

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

10-page end-of-year review! (plus Hinds' fave book)



Rachel Wolf: 'The lack of instinctive trust in parents is irritating'



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MPs to DfE: 'Show us your cost-cutter reports'



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'I won't rest until we've got plans for every single one of those schools'

Dominic Herrington FINALLY talks to Schools Week



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Fair access? Hundreds of vulnerable pupils turned away by schools

- Investigation reveals youngsters waiting up to ten months for places
- Two-in-five councils report a rise in fair access protocol cases this year
- A third of LAs seek intervention where schools 'reluctant' to take on kids

EXCLUSIVE KATHRYN SNOWDON | @KATHRYN_SNOWDON

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Editor's top picks



The tough new finance rules schools must meet

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'The negativity is deleterious to leaders - they need to speak up'

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'Sexy' oral, and more bizarre things that schools have been told to teach this year



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News

MPs to Agnew: Time to come clean on your cost-cutter reports

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government must release reports by its school cost-cutting consultants to MPs and provide evidence of the value for money of their recommendations, the parliamentary education committee has said.

In a damning report on school and college funding published today, the cross-party committee warned of “significant financial strain” on schools, and chastised ministers for their “counter-productive” mantra that more money than ever before is going into education.

Claims about record school funding have fuelled an “unnecessarily adversarial relationship” with parents and teachers, and given the impression “of a department unwilling to engage with the realities of funding pressures”.

Alongside calls for an “urgent funding increase” for schools, the extension of the pupil premium to sixth-formers and significant uplifts in both high-needs and post-16 funding, the report demands the committee is provided with full reports from the Department for Education’s team of school resource management advisers (SRMAs).

The creation of the SRMA role is one of several initiatives developed by ministers to help schools save money. But leaders argue that they have already cut their budgets to the bone, in the face of an 8 per cent real-terms cut in funding between 2009-10 and 2017-18.

According to today’s report, the committee was “disturbed” by an investigation in Schools Week of the recommendations made by some SRMAs, which included urging schools to keep money raised at charity events, cut children’s food portions and use spare staff to cover three simultaneous classes in the dining hall.

Although they have promised a breakdown of savings identified, ministers continue to refuse to publish the full slate of reports, which have so far only been released by the some of the schools themselves.

In their report, the committee said the department “should provide us with the full documents described by Schools Week, a breakdown by category of the measures suggested by school resource management advisers across the country, how much the resource advisers cost, and an evaluation of the long-term value for money provided by their cost-saving



recommendations”.

Overall, the committee’s report paints a bleak picture of funding in schools. In addition, it calls for the full implementation of the promised national funding formula and repeats demands already made by chair Robert Halfon for a 10-year-funding plan.

Such a plan would take the “political short-termism” out of school and college funding, MPs said.

Included in any plan should be a multi-billion-pound settlement from the Treasury “informed by a bottom-up assessment of the cost of delivering a quality education for all children and young people”. Ministers have been told to confirm their intentions and timeline for such a plan in response to the report.

The DfE also “needs to be transparent about how much money is needed for the education system”, the report said.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the ASCL school leaders’ union, said the report was a “damning indictment of the government’s dreadful record on school and college funding”.

Jules White, headteacher who leads the Worth Less? school funding campaign, added that schools are also being “increasingly asked” to commit resources to cover services normally provided by social care and the police and should be “resourced properly”.

Meanwhile, a separate report today warned that the spiralling costs of special educational needs services could “break” councils’ budgets.

The 36 councils represented by the County Councils Network have seen a 46 per cent rise in youngsters given an education, health and care plan. Of those councils, 27 recorded a combined overspend on £123 million in 2018-19 on their high-needs block.

Heads prefer Hunt to Johnson, poll finds

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

Four-in-five headteachers believe Jeremy Hunt would make the best Conservative prime minister, a new poll has revealed.

A survey by school information service The Key found 82 per cent of school leaders would prefer Hunt to win the Conservative leadership campaign.

Voting for Conservative Party members closes this week, with a new prime minister expected to be announced on Tuesday.

While the findings aren’t particularly surprising (the teaching workforce is generally more left-leaning), Hunt has not had much to say on schools during his campaign.

Meanwhile, his rival, Boris Johnson, has made school funding a key pledge of his campaign – promising last month to inject £4.6 billion into the school budget by 2022 if he becomes PM.

Despite this, just 18 per cent of heads would prefer him as the country’s next leader.

Amy Cook, head of content at The Key, said: “We polled school leaders on their preference for the next PM, given that they wouldn’t otherwise have a voice on this.

“We know the school sector is generally more left-leaning, so it isn’t a surprise that we see a landslide victory for Hunt. The school leader view is clearly at odds with opinion polls elsewhere, pitching Johnson as the firm favourite.”

A total of 749 school leaders were asked “Johnson or Hunt: who do you think would make the best prime minister?”.

The survey ran online from Thursday, July 11 to Wednesday this week.

One of Hunt’s only key pledges on schools is to put mental health support in classrooms to “tackle mental health at a young age because more than half of mental health problems become established before the age of 14”.

Plans to place mental health support teams in schools are already under way, with the current government also pledging to ensure new teachers are trained in how to spot signs of mental ill-health.

News

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Maintained schools face stringent new accountability rules

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

School leaders have questioned whether government proposals to increase accountability in maintained schools are just unnecessary "creeping bureaucracy".

The Department for Education is consulting on increasing financial transparency in maintained schools, with proposals including requiring council permission for related-party transactions and publishing annual finances online (see full list below).

The proposals in the consultation, which opened on Wednesday and will run until September 30, seek to bring local authority schools "in line with the requirements and high standards that academy trusts already have to meet".

Other proposals include requiring councils to declare school staff who are paid over £100,000, forcing maintained schools to provide three-year budget forecasts and ensuring they are subject to an internal audit at least every three years.

The latter follows a Schools Week investigation that revealed some councils had not audited their schools for 20 years.

Lord Agnew, academies minister, said the consultation aims to bring "parity" in financial transparency measures across the sector.

But Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, questioned whether stricter controls on maintained schools are "necessary" and said the plans suggested a "creeping bureaucracy".



"It's hard to see how this isn't going to result in already scarce resource being diverted away from the classroom," she said.

"Of course it's right that there are appropriate levels of robust financial accountability. Across the vast majority of maintained schools and academies that clearly exists already.

"We don't have evidence that the current controls are not sufficient. Without that, it's difficult to see why increased controls are necessary. What is the evidence there is a problem and what is the problem we are

trying to solve?"

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership, said more transparency is a "sensible" idea but he raised concerns about the financial impact on small, rural schools made to carry out more frequent audits under the plans.

He also said the government needs to produce clear guidance on what exactly constitutes a related-party transaction for maintained schools, but said the requirement to provide three-year budgets was a "necessary" move and the plans to disclose high salaries were "legitimate".

"I think the transparency of the arrangements for spending public money on state education shouldn't depend on the legal structure of the school," he said.

"We should, as the government is proposing, make a decision that we are going to open the education sector's books to public scrutiny and peer scrutiny. That's a good thing."

Proposals

1. Internal audit every three years
2. Three-year budget forecasts
3. Strengthening related-party transaction rules
4. Reveal staff earning over £100,000
5. Publish statement of income, expenditure and balances online
6. Submit recovery plans if revenue deficit rises above 5%
7. DfE to collect more information on fraud and financial concerns
8. Naming and shaming councils who miss financial deadlines

Self-assessment financial tool to become mandatory for trusts

Academy trusts must complete an annual finance check-up as part of the government's push to level up accountability across the sector.

The self-assessment tool helps trusts analyse their financial and resource management systems. The government said making it mandatory at the end of this academic year will ensure there is no area where academies have "weaker accountability" than maintained schools.

The announcement, which is part of the Department for Education's consultation on accountability in maintained schools, comes after criticism from Ofsted on the self-

evaluation of academy trusts.

Maintained schools must annually complete the schools financial value standard to assure councils about their financial management, which will include a dashboard to allow schools to compare themselves with others next year.

A similar tool was launched for trusts in September, but not made mandatory. Last August, the DfE said the government would "consider in time" whether it should become a requirement.

In a report published on Monday, Ofsted criticised "weak" and "limited" self-assessment at trusts.

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman said the DfE should publish a framework for trusts to self-evaluate performance, particularly their educational impact.

The self-assessment tool questions trusts on governance, budgets, financial strategy, staffing and protecting public money. The DfE says it can assure trusts they are meeting standards and identify areas for change.

From 2019-20, trusts must also disclose more information about staff earning over £100,000. This includes their total salary in £10,000 bandings, their job role and whether they focus on curriculum and education or school business management.

Record number of rebrokers pushes school transfer costs past £30m

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Costs for the academy transfer market have surpassed the £30 million mark as a record 300 academies were re-brokered this year.

Figures released by the Department for Education yesterday (Thursday) show 307 academies moved to a new trust in 2018-19, equating to 3.6 per cent of all open academies in England.

This is an increase from 255 last year (3.3 per cent) and 196 in 2016-17 (3 per cent).

The DfE has now spent over £31 million in grant funding to entice new academy trusts to take over failing schools since 2013. However, the true academy transfer costs are likely to be much higher.

The figures released by the DfE exclude a host of other payments handed out during deals, such as deficit funding, statutory repayments, capital costs and diseconomies of scale.

Schools Week revealed in 2017 how the then academies minister Lord Nash had tried to massage the presentation of academy re-brokerage figures prior to their first publication.



However, despite more academies being transferred this year, the amount of grant funding handed out has actually decreased.

A total of £6.5 million was given to 80 academies this year, down from £7.6 million to 53 academies in 2017-18 and £8.4 million to 61 academies in 2016-17.

Two trusts this year were paid £250,000 – the highest individual amount.

Reach South Academy Trust received the money to take over UTC Plymouth, with the school moving in October 2018.

Meanwhile, Core Education Trust was also handed £250,000 after taking over Arena Academy from the Perry Beeches Academy Trust in 2017-18. The trust was also given £150,000 last year.

Another 14 deals involved payments of £150,000 this year.

Since 2013, grant funding has been handed to 270 (29 per cent) of all academies that have transferred.

The DfE said data on grant funding provided since 2016-17 is not comparable with earlier years because of differences in what is included in the total costs.

Meanwhile, of the 307 re-brokers this year, over one-third were a result of the DfE directly intervening, either through transferring schools or closing sponsors because of failures.

A total of 57 schools are officially listed as being transferred because of government intervention.

However, another 46 schools transferred because their sponsor closed voluntarily after DfE intervention, and a further four are listed as “intervention closure”, including the Durand Academy and three schools previously run by the Link Education Trust. Seventeen other schools transferred because their sponsor closed without intervention.

A *Schools Week* investigation last year found 91 trusts had been, or were, in the process of being wound up. Some collapsed with multi-million-pound debts.

EXCLUSIVE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Teaching union faces legal hearing over Keates's extended term

The NASUWT teaching union will face a hearing to determine whether it broke the law by allowing Chris Keates to overstay her term as general secretary.

The Certification Officer, which oversees unions in England, has ruled the NASUWT case should be listed for a formal hearing after receiving allegations that the union broke the law by failing to hold an election for Keates's replacement before her five-year term came to an end.

It has also emerged that Keates could continue to serve as “acting general secretary” of the union, a role to which she was recently appointed, until next spring while her successor is chosen.

Schools Week revealed last month how the NASUWT was facing questions about its failure to call an election to replace Keates before June 3 of this year, the five-year anniversary of her re-election in 2014.

The law stipulates that unions must ensure “no person continues to hold such a position for more than five years without being re-elected”.

It follows a period of unrest at England's second-largest teaching union, which has seen repeated strikes and other industrial action by its own staff over changes to their pensions, as well as bitter disputes between the leadership and a number of employees.

It was revealed last month that three senior national officials at the union have been serving lengthy suspensions following disputes with the organisation's top team.

In representations made to the Certification Officer, NASUWT's lawyers Slater and Gordon confirmed that Keates formally stood down as general secretary on July 5, more than a month after her term ended, and was appointed as acting general secretary.

The union “recognises that an election could have been called earlier”, the lawyers said. They

claim the election process was commenced on May 21, before Keates's term came to an end. The union also asserts that Keates's continued service in the role is now only on a temporary basis, and therefore is lawful.

According to the timetable, an advert for the post is due to be placed this week, with a closing date of September 16. Members of the union's executive will then interview shortlisted candidates on October 11 to determine which candidate they will put forward.

From October 21, members will be able to nominate challengers to the executive's candidate. They will have until December 9 to do so.

If more than one nomination is received, a ballot will be held between January 2 and 31 next year, and the new general secretary will be introduced at NASUWT's annual conference over the Easter bank holiday weekend.

NASUWT was approached for comment.

Investigation:

FAIR ACCESS? VULNERABLE PUPILS MISS OUT

KATHRYN SNOWDON

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Hundreds of pupils are failing to secure school places after being snubbed by schools during in-year admissions – with others having to wait up to ten and a half months for a place.

An investigation by Schools Week into Fair Access Protocols (FAPs) has revealed a stark postcode lottery in access to school places for pupils.

The purpose of the Fair Access Protocols, as outlined by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, is to “make sure that, outside of the normal admissions rounds, unplaced children, particularly the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible”.

Under the protocols, panels are convened of headteachers and council representatives to find places for children. Most commonly this is for pupils who have moved to the area mid-year or been excluded from schools. It also covers children from the criminal justice system and children of travellers, refugees and asylum seekers.

Figures reveal postcode lottery

Of the 104 English councils that responded to Schools Week’s freedom of information request on FAPs, 41 saw a rise in cases this academic year compared to 2017-18.

Although overall numbers seem to be falling, at least 15,237 cases have been heard under FAPs in England so far during this academic year. That compares to 17,948 last year, 16,651 in 2016-17, and 16,111 in 2015-16.

But the figures vary dramatically across regions.

Leeds City Council had the highest number of FAP cases in each of the last four years – 1,966 cases this year, up from 1,631 last year.

Oldham Council had the second largest number, with 737 this year, compared to 817 last year. A spokesperson for the council said the cases were new arrivals to the borough, those returning to education after extended leave and a “transient population”.

“Until recently we also included



EXCLUSIVE

international new arrivals in the local criteria, which may have contributed to the increase of figures compared to national levels,” the spokesperson added.

Despite the rises in some areas, the majority of councils said they had found school places for all children.

However, there were some noticeable exceptions. In the most recent academic year, Sandwell Council failed to secure places for 134 children. In 2017-18 the figure was just 60.

A Sandwell Council spokesperson claimed every child is eventually found a place, but sometimes may have to go through two or three fair access panels until a placement is secured.

Panels sit every three weeks in the secondary sector and six weeks in the primary.

Joyce Underhill, Sandwell Council’s cabinet member for best start in life, said that the area has seen a “significant increase” in the birth rate which has “put increasing pressure” on primary schools.

Walsall Council did not hold records for this academic year, but for 2017-18, 44 children failed to secure a school place after a fair access panel referral, up from 66 in the previous year.

A council spokesperson confirmed that its fair access policy is under review.

Meanwhile, 43 youngsters in Swindon failed to secure places last year. In Waltham

Forest, 24 children failed to get a place this year, however a council spokesperson said “at no point is a child without an educational placement”, as they would remain at the referring school or alternative provision.

Overall, 249 youngsters failed to secure a school place after a FAP referral last year, up from 158 in 2015-16.

John Cosgrove, a primary school headteacher from Reading, said the FAP system relies heavily on the “goodwill” of teachers and schools. “If you are a school struggling on ‘requires improvement’ or on the cusp of being ‘good’ and somebody says to you ‘we’d like you to take this child, they’ve been out of class for two years’ and you think ‘their progress measures are not going to do me any favours, their achievement is not going to enhance my statistics’, then you might pause.

“I’m not saying that’s unethical, or that heads are wrong to do things like this – I think that the accountability makes people act in ways they wouldn’t do otherwise. I think the lack of resources and the lack of finances is making things worse.”

Councils flag concerns about refusals

The responsibility to find a school place for a child falls to the local authority. But both maintained schools and academies are required to abide by FAPs.

Should an academy refuse, the local

Investigation:

authority can appeal to the secretary of state to intervene. For maintained schools, the council can appeal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

The Department for Education does not have a central record of how many requests it receives from councils.

When asked for the number in a freedom of information request, the DfE said the information is not held separately and instead is part of a "broad category of complaints", which must be accessed individually.

East Sussex Council said it had encountered "some challenge" over compliance "largely from academies".

"In some cases this is due to school staff being unaware of their legal responsibilities in this area but in others (particularly certain academy chains) this cannot be said and it is purely down to reluctance to comply."

Councils also cited funding concerns within schools as reasons why some were reluctant to accept in-year admissions via FAP.

The OSA reported that about one-third of all local authorities reported directing their schools, or asking the government to intervene for academies, during the 2017-18 financial year.

But the overall number of directions still seems quite small. The OSA reported there were 84 directions to schools to admit a child last year.

Youngsters waiting months for places

The average time it took from a pupil being referred to a FAP and being placed in a school ranged from four days, at Hampshire Council, to ten-and-a-half months in Suffolk.

However, just a small number of councils were able to provide this information.

A spokesperson for Suffolk council said the wait was down to the FAP decision being received just before the summer holidays, which meant that it was postponed until the next panel meeting in autumn.

The appeal then sat with the government for more than four months, the spokesperson added.

Another referral took the DfE over three months to act, the spokesperson said, adding the academy also took three months to take the pupil in after receiving a minded-to-direct letter from the government.

One child had to wait eight months for a place in Windsor and Maidenhead in 2016-17, and both Hillingdon and Coventry councils reported waits of up to six months.

A spokesperson for Coventry council said delays were caused by families moving to the area mid-year with children who were in different year groups but who wanted to attend the same school as their sibling.

As some schools were full, parents kept their children out of school – even though a place had been found – in the hope of spaces coming up at their preferred

school. The spokesperson added: "We work with these families to make sure they understand that this is unacceptable and place their children in a school."

Laura Berman, a partner at Stone King who specialises in education law, said as councils write their own protocols, some do not have a built-in review or appeals process, which can really impact the timeframe.

"Admin in local authorities is poor at the best of times," Berman added. "It's not a criticism, I'm sure their resources have been cut and they are under a lot of pressure and their departments are dwindling."

Government pledges action

Geographical inequalities in in-year admissions is on the government's radar. Last month the DfE stated it would "improve the clarity, timeliness and transparency of the in-year admissions process, and strengthen the Fair Access Protocols, ensuring this can be used to admit children who currently need a social worker".

However, no further details on how this will be achieved have yet been released.

A Department for Education spokesperson said they "recognise that there are challenges around ensuring in-year admissions and Fair Access Protocols work effectively for everyone".

They said a consultation on the proposed changes will launch in early autumn.

The number of children who failed to secure a school place after fair access panel referral

	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
SANDWELL COUNCIL	134	60	79	54
WALSALL COUNCIL	DATA NOT HELD	44	66	DATA NOT HELD
SWINDON COUNCIL	43	44	53	38
WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL	24	17	20	26

The number of cases considered under fair access protocols

	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL	1966	1631	1752	2292
OLDHAM COUNCIL	737	817	866	1014
WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	421	570	441	700
SEFTON COUNCIL	609	552	429	387

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ITT providers set to take responsibility for skills judgments

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

Initial teacher training providers will be put in the “invidious position” of trying to avoid lowering the bar in a difficult recruitment climate under government plans to allow them to judge numeracy and literacy skills.

On Tuesday, schools minister Nick Gibb confirmed plans, first revealed by *Schools Week*, to ditch the QTS skills entrance tests for would-be teachers.

From October, teacher training providers will become responsible for ensuring trainees meet requirements by benchmarking them against a “defined set of skills” they will be expected to have by the end of their initial teacher training.

The government plans to release interim guidelines in September, one month before the new system begins.

But David Spendlove, strategic director of initial teacher education at the University of Manchester, said the decision is a “major policy change from the government and a resettling of the ambition of who can be a teacher”.

Gibb wrote just last year that the tests “reassure parents and school leaders” that new teachers can “demonstrate a high standard of numeracy and literacy when they enter the classroom”

Spendlove also warned that providers could



be placed in the “invidious position of trying to avoid being compromised when setting their own literacy and numeracy bar” amid a difficult recruitment climate.

A survey of 4,080 teachers by pollsters Teacher Tapp also found that nearly nine in ten agree that it is “important” that new entrants pass skills tests in order to “maintain standards” in the profession.

Of those, more than half said they strongly agree with the statement.

Last year the DfE awarded a £15 million contract to PSI Services to deliver the tests. The contract, which began on July 1, runs for three years.

James Williams, a lecturer in education at the University of Sussex, said any additional and unfunded burden on ITT providers could “result in some reviewing their provision”.

“The DfE needs to reassure providers that any replacement system proposed will be fully funded and that the savings from scrapping the privatised testing system we have had until now will not simply be lost within DfE budgets,” he added.

However ITT providers have welcomed the move.

Emma Hollis, executive director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers, insisted the move would not lead to a “dumbing down” of the profession.

She said the QTS tests led to too many “false positives”, or candidates failing by just a few marks, and had too many “practical barriers”, including the locations of test centres and difficulty booking appointments to take the test.

Around 10 per cent of candidates fail at least one of the tests each year, according to government data.

In April the government admitted that a marking error meant hundreds of trainees over the past few years were wrongly told they had failed.

Schools Week revealed last month the DfE could face legal action after offering those affected an “insulting” £100 compensation.

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS | @PIPPA_AK

Pearson: No plans to phase out print textbooks in the UK (yet)

Education publisher Pearson has insisted there are currently “no specific plans” to phase out print textbooks in the UK, but stopped short of confirming that it may not do so in the future.

News that Pearson planned to become “digital first” caused consternation when it was reported by the BBC this week, with plans to make pupils rent physical textbooks in the hope that more will subscribe to e-textbooks.

Concerns were raised about the financial impact of removing textbooks that can be easily borrowed, recycled or re-sold, as well as potential problems arising from technological issues and the lack of choice created.

However, a spokesperson for Pearson said the plans are focused on higher education in America, and insisted there were “no specific plans at the moment to move to a digital-first

model in the UK”.

“In time we will look at other markets around the world, but for now the focus is on US college publishing,” he said.

The government’s teacher snapshot survey for winter 2018, released on Wednesday, revealed 87 per cent of secondary teachers used digital resources for the majority of lessons.

Textbooks were the second most commonly used resource, and used in most lessons by one in five teachers.

Just six per cent used e-books, making them the least common resource.

Schools minister Nick Gibb is known for favouring textbooks. In a speech in December 2017 he said that one of the “key lessons” taken from the success of pupils in Far East

countries was the “importance of textbooks”.

He also praised the recent resurgence of “knowledge-rich” textbooks, adding “ideological hostility” had driven a decline in their use in the 1970s.

Tim Oates, group director of assessment research and development at Cambridge Assessment, warned against removing physical textbooks from classrooms and said research shows that reading and learning from a screen “is not the same as with paper materials”.

He said mixing textbooks, practice books and accompanying online enrichment and assessment is “driving improvement” in some areas.

“Different media have different assets for learning. Lose a distinctive form of media, you lose some distinctive assets.”

News

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Hinds' eighth expert panel to plan new professional qualifications

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Another expert panel has been formed by the government, this time to help design new national professional qualifications for teachers.

The panel is the eighth set up since Damian Hinds became education secretary in January 2018.

Plans for five new NPQs – aimed at opening up career opportunities outside the traditional school leadership route – were announced in February in the wake of the release of the government's teacher recruitment and retention strategy.

The new qualifications are meant to build on the "core areas" of the early career framework – the main new policy announcement in the strategy – which guarantees new

teachers two years of induction.

The new group will be led by a civil servant as the panel's members (full list on the right) could all effectively end up bidding to deliver the new NPQs.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said: "These new qualifications, backed by education experts, will provide recognition for those teachers who want to develop their skills and progress their careers.

"Our ambition is for teachers to be able to do so without having to pursue traditional leadership routes, instead expanding their expertise in vital areas such as curriculum or behaviour management."

The other expert panels, which have yet to report, are on early years apps, music curriculum, character education, teacher wellbeing, initial teaching training and edtech leadership.

Panel

Richard Gill, chair of the Teaching Schools Council

Matthew Hood, chief education officer at Ambition Institute

Cat Scutt, director of education and research at Chartered College of Teaching

Reuben Moore, executive director for programme development at Teach First

Samantha Twisleton, director of Sheffield Institute of Education

David Weston, CEO of Teacher Development Trust

Lesley Powell, executive headteacher at Shotton Hall

Emma Rennison, executive director of the Outwood Institute of Education

John Blake, curriculum research and design lead at Ark

Emma Lennard, primary curriculum consultant

Hamid Patel, chief executive of Star Academies

Anne Heavey, national director at Whole School SEND



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News

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Indecent proposals: 111 curriculum suggestions

EVE DEBBAGE @SCHOOLSWEEK

EXCLUSIVE

Schools have been told they should teach pupils how to examine X-rated movies, get a good night's sleep and edit Wikipedia.

The weird and wonderful suggestions are some of the 111 calls from campaigners this year alone about what should be taught in schools – equating to nearly four new suggestions each week.

Others calls include for teachers to make oral sex and mutual masturbation sound "appealing, glamorous and sexy" as a way to cut teen pregnancy, and to put gardening on the national curriculum.

The list, collated by the Parents and Teachers for Excellence campaign group, found the most popular suggestions related to health – at 35 proposals. Another 13 related to crime, and 11 to technology.

Mark Lehain, director of the PTE campaign, said schools are under "constant pressure"



and "we need to be honest about the limits to what schools could and should teach, and demand more of the rest of society – including parents and families".

"A school curriculum should be a dynamic creation that responds over time to ensure children learn the best that has been thought, said and done. And given that pupils only

have about 12,000 hours in school before the age of 16, we can't fit in everything that everyone would like us to."

PTE started collating the list of "curriculum dumping" last year amidst the jostle for additional lessons in an already clogged-up school day.

Last year, PTE found 213 individual calls were made for additions to what schools teach. The list is collated by monitoring both traditional and social media.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, added: "Schools already do a lot to improve the life chances of their pupils and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need for the world in which they live, but it is neither practical nor realistic to expect them to solve everything.

"The curriculum is not fixed in stone and adapts over time to reflect changing needs, but this has to be done in a carefully planned manner so that demands are balanced and achievable."

5 of the weird and wonderful ideas for the classroom

1. CRITICALLY EXAMINE PORN

Psychologists from the National University of Ireland want youngsters to get lessons in how to "critically examine" X-rated movies the way they would books.

A study by the university, published in January, wanted more "porn-literacy education", including that orgasms are rarely "dramatic, overt and easy".



2. TEACH SLEEPING SKILLS

Journalist Julian Glover, writing in the London Evening Standard newspaper, asked, "Why are there no lessons in how to sleep?" back in February.

Schools minister Nick Gibb was urged to "step in immediately to help us put this right". Glover jokingly added: "When he's cracked that



he can show us all how to stuff a duvet, too."

3. PUT WIKIPEDIA EDITING ON THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Students should learn how to edit Wikipedia pages as a vital part of the school week, according to Wikimedia.

The charity, which supports and promotes Wikipedia, said the additional teaching should be "incorporated into digital skills". Apparently, the Welsh Baccalaureate has a "community challenge" to create a Wikipedia page in Welsh under a government-funded programme to promote the language.

4. GIVE GARDENING LESSONS FOR PUPIL WELL-BEING

Robin Lane Fox, a historian and author, writing in the Financial Times newspaper in April said gardening should be part of the national curriculum.

He highlighted organisations such as Groundwork which had started schemes that

nurture children towards horticulture, with 1.5 million primary school children now gardening. More than 6,000 secondaries have taken part in school gardening awards run by the Royal Horticultural Society, too.

5. PUPILS SHOULD BE TAUGHT ORAL SEX IN A 'SEXY' WAY

Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell called for an overhaul of religious and sex education (RSE) in May, including mandatory teaching about masturbation.

The Gay Star News reported that Tatchell wants teachers to make alternatives to vaginal intercourse, such as oral sex and mutual masturbation, sound "appealing, glamorous and sexy" to cut teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates.

He said if parents object "they must come to the school and forcibly remove their child".



News: Q&A

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Q. Has the door been closed to school leaders to become regional schools commissioners?

Not at all. If an RSC vacancy comes up, I will always want a fantastically talented shortlist.

It's got a bit overplayed, if I'm honest. From September, half of my RSC team will be ex-civil servants and half from the sector. I'll always want a balance and diversity in my team. There's a set of skills you need, and it can come from a school leader or civil servants who are committed to education and passionate about it.

Q. Education secretary Damian Hinds has suggested ditching the terms multi-academy trust (MAT) and chief executive (CEO) to detoxify the academy brand. Do you agree?

I think he's got a really good point. Some people have interpreted it that there's some sort of hidden privatisation – it is CEO language that is dominating.

The overwhelming majority of academy trusts do a really good job – rates of failure are low. When it happens, you and yours [the press] rightly report on them.

If we can reframe the language and ensure parents understand that, then great.

Q. So what's a better term for "CEO"?

"Trust leader" or "executive leader". But it won't be for me to mandate that – that's not in the spirit of the programme.

Q. The big promise to academies was autonomy. We are seeing a different approach under academies minister Lord Agnew with, for instance, trusts told how many finance



Editor asks... Dominic Herrington

National schools commissioner Dominic Herrington finally sat down with Schools Week. Here's what he had to say.

“ People have interpreted that there's some sort of hidden privatisation

meetings they should have per year. Where do you stand on this?

We have one of the most autonomous school systems in the world. If you ask people why they want to become an academy, or part of a trust, there's a mixture of autonomy and collaboration. But the clue is in the language – these are state schools. We have a responsibility to ensure money is spent appropriately and effectively. I don't think they [the two approaches] are in conflict – you can do both.

Q. Should Ofsted inspect academies?

The department's view is that Ofsted has a really important role in summary evaluations [of trusts] and inspection report judgments. Trusts are also held to account by RSCs, the Education Skills and Funding Agency, local authority safeguarding, MAT performance tables. It's a really interesting idea about a framework for trusts – we've been developing one in the South West regional team, so we'll see whether that might be part of the solution.

Q. There have been lots of reports concerning the loss of parents' voices in academisation. How do you resolve that issue?

I understand how difficult it is sometimes for communities and parents, particularly if they thought the school was in a good place and it's not. Change can be difficult. Our job is to implement the law to secure a strong sponsor and ensure they speak to the community.

In most cases, the trusts are local. The image that it's a distant [MAT] board from miles away is a really unfair characterisation. National sponsors have really strong local routes. The job for us and trusts is to explain this is the process, this is what's going on, these are the legal provisions. Our job is to get a fresh start for this school.

Q. So you don't think there's an issue with the voice of parents being heard?

The more communication to parents the better. The responsibility for that is with the trust. The examples [of this] are quite rare – most conversations are voluntary and parents are included.

It's not a systematic problem, but it is a good idea for us and trusts to be redoubling our communications at all time with parents.

Q. What are your biggest priorities over the next 12 months?

Three things. How do we build capacity in academy trusts? Some of that is us helping, but more is trusts helping themselves and the sector helping them. We're keen to ensure trusts can learn from each other – which they are doing more and more.

How can I be the best leader and

News: Q&A

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manager for the RSCs? They are a great bunch of people and I want to help them to be as good as they can be about their jobs. The third thing will always be around difficult schools. We've made real progress this year. Lots done, more to do.

Q. So the “untouchable” schools and those classed as “stuck” – what progress has been made, and what more are you doing?

The language we use here is really important, it has to be respectful. These schools have professionals working in them, who are working really hard.

What we've done is had a high degree of single-issue fanaticism on this. When I started there were 219 “inadequate” maintained schools in process of conversion, now there are 157 – our job is to get that number down as low as possible.

It's painstaking work and goes on behind the scenes. RSCs are having conversations with trusts, sponsors, local authorities and dioceses to try and bring local coalitions together to get a plan for the school and give it a

fresh start with a trust.

I won't rest until we've got plans for every single one of those schools and we've got sponsors for those schools.

Q. The narrative is that no one wants to take such schools on, but the issue [in the most severe cases] is normally complicated land issues. Why haven't such problems been sorted out yet?

I'm glad you identify that the problem isn't the number of sponsors. We've got over 1,100 sponsors now. In some parts of the country we have more sponsors than schools that want it.

In that really small number of cases [where there are land issues], the conversations that we have with the local authority are painstaking and at times difficult. We will collaborate as intensively as we can in that situation. But the important thing is not to lose sight of the fact that the school has to have an improvement plan and headteachers. The Hanson School [a school in Bradford waiting seven years for a takeover] has improved – and that's really important we keep up that

progress. At the same time we're working through all those issues... we redouble our efforts and never stop talking to the LA to find ways through all those cases.

Q. We all know who the big trusts are, but who are the next system leaders?

The fastest growth in trusts has been that group with between five and 15 schools. I'm keen they are developed as system leaders; trusts like the STEP Academy Trust, Tenax Schools Trust, WISE Academies, the Flying High Trust – those that have built themselves carefully and gradually, and brought in challenging schools to their trust.

The sector is maturing more now. There was a lot of rapid growth at the start. Now we have a group of trusts that have understood that and want to develop themselves. That group has enormous potential in the sector.

Q. Good governance seems to be a government focus, but there are inconsistencies in the system. Some trusts still don't meet the DfE's own guidance. What are you doing about this?

The materials we put out [academy and governance handbooks] are much tighter and clearer about what the rules are, and these are used by RSCs in making decisions about schools joining trusts. We're funding, I think, £5 million over a number of years to help organisations explain what the rules are. We're getting a lot more chairs of trusts coming together themselves, and RSCs are facilitating that. The sector is maturing in that area – there are a lot more reports and studies about what's going on in the sector, I really welcome those. These are signs of a sector that's keen to learn more about how it's developing.

Q. Is 100 per cent academisation the ideal system?

That's a bigger question that is way above my pay grade. My job is to ensure the academy sector delivers great things for young children – which, in the vast majority of cases, it does.

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Katy Lewis, Head of English, Drama and Languages at Pearson

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The government has published its School Sport and Activity Action Plan. Here's your trusty *Schools Week* round-up of what the DfE has actually promised to deliver.

1 Teaching hubs to specialise in PE training

Sport England will provide £1.5 million to boost the number of Active Partnerships to help schools open up their facilities after the school day and during holidays.

The DfE will also provide £500k to "test new approaches" to improve the "strategic direction and delivery" of PE and school sport through the use of teaching schools.

That includes choosing designated teaching schools to support primaries make best use of the primary PE and sport premium, improve access to high-quality PE CPD, and facilitate greater sharing of best practice for delivering high-quality PE lessons. Schools are also "encouraged" to try out a range of options, such as lunchtime sports clubs to boost physical activity take-up outside of the classroom.

2 'Innovative' pilots to boost activity levels

Regional trials will be launched in September to fund "new and innovative" approaches to driving up activity levels (in school time and outside).

Schools will work with sports providers and groups to put in place a "coordinated offer of sport, competition and activity". However, the "scale and structure" of the pilots will be determined by the amount of cash negotiated as part of the spending review.

3 A PE premium toolkit is potentially on its way

The DfE will "look at" how to give schools access to a toolkit to support effective use of the PE and sport premium, and update national guidance.

A *Schools Week* investigation last year revealed schools are misusing the funds, and the government has now admitted there is "more we can do to make sure that schools are using funding appropriately and as effectively as possible".

The pupil premium toolkit has proved popular by helping schools spend their money in the most effective ways.

4 £1m to get more girls playing sport

Sport England will provide £1 million of National Lottery funding to develop a new digital resource for use in schools, to be launched next year, under the commitment to empower girls to take up sport under the This Girl Can campaign.

The DfE will also invest £400,000 next academic year to get more pupils to take part in sport-volunteering programmes. Sport England will provide £2 million for 400 new satellite clubs. They will target 14- to 19-year-olds in disadvantaged areas with the aim to "bridge the gap between school, college and community sport".

5 Messaging for teachers to push the phrase 'at least 60 minutes a day'

The government "will commit" to raise awareness about the importance of youngsters to take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day (they want it to become as popular as the "5 a day" fruit and veg phrase).

But the only real action outlined is to produce "simple and clear" messaging for parents and teachers. More details will be published in an update to the plan later this year.

6 ITT review to include PE

The DfE's review of initial teacher training has been included and rebadged as a commitment to also ensure that PE teachers have the best training to deliver high-quality lessons. The government will also work with unions to share examples of best practice.

7 More advice for better swimming lessons

Government will work with national bodies to identify barriers to provide high-quality swimming and water-safety lessons and then provide "further support" to ensure all pupils learn how to swim. This will seemingly be based on publishing the findings from the Inclusion 2020 project, where five "local innovation" SEND swimming and water-safety partnerships are being trialled.

8 'Healthy schools' rating scheme finally published

The government published its "healthy schools" rating scheme last week (just the two years later than promised). The sport plan states the scheme will "celebrate the positive actions" of schools delivering good health and wellbeing provision by giving them awards.

However one sector expert said the watered-down scheme is "pointless" after initial plans to involve Ofsted were ditched.



EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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It's unacceptable schools still don't know how much they'll be paying teachers next year

For the second year in a row, schools across England will break up today without an important piece of information - how much they will have to pay their teachers next year.

Once again, the government has failed to publish the annual report of the School Teachers Review Body before the last day of term. It means teachers and leaders will now go into the summer break not only with doubts about their own finances, but about the finances of their own schools.

From a government which claims to be prioritising its fight against teacher workload and wellbeing, this is a laughable omission. But then again, are we really to be surprised?

This is a government that published its workload reduction toolkit the day after schools broke up for the summer last year.

They also like to wait until the end of

term to dump heaps of other important data and guidance for teachers (in the past few days alone we had new guidance on Brexit, school attendance and joint inspections of local services).

Schools are crying out for support from our leaders in Westminster as they grapple with a school funding crisis, a recruitment and retention crisis, a crisis in high needs. The least the government could do is avoid sitting on important announcements until the very last minute.

Our brilliant school workforce, hundreds of thousands of them, have worked incredibly hard over the past year. They do the most important jobs in the world. Isn't it time they were shown the respect they deserve?

From all of us at *Schools Week*, we hope your summers are as restful as possible, and we look forward to welcoming you all back in September.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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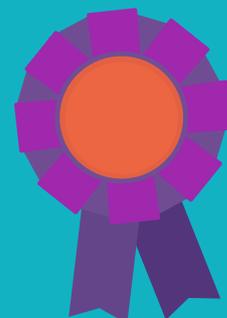


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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



“I find the lack of instinctive trust in parents quite irritating”

Rachel Wolf, founder of New Schools Network and co-creator of Parents and Teachers for Excellence

Rachel Wolf was backpacking around Mexico in 2006 when a job as a researcher for then-shadow higher education minister Boris Johnson popped into her email inbox.

The application included writing two essays: one on universities, and one on “my trip in a spaceship, on a country ramble or to the Taj Mahal”. Wolf, who had just graduated from Cambridge University in natural sciences, thought it “sounded fun”, applied, and to her surprise got an interview. The current Tory leadership favourite, accompanied by a “minder who looked disapproving”, asked questions like “paraphrase this: don’t throw the baby out with the bath water”. She can’t remember her answer, but she got the job.

It was the beginning of a career in education policy that saw her create two well-known

organisations that are aligned to Conservative Party education policy: New Schools Network and Parents and Teachers for Excellence. An effective change-maker in education – who, depending on your viewpoint, either brilliantly introduced more innovation, or helped kickstart much that has gone wrong – she has been close to the heart of power as schools have gone through some of their biggest changes.

After a year working for Johnson, she became an advisor to then-shadow education secretary Michael Gove, working alongside Dominic Cummings and Nick Timothy. It was a “whistlestop” tour of influential figures, whom she says were “very nice” to her.

“The most exciting period for me politically was when I was part of Michael’s reform for the education system,” says Wolf. “You really see what it is possible to achieve. He’s an extraordinary reformer.”

Caught by Gove’s reform bug, she left her advisory role in 2010 after a year-and-a-half and founded the New Schools Network (NSN),

a charity supporting free schools. But it drew criticism for lack of transparency about its donors and the fact that it won £50,000 government funding without bidding. One of its spokespeople – reportedly Cummings – said the organisation would “never” answer a freedom of information request. Wolf defends Cummings’s position; NSN was not a government organisation and some of the requests made were entirely inappropriate, she says. For instance, one trade union wanted NSN to publish the names of all teachers thinking of opening a free school.

“We were not only under no requirement to do so, but it could have been devastating personally to those teachers, not to say illegal.” Many education organisations in those days were awarded funding without having to bid, she adds.

When asked what she is proudest of, Wolf says the fact that “there are schools like School 21 and Michaela which are fundamentally different and excellent”. She enthusiastically backs the proposal of the current NSN head, Luke Tryl, to let parents take over schools that are unable to find

Profile: Rachel Wolf

sponsors.

Wolf was just 24 years old when she set up the charity. Doing this while still so young may be due to keeping up with two older brothers and with high-powered parents, she says. Her mother is professor Alison Wolf, a King's College academic and author of the 2011 Wolf review of vocational education, whose recommendations are instantly recognisable in Tory education policy, including that all pupils should study a core of academic subjects up to age 16. Her father is Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator at the Financial Times. Wolf went to Alleyn's School, a private school in Dulwich, south London, but it was home that shaped her.

"Those hardcore dinner conversations, where I had to keep up with people much older than me – that was as important, if not more so, as my education to how I thought about the world," says Wolf. Was this a Tory household? "Both of my parents are swing voters. My father was chair of the Labour Party at Oxford. I was not automatically Conservative either: I voted Labour when I was at university." But she found that her instincts were "naturally conservative. I've always felt you could trust individuals and families to make decisions more than the state."

That ordinary people should be trusted is an idea that crops up frequently in conversation. Her greatest frustration when working with government was the focus on the "tiny percentage" of dysfunctional parents. "I find the lack of instinctive trust in them quite irritating." One of her "great criticisms" of the Department for Education is that it "speaks to schools and teachers, and not to parents and the public".

Although she remained as chair, Wolf left NSN as director in 2013 to work for Amplify in New York, an education technology company owned

by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. She returned to London after the venture failed and in 2016 she set up Parents and Teachers for Excellence (PTE) with husband James Frayne, also a policy lobbyist. Its aim is to promote knowledge-rich pedagogy and strong discipline standards. Again, donor transparency was queried. Eventually one director was revealed as venture capitalist Jon Moynihan, also on the board of Vote Leave. But Wolf rejects accusations

“Boris has not proven himself the way Michael has”

from critics of “astroturfing”, which suggests an attempt by an organisation to create an impression of grassroots support that is in reality thin on the ground. The accusation was not helped by the fact she had also been appointed an education advisor to David Cameron in Number 10.

"I don't think PTE was pretending to be anything. I think it was explicit what it was about and that it was trying to find people that were on its side."

Wolf seems prepared to listen to parents even when they don't necessarily back her ideas. For example, despite the stricter school culture promoted by PTE, she says parents who feel that schools are exam hothouses need to be listened

to. "Even if you're intellectually right that SATs are a good thing, if people are getting a bad experience, that's a policy failure."

Wolf says that around 70 per cent of her time these days is spent on technology policy as a founding partner of Public First, a strategy and communications firm, but what does she think of the current education policy landscape?

She is concerned by the lack of post-16 funding, echoing her mother's review – and her greatest worry is that Gove's reforms are unfinished. "Nicky [Morgan], Justine [Greening] and Damian [Hinds] have all been helpful in getting a more productive conversation with the sector," she notes. "But do I think a reform energy kept going in that period as much as it could have done? No." A Leave voter, she blames the "distraction" of Brexit too. She did one year in her Number 10 role before quitting under Theresa May as it was "remarkably difficult to get things done."

Wolf also expresses doubts about the Opportunity Areas programme, saying it would have been better to knit the government's industrial strategy more closely with school improvement.

What is odd talking to Wolf is that she rarely mentions teachers.

However, she still holds out hope for a return to the era that so inspired her. It could even get a second wind, given that her first boss looks set to become prime minister, and her second to have a top Cabinet role.

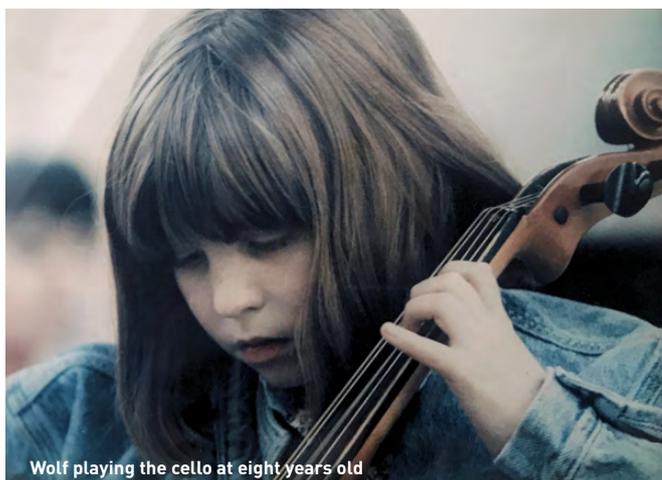
"If I was looking for someone to get us through the next General Election, I would choose Boris. But he has not proven himself the way Michael has [so] that he can transform the country. I think I'd put Michael in charge of the whole industrial strategy, of which education was one part. I'd want him there to drive the whole agenda."



Wolf at three years old



Wolf aged about five



Wolf playing the cello at eight years old

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Many interesting models are being developed by trust leaders across the country, but we need to be honest about just how hard it is to implement new systems and practices, says Tiffany Beck

MATs are for wiping your feet on, chief executive officers (CEOs) are evil, and trustees are their cronies. My worry is that these may too often be the impressions that some people are left with due to a slew of negative stories about our sector. These impressions are likely part of the reason behind the announcement last week that the Department for Education will consult on plans to bring the transparency of local authorities on par with academies, in order to bring to light bad practice across the board so that it can be tackled. But until that happens, the negativity is deleterious to trust leaders and damaging to the truly innovative work going: trust leaders need to speak up.

Schools are incredibly complex places, with many variables involved; as Dylan Wiliam, University College London, Emeritus Professor of Educational Assessment, says, the problems teachers need to solve are much harder and more complicated than in other sectors. When you scale up those issues from classroom to school to trust level, you have to be a little bit mad to take all of the collective pressures upon your shoulders, especially as CEO or chair of trustees.

I speak to trust leaders all over the country. The sector is evolving, with much learning going on and many interesting models being developed as we build and lead an entire system. We can't snap our fingers and make it all happen instantly or ignore



TIFFANY BECK

Chair of Trustees
Maritime Academy Trust

"We can't snap our fingers and make it all happen instantly"

frustrations felt at the length of time it often takes to implement new systems or practices. We need to be honest about just how hard it is, but also keep an eye on why we are doing

knows what working at Maritime means as we work together to drive our vision. This is key both to sustainability and to retention and recruitment.

“ The negativity is damaging to the truly innovative work going

the job in the first place.

At Maritime, we learned the ropes of this entirely different organisation, saw the possibilities, and started to scale and develop practice. Just this year, big pieces of work have been delivered on a number of fronts.

1. Collaboration: our education lead has built bespoke teams to conduct a series of reviews and tackle issues in each other's schools. We know our schools better than ever and we've structured a new continuing professional development pathway programme. Next year is focused on embedding these new systems.

2. Culture: we defined and built it from the ground up and created common language so that everyone

3. Curriculum: our curriculum is central to our vision and focuses on children devising solutions to real-world problems. We have spent a year putting it to paper and are immensely proud of the nearly finished result.

4. Finance & HR: we have centralised our finance and HR to enable schools to focus on teaching and learning. Centralisation is essential for compliance, effectiveness and efficiency.

5. Governance: we have redesigned local governance and removed duplication between the executive and non-executive arms. Now we do something because it's the right thing to do, not because it's the



way it has always been done before. Our governors have clear roles and responsibilities and the direction and focus are explicitly laid out.

It's tough by any measure, but I'm confident that the building blocks we're toiling over and the learning we're taking from challenges now will get us to where we want to be in the future.

Trust leaders need to take control of the narrative, as Leora Cruddas, CEO of the Confederation of School Trusts says. We are leaders of charitable education trusts, empowered to do things differently in order to advance education for the public benefit. That's why chief executives and volunteer trustees put in so much energy and time to overcome challenges, and subject themselves to what Stephen Tierney perfectly described as the "pernicious accountability system".

To crib Ted Dintersmith's words in What School Could Be, we're doing things differently now because rather than doing the same things in a better way, we're looking for opportunities to do better things for thousands of children. That means everything.

Opinion

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



IAN
HARTWRIGHT

Senior policy advisor, NAHT

What to do when an inspector calls



From September, heads may get just an hour or two's notice of a substantive phone discussion with an Ofsted lead inspector, says Ian Hartwright

School leaders tell us they are relieved that Ofsted has dropped plans to arrive on-site within a couple of hours of notifying a school of an inspection. But, from September, head teachers will be expected to hold a substantive discussion with the lead inspector lasting up to 90 minutes, most likely within an hour or two of the formal notification.

This is more than an administrative discussion; it will set the tone and inspection trails for the following two days. There will no longer be an opportunity to reflect overnight on how best to articulate your school's successes and challenges in that key first discussion with the lead inspector.

Ofsted is tight-lipped about the training that inspectors who conduct this call will receive but we do know that the lead inspector will probe the headteacher's view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the progress made since the last inspection and the quality of its

curriculum. Heads will also be asked to identify what they regard as the key areas for inspection "deep-dives".

How best should school leaders respond to this new reality?

While Ofsted maintains that there is no need to prepare, it is clearly prudent to have given this

your school's context and the community you serve; any recent changes that may have affected your school; and your school's progress against the areas identified for improvement since the previous inspection.

Keep in mind the strong focus that

moment's notice.

Finally, have a plan for the actual call. Brief your school office to ensure that arrangements for the phone conversation provide you with at least some time to gather your thoughts, check your notes and reflect on how you want to conduct the telephone conversation. Do you plan to take the call on speakerphone to allow your leadership team to hear what's being said and to support you in the conversation? What about the process for informing and reassuring staff? Will another member of the leadership team need to do this if the call runs beyond the end of the school day? And as well as preparing yourself, take measures to ensure the whole leadership team is equally ready to take the call if for any reason you are not in a position to take it on the day. This includes ensuring that your colleagues are equipped with the relevant information and know where to access the necessary documents.

A few simple steps really can help leaders to feel confident and in control. It can make all the difference to the impression you make of your leadership and your school.

“ The last thing anyone needs is more paperwork ”

new approach some advance consideration. There is a risk that this new approach could drive much misdirected bureaucratic activity in schools, adding to the workload of both school leaders and their staff. The last thing anyone needs is more paperwork, evaluation activity or internal reporting.

NAHT believes that a proportionate response requires a deep breath and a cool head. Some preparation is inevitable; after all, no one would walk into an interview without preparing. But that preparation should be rooted in the work that the school is already undertaking, rather than the creation of a new workstream.

First, consider in advance the following: how you would describe

inspectors will have on curriculum planning, delivery and impact and be clear in your own mind about your school's strengths and weaknesses. Pick out areas where inspectors can see best-practice and areas where you are taking steps to secure improvement.

Take simple, practical steps too. Think about keeping a short, simple aide-memoire of the above points to keep with you, for example. This could prove helpful in reducing stress and anxiety about responding "cold" to "the call", particularly if you are off-site. Similarly, ensure that your school improvement plan, self-evaluation, and your previous Ofsted report are within reach so that you can pull them out at a

Research

To mark the end of the school year, this column highlights some of the most interesting studies published in 2018-19. Each offered something new in its field, and something new for teachers.

My favourite studies of 2018-19

Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate dean at Ambition Institute

Improving engagement and attainment in maths and English courses

This report, from the Behavioural Insights Team, reviews three years of testing ways to improve student engagement and attainment in English and maths courses. The approaches tested include encouraging "grit", having students affirm things they valued while at college and using text messages ([discussed in a previous research review here](#)).

The report offers evidence that some approaches really help: increasing communication with "study supporters", such as parents and friends, can improve attendance and attainment, for example. Helpfully, it also describes interventions that didn't work so well, and tries to explain why, [such as attempts to use students' language on social media to measure their wellbeing](#).

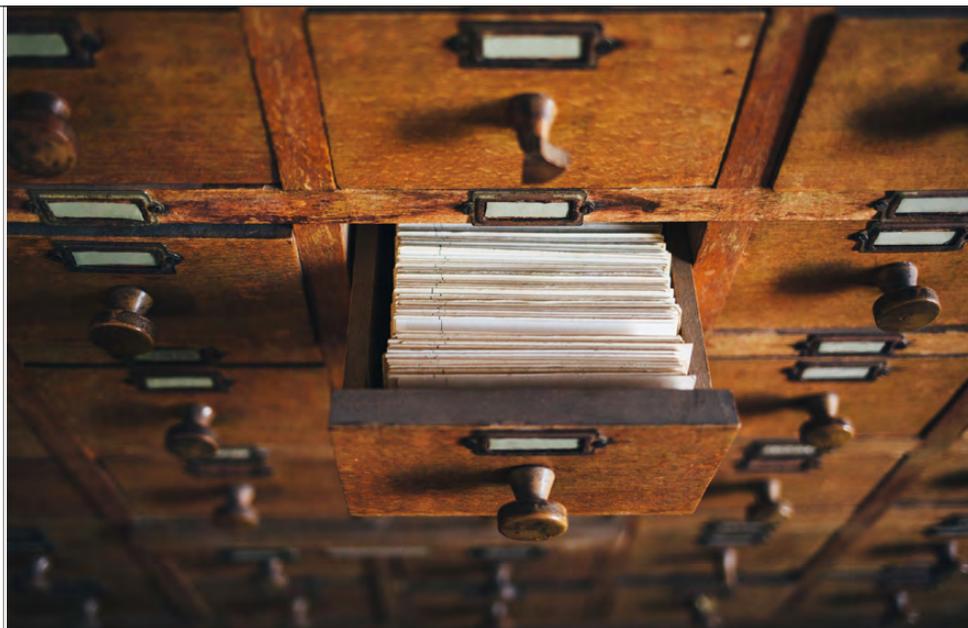
Transfer of test-enhanced learning

Retrieval practice – testing to improve learning – is increasingly popular. This meta-analysis looked at the effect of testing on transfer: students' capacity to use what they know in a new context. Reviewing a large number of existing studies, the authors show that testing helps students to transfer learning to new contexts.

The review also highlights gaps in our knowledge: very few studies test that transfer [knowledge between different domains \(maths and science, for example\)](#).

Toward a multifactorial model of expertise

Deliberate practice – intentional rehearsal to improve performance – also seems increasingly popular: this has brought greater research attention to its limits, as well as to its strengths. Advocates of deliberate practice suggest that it is the sole



ingredient of success. This paper synthesises criticisms of these arguments, noting, for example, that elite athletes who win medals often practise less than non-medallists.

The researchers note that the claims that advocates make about deliberate practice keep changing, which makes it hard to test its power. [They argue that expertise is a result of the individual, the environment and the task they are conducting.](#)

Teacher professional development and coaching

An innovative set of studies in Kenya tested the importance of individual components of professional development. Some teachers received professional development and coaching, some received this plus textbooks, and some received all of the above plus teacher guides. This showed that the most effective (and most cost-effective) approach was the one that offered the greatest support.

[By identifying exactly which ingredients made a difference, the Kenyan government was able to develop a programme that improved outcomes for primary pupils in literacy and numeracy nationally.](#)

Identifying the essential ingredients to literacy and numeracy improvement

Finally, last month a new meta-analysis of professional development in maths and science collated the results of 95 studies. It found strong overall positive effects: on average, professional development improved student learning.

The number of studies included also allowed the researchers to reach broader conclusions. They found that:

- The length of the programme and number of hours of training was not correlated with the results for students.
- Programmes that combined professional development and curriculum materials had better results.
- Programmes that included online learning had lower effects.
- While no individual professional development activity (seeing a teaching technique demonstrated, for example) was associated with improved results, a combination of at least five separate activities was linked to better outcomes.

[Click here for research.](#)



10 things you probably wouldn't know if *Schools Week* hadn't told you

1 FLEECED:

Parents with a child at the Skinners' Company's grammar school were paying nearly three times the price for a blazer when compared to its non-selective schools. Our investigation into uniform prices also revealed schools were flouting exclusive supplier rules.

2 SPLASHED-OUT:

Holland Park School spent £15,000 on fancy Farrow & Ball paint and £6,000 on Jo Malone candles. Our findings prompted a government investigation into the one-school trust, in West London, whose head is paid £260,000 a year.

3 BUSTED:

National newspapers lapped up Boris Johnson's "big" pledge to up the minimum per-pupil funding to £5,000 in secondaries if he became prime minister. Our analysis revealed this actually worked out at a paltry £49 million (it's just 0.1 per cent of the current spending budget). After being widely ridiculed, he massively upped his spending pledge to £4.6 billion.

4 NEGLECTED:

Thousands of council-maintained schools have not had their finances independently scrutinised for more than five years – with three last audited 20 years ago. Our investigation challenged the argument by anti-academy campaigners that councils have better oversight of their schools.

5 PUSHED-OUT:

The number of vulnerable pupils being placed in private alternative provision has nearly doubled. Experts said youngsters were being "brushed under the carpet" in to provision that's largely unregulated and uninspected.

6 TIGHT-FISTED:

Schools were told to replace experienced teachers with support staff on term-time contracts, limit lunch portions for pupils and keep money raised for charity. The money-saving recommendations were revealed in secret reports by the government's school resource management advisers.

7 OUSTED:

Senior national officials at NASUWT were placed on lengthy suspensions after raising concerns about the union's leadership. *Schools Week* was also banned from the union's annual conference after our investigations into the internal strife.

8 CAUGHT-OUT:

The Harris Federation, one of the country's largest academy trusts, entered hundreds of native English speakers into a qualification intended for pupils with English as a second language. While this did boost the trust's progress 8 scores, the trust denied it was gaming.

9 INSULTED:

The government offered an "insulting" £100 to compensate would-be teachers that it incorrectly failed on skills tests they needed to pass in order to progress to teacher training. The applicants, some of whom took lower-paid jobs after being failed, were informed years after failing, and are considering legal action.

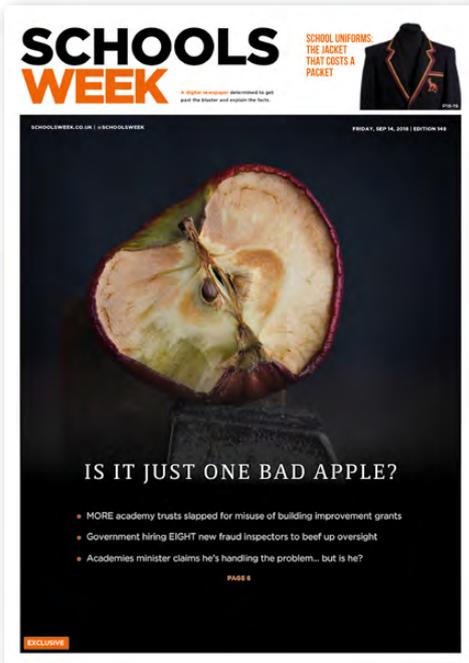
10 CUSHTY:

The failed Bright Tribe academy trust gave the brother of its founder, Michael Dwan, rent-free premises for ten years to run a private nursery on the site of one of its schools. The trust is being investigated concerning allegations of financial malpractice.



Favourite front pages

EDITION 149: SEPTEMBER 14, 2018



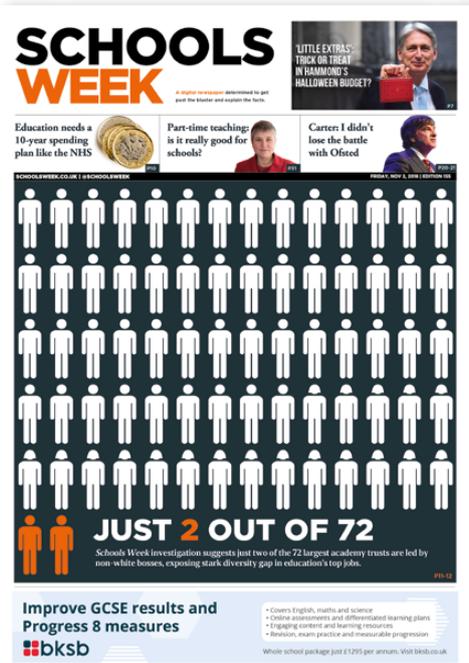
We kicked off the year with a rotting apple on the cover. A leaked letter obtained by us revealed that academies minister Lord Agnew had blamed the Bright Tribe scandal on there “always being bad apples” in the system.

EDITION 165: FEBRUARY 1, 2019



Something of a back-handed compliment for education secretary Damian Hinds as he released his first meaty policy project. While it did take him 382 days to publish an actual proper strategy, the recruitment and retention plan was widely supported.

EDITION 155: NOVEMBER 2, 2018



Our stark image represented the fact that just two of the 72 largest academy trusts in the country had non-white bosses. We exposed the diversity gap in education's top jobs – also finding that three-quarters of the jobs were held by men.

EDITION 172: MARCH 29, 2019



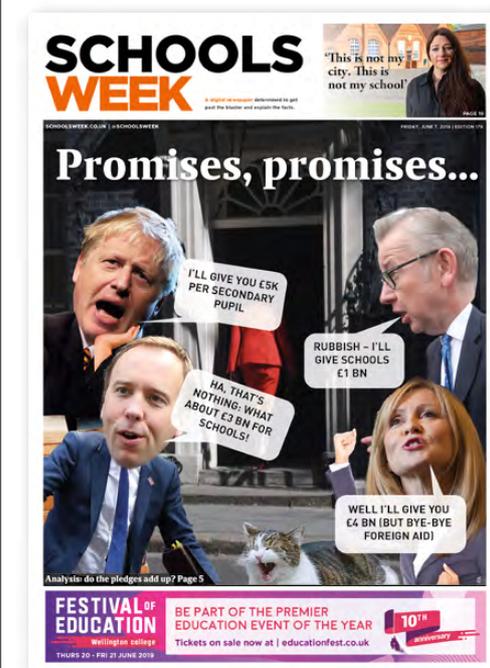
The government refused to release its cost-cutter reports, and it was easy to see why. Under the scheme, set up by academies minister Lord Agnew, schools were told to cut lunch portions, ditch experienced staff and keep money raised for charity.

EDITION 163: JANUARY 18, 2019



Education royalty Amanda Spielman revealed her new inspection framework – the crowning point for any Ofsted chief inspector. We had a 7-page special on the new plans (and even managed to get her trusty Brompton bike in, too).

EDITION 179: JUNE 7, 2019



The Conservative party leadership campaign sparked a flurry of promises over school funding boosts. But did they add up? No, we debunked most of them. And will they be kept? Who knows? That's why we plastered them over our front page!

Favourite cartoons: the academic year, as re-imagined by our cartoonist, Stan Dupp

EDITION 160: DECEMBER 7, 2018



The issue of "orphan" schools has popped up throughout the year. This neatly sums up the current government policy: throw around a bit of extra cash in the hope an academy trust will help them out.

EDITION 161: DECEMBER 14, 2018



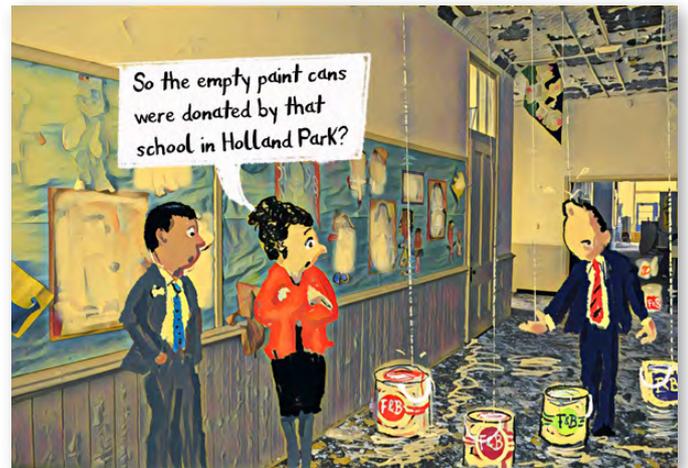
What's not to love about academies minister Lord Agnew as the kick-ass Neo from the film *The Matrix*? (This may also be the editor's favourite film...)

EDITION 170: MARCH 15, 2019



Education secretary Damian Hinds loves an expert group, but after the announcement of his latest panel (to advise on teacher wellbeing), even Brenda from Bristol was fed up.

EDITION 171: MARCH 22, 2019



The image captured perfectly the current inequality of school funding – with one school spending thousands on luxury paint, while others had to put out buckets to catch leaks.

EDITION 172: MARCH 29, 2019



In a rather less flattering portrayal, Lord Agnew is pictured as the workhouse master in *Oliver Twist* after we revealed that his cost-cutting advisers told a school to cut lunch portions to save money.

EDITION 178: MAY 24, 2019



Take your pick for puns after the latest setback for the government's beloved EBacc: the wheels have come off, Messrs Gibb and Hinds are flogging a dead horse, they're being attacked on all sides, etc.

Diversity count

Improving diversity without tokenism

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Sitting in the audience at Oasis Community Learning's Break The Cycle event for BAME leaders in March, I was struck by how unusual it is, as a white man, to be in the minority, even in a city as diverse as London.

Speaking to heads at that event, I learned more in one morning about the barriers our system puts in the way for BAME people who aspire to be school leaders than I have in almost five years of covering this sector.

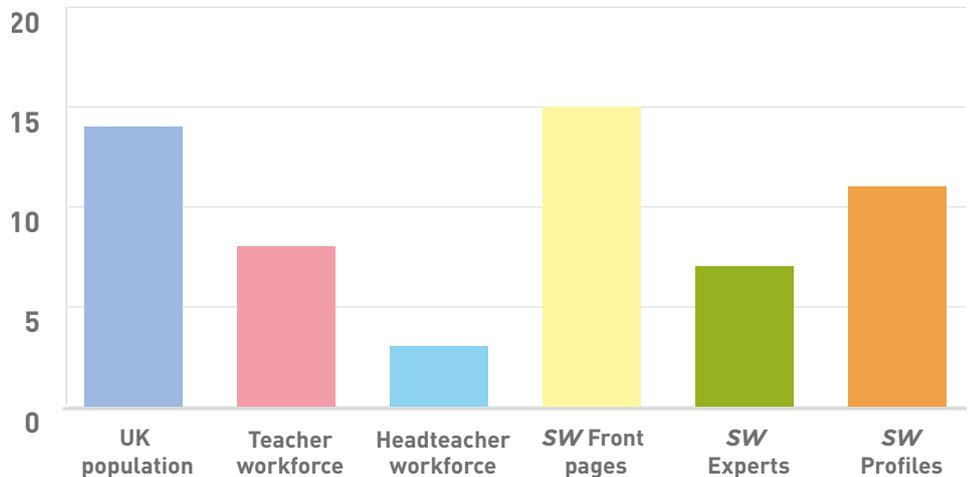
This highlights why it's so important that we as journalists report on and respond to all the communities we serve.

As stab victim Amani Simpson told delegates, young BAME pupils are crying out for more role models who look like them. However, although the proportion of BAME trainees entering teaching has increased, the proportion in leadership remains stubbornly low.

Last year, as part of our annual diversity round-up, my former *Schools Week* colleague Cath Murray wrote about the need to "cast the net" more widely to ensure that those from minority groups are on our radar without resorting to tokenism.

Our representation statistics this year

BAME REPRESENTATION IN *SCHOOLS WEEK* 2018-2019 COMPARED TO POPULATION DATA



show that we need to get better at that.

While we're pleased the representation of BAME people on our front pages has improved this year, we acknowledge that we've gone backwards in terms of the diversity of our experts and profile subjects. We intend to do better.

If this year has taught us anything, it's also that equality for members of the LGBT+ community is still a long way off.

The homophobic backlash against moves to teach about same-sex relationships in schools and the steep rise in the number

of transgender hate crimes only serve to remind those of us who work in the media that we have a responsibility to champion the rights of these communities.

To this end, our focus in the next year will be on improving LGBT+ representation and visibility in *Schools Week*, and ensuring our platform is as accessible as possible to LGBT+ voices, particularly those of trans and non-binary people.

So, this is a call-out to our readers: if you want to write for us – get in touch. Contact news@schoolsweek.co.uk

EXPERTS (EXCLUDING ONLINE)

TOTAL ARTICLES: 99
WOMEN EXPERTS: 47
MEN EXPERTS: 52
BAME EXPERTS: 7 (7%)

PROFILES

TOTAL ARTICLES: 28
WOMEN PROFILES: 14
MEN PROFILES: 14
BAME PROFILES: 3 (11%)

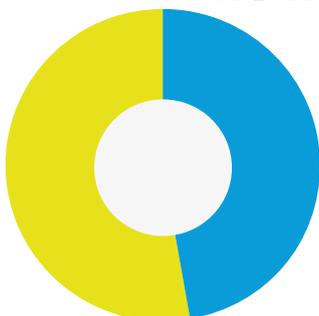
FRONT PAGES

TOTAL PEOPLE PICTURED: 72
WOMEN: 35
MEN: 37
BAME: 11 (15%)

Gender breakdown

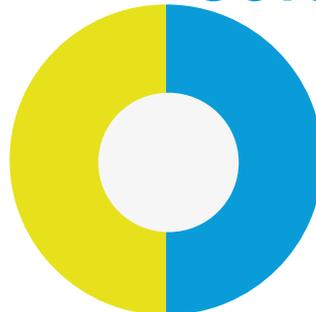
● MEN ● WOMEN

EXPERTS 47.47%



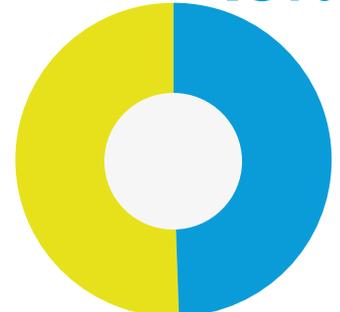
52.53%

PROFILES 50%



50%

GENDER 49%



51%

Books to read this summer

Are you wondering which books to read on your summer break? We asked six people in the education field to recommend two books that they've particularly enjoyed over the past 12 months.



Reviewed by: Damian Hinds, education secretary

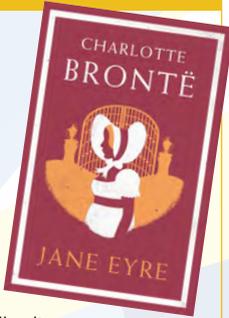
Jane Eyre

Charlotte Bronte, Penguin Books

PLAY

Jane Eyre was my favourite novel this year, which I re-read as part of my recent "revisits" to classics that I first read in my school days, along with Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is nice to return

to a familiar story, but read with a different perspective than the one I had reading it when I was growing up.



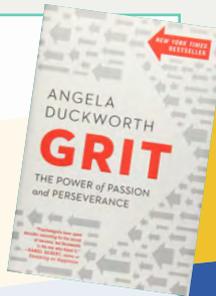
Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Angela Duckworth, Simon & Schuster

WORK

In terms of educational books, I nominate *Grit* by Angela Duckworth as a good book to pick up this summer. The development of character has been something that I've been interested in, and this book's main idea – of committing to "one hard thing", which she defines as something that

requires regular, deliberate practice – really chimed with me. I have found it influential in thinking about how young people can develop character and resilience and it is important in developing the five foundations of character I talked about earlier this year.



Reviewed by: Angela Rayner, shadow education secretary

Becoming

Michelle Obama, Viking

PLAY

One of the best political autobiographies I've read is Michelle Obama's *Becoming*. It's a rich, entertaining book, and an antidote to the politics of Donald Trump. It's also not too heavy-going for a holiday read. I've been inspired by Obama's work on global girls' education; the fact that 98

million adolescent girls throughout the world are denied education is of huge concern. She's an inspiring woman in public life and this comes across strongly in this book. I hope we'll see her again in the White House.



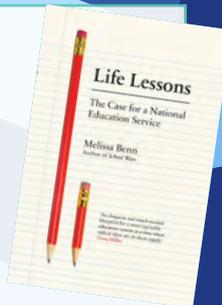
Life Lessons: The Case for a National Education Service

Melissa Benn, Verso

WORK

A book I can't recommend enough is Melissa Benn's *Life Lessons*. Benn is not only an outstanding campaigner but she's also a brilliant writer. What I loved about her book is the mixture of radicalism and pragmatism; Benn presents solutions to the many

problems facing parents, pupils and teachers today. This book is an essential argument for an equal and fair education system, and a vital contribution to our National Education Service, one of Labour's flagship policy proposals.



Reviewed by: Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, headteacher, Anderton Park primary school, Birmingham

Burial Rites

Hannah Kent, Picador

PLAY

Set in Iceland, 1829, Agnes is accused of murder. She is kept on a farm until her end. The relentless bitterness of cold, the utter brutality of hard labour needed simply to survive and the icy ease with which women are condemned make this an incredible portrayal of life. Chilling in every sense, based on a true story of the

last person to face the death penalty in Iceland, Kent's words ink a lasting tattoo on the soul.



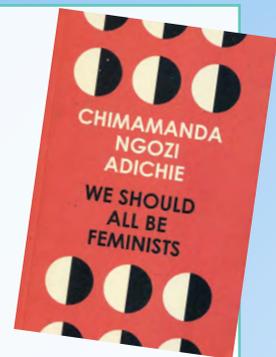
We Should All Be Feminists

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Fourth Estate

WORK

This tiny book (48 pages) should sharpen every school's commitment to equality of the sexes. Misogyny is the silent inequality that 52 per cent of humans face too readily and regularly. The book helps the reader to recognise, for example, that the term "like a girl" is a misogynistic insult and should be

treated as such. As the author points out: "We must raise our daughters differently. We must raise our sons differently." As leaders, we must tackle this head on in our schools too.



Books to read this summer

Are you wondering which books to read on your summer break? We asked six people in the education field to recommend two books that they've particularly enjoyed over the past 12 months.



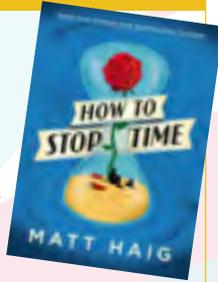
Reviewed by: Natalie Perera, executive director, Education Policy Institute

How to Stop Time Matt Haig, Canongate

PLAY

Although I have followed Matt Haig on Twitter for a while now, I only got around to reading one of his books earlier this year. I wasn't disappointed; the protagonist, Tom, only ages one year in every 14, rendering this story a combination of historical fiction and mystery. Haig's ability to evoke a sense of

both place and time is awe-inspiring and provides perfect escapism. It's a journey through the eyes of a wonderfully crafted character and, above all, a beautifully written story about love and loneliness.



The Unexpected Leader Iesha Small, Independent Thinking Press

WORK

Through the stories of real people, Iesha Small sheds a much-needed light on the complexities and demands of school leadership. Through her refreshingly simple yet convincing narrative, Small tackles issues including workload, impostor-syndrome and mental health. In challenging the stereotype of great

leaders, she tells us it's OK to be different. The experiences she has gathered, together with her own analysis of the lessons we can learn by listening closely to our colleagues, provides an invaluable resource for teachers, leaders and policymakers alike.



Reviewed by: Josephine Morgan, head of pastoral curriculum, Portsmouth Grammar School

Natives: Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire Akala, Two Roads

PLAY

Part-autobiography, part-historical, cultural and political commentary, this book is a confronting and illuminating read for British educators. Against the backdrop of his own life story, Akala highlights the inequalities and injustices still facing black boys in British schools.

From harsher punishments to assumptions about intelligence, the reader is challenged to confront their own unconscious racism and profiling of pupils. Beyond this, Akala questions the future hegemony of British rule against the backdrop of Brexit, Trump and the rise of Eastern democracies.



A Beginner's Guide to Being Mental Natasha Devon, Bluebird

Natasha Devon, Bluebird

WORK

Hilarious and engaging, this book is a fantastic read for anyone who's a little bit mental (all teachers included!). Drawing upon her own experience of anxiety, her extensive work in mental health and the research of experts in multiple fields, Natasha Devon shares her "A-Z of Being Mental from Anxiety to

Zero F**ks Given", as the subtitle puts it. Relatable and empowering, this book is a must-read for anyone working with children. It compels the reader to reflect on their own mental health and fosters a more informed and compassionate approach towards others.



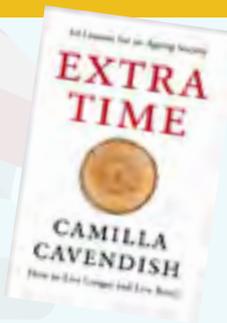
Reviewed by: Anna Trehewey, executive director, LKMco

Extra Time Camilla Cavendish, HarperCollins

PLAY

If you, like me, are having the dawning realisation that the traditional model of retiring at 60 on a final-pension salary is way out of your reach, then this book is for you. It explores the latest research to make a compelling case for why we need to overhaul notions of what ageing and career paths look like. We're all living

longer: this book shows you how to make the most of that extra time. Spoiler alert: beach holidays aren't quite the answer. Soz.

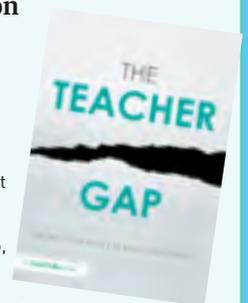


The Teacher Gap Becky Allen and Sam Sims, David Fulton

WORK

This is the total gift of a book, especially for me, a former teacher who spends a lot of time researching how we get more teachers into the classroom and how we get them to stay there. Not only does it analyse the challenges facing the profession, it also presents practical solutions for how schools and

government can move forward. So, if you're thinking about teacher workforce, whether you're at the chalkface or at one remove, this book is essential reading.



BLOGS: YEARLY ROUNDUP

This summer we asked our blog reviewers to tell us about their most memorable blogpost of the school year. Here's their pick.



AMIR AREZOO IS VICE PRINCIPAL OF HORIZON COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BARNSELY

@WORKEDGECHAOS



DEBRA KIDD IS AN AUTHOR AND FORMER TEACHER

@DEBRAKIDD



ROBIN CONWAY IS DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AT JOHN MASON SCHOOL

@JMSREFLECT



HANNAH WILSON IS HEADTEACHER AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF WOMENED

@ETHICAL_LEADER



JON HUTCHINSON IS ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER, PRIMARY TEACHER

@JON_HUTCHINSON_

Most memorable blog post of 2018-19

Hannah Wilson

Ramadan Insights

Yusuf Ibrahim, @teachernudge

Yusuf Ibrahim wrote a series of 29 blogs to chart his experience of Ramadan this year. From insights on how one prepares to fast, to reflections throughout the month on fasting and the act of breaking fast, Ibrahim took us on a journey with his daily entries. Each blog informed us about the nuanced cultural traditions of Islam, offering the reader a glimpse into someone else's life. Ibrahim's reflections on his wellbeing, his productivity and the way his blogs enhanced his relationships with his work colleagues are honest and thoughtful. If you don't have time to read them all, check out day 9, 19 and day 27 to benefit from his profound reflections on his faith. This blog series embodied my belief that we need to celebrate the cultural richness of our society.

Jon Hutchinson

In praise of a prosaic curriculum

Clare Sealy, @ClareSealy

It is no exaggeration to say that Clare Sealy has almost single-handedly transformed the way that primary school teachers and leaders consider what they are teaching and how they teach it. Tragically, there has been something of a Sealy blog-drought over the past several months.

In need of a fix, and because it's so damn good, I have found myself returning to this blogpost from last year again and again. Tackling one of the slipperiest words in education, "engagement", Clare makes the argument for a simple yet effective core curriculum in primary teaching. At a time when many schools are panicking and over-complicating their curriculum design, it may well be worth returning to this piece.

Robin Conway

What is academic language?

Diane Leedham, @DiLeed

There are so many people who generously share their expertise, ideas and experiences for the benefit of students they will never meet, that to select just one blog was an incredibly difficult task. It is a close-run thing, but I believe that I have applied more ideas in my classroom as a result of this post by Diane Leedham than anything else I have read so far this year. Leedham has challenged me to think carefully about how to build my students' familiarity with academic language and their ability to use it, without rejecting "everyday language". She argues that the successful acquisition of academic language applies across all key stages and is truly powerful. She is absolutely right. The post stands out as one that is empowering, ambitious and yet highly practical and I can only recommend frequent re-reading.

Debra Kidd

An argument for discovery learning in early years classrooms

Peter Ford @Edscaredprofane

Ruth Swailes @SwailesRuth

In this well-referenced blog post, Peter Ford and Ruth Swailes unpick some of the misconceptions around discovery learning and constructivism as presented by researchers such as Kirschner, Sweller and Clarke. Arguments made by these and other academics against modes of learning such as inquiry, problem solving, discovery and constructivism have been increasingly influential among teachers and policy makers, but their definitions of these terms are vague. This blog looks closely at what is really meant by discovery learning, with the specific developmental needs of young children in mind.

It offers all the best things that a blog post should: it's polite, measured and well reasoned; meticulously researched, with clear examples, and it serves as a warning to gung-ho ideologues of the importance of both knowing your stuff and the ability to communicate your case well.

Amir Arezoo

Great teaching: the power of expectations

Tom Sherrington, @teacherhead

The key message in this blogpost is that your students will meet whatever expectations you have. This is not new to me, but the way Tom Sherrington outlines his argument is a call to action that we should take up if we want to develop an aspirant culture in our schools, no matter how challenging. When I read Sherrington's blogpost, I shared it with fellow senior leaders and it was distributed to our staff on our return last September. Since then, it has been a touchstone for every key conversation, every training session, every leadership meeting that I've led or been part of. It will continue to do so for a long time to come.

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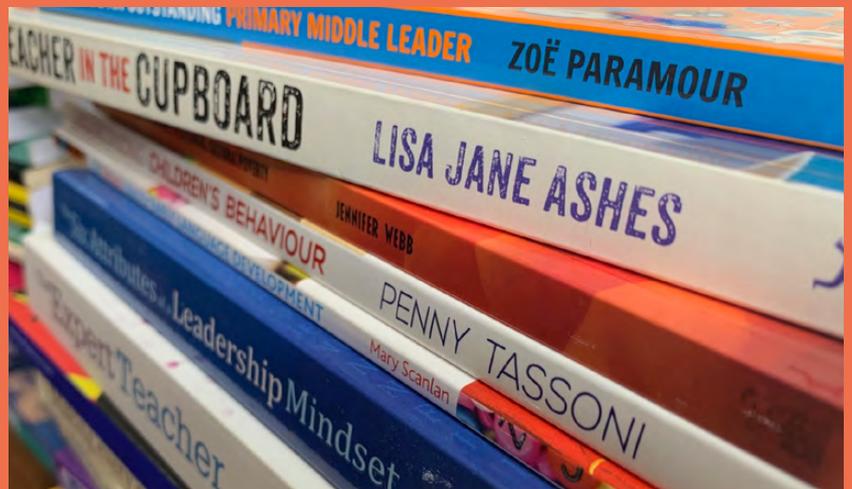
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QTS skills tests to be scrapped

Louise

My son is struggling to pass the English, missing it by one or two marks each time. I work at a secondary school and employed an English teacher to tutor my son. They did an English test paper together and only got 43% on the punctuation! She assured me that what they had put was absolutely correct, so I'm not sure where the assurance is for parents and pupils in schools that teachers are of a high literacy standard! Please abolish these tests: my son will be an amazing teacher and an absolute credit to the profession, which is why University of Exeter have accepted him for a PGCE.

Imran Ali

These tests assess basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills! Surely teachers should be expected to possess a good level of knowledge from each of these areas. The QTS is the most effective and unbiased way of assessing this. Move the power to the PGCE providers, then all fairness has gone.

Teacher A may have a lenient mentor who will pass them. Teacher B may have a harsh mentor who will fail them for the sake of one area.

Tighten rules on parental consultation before academy conversion, DfE told

Shelley Whitehead

Effective stakeholder communication and a thorough and meaningful consultation are an essential element of the academy conversion process. Getting the timing right is also important. Whilst consulting as early as possible in the school's thinking is the best approach, it's also important that a school knows what exactly it is consulting on – ie, governance model, structural implications, asset transfers, what will change and what will stay the same etc – so that consultation is meaningful.

This is often easier to set out for stakeholders when a school is considering joining an existing academy trust that has known structures, policies and processes; but it takes more planning when a group of schools are forming a new trust together, as there are stages in the design and conversion process that the schools would need to have defined to enable them to consult meaningfully on.

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Johanna

QTS skills tests to be scrapped

This test system is completely disconnected from pedagogy and the skills required to be a teacher. The very fact that an on-screen test of this nature can potentially exclude dyslexic candidates highlights that an inclusive approach to recruitment is clearly not on the agenda. Excluding candidates who cannot read at this speed is the direct opposite of what I would do as a teacher.



I am dyslexic and have several tests and assessments as evidence, which I obtained at school and university. I got on to a PGCE for German and Spanish teaching two years in a row – both subjects have a severe shortage of teachers. I am a polyglot, with a masters in art and design, a good BA and a lot of experience working in support and cover in state schools, teaching at universities and on cultural language programmes. I was planning to teach Spanish, German, art and design; however, this skills test excluded me from the process. I was treated as if I had an illness. Despite sending all the evidence, I was told my documents needed to explicitly state that I had difficulty reading on a screen and that I should see a doctor to obtain further evidence. My experience and knowledge of my own dyslexia were completely disregarded. The people running the skills test...showed a complete lack of understanding of dyslexia. I had never been sent to a doctor for it and found this whole process humiliating, so much so that I have no intention of reapplying. I realised that I would never want to teach in a system which is driven by data and results anyway, where teachers receive little pay for what is a highly stressful job.

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

Spielman: it's a 'red herring' to blame plunge in D&T numbers solely on Ebacc

Mike Jenkins

I was leader of curriculum in a high school for 12 years until 2016 when I retired. When Gove brought in the Ebacc he ended real choice for KS4 students. The pressure from parents on students to take Ebacc subjects and avoid other subjects (art, ICT, music, religious studies and vocational subjects) was palpable. The pressure on myself in the senior team via the need to optimise performance to restrict the curriculum was very strong, though I resisted until I retired. Gove effectively killed choice and condemned large numbers of students to having to follow a curriculum totally inappropriate to their needs.

YEAR^{IN} WESTMINSTER

Our review of what went into central government 2018-19

AUTUMN

School staff were given a nice welcome back to work last September in the form of updated guidance warning them about their political views. Serves them right for, erm, telling the truth on school funding in the run-up to the 2017 general election.

However, it was Amanda Spielman's refusal to comment on school funding issues that was her downfall in a particularly damning report on the school inspection system from MPs, who are clearly just wistful for the days of Sir Michael Wilshaw and his willingness to comment on EVERYTHING, ALL THE TIME.

Meanwhile, Nick Gibb was on fine form at his favourite education conference. The schools minister defended the government's grammar school expansion plans at ResearchEd, despite a distinct lack of evidence that they do anything other than disadvantage those who don't go to them.

During party conference season, we learned a little bit more about Labour's plans for a National Education Service (just not any actual details about how it will operate or work), while Damian Hinds used an uneventful speech to announce a £10m behaviour fund and a load of stuff he'd already pledged.

At his autumn budget, the chancellor Philip Hammond became the laughing stock of the schools community when he pledged just £400 million for "little extras" – a move described as "tone-deaf" and derided by, well, almost everyone.

Meanwhile, school leaders were further aggrieved when Lord Agnew, the academies minister, wagered them a bottle of champagne that he could find more savings in their schools – comments he later defended in a *Schools Week* interview as just deliberately "stirring up controversy" to get schools to participate in his cost-cutting measures. That's OK then!

SPRING

We started 2019 with a cheery admission from Lord Hill, a former schools minister and one of the main architects of the free schools programme, that some of the institutions were "bound to fail". His successors must have loved that.

In the same month, Lord O'Shaughnessy, another Tory peer and academy enthusiast, was criticised after it emerged his own trust, Floreat, had advertised for unpaid workers, and Future, a trust run by Lord Nash, another Tory peer and former academies minister, was found to have flouted governance guidelines. A good month for the reputations of both the academies system and the House of Lords!

January also saw the publication of the government's long-awaited teacher recruitment and retention strategy, which – in an incredibly rare moment for the DfE – won plaudits from across the board. Only time will tell if it will actually be implemented in full though...Brexit and Boris may get in the way.

Continuing a trend set with his calls for more pupils to climb trees at Christmas, Damian Hinds launched a new plan for character education, including another expert group. What a novel idea!

Into union conference season and it was time for another expert panel to be announced, this time on teacher wellbeing. That'll do the trick!

And in late March, Lord Agnew became the sector's chief bogeyman once again after *Schools Week* revealed how his cost-cutting consultants told a school to replace experienced teachers with support staff on term-time contracts, while another was urged to limit lunch portions for pupils.

SUMMER

Jeremy Corbyn received a hero's welcome when he pledged to scrap SATs at the National Education Union's annual conference. All Labour needs to do now is come up with an actual replacement, which we're not holding our breath for (yes, there's still been no further information about that pesky NES).

At the NAHT conference in May, Hinds called for help from headteachers to sort out the mess of SEND funding, leaving incredulous leaders wondering whether he realised that's actually his job, not theirs.

Exclusions were on the agenda a few days later when the long-awaited Timpson Review was finally published. The document confirmed *Schools Week's* scoop from earlier in the year that the review would demand schools be held accountable for excluded pupils and a few other policies, but very little else of note. We understand his initial draft made for much more interesting reading...

In June, the Tory leadership race continued in earnest, prompting school funding pledges from most of the candidates, but some were more generous than others. Boris Johnson pledged a £5,000 minimum spend per-pupil for secondary schools. But most are already funded above that rate, meaning his pledge amounted to under £50m, less than 0.1% of the total schools budget. How generous!

Funnily enough, Johnson didn't manage to win the backing of moderate Cameron Damian Hinds, who went for his predecessor Michael Gove and then Jeremy Hunt when Gove was unceremoniously knocked out.

"It's not been a difficult decision," remarked Hinds at the time. DO YOU NEED SOME ICE FOR THAT BURN, BOJO?



Diocese of Norwich
Education and
Academies Trust

Diocesan House,
109 Dereham Road, Easton,
Norwich NR9 5ES



DIOCESE OF NORWICH EDUCATION AND ACADEMIES TRUST (DNEAT)

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Interview date: Tuesday 24th September 2019

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