

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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Coronavirus: Schools defy advice, Ofqual opens exam talks



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Move over Ofsted, here come the robots



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Universal free school meals for the chop?



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FRIDAY, FEB 28 2020 | EDITION 205

Face-off

Schools put in 'impossible' position over conflicting cuts advice

Spielman criticises schools for cost-cutting measures ...

... that DfE advisers had told schools to implement to save cash!

Trusts sign 'gagging clauses' in takeovers of scandal-hit schools

- Emails DfE tried to keep secret reveal new use of non-disclosure agreements
- Attempts to 'gag' trusts linked to delays in finding new MATs for failed schools
- Probe also finds government lost key emails relating to trust founder's lies

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Nick Gibb gets beefed-up role in new ministerial line-up



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News

EXCLUSIVE



Facing the chop: universal free school meals

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government's universal infant free school meals programme is on a hitlist of policies being considered for the axe in this year's spending review, *Schools Week* has learned.

Multiple sources familiar with the process said the policy, which costs the government more than £600 million a year and provides meals for around 1.4 million infants, has been "long-listed" by the Department for Education as ministers scramble to meet demands for cuts.

It was reported in January that Boris Johnson has asked all cabinet ministers to find cuts of up to five per cent in their departmental budgets.

Since it was introduced in 2014 by the coalition government, the policy has been threatened on several occasions. Most recently, the Conservatives pledged in their 2017 election manifesto to ditch it, but then U-turned following a huge backlash and the loss of their majority.

Johnson's victory in December's election, coupled with the elevation of his key adviser Dominic Cummings, who opposed the policy when he worked for Michael Gove at the DfE, have both led to concerns it will finally get the axe.

Ministers have also refused to guarantee the future of the scheme's funding. In a recent response to a parliamentary written question, education minister Michelle Donelan said funding arrangements from 2020-21 onwards would be confirmed "in due course".

Some proponents of the policy argue that providing meals for pupils makes them more ready to learn, though there is little evidence available about the impact it has on educational outcomes.

For others, the focus is on the impact on social cohesion.

Henry Dibleby, the co-founder of restaurant chain Leon, whose 2013 school food plan report

recommended the establishment of UIFSM, told *Schools Week* the policy represented "massive value for money".

Dibleby, who is currently leading the government's national food strategy, said he "wasn't surprised" it had made the list. But he added: "Having said that, it's a fantastic thing that has transformed not only the culture in schools, but also the quality of food served to all pupils. To pull that away, after all the effort these schools have gone to, would be the wrong thing to do."

However, opponents of the policy believe it targets better-off pupils.

"Universal infant free school meals prioritise support based on age rather than need. It's feeding all infants, rather than supporting those children who are actually going hungry," said education campaigner and school governor Andy Jolley.

"Given the unsustainability of UIFSM, everyone's focus must be to ensure the money saved is used to support those living in poverty, to help over school holidays and provide greater access to free school meals for pupils whose parents claim universal credit"

An Education Policy Institute evaluation of the policy in 2018 found that although parents reported financial benefits and school leaders felt it had improved the profile of healthy eating in their schools, further research "may be required" to establish its educational impact.

The study also warned that the funding provided – £2.30 per meal – was not enough, and predicted that rising costs meant the amount allocated was "likely to become insufficient".

Cummings told *Schools Week's* sister paper *FE Week* in 2014 that the introduction of UIFSM, which was a Liberal Democrat policy approved by the Conservatives in return for their go-ahead on tax breaks for married couples, was "a small but telling example of the stupid way decisions are made by Cameron and Clegg without proper thought, and it is more telling that they have no idea why it's stupid".

Seldon: robots are coming for Ofsted

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Artificial intelligence could make Ofsted inspectors redundant within the next decade, according to the founder of an institute looking into how to use technology ethically in schools.

Former headteacher Sir Anthony Seldon, now vice-chancellor at the University of Buckingham, outlined his predictions for the sector as the Institute for Ethical AI in Education published its first interim report this week.

He told *Schools Week* new technologies will mean data from schools will "dwarf anything a team of human inspectors could assimilate in a few hours".

He predicted that children would have machines with a voice or face which would personalise lessons to their level while also collecting data on how they, their departments and year groups are performing in real time.

Seldon said schools would be held to account for how education is delivered week-on-week through the data, rather than by an inspection every few years, in a way that will "utterly revolutionise" the system.

This could happen gradually across the next ten years, before a more radical change by 2040, he added.

"Ofsted and its inspectors seek the best for our students. Many inspectors are experienced educators passionate about ensuring schools are operating at their very best."

But Seldon added the "education sector as a whole is only now starting to enter the 21st century, our school accountability system is mired in 20th-century thinking and practice".

The idea of AI being used in Ofsted inspections isn't new.

A study by the Behavioural Insights Team, which was then operating in partnership with the Cabinet Office, found data and machine learning together could predict whether a school would be given an 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' rating.

The new Ofsted framework focuses less on data and more on curriculum. But Seldon said AI will "be able to adapt... we are going to be monitoring children all the time in real time, we don't need to have inspectors coming into lessons, we will be able to see how the learning is taking place."

"We'll be able to understand the behaviour without having people standing in corridors."

News

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Timpson review worries as taskforce revealed

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The author of a major review into exclusions has urged the government to "step up" its response, as a new taskforce to help schools tackle unruly behaviour is announced.

The government has unveiled the name of six advisers (see list, right) who will join behaviour tsar Tom Bennett in supporting 20 lead schools support 500 others to tackle classroom disruption.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson said the £10 million programme, announced in August, would "give all schools the tools they need to improve behaviour by making sure that they can learn from the best".

However, it comes as Conservative MP Edward Timpson pushed the government to accelerate its response to his major review into exclusions.

The former children's minister called for work on proposals to keep schools accountable for the results of the pupils they exclude to be "stepped up and shared

outside" of the department.

Timpson also challenged schools minister Nick Gibb on when a promised consultation on reducing the upper limit of fixed-term exclusions will happen.

It was one of several Timpson Review proposals the government vowed to implement in May last year.

Gibb would only say expectations for pupils in alternative provision "have not been high enough in the past... We will consider how we can better assess performance and strengthen accountability for pupils in AP. We will have more to say on that in due course."

The government said its new advisers include current and former school leaders with experience in implementing successful behaviour management practices across primary, secondary special and alternative provision settings.

The department is now recruiting up to 20 lead schools to become behaviour hubs and work with the new advisers to support at least 500 schools over three years.

The first wave of lead schools will be

matched with partners and start work this September.

Bennett, the DfE's lead behaviour adviser, said: "There are some incredible schools out there making miracles happen every day, but many schools who, often through no fault of their own, face huge challenges getting there. Behaviour hubs will support these schools with the schools who know how to turn things around."

Bennett's behaviour advisers:

Mark Emmerson, chief executive officer of City of London Academy Trust

Marie Gentles, co-director of Magic Behaviour Management and former AP principal

Michelle Long, executive principal at Dixons Academy Trust

Jayne Lowe, director of Bright Green Learning and former PRU headteacher

Charlie Taylor, chair of Youth Justice Board, former chief executive of National College for Teaching

Jenny Thompson, principal of Dixons Trinity Academy



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Coronavirus outbreak

Corvid-19: conflicting advice and actions

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

INVESTIGATES

Schools across England are defying official advice and closing their doors amid fears concerning the spread of coronavirus, as heads complain about conflicting guidance.

At least a dozen schools are reported to have closed after staff and pupils returned from trips to coronavirus-hit regions of Italy.

One academy trust said it closed its three schools because it had "pupils of Italian origin", but later clarified this statement to link it instead to recent trips to Italy or to visits from relatives from Italy.

But Public Health England's official advice is still that schools do not need to close, and that pupils and staff do not need to avoid their schools unless they have had a contact with a confirmed case of the virus.

The Guardian reported that the organisation's medical director, Paul Cosford, said: "Schools have to take difficult decisions, given the complexity of issues they are facing. What I would say is that our general advice is not to close schools."

"What we are clear about is if you have been in the area of northern Italy of concern, and you have symptoms – it is a cough, shortness of breath or fever – then you do need to self-isolate, you need to phone NHS 111 and await advice for further assessment or testing."

However, headteachers have reported confusion after England's chief medical officer, Professor Chris Whitty, admitted closures were a possible way to contain the virus.

Other countries are also handling the situation differently. Japan, for instance, will ask all schools to close from Monday.

The Khalsa Academies Trust, which closed all of its schools earlier this week, told parents it had done so on the advice of the government and "because our schools have some students of Italian origin".

In a subsequent statement, Nick Kandola, the trust's CEO, said: "Because of the nature of our communities, we do have a number of students who either visited northern Italy, or have had relatives or friends who visited them from category 1 and 2 regions, over the



half-term break.

"Given that volume of connections to affected areas, we feel it is prudent to shut the schools so that a deep-clean can be undertaken. This is as a precautionary measure to protect the health of our children and staff."

Richard Pollock, head teacher of Cransley School in Cheshire, which closed after some pupils showed flu-like symptoms, said he had made the decision despite PHE advice

that the school should stay open.

In a letter to parents, he said both he and the school's governors believe it is the best way to "completely minimise possible spread of infection".

Schools Week has also learned that the exams regulator, Ofqual, is in discussions with exam boards over the summer exam series and how it might be affected. The first exams aren't due to be sat until early May, and schools are currently being urged to continue to prepare as usual.

"We routinely consider whether there are particular risks to the smooth running of exams and we are working closely with the exam boards and with the Department for Education," a spokesperson said.

"We will update our existing guidance to reflect any specific arrangements schools and colleges should put in place if required. In the meantime, students should continue to prepare for the summer exams as usual and schools and colleges should ensure their contingency plans are up to date."

WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS FOR SCHOOLS

1. Call 111 or 999 if you believe someone has been exposed

If pupils or staff become unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19, either through travel to China and other affected countries or contact with a confirmed case, they should call 111 (or 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk).

2. Find somewhere to isolate them

Anyone who is unwell and believed to have been exposed to the virus should be kept at least two metres away from other people.

3. No need to close your school if you suspect exposure

Even if someone in a school has been in contact with a suspected case, there is no need for restrictions or special control measures while laboratory test results are awaited.

4. Clean surfaces properly

Once someone is symptomatic, all surfaces they come into contact with must be cleaned "using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice".

5. Those returning from trips should follow normal travel guidance

Pupils, students and staff returning from school trips in specified countries or areas should follow the same advice as those who have travelled separately from their school. Responses will depend which countries they have returned from.

Note: This is just an extract from the guidance. All schools should read the full guidance on the Public Health England website before making decisions.

News

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New baseline tests get green light despite major concerns

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER
@SCHOOLSWEEK

The new reception baseline assessment will be rolled out this September – despite teachers saying it has increased workload and negatively impacts on children.

It means that key stage 1 SATs, currently taken in year 2, will be scrapped, as planned, from 2022-23.

The new tests, which focus on language, communication and literacy, and early maths for reception children, will provide the baseline for measuring progress in primary schools.

But Wednesday's announcement followed a critical University College London study, commissioned by the National Education Union, revealing that teachers involved in the pilot had major concerns.

Four in five teachers did not think the baseline provided an accurate picture of children's current attainment, while 69 per cent said it had not helped develop

positive relationships with pupils.

Eighty-three per cent of teachers said it increased their workload, according to the study.

However, education secretary Gavin Williamson said the "logical and sensible" approach "helps us being able to remove further workload from teachers" by scrapping key stage 1 SATs.

He also claimed teachers he talked to who took part in the trial said "by instinct and by nature" the "first thing all great teachers are doing in terms of baselining the child as they come into the classroom".

Meanwhile, the Department for Education's own study into a pilot of the baseline, also published on Wednesday, found over a quarter of schools didn't complete all the assessments.

Two tasks – early reading and shape – also had to be removed during the trial. Despite this, just over 90 per cent of tests were completed within the intended 20 minutes.

But the trial did find the tests demonstrated a "high degree" of reliability

and were suitable for pupils with SEND or English as an additional language.

However, Dr Guy Robert-Holmes, who led the UCL study, said the baseline created "inappropriate stress, emotional upset and uncertainty" for some four-year-olds.

"Contrary to claims that children don't know they're being tested, we found that children are well aware that they are taking a scripted computer test, and that they have a sense of whether they've performed well or badly.

"There is a danger that they will then label themselves as 'good' or 'bad' learners. There are strong grounds here for parents to be concerned."

The tests have the backing of school leaders' union NAHT. General secretary Paul Whiteman said "we should finally start to see the reduction in the volume of high-stakes testing in primary".

The DfE has also confirmed it will not share raw scores with schools, teachers or parents to guard against "unintended consequences".

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Investigation

Gagging orders demanded in controversial rebrokers

GERALDINE HACKETT

@SCHOOLSWEEK

EXCLUSIVE

Academy trusts looking to take over scandal-hit schools have been asked to sign "gagging orders", an investigation by *Schools Week* can reveal.

This newspaper has seen a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) signed by a trust involved in taking over a school. The NDA insisted none of the information gained during due diligence could be made public for two years. It suggested any breach of the agreement would be dealt with by legal injunctions.

It also emerged this week that Rachel Mallows, chair of the Education Fellowship Trust (TEFT), had asked trusts to sign an NDA before they were given access to the details of the 12 schools being rebrokered following its collapse.

It was the first trust to give up all of its schools, and some of the takeovers were delayed for months.

The Department for Education said it was not "unusual for trusts to sign confidentiality agreements during the due diligence process to protect sensitive information, including pupil data".

However, academy leaders contacted by *Schools Week* had not heard of the practice. But one that had said they can lead to difficulties.

The senior executive, who we are not naming, said: "You might discover a contract had been agreed on the golf course in breach of the tendering rules. In theory, you couldn't do anything with that information."

However, one trust did tell *Schools Week* they had blown the whistle after finding a six-figure contract had been handed out without going to tender – despite signing an NDA.

Regional schools commissioners also seem to be aware that such agreements, also called "gagging clauses", are being signed in

SENT ON BEHALF OF RACHEL MALLOWS, MBE DL CHAIRMAN

Dear Martin,

Further to your email of 21st April. May I respond to your points:

- On the due diligence we are fully up to date. We have a delay with Lion Education Trust who are questioning the NDA and Stone King our lawyers say we should remain firm on what we are requesting. No other interested sponsors has queried this. We are resolving the matter currently. Clearly we are involving our schools in the preparation of the due diligence paperwork and therefore the two week Easter break delayed that facility to a degree.

controversial rebrokers.

In an email from 2017, released under FOI this month, Martin Post, the former regional schools commissioner for north-west London and south-central England, queried delays in the rebrokerage of TEFT schools. He was told by Mallows: "We have a delay with Lion Education Trust, who are questioning the NDA... No other interested sponsors has queried this."

Continued on next page

DfE 'lost' emails relating to trust founder's lies

The Department for Education failed to release 11 emails relating to the Education Fellowship Trust that a tribunal ordered to be provided because the department had lost them.

The government was forced to release details that proved it did not vet the trust's founder, Johnson Kane, after it was taken to court (see page 9).

The Times, which first revealed the findings, reported that Kane, 67, claimed he was high up in the John Lewis Partnership and was put on the board of the British Airports Authority by the government when he co-founded the trust in 2012.

However, he had only worked on the sales floor at a John Lewis store and lied about his qualifications to get a job with BAA.

The Times reported he was never on the board, but did work for 18 months as a

commercial service director.

The tribunal also ordered the government to publish emails relating to the proposals to tackle poor performance at the trust, which has now collapsed, after a contested Freedom of Information request.

The DfE response read: "Four of the documents (that contain 11 emails) listed in the documents contents, as identified at the time of the original request, were unable to be located at the time of the internal review.

Another search "at the time of the hearings in June and July last year, but were unable to



Johnson Kane

locate them at the time of the hearing."

The emails were mainly between Martin Post, the then regional schools commissioner for north-west London and south-central England, and the trust.

According to the DfE, the documents were lost between September 2017, when the FOI was submitted, and February 2018, the date of the DfE's internal review of the FOI request.

The emails were all sent around the time the trust was being closed down. Nine of the missing emails were sent in April 2017. There are no details about the content of the emails.

The government's legal department said the DfE had conducted an in-depth search for the documents, but they had not been found.

Solicitors that acted for the trust were contacted by *The Times*.

Photo: @headshot_co

Investigation

The rebrokerage of TEFT schools took more than a year, with schools distributed between five academy trusts.

Schools Week reported in 2018 that delays to the rebroker process had resulted in additional legal costs and central funding needed from the government.

A tribunal last year forced the DfE to release the emails (see below).

Schools Week approached the five trusts to ask about NDAs. One of the trusts, which asked not to be named, said it didn't sign an NDA. The other four either refused to comment or did not respond.

TEFT, co-founded by Johnson Kane and Sir Ewan Harper, an architect of academies policy under Tony Blair, gave up its schools following financial issues and concerns over poor outcomes for pupils.

Martyn Oliver, chief executive of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, warned that due diligence is "all about shining a light on all of the practice in the school, not to cover things in darkness".

"Ultimately, the system should be about supporting and sharing, but NDAs should never have anything to do with stopping people whistleblowing about failures or safeguarding issues."

But he added it was "understandable"

to use such agreements to protect commercially sensitive information and intellectual property. Many businesses use NDAs for this reason.



The government has shelled out more than £30 million in grants to entice new academy trusts to take over hundreds of failing academies since 2013.

Critics say the process is not open to public scrutiny, with regional schools commissioners deciding which trusts take over schools in meetings that are closed to the public.

Schools are often rebrokered when they

have been rated 'inadequate' and their trust has been judged unable to drive improvement.

Steve Edmonds, the National Governance Association's director of advice and guidance, said the "legitimate purpose of an NDA is preventing sensitive information becoming public".

He pointed out that trusts and their staff are public servants, meaning they are bound by the "Nolan principles, one of which is openness", adding: "There are potentially damaging consequences if an NDA is being misused in order to hide a problem or brush it under the carpet."

However, the use of NDAs in relation to departing staff has come under scrutiny. Former academies minister Lord Agnew said last year he was worried about their "endemic" use in the public sector, adding that they were "not a good thing when public money is involved".

Figures obtained by *Schools Week* last year showed their use was increasing in some academy trusts.

The Department for Education said: "The decision to draw up an agreement to protect information is a matter for individual trusts and the department would not be involved in this process."

Reporter's take: how I got the DfE to 'fess up

The Department for Education did all in its power to keep secret the details of its failure to vet Johnson Kane, co-founder of the Education Fellowship Trust, writes Geraldine Hackett.

Kane was paid £160,000 as chief executive of the trust that ran 12 schools for six years. However, his tenure, and the trust, came to an end when five schools were deemed to have failed and two had massive debts.

I had submitted a Freedom of Information request in September 2017. I asked for information on the background checks carried out by the government on Kane (when his trust got approval to open in 2012) and information on proposals to tackle the poor performance of the Education Fellowship Trust.

The DfE refused to release the information, claiming it was not in the public interest. The information commissioner also refused my appeal, meaning the next step was an information rights tribunal.

Just weeks before it started, government

lawyers notified me they would be applying to have a witness statement thrown out on the grounds that it breached Kane's human rights.

John Mills, a former senior executive at the British Airports Authority, had known Kane when he was employed by the company as a commercial services manager. Mills had discovered that when Kane had applied for the job he had lied about his school, his qualifications and his previous employment.

His witness statement was the key to the case – that Kane was a liar and was not qualified to run schools – and the DfE should therefore reveal what checks had been done on his background.

The judge, Anisa Dhanji, ruled that Mills' statement be allowed and the hearing went ahead in June last year.

The DfE's case was led by Christina Michalos, a prominent media QC. With her were two



government lawyers and two FOI compliance managers.

The DfE's case was that confidence in the education system would be undermined by the release of the material.

But the judgment could not have been clearer: "It is self-evident there is a strong public interest in knowing that those in charge of MATs are fit and proper persons" and parents of children at the school have "legitimate public interest in knowing how the difficulties were being addressed".

The judge also said it was "unhelpful" the opinion of former academies minister Lord Agnew, who signed off the refusal decision, was "as brief as it is" with no attempt to explain what prejudice would be caused by releasing the information.

The wheels of challenging FOIs can turn very slowly, but sometimes you win.

Who's who? Your guide to the new ministerial line-up

The Department for Education has finally confirmed ministers' responsibilities. While Gavin Williamson's overall remit remains the same, Nick Gibb's responsibilities as schools minister have changed slightly. Gibb has been handed extra responsibility for support for raising school standards and early education curriculum and teaching quality. But he has given up responsibility for tackling bullying and alternative provision, both of which now sit under children's minister Vicky Ford. Baroness Berridge has taken on most of Lord Agnew's old brief, but will also be responsible for safeguarding in schools.

GAVIN WILLIAMSON

Education secretary

- Early years
- Children's social care
- Teacher recruitment and retention
- The school curriculum
- School improvement
- Academies and free schools
- Further education
- Apprenticeships and skills
- Higher education



NICK GIBB

Schools minister

- Recruitment and retention of teachers and school leaders
- Supporting a high-quality teaching profession and reducing teacher workload
- Teaching Regulation Agency
- Admissions and school transport
- School revenue funding, including the national funding formula
- Curriculum and qualifications
- Standards and Testing Agency and primary assessment
- School accountability and inspection (including links with Ofsted)
- Support for raising school standards
- School sport
- Pupil premium
- Relationships, sex and health education; and personal, social, health and economic education
- Behaviour, attendance and exclusions
- Early-education curriculum and teaching quality



MICHELLE DONELAN

Universities minister

- Strategy for post-16 education (jointly with Gillian Keegan)
- Widening participation in higher education
- International education strategy, including education technology
- Opportunity Areas programme



BARONESS BERRIDGE

Academies minister

- Free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools
- Academies and multi-academy trusts, including governance
- Faith schools
- Independent schools
- Home education and supplementary schools
- Intervention in underperforming schools
- School capital investment
- Counter extremism and integration in schools
- Safeguarding in schools and post-16 settings
- School efficiency
- Departmental efficiency and commercial



VICKY FORD

Children's minister

- Special educational needs, including high-needs funding
- Early-years policy and childcare
- Alternative provision
- Disadvantage and social mobility
- School food, including free school meals
- Children and young people's mental health, online safety and preventing bullying in schools
- Policy to protect against serious violence



GILLIAN KEEGAN

Apprenticeships and skills minister

- Strategy for post-16 education (jointly with Michelle Donelan)
- Technical education and skills including T-Levels and qualifications review
- Careers education, information and guidance including the Careers Enterprise Company



NLE review wants in for turnaround heads and CEOs

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

National leaders of education should still face being stripped of the title if they stop meeting new eligibility criteria, the chair of a review of the scheme has said.

Ian Bauckham told *Schools Week* the credibility of NLEs would “come into question” if they ceased to meet new eligibility requirements proposed this week by his advisory group.

Under the current system, heads must meet a number of eligibility criteria including a ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ rating for their leadership and management, and can lose their designation if their school loses that rating.

In its report, the advisory group recommended that de-designation should only happen “as a result of clear failure to comply” with new NLE standards also proposed by the group.

The eligibility criteria would be expanded to focus on heads with track records of improving schools and open up the scheme to academy trust CEOs, who can’t currently participate unless they are also the leader of an individual school.

But Bauckham said changes in eligibility should also be a factor.

“I think meeting the eligibility criteria is the first expectation and if individual NLEs cease to make the eligibility criteria in any meaningful way...if it’s clear they are neither transformative leaders nor successful CEOs with a record of turning schools around, if they cease to be those people, then obviously their credibility as an NLE will come into question.”

Ministers paused the recruitment of NLEs in May 2017, pending a national review of system leadership. That review was eventually launched last year, alongside the government’s new recruitment and retention strategy.

The review concluded that the NLE designation has been “weakened”, and that the programme in its current form “does not fully address the demands of the system”.

Under the group’s proposals, leaders will be eligible if they are a “turnaround head”, a “beacon of excellence” or “transformative MAT CEO”.

“Turnaround heads” will be those with recent experience of raising a school’s Ofsted grade to at least ‘good’, while leaders will be considered a “beacon of excellence” if they are



Ian Bauckham

the headteacher of an ‘outstanding’ school with strong performance and progress data.

To be a “transformative MAT CEO”, leaders will have to be in charge of a trust “with strong performance and progress data” and must have experience of moving at least one sponsored

academy out of the ‘requires improvement’ category. The group has also recommended that other MAT leaders with experience of improvement, such as regional directors, be considered in this category too.

The group stated the new NLE programme would take up to one year to implement fully. They want the government to have in place a “full cadre” of newly designated NLEs by the start of 2021-22.

The government said it will be “taking forward recommendations so that all National Leaders of Education are clear on their roles as system leaders”. However, when pushed on this, they would not commit to agreeing to all the recommendations.

Bauckham told *Schools Week*: “My understanding is that the recommendations have been accepted by ministers as a whole. It will now be a question of deciding which particular recommendations they want to prioritise.”

SPEED-READ: THE 5 KEY FINDINGS



1. Focus on DfE deployments over other gigs

There’s a need to “define a clear remit” for NLEs around their core role of delivering the government’s school improvement support offer (supporting schools moving from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘good’). Leaders should prioritise DfE-funded deployments over external activities.

2. New criteria opens up role to MAT CEOs

The group recommends NLEs must meet one of three eligibility routes: ‘turnaround head’, ‘beacon of excellence’ or ‘transformative MAT CEO’.

3. Three-year reviews to stop ‘weak performance’

To cut out poor performance or under-deployment, the group wants NLE designation to last for three years before a “light touch” review. At present, NLEs can lose their designation if their school’s Ofsted grade drops.

4. ‘Attractive’ training offer needed

A curriculum framework should be developed by the department for compulsory training that provides an “attractive offer” to NLEs, to be undertaken by a “national delivery body”.

5. New standards include ‘professional credibility’ and ‘problem-solving’

The group found there was confusion in the system over the attributes of effective NLEs.

So they’ve drawn up three standards that “align closely” with the teacher standards, early career framework and headteacher standards. They are “professional credibility”, “problem solving and influencing for improvement” and “capacity building and knowledge transfer to ensure sustainability”.

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Trusts' rapid expansion 'may lower standards'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

A quarter of the academy trusts recently issued “termination” warnings after standards dropped at one of their schools had expanded considerably in the past few years.

Experts have warned that rapid expansion can “easily result in lower standards”. However, school bosses urged caution over the analysis.

Regional schools commissioners (RSCs) send “minded to terminate” letters to a trust following an ‘inadequate’ Ofsted judgment at one of its schools. This is the first step in a process that could see a school rebrokered if no improvement is seen either in the school’s outcomes or its Ofsted rating.

Of the 20 notices sent since May 2019, five were sent to trusts that had taken on a number of schools in the past two-and-a-half-years (see chart below).

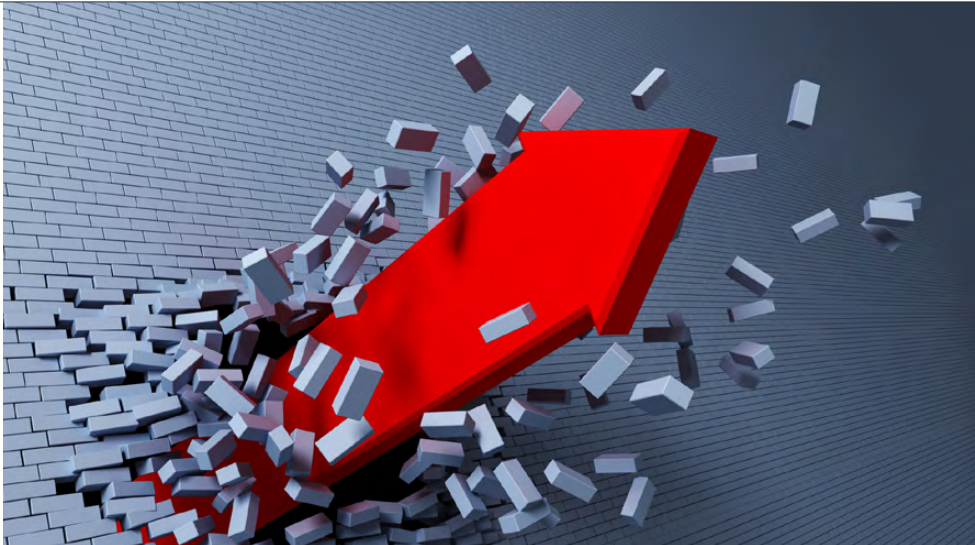
Tom Richmond, director of EDSK think-tank and former government adviser, said: “There is nothing wrong in principle with successful school trusts expanding, but we have already seen in recent years that this expansion can easily result in lower standards if it is not done in an appropriate manner.

“The skillset needed to run a large trust is very different from what is needed to run a small high-performing group of schools, yet there is often not enough consideration of this.”

Active Learning Trust received a letter in January, which was published last week, following an ‘inadequate’ judgment at Kingsfield Primary School.

The trust runs 21 schools, but four of these have been acquired since 2017. Both the DfE letter and watchdog report stated it did not have a “systematic approach to addressing the areas for improvement that were previously identified” since the schools’ ‘require improvement’ judgment in 2017.

Trust chief executive Stephen Chamberlain said the Ofsted findings were “disappointing”. He explained the death of former chief executive Gary Peile in February last year meant there was a period “where the trust had interim leadership and this led to gaps in the continuity of strategy during this time... we know we have a plan in place to develop strong and lasting improvements in the school and ensure aspirations are raised for



Kingsfield’s children.”

Elsewhere, the Elliot Foundation was sent a letter in May after Ramnoth Junior School, in Cambridgeshire, was put in ‘special measures’.

The trust oversees 28 schools, seven of which have joined since 2017 – which is 25 per cent of its current crop.

CEO Hugh Greenway said the trust “deeply regret the way we let down the children and families... We have taken this school from special measures to good in the past and we are doing it again, this time for the long term.”

However, Greenway cautioned against mistaking correlation for causation. He explained the nature of academisation meant “the most vulnerable schools” are taken on by trusts – increasing the chances of an adverse inspection.

The Elliot Foundation’s upcoming annual report shows the trust has gone from 66 per cent of schools being rated ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’ at the point of conversion to 75 per cent ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ in January 2020.

RSCs sign off on decisions for trusts to take on new schools. However, the performance of commissioners themselves is judged on



Tom Richmond

various indicators relating to growth, such as the number of new trusts that still have fewer than four schools, and how many council schools become academies.

An EDSK report on the future of the academies system called for full transparency over RSC decisions. Richmond added: “This will help ensure that no trust finds itself struggling to cope after taking on more schools.”

A Schools Week investigation in 2018 revealed a growing trend of “supersized” academy trusts, with 31 taking on five or more schools in 2017-18, compared with 20 in 2016-17.

The government has previously stepped in when a trust is seen to be failing pupils. In 2013, Academies Enterprise Trust was banned from taking over any more schools after it was deemed to have grown too quickly and was not adequately running its schools – this was lifted in 2017.

A DfE spokesperson said trusts are “subject to a robust system of oversight... We have improved the process for trusts applying to grow, meaning there is now a more structured system for managing capacity, reducing the likelihood that trusts grow in an unsustainable way.”


5 expanding trusts that received notices after May 2019

TRUST	No. OF SCHOOLS IN TRUST	% WHICH JOINED AFTER 2017
Active Learning Trust	21	19%
The Elliot Foundation	28	25%
West Somerset Academies Trust	6	50%
Redhill Academy Trust	14	57%
Robinswood Academy Trust	5	40%

News

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Lukewarm reception for university admissions proposals

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

A proposed overhaul of the university admissions system (UCAS) favoured by vice-chancellors has been likened to a "halfway house" that will fail to address "hidden bias" against poorer pupils.

Independent regulator the Office for Students (OfS) has launched a major review inviting schools to have their say on how future admissions to university should look.

A trio of potential options have been put forward but, according to *The Times*, a proposal that would see pupils receiving a university offer after their A-level results is favoured by a number of vice-chancellors.

Under this proposal pupils would apply to university in the same way they do now, but would not receive an offer until after their A-level results are released.

This system would still allow schools to continue making grade predictions as guidance for pupils and universities.

Former government adviser and director of education at lobbyists Public First, Jonathan Simons, said such a system would merely suspend the current status quo.

He said: "The reasons for moving to a system of post-qualification admissions (PQA) are largely to correct for a hidden bias in the system, which is that data consistently shows that more disadvantaged pupils are likely to undershoot for universities on the basis of how well they think they will achieve."

He said a "proper" PQA system "needs to allow for students – supported by teachers and expert advice – to apply once they have their grades, not just be offered places on confirmation of grades."

"The risk of this halfway house is that it deters momentum from a broader move in this direction, while not actually helping the

students it has the most potential to."

Other potential options cited in the review include keeping the system the same but removing personal statements and increasing transparency around entry requirements.

While the final option would see pupils register their interest in particular universities but wait until they've had their results to complete their application.

The OfS acts as a convenor and has no power to enact changes. The body will take the consultation results to bodies involved in admissions, such as the Department for Education and UCAS.

Last year education secretary Gavin Williamson expressed his support for such a review, which would take steps to clamp down on hard-sell tactics used by some universities, along with the use of unconditional offers.

The review was commissioned by his predecessor Damian Hinds who had been a vocal critic of the current system.

Hinds had previously written to 23 universities to warn them about their "unethical" use of unconditional offers, which he said was "damaging the reputation of the institutions involved and our world-leading sector as a whole".

Sir Michael Barber, chair of the OfS, said there is "widespread recognition that certain aspects of the current admissions system are not working, and may be especially unfair on students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"This is fundamentally an open consultation and a genuine attempt to seek views from as wide a range of respondents as possible."

Clare Marchant, chief executive of charity UCAS, which currently manages applications, added the organisation is "already planning more innovation and reform to broaden students' choice, raise aspirations, and consider how the process can be even more transparent, flexible and personalised".

Unions hit out at representation reforms

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Government plans to allow employees to bring lawyers or other non-union representatives into disciplinary meetings will see "simple disputes escalate", according to education unions.

The Sunday Telegraph reported that Downing Street is examining proposals to bolster the rights of non-union members in the workplace to break the "stranglehold" of trade unions.

Currently the law only requires employers, including schools, to allow staff to be joined by a union representative or colleague at grievance and disciplinary meetings.

The new plans would allow staff to bring an external lawyer or a representative of a body other than a union, the newspaper reported.

A spokesperson for Edapt, a teachers' union alternative that offers employment protection, said the move would "see equal rights under the law to workers and employees regardless of whether they are a member of a trade union or not".

"It means that everyone is afforded the same rights to be accompanied in their working life during any difficult times, and it is challenging to understand why anyone would be opposed to such a positive move forward for employment relations."

However, Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary at the National Education Union, said union representation helps resolve matters "cheaply, quickly and amicably. Introducing lawyers and private profit-making firms to the mix will add costs, delays and animosity. Simple disputes will escalate unnecessarily."

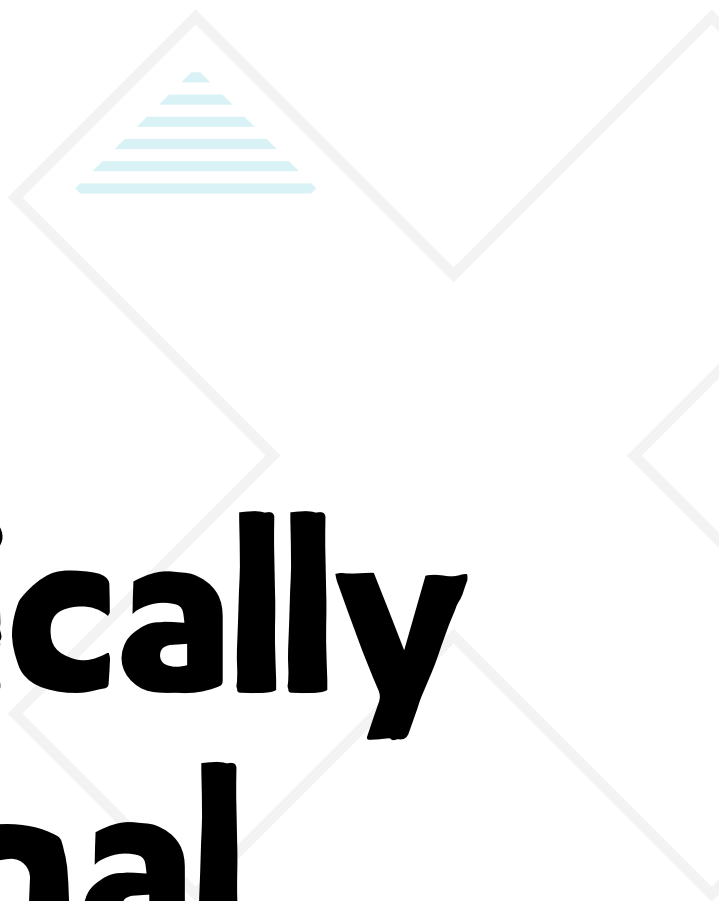
She added that firms could not replicate the "solidarity" and "understanding" of the education context.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said "teachers and leaders would still want the full range of support provided by a trade union rather than having to hire a lawyer to represent them".

Voice general secretary Deborah Lawson said unions are "democratically accountable to their members, whereas commercial companies are not".

"The days of some unions striking at the drop of a hat are long gone. My own union certainly believes in negotiation and campaigning, rather than industrial action that is damaging to education or to the interests or welfare of those children, pupils and students in our care."

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Advisers placed heads in 'impossible position' on cost cutting

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Government advisers told schools to carry out cash-saving actions such as reducing curriculum breadth, which has now been slammed by Ofsted as "detrimental to pupils' education".

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman flagged concerns over breadth of curriculum, quality of teaching and SEND provision last week in a controversial report investigating the impact of funding pressures on schools.

However, analysis from Schools Week has revealed that advice from cost-cutting advisors parachuted into schools and trusts by Lord Agnew bears a striking resemblance to the problems now identified by Spielman.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said the conflicting messages meant "school leaders have been placed in an impossible position and agonise over how to make cuts in a way that will have the least impact on the provision for pupils".

In a blog post released alongside Ofsted's report, Spielman recognised the negative impact school-funding pressures had on schools.

She said it was "particularly concerning that schools are responding to funding pressure by reducing curriculum breadth" as "all pupils should be entitled to a broad and rich curriculum".

Yet Leeds UTC was advised by government cost-cutters to review the timetable and "reduce the number of subjects offered". The adviser was told that geography would be removed.

The government's school resource management advisers were sent into 72 schools and trusts during a trial in 2017-18 – and claimed to have identified £35 million in savings.

But their recommendations drew criticism when a Schools Week investigation, based on leaked reports, revealed suggestions included limiting pupils' lunch portions and replacing experienced teachers with support staff.

Elsewhere the chief inspector noted cutting extra-curricular provision "may reduce pupils' opportunities to enrich their experience and grow cultural capital".

However, under recommendations for



Amanda Spielman

St Michael's Academy, in Yeovil, the cost-cutter stated "the number and cost of extra activities has been and will be further reduced", although they said activities had been "poorly managed" in the past.

Spielman further noted schools were reducing staff, since this is their biggest cost. She said this led to examples of subject teachers not being replaced, experienced teachers "replaced with less experienced staff" and "higher level teaching assistants...being used to cover classes".

Spielman said these decisions "taken together may lead to a reduction in expertise in the school, with less experienced teachers and more out-of-subject teaching".

Many of the schools were told to reduce staff. However, Wooton Academy Trust in Bedfordshire was told to replace a retiring teacher on upper-pay-scale 3 with a member of support staff on a term-time only contract.

The Heath Family Trust, in the north-west of England, was advised to replace a retiring upper-pay-scale 3 teacher with a main-pay-scale 1 teacher.

Similarly, the inspectorate flagged reduced provision for SEND, but advisers previously instructed Corfe Hills, in Dorset, not to recruit a replacement SEN teaching assistant to help facilitate the overall reduction of support staff.

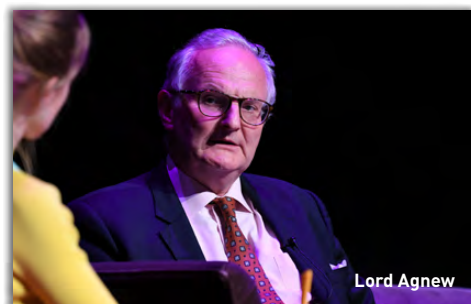
Headteacher Jules White, leader of the Worth Less? funding campaign, said Ofsted's report "finally confirmed what all headteachers have been saying for years".

He added that Spielman should "tell the DfE that rather than simply requiring schools to make cuts in essential areas they should build on their recent funding announcements and fund every school adequately".

Spielman did claim "few school leaders carefully monitor the impacts of their responses to financial pressure". But Barton said it was impossible "to make significant cuts to school budgets without detrimentally impacting the areas highlighted" by the chief inspector.

The DfE dismissed Ofsted's findings, claiming that the report was based on a "very small and unrepresentative sample".

Ofsted surveyed 201 headteachers, interviewed 18 other school leaders, had focus groups of inspectors and did research visits in 16 schools.



Lord Agnew

News

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Ofsted denies giving 'approval' for provider's magazine content

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

A curriculum provider has insisted that an Ofsted official "approved" articles in its promotional magazine that featured alongside the Ofsted logo – despite the watchdog claiming that it doesn't approve "commercial products".

Cornerstones Education distributed The Curriculum magazine to schools earlier this week, having released an online version last month.

The front page features the watchdog's logo, with the words "Ofsted-approved articles" for two pieces – "What to expect from Ofsted's subject 'deep dives'" and "FAQs about inspection".

Inside the magazine, the two articles are said to have been "reviewed by Matthew Purves, deputy director, Schools Ofsted".

The claim features below the Ofsted logo and "Ofsted-approved article" stamp.

The watchdog has strict rules around the use of its logo and has previously threatened a training provider with legal action over misuse of its badge.

An Ofsted spokesperson told *Schools Week*: "We were asked to fact-check some content for Cornerstones and we did so in the interests of accuracy. We do not 'approve' any commercial products."

Cornerstones Education declined to comment. But its founder, former headteacher Simon Hickton, said on Twitter last night that the articles were "approved through extensive correspondence with Ofsted" for "content and accuracy".

Ofsted refused to answer when asked specifically whether they gave the firm permission to use its logo or the "Ofsted-approved article" tag.

Some in the sector questioned whether Ofsted should be granting commercial companies use of their logo alongside an "Ofsted approved" tag – which could generate extra sales. It comes as schools scramble to update their curricula to meet new framework requirements.

Ofsted states that it will "rarely give permission for our main logo to be used by



third parties", and its logo "should not be taken as endorsement of any kind by us".

The inspectorate also came under fire this week in a report by think-tank Policy Exchange, which claimed the organisation has created a "de facto preference" for a two-year GCSE curriculum.

Analysis from the 169 Section 5 inspections found that 16 per cent of schools who had extended their GCSE curriculum to three years were rated 'inadequate', compared with just seven per cent of those running a two-year key stage 4.

The think-tank criticised Ofsted for "seeking to create its own education policy" under its crackdown on faith schools not teaching British values. The report stated that by "alienating peaceful, law-abiding people of faith, Ofsted makes it harder to work with these communities to tackle radicalisation".

Ofsted will also soon be launching a consultation concerning how it handles school complaints.

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News in brief

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'Make yourself unavailable to Ofsted' teachers urged

All headteachers have been urged to join a "quiet revolution" against Ofsted and block their employees from working as inspectors.

The Headteachers' Roundtable (HTRT), in a letter to all schools sent this week, alongside the National Education Union, called on staff to make themselves "unavailable with immediate effect" for Ofsted inspections.

HTRT chair Stephen Tierney also urged leaders to join the "quiet revolution" and agree "to no longer support applications from current employees for time away from school to carry out inspections, or new applications to be Ofsted inspectors".

Ofsted relies on school staff to work as part-time inspectors alongside its in-house workforce.

According to Ofsted's website, the watchdog has contracts with "more than 2,300 Ofsted inspectors" across England. The HTRT believes that by refusing to accept work from the watchdog, they can force Ofsted to change its ways.

"We want to build a grassroots movement seeking to reclaim professional agency and responsibility for school improvement," said Tierney. "We believe the accountability system and its inspectorate need fundamental reform."

In his letter, part of the groups #PauseOfsted campaign, Tierney also calls on school staff to



share the rallying cry with other leaders.

Ros McMullen, a founding member of the group, added the "current impact of inspection is damaging to too many schools and head teachers, destroying careers and paralysing school improvement".

"We believe that it is therefore a requirement of ethical leadership to refuse to be complicit and support a pause in the involvement of school leaders."

A spokesperson for Ofsted said its independent inspections are "trusted and valued by parents" and "most teachers and heads" find the process positive.

"Ideological opposition to school inspection doesn't serve parents, pupils or teachers well and we continue to have useful discussions about the feedback on the inspection framework with the recognised leadership unions."

Three vacancies for RSCs

The current longest-serving regional schools commissioner is to retire, as the government advertises for three new commissioners.

Two of the three roles are currently filled on an interim basis: Dame Kate Dethridge, a former primary school head, in the north-west London and south-central post, and Katherine Cowell, an ex-Downing Street education adviser, in the north region role.

However the third, Lancashire and West Yorkshire, is currently led by Vicky Beer. She's been in the post since November 2015. Only Dominic Herrington has served longer, but he has since been promoted to national schools commissioner.

Beer is retiring from full-time roles as her five-year term as RSC comes to an end, and will be replaced in the autumn.

Beer will join former colleague Martin Post as the only RSCs to see out their five-year contracts, after a long line of commissioners left to take up roles in the academy sector.

Herrington thanked Beer for her "professionalism, resilience and excellence" and making a "fantastic contribution" in the role.

The posts are advertised as paying up to £110,000.

Williamson appoints Ofsted critic as aide

A policy expert who recently co-authored a critical report claiming Ofsted was overstepping its brief has been appointed as special adviser to the education secretary.

Iain Mansfield will now advise Gavin Williamson on post-18 education and skills. He will step down as head of education at the Policy Exchange think-tank.

It comes at a time when the watchdog is facing huge pressure from across the sector over its new inspection framework.

Turnaround academy trust leaders have said the new curriculum focus favours middle-class pupils, while a headteacher group has called on schools



to block their staff from doing inspections.

Earlier this week Policy Exchange released its report *The Watchmen Revisited*, which claimed the inspectorate has created a "de facto preference" for a two-year GCSE curriculum under its new framework.

The think-tank also criticised Ofsted for "seeking to create its own education policy" under its crackdown on faith schools not teaching British values.

The report added by "alienating peaceful, law-abiding people of faith, Ofsted makes it harder to tackle radicalisation".

DfE to boost vulnerable youngsters protection

The government plans to look at how it can strengthen the role of designated safeguarding leads in schools to ensure vulnerable children "achieve and attend".

Safeguarding leads are currently responsible for such matters as ensuring that staff across a school understand signs of child abuse and neglect.

The government said it will consult on what is needed to provide this help, in terms of resources, training and support. The changes will be introduced from September.

The Department for Education said the plans would specifically help children who experience challenges outside of school.

The proposals include sharing information about how children's circumstances are impacting on their education, and supporting staff to find "effective ways of teaching... and maintaining a culture of high aspiration".

The consultation follows the Children in Need Review into improving outcomes for the 1.6 million children known to social services.

These pupils lag behind their less vulnerable peers at GCSE, even if they are no longer classed as "in need", and are also three times more likely to be persistently absent from school and up to four times more likely to be excluded.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Heads are damned if they do, damned if they don't

Amanda Spielman's belated foray into the world of school funding cuts didn't go down well.

Forgetting the botched publication (it was published online by accident last week, then hastily deleted, then reinstated), the tone was way off.

Spielman was right to highlight the cuts being made. But she was wrong to suggest school leaders don't know the impact such measures are having on pupils' education.

Our analysis this week also exposes some of the cost-cutting measures Spielman was critical of are exactly the same as leaders are being told to implement by the Department for Education to get their budgets in shape.

It puts heads in an impossible situation: make cuts to keep the DfE off your back, but face Ofsted's ire. Or keep the watchdog happy and have Lord Agnew claiming you're inefficient.

Being forced to make such demoralising budget cuts is hard enough. School leaders need a break.

'Gagging clauses' for trusts might not end well

Well done to freelance journalist Geraldine Hackett whose tenacity and determination to keep fighting for the truth revealed some troubling revelations (page 8-9).

Not only did she make the DfE fess up it did no checks on the co-founder of an academy trust that went on to spectacularly collapse (he actually also lied on his CV).

But she has unearthed a potentially worrying practice that has so far gone on outside of public knowledge. Trusts handing over scandal-hit schools are 'gagging' other trusts looking to take those schools on.

Some in the sector say its normal practice to keep sensitive information safe. That's fair enough.

But if it in any way halts the disclosure of wrongdoing then this is problematic.

The sector is already suspicious about the government's ability to shine a light on academy freedoms being abused. It's important they are vigilant to further potential problems.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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WE FOUND HIM IN A CUPBOARD ...



THERE IS NO READERS' REPLY THIS WEEK, NORMAL SERVICE WILL RESUME NEXT WEEK.

ACCESS, OUTREACH AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: LUCY CAVENDISH COLLEGE ON WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND WHY ITS ADMISSIONS POLICY IS CHANGING



JANE GREATOREX, SENIOR TUTOR
AT LUCY CAVENDISH COLLEGE

Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge, is committed to the widening participation agenda. It recently announced a new admissions policy to accept men, women and non-binary students from 18 years upwards to study at the College, having previously been a college for women aged 21 and over. The change takes effect from October 2021.

Jane Greateorex, Senior Tutor at Lucy Cavendish College explains:

"Through its admissions policy, the College has always sought to address unmet needs in our society. When Lucy Cavendish was founded, opportunities for mature women were scarce, but now women are more likely to start University straight after school. Our remit is evolving so that our community can be truly representative of society today."

Diversity is crucial for achieving the very best learning, for testing and developing ideas, and for bringing new perspectives to research. By admitting students from under-represented backgrounds who show outstanding potential and a commitment to tackling pressing social and technological challenges, the College will educate and inspire the next generation of leaders – the change makers and implementers of the future.

Access and Outreach

With the change in our admissions policy, outreach activity is becoming more pro-active in the form of school visits,

open days and events. We offer events for students thinking about applying to University, including free 'Subject Experience Days' that have been designed to enrich students' learning and help them develop their commitment to the subject. Students are invited to visit Lucy Cavendish College and experience first-hand our welcoming, diverse and inclusive community. Or our outreach team can come to you. Either way these are excellent opportunities for potential students to get the right information to make decisions about their future. There are also opportunities for teachers and tutors, where we can give you advice about helping students apply to Cambridge.

Maximising personal and academic potential

At Lucy Cavendish we offer a truly supportive experience by providing opportunities that enable students to thrive and flourish - to maximise their potential for the best academic attainment and career outcomes as well as maintaining their wellbeing.

For example, all new undergraduate students are invited to a Bridging Week in College before the start of term – an opportunity to bring them all together and help them settle into college life from both a social and academic perspective.

A student said:

"It gave us an opportunity to understand the Cambridge social and academic scene before term started so we settled in better. I think the week has been fantastic and I feel really

prepared to take on Cambridge life!"

Academic skills workshops are available throughout students' time at the College, on an "as and when needed" basis. Tailored employability programmes are also provided to help students progress to the most aspirational careers they choose.

Expansion and Development

As part of the College's vision, Lucy Cavendish will build an innovative, low-carbon, landmark building designed to be inclusive of diversity and supportive of interdisciplinarity.

Professor Dame Madeleine Atkins, President of Lucy Cavendish College, concludes:

"Our doors are open to all exceptional students with the ability, passion and motivation to succeed – we particularly welcome students who really care and want to make a positive impact on our society and those who are entrepreneurial. In October 2021 the number of undergraduates we accept will more than double to 130 and we aim to admit at least 80% of our UK students from under-represented or disadvantaged backgrounds. That growth will continue, and by 2025/26 we will be a community of 1,000 undergraduates, postgraduates and postdocs. We will be learning and working together and searching for solutions to the important, complex issues that our global societies face."

Contact and further information:

www.lucy.cam.ac.uk comms@lucy.cam.ac.uk

Interview

JL DUTAUT | @DUTAUT



“Most organisations go through a phase where they retrench a bit”

JL Dutaut meets Ambition Institute's new CEO, an ex-civil servant for whom policy is about creating the conditions for everyone's success.

The coffee isn't even ready yet, but Ambition Institute's new CEO, Hilary Spencer, and I have already discussed

retiring at 68, the Chartered College's work on Chartered Teacher Status, and we are moving on to retention and the lack of good knowledge about the teachers who leave and return to the profession. Not the guarded ex-civil servant I might have expected.

“If you've done a particular career for 15 years, and then you want to do something different

– quite often having kids is a trigger, or maybe just being 15 years in one place – is there a way of understanding that a bit better? In terms of 40 per cent of teachers leaving within the first five years, if we could even get a third back five or ten years after, that would make a massive difference. And would you bring a different set of experiences to the class or to running a school? It

Profile: Hilary Spencer

could be really valuable.”

When it comes to policy and the big ideas shaping education, Spencer is at ease and vocal. She is more protective of her personal story, yet there is no denying it informs her views. A mother of two – a six-year-old and an 18-month-old – she has just left the world of policy behind after not 15 but 18 years. Perhaps she already has half an eye on her return.

Since 2013, as well as consecutive roles as director of Civil Service learning and then as director of the government Equalities Office, Spencer has been chair of the council of Oasis Academy South Bank, a school she helped set up and which Ofsted graded ‘outstanding’ in all categories in 2015. If one thing is certain then, it’s that she is quite comfortable with getting hands-on and facing a high level of challenge. That’s likely to serve her well at Ambition Institute.

In October 2019, as Spencer was gearing up to take the CEO job, *Schools Week* reported that the organisation had moved from a £300,000 surplus to an £800,000 deficit, had seen its total income fall by 13 per cent, and that government contracts had made up 72 per cent of its income in the 2017-18 financial year. With tight school budgets only getting tighter in the interim, the charity faces a rocky road ahead, notwithstanding any announcements in the upcoming budget.

But Spencer doesn’t seem fazed. “Personally,” she says, “I’d like us to get to a point where [DfE contracts are] a smaller overall percentage of our funding base, just because I think it gives us more space to tailor some of what we’re doing. Also, it gives us the potential to do some really interesting, innovative stuff.”

A desirable outcome in its own right then, rather than an organisational necessity. At least in the short term. Spencer has other priorities, and rushing in all guns blazing isn’t her style. “There’s this whole thing about CEOs coming in having their hundred-day plan. Obviously, you do have a plan when you join an organisation, but I think you’d be relatively insufferable if you came in with a plan and stuck to it no matter what, right?”

Nevertheless, there are lessons she learned in Whitehall that are highly likely to follow



her into her new role. As director of Civil Service learning, she took responsibility for the professional development of 400,000 staff – just 50,000 short of the total number of teachers in England’s state-funded schools. By all accounts, her impact was transformative. She describes

“You’d be insufferable if you came in with a plan and stuck to it no matter what”

with enthusiasm the experience of developing programmes that are 80 per cent consistent, with 20 per cent left flexible to be tailored to the needs of each organisation and team, and developing the use of technology to tailor learning programmes for individuals while maintaining all-important face-to-face learning.

Meanwhile, her top priority has been to appoint a new chief operating officer, and that’s been a success. Kimberly Lovegrove, whose CV includes

project management and operational leadership in educational organisations from MIT to Navitas, will be starting her new role on March 9. It’s an astute appointment from the new CEO, who otherwise has spent her time learning about the organisation and its people.

And Ambition Institute isn’t without controversy. Formed from the merger of the Institute for Teaching and Ambition School Leadership (the latter itself a merger of The Future Leaders Trust and Teaching Leaders), the new organisation bills itself as a graduate school with “the mission focus of a charity, the academic rigour of a traditional university and the essential classroom connection of a teaching school”. That statement alone ruffled a few feathers in university circles, as symbolic of the displacement of teacher education from its traditional home in faculties of education. When Ambition Institute then floated the idea that it would seek to be granted degree-awarding powers, some of those same faculties were incensed, seeing in the move a further Govian attack on the so-called “Blob”.

Incidentally, Spencer served as Michael Gove’s principal private secretary for 18 months across 2011 and 2012. Yet there is little of the ideologue in her take on the role she has been in for only four

Profile: Hilary Spencer



months. “I think there’s some value,” she tells me, “in just pausing for a minute and trying to work out where it is you really want to go.”

Nevermind the 100-day blitz then, or the single-minded certainty of so many leaders of organisations. In fact, even the proposal to seek degree-awarding powers is up for grabs. “We’ve had quite a lot of work going into this from a really talented team,” she says, but, “most organisations go through a phase where they retrench a bit to focus on their core offer. The degree-awarding powers is part of that discussion.”

First and foremost for Spencer, it’s a question of impact. An alumnus of an all-girls private school in Hertfordshire, and an Oxford PPE graduate, her story isn’t quite the one of privilege those experiences might suggest. From the age of eight, she was raised by her single mother and, despite the riches of her educational environment, the absence of childhood photographs that traditionally accompany these profiles is down to the fact that “we didn’t have a camera”. She won’t be drawn further, but her deep regard for her mother, who taught her and her younger brother, above all, to “work hard and be nice to people”, is palpable.

So it could have been very different for Spencer, and the experience has left her with a singular



drive. “It shouldn’t be down to luck. Everyone should have the opportunity to go to a school that nurtures them, that encourages them, that gives them the potential to succeed and to exceed their

“I taught English. Badly. I feel very confident about that now”

own expectations.”

So while under her leadership Ambition Institute could follow what she calls the “Future Leaders history of the organisation, focusing on the top end of the education system”, that isn’t where she believes the biggest impact is to be had. And there’s an ethical dimension to that bias. Spencer grew up in a Christian household and “became a Christian in her mid-teens. So that sense that social justice is an important end in itself is a core value of mine.”

But why education? “Having enjoyed school

so much I thought I might want to be a teacher, so I tried teaching in China. I taught English. Badly. I feel very confident about that now.” She “loved seeing the light go on behind someone’s eyes when suddenly they get something”, but it was something else that captured her interest. The children she taught had been selected to learn tourism while others down the road were destined for university. That predetermination and lack of agency seemed unfair.

A stint in South Africa in 1999 only reinforced that sense of injustice. Post-apartheid, race was (is) still a determinant of children’s education, outcomes and future lives. Reflecting on her own experience, Spencer returned to the UK with a drive to tackle the systemic barriers to children’s success that still blight our system.

Two decades later, she is still on that singular mission. “The thing that really drives me,” she says, “the reason for joining the Department of Education in the first place, is how you create the conditions where people can achieve their potential.”

Spoken like a true teacher. Maybe those Chinese students didn’t have it so bad after all. It doesn’t look like Ambition will retrench for long.

Opinion

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



DR SARAH ALIX

Programme director,
North Essex Teacher Training (NETT)

Looked-after children need better-trained teachers

Looked-after children and their teachers are being let down by a persistent lack of guidance. Closing the training gap is a political priority, writes Dr Sarah Alix

As a qualified teacher I always felt frustrated with my own lack of understanding about how best to support looked-after children. I didn't have the information I needed, and at the time I didn't know how to get hold of it. Sadly, this is still a difficulty for teachers today.

In their 2018 report, *Teachers Who Care, Become*, the charity for children in care and young care-leavers, stated that "a significant training gap is leaving teachers unprepared to support looked-after children in their schools". The report highlighted that 87 per cent of teachers who had qualified since 2010 had received no training about looked-after children before qualifying, and 26 per cent had received no training before or after they had qualified, with many revealing that they had heard negative generalisations about children in care.

My own research examined trainee teachers' and mentors' perspectives and experiences of working with

this vulnerable group. Its aim was to support teachers by identifying the best forms of training for that purpose, but in the process I too

“ A good knowledge base is already there about how to support this group

picked up on negative perceptions about working with these children. It isn't a question of malicious intent; but the absence of a well-communicated knowledge base makes a rich soil in which rumours and misconceptions can take root.

In this context, it is unsurprising that looked-after children continue to underperform academically in comparison to their peers. They are let down by support systems that are not limited to schools but which definitely include them. More than one-third of looked-after children end up Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) upon leaving school, and only six per cent of care-leavers progress to university, compared with 38 per cent of the general population. And too many enter the criminal justice system at an early age.

Although there are many contributing factors, higher



educational outcomes correlate strongly with other positive life outcomes, such as establishing a career and a family. Unsurprisingly, they also correlate with a reduced involvement with the criminal justice system. The cost of not acting is borne by the children

first and foremost, but eventually it is borne by us all. This is simply unsustainable, ethically and societally.

Thankfully, solutions are within our grasp. Ofsted and the Department for Education make a great deal of the importance of research in the development of teachers and school policies alike, and where it has been applied, it has already begun to have a positive effect on achievement gaps for some groups of children. Those with English as an additional language and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have benefitted. Even the seemingly intractable gender gap has started to close. However, looked-after children are not seeing the benefits yet.

It seems an inescapable fact that teacher training compresses a large number of important areas into a

generally short time. A detailed consideration of the needs of looked-after children competes with DfE and Ofsted foci, such as systematic synthetic phonics and reading, behaviour management, SEND, subject knowledge, skill development and much, much more. This will always be a balancing act, but we can no longer overlook the fact that a failure to prepare teachers for working with looked-after children is unfair both to some of our most vulnerable young people and to their teachers.

Though more research would definitely be a good thing, a good knowledge base is already there about how to support this group. Not all training needs to happen within teachers' qualifying years, but there can no longer be any excuse for teachers starting their post-qualification careers without the core knowledge required to begin to work with a looked-after child.

As a profession, we tend to be critical of over-prescriptive guidance. Yet the absence of any guidance for working with looked-after children leaves teachers to flounder and children to fall through the cracks, and that is no longer tenable. It's time for government and teacher trainers to close this training gap once and for all.

Opinion

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

It is imperative that any new additional funding in the budget is used solely for its intended purpose, says Simon Barnes

Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools Amanda Spielman made waves over the half-term by suggesting school leaders could "squander" any additional money allocated to them in the upcoming budget. For all the controversy, it does draw attention to a well-known problem: budget cuts have meant that schools are forced to use whatever funding they get to plug the holes. One of the most obvious examples is the pupil premium. With that funding stream set to increase for the first time in five years, it's imperative the money is used for its original intended purpose.

When the pupil premium was originally set up in 2011, it was to provide support in maths and English up to GCSE level. While the early years of investment were largely successful, last year's education select committee report declared that the funds are instead being used "to plug holes in schools' budgets". Meanwhile, DfE statistics show that pupils eligible for free school meals have seen a large increase in fixed-term exclusions. If anything is being squandered then, it is surely the pupil premium.

The Education Policy Institute's 2019 study of the 2017-18 academic year supports this conclusion, finding that while primary schools continue to close the attainment gap, it is actually widening in secondary schools. Similarly, the Sutton Trust's annual poll of teachers found that only 55 per cent felt that the pupil premium was being used effectively in their schools, while 26 per cent believed that their schools



SIMON BARNES

Founder and CEO, TLC LIVE

Regaining pupil premium's lost focus

used it to fill unrelated budget gaps instead.

Virtual schools have different budgetary challenges, yet the

learning in English and maths having a one-to-one focus, often involving the foster carer.

In addition to these cognition and

“Only 55 per cent of teachers felt the premium was being used effectively in their schools

pupil premium plus, a similar fund for looked-after children, has maintained its per-pupil attainment focus. This is in large part because pupil premium plus spending in virtual schools is more closely monitored by the government. Activities are quantitatively assessed with feedback provided on reading age, fluency and comprehension. This greater attainment accountability results in more targeted use, with many virtual school activities associated with cognition and

learning activities, there's a greater focus on one-on-one tuition. As founder of a company that delivers pay-as-you-go tutoring I have a vested interest, but whoever delivers it, provided they are qualified to do so, the fact of the matter is that tuition is effective. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) 2018 trial showed that low-cost tutoring can boost struggling pupils' maths results by three months.

At TLC LIVE, we delivered over 24,000 hours of tuition to

looked-after children last year. All made academic progress, with some demonstrating as much as one month's progress per lesson. This is in addition to the gains in confidence and the growing ability in communication these students exhibited, particularly noticeable among our more challenged students.

Pupil premium plus is an important reminder of the effectiveness of one-to-one interventions, but it is also a forceful argument for the need to focus on attainment to measure the efficacy of pupil premium spending, particularly when it comes to fundamental lifelong skills, such as literacy and numeracy, which are key to the policy's success. Keeping the lights on so that all students can learn was never its intent.

As EEF chief executive Sir Kevan Collins put it in the foundation's pupil premium report: "Educational attainment is the best predictor that we have of a young person's long-term outcomes." As we near the budget of this new government, there is a growing feeling among senior leadership teams that promised funding increases will mean pupil premium will once more be spent directly on raising the attainment of specific students in core subjects.

If we mean to close attainment gaps, then the DfE must incentivise school leaders to demonstrate pupil premium is being spent effectively and advise school leaders with strong research about how to effectively target funding for the very best outcomes.

Only by doing that will we know that the pupil premium is still fulfilling its intent, and ensure it doesn't run the risk of being labelled "squandered" by Spielman and her contemporaries.



Research

This term the Institute for Effective Education will regularly review the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact them on Twitter @IEE_York if you have a topic you would like them to cover

Truanting in Arkansas - how not to make policy

Jonathan Haslam, director, Institute for Effective Education

A famous Pentagon saying, quoted by the journalist Thomas Friedman, is that “a vision without resources is hallucination”. The same might be said of education policies, whether at local or national level. If they are not supported by resources to make the required change happen, teachers and schools will find a way around them.

A recent study from the US looked into just such an issue. In the US, pupils who have been truant or chronically absent are often punished with an out-of-school suspension. Not surprisingly, some people have questioned the merits of punishing students who don't come to school with a punishment of not letting them come to school. As a result, some states have banned this practice.

But did banning the approach solve the problem? A recent study looked at the effects of one such policy, in the state of Arkansas, which banned out-of-school suspensions in 2013.

The state offered no training to schools, and each school was left to make its own way with the policy change. Although out-of-school suspensions were banned, other punishments were allowed to continue, including in-school suspension.

Using data from all Arkansas state schools, researchers compared the attendance of truant and non-truant pupils before and after the policy to see if there were any dramatic changes in attendance. They looked at grades 7-12 (years 8-13), in which 96% of truancy occurs.

The researchers found that only one-third of schools complied, with compliance particularly low in disadvantaged schools. Among schools that did comply, there was no



evidence of a change in student behaviour after the policy came into effect. Three key findings were that:

- Policy alone is not enough to change behaviour – implementation of a policy must be overseen and reinforced.
- When policies change, there has to be consideration as to whether school resources are sufficient to enforce this change, or whether they need support or training to comply.
- High-level policy changes need to be followed by quantitative and qualitative evaluation to assess key outcomes and compliance.

In addition, the researchers reflected that, perhaps because there were still other punishments, truancy continued. They argue that punishment did not address the root causes of pupils truanting, and that pupil outcomes might not change if schools simply replace out-of-school suspensions with other types of punishment.

Some might argue that this is an obvious piece of research, and that clearly resources are necessary if we make a policy change. But we don't have to look far in current education debates to find calls for an approach or organisation to be banned without a clear strategy for its replacement. Without a clear idea of the root problem or need that an approach currently

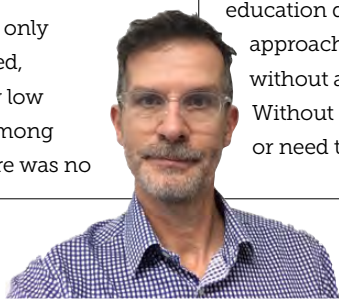
addresses, ideas for an alternative that could be more successful, and the resources and support for teachers and schools to implement and evaluate that alternative, it is unlikely that a simple ban will lead to improvement.

At a local level, too, when schools are planning policy changes, there are a few questions it might be worth reflecting on:

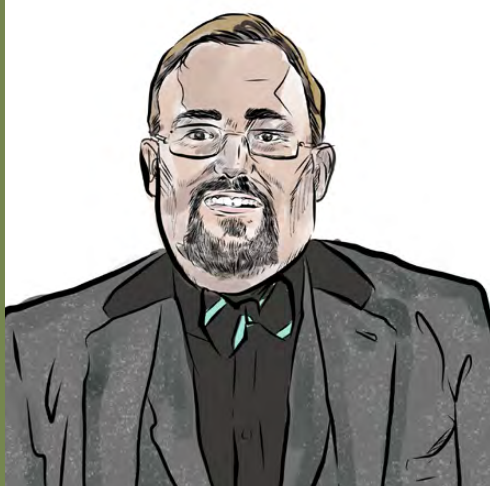
- What issue is the current policy aiming to address? How will that issue be addressed in the future, once the policy has been changed? What evidence is there that the new policy might be more successful?
- How will stakeholders (staff, students, parents) be supported to implement the new policy? What are their views about the proposed change?
- How will the impact of the new policy or approach be evaluated, both in the short and long term?

So whether it's Ofsted or local authority control, homework or isolation booths, failing to ask these questions before banning or changing a practice may be rich in vision, but risks implementation being little more than a waking dream. When it comes to putting policy into practice, preparation is key.

'Discipline Reform: The Impact of a Statewide Ban on Suspensions for Truancy' (January 2019), *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* (JESPAR), Volume 24, Issue 1



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Robin Conway, who is director of research and innovation at John Mason School

@JMSREFLECT

Staff Training Days – What's Your Experience?

@jillberry102

Jill Berry's blogs are always thoughtful, reflective and draw on a wealth of experience in different educational roles. This piece is no different. Looking back over four decades at the change since the introduction of "Baker days" in 1988, she reflects on the value of staff training days in light of research that suggests their impact is highly questionable. Her thoughts on how to maximise the impact and inclusivity of whole-staff training are the most powerful part of a great read. Berry makes a good case for the value of "the whole staff coming together as a community to learn". If you're leading CPD, this blog is an indispensable starting point for how to do it well.

Implementing A Knowledge Rich Curriculum in the Early Years

@DebbieMann

Having recently become a primary school governor, I've started to expand my reading into early years and key stages 1 and 2. This piece by Debbie Mann is an excellent

TOP BLOGS of the week

analysis of the importance of early-years teaching and the significance of teachers to their wider communities. Mann outlines some approaches she has implemented in her pre-school to engage with research and ideas from Hirsch, Engelmann and others. I particularly liked "snack facts" and the early introduction of non-fiction texts. For those looking for ideas for their early-years curriculum, this is a great place to start, and I hope that there will be more posts from Mann in the future.

Shifting Lines: Does Everything Work Somewhere?

@adamboxer1

When it comes to research, sometimes we can be a little too ready to adopt ideas because they are "research-based". At other times we can be resistant to changing our practice without being clear on the reasons why. While important, empowering teachers to engage in critical analysis of research does not necessarily ensure we achieve the right balance. What should we be thinking about? How do we evaluate research and new pedagogical ideas to decide which ones are worth adopting? I have never seen these questions answered more clearly and succinctly than in this blog by Adam Boxer. After a highly relevant analogy from the field of chemistry – so well-explained that even I could follow it – Boxer explains exactly why the key

question to ask is "not 'what is the impact of this?' but 'how likely am I to screw it up?'...If your intervention is hard to implement, it's not a good intervention."

I'm Still Standing – Just a Little Further Back

@MrHtheteacher

In the last few years, teacher well-being has increasingly taken on the prominence it always should have had in educational discourse. Some of Mr H's experiences illustrate exactly why it is so important, and highlight that there is much work still to be done. He honestly recounts some of the challenges and unhelpful feedback he experienced and the impact they had on his motivation and health, but the piece remains a positive one. By choosing a school based on the headteacher's ethos, even though it was a "step back" career-wise, he has "found a place of kindness, compassion and happiness". It's hard to read this and not come to the conclusion that the education system needs more places like that to keep hold of more teachers like Mr H.

Just Let Our Teachers Teach

@Ni_Principal

From Northern Ireland comes this piece by a principal who finds his own pedagogical instincts at odds with prevailing directives. Rather than focus on generic "thinking skills and personal capabilities" this principal wants to empower his teachers to do what they do best: teach and model the subjects about which they are passionate. The piece is not advocating a return to "chalk and talk"; it is a nuanced approach to learning, which includes a range of teacher-led activities. Drawing on Sam Strickland's Education Exposed and the reality of running a school, this post is a powerful affirmation that "the teacher is the expert, not the guide on the side".

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The School Fundraising Handbook

Author: Lindsey Marsh

Reviewer: Terry Freedman, education writer and former head of computing

Publisher: Crown House Publishing

One of the chief banes of my life as a head of computing in a comprehensive school was acquiring enough money to develop the subject and to improve the experience of using education technology for everyone across the school. My experience is not unique, of course. The same lament is heard from teachers and subject leaders across the land, and the ever-present budget constraints have only made the situation more challenging.

That's where this book comes in. I only wish it had been available when I needed it most.

Lindsey Marsh's book has much to like. It is fantastically comprehensive, and sometimes imaginative, with a wealth of ideas and suggestions for topping up the coffers. For those who still hold on to the idea of fundraising as holding a raffle, running a tombola and selling cakes at the summer fete, *The School Fundraising Handbook* will soon have you rethinking how to generate cash. Indeed, there's enough in these pages to challenge even the more creative fundraiser to raise their game.

The book follows a logical structure, most chapters containing ideas for activities, followed by suggestions about how to pay for them or make money from them.

Some of it is about rethinking those events that might at first glance appear to be a loss, such as author visits. A visiting writer deserves to be paid, but if you can get together with other schools

and charge parents a small amount towards the cost, you could make a small profit. Running a breakfast club is obviously going to cost money, but the price you charge to attend should cost parents less than the services of a childminder, and could be an attractive proposition for all involved.

But there's plenty of other practical advice too, such as how to complete grant applications and what to consider when planning a school trip or residential visit. In addition, there are lots of useful websites cited, and the preponderance of bullet points will gladden the busy teacher or school leader. Although the book is quite long, at over 200 pages, it is very accessible. There are even a few pages for notes at the end of the book.

Unfortunately, the book is far from perfect. There are plenty of problems, but none that a second edition couldn't easily fix.

First, as an ICT and computing specialist, I'm pleased with the amount of space devoted to various aspects of ed tech. However, other subject specialists may feel they have been given short shrift, and over-reliance on technology to save money has its problems too. Without proper

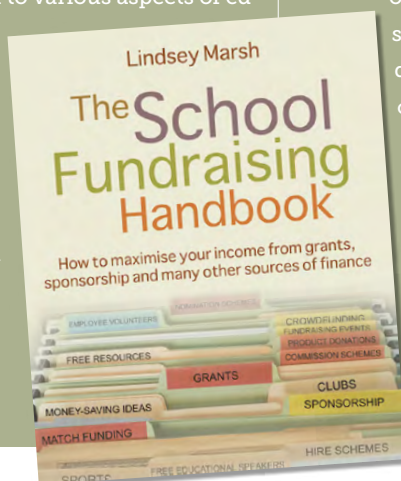
consideration, it can be symptomatic of short-termism which can turn out to be costly in its own right, long after the cost of implementation is considered.

Second, there is no index. Many of the chapters are devoted to one particular aspect of school life, and organisations and their websites are provided in the most appropriate locations in the book. However, some of these could easily be useful across a number of contexts, and such a huge amount of information needs as many tools as possible to help readers find their way around the book.

Third, it's wonderful that so many websites are included, but copying a long URL from page to browser address bar is never pleasant. A URL shortener, or clever use of QR codes, could have made for a much easier user experience.

Fourth, and at the risk of sounding picknickety, I was surprised to find that the section on author visits makes no mention of the Society of Authors, which maintains an online directory of authors who are willing to visit schools, along with advice on running author visits. It's a strange omission that begs the question of gaps in research in other areas.

Overall then, this a fantastic resource – a superb repository of suggestions, resources and practical tips – that could have been made much stronger with some astute editing, and more thought given to the user's navigation.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

TUESDAY

Nicky Morgan and her former special adviser Luke Tryl have been thick as thieves since they served together at the Department for Education. So, it was surprising the former education secretary backed a report that trashed the very organisation her aide used to work for.

A report by Policy Exchange, supported by Morgan, warned that Ofsted was straying from its brief, even setting education policy through the inspection process.

In her foreword to the report, Morgan, now a Tory peer, said it was important "not to undermine those academy freedoms by the back door" and said it was "important that all of us, including Ofsted respect that".

Her involvement is awkward given that Tryl was until early last year Ofsted's corporate strategy (and massively responsible for drawing up the new framework). Awks!

WEDNESDAY

Teacher-turned-MP Jonathan Gullis is already making his voice heard on education issues in Parliament.

In a Westminster Hall debate on exclusions, the Tory MP said schools with zero-tolerance behaviour policies should be "unreservedly celebrated" for ensuring staff aren't "treated as punch bags".

The debate was moved by Labour MP for Croydon Central Sarah Jones, who said increasing numbers of



school exclusions was "one element of inequality in society that is moving in the wrong direction".

But Gullis (pictured), the Stoke-on-Trent North MP, dismissed concerns schools were on a "exclusions spree".

He even said he'd witnessed headteachers keep children that should have been excluded in internal exclusion for fear of "triggering an Ofsted inspection and breeding further stresses for teachers, pupils and parents".

Gullis, who was a teacher for eight years before becoming an MP at the recent election, added: "We should unreservedly celebrate schools with high expectations and zero-tolerance policies."

And while he may be a newbie, he's already learning the time-honoured ways of his colleagues of who to name-check in Parliament: "We should follow the example set by Michaela Community School, in Brent, and Magna Academy, in Poole, both of which have excellent Ofsted ratings, excellent results and the highest standards of behaviour."

THURSDAY

While we're on the subject of Policy Exchange's critical report on Ofsted, it seems its author has impressed Gavin Williamson.

The education secretary has hired Iain Mansfield, up until recently head of education, skills, science and innovation at the Policy Exchange, as a special adviser.

The news will have gone down like a sack of spuds at Ofsted, where they're already feeling under the cosh as a result of a concerted campaign against them by school and academy trust leaders across the country.

Williamson, meanwhile, is said to be keen not to take sides in the dispute.

While it's not uncommon for PX staffers to get jobs in government, some were surprised to see Williamson hire a SECOND policy SpAd, after Innes Taylor joined the team earlier this year.

Once his new media adviser has been recruited, it will mean the ed sec has three key advisers, a situation not seen at the Department for Education for some time.

Clearly the number of SpAds in government is less of an issue for team Boris than it was for his predecessors.

BTW: Mansfield had only joined Policy Exchange in October last year. He previously worked as a special adviser to energy minister Kwasi Kwarteng and former universities and science minister Jo Johnson.



Department
for Education

Regional Schools Commissioner (x3)

Pay scale: up to £110k per annum

Location: Based in Manchester, Darlington, Watford with regular travel within the region, and attendance at meetings in London and other RSC regional offices

Dedicated to delivering first-class education to children and young people across England, the Department for Education is a stimulating and rewarding place to work.

With over 9000 open academies and free schools, we're looking for an outstanding leader with a track record of significant achievement and delivery, commitment to and passion for diversity and inclusion, and a good understanding of the education landscape both nationally and locally.

You will be part of a strong team of Commissioners, making important operational decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State for all academies, free schools and sponsors in your region. That means monitoring performance of all academies and free schools, identifying and driving improvements to schools that are underperforming, encouraging academies that are performing well to become sponsors or set up multi-academy trusts and leading on free school delivery. You will also play a key role in leading a Civil Service regional team that contributes to wider Department school improvement work. Engaging effectively with school leaders and stakeholders is key, commanding respect to support and challenge the wider sector.

For further information, including details of how to apply for this role, please visit the Civil Service Jobs website www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs – search under Department for Education. The recruitment is regulated by the Civil Service Commission.

Closing date: 25th March 2020.

The Department for Education is an equal opportunities employer and we particularly welcome applicants from under-represented backgrounds.

anthem



Headteacher, Abbey Woods Academy Location: Berinsfield, Oxfordshire Contract type: Permanent

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking an exceptional individual to lead Abbey Woods Academy to future success, building upon and sustaining recent whole-school improvements following its Ofsted inspection in September 2019. This is a unique opportunity for someone who is passionate about making a real difference to the children and the community the school serves. We are looking for a Headteacher with a proven track record at primary Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher level who can create a stimulating, nurturing, happy, safe and productive learning environment for all pupils and continue to build teaching capacity by working collaboratively within the school, with local partnerships and with other schools across the Trust.

Please contact enquiries@anthemtrust.uk for an application pack, or to arrange an informal discussion with the Education Director for London and the Thames Valley, Karen Walker

Find out more at www.abbeywoodsacademy.oxon.sch.uk and www.anthemtrust.uk

anthem



Headteacher, Judith Kerr Primary School Location: Herne Hill, London SE4 Contract type: Permanent

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking a Headteacher for Judith Kerr Primary School to deliver inspirational and motivational leadership across the school that will sustain and develop the school's established secure foundations and develop further outstanding performance in all areas of its work. The school offer a bilingual education to all, and the successful candidate will be expected to lead and promote the unique and innovative curriculum of the school with its strong focus on the teaching and learning of German. The ability to speak German is not essential.

To request an application pack, please contact enquiries@anthemtrust.uk.

Prospective applicants are also welcome to have an informal discussion with the Education Director for London and the Thames Valley, Karen Walker. To do so, please contact us via the email address above.

Find out more about at www.jkps-cfibt.org and 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 | 07739 364 033



Deputy Headteacher

L24 - L28 (£72,306 - £79,748)
Required for September 2020

We are looking to appoint a permanent Deputy Headteacher who has:

- Made a demonstrable impact in at least one senior leadership role
- A secure track record of delivering excellent academic outcomes, possibly as a head of department or an assistant headteacher with a direct role in raising standards
- An excellent understanding of how to build a balanced, rigorous and inspiring curriculum
- The energy, drive and resilience to make a tangible difference as deputy head in a large and ambitious school
- The integrity, moral purpose, presence and emotional intelligence necessary to inspire confidence from staff, students and parents
- The potential to be a headteacher themselves within the next few years

Lymm High School is an 11-18, mixed comprehensive school with around 1900 students, set in 28 acres of beautiful grounds and in an area with excellent transport links. Attainment and progress have risen significantly over the past few years and both are now well above national averages.

If you would like to see for yourself why we believe this is such a fabulous school in which to work and why the post itself is so exciting, then please do not hesitate to contact us on **01925 755458**.

Closing date for applications: 9am Wednesday 11th March
Provisional interview dates: 19th and 20th March

An application pack, including letters from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors is available on the school's website. www.lymmhigh.org.uk

Further information:

Application forms should be returned to recruitment@lymmhigh.org.uk
Lymm High School, Oughtrington Lane, Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0RB

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