

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Start of the 'future-focused schools' revolution?



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Parents must pay £1 for kids to weed school garden



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DfE vacancies website 'stalling'



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Ability grouping is harmful - why do we do it?



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- Calls to re-open investigation that paved way for controversial school takeover

INVESTIGATES

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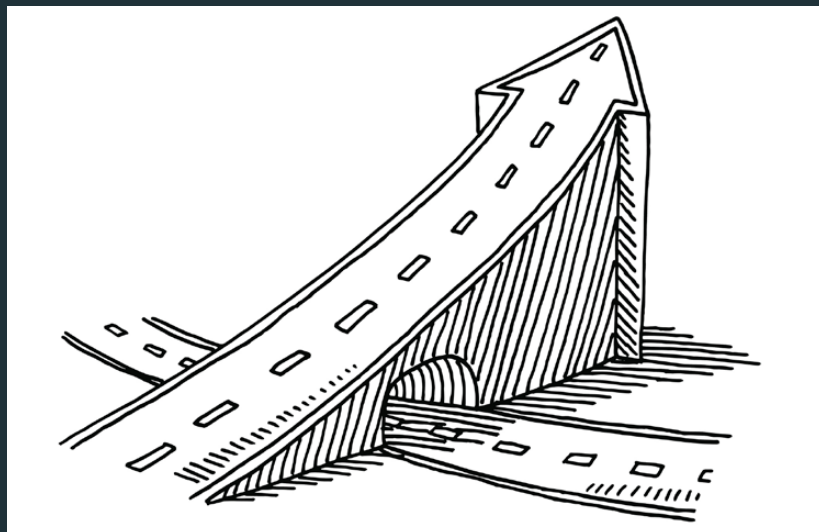


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# Head claims DfE's new funding website doesn't add up

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

A leading headteacher has criticised the government's new school funding website for displaying figures for his school that are hundreds of thousands of pounds higher than the sum he will actually receive.

The Department for Education launched a new online tool last week that allows anyone to find out how much money their local school will receive under planned increases from April.

But Vic Goddard, co-principal of Passmores Academy in Essex, has complained after the website claimed his school would receive £6,850,307 in 2020-21, when in reality it will get just £6,257,246.

The figures are different because Essex County Council has not yet fully

implemented the government's new national funding formula (NFF). Local authorities are not required to do so until April 2021.

The DfE's new website makes it clear that schools' final funding figures "may be different" to its displayed figures.

"This is because funds are allocated to the local authority first. The local authority then decides how much funding this school gets."

But Goddard said a lack of school funding was "once again causing me and so many other headteachers extreme anxiety".

"Despite the government creating its own funding website, showing how much money they say they are providing each school, the reality is different."

The problem is likely to affect many

more schools.

*Schools Week* understands around two-fifths of councils are not yet operating funding systems that exactly mirror the NFF.

Essex County Council said it would be "very challenging" for it to implement the full national funding formula because of a shortfall in the cash handed to it by central government.

"The national funding formula allocation for growth in Essex is £7.5 million and Essex needs a budget of £10.7 million to meet demand," a spokesperson told *Schools Week*.

Goddard added: "As we've known for some time, it's not how many slices of pie there are but how big the pie is in the first place. There is simply not enough money being put in to the education of our children."



Vic Goddard

## Rural schools to get cash inducement to academise

Rural local authority-maintained schools will be given access to government expansion funding for the first time next year to encourage them to academise and form new chains.

The Department for Education has added a fifth "strand" to its trust capacity fund, which launched last year. However, the amount of funding on offer – £17 million – has not increased.

The fund will continue to be used to support existing academy trusts to "grow and innovate", to accelerate the development of mid-sized trusts and to support mergers between trusts.

But now the money will also be available to support 'outstanding' or 'good' local authority-maintained schools in rural hamlets and villages to "collaborate and create new, strong multi-academy trusts". Successful applicants in this category will receive between

£50,000 and £100,000.

It comes after *Schools Week* revealed last year how rural schools are fighting to survive in the face of funding cuts and other issues.

The government has sought to divert additional money to rural schools through its new national funding formula, and has for some time attempted to encourage smaller isolated schools to join academy trusts.

"Academy trusts are a central part of our ambition to build on the rising standards in our schools," said academies minister Lord Agnew.

"That's why we're launching another round of this fund, to back some of our highest performing academy trusts to tackle entrenched underperformance and support those schools that are most in need."

The first application window will open on April 6.

## Agnew fires off more Baker clause warning letters

Another round of letters warning schools of their legal duty to promote apprenticeships will be fired off to headteachers across the country.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson told sister newspaper *FE Week* the letters will be issued today by academies minister Lord Agnew, who also has the FE market in his brief.

Williamson said the government "wants to make sure every young person is aware of just how rewarding doing an apprenticeship can be – no matter what their skills, interests and aspirations".

Education select committee chair Robert Halfon said earlier this week that "time and time again we know schools, for one reason or another, are not doing enough to promote apprenticeships".

"If we're going to change the views of parents, and if we're going to have more young people

thinking an apprenticeship is the right thing to do, we need to have people going into schools," he added.

Under the so-called Baker clause, all local authority-maintained schools and academies have since January 2018 been legally obliged to give education and training providers the opportunity to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13 about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Despite numerous warning letters, the Department for Education has so far shied away from actually intervening over non-compliance.

A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that two-thirds of schools were flouting the clause.

The government's lack of action has led the Baker Dearing Trust to label their own founder's clause a "law without teeth".

## News

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## DfE'S JOBSITE CARRIES ONLY HALF OF AVAILABLE POSITIONS

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education's free-to-use Teaching Vacancies website is failing to advertise more than 55 per cent of available positions, new analysis has claimed.

The government-run teacher vacancy service was rolled out across England in April last year as part of a strategy to aid recruitment and retention.

Ten months on, experts have claimed the website has stalled. But the government has challenged this, providing figures to show that nearly two-thirds of schools have now signed up to the site.

Analysis by professor John Howson, an academic who studies the teacher labour market and runs rival service TeachVac, found the DfE scheme consistently advertised less than 45 per cent of the jobs available since its launch.

TeachVac uses artificial intelligence to "scrape" school websites and collate job listings, but it differs from the government's site as it also includes jobs for independent schools, making a like-for-like comparison difficult.

However, analysis of weekly job adverts shows the DfE peaked at around 43 per cent of jobs available (based on TeachVac's estimations) a month after being rolled out nationally.

But the site has failed to attain this level in any of the following weeks – even slipping to 25 per cent or less for three weeks in July 2019.

A snapshot from November, for example, showed the DfE's initiative advertising 580 teacher vacancies, compared with 2,053 from TeachVac.

Howson said the statistics were "very disappointing" and believes that people may be



cautious of using the government service "as it might not produce the return".

However, the DfE says the site has now been used by more than 500,000 jobseekers since its launch, with 65 per cent – over 13,000 – of state-funded schools now signed up to the site.

In total, more than 19,000 vacancies have been advertised – one in 10 of which are flexible-working roles.

The website is part of the government's plan to boost recruitment and retention in the sector.

The DfE has failed to meet its secondary-school teacher recruitment target for seven years running.

Just 43 per cent of the required physics teachers were recruited for this September, 62 per cent of modern foreign languages and 64 per cent for maths.

Schools Week conducted test searches in the subject areas with a shortfall and found twice as many vacancies advertised on TeachVac for

physics positions in Newcastle, and modern foreign language roles in Manchester.

However, the DfE's site did show more maths vacancies in Birmingham – 10 compared with TeachVac's seven.

Stephen Tierney, chair of Headteachers' Roundtable, said there was initially hope among school leaders the website could solve the problem of "extortionate" advertising.

The DfE said the site aims to eradicate schools' £75 million-a-year advertising jobs spend.

But Tierney said it has fallen short due to a lack of confidence in the DfE's ability to oversee the current teacher shortage, meaning heads fear that "if they are not using the most established means, they are potentially missing candidates".

Dr Timo Hannay, founder of SchoolDash, added the service hasn't "made a big splash" in the sector.

He said: "I think people underestimate how difficult it is to get people in organisations to use these kinds of services – it's not a case of if they build it, they will come."

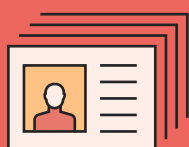
Hannay, a research expert, added: "The biggest problem isn't that schools have to pay for ads, it's that when they place the ads, they don't get enough good applicants".

School standards minister Nick Gibb said this week the "ground-breaking" service "offers part-time, compressed hours and job-share opportunities to ensure teachers have access to the same opportunities as those in other industries across our thriving economy".

The website was first promised in a white paper in 2016 and again in the Conservative Party election manifesto the following year.

The website was first rolled out in Cambridgeshire and the north-east of England in June 2018. It was due to be rolled out nationally in February 2019, but was delayed until April.

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FAILING TO  
ADVERTISE  
MORE THAN  
**55%**  
OF JOBS AVAILABLE



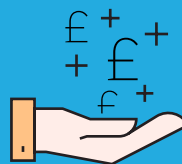
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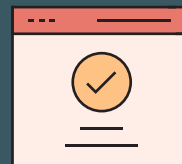
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SCHOOLS  
PREVIOUSLY SPENT  
**£75M**  
PER YEAR ON  
ADVERTISING  
VACANCIES



SOURCE: DfE

**65 PER CENT**  
OF STATE-FUNDED  
SCHOOLS –  
**OVER 13,000**  
– HAVE NOW  
SIGNED UP TO  
THE WEBSITE



SOURCE: DfE

## News

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## DfE threatens to take control of failing SEND services

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Councils failing to improve their SEND provision after repeated warnings from inspectors risk being taken over by government commissioners.

A *Schools Week* investigation has found the number of town halls given a second warning by inspectors over failing SEND services has almost doubled in less than six months.

The Department for Education said this week it will "not hesitate to take action". *Schools Week* understands education secretary Gavin Williamson is even prepared to use legal powers that allow him to directly order councils to make certain changes if progress is not demonstrated.

The findings come after Ofsted warned about the quality of SEND provision, with particular concerns about joint commissioning, in its annual report last month. Overall, half of areas inspected have demonstrated "serious weaknesses", the watchdog has said.

They also highlighted five councils had been warned over a lack of improvement following "revisits" by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). *Schools Week* has now found that, since September, another four have been officially warned after the re-inspections 18 months later – taking the total to nine.

Dr Adam Boddison, chief executive of the National Association of Special Educational Needs, said it is "clear that both local and national changes are needed to move forward."

"Locally, there could be better sharing between areas so that effective practice is maximised and ineffective practice is not inadvertently replicated. Nationally, it is clear that addressing the pressure on high-needs funding will enable local areas to better meet the needs of individual learners."

Joint inspections of SEND provision began in May 2016. Their purpose is to give an overview of the quality of both the education and health elements of a council's offer.

Councils with serious weaknesses are ordered to produce a written statement of action, setting out how they intend to

EXCLUSIVE



improve and are subject to "revisits" by Ofsted and the CQC within around 18 months.

Of the 11 areas revisited between December 2018 and August 2019, five (Suffolk, Hartlepool, Surrey, Sefton and Bury) were warned they weren't making enough progress.

A further four areas (Oxfordshire, Hull, Windsor & Maidenhead and Oldham) have since been warned about the same issue, and are now subject to greater scrutiny from Whitehall.

A Department for Education spokesperson said they work with partners, such as NHS England, to "support and challenge local areas to improve – if they do not, we will not hesitate to take action".

Asked what action it would take, the DfE pointed to Ofsted guidance which states that next steps can include the use of the education secretary's "powers of intervention".

Under these powers, the education secretary can issue a direction notice to councils, requiring them to follow specific instructions to improve their provision.

In extreme circumstances, ministers can even

effectively take charge of children's services departments.

In 2015, the government sent commissioners in to Rotherham's children's services department to tackle significant failings that contributed to child sexual exploitation.

Chris Rossiter, chief executive of the Driver Youth Trust, which exists to help young people with literacy difficulties, said it was "unacceptable" that pupils are being "systematically failed".

"We have known for a long time that in too many cases, joint commissioning does not work effectively and that young people are missing out on a quality education as a result," he told *Schools Week*.

For many in the sector, the issue comes back to resources.

A report by the think-tank IPPR North last year found SEND funding had been cut by 17 per cent in just three years. *Schools Week* has also documented the plight of schools faced with having to limit numbers of SEND pupils because they have to stump up the first £6,000 of provision themselves.

The government will provide an additional £780 million to the high-needs budget in 2020-21 and has launched a review of the SEND system, which is due to report in the coming months.

## Case study: Hull

Following a revisit in October, Ofsted and the CQC ruled that Hull still had too little involvement of families in decision-making and had insufficient awareness of resources and support. Inspectors found "very few" families felt they were "meaningfully involved in co-producing decisions about how best to support their children, or in the routine commissioning, development and evaluation of the services their children need". In a joint statement, Hull council and the area's clinical commissioning group said they were "now focusing on ensuring that children, young people and families are involved with leaders and frontline professionals more frequently for every area of SEND".

## Case study: Suffolk

Following its revisit last May, Suffolk was found to still have serious weaknesses in terms of timeliness, integration and quality of SEND statutory assessments and plans, "high levels of complaint and anxiety" among parents and a lack of joint working. Mary Evans, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for children's services, education and skills said the "most significant challenge" her area faced was rising demand for our SEND services, which has been coupled with "very low rates of funding per child" compared to similar areas. "This has made it more difficult to achieve the speed of progress we aspire to," she said.

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## Investigation

## Whistleblower scared off after 'threatening' letter



**JOHN DICKENS**  
@JOHNDICKENSSW

A whistleblower in a SATs cheating probe was scared off from giving evidence after a "threatening" legal letter from the accused trust.

NET Academies Trust (NETAT) was given the go-ahead to take over 'inadequate'-rated Waltham Holy Cross primary school, in Essex, in October.

The conversion was delayed following the launch of an investigation into allegations the trust, while supporting the school, encouraged teachers to "over scaffold" support in key stage 1 and 2 writing by using Post-it notes to guide pupils.

The government probe later concluded that the accusations were "unsubstantiated".

But a *Schools Week* investigation has found the government did not speak to any of the three original whistleblowers as part

of its probe, whilst the Standards and Testing Agency didn't even visit the school where the cheating was alleged to have happened.

Unions and lawyers have claimed the investigation was not "sufficiently robust", prompting a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman by a parent who has campaigned against the conversion.

Events during the investigation also caused a lawyer to express concerns over the

**Continued on next page**

## Post-it note cheating? What the DfE investigation found

The investigation heard claims that staff at Waltham Holy Cross Primary were "instructed" to use Post-it notes to "provide feedback to pupils in a manner which would artificially inflate their attainment". This was "described during [a] meeting as 'playing the game'".

The allegations centred on the notes being used to make corrections and guide pupils, before then being removed from books to make it look like it was independent work. The allegations first emerged from a non-statutory moderation commissioned by the

school from Essex County Council in summer last year.

NETAT was not sponsor of the school at the time, but was providing support.

The trust told the investigation that post-it notes were used to provide appropriate support to pupils – particularly SEN pupils – to encourage them to write independently.

The investigation found planning documents provided by NETAT, which included recommendations around the use of post-it notes, were "entirely compatible with supporting independent work but were

interpreted by staff at the school as being deliberately intended to over-scaffold".

The government highlighted official guidance that states "teachers can use success criteria in lessons to help pupils understand what they have learnt and to help them judge whether a pupil has met the objectives for a piece of writing".

The guidance adds: "Using success criteria does not mean that a pupil's writing is not independent. Teachers would simply need to avoid modelling or over scaffolding the expected outcome."



# Investigation

treatment of one of the whistleblowers by the trust.

*Schools Week* understands that eight days after the DfE and the STA launched investigations into the allegations on September 9 last year, one of the whistleblowers was issued a legal letter by the trust relating to a settlement agreement (also known as a compromise agreement) between the two parties.

The letter warned the individual that confidentiality obligations set out in the agreement had been breached after information was disclosed to an unauthorised third party – although the letter did not explain what the alleged disclosures related to.

The trust went on to say that it did not intend to pursue its legal right to recover the settlement sum, but did reserve the right to bring future legal action should there be another breach.

A spokesperson for NETAT said that it could not comment on the specifics of the letter but stated that it “did not in any way relate to the threat of whistleblowing”.

## Legal threat ‘questions culture at trust’

However, the lawyer who lodged the whistleblowing concerns with the government – prompting the investigation – described the letter as “threatening” and “the reason why [the whistleblower was] afraid to speak” to investigators.

In a letter to government lawyers, Dan Rosenberg, education solicitor at Simpson Millar, also questioned “how openly current staff members at other schools would be willing to speak to the DfE if this is the culture within the organisation”.

Rosenberg claimed the government had been alerted to the trust using “such tactics” on October 17, but that they had not “engaged with the issue at all”. The investigation closed on October 25.

Rosenberg added: “One would have thought that they may have taken steps to ensure that [the whistleblower] could speak freely to them or to examine whether NETAT was putting pressure on individuals not to provide evidence that was critical of their practices.”

The investigation report states the



whistleblower did not respond to two phone calls and a voicemail message.

Academies minister Lord Agnew vowed in July to “look into whistleblowing procedures to ensure that we are protecting their interests” amid concerns “retaliation [to disclosures] is exceedingly common”.

Andrew Pepper-Parsons, head of policy at whistleblowing charity Protect, said staff should not be “made to feel they cannot raise serious whistleblowing concerns”.

## ‘Sending whistleblowers an email was least that could have been done’

The government is also under fire for not speaking to two other whistleblowers.

The investigation report, seen by *Schools Week*, states no response was received after investigators made phone calls to the pair.

But Rosenberg said that given their importance as witnesses, “the least that could have been done would be to send them an email to arrange a time when they could speak”.

The National Education Union, in a letter to the government after the investigation, also said both whistleblowers had “expressed a wish” to take part in the investigation.

The letter, signed by both of the union’s joint general secretaries, claimed it “does not seem clear... that the laws regarding whistleblowing have been followed, nor would we consider the investigation that has been conducted to be sufficiently robust in light of this fact”.

The STA visited four NETAT academies as part of its investigation into assessment practices.

The agency did not visit Waltham Holy Cross Primary, where the cheating was alleged to have taken place. The DfE said this was because the trust was not yet officially responsible for the school.

The government investigation found that allegations that English lesson planning provided by the trust had led to work being over-scaffolded have “not been sufficiently substantiated to be made out”.

The STA’s investigation found “no maladministration sufficient to justify annulling any NETAT teacher assessment results”.

But the investigation did urge the area’s regional schools commissioner, Sue Baldwin, to “seek assurances” that NETAT has done “everything in their power to ensure KS1 and KS2 English planning materials are fully compliant” with relevant guidance.

## Allegations were ‘false, damaging and unfair’

However, the National Audit Office, the government’s spending watchdog which has since reviewed the investigation, found the probe could have been “more visibly independent”.

The government’s investigator was in a line management chain reporting to Baldwin, who was responsible for the school’s conversion.

A spokesperson for the DfE said the investigation into the academy trust, on behalf of the RSC, was “undertaken by a suitably senior and competent individual... Having examined the concerns that were raised, the NAO concluded that its findings did not support it carrying out any further work on this matter.”

Agnew previously said “significant exceptional action” was taken over the allegations, with a “thorough investigation”. The DfE’s probe also looked at the trust’s overall practices, finding it had a “sound financial position and good governance”.

NETAT, meanwhile, says that the overall cheating claims made against the trust were “false, damaging and unfair”. It said its guiding principle is to “provide the very best education we can for all pupils we are privileged to serve”.

A trust spokesperson added: “NET has a strong record of improvement within the schools we lead and our work at Waltham Holy Cross Primary School is already making a difference and being positively received.”

# Teacher body cams made permanent to blitz bad behaviour

HÉLÈNE MULHOLLAND

@LNMULHOLLAND

Three secondary schools in England are piloting the use of body-worn cameras for teachers to tackle bad behaviour, with two already vowing to deploy them in the long term.

Southfields Academy in south-west London, together with a further two unidentified schools, are deploying the surveillance technology amidst its growing use within the public sector.

At Southfields, four teachers across different parts of the school have been wearing the cameras since September. Deputy head Larry Davis believes their presence has helped to "de-escalate" confrontations now that pupils realise their actions are going to be captured on film if they don't stop the inappropriate behaviour.

"My aim is how best can we just focus on the teaching and learning rather than dealing with confrontations," said Davis. "Since we have introduced [them] we have very few issues in regards to that – maybe once a month."

Davis said that there have been no "adverse" comments to date by pupils who have seen teachers wearing the cameras. However, consultation was limited to the parents' forum and key members of staff.

He is keen to continue using the equipment after the trial concludes around Easter.

An unnamed school in South Hampshire decided to try out the camera to protect staff and students in light of high levels of anti-social behaviour caused by unknown children coming on to the school site from outside.

The school has six cameras worn by staff across the school, including the headteacher, according to a case study compiled by Reveal, a body-worn camera provider that has loaned its Calla brand cameras to the three pilot schools.

Each wears a hi-vis jacket with "body worn video" written across the back to make clear that recording may take place.

Footage can be presented to the police as evidence, and arrests of young people have been made, said the headteacher.

EXCLUSIVE



Calla Body Worn Camera

The case study reads: "We're definitely going to keep going with the cameras. It's not something we can come back from because of what it has done for us as a tool to safeguard our students."

The company Reveal is currently discussing the possibility of an evaluation with the schools.

Body-worn cameras are already embedded within policing and in prisons and are increasingly being used within the NHS.

Last week, Ofsted announced that teams inspecting suspected illegal schools will wear cameras from next month for their own safety.

But the notion of teachers sporting a front-facing camera on their chest to film unruly pupils has proved more controversial.

In 2017, there was an initial flurry of debate when it emerged that two unnamed schools were trying out body-worn cameras to help control classroom behaviour.

Both pilots were subsequently dropped – at least one of which was due to the negative publicity that ensued.

But Ben Read, head of marketing for Reveal, said there has been a resurgence of interest from schools this academic

year, with around ten schools getting in touch over the past four months. "There are varying reasons, but most of them are to do with the safety of staff and students," he added.

But some observers, such as Silkie Carlo, director of Big Brother Watch, said the cameras are "intrusive surveillance devices that have no place in our schools... Young people shouldn't see teachers as walking CCTV cameras, or fear being filmed without their consent. There is no evidence that recording children deals with the causes of behavioural issues but it can create oppressive environments, and so we urge these schools to reconsider."

When the camera is switched on to film an incident, the default option means that the footage is encrypted and it cannot be edited prior to being uploaded to a secure Cloud account.

The market cost for the cameras is a one-off payment of £249 for the hardware and £15 a month for storage of the footage.

The Department for Education said it does not collect information on the use of body-worn cameras in schools and believes schools are best placed to decide how to manage pupil behaviour and security risks – subject to respecting the laws surrounding data protection and privacy issues.

## News

EXCLUSIVE



## Just 1 in 6 breakfast clubs in £26m scheme are actually new

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Just 286 new breakfast clubs have been created under a £26 million government scheme, ministers have finally admitted.

The government claimed last month that its national school breakfast programme had “created or improved” around 1,800 clubs in schools across the country.

However, the Department for Education has repeatedly refused to say exactly how many of the clubs are actually new, even claiming in January that it did not know how many were.

But figures obtained by Schools Week under the Freedom of Information Act show the DfE did know – and that they equate to less than one-sixth of the 1,800 clubs heralded by ministers.

Angela Rayner (pictured), the shadow education secretary, said the government’s promises were “simply not worth the paper they are written on”.

“Time and time again the figures they use turn out to be a misleading trick, designed to mask their long record of failure,” she told Schools Week.

“Instead of publishing misleading numbers they should simply match Labour’s commitment to provide a free breakfast to every primary school child.”

The breakfast clubs programme was launched in March 2018 by Damian Hinds, the former education secretary.

The scheme represented a climbdown on the Conservatives’ 2017 election pledge to give all primary school pupils free breakfasts, which was criticised at the time after Schools Week calculated that just 7p per meal had been allocated.

Although the announcement in early 2018

promoted the programme as a way to “boost” clubs, the emphasis was on giving “more children” access to a healthy and nutritious breakfast.

But the DfE said it had been “clear throughout that the funding for this programme is to kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in disadvantaged areas”.

“The programme has helped schools remove barriers and enable pupils who are most in need of breakfast provision gain access to a breakfast club,” a spokesperson added.

“This has been achieved by, for example, removing charges that may have prevented the poorest children attending, through to practical support in how to operate at scale in order to meet the needs of many more children.”

Around 280,000 children are supported by the scheme every day. The government said the demand had “largely” been from schools needing practical support to expand their existing clubs.

An announcement last month that the breakfast clubs pilot will be extended to 2021 at a cost of almost £12 million prompted questions about how successful the first allocation of funding had been.

But speaking to Schools Week at the time, Alex Cunningham, chief executive of Magic Breakfast, one of the charities delivering the breakfasts programme on behalf of the DfE, insisted that improving existing provision was not just about replacing existing good practice, but about helping schools better identify hunger in the classroom and reach those most in need.

“Many schools will have a form of breakfast offering, but that could range from being not very nutritious, like a slice of toast, to something more substantial that cost money. The one thing this move is not about is replacing an existing provision that is already doing well enough.”

## HEFTY FREE SCHOOL COSTS REVEALED NINE YEARS AFTER SET-UP

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

The Department for Education has come under fire after taking nearly a decade to reveal over £62 million in set-up costs for five of the first-ever free schools to open, in 2011.

Earlier this week the government released its latest batch of figures for the amount of capital funding spent on free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools.

It revealed the DfE spent £62 million in capital funding on the five free schools opened in 2011.

Among those is West London Free School, set up by free school pioneer Toby Young at a cost of £30.6 million – split between site acquisition and construction costs of around £15 million each.

Janet Downs of the Local Schools Network said it was “very strange” that it took the DfE so long to release these figures. “I accept you may need a couple of years getting the accounts sorted, but to wait all this time seems odd, to put it mildly.”

A DfE spokesperson said the time taken to publish the data reflected the size and complexity of the projects.

The updated data now shows that five free schools have cost over £30 million each to set up – with Harris Westminster Sixth Form topping the list, at £50 million.

Since 2018-19, the government also spent £1.7 million in revenue funding on free schools that did not even open. Durham Gateway Academy alone received £214,689.

Meanwhile a further £36 million was given to three failed free schools which have either closed or been rebrokered – The Minerva Academy, Atlantic Academy and Steiner Academy Exeter.

A DfE spokesperson said “projects are subject to rigorous affordability checks to provide good value for the taxpayer”.

“If we have concerns about the long-term viability of a project, we will cancel it and if standards are not being met, it may be the best option for the pupils for the school to close.

“We will always aim to recover assets and identify alternative educational uses for sites.”



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# News

## DfE backs law to cut uniform costs (at last!)

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has backed a new law to cut the cost of school uniforms – five years after first promising to act.

Mike Amesbury, MP for Weaver Vale and a shadow work and pensions minister, lodged a private member's bill this week that seeks to put the Department for Education's 2013 school uniform guidance on a statutory footing.

The guidance demands value for money for families and discourages deals between schools and single uniform suppliers, which restrict competition and drive up costs for parents.

Ministers have been promising to make the guidance statutory since 2015, but despite previous opportunities to back similar drafts laws in Parliament since then, they are yet to make good on their pledge.

The DfE has said it will back the new bill – meaning it's the first step to enacting the new legislation.

Schools minister Nick Gibb said: "School uniforms should always be affordable and should not leave pupils or their families feeling that they cannot apply to a particular school.

"That is why we will be supporting the progress of this bill through parliament, in order to make our guidance on the cost considerations for school uniform statutory at the earliest opportunity."

Lord Agnew, the academies minister, vowed last September to clamp down on "pernicious" exclusive uniform supply deals. Labour also pledged to cap the costs of school uniforms ahead of December's election.

In 2018, a Schools Week investigation revealed how one academy trust's school uniform supplier was charging nearly three times the price for blazers in its grammar school than in its non-selective schools.

We also revealed instances of parents being stung by deals between schools and single uniform suppliers, and how one school even charged £4.50 for compulsory branded "drama socks".

Private member's bills rarely get past the early stages of their development because of lack of parliamentary time, but the government's backing means the school uniform bill is likely to pass.

The 2013 guidance instructs schools to "give highest priority to the consideration

of cost and value for money for parents" when sourcing uniforms. But because it is not statutory, schools face no consequences if they don't follow it.

The guidance also discourages exclusive single-supplier contracts. Such contracts should only be used if "regular tendering competitions are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where best value for parents is secured".

If the bill is passed into law, schools will have a legal duty to follow the guidance. It will in effect ban the use of single-supplier contracts without proper tendering exercises, and require schools to demonstrate that they have achieved value for money for parents.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) told the DfE last year that "action is needed" after a "surge" of complaints from parents and carers about "excessive" costs of uniforms when they are forced to purchase items from specific, often more expensive, suppliers.

Amesbury said: "The response to this has been hugely positive already... As we take this bill through parliament I hope that other MPs will come onboard so we can help make a real difference for families who are struggling with the cost of school uniforms."

The bill is called the Education Guidance about Costs of School Uniform Bill. It was introduced on Wednesday and will have its second reading in the House of Commons on February 13.



## Police probe finances of Schools Company Trust

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Police are investigating the finances of the failed Schools Company academy trust, according to reports.

A BBC Inside Out South West investigation, which aired this week, said Kent police are looking into the chain, which collapsed in 2018 after it was stripped of its four schools by ministers.

The Schools Company Trust (SCT) ran three pupil referral units in Devon and a secondary school in Kent.

Schools Week investigations have revealed safeguarding breaches, unsafe premises and inadequate staff were among the failings at the schools.

We also reported last year that the Education and Skills Funding Agency was forced to write off £3 million of debt owed to it by the stricken trust.

The trust's latest accounts show the government has been alerted to alleged impropriety over a failure under the trust's former leadership to declare payments to companies they were linked to.

The collapse of the trust prompted an investigation by the ESFA and a new executive team sent in by ministers to deal with the chain's difficulties.

In relation to the police probe, Lord Agnew, the academies minister, said: "Any type of financial mismanagement in schools is completely unacceptable and although it is rare, where it does occur we will take strong action."

"In the case of Schools Company Trust, we took robust action, putting in a strong interim leadership team and transferring the academies to high-performing academy trusts. These trusts are already improving standards at the schools."

Agnew said his department's investigation remained "ongoing" and was "actively following several lines of inquiry".

"However, we are unable to comment further at this time so as not to jeopardise our legal position. Once [it is] complete, we will publish the findings and will not hesitate to take further action to hold those responsible to account."

Kent police would not confirm whether the force is investigating.

Former SCT trustees did not respond to a request for comment by the BBC.

A spokesperson for Schools Company Trust said: "The way the trust was run previously was unacceptable."



# Gardening or the grand tour: is activities week socially divisive?

**HÉLÈNE MULHOLLAND**

**@LNMULHOLLAND**

A school plans to charge pupils to do weeding during lesson time as part of a range of options during activities week, whilst other pupils go abroad.

At £1 for the day, "clearing the weeds and helping out on the allotment" is at the bottom end of options set out by Sir William Romney's School, a small 11-16 comprehensive situated in Gloucestershire, for the first day of "school activities week".

Families with deeper pockets may opt for Bristol Zoo (£15); Drayton Manor theme park (£27); archery, bushcraft and climbing (£27), and paddle boarding (£28).

But parents are expected to pay, whatever they choose. The final tab for those who opt for the very cheapest activities each day – such as art, sports or creative writing – is £7 for the week.

*Schools Week* understands that the programme was put together by the school for children who were being left behind when their peers go on trips to Normandy, Paris or Italy in the week beginning June 29.

Louise Tickle, who has a child at the school, is among the growing number of parents up and down the country who are increasingly concerned at the cost of sending their children to school.

The latest annual survey from Parentkind, which supports parental involvement in schools, found that four in ten are particularly worried about the cost of school trips and only one-third believe that the cost of sending children to school today is acceptable.

Tickle said that it was "ludicrous" families were being asked to pay for activities that would normally be free. Other costs at the school include £2 for art or £3 for cookery.

She added kids of hard-up families "will have to watch children whose parents are much better off head out to wildlife parks, adventure playgrounds, climbing walls and riding stables, which frankly, they probably do anyway".

However, Jonathan Bell, headteacher at the school, said notice is given five months in

EXCLUSIVE



advance to allow families to budget and to pay in "affordable instalments".

He said that a "considerable element" of the school's pupil premium funding ensures that qualifying students at the school do not miss out on "cultural and enrichment opportunities".

This includes financing "some of the more affordable school-based and local activities in our activities week programme". The school also benefits from financial assistance from local organisations that help pay for activities, he said.

"The cost of the school-based activities are kept to an absolute minimum and basically allows students to receive ice creams and other 'treats' through the course of the activities. Under no circumstances do these funds contribute towards school budgets, staff costs or associated activities."

Activities week is usually run close to the end of the summer term for year 7 to 9 pupils. It is widely seen as a time where the usual curriculum is set aside in favour of enrichment activities.

But some schools charge three-figure sums for activities. At Newton Abbot College, for example, pupils can opt from anything from a four-day residential stay in Cornwall (£390) to a "creative outdoors week" for free.

Others, like West London Free School, appear to offer just one activity for an entire year group.

Some schools are also revising their approach.

Last year, West Exe School, in Devon, was offering activities such as golf (£125), horse riding (£150) and scuba diving (£345), while just four of the 19 options, such as coding or an upcycling project, were free.

The school has reviewed its approach after recognising the need to further eliminate the potential for inequality of experience due to cost, according to Tamsin Frances, head of business support.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said affordability is a "key consideration" for schools in planning activity weeks.

He said schools often provide hardship funds for poorer pupils and take advantage of group discounts to get adventure activities and overseas trips at "relatively low prices, giving pupils opportunities they may not otherwise be able to afford".

But John Jolly, Parentkind chief executive, said schools need to think "very carefully about what they are doing, what the costs are, how they consult parents and how they manage expectations".



# INNOVATIVE NEW MOBILE APP IS REVOLUTIONISING ACCESS TO TUTORING



PEER TUTOR CEO AND FOUNDER WAYNE HARRISON

**T**utoring outside of the classroom has been proven to be advantageous for learners, however, not all young people are able to access the same learning opportunities.

For many young people and their families, the costs associated with private tutoring are completely prohibitive. This inequality is outside of the control of young people, however, they are the ones who are losing out.

With this in mind, a North East based start-up has developed an innovative new mobile application, designed to make tutoring available and affordable to every student across the UK through peer-to-peer learning.

The mobile app has been designed to create equal access to learning and provide a low cost, high quality alternative to traditional private tutoring. It's the first of its kind and gives students the bespoke support they need, anytime, anywhere, 24/7.

## Household income shouldn't dictate education outcomes

Peer Tutor CEO and Founder Wayne Harrison explains: "Whilst teachers work incredibly hard to close the gaps in academic attainment between students during the school day, the support that

families with more disposable income are able to provide their children through private tuition cannot be underestimated. Peer Tutor has been developed precisely to bridge this divide, by providing accessible and affordable tutoring for all."

Peer Tutor provides a secure online platform for pupils to access instant one to one support with homework and revision when they need it most. Learners can request a live one to one lesson within 15 minutes, request feedback on their work and take a photo of specific questions and receive a step by step guide and model showing how to tackle this type of question going forward.

## Safe, cashless and high quality tuition

"We take learners' online safety very seriously," Wayne added.

Peer Tutor has a number of built-in safety features, including the latest AI screening technologies to moderate documents and feedback. All of the tutors are DBS checked and have passed their own exams at Level 6 (Grade B) or above and tuition is supported by Collins approved resources. This ensures the quality of the tutoring sessions and the safety of everyone who accesses the app.

Peer Tutor is operated on a credit-based system, where 'gems' are exchanged for question and answer based support, essay feedback or a 30-minute live tutoring session. Cheaper than

private tutoring, where sessions can cost £25 and more, learners and parents have the option to purchase gems on the app on a pay as you go basis.

Peer Tutor has been seeking support from businesses to sponsor schools and give learners access to the app allowing even more young people to access private peer tutoring for free. By supporting young people whilst at school, businesses can help to develop the future talent of their region whilst also delivering on their own corporate social responsibility objectives.

Peer Tutor is wholly owned by North East based educational charity, awarding organisation and education services provider, NCFE.

The company, which also counts education and healthcare qualifications brand, CACHE, and e-learning company, Skills Forward, in its portfolio, will be working with Peer Tutor to help develop and moderate the app's content to promote successful outcomes for learners.

David Gallagher, chief executive at NCFE, commented:

"At NCFE, we are committed to promoting and advancing learning to help students of all ages to reach their learning and career goals.

"Investment in technology and pushing innovation is one of the key ways we look to achieve this, which is why we are really excited about our new partnership with Peer Tutor."

**Peer Tutor is available to download now from the App Store and Google Play. To find out more, visit <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/schools/peer-tutor>.**

# League tables

## MAT pupils still lag behind the national average

Pupils in multi-academy trusts are making better progress than before, but their average scores remain below the national average, new data shows.

The Department for Education has published its latest academy trust league tables, which rank the 102 English trusts with three or more schools that have been with them for at least three years.

Nationally, the Progress 8 score of pupils in MATs measured in the league tables was -0.02 last year.

This is up from -0.04 in 2018, but still below the 0.01 average score for all state-funded mainstream schools.

Star Academies, which topped last year's MAT league tables under its previous name, Tauheedul, is number one for progress 8 again this year, with an average score of 0.74.

However, this is a lot lower than the trust's score in 2018, which was 1.42.

Philip Nye, from Education Datalab, warned the MAT league tables compared trusts "that are quite different to one another in their composition".

For example, Star Academies' ranking is mostly based on the performance of free schools, with one high-flying converter academy and just two sponsored academies, which tend to fare much worse, also in the mix.

Schools Week understands the trust's much lower progress score this year is a result of those sponsored academies counting towards its position for the first time.

A spokesperson said: "We are delighted to have retained our place as the highest performing multi-academy trust for progress, nationally, for the second year running. We are particularly gratified that the top three schools for progress are Star schools."

Star is closely followed by Dixons Academies Trust, with a score of 0.72 (down from 0.83 last year) and the Cardinal Hume Academies Trust on 0.71.

Overall, six trusts have "well above average" progress scores. The other three are the Diocese of London (0.6), the Education and

Leadership Trust (0.59) and the Gorse Academies Trust (0.59).

At the bottom of the league table for Progress 8 is the Meller Educational Trust, an academy chain founded by former DfE board member David Meller. The trust had an average progress score of -0.67 last year.

Meller took a leave of absence from the trust in early 2018 following allegations of sexual harassment by diners at the exclusive Presidents Club charity dinner, of which he was an organiser and co-chair. Company records show he resigned as a trustee in February 2018.

Other trusts at the bottom include the University of Wolverhampton Multi-Academy Trust, which has been criticised for its financial management, and the University of Chester Academies Trust, which has since given up all of its schools.

The proportion of MATs with below-average progress scores is also larger than the proportion with above-average scores, at 39 per cent and 31 per cent respectively.

Analysis by Nye which adjusted progress 8 scores by school type shows a very different picture, which changes the performance of some trusts "by a large amount".

For example, once the adjustments are made, Activate Learning and the Northern Schools Trust, both of which are judged predominantly on the results of University Technical Colleges and studio schools, go from near the bottom of the league tables to "pretty much at the national average".

"There's much more to a MAT than simply the number and type of school in it, and the context in which those schools are working," said Nye.

"Different trusts have grown by different amounts over time and they have also grown in different ways. When we start to look at how trust appear to perform over time such changes will all have a bearing. Yet there is no easy way to get information on changes in MAT size and structure."

### BEST PERFORMERS FOR PROGRESS 8:



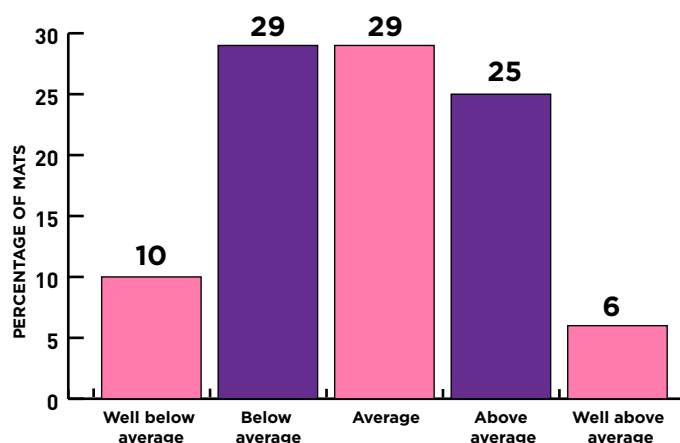
STAR ACADEMIES  
0.74

DIXONS  
ACADEMY TRUST  
0.72

THE CARDINAL  
HUME ACADEMIES  
TRUST  
0.71

4	DIocese OF LONDON	0.6
5	EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP TRUST	0.59
6	THE GORSE ACADEMIES TRUST	0.59
7	NOVA EDUCATION TRUST	0.43
8	HARRIS FEDERATION	0.39
9	THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER ACADEMY TRUST	0.38
10	THE ROSEDALE HEWENS ACADEMY TRUST	0.35

### PROGRESS OF MATS



### WORST PERFORMERS FOR PROGRESS 8

1	DAVID MELLER	-0.67
2	LYDIATE LEARNING TRUST	-0.66
3	UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON MULTI ACADEMY TRUST	-0.65
4	THE MIDLAND ACADEMIES TRUST	-0.61
5	UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER ACADEMIES TRUST	-0.58
6	ACTIVATE LEARNING EDUCATION TRUST	-0.57
7	BROOK LEARNING TRUST	-0.56
8	THE HEATH FAMILY (NORTH WEST)	-0.56

# League tables

## Deep dive: what the numbers tell us

### DISADVANTAGE GAP WIDENS SLIGHTLY

Revised key stage 4 data published yesterday (Thursday) shows that the disadvantage gap – the difference in performance between poorer pupils and their better-off peers – widened again last year.

The gap of 3.70 in 2019 is higher than it was in 2018 (3.68) and 2017 (3.66), but is still lower than it was in 2011 (4.07). The gap was closing until 2017.

Dr Maria Neophytou, director of social mobility charity Impetus, said it was moving “so slowly it will take until 2066 to close the gap entirely. That’s a hundred years from

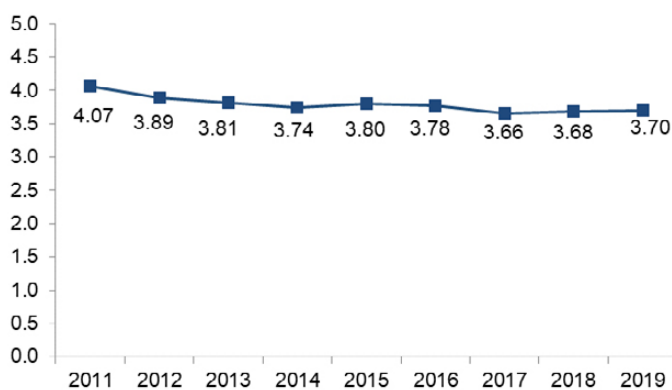
England’s men winning the football world cup,” she added.

“It’s unacceptable that too many young people leave school without vital passes in English and maths – the absolute basics.”

There was a slight narrowing in the gap between the proportion of free school meals-eligible pupils achieving English and maths GCSE passes and their peers, from 27.7 in 2018, to 27.1 last year.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, claimed the gap remained “stable”, but admitted there was “more to do”.

Disadvantaged attainment gap index



### PROGRESS OF WHITE PUPILS WORSENS

The average progress score of white pupils slumped last year, while most other ethnicities saw their progress improve.

White pupils had an average Progress 8 score of -0.11 in 2019, lower than the -0.10 they scored in 2018.

At the same time, the progress scores of mixed-ethnicity pupils improved from -0.02 to 0, black pupils from 0.12 to 0.13 and Asian pupils from 0.45 to 0.47.

Only Chinese pupils also saw their average progress score fall – from 1.03 in 2018, to 0.86 last year, though they remain the highest

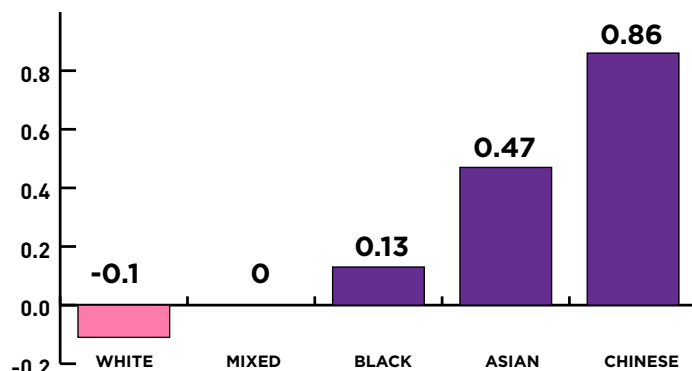
performing ethnic group in terms of Progress 8.

However, the data is based on the outcomes of just 1,697 Chinese pupils, meaning it is easier for large fluctuations in scores as these can be based on the results of a smaller number of pupils.

Although black pupils overall had an above-average progress 8 score in 2019, this masks poor performance among black Caribbean pupils, who had an average score of -0.31.

The lowest-performing sub-group was those of Irish traveller heritage, who had an average progress score of -1.05.

PROGRESS BY ETHNICITY



### SEN PUPILS STILL FAR BEHIND THEIR PEERS

Pupils with special educational needs are still massively underperforming when it comes to both their Progress 8 and attainment 8 scores.

In 2019, the average attainment 8 score among SEN pupils was 27.6, compared with a score of 49.9 for pupils without SEN.

SEN pupils had an average progress 8 score of -0.62, while those with no identified SEN scored 0.08.

The gap is even wider for those with a statement of SEN or education, health and care plan, who scored an average progress 8 score of -1.17.

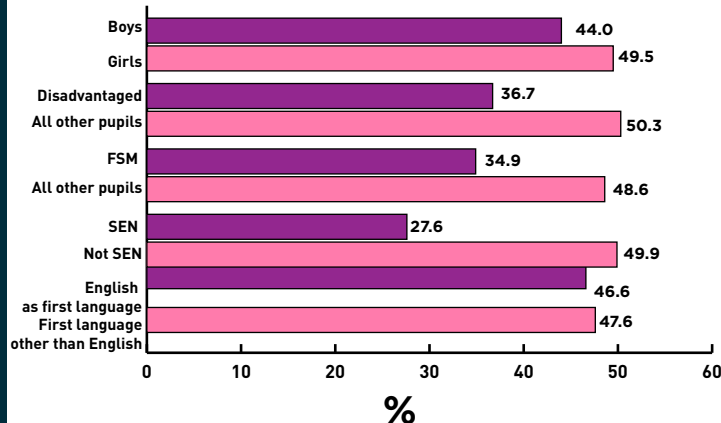
“Some groups of disadvantaged

pupils make less progress than others because of challenges in their lives, and this can penalise schools with more disadvantaged pupils,” warned Duncan Baldwin, deputy policy director of the Association of School and College Leaders.

The data also shows smaller gaps between boys and girls (44 and 49.5 respectively) and disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils (36.7 and 50.3).

Native English speakers and those whose first language is not English have very similar average attainment 8 scores.

ATTAINMENT BY PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS





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# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Fresh thinking needed on outdated activities week

Ensuring that trips and extra-curricular activities are accessible to all pupils is a constant juggling act for schools, especially after years of cuts.

But charging parents for their kids to help weed the school's allotment while their pals jet off to Paris for the week seem a little out-of-touch.

Inequality already plagues our school system. Disadvantaged pupils are already less likely to perform well in exams. Schools must take care not to limit their opportunities further with unfair policies.

In an ideal world, schools that run expensive overseas trips would have enough funding to subsidise them for those who cannot afford to go. But we know this won't be a reality for many.

However, it is important that leaders do what they can to avoid activities that further divide their poorer pupils from their better-off peers. And that might include rethinking approaches where the type of activities depends on the amount of money in their parents' pockets.

## Time for some evidence on effectiveness of body cams

It's three years since two schools were said to be trialling the use of bodycams to stop pupil disruption.

As we reveal this week, both those trials fizzled out, with one school put off by the backlash over their use.

However, there's a growing trend within the public sector to use body cameras. The news another three schools are trialling their use - with two vowing to make them permanent - will reignite the debate.

Just last week Ofsted also announced it would fit the devices to inspectors to collect evidence during inspections of illegal schools.

So, it looks like cams are here to stay.

But it's disappointing there doesn't appear to have been any progress made in terms of evidence on their effectiveness.

Does filming pupils reduce bad behaviour? What impact does this have on the pupil? And that's before we even get into issues around data protection or civil liberties.

There are still lots of questions that need answers before schools can make informed decisions.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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See page 10







## CEO pay in spotlight again as academy boss gets £60k rise

**MrRowntreeTeach, @mrrowntreeteach**

What on earth would justify a salary rise of £60k for *anyone* involved in the same role at *any* school in the country? It's these examples that create serious problems, derision and suspicion against #academies who are doing things the right way!

## 'Growing workload threatens MAT chairs, but can be tackled'

**Mark Watson**

So, to address the elephant in the room, which is studiously avoided above, should there be the option for multi-academy trusts to remunerate their chair of trustees?

Contentious question, with pros and cons for either choice, but one that should be discussed.

## Leading trust investigating claim that pupil was 'encouraged' to leave

**Ann Parent**

There was certainly more than one text sent to pupils' parents advising them of compulsory after-school and weekend sessions. Also, the reasons given to the children were exactly as the spokesperson denies – to make up for lost time due to staff losses and also due to a change in the curriculum. Additionally, some year 11 kids were pulled from their existing GCSE subjects (which they had been studying for the previous two years) and switched to a new subject.

I don't think United Learning has a full grasp of the decisions the executive head is making at these schools.

## Plight of SEND families shames me, admits Halfon

**Janet Downs**

Pleased that Robert Halfon is back as education committee chair. He and his committee aren't afraid to call the government to account. Long may they be a thorn in the government's side.

## Reform league tables to include pupil wellbeing, says ASCL

**A Brown**

I think government action is an excellent idea, especially if

## REPLY OF THE WEEK **John Mapperley**

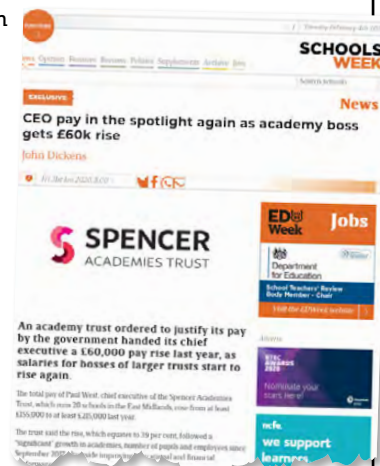
### CEO pay in spotlight again as academy boss gets £60k rise

The Department for Education policy of "challenging" trusts to justify pay rises is a nonsense. It suggests that trust boards have simply plucked a figure out of thin air, or are so clueless with regards to setting pay that they have been intimidated into agreeing a pay increase by an overbearing CEO.

Either of these scenarios could be true, but surely if there is a problem with pay at senior levels within trusts, the problem is with accountability and decision making at trust board and membership level – what used to be called governance. There is no democratic accountability here.

We need to be questioning the whole governance structure of our academies – who appoints directors and members and who holds them to account? Is this system of governance really fit for purpose?

I rather suspect that government ministers are not actually concerned about senior levels of pay at all, but are concerned about the headlines they generate and simply want to appear to be taking this seriously without actually doing so.



**THE REPLY OF THE WEEK WINS A D MUG. CONTACT US AT [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK) TO CLAIM**

they make off-rolling, gaming and pre-emptive exclusion sackable offences for the entire senior leadership team found to have been doing it. [They should also] provide a system where parents can alert Ofsted and have them investigate, rather than, as at present, Ofsted conducting investigations into off-rolling without talking to those who have left the school or college (or failed to gain admission) under concerning circumstances.

It's long past time that the industry stopped talking about how naughty it is and started taking action against those who dump the unwanted on the scrapheap while talking about "inclusivity". I believe the majority of teachers come into teaching because they care about children and want to do the best for them, so I would like to think that they would support measures that would remove those who betray their profession by treating vulnerable young people as loss-making liabilities.

## Academy trust chair and member roles must be split, says NGA

**Martin Matthews, @mmm684**

Choose to be either: member or trustee, trustee or supplier. That would sort out so many issues.



# The future-focused school where curiosity trumps compliance

Parents in the staffroom, no headteacher's office, and wasps on the ceiling. Welcome to Foxfield, where the future is decidedly different

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

**W**alking towards Foxfield Primary School in Woolwich, south-east London, feels a bit like approaching a small, rather beautiful airport. There's an elevated runway with a spacious playground below and sliding glass doors leading into a modern, open-plan reception. All I know about the school is from a researcher looking at "future-focused" schools, who pointed me straight here. The airport vibe seems appropriate.

Inside, I arrive at an exotic destination. There are papier mâché flowers and bugs everywhere. In one corridor huge bees hang from the ceiling and in others palm fronds bend over bookshelves. Not far from reception, I can see a glass-walled studio with green-screen and recording equipment, where pupils make podcasts and videos. I feel like I've entered a fantasy mix of *Where the Wild Things Are* and Pinewood Studios.

Last year, a report called *Leading Future-Focused Schools* was produced by Katy Theobald. She's the former associate director of research and evaluation at Ambition Institute and left to research schools in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore with similar characteristics that she captured under the term "future-focused". In a nutshell, they are places where "leaders are deliberately developing cultures of innovation" through agency and experimentation.

Theobald ranks Foxfield as a key example in the UK. But with such approaches firmly out of favour with longstanding schools minister Nick Gibb, and educators who prefer "direct instruction", can this school prove that the model is in demand?

Just down the road in Greenwich is School 21, the free school set up by Tony Blair's former advisor, Peter Hyman, whose emphasis on oracy saw it awarded an 'outstanding' grade from Ofsted in 2014. But that Ofsted report is now five years old, and



Pupils read books at Foxfield Primary



Papier mâché bees adorn a corridor

a chain of School 21s has not sprung up to proclaim a new, progressive dawn.

The Inspire Partnership, an academy trust officially begun in 2017, and now with five primary schools, including Foxfield, is doing just that. I assume I know what it's about – creative thinking, technology – but the heart of the approach surprises me. It's collaboration, on a deep level. And more schools are coming on board.

The first surprise is when headteacher Rupinder Bansil takes me to the "leadership

suite", where two senior leaders look like they're hotdesking, surrounded by plants and scrapbooks. "Where's your office?" I ask. "I don't have a headteacher office," she laughs. "I sit right here with them, discussing." "Like constant CPD for them?" I ask. "Exactly," she beams. Her deputies chip in as she talks to me, leaning back from laptops.

We continue to the staffroom. "Parents can come in here," says Bansil.

"What if they make trouble?" I blink.



# The future-focused school where curiosity trumps compliance

**“What makes a real expert is their curiosity. That’s what we’re teaching here”**

“It works nicely. It’s generally very safe.”

The open-door policy is all the more unusual, given the school’s neighbourhood. It borders the Glyndon estate, which a quick Google shows has suffered numerous stabbings. “Pupils worry about me walking home because they know drug deals go on there,” says Bansil. The murder in 2013 of soldier Lee Rigby was up the road.

I soon discover that the flat hierarchy model of the leadership suite and staffroom is a deliberate feature of a future-focused school. I sit with Inspire Trust’s chief executive, Rob Carpenter, who explains that a new primary school is joining the trust this month, with three coming in March.

“When we wanted to improve these schools, we didn’t go through the traditional route of instructional change. We get people to work together. All our policy development comes up through teachers, rather than senior leaders, through cross-school hubs that work together. We have policy development coming from the classroom. Being future-focused is about enabling agency for pupils and staff.”

For instance, the maths hub trialled “feedback prompt cards” for pupils instead of traditional marking. Pupils are given a card that asks specific questions about their work which they answer. It helps with teacher workload and it develops critical self-reflection, explains Carpenter. Now all teachers in the trust use the method. “The best practice among teachers becomes trust practice. It’s not from me saying, ‘You’ve got to do it like that.’”

New approaches also come from individual teachers, who are “coached” to develop their own project. One teacher, called Sophie, trialled a new strategy for improving oracy among reception children which staff found so effective it has been implemented trust-wide. It has also led to career opportunities for Sophie. “She’s in her fourth year of teaching, and she’s already



Pupils use recording equipment in the radio and video studio at Foxfield Primary



Headteacher Rupinder Bansil at Foxfield Primary, part of the Inspire Partnership academy trust

being asked to speak at conferences,” smiles Carpenter.

His belief in the approach is two-fold – to tackle retention, and to enable staff and pupil agency. “We cannot keep forcing teachers through the instructional model, because what we’re seeing are highly skilled and creative teachers leaving the profession.” He cites 2018 research from Sam Sims, researcher at the UCL Institute of Education, which lists teacher autonomy as

an important factor in keeping teachers in the profession – findings that are backed up by the National Foundation for Educational Research just last week. Sims also found that, out of 22 comparable countries, only Latvia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic had teacher job satisfaction as low as England.

Bansil later tells me staff turnover at the trust is very low. “We’ve got at least six teachers who left the partnership and then came back,” she says. Carpenter concludes:



# The future-focused school where curiosity trumps compliance



Rob Carpenter, chief executive of the Inspire Partnership academy trust

"The point is, the revolution starts in the classroom."

Greater agency is not only good for teacher motivation, it makes pupil agency the norm too, says Carpenter. Constant reflection on their own work, and coaching between pupils, means they are doing "deep learning" rather than rote learning, says Carpenter. "The children won't just write their work. It could be a presentation, exhibition or video. Recently children needed materials for an art project and took charge of contacting supermarkets to get hold of the right stuff. That's what kids want – they want agency. To thrive in a modern, complex society, they need to be able to make sense of it."

He refers to a book by Gordon Stobart called *The Expert Learner: Challenging the Myth of Ability*. "There's this mythical thing about 10,000 hours of practice making you an expert. But you can only practise predictable stuff. The future is unpredictable. What makes a real expert is their curiosity, their ability to look for patterns and make sense of things. That's what we're teaching here."

Given Ofsted's new curriculum inspection model, I expect Carpenter to say trusts like the Inspire Partnership will finally be recognised for all their hard thinking. But it's the opposite.

"The new framework is about encouraging compliance. It's about measuring knowledge through remembering facile information."

Carpenter describes a recent Ofsted visit in which the inspector was checking whether pupils knew the names of rivers. "I'm not saying rivers of the world aren't important, but if you're evaluating the curriculum



## "The point is, the revolution starts in the classroom"

through remembering stuff, you're nowhere near where we need to be in terms of developing children." He is supportive of the government assessing whether schools develop "competencies" in pupils, rather than just academic progress. He also thinks parents would be supportive.

"Our current generation of parents are the first to have been through Ofsted and the high accountability system. Do you know what? They don't want that for their own kids. We have to rethink how we do this."

And it seems to be working. In year 1 phonics, across the trust 87 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard, a five per cent rise compared to the previous year and five percentage points above the national average. In key stage 1, 75 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, up three per cent from the previous year and 10 percentage points above the national average. The picture is almost identical at



key stage 2.

"Our kids are change agents," says Carpenter. "You can't measure that stuff, but guess what? It gets better outcomes."

It's food for thought for chief executives facing the catch-22 of underperforming pupils and overstretched teachers. As Theobald writes: "The widespread engagement of teachers in professional inquiry cycles provides a mechanism by which teachers could drive sustained change with a sense of ownership, rather than having changes 'done to' them."

Move over School 21 – here comes the Inspire Partnership.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**SIMON FISHEL**

Founder and president,  
CARE Fertility Group

## Teaching contraception without teaching conception fails young people

**Looking ahead to compulsory relationships and sex education from September, fertility pioneer Professor Simon Fishel says improved fertility education would allow young people to plan for their futures**

Relationships and sex education (RSE) is finally having its moment. Overall teenage pregnancy rates are at their lowest since records began, comedy-drama *Sex Education* is trending on Netflix, and the subject becomes compulsory in English schools from September.

Yet, although RSE has been a huge success in preventing pregnancies, youngsters learn next to nothing about fertility. The government's new requirements for secondary sex education include sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, contraception and miscarriages. These requirements are to be welcomed, but contraception and conception are two sides of the same coin and teaching one without the other is failing our young people.

Now, as secondary schools develop their curricula for the autumn term, is the time to include long-overdue fertility education in the RSE curriculum. Individuals should have the liberty and respect to make informed choices, but we seem content to leave reproduction in the providence of the divine, to view it

as somehow different from other medical conditions.

Many go on to assume fertility is a constant unwavering state from puberty to menopause and

“ There can be no knowledge-rich RSE curriculum that leaves out fertility

that having a baby is a matter of timetabling. They see celebrities having children in their late thirties and early forties and believe they will be able to do the same, unaware that many of them have had fertility treatment, often with donor eggs.

For some, by the time they visit their GP or approach a specialist, it may already be too late to conceive without the help of fertility treatment, while others may find they are no longer able to conceive at all.

Many young people are also unaware that lifestyle factors including drugs and alcohol consumption, obesity and STIs can all have effects on short- or long-term fertility. Fertility in both men and women can also be affected by environment and pollution.

And while women's biological clock has long since been reduced to a stereotype, men have one too. In many ways it is more insidious as it relates to issues of the health of



the child and miscarriage. In many Western nations sperm counts are declining, and approximately half of all fertility problems are due to problems with sperm. This needs to

overcome with IVF, the technique also controversially allows screening procedures to reduce the incidence of chromosomal abnormalities.

Meanwhile, cryo-preservation of ovarian tissue is also likely to become increasingly available. But although egg-freezing is sometimes touted as the solution to the working woman's dilemma – allowing her to schedule childbirth at a convenient moment in her career – it ultimately relies on costly IVF. Does this undo the potential gains of pursuing a career in the first place? Is the ability to afford a procedure an equitable way to determine access to treatment?

Young people may not even know if they eventually wish to have children, but fertility education would give them a greater understanding of their reproductive biology, inform them in choosing the life they want, and give them a greater chance of conceiving should they choose to do so later. Importantly, it would also empower them to engage in the thorny political decisions facing society as they mature into fully fledged citizens.

In the meantime, as the adults in the room, we ought to be asking for a better RSE curriculum for their sakes.

be taught.

In effect, there can be no knowledge-rich RSE curriculum that leaves out fertility and the biology of reproduction, to focus solely on STIs and avoiding unprotected sex. What is cultural capital, after all, if not the ability to take control over one's life, to look to the future and to plan for it?

Having children earlier often impacts career development, financial security and housing stability, but waiting increases the risks of complications and life-changing outcomes for mother and child. Such moral dilemmas should not be left to be discovered unprepared.

And the development of technologies in the field presents as many new ethical questions as it does solutions. Options are already available to address some issues with later-life pregnancies, but while fertility issues may be

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**So much has been written and said about knife crime in recent months, yet so little of it has been from young people themselves, says Lisa Capper.**

**A**t Nacro we are increasingly concerned that young people – particularly those most at risk – have so little voice in the debate. That's why we spoke to students in four areas of the country to gather their views and experiences, resulting in our *Lives Not Knives* report published this week.

The report reveals that all of the students Nacro works with know someone who has been a victim of knife crime, or has carried a knife, that they believe that fear is the main reason people carry knives, and that tougher penalties and longer prison sentences will not deter young people from carrying them. Importantly, their assessment is that political priority should be given to tackling the underlying issues of poverty, lack of opportunity and low aspiration.

With news last week of the huge increase in the number of knife and offensive weapon offences committed by children under 18, rising from 2,671 in 2014 to 4,451 in 2018-19, it is clear that the current approach is failing. A fundamental shift in approach is needed towards prevention and early intervention, and away from hopelessly simplified arguments for deterrence through tougher penalties.

Nacro supports over 30,000 disadvantaged people every year. This includes our work in 14 education and skills centres and through education support in prisons and secure custodial units. We know from our work that no single organisation or agency can tackle knife crime alone. It is



LISA  
CAPPER

Director of education  
and skills, Nacro

## Young people's views are vital to solving the knife crime crisis

critical that we have a co-ordinated, locally responsive, evidence-based approach to tackling it and, as our students have told us, its underlying causes.

markers of a reactive system whose parts too often act in isolation from each other. This simply can't succeed.

And it absolutely isn't a case of blaming schools or of holding

### “ Priority should be given to tackling poverty and low aspiration

For many years, further education has been acting as the education system's safety net and meeting the needs of many vulnerable and at-risk young people. And for the increasing number of young people who fall out of mainstream education before 16, PRUs and alternative provision step in. Both are underfunded, and

them responsible for knife crime. The correlation between school exclusions and crime of any kind is a complex one. But there is no doubt that exclusion from school increases the risk to those young people, and that earlier intervention could prevent many of the attitudes and actions that lead to exclusion.



We know from our own work at Nacro that by acting at the very earliest opportunity and at key transition points we can support young people to take a different path. We provide education and awareness programmes for young people at risk, which have safeguarding at their core. Our work is valued and effective, but our provision is a drop in an ocean.

We embed in-depth local knowledge into our wider curriculum, and our staff have the training and the time to build trust. It isn't magic: it's well-evidenced work and it ought to be widely available to young people across the country.

Nevertheless, no one organisation can solve this alone. Schools, other education providers, police, social care and many other agencies need to come together to take a joined-up approach to prevention and early intervention.

That's why we are also calling for a "second-chance fund" to provide additional investment into interventions for young people who have been permanently excluded from school or college. With investment in education interventions outside of mainstream education too, the education system can be an instrumental part in reducing knife crime and the causes of knife crime.

Young people we spoke to were clear about fear being the main reason that some carry knives. Our system currently has too many cracks they can fall through, and it's time we worked together to fill them.

If we only listened to young people, we would find out that they are pointing out exactly where things have gone wrong.



# Research

UCL reviews the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact them on Twitter @UCL if you have a topic suggestion

## Ability grouping is potentially harmful, but the alternatives are untested

**Dr Becky Taylor, senior research associate at the UCL Institute of Education**

England's schools make more use of within-school "ability" grouping than those in other similar countries, yet there is no evidence that this practice results in better outcomes overall for students.

In fact, the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit reviews the best evidence available from experimental studies and concludes that there is a small negative impact of attainment grouping for middle- and low-attainers, and a small positive impact for high attainers. Effectively, setting and streaming are not effective ways to raise attainment for the majority of pupils. The practice seems even more questionable because we also know that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have low prior attainment.

It's not just pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may be losing out. In our recent study involving more than 9,000 pupils, we found that black pupils were 2.4 times more likely than white pupils to be placed in a lower maths sets at the start of secondary school in a manner unwarranted by their key stage 2 maths results. Asian pupils were 1.7 times more likely than white pupils to be placed in a lower set; and girls were 1.5 times more likely than boys to be placed in a lower set.

Research suggests that once in a lower set, pupils get a less rich curriculum and less good teaching and make less progress.

We have also found that attainment grouping may have an effect on pupils' self-confidence. At the beginning of year 7, pupils in the lowest sets for maths and English have lower self-confidence in those two subjects than their peers in higher sets – but they also have lower general self-confidence. Moreover, we have found evidence of a widening self-confidence gap between



pupils in the highest and lowest sets, from the beginning of year 7 to the end of year 8.

All this calls into question the widespread faith placed by schools in attainment grouping. Our research found that only four per cent of schools use completely mixed-attainment grouping for maths in year 8. Moreover, PISA findings show that all participating schools used attainment grouping for at least one subject, and research conducted for the DfE found that one-third of schools used setting or streaming as a strategy to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

But would a move to mixed-attainment grouping be the answer? The fact is, we do not yet know enough about mixed-attainment grouping to say for certain that it is a better approach. Our current Student Grouping Study is investigating the usual practices of over 100 schools that use either mixed-attainment grouping or setting for maths in years 7 and

8. We hope to gather rich data about the specific ways in which schools teach pupils in sets and mixed-attainment groups and to understand what makes grouping and teaching successful. We hope then to be in a much

better position to describe grouping practices that help all pupils to achieve and give all pupils access to a rich curriculum and great teaching.

In the meantime, we think there is enough evidence of the potentially negative effects of setting to ask teachers to reflect on their grouping practices and consider some tweaks that can help make setting fairer for all pupils.

We recommend that setting is as subject-specific as possible to avoid the negative effects of streaming. We advise that schools group pupils by attainment only, to avoid any unconscious bias creeping in, and that schools use a lottery to place borderline pupils into sets. We think schools should take care to give pupils in low sets access to the best teachers, with high expectations, and to a high-quality curriculum that enables pupils to succeed in a higher set when their attainment improves and they are ready to move up a group.

In the light of the research evidence, we're asking schools to reflect on their grouping practices and consider whether they could be made fairer. And we're asking teachers to start a conversation with their colleagues and with us about it. You can get started here [www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/groupingpledge](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/groupingpledge)





# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Relearning to Teach – Understanding the Principles of Great Teaching

**Author:** David Fawcett

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Reviewer:** Rachel Rossiter, SENDCo and assistant head, All-Through Trust, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Someone tweeted recently that teachers go through two epiphanies in their careers: the first is when they grasp how to do this teaching thing, followed by another when they *really* understand how to do this teaching thing. I'm sure I'm far from the only old-timer who feels exactly the same.

That's not to encourage complacency, or to nullify the need for continuous professional development. However, those of us who are getting somewhat old in the tooth and have seen fads come and go can nonetheless indulge in a little justified cynicism when it comes to advice on how to teach.

Therefore, it was with some dubiousness that I picked up *Relearning To Teach*. I wasn't sure that I needed to "relearn" anything from yet another Edubook. It's a seemingly saturated market at the moment, and I wasn't convinced that this one was going to provide anything that hasn't been said before. I was wrong.

I was immediately struck by the honesty and integrity with which the book is written. By chapter 2, any scepticism I had previously held melted away and Fawcett had won me over (and not just because of the references to football).

The author begins many of his chapters by explaining where he has made mistakes in his teaching and how he has been "seductively wooed by a plethora of ideas that have no benefit". This, coupled with his easily accessible style and the use of rhetorical questions as sub-headings, made me feel invited into a conversation with Fawcett to reflect together upon, and mull over, our respective teaching experiences. In essence, this is what good CPD should

be all about.

Throughout the book, Fawcett tackles myths head on and offers a very balanced and pragmatic view of teaching today. A number of recent conversations have convinced me that there is a general feeling that teacher voice and feedback on the efficacy of certain approaches is all too readily dismissed as anecdote. So it is particularly refreshing that, among the references to research (of which there are many), *Relearning To Teach* is interspersed with views from current practising teachers sharing their thoughts and experiences from the coalface. This authenticity is sorely missing from much that the Edubook genre has to offer.

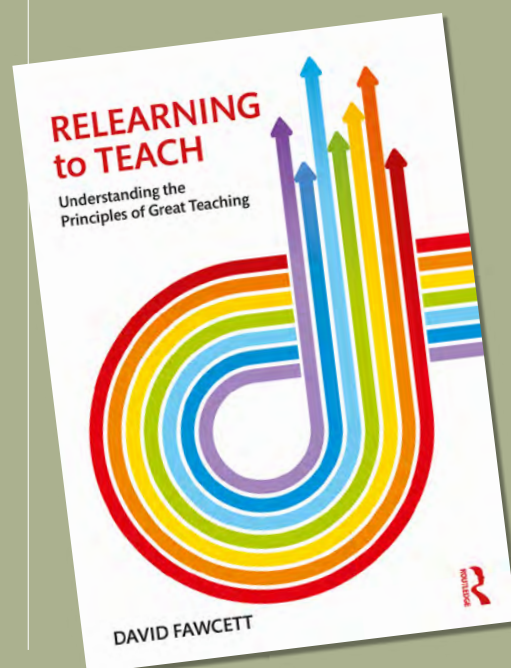
Chapters cover a range of topics, including planning, memory, questioning, feedback and data. In them, Fawcett explores frameworks, structures and taxonomies such as Bloom's and SOLO that many of us will be familiar with but which have in recent years come under a lot of scrutiny from some quarters. He revisits these anew and provides useful suggestions for their application, particularly around planning.

With my SENDCo hat on, I was particularly interested in the chapter on differentiation. Here, Fawcett and I sing from the same hymn sheet. The key is to know your learners really well and to aim high – he talks about making the thinking easier, not the task. But he also acknowledges that what we can ask of ourselves as teachers has limits, that all schools have children with significant and complex needs for which expert advice should be sought.

If I have one criticism of this book, it

is the title and how it frames the content. Re-learning implies starting afresh from a clean slate, and the idea does a disservice to the book and to its readership of experienced teachers. It also fails to properly capture what the book does best, which is to stimulate professional reflection.

*Relearning To Teach* is not so much a call to arms as an invitation to pull up a chair, get comfortable and have a good old natter about all things teaching and learning. I wouldn't recommend it for trainees or NQTs (and I'm sure that was not Fawcett's intended readership). However, if you've been around a bit, like me, and you're looking to choose one book from the plethora of those currently being plugged in EduTwitter circles, then, for its pure integrity, honesty, authenticity, wisdom and accessible style, you won't go far wrong with this one.



# Reviews



Our reviewer of the week is  
**James Murphy, school partnerships  
director at Thinking Reading**

@HoratioSpeaks

## The Grass is Not Greener

@buckingham\_j

Disagreement about phonics once more rose to the surface in pedagogical circles this week. Like the Hydra, no matter how many times you cut off its head, back it grows. The latest act in the melodrama is a recent claim that despite a strong scientific consensus, there is little or no evidence to support its effectiveness, and so other approaches should be considered as valid alternatives. This excellent post by Jennifer Buckingham on the Five From Five blog is a comprehensive response. Buckingham is not only fiercely knowledgeable, she is an excellent communicator, and the piece strikes a healthy balance between accessibility and academic accuracy.

## No iPads Please, We're Teachers

@MrHeadPrimary

This week also saw pedagogy go paperless with the opening of a new school in Australia proudly proclaiming that there would be no exercise books or textbooks. Here, Tim Head writes about the mistakes we make with edtech: confusing tools with lesson plans and activities with outcomes, and investing in expensive

## TOP BLOGS of the week

new technologies that will inevitably – sometimes quickly – become obsolete. For anyone involved in school leadership, resource planning or curriculum design, this piece is short yet thought-provoking.

## If we Don't Think, Curriculum Dies

@stoneman\_claire

In this post, Claire Stoneman argues that it is very easy for us to have conversations that are supposedly about curriculum, but which are really about its accoutrements, such as knowledge organisers. These, she argues, are not in themselves a good thing, but depend on the curriculum that underpins them. Stoneman urges us to stay focused on what matters: how well we are organising the knowledge in our own minds. For that, teachers, middle and senior leaders need time to think and to think hard. The alternative is to see curriculum reduced to objects and tasks.

## Why is England's education revolution faltering?

@mfordhamhistory

In a welcome return to blogging, also on the topic of curriculum, Michael Fordham outlines with typical subtlety how new trends that have emerged in education are in many instances becoming the new orthodoxies. Some of these are to be welcomed, while others may be remembered more kindly if they were to fade away quickly. Most intriguingly,

Fordham suggests that the revolutionary changes we have seen in English schools over the past decade may now falter – not because they are not good ideas, but because growing understanding of pedagogy and curriculum have not been paralleled with growing understanding of leadership. I am looking forward to the development of this critique, as leadership has been subject to fads at least as much as any other aspect of education.

## My parents' Dementia Helped me x Are Mental Health Problems Among Teachers On The Rise?

@JohnPeterJerrim

Beyond pastoral care for our students, care for our teachers also matters, but the evidence on teacher mental health is sometimes paradoxical, as Education DataLab's John Jerrim thoughtfully explores in this blog. He suggests that this can be explained by a rise in the reporting of such problems, in line with a reduction in stigma. However, as he points out, proving anything in this field is very difficult. It is perhaps a timely reminder that in teaching, we tend to imagine things were better in the past when in truth the job has always been challenging and stressful.

## I Was Watching Two Dragons Dance

@whatonomy

Putting that stress into perspective is this remarkable first-hand account by anonymous international-school teacher Whatonomy, describing what it is like to be trapped in the midst of the coronavirus outbreak in China, and the choices that have to be made for career, safety and above all family. Making decisions knowing that we cannot predict the outcomes; knowing that we step out in hope that we will find under our feet not a void but firmer ground. In all our busyness, this post confronts us with the need to stop and think hard about the people and things that matter, and not be distracted by the shiny, the new, or even the frightening.

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +

# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## MONDAY

Ministers' repeated claims that there's more money going into schools than ever before would be more believable if they weren't contradicted by the government's own data

This week, education minister Michelle Donelan was forced to admit that plans to raise the school funding rate for 16- to 19-year-olds will still leave schools with less than they had seven years ago.

Chancellor Sajid Javid announced last year that school sixth-forms would receive £4,188 per pupil from August 2020, a 4.7 per cent cash-terms increase on the current rate of £4,000.

However, in a written answer, Donelan admitted that funding in 2013 was equivalent to £4,435 in today's money, meaning the rate from August will still be more than 5 per cent lower in real terms than it was seven years ago.

Good to see the government finally telling the truth on funding, but pretty galling of them to change tack only after winning a massive majority at the general election.

## TUESDAY

Even by government standards, managing to sit on controversial information for nine years is no mean feat.

So, we suppose the Department for Education must be due some kind of award for their lack of transparency over free school capital costs.

The latest data published this week included figures for the spend associated with opening the West London Free School, which was set up by Toby Young in 2011.

Quite why the government would want to keep the costs of such controversial projects under wraps for so long is anyone's guess.

But we wouldn't dare suggest it was done to avoid public scrutiny and criticism. That would be incredibly cynical of us.

\*\*\*

Ministers were so committed to their promise to put school uniform guidance on a statutory footing in 2015 that they waited five years to do something about it – and couldn't even be bothered to draft their own legislation.

Still, their better-late-than-never decision to back Mike Amesbury's private member's bill in parliament is a big win for families, and should be a big wake-up call for private companies that seek to fleece hard-up parents (see what we did there).

## WEDNESDAY

The prime minister isn't exactly known as a details man, but we would have thought that the most powerful man in the country should probably have a decent grasp of the difference between revenue and capital funding.

During this week's prime minister's questions, Boris Johnson was quizzed by Labour MP Catherine West about the state of one of her local schools.

"Last Friday I visited a school in my constituency, and in 2020 the state of the school buildings was Dickensian, with leaking roofs, rusty shower rooms and mouldy changing areas," West said.

"When will the government understand that the cost of education is high, but that it is a worthy investment in the future of our schools? Whether a child is a whizz

kid or is needy, every child deserves to be at school in an excellent and inspiring school building."

But instead of tackling the complaint about a lack of capital funding head-on, Johnson switched back to his well-rehearsed (and misleading) lines-to-take about revenue funding.

"That is exactly why this government are investing a record £14 billion more in education, raising funding for primary schools to £4,000 per head and £5,000 per head for every secondary school in the country," the PM said.

Schools will be glad to know that contrary to his remarks, they won't be expected to fund repairs to their buildings from their incoming revenue funding increases.

## THURSDAY

Labour leadership hopeful Lisa Nandy has said she wants to hand the funding currently received by Local Enterprise Partnerships to local authorities.

Nandy is by no means the frontrunner, but she won't be the only leadership contender thinking about what to do with costly quangos if Labour wins power.

This will be worrying news for the Careers & Enterprise Company, which is reliant on cash from the LEPs to co-fund its enterprise co-ordinators programme.





# Associate Headteacher

Application Deadline: Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020

Interview Date: Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 Start Date: Easter 2020

Visits to school: Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Salary: L18-L24 £62,733 - £72,662



**Bloxwich Academy**

'Be The **Best** You Can Be'

Bloxwich Academy is a school on the up - and we need you to take it even higher.

Are you an enthusiastic deputy who is looking for their next career step? You should be an exceptional leader who can inspire staff and make a real difference to the life chances of every child.

We need someone who can build on the school's recent, rapid improvements. Over the last three years pupil behaviour, attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching and learning have led to a significant improvement in pupil progress.

Bloxwich Academy is an all through school with 435 primary pupils and 755 secondary pupils. Andy Seager is Headteacher at Bloxwich Academy. As Associate Headteacher you will be responsible for the primary phase and will have regular support from Matrix Academy Trust. You will be in charge of the primary school which is just ½ mile from the secondary school.

There's a real buzz about the place which no amount of words can convey, so please come to see Bloxwich Academy for yourself.

To apply please fill in an application form found on our website:

[www.matrixacademytrust.co.uk/vacancies](http://www.matrixacademytrust.co.uk/vacancies) and send to

[mbrennan@matrixacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:mbrennan@matrixacademytrust.co.uk)

Matrix Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.  
All appointments are subject to an enhanced DBS clearance.



**anthem**

## Education Director

Location: Head Office in Reading and schools

across South East England

Contract type: Permanent

Anthem Schools Trust is looking to appoint an Education Director to join its ambitious and dynamic Education Executive Team, take responsibility for a group of four secondary schools in London and the South East and contribute to the strategic development of the Trust at this exciting stage in its journey of growth and development. The team have ambitions to work cross-phase and are looking to appoint an Education Director with secondary school expertise who is also interested in developing their understanding of primary education.

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to arrange an informal discussion with the Anthem Chief Executive, Andy Yarrow, in the first instance. This can be arranged by contacting his Executive Assistant, Lasma Geide on **01189 021637** or by email: [lgeide@anthemtrust.uk](mailto:lgeide@anthemtrust.uk)

Find out more about Anthem at [www.anthemtrust.uk](http://www.anthemtrust.uk)



**Whitefield**  
Academy Trust

## Chief Executive Officer

The Whitefield Academy Trust, one of the largest and most successful specialist multi-academy trusts in Europe, are appointing their next CEO. You will be an experienced educational strategist able to balance both the strategic oversight of the Trust and ensure it retains its outstanding profile, whilst also running its business of education and raising its profile with stakeholders.

Whitefield is an outward facing Trust and has an ambition to leverage its knowledge of SEN education and innovation in the sector to support policy

both here in the UK and abroad. As such, they need a CEO who has substantial and successful experience of leading SEN provision in an educational context; being adept at curriculum design, an expert around SEN funding and able to translate policy into reality. You will be experienced in capacity building and able to spot opportunities which will enhance the Whitefield Academy Trust's reach, influence and position in the sector.

*Peridot*

For further information about the role, or to arrange a confidential chat, please contact our lead consultant at Peridot Partners:

**Drew Richardson-Walsh**

[drew@peridotpartners.co.uk](mailto:drew@peridotpartners.co.uk) | 07739 364 033



# Head Teacher

For September 2020 | Contract Type: Full Time | Contract Term: Permanent

Leadership Group 4: L20 £66,698 - L27 £78,169

Closing date: 9.00am Monday 24th February 2020

Interviews: 5th and 6th March 2020

[St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical Middle School- Windsor](#)

St. Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical is a distinctively Christian school in which we as individuals achieve and thrive with dignity, knowing we are loved by God. In our supportive and exciting environment, we are given opportunities to grow and learn; to aim for excellence in all we do and develop enquiring minds.

**“ The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.”**

Carl Jung

*Our Headteacher of 16 years is retiring and we are seeking to appoint an experienced, enthusiastic and highly motivated leader.*

## Can you ....

- Offer inspirational leadership skills
- Provide the drive and ability to bring our vision to fruition
- Empower us to become the learning hub at the centre of our community
- Help us become an innovative place to learn
- Maintain and grow our strong Christian ethos

## We will offer...

- A competitive salary.
- Opportunities to work flexibly.
- Access to rich and diverse CPD opportunities.
- A relocation package for exceptional candidates.
- A dedicated team of talented, caring and conscientious staff
- Thoughtful, charitable and supportive families who enjoy being part of school life.
- Supportive partnerships within the community.
- Opportunities to work alongside local cluster groups on various projects and represent other schools as well as us at school's forum.

## We have ...

- A thought-provoking, knowledgeable and supportive governing body.
- Well-maintained buildings and grounds, providing a safe, calm and well-ordered and resourced environment for pupils and staff.
- A well-managed, balanced budget.
- 94% of our pupils think they are taught well
- A fantastic group of children who are polite, work hard and are a delight to teach.
- A caring and happy environment, with a strong ethos and values that reflect our Christian ethos.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS check is required for all successful applicants.

If you would like more information please visit our website: [www.sterf.org.uk](http://www.sterf.org.uk) or call **01753 867809**

Applications to be submitted to **Mrs Nav Amar-Choi** - Business Manager,  
[headteacher-vacancy@sterf.org.uk](mailto:headteacher-vacancy@sterf.org.uk)



## VACANCY: EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL (FULL-TIME ROLE)

Salary: Competitive and TBD in light of experience and qualifications

St Gregory's and St Simon Stock form a Catholic secondary academy cluster as part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership (KCSP), a multi-academy trust (MAT) established by the Archdiocese of Southwark for Catholic education across Kent. Currently comprised of 24 academies (5 secondary and 19 primary), the Trust is seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Executive Principal from August 2020 for this cluster due to the retirement of the current post-holder.

Reporting to the Chief Executive of the Trust and Executive Governing Body for the cluster, the Executive Principal will provide the strategic Catholic leadership and inspiration for the cluster, motivating staff and maximizing all available resources for the cluster's 'common good'. This includes the strategic planning and management of cluster finances, staff, buildings and other resources. The postholder will represent the academies to the Executive Governing Body, CEO and Trust Board, the Diocesan Education Commission, and to local and central government, and their agencies as necessary.

The successful applicant will be highly motivated and innovative, accountable for ensuring, maintaining and sustaining the Catholic identity of the academies they are assigned to lead, and for ensuring that this identity is reflected in every aspect of the academies' Catholic life, so that the learning and faith outcomes of all pupils improve continuously. This fundamental duty, rooted in our shared Gospel values, provides the context for the proper discharge of all other duties and responsibilities, and consequently we are seeking to appoint a practising Catholic, with the necessary desire, experience, expertise and qualification, to this role.

St Gregory's and St Simon Stock are inclusive secondary academies. Their dedicated staff, helpers and Governors work hard to ensure every student is supported and challenged to be their best.

St Gregory's and St Simon Stock are located to the west of Kent and are easily accessible via both road & rail. Both enjoy spacious classrooms, large grounds, excellent student facilities and benefit from recent and substantial investment.

St Gregory's were judged 'Outstanding' in their most recent denominational inspection in 2018 and were also judged to be 'Outstanding' in all areas at their last Ofsted inspection in 2013. St Simon Stock were judged 'Outstanding' in their most recent denominational inspection in 2015 and were also judged to be 'Good' in all areas at their last Ofsted inspection in 2016.

KCSP, as the largest, single Catholic MAT in the south of England, is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and requires all staff, helpers and Governors to share this commitment. Offers of employment are subject to an enhanced disclosure and barring service check and section 128 check.

Please visit [www.kcsp.org.uk](http://www.kcsp.org.uk) to view the full job description and person specification, and to download an application form and all of the related documents.

Please send your letter of application together with a completed Catholic Education Service (CES) Application Form, completed CES Recruitment Monitoring Form, CES Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 Disclosure Form and CES Consent to Obtain References Form to the Chief Executive at: [office@kcsp.org.uk](mailto:office@kcsp.org.uk)

*Your letter of application should outline why you feel you are suited to this role, what you believe you can bring to the academies and also detail your experience to date, skill set and qualifications.*

**Closing date for applications: Monday, 10th February 2020**

Shortlisted candidates to be notified: no later than Friday, **14th February 2020**

Interviews will be held during the week commencing: **9th March 2020**



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