

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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FRIDAY, MAR 6 2020 | EDITION 206



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- 'This is working against getting strong staff in the schools that most need them'

INVESTIGATES

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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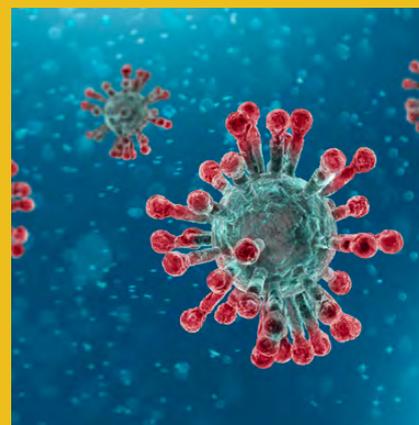
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Councils plan admissions overhaul as SEN pupils shunned

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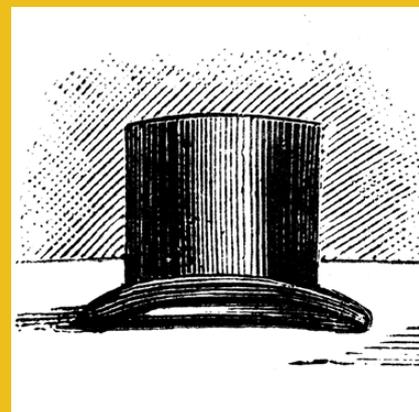
Ofsted behaviour report at odds with Williamson's discipline crackdown

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Coronavirus: the latest

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Excellence isn't elitist.
Our system is

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News

EXCLUSIVE



'No-frills' private school founder eyes seven north-east sites

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The man behind a “no frills” private school is looking for sites to open another seven in the north-east, warning he’s “absolutely happy” for his chain to make state schools unviable.

In an exclusive interview with *Schools Week* Professor James Tooley said he plans to open the schools “in the next few years”.

Billed as the country’s first “no frills” school when it opened in 2018, charging parents £52 per week, the Independent Grammar School: Durham (IGSD) now has 25 pupils, up from just six in its first year.

Tooley believes it will have 40-odd next year, meaning the school – for four- to 11-year-olds – will “break even” financially. However, the school has hiked its yearly prices to £2,995 – a rise of nearly £300 (11 per cent).

Tooley is now planning to expand into areas such as Sunderland, Gateshead and Newcastle.

But Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said the business model was “highly questionable, both from the point of view of the sort of education that can be provided, and the sort of salaries, support and terms and conditions that staff may be offered.”

Tooley would not reveal the salaries of his four staff at the Durham school, but said they are “not paid less than if they were in the state sector”.

Courtney queried what the schools offer in terms of arts and creative subjects, sports and support to children with special educational needs, adding: “No frills may sound appealing to some, but what does this mean?”

IGSD focuses on maths and English in the morning, with “all the major subjects in the curriculum” covered mainly via topic work in the afternoon.

Tooley said every child at the school plays an instrument, while its gymnastics team has

made it through to a national competition as representatives for County Durham.

He added the school’s smaller size means it can give individual attention to pupils, something that parents “appreciate”.

He said some parents are travelling long distances and the “idea is to put schools, particularly primary schools, close to where the family is”.

Tooley conceded the main reason for targeting the north-east is because it is where he has been based for most his career, along with his principal, Chris Gray, and funders.

But he did say the region is a “good area to be working, because it’s known to be an area with educational needs”.

When asked whether he would be happy if the schools could make their state counterparts unviable, he said: “If they [state schools] are not doing a good job and parents think we can do better – absolutely I’m happy with that”.

Tooley said he is “exploring” bringing other investors on board to help fund the expansion. He claimed that around 30 people, including in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, had also been in touch to express interest in replicating the model.

Chris Zarraga, interim director of Schools North East network of schools, said the success of the model is ultimately down to “pupil and parental choice”.

The school’s fees are still way below the average for private day schools, at £14,289. However, its website also states that costs are “likely” to rise in line with the consumer price index each year.

Julie Robinson, chief executive of the Independent Schools Council, said the model is a “welcome addition”, particularly as many private schools are experiencing upward pressures on fees amid the “uncertainties” of Brexit and increased pension costs.

She said: “Having a range of school types with different strengths helps create an educational ecosystem where there is a school to suit everyone.”

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Frugal CEO joins board of cash-strapped trust

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The chief executive of one of England’s largest academy trusts has joined the board of trustees of another large chain.

Martyn Oliver, who heads up Outwood Grange Academy Trust, has become a trustee at the David Ross Education Trust, as the latter grapples with a £1 million deficit.

In a *Schools Week* op-ed last month, DRET CEO Rowena Hackwood said school staff should treat “every penny” of funding as if it was their own and apply the same “discipline” to financial management as they do to improving educational performance.

OGAT is known for its financial efficiency.

It is rare for the CEO of a trust to join the board of another, but it comes amid calls for greater collaboration across the sector.

Oliver said he looked forward to “not only helping this excellent trust, but also in learning from them”.

“I have always believed in both giving and receiving support: it is what makes our education system great.”

According to the most recent DfE data the two trusts are among the largest in the country, with OGAT running 32 schools and DRET overseeing 34.

Both organisations run schools in Yorkshire and the Humber, with DRET also running some in the Midlands and OGAT in the north-east.

Hackwood said her trust “firmly believe in collaborative working as way to ensure that every child benefits from a world-class education”.

The National Governance Association’s (NGA) campaign Educators On Boards previously encouraged school leaders at all levels to join governing boards.

Sam Henson of the NGA said it could be a “really positive move, one with a clear ethical dimension, that backs the idea of school leaders being public servants, part of a collaborative system, and an increase in trusts building connections and working together will help promote wider systemic school improvement”.

But he added that some MATs may “struggle with this idea, especially in areas where there is actual or perceived competition between trusts”.

EBacc requirement excludes schools from DfE schemes

SAMANTHA BOOTH
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Teachers in the most challenging schools are being barred from shaping policy or sharing their expertise as government limits access to its schemes based on EBacc entry rates.

Analysis by Schools Week has found at least five Department for Education initiatives where a quota of pupils entered into the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was part of the eligibility criteria.

Last week, it was announced new lead behaviour schools helping others tackle unruly behaviour must, as well as be rated 'outstanding', have EBacc entry rates at or above 45 per cent.

Meanwhile, the DfE is advertising for a new member on its teacher reference group, which advises officials on the potential impact of policies in schools. However, only teachers from schools that have 45 per cent or above of pupils entered into EBacc may apply.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "It makes no sense to make EBacc entry a condition of anything, and smacks of flogging a dead horse."

He added the EBacc criteria was "unreasonable", and pointed out that being a behaviour hub was "patently unconnected" to the measure.

Analysis by Education Datalab shows 61 per cent of secondary schools did not have a 45 per cent or above EBacc entry rate last year.

Furthermore, their analysis showed certain areas are harder hit. For instance, 75 per cent of schools in the north-east, the region with the lowest EBacc entry rate, would not be able to apply, whereas more in London would be able to.

Caroline Spalding, an assistant headteacher and former adviser, said the "flawed" decision means the DfE won't hear the voices of teachers in the "very schools they hope to persuade that the EBacc is a useful measure".

She added the DfE was "mistakenly conflating individual teachers with schools" and any limiting opportunities for teachers in challenging schools is "working against attracting and retaining strong teachers to the very schools that need them most".

For primary schools, teachers must work

INVESTIGATES



Postcode lottery: schools barred from DfE schemes

REGION	% OF SCHOOLS NOT MEETING 45% EBACC ENTRY RATE
England	61
North East	74
North West	69
South East	60
London	36
South West	69
West Midlands	61
East of England	63
East Midlands	70
Yorkshire and the Humber	70

at a school that has at least 90 per cent year 1 students meeting the required standard in phonics.

But special schools, alternative provision and middle and junior schools need only show they have "strong performance".

But it is understood the current teacher reference group has raised concerns over the EBacc criteria to the government.

The 45 per cent EBacc entry is also a requirement to get a spot on the headteacher reference group, and to become one of the new teaching school hubs. Plus, academies wanting expansion cash must also hit EBacc entry requirements.

Jonathan Simons, a former policy adviser at Number 10 and now director at lobbyists Public First, said that the government using "all of its levers" to promote a policy object was "legitimate".

But he added: "There's a risk that linking it to

unrelated issues – such as whether a teacher is good enough to advise DfE on a reference group – causes frustration."

However, the EBacc measure is also coming under increasing pressure.

The Russell Group of elite universities has already ditched its list of "facilitating subjects" amid concerns that too many pupils felt they had to study only academic subjects to get into university.

The government had to drop a statement on its website stating that the country's top universities believe the subjects "open more doors to more degrees".

Barton said it was "another sign that the government needs to consign the EBacc to history".

He added it's not necessarily the "right combination of subjects for all students. It has been superseded by progress 8, and the government target for entries is unachievable because there are not enough foreign language teachers in the system to deliver this element".

The DfE has pushed back its target to get 90 per cent of pupils studying the full suite of EBacc subjects until 2025. The current EBacc entry rate is just 40 per cent. A DfE spokesperson said the EBacc "opens doors for future study and employment and therefore we actively encourage schools to enter pupils in these subjects".

It's just the latest example of the government using its levers to shape school behaviour towards its own objectives. For instance, schools who applied for repairs cash last year had to agree to a visit from a government cost-cutting consultant to get the funding.

News

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Criticism is just 'small and vocal minority', says Spielman

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE



Amanda Spielman

The criticism of Ofsted's new inspection framework is solely down to a "small and vocal minority", Amanda Spielman will claim this weekend, as the government prepares to intervene in matters.

The chief inspector will tell ResearchED Birmingham that "feedback from many directions is telling us that the inspections are nearly always working well" with schools "overwhelmingly" positive.

The claims will surprise, and be hotly-contested, by many in the sector. They come after substantial criticism from school and academy trust leaders over Ofsted's new framework.

That includes influential academy trusts, such as the Harris Federation and Outwood Grange, who say the new focus on curriculum, rather than outcomes, is punishing disadvantaged pupils.

Schools Week has been told education secretary Gavin Williamson is set to

intervene in the matter. A draft letter from Williamson, and a response from Spielman, have been shared between the departments. Downing Street will have to sign off the letter before publication, Schools Week was told.

But Spielman will say on Saturday: "We do know there is a small – and vocal – minority who don't like the new model, or who haven't been happy with their experience of it or with their outcome."

"But overwhelmingly the schools who have been inspected are positive about it."

However, some headteachers have even called on their colleagues to stop working as Ofsted inspectors under the "Pause Ofsted" campaign amid the new framework fallout.

Spielman will also bat this away concern, claiming the HMI recruitment pipeline is the "strongest it has been for a very long time, in terms of both quantity and quality".

She said the resignation call "doesn't seem to have prompted a single resignation that we can find, nor are we noticing people reducing their commitment".

However, Schools Week knows of at least four inspectors who say they have stepped away from doing regular inspections.

The chief inspector will say there have been "a few wrinkles and teething issues – among several thousand inspections, how could there not be – but we take all feedback very seriously, and work fast to address issues, as for example we did back in September to sort out a problem that was flagged up for small primary schools".

Schools Week understands the chief inspector will also use her speech to school leaders' union ASCL's annual conference next week to tackle criticism of the framework "head-on", while also addressing how implementation of the framework is being refined in light of feedback.

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News

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1 in 4 schools improved while in academy 'limbo'

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EXCLUSIVE

Over a quarter of schools inspected by Ofsted after receiving an academy order improved while they were "in limbo" waiting to join a trust. This has led experts to brand the system "flawed".

According to Ofsted's annual report, 97 of the 170 schools with looming academy orders have been re-inspected – meaning they hadn't been academised within up to 30 months of being rated 'inadequate'.

In total, 26 of these schools improved to 'good' or 'requires improvement'.

Julie McCulloch (pictured), director of policy at the Association of School and College Leader (ASCL), said this demonstrates "the current system for providing support to struggling schools is flawed".

"The number of multi-academy trusts capable of taking on these schools, and their capacity to do so, varies across the country, and this means that schools judged by Ofsted as being 'inadequate' are often left without a sponsor for long periods of time", she added.

Local-maintained schools are automatically issued with an academy order following an 'inadequate' judgment from Ofsted.

But, according to the inspectorate's report, "if a school is still open a long time" after the order is issued, it may be inspected again.

The wait for a full inspection could be up to 30 months, around seven school terms, while monitoring inspections could be carried out in between.

A Freedom of Information request from *Schools Week* has revealed some of the schools reinspected have been waiting over four years to join an academy.

For example, Chadwick High School, in Lancashire, was first rated 'inadequate' after an inspection in April 2015.

It improved to 'requires improvement' in a July 2017 inspection, before earning 'good' in January 2020. The school is yet to find an academy sponsor.

McCulloch said the fact some schools improved "despite the absence of a sponsoring trust" suggests that other strategies could be effective and trusts "should not be the only solution".

She called for "a more flexible approach" to "stop the scandal of schools being left in limbo for years".

However, a school's improvement can sometimes be a red herring. St Anne's Roman Catholic School in Stockport (see article below) was rated 'requires improvement' in 2017 after an 'inadequate' grade two years before.

However, the school plummeted back to 'inadequate' after an inspection in January. Five years after the academy order, it is finally set to join an academy trust.

Meg Hillier, the Labour MP who chairs the public accounts committee, said academisation has "become a process for its own sake – rather than what it achieves for schools".

"Lots of these schools could improve without going through this process. Bad inspection results certainly triggers activity, but the government has decided ideologically that it must trigger them becoming an academy," Hillier said.

"The government is letting ideology rule common sense."

In total, 24 schools which received approval to become academies in 2016 and before are yet to join a trust.

Hillier said such schools "could lose a whole cohort of young people when actually what they need to do is get support for that cohort".

Academy orders can be rescinded – but this only normally happens in "very exceptional circumstances".

It was reported last month Mackie Hill Primary School, in Wakefield, had an academy order rescinded. The school was rated 'good' in January. It had been issued an academy order in 2017.

A *Schools Week* investigation last year revealed the government had revoked just 33 academy orders, for schools which spent more than 16,000 days combined waiting to join an academy.

The Department for Education said that it is unnecessary to provide a timescale for the academisation process.



JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

'Forgotten' school waited five years for takeover

A "generation of schoolchildren" were failed after a "forgotten school" was left waiting over five years for an academy takeover, its ninth headteacher in ten years has claimed.

St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, in Stockport, has been put in special measures again after being rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted following an inspection in January.

The report, published this week, describes a "dire situation" at the school, with incidents of racist behaviour and common use of homophobic language.

Ofsted criticised the "people responsible for this school" – governors, the council and

diocese – for "failing its pupils for far too long" and not acting with the "required urgency".

The school was originally handed an academy order after being placed in special measures in October 2014.

Ofsted found there had been "endemic weaknesses in the leadership of the school", which is now on its ninth headteacher in a decade.

The report praises current headteacher Daniel Wright for bringing "new hope" and having "a clear grasp of the deep-rooted issues that have dogged this school".

But Wright told *Schools Week*: "My question

has consistently been through all of this 'why has this not been done over the past five years?'"

He described St Anne's as a "forgotten school" which failed a "generation of schoolchildren". The school is now due to become part of the newly formed Emmaus Trust in June.

Stockport Council declined to comment, while a spokesperson for the Diocese of Salford said they are "fully committed to continuing the improvements for the pupils at the school and recognise the improvements needed".

Investigation

Uniform bill MP wants clampdown on branding

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Families are being made to pay up to £4 extra to add compulsory initials on to items of PE kit – in some cases, pushing the school uniform price up by 20 per cent.

Labour MP Mike Amesbury, the architect of a law to make schools ensure their uniforms are more affordable, also wants statutory guidance to limit the number of branded items.

He told Schools Week that disadvantaged families are “choosing schools based on whether they can afford the uniform”, with demands for logos on multiple items prohibiting parents from finding cheaper alternatives.

He is also demanding a clampdown on schools requiring pupils to have their names or initials embroidered on items of uniform, amid concerns the practice prevents pupils from handing items down to younger siblings.

Schools Week found multiple examples of schools that require initials to be embroidered on multiple items of clothing, with charges for the service if parents don't have the means to do it at home.

For example, the Weald of Kent Grammar School requires all pupils to have their initials embroidered on their PE polo shirt, “skort” (shorts designed to look like a skirt), gym and dance T-shirt and hoodie.

According to the website of local uniform supplier Simmonds, the full kit would already cost £75 without embroidery. The extra charge of £4 per item to add the initials totals £16.

Liz Bone, Weald of Kent's headteacher, said the school had decided to stop requiring initials on PE kit from this September, and had reduced the number of compulsory branded uniform items more generally.

But she said the decision was not prompted by a recent backlash over the cost of uniforms, or the plans to make the guidance compulsory.

“I became head here in 2018 and it was one of the things I



Labour MP Mike Amesbury



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who remembers having to embroider her own PE shirt, said the practice was an old tradition, and “something that perhaps hadn't really been thought about”.

wanted to look at, to rationalise what we do” she told Schools Week.

Bone, also a former pupil of the school

The school's parents and teachers association also sells second-hand uniforms, and children

Continued on next page

Investigation

eligible for the pupil premium are given financial help, she added.

Stroud High School, in Gloucestershire, states in its uniform policy that PE kit “must be embroidered with the student’s full name on the burgundy shirt, with initials on the skirt and shorts, and with name tags on every item”.

Again, there is an extra charge by local uniform supplier Bateman’s for the embroidery – £3 per item.

Bishop’s Hatfield Girls’ School in Hertfordshire also requires initials on its PE top and skirt.

All two schools were approached for comment.

Figures collected by the Department for Education in 2015 show that parents paid an average of £213 for a full school uniform, with PE kits costing between £70 and £140 on top. Those costs are likely to be higher now because of inflation.

Alison Garnham, chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group, said her organisation’s surveys showed hard-up families “really worry about school uniform costs. Parents dread the bills for a blazer or a school bag, especially at ‘back to school time’, and children can feel awful if they look different from their school mates, when they just want to fit in with everyone else.”

An investigation by Schools Week in 2018 found

parents being stung by deals between schools and sole uniform suppliers. One school even charged £4.50 for compulsory branded “drama socks”.

Current government guidance states that schools should secure value for money for parents in their uniform policies, and discourages the use of exclusive supplier deals.

However, despite repeated promises by ministers since 2015 to put the guidance on a statutory footing, schools are still not required by law to follow it.

The government has confirmed it will back Amesbury’s bill to enshrine the guidance in law, meaning it is highly likely to pass.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the government intends to draft and consult on new guidance as part of this process.

The bill also has the backing of the Liberal Democrats, but despite this cross-party support, Amesbury suspects he may face opposition to some of the more restrictive proposals he wants.

“I’d like to see a restriction on the number of logos you can have on one uniform in the guidance. I suspect I’ll get some pushback on that, but I have told ministers [it’s what I want],” he told Schools Week, adding that he believes two logos per full uniform is enough.

“At the moment, you’ve got schools that need



A branded shirt

a logo on the jacket, the shirt, the tie, the jumper. You’ve got working-class families who are choosing schools based on whether they can afford the uniform.”

A clampdown on the compulsory use of initials is also likely to face opposition. But Amesbury said the practice is costing families extra and preventing hand-me-downs.

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News



Heads 'handcuffed' into anti-academy vow

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Unions are using strike action to "handcuff" headteachers into signing pledges not to academise for up to five years

National Education Union (NEU) members have held strike action at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Brentwood.

The diocese has outlined plans for eight new academy trusts to take over its local authority-maintained schools, although the diocese says the final decision is always down to the school.

St Bonaventure's secondary school, in Newham, was facing three days of strikes for three weeks this month, after six days already.

However, on Tuesday the governing body – chaired by Tim Campbell, a former winner of the BBC show *The Apprentice* – signed a statement pledging the 'outstanding'-rated school would not consider academisation for two and a half years.

St Angela's Ursuline School in Newham, after one day of striking, last month agreed to not academise for five years.

But the statement issued by St Bonaventure's, and seen by *Schools Week*, stated the school had "no current plans... to become an academy and we have no current plans to change the structure and governance to our school".

One headteacher, who has experienced strike action due to academisation but who did not want to be named, said they "respect the rights of staff to strike, particularly where there are specific issues that senior leaders can address".

But added: "What is more difficult to respect is action against an ideology or political standpoint. How standards are improved should be driven by a range of issues and influences that should be continually addressed and reviewed.

"We should not be handcuffing ourselves with promises that we might not be able to keep. We should be looking at opportunity, whatever that may be, to get the very best for our students."

However, speaking last week, Louise Cuffaro, the NEU joint secretary for Newham, told *Schools Week*: "We are saying to the governing body, just agree that you will pause and give us a timescale."

She added if governors at St Bonaventure's are "not intending" to academise currently, "why won't they just agree that this is the timescale?" Cuffaro said that the diocese has designed a TUPE+ to ensure staff's salary conditions are maintained, but claimed that "isn't enough".

Also affected is St Michael's, a 'good'-rated primary school in Newham, which has seen 12 days of strike action.

The NEU said it pays striking staff "as close as they can get to a day's net pay".

Speaking after agreement was signed at St Bonaventure's, Cuffaro said it was an "important achievement that has been achieved through the solidarity of our members... We know our members [at St Michael's] remain ready to take action if necessary to achieve this fair outcome."

The Diocese of Brentwood says the final decision on whether a school should become an academy is for individual governing bodies to make, having consulted with staff and parents.

The diocese, which covers a large area across London and Essex, has already seen schools become academies.

Richard Simpson, director of education, said supporting schools in their choice to become academies is "one way in which we are working to continually improve educational outcomes for pupils."

The St Bonaventure's statement added that if there is a review of its decision in September 2022, it will enter into a full consultation with staff, union representatives and parents, with "no predetermined outcome".

This doesn't apply if the school is rated 'inadequate' and given an academy order direction by the government. The three schools did not respond to a request for comment.

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School business leaders 'left out of decision-making'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Education leaders have penned a joint letter imploring schools to include their business professionals in senior leadership meetings amid fears that valuable expertise is being wasted and professional relationships undermined.

The call to arms has been issued following an Institute of School Business Leadership workforce survey in January which revealed that 45 per cent of school business leaders did not attend all senior leadership meetings.

Additionally, 29 per cent were only occasionally invited to specific meetings to contribute.

ISBL has now issued a joint letter, signed by the Confederation of School Trusts, National Association of Head Teachers, Association of School and College Leaders and the National Governance Association, calling for a "more joined-up approach to the leaderships of schools".

The letter states the survey findings were "disappointing", adding that "school business leaders had never been invited to participate in leadership discussions, even where there were clear resource and financial implications".

"Decision-making in silos, where pedagogical colleagues do not fully engage with business professionals... can only result in less informed and collaborative decision-making.

"It also undermines the working relationship between school business professionals and governing boards who rely on their contribution to the effective management of financial resources."

ISBL chief executive Stephen Morales said the notion that business leaders don't need to be part of leadership conversations is "flawed" and senior leadership teams need an "appreciation of the challenges a school is facing in the round".

Elsewhere ISBL's survey noted a "gender tension". When asked about their level of participation at strategic meetings, 70 per cent of male respondents said they took part, compared to 52 per cent of women – despite the survey finding the profession to be female-dominated.

Morales explained this was likely down to there being an imbalance at executive levels, with more men filling such roles.

Morales said mentoring and coaching could help all colleagues "take advantage of the opportunities that are there".

Investigation

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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SEN pupils 'not well' served by in-year admissions

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

One in ten councils believe pupils with special educational needs are being let down when they try to move mid-year, with some schools refusing to admit children unless extra funding is agreed.

An investigation by Schools Week has also found town halls are shaking up in-year admissions in response to growing problems with the system, with one county even resorting to taking charge of the process for all schools on its patch.

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) revealed in its annual report that councils had “considerable concern” schools were refusing to admit pupils eligible for SEN support unless additional resources were forthcoming.

Schools Week has obtained the names of the 16 of England’s 152 councils that told the OSA in-year admissions do not function well for pupils in need of SEN support, but who do not have an education health and care plan.

The councils’ submissions paint a bleak picture of an admissions landscape beset by funding and administrative issues, as schools and local authorities grapple with the impact of a 17 per cent real terms cut in SEND funding over just three years.

In its submission, Bexley Council in south-east London warned that some schools “can put barriers to admission where there are additional needs to consider, without a plan”, while Kent County Council said its SEN department was now more frequently having to direct schools to take on pupils “due to mainstream and special schools unwilling or unable to admit a child”.

There are two categories for pupils



with identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND):

Children with legally binding EHCPs, who are assigned additional funding, make up around one-fifth. The rest – more than one million children nationally – are those with SEN support, who are usually taught in mainstream schools and whose provision has to be funded from general budgets.

Unlike those with an EHCP, who have their own tailored system for in-year admissions, pupils who receive SEN support are considered alongside all other pupils.

Some councils are now even resorting to changing their systems in the hope that consistency across all schools will help.

For example, in Worcestershire, the council will take over all in-year admissions from next September.

Marcus Hart, the county’s cabinet member with responsibility for education and skills, said his council has been “working closely with schools to simplify the process of admissions and to promote inclusion and equity for children”.

Wigan Council is also considering changes. As well as a project to

create more special school places, the authority is looking at how it can use special school places “differently and more flexibly to support children to remain in their mainstream school where appropriate”.

“We aren’t suggesting the system doesn’t work for SEND pupils but we are aware that there are challenges, including special schools being at capacity and lack of funding, which can impact the support SEND pupils can receive,” said Cath Pealing, assistant director of education at the authority.

In Rotherham, the council has introduced “focussed” placements for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs following a “significant increase” in demand.

The authority told the OSA in its report last year that it was responding to “particular issues with admission of children who have SEN but no plans”, and said that schools “lack confidence in their ability to meet needs”.

Pepe Diasio, the council’s assistant director of education, said new measures included an additional outreach programme to aid in-year

transitions and placements into mainstream education, and added that the council is “now seeing the benefits of our refreshed strategy”.

According to the OSA’s report, schools are also reportedly putting parents off applying in-year.

The report claimed “several councils” found that “many parents report not making a formal application to a school as they are told when they initially make contact to apply that the school is unable to meet their child’s needs”.

But the local authorities expressed “considerable frustration at a perceived lack of consequences for schools who behave in this way”.

Anne Heavey, national director at Whole School SEND, warned of “perverse incentives” that can “work against schools taking on pupils with SEND mid-year”.

These include staff capacity issues, which are “especially challenging” for SEN support pupils because schools are expected to fund provision from existing resources.

But Heavey also said many teachers lacked confidence in supporting pupils with SEND, leaving leaders concerned about “having the resource to address training needs quickly”.

“This last point is unpalatable, but school leaders know that on average, pupils identified as SEN support attract negative progress scores in both primary and secondary schools – meaning that despite targeting resource at supporting pupils with SEND, schools are not currently recognised for delivering effective SEND provision.”

Councils are required to draw up fair access protocols in order to help pupils, especially the most vulnerable, find new schools as quickly as possible when they move outside normal admission rounds.

However, a Schools Week investigation last year revealed a postcode lottery, with some pupils waiting months for places.

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News



Coronavirus closures under discussion in Downing Street

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government could close schools and order others to take extra pupils from elsewhere under new coronavirus contingency plans being drawn up in Whitehall.

Boris Johnson has said that schools should not close "in principle", and Public Health England has said they should remain open unless told otherwise.

But a joint action plan issued by the UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments earlier this week stated that school closures could be considered as a way of slowing the spread of the disease.

Japan and Italy, which both have a much higher number of cases than the UK, have already closed all their schools as a preventative measure.

Downing Street has also briefed journalists that emergency legislation being drawn up is likely to allow schools to ignore rules governing class sizes and pupil-to-staff ratios in the event that some institutions have to take on children from others that close.

As of yesterday, 115 people had tested positive for COVID-19 in the UK, including a small number of school pupils.

However, England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty said earlier this week that there is "no evidence at the moment that children are particularly badly affected by this virus".

"Currently the evidence, from China at least, would imply that children have much less of this disease. That's either because they're getting it less often, or that they are getting it but it is much milder."

Whitty also revealed that scientists are currently analysing whether the impact of school closures on the spread of the disease would "justify the considerable burden" it

would place on parents.

The spread of the disease and speculation about closures has prompted schools to consider how online learning can be deployed in the event that they do have to shut their doors, with YouTube even suggested as a potential teaching tool.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of school leaders' union ASCL, said the discussion would be revealing about schools' readiness to take advantage of technology.

He told *Schools Week* the outbreak was "leading people to say some pretty madcap ideas that, you know, we're going to have the nation's children sitting at home watching YouTube videos of their teacher doing a history lesson, or whatever".

"But what it will expose, I think, is that some schools are well set up and some schools aren't," he added.

"I do wonder whether actually it might be a useful point to focus on what we could be doing, what would make it easier for a child who maybe isn't in school on one particular day to be able to access resources."

But even virtual learning will become tricky if large numbers of schools close, because many teachers themselves will have to care for their own children.

Data collected by Teacher Tapp in 2017 suggests 46 per cent of teachers have children aged between two and 12.

The NASUWT teaching union said it has seen "increased covert and overt racial attacks perpetrated against some minority ethnic pupils and NASUWT members", and called for new guidance from the government on how to handle the incidents.

It follows a number of cases of racist abuse and xenophobia against people of east Asian appearance.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Paying for a cuppa takes the biscuit

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Making a round of brews for your colleagues is an everyday activity for many teachers, but what if the contents of the staff kitchen had to be paid-for out of your own pocket?

A survey found 38 per cent of teachers in secondary schools have to bring in their own tea and coffee, with over a quarter also having to provide their own milk.

Primaries were a little more generous – just 31 per cent of teachers had to bring their own tea or coffee, and just 17 per cent their own milk.

The findings come as many schools tighten their belts amid years of real-terms funding cuts.

It was reported last month the David Ross Education Trust told its teachers to "only boil as much water as you need in kettles", among other ideas to save money.

However, 46 per cent of teachers were working in secondary schools, and 43 per cent in primaries, that provided tea and coffee for free, according to a survey of 6,304 respondents by Teacher Tapp.

The issue is clearly a divisive one: online forums are awash with teachers discussing their school's arrangements, including one contributor stating they paid £15 per term towards a tea fund.

This was popular among primary schools, where 37 per cent of teachers contributed to a staff fund, according to the survey, compared to just 15 per cent in secondaries.

Schools Week was told of a case where a school stopped providing tea, coffee and milk after auditors said funding shouldn't be used this way.

However, HMRC guidelines state the provision of free refreshments is a "trivial benefit" – which means schools don't need to pay tax on the employee benefit.

Bill Dennison, an associate education expert for The Key, wrote in 2016 that schools providing free refreshments should be able to make a "strong justification on grounds that take into account the entirety of the school's context... not just budgetary considerations".

For instance, he said providing refreshments may not be appropriate at a school in a deprived area and with comparatively well-paid teachers.

Behaviour tsar hits back at 'contradictory' Ofsted findings

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted criticism of school leaders who "extensively controlled" pupil's behaviour with sanctions "disproportionate to infringements" has been labelled "contradictory" by the government's behaviour tsar.

Just last week, education secretary Gavin Williamson told school leaders they have the "full support of the government to impose discipline in classrooms" to create "calm and nurturing" teaching environments.

However, an Ofsted report at King Charles I School in Kidderminster, published on Monday, found while pupils "behave well, they feel like they are not trusted... Parents have raised concerns that the system is too strict and is having a detrimental impact on children's well-being."

While it found the school continues to be 'good', the report was critical of its behaviour policies.

Inspectors said "behaviour is controlled to such an extent that it is not making pupils' self-discipline better and does not create an environment in school that is conducive to learning. Not all sanctions are proportionate to the infringements committed."

Tom Bennett, the government's lead behaviour adviser, was "extremely concerned" about the report's language.

"On one hand it praises the school for good behaviour and that the students are safe and free from bullying. On the other hand, it seems to criticise the school for having a clear,



Gavin Williamson

well-executed behaviour policy with high standards and expectations."

The school's behaviour policy, published online, includes walking in single file, being calm in corridors and bringing the correct equipment to each lesson.

It runs a consequence system based on five core standards, including punctuality, focus on learning and correct uniform.

The policy states teachers will "consider the student's circumstances", such as age and SEND needs, before "determining the consequence".

A spokesperson for the school said the behaviour policy created "quiet classrooms where teachers can teach and pupils can learn" and reduces "workload stresses" on teachers by managing punishments centrally.

Bennett said the policies are "completely ordinary" and seen in "thousands of other schools".

"A few students thinking the school is a little strict is not a secure platform of evidence", he added.

"Furthermore, the fact that some students are routinely removed from lessons is a sad but necessary feature of a school trying to keep students safe and lessons undisturbed."

But the Ofsted report claimed the system is "not working for pupils whose behaviour is not good enough, because these pupils continue to reoffend and often spend time being isolated from lessons. This slows their learning".

The "minority" of pupils misbehaving are mostly disadvantaged or have SEND needs, and these

pupils "miss out on their learning" when sent to isolation.

Under the system, pupils' behaviour is "extensively controlled", Ofsted said. They told leaders to ensure their policy "addressed effectively" the behaviour issues of those who are "falling short of leaders' high expectations, while not disadvantaging those who generally behave well."

Williamson last week said he wants the school culture created by behaviour policies such as silent corridors and banning mobile phones to "be the norm".

He said the country's best schools all had discipline "in common", praising "Michaela – Britain's strictest school" for conducting reading and writing exercises in silence and giving pupils "demerits for things like forgetting their pens or slouching in class".

Williamson said such measures improve pupils' outcomes, and improve teacher morale and retention.

"Teachers deserve better, and they have the full support of the government to impose discipline in their classrooms and create calm and nurturing environments for teaching," he added.

Mark Leahay, chair of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, said Ofsted should examine behaviour closely, but government guidance states schools are "free to determine their approaches to behaviour as they see fit" and "heads must be free to create the culture they want".

Ofsted said it doesn't have a "preferred way for schools to manage behaviour. We want to see that a school's policy is implemented consistently, that it's well understood and ultimately, that it works."

Ofsted mulls delaying inspection reports until complaints are resolved

Ofsted will withhold publication of inspection reports until it has resolved complaints about them under proposals for a new redress system.

A consultation launched this week proposes that formal complaints raised by schools within two working days of receiving their final report will effectively delay publication of the report until the complaint is dealt with.

Under the current system, schools have to submit formal complaints within ten days of an issue of concern, but Ofsted does not normally withhold publication of reports while it considers complaints.

The current approach has led to Ofsted having to take action after it has published a report "when a complaint investigation highlights an error in the inspection process".

In 2018-19, 1.8 per cent of inspections led to complaints. Of these, 22 per cent were upheld or partially upheld – with 13 providers having their grade changed.

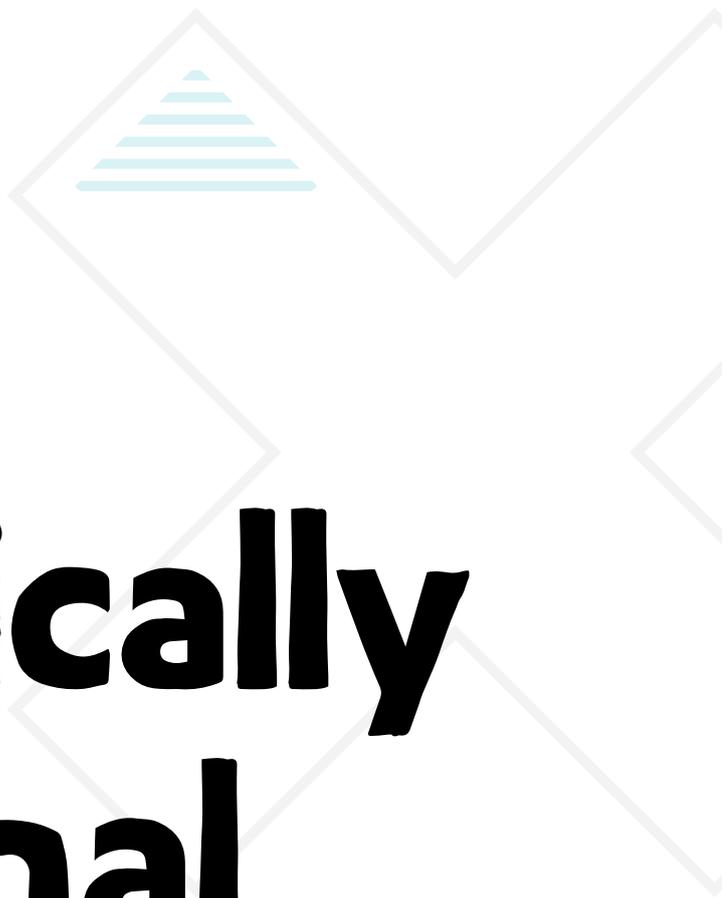
The consultation also proposes that schools will receive five working days to review their draft report and submit concerns about issues of "factual accuracy and the inspection process". At the moment, they only have one day, but some other types of provider get longer.

A new timeline will mean that all providers "should expect to see their draft report within 18 working days of the end of their inspection", and Ofsted will aim to issue all final reports to providers "within 30 working days of the end of the inspection".

However, the current system of internal reviews, which are the last step for those not satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled, will be retained.

But Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said an option for a "fully independent complaints process" should have been in the consultation.

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EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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EBacc entry nonsense will make DfE a closed shop

The government's latest wheeze to only allow teachers whose schools have a 45 per cent or above EBacc entry rate on to its teacher reference group is a massive own goal.

The group is an important cog in the government's policy-making process. Teachers on the group sound out how potential policies will "land" – to make sure any future problems are spotted before they cause a nightmare for schools.

There's a trio of problems. Firstly, it penalises teachers for something that's not even in their control.

As school leader Caroline Spalding points out, it also means the Department for Education has excluded the voices of teachers in the very schools they hope to persuade to bump up their EBacc entry rates.

And, maybe what's most worrying, it's also limiting the opportunities available for teachers working in the most challenging schools (at a time when the government claims it's making

teaching in such schools more attractive).

This is before we've even got into the issue about the waning case for the EBacc, especially as universities have now ditched their facilitating subjects.

School leaders will also, rightly, point out that academies have freedom to enter pupils into whatever subjects they decide are best. The government sold its academies programme on the premise of freedom from interference.

But, as they prepare to intervene to tell Ofsted how important schools' autonomy is over their curriculum, the government is making EBacc entry a condition of eligibility to lots of government schemes (as we reveal on page 5).

There's no chance of the EBacc being dropped while schools minister Nick Gibb remains in post. But he should do the right thing and ditch this flawed EBacc entry nonsense to ensure the government remains informed by a wide range of voices, rather than becoming a closed shop.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.

See page 5



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Education Unions reject proposed representation reforms

Mark Watson

Genuinely amusing to see the unions scabble about trying to come up with sensible-sounding reasons for how they can protect their nice little closed-shop exclusivity deal. But what makes it drop-dead hilarious is Mary Bousted claiming that unions are a calm voice of sanity that stop “disputes escalating unnecessarily”. Anyone who’s had the slightest experience of dealing with unions will be rolling around on the floor at that one!

Of course, if what is being suggested actually happens, then a teacher could always choose to bring their union rep in with them, if they wanted to. So as long as the union reps do a good job you would think they’d always be the first port of call. But heaven forbid that employees might be able to look elsewhere if they don’t have faith in their union, or, as Edapt says, they’ve made the conscious decision not to join a union.

Williamson calls for silent corridors and banned mobiles ‘to be the norm’

Janet Downs

Aren’t schools, especially academies, supposed to have freedom to decide their own policies? It appears that it is the freedom to do as the government says.

Laura

Bad behaviour should be managed as it arises, not blanket policies that punish everyone to prevent it. This, in particular, is restricting our children too much. So much is expected of them for hours, breaks have been cut and they have to concentrate for long periods of time – our style of teaching is so backwards and rigid. They are not little soldiers. In the workplace you are not expected to do these things. Dear lord, we are suffocating our children.

John Mirra

Instead of a “bring back the cane”/Victorian discipline approach (that seems to be an eventual goal here), why don’t we take a modern approach? Embrace technology as a potential way of helping the education system. Give teachers the resources to deal with unruly students – that means dedicated staff members, facilities and approaches. And, of course, pay them a fair wage for the work they do.

REPLY OF THE WEEK **Matthew Clements-Wheeler**

Williamson calls for silent corridors and banned mobile phones ‘to be the norm’

While I support an agenda that seeks to (re)normalise good manners and respect for others, I fear that this national culture must start at the top. The behaviour of politicians and our national leaders sometimes falls a long way short

of what Williamson rightly asserts should be the norm for schoolchildren. Can we assume, therefore, that Williamson will be exhorting the entire cabinet to model these behaviours in the Commons to set the tone from now on? “No slouching in your seat, Rees-Mogg... Pay attention, Johnson... no talking at the back... The (division) bell is for me and not for you...”



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

Investigation: gagging orders demanded

Jerry Baker

What information would be commercially sensitive? If it is developed in the school or the trust, then surely it is not commercially bounded? After all, everyone is always at great pains to tell us that trusts are not businesses.

DfE eyes universal infant free school meals in cuts drive

Andy Jolley, @ajjolley

Spending almost £1bn feeding every infant, while ignoring older children living in poverty, doesn’t seem that great a use of public funding. The focus now should be on influencing a replacement policy prioritising those in need, expanding free school meals to all on Universal Credit and properly funding holiday hunger projects.

DfE reveals new behaviour taskforce

Naureen Khalid

Good to see government investing in this. Also good to see people with alternative provision and pupil referral unit experience lending their expertise.

Interview

JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENSSW



“Why do we want the state involved in education?”

James Tooley’s vision of no-frills private schools is now a reality in England. How afraid should the state sector be? John Dickens finds out

If I were a highly qualified teacher working in a publicly funded school... I would be afraid of him. Very afraid.”

So concluded a 2013 interview with Professor James Tooley. That was in the liberal-leaning Guardian newspaper, which matters, given what

Tooley spends his time doing.

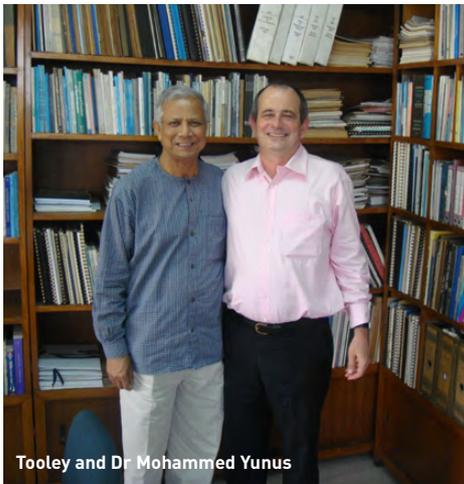
Seven years later, what Tooley described back then as “just an idea in my mind” is a reality. The Independent Grammar School: Durham (IGSD), billed as the country’s first low-cost, or “no frills”, private school, opened in 2018, charging parents £52 a week, or £2,700 a year.

Schools Week has had several requests to visit the IGSD turned down, probably due to the school opening with just six pupils. So we gladly took up the chance to interview its chair of

school board at the University of Buckingham – where he has recently been appointed pro-vice chancellor after 21 years at Newcastle University – to try to find out just how afraid the state sector should be.

Tooley is down-to-earth and relaxed as we chat about our surroundings. He calls the country’s oldest independent university his “spiritual home”. He is smartly dressed in a suit, with a sort of psychedelic tie-dye pocket square suggestive of an underlying eccentricity.

Profile: James Tooley



Tooley and Dr Mohammed Yunus

But he also chooses his words carefully, pausing to think before answering questions – particularly about why he believes there is a case for low-cost private schools in England.

He says some parents are “very dissatisfied” with state schools – either because their child has special needs (“whether that’s because they are gifted or have other special needs that are not being catered for well”) or because the school is “not accountable to them”.

But opening with just six pupils doesn’t really seem to evidence that claim.

Tooley puts the numbers down to IGSD’s opening being twice delayed. “The regulation of private schools was much more onerous than I thought,” he says. “Antagonistic” unions also picketed open days.

He says the school now has 25 pupils and is rated ‘good’ by Ofsted. It’s still way off the 65-pupil capacity of its converted church setting, but Tooley believes they will hit the 40-odd pupil mark next year, allowing them to “break even” financially.

IGSD quietly upped its annual charge last year to £58 a week, £2,995 annually. However, it’s still way below the sector average of £4,763 per term for private day schools

Some quick maths. Assuming break-even at 45 pupils, at £3,000 each, that’s £135,000 a year. Doesn’t seem much to pay four staff (two teachers and two assistant teachers) as well as rent and so on. Full capacity would mean around £60,000 profit.

Tooley has opened low-cost private schools in developing countries across the world. One of the concerns is that they are run largely by



unqualified teachers on low wages.

He says he can’t reveal his teachers’ salaries for data protection reasons, but I press again. Are they on the newly qualified teacher scale?

“Yes, absolutely, the teachers are not paid less than if they were in the state sector.”

“We’re getting a sense there’s definitely a market for this”

The numbers still don’t quite seem right.

Undeterred, Tooley is now looking for seven sites across the north-east to expand his “no-frills” chain “over the next few years”.

“We’re getting a sense there’s definitely a market for this. You would say it’s a tiny market so far – I’m very happy with that observation – but I think we’re going to grow.”

The model now seems to make more sense: that £60,000 profit across seven schools is now £420,000 (and that’s before any economies of scale).

He says “obvious” locations include Sunderland, Gateshead, Middlesbrough, North Shields and Newcastle.

Why the north-east? Tooley says it’s partly because that’s where he was based at the time,



along with his funders who are “at this stage entrepreneurs, friends and family”. But it’s also a “good area to be working because it’s known to be an area with educational needs”.

He also says around 30 people have got in touch – across England and also in Dublin, Scotland and Wales – to ask for advice on replicating the model. One of these – a “no frills” school charging parents £100 a week mooted for London – seems to have gone off the radar after we first revealed the plans in 2018.

Providing advice for competitor schools intrigues me. Is Tooley not in this for the money then? Does he not want the “James Tooley Chain” to run them all?

“I have no ego. When I was younger, probably yeah, it would have been something like that.

“I’ve not come into it as this person who wants his model all over the place. I want to see this work from a philosophical point of view. I’m very happy there are competitors, but also replicators.”

But let’s say the model does take off – is he happy for them to make state schools unviable?

“If they [state schools] are not doing a good job

Profile: James Tooley



Prof Tooley in Christian Hill, Ghana

and parents think we can do better – absolutely I’m happy with that.”

I ask about an opinion piece he wrote for the *Telegraph*, titled ‘Only a new breed of low-cost private schools for the masses can save the UK’s failing education system.’

So why is the state system failing?

“I didn’t like that title – I never talk about failing. My belief is we don’t want the state in education. The article was trying to say that I believe these [low-cost private schools] will be better than the state system.”

But if there’s a need for an alternative – surely the state has to be getting something wrong?

“I’d rather come from it at the other angle,” Tooley adds. “Why do we want the state involved in education? The state is not involved in most other areas of our lives – it doesn’t feed and clothe us, it doesn’t provide shelter. Why is education different?”

I point out that the argument for state education seems pretty compelling – it means everyone is entitled to an education, regardless of where you’re born or the amount of money you have.

But Tooley cites the Newcastle Commission report, published in 1861 (nine years before the 1870 Education Act that established compulsory education), which, he states, actually found 95.5 per cent of children were already in school for six years.

As well as public and church schools, a “large proportion” of that provision was “for-profit schools” – which he says were the low-cost private schools of the day.

“A small number of kids were not in school, so we wanted the state to come in and provide opportunities for all. But then the state took over.

“But why do we want the state to be involved? It’s clearly in other parts of the world not working. It also breaks the link – as parents, the education of our children is no longer accountable to us.

“My belief is we don’t want the state in education”

“We have to give our children to the state system and they educate them in the ways they want to. That seems wrong to me and undesirable. A much better system for me is where parents are in charge and the schools are accountable.”

So, let’s say Tooley’s model does take over. That five per cent of pupils will still be there – what happens to them?

He says there are “ways around this”, such as tax credits or targeted vouchers, which he explains could work in a similar way to our current system for welfare payments: “Just because some parents don’t feed and clothe their kids, we don’t then say universally we have to have the state feeding or clothing all kids – let’s target assistance where it’s needed.”

Tooley didn’t always believe this. One of five children, he attended a comprehensive school in Bristol before studying at Sussex University

and getting his first teaching job in newly independent Zimbabwe in 1983.

“As a socialist at the time, I saw an advert in the *Guardian* – it got into me this whole excitement about Africa and development.”

His views changed when he started work on a PhD to challenge then-prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s 1988 education reform act to “introduce elements of markets into education”.

As part of his research, he read E.G. West’s *Education and the State*. It made him realise “instead of us taking state education as the status quo, private education should be baseline... That’s when I became converted from being a socialist to a classical libertarian.”

So should highly qualified teachers be afraid of him? What happens to them if an army of low-paid, less experienced staff do take over?

“They can open schools. If you’re a highly qualified teacher and devoted and committed and passionate, then there’s so many more opportunities open for you than just staying in the state sector.”

Tooley seems non-plussed when I say the free school programme already offers this. His model, he explains, is “predicated on parents wanting control and schools that are accountable to them”.

“If they don’t like what we’re offering, then they won’t come. If this is something that is of interest to parents, then great.”

It doesn’t sound like teachers should be too afraid, then – not just yet, at least.

Opinion

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

The winners-and-losers way of doing things has taken us as far as it can and it's time for a radical rethink of excellence in education, writes Kate Chhatwal

Writing my introduction to this year's Challenge Partners annual report, my second as CEO, got me thinking about excellence. Many representations make it out to be exclusive or elitist when in truth it is neither. What is elitist and exclusive is the idea that excellence is a zero-sum game. The reality Challenge Partners demonstrates day in, day out, is that through collaboration we can all be better than any of us could be alone.

Too many of our children and young people – often the very same who face the greatest challenges to start with – are written off without being given the best chance to achieve and to demonstrate their unique brilliance. If what we are doing to address the challenge isn't working for them, it isn't working full stop.

We analysed the DfE's own key stage 2 and 4 data on the disadvantage gap for our annual report, and it suggests we have tipped over the top of the sigmoid curve. The gap is beginning to widen once more. Even if that's a blip (which seems doubtful, given the gap is widening in both primaries and secondaries), we know it has been closing too slowly for too long.

It may be time, then, to call time on our zero-sum paradigm and to rebalance the scales between universal standards and valuing the unique talents of each child. As we design and sequence our curricula, we may do well to heed the words of Professor Mark Priestley that we are educators, not "milkmen" – that our job is to light a fire



KATE CHHATWAL

CEO of Challenge Partners

The zero-sum paradigm of education excellence is at an end. What next?

through pedagogy, at least as much as it is to fill a pail through content delivery.

Continuing to eke out marginal

Samsung to know I'm no edtech evangelist, yet I couldn't help but be excited by the idea that our near-ubiquitous devices could provide

“Too many of our young people are written off without the best chance to achieve

gains is no longer enough. Rising to the challenge of achieving inclusive excellence will require creativity and disciplined innovation such as I saw when I visited Apple at the start of the year as part of an ASCL delegation. In Cupertino, we explored some of the hardware and software that has the potential to transform the way children learn and achieve. You only have to look at my battered

a way of unlocking learning and achievement for children who are not well served by traditional book learning, who disproportionately come from disadvantaged backgrounds or have additional needs.

Some here are already exploring that potential in their schools, and I have been fortunate in this role to see it first-hand. They know as well as the



rest of us that technology isn't a panacea and that implementing it presents its own challenges. But to suggest they are dumbing down is just as ridiculous a simplification. Using the information and technology at our fingertips can enable us to raise the bar, to expect our students to show deeper understanding and fuller application of the knowledge they are gaining.

Moving beyond zero-sum thinking requires us to draw on and combine diverse ideas. For sure, that requires us to challenge ourselves and each other. We need collaboration – as they say at Apple – to be a contact sport. But we must also avoid the macho, gendered notions the phrase conjures up, and which often characterise our education debates. Professional collaboration is about improving each idea, not picking a winner.

Perhaps a better analogy, and one I also picked up in Cupertino, is that we need to put our diverse ideas, experiences and perspectives into a rock tumbler and let challenge – from inside and out – be the grit that turns our rough ideas into so many unique gems.

Bringing together the best of what is thought, said, practised and researched – in education and beyond – and innovating with discipline are how we will secure a truly inclusive excellence. That's the strength of peer review – challenge and collaboration – and that's why I'm increasingly convinced it's just what the system needs to replace the spent zero-sum paradigm.

Opinion

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



COLIN DIAMOND

Professor of educational leadership,
University of Birmingham



Trauma-informed practice is the right response to austerity

Trauma-informed practice is good for everyone and best of all for the most vulnerable. Why would our government favour compliance instead? asks Colin Diamond

Speeches like Gavin Williamson's last week, in which he appeared to endorse the nationwide replication of so-called "no-excuses" or "warm-strict" schools, hardly deserve the attention, let alone the heat, they generate. In truth, even if the political desire is for uber-compliance, it is unlikely ever to become the norm. If nothing else, the school system simply doesn't have the capacity to deal with the level of exclusions that would result.

As government policy moves inexorably towards an ever-tighter definition of the role of schools and teachers, an increasing number in the profession are turning to attachment theory and trauma-informed practice to make sense of their work and its daily demands. Some seek to characterise professionals who champion this work as lowering the bar on behaviour standards in schools. No. This is the key to understanding vulnerable pupils and unlocking

their potential. All of us in education want children to do well, and each of us understands that this requires

children to be ready to learn. For teachers struggling in schools with chaotic classrooms and corridors, emulating the warm-strict diet is an understandably seductive prospect, yet many schools in challenging contexts manage to maintain high standards and be inclusive.

For my part, that approach is highly preferable on the grounds of social cohesion alone. In that spirit of consensus, it's worth noting that there is no dividing line between being research-informed and being attachment- and trauma-informed.

Many ministers over the past decade, for example, have promoted growth mindsets, grit and resilience. The last secretary of state even championed the idea of Gatsby-style benchmarks for character education. We can certainly agree that teaching and modelling resilience to young people is desirable. But we must

also share an understanding that its absence is often a symptom of emotional or physical damage.

It won't do, then, to teach resilience without teaching what

they manifested could not be dealt with by what I was learning at the Institute of Education.

So I trained at the Tavistock Clinic to understand how to meet their needs. I read John Bowlby's book *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds* and I learned to see that my students were unable to form and sustain healthy relationships at home or in school because adults, particularly male parents and carers, had let them down from an early age and broken their trust.

As heads report enormous concerns about children's mental health, compounded by poverty and instability, it's tempting to say the book and the theory's time have come again. In fact, its time never really went away. That's not advocating a low bar for children's behaviour in school. It's setting a high one for adults.

Being knowledge rich may well be the ticket to individuals' future economic prosperity, but happiness is not dependent on that alone. A prosperous society is more than the sum of its parts, and we will continue to be denied it as long as wellbeing is relegated to an also-ran, and the resulting rise in exclusions and elective home education is normalised.

“ No standard that perpetuates or aggravates abuse should be maintained

to do when someone in our life lacks it. In the current policy era, I have witnessed a student arriving at secondary school distressed and minus a few items of uniform. The school's response was to put that young person in an exclusion room, compounding the damage. This was rationalised as "maintaining standards", but no standard that perpetuates or aggravates abuse should be maintained. A good test is to ask whether you would treat a young person like this if they turned up at your house.

As a young teacher, before we had terms like Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), I ran an on-site secondary school unit for pupils with additional needs. It wasn't unusual to hear my students referred to as "the mad, the bad and the sad" by ill-informed colleagues. The truth was that the behaviours

Research

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

Are schools ready to dismantle period stigma?

Kate Bowen-Viner, senior associate, Centre for Education and Youth

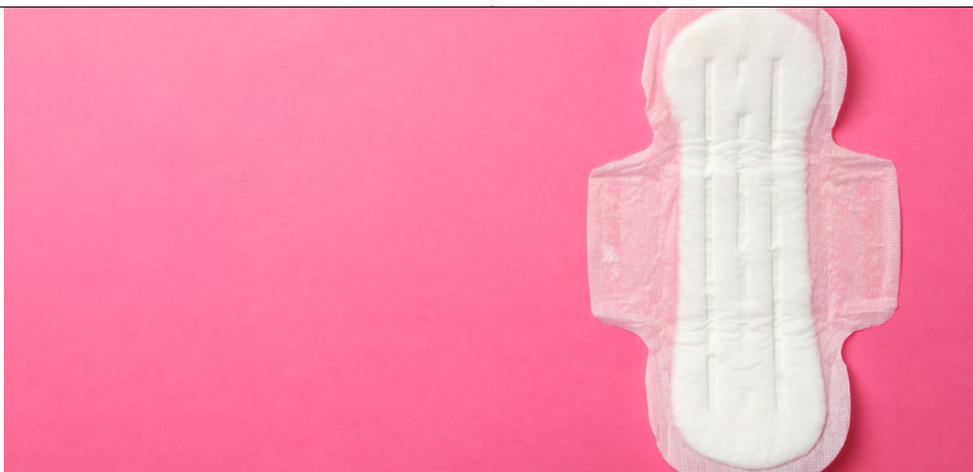
Last year, I spent time in a secondary school talking to girls about how period stigma can be compounded, and mitigated, by their school environment. Girls shared their frustrations about period taboo: how it was often used to ridicule and make them feel embarrassed. Shame about periods led to many adapting their behaviour or wanting to skip school.

Thankfully, the education sector is becoming more period friendly. Schools now have access to free menstruation products to tackle period poverty, and updated RSE will be compulsory from September. But how to build on this momentum to dismantle the stigma surrounding periods is unclear, and getting it right is a matter of social justice.

Whilst there are few studies on menstruation in school, research shows us that menstruation stigma is widespread in the UK and the rest of the world. The way many people talk about periods suggests that they are something to be ashamed of and kept secret. The media's portrayal of menstruation often feeds into this narrative too. For instance, until four years ago all adverts for menstrual products showed pale blue liquid, rather than red blood.

Existing research shows how problematic menstruation stigma can be for young people. Studies show that many girls in England and other parts of the world feel so ashamed by their periods that they miss out on school and sport. Girls' worries about keeping their menstrual status private also affects their attendance at school.

Menstruation stigma also affects boys' behaviour. Many boys do not receive high-quality education on periods and in some cases are excluded from lessons about



menstruation. Society also encourages them to see menstruation as a mysterious and embarrassing "women's problem". Boys can therefore be reluctant to ask questions about periods. This can culminate in a situation where boys at best feel like they do not understand girls and at worst belittle girls with sexist comments.

The section on menstruation in the new RSE guidance states that it "should ensure male and female pupils are prepared for changes they and their peers will experience," but there is no specific guidance on how schools should do this. The small but growing research base on the problematic nature of menstruation stigma is helpful, but we need more studies that focus on how schools can tackle it.

Studies are scarce, often methodologically flawed and rarely transferable to schools in the UK. A few evaluations, including quasi-experimental studies in international contexts, have assessed the impact of various interventions on girls' embarrassment and shame. However, these approaches may not have the same power in the UK. The form of period stigma varies massively across cultures.

Finally, to get a fuller understanding of the issues young people face and

workable solutions, new studies to fill this gap should include them in their design and implementation. As the N8 Research Partnership has highlighted, such an approach allows young people to be more open about their experiences, ensures methods are relevant to them, and gives rise to recommendations that bear weight in the real world. Period stigma exists in different social settings, using context-specific language. Youth-led research is therefore especially valuable for exploring locally relevant solutions.

The menstrual movement is at a unique juncture. Activists have put period poverty and menstruation stigma in the spotlight and many people are becoming more passionate about periods. It is impossible to know how long this will last. Researchers, policymakers and leaders across the education system must strike while the iron is hot and invest in co-produced research to identify practical and relevant ways for schools to dismantle period stigma. If we do not, the opportunity presented by compulsory RSE could be lost and we risk period stigma being characterised as a passing fad. We already know that the taboo around periods is a widespread problem for school pupils. Now, we need to collaborate with young people to explore and promote solutions.



Reviews



Our reviewer of the week is Helena Marsh, executive principal of Linton Village College and Chilford Hundred Education Trust

@HelenaMarsh81

How to remember anything, forever
@daisychristo

In this concise blog, Daisy muses on the forgetting curve and the power that technology has to aid spaced repetition. While most teachers recognise the importance of revisiting learning for retention, Daisy highlights the importance of ensuring optimum timing for review. She recommends the potential of technological algorithms, such as the flashcard app, Anki. Rather than creating and using revision resources at the end of a programme of study, she endorses a model whereby key knowledge could be captured en route and regularly presented to students to revisit knowledge and make connections with their current learning. The creation of an individual electronic flashcard library throughout secondary education certainly has the potential to be a very powerful educational tool.

Lions sit on irons: the curse of the pedagogical non-negotiables
@mssfax

The blog's title, borrowed from a whimsical poem, indicates the absurdity of the trend in school leadership to mandate trendy classroom practices. Using a range of now out-dated pedagogical examples (Bloom's

TOP BLOGS of the week

differentiated learning objectives anyone?), Sarah Barker problematises the tendency to attempt to create a whole-school teaching-and-learning blueprint. She highlights the irresistibility of creating compulsory approaches and the flaws in attempting to force ideas into policy. While recognising the value of some consistent routines, Sarah critiques a tick-list approach to pedagogy that undermines professional judgment and waters down the quality of teaching. Instructional methods may be the current craze, but we must ensure they don't become the next victims of shoe-horning and imposition.

Women leading with confidence
@Ethical_Leader

Hannah Wilson shares the highlights from her keynote presentation for the DfE programme of the same name, reflecting on the delegates' reticence to articulate their career ambitions with confidence, and providing universally useful job application tips. Wilson's advice ranges from the importance of clarifying your leadership values when choosing a school, to practical suggestions about preparing for the day and negotiating terms when offered a role. She emphasises the valuable professional learning experience an interview can be, regardless of the outcome. The blog distils a good deal of common sense and lived experience and serves as a reminder of differences in approach that can influence a candidate's success in securing promotion. A helpful read for those in the throes of job hunting.

Leading questions
@MrMountstevens

In this blog, Jonathan Mountstevens encourages us to see the power of questioning as a leadership tool and shares the impact that carefully posed questions can have in line-management meetings. He identifies three main purposes of powerful leadership questions: to elicit thought, to learn from the answers, and to hold people to account. Through a range of examples, Mountstevens demonstrates how precise and thoughtfully worded questions can probe into the quality of curriculum, assessment and teaching and learning. He also warns against the kinds of questioning that can be damaging, misleading and counterproductive. This considered blog provides a useful means for leaders to reflect on established line-management practices. Expert questioning is already a key facet of effective teaching, and it prompts us to recognise its importance in conversations with colleagues, too.

Viewing Ofsted from the inside and out
@Julespg

Guest blogger for the Headteachers' Roundtable, Julie Price-Grimshaw shares her perspective on the #PauseOfsted campaign, as someone with experience of both inspecting and being inspected. She reflects on how the organisation has evolved from its advance-notice, lengthy Section 10 inspections of the 90s to snappier Section 5s in the Noughties. She notes that despite the good intentions of each HMCI to address the issues inherent in legacy frameworks, the reality is that the inspectorate's ambitions have become unwieldy and subject to inconsistent application. With many questions about Ofsted's role as a regulator and the unintended consequences that undermine its "improvement through inspection" mantra, namely its belittling, exasperating and demoralising impact, Price-Grimshaw deftly argues for a professional pause to rethink and reframe an accountability system that currently requires improvement.

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Research-Informed Practice

Author: Jennifer Ludgate

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Reviewer: Maria Cunningham, head of education, Teacher Development Trust

When talking to colleagues in schools about their use of research and applying evidence to the classroom, the teachers I meet tend to fall into two camps. Either their eyes light up and they enthusiastically reel through who they follow on Twitter, when they last attended ResearchEd and the entire contents of their CPD library; or, more frequently, they dismiss it entirely as something with which they might engage if only they had the time/resources/support from leadership.

So I admit to being a little sceptical about books aimed at practitioners that tackle this area. How do we avoid simply preaching to the converted? And how do we use examples or case studies of best practice as a lever to support others on their journey, rather than a stick with which to beat them?

Jennifer Ludgate's *Research-Informed Practice* claims to provide simple, manageable strategies for busy classroom teachers to access and engage with research, directly acknowledging that it can be complex and time-consuming to do it well. You can tell that Ludgate is a teacher, herself accustomed to thinking about this within the limits of a jam-packed school timetable. Both the advice and resources provided throughout the book reflect this. A research-informed practice self-assessment questionnaire, for instance, gives the reader autonomy to select either a quick approach, a more considered one or a combination of

the two. I was pleased at the author's insistence that "quick" does not equate to corner-cutting. Expectation is managed incredibly well from the outset – change "cannot happen overnight".

The book is split into two parts: Train Yourself and Teach Others, with five main chapters sequenced as a walk-through of the change process. From initial reflection (Stage 1) to embedding research-informed practice (Stage 5) Ludgate's commentary is enthusiastic and reassuring, while modelling fidelity to the principles of effective CPD.

In listing her estimation of the key research every teacher should read, she offers some excellently accessible summaries of topics such as metacognition and Rosenshine's principles of instruction. Each is structured clearly, with an overview, key ideas to take away, overall considerations and suggested further reading.

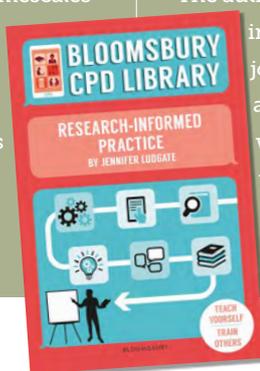
It is the takeaways that give *Research-Informed Practice* its edge. Teachers love CPD that involves practical strategies, resources or ideas that can slot straight into their professional repertoire, and this book is brimming with them, including an impressive 19 training plans to suit a variety of needs and timescales – invaluable reading for existing or aspiring school research leads. Though the book suggests application does not necessarily require staff to be in leadership positions, that does feel important in

order to reach the suggested end-point of developing a whole-school research-informed culture.

There is sensitive, emphatic articulation of the importance of organisational culture and of getting this right before jumping straight into implementation. Ludgate rightly reminds us that CPD is too often planned without careful identification of what would look different in terms of student outcomes, attitudes of staff and wider teaching and learning. For anyone who has ever sat through (or perhaps guiltily been the perpetrator of) a generic whole-staff INSET, with fuzzy links to staff or pupil needs, I urge you to pay particular attention to part two of her book, for a wealth of wisdom on vision, colleague buy-in, audience and purpose.

I particularly enjoyed the Evaluation Of CPD chapter. Though tagged on to the end, it is by no means an afterthought, covering an array of approaches and measures to strengthen the evaluation of research-informed strategies. In fact, it feels powerful that one of the book's parting messages is a caution against using "big data", such as SATs or GCSE results, as a definitive answer to whether training has had the desired impact.

The author invites us to see research-informed practice as a cyclical journey of trialling, embedding and refining, made better by working with others and bringing them along with you. After reading this book, you will see very little reason not to join in.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

FRIDAY

Gavin Williamson has taken a tough stance on behaviour, telling heads he wants the culture created by silent corridors to be "the norm", and expressing a displeasure for "slouching".



Presumably this means the education secretary is prepared to issue a detention to his colleague Jacob Rees-Mogg next time he sees the minister for the Victorian age reclining on the front benches?

We won't hold our breath...

Meanwhile, it was with some surprise when health minister Matt Hancock said schools with queries on coronavirus should contact the government's regional schools commissioners.

I mean, just ask anyone who has campaigned over an academy decision how hard it is to reach an RSC.

It also comes just a few weeks after national schools commissioner Dominic Herrington said his team are so bombed out already they "just don't have the resource" to meet with unhappy parents.

SUNDAY

The government's treatment of civil servants is very much in the spotlight at the moment, so how did the DfE show it cares about its employees' welfare?

It posted a job advert today that informed would-be applicants they would have to wait up to two months to be paid.

An advertisement for six "interesting and rewarding roles" in DfE ministers' offices was published last week. The roles included private secretaries to schools minister Nick Gibb, universities minister Michelle Donelan and DfE permanent secretary Jonathan Slater.

As the department is moving to a new HR system, we are unable to add new joiners to payroll for several weeks. Therefore, if you are recruited to the department in late March/April please be aware that you will not receive your pay until the end of May.

They are all "higher executive officer" grade, and carry starting salaries of between £32,584 and £35,865.

However, visitors to the original post were warned that they might not see any of that cash until the end of May, even if they were recruited in late March.

The post originally stated: "As the department is moving to a new HR system, we are unable to add new joiners to payroll for several weeks. Therefore, if you are recruited to the department in late March/April please be aware that you will

not receive your pay until the end of May."

However, the DfE later removed that paragraph from the job advert, claiming it was incorrect.

Ministers' private offices support their work in the department, and are different from their parliamentary offices. Private offices are staffed with civil servants, rather than political appointees.

According to the job advert, successful applicants will be "hardworking and comfortable operating in high-pressure environments" and have "excellent organisational skills and be able to prioritise effectively to manage a high workload".

"In ministerial offices, no prior knowledge or experience of educational policy, or working in central government is required, although may be helpful," the advert also states.

That's reassuring!

MONDAY

Ministers were tellingly silent on the issue of the future of universal infant free school meals when *Schools Week's* scoop about threats to the policy was raised in Parliament this week.

Angela Rayner grilled ministers on the matter at education questions, though she inadvertently spoke about free school meals more generally rather than those given to all infants.

The shadow ed sec said Williamson should resign rather than implement cuts to the policy. Vicky Ford, the newly-appointed children's minister simply changed the subject.

Then again, with all departments having to draw up plans for spending cuts (remember when we were told austerity was over?!), it's hardly surprising that ministers won't defend a policy that could be for the chop...



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We are looking for someone who has:

- A record of developing teaching and learning for sustainable change.
- A proven track record of securing high student progress through excellent knowledge of engaging learning, assessment and intervention.
- A clear and demonstrable commitment to the Christian and Methodist ethos of the school
- The ability to support, develop, motivate and lead our committed staff through collaboration.

This unique opportunity offers you:

- An over-subscribed school in a welcoming community
- Pupils with positive attitudes to learning who are caring, hardworking and proud to come to Nutgrove
- Dedicated staff who are committed to delivering the very best for pupils
- The support of the Wesley Trust, MAST and the Methodist Church

Nutgrove is the founding school of The Wesley Trust, a multi-academy trust established by the Methodist Church.

The job pack is available via our recruitment website:

<https://leadnutgroveprimary.co.uk>

School visits are strongly encouraged. Please contact Mrs Louisa Chamberlain, School Business Manager on email at nutgrove@sthelens.org.uk or call **01744 678400** to arrange.



**Closing date: 12noon,
Monday 16th March 2020**

**Interviews: Wednesday and Thursday,
1st and 2nd April 2020**

Nutgrove Methodist Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. School strictly adheres to our Safer Recruitment Policy.



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

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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.



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-cfbt.org
and www.anthemtrust.uk



LYMM
HIGH SCHOOL



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



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

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

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HEADLINE
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