

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

“At first you’re a hero. After that it’s your problem”



P20-22

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‘Misleading’

- Advertising watchdog issues damning ruling on *The Parliamentary Review*
- Magazine ordered to make clear it’s NOT official government publication
- Whistleblower: ‘Are they picking the top schools? No they are not’

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

Schools charged up to £3,500 for ‘Parliamentary Review’ exposure

- Glossy magazine accused of misleading schools over links with parliament
- Education secretary and PM’s name used to promote controversial publication
- Labour MP cuts ties after learning of how much schools are charged

INVESTIGATES FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER



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‘Failing’

- Probe into nationality checks exposes DfE GDPR breaches
- Watchdog says ‘clear deficiencies’ in processing pupil data
- ‘Far reaching’ issues affecting ‘huge number’ under scrutiny



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Headteachers' Roundtable

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SUMMIT

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Editor's top picks



Tory MP hopeful promises voters new grammar school

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Leading headteachers publish manifesto to detoxify education

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Is Christmas cancelled (again)?



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WILLIAMSON'S PLEA FOR FESTIVE JOY FALLS ON DEAF EARS

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Councils across England have snubbed Gavin Williamson's offer of extra funding to find alternative polling stations so school nativities can go ahead.

Last week we revealed how the education secretary had been told that his extra cash for councils who wanted to avoid using schools on December 12 was too little, too late.

Councils claimed they had already booked sites. Others said poll cards with schools' details had been printed. And one headteacher claimed her council rebuffed two other choices – with a reception nativity facing disruption (see box below).

Peter Stanyon, the chief executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators, told *Schools Week* he was "not surprised".

"The venues for polling stations are not just picked overnight. They're set well in advance of elections.

"It was the timing of the election being called that's been the issue, not the fact venues themselves are regularly used as polling stations."

Councils in North West Leicestershire, Fylde, South Ribble, Central Bedfordshire, Rossendale, Woking, Gateshead and the London borough of Brent said time constraints stopped them taking up Williamson's offer.



A spokesperson for North West Leicestershire said it came "too late as we needed to book the polling station as soon as the election was announced" to allow poll card data to be printed and issued to voters.

Woking council said it had "no other suitable venues within the polling district", and that, "due to the short timeframe . . . the offer of extra funding from the DfE has not been taken up".

Other councils said finding alternative venues was not an option.

Cheltenham council, for example, said cost was "not a factor in being unable to find alternatives to schools used", and Stratford-upon-Avon said that if they were available, "we would use them".

Earlier this month, *Schools Week* revealed how hundreds of schools faced rescheduling nativity plays and Christmas concerts because their sites were being used for the snap election.

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.

In response Williamson wrote to councils on November 5 with a pledge to "reimburse necessary costs" to support councils find other polling venues and "avoid disrupting long-planned and important events" during the run-up to Christmas.

Responding to the letter last week Stanyon said the education secretary had a "complete lack of knowledge and understanding" of how elections worked.

The row has ignited the debate over whether schools should be used as polling stations. It's the third closure this year for some, with the European Parliament and council elections in May.

However, Nottingham council said no school would close for the election.

Of the ten designated as polling stations, eight would remain fully open and two would have to close nursery provision only.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that while Williamson's offer was "well-meaning", it was "unfortunate that the hasty nature of this election means none of the solutions offered look like they will help schools".

EXCLUSIVE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

'It's almost like the council doesn't care'

A school has rescheduled its reception nativity play after the local council rebuffed alternative venues for a polling station.

Helen Williamson, the head of Billingshurst primary school, said Horsham rejected her proposal to move the polling station to a nearby leisure centre because it was "being used by a school during the day".

"I responded that our school is being used by a school during the day."

Williamson said she was "incredibly frustrated,

particularly as I've been campaigning on this issue for ten years.

"I fully appreciate that for councils working at short notice this is very challenging, but . . . pretty much any other venue would be more suitable."

The school said it had no choice but to move its reception nativity, due to take place on December 12, to a different week.

In a letter to parents, Williamson said that week has "six other year groups performing. I am sure you do not want to have to choose which of your children's performances to attend if they clash."

The school will lose access to a hall, denying "at least 120 children a hot meal that on every other day of the school year is their legal entitlement".

Abi Smith, who has three children at the school, including one in reception, said: "It's almost like the council isn't listening and doesn't care. My child has started talking about Christmas already, and he's come back excited. It's quite a big deal for them."

Horsham council said they had an "impossible choice" of disrupting activities at one of two schools. A review in September found no suitable alternatives for Billingshurst primary.



DfE breached GDPR over pupil data collection

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

An investigation into the controversial, now abandoned, pupil nationality checks has unearthed “far-reaching issues” and “clear deficiencies” in how the Department for Education collects data about children.

The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) is now considering whether to take further regulatory action.

The ICO’s decision, seen by *Schools Week*, said a complaint from Against Borders for Children “highlighted clear deficiencies in the processing of pupil personal data by the DfE.

“Our view is that the DfE is failing to comply fully with its data protection obligations. Primarily in the areas of transparency and accountability, where there are far-reaching issues, impacting a huge number of individuals in a variety of ways.”

The complaint, supported by Liberty, centred on two issues.

The first related to the government’s retention of nationality and country of birth data collected through the school census, introduced in September 2016 but scrapped in June last year after criticism that it was used to track immigration status.

The ICO said the DfE did not need consent to collect and retain nationality and birth data in the pupil database.

However, it found the government was failing to fully comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) because many parents and pupils were “entirely unaware of the school census and the inclusion of that information in the national pupil database”.

Others were not “aware of the nuances within the data collection, such as which data is compulsory and which is optional”.

The second issue related to the sharing of pupil data with the Home Office for immigration checks.

The Home Office can request data – including a pupil’s address and school details – from the national pupil database if there is evidence of illegal activity, including illegal



immigration or evidence a child is at risk.

The DfE has agreed to share the personal details of up to 1,500 school children a month with the Home Office as part of the “hostile environment” policy. Campaigners call these “secret immigration checks”.

However, the ICO warned of a “lack of transparency by the DfE” because parents and children were not informed their data could be shared.

“Our view is that the DfE is failing to comply fully with the GDPR in respect of these articles and the requirement for accountability in the processing of personal data.”

Against Borders for Children argued that the DfE’s actions left parents afraid to send their children to school, and have called on the DfE to delete children’s nationality and country of birth data.

Kojo Kyerewaa, a co-ordinator for Against Borders for Children, said schools had been “covertly incorporated as part of Home Office immigration enforcement.

“Millions of families haven’t consented to a pupil nationality database or to secret immigration checks. We call on the DfE to protect all children’s access to education without fear by deleting the pupil nationality database, repeal pupil nationality census

legislation and stop immigration checks using pupils’ data.”

The national pupil database holds information on more than 21 million children collected through the school census since 1998.

Philip Nye, of the research organisation FFT Education Datalab, said the national pupil database “should never have been used for immigration enforcement”.

But he stressed that the information it contained helped researchers “answer a huge number of questions about what works – or, frequently, doesn’t work – in education policy.

“Hopefully these issues can be addressed, and the ability of the research community to answer important questions about the school system will continue.”

The DfE and ICO were unable to comment on the case because of purdah restrictions.

The ICO letter said the “wide-ranging and serious concerns raised about the DfE . . . will be formally considered for further action”.

Jen Persson, from the campaign group Defend Digital Me, said it was now about waiting to see whether the ICO would “show its teeth” and, if so, what enforcement it would take.

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Investigation

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£3,500-a-go mag 'misleading', rules ASA

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

A glossy magazine that charges headteachers thousands of pounds to publish content about their schools has been ordered to end its "misleading" marketing practices by the advertising watchdog.

The Advertising Standards Authority ruled that *The Parliamentary Review* was unclear about its links to government. The ASA said the magazine also failed to make clear that letters sent to potential customers were marketing communications, or that articles included in its publications were advertisements.

Whistleblowers who once worked for the publication have claimed schools were approached indiscriminately and that they felt schools were misled into believing they had been singled out for praise by an official outlet.

Schools Week revealed last year how schools were approached by *The Parliamentary Review* through letters from senior politicians, including Lord Pickles, the former communities secretary, and David Curry, a former Conservative MP and the publication's editor.

The letters told heads they had been selected to share best practice by contributing to the magazine and were invited to a glitzy gala in London.

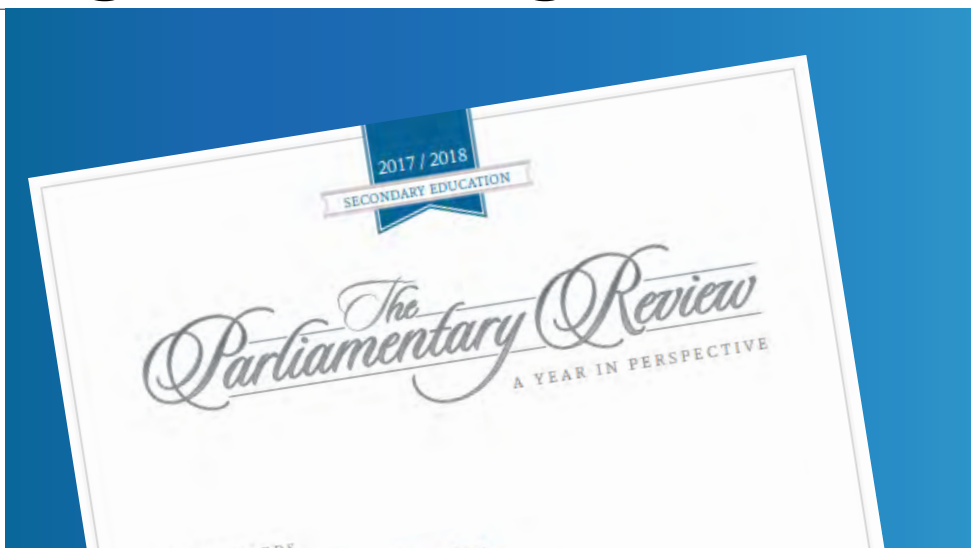
But, when they enquired further, they said they were told they had to pay up to £3,500.

If the 118 schools featured this year and the 217 included in 2018 were charged the same, the publication would have made more than £1 million from schools in two years.

While the publication did not confirm its fees to schools, *The Parliamentary Review* said that less than 10 per cent of its annual turnover derived from schools.

Two complainants to the ASA said the letters, issued to businesses, were not "obviously identifiable" as marketing communications and misleadingly implied the review was an official government publication.

They also complained it was not obvious that the magazine content was marketing.



The ASA upheld all three complaints and ordered Westminster Publications, the magazine's publisher, to change the way it presented its publications and written communications and to make it clearer that it is not associated with government.

“Are they picking the top schools in the country? No, they’re not”

Westminster Publications did not respond to a request for comment from *Schools Week* after the ruling. But in its official response to the authority, the publisher said it was "not its intention to mislead consumers" in the letters and that it would add words to future mailings to prevent further issues.

It said it did not believe submitted articles counted as adverts because the content was controlled by the company, and not the contributors. But former staff have questioned the rationale for choosing schools.

"Are they picking the top schools in the country? No, they're not," said one former staffer, who spoke to *Schools Week* on condition of anonymity.

They said some schools that agreed to be included were "desperate to get some

recognition on a national level".

"If you're a struggling headteacher with a poor Ofsted report, appearing in *The Parliamentary Review* can give you some breathing space. Think about what it does to be told that you have been asked to appear in a politician-run, prestigious magazine."

Westminster Publications insisted it was "false" to claim that schools were approached and published indiscriminately, and said it had previously dropped schools that did not meet its "strict criteria".

It also said best practice "is not directly linked to Ofsted grades and it [is] imperative that all those working in education have a chance to talk about how they are responding to educational challenges".

Another former employee, who also asked not to be identified, alleged that schools were led to believe the magazines and gala events were exclusive.

"It's the fact they think it's an exclusive evening gala that's tailored to them, when in fact it's done on a massive scale with about 24 galas a year," they said.

The Parliamentary Review said that these allegations were false and that the events were exclusive. It said that the publication was sent to all schools in the country, but later said "near enough every school in the country receives a copy of the review each year".

It also said that the whistleblowers were "disgruntled employees" and that it was "extremely proud" of its publication and "all that it has achieved".

Damian Hinds, the former education secretary, who wrote a foreword for the 2018

Investigation

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edition, told *Schools Week* this year that he was not aware schools had to pay thousands of pounds to appear.

When approached by *Schools Week* in July with the whistleblowers' concerns over how schools were recruited, Lord Blunkett – co-chair of *The Parliamentary Review* – said: "If there is serious concern by schools then of course this should be addressed as a matter of urgency."

He said his signature was at the bottom of articles and letters "only when I have approved them", adding: "This is normal practice in wide-ranging organisations of this sort, where there is an interchange between parliamentary activity and the world that parliament is there to serve."

"That is why I have supported the interesting and groundbreaking work that does not feature in any other current organisation."

In its ruling, the ASA agreed with the complainants that letters sent by *The Parliamentary Review* and signed off by politicians were not "obviously identifiable" as marketing communications.

It also agreed that the letters "misleadingly implied that *The Parliamentary Review* was an official government publication".

The ASA also agreed that articles in the magazine were not identifiable as marketing communications, because the review did not label them as advertising. This complaint related to articles contributed for *The Parliamentary Review* 2017-18, and viewed online in May this year.

The Parliamentary Review argued that its articles "did not include any agreement as to what the articles would say", and that editorial guidelines were "sent to all contributors and clearly stated that *The Parliamentary Review* retained editorial control over the final published piece".

However guidelines it provided to the

ASA "related to stylistic considerations rather than content". The watchdog said that simply proofreading or editing the articles was not "in line with the definition of editorial control intended by the code".

The ASA also noted that the review's website included an FAQ section that stated organisations were "free to use the review, and their article within it, to promote themselves to a wide audience".

Marketing letters said the review was "fiercely independent and, as such, you would have full freedom to express yourself entirely as you wish".

The ASA said adverts "must not appear again in the forms complained about", and ordered Westminster Publications "to ensure that their marketing communications were obviously identifiable as such".

"We also told them to ensure they did not imply that *The Parliamentary Review* was an official government publication."

The men behind *The Parliamentary Review*

DANIEL YOSSMAN

Westminster Publications Limited has one shareholder, Daniel Yossman, who has sole control over the company.

The 31-year-old was paid dividends of £510,000 in 2018, £176,000 in 2017 and £360,530 in 2016.

The company says the sum taken out last year was in the form of a loan to Yossman "in order to buy his family home following the birth of his child".

CRAIG WILMANN

Wilmann, who sometimes goes by the name CJ Wilmann, is the director of *The Parliamentary Review*.

Outside his work at the magazine, he is a playwright and author, who released a book called *How Michael Gove Saves the World* in 2017.

According to a description on the back of the book, it paints the former education secretary as a "hero" who is "deeply misunderstood".

DAVID CURRY

As the magazine's editor Curry, the Conservative MP for Skipton and Ripon in Yorkshire from 1987 to 2010, signs off some letters to schools asking them to take part.

He served on the Conservative frontbench while the party was in opposition in the 1990s and 2000s, initially as shadow agriculture, food and fisheries minister and then as shadow local and devolved government affairs secretary.

He also served briefly as chair of the parliamentary standards and privileges committee.

In 2010, he was ordered to repay £28,000 of parliamentary expenses that he spent on a house in his constituency that he rarely used. The Commons standards and privileges committee noted that there was no intention to deceive or derive an improper personal benefit from his expenses claim.

LORD PICKLES AND LORD BLUNKETT

As the co-chairs of *The Parliamentary Review*, Pickles and Blunkett also sign off some communications from schools, and host some of the publication's gala events.

Pickles served as communities secretary under David Cameron before his elevation to the House of Lords.

Blunkett was Tony Blair's first education secretary, serving from 1997 to 2001.



David Curry



Lord Pickles



Lord Blunkett



MOST PARENTS WILL HAVE THEIR SAY ON RSE LESSONS

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EXCLUSIVE

One in ten schools plans to ignore government demands to consult parents on developing new relationships and sex education (RSE) lessons.

A quarter will form working groups with parents, while almost a fifth have not yet decided how to engage, according to a new poll by The Key.

From September next year all schools must teach relationships and health education, and all secondaries must teach sex education.

However, some parents oppose the requirement. In Birmingham and Manchester several have protested about the content, particularly LGBT relationships.

Government guidance says schools must "consult parents" in developing their RSE policy and ensure it "meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve".

Sarah Hannafin, a senior policy adviser at the National Association of Head Teachers, said the requirement to consult "does not exist for any other areas of the curriculum".



But she said parental engagement "can be a positive step", especially when there was "widespread misinformation or misunderstanding".

"Ultimately it is for schools to decide what is taught and how."

The Key survey of 674 school leaders and governors found 24 per cent would form a working party with interested parents on the new curriculum.

Twenty-three per cent were planning information sessions, 17 per cent said they would survey parents and 12 per cent had an "open door policy" for parents.

Lucy Emmerson, the director of the Sex Education Forum, said it was "encouraging"

so many schools were planning to involve parents in RSE.

However, 17 per cent said they still do not know how they would do that, and 9 per cent had no plans to consult at all.

Respondents could select multiple options in the survey – and some schools were pursuing more than one approach.

Alastair Lichten, the head of education at the National Secular Society, warned schools not to start "lending credence to unreasonable expectations that the course content will be subject to parental whim or veto.

"A school's overriding duty is to deliver RSE in a way that is comprehensive, non-discriminatory and rights-based. Any consultation must not undermine that."

The high court is due to rule today whether to keep an exclusion zone outside Anderton Park school, in Birmingham.

Birmingham City council has lodged an application to make the zone permanent after scores of parents protested against the school's planned LGBT lessons.

The council said noisy protests meant some children were unable to use the playground.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

DfE pumped £3m into failing ICT supplier

The Department for Education pumped £3 million into a cash-strapped ICT supplier to schools - stopping the firm collapsing after it was put into administration this year.

In August, Gaia Technologies entered administration amid "severe cashflow issues".

The Welsh firm was listed among the DfE's approved ICT service suppliers and described itself as a "leading provider" with 500 education customers.

However it has now been suspended as a supplier, with documents filed by administrators showing that the firm is £5.8 million in the red.

Gaia owes cash to 192 creditors, including over £860,000 to HM Revenue and Customs.

But the document also reveals that in order to secure the planned delivery of projects "at risk of not being completed or delivered", an

agreement was reached "whereby the DfE would advance funds" to the tune of £2.7 million.

The department will also foot over £200,000 of the joint administrators' trading costs.

Accounts filed last year show the company turned over £19 million and won more than half of contracts available within the DfE framework.

Mark Orchison, managing director at education technology consultancy agency 9ine, previously estimated that hundreds of schools who depend on ICT services from exterior providers are at risk of having assets sold from underneath them if these firms collapse.

He said: "It is surprising ... that the DfE has not been actively monitoring the supplier to whom they have awarded over 50 per cent of education contracts on their crown commercial services.

"This really calls for school leaders to ensure they have a robust supply chain, and contracts where they have title over equipment should their suppliers fall into administration."

Gaia claims it has provided services to a number of well-known clients such as the Ormiston Academies Trust, the JCB Academy in Staffordshire and the Sheffield Community Academy.

Ben Woolrych and Anthony Collier, partners at specialist business advisory firm FRP Advisory LLP, were appointed joint administrators in August.

Explaining the firm's downfall Collier stated: "Gaia Technologies has grown rapidly over the last few years having secured a number of significant contracts, but unfortunately severe cashflow issues have resulted in it being placed into administration."

Former RSC: DfE expects improvement too quickly

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Failing schools need time to turn around, despite the Department for Education's expectation of "quick" results, says a former regional schools commissioner.

Jennifer Bexon-Smith said "broken" secondary schools needed a "minimum" of five years for improvement.

She also warned that Ofsted reports did not show a full picture of what was going on in schools rated 'inadequate'.

The former RSC for the East Midlands and the Humber, who retired in 2017, was quizzed at the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham this week about *Schools Week's* recent story on schools left in limbo by a lack of sponsors.

Andy Mellor, a past president of the National Association of Head Teachers, who is based in Blackpool, said a school in his area had recently dropped from 'requires improvement' to 'inadequate', despite the efforts of the best-performing academy trust in the locality to turn it around.

Bexon-Smith said Ofsted was "only ever a snapshot over those two days", adding: "I'm not sure it necessarily reflects all the work that very often is going on in these schools.

"I've worked in many broken schools, and I think particularly at secondary, to really embed change, to really get down to the root causes of problems and difficulties, you're talking about a minimum of a five-year journey," she said.

"Now we all know, and I've worked at the DfE, expectations are much quicker than that. But realistically I do think some of these schools take a long time."

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary, who joined Bexon-Smith on a panel to talk about social mobility, said that some schools struggled to get a good Ofsted grade "no matter how much money or talent you are throwing at them".

He also said the Ofsted model "tends to be more reflective of your circumstances rather than what's going on with the school".

Ofsted itself has warned of the plight of "stuck schools" that keep a low grade for years at a time.

EXCLUSIVE



Revealed: Councils' £700k illegal school bill

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Local authorities have been urged to maintain a list of registered independent education providers after it emerged six councils spent more than £700,000 sending vulnerable youngsters to an "unsafe" illegal school.

Last month three people were convicted of running the unregistered school at Freiston Hall in Lincolnshire (pictured). It charged £1,200 a week to educate youngsters with complex physical and mental health needs.

Cath Murray of The Centre for Social Justice said: "No children should be placed in unregistered schools or alternative provision."

She said that every local authority "should be required to maintain a list of all providers with whom they commission places.

"If any education provider does not meet the threshold for Ofsted inspection, the local authority should perform quality assurance and safeguarding checks – involving an initial visit in person – before they place any child with the provider."

Government guidance issued last year says councils have a "crucial role" in identifying illegal schools and should liaise with the Department for Education and Ofsted to check a school is registered.

Local authorities that come into contact with a potential unregistered school are told to "not give the setting any impression it is acceptable to operate unregistered".

Local authorities are said to have "overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children... regardless of the types of educational setting they attend".

However, the Freiston case has raised questions about the due diligence councils carry out over such placements.

Essex County Council told *Schools Week* it knew Freiston was unregistered before it sent two "exceptionally vulnerable" children there. The council spent £288,000 on the placements

between January and August last year.

The authority claimed Freiston's leaders had assured them registration was "imminent" and the council faced a "very challenging placement situation".

A council spokesman said it was then "subsequently wrongly advised by the provider that the provision had been successful in registration and inspected".

When notified by Ofsted in July 2018 that the school remained unregistered, Essex claimed it "instantly made plans" to move the youngsters.

Hertfordshire county council spent £131,000 sending four youngsters to Freiston, between October 2017 and August 2018. The council said it has reviewed processes to "ensure no similar situation can arise in the future".

City of Wolverhampton Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council sent one youngster each, at a cost of £148,500 and £146,000, respectively.

Birmingham City Council and Reading Borough Council did not fully respond to our Freedom of information requests.

Patricia Hodgkinson, Albert Okoye and Clement Earle have been ordered to pay £1,000 costs for their part in running the unregistered school. They all pleaded guilty.

Ofsted's special taskforce – which costs £1 million a year – has identified hundreds of potential illegal schools, but just three have been prosecuted.

Any independent setting offering full-time education must be registered with the government, but there is some ambiguity over what constitutes full-time education.

Ofsted last week many illegal schools had pre-prepared "drills" to evacuate children when inspectors visited.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said: "This case should serve as a warning to local authorities." She said those that ran the school received "large amounts of public money from local authorities, which were paying for exceptionally vulnerable children to be educated in an unregistered, unsafe school".

News

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Timetabling missed out in £1.2m edtech fund

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

The government's commitment to boost flexible working in schools has come under fire after just 3 per cent of the new edtech fund was awarded to sort out timetabling issues.

Thirteen companies will share £1.2 million under the first wave of EdTech Innovation funding to develop products that will "revolutionise education".

The £4.6 million partnership between Nesta and the Department for Education, launched in April, pledged to find solutions in schools for four "challenge areas": assessment, essay marking, parental engagement and timetabling.

But of the grants announced this week, just £38,975 (3 per cent) will go towards resolving timetabling issues – said to be a major obstacle to flexible working.

Alison Peacock, the chief executive of The Chartered College of Teaching, said: "If schools are to 'transform' their approach to flexible working, then they actually need to be given the tools and support to do it.

"Funding for this is important and 3 per cent of the overall tech budget for timetabling software seems quite small, given the challenges schools face in retaining teachers."

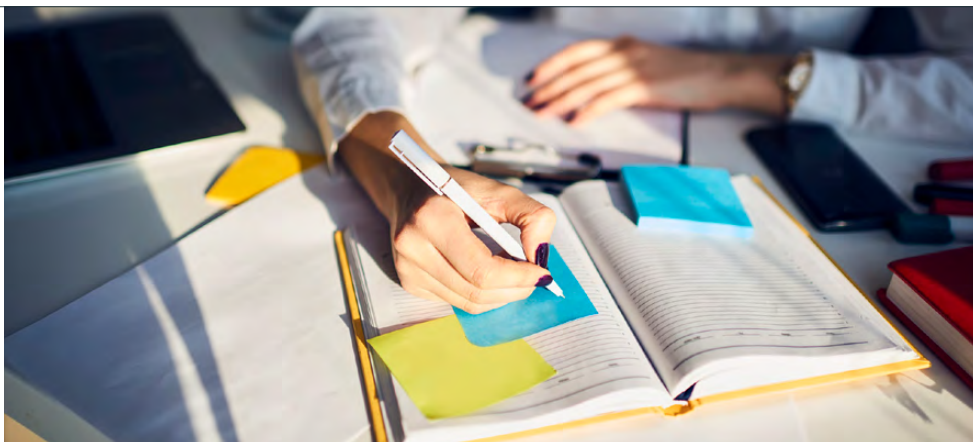
Earlier this year the Department for Education called on headteachers to "transform" their approaches to flexible working as it was "more important than ever that teaching is compatible with having children and a family life".

A government study found flexible working in schools tended to be confined to part-time opportunities. This was generally attributed to "the nature of school timetabling and the requirements to be onsite".

The government pledged to fund companies that would "create innovative solutions to promote and facilitate part-time and flexible working patterns", including timetabling.

But October Resolutions was the only one to get funding.

The cash will pay for a pilot to test the company's Timetabler software – which claims it makes part-time working, staggered hours and job sharing easier to schedule – in 20 schools.



The largest chunk of cash went to companies tackling formative assessment. Seven edtech firms received £689,365, or 50 per cent, of the first-round funding.

Three companies addressing issues with parental engagement have been chosen, with two more for essay marking.

Joysy John, Nesta's director of education, said there were fewer applications in the timetabling category, so the funding awarded was "broadly representative of the proportions of applications we had for each of the four challenge areas".

She added that applications were judged on "specific selection criteria" to find the "edtech products with the greatest potential to improve, build an evidence base for what works and scale in order to have real impact".

One of the successful companies was HegartyMaths, which publishes online videos of maths lessons. It was recently acquired by the education tech giant Sparx, which has more than one million users in more than 1,300 schools.

In September Sparx received one of the largest investments in the UK edtech sector when it was given a £50 million cash injection from Oxygen House to support and expand its services.

The government has previously said that shifting to flexible working "ultimately comes down to headteachers".

However, it has pledged to develop a new "Match.com"-like website to help teachers to find job-share partners. This has yet to be launched.

John added that Nesta was also working to include timetabling in the Edtech Innovation Testbed programme to help schools trial promising tech products free.

The companies to take part will be announced next year.



Department for Education

FULL LIST OF THE WINNERS

Formative assessment

- Bolton College First Pass – £100,000
- Educake Ltd – £89,000
- Enabling Enterprise CIC Skills Builder – £99,765
- HegartyMaths – £100,000
- MangaHigh – £100,000
- Pobble – £100,000
- Seneca Learning – £100,000

Essay marking

- No More Marking – £63,768
- Texthelp Ltd WriQ – £87,000

Parental Engagement

- Engagement in Education Ltd freeflowinfo – £99,400
- Firefly Learning Ltd – £100,000
- Studybugs – £100,000

Timetabling

- October Resolutions Timetabler – £38,975

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Neil Stocking, Vice Principal, Highcrest Academy

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Election watch



Purdah further delays late consultations

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers are yet to respond to five consultations on new reforms as government shuts down for purdah, including one aimed at helping Theresa May's "ordinary working families" that is more than two years late.

With a total of four years of delays between them, other consultations cover fire safety in schools, launched after the Grenfell fire, and safeguarding youngsters in out-of-school settings.

With the Department of Education now in purdah – the pre-election period during which public bodies have to act in a politically neutral manner – it is unlikely responses will be issued before the end of the year.

Government guidance states that all departments should publish consultation responses within 12 weeks.

But a response for the *Analysing family circumstances and education* consultation, launched in April 2017, is now overdue by 753 days – or more than two years.



Justine Greening (pictured), a former education secretary, said the consultation was about investigating how reforms could better support "ordinary working families".

It was part of Theresa May's priority while prime minister to help "just-about-managing" families or "Jams".

The consultation seeks views on the methods the government uses to analyse the household income and educational outcomes of pupils in England.

To count in the "Jams" group, children must come from families earning below the median income, but who do not qualify for free school meals. About one in three children falls into the category.

At the time of the launch, May's government

was proposing new selective schools to support "young people from every background, not the privileged few".

Greening used analysis in the consultation to shore up its argument, stating that grammar schools were helping children from "ordinary families" and critics should "not lose sight of the fact".

The research found children "are as likely to be from ordinary working families as children in non-selective schools, demonstrating that grammar schools are not just for the wealthy".

The government is also yet to respond to its *Design for fire safety in schools* consultation, with a response nearly three months behind schedule.

In light of the Grenfell Tower fire, in which 72 people died, the government sought expert advice as to whether guidelines needed to be updated.

The consultation reviews *Building Bulletin 100*, the technical guidance for those designing and building schools.

While the consultation acknowledges "schools are already very safe buildings in the event of a fire" the technical review looks to ensure every effort is made to mitigate risk.

FULL LIST OF CONSULTATIONS AWAITING GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

ANALYSING FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES AND EDUCATION

Opened: April 12, 2017
Consultation closed: July 31, 2017
Days overdue: 753

Details: It seeks opinions on the methodology used by the government to analyse the household income and educational outcomes of pupils in England. It also outlines an approach to looking at ordinary working families.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SETTINGS: VOLUNTARY SAFEGUARDING CODE OF PRACTICE

Opened: December 2, 2018
Consultation closed: February 24, 2019
Days overdue: 180

Details: Launched to help the development of a voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS: CARE STATUTORY GUIDANCE REVISION

Opened: May 10, 2018
Consultation closed: July 4, 2018
Days overdue: 422

Details: A consultation, including for education professionals, seeking views on revisions made to include asylum-seeking children being brought to the UK under the Dublin III Regulation to join family or relatives.

REVIEW OF BUILDING BULLETIN 100: DESIGN FOR FIRE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

Opened: March 8, 2019
Consultation closed: May 31, 2019
Days overdue: 84

Details: A consultation calling for evidence to ensure the DfE's guidance to those who build schools is fit for purpose and aligns with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's wider review of fire safety.

CHILDREN NOT IN SCHOOL

Opened: April 2, 2019
Consultation closed: June 24, 2019
Days overdue: 60

Details: It follows up the DfE's consultation and call for evidence on elective home education and seeks views of legislation to establish a register maintained by local authorities of children not attending mainstream schools, and the duties on parents and the proprietors of certain educational settings.



Election watch

MP wants new grammar school despite ban

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

The Conservative candidate for Croydon South told voters in an election video he “wants to see” a grammar school built in the borough – despite the fact that new selective schools are illegal.

Chris Philp, who has represented Croydon South since 2015, is a long-time supporter of bringing selective education into the London borough.

In a campaign video on his website, released this month, Philp said he attended grammar school as a child adding: “Grammar schools can help Croydon kids from ordinary backgrounds like mine achieve their potential. That’s why I want to see a grammar school right here in Croydon.”

New grammar schools are illegal, but existing grammars can apply to expand, including on to separate sites. However any that want to expand have to prove the satellite is an extension of their current school, and does not constitute a new school.

Dr Nuala Burgess, chair of the anti-grammar campaign group Comprehensive Future, said it was a “revealing slip of the tongue” for Philp to talk about a new grammar school rather than a satellite site and called for a “serious investigation”.

She added: “If Mr Philp is honestly suggesting this is a new school and isn’t even bothering with the terminology of ‘satellite’, then you have to

question what is going on.

“Bringing a grammar school to his borough will drain high attaining pupils from good comprehensive schools and damage the overall education results in Croydon.”

Croydon is a non-selective area. Philp has previously supported potential plans for Wallington County Grammar School (WCGS), based in neighbouring Sutton, to open a satellite site in the borough.

Philp wrote on his website in January 2017 that he was “pushing hard both publicly and privately” to get the satellite opened “as quickly as possible”. However the school told Schools Week in November 2017 that expansion was “never on the table”. At the time, Philp said he was “confused” by the denial.

When asked if WCGS was connected to Philp’s new pledge for a grammar school in Croydon, a spokesperson for the school said they were “aware of Chris Philp’s desire to see selective education set up in Croydon” but they had “no plans to deliver on this”.

It is not clear if any other schools are in talks with Philp to open satellite sites. The politician did not respond to requests for comment, but Burgess added that it was “very concerning” if Philp was pledging to introduce a satellite site without being approached by an existing school.

Selective schools can access a £200 million



expansion fund, but government guidance says they can only expand to a satellite site if it is “genuinely part of the existing school”.

Jon Andrews, deputy head of research at the Education Policy Institute, warned that “any expansion in the number of grammar school places – either through the opening of new selective schools or the expansion of existing schools – is likely to have damaging effects on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils”.

INVESTIGATES

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Private school analysis doesn't add up

The Conservative party’s high-profile dossier revealing the “£1.2 trillion cost” of Labour’s policies includes details for a schools policy the party has not committed to.

In a document entitled The real cost of a Labour government, the Conservatives said that extending free school meals to all secondary pupils would cost £6.8 billion.

But Labour hasn’t committed to this policy. It’s inclusion in the Conservative party document was based on a Schools Week article reporting the shadow health minister Sharon Hodgson telling a conference the party “should seriously consider” rolling it out.

The document also claimed closing all private schools would cost £35 billion over five years (£7

billion a year).

Labour has pledged to close “tax loopholes” for private schools and said it would consider ways to “integrate private schools into the state sector”.

Half of the annual £7 billion is the estimated cost of educating all private school pupils in the state system.

Fact checkers said this was “pretty reasonable”. But they highlighted issues with the other £3.5 billion which the Conservatives claim is the amount of tax revenue that will be lost if the private school sector closes.

Abbas Panjwani, a fact-checker with the independent charity FullFact, said: “The idea you would lose out on all that tax revenue if you abolished independent schools doesn’t really

hold.

“You would have more teachers in the state sector, who would be paying income tax and generating tax revenue, and you would have more office supplies to buy for kids being educated in the state sector.”

The costing was based on analysis by the research consultancy Oxford Economics. The company did not combine the two £3.5 billion figures in its original analysis, which was published last year for the Independent Schools Council.

A spokesperson for Oxford Economics said the firm was satisfied its analysis was “highly rigorous”, but said it had not had a chance to evaluate recent interpretations.

INVESTIGATES

Fewer teachers banned for life over misconduct

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

The number of teachers banned from the profession for life without the right to appeal last year has halved, while those escaping misconduct hearings without any prohibition rose.

Our analysis has prompted further calls for reform to a system that one senior lawyer says leaves the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) without the “nuance” needed to deal with misconduct.

Of the 104 misconduct hearings carried out by the TRA in 2018-19, a quarter (27) resulted in a ban with no appeal.

That was way down on the 45 per cent (53) of teachers who received lifetime bans in 2017-18, and 36 per cent (49) the year before.

Almost a third (33) were not banned, up from 23 per cent (27) the year before and 20 per cent (27) in 2016-17.

Unlike professional regulators in other sectors, and education regulators in Scotland and Wales, the TRA can only ban or not ban – no other sanctions are available.

Sarah Linden, a senior solicitor at the Association of School and College Leaders, said a ban was not proportionate in all cases and “something short of a ban needs to be recognised”, such as a temporary suspension or re-training.

She said some teachers could be “potentially at large in the workforce without the full weight of a regulatory sanction” because their misconduct did not warrant a ban.

All banned teachers receive a lifetime prohibition, but some can appeal after a specified time. Last year, 68 per cent (71) of misconduct hearings resulted in a prohibition order.

The education secretary makes the final decision on whether to bar a teacher.

Andrew Faux, a barrister at The Reflective Practice, said every other professional regulator could make a “graded response” to misconduct. But because the TRA was “not a professional regulator, it’s just the education secretary making barring decisions, there’s no nuance in it.”

As panels could not suspend teachers for a short period or require re-training, they “end up prohibiting people who they probably wish they could keep in the profession and support”.

Of those banned for life without appeal, more than half related to sexual or inappropriate behaviour towards pupils. Fifteen per cent were banned for exam malpractice, and 11 per cent for criminal convictions.

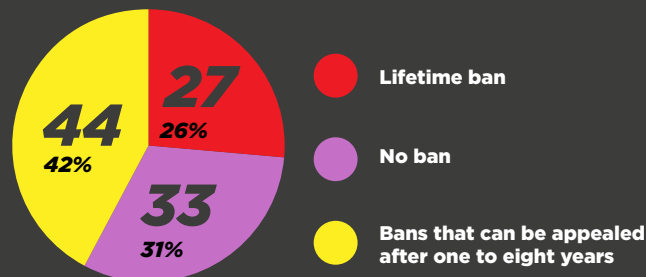
Alan Stevens, a vice-principal in Cambridgeshire, was convicted for fraud after he claimed expenses for personal items from a company linked to the school. But the panel decided not to ban him because he was a “well regarded” teacher who expressed remorse.

Lewis Morrison drank up to seven bottles of beer at a school prom, telling male pupils that girls were “gagging for it”. He was videoed saying he would knock the headteacher “the f*** out”. The panel said it was “crass stupidity”, but a one-off where no one came to harm.

Rachel Clint avoided a ban after sitting on a pupil’s knee and kissing him following a leavers’ drinks event for year 13 pupils. The panel said the kiss was “spontaneous” and not sexual, highlighting Clint’s “unblemished record”.

But Faux said teachers were still found guilty of misconduct and had to declare it to prospective employers.

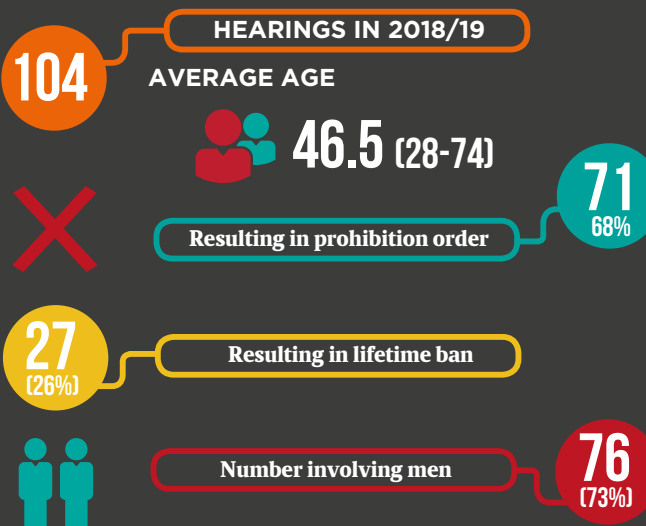
HEARING RESULTS



REASONS FOR LIFETIME BAN



HEARINGS IN NUMBERS





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INSPIRATION ADMITS TOO MANY PUPILS OPTED FOR HOME ED

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

The Inspiration Trust has admitted that the number of pupils leaving one of its schools for home education was “too high” after Ofsted said its response to the departures was “flimsy”.

Ofsted visited East Point Academy in Lowestoft, Suffolk, last month to look at high levels of pupil movement at the school, rated ‘good’ in October 2016.

Under a monitoring report published this week, Inspiration – founded by Lord Agnew (pictured), the academies minister – admitted the number of pupils moving to home education was “too high”.

Ofsted said leaders’ response to the “significant proportion” of pupils leaving the school was also “flimsy”.

The watchdog also noted that until summer this year pupils who attended alternative provision were “sometimes removed from the school roll” in year 11.

Leaders said they were following locally agreed practices, but could not show how it was in the best interests of pupils.

Another Suffolk school, Ormiston Denes Academy, was last month rapped for employing the same practice, which Ofsted said it deemed as off-rolling.

It was rated ‘inadequate’ and is now facing a transfer to another sponsor.

Schools Week understands the difference in



reporting is because Ormiston was still off-rolling at the time of the inspection, whereas Inspiration stopped months before the East Point visit.

A spokesperson for Inspiration said the report for East Point “explicitly makes clear that there is no evidence of any off-rolling”.

The trust has changed its processes and the few pupils taken off roll have since been reinstated.

Ofsted said although some moves away from school were at the request of some parents, it warned in other cases the reasons were “less clear”.

The report noted the proportion of parents opting for elective home education in 2017-18 “rose steeply”.

Rachel de Souza, the trust’s chief executive, was quoted as saying: “We knew historically that it was not where it needed to be. Data doesn’t lie; some of these figures were too high”.

But Ofsted warned that the school’s “interrogation” of why parents were opting for home education was “flimsy” and it had not “analysed patterns of pupil movement closely enough”.

It said a trust audit also “highlighted the lack of rigour in the school’s processes for monitoring pupils” who left for home education.

Although Ofsted said there was “no evidence that senior leaders or the trust encourage pupils and their families to leave the school”, it said that leaders have only “recently” reflected closely on why so many pupils chose to leave.

The inspectors said there was “still some work to do” at East Point to make sure that all pupils had access to “full-time, high-quality, appropriate provision”.

However, Ofsted also noted that Inspiration had done “extensive audit work” across all of its schools last year and “has identified that developing staff’s understanding of inclusion in its widest possible sense must now be, as stated by leaders, ‘front and centre of their agenda.’”

The Inspiration spokesperson said that “administrative processes around families who opt to home educate their children needed to tighten up”.

Fewer families were now choosing home education and students in alternative provision remained on Inspiration’s roll.

Colin Diamond, an Inspiration trustee, told *Schools Week* that inclusion scorecards were now discussed at every board meeting.

Suffolk council confirmed it would issue “new guidance” to all secondaries and pupil referral units.

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS | @PIPPA_AK

Brum school downgraded over off-rolling

A Birmingham school has been downgraded from ‘outstanding’ for off-rolling.

In a report published this week, inspectors warned that leaders at Holte School could not give a “clear reason” why a small number of pupils were removed from the school’s roll in year 11. There was “no evidence that this practice benefits the pupils”, it said.

“It means that information the government publishes about the school is not accurate. Ofsted refers to this practice as ‘off-rolling’. It should not happen.”

The report comes a year after Harrop Fold in Salford – the first council school to be rapped for off-rolling – was put in special measures.

At least seven schools have now been downgraded by Ofsted for off-rolling.

However, inspectors conceded that the Holte pupils educated in alternative provision were “well cared for” and achieved good results.

The school was said to do “many things very well indeed” and was described as a “welcoming, harmonious, multicultural community”.

Holte has now been rated ‘requires

improvement’. It was rated ‘outstanding’ in September 2012.

Birmingham City Council told the *Birmingham Mail* it was “working to address the areas for development identified”.

Off-rolling was flagged in another Ofsted report of a local authority school published this week.

St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School in Liverpool was rated ‘inadequate’ for the second time running. The report noted leaders had removed a small number of year 11 pupils “in the past”.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Firm must change its ways so teachers aren't misled

After years of squeezed funding, it is more important than ever that schools spend their money wisely.

We have written about how schools have buckets collecting dripping water from leaking roofs, how headteachers are cleaning toilets because they can't afford staff. Every penny is vital.

It's an important backdrop to the findings this week from the advertising watchdog, which ruled that *The Parliamentary Review* was misleading in its dealing with clients.

Headteachers who got letters saying they had been chosen to appear in its magazine, understandably, thought it was an official government publication. It isn't. And the advertising watchdog has told the publisher behind the magazine to stop such misleading practices.

The ruling is clear: *The Parliamentary Review* failed to inform its potential customers that its letters were marketing materials; articles in its magazines are adverts and it has no formal link to the government.

We hope the organisation is now clearer in its communications to schools so that headteachers know what is being offered.

The dodgy election claims just keep on coming

As we promised last week, we have been keeping our beady eye on the dodgy claims being bandied about during the election campaign.

We have already ticked off one of our bingo numbers after education secretary Gavin Williamson tweeted the discredited 1.9 million more children in "good" and "outstanding" schools line. He later deleted the tweet.

The Conservatives' "dossier" on Labour's spending plans is also worth further scrutiny. The costings included on education are particularly revealing.

What is also telling is that, when we went to the Conservatives to ask them for their justification for these incorrect figures, they just repeated them back to us.

Meanwhile it is concerning that a Conservative party candidate is telling voters that he wants to see a grammar school built in a non-selective area. (New grammar schools are illegal).

As ever, we will keep calling out such shenanigans. And, if you spot any dodgy dealings on the election trail relating to schools - do let us know.

Email news@schoolswweek.co.uk

See story on page 12



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Interview

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



“In the first couple of years you’re a hero. After that it’s your problem”

Nadia Paczuska, headteacher, Phoenix St Peter primary academy, Lowestoft

I'm standing beside a sugarbeet field somewhere in Suffolk trying to get to Nadia Paczuska's school. It's on the coast and Google has promised a bus from Norwich, but it has failed to turn up. My frantic calls for a taxi don't connect as

there's no 3G and the wifi in the nearby country pub isn't working.

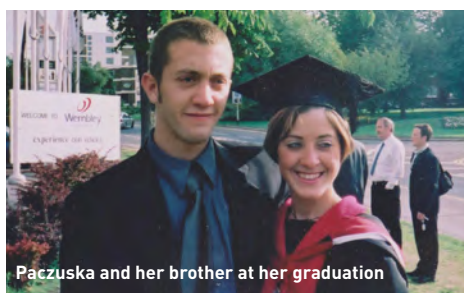
I ring Paczuska from the pub landline. She screeches good-naturedly: "This is why no one visits us! It's a flipping nightmare!"

Ninety minutes after leaving Norwich (it should have taken 50) I arrive at Phoenix St Peter Academy in Lowestoft where Paczuska is in her fifth year as head.

My research tells me she was parachuted into the coastal local authority school to much fanfare in 2015. A year later ITV reported: "Superhead sees progress at end of school year."

But in June last year Ofsted published a report with a brutal opening line: "Leaders and governors have an inflated view of the quality of provision at the school." It's been 'requires improvement' since.

Interview: Nadia Paczuska



Paczuska and her brother at her graduation

After leading me down bright corridors (a ceiling fell in a while back) to watch a yoga session with year 5, she takes me to her office.

Targets and national standards are chalked on the window and the wretched Ofsted report stapled to one wall.

I ask her to start from the beginning. She seems at home in her school, but as a London girl born to Polish parents, a long way from home too.

"I grew up in social housing and had that experience that many Londoners have, that finances were hard, but my mum was educated so we valued education and culture. She worked pub jobs in the evenings. She was also very political – she was concerned about equal opportunity," Paczuska says.

School didn't start well, with a year 7 exclusion. "My memory is I got the whole class to throw Pritt Sticks at the ceiling... don't know how I had the audacity."

But she moved to a good Camden school and studied Spanish at Middlesex University. After a year in Seville she returned for a PGCE at London Metropolitan University in modern foreign languages, starting off in the capital's secondary schools before moving to primary and "never looking back".

Soon she was ready for headship, spurred on by Heath Monk, then-chief executive of the Future Leaders Trust. "Heath said, 'you've got an energy and talent that's desperately needed outside London!'"

Paczuska pauses for breath as she recalls this



"There is a cultural deprivation here that doesn't exist in London"

penny-drop moment. "It's the first time anyone ever said that to me. He talked to me about coastal towns, northern towns, mill towns. I started reading about them and I was fascinated, and shocked. I was living in this bubble of London."

So she applied for Talented Leaders in 2014 – the more selective programme for exceptional headship candidates, which closed two years later (something Paczuska laments). She was one of 17 candidates from 200 who passed high-speed interviews, psychometric testing and problem-solving scenarios. "They just kept tapping people on the shoulder and telling them to go home."

So she was prepped, and arrived at Meadow Community primary school in Lowestoft, which had been graded 'requires improvement' in 2014.

Paczuska academised the school, joined Reach2, a trust with 59 schools, and launched a relentless recruitment campaign aimed at London, gaining her supportive deputy, Steph Hunter, and eight more teachers from the capital.

The staff quickly learnt these weren't the children they were used to. "There is a cultural deprivation that just doesn't exist in London. Me and my friends were poor but we knew what fancy tea was, you know? We knew what the

good stuff looked like," she says.

Some parents threatened to take their children out of the school when she hired a member of staff of Indian background. "There's also such a drugs problem on the coast. It's everywhere."

There was no school fence, pupils were out of lessons and none had visited Norwich's castle or Sutton Hoo, a nearby archaeological dig.

So Steph Hunter designed their "Horizons" curriculum, which themes the timetable around being "scientists", "historians" and so on.

I look at the timetable for when pupils are "culturalists": they examine life in India across all subjects. It's a clear effort to take them to worlds beyond Lowestoft.

Meanwhile, behaviour seems strong, with young children filing quietly down corridors – although they're very happy to chat with me. Almost 30 per cent have free school meals, 5 per cent have a special educational needs plan and 16 per cent are on SEN support – well above national averages.

Her 2017-18 results were -2.9 in reading, well below national average, and average for writing and maths.

I touch on that Ofsted finding. Paczuska is almost torn. "You know what, doesn't everything require improvement? I agree we require improvement!"

But she is clear the tone of the report felt unnecessarily unkind. "All he did was look at data. The style of the report gave me such dark moments. It was just awful. Keeping the team going is the most challenging thing."

Following the Ofsted, the school had a drop of 16 pupil applications compared with the previous year and four teachers left. Paczuska worries

Interview: Nadia Paczuska



Paczuska with her children and nephew



Paczuska, her mother and brother, Hampstead Heath, 1983

“We’re in the Ofsted window now. Let them come. I’m ready”

some neighbouring school leaders were even glad this “superhead” had seemingly failed.

To me it also seems a problem Talented Leaders closed, meaning the unofficial support Paczuska receives from her old mentor only exists because he cares.

“I’m owning bad results every year, and no one wants to own that.

“In the first couple of years you’re a hero. After that it’s your problem.”

The research on coastal schools is clear. In February, the University of Plymouth found rural and coastal schools “feel isolated” from government support.

In 2016, the Social Mobility Commission found some of the worst prospects for poor children were in remote parts of the country. In April, the Centre for Education and Youth found poor pupils in rural schools were more likely to get low GCSE scores than their poor peers elsewhere.

Paczuska and Hunter say peer reviews made them “crazy” as some experts said the school was brilliant and others said it wasn’t. Tim Coulson, the former regional schools commissioner, told



With her mother in 1999 when she came home from studying in Seville

Paczuska to “keep going” whenever he visited.

Without Reach2’s support after the Ofsted, Paczuska says she might have crumbled. “My manager said one day, ‘what you have to do, Nadia, is realise this will always be hard’. It changed something for me. I will achieve an exceptional school, but I won’t get the badge that goes with it.”

Like many school leaders, Paczuska wants the ‘outstanding’ grade scrapped. But, impressively, she is not at all keen on contextualised attainment scores, worrying this could lead to lower expectations of her pupils.

One thing, however, drives her nuts. “When people compare their school in London to mine because we have similar free school meals, it’s an insult. It just doesn’t compare.”

Hunter adds how much she misses restaurants and theatres. “Colleagues don’t realise how privileged they are,” Paczuska says. “There’s a calling much bigger than people realise about how we save the education system in this country. Come out here and work.”

I tell Paczuska she should set up a National Association of Rural and Coastal Schools and take the case to No 10. “That’s a great idea!” She’s also in favour of a national distribution system of teachers across the country, as in Spain.

As we peek into the Friday afternoon assembly with pupils belting out Pharrell Williams’ Happy, I ask her when she’s next due an Ofsted inspection.

“We’re in the window now. Let them come. I’m ready.”

Opinion

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

The Headteachers' Roundtable's "Big 5" election manifesto gives a new vision of professionalism and trust, restoring confidence in education, writes Ros McMullen

The education system is in crisis. Recruitment and retention, funding, special needs provision, accountability and ethical leadership are all at breaking point, but it won't do to look at these five factors individually. It is the interplay between them that creates the crisis, and it is here that the solution will be found.

Retention and recruitment, for example, are far more complex than simple work-life balance; accountability has created a damaging cocktail of drivers for unethical behaviour, unfair funding, and lack of specialist provision that, taken together, have led to a long-term erosion of vocation and joy.

The Headteachers' Roundtable's manifesto is unequivocal that "every pupil needs a good teacher if they are to thrive and flourish", but we have a whole generation of teachers who believe the biggest driver in their school is "keeping Ofsted happy". No wonder we do not retain enough of our teachers, and how deeply depressing!

Early indications are that the new education inspection framework is making little difference to the strong correlation between Progress 8 and a school's inspection outcome. Tinkering with the framework is not the problem here.

We know schools labelled 'outstanding' who live in fear of losing that status. We know colleagues who have devoted their lives to working in the most



ROS
MCMULLEN

Founding member,
Headteachers' Roundtable

Why you must ask candidates tough questions about schools

challenging of circumstances to transform communities, and live in fear of losing their jobs. We know outstanding and respected leaders who have lost their jobs. And every day teachers hear leaders saying "we have to do this because it's what Ofsted – or the DfE or the regional

led, judgment-based accountability system is totally unfit for purpose.

From the EBacc measure that narrows curriculum offer to the punitive consequences of behaving inclusively, school leaders are desperately trying to maintain quality, inclusion and ethical

“ Our accountability system is totally unfit for purpose

schools commissioner [delete as appropriate] – wants”.

Nobody wants an unregulated education system. Nobody wants schools that are unable to benchmark themselves, nor teachers who have no idea how effective they are, nor underperformance that goes unchallenged. Yet our data-

behaviour in a system driving the opposite. What we have is a system that has emerged through incrementally solving one problem caused by holding schools to account only to cause several more. And that has gone on for years.

The strong correlation of Progress 8 data to Ofsted judgments, and of both



to the socio-economic backgrounds of the parent body show how little things have changed. The only real change is the increasing disincentive for anyone to work in disadvantaged communities.

Across education, high stakes have led to a 'football manager syndrome' and a crisis in recruiting and retaining the high calibre of teachers and leaders we need in those communities.

Serious underfunding only makes this worse. Too many of our most vulnerable learners are not receiving the education they need, with provision determined by "what is possible" rather than by children's needs, compounding perverse incentives towards exclusion and unethical behaviours.

School governors and headteachers consistently report the stress caused by the challenge of cutting essentials. Less-than-honest government reporting of school funding exacerbates the situation by reducing trust at a time when it has never been more important for school leaders to be able to feel secure.

All this creates a toxic working environment for leaders and teachers: the drivers in the system are towards all the behaviours that reduce job satisfaction, reduce trust and damage inclusivity.

If adopted, our detailed policy recommendations will begin to reverse the decline and restore confidence. They stand for far more than incremental and piecemeal reforms, but a new vision of professionalism and trust. This, above all, is essential to create a climate in which teachers and leaders can be recruited and retained, and all our children flourish.

Opinion

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



THOMAS MOORE

Headteacher, Bury CE Primary,
West Sussex

Look at the figures: small schools face extinction



As an election looms, funding promises abound, but Thomas Moore is pretty sure that small schools will continue to miss out

Earlier this month the Department for Education released a spreadsheet and simultaneously announced a funding boost for schools for 2020-21, following “the prime minister’s pledge to level up education funding and give all young people the same opportunities to succeed – regardless of where they grow up or go to school”.

That statement simply wasn’t true, and I have since met with Nick Gibb, the schools minister, who accepted that the national funding formula was unfair on small schools, and that its negative impact had been “an oversight”.

He then tasked civil servants to see if something could be done.

Unfortunately schools such as mine continue to face extinction as we await election results in the hope that whatever government gets in will take a different view of our plight.

Part of schools’ funding is the “lump sum”, a figure designed to recognise fixed costs. No matter the size of the setting, it needs a headteacher,

caretaking, finance and admin staff, etc. to carry out its basic functions. The lump sum ensures that every school receives the same amount for this, regardless of size.

To a small school, this lump sum is a significant proportion of the overall budget. Yet, the spreadsheet includes it in the per-pupil (PP) section. Knowing every school needs the same figure, why include it there?

My own comparison of schools on the DfE spreadsheet with rolls ranging from 50 to 646 shows that small settings appear to receive about £2,000 more per child than larger schools, up to as much as £6,095 PP.

But by including the lump sum in

still at 2016-17 levels with £150,000 removed from the PP figure, real PP funding for the same small school would be £3,095. A two-form entry school would receive £3,720.

Since my meeting with Nick Gibb, I have been told by the DfE that “decisions will be made by future governments”, but that “as officials we will continue to consider the impact of the NFF on small schools”. It also said that as a result of the NFF my own school would now be in receipt of “mobility funding” amounting to £2,423.

Don’t get excited for us. We will never see that money.

“ NFF distributes the bulk of money to larger schools

these calculations, it means that a small school can only receive the minimum possible uplift in funding of 1.84 per cent. Larger schools will get an increase of between 6 to 8.5 per cent.

And to compound the issue, the lump sum for each school in my authority has dropped from £150,000 in 2016-17 to £110,000 now. If we were

Due to being on the funding floor level (above £4,000 PP and £40,000 down on the lump sum), we are in receipt of the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to ensure we gain something. But the money the DfE believes we are gaining as a result of the NFF is simply absorbed into the MFG protection calculation.

This is happening for most small

schools. Any local authority that previously had lump sums greater than £110,000 is already on the back foot, and their small schools will mostly be on the funding floor.

They won’t receive a PP funding increase because, with the lump sum included, their PP funding appears over £4,000. Neither will they receive the 4 per cent increase in “per pupil factors” or any new funds such as “mobility factor”, as they don’t make up for the £40,000 reduction in lump sum.

In short, the current NFF distributes the bulk of money to larger schools. Despite the DfE’s assurances, I cannot help but question whether it truly was an “oversight” or a targeted cost-cutting exercise.

Small schools provide a distinctive education, a hub for communities and an important avenue for the expression of parent choice. If they value these qualities, whichever government is formed come Christmas will need to act quickly to ensure small schools are not consigned to history.



Headteachers' Roundtable



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Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



What Works? – Research and Evidence for Successful Teaching

By Lee Elliot Major and Steve Higgins

Published by Bloomsbury

Reviewed by Jarlath O'Brien, executive headteacher, GLF Schools

I had Gert Biesta's seminal *Why 'What Works' Won't Work* ringing in my ears as I picked up Major and Higgins's *What Works?*, so it was with a sigh of relief that I noticed the question mark at the end of the title.

That punctuation is important, as the authors emphasise in the introduction. "What works?" they say, "is a deceptively simple question." They go on to make a good case in this well-written introduction that "*[d]istilling research findings into actionable steps is tricky work*". It certainly is, so it was with a sense of excitement that I settled down to read.

They have set themselves an admirable and challenging task. Sadly, at the end of the book I was left with the feeling that they have fallen short of achieving their goal.

There is no doubt that its breadth is ambitious, covering an impressive 21 chapters from topics such as phonics to "art for art's sake" – but it is beyond me how a topic as fundamental to teaching as behaviour has been left out. This book is a bantamweight, coming in at fewer than 150 pages and unfortunately depth has quite clearly been sacrificed for breadth.

Both authors have an impressive pedigree and are surely far from short of things to say, so if the book's brevity is an editorial decision, it is a poor one.

David Mitchell's *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education* is a good example of where the balance is well struck with this kind of book. By contrast, quite a few of the chapters here are only four or five pages long – and it was rare for me to feel that I was any further forward in my thinking at the end.

To be fair, the authors do squeeze a lot into those small chapters, but nothing really gets any further than a brief mention. The referencing is interestingly split into, as the authors call them, academic and practical so that the reader can pursue their interest relatively easily if they want. I would certainly have to if I wanted to give any of these topics any real consideration in my school.

The authors are careful to support the reader with the interpretation of the evidence in the useful section on technical notes.

They advise that they "use averages of averages, with all of the mathematical risks involved" and invite the reader to give due consideration to our own contexts and our skills and abilities as

teachers.

However, I found the use of months' progress as a measure of effectiveness – the estimate of impact retained from their *Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit* – a wholly unconvincing device. In fact, I feel it gets in the way in the same manner that Black and Wiliam (ironically quoted in this book) argue that grades can inhibit effective feedback.

The first words of the first chapter, *Improving Classroom Teaching*, are "Attainment gain: +4 months". I feel that this reductive presentation dilutes out of all practical use the complex and nuanced evidence of impact on the very broad topics covered.

On the whole, the structure of the chapters was helpful and I particularly liked the "Unexpected findings", which made me look at some topics from a fresh angle.

The authors are right that school leaders and teachers need to be more discerning and critical of the latest fads, and this book could have made a solid contribution in helping them to do that. Sadly, the brevity and overly-simplistic presentation of estimations of impact means that contribution will not be as great as it could have been.



Research

Harry Fletcher-Wood reviews the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact him on Twitter @HFletcherWood if you have a topic you would like him to cover

Organising our thoughts about teaching – the work of Mary Kennedy

Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate dean, Ambition Institute

How we organise our thoughts shapes how we view the world and how we act. At Ambition Institute, we have found that three papers by Mary Kennedy, professor emeritus at Michigan State University, have been incredibly useful in framing our beliefs and actions about the work of teachers and teacher educators.

1: How can we organise our thinking about teaching?

When we categorise what teachers do, we can “easily go awry and generate hundreds of things teachers strive to achieve, ranging from extremely broad goals such as ‘help students learn the curriculum’ to extremely narrow and fleeting goals like ‘Get Frederick to stop poking Julio.’”

Kennedy suggests parsing “practice into a handful of important, meaningful, and analytically distinct purposes that teachers’ actions serve”. She argues that almost all teacher behaviour can be understood as responding to “five persistent challenges” that are intrinsic to teaching and are “faced by virtually all teachers”:

- 1) Portraying the curriculum (planning and explaining)
- 2) Enlisting student participation in lessons
- 3) Exposing student thinking (assessing and responding)
- 4) Containing student behaviour
- 5) Addressing the preceding challenges in ways which are consistent with teachers’ personalities and needs.

Kennedy argues that focusing on the goals that teachers’ actions pursue offers “a useful framework for parsing observed behaviours, examining their purposes and evaluating their value.”



2: How can we organise our thinking about professional development?

In this paper, Kennedy reviews – and organises – evidence on CPD. She suggests that programme design features, such as duration, coaching or online elements, receive too much attention. Instead, she suggests categorising programmes by “their underlying theories of action”: the “central problem of practice that it aims to inform” and the approach it uses to help teachers “enact new ideas, translating them into the context of their own practice”.

Kennedy uses the persistent challenges defined above to examine programme purposes and finds that professional development “about any of these four persistent challenges is equally likely to increase student achievement”: curriculum, assessment, motivation or behaviour. She also identifies four forms of professional development:

- 1) Prescription – describing or demonstrating “the best way for teachers to address a particular teaching problem”;
- 2) Strategy – combining a specific goal with illustrative practices which teachers adapt to meet their needs
- 3) Insight – raising

provocative questions which promote “self-generated ‘aha!’ moments”
4) Presenting “a body of knowledge that may not explicitly imply any particular action”.

Kennedy finds evidence that two approaches – prescription and presenting bodies of knowledge – do not increase student learning. The other two – strategy and insight – do.

She also notes the importance of teacher motivation in professional development and questions compulsory participation.

3: What do we miss when we focus on teachers?

Finally, Kennedy argues that examining “teacher quality” leads us to focus on teacher qualifications or subject knowledge, but that this is an example of the Fundamental Attribution Error. When we try to understand others’ behaviours, we overestimate the importance of their personality and underestimate the importance of the situation.

She asks: “To what extent is the quality of teachers’ everyday practice – actual classroom behaviour – really a function of enduring personal qualities that they bring with them, and to what extent is it a function of schedules, materials, students, institutional incursions into the classroom, and the persistent clutter of reforms that teachers must accommodate?”

This makes finding “good” teachers hard; how “good” they are depends on their situation – their timetable, classes, resources and the school’s incursions on their time.

Ultimately, Kennedy encourages school leaders, teacher educators and researchers to think less about teachers’ qualities and more about their situations: perhaps the persistent challenge that matters most for teacher educators and school leaders is ‘How well are we supporting teachers and what further obstacles can we remove from their path?’



Reviews



Amir Arezoo is vice principal of Horizon Community College, Barnsley

@WORKEDGECHAOS

Do you know when to use 'little-and-often' teaching?

@Suchmo83

As cognitive science becomes de rigueur in terms of teaching discourse, it's pertinent that many are applying pause points to its implementation. Christopher Such gives us good reason: as always, context matters when considering evidence-based practice and one method is not to be applied wholesale. For example, in terms of recall practice some parts of the curriculum are more appropriate than others. As Such points out, this may seem obvious (or "exasperating", as he puts it), but as he rightly states: "Raising some awareness of this way of thinking with our colleagues – especially those with less experience – has the potential to be hugely beneficial." In other words, when considering evidence-based practice, it's important not to forget expert-induced blindness.

Is homework worth the pain?

@bennewmark

Prompted by Matt Pinkett declaring his views on homework on Twitter, Ben Newmark wrote a defence of this timeless

TOP BLOGS
of the week

practice based on three principles: that it should be "efficient and useful", "clear and doable" and tracked centrally. Newmark sets out the rationale for each. The statement "If schools stopped setting homework, the most privileged of our young people would continue to do it because their parents, understanding the competitive nature of schooling, would insist" should be the centrepiece of any argument in favour of homework, particularly for those of us who work in or with communities of socio-economic deprivation.

UnsustainED? Why ESD isn't working

@robin_macp

As Robin MacPherson points out, Unesco set aside a whole decade to focus on education for sustainable development (ESD). Can we say this has had a noticeable impact? According to this post, we cannot. There are numerable contributing factors, but the one that struck me the most was "death by certification" – the phenomenon of dwindling effort once a school is awarded "eco" status. As MacPherson states with an irony not lost on his readers, what ESD failed to grasp was the need to "make sure that education about these issues is itself sustainable".

The more pointable-at things aren't always the best things

@rosalindphys

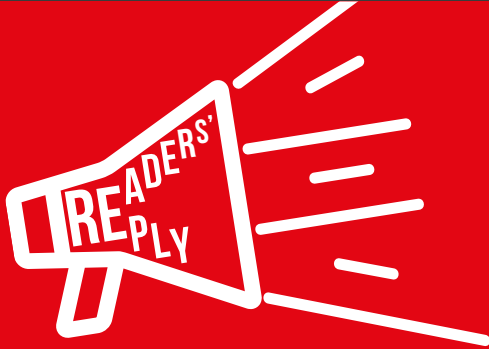
In healthcare, it is well-documented that the cost of stopping people getting ill is less than the cost of treating the illness. Obvious yes, but as Rosalind Walker sets out in her post, do we have a handle on this in education? When it comes to the big questions of male underachievement, the disadvantage gap, SEND, etc, Walker says: "We'd like narrowly defined, easily measured activities to be the best things to address these areas, because that would be convenient for accountability . . ." But she adds: "When we nominate these isolated interventions, we distract from the important work of the school". I agree with Walker that "behaviour, curriculum and teaching" are the correct policy levers to address those questions in school, but leaders need to come to terms with the fact that getting those three areas right needs long-term, strategic thinking.

This much I know about . . .

the challenges for early-career headteachers: establishing a position on teaching and learning

@johnthomsett

By placing the spotlight on teaching and learning in his latest post, John Thomsett reminds all those in senior leadership what is at the heart of all that we do. Hindsight is a wonderful thing when it comes to reflecting on one's own practice, and Thomsett urges us to accept that "throwing books at teachers [. . .] will do diddly squat to improve teaching". Instead, he demonstrates the leadership lessons he's learned in establishing teaching and learning development, with one important caveat: "Until you have good student behaviour in lessons right across your school, you cannot focus upon developing teaching and learning." Wise words.



Three-quarters of teachers are stressed out, study finds

f Jayne Andrews

I'm retired now, but have many friends and family who are teaching. One big problem is the amount of marking that takes up evenings and weekends. This means that there isn't time to properly relax before the next school week begins. Tiredness and stress soon build up and the general workload becomes more and more difficult to manage. I can't see for the life of me how this benefits either the teachers or their pupils.

Less accountability, more responsibility is key to better CPD

🐦 Hilary Macaulay, @DocMacaulay

Interesting as I have changed the language in my new trust away from the "stick" of what was previously termed "management accountability" to one of "professional responsibility and trust". I have also changed the way objectives are agreed and conversations around them take place.

🐦 PCCrabb, @sillycrabb

This is the way forward as so much that is related to children's outcomes are beyond a teacher's control. The only question I'm left pondering is that one of the teacher standards is directly linked to data, how is this managed if data is taken out of the equation?

Blacklisted academies boss is working with schools again

🗨️ Martin Matthews

This is why we need governance regulation. Cases should be referred, decided and if appropriate people "struck off".

iGCSE top grades easier to achieve, study finds

🗨️ Steve Warburton

The iGCSE's global reach means that comparing performance at iGCSE and A-level needs far more nuanced understanding of the context of those students, many of whom are working in their second or third language and for whom the literacy demands of A-level study (especially in those subjects mentioned) are particularly exacting.

REPLY OF THE WEEK

🗨️ Andrew Baisley, NEU data analyst

Williamson repeats dodgy stat 24 hours after warning

I think your article is a bit unfair to the school cuts coalition of unions.

The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) criticised us for our use of language in January, as you correctly point out.

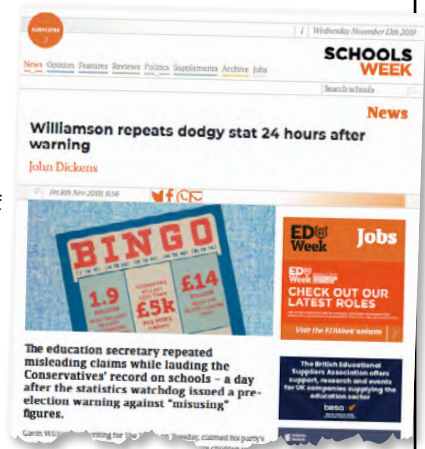
However, the figures for schoolcuts.org.uk have been recalculated twice since the letter was sent without challenge.

We endeavoured to ensure that this never happens to us again and met the UKSA to ensure it was happy that we had fully addressed all the points it raised.

Currently the site's headline is "83 per cent of schools still lose out next year because of government cuts". We believe this to be a completely accurate statement.

This is a completely different approach to that of the Department of Education and ministers who use misleading statistics long after they have been told to stop.

Gavin Williamson is repeating dodgy statistics more than once a day. It is for this reason that I think you are unfair to put us in the same category as Mr Williamson.



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

Ofsted faces complaint about 'oversimplified language'

🐦 N Goforth, @ngoforth7

I think the bigger issue is how short the reports are. We got a lot of positive feedback about teaching that wasn't in the report, but parents would want to know. Outcomes are hardly mentioned. Again parents really should be told in the report.

🐦 John WM Stephen FCCT, @john_stephens67

For balance, this was not our experience. The report was certainly condensed and had none of the richness of the verbal feedback, but the language used and the specific exemplifications given were accurate and portrayed the school in a way that we all recognised.

DfE reminds schools to 'avoid partisan activity' as election looms

🐦 onwards and upwards!, @accidentalSBM

After the antics of the main political parties including the prime minister and several cabinet members I am not sure anyone in this government has the right to tell any of the rest of us how to behave.

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

FRIDAY

Chris Keates, the soon-to-depart general secretary of the NASUWT, is keen to see her deputy Patrick Roach – the national executive's official candidate – take up the hot seat when she (eventually) leaves next year.

So keen, in fact, that she has written to union staff urging them to “play your part in supporting national executive members in their promotion of his nomination to local associations. . .”.

The union has strict rules preventing members from distributing material seeking support for the nomination of any prospective candidate.

But union staff are not members of the NASUWT and are therefore free to campaign away.

Poor Paul Nesbitt, also a national executive member, who is trying to secure enough nominations to run against Roach. We imagine he's probably miffed his opponent has such an advantage.

MONDAY

Congratulations to Mark Lehain, formerly of Parents and Teachers for Excellence fame and more formerly of New Schools Network fame, for his nomination as the Conservative candidate for Newcastle North.

Week in Westminster took a sneaky look at his tweets to find if the proud southerner had talked much about “the

north” in the past.

We found a couple of replies in what looked like harmless banter about the north. However, we couldn't see what they were replying to as Lehain's original tweets had been deleted. What a coincidence!

TUESDAY

Gavin Williamson was his usual energetic self on social media this week, posting (and deleting) tweets at a rate of knots.

Just as Jeremy Corbyn got up to speak during an appearance in Blackpool, the education secretary tweeted a cryptic message that consisted of simply: “Jeremy Corbyn is” followed by the popular claim “1,900,000 more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010”.

The tweet was swiftly deleted, and followed up with what we assume Williamson meant to tweet.

In the second tweet he accused Corbyn of an “astonishing attack”, claiming the Labour leader had “opposed all we've done to drive school standards and discipline”.

He then went on to repeat the “1.9 million MORE children in good/outstanding schools than in 2010” claim, albeit with neater formatting and more emojis than his first attempt.

That soon disappeared too.

Did someone slap Williamson on the wrist for using the 1.9 million statistic, dubbed misleading by the UK Statistics Authority? We'll never know.

WEDNESDAY

Organisers of the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham were left in the lurch this week after civil servants pulled out of the event en masse.

Strict rules restrict what government employees can say in the pre-election period, so their decision to abandon speaking engagements is understandable.

But the purdah rules are causing a particular issue for Ofsted, given that its future is up for debate at this election (Labour and the Lib Dems have pledged to abolish it). Insiders fear that even stating facts about the watchdog could be taken as promotion of its work, and therefore political.

THURSDAY

In a significant role-reversal, Boris Johnson took on the role of fact-checker during a visit to a school in Somerset.

When one pupil pointed at a picture of the Incredible Hulk and proclaimed “he's got boobies”, the PM patiently corrected him: “Those aren't boobies, they are muscles”.

Everyone's an expert these days . . .





Teacher/ Teaching Assistants vacancies

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Higher Level Teaching Assistants for Salisbury, Taunton and Orpington

For further information or to apply please go to <https://five-rivers.org/careers/vacancies/>

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are achieving some of the best results in the country despite being largely in areas of historic academic underachievement. Ark also designs and incubates Ventures to tackle some of the most intractable issues in education both in the UK and internationally.

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