

SCHOOLS WEEK

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FRIDAY, NOV 1, 2019 | EDITION 192

On a day when festive fun should have filled school halls, thousands now face closing for a **THIRD** time this year to become makeshift polling booths. As school leaders scramble to rearrange nativity plays because of the snap election, we ask ...

Has Boris stolen Christmas?

- Hundreds of schools face Christmas nativity disruption after politicians back election
- MP calls for apology as parents left in lurch, with breakfast clubs also cancelled
- Councils pledge to reduce reliance on schools as polling stations after complaints
- Headteachers vow 'immutable' festivities will go ahead



INVESTIGATES

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Election 2019



The Christmas show must go on... but not on December 12

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Hundreds of schools are rescheduling nativity plays and Christmas concerts while parents scramble to make childcare arrangements, following the announcement of next month's general election.

The election on Thursday, December 12, called to break the parliamentary stalemate over Brexit, will take place in the penultimate week of term for most schools.

School leaders and MPs have warned of disruption as schools are forced to become polling stations.

For some it will be the third time this year they have had to close – in May ballot boxes moved in for local and then EU parliamentary elections.

'Brexit screws up Xmas. Cheers'

Helen Williamson, the head of Billingshurst Primary School, in Horsham, West Sussex, tweeted she now has to "deal with" an election "in the middle of our Christmas productions and nativity performances".

The local council has snubbed the school's pleas for it not to be used as a polling station, and Williamson added: "Brexit screws up Christmas. Cheers."

Of 1,450 primary teachers surveyed by Teacher Tapp, 116 (one in 12) said the election would disrupt a planned activity such as a nativity play or concert.

When secondaries were taken into account, 219 respondents said there would be some kind of disruption, including to end-of-year assessments.

Schools Week analysis of the 2015 general election found one in six schools had to close or partially close.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the timing of December's election "could prove particularly disruptive, landing during a special time of year for many primary schools and clashing with nativity plays or other seasonal celebrations".

Breakfast club cancelled, parents left in lurch

At St Jude's Church of England Primary School in Herne Hill, south London, leaders have moved their reception nativity play to the following day.

Alexandra New, the school's head, said she would normally offer a breakfast and after-school club in the "extra space we have, but I can't offer that on



an election day because of safeguarding and all the others issues that arise from it.

"It's hard to find solutions for parents really, other than just saying 'we're sorry, you'll need to sort yourselves out with some childcare or not go to work'."

Simon Jackson, the head of the nearby St Leonard's C of E Primary School in Streatham, said schools were having to pick up "responsibility for thinking about our parent and family community, because there certainly hasn't been any consideration given to it by parliamentarians".

The school will move its infant party to the week after the election, but a reception trip to London Zoo on December 12, already paid for by parents, will go ahead. Pupils will have to be brought in through a separate entrance to be registered and then moved on to coaches.

"Elections always present a bit of a challenge in terms of how much notice we're given, but it's always much more difficult to shove something into the calendar for December at short notice," he said.

Politicians should 'say sorry' for disruption

Speaking in the House of Commons earlier this week, Anne Main, the Conservative MP for St Albans, said politicians should be "saying sorry" for the "cancelled Christmas decorations or whatever else was going on in halls that are now going to be having election proceedings".

Earlier this year, hundreds of parents petitioned Brighton and Hove council to stop using schools as polling places.

The council said it had aimed through a recent review to minimise disruption.

Alex Phillips, a Green Party councillor for the centre of the city, told Schools Week the election "is going to mean already overworked teachers having to move events and potentially cause parents to miss out on seeing their children take part in a celebratory rite of passage".

Some councils – including Wolverhampton and Northampton – are proposing to reduce the number of schools used as polling stations to minimise the impact on children's education.

However, it's unlikely the changes will be in place in time for December 12.

But school leaders are defiant. Reach2, England's largest primary-only academy trust, has confirmed Christmas events will be moved to ensure they go ahead.

Sir Steve Lancashire, the trust's chief executive, said: "These traditions are very important to children, families and are immutable. Elections come and go."

Pre-election rules delay Ofsted's annual report

Ofsted will delay publication of its annual report as it seeks to avoid making any statements that relate to its own performance.

Civil servants and public bodies cannot publish anything that could be considered political in the period before an election, known as *purdah*.

But the watchdog is particularly hamstrung this year as Labour, the Lib Dems and Greens have all committed to abolishing it.

It's highly likely that Ofsted's annual report – normally released in December – will be published after the election. It reveals how the watchdog has performed over the year.

Ofsted also won't be able to publish any focused inspections of multi-academy trusts, inspection reports for local authority

children's services, or any commentary or research reports.

However, it anticipates its standard school inspection reports will not be affected.

The Department for Education will not approve any academy orders, nor make decisions about the movement of academies between trusts.

Consultation responses and other expected policy decisions will also be delayed until after the election.

There are also questions about applications under wave 14 of the free schools programme, which close on November 11.

The government is yet to confirm what will happen, but in the past applicants have waited about six months to hear back.

Purdah will start next week.

Election 2019

Money, money, money – and what to do with Ofsted

It's official then: the first pre-Christmas election for almost a century. And yes, Brexit will hog the headlines, but education is set for a key role. Here is a round-up of what we can expect in each's party's manifesto

Conservatives

The Conservatives have already announced a great deal of what is likely to feature in their manifesto, and there will be a real focus on schools.

On funding it will make a big deal about plans to increase education spending – but expect some smoke and mirrors over the figures.

The Conservatives use £14 billion as the figure of how much they are pumping into schools (which is a cumulative total over the next three years).

The budget will actually increase by £7 billion by 2022 (which works out as £4.3 billion extra in *real-terms*).

An existing pledge to raise teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 should also feature.

The party will also seek to put distance between it and Labour on the issues of Ofsted and private schools.

Whether the Tories will seek to grant Ofsted new powers remains to be seen, but expect to see some love-bombing of the inspectorate.

The Sunday Times has reported the government could reintroduce a version of the assisted places scheme in which government funding helps poorer pupils in to private schools.

Pledges about more grammar school places are also expected, but these are unlikely to go much further than the existing selective school expansion fund scheme.

Questions remain other whether recent pledges will feature, such as the promise to implement the recommendations of the Timpson review of exclusions, introduce a duty on schools to help tackle knife crime and review post-16 qualifications.



Gavin Williamson, education secretary

Labour

Labour has also made a series of big announcements on education – most notably a pledge to replace Ofsted with a local authority-led school accountability system.

Earlier this year the party also said it would get rid of SATs for 7 and 11-year-olds, and scrap the new reception baseline assessment.

Labour is also expected to come up with a funding pledge that will outweigh Conservative promises, and recommit to the 2017 pledges of universal free school meals for juniors and an arts pupil premium.

The party will be under pressure to reveal more details about its long-touted national education service, which is still slim on detail. One issue is what a "middle tier" between government and academies would look like.

Another big question is how the party will address private schools. Members voted in September to make it party policy to seize private school land and assets and redistribute them among state schools. But this is privately opposed by Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, and John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, so is unlikely to make it to the manifesto.

The party will want a compromise that seeks to keep the abolitionists on-side without alienating supporters.

Behind the scenes, Labour is also keen to look at school accountability measures, in particular Progress 8 and the EBacc, but this may be one reform too many for an impending election.



Angela Rayner, shadow education secretary

Lib Dems

The Lib Dems' policy platform looks similar to Labour's – although the party would insist that it pledged some of the proposals first.

It wants to scrap Ofsted and primary testing, and has pledged to reverse school cuts with an "emergency cash injection".

On academies, the party wants to put councils in charge of all school admissions, and repeal the rule that all new schools have to be free schools.

In October, Layla Moran, the party's education spokesperson, also said the party wanted to "end the crisis in special needs education" and "mend the hole in SEND funding".



Layla Moran, education spokesperson

Brexit party

Nigel Farage's new party has said very little about education.

Given it's made up of more than ex-Ukip members, it would be wrong to assume it has similar policies to Farage's previous party, such as opening a grammar school in every town and making efforts to end "extremism" in schools.

However, the party doesn't appear to have publicised an education policy, so there's not an awful lot to go on.

We contacted the party to find out more, but it didn't respond by the time we went to print.



Green party

The Greens' education policy, updated in 2017, states that decisions about education should be devolved to "the most local level that is possible", but that monitoring by councils is needed "to ensure equal opportunities, accessibility and standardisation".

The party wants to integrate free schools and academies into the local authority system, and has long been a proponent of scrapping Ofsted and SATs.

It has also shown interest in replacing the national curriculum with a set of learning entitlements and in abolishing league tables.



Vix Lowthion, education spokesperson

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Investigation: Ofsted

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Schools drop 3-year GCSEs under new Ofsted focus

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

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EXCLUSIVE

One of the country's largest academy trusts is reviewing whether to ditch three-year GCSEs across all its schools, the first sign that leaders are switching their practice to meet Ofsted's new focus on curriculum.

Others are also lengthening their key stage 3 curriculum following criticism from the watchdog. An analysis of monitoring visits shows that multiple schools rated "inadequate" or "requires improvement" are now deemed to be improving after changing their curriculum structure.

The watchdog had assured school leaders there would be no "Ofsted-approved curriculum" under its new regime.

But Carole Willis, the chief executive at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), said the change "demonstrates the powerful influence of the accountability regime, and how significantly it affects school behaviours".

An NFER survey in April found more than half of secondaries began teaching GCSE content in year 9, while the government's school snapshot survey last year revealed year 9 pupils were studying for key stage 4 in all subjects in 35 per cent of schools.

Ofsted made a monitoring visit on September 17 to Shenley Academy in Birmingham, which it rated inadequate in October last year.

Its report said leaders "identified some serious weaknesses in key stage 3" which had resulted in "significant gaps" in pupils' knowledge, and noted the school taught a two-year key stage 3.

However, it added: "The key stage 3 curriculum is currently under review. Leaders want to change the length of the key stage, as well as the time allocated to each subject."

Shenley is run by E-Act, which has 29 schools including 12 secondaries. A spokesperson for the trust said the review "reflects a wider trust-wide approach" and focus on curriculum.



When pressed by *Schools Week*, the spokesperson confirmed that discussions about all its schools changing to a three-year key stage 3 were ongoing, but stressed the final decision would be left to individual schools.

They added: "We are confident that, as highlighted by Shenley's Ofsted report, this approach is a sustainable model that will empower academies and their leaders to transform the provision in our academies."

The Prescott School in Liverpool, run by The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust, received a monitoring visit on September 11 after an inadequate rating in March.

Inspectors commended the school for ending early entry to GCSEs. David Donnelly, the trust's chief executive, said the change was a "collective decision" taken last year by the heads of the trust's four secondary schools.

"We were obviously heartened to see that the new Ofsted framework supports this approach, but first and foremost the rationale for this move was to ensure that our students had access to a much broader curriculum than they had been offered previously."

Merrill Academy in Derby, rated inadequate in April, was also commended

in its monitoring inspection on September 19 for moving most subjects to a three-year key stage 3.

Neil Calvert, chief executive of The Northworthy Trust, which runs the school, said all three of its secondaries were now largely three-year key stage 3 for a "combination of factors".

"Ofsted's approach was a consideration, but not a determining factor," he said.

Stephen Rollett, a curriculum and inspection specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the union was "continuing to keep a close eye on how this issue develops".

He said it was "important schools do not feel under pressure to change their curriculum model if their existing model is working well for their pupils".

Kaley Foran, the lead content editor at The Key, said there was "no one size fits all" curriculum. The important thing was having "a clear rationale and evidence that its key stage structure helps pupils achieve to the best of their ability".

A spokesperson for Ofsted said inspectors would be "particularly alert" to signs of a narrow curriculum in key stages 2 and 3, and would want to see that pupils could still study a "broad range of subjects in sufficient depth".

Investigation: Ofsted

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New inspections 'still disadvantage' less affluent schools

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INVESTIGATES

Schools with challenging intakes are still disadvantaged under Ofsted's new framework, suggests an analysis of the first inspections.

Although the sample size is small – it looks at the first 36 inspections – the findings seem to challenge assurances from Ofsted that its new framework would level the playing field.

Amanda Spielman (pictured), the chief inspector, admitted last year that the old framework made it "harder to get a good or outstanding grade if your test scores are low" as a result of a "challenging or deprived intake".

She insisted the new framework would "reward schools in challenging circumstances that are raising standards through strong curricula".

But the new study found inspected schools with the highest prior attainment intakes were twice as likely to be rated 'good' as those with the lowest.

Gary May, the vice-principal at Dover Christ Church Academy, Kent, who carried out the analysis, said it showed a "clear disparity in outcome" when comparing schools at the top and bottom end of disability and advantage.

Ofsted said it would not comment on "small sample data sets" before next month's publication of its first management information under the new framework.

The analysis found of the ten schools ranked highest on prior attainment, eight were rated 'good' under the new framework and two 'requires improvement'. Eight had fewer students on free school meals than the national average, and two had above average.

Of the ten schools ranked lowest on prior attainment, just four were rated 'good' while six were 'requires improvement'. Seven had more pupils receiving free school meals than the national average, and just three had below average numbers.

However, there is less disparity when focusing just on free school meals. Of the ten schools with the highest levels of free school meals, half were rated 'good' and half 'requires improvement'.

Although this is still a bigger gap than those with the lowest levels – where two were 'requires improvement' and eight were 'good' – the difference is less stark.



May added: "I believe Ofsted is trying to improve things and there may be some green shoots visible in the dataset as a whole. Future data will make that clearer.

"What is clear, however, is that there is a

disparity at the extremes and more work needs to be done in reflectively applying the new framework in these settings."

Research into Ofsted's new curriculum focus, published last December, found schools in the most deprived communities outscored their more affluent counterparts.

However, there were questions over how the results would translate in real inspections.

In the study, inspectors ran detailed checks based on 25 curriculum indicators. For real inspections, introduced in September, these were boiled down and divided between the two key areas of "intent" and "implementation".

Stephen Tierney, chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable, said there were "no surprises" in the new analysis, and warned that it was "new framework, same old Ofsted".

"This grading of schools nonsense that we've got is really just grading their intakes. It's saying nothing about school effectiveness."

HIGH PRIOR ATTAINMENT

| School | FSM* | Prior attainment ** | Ofsted grade |
|--|------|---------------------|--------------|
| Calday Grange Grammar, Wirral | 3.0 | 84.0 | Good |
| Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Blackburn | 5.4 | 59.3 | Good |
| Brookfield Community (Southampton) | 4.2 | 40.3 | Good |
| Guiseley School, Leeds | 5.1 | 38.6 | Good |
| Boldon School, Tyne & Wear | 27.4 | 36.0 | Good |
| Woldgate School and 6th Form, E Yorks | 4.4 | 35.5 | Good |
| West Derby School | 21.1 | 35.4 | RI |
| Corsham School, Wiltshire | 9.2 | 34.4 | Good |
| The Bewdley School, Worcs | 9.1 | 34.2 | Good |
| Belper School and 6th Form, Derbyshire | 8.5 | 33.5 | RI |

LOW PRIOR ATTAINMENT

| School | FSM* | Prior attainment ** | Ofsted grade |
|---|------|---------------------|--------------|
| The Bath Studio School, Somerset | 24.4 | -22.2 | RI |
| Outwood Academy Acklam, Middlesbrough | 34.9 | -11 | Good |
| All Saints CofE Academy, Plymouth | 33.0 | -5.6 | RI |
| Swinton Academy, S Yorks | 15.2 | 1.5 | RI |
| Beckfoot Thornton, W Yorks | 16.4 | 4.4 | RI |
| Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, Birmingham | 29.5 | 4.4 | Good |
| Holy Family Catholic High School, N Yorks | 7.1 | 5.6 | RI |
| Homewood School and 6th Form, Kent | 11.8 | 5.7 | RI |
| Walsall Studio School | 15.2 | 5.7 | Good |
| The Elstree UTC, Herts | 13.5 | 6.1 | Good |

*Colour code: green for below average FSM, red for above average. England average = 14.1%

**Prior attainment score calculated by % of high prior attaining pupils - % of low prior attaining pupils

Grammar expansions expose satellite loophole

JOHN DICKENS

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EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted will not inspect "satellite" school expansions separately, exposing what policy experts call an "unexpected loophole" that will allow them to avoid scrutiny.

The Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys in Kent is consulting on a three-form entry expansion on a satellite site 12 miles away in Sevenoaks. The satellite will eventually have room for 500 pupils.

Grammar critics fear it could be the first of a new wave of such applications after the Weald of Kent – the first grammar to expand on to a satellite site – was allowed to stop sharing pupils across its sites earlier this year.

Tunbridge is also proposing pupils would be educated separately, with only extra-curricular clubs and the house system shared across sites – a controversial plan as satellite expansions must be "genuinely part of the existing school". New grammar schools are illegal.

But the cases also expose another loophole. The Weald of Kent is exempt from inspection as it was rated 'outstanding' in 2007, four years before it became an academy.

'Conceivable for a school to set up satellites with none inspected'

Ofsted confirmed this week that when a "school is registered as a single school it is treated as such for inspection purposes". It means new satellites sites of 'outstanding' schools will not be inspected.

Jonathan Simons, a former government adviser who is now director of education at the lobbyists Public First, said: "This is a good example of the type of unexpected loophole that happens in a fast-moving system where the law is unclear."

He said although it was "not the intention", it was "conceivable for an [outstanding] school to set up a number of satellites – effectively a new MAT – and for none of those to be inspected".

Further secondary expansions are also

Admission and curriculum arrangements

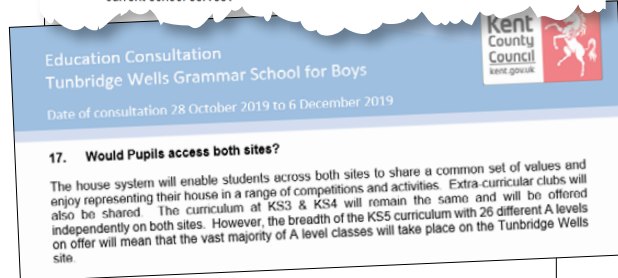
- How will the new site be used (e.g. which age groups/pupils will it serve)?
- What will the admission arrangements be?
- Will there be movement of pupils between sites?

Governance and administration

- How will whole school activities be managed?
- Will staff be employed on contracts to work on both sites? How frequently will they do so?
- What governance, leadership and management arrangements will be put in place to oversee the new site (e.g. will the new site be governed by the same GB and the same school leadership team)?

Physical characteristics of the school

- How will facilities across the two sites be used (e.g. sharing of the facilities and resources available at the two sites, such as playing fields)?
- Is the new site in an area that is easily accessible to the community that the current school serves?



expected as the baby boomers of the early 2000s move from primary level.

When asked about the loophole, Ofsted said the government had pledged to drop the inspection exemption for 'outstanding' schools.

However, a consultation has yet to be launched and the plans need parliamentary approval. With an election next month, the political will to continue isn't guaranteed.

Tunbridge Wells grammar is rated 'good', so is inspected every five years. The council will decide on the expansion as it is a maintained school.

Guidance for the application states the reason for expansion, curriculum arrangements (including movement of pupils between sites), and how frequently staff will work on both sites should all be considered.

"The more integration, the more likely the change will be considered as an expansion."

While pupils would not be shared at Tunbridge, the consultation proposed a "minimum expectation" that senior leaders would work across both sites.

'We could see new selective schools springing up everywhere'

Comprehensive Future, the anti-grammar

campaign group, has already pledged to explore legal action if the proposal does not meet the criteria.

Dr Nuala Burgess, the group's chair, said: "The fact a grammar school can build a second school building, with barely more than a shared uniform in common, means that we could see many new selective schools springing up around the country."

Kent council said the expansion – adding 90 places to the school's 210 published admission number – would address "significant short and medium-term" pressure on places.

A "significant" number of boys travelled from near the satellite location to the school, spending "at least three hours on public transport".

The expansion into satellite provision would also "allow the school to share its ethos and educational values with a wider cohort of pupils, whilst ensuring all systems and structures from governance and leadership to curriculum planning will remain consistent".

The council has already finished a building costing £2 million on the Weald of Kent's satellite site. If the plans are passed, the satellite would open in September 2021.

'Grammars should be allowed to expand like other schools'

Michael Fallon, the Conservative MP for Sevenoaks, said: "Far too many boys from the Sevenoaks area have to travel back and forwards" to the Tunbridge school "at a huge cost in both time and money... Grammar schools should be allowed to expand like any other school."

A pledge to create more grammar school places could be part of the Conservative manifesto, *The Sunday Times* has reported, but *Schools Week* understands this is more a renewed commitment to the £200 million grammar school expansion programme.

To date, 16 grammars have shared £50 million under the first year of the scheme. Winners of the second round are due to be announced this autumn.

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News

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Not a single bid for computing SCITT



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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education failed to attract a single bid to run its proposed national computing SCITT, but has insisted plans will be relaunched this year.

The appointment of a computer science “champion” to help upskill teachers has also been delayed.

In March *Schools Week* revealed plans to run a national computing SCITT as the number of pupils taking computer science crashed.

The DfE admitted in September – when the contract was supposed to begin – a procurement process “didn’t result in any suitable bids”.

It refused to say how many bids were received, but *Schools Week* can now reveal not a single company showed any interest.

However, the department has confirmed it plans to reopen bidding by the end of the year.

Bob Harrison, a school governor and former chair of the DfE computing expert group, questioned the need for a SCITT and said the failure to attract any bids demonstrated “the lack of interest or preparedness in this particular issue.”

He said it was time to “go back to the basics” and “re-examine” the national curriculum and qualifications system.

Recruitment for computing teachers rose from 66 per cent of the required number in 2017-18 to 73 per cent in 2018-19, but the government is concerned about low uptake of its new computer science GCSE and wants more teachers to deliver it.

In summer 2018, the uptake of GCSE computing or ICT qualifications fell by 45 per cent.

The DfE wanted an organisation with “national reach” to create a network of eight hubs by the end of next summer, and suggested an annual recruitment target of 40.

But the decision was criticised after other subject-specific national SCITTs failed to recruit their target numbers.

James Noble-Rogers, the executive director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, said: “The DfE would do much better in investing resources in supporting existing ITE providers or finding other ways to attract new computing teachers.”

A five-month £30,000 contract for a new computer science “champion” was due to start today – but no contractors have yet to be appointed.

The National Stem Learning Centre, which ran the tender, would not provide further details.

The “champion” must raise awareness and encourage participation in the computer science accelerator programme, which supports teachers from non-specialist backgrounds teach the subject at GCSE. The programme aims to train more than 7,000 teachers.

He or she would be supported by the National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE), which also announced the creation of 23 computer science hubs in July.

Simon Peyton Jones, the chair of the NCCE, said they want to help teachers “embrace the computing curriculum, to support, equip, and encourage them, and to provide tangible resources that can help turn the curriculum into a rich, vibrant reality”.

On the computing SCITT, a DfE spokesperson said they are “considering next steps.”

Teacher vacancies soar by almost 5%

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Schools advertised almost 1,300 more teacher vacancies last year than in the previous 12 months, according to new research that suggests the recruitment crisis is worsening.

Analysis by SchoolDash and the Gatsby Foundation found 1,279 more secondary teacher vacancies were advertised in 2018-19 than in 2017-18 – a 4.6 per cent rise.

The government is under pressure to address a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. In 2017 the number of teachers leaving the profession outstripped the number entering it.

The number of secondary pupils is expected to rise substantially in the coming years.

Professor John Howson, an academic who studies the teacher labour market, said:

“There are emerging challenges at middle leadership levels, although senior posts are still easier to fill than a few years ago.”

His own organisation, TeachVac, is predicting 2020 will also be a “challenging year for recruitment based on numbers currently in training”.

London and the Home Counties were the “main stress points”.

This was backed by SchoolDash’s research that found recruitment activity levels were highest in the southeast and London, and lowest in the northeast and northwest.

SchoolDash’s research also found “considerable variation” by subject area. Vacancies in expressive arts went up by 15 per cent, while vacancies in technology rose 12 per cent. The analysis found a 9 per cent rise in English vacancies, 7 per cent in maths and 3 per cent in science.

At the other end of the scale, vacancies in humanities and social sciences fell by 2 per cent, and language vacancies dropped 5 per cent.

Dr Timo Hannay, the founder of SchoolDash, suggested the decline in language vacancies was linked to the “long-term decline in GCSE entries for MFL.”

The study also found rises in advertisements for maternity, temporary or part-time positions. It follows a push from the government for schools to offer more flexible working opportunities.

A Department for Education spokesperson said the new recruitment and retention strategy, published in January, set out to “attract and retain a strong and passionate [teaching] workforce”.

Full financial failure of UTCs revealed

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The financial failure of the government's university technical colleges programme has been laid bare in a new report that also reveals efforts to salvage the struggling schools are failing.

The National Audit Office (NAO), the government's spending watchdog, found £792 million has been spent on the institutions.

But ten have closed or converted to other types of schools, with the remaining 48 operating on average at 45 per cent of capacity.

Meanwhile, college deficits have more than

doubled in four years – despite the government spending tens of millions to prop them up.

Meg Hillier, a Labour MP and chair of the powerful parliamentary public accounts committee, said the report provided “further evidence as to why the Department for Education is my top department of concern”.

“Seven hundred and ninety-two million pounds have been spent, but UTCs are under capacity, often perform less well than other secondary schools and just under half of those inspected either require improvement or are inadequate,” she said.

The colleges are the brainchild of Lord Baker,

the former education secretary, who chairs the Baker Dearing Trust.

He said the report “records the price of everything and the value of nothing”.

“UTCs should be judged by the success of their students becoming apprentices, studying STEM subjects at a university and getting a job as a technician or an engineer ... for that we have the best destination data of any schools in the country.”

Government data shows that UTC pupils are more likely to proceed to an apprenticeship or employment than others, but they are also less likely to progress to sustained education destinations.

KEY FINDINGS

1 DEFICITS ARE SOARING ...

The NAO report found the cumulative deficits recorded by UTCs rose from £3.5 million in 2014-15 to £7.7 million in 2017-18. The deficits now make up almost 10 per cent of the total cumulative revenue deficit reported by academy trusts (although UTCs make up less than 0.1 per cent of academies).



2 ... DESPITE TENS OF MILLIONS TO PROP THEM UP

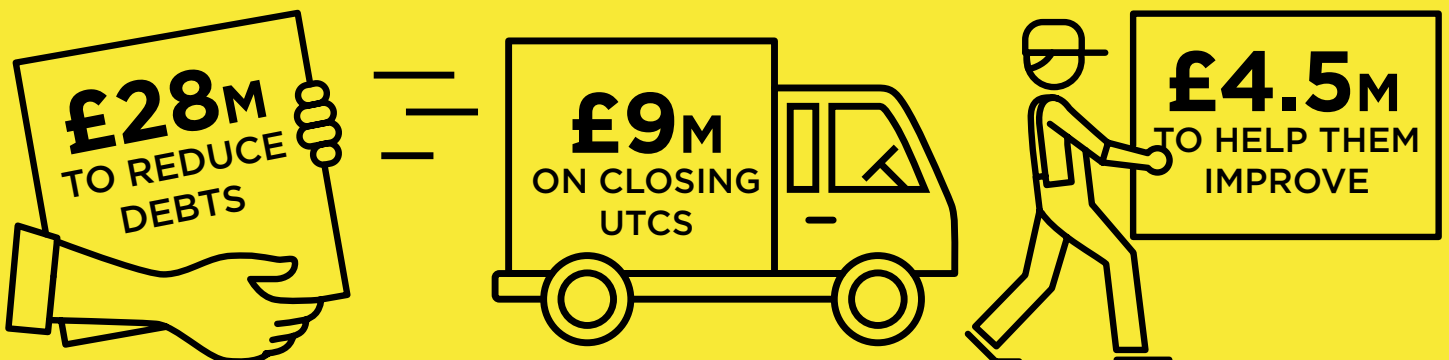
The DfE spent £28 million in transitional revenue funding to improve the financial position of UTCs, for example by reducing their debts, and a further £8.8 million to cover their deficits (though they will have to repay half this funding over time). The department also spent £4.5 million on “measures to help UTCs to improve”, and £9 million to cover the cost of writing off debts and staff redundancies at those that closed.



3 CONCLUSION: DFE'S UTC RESCUE PLAN IS FAILING

The DfE launched a three-year improvement plan in September 2017. The first measure of success is to get the proportion of UTCs rated “good” or “outstanding” to equal that of free schools generally. But just 52 per cent of UTCs have a good or better rating, compared with 84 per cent of free schools.

Ministers also want the proportion of UTCs listed as being of concern to be the same as academies overall. But 26 per cent of UTCs (13) are in this position, compared with just 1 per cent of academies generally.



17 SCHOOLS FORCED TO WAIT FOR REPAIRS

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Ministers are withholding £500,000 for vital repairs from 17 schools because they haven't agreed to a visit from Lord Agnew's costcutters.

The disclosure comes in the same week the government announced further conditions for dishing out maintenance funding.

Trusts bidding for a slice of next year's £400 million condition improvement funding (CIF) will now be penalised if they have excessive executive pay or poor governance.

But the new points system (see right) has been criticised as unfair because it only applies to smaller trusts. Chains with five or more schools are allocated condition funding through a different route that doesn't have the same conditions.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said he was "increasingly concerned" about the "strings attached" to grant funding.

"The deterioration of the school estate is a well-documented problem and the department should not be making it more difficult for schools to access what little capital funding is available."

The government said the additional CIF criteria would "incentivise academies and trusts to improve finances and governance".

It follows the department informing winning trusts under this year's CIF that they would only get the allocated cash after agreeing to a visit from a school resource management adviser (SRMA).

Responding to a freedom of information request, the Department for Education said 1,192 of the 1,209 successful CIF 2019-20 projects have agreed to a SRMA visit.

None has rejected the offer of a visit, but £500,000 has been withheld from 17 yet to respond.

Most CIF projects will have been funded in two tranches over the summer.

Hilary Goldsmith, a school business leadership consultant, said the disclosure was "insane", adding some schools could have already appointed builders to do the work.

The DfE said it had not been contacted by

EXCLUSIVE



any school to say it was unable to progress a project or pay contractors because of the withheld cash. Officials also said they were working with non-compliant trusts so projects could "continue as planned".

Barton added it was "not in the best interests of pupils or staff" to have the funding withheld.

The CIF normally receives four applications for every successful project – meaning only those who can show a desperate need for repairs get the cash.

Barton added: "It is deeply worrying that money that has been allocated for keeping buildings safe and in good working order is being withheld to leverage an unconnected policy."

But the FOI also highlights potential issues over the capacity of the government's SRMA programme.

Of this year's CIF projects, SRMA visits have been completed or are scheduled for just 248 – meaning four-fifths are still waiting for a date to be pencilled in.

A DfE spokesperson said it was determined that all children should learn in "classrooms that enable them to gain the knowledge and skills they need for success".

They added it would not be appropriate to identify the schools that have had cash withheld.

The government has committed to publishing a report on SRMAs before January. *Schools Week* previously found some advisers had told schools to cut the size of lunch portions for pupils and to keep money raised for charity.

THE NEW CIF POINTS SYSTEM

EXCESSIVE PAY

This will apply to trusts paying two staff more than £100,000, or one on more than £150,000, who also have evidence of financial or educational underperformance. Increases in six-figure salaries and a failure to reduce "excessive" pay will also be considered.

Four points can be deducted for trusts outside London, one point for those in London.

FUNDING AGREEMENT

Trusts that have signed up to a master funding agreement after December 2014, or committed to moving to the latest model, will get a bonus point.

COSTCUTTERS

Trusts that have had a school resource management adviser (SRMA) visit in the past two years, but haven't provided the government with an "appropriate" response, will have four points deducted.

Successful applicants who haven't had a SRMA visit will have to agree to one as a condition of the funding.

FINANCES AND GOVERNANCE

Trusts with "financial viability concerns" that haven't yet submitted "effective" improvement plans will be deducted four points. Viability is defined as those with deficits, late financial returns on more than one occasion or where auditors have flagged concerns.

Points can also be deducted for financially healthy trusts that have submitted late returns.

News

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DfE wants sign language GCSE 'ASAP'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers are aiming to introduce a British Sign Language GCSE "as soon as possible" and have pledged to consult on draft content next year.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, has confirmed Department for Education officials are now "working with subject experts to develop draft subject content" for the exam.

The government relaxed its position on the creation of a BSL GCSE in 2018, following threats of a legal challenge by the family of a 12-year-old deaf pupil.

Last May Gibb said the government was "open to considering" a BSL GCSE "for possible introduction in the longer term", but insisted there were no plans to do so until after the next election, at that point scheduled for 2022, "to allow schools a period of stability".

But in August last year, he said the government could make "an exception" to its moratorium on new qualifications.

With a general election early next month, Gibb



has given the strongest signal yet that the new qualification could become a reality.

"The government is aiming to introduce a GCSE in British Sign Language as soon as possible, so long as it proves possible to develop a qualification that meets the rigorous requirements that apply to all GCSEs," he said in an answer to a parliamentary written question.

"We are currently working with subject experts to develop draft subject content.

"The department will be working with Ofqual to ensure that the subject content can be

assessed appropriately and will be working with stakeholders to ensure a wide range of views are reflected.

"We are aiming to consult publicly on draft content next year. Once final subject content has been published, it will be a matter for individual awarding organisations to decide whether to develop a specification and have this accredited by Ofqual."

The government's change of heart has been prompted in part by a campaign launched by the family of 12-year-old Daniel Jillings.

Daniel's family, from Lowestoft in Suffolk, raised thousands of pounds through crowdfunding after they decided to fight for his right to take the exam with his other GCSEs.

Gibb has previously warned that a "huge number of steps would have to be gone through" to gain GCSE accreditation for the current BSL qualifications.

The National Deaf Children's Society said it was "very happy" to see the DfE developing a BSL GCSE "but we'd like to see more definite timeframes so it can be delivered as soon as possible".

EXCLUSIVE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

NASUWT deputy faces challenge for top job

A senior member of the NASUWT teaching union is seeking to challenge the establishment candidate to become its new general secretary, pledging to hand control of the organisation "back to its members".

Paul Nesbitt, the union's national executive member for the West Midlands and a serving teacher, is seeking nominations from branches to run against Dr Patrick Roach (pictured), the union's long-serving deputy, in the race to succeed Chris Keates. Roach was selected in October as the official nominee of the union's executive.

If Nesbitt receives the 25 nominations required, the NASUWT will run its first leadership election in almost 30 years.

The Association of School and College Leaders faced a similar situation in 2016, when Geoff Barton, then a member of the



union's council, challenged Chris Kirk for the leadership. Barton won by a landslide.

Keates told the union she would stand down in June. It has since admitted she overstayed her five-year term of office by serving beyond June 3. However, the certification officer,

which regulates unions, decided not to issue an enforcement order removing her from post.

Keates remains the union's acting general secretary until a successor is chosen.

In election literature circulated to branches Nesbitt said he wanted the NASUWT to be "led by teachers who have very recent experience of the day-to-day issues we face both in schools and in our lay roles within the union".

The union needed "more versatility and political challenge" to address issues in

education.

He has also committed to supply teach between five to ten days a year if elected.

In literature circulated on behalf of Roach, Dave Kitchen, the union's president, said he had "secured the depth and breadth of experience necessary to discharge effectively all of the onerous responsibilities of the general secretary post to a high standard.

"Many members and activists know Patrick and his work for the NASUWT and his deep commitment to the union's ethos and values, including our strong tradition as a lay-led union."

Nominations from NASUWT branches across England opened last Monday. If Nesbitt receives enough nominations by the December 9 deadline, an election will be held in January.

Keates was elected unopposed in 2004, 2009 and 2014. It is believed the last contested election was in 1990.



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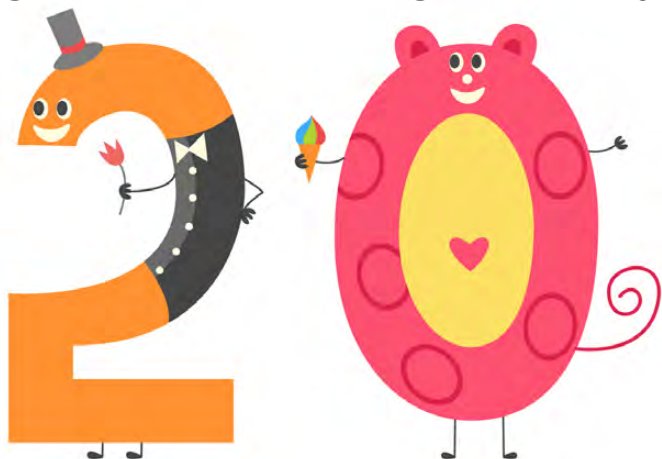


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News

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Counting to 20 is back as a goal in early years



PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

The government has U-turned on plans to make pupils count to 10 - rather than beyond 20 - under its early learning goals shake-up.

The government's proposals for the developmental goals for reception pupils were tested in 23 pilot schools before a public consultation launched last week.

Initial proposals said children should show a better understanding of numbers while counting to ten, but no longer needed to count to 20.

An evaluation of the pilot, published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) last week, said teachers felt this "allowed children to gain a deeper understanding of numbers".

However, the new consultation proposals have unexpectedly reinserted the need to "count confidently beyond 20".

A Department for Education spokesperson said the changes were made following the evaluation and "through working with early years subject experts".

But Dr Helen Williams, an early years research work group leader at the Cornwall and West Devon maths hub, challenged the department "to name one early years expert who would want that in there".

"None of us is saying children shouldn't be counting above 20. The issue is whether that is an established good level of development measure. It isn't."

Ruth Swailes, a school improvement adviser and education consultant, said there was "no research to back up the reason" for counting beyond 20.

"It's the one thing that everyone was united in agreement on when the proposals came out."

Swailes said she was also "very concerned" by the decision to remove shape, space and measures from the early years goals as studies suggested

that children with "good spatial awareness - which comes from all the work you do in shape, space and measures - do better in the long-term in STEM subjects right up to key stage 3 and 4".

"I'm already having teachers telling me that heads and advisers are saying 'we don't need to worry about shape, concentrate on number'. I think that's highly problematic."

The EEF evaluation backed this up, warning: "While no school had stopped teaching this area, schools had reduced the emphasis on shape, space and measures in their teaching practice.

"One reason for this was because they believed that its removal from the early learning goals meant that it was no longer part of the reception curriculum."

A spokesperson for the DfE insisted the goals "are not the curriculum and form a simple measure of what a child should be able to demonstrate by the end of reception".

Chloe Webster, an early years practitioner at Pebbles Childcare in Worthing, warned that removing the measure sent the message it was "no longer considered an important part of a child's education, which is frankly not true".

And Michael Freeston, director of quality improvement at the Early Years Alliance, warned the changes were creating "a more formalised approach to learning".

"That will, with less experienced practitioners, mean that is how they end up preparing the sessions they do for children. That is very limiting for children's development."

But Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the consultation would "help to make sure the early years foundation stage framework will make a difference to a child's education as they move through the early years to more formal schooling".

The consultation will run until January 31. The new goals are set to be rolled out nationwide in September 2021.

DfE reverts to backing sole supplier for Teach First

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education appears to have abandoned any potential split in Teach First's contract between several suppliers.

Last year the government floated the idea of using "new funding mechanisms" for its high-potential initial teacher training programme and delivering the programme through "collaboration between a number of suppliers".

But pre-tender documents for the next round of funding show the government wants one supplier to deliver a "single national contract".

The contract, which Teach First has to re-bid for every few years, will also be for two cohorts. The last contract issued to the charity covered just one.

Schools Week revealed last year how Teach First had revitalised its operations after doubts surfaced over the future of its government funding.

Under Russell Hobby, its new chief executive, the charity has concentrated on its core business of teacher recruitment, ditching some of its side projects that focused on social mobility.

Earlier this year it celebrated a record cohort of trainees - 15 shy of its 1,750 target - after almost two in three applicants passed screening. But the charity was criticised for "dropping its standards".

Schools Week understands the charity sees the scope and scale of the new tender as a "positive move".

The pre-tender documents show that the successful bidder will receive up to £70 million to attract and select "high-potential" candidates, recruit eligible "challenging" schools, deliver training and continual professional development, and provide mentoring.

Neither Teach First nor the DfE would comment while the process was ongoing.

The successful bidder will begin recruiting next year, with the first recruits starting training in 2021-22.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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We won't keep quiet about Christmas election disruption

OK, we'll admit our front page is a little provocative. We're sure there will be some who say moving nativity plays to another day is a small price to pay to get Brexit over and done with.

But we're here to stand up for leaders across England, who, after a tumultuous year in which some schools have already closed twice for elections, are just trying to do what is right for their pupils.

Holding an election in December WILL cause disruption (about one in six schools faces closure or part closure to become a polling booth).

And it's not just headteachers having to rearrange Christmas festivities (and dealing with fallout from parents who may have already got time off). Breakfast clubs will be cancelled, lessons disrupted.

Plus, schools have been given just six weeks' notice. It would be unsustainable, and doesn't make sense, to rid schools of polling stations.

But during our tumultuous times politicians need to see the consequences of their decisions. We hope our front page gets that across, loud and clear.

Time to close the satellite site Ofsted loophole

Just imagine this. You're an 'outstanding' school. You want to expand - open a new school to spread your excellence.

But the free schools process has hurdles, and you'll have Ofsted sniffing around within a couple of years.

So what if you could just open what is effectively a new school without these pesky annoyances?

What the expansion of grammar schools on to satellite sites shows us is that you can.

As long as you have a couple of leaders who work across both sites (an exec head - check), have the same uniform and ethos, you're on.

Once the satellite is open (the latest, if it goes ahead, will have 500 kids in it when full) it will still be viewed as the same school. So if you're 'outstanding' - no Ofsted.

The inspectorate countered the concern by saying the government has pledged to drop the 'outstanding' exemption. But the government could soon change.

There's a secondary school places bulge on the way. Surely time to close the loophole before it can be exploited?

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Interview

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



“I’m not a Teach First, change-the-world type”

Andy Buck, author, speaker, trainer and coach

I pass through the glass doors of a tall building in deepest East London and a beaming Andy Buck springs out of a chair.

“Hello!” he cries. “I got here early on my motorbike.”

Like his choice of transport – in reality a moped – I soon learn Buck’s main concern is not certainty, but to find speedy, nifty and effective routes to great outcomes (without sweating the small stuff that’s out of your control).

Buck, a leadership expert, calls this living by the “Pareto principle” – the idea that 80 per cent of outcomes, in business or otherwise, are the result

of 20 per cent of causes.

Buck puts it this way: “Does it make sense to do one thing perfectly and get 100 per cent of results, or do many things pretty well and get good results across the board?”

He later adds: “I’m good at multiplying time. Taking shortcuts.” It’s an idea from Rory Vaden, the US productivity expert. “What multipliers do is give themselves emotional permission to invest in things now that save time in future.

“Too often in teaching it’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking, ‘it’s quicker if I do this now myself.”

He pauses and admits: “I’ll be honest with you, I didn’t always follow the marking scheme at my school.”

The approach has enabled Buck not just to survive the grinding realities of teaching, but to flourish.

His CV speaks for itself: a headteacher at 32, national leader of education, a director of the National College for School Leadership, leader of the teaching schools programme, managing director at a major academy trust and now founding director of his own leadership company.

Martyr-like, he is not. One of the most influential teachers of his generation, he is. So what’s his secret?

“I’m quite sanguine. I’m not a Teach First, change-the-world type. There are things you can control, and things that you say, ‘I can’t do much

Interview: Andy Buck



One of Andy's first lessons, aged 6, with sisters Wendy and Jo, aged 4



Aged 17 as a member of the Rugby Union Society of Referees in Sussex



As a newly qualified teacher

about that.”

He credits his pragmatic approach to attending six primary schools in six years across Edinburgh, Chichester and Surrey, a result of his parents' split. “Divorce made me tough.”

He also has a supportive mum, who speaks frankly to him when he faces difficulties, and twin sisters “to practise teaching on”.

Buck brings the talk around to his favourite subject - leadership.

“The job of leaders is to make teachers feel they have a manageable job they can enjoy.”

He adds: “I hate waste. I'm always trying to improve on something. Sometimes I worry I'm lazy, like I'm looking for an easier life. But actually it's about making the job doable.”

Buck had only been a deputy for two years when he became a headteacher in Barking, Essex. But his leadership training was not exemplary. “My mentor was a lovely, lovely man who I went to the pub with every half-term. That was it.”

Buck was there for five years and took the school to ‘good’. But he quickly points out that his lack of a succession plan was one reason the school fell back into special measures 18 months after he left.

Committed to the need for better coaching, he took a headship at the Jo Richardson community school in nearby Dagenham, helping to take it to ‘outstanding’. One of Buck's proudest moments was when the school won Pearson's school of the year in 2018, almost a decade after he had left.

Towards the end of his headship he also began running the London “good to great” programme, enabling heads to support other leaders – an area that was rapidly becoming his greatest interest.

In 2009 he was appointed a director at the now-defunct National College for School Leadership, leading on strategies for the London Challenge programme. He was invited to No 10 while at the college, but first visited in 2001 as a head for the

launch of an education policy paper. (His main memory of that visit was sitting opposite Tony Blair and realising that “prime ministers wear make-up” for public appearances.)

That led – one year later – to Buck's first “pretty scary” role, setting up teaching schools across the country for the NSCL.

“We'd tried and failed as a country to move excellence around the system, because we kept saying to schools ‘copy this’. It needed to be about a school leading a community of schools.”

“I feel guilty that I didn't come out to my pupils sooner. They deserved that”

His approach was paying off and he was now being noticed in high circles. He leans in and tells me something “not many people know”.

He was headhunted to apply for the top job at the new Teaching Agency, which eventually merged with the NSCL in 2013. “I ended up as the preferred candidate, which was very exciting and a bit scary at the same time. But you have to have sign-off from the secretary of state, who was Michael Gove. His last question in the interview was brilliant: ‘Of all the things I've done since I was secretary of state, what's been my biggest mistake?’”

Buck told Gove he hadn't properly thought about how the department would manage its academies. It was obviously also on Gove's mind as the appointments of regional schools commissioners were announced soon after.

“Michael then stood up and shook my hand – you know how polite he is – and his private office

said he'd be in touch that evening. But I didn't hear from them or the next day, which seemed a bit rude.”

Buck suspected, and heard rumours, that Gove already had a preferred list of candidates for the TA role and he wasn't one of them, but that he might now land the role. “I sent an email at 5am pulling out. I've never taken a job where the people that employed me weren't sure if they wanted me.”

It's one of the best decisions he made, he says.

So Buck may throw caution to the wind – but he knows his limits, too. Only once did he not listen to his instincts.

Jon Coles, a former civil servant under Gove and by then chief executive of United Learning, persuaded Buck to join as managing director of the trust. He stayed less than three years. “When I was first approached, I thought this isn't really the right fit for me. But then I got approached again, and because I was feeling really frustrated with being a civil servant, I took it.

“I probably should have trusted my original instinct. I was so far from being a developer of relationships. I'll be honest, I became quite unhappy. It was nothing to do with United Learning. I left.”

Buck is now happily freelance, publishing his book *Leadership Matters* in 2016. It showcases his belief in coaching and, with its accompanying resources, the value of “shortcuts” for great leaders.

Another success is his #honk campaign on Twitter, inspired by flying geese who honk encouragingly at the leader in front, which he tweets to celebrate great practice. It is the title of his upcoming second book and a website too.

His new role has also brought him close to his heroes. He tells of waiting to go on stage at the Inspiring Leadership conference in 2016, and a voice saying: “Can I introduce you to William?” It was the former education secretary Estelle Morris, there with the former foreign secretary William Hague. “I went into crazy fan boy mode.”

Only one thing niggles. He wishes he'd come out as gay to his pupils sooner. “There's a sense of guilt I feel around the fact I wasn't out to them. Those kids deserved to have the role model I could have been.” Those days are behind him now, and he smilingly asks me to include this personal fact about him if I can.

So, if you want to reach some of the most exciting roles in education – be a Buck: #honk the great bits, and don't sweat the small stuff!

Opinion

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KATE FROOD

Headteacher, Eleanor Palmer primary school, north London

The role of head should be more than a staging post

In an age of chief executives and superheads, Kate Flood writes in praise of the one-school-one-head model

As an experienced head with almost 40 years' experience in education, I find myself in many meetings these days in which I feel small. As the only person who introduces themselves as a headteacher among a roomful of chief executives, principal-designates and directors of trusts, my confidence takes a hit.

The school system has been transformed during my career and I'm not convinced that its fragmentation has quite lived up to its aspiration. Career paths have changed beyond recognition and while I have the utmost respect for colleagues who take on two, three or more schools, I wonder what we've lost in making the position of headteacher a staging post rather than the ultimate career achievement.

George Berwick, the genius behind London Challenge, taught me about "teachable moments" – that the best learning happens when a teacher is as close as possible to the learner. The scale and the role of one-school-one-head creates so many "leadable moments".

I'm in one school. I'm very close to

the pupils, the community and the curriculum. I'm present and known to everyone. I still teach weekly. We've developed our own strong and well thought-out curriculum over the years and I've always been close to that development.

“ I might not be a system leader, but I'm a systemic leader

My North London borough, Camden, is still a strong community of schools. Each has its own headteacher. Each has its own identity. We're all doing what is right for our community.

Three years ago we formed a company called Camden Learning, which cemented and secured our commitment to working together to improve our schools. I think we are winning. None of our 51 schools is less than good and 14 are outstanding. There is collaboration and support at every level. We have a wonderful council that prioritises education in its vision and in its budget.

Part of our work has been to create learning hubs. Practitioners from all levels sign up to work on the same line of enquiry in joint practice development groups. Last year I led a maths hub looking at improving teaching for remembering in maths.



This year, my group is composed of year 4 teachers coming together to distil what is unique and special

about this oft-neglected year group. My staff are working in other hubs on mental health, special needs and early years. It's stimulating and professional.

It's not cosy – far from it. We have rigorous standards meetings once a year where, with our chair of governors, we are grilled on a range of school improvement issues. School improvement partners visit regularly.

As a teaching school, we train student teachers, lead NQT induction and offer professional development in maths for teachers and support staff across six boroughs.

So I might not be a system leader with the title and salary to go with it, but I'm a systemic leader. The work we do affects the front line, changes classroom practices, builds teacher pedagogy and commitment. And it's done from an authentic position of

being a lead practitioner.

We have a wonderful and growing network of teachers who we have trained, inducted, and who we now watch grow into leadership within our partnership. Teachers stay in our schools because they know they will be supported and developed.

Many excellent future leaders tell me – quietly – that what they really aspire to is to be a headteacher, to run their own school, build their own community. None aspires to be "head of school" within an academy chain, never quite having the autonomy real leadership affords.

Things have a way of coming back in education. Maybe someone will eventually realise that systems and structures don't improve things. People and the relationships they build do. Maybe someone will even decide that the best accountability system for schools is to build strong local communities of schools led by a well-funded local council.

I may not see it come to pass before I retire but, until then, I will keep celebrating the autonomy and support I have, in my own small way.

Opinion

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

Inspiration Trust's data on exclusions have shocked some, while its actions to tackle the problem have riled others. The story, says Colin Diamond, lies beyond these emotive responses

Dame Rachel de Souza, the chief executive of Inspiration Trust, made waves last week when she revealed the trust's fixed-term exclusion rate sits at 17.2 per cent, compared with a Norfolk rate of 2.61 per cent and a national rate of 1.4 per cent. Persistent absence and permanent exclusion rates only add to a negative picture, but it is not the whole picture. If it was, I wouldn't be there.

When Dame Rachel asked whether I might be interested in becoming a trustee, I thought she had dialled the wrong number. I couldn't see what added value I might bring.

The trust's website proclaimed commitment to academic excellence, a knowledge-rich curriculum, sports and the arts, but there was no mention of inclusion.

Professional development opportunities looked fine for orthodox subject leaders, but nothing was visible for special needs co-ordinators. Moreover, it all appeared very white, with few visible BAME role models for students or colleagues.

But she was adamant that she had the right number. Inspiration was serious about tackling inclusion and would aim to become a beacon of practice and to share its approach with other MATs.

One year later, as lead trustee for inclusion, I am pleased with our progress. The board agreed to commission an external review of



COLIN DIAMOND

Trustee, Inspiration Trust

Turnaround MATs must look beyond short-term gains

its inclusion policy and practice – it's where these numbers emanate from – and has taken on its full recommendations.

Heads of individual schools have discussed the review findings with

challenges a low bar on behaviour and historically poor aspiration represent.

Radical measures can be required to get new academies into shape in the first couple of years. At its

“ If exclusions persist once things are steady, something is wrong

Dame Rachel directly. Improvement plans have been produced. An inclusion lead has been appointed to work with the standards director and an inclusion scorecard is now reviewed at every board meeting alongside attainment and progress.

This half-term, the annual Inspiration conference adopted inclusion as its theme and the message was clear: inclusion is a priority and performance must improve. Resources will be made available.

Inspiration has a powerful track record of turning around chronically underperforming schools in one of the lowest performing areas of England. Many MAT leaders will recognise the

core, inclusion is about ensuring everyone's needs are met, but this can be at odds with making sure the majority's needs are met in the first place. Sometimes that can mean forms of internal or external exclusion, but as Dame Rachel reminded colleagues, if such practice persists once things are steady, something is wrong.

The question then becomes a practical one: How do those academies become truly inclusive for the long-term?

There are no quick fixes here. Investment is

required in staff, pupils and their families, and our work with wrap-around services. There is no balance or harmony if any of these elements is neglected.

Building staff's confidence to become more inclusive is critical. Values-led leadership sets the tone for that, and a good supply of local, high-quality CPD can make the difference. At board level, we will continue to back our schools on their inclusion journey, as well as further examine gaps in local offer, such as alternative provision or access to CAMHS.

Some observers have raised concerns that increasing inclusion implies accepting poor behaviour. No. There is no trade-off. Done well, inclusion improves behaviour by adopting and adapting approaches that engage pupils in everything good about learning. There are hundreds of schools in socially challenged areas that have the highest standards of behaviour, coupled with strong pupil outcomes.

Since the Academies Act 2010, policy has focused on structural reform. The Children and Families Act 2014 attempted to refocus attention on inclusion, but relegated the idea to a subset of SEND policy, itself increasingly concentrated on rising costs.

We need a connection between these policy silos so that standards and inclusion are not seen as mutually exclusive, and Inspiration Trust is now modelling that synthesis.



Dame Rachel de Souza

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The Educated Guess

By Warwick Sharp

Published by The Educated Guess

Reviewed by Leora Cruddas, chief executive, the Confederation of School Trusts

Do you know how a fridge works? Think carefully before you answer. Most people say yes, but when we're tested we realise we don't know very much at all. We mistake basic familiarity with understanding. This is one of the many "thinking biases" explored in *The Educated Guess*, a book designed to make us aware of our invisible biases and to help us make better choices about education.

It is a small gem – easily digested in a couple of hours, yet pleasantly challenging. The most demanding section for me was the one on intuition. I have always valued my intuition and often acted on it, but Sharp, principal private secretary to the education secretary on and off since February 2017, argues that "whilst fast and automatic, [it] is riddled with what we call 'cognitive biases'." Intuition, he explains, doesn't wait for the logical, analytical part of our brains to engage.

The book begins with an exploration of the "bigger picture". There is a fascinating chapter on negative news and the distortions these create in our thinking. News items stick in our minds; they worry us. They give the sense of an ever-present danger to our children and evoke strong emotional responses. This, Sharp says, is problematic because we have become so risk-averse that there is some evidence that our children have fewer developmental experiences than ever before.

Yet in many ways, he argues, children

are safer. Sharp is certainly not making the case that we should abandon our protective instincts, but rather that we should avoid over-protection. We need our young people to be able to navigate the world confidently and to do this, they need a healthy range of experiences.

Another of the thinking biases Sharp explores is what he calls the "narrow lens". This is where we focus on a single factor in decision-making, like class sizes. He interrogates the evidence on class size, counter-intuitively looking at the benefits of larger classes. By all means, he concludes, "zoom in to view the details, but zoom out too to look at the bigger picture".

Sharp applies similar laser-like interrogation to the "bandwagon bias" towards university rather than vocational education, and "survivorship bias" in which the grand stories of success against the odds lead some young people down unrealistic paths. For example, 21 per cent of 15-to 16-year-olds have ambitions to secure the 2.1 per cent of jobs in culture, media and sport. He is certainly not saying that we should not encourage young people to be ambitious – or that we should not be ambitious for them

– but he cautions that we need to balance ambition with realistic paths.

The final section really touched me. It is about how we create a good, fair and equitable society. He explores the unconscious bias of choosing "people like us", which he calls "in-group" bias. He cites research that suggests education choices are related to social class, and makes a brilliant case for more integration in education as a way of helping young people prepare for life in the real world. He encourages a collective national effort for each of us to play our part in taking care of others.

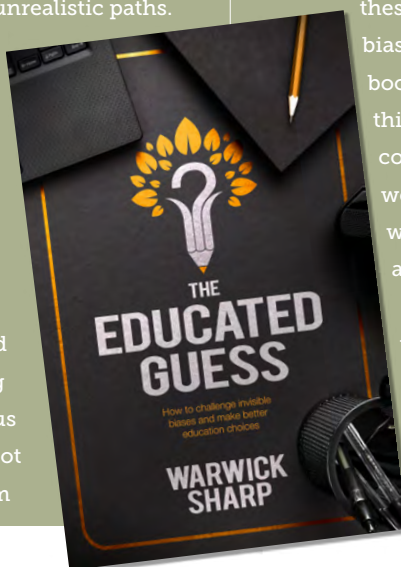
The book ends with a call to action: "the next step is deciding and acting differently to what our biases might be telling us. When we realise our thinking is flawed, we can slow down, assess the facts and information for ourselves as part of the broader view."

He leaves us with an overarching message: "trust your ability to challenge

these particular thinking biases." Ultimately, for me, this book starts us on a journey of thinking differently, pausing to consider the evidence so that we make better decisions that will foster the common good and a better society.

I can't help but wonder, though: What biases did I bring to reading the book?

My intuition tells me I will need to read it again.



Research

This year The Centre for Education and Youth will regularly review evidence on a school-related theme. Contact the centre on Twitter @TheCFEY if you have a topic you would like it to cover

How to speak to young people about the future

Dr Sam Baars, director of research, The Centre for Education and Youth

The “raising aspirations” discourse is dead, and I’m happy to have played a small part in its demise. Over the past decade a barrage of empirical evidence has shown that few young people in the UK hold “low” or “no” aspirations, or that these are meaningfully linked to their educational attainment and wider outcomes. Seeing aspiration-raising as a panacea for poor grades has been discredited by the Education Endowment Foundation, while academics have roundly condemned the whole discourse as a red herring.

It’s one thing to slay an unhelpful way of thinking, but arguably the harder job is to construct something in its place. Given a blank slate, how does the latest research suggest schools should approach their conversations with pupils about their future hopes and plans?

First, focus on the journey rather than the destination. The Centre for Education and Youth was part of early attempts to encourage practitioners and parents to focus on helping young people put plans in place to achieve their (mainly already high) aspirations, rather than focus on the supposedly “low” aspirations themselves.

Young people often have a fairly clear idea of their desired endpoint; what they’re often less clear about is how to get there – and research suggests this is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Even if you are keen on inculcating a particular aspiration, such as university, you’re better off focusing on the steps rather than the outcome. That’s because potential aspirations can be suppressed when young people don’t feel they know how to realise them. Making that pathway clearer can help to make the



aspiration “thinkable”.

Second, distinguish between aspirations and expectations. My own research called for a clearer separation between young people’s aspirations (what they want to happen in future) and their expectations (what they think is likely to happen). The importance of this distinction has been demonstrated by excellent empirical studies that show it’s the combination of aspirations and expectations that seems to feed into better attainment at school and a greater likelihood of applying to university. If young people have high aspirations, but don’t expect them to be remotely attainable, it’s not hard to see how those aspirations rapidly wither on the vine.

Third, take the time to gauge whether young people feel they have much influence over their own futures. This can be considered in relation to specific goals (their “self-efficacy”) and their overall belief that what they do as an individual has any bearing on how their story will unfold more widely (their “locus of control”).

Taken together, we can see these as a “set” of factors that feed into how young people construct what researchers call “possible selves”. Initial experimental studies indicate that working with young people to develop their possible selves could have a significant impact on

their school motivation and educational outcomes.

There are difficult and sometimes openly negative aspects to the conversations you might have with young people about their possible selves. First, because exploring possible selves goes beyond talking narrowly about aspirations, you’ll also find yourself talking about things that young people don’t want to do, don’t see as possible, or don’t know how to reach. Second, for such seemingly personal, individualised conversations, young people’s backgrounds are never far from the frame. Socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender all shape the types of ideas that young people consider as potentially possible or desirable, their sense of agency, and their ability to access the information needed to start mapping out pathways.

Talking to young people about the future is central to knowing and supporting them. But we can do so much better than just talking about their aspirations. Recent research suggests talking instead about possible selves could pave the way for much more meaningful dialogue and support. This approach has clear relevance for careers education and widening participation, but also for anyone looking for ways of supporting young people’s educational engagement and attainment.



Reviews



Jon Hutchinson, assistant head, Reach Academy Feltham and visiting fellow, Ambition Institute

@JON_HUTCHINSON_

Challenge beyond Bloom's **@adamboxer1**

When, in the 13th century, Aquinas rediscovered the works of Aristotle, he referred to him simply as "the Philosopher", such was the comprehensive nature of his genius. I wonder whether 2,000 years from now education faculties will refer to Adam Boxer as simply "the Teacher". Here, Boxer turns his critical lens onto questioning.

It's a unique and original take, as he argues that the taxonomy of higher (and lower) order questions (mis)attributed to Bloom is flawed and unhelpful. By presenting question-pairs and asking us "Which is more challenging?" Boxer forces us to abandon preconceptions around command words dictating difficulty. He demonstrates that the same question can vary in difficulty simply through manipulating timing. If we're lucky, we'll all be footnotes to Boxer.

The joys of repetition **@elucymay**

Many of us are going retrieval practice crazy in our classrooms, quizzing pupils on the key facts, people, concepts, dates and ideas relating to our subjects. In this hugely

TOP BLOGS of the week



practical blog, English teacher Elisabeth Bowling details exactly how she goes about designing these quizzes in a handy step-by-step guide. For those starting out on the retrieval journey, it's a wonderful short cut to success. But there is still plenty to learn for those of us who have been taking a less examined approach to retrieval than the method elucidated by Bowling. I hope that this blog features in departmental meetings across the country.

How I... became a regional ambassador for RE

@mrsharrisRE

I don't think that it's hugely controversial to say that RE is not taught particularly well in primary schools. A harsh generalisation, perhaps, but whenever I meet fellow primary teachers the response to "What do you do for RE?" is often the same: eyes darting, nervous shuffling, a quick change of subject. We desperately need leadership in this too-often neglected area, and so Laura Harris's blog on how she swerved away from secondary RE teaching to champion the subject within primary schools is most welcome. In this post, she explains how she became a regional ambassador for RE, and reveals some of the important work that she is doing to ensure all primary teachers have access to high-

quality RE resources and best practice. I can't wait to learn more from her work.

Clear teacher explanations I: examples & non-examples

@Mr_Raichura

If we want to be really reductive about it, teaching is largely and often just explaining things really well. It's as simple and as complex as that. One too-often overlooked strategy is using examples and non-examples to clarify key concepts. Early years teachers will know this approach well, and are skilled in building abstract understanding through lots of concrete examples, as well as pointing to things that do not fall within the concept. But here, secondary science teacher Pritesh Raichura explains how he has shifted from "starting with a generalised definition... presenting a vacuous string of words, devoid of meaning" to "always begin[ning] with concrete examples". Non-examples, he explains, "highlight concept boundaries". This is a strategy that teachers of all ages and disciplines can capitalise on.

Librarians as teachers and information skills developers

@Elizabethhutch

As David Attenborough warns about the loss of flora and fauna through climate change, let's turn our attention to the endangered species within education: the school librarian. In this blog, Elizabeth Hutchinson (no relation) discusses why well-stocked libraries and professional librarians are more needed in schools than ever. She outlines the core role of a school librarian – "to bring our expertise to education and the curriculum, and through doing this help our schools understand the value that our libraries bring to their students and teachers" – and offers four top tips to help librarians break away from their "traditional role" and "unleash their potential".

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +



Schools with excessive pay risk missing out on maintenance cash

John Mapperley

This sounds like utter desperation on the part of the government. Surely all schools should have good governance and financial systems – incentivising in this way might seem like a cheap way to ensure schools are spending public money wisely, but it simply will not work. What will work is a properly enforced system of audit, financial accountability and due diligence. At some point the government will realise that it has to put its political preferences to one side and do just this.

Mark Watson

Whilst this is a good idea, its scope is limited. It relies on the academy trust in question needing to get money under the CIF programme. I would think Holland Park school (chief executive on £260,000, three other employees on £100,000-plus) is unlikely to be needing CIF money so won't be affected by this.

It also won't have any impact on trusts with more than five academies and 3,000 pupils, as they don't take part in the CIF programme at all.

So a positive start, but more is needed . . .

'The computer science revolution needs processing power'

Assembly Tube

It would be a positive move if we acknowledged that the change from ICT for all to computer science for all was a misguided decision.

We do not need the whole population to learn to code. Students as a whole do not want to take computer science GCSEs.

Trying to encourage enough teachers to train in computer science so that all schools can teach computer science is doomed to failure.

ICT literacy for all, YES!

Computer science geekdom for all, NO!

Can schools be expected to solve the obesity crisis?

Andy Freeman

A very interesting read . . . based on two lengthy and heavily resourced programmes it seems clear that it isn't working. Schools are definitely a cog in the wheel; however, to get the

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Roger Titcombe, @rogertitcombe

Schools with excessive pay risk missing out on maintenance cash

Well that will help their students – as well as attending really crap schools that spend their money on executive pay rather than teachers and resources, they will now risk their classrooms collapsing on them.



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

wheel working there needs to be more cogs. A holistic approach seems to be the best solution. I also like the trial and measure model of trying lots of different small programmes that can be set up and delivered quickly. The programmes that show positive results should be explored, analysed and renewed on a bigger scale and then explored, analysed and renewed if they show further success.

Another grammar school plans 'satellite' site – but won't share pupils

Andy Squires, @andysquires1

This is shameful and should not be allowed. To cite travel time as a reason – well I never. Grammar schools are designed to draw from a wide area.

Parliamentary knife crime group calls for investigation into alternative provision

Peter Rhodes, @peterrhodes22

Correlation not causation. The exclusion of pupils for violent behaviour is because they are violent, not the reason they become violent!

Tom, @toburrrrst

Most exclusions are not for violent behaviour, though . . . because these issues are so complex it is difficult to prove causation, but it is also difficult to rule it out.

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

SUNDAY

With an election just weeks away, it looks like education funding will be front and centre of the campaign.

Over the weekend, the Conservative Party tweeted that it would "properly fund our schools so that every child gets a superb education, wherever they are in the country".

Someone should probably remind party members that they have been in power for more than nine years, so surely any "improper" funding of education is on them?



MONDAY

In the run-up to an election you'd have thought the PM would want to avoid giving fact checkers any ammunition.

However, despite being warned by the UK Stats Authority, Boris Johnson couldn't resist referring in a recent campaign video on Twitter to a "£14 billion package of investment in education".

The watchdog says the figure – which is a cumulative figure of increases over a three-year period – is misleading if used without context, so it's a good job

the PM made that clear in the video.

Oh no, wait. He didn't.

TUESDAY

While Rachel Wolf, the founder of the New Schools Network, was hard at work getting started on Johnson's election manifesto, her colleague Jonathan Simons was also hanging out with a goofy cartoon character.

Simons, who works for Wolf's think tank and lobbying firm Public First, was at Disneyland Paris this week, presumably to seek out some more sensible views on Brexit than you can usually hear in parliament.

Anyway, our point of mentioning this is to reassure readers that even shadowy neoliberal figures have a cuddly side too!

Meanwhile, the Tories have come under fire for hiring Wolf, a former Downing Street adviser during the Cameron era, not least because her firm represents fracking clients and those tax-efficient tech companies.



WEDNESDAY

Farewell then, Nicky Morgan.

The former education secretary has

become the second recent holder of the title to announce she's quitting the Commons (Justine Greening confirmed her departure in September).

Her resignation is on very different terms to Greening, who cited her disillusionment with the Conservative Party when she announced her plans.

Despite Morgan's early opposition to Brexit, she more recently became a committed member of Boris Johnson's cabinet. In resigning, she took a swipe at those MPs who sought to frustrate the purpose of leaving Europe.

In a letter to her local Conservative association in Loughborough, where she has been an MP since 2010, Morgan raised the "clear impact on my family and the other sacrifices involved in, and the abuse for, doing the job of a modern MP".

The culture secretary said these "can only be justified if, ultimately, parliament does what it is supposed to do – represent those we serve in all areas of policy, respect votes cast by the electorate and make decisions in the overall national interest".

THURSDAY

Labour unofficially launched its election campaign with a speech by Jeremy Corbyn.

Flanked by the shadow education secretary and other frontbenchers, Corbyn repeated his pledge for "a good education from cradle to grave as a right not a privilege".

Maybe this election campaign will be the one where we actually get some information about how the National Education Service will work? We are not holding our breath.



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The Trustees of the Ebor Academy Trust are seeking to appoint a new CEO from April 2020, to succeed Richard Ludlow who is retiring.

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Our schools, of varying size and in both rural and urban settings, are organised into collaborative locality hubs. We are a Trust of both community and church schools with a mission to make a difference to the life chances of everyone within our organisation.

Ebor for us means

- success for our children within fun contexts
- professional opportunities and growth for our people
- a community that's optimistic, dynamic and collegiate

Our new CEO will be the Accounting Officer for the Trust and have direct responsibility for the quality of education across our schools. They will work closely with our Chief Operating Officer who leads on non-teaching support functions.

For further information on our Trust and the application process, please download the attached candidate pack.

Applications are to be received no later than 12 noon on **Monday 11 November 2019**. Interviews will be held on **Thursday 28** and **Friday 29 November 2019**.

Download pack

Ebor Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All applicants will be subject to a full Disclosure and Barring Service check before appointment is confirmed.

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