

# In this together



- Schools to close today for all but vulnerable and children of key workers
- Williamson: 'I'm asking schools to be at forefront of our national response'
- But heads left in dark over key workers, and special school plans 'untenable'

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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### How schools led the way in ensuring poor pupils got fed



PAGE 20-21

### Barton: 'This is a time for maximum focus on concentration'

PAGE 23

### Exams have been cancelled, so what happens next?

PAGE 25



**Personality issues. Why 'leadership traits' are a red herring**

PAGE 26



**Can do better. Improving on our paparazzi accountability**

PAGE 27

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# Coronavirus outbreak

## As schools close, confusion reigns over key worker status

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Schools will close their gates to most pupils from this afternoon after the first mass-closure of educational institutions since the Second World War was enacted by ministers.

Only the children of "key workers" and the most vulnerable, thought to make up around 10 per cent of pupils in England, will attend school as part of emergency measures that ministers admit could last until September.

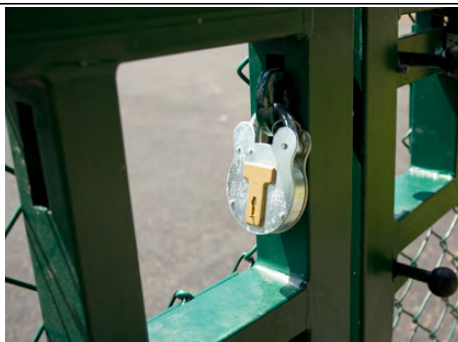
Announcing the closures on Wednesday, Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said it was a "testing time for the whole nation, but by asking schools and other settings to look after the children of key workers and the most vulnerable, we will be directly saving people's lives".

Williamson said the "extraordinary situation will make demands of us all, and we must carry on working together to get through it".

He added: "I know not all of this will be easy, I am asking nurseries, schools and colleges to be at the forefront of our national response to this crisis."

To help, Williamson said exams and primary tests will be cancelled this summer. Ofsted inspections have also been suspended and schools will get "extra resources".

The government has also pledged to create a national voucher scheme so pupils eligible for means-tested free school meals can be fed at home. Schools are also urged to work with caterers to send food parcels or buy



supermarket vouchers in the meantime.

However the government has lost a lot of goodwill over delays in providing desperately-needed guidance for schools.

As *Schools Week* went to press, more than 24 hours after the original announcement and less than a day before schools are due to close, headteachers were still waiting to find out which staff will be classed as key workers, and therefore which and how many children they will be looking after next week.

Although Williamson has confirmed that NHS staff, police, delivery drivers and school staff are included, there are questions about whether contractors and suppliers to those industries are also on the list.

It's also not clear if schools will become "hubs" in each area, with pooled staff and resources.

Emergency legislation due to be passed next week will seek to amend the 1996 education act so that children are not considered pupils at schools they attend on a temporary basis as a result of the virus.

In the vacuum of information from government, headteachers have throughout the week taken matters into their own hands.

Roger Blackburn, headteacher of Ellenbrook Community Primary School in Manchester, started surveying parents about their jobs on Monday.

"I've got an idea of numbers," Blackburn told *Schools Week*. "For us, I think the decision to make such a massive statement and then not to back that up by telling us who the key workers are, giving us 48 hours to sort it all out, was ill-advised," he added, paying tribute to the "tremendous, amazing support" of parents.

James Bowen, head of policy at the NAHT school leaders' union, said the delay "makes it pretty much impossible to be ready for Monday".

Schools have been sharing online resources to keep pupils learning while they are off.

But just under a third of teachers told pollsters TeacherTapp that they either didn't think they could set work remotely for a recently-taught class or would need the office or school to resolve the matter.

Asked whether they could broadcast a video lesson for a recently-taught class, 52 per cent said no, and just 42 per cent said yes.

Williamson told the BBC school is "going to be a safe place for those [vulnerable] children to be, it's not going to be an educational setting. They're not going to be teaching the national curriculum".

But he said government will work with the BBC and others to provide resources for children to access at home, with more resources put "online to support children to continue to learn even if they are not in an education setting".

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Prime minister Boris Johnson says closing schools now could do "more harm than good"

Education secretary Gavin Williamson says package being drawn up to support schools staying open



Government issues guidance on school meals, but leaders wait on key worker details

THURSDAY, LAST WEEK

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY



PM urges social distancing, but says schools will stay open. *Schools Week* reveals Ofsted to suspend all inspections

Government publishes details of new powers to force schools to remain open. Williamson later announces schools will close from Friday, with exams and performance tables cancelled



# Coronavirus outbreak



## Prioritise according to need, NAHT urges schools

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Schools may have to “prioritise according to need” when admitting vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers next week, as leaders wait on further details from government for its closure plans.

The National Association of Head Teachers has said it is seeking guidance from the government on how schools with capacity concerns should decide which pupils should be offered places under emergency measures drawn up in response to coronavirus.

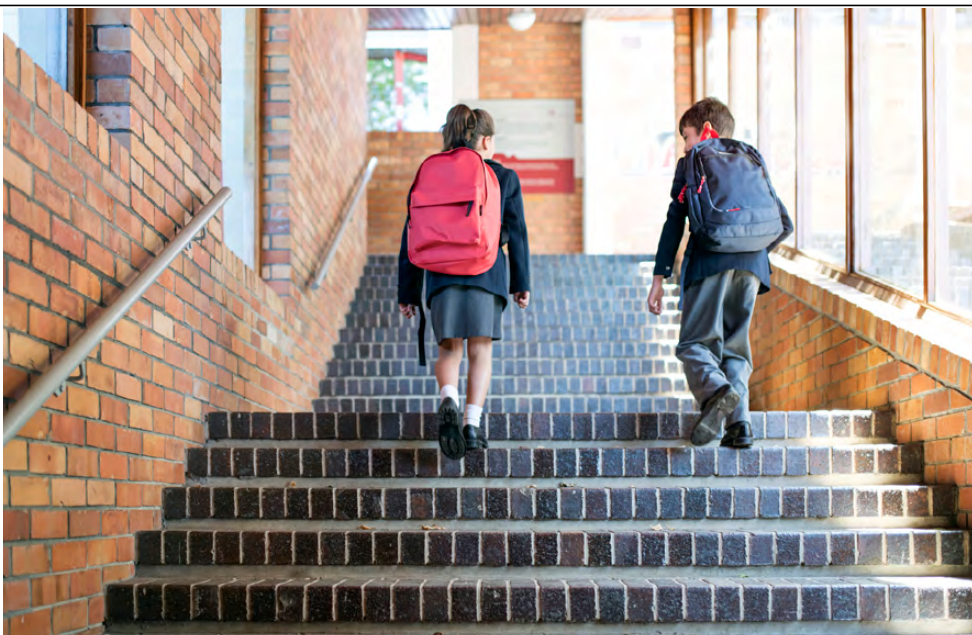
Gavin Williamson announced on Wednesday that schools across England would close to all pupils except for those considered vulnerable – particularly pupils with a social worker or education, health and care plan – and the children of essential workers.

However, a lack of clear guidance on many issues has left headteachers questioning how the new system will work. As a result, the NAHT has urged its members to pre-empt government announcements on exactly what constitutes key workers and vulnerable pupils.

In guidance issued to members yesterday, the NAHT said the announcement required “immediate action” from schools to identify who is eligible for care. It will also require schools to, “in some cases, prioritise offers to families according to capacity, need and health advice from Public Health England”.

The advice follows warnings about the capacity of schools to remain open during the crisis. The Association of School and College Leaders warned earlier this week that “between 10 to 20 per cent” of teachers are now self-isolating, and the impact on schools shows no sign of abating.

The NAHT said schools should “immediately” ask parents to inform the school if they believe they are a key worker, and should also identify “any



pupils they judge to be ‘vulnerable’ and in need of a place”.

Schools “can then use that information to offer places based on their capacity”, which “may mean that schools will have to prioritise according to need”.

“We have been told that the government will publish guidance on how to prioritise within the key worker information. Schools should consult this.”

The union also warned that it is possible schools won’t be ready to provide the care required of them “in full” from Monday morning, and that some may need to “start by offering places to a smaller group where the need is most urgent”, for example, the children of A&E nurses and doctors.

Schools should “stress to parents that school will close on Friday and that you will notify them when it will reopen to provide the reduced provision offer for certain pupils”.

The union continued: “You must clearly explain to all parents, whether they are key workers or not, that only families with an offer of a place should attend the school.”

It comes after ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton told heads there was an “aim of setting up some kind of national task group to work through some of the details,

to address questions, to target extra resources, to give you a sense that you are not working alone in these strange times”.

In a memo to heads, he urged them to place “maximum focus on communication – explaining to staff, pupils and your community of parents and governors (a) what’s happening now and (b) what may happen next.

“You’ll be involved in planning provision for next week’s in-school cohort. You’ll be thinking about resources for those pupils who will be at home, probably for the next few months. You’ll be trying to make plans around which staff you may or may not have.”

Speaking in parliament on Wednesday, Williamson said headteachers and teachers were “central to the country’s response to the current crisis”.

“I am reassured by their readiness to step up and to take the lead in supporting families through this most incredibly difficult time.

“All of those who work in our schools, colleges and universities rightly take their place next to our NHS staff and other key workers as central to our efforts as a country in battling the virus, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all of their support and all they do.”

# Coronavirus outbreak



## Moderated assessments to replace summer exams

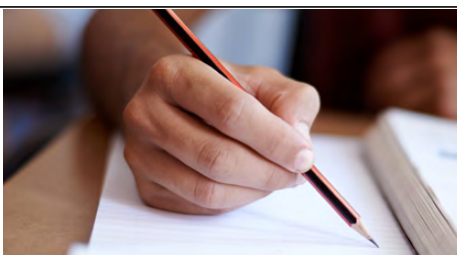
**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government looks set to replace summer exams with moderated teacher assessments, with "mini" exams for pupils who feel they could do better than their predicted grade.

Gavin Williamson announced on Wednesday that GCSEs, A-levels and primary tests would not go ahead this academic year. School league tables will also not be published.

Pupils will still get grades for GCSE and A-levels, but the government said it is working with Ofqual on a system that ensures "no child is unfairly penalised". Williamson is expected to publish plans of how this will work later today (Friday).

However Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, who has been in regular contact with



Williamson, revealed in a letter to members on Wednesday that grades "will be awarded on the basis of moderated assessment with the exam boards and Ofqual".

She also said she believed there would be a "mini" exam session in the autumn for those young people "who feel that they could have done better than their predicted grade".

This was alluded to by Williamson in parliament on Wednesday when he said the standard exam appeals process will still run. However, he said they are looking at "additional measures, such as enabling a child rapidly to take a fresh set of tests

or exams".

But Williamson said they must be "conscious of the fact we do not know how the virus will manifest itself and in what sort of time-scales we will see peak and reduction".

Ofqual would only say they "welcome the certainty" of the government's announcement and are "urgently" working "through the detail of this decision".

Discussions are ongoing as to whether any exam fees already paid by schools will be refunded. When asked for comment, exam boards told *Schools Week* to contact Ofqual.

A spokesperson for Universities UK said they "await further information".

But Mary Curnock Cook, former chief executive of university admissions body UCAS, said the "inaccuracy of predicted grades is already priced in for universities when they make offers", adding that the system "is not a problem".

### Government to force emergency measures on schools

A new law will give Gavin Williamson the powers to force schools to close or stay open as the government's emergency arrangements for the education sector during coronavirus take hold.

It comes as the education secretary confirmed he would be asking schools to continue to cater for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils throughout the Easter holidays.

The coronavirus bill, draft legislation put together by the government, passed its first reading in the House of Commons yesterday (Thursday) and will be debated again on Monday.

The bill will enable Williamson to force the "restriction of attendance" at schools and other educational settings.

It will also give him the powers "to give directions requiring the provision, or continuing provision, of education, training

and childcare", and to "give notices disapplying or modifying enactments".

In essence, it allows him to close schools to most pupils but force them to stay open for certain groups, and relax rules around things like teacher-pupil ratios.

Specifically, Williamson will have the power to direct any school "to stay open, to re-open, or to open at times when it would not usually be open".

The bill also lifts the duty on Ofsted to inspect schools. The legislation will be time-limited, for two years, and not all of the measures will come into force immediately.

The four governments of the UK will be able to "switch on" the new powers when needed, and "switch them off again once they are no longer necessary, based on the advice of chief medical officers".

### Non-permanent staff face struggle for financial support

Supply teachers and other school workers on short-term contracts face having to rely on statutory sick pay or benefits if their hours are slashed because of coronavirus.

Like all employed workers, school contractors working for agencies have been told by the government that they will get expedited access to statutory sick pay, which amounts to £94.25 per week.

However, those who are self-employed, or don't earn enough to qualify for sick pay, could get as little as £73.10 a week in employment support allowance if work dries up.

The predicament has prompted some schools to pledge to pay their supply staff for their booked hours even if they are not needed because of closures. But heads say supply agencies still intend to take a hefty slice from their pay cheques, despite their precarious position.

Roger Blackburn, headteacher of Ellenbrook Community Primary School in Manchester, said he asked the agencies used in his school to waive their fees during closures. Only one of three, Zen Educate, agreed.

"The nature of supply means it's not permanent, secure work," he told *Schools Week*. "They need every penny they can get."

"For any supply agency to hold money back right now is absolutely not on."

*Schools Week* approached Prospero, Reeson, ANZ, Vibe and Protocol, some of the largest supply agencies, to ask whether they would waive fees. None responded to our requests for comment.

A spokesperson for Zen Educate said it had decided to waive fees during "a time of great uncertainty and anxiety for supply staff faced with the prospect of school closures and an extended period without income".



# Coronavirus outbreak



## Covid-19 plans for special schools 'untenable'

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Special school headteachers are in the dark over whether they will now be forced to stay open – as dwindling staff numbers push them to the brink.

Some schools with highly vulnerable pupils shut this week after government guidance on Monday stated people with underlying health issues should follow social distancing, with staff also having to stay at home.

But on Wednesday, education secretary Gavin Williamson said schools would remain open for children of key workers and vulnerable children, including those on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The government will also have powers to force schools to stay open.

Special school and alternative provision headteachers – who have large numbers of such pupils – now have no idea whether they will have to open.

Asked for clarity, a Department for Education spokesperson said special schools and

councils should “make assessments on a case-by-case basis of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an EHCP”.

“For some, they will be safer in education provision. For others, they will be safer at home. The secretary of state trusts leaders, with parents, to make these decisions.”

Williamson told BBC Breakfast that restrictions on staffing ratios would be lifted in emergency legislation and they would look at how, working with local authorities, they could “backfill” resources into special schools.

But school leaders’ union NAHT said the government’s policy has “contradictions” and “provides enormous challenges for special schools”.

“We have expressed our view to the government that such an approach is not tenable in most cases.”

John Cope, a governor at a SEND school, said the idea of staying open is “daunting”.

“In unprecedented times, schools will need unprecedented guidance to make these assessments, understand what will be

expected of them in the coming weeks, and the specific support available to keep going.”

Headteacher Paul Silvester is keeping Newman School, a special school in Rotherham, closed to protect his students with complex medical needs and because there of staff shortages.

Damian Hinds said in parliament on Wednesday that if schools should pool resources if they can’t open. Williamson agreed, adding, “flexibility is absolutely at the core of this.”

But there’s also concerns whether disabled pupils will even be able to get to school as it is not known if school transport drivers will be required to continue working.

It’s also not known if pupils awaiting an EHCP decision will be classed as vulnerable children. SEND consultant Barney Angliss estimated around 1,500 children await an EHCP decision every week.

Dominic Wall, of the Medicine for Specialist Schools groups, was confident “staff will support their schools to provide families with a safe level of service”

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# Agnew's advisers didn't find savings at over one in 10 schools

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

Lord Agnew's cost-cutters failed to identify savings at more than one in ten schools they visited, new figures show.

The findings challenge the government's rhetoric around school funding, particularly from former academies minister Lord Agnew, which suggested that all schools could tighten their purse strings.

A Freedom of Information request found no savings opportunities were recorded at eight of the 72 schools or trusts that welcomed school resource management advisers (SRMA) under the trial that ran in 2017-18.

The Department for Education has claimed savings were identified at the schools, but just not recorded.

However Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said the findings show the cost-cutter policy is "based on the fantasy that 'schools have more money than ever before' and therefore any schools in financial difficulties must be doing something wrong."

Agnew famously said in 2018 he would bet any headteacher "a bottle of champagne and a letter of commendation" his advisers could find savings in their schools – and likened himself to "a pig hunting truffles" in his pursuit of efficiencies.

When asked if Agnew had in fact sent those schools a bottle of champagne, the DfE reiterated, "opportunities were identified in these cases but they were not costed or reported."

But Bousted said the initiative was "only ever intended to generate news stories" and designed "to shift the blame from the ministers responsible for underfunding schools".

The DfE has refused to release reports of the school resource management adviser visits, stating that the findings are confidential.

Bousted said it was not surprising information about the advisers' work "had to be dragged from the government through FOIs and leaks".

She added: "They reveal that the whole initiative



has been a waste of public funds and that too often the advisers recommended heartless cuts that no civilised society should consider, such as cutting the size of portions for school lunches."

Based on leaked reports, Schools Week previously revealed that some cost-cutting recommendations included telling leaders to limit pupils' lunch portions, to replace experienced teachers with support staff and to keep hold of money raised for charity.

During the trial visits, advisers found savings of £35 million across the 72 schools and trusts.

Speaking at an event in 2018, Agnew said these "essentially misdirected resources" comprised a "colossal sum of money".

However, one of these visits alone (most likely at one of the larger academy trusts visited) amounted to £6.7 million of savings – or nearly 20 per cent of the total savings found.

There were a further five schools or trusts where savings of over £1 million were identified. The figure for median savings identified is actually £267,000.

An evaluation of the trial found just 16 per cent of identified savings had actually been enacted. However, that still meant £13 had been saved for every £1 spent on the scheme.

A DfE spokesperson said the pilot had covered recommendations for the "majority of schools that participated in the programme but for a minority, not all saving opportunities were recorded".

"We have since altered the SRMA report to ensure all reports now include fully costed recommendations as far as possible, as we believe this is more helpful to the trusts."

They also said trusts who had worked with an SRMA "made clear it was invaluable to have a second set of expert eyes look over their plans".

The visits have since been rolled out, and Agnew claimed in January that his team of experts had found £172 million of potential savings in schools during more than 400 visits since 2017.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of Schools and College Leaders (ASCL), said it can be "helpful for schools to have the advice of an SRMA" but added "the scope for savings is limited. The spending of schools is mainly invested in putting teachers in front of classes and providing pupils with appropriate levels of support."

He added it was "no surprise to find that it has not proved possible to identify savings in a number of schools".

## News

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## LARGE TRUSTS OUTSPEND COUNCIL COUNTERPARTS ON CPD

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

Large academy trusts are spending almost 75 per cent more on staff development at secondary schools than local authorities, new analysis has discovered.

Education specialists SchoolDash, in collaboration with the Teacher Development Trust, has analysed the trends in staff development amid the sector's deepening recruitment and retention crisis.

It found large academy trusts – those with 11 or more schools – spent the most across all school types on staff development in 2017-18, over £750 per teacher compared with maintained schools, which spent just under £600.

The gap widens further when looking specifically at secondary schools, with large academy trusts spending 74 per cent more per teacher than maintained schools – £637 compared with £366.

SchoolDash founder Timo Hannay said

when combined with a recent survey on teacher autonomy by the National Foundation for Educational Research, this suggests academy trusts "offer less autonomy but more professional development" than maintained schools.

Hannay was reluctant to say which was more appealing – autonomy or progression – but warned "there are not enough good teachers to go around and at some point they will vote with their feet".

The government's most recent initial teacher training data, released in November, revealed it had missed its secondary school teacher recruitment target for the seventh year in a row.

Hannay explained that incentives such as development and career progression were vital with education as it is a "people-driven business which can't find enough good people".

Elsewhere the analysis found the spend on staff development increased in 2017-18 compared with the previous year.

The rise in spend reverses a previous trend of falling expenditure. Previous analysis by SchoolDash found £235.8 million was spent on CPD in 2016-17, a drop of almost nine per cent on the £259 million in 2015-16.

Last year secondary schools spent on average £520 per teacher, while primary schools spent nearly £710. However, in both cases this represented just a tiny portion of average total spending at 0.54 per cent and 0.66 per cent respectively.

The analysis uncovered huge regional disparity between spend – with London secondary schools spending 26 per cent more per teacher than schools in the east and west Midlands.

Hannay said the reasons for these differences were unclear and could be down to the number of large academy trusts in each region.

However, he said it was likely to be "another thing on the list which needed levelling up" across the country.



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# Williamson going beyond academies in school visits

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

The education secretary is reversing the 'ideological obsession' of his predecessors by visiting a wider range of schools – rather than just academies – new figures show.

Freedom of information figures show Gavin Williamson has visited a total of 46 schools, colleges and universities since taking the post in July last year.

Of these ministerial visits, 17 were to academies and free schools, 13 to maintained schools, 10 to further education colleges and six to universities.

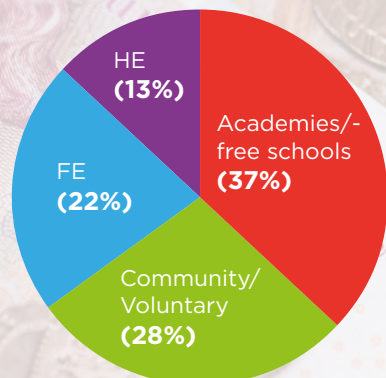
A previous freedom of information request by *Schools Week* revealed former education secretary Damian Hinds visited more than twice as many academies than local authority-maintained schools during his first four months on the job.

A Department for Education spokesperson said the visits helped Williamson to reinforce "his priority to deliver world class education, training and care for everyone, whatever their background".

"He has visited a range of schools, colleges and other settings across the country to hear about the excellent work they're doing and to make sure nothing stands in the way of young people having the best choices in life."

According to the National Audit Office around 35 per cent of all state-funded

WILLIAMSON: 46 TOTAL



schools are academies – in line with 37 per cent of Williamson's visits.

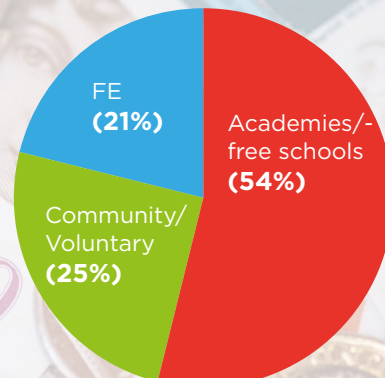
Between January and April 2018, former education secretary Hinds visited 13 mainstream academies and five maintained schools.

At the time the findings prompted Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, to warn an "ideological obsession" with academies was "in danger of skewing a minister's professional duties and responsibilities for all schools".

However, the pattern remains when looking at Hinds' complete set of school visits during his first year as education secretary.

According to an FOI from Teacher Toolkit he visited 57 schools between January

HINDS: 57 TOTAL



and the end of November 2018 – plus an additional five early learning and nursery settings.

Once again he visited more than twice as many academies and free schools as maintained – 31 compared with 14.

He also visited 12 further education or post-16 colleges.

Between January and April 2018, former academies minister Lord Agnew visited a specialist maths free school sixth form, a UTC and two academies, but no maintained schools.

New figures show between July 2019 and his departure from the DfE in February, Agnew visited 11 education settings – seven academies and free schools, three further education colleges and just one maintained school.

## Williamson remains reticent on capital spending for schools

The government still won't say how much of its £640 billion capital spending pot will go to schools.

In the budget earlier this month, chancellor Rishi Sunak confirmed a manifesto pledge to pump hundreds of billions of pounds into infrastructure.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, confirmed to *Schools Week* in December that some of that money would go to schools.

But despite having confirmed plans for further education capital spending at the budget, ministers remain tight-lipped on the issue of schools, despite rising pupil numbers and complaints from heads about crumbling classrooms.

Pushed on the matter by *Schools Week* after his speech to the ASCL conference on Friday, Williamson said he didn't want to prejudice his

negotiations with the Treasury ahead of this autumn's spending review.

"But as you can imagine, as an education secretary who really wants to see this transformation in terms of our schools, capital is an important part of it, and I would want with my officials to pull together the best possible options," he added.

Jonathan Simons, director of education at lobbyists Public First, said the DfE should take the opportunity of available capital spending "to not just fix the backlog of repairs, but think creatively about what the future school estate should look like".

"What does proper co-location of local children's services look like? How can large school trusts roll out a whole range of services? Should more trusts be building special schools and alternative provision?

How do we deliver high-quality post-16 provision that needs specialist facilities? How many new maths schools can we build? Should all schools have greater community facilities?"

He added that coronavirus has shown "how schools of whatever legal structure need to be truly at the heart of their communities".

Williamson said his department was "often highlighted" as one of the best at delivering capital projects "very efficiently" and "that puts us in a good place to look at how we continue to roll out new school builds right across the country".

However, the department has been criticised over its capital spend. In 2017 the public accounts committee said the government was spending "well over the odds" to build new free schools.

## News

EXCLUSIVE



## New Ofsted inspections are oversimplified and rushed, claims NGA report

**JAMES CARR**  
@JAMESCARR\_93

Ofsted's new inspection framework is diminishing the role of governance in schools, patronising leaders and leading to rushed inspections, a new report has claimed.

The National Governance Association has today released 'A view from the board' – its evaluation of Ofsted's new inspection framework which was introduced in September.

While 65 per cent of governors and trustees at over 800 schools inspected under the new framework said they were satisfied with the process, NGA said it leaves "significant room for improvement".

The report stated that "governance as part of the wider leadership and management judgement has decreased in value". Of more than 800 published reports analysed there were "very few substantive mentions of quality of governance".

While 66 per cent of reports did mention governance, this was rarely a separate or specific statement and most often a summary of governance and other leadership roles, NGA said.

Emma Knights, chief executive of the NGA, said it was "particularly dispiriting" the changes "render governance less visible".

"The inspectorate's commitment to us that governance would feature as much in inspection as it has done in the past has not materialised."

She said it was "important in terms of improving the system to have acknowledgement when governance is working well: that emphasis of what 'good' looks like from Ofsted is taken seriously".

The NGA has now urged that governance "should return as a mandatory portion of the report".

Ofsted's new reports are much shorter, with simplified language aimed at being more inclusive to parents, but NGA found they have become "too simplistic and seen by some as patronising".

*Schools Week* reported last year how new reports included a range of weird and wonderful observations, such as children going to a pizza restaurant, while an inspector at one school told of "sitting on a milk crate at the back of a makeshift bus" before judging "children are happy at the school".

The Northern House School Academy Trust even lodged a complaint about "oversimplified language" in a report at one of its schools.

The NGA recommends a return to "a more informative format" which "specifically includes information targeted at those responsible for school improvement" so they can "carry out that function well".

Knights suggested this could be done by adding to the existing reports or producing a separate report.

The report also drew attention to the conduct of inspectors which could have a "negative impact on both staff and pupils".

It found a large number of respondents noticed the "rushed nature of the inspection overall" and in particular "the impact this had on governance playing any part".

The report read: "Surprisingly, the deep dive nature of the inspection also meant that some sections of school staff felt the inspection process had no bearing on their own departments, and so could not be viewed as a schoolwide judgement."

Elsewhere the report found 72 per cent of respondents felt the inspection accurately reflected their school, while a further 83 per cent highlighted how valuable the feedback meeting was in understanding their school's rating.

An Ofsted spokesperson said governance is "an important part" of the framework and is "explicitly evaluated as part of the leadership and management judgement".

"The format of reports is based on feedback from hundreds of parents. It has been designed to provide the most useful information in the most accessible way. More detailed feedback is available for school leaders and governors during the inspection."

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

## School rapped for short KS3, despite national curriculum focus

**JAMES CARR**  
@JAMESCARR\_93

Ofsted has criticised another school for its two-year key stage 3 syllabus – despite admitting that it was based on the national curriculum.

A termination warning notice has been issued to The Giles Academy, in Lincolnshire, following an 'inadequate' judgment from the inspectorate last month.

In the school's inspection report it is noted that "leaders have set the national curriculum as the foundation for what teachers should teach".

However, this is caveated with the fact "the two-year key stage 3 curriculum means that pupils do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to be well prepared for their key stage 4 courses" and "the quality of education is not good enough".

The schools watchdog has since said the school's 'inadequate' rating was not based on the length of curriculum.

But critics will again point out the inconsistency in Ofsted's approach. The watchdog has previously insisted the national curriculum acts as a benchmark for what schools should be offering.

This conflicts with freedoms given to academies allowing them to develop their own curriculum.

While local-authority maintained schools must still follow the national curriculum, Ofsted has said academies "must offer all pupils a curriculum of a similar breadth and ambition as the national curriculum".

But an Ofsted spokesperson said: "We judged this school to be inadequate for reasons clearly set out in our inspection report. Our inspectors found that the quality of education was not good enough at this school, and some pupils did not feel safe."

"Ofsted has stressed that it is for schools to decide their own curriculum and how it is delivered. No school is judged solely on whether it has a two- or three-year key stage 3."

The termination warning notice states that the government could close the school, which is a single-academy trust, if improvements are not made.

The Giles Academy did not respond to a request for comment.



## News

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## UTC turns the tables and comes to the aid of a MAT

FRASER WHIELDON

@FRASERWHIELDON

A north-west England university technical college has become the latest of its type to move towards joining a multi-academy trust – but this time the tables have turned.

The leader of UTC Warrington, Lee Barber, has been appointed by the North West Academies Trust (NWAT) to be the interim headteacher of Rudheath Senior Academy, following the resignation of its second headteacher in as many years.

Rudheath, which teaches pupils aged 11 to 16, joined NWAT 18 months ago following a fire that burned down half the school, and its departure from University of Chester Academies Trust, which collapsed in 2018 after forecasting a £3 million deficit.

This marks a rare example of a successful UTC supporting a multi-academy trust (MAT) with a struggling school. MATs have traditionally come to the aid of at-risk UTCs in the past.

UTC Warrington, which teaches students aged 14 to 19 and specialises in science, engineering and cyber, is rated 'good' by Ofsted.

Barber said, although Rudheath is also rated 'good' by Ofsted, it "has suffered significant turbulence, fallen on tough times and needs some strong leadership and management".

While discussing with NWAT the opportunity for UTC Warrington to join the trust, the idea of Barber working across both schools "seemed like an obvious start to a strong future partnership," he said.

While he splits his time between the two, the UTC's vice principal Amanda Downing has become associate principal and conducts the day-to-day running, though Barber insists he is still "proactively" involved at Warrington, and staff at both providers are supporting one another.

Barber says that as Rudheath's curriculum is very academically focused, the UTC is taking the opportunity to inject some technical education into its provision.

The school's students have gone to the UTC for engineering and construction taster days. There is even talk of the UTC delivering specialist GCSEs for Rudheath from September.

The boards of NWAT and the academy will be discussing the UTC possibly joining the trust in the coming weeks and months, Barber said.

The chief executive of NWAT, Steve Docking, called this a "great opportunity" for both organisations to benefit from working together and sharing resources.

He also believes the partnership will strengthen their work ensuring "every student deserves the best possible education".

UTCs that have been brought into MATs following academic or financial difficulty include Sir Charles Kao UTC, which joined the Burnt Mill Academy Trust and rebranded itself the BMAT STEM Academy in May 2018.

After Ofsted slapped it with a grade 4 in its first-ever inspection, UTC Swindon joined the Activate Learning Education Trust in 2017, which also includes UTCs in Reading, Oxfordshire and at Heathrow.

UTC Bolton was told to join a MAT in March 2018 when it was issued with a notice to improve because the Education & Skills Funding Agency found it had "inadequate" financial controls. It was announced last month UTC Bolton would be joining The Keys Federation MAT and renaming itself the University Collegiate School.

UTC founder and former education secretary Lord Baker has previously warned that UTCs would be "watered down" if they joined a MAT.

But in a U-turn last year, he and then-academies minister Lord Agnew wrote to the principals and chairs of every UTC urging them to join a trust.

Speaking at a public accounts committee hearing on Monday, the Department for Education's permanent secretary Jonathan Slater said that around 30 UTCs will be part of a MAT in the next year. There are nearly 60 UTCs open in England.

## Cost-cutters help UTCs stay afloat

Jonathan Slater, the Department for Education's top civil servant, told MPs on the public accounts committee on Monday that school resource management advisers had identified around £10 million of savings in 33 of England's 48 UTCs.

Created in 2018, the SRMA scheme involves consultants, usually school business professionals, going into schools to help leaders identify potential savings.

The scheme faced criticism last year when *Schools Week* revealed that some of the advisers had recommended that schools limit

lunch portions and use spare staff to cover lessons, instead of supply teachers.

Slater's comments come after a damning report by the National Audit Office found the struggling technical institutions account for almost 10 per cent of revenue deficits reported by all academy trusts. Ten UTCs have so far closed, blaming low pupil numbers and poor financial health, and many that remain are still struggling.

The DfE's permanent

secretary told the committee that of the £10 million of potential savings identified by SRMAs, £4.3 million have been achieved.

Slater also faced questions about the amount spent on building UTCs. So far, the scheme has accrued capital costs of £680 million, working out as £50,000 per pupil.

But the civil servant said this ignored the fact that the DfE has made "alternative use" of the buildings of UTCs that closed.

"We want to make sure that all of that capital – land, buildings, equipment – is reused," he said.



Jonathan Slater

11<sup>TH</sup>

EST. 2010

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It is with a heavy heart that we have made the following decision regarding the 11th Festival of Education, due to be held on 18-19 June 2020 at Wellington College.

Due to the current uncertainty around Covid-19, we have decided to cancel this year's Festival of Education. The next Festival of Education will now take place on 24-25 June 2021 at Wellington College.

Wellington College and Lsect are devastated by this decision, but it is the only viable option given the significant disruption and uncertainty caused by the current pandemic, Covid-19.

In the coming weeks, we will be announcing plans to broadcast some Festival content during 18-19 June 2020 via the internet. Look out for further details.

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# On location: ASCL conference

## New NPQs to focus on behaviour and developing subject leads

**JOHN DICKENS**

@JOHNDICKENSSW

A new specialist qualification for “often overlooked” experienced teachers will focus on behaviour management and pupil wellbeing, Gavin Williamson said today.

Speaking at the ASCL conference on Saturday, the education secretary announced details of two new national professional qualifications.

One will help “train and develop teachers who are subject leads or responsible for improving teaching practice in a subject or phase”.

The second will be for “those whose role includes ensuring schools are calm and orderly places, by focusing on behaviour management and pupil wellbeing”.

The government announced in February last year that five new NPQs would be established as part of the new recruitment and retention strategy.

However, specific details were not provided at the time, other than that they



Gavin Williamson

will be linked to the “core areas” in which teachers receive training at the start of their career, such as assessment, behaviour management, curriculum expertise and pedagogy.

One of those includes a “teacher developer” NPQ to support roll-out of the new early-career framework.

Williamson said that transforming the support and development for teachers and leaders is a “career-long enterprise”. However, he added that he is “aware” of experienced teachers who want to stay in the classroom (rather than move into headship) who are “often overlooked”.

He said former ASCL boss Malcolm Trobe has been recruited on to the expert

panel which is reviewing the full suite of leadership NPQs.

Williamson added: “We want teachers and leaders to know that if they want the best professional development opportunities they can find them in Oldham, Knowsley and Teesside, not just in London.

“These measures will create a golden thread running from initial teacher training through to school leadership, rooting teacher and leader development in the best available evidence.”

News of the behaviour NPQ follows on from the government launching a new £10 million behaviour taskforce to help schools tackle classroom disruption.

Williamson praised such measures as silent corridors and banning mobile phones, adding that teachers having to deal with “unruly pupils on a daily basis” adds to their workload and stress.

“Those 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.”

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## ‘Let’s end the era of managerialism’, Barton urges

The leader of the ASCL headteachers’ union has called for an end to the “era of managerialism” in education policy, as he urged the government to “dispense with the distractions” and focus on “game-changer policies”.

Geoff Barton told the union’s annual conference in Birmingham on Saturday that there was “increasing momentum” around the realisation that “more of the same is simply going to deliver more of the same”.

Boris Johnson’s big win in December’s general election with a large majority means the Conservatives will for the first time in several years find it easier to pass legislation.

Barton told the conference that leaders needed to consider whether the experience currently provided is preparing children “to be genuine lifelong learners, ready to train and retrain, to embrace learning as an essential human skill”.

“Because the future’s going to need more of these things. And now surely is the time to



Geoff Barton

be asking how we achieve it,” he said.

“That’s partly because there’s an increasing momentum building with the realisation that, in education policy terms, more of the same is simply going to deliver more of the same. It’s time to end this era of managerialism.

“And partly because a new government, with a thumping majority, with new constituencies, has the opportunity to work with school and college leaders, the people leading our system, to identify what are the game-changer policies, the three or four big ticket ideas that would move England’s education provision from good to world

class.”

But Barton said the new government also had an opportunity “to decide what it’s time to stop doing – dispensing with the marginal stuff, the distractions, the policy clutter that stops us focusing on what truly matters”.

His comments come after Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, told the conference his government had been given “a historic mandate to level up opportunity and transform the lives and prospects of a generation”.

“I want you to be in no doubt how important you are to these plans,” he told heads. “Education is one of the greatest levers of social change.”

He also praised “exceptional leaders” across England and said he “could not be more grateful” for their leadership.

“I am so, so enormously proud to be your champion in government. And so I look forward to working with you over the coming years to see that change and improvement.”

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# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**Schools Week's contributing editor reflects on the prospects of empty playgrounds and the role schools must continue to play**

Once upon a decade ago, I sat with a group of utterly dejected 17-year-olds; their heads in their hands, almost ready to care. The school had messed up. Despite the students having been repeatedly told that they were well over half-way through their enormous coursework load, they had actually only completed just a third of the work.

Even worse, it was already late in the autumn of Year 13. We had about 6 months to turn it around. All we could do was find it in ourselves to push forward and hope that if we worked hard – if we slowly, achingly, with extreme effort – rebuilt the portfolios with everything needed, then it might just be okay.

A few weeks later, we hit a brick wall. All the extra lessons, extra homework and extra writing had exhausted them. They were so angry and so done. I stopped the lesson and pulled out gigantic sheets of paper, one for each child. For 90 minutes we created 'inspirational posters' – writing the sorts of quotes we might imagine saying to someone else in this situation. For the next 6 months, whenever we felt down, we looked at the posters plastered on the wall and one always rang out. It read: THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH.

There were times that year when I needed the poster more than students. Times when I would look at the poster and wonder how a group of such amazing kids, who had worked so hard, could have such rotten luck as to have been sent a third-year teacher who'd never taught their



LAURA  
MCINERNEY

Schools Week's contributing editor  
and co-founder, Teacher Tapp

## Even when the world stops, we have to keep on going

subject before to get them out of their bind. And yet, somehow, we got there. Eventually, the coursework was complete and they

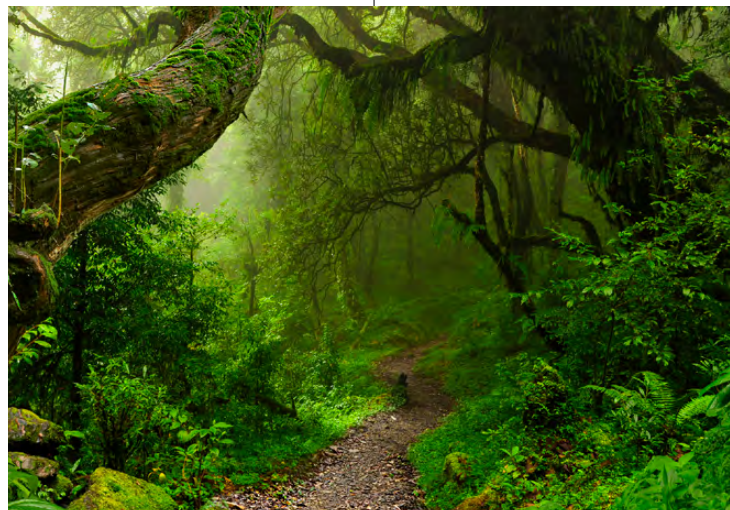
said, Miss? The way out is through? Were you trying to test that I hadn't forgotten?!"  
School life is always like this.

**"It's going to be slow and difficult. But it will get better"**

were able to move on.

A few years later, I was rushed into the Accident & Emergency ward with a life-threatening issue. One of the students from that class was on shift in scrubs; her badge read 'Nurse'. As I recovered she came in to see me: "What was it that poster on the wall always

Disaster. Triumph. Disaster. Triumph. Right when you're savouring the moment a kid delivering a beautiful poem or solving a quadratic equation, suddenly you see the ceiling is leaking green goo onto the classroom hamster and you know there's about 3 seconds before the



pupils start screaming.

Nevertheless, as a teacher, comfort comes from knowing that no matter how mad things get you can get them under control. That, somehow, your lesson WILL start at 9.10am, and the pupils WILL arrive, and – somehow – you WILL get them to behave and learn. It's what schools do. We give pupils the certainty of knowing that even if the world outside is falling apart: We. Are. Still. Here.

Which is why the time upon us now is so brutal. From Friday, when schools close in their current form there isn't certainty anymore. To me, endless empty playgrounds is as surreal as if the clocks suddenly forgot to strike 12 or if ice became hot to touch. It's impossible to fathom and there are endless questions: How will pupils eat? How will they learn if they don't have access to devices? Will I ever be in the same room with Year 6 or Year 11 again?

The truth is that life is not going to feel certain for some time. Nor can teachers make it so. You are a human like everyone else and children's safety and learning is a true partnership now: with parents, local authorities, and everyone else. It's going to be slow and unsteady, frustrating and difficult. But it will get better. Achingly, slowly, one piece of work at time.

Sometimes it will feel like disaster, followed by triumph, followed by disaster, and triumph.

But the only way out is through. We will get there. Just keep going.



## Ofsted amends report at Harris school at centre of framework row

### Teacher Toolkit

When I worked in the same school, our leadership team complained about the injustices of the Ofsted report in 2017, which used flawed DfE data. Ofsted failed to take any action after a laborious three-month process.

There's nothing wrong with real people [inspectors] getting decisions wrong. The problem is, they only appear to do so when it is politically pressured and expedient for them, particularly when it fits in with MAT/free school ideology to demonstrate that value for money = high standards.

### ASCL: 9 in 10 leaders believe inspection isn't consistent, fair or accurate

#### Rich Atherton

9/10 seems really positive... yet 10 per cent dissatisfaction is too high. The current high-stakes accountability system means that "10 per cent" experience devastating consequences. I'm all for accountability, but it has to be proportionate. The current model is not!

## One-third of teachers have to bring their own tea and coffee to school

### Chris Ward

I have always had to pay, or bring coffee, and I have been teaching since 2001. I even brought in tea and coffee for staff in EYFS, knowing how little they earn and how they came in early because they care. I thought that was normal!

## COVID-19 school closures: the disaster that will put edtech to the test

### Bob Harrison

It's not a test of technology at all... the technology is what it is... the real test is of the capacity, capability and confidence of the education workforce to use technology effectively. Whilst there are lots of examples of schools and colleges who have invested in digital infrastructure and workforce skills and whose leadership have had the vision – many are ill prepared. This is as a direct result of the techno-scepticism of Nick Gibb and his missionaries.

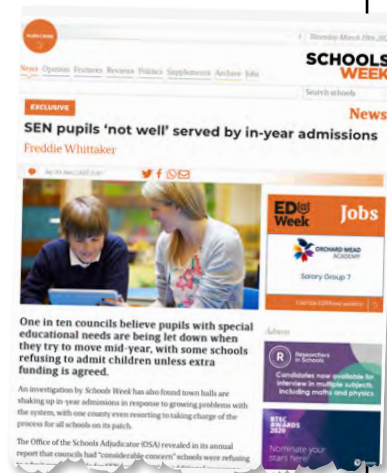
## REPLY OF THE WEEK

Rachael Jubb

## SEND pupils 'not well served' by in-year admissions

So you are asking a school to take on an extra student when all their teaching assistants and resources have already been allocated? Who will be helping the child with SEND to settle? More often than not, these children need more support to settle, but schools do not have any extra to give.

Schools are often at breaking point sharing TA resources and expecting staff to work through lunchtimes to support students who find social settings hard. If a school says it cannot meet the needs of the child – this is the case. I am appalled with this article and shocked at the lack of understanding shown. Perhaps the writer should visit a Reading secondary school, then ask the schools what support they are able to offer and what support is expected when a new child joins. If parents and the local authority would like to add extra children to a year, then fund the student place.



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

## Budget 2020: what do schools need to know?

### Chris Burgess

School staff are feeling demoralised due to lack of funding. A considerable amount of schools are having to restructure, with staff being made redundant. SENDCo staff are exhausted, filling forms in and not receiving funding because authorities have no money. Children with special educational needs are not receiving the support they deserve. It is shocking... I have worked in a school for 18 years and I feel really sad.

### Wendy Roberts

Where is any extra funding for junior schools and for children and young people with special needs? These areas have been significantly depleted in recent years. Children and young people with special needs are especially vulnerable and appeared to have been forgotten in all this purported largesse from the chancellor. It is bitterly disappointing.



# Aspiration Awards 2020

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\*The NCFE Aspiration Awards are conducted entirely remotely and do not include a ceremony.

## Feature

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

# How schools led the way on free school meals

**At a time of uncertainty and lack of clarity from the top, many school leaders have been sharing ideas on how to keep disadvantaged pupils fed, ahead of today's coronavirus school shutdown.**

Schools this week took the lead to ensure poorer pupils are provided with free school meals, with staff providing food hampers and buying up supermarket vouchers to distribute.

Government guidance published yesterday morning (Thursday) stated schools should work with catering providers or councils to provide food parcels, or send out supermarket vouchers to pupils eligible for free school meals who are off school from today because of coronavirus closures.

The official guidance takes the lead from schools who have already set such operations in place throughout the week – in advance of a possible closure announcement.

Consilium Academies, which has eight secondary schools in the north-east and north-west of England, has ensured that parents of around 30 per cent of its pupils will get £10 supermarket vouchers on a weekly basis, either through the post or delivered by hand.

"In some cases, it has meant business managers literally driving around to Asda, getting in as many [vouchers] as they've got in stock," said chief executive David Clayton. "In other cases, we have been able to do it online, but we've been trying to get in place as quickly as possible because we just don't know when closure is going to happen."

He is one of several school leaders sharing their plans publicly, helping others to formulate their contingency plans. While the government's guidance sets out what they think schools should do, it effectively leaves it up to headteachers to ensure poorer pupils are fed.

regardless of need, who is self-isolating.

"It's just shown we're all in it together," he told BBC Radio 5 Live on Wednesday. "The community are happy we've got plans in place for their children. The community spirit is getting so strong at the minute."

## "I think it's sad, the extent to which we are being tested"



Chris Dyson

Heads also haven't been told what value vouchers they should buy for pupils, nor how long they should order them for.

"I think it's sad, the extent to which we are being tested – the sooner we get some clarity, the better, because I think the pressure on school leaders, in particular, is absolutely immense," Clayton added.

In Leeds, Parklands Primary School will keep its kitchen open to provide food to be dropped off at local authority schools across the city.

Headteacher Chris Dyson said they will also be providing food hampers for pupils on free school meals and a packed lunch for any child,

Schools don't normally have to provide free school meals for pupils who are away due to illness or school closure, but the government has said it "expects schools to continue to provide support" during the pandemic.

The government said yesterday [Thursday] it was developing a "national approach to providing support through supermarket and shop vouchers". In the meantime, schools can "source vouchers in the local area".

But Chris Smith, headteacher of Dereham Neatherd High School in Norfolk, said his school had been "given the message that they [supermarkets] are all so overwhelmed with requests, that they cannot meet demand, and need a different



David Clayton



# How schools led the way on free school meals

strategy”.

Dyson also said this may be problematic since “there might not be food to collect”. Supermarkets in some areas were reported this week as running out of key food supplies.

Stuart Lock, chief executive of Advantage Schools, said schools need to make reclaiming vouchers “as easy as possible to do”.

Some schools are now making use of technology firms to get vouchers to pupils. These include Huggg, a micro-gifting platform that makes it possible for vouchers to be delivered to people via an online link. The firm is waiving its costs, but will take a small margin in vouchers to cover the cost of administration.

None of the major supermarkets responded to Schools Week’s enquiry about committing to helping further.

But the Co-Op supermarket chain announced on Tuesday that it will provide lunch for all 6,500 students who normally receive government-funded free school meals at the 25 Co-Op academies trusts in the north of England, should they close.

Co-op Food chief executive Jo Whitfield also called for a nationwide effort involving the government to make sure no child goes hungry “just because they can’t go to school”.

Charities and academics have called for cash transfers to be given directly to individuals or households “as this is by far the most effective tool in order to aid families to weather the storm”.

They also want provisions put in place to ensure



blogger, said: “Schools will play a key role in supporting families living in food poverty. They will need to focus their efforts on those in greatest need, irrespective of free school meals status. Extra funding is essential, as is reassurance that schools will not be penalised for using it to help hungry families.”

In terms of the cost, Clayton said he is prioritising funding for their free school meal plans, but would look to use reserves if needed.

Lock said that, if he is allowed, he would dip into reserves to help with supermarket vouchers costs. “Many schools don’t have substantial reserves to allocate, and they will have really difficult choices

in the area. “Schools have got so many decisions to make,” she said. “If I can sort these boxes out and take them to the schools, then it’s one thing that might just help.”

But the Trussell Trust, which supports over 1,200 food banks, said the government should provide an emergency uplift in child benefit to support poorer families.

The government’s guidance stated that schools’ first step should be to contact their in-house catering team or provider to see if they can prepare “meals or food parcels that could be delivered to, or collected by families”.

Those unable to do so should consider using “other local initiatives”, such as local schools acting as a community hub, or a local charity. If not, schools should provide vouchers.

Ben Gadsby, policy and research manager at youth charity Impetus, questioned whether schools could keep kitchens open by using trained staff not currently needed in restaurants and cafes.

“These unprecedented times create big problems that need an equally big response, but we also need to take advantage of systems and process that already exist.”

He also suggested helping the “gig economy” by schools utilising drivers from Deliveroo and Uber Eats to deliver meals for children who aren’t in school – with the government picking up delivery costs.

“Can we even expand all of this to sell additional low-cost lunches to families and others in the community who are in need? This is not easy, and schools will need support. But it’s do-able, and do-able is exactly what we need right now.”

## “It’s do-able, and do-able is exactly what we need right now”

that children in migrant families, including those with no recourse to public funds (where they are unable to claim most benefits) can access these emergency funds.

The charity Feeding Britain has also drawn up contingency plans which include working with a core group of schools in different areas to prepare hot meals for parents whose children are on free school meals to take home.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson said in parliament on Wednesday that the new measures will only apply to pupils on free school meals, not pupils who receive universal infant free school meals (those in reception, year 1 and year 2).

Andy Jolley, school governor and education

to make,” he said. “Of course, this compromises exciting plans we have for our schools, but keeping the poorest children safe and healthy at this time is more important.”

As Schools Week went to press, the government said it will issue further guidance “shortly” on how it will compensate schools that incur additional costs when providing meals or vouchers.

Meanwhile, food banks – which often see an increase in the number of parcels provided to children during school holiday periods – have said they will do all they can to support people.

Louise Kinlen, head of pre prep at S. Anselm’s School in Derbyshire, is helping collect donations from parents to create food hampers for schools

# HOW TO IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STAFF



By Paul Matthias,  
National Director of  
Hays Education

**M**ental health and wellbeing is becoming an increasing priority for schools, and now more than ever staff workload and wellbeing must be prioritised and reported upon by school leaders.

There are number of reasons why improving mental health and wellbeing of staff is important. Put simply, you can't expect your staff to remain motivated to stay and give their role 100% if you don't support them in their position and wellbeing.

With funding a major challenge, I wanted to share with you some simple low-cost actions your school can take to enhance mental wellbeing for staff.

## 1. Encourage staff to share their stories

Whether it's through an informal staff room chat or an agenda point on a staff meeting, provide the means for your staff to share their stories. It will help an individual to not feel isolated and most importantly allow others to understand that other people have had similar experiences, be it a work-related or personal challenge they are facing.

## 2. Consider wellbeing training

Wellbeing-focused training for staff can really help in making sure staff wellbeing is at the heart of every school. Wellbeing First, our free service available for school staff across the UK, provides a selection of free courses to help staff manage their stress levels, reduce their anxiety and discover how to foster positive mental health.



## 3. Communication is key

Some schools have taken steps such as designed posters with 'Top Tips for Wellbeing' or with signposts to get help if needed, such as Employee Assistance Programmes, to drive awareness and help. Think about how often do you talk about it with staff, School Leadership Teams or in Governors' meetings – could this be improved?

## 4. Promote mindfulness

There are lots of ways you can promote mindfulness within your school, starting with simple options such as introducing mindfulness books into the staff room or school library. You can also promote free apps to download to encourage mindfulness or take up our mindfulness module as part of our Wellbeing First service.

## 5. A staff charter

Do you have a staff charter? Staff charters encourage a positive work-life balance and help towards taking steps to address some of the underlying reasons staff feel stressed. Some of the actions include:

- After school meetings to have an agreed finishing time
- A minimum of one evening per week where staff don't take work home

For more information on the free Wellbeing First or other training courses, visit: <https://educationtraining.hays.co.uk/>

**HAYS** Recruiting experts  
in Education

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

**ASCL general secretary, Geoff Barton responds to the announcements of school closures and the cancellation of this year's exam series**

In truth, this was always inevitable. Commentators and pundits have been clamouring for schools to close, and despite the advice that keeping children and young people in school keeps them safe, it couldn't last once teachers and other staff began to self-isolate. One ASCL member said to me on Monday that their school was running on "20 per cent of staff off, and not a single supply teacher available". The safety argument was no longer holding.

Now that the decision has been made, we should view the coming weeks and months in three phases.

First, we need to get ourselves to Easter – to provide some semblance of education for the children of key workers and 'vulnerable' pupils, accepting that these are fuzzily defined. With regards to key workers, we'll get a tighter definition soon but it may be wise in the meantime to take as broad a view as possible of who they are in order to keep the country at least partially open.

As to 'vulnerable children', the government's working definition includes those with EHCPs and those with a social worker. The reality for education leaders is that we will also want to ensure the wellbeing of those on free school meals, those with special needs, and those who – frankly – you would worry about leaving in their homes for days and weeks on end. Who should stay in school next week is going to vary from one school to another.

Phase two will be the Easter break. That schools will be expected to keep provision going for some young people over the holidays is uncharted territory,



GEOFF BARTON

General secretary, Association of School and College Leaders

## A phased approach makes school leaders' success inevitable

and all of us – not least those children – are going to need some respite, but there's enough to get on with in phase 1. Planning for phase

reduced offer. Local authorities, partnerships, trusts and individual settings will all have a part to play in reinventing our work and sustaining

**“This is a time for maximum focus on communication**

2 will need to begin in earnest next week as government expectations, school needs and system capacity become clearer.

Beyond Easter, phase 3 will see us build a more joined-up form of provision, with collaboration across schools and colleges – strategically deploying teachers, teaching assistants and other staff to support the continuing operation of our

capacity.

There will be criticism from within and without that schools have transformed into a national babysitting service. If that's what it takes to get through this crisis, so be it. The BBC and others will be creating a host of resources, and teachers are dedicated professionals. I am confident that we will find a way to continue offering young people



opportunities to develop.

Yesterday's biggest bombshell was the cancellation of this year's exam series. The simple truth is that doing so was the fairest thing for young people amid a disruption that would have made for impossible inconsistency otherwise. But we, as leaders and teachers, have amazing expertise in making moderated assessments for our students. We have an opportunity to demonstrate that, as well as our professional strength and our generosity of spirit in the long term. Students awarded grades based on these assessments will proceed into sixth forms, colleges and universities without having done the usual battery of tests, and it is up to us to ensure they do so successfully.

My proud predecessor, Sir John Dunford taught me that leadership is 10 per cent doing things and 90 per cent explaining why you've done them. This is a time for maximum focus on communication – explaining to staff, pupils and communities what's happening now and what may happen next.

That's no easy feat when what was normal last week has already faded away. It's even harder when so many of your own questions are yet unanswered. That's why work is ongoing to set up a national task group to work through the detail, address questions, target extra resources, and give school and college leaders a sense that they are not working alone.

In the meantime, ASCL and I are here for our members. Together, we can steer a steady course through this crisis.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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SHEILA  
MULVENNEY

Director, Attuned Education

## COVID-19: vulnerable students need key adults to fight through isolation

**As schools rush to put home learning and free meals in place, we mustn't forget the importance of key adults in vulnerable children's lives, writes Sheila Mulvenney**

Even in normal times, the combination of overwhelming stress and lack of adults who can help them manage it can lead children and young people to be unable to regulate their behaviour. As we face the very real possibility of school closures, we need to be aware that many vulnerable children may end up with reduced access to the very adults who help them to manage themselves. And this in the midst of a situation of prolonged, repeated and inescapable stress for the nation that is likely to be felt hardest by the most vulnerable among us.

While schools are still open, it is important to remember that children as well as the adults trying to shield them from it will be suffering from the effects of stress, whether it is evident or not. While small doses of stress can be good for us (call them life's "desirable difficulties") resilience is really all about context.

Stress is an integral part of learning. In every class, we know that we have students who cope

well with it and students who don't. Those who don't are likely either to be experiencing other stress in or outside of school, or to have

**“It's easy to forget, but we are not born able to regulate**

experienced toxic stress, which can cause injury to the developing brain.

The term toxic stress is used to describe stress which is overwhelming, where there is not enough support from calm adults to help the child regulate. When this happens repeatedly to the developing brain, the result is that the survival instinct (designed to help us fight, flee or freeze to keep us safe) is repeatedly activated. Children who have experienced this are likely to respond to situations where they perceive threat with aggression, reluctance, refusal or disengagement. Situations that otherwise might appear simple enough to cope with quickly become overwhelming – doing work that's challenging, not being able to sit where they want, the absence of the teacher they were expecting, and so on.

While teachers will be undergoing



their own stresses, and protecting them from undesirable challenge in the classroom is important, simply sanctioning unwanted student behaviours that are the result of stress is likely to be ineffective. The key is to afford the student the

opportunity to learn how to self-regulate.

It's easy to forget, but we are not born able to regulate. An infancy and childhood of having needs met, developing healthy attachment, and experiencing the soothing actions of a caring adult teaches us how to do this for ourselves. It is entirely dependent on adults being available. Predictably, insecure attachments are therefore more likely in situations where there are other adversities (domestic violence, deprivation or substance misuse, for example) or in situations of toxic stress (such as neglect or abuse). But they can develop in any child.

The absence of someone they can trust and attach to so that they can "co-regulate" with them could create the space for many children and young people to unlearn what calm feels like and make repairing

the damage caused by their sustained-survival response all the harder in future. And those most likely to need and to miss the key adults they rely on in school are the very same who are least likely to have access to the home-learning opportunities schools are frantically (read: stressfully) working to develop.

In short, the evolving situation of this pandemic has the potential to re-traumatise a huge number of children, so it's time to ditch the myth that resilience can be developed through adversity. Recent developments in the study of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) seem to show that adversity without support or compensatory experience causes damage to the developing brain rather than developing "character" or "grit". Recovery from such trauma and adversity may mean that resilience is developed, but not all resilience mechanisms are pro-social.

Schools are already identifying their most vulnerable students and making sure they have access to the hot meals they would otherwise miss. Access to a key adult through regular communication could be just as important to their healthy development.

## Opinion

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

Director at Public First

Exams have been cancelled –  
so what happens now?

**Minimum bureaucracy and maximum reliability. Simons weighs up the options for awarding students their interrupted qualifications**

Robert Half, the American businessman, once said “it’s easy to make good decisions when there are no bad options”. Gavin Williamson is now grappling with the opposite. Because it’s not only easy, but inevitable, that bad decisions are made when there are no good options.

In a fast-moving crisis, you can’t afford to wait for good options. But thoughts now turn to what replaces the exams that Years 11 and 13 (and older learners) have been spending two years working towards. They’ll rightly be anxious – as will their parents and teachers.

Logically, there are only three things that can now be done. We can abandon the system altogether and no qualifications be awarded. Exams can be taken later in the year at an unspecified time. Or there can be some other system for awarding qualifications to the usual timetable.

The first is possible but highly undesirable. Qualifications serve to recognise student achievement, as

well as a signal onto their next stage. That’s still needed.

It’s possible to have them taken later in the year. But at this moment we simply don’t know when – or if – schools will reopen. We can’t

“Centres, and students, need to be given total clarity over how Ofqual will do this

say we’ll definitely hold them in, say, September. Even if we could, it’s not clear we could reorganise all other elements of education, as well as work, around an extension of the school year.

So that leaves only the option of awarding grades by other means. How to do this? We want a system that balances three things: maximum certainty for students and exam centres about how grades will be awarded; minimum bureaucracy and burden in generating these; and maximum reliability and disaggregation between students’ achievement. Naturally – because why would things be simple – these three goals can be in tension.

We could set some other test – one that requires no additional learning, and is quick to mark. This would



score high in certainty for learners; high(ish) in reliably disaggregating student outcomes, but poorly for bureaucracy.

We could somehow make a holistic judgement on students’ performance to date. This would involve some form of best fit overall judgement on a student and award a grade on that basis. This gives less

certainty for learners, probably less disaggregation, and probably quite a lot of effort.

Or we could simply use predicted grades. This gives maximum certainty, a reasonable disaggregation of achievement, and minimal effort – because, of course, predicted grades have already been made, especially for A Levels.

The obvious pushback is how we ensure such grades are remotely valid. There’s a significant literature showing that teacher judgements are hugely variable. In addition, there’s a differential bias seen in the system when it comes to A Level predicted grades in particular between different centres as well as the curse of over- or under-predictions.

This is where Ofqual comes in. All

centres would submit predicted grades to Ofqual for their GCSE and A Level students. As they would do if the grades were submitted by exam boards, Ofqual would scrutinise these, and ask – based on everything we know about that student (prior attainment etc), and about that centre (previous GCSE and A Level grades) – do these seem right? If not, they adjust the grades up and down accordingly.

Three more things need to happen. First, centres and students need to be given total clarity over how Ofqual will do this and what the margin for error is, and centres need clear guidance to help them submit correct grades. Second, students need to be reassured that Ofqual’s goal is to support them to get grades that are fair and as close as possible to what they would have got in their exams. Third, if a centre or students really don’t want to do this, they must be supported as far as possible to resit some or all paper exams as soon as they can – perhaps next January, or even next summer.

There are several perfectly sensible objections to this system. But in a time of national crisis, we need a best-fit decision – and to all back it.

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

**Bunkum and divination have made their way on to educator development programmes and even leadership interviews, write Matt Hood and Neil Gilbride**

Whether you're a teacher or teacher educator, curriculum development is one of the most fascinating and hardest parts of the job. Given limited time, what to include and what to leave out can be agonising.

In educator development, as in teaching, decisions on what to include haven't always been as research-informed as they should have been. As a result, content has seeped into programmes that the evidence suggests shouldn't be there.

A good example is efforts to develop or understand educators' personality traits or psychological constructs. It may very well be the right thing to do, but, at least right now, we seem to have collectively put the cart before the horse. So far before it, in fact, that it has worked its way into school leadership interviews too!

If we are going to try to develop certain traits or constructs among school leaders, and screen candidates based on these, four important questions need answering before we do so.

The obvious place to start is whether we can reliably assess the traits and constructs in the first place. We face two challenges here. The first is that the small number of reliable psychological assessments we do have haven't been widely used with school leaders. There is some work, but this is still at an early stage and needs scaling up. A relatively easy fix but we need to do that research.

Next, most of what's out there and being used in school leadership

MATT HOOD

Founder, Ambition Institute

NEIL GILBRIDE

Lecturer in education, University of Gloucestershire

## Should character play any part in educator development?

development isn't one of these reliable assessments. What's being used in practice is often not the same as what is being used by researchers

require resorting to quizzes that create an illusion of science without any substance.

The second question regards which

“Content has seeped into programmes that evidence suggests shouldn't be there

– and for good reason. Most are pure bunkum, akin to palm-reading or astrology. And we don't yet have the expertise we need in the system to spot them and call them out for what they are.

While leaders often discuss the pragmatic benefit of these tests for individuals and their organisations, there are a number of ways of facilitating discussions about how teams work together that don't

traits and constructs lead to better outcomes for pupils. Assuming we weed out the palm-reading by doing the research at scale, we then have to identify the combination of traits and constructs that more effective school leaders possess. We simply don't know which – or which combination, if any – leads to changes in educator behaviours, and we don't know if those different educator behaviours lead to better pupil outcomes.



Having selected those most likely to have greatest impact, we then need to know how to develop them, and in doing that we face three instructional challenges. First, when it comes to personality traits like the Big Five (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neurosis), evidence suggests that they are largely fixed – we can't develop them, even if we want to.

Second, there are many constructs we simply don't know how to develop.

And third, for those constructs we think we can develop, we have limited research on how to develop people into more advanced ways of working. For example, moving individuals in later stages of adult ego development would appear to require more than the disorientating experiences that are so successful for individuals in earlier stages.

Lastly, we still need to ask whether any of this work is worth it. Assuming we manage to improve assessment, identify desirable traits and constructs and work out how to develop them in school leaders, we're back to the educator's curriculum dilemma. Is prioritising this work more important than developing greater expertise in other facets of leadership, such as curriculum or pastoral work?

Simply put, we need far more high-quality research in this area. When – and only when – we have good answers to these four questions should personality traits of any kind be part of our leadership development practice. Much less should such a stab in the dark be deployed as part of screening leadership candidates at interview.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

**Schools, teachers and students deserve better than to see their stories reduced to statistical snapshots, writes filmmaker and ex-teacher Jaime Taylor**

In the end, it's teachers in classrooms that make a difference. It doesn't matter if it's attainment or behaviour, aspirations or beliefs, nothing improves without them. But they are doing this work in the face of increasing challenges, and the way in which they are represented is not helping.

The stories we hear and the stories we tell matter. They shape how we perceive ourselves and each other. And it isn't just a question of subject matter, but how stories are told and who gets to hear them. Nacro's recent report on tackling knife crime makes a powerful recommendation to listen to the young people most affected by it in the search for solutions. Similarly, the Royal Society of Arts wrote recently about the importance of empowering young people to shape their own social action agendas.

But that's easier said than done when young people have a particularly pessimistic outlook on their life chances. According to the Social Mobility Commission's annual Social Mobility Barometer released last month, only one-third of 18-to-24-year-olds believe everyone in Britain has a fair chance to progress.

It's harder still when their pessimism is at least partly justified. Recent figures from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation show that 4.1 million children are trapped in poverty, a rise of 500,000 since 2011-12. That's nine children in a typical classroom of 30 whose opportunities and life chances are restricted by poverty.

But of course, they are not distributed evenly, and concerns continue to grow that the way we run the school



JAIME  
TAYLOR

Co-director, *H is for Harry*

## Accountability snapshots tell an incomplete story of schools

system is a barrier to releasing kids from the grip of poverty. The way Ofsted grades and league table places are awarded too often

for Harry, and it is just as much about his teacher, Sophie as it is about him.

Despite Harry's outwardly confident appearance, Sophie quickly

“Debates have become disconnected from the experiences of students and teachers

reflect our economic divisions, and communities trapped in poverty are disproportionately affected by the ongoing teacher recruitment and retention crisis.

Lucky for Harry then, that he and Sophie found each other. My co-director, Ed Owles and I spent two years observing 11-year-old Harry as he started secondary school as the third generation in his family unable to read and write. The resulting feature documentary is entitled *H is*

recognises a child who struggles intensely to believe in himself. She sees the potential in him and starts to work closely with him and his dad to encourage that belief in them too. Sophie's skilled navigation through the frequent challenges and the incredible energy, love and commitment reflected in her actions throw into acute relief both the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the power of narrative.



By contrast, teachers like Sophie and schools in general are too often represented by snapshots – one-off observations, Ofsted grades from short and irregular inspections, and league tables based on just one year's data. Such snapshots lack the narrative depth of an ongoing exploration. The result is that important debates at system levels – school, local authority or national – have become disconnected from the experiences of students and teachers, with all the attendant problems for recruitment, retention, wellbeing and self-belief.

For teachers to show the kind of patient, personalised approach Sophie does with Harry, they need time, support from the top and a conducive climate. Over-reliance on what the United Nations have called “information shortcuts” to shape policy fails everyone, especially if these measures penalise teachers and schools in less affluent areas.

Our small contribution has been to create a documentary film with a CPD Toolkit and Vision for Change supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to lead audiences to engage with the real people at the centre of the education and social mobility debate – students and teachers.

They deserve fewer snapshots and more of the documentary approach to capture their performance. That means taking your time and letting your subjects tell their own stories. Getting that right is the only way we'll get started on sustainably tackling the pessimism and entrenched inequalities that blight our system

# Research

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

## Do we value hard thinking, and what does it look like in the classroom?

**Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate dean at Ambition Institute**

In Rob Coe's memorable formulation, learning "happens when people have to think hard". As his very next line noted, however, this is "vague" and "over-simplistic". It tells us nothing about how we ensure our students are thinking hard, and begs the question whether our training and systems place enough value on doing so.

A recent report from Deans For Impact implies that new teachers may not recognise the value of thinking hard. The report notes that a student "needs to actively think about information in order to remember it – simply being repeatedly exposed to the information is not enough to create a long-term memory."

Yet they found that almost none of the American trainee teachers they questioned appreciated this. Asked whether it was true or false that "Any kind of repeated exposure to information makes it more likely the information will be moved into long-term memory" only six per cent of trainees correctly identified this as false. As the authors point out, "Exposure to information is not, by itself, enough [...] Information can only be remembered if the learner actively thinks about it."

What we value affects our practice. The trainees in this research didn't just lack theoretical knowledge; offered a choice of activities and asked which would best help students to remember new learning, only 13 per cent were able to select the activity that best promotes meaningful thinking.

As to what kinds of activities those are, two papers offer valuable guidance.

The first, by Pooja Agarwal, looked at the value of different kinds of questions for encouraging particular kinds of



thinking. She found that asking factual questions improved students' memories of those facts, while asking questions demanding more complicated thinking improved students' memories of more complicated thinking. This supports a theory that "encoding processes engaged during learning" need to "match retrieval processes engaged during testing". In other words, we need to get students to practise the kind of thinking we want them to be able to do.

The second, by Bob and Elizabeth Bjork, explains the value of "making things hard on yourself, but in a good way". The authors describe the value of desirable difficulties which strengthen the "storage strength" of memories – the durable connections between one memory and other, related, knowledge and skills. High storage strength for a memory makes it last, even if we don't use it for a long time. For example, we may not have played a game or musical instrument for years, but find that the hours of practice we once put in come back to us when we pick it up again.

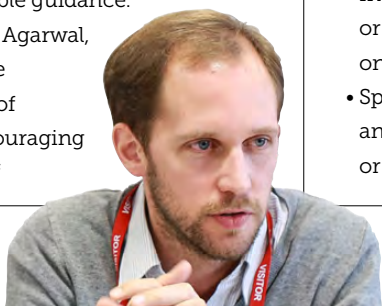
Desirable difficulties include:

- Interleaving: practising a mixture of topics or questions at once, rather than focusing on one kind of question at a time.
- Spacing: leaving gaps between teaching and revision sessions, rather than learning or practising only one topic at a time.

- Generating answers, solutions and procedures: "Basically, any time that you [...] look up an answer or have somebody tell or show you something that you could [...] generate instead, you rob yourself of a powerful learning opportunity."
- Varying the conditions or the context of practice: asking students to practise in different situations or answer different kinds of questions.

Not all difficulties are desirable. If they are so difficult that students can't answer correctly, they will only cause frustration. Nor will this approach suit every topic and subject. If you are following a narrative in English or in history, it makes little sense to interleave it with other topics (although you could ask students to make links to other stories they have studied previously). However, correctly pitched and judiciously applied, these difficulties can help students think harder, forming stronger memories that can be retrieved more easily later.

When we introduce desirable difficulties and practise the challenging thinking we want students to do, we make the learning process harder; but we make the learning product richer, deeper and more secure. Perhaps Rob Coe's claim that "Learning happens when people have to think hard" is more profound than it initially seems. It should guide everything we do as teachers.



# Reviews



**Penny Rabiger takes over our 'blogs of the week' slot once every half-term to point to the best of the education podcasts**

@Penny\_Ten

## Trauma, Resonance, Resilience podcast

Lisa Cherry's podcast series is a multi-agency, interdisciplinary resource for those who work in education, social care, criminal justice or health and who want to listen to conversations that make a difference. In this podcast series, Lisa and her guests explore better ways of working together, sharing emerging research that informs practice while deep diving into empathy, connection and vulnerability. The episode which caught my eye was the most recent one with Dr Muna Abdi on narratives, anti-racism and education. Muna draws on her personal, professional and academic research experiences to explore the parts that trauma, resonance and resilience play in the lives of students and adults of colour in our education system.

## The Emotional Curriculum podcast

Dr Sarah Taylor-Whiteway talks to academics about their research and how it can be used and applied in schools.



School exclusions rose by 40 per cent between 2013 and 2019. In response, an investigation was opened by the education select committee, which led to the Timpson Review and recommendations. Schools are naturally concerned about behaviour management and exclusions, but this rarely focuses beyond the impact on the school. In episode 6 of the series, educational psychologist Carina Embeita is invited to share her research, which explored parental views following the exclusion and reintegration of their child. Dr Taylor-Whiteway discusses with her how exclusion and reintegration are inseparable experiences for parents and what this suggests in terms of the support that reintegrating schools can offer.

## Oxfordshire Teacher Training podcast

This is a podcast intended for those working in initial teacher training but each episode does provide some good insights for all areas of the sector. Although there is only a handful of episodes and the sound quality is not great, it does give an interesting window on to the sorts of things that trainee teachers are being guided towards in their training. I have chosen episode 4, which is on resilience from the perspective of the teacher. Here, host Matthew Coatsworth talks with David Gumbrell, author of *Lift!*, about

resilience and explores some practical advice for teachers, whether they are at the start of their career or have many years' experience.

## The Nourished Collective podcast

This podcast dives into a broad range of topics around ethical leadership in education. Host Angie Browne takes her own experiences as an education leader as a starter for ten and invites discussion, conversation and debate with educators to really dig in. Keeping on this week's Penny's Podcasts review theme of emotional responses to our education system, I chose episode 4, entitled "The Disingenuous System". Here, Browne asks: "Why does the education system insist on telling us that we should be able to cope?" The episode is about the importance of acknowledging the truth of the situation we are in, in order to undergo transformation and move forward. While, on the one hand, resilience is key to being a teacher in any context, on the other, are we being pushed to accept conditions or circumstances that are unacceptable?

## Human Enquiry Project podcast

Manoj Krishna trained as a doctor in India before coming to the UK to pursue a career as a spinal surgeon, and later to write a book and to launch the Human Enquiry Project. The episode I have chosen from the podcast series is a talk given by Krishna in 2018 at the North East Teachers' Conference, organised by Total Teaching. Krishna spoke about the aspirations of children to be happy, healthy, successful and to live with a sense of peace, and how education was only helping them get a good job. He explores how an understanding of ourselves and how our minds work may help meet the other needs children have. He explores the key principles of the enquiry and ends with two examples – exploring our conditioning; and asking "What is happiness?"

CLICK ON LINKS FOR PODCASTS +



# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Reframing Education

**Author:** Mike Murray

**Publisher:** John Catt Educational

**Reviewer:** Cassie Young, head of school and SENCo, Brenzett CE Primary School

We are awash with books about education: leadership, well-being, classroom practice, behaviour and on it goes. It can be difficult to know whether a book will support your professional development or patronise you, enrich your professional life or waste your personal time. There is a danger of feeling quite cheated when you pick up a book and are left uninspired afterwards, especially when you're dipping into the "life" bit of your "work/life balance" to read it.

I was relieved, then, when Mike Murray's *Reframing Education* appeared to be a short, manageable book for someone whose reading time is all too often non-existent. Reading the synopsis, I was surprised that it claimed to cover everything from data and sustainable education to gender and growth mindsets. Can such huge areas of education really be covered in less than 160 pages, including ten recommendations and frames for a renewed education system? The short answer is no. But here is the really great thing: *Reframing Education* really does give valuable overviews of current thinking about some of the most intricate and embattled areas in education, in a quick, easily digestible and wholly accessible way.

Whether you like the accountability system we work within or whether you would scrap the lot and start afresh, the author offers a fair overview and a positive alternative, regardless of the current rhetoric. Murray very helpfully

signposts to further reading, and it isn't all just to support his perspective and ideology; it eases that initial feeling that it is a manifesto to support the most vocal among the education landscape. *Reframing Education* subtly makes very valid points and allows you to think deeply about your own standpoint and reflect on how these areas of discourse could be changed to real effect.

Murray tackles the buzzwords that are flooding our schools at the moment. He explains their origins and the way they may present themselves within establishments, then uses this baseline to reframe each idea, movement or policy that has either been implemented or suggested in recent years to tackle the education system's many challenges. He also successfully highlights some of the contradictions we are working against and how these can be overcome by reducing high-stakes, data-led accountability. This does seem radical and easy to dismiss as an overly simplistic dream, yet the author writes in such a way that it is both difficult to dismiss and conducive to optimism.

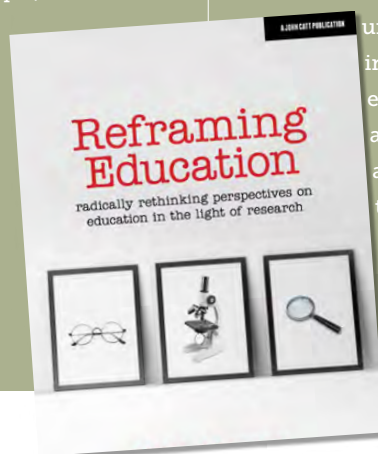
Some chapters are simple, commonsense viewpoints, which is sometimes sorely missing from discussions around these research areas. The author explores ideas such as growth mindsets and rightly points out that, used in

its purest form, it can really be beneficial to our pupils and hugely positive for teacher-student relationships; however, while we still remain in a system that measures our success by data and fixated with outcomes, the parameters contradict each other.

Remarkably, Murray then discusses the same subject in the context of social and cultural dispositions and the narrowing of curriculum, clearly demonstrating the very complicated interwoven difficulties those working at the coalface have to consider when trying to make an environment that is conducive for learning. School leaders will find plenty of food for thought on the interplay between demographics and our high-stakes accountability culture and wonder whether the latter isn't entirely counter-intuitive to the very outcomes education ought to strive for.

The book concludes with ten recommendations and "frames" for renewing education systems, which cleverly interlink and are a great platform for further discussion at any level, from classroom to boardroom. There are even suggestions for areas of investigation in journal clubs.

I felt that, rather than this being a manifesto or how-to guide, the author was urging readers to use the ideas in the book as a springboard to enrich the conversations they are already having. That is rare among education books. Taken together with the positivity and optimism that underpin it, *Reframing Education* is altogether an unassumingly revolutionary little tome.



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## SATURDAY

Ever a committed constituency MP, Gavin Williamson did his best to promote his local area when he met with journalists at the ASCL conference last week.

Reporters were led to a windowless room in the basement of the International Convention Centre in Birmingham to quiz the education secretary on the government's response to coronavirus.

"Welcome to my manor," the politician said, cheerily. "Well [it's] not quite Wolverhampton, but heading there. Next time we'll have to get you all together in Wolverhampton."

We hope he'll offer to pay the tram fare!

## MONDAY

DfE permanent secretary Jonathan Slater was keen to tell MPs on the public accounts committee this week that his department's cost-saving consultants had found £10 million of potential savings in UTCs.

But the DfE's eagerness to share details of savings found by its school resource management advisers is somewhat newfound.

When *Schools Week* asked for details last year, we were told the findings were "confidential".

It turns out they're only confidential until you want to use them to make you look good during a grilling by MPs.

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At this time of national crisis, the Department for Education Facebook page is here to remind you...to prepare for the times tables tests?

Despite everything being up in the air, the department posted on Monday that it was "just one week" before the administration application opens for schools to use.

"Are you ready?" the upbeat post asks of schools.

The test, along with all others planned for this academic year, is now cancelled, but schools will no doubt be grateful that, at the right moment, they were still being kept on their toes.

## TUESDAY

Boris Johnson appeared to get caught off-guard when quizzed about how the government will maintain free school meals for those who need them in the event of school closures.

Asked about the issue at his daily press briefing on Tuesday, a flustered Johnson said the government had "certainly anticipated that".

"As we come to the decision on schools, we will have plans ready to go on that," he said.

"Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, has a plan to make sure that parents with kids who are eligible for free school meals get the compensation or the treatment they need, one way or the other."

Fast-forward to later in the week, and it seems the government's "plans" that it had "ready to go" were identical to the things many heads are already doing.

Pioneering stuff!

## WEDNESDAY

If proof was needed that the education sector retains its sense of humour during this crisis, then look no further than the

multiple tweets, responding to the news that Gavin Williamson's statement in the Commons had been pushed back by 15 minutes, joking about him being marked "Late".

## THURSDAY

The Department for Education may not have managed to publish further details of its plan for school closures by Thursday morning to reassure panicking heads, but luckily it did still manage to take the opportunity to kick schools while they were down.

Because, of course, less than 24 hours after revealing that schools are going to close, and exams are going to be cancelled, is the PERFECT time to publish a name-and-shame list of schools based on their EBacc languages entries.

The release wasn't on a list of scheduled publications, so it beggars belief as to why the department felt publishing it at this point was a sensible idea.

It's a busy time for everyone – civil servants too – so we'll write this one off as an accidental oversight.





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

Salary: Competitive and TBD in light of experience and qualifications

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

Reporting to the Chief Executive of the Trust and Executive Governing Body for the cluster, the Executive Principal will provide the strategic Catholic leadership and inspiration for the cluster, motivating staff and maximizing all available resources for the cluster's 'common good'. This includes the strategic planning and management of cluster finances, staff, buildings and other resources, with a special focus on professional development and training, cultivating collegiate responses and the sharing of specialist skills and resources across the cluster. The postholder will represent the academies to the Executive Governing Body, CEO and Trust Board, the Diocesan Education Commission, and to local and central government, and their agencies as necessary.

The successful applicant will be highly motivated and innovative, accountable for ensuring, maintaining and sustaining the Catholic identity of the academies they are assigned to lead, and for ensuring that this identity is reflected in every aspect of the academies' Catholic life, so that the learning and faith outcomes of all pupils improve continuously. Consequently, we are seeking to appoint a practising Catholic, with the necessary desire, experience, expertise and qualification, to this role.

St Gregory's, Margate; St Joseph's, Broadstairs & St Mary's, Whitstable are inclusive primary academies. Their dedicated staff, helpers and Governors work hard to ensure every student is supported and challenged to be their best.

St Gregory's, Margate; St Joseph's, Broadstairs & St Mary's, Whitstable are located to the east of Kent and are easily accessible via both road & rail. Each academy enjoys spacious classrooms, large grounds, excellent student facilities and benefits from recent and substantial investment.

St Gregory's, Margate was judged 'Good' at its most recent denominational inspection in 2016 and also judged 'Good' in all areas at its recent Ofsted inspection in September 2019. St Joseph's, Broadstairs was judged 'Outstanding' in their last denominational inspection in 2016 and was also judged 'Good' in all areas at its last Ofsted inspection in February 2017. St Mary's, Whitstable was judged 'Good' in their last denominational inspection in 2016 and was also judged 'Good' in all areas at their most recent Ofsted inspection in April 2018.

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

Please click [here](#) to view the full job description and person specification, and to download an application form and all of the related documents. Please send your letter of application together with all supporting documents to the Chief Executive at: [office@kcsp.org.uk](mailto:office@kcsp.org.uk)

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

**Closing date for applications: Monday, 30th March 2020 @ 5pm**

Shortlisted candidates to be notified: no later than **Friday, 3rd April 2020**

Interviews will be held during the week commencing: **Monday, 20th April 2020**





## St Augustine's Church of England (VA) Junior School - Headteacher

**Dates:** Closing date 9.00am 3rd April  
**Salary Range:** L 12 - 21 depending on experience (£53,856 - £67,183)  
**Location:** Woodston, Peterborough  
**No. of Children:** 234  
**Contract type:** Full time  
**Contract term:** Permanent  
**Starting date:** September 2020

The Governing Body of St. Augustine's Church of England (VA) Junior School, are seeking a committed, dynamic Headteacher to lead and inspire a professional and supportive teaching team.

The role is an outstanding opportunity for career progression in a supportive, Christian environment. St. Augustine's offers:

- a welcoming and friendly environment, including a team of highly committed and experienced staff
- established partnerships with parents, a supportive Governing Body and the local parish
- pupils who enjoy their school, work hard and come from a diverse community
- the opportunity to work in a caring Christian environment
- professional development opportunities to help us to build on our previous "Good" Ofsted inspection

Our ideal candidate will combine proven leadership and management skills with a desire to drive continuous improvement across the school. They will seek to enrich the school's broad curriculum and will be able to think strategically, developing approaches

to teaching and learning which maintain and develop already positive academic outcomes. They will share our Christian values, calling on strong interpersonal skills to work across the whole school community to ensure every child is supported and challenged to meet their full potential.

Offering Key stage 2 to Years 3 to 6, we were designated a "good" school on our last inspection and are now looking for the Headteacher who can lead our thriving school into its next stage of success.

### How to apply:

If you have any queries or would like to arrange a visit to look around the school please contact the Chair of Governors by email at: 01733 563566 / [office@st-augustines.peterborough.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-augustines.peterborough.sch.uk)

To request further details and an application pack and form please contact the school office using the email address above. All applications should be submitted on the application form with a covering letter explaining why you are suitable for the role, via email to [office@st-augustines.peterborough.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-augustines.peterborough.sch.uk)

### Recruitment Schedule:

The closing date for applications is Friday, April 3rd at 9.00am. Any applications received after this

date will not be accepted. Short listing is due to take place in the days following.

Candidates selected for the shortlist will be notified as soon as possible following that date, unsuccessful candidates will also be notified.

**Interviews are scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 22nd and Thursday, April 23rd** and details of the selection process will be sent to you on application.

St Augustine's Church of England (VA) Junior School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Appointment to this post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check as well as other pre-appointment checks and references outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019. Applicants should note that written references will be taken up at shortlisting stage prior to interview.

**Our school vision is to be guided by God's wisdom, to embrace challenge and strive to achieve our best, enjoying all that we do together**



## Are you an ambitious leader, who wants to have a transformative impact on education?

If you want to be a key leader in an energetic, inspiring team, and benefit from opportunities for rapid growth, development and challenge, we want to hear from you.

The Skills Builder Partnership is an award-winning social enterprise. Our mission is to ensure that one day, everyone builds the skills, experiences and aspirations to succeed – beyond just a set of qualifications.

The Partnership includes over 700 schools, colleges, skills-building organisations and top employers. We are backed by sector leading organisations including the CBI, the National Education Union and the Careers & Enterprise Company.

This role is a high-impact leadership position reporting to the CEO. The Director of Education Programmes will be able to have a systemic impact as we work to make our approach, underpinned by the Skills Builder Framework, the norm in the education system.



Department  
for Education

## Regional Schools Commissioner (x3)

**Pay scale:** up to £110k per annum

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

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

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

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

**For further information, including details of how to apply for this role, please visit the Civil Service Jobs website [www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs](http://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.

# **Recruitment advertising during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

**To assist organisations over the forthcoming weeks, Schools Week and EduWeek Jobs will be offering the following:**

- **Free recruitment advertising for Coronavirus cover roles** at education settings remaining open to support key-workers
- **On all online listings**
  - A **free** of charge extension by up to 8 weeks after the closing date
- **On all adverts within the Schools Week digital edition**
  - A **free** of charge second insertion of your advert

**For more information, contact  
[clare.halliday@schoolsweek.co.uk](mailto:clare.halliday@schoolsweek.co.uk)  
or 020 3432 1397.**