be accepted for any posts.

www.marstonvalemiddle.co.uk



CLOSING DATE: Monday 22nd January 2018
INTERVIEWS: commencing Tuesday 23rd January 2018

Should you wish to come along and look around our school prior to applying please email Sally Knight, HR Partner at sknight@marstonvalemiddle.co.uk or call her on 01234 768224.

For full details and an application pack please visit:
www.marstonvalemiddle.co.uk

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service. CVs will not be accepted for any posts.

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Head of Specialist Provision

Marlborough Centre, Hoo St. Werburgh Primary School
Leadership Scale L13 - 18 FT

Are you a dynamic, passionate, and progressive leader for children with special needs? Do you have the skills and drive to lead a fantastic specialist provision from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'? Are you passionate about achieving outstanding teaching and learning in every classroom? Do you want to inspire children through engaging curriculums? Do you excel at developing your teaching and support staff to be the best they can possibly be? If so, then this could be the role for you!

We have an exciting opportunity for an enthusiastic, experienced and skilled individual to take on the senior role of Head of Specialist Provision at the Marlborough Centre, Hoo St Werburgh Primary School, part of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust to join our team, supporting children who have Education Health Care Plans in Autism, associated difficulties and complex matters.

You will need extensive experience of behaviour management across all Primary key stages, actively managing groups of children and coping with a complexity of challenging needs are essential for this role. The ideal candidate will be expected to have a continuous presence within the school, be responsible for leading and supporting staff within the Centre as well as collaborate with the Head of main School at Hoo St. Werburgh Primary which shares the site. Responsibilities will include the development of staff, relevant policies, training and the management of data as well as innovative leadership and being an outstanding practitioner.

The Centre and school share the inclusive ethos of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust, we firmly believe that every child has a right to an education, no matter what barriers they have to learning. We aim

to instil in our pupils an enthusiasm for learning and an interest in the world around them. We have high expectations of our pupils and staff and strive to provide a learning environment that ensures our pupils are challenged and make good or better progress in all aspects of their school life.

We celebrate every achievement of our pupils learning including their social and emotional development, life skills acquisition to the national curriculum subjects of reading, writing, maths and many more. We recognise that becoming toilet trained or trying something new to eat is just as momentous as being able to read & write.

Visits to the Centre are highly recommended. Please contact **Karen Watkin**, HR Manager: **01634 338348** for an application form please email hr@rivermeadinclusivetrust.com. If you would like to have an informal discussion with either the Director of School Improvement or the CEO please contact Karen Watkin so a time can be given.

Closing date: 26th January 2018 noon

Interviews: Week beginning 29th January 2018



Principal

South Pennine Academies are seeking an outstanding person for the post of Principal to lead Brambles Primary Academy, a brand new Academy in the North of Huddersfield opening in September 2018. The successful candidate will believe passionately that all children, regardless of background can make strong academic and personal progress, and succeed.

This is a truly unique and once in a life time opportunity to develop this new provision as a presumption free school from pre-opening to outstanding. This career changing opportunity is seeking its founding Principal who will be available to start as soon as possible. Jane Acklam OBE, the CEO of our Trust will lead strategically with you at this new Academy. We are looking for a leader with special qualities, who will benefit from this strong partnership.

The Governors, and South Pennine Academies will ensure that

our new Academy provides the very best educational success for our children. We will create a dynamic relationship between Governors, Sponsors and the CEO which will be both challenging and supportive as we work together to create an outstanding Academy.

If you think you would be the right person for the role then we would love to hear from you!

To read further about this exciting opportunity and apply please visit <http://bit.ly/2EvOZ2a>

Closing Date – 9am Monday 22nd January 2018
Interview Dates – Monday 29th January and Tuesday 30th January 2018

Moor End Academy



Principal

South Pennine Academies are seeking an outstanding person for the post of Principal to lead Moor End Academy in Huddersfield. The successful candidate will believe passionately that all children, regardless of background can make strong academic and personal progress, and succeed.

Moor End is our flagship school, an academy converter who converted to an academy as an 'outstanding school' in August 2011. Before this the academy was a technology college for over ten years, and this grounding in technology still forms a strong part of curriculum and student experience.

Moor End's school improvement journey is always determining new destinations and looking for new horizons. Our students are amazing; they have a thirst for learning, have fantastic relationships with staff and therefore attendance at school is high.

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READERS' REPLY



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Damian Hinds: The new sheriff in town

David Marriott, Wiltshire
Of course, as with the vast majority of education secretaries, it's vital that he knows nothing about and has no experience of education.

Sarah Bailey
Seriously, his CV reads like someone with zero qualifications or experience for the role. Where else in life would you just get given a senior post you know nothing about?! Makes me fume.

Blackpool and Walsall 'need' new free schools the most

Janet Downs, Bourne
The only acceptable reason for a new free school is where there is a need for extra places. There is no guarantee that opening free schools will have a positive impact. Oldham, for example, has already had a secondary free school. It was the Collective Spirit Free School opened in 2013 and closed in August 2017 after being judged 'inadequate'. Rather than wasting money on new schools where there's no need, the money would be

better spent supporting existing schools to improve.

DfE unclear on existence of selective schools unit

Kathie McInnes // @Kathie_McInnes
This is like The X-Files. But instead of searching for intelligent life from other planets, they're searching for school places for intelligent earthlings...

Catering staff feel excluded, undervalued and poorly trained

Irate Guy // @Ir8_Guy
Just the catering staff? Try all staff, teachers at least get a decent wage (though not for the amount of work/hours they're required to put in) but most support staff are paid a pittance, certainly not living wages.

Primary schools are being asked to trial lessons in identifying 'fake news'

Dave Cooper, address supplied
Why is this news? We were doing this 10 years ago in class!!!!

Catering staff feel excluded, undervalued and poorly trained

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Anthony Thomas // @jua1313thomas

When there are so many issues around ensuring children get adequate food or responding to the challenges of obesity, it seems an own goal if we are not maximising the skills and commitment of school catering staff.



Reply of the week receives a Schools Week mug!

Every time an English school is forced to take a day off for bad weather, the usual suspects ooze out of the woodwork and make a fuss about the terrible effects of kids missing lessons. So why don't we follow what they do in the states, and add a day at the end of July?

Now is the panda of weather. They both look cute, but they suck resources without giving anything useful back. (Don't start me on snow helping out with skiing. I don't believe anyone really likes skiing).

Snow is particularly problematic for schools – as colleagues in the north of England learned this week after piles of precipitation caused a second round of closures in a month.

Whenever schools close for snow, Joe Public likes to get up in arms: "In other countries they have piles of snow and everything keeps working, why can we do that here?"

Thing is, I used to live in one of those countries with piles of snow. For two years I lived in Missouri, a US state which is boiling in the summer but enjoys a Narnian Age of Winter between January and March.

While teachers sweat through their shirts during the summer and shiver by radiators in the winter in England, in Missouri, they simply go home when buildings are too hot



LAURA MCINERNEY

Contributing editor, *Schools Week*

American schools have the white idea for snow days

or too cold. Snow days are almost annual, and totally normal.

But here's the thing. There's a plan for making up the days at the end of the school year. By law, Missouri requires students to attend a set number of days and "emergency make-up days" are planned for the end of term in lieu of any that are missed earlier in the year. Up to five extra days can be added, and schools must make this clear to teachers at the beginning of the year.

If England were to follow this rule then if a school closes for a snow day in January, it must do an extra day in July.

It does mean teachers begin the school

year not really knowing when they will go on holiday. But most simply plan their holidays from the final possible date and, if no snow days are taken, consider themselves lucky to be breaking up a week early.

Back in 2010 the idea of snow day make-ups was proposed by a triumvirate of right-leaning think-tanks (Civitas, Policy Exchange, and the Campaign for Real Education). Each claimed that teachers would be incentivised to turn up if they thought their summer holidays would be eaten into due to absences.

Unions meanwhile pointed out that British kids already go to school for 15 days a year longer than American children (a fair

point) and that it's not as if teachers are responsible for or able to clear roads and

“ In Missouri, they simply go home when buildings are too hot or too cold

ensure public transport is running smoothly during severe weather.

At the time, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (as the education department was then called) said it wasn't going to look at the idea.

But since then, schools minister Nick Gibb has reminded everyone, at every opportunity, that JUST ONE DAY OFF CAN HAMPER CHILDREN'S LIFE CHANCES. Hence he has dedicated himself to taking parents to court for taking their children to theme parks and promised never to rest until every last hoodlum is in a classroom. (Ok, that last bit is artistic licence; he never used the word "hoodlum").

Still, if the government is going to zealously hunt down parents who take their children out of school for fun events, why not also take the weather seriously?

PROFILE

CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

JAN DUBIEL

Jan Dubiel, head of national and international development, Early Excellence

Specialist early-years training company Early Excellence was famously shafted by the Department for Education in November, in the latest instalment of the baseline assessment debacle.

But its head of development doesn't express rancour – in fact the whole process accidentally thrust his organisation onto the national stage, giving it “quite a strong voice in terms of the whole early-years agenda”. What he does project is a deep disappointment at the lack of understanding of foundation-stage education that he perceives not only at the department but in education circles as a whole.

Baseline assessment was conceived as a way to measure children's progress through primary school, by assigning scores to children when they enter in the reception year, then comparing these with their key



stage 2 SAT scores, seven years later.

The controversy centres on what type of assessment can accurately reflect five-year-olds' cognitive ability, and Jan Dubiel is convinced that the ideology of the secondary stage of education is being imposed – quite wrongly – onto early years.

"I would say we're in a real danger of having what is essentially a late-primary/secondary model lens which early years is viewed through, and that's when the problems start, because young children need a different kind of pedagogy," he says.

Young children are not actually just mini versions of their older selves, he explains: "Often, people – particularly making policy or in other strategic positions – have assumptions about early years, that it's like older children but a bit easier, where actually it's fundamentally different.

"Birth-to-seven is a particular phase of development: it's the biggest period of neurological, physical and emotional growth. So there's a point at seven, which is when most countries start school, where the brain clicks into place, or it makes particular changes, which makes, for instance, abstract thinking more possible."

He would happily explain early years to Nick Gibb, whose understanding of the phase he describes, "respectfully" as being "at an early stage of development".

"I would love him to come here," he enthuses, "and I would like to talk to him about why we do what we do."

Early Excellence, which was set up about 20 years ago in Huddersfield by Liz Marsden, who is still its CEO, is an independent, self-funding training organisation that connects with academics and practitioners, and positions itself "at the very rigorous end of evidence-based, highly principled practice". It delivers CPD, training and

rooms, a shop full of "high-quality, durable" educational toys and books (the construction set has actual miniature bricks), various demonstration-learning environments and even a cafe that's proven popular with local mums.

Then in 2016, after assessing the results of the three baseline providers that had fulfilled the government criteria – a magic combination of reliability and take-up by at least 10 per cent of schools (the other two were Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) and the National Foundation for Educational Research) – the DfE decided the results were not "comparable" between providers and scrapped the project.

Given that it was obvious to even the most inexperienced observer that such different assessments were never going to be comparable, it was described as "an embarrassing policy cock-up" by Rob Coe, the director of CEM. But Dubiel reckons there's more to it than that: "I think the reason they pulled baseline and the reason they've gone with the model that they're doing now is an ideological one, not an educational one.

"I think Nick Gibb particularly has an ideological position about testing. It's too inconvenient and too messy to do observational assessment because it doesn't fit with a particular model. Now I would argue that's true, but it's the only way you're going to get accurate data."

The latest tender document, released in November, which effectively rules out EExBA, states: "We do not intend this to be an observational assessment... The reception baseline assessment is not intended to provide on-going formative information for practitioners."

So would Early Excellence consider devising a non-observational assessment and retendering?

"Well, no, because it would be unreliable," he insists. "It will be unreliable."

"WE'RE SERIOUS, SERIOUS EDUCATIONALISTS"

consulting services to about 30 per cent of all primary schools in England and its expertise is in increasing demand internationally.

"We're serious, serious educationalists," he says.

And while it was respected in its field long before the baseline assessment was even a twinkle in the schools minister's eye, it was thrown into the national limelight in 2015 when, after primary schools were given the choice between six assessments selected as capable of reliably measuring the abilities of children entering the reception year, 75 per cent opted for EExBA, the assessment tool designed by Early Excellence and scored through teacher observation.

While Dubiel, who was at the time Early Excellence's national director, tasked with developing the company in the south, insists it is "not an assessment organisation", it certainly received a reputational and financial boost from EExBA, giving it an in with over 12,000 primary schools nationwide and a profile raised beyond its traditional northern stamping ground.

Its plans for a southern office materialised in a trendy canalside centre in the London docklands. It has training

This is the part that drives Dubiel crazy. He believes the concept of testing held by Gibb, and many others used to dealing with older children, is simply the wrong way to get accurate data about five-year-olds.

One problem with test-based assessment, defined as "something for which there is a right and wrong answer", he explains, is that younger children don't even understand the concept.

"They don't know that there are right answers, and so they engage with it in a variety of different ways, often very creatively," he says.

"Therefore what you think you're trying to find out, you're not finding out. So testing is a very unreliable way of working with young children. You also make huge assumptions about what you think they should know in terms of getting to the answer that you do."

To the question of how many spots a ladybird has, an answer of "six", for example, including the eyes, might show the child can count, but it would be marked as wrong.

"You can't legislate for that that kind of diversity in how children will engage with it," he stresses.

PROFILE: JAN DUBIEL

I THINK THE OPPOSITION IS AN IDEOLOGICAL ONE



Dubiel is not claiming observational testing is perfect: he admits that teachers can also bring assumptions to their observations, but he thinks that can be weeded out during moderation and refined to produce accurate data, as was done with EExBA.

"We had it externally verified by statisticians who said it was valid, it was reliable, it was consistent – all the things it needed to be. So I think the opposition is an ideological one."

He also thinks the new baseline will be proven inaccurate as a way of measuring progress through primary school and ditched, possibly even before the first results are made public in about 10 years' time.

"It just seems a bit of a criminal waste," he says. "With schools having their budgets cut and spending £10 million on a system that I think is not going to last."

The need for a strict delineation of assessment data for formative and summative purposes is something Daisy Christodoulou, the highly influential CEO of No More Marking, has evangelised about. But as Dubiel points out, "she's not an early-years specialist".

"This is an example of looking at early years through a secondary lens," he says. "In secondary, it may be that you need formative and summative assessment to be separate, and I'm not a secondary specialist so I'm honest enough to say I don't know the answer to that."

Here he expresses the wish that secondary specialists,

who have never taught reception, might demonstrate the same degree of restraint.

One thing reception teachers do very well, claims the former nursery teacher, is get to know the intricacies of each child really well; so something they are already doing becomes part of the assessment process. EExBA was essentially a set of questions designed to translate that observed information into numerical data that the government could use to compare children in some meaningful way.

"So I would argue very strongly in early years that formative and summative assessment should be the same information," he argues. "And I think it's actually very difficult to divide them."

What's perhaps most frustrating for this lifelong early-years specialist is that – unlike Ofsted, which is working closely with Early Excellence, most recently to dispel myths about the regulator's Bold Beginnings report that is causing such an uproar among EYFS practitioners – the DfE doesn't seem to be asking his advice.

"Considering we got 80 per cent of the share, it might be sensible to at least have a conversation with us," he suggests. It's a genuine invitation from a man who dedicates his life to improving early-years around the world. Whether the minister for school standards in England will take him up on it is another question.

CV

1985–88	BA (Hons) peace studies, University of Bradford
1989–90	PGCE (early years), Bradford and Ilkely Community College
1990–91	Nursery and reception teacher, Bradford
1991–96	Reception and Y1 teacher, Oxford
1996–98	Nursery and reception teacher, early-years coordinator, senior management team, Norfolk
1998–2000	Nursery and reception teacher, early-years coordinator, acting deputy headteacher, York
2000–03	EY consultant, City of York local authority
2003–05	Senior early-years adviser, London Borough of Havering
2004–05	Institute of Education, London, graduate certificate in educational leadership development and consultancy
2005–10	Programme leader EYFS Profile and EYFS, NAA/QCA/QCDA
2011–17	National director, Early Excellence
2018–	Head of national and international development, Early Excellence

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Further speaker announcements will be made next week.

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OPINION



SAMEENA CHOUdry

Co-founder, #WomenEd

Now is the time to beat the gender pay gap in schools

Schools will soon all be obliged to publish the differences in what they pay men and women. Sameena Choudry explains why that gap must now be filled.

Last October, Theresa May brought the gender pay gap back into prominence. She declared that tackling it is an absolute priority for the government and made it a requirement for companies to publish their gender pay gaps.

From April 2018, all companies employing more than 250 people are required to publish annual data on their gender pay gap, their bonus gap, the proportion of men and women receiving bonuses, and the proportion of men and women in each quartile of the pay structure. This will appear both on their own websites and the government's site.

The concept of the "gender pay gap" refers to the discrepancy in what men and women are paid irrespective of their job or position. It is worth noting that this is different to equal pay – the reason Carrie Grace gave for resigning from her post as the BBC's China editor – which means that by law companies must ensure that men and women carrying out the same or similar roles are paid the same for the amount of work they do.

Just over 500 companies, including some independent schools, colleges, universities and multi-academy trusts, have published their data ahead of time, which provides interesting reading.

We already know education is a female-dominated profession. The latest school workforce census shows that nearly three out of four school teachers, and four out of five school employees, are female. This increases significantly in nursery and primary, where 85 per cent of teachers are female compared with 63 per cent in secondary. Teaching and support staff roles are even more female-dominated: 91 per cent of teaching assistants and 82 per cent of support staff.

The ONS itself reports a significant pay gap: "senior professionals of educational establishments" have a 19.7 per cent pay gap in favour of men. For "secondary educational teaching professionals" roles, there is a gender gap of 6.4 per cent overall. "Primary and nursery teaching professionals" buck the trend: women are paid marginally more than men by half a per cent.

This brings us to the latest data, in which over 40 educational organisations went

public, the vast majority being MATs. Unsurprisingly, the majority of these organisations have a gender gap in favour of men, varying from a very small 0.4 per cent for the FE College of Haringey and Enfield, to over 35 per cent at Ocean Learning Trust and Peninsula Learning Trust

In comparison there were only two

“**The majority of educational organisations have a gender gap in favour of men**”

educational organisations with a gender gap in favour of women. These were Northern Education Trust (9 per cent) and Saint Elizabeth's School (2.7 per cent). There was only one multi academy trust – Connect Academy Trust in Plymouth – where there was no gap. Interestingly, the Department for Education was one of the government departments with a lower gender gap in favour of men than most, at 5.3 per cent.

No doubt these organisations will be looking into why these gender gaps exist and what they can do to over the forthcoming year to reduce them.

We at #WomenEd will be looking at what the data shows when the remaining educational organisations publish their data in April. With such a teaching and leadership recruitment crisis, and while women dominate the workforce, this data will prove invaluable for existing employees to find out why there are such pay differentials.

For those applying for new roles, we recommend that women look at this data as part of their application process. Be 10 per cent braver by negotiating a salary that is commensurate to your male counterparts. We also hope that governors and trustees will play their part in challenging what is going on in their educational organisations.

We cannot wait another 100 years for the gender pay gap to close between men and women or – which is effectively the case right now – for women to work effectively for free from the equivalent of November 10 each year.



CHARLOTTE AVERY

Headmistress, St Mary's School, Cambridge

Removing the faith-school cap risks fresh intolerance

With talk in the air that the new education secretary will deregulate faith schools, Charlotte Avery makes her plea for the place of comparative religion

It was suggested this week that the new education secretary Damian Hinds plans to remove the 50-per-cent cap on pupils of the same religion being admitted to faith schools.

This comes hot on the heels of a revelation by *Schools Week* that increasing numbers of pupils are being entered for the iGCSE in religious studies, which allows them to learn just one religion – in spite of government rules that require RS GCSEs to include two religions.

The danger here is that an increasing number of faith schools will choose to teach only one religion – as has already been reported. You would think that religious communities would be perfectly placed to understand first-hand why it is beneficial for others to have a basic understanding of their beliefs, practices and wider cultural norms, for the sake of living peacefully side by side. Schools need to uphold an attitude of learning about and respecting other people's cultures, if they are to expect or assume the same treatment in return.

Most religious people believe that their religion has something positive to offer, and recognise that this is a two-way street. In the UK we are perhaps more likely to hear the Christian narrative than others, so if anything, Christian schools should be conscious of teaching their students about the other major world religions as they are less likely to be understood by osmosis.

Beyond the three Abrahamic religions, there is yet more to learn. Buddhists believe they must "not to do any evil, cultivate good, purify one's heart", and Buddha told his followers not to believe without questioning – definitely an attitude to be encouraged. Hindus believe that every action has an effect, and there is a cause for everything, and Sikhs believe that everyone is equal before God, and that a good life is lived as part of a community, through service of others and living honestly.

While I don't advocate that an individual can sincerely take on a number of different religions, what I do believe is that people who wholeheartedly subscribe to any major religion do it because something has struck

a chord – whether it makes logical sense to them, or it simply feels right. Regardless, there are so many positive takeaways from each that even as a personal pursuit, learning about multiple religions can only be a positive experience for young people as they consider pertinent questions about life.

“**Learning about the 'other' is important because it removes potential barriers in society**”

Learning about the "other" is important because it removes potential barriers in society. Various projects encouraging inter-religious dialogue in the UK over the past couple of decades have found that, while discussing different theologies and traditions is important, the real gift of interfaith encounter comes when different communities join together in a common response to community, charitable, social, or political needs. This was seen powerfully recently in the joint response of religious community groups to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

It should go without saying that I do, of course, recognise that there are also many wise and selfless individuals who don't have a personal faith, and who still have much to share with us all about how to live well. Equally there are many individuals who don't live up to the ideals of their faith traditions.

Studying religion lets students explore what it means to be human, their place in the world, how to live a good and happy life, how to contribute to society positively. It fosters respect for other people and encourages them to think more deeply, behave morally and develop good judgement. I think it should be a priority for all of us in 2018 to support the government's ruling that all children should have the opportunity to learn about at least two religions, so that as a society we become better informed about our neighbours' cultural practices and ideologies, which are so often entwined with their religious beliefs.

Mary Woolley interviewed 13 veterans of history teaching, in an effort to discover how teaching has changed over the last 30 years. This is what she learned.

The role and approach of teachers in classrooms is frequently contested, particularly in the history education community. Advocates of direct instruction emphasise the place of the teacher at the front of the classroom, sharing knowledge with the class. The pupil-centred approach, on the other hand, might include group work and helping construct shared knowledge.

This is not a new debate, and there are many nuances between the two poles, so we must apply a historical lens to such disputes. Literature on the history of history teaching has tended to analyse policy documents and textbooks rather than the experiences of teachers in the classroom. To enrich this experience, 13 long-serving history teachers were interviewed using an oral history approach. They were asked how their teaching had changed over the course of their careers and why it had changed. The teachers involved weren't necessarily the high-fliers of the history community, but they were passionate and dedicated practitioners who had stayed in the classroom for over 25 years. The results are long and complex, but there are a few highlights that shine a light on the debate.

Almost all the teachers described a didactic, from-the-front teaching approach in classrooms in the mid-1980s. It wasn't the only approach, but it did exist. As Simon put it, "I can certainly remember when I first



MARY WOOLLEY

Senior lecturer in education
Canterbury Christ Church University

How did the 'pupil-centred' dogma take hold in schools?

came into teaching, rows of very miserable-looking children, with a textbook, a pen and an exercise book, with, in some cases, dictation still going on. I think that was probably the end of that era."

William described a more varied approach: "We would introduce some sources and look at some, but typically, I would often kind of credit the success of the lesson on how many times I would lap the circular blackboard." There was nothing simplistic in these approaches though. Behind William's laps of the blackboard lay a Socratic approach to questioning and discussion.

There was a dramatic shift in approaches to history teaching over the next 20 years. Many factors contributed, from the introduction of GCSE to the national curriculum, league tables, Ofsted and new technologies. In this context, teachers appeared most likely to change

their practice in response to the demands of assessment, particularly from examination boards. Some teachers were more resilient than others, adopting a more disciplinary approach to mediating the demands of senior managers.

It was from the mid-2000s, however, that a campaign seems to have been waged by senior managers in some schools, probably in fear of Ofsted, to limit "teacher talk". Allan, an advanced skills teacher, described being observed by a new head in 2008, where he was told not to talk for more than 15 per cent of the lesson. He went over the allocated nine minutes and his lesson was downgraded as a consequence. Alison, working in prefab classroom, recalled a member of the senior team looking through the window. Later that day, in a phone call from SMT, she was reprimanded for standing at the front of the

classroom and told her approach should be more pupil-centred.

It is not surprising that many history teachers want to reclaim space for quality input. However, it appears just as unacceptable for them to be told they are not talking enough, after observations or learning walks, or that their pupils are engaged in appropriate activities.

“**Rows of very miserable-looking children, with dictation still going on**”

There are many ways to create a knowledge-rich history classroom that values enquiry. Teachers need to be aware of a variety of strategies and to feel free to trial the methods that suit both their pupils and the particular form of knowledge they are trying to convey. However, our interviewees who succeeded in mediating government or school policy without becoming frustrated were those who had a strong subject-specific articulation of history through a disciplinary frame. What history teachers, and perhaps all teachers, need is the freedom from senior leaders to choose the most appropriate form of pedagogy to suit both their discipline and the progression of their pupils.

The battle for the soul of reception continues, especially on social media, writes Colin Richards

It is clear that Ofsted has mismanaged both the writing and the reception of its report, 'Bold Beginnings'. There has been needless, counterproductive recrimination both by inspectors and critics. It is time that rational discussion replaced rhetoric and injured self-justification.

Let's be clear. There is a case for re-examining policy and practice in the reception year, but there's equally a case for re-examining policy and practice in year one, and for that matter every year of primary education. The report critiques reception but assumes provision is appropriate from thereon in.

A major part of the controversy rests with the wording of the report, especially its recommendations. The predictable fury from early-years specialists is understandable given the insensitive drafting of Ofsted's recommendations – note, not just for "the schools inspected" but for "all schools".

Take the very first one: "All primary schools should make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics, is the core purpose of the reception year."

Note its tone: not a recommendation to consider, but one to act upon. Note the readership: every school in England without exception, whatever its circumstances. Note "the core purpose", not "a core purpose": i.e. one among others. Note "the teaching



COLIN RICHARDS

Former professor and HMI

Bold Beginnings: how not to write an Ofsted report

of reading, not "the learning and teaching of reading". Note the paramountcy of "systematic synthetic phonics", with no acknowledgement of the relevance of other approaches to reading.

Would there have been such a violent outcry if it had been rephrased more carefully and with better sense of audience? Perhaps it should have said something along the lines of "primary schools should consider whether the learning and teaching of reading is being given sufficient attention as one of a number of purposes of reception class education"?

Take the second recommendation: "All primary schools should attach greater importance to the teaching of numbers in building children's fluency in counting, recognising small numbers of items, comparing numbers and solving problems." It would have been more appropriate and

sensitive to context if it had been phrased thus: "Primary schools should consider whether adequate attention is being paid to the learning and teaching of number in the context of other demands on the reception year curriculum."

The fourth point is as follows: "All primary schools should devote sufficient time each day to the direct teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, including frequent opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills."

More adroit phrasing might promote a more considered reaction from many readers.

For instance: "Primary schools should consider the place of direct teaching, as well as informal learning, in early language, reading writing and mathematics, and should provide opportunities for children to consolidate their understanding and skills through a range of activities and contexts."

It would have helped too if Ofsted had added an extra recommendation linked to its last main finding, along the lines of: "Primary schools should acknowledge the importance of play in reception class settings and keep under review its role in furthering children's understanding in the different areas of learning."

Such rephrased recommendations would have been an invitation to deliberate on current policy and practice in reception class education – not a set of injunctions to follow because of the need to prepare young children for a not-to-be questioned Y1 curriculum assumed to have no shortcomings.

“**It is time that rational discussion replaced rhetoric**”

Of course, given the values, sensitivities and experience of many early-years specialists, there would have been debate and controversy but not one as virulent or impassioned as we have witnessed in recent weeks.

As an inspector I always trod carefully when visiting reception classes, and not just because of paint splashes on my suit! Ofsted needed, and still needs, to do the same. But has it learnt a lesson from its "bold beginning"? Time and the early years community will tell, and tell it vociferously.

REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

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



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

My shero
@womened



"From our first conversation it was like I had met the person I had been waiting to meet all my life. We 'clicked' instantly – I found my soulmate that night."

No, *Schools Week* hasn't started a new romance novels review section; this is a description of the writer's first meeting with her "shero", or she-hero.

The team at WomenEd have invited 300-word contributions from anybody to write about women who have inspired them in their lives so far. Sue Cowley chose to write about her best friend of 30 years. It's wonderful to see close adult relationships celebrated that aren't between family or partners. Other bloggers have included reflections about mothers, headteachers and former bosses. I also noticed that there were male bloggers who had joined in to write about women who had inspired them: heroes aren't just for women and girls.

New year, new school: On making
a good start
@Bennewmark



"Before taking over a class I deliberately avoid anything, aside from relevant SEND information, that might make me form prejudices about behavior," writes Ben Newmark, who started a new job at a new school this term. As somebody who has started three different teaching posts in January of the spring term, I immediately empathised.

In January you have to hit the ground running: there isn't the honeymoon period that you have in September when everybody else is new or adjusting to a new academic year too. It's especially interesting when you start as a head of department or SLT, as I previously have, and staff automatically expect you to know everything because of your position.

This blog is a straightforward walkthrough

of what Ben plans to do in his first lesson with each of his classes. If it were a film, I could imagine the lead character speaking to himself in the bathroom mirror as he prepared to go into work. It's a very traditional take on a first lesson, which many readers may disagree with, but the point is that it has been planned, it has been thought about and there is a reason for everything. The bit that really stood out to me was Ben's statement that he had been forced to think about "how to make the best start with children who do not know me, in a context where I can't rely on the artificial gravitas a leadership position provides".

Having worked in five schools in a variety of contexts in my career so far, I've noticed that many teachers forget how much of what they consider their good behaviour management is actually related to children's familiarity, their status in a particular school and their reputation. Stripped of context and status, it's useful to think about how we'd each approach a new class and it may help us to approach less experienced, new or temporary, colleagues with compassion.

Teacher Toolkit podcast 2:
Sean Morrison
@TeacherToolkit



In this short, 12-minute podcast, Ross McGill, a consultant and former school leader, talks to headteacher Sean Morrison, who recently spent three months in the US on paid sabbatical researching how to improve student outcomes.

Sean is Australian, and it was fascinating to hear him talk about the Australian system, where many schools give heads a two-to-three-month sabbatical after around five years in post. Having worked on two research projects related to recruitment and retention in the English state system in the past year, I'm always interested in how other industries or countries approach workforce issues. I strongly believe that the recruitment issue in teaching is actually a retention issue and sabbaticals could help.

On race, class and intelligence
@DavidMcQueen



"At the core of the British education runs a deep vein of elitism" – and you know that a blog which starts like this isn't going to be an easy read. Toby Young recently resigned from the Office for Students, shortly after he was linked to a private conference with unsavory links to eugenicists.

This post goes beyond individuals and explores the history of links made between race and IQ. I support free speech but I also agree with McQueen that anybody who makes assumptions about students based "on genetic heritability or physical ability" is unfit to serve in any position related to education.

BOOK REVIEW

Inside the autonomous school –
making sense of a global
education trend

By Maija Salokangas and Mel Ainscow

Published by Routledge

Reviewed by Mark Lehain,

director, PTE



I've worked in schools since 2002, and to say that the changes we've seen since then have been significant would be an understatement. While some of these were driven by local circumstances, this book is a timely reminder of two things: 1) most of the really big developments have been pushed by national government, and 2) this is a global phenomenon.

Outside Michael Gove's brain, you'd be hard pressed to find a bigger advocate for school autonomy than me. I'm a passionate believer that heads should have the freedom to do whatever they feel they must to meet the needs of their kids. That could mean longer days, shorter holidays, different curriculums and staffing arrangements, whatever; they should be left to get on with it, and judged by the outcomes for students.

However, it's still relatively early days, and no-one can deny that the evidence school autonomy is definitively better for everyone is still patchy. We need to keep testing and revisiting even cherished views, and *Inside the autonomous school* certainly helped to do this for me.

In a democracy, education will always be politicised, and in most places it's been a slow move back towards freedom for state-funded providers. In England, most schools are still getting to grips with the amount of power they have over how they do things, which isn't surprising when you consider how constrained they were for so long.

This book takes a neat approach to the topic of school autonomy: it starts by describing trends at the global level, zooms in to give more detail to the reforms in England, and then spends the rest of the book detailing how these have played out

over time at a particular (anonymous but real) school it calls "Parkside Academy". This makes the whole thing very readable, and really helped to bring the issues to life.

For instance, there is a compelling case for how early idealism at Parkside was constrained and undermined by the accountability regime and the need to deliver "results" quickly. There is also a chapter dedicated to how the school's leadership team fell apart as it struggled to cope with its principal stepping up to run the wider trust. I found myself nodding along to lots of it – we have seen this kind of thing happen all too often in our schools.

That said, while it flows from the general to the particular with ease, I worry that it ends up overexaggerating the role of the reforms in reality.

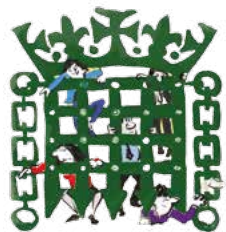
A lot of weight is placed on their role in the specific problems Parkside faced. However, I can think of any number of maintained schools that have seen their leadership, and thus performance, collapse when the head took their eye off the ball. Gaming and cramming the life out of a child's curriculum is not the preserve

of academies. Unpicking exactly what part academy freedoms or qualification reform played in Parkside's rise and fall would be tricky – one could just put it all down to weak leadership.

The recommendations the authors draw could have been made at any point in the last 70 years – "ensure clarity of purpose", "encourage schools to collaborate" and so on. These are all worthy considerations, but I still need to be convinced they have greater relevance in a system of more autonomous schools.

That said, I really enjoyed the book. I read it over Christmas, and it provided an easily digestible alternative to the usual routine of turkey, ham, schlock fiction and television. Whether you favour or are against the direction of travel of recent years, it provides an accessible but rigorous examination of the existing literature, and will challenge your existing point of view. In my new role I'm encouraging more schools to make the most of the autonomy they already have – and it certainly got me considering how we ensure lessons are learned from earlier days of reform.





Week in Westminster

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

MONDAY:

A slightly awkward morning as the collapse of Carillion means a lot of schools are suddenly without contractors for services. But how many exactly? If you add up all of Carillion's claims on its website, it was working with at least 800 schools and possibly as many as 1,400.

The government, however, says it's more like 250.

Anyone starting to get the feeling that contract management isn't a DfE speciality? Oh well. At least they're not now in charge of contracts for academy trusts to run thousands of schools. Oh wait, no. The other thing. Sigh.

TUESDAY:

That schools minister Nick Gibb seems like a straightforward guy who says things as they are, right?

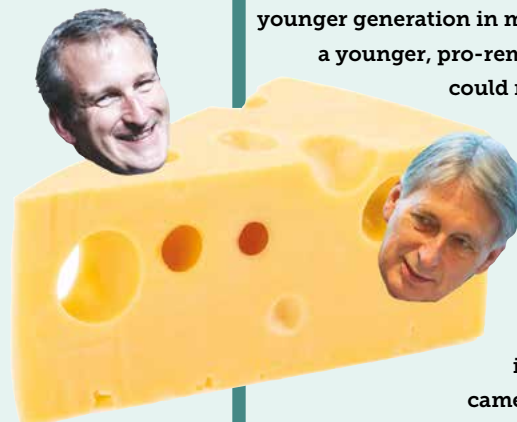
Today he is asked by fellow Tory MP Henry Smith about the discussions that have taken place between him and the chancellor about the impact of cash on

school outcomes since 2010.

Gibb writes (hold your stomach): "My rt hon friend the secretary of state for education routinely discusses matters of shared interest with cabinet colleagues, including my rt hon friend the chancellor of the exchequer. Pupil outcomes are, of course, at the heart of the Department's decision-making."

What's remarkable about this answer – besides the fact that it sounds like the 19th century – is that the real answer could be "WE HAVE HAD ZERO CHATS" and it still works.

Week in Westminster also enjoys the idea that Damian Hinds "routinely" discusses "matters of shared interest" with Phillip Hammond, the chancellor. What if they both have a shared interest in cheese? Do they meet each Tuesday to discuss the best brie? Count us



in if you do, lads. We'll bring along some baloney to match yours!

WEDNESDAY:

Justine Greening has wasted no time in sticking pins into the boss who sacked her.

During a Brexit debate she jumps in and said negotiations must be made with a younger generation in mind, and suggests

a younger, pro-remain generation

could reverse Brexit if it did not work for them in the future.

She also wakes up a colleague who kept falling asleep in full view of the cameras. If only she'd

been able to keep us awake during some of her interminable speeches she might still have her job. Too soon?.

THURSDAY:

New education minister Nadhim Zahawi is

having an identity crisis.

The MP for Stratford-upon-Avon, who was appointed as children's minister last Tuesday, told a colleague that his full responsibilities still haven't been confirmed by the department.

Unlike his predecessor Robert Goodwill, Zahawi is not a minister of state, but rather a "parliamentary undersecretary of state", the most junior ministerial rung.

The change in the role raises questions about what exactly he will do.

Quizzed by Emma Lewell-Buck, the shadow children's minister (who doesn't currently know what she's supposed to be shadowing), Zahawi simply answers: "My responsibilities will be confirmed in due course."

The new minister should get used to those three words "in due course". They are the DfE's preferred response to almost every question.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



Name Kieran McGrane

Age 49

Occupation Headteacher

Location Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne

Subscriber since March 2015

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



FLY ON THE WALL

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

In my car while waiting for my son to finish football training and on a Sunday morning before his games start.

Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?

A Week in Westminster – it always makes me laugh out loud.

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

The introduction of more grammar schools being consigned to the bin, and the earmarked funding redistributed to all schools.

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

I think the articles on making the work of regional schools commissioners more open and transparent have been encouraging and necessary.

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

I read it electronically and store them away for future reference. I also share certain articles with staff and governors.

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

Write an article about the top 10 reasons to be a headteacher, celebrating the brilliant aspects of the role

Favourite memory of your school years?

Playing football for the school teams and an A-level geography field trip to Swanage with my teacher Bob Leake – he was amazing.

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

Coaching football full-time at an American university.

Favourite book on education?

Anything by Michael Fullan or Tim Brighouse.

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

Nothing immediately springs to mind – I think it's great.

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

Donald Trump...



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



Jamie Oliver takes on energy drinks **FEATURED**

Harris Academy students are spearheading an awareness-raising campaign after starring in a TV segment presented by Jamie Oliver on the detrimental effects of energy drinks.

Seven year 10 pupils from Harris Academy South Norwood, selected for their passion for the drinks, appeared in a recent episode of Channel 4's Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast exploring healthy alternatives with TV chef Jamie Oliver and his farmer pal Jimmy Doherty.

The pupils involved are now leading a drive to educate their peers on the dangers of having too many energy drinks, coinciding with Oliver's latest campaign to ban their sale to anyone under the age of 16.

"The most powerful thing is that the students who were on the programme have dramatically cut down. That's seven children that are not having the energy drinks like they were, and that makes me very, very happy," said assistant principal Louise Martin, who also appeared in the episode. "If you're full of stimulants you're not going to have the best learning experience."

Harris Academy South Norwood banned energy drinks on school premises in September 2016, along with all other schools within the Harris Federation.

"When energy drinks are confiscated, they're not just confiscated," Martin



Harris pupils on the show



added. "You've got to explain to the students why they can't have it. It says you can't give them to a woman who's breastfeeding, why do they think that is? Because it's going to go to the baby. Get them to break it down like that, exactly like you would in a lesson."

"The academy had long recognised the negative impact of these high-caffeine drinks on our students' ability

to concentrate," said Nick Soar, the academy's executive principal. "The results have been very positive, so we were delighted that our students were asked to take part in Jamie and Jimmy's documentary to raise awareness of this issue."



A juicy alternative



REINVENTING THE SATELLITE

The UK Space Agency is calling for schools to come up with innovative ways satellites can improve life on Earth for a chance to win a share of £50,000.

The annual SatelLife competition – now in its second year – asks young people aged 11 to 22 to come up with new ways satellites can benefit the economy, health or environment, presented through posters, brochures and videos.

Previous entries include an app warning people of impending natural disasters, and GPS trackers placed in fitness devices to help emergency services respond quicker to heart-attack victims.

The competition aims to support the development of science, data handling and technological skills, and the best individual and best team each receive £7,500. A further seven individual entries will take home £5,000 each.

"SatelLife is a great opportunity for students to work together as teams to understand the things that satellites do for us now and their potential in the future," said Emily Gravestock, head of applications strategy at the UK Space Agency. "They can collectively come up with a way to improve life on Earth, and increase their knowledge about space and the world around us."

The deadline for entries is February 25. To apply, visit <http://bit.ly/2D8IUse>



PC Wardell and Finn, centre, with pupils

Hero dog saves English class

A service dog stabbed while protecting his handler has visited pupils at a Lancashire primary school to help them with a creative writing module.

Year 6 pupils at St Bartholomew's CE Primary School had been learning about Finn the German shepherd, who was stabbed in the head and chest in the line of duty, and his handler PC Dave Wardell, writing their own news stories recounting the events.

Their teacher Helen Lawton sent some of their stories to Wardell via Twitter, who was so impressed with the writing that he offered to visit the school with Finn, who is the subject



Walking Finn

of soon-to-be-released book, Fabulous Finn: The brave police dog who was stabbed and came back.

"It was the best writing that they'd ever done," said Lawton. "PC Wardell messaged me back and said he was so moved, he had even been crying, and wouldn't it be nice to give kids a happy ending."

Pupils got the chance to take Finn for a walk and had a Q&A with Wardell. Other sniffer dogs from Lancashire Police also turned up, accompanied by the local radio station.

"The start of our new topic is heroes and villains so it was perfect for a topic launch as well," Lawton added.



Patent attorney Kathryn Whyte, left, with students

Standing on the shoulders of women

Pupils at a Norfolk secondary school were instrumental in setting up a programme to network with inspirational women during lunch breaks.

Ormiston Victory Academy has been inviting a series of professional women to talk about their respective fields during working lunches, offering career tips and advice, with a particular focus on issues affecting women.

The sessions were introduced after a group of year 10 girls asked to hear about prominent women's specific experiences, following media revelations around equal pay and harassment in the workplace.

So far guests have included academics, public servants, business leaders and a patent attorney, and there are visits from a consultant paediatric orthopaedic surgeon and a detective superintendent in the pipeline.

"It has been fantastic welcoming all of the special guests we've had so far in this series of talks, and our year 10 girls have shown such initiative in helping us to get this going," said principal Naomi Palmer. "Talks like this are so important to inspire students to achieve their full potential and show them that no dream is impossible, if they put their mind to it."

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



JOANNA CHAPMAN

Head, Summer Fields pre-prep

START DATE: September 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Head of junior school, Knightsbridge School

INTERESTING FACT: Joanna is a keen baker and won Knightsbridge School's version of the Great British Bake Off.



NEIL BROOKS

Headmaster, Cranleigh Preparatory School

START DATE: September 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Principal, Fulham Prep School

INTERESTING FACT: In his early career, Neil was an army officer on active service.



JO HIGGINS

Chief Executive, Dudley Academies Trust

START DATE: December 2017

PREVIOUS JOB: Principal, Penistone Grammar School

INTERESTING FACT: Jo loves dogs, horses, West Bromwich Albion (even through the tough times) and shoes.



DAVID THOMAS

Head of school, Jane Austen College

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Manager, McKinsey & Co

INTERESTING FACT: David has spent the past two years running school improvement projects for refugee schools in Lebanon.



KATIE ROBERTS

Headteacher, Da Vinci Academy

START DATE: January 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Vice-principal, Heanor Gate Science College

INTERESTING FACT: Katie loves travelling with her family to keep perspective on life, and has so far visited Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Lithuania and Slovenia.

Get in touch!

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

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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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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.