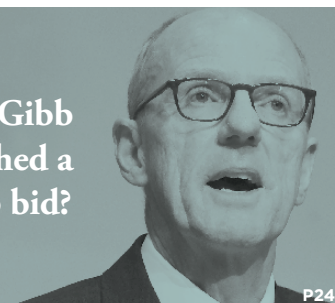


SCHOOLS WEEK

A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.

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- Debt-ridden schools won't get help from new PFI 'centre of excellence'
- Campaigners demand action for those 'being held to ransom' by private firms

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Edition 175



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Editor's top picks



**Five mistakes to avoid
when managing school
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**Ofsted has shot itself in the
foot on retaining grades**

P22

Interview: Martyn Oliver



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Ofsted mulls school reviews website

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted has refused to rule out a TripAdvisor-style reviews website for parents after more than three quarters of respondents to a survey backed the idea.

The watchdog is designing a replacement for Parent View, the service it uses to gather the views of parents about schools.

Under the current system, feedback is recorded via a survey and published as data, with no function to take written comments.

In its latest annual survey, the watchdog asked whether parents would trust online reviews about a school written by other parents.

Seventy-three per cent said they would somewhat trust them and 5 per cent said they would trust them totally. Just 12 per cent were against the idea.

A website provided by Ofsted was also the preferred platform, with 45 per cent backing the watchdog to provide the service.

Twenty-one per cent said a school's own website would be best, while 19 per cent backed hosting the reviews on a third-party website such as Mumsnet.

An Ofsted spokesperson said it was in the "early stages" of replacing Parent View, but "cannot state for certain what changes are being considered and how this will affect the final version".

Schools Week understands that Ofsted has looked into a reviews website, but planned changes to the inspection framework and more pressing IT projects means it is not a priority. Senior staff are also concerned about the watchdog's capacity to moderate reviews to remove vexatious or personal comments. However, the idea has not been ruled out.

It may not find favour with school staff already on the receiving end of online abuse and harassment from parents.

Teachers have spoken out over abusive comments on existing services, such as ratemyteachers.com, and hurtful and bullying comments posted on Facebook.

Schools in Birmingham were recently forced to pull lessons about LGBT relationships following parents' protests and abuse of school leaders. Andrew Moffat, the deputy head of Parkfield community school,



who designed the guidance, was singled out for abuse and subject to threats because of his sexuality, while Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, the head of Anderton Park primary, has faced calls to resign.

A survey of teachers in February by the insurance firm Ecclesiastical found that more than a third of those contacted by parents on social media had received criticism or abuse.

Earlier this year, Damian Hinds, the education secretary, urged teachers not to respond to emails from pushy parents outside office hours.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, accused Ofsted of "jumping on the latest idea" in a bid to "reinvent itself and give itself credibility".

"I'm a real fan of parental involvement, but

it's got to be done properly and in a helpful way, not used to pit schools against one another," she said.

"I don't want to downplay the importance of the parent voice, I do think it's very important. At the moment, parents say they trust Ofsted grades. I think they are wrong to do so, but what else have they got?"

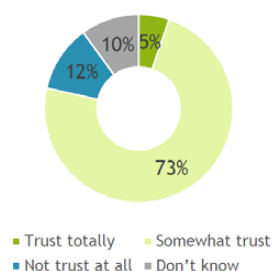
It is not the first time a government agency has considered the use of TripAdvisor-style reviews for the education sector.

Last year, the Education and Skills Funding Agency launched such a system for apprenticeship providers.

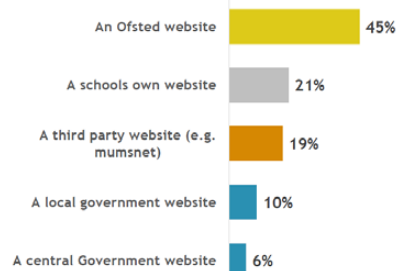
The tool, called "what employers are saying", allows employers who have registered apprentices on the apprenticeship service to feed back on specific aspects of their programmes. Ofsted intends to use the data to inform inspections.

Three quarters of parents would trust online reviews written by other parents. With reviews being hosted on an Ofsted website most commonly cited as being trusted the most

Trust levels of online reviews from other parents



Platforms trusted for reviews about schools



Q5V4. To what extent, if at all, would you trust online reviews written by parents about a school? Base: all parents (n=1111)
Q5V4b If reviews from parents about a school were to appear on an online site, which, if any, of the following types of website would you trust most? Base: all parents who would trust reviews from parents (n=785)

YouGov

News



Schools denied access to PFI 'centre of excellence'

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Schools have been 'snubbed' from accessing the Treasury's new private finance initiative (PFI) 'centre of excellence'.

Philip Hammond, the chancellor, announced the centre last year as part of his pledge to stop using PFI for building projects.

The Treasury has now told *Schools Week* the centre, set up to improve the management of existing PFI contracts, would only be available to NHS trusts.

The admission is a blow to the sector. Several *Schools Week* investigations have revealed how the hefty contracts are holding up takeovers of struggling schools.

It also comes after Damian Hinds, the education secretary, told school leaders he had heard their funding concerns "loud and clear" and would make the "moral argument" to the treasury for more cash.

Labour MP Stella Creasy, a campaigner against PFI, said: "Philip Hammond promised 'the days of the public sector being a pushover, must end', but now we know that his so-called centre of excellence will look at NHS PFI contracts – a snub to schools who are being held to ransom by these private companies."

She said more than 800 PFI schools in the UK that were "drowning in debt" needed help.

Research by the Centre for Health and Public Interest found schools were on track to pay £4.8 billion to PFI firms by 2020, generating an estimated £270 million in profits.

But billions are still owed, with schools in five regions tied into contracts – many of which rise each year – until 2039.

Mary Bousted, the joint general

secretary of the National Education Union, said: "There should be a concerted effort from government to help schools and local authorities struggling with the contracts they have been saddled with under this misguided scheme."

"It's disappointing that the government has not focused more resources on this."

The centre of best practice sits under the Department of Health and Social Care. The treasury said if the scheme was effective, it might consider rolling out centres for other sectors.

But Bousted said more than a best practice centre was needed.

"Central government must step in to free those schools and local authorities that are saddled with historic PFI debts so that taxpayers' money is properly invested in education rather than boosting the profits of private companies."

Liverpool council has been paying £4 million a year – or £12,000 a day – under a PFI deal for Parklands School, despite it closing five years ago.

The *Liverpool Echo* reported last month that external advisers had estimated the council would have to pay £34.1 million to get out of the contract under any sort of voluntary termination agreement. This included compensation for shareholders.

The council's PFI contract with Education Solutions Speke Limited runs until 2028. The firm lists Michael Dwan – the founder of the collapsed Bright Tribe academy trust – as a director.

A spokesperson for the firm previously told *Schools Week* it remained "extremely flexible" about alternative uses for the school buildings, which remain available and "continue to be maintained to a high standard".

The DfE said it provided help to schools and councils in PFI projects.



Stella Creasy

Academy option reopened for sixth-form colleges

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

The government is to reopen the option for sixth-form colleges to acadmise – widening its pool of potential sponsors.

Nearly all sixth-form colleges have been able to convert to academy status since George Osborne, then chancellor, changed the rules in November 2015.

Many took up the opportunity as it freed them from VAT bills.

However, the window of opportunity closed in March when a government review into post-16 colleges ended.

The Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) has been campaigning for the "arbitrary" deadline to be extended indefinitely – and sister title *FE Week* understands the Department for Education has agreed.

"This is a welcome and sensible development and we expect updated guidance to be published later in the year," said James Kewin, the deputy chief executive of the SFCA.

It is not known, however, whether colleges will have to pay the full conversion costs themselves, which can range between £40,000 and £90,000. Schools get a £25,000 conversion grant if they acadmise.

Kewin added: "This guidance could bring some consistency to the type of academisation that is permitted and hopefully confirm that the academy conversion grant available to schools will also be available to sixth-form colleges."

The change makes sense for the government, which is under pressure to widen its pool of good academy sponsors.

John Abbott, the principal of Richard Huish College, Taunton, said his college was unable to acadmise through the area review process because of the "complexities of providing education for international students".

He said this remained an "on-going issue". The Huish Group now included one secondary and four primary schools, as well as the sixth-form college.

Abbott said there was a "growing logic and desire that the college becomes a 16 to 19 academy in order to formally consolidate" into a trust.

News: NAHT conference

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Hinds seeks views on special needs funding

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government will seek the views of schools on whether special needs funding should be reformed to make it "more effective", Damian Hinds will announce today.

The education secretary will launch a "call for evidence" on SEND funding arrangements at the National Association of Head Teachers annual conference.

The department is seeking views from schools on whether the funding system "could better reflect the changing nature of need", and whether cash can be "distributed more effectively".

It follows a warning last month from think tank IPPR North that funding for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities has been slashed by 17 per cent in just three years as demand from rising numbers of pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCP) outstrips supply.

Ministers have already identified high-needs funding as one of two areas most in need of a funding uplift in the forthcoming spending review, the other being post-16 funding.

Today, Hinds will tell headteachers he recognises how the advent of EHCPs has meant schools have had to deal with additional pressures.

"That support needs investment, and while we have already hugely increased spending in this area, I recognise that providing for additional complexities can put additional pressures on schools."

But Barney Angliss, a SEND consultant and founder of FestABLE, a national festival of specialist learning, said the announcement was a "smokescreen".

"There is no change in the nature of needs and the minister has produced no evidence of it," he said. "What has changed is the extent to which the DfE seems to care that our mainstream schools should be inclusive, watching an ever-increasing proportion of our children transferring to special schools because of the mainstream sector's reluctance or inability to meet their needs in the face of inadequate training, insufficient recruitment and inappropriate systems of accountability."

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary, added that while the move is welcome, "the solution is simple: more money from the Treasury is urgently needed".

The call for evidence will run until July 31.

EXCLUSIVE



NAHT prepares for battle over funding

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Headteachers are "not scared" of taking industrial action over school funding, says the head of the country's largest school leaders' union as members prepare to vote on the direction of their campaign.

The annual conference of the National Association of Head Teachers will begin in Telford today, with delegates set to hear from Damian Hinds, the education secretary, this afternoon.

One motion will propose that the union's leaders explore options to challenge the funding crisis "up to and including industrial action".

School leaders could refuse to make any redundancies or change staff terms and conditions to balance their budgets, or even set projected budgets that "reflect the actual cost of running a school" as part of any action, the motion says.

Paul Whiteman (pictured), the NAHT's general secretary, told Schools Week of "frustration and anger" among his members over "how long it's taking to deal with the funding crisis".

The latest analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows school funding is down 8 per cent in real terms since 2009-10.

"I have always said that industrial action is a last resort for any union, and in particular in a professional environment where we're looking after children and are so active in communities. It is so difficult in those circumstances to take action that doesn't do damage to the community relationship," he said.

"But we're not scared of it either. We don't rule it out. It's something we will use judiciously. This motion is just reaffirming our commitment to that."

Whiteman praised heads for the campaign so far, which had educated "parents, grandparents and the communities that our members serve as to the depth of the crisis".

He also insisted that heads were not daunted by criticism of their campaign or accusations of political bias.

"When you know that you can't deliver what you're being asked to deliver because the money just isn't there, that's not a party political statement, that's just a statement of what people are struggling with."

"We've demonstrated over the past two years that our members, in the middle of crisis, are prepared to tell the truth and are prepared to reveal the inconsistencies in what a government will say and the truth on the ground."

Despite this strength of feeling, Whiteman expects Hinds to get a "warm and professional reception".

"I am sure in the questions there will be some difficult and robust questions around funding, but I would expect them to be professional."

Members will also debate the recruitment and retention crisis, after new NAHT survey figures suggest that 66 per cent of heads struggled to recruit for leadership vacancies last year, while 12 per cent failed to recruit at all.

"I don't think we're going to see a solution to recruitment and retention until the pay issue is addressed," Whiteman said.

"The depth of anger is palpable when we talk to our members about that."

MPs to investigate careers spending

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

MPs will investigate whether careers funding is value for money after the government abandoned plans to make the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) pay for itself.

Meg Hillier, the chair of the parliamentary public accounts committee, says it wants to look into the Department for Education's careers spending, most of which goes to the CEC.

Schools Week revealed on Friday that ministers would continue to fund the company, which has to date received more than £95 million, after admitting it would not become self-sufficient.

The company had pledged to raise at least half its funding from alternative sources by 2017-18, but documents obtained by *Schools Week* show plans to generate millions through the sale of its services did not come to fruition.

"It's vital that we're clear where taxpayers' money is being spent and what the procurement process has been," Hillier said, adding that there was a "big question" over how careers funding was spent.

"That's the bit we will look at."

The education committee has also criticised the company's impact and spending.

Robert Halfon, the former skills minister who chairs the committee, said the decision to continue funding the company from the public purse "undermines part of the basis



Meg Hillier

on which it was established".

He urged ministers to "pause and reflect" on whether the CEC was "a vehicle to rely upon for transforming careers education".

Dr Deirdre Hughes, the former chair of the National Careers Council, said: "Given the acute lack of school funding, surely it's time to rethink and allocate the majority of the money to schools, colleges, working in partnership with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), local authorities and the National Careers Service, instead of expensive London-based staff and a plethora of external consultants."

Announcing its creation in 2014, Nicky Morgan, then education secretary, said that "in the longer term" the company would sustain itself.

But CEC's sustainability plan shows the company and the government "no longer envisage replacing government funding

with alternative sources of income in the way that was originally intended".

This was because the nature of its work had "expanded significantly" to deliver the government's careers strategy.

The original sustainability plan from 2016 predicted the company could raise up to £1 million each from educators and employers for destinations data, and a further £1 million from the commercialisation of its "passport for life" scheme, which is still not up and running.

The company also hoped to make £1 million by developing and selling a service that runs psychometric profiling of company workforces, and £4 million in corporate sponsorship.

But it has "leveraged" just £16.5 million from "other sources" since it was launched, including £6.5 million from LEPs, which are themselves part-publicly funded.

When asked what had happened to the various proposals in 2016 for revenue generation, a company spokesperson said that plan had been "completely replaced", given CEC's new role.

Claudia Harris, the company's chief executive, said ongoing government support would "ensure continued rapid progress in line with its careers strategy and make sure all young people receive the vital opportunities and inspiration they need".

A DfE spokesperson said: "Since the launch of our careers strategy in 2017, the remit of the CEC has expanded and this government recognises that grant funding is necessary to fulfil its important role."

Delay work experience until post-16, says report

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

Work experience should take place in post-16 settings and be spread throughout the year, rather than as a "one-off encounter" at age 14, according to a new report.

Research published yesterday by the think-tank LKMco and the charity Founders4Schools said schools, colleges and universities should set up "multiple, varied interactions" between young people and employers until the age of 24.

The report, based on roundtables attended

by careers education experts, case studies and interviews, argued work experience was more effective later as pupils could "fully develop and use the skills employers value".

However, it warned that access to the best placements was limited for those from poorer backgrounds, in rural areas or with special educational needs or disabilities.

Will Millard, the head of policy advocacy at LKMco, said the report showed that "challenging some deeply entrenched assumptions about work experience [...] would be very powerful for young people across the country".

The report identified ten "key actions" schools could take to support effective work experience, including supporting interactions with employers, matching pupils with "appropriately stretching" opportunities and helping them to prepare for placements.

It recommended work experience was spread throughout the year, in short-term blocks of one or two weeks and extended placements undertaken one afternoon a week across a term. It also suggested pupils went in groups rather than individually to "boost personal, social and emotional skills".



Trust has 'no lawful basis' to hold pupils in year 8

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

An academy trust has "no lawful basis" for keeping misbehaving pupils back a year until they improve, says a partner in a leading law firm.

A new behaviour policy at Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT), released this week, promises to praise pupils more, and will include a safeguard to ensure pupils stuck in the "merry go round" of isolation get support.

But a lawyer has criticised one aspect of the policy that says pupils who don't show "over time, good behaviour, attitude and effort in their lessons, will not graduate at the end of year 8 and may subsequently remain in year 8 until improvements are made".

Dan Rosenberg, a partner of the public law team at Simpson Millar, said: "There is no lawful basis for schools preventing pupils progressing to the next year with their peers."

"The only reason that we have seen schools put similar policies in place is because, rather than face the humiliation of being stopped from progressing, many children want to leave and/or are withdrawn by their parents."

"Keeping children down a year (or threatening to do so) is an effective way of getting them to leave."

OGAT, which starts GCSEs in year 9, rebutted the criticism, saying that it was "in fitting with the schools' legal ability to manage and organise their curriculum as they wish".

In the worst-case scenario, pupils would be held back for six weeks.

Martyn Oliver, its chief executive, said graduation ceremonies were "a wonderful celebration" to "praise those students who have demonstrated effort and have shown a

readiness to start year 9".

"On the very rare occasion that a small number of children do not graduate at the end of year 8, the students will receive intensive support and a relevant curriculum to ensure they continue to progress their learning."

Any pupils kept behind in year 8 would also study the year 9 curriculum, the trust said.

It said that 16 of its 4,000 pupils were held back in year 8 last year, with just one of the 16 potentially leaving the school as a result.

A spokesperson said holding back pupils had been part of its older behaviour strategies.

The new policy comes after lawyers threatened a judicial review, claiming that one pupil had spent almost a third of a school year in an isolation room at one of the trust's schools.

Oliver also said any implication that the trust "off-rolls" was incorrect.

"It is an abhorrent practice and one that we simply do not do... OGAT is subject to Ofsted scrutiny and has been inspected over ten times this academic year. In all cases it was confirmed that our academies did not 'off-roll' students."

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) says on its website that repeating a year was "very rare" in the UK, although relatively common in other countries, including the US.

The EEF said repeating a year had a "negative impact for very high cost. Evidence suggests that, in the majority of cases, repeating a year is harmful to a student's chances of academic success."

However, a YouGov poll in 2012 found 67 per cent of Britons agree with the idea for underachieving pupils.

Five-year-olds find science a gas

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The early years curriculum should be revised to improve guidance on teaching science, an academic has said, after a study found younger children can understand abstract scientific concepts through guided experiments.

A recent study conducted with five and six-year-olds in Greece found they were able to understand the concept of change in the state of water between gas, liquid and solid.

Teachers led an experiment in which ice was heated to form water vapour, then cooled on a cold plate to form water droplets. School staff guided the class to "explain what they saw and understood through the experiment".

Dr Maria Danos, from the University of Reading, who led the study, said schools "tend to underestimate the ability of young children to understand and grapple with scientific concepts, particularly abstract concepts."

"This study has shown young people do have the potential to understand abstract scientific concepts, but there needs to be a process for that learning."

"Children are naturally curious. They possess the skills and attributes that professional scientists need, but we need to nurture them in a more systematic way."

Stephen Fraser, the deputy chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said the findings showed there was "value in introducing simple scientific concepts in the early years".

The early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework, which sets out what young children must learn by the end of reception, includes a section on "understanding the world", but Danos said the guidance was "very poor".

"In terms of the government, my big dream and suggestion would be to revise the EYFS and include more guidance about the understanding of science." She also called for better training for early years teachers in how to cover scientific topics.

A Department for Education spokesperson said recent reforms to the EYFS were developed with feedback from the sector "to be clearer and create specific goals".

Interview with Martyn Oliver, page 20

News

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Veteran RSCs to leave amid role shake-up

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

Two veteran regional schools commissioners will leave their posts later this year as the Department for Education prepares to shake-up the role.

Martin Post and Janet Renou have served as commissioners since the posts were created in 2014, but are due to leave when their contracts finish this year.

The DfE announced last month it would make "operational changes to the work of regional schools commissioners" to make their teams more "joined-up".

A source told *Schools Week* the changes were about "broadening the regional systems with a senior civil servant in charge".

It is understood that RSCs will have to reapply for their jobs. The DfE, however, would not comment on any changes.

The departure of Post and Renou, both former headteachers, will leave few school



Martin Post

leaders in key school-facing roles at the department.

The first RSCs were given five-year fixed-term contracts. Post, the RSC for northwest London and south-central England, was applauded at a Westminster Education Forum (WEF) event on Tuesday when he said he was "one of the few who's actually going to serve out the contract".

"It will be really interesting to sit at the WEF next year in your seats and quiz my successor. I'm looking forward to that."

A DfE spokesperson thanked Post for his work and said the department "wishes him all the best for his return to the sector".

The department would not comment



Janet Renou

on the departure of Renou, who works in the north of England, but *Schools Week* understands she will leave when her contract ended.

The only RSC to have served longer than Post and Renou is Dominic Herrington, the new national schools commissioner, who was appointed in July 2014 on a rolling contract as he was already a civil servant.

Lisa Mannall, RSC for the southwest, is due to leave this summer to head the Cornwall Learning Education Trust. She joins a long line of former RSCs who have left for jobs in the academies sector, including Tim Coulson, Rebecca Clark, Pank Patel and Paul Smith.



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News

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DfE keeps schtum on £16m bailout for mega trust

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has refused to release details of its £16.1 million bailout for England's largest academy trust – despite a senior civil servant's promise that such deals would be made public.

The Department for Education was put under pressure by MPs this week to release its turnaround plan for the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).

It follows a tumultuous period for the 62-school trust, in which it was prevented from taking on more schools and issued with a financial warning.

It also comes as unions representing trust staff prepare to ballot for a vote of no confidence in its leadership.

Schools Week understands the bailout will be used to pay for redundancies and the cost of rebrokering schools to other sponsors. About £4.5 million has already been handed over, but the government is still withholding details.

Quizzed by Labour's Lucy Powell during an education committee hearing this week, Lord Agnew, the academies minister, said



the turnaround plan was still a "work in progress", adding that it was government policy to "carry out the recovery exercise before publishing everything".

The DfE also refused to release the document to the National Education Union under the freedom of information act because its publication would "prejudice [AET's] legitimate commercial interest and relationships with other parties, including suppliers".

It said disclosure would also "likely prejudice" its ability to fulfil its role because trusts would be less likely to provide commercially sensitive information.

But the decision appears to conflict with comments made in January by Jonathan Slater, the department's permanent secretary.

"It may well be that in a particular set of circumstances the best thing for the children at that school is for the department or the local authority to lend them some money to get themselves sorted out," he told MPs.

"We have nothing to hide on that. We make that public."

Powell urged ministers to "lift the veil of secrecy" around the plan. "There was no contrition from the minister, just a desire to brush this issue under the carpet and deny the public the right to see how the government is spending our money."

An AET spokesperson said the turnaround plan involved "wholesale reform" and that "as the DfE recognised in Tuesday's education select committee hearing, the plan is succeeding".

AET, which is no longer subject to a financial notice or prevented from expanding, also said it had moved from "an unsustainable £8 million annual deficit to breaking even for the first time in five years in the last financial year".

"The funding represents value for money to the taxpayer and an investment in children's education. Something that AET had failed to do historically."

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Agnew has 'simple way' to keep failings secret

The academies minister has suggested trusts take part in mid-year financial audit reviews to avoid "failings going on to the public record".

Lord Agnew's suggestion appears to contradict his championing of increased transparency in the academy sector.

In a letter sent to auditors and accounting officers, published this week, he said the government was increasingly using auditors' management letters to assess the quality of governance and control within trusts.

External auditors must sign a management letter to confirm the accuracy of financial statements and flag any issues within them.

But he added a "simple way" to "avoid these financial failings going on to the public record" was to warn trust leaders of any problems mid-year so they had "time to resolve them before the accounts have to be signed".

The failings would then not show up in

annual accounts published in the public domain.

Agnew wrote: "Siren voices that complain about the cost of this action should be cause for concern in itself. Normally the failings identified will have a cost well in excess of an audit review. The sooner they are rectified the less risk and cost to the trust."

Agnew said the expertise of auditors in writing the letters was "therefore vitally important for getting to grip with issues early".

"There may be rare occasions where delay, and reliance on the standard channels for reporting audit findings, runs the risk of significant irregularity or impropriety."

Auditors were also told they would face "appropriate action" should they not report any issues they discovered.

Meanwhile, the Astrea Academy Trust is running a tender for auditors – suggesting it wants to make a new appointment.



The 27-school trust had to delay publishing its accounts and bring in "forensic" auditors after its expansion to take on struggling schools "raised some question marks".

A spokesperson said: "As is good practice, we are refreshing our procurement of our external auditors. This process is now underway and will help ensure we have a strong audit partner for this next phase of our development."

Education select committee

More accountability, more advisers – and private schools ‘must work harder’

Lord Agnew, the academies minister, and Dominic Herrington, the national schools commissioner, faced MPs this week over funding, academies, exclusions and other education issues. Here's what we learned...

1 DfE will “tighten accountability” around exclusions (you heard it here first!)

Confirming the *Schools Week* exclusive from February, Agnew told MPs that the long-awaited Timpson review will propose that schools that exclude pupils will keep “some ownership of that child’s progress”, and that “we are proposing that the accountability be tightened”.

The review would be published in the “coming weeks”.

2 The “other” category for exclusions has to go, too

Agnew “entirely supports” calls for a change to the reporting system for school exclusions, which allows the reason for about a fifth of exclusions to be labelled as “other”.

It’s the second most common reason behind “persistent disruptive behaviour”.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector of schools, has also recently backed calls for the category to be scrapped. Agnew seems to fully support this.

He said he was worried about gaming of the coding system, which he described as “completely labyrinthine and a number of the codes don’t have to be reported”.

3 Cost-cutting advisers’ bill will rise to £4m – but they’re worth it

Agnew said his network of school resource management advisers will carry out 800 visits, which will cost £4 million (up from the original £2.3 million).

But the academies minister said they would find “at least ten times the cost” in savings. Interestingly, he didn’t repeat his claim that the advisers had identified £35 million of savings under the pilot last year.

Schools Week has revealed holes in those claims. Some schools had already made the savings, while other suggestions included controversial advice such as keeping money raised for charity or replacing an experienced teacher with support staff.

When asked whether the recommendations were “detrimental to the quality of children’s education”, Agnew said: “It’s taking challenge to heads, these are things you could do.

“It’s not do or die. It’s ‘have you thought of this?’ In many cases, schools haven’t.”

4 Private schools must be “more innovative”

Grilled on the Conservatives’ 2017 pledge to make private schools work harder to support state schools, Agnew said change wasn’t happening fast enough.

He said independent schools must be “far more discriminating” with scholarships, and spend their money on means-tested bursaries, rather than “giving a wealthy parent a scholarship just because they have a bright child”.

Agnew also insisted he had been “frank” with the Independent Schools Council that it “needs to move at pace to maintain their place in our system”.

He also pointed to other ways private schools could help the state sector. In one scheme, Eton College pupils visited a free school in Slough to coach GCSE maths.

“I do think the independent sector needs to be more innovative in how it can help,” he said.

5 Sponsor capacity shortage can be solved by smaller MATs expanding

Asked about problems finding good academy sponsors, Agnew denied there was a shortage of sponsor capacity, explaining that his department was focused on boosting the capacity of existing sponsors.

Herrington told MPs that 73 per cent of MATs had between one and five schools, and that this was where the capacity-building efforts would focus.

6 Academies progress “not as fast as we’d like”

Agnew admitted that progress in school improvement through the programme “isn’t as fast as we would like”.

“But I think people do forget the extent of the change the academisation programme has brought to education. When you’re doing something at that scale, it does take time to flow through.”







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More mocks follow GCSE reforms, study shows

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

GCSE reforms that Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said would end the "constant treadmill of exams" have led to an increase in mock exams, suggests a new report.

Until 2012 most GCSEs were modular, with pupils sitting exams throughout the year. New linear exams require them to sit all the tests at the end of their course.

A three-year research project by the exams regulator Ofqual and the University of Oxford's Centre for Educational Assessment found more mocks have been introduced since the change, because the modular system offered more feedback to pupils and allowed them to learn good exam techniques.

In December 2011 Gibb said he wanted to "break the constant treadmill of exams and retakes throughout students' GCSEs courses – schools shouldn't be a dreary trudge from one test to the next".

But the report said "while the treadmill of formal examinations has reduced, the corresponding increase in mock examinations means that assessment may still heavily feature in some students' educational experiences".

Researchers interviewed 49 senior leaders across 15 institutions, and found seven schools had introduced additional mocks or other assessments to "provide a variety of benefits previously served by modular examinations or early entry".

One school held additional mocks in maths and English in March, despite having held mocks for all subjects in December.

Teachers also told the researchers that linear examinations were damaging pupils' mental health. "They were felt to cause more pressure due to their high-stakes, all-or-nothing performance on the day nature."

Although it said there was "no hard evidence" that the modular system might have caused anxiety, the report noted that "wider societal problems may be exacerbated" by the changes and "well-targeted support" for pupils with anxiety was needed.

The reforms were partly prompted by concerns about grade inflation and whether modular exams were easier for pupils who repeatedly took re-sits.

But the report said: "Changing the structure from modular to linear examinations did not, in itself, halt rises in examination results. The comparable outcomes approach tackled grade inflation."

INVESTIGATES



Ofsted defends grading system

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

Ofsted has been accused of ignoring "serious concerns" about its grading system after publishing an evidence paper that concluded any criticisms were outweighed by arguments in favour of keeping it.

In a defence of its four-point grading system, published on Tuesday, it acknowledged that concerns were "to some extent valid", but that replacing it with a pass/fail system could lead to more gaming and parents relying on attainment data to make decisions about schools.

Tom Richmond, the director and founder of the think-tank EDSK, however said the inspectorate "ignored the most serious and substantive concerns" about the current system, namely the "lack of accuracy and consistency in its judgments".

"The idea that you can summarise an entire school in a single number or phrase is simply not supported by any research evidence," he said.

Ofsted's use of grading has come under increasing scrutiny. A report from EDSK last month said the inspectorate should stop providing overall grades, warning that it had not published any research to show that the grades it awarded were "a fair and accurate reflection of the quality of education being provided".

The Social Mobility Commission's annual state of the nation report, published on Tuesday, also called for Ofsted to "move beyond" the "simplistic" four-tier categories.

It said inspection outcomes "largely correlate with the socio-economic make-up of a cohort" and subsequently penalised the school.

Any failure to find an effective replacement system would "continue to undermine many of the benefits that the new inspection regime promises", it added.

An analysis by headteacher Simon Smith, based on inspection data from December, found just 15 per cent of schools in the most deprived

areas were "outstanding", compared with 31 per cent in the least deprived.

"I genuinely don't believe the teaching or the leadership will be any better or worse in those schools in deprived areas," he said.

"My experience would suggest that actually the teaching in these schools is pretty top-notch."

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector, said parents used the inspectorate's reports to choose schools and to understand a school's strengths and weaknesses.

"The grades are a reliable measure of quality. They are simple, they are well understood and they work for parents."

Ofsted's annual parent survey, also released on Tuesday, said nearly two thirds felt the inspectorate was a "force for improvement and a trusted judge of standards".

However, Ofsted acknowledged that parents had never been "directly asked about the four-point grading system".

The report concluded the "arguments for change do not yet counterbalance the arguments for keeping the current system".

Colin Richards, a former senior Ofsted inspector, said the report "fails to take seriously enough the threats four-point grading is making to professional morale and to Ofsted's own credibility and long-term survival".

He called on inspectors to sum up a school's strengths and weaknesses using "brief, pithy, bespoke descriptors" instead of a single number or grade.

The EDSK said one-page information cards should be published annually for each school, containing performance measures, judgments by inspectors on aspects that included curriculum quality, and four measures on wider school life.

This would "empower parents" with better information and create a "self-improving school system" without "the burdens that inspections generate at present".

News

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Academies eye curriculum package sales after pilot

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

Just three of the 11 academies splitting £2.4 million government funding in a curriculum programme pilot have ruled out selling their resources once the pilot is finished.

The 11 knowledge-rich academies were chosen to find the best ways to improve results and reduce teacher workload.

Each school already had curriculum programmes prepared in their chosen subjects, containing resources that included printed textbooks and lesson plans, and received a maximum of £150,000 each to pilot one programme and up to £100,000 for each additional programme.

A Q&A session with civil servants in August, first revealed by Education Uncovered, said the funding was available "to share, test and refine their complete curriculum programmes".

Asked if lead schools could charge for their curricula once the pilot ended in July, the response said the Department for Education "will encourage schools to share their programmes with others. It is the responsibility of the school that they have all of the required intellectual copyrights in place".

Schools Week contacted all 11 schools to ask if they would sell their curricula. Of the ten that responded, just three ruled out charging other schools in the future.

Sam Twiselton, director of the Sheffield Institute of Education, said selling programmes developed with government funding would need to be "seriously looked at to see if it's fair".

"If public money has been spent to help to develop materials, then it seems odd that the taxpaying public and the schools their children are in aren't benefiting from them without taking more money out of the system," she said.

She added the "intent" behind the programme was good, but individual schools must consider how any curriculum could be adapted.

Stephen Tierney, the chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable, said it was not "acceptable" for curricula developed with public funds to be sold on for profit.

"This is a lot of money for refining. They're



Sam Twiselton

"If public money has been spent to help develop materials, then it seems odd schools aren't benefiting from them without taking more money out of the system"



not just tinkering. This is a significant amount of money that will help them write curricula and as such it should be available free."

A spokesperson for Reach Academy Feltham said it had worked on its key stage 2 geography and history and key stage 3 geography curricula "for years" and would create a subscription model in the summer, charging £600 a year for two programmes in primary schools and £300 for secondary schools.

"We are committed to sharing our resources in a sustainable way that allows us to further develop materials and is, at the same time, affordable for schools," he said.

A spokesperson for St Martin's Catholic Academy in Warwickshire, part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust, said that before the pilot it had set up the Midland Knowledge Schools Hub to help local schools to share expertise and resources. The funding had allowed it to finance "what we were previously doing free, and on a larger scale".

He said the school had not decided what would happen beyond the end of the pilot. Spokespeople for Oasis Academy South

Bank, Ark St Alban's Academy, West London Free School and Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Newcastle said they were waiting for the pilot to end before deciding on any future charges. Kendrick School in Reading refused to comment.

However, Trinity Academy Halifax, The Cherwell School in Oxford and Thornden School in Hampshire said they would be "happy" to share their curricula at the end of the pilot at no cost to other schools.

Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said the pilot was leading to "the provision of publicly funded curriculum development work through privately controlled groups.

"We need a model of curriculum development that is based on research and wide and inclusive dialogue. This isn't it," she said.

But Tom Sherrington, a former headteacher and education consultant, said the sector should be "celebrating the fact we have non-commercial teachers who are being empowered to design resources to share".

It was "actually not a bad response" to not having enough specialist teachers in every school.

The Department for Education said the money was to fund "testing and refining" of curriculum programmes. After the pilot, schools "own the intellectual property rights to it will be free to share it in the best way for them".

News

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Online games add up for primary pupils, says EEF

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

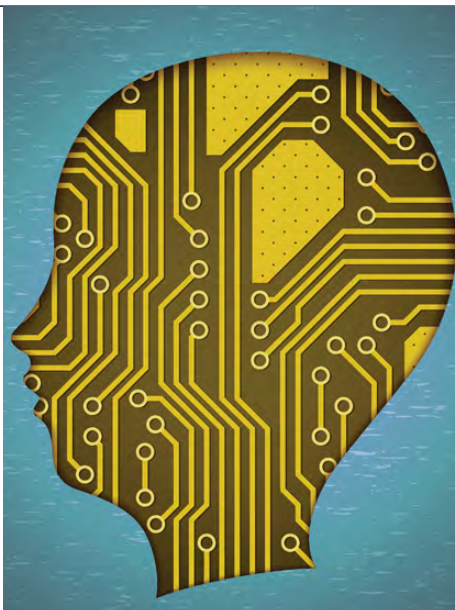
Playing online games that aid short-term memory can help to boost maths scores for primary pupils by three months, suggests a report from the Education Endowment Foundation.

But the findings are less impressive for pupils on free school meals who made just one month's extra progress.

The foundation trialled the Improving Memory Programme across 127 schools. Over a term, year 3 pupils took part in ten one-hour sessions delivered by teaching assistants to learn strategies to help retain information.

They then practised using the strategies either through games at school, or online games at home. In one computer game, pupils had to count animals while ignoring "gremlins". At the end of the game, they had to recall the number of animals they had counted.

The programme builds on evidence from cognitive science that suggests struggles in maths can be down to poor



working memory – the ability to hold and manipulate information while you use it to finish a task.

Two versions of the intervention were tested.

Researchers found pupils who received either version made three months additional progress in maths compared with similar pupils in schools without

the sessions.

Sir Kevan Collins, the foundation's chief executive, said the results showed that helping to support working memory "could be a good way for schools to help struggling pupils catch up with their classmates".

However, FSM-eligible pupils made just one month's extra progress in one version, and no extra progress in the other. The trial was not deemed suitable for pupils with special educational needs.

Stephen Gorard, the director of the Durham University Evidence Centre for Education, said there was "some promise" in the findings, but it was "not good for poorer kids. It will actually exacerbate the poverty gap and therefore even if we accept it, we're not going to go forward with it.

"If you apply that in your school, it means the gap between the poor and the not-poor will get bigger. I don't think that's a good thing and I'm sure the EEF would agree."

The EEF describes itself as "dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement".

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Networked 'ecosystems' could transform learning

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The next education secretary must be "less parochial" and "look at what the rest of the world is doing", according to the lead author of a report into collaboration in education.

Local Learning Ecosystems: Emerging models was published this week by the Innovation Unit, Qatar Foundation and World Innovation Summit for Education.

It looked at how criticisms of the top-down "subject-based, didactic, one-size-fits-all" traditional teaching model had prompted the exploration of "networked" models that were personalised to the needs of the learner.

It concluded that learning ecosystems – where schools and other learning institutions existed within networks of other organisations in their communities – were an "important education phenomenon" that had the potential to "transform learning".

At the launch of the report at the House of Lords on Tuesday, Valerie Hannon, the director and co-founder of the Innovation Unit and lead author of the report, had a message for whoever became the next education secretary.

"I think be less parochial," she said. "Look at what the rest of the world is doing. I worry that we are becoming . . . an outlier in so many respects."

"A secretary of state should first of all inform themselves about what's going on elsewhere in the world, understand the underpinning vision and talk to people trying to make it happen."

Policy-makers in England have

in recent years looked overseas for inspiration, with mixed results.

Michael Gove, the former education secretary, was inspired by Sweden's "Friskola" in developing his free schools policies.

In January it was revealed that the government's Shanghai maths teacher exchange failed to boost key stage 2 outcomes. Meanwhile, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, has spoken of his desire to see the use of textbooks rise to the levels seen in Singapore.

For this week's report, researchers looked at nine examples of learning ecosystems across the world.

In the UK, researchers saw how the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce's (RSA) Cities of Learning programme created networks of schools, colleges, employers, training providers, charities, councils, libraries, museums, coding clubs and other institutions supported by a digital platform.

Anthony Painter, director of the action and research centre at the RSA, said education policymaking in England needed to become "more global and more local".

"It's quite difficult, in a political system as centralised as the UK, to think in some of those ways. Innovation, when it comes about, tends to be a policy innovation with an intervention attached to it that is then delivered."

"I would say that, for a new secretary of state, it's about what you can do to provide the meaningful support in terms of encouraging that meaningful institutional collaboration."



Dr Asma Alfadala and Anthony Painter



Valerie Hannon



Anthony Painter, Shane Mann and Tim Riches

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EDITORIAL

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Missed opportunity to tackle the PFI legacy

The Treasury refused to confirm last year whether chancellor Philip Hammond's promise to help public organisations saddled with private finance initiative debt would apply to schools.

That the sector has been shunned from accessing the new "centre of excellence" is a big blow.

There are thousands of pupils in struggling schools across the country seeing potentially transformative takeovers stalled because of PFI.

We've long championed raising the plight of these schools that are sidelined as councils and the Department for Education struggle to disentangle the complex contracts.

Expert help in doing just that would have surely speeded up potential resolutions, meaning new sponsors can come in and deliver much-needed help.

The snub comes as education secretary Damian Hinds promises that he has heard the message from school leaders on funding, and will make the best case to the Treasury for more cash.

This is a huge missed opportunity from the government to show that it's listening.

Farewell to two more school leader RSCs

The exodus of school leaders from the DfE's regional commissioner roles is nearly complete, with the news of two veterans stepping down.

Martin Post and Janet Renou, who have both served as commissioners since the posts were created in 2014, will leave the roles when their contracts finish this year.

While it makes sense for the school commissioner roles to be filled by senior civil servants, it will be a shame that the sector has fewer of its leaders in the key posts.

The changes are part of a yet-to-be-revealed restructure that will broaden the regional systems, with a senior civil servant in charge.

We've been pretty eagle-eyed on the activities of commissioners since their inception, and robustly held them to account when this was needed.

So this seems like a good opportunity to, for once, say thanks. We wish Martin and Janet the best of luck for the future.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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LISTINGS CORRECT AS AT 25.04.19 - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Interview: Martyn Oliver

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

OGAT, saviour of many schools in the north, can't seem to shake criticism of its strict behaviour sanctions and their effect on vulnerable pupils. But are things changing? Chief executive Martyn Oliver tells all ...

Outwood Grange Academies Trust has built its reputation on being the turnaround trust. It takes on some of the worst-performing schools in the country, in some of the most deprived areas, and transforms them.

Search for one of its many Ofsted reports and have a read. Read too comments from ministers who say it is one of the best trusts in the country.

Not just this, but it's also leading the system. It's financial planning models are now used by the government to check whether other schools are running efficiently.

Elements of its consequence behaviour system have been taken on by hundreds of schools. The trust, which runs 31 schools across the north, is known for sharing most of its stuff free, too.

But there's something the trust can't seem to shake: criticism that its methods (strict behaviour sanctions, high numbers of suspensions) cause the most vulnerable pupils to leave – making turnarounds easier.

When I put this to Martyn Oliver, OGAT's chief executive, his response is somewhere between frustration and slight bewilderment. But, as he does throughout our conversation, he responds steadily.

"When I choose to go to the most difficult schools, I would somehow want to exclude the most challenging pupils? I don't get complaints on that. In many cases, 90 per cent of the pupils are vulnerable."

Julie Slater, the trust's chief executive principal, adds from across the table: "We have committed our professional lives to work in some of the worst schools of the country. We care about children."

We've written about OGAT regularly: be it the "flattening the grass" assemblies, the high levels of fixed-term exclusions in some of its schools,



"This is not a deliberate attempt to reduce sanctions"

its use of isolation booths.

That's why we took up the invitation to visit the trust's purple-clad Institute of Education, based at the Outwood Academy Acklam in Middlesbrough, to talk about a new behaviour policy.

The change comes amid a legal threat over the trust's use of isolation, with claims that

one pupil spent a third of his year in one of its "consequence" booths.

The new policy will include more praise, a further safeguard to pick up – and provide support for – those pupils stuck on the "merry go round" of sanctions, and more teaching for pupils about how to behave.

Interview: Martyn Oliver

While Oliver stresses this is not to “lower expectations”, he hopes fewer students will “require sanctions and suspensions”.

“This is not a deliberate attempt to reduce sanctions, it’s a deliberate attempt to help support pupils better – reducing behaviour that leads to sanctions.”

Are the changes in response to criticism? “The change has come because of me. It reflects who I am and the people appointed around me,” Oliver says, adding the move is on the back of a “strong position, but moving to where I want it after taking over in 2016”.

But that criticism just won’t shake.

A day after we meet OGAT’s leader, a lawyer raises concerns at a strand of its new behaviour policy that states pupils who misbehave or don’t have a good attitude to learning will be made to repeat year 8.

The lawyer says that “keeping children down a year (or threatening to do so) is a very effective way of getting them to leave”.

Oliver, as covered in our story on page 8, says on the “very rare occasion” pupils don’t graduate, they get intensive support to progress their learning.

He also provides a strong rebuttal to any accusations of “off-rolling”, telling me that if he wanted to have “overt preference on the type of child we have” then he would look at something such as fair banding – which the trust doesn’t use.

“Why would I go [to these communities]? Outwood doesn’t off-roll,” he adds, stating Ofsted inspectors have called the parents of pupils who’ve left the school to check they haven’t been off-rolled. “We have incredible growth for all our academies. Parental preference of first choice is phenomenal.”

When we later touch on the criticism, he adds: “If people think they can do it better, come and show me how.

“If behaviour is better and I can learn, I’ll change our policy overnight” – but only on the condition, he says, that he can check exclusions are recorded properly.

“We should be open to criticism and public scrutiny, but not create a system where I say ‘forget it, I’m not going to do it’. If that’s the climate, we’re not celebrating people going into challenging schools.”

Our attention turns to “flattening the grass”, a



phrase coined by Sir Michael Wilkins, the trust’s founder, to describe how OGAT takes over schools – covering everything from implementing its new management information systems, to rolling assemblies where behaviour expectations are laid out.

“
If people
think they can
do it better,
show me how

Its association with the latter clearly pains Oliver.

A Schools Week story in February included testimony from four senior leaders about the conduct of senior staff during such assemblies, across OGAT and the Delta Academies Trust.

They claimed pupils were regularly screamed and shouted at, sometimes until they began to cry.

Oliver, as he did at the time, refutes the claims. He says that some staff raise their voices, but that this is part of a teacher’s “armoury”.

“Do we identify those children that are vulnerable and require teaching assistance? Yes. Do we identify to ritually humiliate and make them cry. Never.

“I can’t say we’ve ever had a complaint from a parent, a staff member, or pupil. Ever.”

He says the reality is that “children have given us a round of applause in those assemblies”.

“One school in Worksop was so bad that

teachers used to lock themselves in their classrooms. The headteacher was assaulted three times in their first week. Pupils ran across tables during a lesson while we were doing due diligence.”

He also adds the “only thing parents say to me is they think our policy should be tougher”.

But he does concede that parachuting in up to 20 extra staff for an assembly “may feel oppressive”.

“We need to be more overt there’s a step change ... I need to do more to say this is what you’re going to experience.”

Oliver has worries too about social media, in particular Twitter. He’s concerned about the impact on pupils’ mental health – and on teachers.

“For some things Twitter has been brilliant ... [but] I do think there’s a danger some of the things are so unprofessional, and some of comments bordering on unprofessional. There’s a significant danger, a real danger, to recruitment and retention of staff”.

It’s clear some of the comments he’s thinking of were aimed at his staff. But he adds he would discipline any of his staff “if I thought they were talking in an unprofessional manner about people in other schools”.

I finish by asking him if he wants to talk about how the news stories on OGAT have affected him.

Characteristically he talks about how it has upset his staff – highlighting that at the last count the trust’s turnover was just 7 per cent (he says he can’t find a national average, but reckons it could be about 25 per cent).

“All I can do is try and maintain our dignity and respond based on openness and honesty.”

Throughout our wide-ranging conversation, it’s fair to say he has done just that.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

School refusal may be a little more understood that when it was identified in the 1930s, but we still haven't come up with any effective or pragmatic solutions, says Fran Morgan

I didn't choose to be an expert on school refusal; it chose me. When our daughter refused to go to primary school our main concern was to find out what was wrong and decide (ideally with the help of professionals) what we could do to help her. Pretty quickly we realised that the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted agenda ("every child deserves an education" which translates to "get her to school, whatever it takes") contradicted our gut instincts for time, flexibility, patience and understanding.

The move to secondary school triggered a second episode and a two-year battle, with a tribunal (conceded by the local authority days before the court case), to secure the right support.

School refusal was first identified in the 1930s, when psychiatrists noticed a difference between school refusers – who were generally well-behaved, above-average academically and free of anti-social behaviour – and typical truants.

Our understanding has advanced to a limited extent, but it has so far failed to provide us with effective and pragmatic solutions that work for schools, children and their families. It's a complex issue, and a growing problem.

The term school refusal isn't really helpful since it implies wilful choice, but it has become the term most commonly used. It is, however, more useful to consider how extreme



FRAN MORGAN

Parent of school refuser and founder of Square Peg

School refusal is a complex issue with no easy answers

levels of anxiety may be triggered by diagnosed or suspected special needs, bullying, or other harmful or traumatic experiences.

for the parent/carers of school refusers, Not Fine In School (NFIS), now has a membership of 6,000 on its closed Facebook group. And it is

“ School refusal isn't a helpful term as it implies wilful choice

While problems may be centred around school or home life, the end result is the same – children can't cope and withdraw from school. They need the education system to recognise that anxiety that interferes with their day-to-day living is a debilitating mental health condition requiring support and reasonable adjustments. Many children also mask their anxiety and distress. It is neither effective nor acceptable to simply demand that they return to school.

School refusal is a strong indicator of mental health and SEND needs, but we don't have any data to evidence the scale of the problem. Current DfE school attendance codes, the obvious route for data collection, do not identify school refusers.

However, a national support group

growing by more than 800 a month.

For parents, the vague guidelines, inconsistent response and the threat of fines or prosecution that arise from unauthorised absence add significant pressure to an already challenging situation.

A NFIS survey of more than 1,600 members (May 2018), gives an indication of what parents experience when their child's school attendance becomes a concern. Sixty-seven per cent had been put under pressure to force their child into school, yet 59 per cent said this had made the situation worse. Ninety-two per cent thought that their child's school attendance difficulties were related to undiagnosed/unsupported SEND and 55 per cent felt blamed for their child's attendance issues. Twenty-five per cent of parents had been



reported to social services and 18 per cent had been accused of fabricating or influencing their child's illness.

School refusal is a complex issue with no easy answers. Schools are facing huge challenges, particularly in relation to SEND, and the inflexibility of the education system fails to recognise that one size does not fit all.

However, we have to find better ways to support school refusers and their families without compromising either their well-being or their education.

My wish list has three main aims:

1. New legislation, including a new absence code for school refusal that evidences the scale of the problem and alleviates engaged parents from the threat of prosecution.
2. Research to identify effective school refusal strategies that work for children, parents and mainstream schools.
3. National guidance, and a flexible "toolkit" for school leaders, to ensure a consistent and inclusive response that promotes school partnership with parents.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



FRANK
COFFIELD

Emeritus professor of education,
UCL Institute of Education

Ofsted has shot itself in the foot on retaining grades

The retention of grades, says Frank Coffield, will not improve the quality of education, but will give the powerful an easy way to tightly control schools, colleges and teachers

Ofsted's defence of its four-point grading scheme in its recent paper (*Retaining the current grading system in education*, April 2019) has two, but only two, positive features.

First, it acknowledges that there are strong arguments against its use of these grades. Second, it admits that "we have never directly asked (parents) about the four-point grading system". That said, it is downhill all the way.

For a start, Ofsted fails to deal with any of the ten arguments used in the public petition against the grades, which has now been signed by almost 5,000 people.

Instead, it sets up Aunt Sallys by suggesting, for example, that the alternative to grading is to provide more attainment or progress data, when we argued instead for a detailed narrative about each school that celebrated strengths and showed how to deal with weaknesses.

The so-called evidence that Ofsted advances to support grading is also deeply flawed.

For instance, it asked teachers to agree or not with the following statement: "A clear grading system allows schools to know what they are aiming for and also helps parents readily understand the quality of education in a school."

But, as any undergraduate will spot, this elementary mistake in research methods presents teachers with a double question so we cannot tell



judged. To claim that it can shows a misunderstanding of research.

The language in this paper is also seriously inappropriate. To claim that the grades allow it to make "fine-grained distinctions" (p6) or "granularity" (p11) is nonsense. The grades, far from "over-complicating matters" (p6) are crude, over-simplified and stigmatising labels.

much for consultation.

The comments on FE colleges deal only with the complexity created by colleges on different sites or regions, but ignores the considerable internal variation in subjects taught, which make the award of one grade for a whole college an absurdity.

Finally, Ofsted concedes that grading "provides policymakers with useful information".

Now we get to the heart of the matter. Grading is not done to improve the quality of education but to give the powerful an easy way to tightly control schools, colleges and teachers.

Ofsted has revealingly nothing to say about the impact of the grades on the recruitment and retention of teachers. If it is not careful, the retention of the grades may contribute to us having "no one left in the classroom except the children." (Jeremy Hannay, April 30).

Ofsted's arguments are so fallacious, its evidence so unfounded, that its case for retaining the grades collapses. It has also shot itself in the foot by demonstrating its failure to understand the basic principles of research.

“Ofsted is only happy to introduce changes that it has thought of

from their responses whether they agree with the first or the second question, with both or neither.

Similarly, the figure showing the relationship between Progress 8 and overall effectiveness grades demonstrates more than anything else the considerable overlap between the scores made by schools, no matter what label has been stuck on them.

To sum up at this point, Ofsted has no reliable or valid evidence to support the retention of the grades.

It also claims that "the current grading system also allows us to look at trends over time". But Ofsted cannot identify trends over time because every few years it changes the framework by which schools are

Nor does Ofsted have any evidence that the grading system "transfers well across contexts" (p11). The most that can be claimed is that the system has been taken up by other providers. Whether it is working well or ill in these sectors remains to be established.

Ofsted argues that it is "unwise to make major changes" to current practice. This is a deeply conservative stance that would freeze inspection practice for ever, but Ofsted is not inhibited from making a huge change to inspection by concentrating heavily on the curriculum that will involve teachers in endless extra work.

Ofsted is only happy to introduce change that it has thought of. So

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

Transport safety in schools is about a lot more than an annual service of the school minibus, says Surekha Gollapudi

In December 2014, a 15-year-old boy died after being struck by a minibus when he was crossing a road outside school to board his bus home. Bridgend council was later fined £300,000 for its failure to enlarge a layby to accommodate all school buses at home time and allow pupils to board safely from the pavement. The Health and Safety Executive has since urged schools to review traffic arrangements within their grounds to ensure they have properly considered all significant risks and their associated control measures.

In addition to ensuring appropriate traffic management on school property, road traffic legislation imposes specific requirements on employers in respect of vehicle use and maintenance and driving on public roads when "driving for work".

Common mistakes and misconceptions generally made around driving for work include:

"They do not drive a vehicle owned by the school, so do not drive for work"

Understanding who drives for work is essential to managing risk. The definition of "driving for work" is "any driving done for work purposes other than the normal commute to the usual place of work". This could include, for example, a short trip to the supermarket to purchase school supplies or a drive to another campus. Importantly, this definition is not linked to who owns the car or whether it is leased or hired.



SUREKHA
GOLLAPUDI

Health and safety lawyer
at Eversheds Sutherland

Top five mistakes to avoid when managing transport in schools

"They are driving their own car, so are covered by their personal insurance"

If an individual is driving for work, they will require business insurance regardless of how often they drive for work and whether they use their own vehicle. Employers should consider whether employees' vehicles used for work purposes (often called "grey fleet") are safe and legal to be on the road, and whether drivers are properly licensed and

driving and provide appropriate information, instruction and training for the vehicle they are using.

"We have the school minibus serviced each year, so don't need to regularly check it"

This is a common mistake. Whilst an annual service and MOT is essential, regular further basic checks should include ensuring that all lights are working, mirrors are correctly positioned and tyres are

"A trip to the supermarket for school supplies is driving for work"

insured. This requires effective communication with employees and driver licence checks.

"They have a valid driving licence, so are fine to drive the school minibus"

Do not confuse qualifications with competence. An individual may have a valid driving licence (for the appropriate class of vehicle), but this does not equate to competence driving larger vehicles such as a minibus. Check that they are confident and experienced with driving larger vehicles, monitor their

not damaged. Employers should also check that the type of vehicle being driven is appropriate for the intended purpose and that the driver is familiar with it.

"We have engaged a competent bus company to transport our students and carried out all the necessary background checks. It's now down to them"

Wrong. When using contractors, employers still have health and safety responsibilities. Ensure you manage the bus company effectively: check any health and safety policy and the training delivered to drivers; provide them with relevant information such as vehicle and pedestrian routes, and undertake regular monitoring to ensure the drivers are not acting in an unsafe manner.

Effective planning and design of the school site is also required to ensure the safety of pedestrians and those on board any vehicles. To reduce the likelihood of an accident, clearly mark out and maintain separate pedestrian and vehicle routes. Consider if there are ways to reduce the need for vehicles to reverse. If employees are monitoring a car park, ensure they are wearing high-vis vests and are visible to drivers at all times, as well as trained to at least a basic standard in traffic management.

Co-written by Claire Watson, health and safety lawyer



Reviews

REVIEW



“The crisis of capitalism”: Nick Gibb’s speech to the Social Market Foundation

Speech reviewed by Jonathan Simons, director at policy and strategy specialist Public First

There is a well-worn lexicon of how you describe speeches in Westminster. Anyone giving a “thoughtful” or “wide-ranging” speech has ambitions for higher office. Anyone explicitly talking “beyond their brief” is about to run for leader.

Email comes in. Would I like to come and see Nick Gibb give a wide-ranging speech, going beyond his brief to talk about capitalism?

Yes I would. But surely not?

The speech was in Edelman PR’s palatial offices. Outside journalists surged against crash barriers and bellowed at the crowd. Surely, surely not?

(In this instance, no. They were there to cover the Labour NEC argument about Brexit on another floor.)

Inside all was calm and luxury. The office had a bar. Beautiful People walked around carrying MacBooks. Nick Gibb was the only person wearing a tie.

The venue had no seats. Instead, there were tiered benches with plumped cushions. We reclined and drank artisan coffee from the free bar.

The event started with an introduction from someone Beautiful who explained that Edelman works with some of the world’s biggest companies to strengthen and improve their reputation.

There was a beat.

“I’m here to talk about the crisis of capitalism,” Gibb said, brightly.

Surely, surely not.

To be honest, readers, I’ve sat through a lot of his speeches.

Like an experienced teacher using a well-worked lesson plan, they’re none the worse and much the better for



being honed over time. Government drawing on evidence. Trusting teachers. Emphasis on knowledge. Shout out to a few favoured schools. Quick genuflect

“The venue had no seats. Instead there were benches with plumped cushions”

to Hirsch. Exit stage right.

We began.

I want to talk about musical theatre, he said.

I bolted up from my plumped cushion.

Apparently, so runs the thesis, we can trace the decline of Conservative principles both to the fact that no one explains them to young people, but also that some companies are bad. And that’s why middle-class young people who go to the theatre to see terribly left-wing musicals clap and cheer them, and vote for Jeremy Corbyn.

We hit the phonics section. I relaxed. “We have changed the way we teach reading”, Gibb said. And then moved on.

What? This is like going to a Rolling Stones gig and them not playing *Brown Sugar* because they want to “show some new songs”. SAY PHONICS, YOUR FANS DEMAND IT.

We are a nation of innuendo, he

continued. We love *Carry On* and *Mrs Brown’s Boys*. He paused and looked up. “Don’t we, Mrs.”

By this point my jaw was hanging low over my artisan coffee.

But he wasn’t done. Technology companies were in his sights. But it was important for him to be clear that they aren’t all bad. For example – and I promise you this is an exact quote – “A question that once involved a trip to the library can now be answered by a simple tap on a screen that we all keep in our pockets. As an education minister, and as a citizen of course, I welcome that.”

As someone said on Twitter, this now sounded like one of those kidnapping calls where you say something you would never normally do to indicate you’re being held against your will.

And then it was over. Courageously for the chair, he addressed the elephant in the room. Was this a leadership speech?

I’m not running, Gibb said. Well, that’s what leadership contenders often say, countered the chair. This one means it, Gibb replied.

My neighbour stiffened. HE’S CONFIRMED IT, he gasped. HE SAID “THIS ONE”.

As I poured myself another artisan coffee, I did what the schools minister would surely want us to do, and considered the evidence. A wide-ranging speech indeed. Fulsome praise for the prime minister. An attack on Jeremy Corbyn. A manifesto for what the Conservative party should do in future.

Surely not. I mean *surely* not.

So, points for a love of musical theatre and approval for “just googling it”, but disappointingly no phonics, and no Hirsch.

Research

Every month Evidence Based Education trawl through their greatest research hits to offer practical implementation tips for using evidence in practice

How to make collaborative learning worthwhile

C.J. Rauch, head of teaching and learning, Evidence Based Education

Everything that teachers do has a cost, a benefit, and (ideally) a valuable balance between the two. Often that cost is class or preparation time — a resource that always seems to be scarce — the benefit, student learning. But there are other indirect benefits that can come from many activities. Given this, we naturally seek any strategies that can tip this balance in favour of the benefits.

Take collaborative learning: instructional arrangements that involve two or more students working together on a shared learning goal.

The planning stage of any sort of group task is significant. A teacher first must design (or select) an activity that has the right amount of difficulty. If too difficult or ill-defined, the students may grow frustrated and experience cognitive overload.

Then comes the Sudoku-like task of breaking the students into groups of the right size — a target of three or four and not more than five (Burke, 2011). The teacher needs to consider the demonstrated achievement of the students. The goal is a balance of heterogeneity in the group that maximises student learning and eases cognitive overload, which itself depends on the particular needs of the activity (Kirschner et al., 2018).

This must be balanced with the practical considerations of students in a classroom: students A and B were absent yesterday and shouldn't be in the same group; students C and D are feuding — now isn't the time to play peacemaker.

Perhaps a class period of group work also calls for a mild rearrangement of furniture (how did all those desks fit last time...)

Clearly then, teachers spend a great deal of time preparing. What can be done during the activity to



optimise student collaboration and learning?

In a systematic review of literature, van Leeuwen and Janssen (2019) looked at more than 60 studies on the guidance that teachers give students during collaborative learning. They examined qualitative and quantitative studies from primary and secondary settings. While some actions had mixed effects (for example, the researchers found that sometimes explanations from teachers had a positive effect, sometimes negative), they did find some broad suggestions that could be implemented during collaborative learning.

When it comes to promoting group learning, guidance on the "meta" level is better than on the content level. Rather than focusing the feedback on what group's responses are, feedback on the how or why is more effective.

This focus can counteract some of the problems that students working in groups can face (Janssen & Wubbels, 2018). Collaborative skills do not come naturally to all students. Furthermore, group dynamics can be affected by "free-riders," students' perceived status — even friendships.

The research suggests the following techniques best support student collaborative learning:

- Provide feedback on the strategies the group is using for the task. Is it an effective

technique? How can the group make a plan?

- Give feedback on collaborative strategies. Is the group considering everyone's input? How might they resolve a conflict?
- Prompt and question the group. Why did they make a particular decision? Can they provide greater explanation?
- Transfer control of the learning process to the group. Encourage them to make their own decisions; withhold answers the group may solve themselves.

To best encourage collaborative learning, teachers should "walk a fine line between explaining sufficiently and explaining too much" (van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019). This is not easy. By their nature, teachers delight in answering questions. While there are times for these, collaborative learning is best served by withholding them.

Good group tasks demand so much effort and output in advance. It certainly seems fair during the task to transfer that effort and output to the students.

For further reading: van Leeuwen, A., & Janssen, J. (2019). A systematic review of teacher guidance during collaborative learning in primary and secondary education. *Educational Research Review*, 27, 71–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.02.001>



Reviews



Julia Skinner is a retired headteacher who is now a trustee and founder of the 100 Word Challenge

@THEHEADSOFFICE

Six months in . . . chair v marathon?
@vawells1

Who would have thought there were several similarities between being a chair of a board and training for the London marathon? This is an appropriately pacey piece from Vicci Wells who (hopefully) completed the London marathon last Sunday. She has selected four areas that each role shares – clarity, understanding the direction and that it may change, building a team and knowing your super power. The post helps to emphasise the energy that governance needs

Alright guv'nor? – how to support schools by being more evidence informed
@pna1977

I was recently involved in a Twitter conversation about training for governors and trustees: where it should come from and whether it should be mandatory. This post from Phil Naylor shows that the role of a school governor is no longer the model that we know and love from the *Vicar of Dibley*. As Naylor points out, that can scare a great number from stepping forward. He cites the report from the Education

TOP BLOGS of the week

Endowment Foundation on becoming an evidenced informed governor that, for him, short-cut some of his learning from experienced colleagues.

Reflections of a pilot school (new Ofsted framework)
@MrB_online

Although Mr B is a headteacher rather than a governor, I'm including this post as it is a great snapshot of the recent pilot inspections carried out by Ofsted. Although there are no gradings or reports written for the estimated 200 pilots that were carried out, this post is an excellent "handbook", for the preparation schools should be considering and the differences in the new framework. I was particularly interested in some of the areas that have generated heated debates on social media, including the "extra" afternoon for inspectors to prepare, the lack of internal data and the focus on leadership.

Let's get ethical - culture, ethos and ethical leadership

@hoylerosemary

Rosemary Hoyle gets right to the nub of her post when she asks governors: are you doing the right thing or just saying the right thing? Her school is part of the Pathfinder for the Ethical Leadership project, but many of the conversations her board has had will have been echoed in other schools. Reflections of vision and values often come to the agendas of school boards, but what do we actually DO about them. Hoyle shares some of the things her team are working on – hopefully other pathfinder schools will also be able to add to the conversation.

Pillow talk

@dogpaws23

My clerk has just found Fee Stagg's blog and has told me that she is now a "diehard" Elbow fan. As regular readers of these reviews will know, I love her quirky, often humorous way of exploring the world of governance. In this piece she looks at conflicts of interest. Highlighting related-party transactions that have been hitting the headlines recently is probably easier to spot, but what about unconscious bias? As usual, there are no answers from Stagg, just some great questions to ask ourselves.

Life is short – a realisation

@vicgoddard

Although this post has been shared on social media I feel it is a rallying call for all of us working in education. We are in a caring profession that is developing our citizens of the future. We have many challenges, but unless we look after each other we will not do any sort of job and will let our young generation down. So, if you are a chair, a governor or a clerk, please remember to look beyond the minutes and reports and make sure you see the human beings behind them. Then, take care of yourselves!

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +



SATs are fairest way to judge pupil progress

... **Nicki**

I understand the idea of an opinion piece, but it is certainly worth putting the case from schools in inner cities and the highest areas of deprivation, as well as those with high proportions of pupils whose first language is not English. In schools like this the pressure to perform in statutory assessments rules everything and has led to a gross narrowing of curriculum to keep attainment up.

These are the children who would benefit most from a rich curriculum of arts, sport and humanities, thus underlining how unfair the system is. I understand the sentiment of the article, but to effectively say, "If SATs aren't just a minor inconvenience in your school, you probably just don't have great leadership" is, frankly, somewhat offensive.

Half of schools start GCSEs in year 9, NFER survey suggests

... **Dr Carl Wilkinson**

Like all potentially lucrative and career-enhancing vocational courses/subjects there is a danger that course content if targeted too narrowly will only appeal to those who are dedicated to the subject.

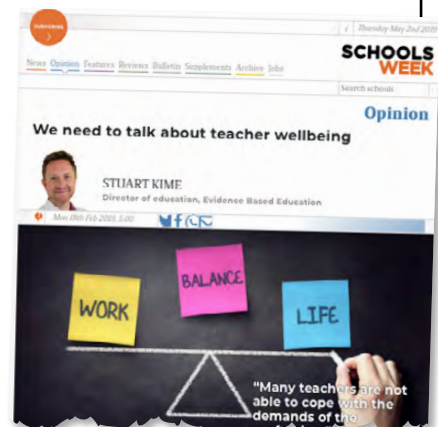
Computer science being deemed as the "new science" by the incumbent secretary of state fell into this predicament. This was a lost opportunity to develop a general understanding of the digital world, but instead focused heavily on coding, a great turn-off for many and of little interest/use for those not intent in studying the topic further.

Key stage 3 should be a time for discovery for young people to enable them to be able to make informed choices when the time comes to specialise, such as at GCSE, A-level, BTEC. If Ofsted is serious about monitoring schools' curriculum entitlement then it should judge a curriculum by breadth and eliminate the performance monitoring of Ebac. This would reduce the tension that schools are facing and allow those schools that are dedicated to enhancing the life chances of low socio-economic children to prepare them for life in their local communities, by providing relevant courses and qualifications,

REPLY OF THE WEEK **Andy McHugh**

We need to talk about teacher wellbeing

While "types" of teacher can be a helpful way to understand different levels of resilience, it's often the context that makes the most difference. Putting a previously resilient teacher into a challenging context for long enough can break them. If schools are to tackle teacher wellbeing successfully, they need to take a good look at the context within which they place their teachers, resilient or not.



THE REPLY OF THE WEEK WINS A SCHOOLS WEEK MUG. CONTACT US AT NEWS@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK TO CLAIM

notwithstanding STEM opportunities, that are recognised by employers.

... **NEU will ballot for SATs boycott in 2019-20**

Eleanor O'Dwyer

It is about time that we recognised the mental damage we are doing to our children. There is no benefit doing these tests – they only serve to grade teachers and schools (in a way that damages them too).

They mean our kids don't have the broad education they should have in primary. After SATs we need to look at the damage the narrow secondary curriculum is doing to everyone. Get the professionals back in charge – trust teachers!

Timpson review will recommend schools are responsible for excluded pupils' progress, Agnew confirms

 **Ben Whitney**

This will probably have three effects:

1. In some schools formal exclusions will be replaced by backdoor removals that aren't counted.
2. Some schools will be even more reluctant to admit children who they see as posing potential problems.
3. Schools in challenging circumstances with more than their fair share of SEND pupils will be disproportionately penalised. Is any of this actually helping troubled children and young people to behave better? They get excluded for a reason.

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Still recovering from the first week back.

TUESDAY

In a "wide-ranging speech" to the Social Market Foundation think tank that *definitely* wasn't a leadership bid, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, argued that Conservatives should have a social conscience if they want

SMF Social Market Foundation
@SMFthinktank

Today's speech by @NickGibbUK chaired by @JamesKirkup argued for a more responsible capitalism that ensures better regulation for the provision those struggling under the capitalist system.

Full speech: bit.ly/NickGibbSMFspe...

#GibbSMFspeech



to keep the threat of a Jeremy Corbyn premiership at bay (sorry, we mean do the right thing for UK citizens).

Gibb, who at the time *Week In Westminster* went to print was 999/1 to take the leadership, railed against monopolies of power, cheating tax avoiders and university chancellors earning over £400k, no doubt leaving Harris Federation CEO Dan Moynihan unsure whether to be relieved or offended that he failed to get a mention.

The minister ended by arguing that his approach to education could be scaled up across every government department. Should Gibb ever become PM, expect after-work detentions, during which naughty tax avoiders are made to sound out phonemes while sitting in booths.

At the same time, back in Westminster, Gibb's colleague Lord Agnew and the national schools commissioner faced a grilling from MPs on the education select committee.

Lucy Powell, the former shadow education secretary and now the committee's fiercest quizmaster, was so despairing of the answers given by the pair that she suddenly came over all potty-mouthed.

After being told for the umpteenth time that the government had "learned lessons" from the academy failures, she lost her patience.

"I think it's a fair assessment that more recently in the light of the collapse of WCAT, in the light of Bright Tribe and other scandals that, hey, guess what?, we've got to make sure that the ESFA work hand-in-hand with the RSCs and we've got to put more support round these schools and we've got to make sure they work on a geography where they can all support each other," she said.

"Looks and sounds very like all the lessons we would've learned from good local authorities to me, that. No shit, Sherlock."

WEDNESDAY

The Department for Education's opportunity areas programme was set up to bring schools and other

stakeholders together in hard-to-reach areas of the country, but the government doesn't seem to have taken a leaf out of its own book when it comes to cross-departmental working on the scheme.

During a hearing of the education committee this week, officials involved in the £72 million programme lamented the lack of involvement of other departments, such as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Chair Robert Halfon also remarked it was strange more departments weren't involved.

Then again, this is what happens when policy is drawn up on the back of a fag packet...

THURSDAY

Private school leaders told academies minister Lord Agnew that they are feeling "unloved" after the DfE decided not to cover the 42 per cent hike in pension contributions – leaving independent schools facing closure.

His response? To throw his own government under the bus.

"It's appalling. Nobody in the DfE is cooking up this idea that we want to wallop private schools. Weaponise yourselves and take the argument to the Bank of England and the Treasury – they are causing this."

After offloading any responsibility, Agnew went on to give attendees at the conference at Brighton College a brief history of the pensions pot, dating back to the First World War. Lucky them!





At E-ACT, it is our mission to provide all of our pupils with an education that encourages them to explore, discover, create and achieve. By developing inspiring curricula and nurturing a culture based on our values of thinking big, doing the right thing and showing team spirit, we exist to give young people access to the best possible educational opportunities.

Our academies span the length and breadth of the country

We educate over 18,000 pupils across the length and breadth of England. The E-ACT team includes over 3,000 employees based across 29 academies, four regional teams and a national team. Our academies may span the country, but we all follow the same set of underlying principles. E-ACT academies can also collaborate and share ideas in ways that other schools may not be able to.

Our hopes and aspirations for every one of our pupils is the same. By encouraging them to think big and understand that anything is possible, by showing them the importance of team by working together to achieve, and by teaching them to carefully think through their decisions to do the right thing, we know that every one of our pupils can realise their potential with us.

Are you an E-ACT leader?

We are always on the lookout for dynamic, motivated and inspirational leaders.

Please click anywhere on this advert to view our latest leadership vacancies.



EDUCATION ASSOCIATE, NORTH MIDLANDS

Enabling Enterprise is an award-winning social enterprise. Our mission is to ensure that one day, all students leave school equipped with the skills, experiences and aspirations to succeed – beyond just a set of qualifications.

We are looking for self-starters with a collaborative, entrepreneurial approach; comfortable working with students and presenting to school leaders, and with a passion for education.

Working with over 120,000 students across the country, we are in a period of strong growth, backed by leading organisations including the CBI, the National Education Union and the Careers & Enterprise Company.

If you want to be part of an inspiring team, and benefit from opportunities for rapid growth, development and challenge, we want to hear from you.

Salary: £28,000-£32,000

Start Date: 19th August 2019

Closing Date: 13th May 2019

Application: www.skillsbuilder.org/jobs



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

From September 2019 or by negotiation

Contract type: Full Time – with possible flexibility for the appropriate candidate

Salary: circa £85k dependent upon calibre of successful candidate

ULT is comprised of 8 academies (including a teaching school) with plans for expansion of up to 20 schools across the area over the next 5 years. The ULT includes First, Middle and High Schools, several of which are small, rural schools (including Church of England). The ULT forms a 3-18 all-through educational family, supporting each other to provide excellent teaching and learning, excellent progress and attainment, and a friendly, safe and caring educational environment.

You will have the experience, vision, ambition and skills to grow a high quality, financially sustainable MAT centred on providing a seamless educational journey for our young people.

Further details on the position and how to apply can be requested from russellsheldon88@gmail.com

Closing date: 30th May 2019.



PRINCIPAL

£59,265 to £68,667 per year
(for a September 2019 or January 2020 start)



The Inspire Learning Partnership is seeking to appoint a Principal at Kanes Hill Primary School. The Trust is looking for an exceptional candidate to develop this outstanding, inclusive school and champion its collaborative work with the Inspire Learning Partnership and the local community. This is an exciting opportunity for a senior leader who has the passion and expertise to lead Kanes Hill Primary School to reach its true potential.

Visits to the school are warmly welcomed and will take place on **Thursday 2nd May 2019 (1.00pm - 2.00pm)**, **Tuesday 7th May 2019 (10.00am - 11.00am)** and **Monday 13th May 2019 (12 noon - 1.00pm)**

Please contact the Executive Principal's PA at principalrecruitment@ilpartnership.org if you wish to come along on one of these days.

Closing Date: Tuesday 14th May 2019 (noon)

Interview Dates: Monday 20th May 2019 from 3.30pm to meet staff and Trustees

Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd May 2019

How to apply: Download an application pack from either the Inspire Learning Partnership website:

www.inspirelearningpartnership.org or Kanes Hill Primary School website: www.kaneshillsch.net

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This role requires an enhanced DBS check.

Inspire Learning Partnership is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 9202445.



Headteacher, Rolph, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex

Salary: L15 - L21 (£56,434 - £65,384 per annum)

Start Date: September 2019

Closing 13th May 2019 at noon

Interviews: 21st May 2019

Rolph C of E Primary School is a one-form entry primary school with strong links to the local Church of St Michael's, Thorpe-le-Soken. We are a caring school, built on Christian Values, where we aim for every child to show Love, Integrity, Fellowship and Endurance.

We are looking for an inspirational and committed leader with the vision, confidence and skills to lead our school forward into its next exciting stage of development. We embrace the future with optimism and with a passion to deliver the very best education for every child.

For more information and to apply, please visit:
<http://www.vineschooltrust.co.uk/vacancies>.

Visits to the school are encouraged and welcomed. Please contact Elizabeth Williams on **01245 294496** to arrange a visit.

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