

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Are calls for national curriculum reform justified?



P20-22

School leaders can start continuity planning now



P26

Black teachers continue to experience racism



P23

Schools won't get cash back for corona planning



P7

SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK | @SCHOOLSWEEK

FRIDAY, JUNE 12 2020 | EDITION 217

## What's the plan, Gavin?

Ministers told to 'get their act together' over non-existent back-to-school plans

- 

PM promises 'massive summer catch-up', but sector left waiting for details

- 

200k extra teachers needed to staff bubbles of 15 pupils in September

- 



PAGE 4

TEACH BTEC

BTECWORKS.COM



"TAKING A BTEC SHOWED ME THERE WERE DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING AND MANY PATHS TO SUCCESS."

Flex Social Media Influencer

Pearson | BTEC

# SCHOOLS WEEK

## Meet the news team



**John Dickens**  
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW  
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



**Laura McInerney**  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

@MISS\_MCIENERNEY  
LAURA.MCIENERNEY@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



**JL Dutaut**  
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@DUTAUT  
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



**Freddie Whittaker**  
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER  
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



**Samantha Booth**  
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH  
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



**James Carr**  
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR\_93  
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



**Nicky Phillips**  
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA  
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Shane Mann**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN  
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

### THE TEAM

Designer:	Simon Kay
Sales team leader:	Bridget Stockdale
Sales executive:	Clare Halliday
PA to managing director:	Victoria Boyle



BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
**SCHOOLS WEEK**  
AND **FE WEEK**

THIS WEEK'S TOP AVAILABLE JOBS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR. TO ADVERTISE YOUR VACANCY WITH EDUCATION WEEK JOBS AND SCHOOLS WEEK PLEASE CALL 020 81234 778 OR EMAIL [ADVERTISING@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:ADVERTISING@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)



**ICENI ACADEMY - PRINCIPAL - CIRCA £80K**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/3MH6](https://httpslink.com/3MH6)



**RAVENS ACADEMY - PRINCIPAL - COMPETITIVE SALARY**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/8M96](https://httpslink.com/8M96)

**SCHOOLS WEEK**

**EDU WEEK JOBS**

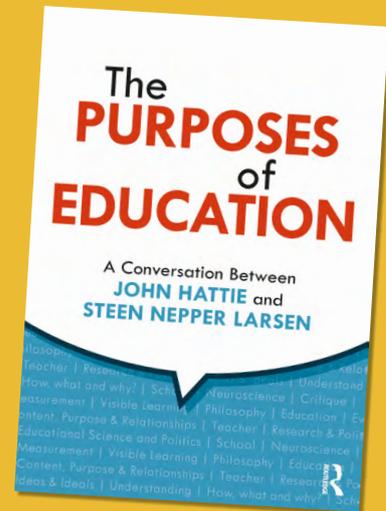
Recruitment Advertising during the Coronavirus Pandemic - how *Schools Week* and *EduWeek Jobs* can help your organisation. **See more information in the classified section.**

TO ADVERTISE YOUR VACANCY WITH EDUCATION WEEK JOBS AND PLEASE CALL 020 81234 778 OR EMAIL [ADVERTISING@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:ADVERTISING@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

### Only systemic reform will help our most vulnerable



Page 25



### Book review: Has John Hattie met his match?

Page 29



### 'My class has shown resilience that puts many adults to shame'

Page 27



### Blogs: Three perspectives on racism in education

Page 30

**Disclaimer:**  
Schools Week is owned and published by Lsect Ltd. The views expressed within the publication are those of the authors named, and are not necessarily those of Schools Week, Lsect Ltd or any of its employees. While we try to ensure that the information we provide is correct, mistakes do occur and we cannot guarantee the accuracy of our material. The design of the digital newspaper and of the website is copyright of Lsect Ltd and material from the newspaper should not be reproduced without prior permission.

If you wish to reproduce an article from either the digital paper or the website, both the article's author and Schools Week must be referenced (to not do so, would be an infringement on copyright).

Lsect Ltd is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites linked to.

Please address any complaints to the editor. Email [john.dickens@Schoolsweek.co.uk](mailto:john.dickens@Schoolsweek.co.uk) with Error/Concern in the subject line. Please include the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is.

#### ADVERTISE WITH US

If you are interested in placing a product or job advert in a future edition please click on the 'advertise' link at the top of the page on [schoolsweek.co.uk](http://schoolsweek.co.uk) or contact:

**E: [advertising@schoolsweek.co.uk](mailto:advertising@schoolsweek.co.uk)**  
**T: 020 81234 778 or [click here](#)**

SCHOOLS WEEK IS PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF



LEARNING & SKILLS EVENTS,  
CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING LTD  
163-165 GREENWICH HIGH ROAD  
LONDON SE10 8JA  
T: 020 8123 4778  
E: [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

#### SUBSCRIBE

For an annual subscription to Schools Week for just £50 visit [www.schoolsweek.co.uk](http://www.schoolsweek.co.uk) and click on 'subscribe' at the top of the page. [schoolsweek.co.uk](http://schoolsweek.co.uk) or call 020 8123 4778 to subscribe or [click here](#).

# Pressure on government grows for September plan

**JOHN DICKENS**  
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The government is under increasing pressure to produce a proper coronavirus plan for schools, particularly the renewed pledge to get all pupils back in school by September.

The fall-out follows the government dropping its “ambition” this week to get all primary pupils back to school before the summer.

Critics from across the political spectrum have slammed ministers for their lack of planning, with commentators pointing out pupils will soon be able to go to the zoo, but not return to school.

## ‘Massive catch-up operation’

Prime minister Boris Johnson was repeatedly questioned over his plans for schools during the coronavirus briefing on Wednesday.

He said the primary plans were dropped because the prevalence of the disease “is not quite down far enough to change the social distancing measures in schools”.

He promised a “massive catch-up operation” over the summer and beyond to help pupils “make up for lost time”.

He said an announcement would be made by education secretary Gavin Williamson next week. Schools Week understands this will include plans for online and face-to-face tutoring.

Meanwhile, Williamson said the government is working to “devise a priority list so that schools are able, where they do have extra capacity, to welcome back more children”.

The DfE said further details will be available “in due course”.

## Ministers need to ‘pull their finger out’

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer told Johnson this week that “parents have lost confidence in the government’s approach, millions of children will miss six months of school, and inequality will now go up.

“It’s time he [Johnson] took responsibility for his own failures. This mess was completely avoidable.”

Former education secretary Justine Greening said it is “untenable to still have no



Sir Keir Starmer



Gavin Williamson

government plan to get schools reopened... It’s absolutely crucial that ministers now pull their finger out and bring forward a plan.”

Meanwhile, former Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw said the government “needs to get its act together”, while Labour MP Meg Hillier, chair of the public accounts committee, suggested Williamson had been “asleep on the job”.

## But what can be done?

One of the plans suggested by the National Education Union, in its “national education recovery plan” published yesterday, is to teach classes in public buildings such as libraries, sports halls and religious buildings.

However, there are concerns over the lack of specialist facilities in such buildings, for example, science labs, art rooms and design and technology suites.

Others, such as education committee chair Robert Halfon, have called for an “army” of retired teachers to help out.

Analysis by Sir Jon Coles, chief executive of the country’s largest academy trust, United Learning, found classes of 15 would require 585,000 groups of pupils in England’s schools.

With at least ten per cent non-contact time for teachers, that would mean around 650,000 teachers are required. There are currently 450,000 full-time equivalent teachers in England, some of whom will also be clinically vulnerable and unable to teach.

“There is no realistic way of getting that number of additional qualified people into schools. The

reality is: we will not be able to open schools fully to all pupils until the public health advice is that it is safe to teach in groups of up to 30,” Coles said. “That is what schools have the space and staffing to do.”

He called for that advice to be communicated “clearly and unambiguously for September. It will need to be explained to parents and to staff working in schools. We will need a united message about safety from experts and across the political spectrum.”

## Shifting stances

But a noteworthy development this week is a shift towards how schools can reopen, rather than opposition to it.

The NEU, for instance, in its education plan, called for a “can do” mentality” in order not to “lose a generation, because the pandemic makes even more children poor”.

The union has previously come under fire for urging its members not to engage in any back-to-school planning and writing warning letters to headteachers looking to reopen their schools.

Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman also said this week that “people have perhaps been looking at this from the point of view of what they can’t do, rather than what they can”.

“I would love to see more people in local areas really stepping up and saying, ‘I could make this happen’ and getting as much on the road as possible this side of the summer.”

Johnson said on Wednesday he “fully intends to get all pupils back by September if the science and battle against the disease allows it”. He later added he had a “very big plan to get all pupils back to school” – but provided no further details.

News

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

# 1 in 10 secondaries to ignore reopening

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
**@FCDWHITTAKER**

More than one in ten secondary schools look set to ignore government calls to begin reopening to year 10 and 12 pupils next week.

A poll by Teacher Tapp found that although over 70 per cent of state secondary school staff reported their school would open more widely next week, 13 per cent said they were waiting until a later date, with some not planning to welcome pupils back until the autumn.

The government has asked secondary schools to begin "some face-to-face contact" with year 10 and 12 pupils from next week, but with only 25 per cent of those pupils allowed in school at any one time.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL leaders' union, said heads were "doing an enormous amount of work", adding that it was "akin to something between a military operation and an exercise in mathematics".

At Heathfield Community College in East Sussex, around 30 per cent of year 10 pupils will not be returning with their peers next week. Headteacher Caroline Barlow feels the school's rural location is to blame. "A lot of parents don't want to put their kids on the buses," she told *Schools Week*.

The year 10 pupils who are going back have been split into three groups, with each going in for one day a week. On those days, they will learn in "bubbles" of eight, each



with its own room, and no interaction with other groups.

"We could get a few more in but it means the teacher couldn't leave the desk," said Barlow.

"We've got one-way systems around the school, and new signage. But we're in competition with everyone else for PPE, cleaning wipes and hand sanitiser. I feel like I'm spending most of my time stalking Wickes.

"None of it feels quite real, but we're trying to make it as real as possible."

At Manchester Academy, year 10 has been divided into fifths, with each attending for

a day.

"Each bubble, each class, is no more than 10," says head James Eldon. "And that's dictated by two metre social distancing.

"That put a really big limit on how many rooms we could use. We're quite a big school, but in the end, there were only about 15-16 rooms that we could actually work that in, and even in some of those it was a little bit of a squeeze."

Geoff Barton said the biggest problem had been confusion about whether the 25 per cent rule applied to the year groups separately or collectively. "It took a great deal of time to obtain a clear answer from the government that it was, in fact, the latter," he added.

"This made planning extremely difficult, and it is to the great credit of schools that they have turned this round in such difficult circumstances."

Responding to a Teacher Tapp poll yesterday, ten per cent of state secondary staff said their school had already returned, either this week or last, while 71 per cent said their institution plans to reopen next week as per the government's wishes.

However, nine per cent said they would wait until next week, one per cent said they would wait until June 29 and another one per cent said their pupils would begin to return "a later date before the summer".

Three per cent of respondents said their school would not re-open to year groups until the autumn term, while five per cent said they were undecided.

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER | @SCHOOLSWEEK

## DfE silent on attendance figures breakdown

The Department for Education has refused to reveal the proportion of eligible primary pupils who returned to school last week, with estimates suggesting it was just 25 per cent.

The weekly attendance statistics published by the DfE on Tuesday showed 52 per cent of primary schools reopened to welcome back pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6 from Monday last week.

The overall attendance rose to 6.9 per cent of all pupils by Thursday last week, with 91 per cent of all educational settings open.

This is up from 2.6 per cent on May 21, the Thursday before half term, when 80 per cent of institutions remained open for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

The data also included figures for the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan (15 per cent) and key worker children (9 per cent) attending school last week.

But it did not provide a similar figure for the proportion of pupils attending based on the wider reopening.

It's tricky to work this out, as pupil

datasets contain the overall pupil numbers broken down by pupil age, not year group. However rough estimates suggest about 25 per cent of eligible pupils returned.

It appears the government does have access to the figures. Following criticism in parliament on Wednesday on the government's reopening plan, Boris Johnson said it was a "good thing that 37 per cent of kids in year 6 ... are now coming back".

However, when pressed by *Schools Week*, the DfE said it wouldn't be providing further information.

# 'Too early to draw conclusions' as school Covid cases flatline

**JAMES CARR**  
@JAMESCARR\_93

The number of coronavirus outbreaks linked to schools remained static last week despite half of primaries opening to more pupils.

Public Health England's weekly Covid-19 surveillance report, published yesterday, shows there were nine confirmed Covid-19 outbreaks in schools last week. That's the same number as recorded in the week before schools reopened.

While the news may be seen as encouraging, experts have warned "it's too early" to draw any conclusions.

Professor Allyson Pollock, director of Newcastle University's centre for excellence in regulatory science, and part of Independent Sage, said: "The government wasn't even doing community testing until very recently and people couldn't get tests until very recently, so it's terribly difficult to interpret from one week to the other."

Pollock also said a lack of detail on whether the cases related to teachers or pupils further complicated the issues. "There's just not enough information," she added.

The PHE update provides a snapshot of the virus' spread across key settings such as care homes, hospitals, schools and prisons based on surveillance systems used to monitor the pandemic.

The report showed there were 14 "acute respiratory outbreaks" in schools last week, with nine testing positive for Covid-19.

An outbreak is defined as two or more people experiencing a "similar illness, which appears to be linked to a particular setting".

Nine confirmed outbreaks were also recorded in the previous week, which was the May half-term (week commencing May 25). However, that represented a large rise on previous weeks.

Between April 20 and May 24, the number of positive tests had remained relatively low across school settings, peaking at three.

But the report does not include any further information about why there was a rise in the week beginning May 25.

On the Monday of that week, just 60 per cent of schools were open for vulnerable children and those of key workers. That's fewer than previous weeks, in which roughly 80 per cent of schools were open.

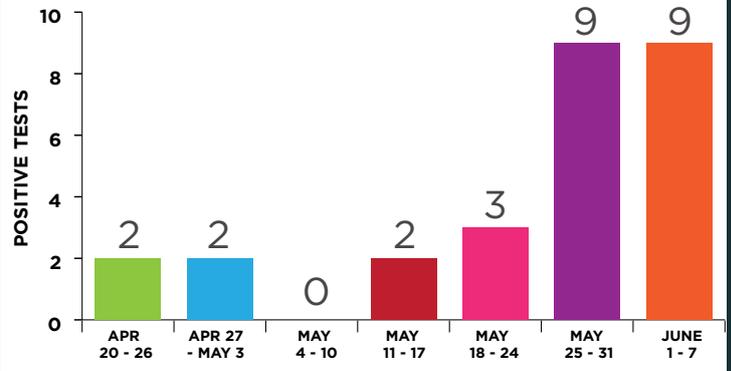
Dr Joshua Moon, a research fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), added the viruses' lengthy incubation period means any potential rises in cases caused by schools reopening would be seen in future weeks.

But Moon, who is currently working on a project studying Covid-19 testing systems, said schools' precautionary measures will "likely contribute to a reduction in the possible increase".

Last week, both care homes and hospitals had more confirmed outbreaks (68 and 31 respectively) than schools, while prisons had fewer (two).

Earlier this week, official attendance data

## COVID SCHOOL OUTBREAKS



confirmed just 52 per cent of schools which normally educate nursery, reception, year 1 or 6 welcomed back at least one of those year groups last week.

The number of teaching staff in schools increased during the week, up from 125,000 to 183,000. While the number of non-teaching staff also increased from 87,000 to 238,000.

The government this week dropped its ambition for all primary pupils to return to school before the summer, instead saying the plan is to get all pupils back in September.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said there would need to be "specific scientific advice in order to be able to say with any degree of certainty what the effect of the wider opening of schools has been on coronavirus cases.

"We certainly need to monitor the situation carefully, and react accordingly, but we would urge people against jumping to conclusions and fuelling unnecessary alarm."

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR\_93

## Schools to join coronavirus 'surveillance study'

Teachers and pupils across England will receive new coronavirus testing as part of a "surveillance study" to "assess and monitor" the spread of the disease in schools.

Under the programme's initial phase, up to 100 schools, 15 in London, will undergo swab testing by the end of the summer term. Results will be available "over the summer".

About 200 staff and pupils at each school will be tested as part of the Public Health England (PHE) study, which will add to data on antibody and virus prevalence already being

collected nationwide.

The Department for Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education to "identify suitable schools".

Participation is voluntary. Those who do take part will invite staff and pupils to participate.

About 40 per cent of the schools selected will also receive antibody tests by phlebotomists - medical professionals trained to collect blood samples.

This test will determine whether someone has had the virus and developed antibodies.

The guidance reassures schools and parents the "testing procedures are completely safe" and will be carried out by medical professionals.

The government's phased reopening of primary schools started last week, with some year 11 pupils due to go back next week.

Dr Shamez Ladhani, paediatric infectious diseases consultant at PHE, said: "The results of this study will play an important role in informing wider surveillance planned for educational settings in the autumn term."

# Schools can't claim for extra cleaning

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

The government's exceptional costs reimbursement scheme must be extended to cover preventative measures as school reopen in the coronavirus outbreak, headteachers' unions have said.

Leaders of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) told *Schools Week* the scope of the scheme drawn up by the Department for Education in April was out of date and must be widened to include preventative measures.

The department has told schools to increase the cleaning of surfaces and equipment, and provide hand sanitiser for pupils. They are also encouraged to implement one-way systems and alter classroom layouts.

But guidance on the exceptional costs fund still states that the cost of additional cleaning will only be reimbursed in the event of a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case, and that schools with additional costs should contact the department for advice.

Tracy Doyle, the finance director at Longdean School in Hertfordshire, said she had contacted the DfE to ask whether her school could claim for hand sanitiser units, screens, signage for a one-way system and higher cleaning costs.

But the department's reply, seen by *Schools Week*, reiterated that costs "can only be claimed for where there is a confirmed or suspected case of coronavirus in your institution".

The DfE said schools would be able to register "any other exceptional costs" when the claims system opened later this month, but has not guaranteed that claims for preventative measures would

**EXCLUSIVE**



be successful.

Doyle said the DfE's position was "very disappointing, even though I can't say I am surprised".

"In practice for us this has meant the purchase of sanitiser dispensers and supplies, wipes, signage, tape for floors, paint to mark out two metre spacing for students arriving on site. Costs so far are in the thousands.

"To tell us that we must arrange all this, but then to tell us that we cannot reclaim any of the costs back, is just ridiculous, particularly bearing in mind there are no plans to compensate us for the loss of income for things like lettings, so key to school budgets these days."

It is not the first time the reimbursement scheme's narrow scope has been criticised.

School leaders have said that a stipulation in the guidance that they could not claim if they were expecting to run at a surplus this year made a mockery of efforts to reduce deficits in recent years. However, others have supported the rule, saying if schools could afford it they did not need to be compensated.

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary, said the government had been "clear that schools should not be left out of pocket for these additional costs and it is vital they honour that commitment".

"NAHT believes that it is essential

that the department extends the scope of its exceptional funding guidance to include costs associated with the wider readmission of pupils as a matter of urgency."

Geoff Barton, ASCL's leader, agreed. "The existing government guidance on financial support for schools was issued in early April and was focused on the cost pressures at that time. It needs to be updated to reflect the fact that schools are bringing in more pupils, and to ensure that any extra costs are covered."

A DfE spokesperson said the exceptional costs fund was "targeted towards the costs we have identified as the biggest barrier to schools operating as they need to at this challenging time".

"Schools will be able to register the details of any other exceptional costs when the claims process opens later this month."

## TARMACADAM EXPENSIVE? ASPHALT RESURFACING

Due to large bulk purchase owing to large M.O.D. contracts, we have 800 tons of 10mm and 6mm DBM asphalt suitable for school playgrounds, car parks, tennis courts, driveways, paths, forecourts, industrial areas.

### ENQUIRIES FOR ANY JOB SIZE WELCOME

We supply and lay dense bituminous macadam surfacing to British Standard thickness rolled and consolidated for only £25 per square metre.

- COLOURS AVAILABLE BLACK, RED OR GREEN
- OFFER AVAILABLE FOR 10 WEEKS
- ALL WORK GUARANTEED FOR 15 YEARS
- £10 MILLION PUBLIC LIABILITY

### R. GOLD CONSTRUCTION LTD

Mobile: 07779 998866

HEAD OFFICE: Sandrock Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4NS

Tel: 01252 308 593

LIPHOOK DEPT: Haslemere Road, Liphook, GU30 7AL

Tel: 01428 65 88 66

CHICHESTER DEPT: Drayon Lane, Chichester, PO20 2EW

Tel: 01243 65 88 66

LONDON DEPT: Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London SW1 6NP

Tel: 0208 625 88 66

Email: sales@rgold.co.uk Web: www.rgold.co.uk

Company Registration No: 12295108

**BLOCK PAVING ALSO AVAILABLE ONLY £75 PER SQUARE METRE**

## Key points

# Ofqual quizzed on exams plan

Exams were the focus of an education select committee hearing this week, with senior staff appearing from the exams' regulator Ofqual. Here's what we found out

## 1 Consultation on 2021 exam plans due before summer break

Sally Collier, the chief regulator of Ofqual, told MPs schools needed to know what was happening with next year's exams "before the summer break ideally".

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said this week that exams would go ahead in 2021, but it was not known what adjustments would be needed to make the system work for pupils, many of whom have had their education disrupted.

Collier said consultation would start "in the coming weeks".

"Schools and teachers, they need to know very quickly - and exam boards - before the summer break ideally, as to what's going to happen in September."



## 2 'There are safeguards to pick up on teacher bias'

Ofqual has said it will not change teacher-assessed grades to take into account unconscious bias, leading to concerns that some pupils, such as those from ethnic minority backgrounds, will face discrimination.

Dr Michelle Meadows, Ofqual's deputy chief regulator, said it would "look at how those centre assessment grades vary by various protected characteristics".

"Then of course there'll be the standardisation process, by which we will adjust outcomes for schools and colleges to set a fair standard, a level playing field. And then we'll want to look again at what those differences look like compared to what we see in historical data."

Collier said grade predictions allowed schools to consider pupils' individual circumstances: "there are safeguards in the prediction process itself".



## 3 But no 'easy answers' on proving discrimination ...

The regulator said it will challenge grades based on claims of bias, but campaigners say it will be hard for pupils to prove this.

Robert Halton, the committee's chair, said he found it "incomprehensible" that a pupil from a disadvantaged family "is supposed to know if there is bias or discrimination in terms of their grading results and then undertake some kind of appeal".

Collier acknowledged a route was needed for any student who felt they had been discriminated against, "but ... I don't claim to have any easy answers".



## 4 ... and it's down to schools to make sure pupils don't lose out

Collier said the first port of call for pupils challenging grades would be their school.

"This is new, this is novel, there are over five million grades coming in, there could have been a mistake.

"There is a route then that the school, as in any other year, would put in their appeal to the exam board, the process would be checked, the evidence would be looked at and the mistake can be corrected."

But if an appeal "goes through the system and students and schools don't feel there's been fairness, they can appeal to us. The process is in place. We need to make sure it's as accessible as possible."

Collier will also consider calls for an appeals helpline for parents.



## 5 Standardisation system has been tested for impact on all school types

There have been concerns that the standardisation system's use of schools' previous results could discriminate against pupils at newer or improving schools. Meadows told MPs that to address this, Ofqual has been testing a "whole variety of different approaches".

That included looking at 2019 data to test which approach "most accurately predicts the grades that students actually got". It found that "particular approaches that work well on average also work well for these different school types".

"But what we can't predict is the unknown, those changes that may well have happened if exams had gone ahead this year.

"So yes, we too have heard from schools for whom this year would have been 'the year'."



## 6 There will be a 'full programme of evaluation'

Earlier in the session, Lee Elliot Major, a professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, spoke of the need for a "systematic review of how these results play out for different students".

Meadows said that Ofqual was "absolutely committed" to an evaluation of what was done this summer.

A "full programme of evaluation" that would be published in the autumn would look at the impact on attainment gaps, survey teachers and talk to students to "really get under the lid of this year's process".



# Assessing Primary Writing

In 2016 No More Marking ran the first pilot of a Comparative Judgement system with 5 primary schools to allow teachers to collaborate with other schools in judging their pupils' writing. Since then the network has grown to over 1,000 schools who collaborate on the judging.

Last year, every national writing window attracted over 700 schools and over 30,000 individual writing submissions. There are six windows in a year, one per year group.

In every window, the pupils are given an engaging writing task designed by a leading children's illustrator. Conditions are strictly controlled so that the writing conditions are standardised between schools. The pupils have one hour to write their answers on special pre-prepared lined sheets of paper with a unique pupil code at the bottom. After pupils have finished their writing, teachers scan in the sheets, and upload them, at which point the pupil names magically disappear, but the data is still matched to the pupils' codes.

Once all the writing has been checked by the team at No More Marking, judging week opens.

During judging week, teachers work individually online to judge pairs of writing side by side, deciding each time on the better writing. There are no criteria, just professional judgement! To ensure everyone gets a fair score, every fifth judgement a



**No More Marking**

Add wheels to your assessments!



teacher will see a pair of scripts from two other schools. A teacher is never asked to judge a pupil from their own school against a pupil from another school, so the comparison is always fair. These moderation judgements allow for the silent and efficient scaling of scores done by a powerful statistical model running in the background.

Within an hour of judging every teacher in the school will have an overview of the writing of a year group, the strengths and weaknesses and the priorities for next steps. The collective judging approach allows schools to develop whole school approaches to writing that are based on good evidence and a firm grasp of the national picture.

As the windows attract a large nationally representative cohort, once all the judging is finished, No More Marking are in a unique position to be able to give every pupil a writing age and a grade (WTS, EXS, GDS). Detailed reports show pupils' writing

in the context of other pupils' writing across the country. The reports are accompanied by booklets of exemplar scripts along with a fully searchable archive of scripts matched to year group, scaled score, writing age and national percentile.

No More Marking is led by education expert and author Daisy Christodoulou MBE along with Dr Chris Wheadon, a widely cited psychometrician whose roles include acting on Ofqual's research advisory group. The company supports you every step of the way, from uploading your data, to checking every single script you submit to ensure that you get reliable results with the minimum of effort.

**The next writing window is Year 3 in October 2020. For a limited time, Primary Schools can join this national window entirely FREE.**

**Click here.**

# Legal campaign to extend voucher 'lifeline'

## SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Campaigners have begun the formal process of issuing judicial review proceedings after the government refused to fund free school meal vouchers over summer.

Their move follows senior Conservative MPs joining critics of the Department for Education's decision not to continue the £15 weekly voucher scheme over the summer break.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, faced multiple pleas from MPs in the House of Commons on Tuesday to provide the vouchers over summer. Such an extension would cost up to £120 million.

He said the department had "never traditionally provided free school meals all the way through the summer", adding the Department for Work and Pensions had "put in an extra £6.5 billion to support those families who are most vulnerable".



The food charity Sustain and the Good Law Project have begun a crowdfunded legal challenge over the lack of plans to tackle holiday hunger.

A pre-action protocol letter has been submitted, a preliminary step to judicial review proceedings.

Jolyon Maugham, the director of the Good Law Project, said: "We are one of the richest countries

in the world. We think the government's first priority should be to ensure the 1.3 million poorest children have food on their plates."

Robert Halfon, a former Conservative education minister and chair of the education select committee, has written to Vicky Ford, the children's minister, to express "huge concern" that the voucher scheme would stop in mid-July.

Halfon said the vouchers had "offered a lifeline to many families in difficult financial circumstances that have been exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19".

Justine Greening, a former education secretary, told BBC Radio 4 that it was "an easy decision" to continue the scheme through the summer to make sure that children who qualified for free school meals "could stay properly fed".

The DfE ran a £9 million scheme last year to provide healthy food and activities to 11 local authorities over the summer. It will run this year, but again will be confined to specific areas that will be announced "shortly".

BILLY CAMDEN | @BILLYCAMDEN

# T-level wobble as providers ditch Sept launch plan

Four providers due to teach the first T-levels in September – including a school – say the Covid-19 pandemic has forced them to delay delivery for at least a year.

The number of colleges, schools and other providers in England in wave one of the rollout of the new post-16 technical qualifications has now fallen below 50, to just 46.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We have always taken a gradual approach to rolling out T-levels to ensure we get the new high-quality qualifications right from the outset.

"Four of the 50 providers for 2020 are delaying delivery until 2021 in light of the current circumstances, but they remain fully committed to T-levels and we will continue to work closely with them."

The four are Access Creative College, Durham Sixth Form Centre, Salesian School and University College Birmingham.

Gillian Keegan, the skills minister, confirmed in May that the government would drive forward with plans to launch the new qualification from September, despite Covid-19 disruption.

She said that while providers had "rightly raised some issues" with delivery, "most wanted to continue to deliver the first T-levels this year".

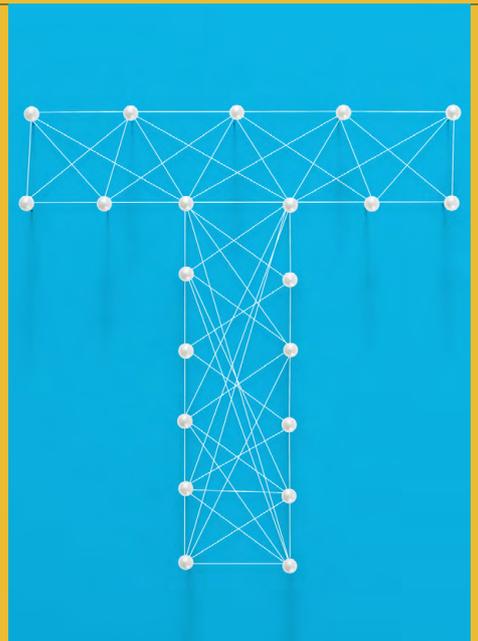
Three routes will be taught in the initial rollout: digital, construction, and education and childcare. Health and science will be added next year.

The new qualification has already faced delays and withdrawals. In October, Scarborough Sixth Form College pulled out of construction and digital pathways from 2020 because of few local opportunities for the mandatory 315-hour work placements and a shortage of good teachers.

Salesian School, in Chertsey, Surrey, which was awarded £1.1 million in T-level capital funding last year, will now teach digital and education and childcare next year.

The DfE did not say what will happen to the T-level learners the four providers had signed up this September.

The deferrals were announced on the same day that the department revealed the 88 providers who will deliver the third wave in



2022, Subjects will include law, engineering and manufacturing, and legal, finance and accounting.

# Coronavirus round-up

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

## DfE delays safeguarding consultation

The government has delayed its plans to strengthen school safeguarding lead roles to help vulnerable pupils.

In March the Department for Education suspended its 2020 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) consultation to allow schools to focus on responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

When launching the consultation, Vicky Ford, the children's minister, said she did not want "any child to slip through the cracks". The consultation proposed having a "dedicated senior leader" to "make sure schools know who their vulnerable children are, set high aspirations for them and put in place the right support so they can achieve".

But the government said most of the proposed revisions to the guidance would be reconsidered for "future updates in a full public consultation". Further details would be confirmed later this year.

A small number, including legislative changes essential to ensure the guidance was accurate and those that provided helpful support on, for instance, mental health, would still be made.



The government issued non-statutory, interim safeguarding guidance during the pandemic to help school staff keep their pupils safe.

In an update to schools, the department said this was "under constant review". Revised KCSIE guidance would also be published this month, to come into force in September.

The KCSIE consultation was launched following the 'children in need' review into improving outcomes for the 1.6 million children known to social services.

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

## Trust budget forecast changes

Academy trusts need only submit a one-year budget forecast this year – and have been given another two months to provide it.

The Department for Education announced on Friday the deadline for submitting the academies budget forecast return three year was pushed back to September 29.

Academies also only have to submit budget forecasts for one year (2020-21).

Phil Reynolds, a senior manager at Kreston Reeves accountants, said this was "welcome news" for staff occupied by drawing up coronavirus reopening plans.

But the DfE says trusts must "still compile longer-term forecasts for their own internal financial planning" as required by the academies financial handbook.

But Reynolds added it was "best practice and compliance ... to still continue to produce forecasts as best as possible".

School business managers also agreed with continuing future planning. Micon Metcalfe, the chief operating officer of the Inspiration Trust, said it was "needed "now more than ever".

However, this year's forecast return will include eight new summary revenue fields for the 2018-19 year to help the department understand trusts' financial position "before and after school closures".

This will be used to "review financial trends in the sector and to supply [the] Treasury with a financial forecast for the next year".

## Training extension for 'small minority'

A "small minority" of trainee teachers who have fallen behind because of the coronavirus pandemic will have until December to earn their qualified teacher status (QTS).

The government has allowed initial teacher training providers to recommend trainees for QTS based on their completed assessments and progress towards the teachers' standards.

However, in April it warned such allowances "do not, under any circumstances, give trainees a 'free pass'" and ITT providers "should not make any recommendation for QTS without giving full consideration to a trainee's progress and available evidence".

Those not on track to qualify – estimated to be about 5 per cent – will be able to pick up from where they left off in the autumn term, with their training to conclude by December.

The guidance says: "It is for the ITT provider to determine the duration and content of training that takes place in this period."

ITT providers can apply for two separate funding streams to cover the costs of this additional training.

The first, "trainee funding of £1,300 per trainee per month", supports trainees during the course extension, up to a maximum of five months and £6,500.

The second, "provider funding of £750 per trainee per month", addresses the costs of course extensions, up to a maximum of four months and £3,000.

The funding is available for all ITT trainees except those on Teach First, and is not differentiated by phase, route or subject.

The guidance adds: "Trainees must only remain on their extended ITT course until they can be recommended for QTS and may not remain on the course after successful completion."

Last week, a survey from the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) found that the pandemic resulted in a "worryingly high" number of schools pulling out of offering teacher training placements for the next academic year.

# Slump in schools' spending for another CPD provider

**JAMES CARR**

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

A major school staff professional development provider has lost income from schools – but the drop has been offset by an increase in government funding.

Income from schools for the Ambition Institute, which provides training courses for teachers, school leaders and system leaders, dropped £500,000 to £3 million last year.

Other CPD providers, including the PiXL Club and SSAT, experienced similar slumps.

However, Ambition's 2018-19 annual accounts, published last week, show income for programmes funded by the Department for Education rose 15 per cent from the previous year to £12.1 million.

The accounts run up to the end of August. Hilary Spencer, its new chief executive, told Schools Week earlier this year: "I'd like us to get to a point where [DfE contracts are] a smaller overall percentage of our funding base, just because I think it gives us more space to tailor



some of what we're doing."

But the accounts show Ambition has become more reliant on the government: DfE funding made up 74 per cent of its income last year, up from 72 per cent in 2017-18.

Meanwhile school funding fell from 24 per cent of its overall income to 18 per cent.

However, the accounts say it is in a "healthy position", posting a £1.3 million surplus before "change costs".

Last year was year two of a three-year plan to "review and modernise" the organisation to ensure it was "financially secure for the future". It invested £1.8 million of its reserves on the changes last year alone.

Rebecca Boomer-Clark, its chair of trustees, said changes would "improve the quality and scope of our programmes and make them better value for money".

Analysis of financial returns by the data specialists SchoolDash last year found that schools' spending on CPD plummeted by £23 million, from £259 million in 2015-16, to £235.8 million in 2016-17 – a drop of almost 9 per cent.

And there are concerns the coronavirus pandemic will push CPD even further down the list of priorities for schools.

Tom Middlehurst, the head of policy at school member organisation SSAT, said the extra costs of more cleaning and personal protective equipment might mean schools were "naturally looking again at their CPD budgets – at a time when professional development is needed more than ever".

But organisations are adapting. PiXL, another school membership body that provides CPD, has shifted its offer for schools, including running national meetings on its own TV platform, "PiXL TV".

## School of Education



With over 1,000 teachers and school leaders studying with us, the University of Buckingham's School of Education is now one of the country's leading providers of teacher training and professional development. We train the teachers of the future.

- **High quality courses that don't take much time away from school**

Our classes are delivered in short residential bursts and our tutors offer support by visiting teachers in their classroom settings.

- **One of the largest teacher trainers in the UK**

Over 1200 trainees this year.

- **The calibre of academic staff**

We involve a high calibre of staff in the development and delivery of our courses. They are some of the best in the country.

- **We focus on classroom skills**

We're all about developing excellent practitioners.

- **Seamlessly progress through our courses**

From initial teacher training via Masters to doctorate.

Further information and applications:

[buckingham.ac.uk/school-of-education](http://buckingham.ac.uk/school-of-education)  
[education@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:education@buckingham.ac.uk)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**BUCKINGHAM**

# Trust mulls legal action over termination notice

**JOHN DICKENS**

**@JOHNDICKENSSW**

An academy trust mulling legal action over the government's decision to rebroker an 'inadequate' free school claims it has been disadvantaged by the suspension of Ofsted inspections.

Baroness Berridge issued a termination notice to the Khalsa Academies Trust this week over Khalsa Secondary Academy, a south Bucks free school put in special measure over safeguarding failures.

During an inspection in December, Ofsted discovered a "serious incident" was "under investigation by the appropriate authorities".

Berridge, in the termination letter published on Monday, said trustees had "failed to show" they have a "robust understanding" of the role of a central leadership team – particularly the chief executive.

The letter added there was a "lack of evidence" the CEO, Nick Kandola, was being "held to account" and the trust failed to show it had the "necessary experience or knowledge to improve a failing school".

The Department for Education's "strong preference" is for the academy to transfer to a "strong performing sponsor that will respect the Sikh ethos of the school".

But the trust, in a letter to parents, said it was "shocked and angered" at the termination decision, adding: "We will be considering all options, including a legal challenge."

In a letter sent to Berridge, seen by *Schools Week*, Khalsa chair of trustees Shaminder Rayatt also accused the government of ignoring the findings of an independent review it commissioned by the Confederation of School Trusts that "praised the progress that the school and trust is making".

Rayatt said the timing of the decision was "very insensitive and wholly inappropriate because we are in the middle of planning the re-opening of our schools in an unprecedented situation".

She added the trust believed the school would now be rated 'good', but Ofsted inspections have been suspended because of the coronavirus so they have been disadvantaged. An audit report in March was also said to have found safeguarding was "effective".

However, an Ofsted spokesperson suggested they would not have gone back to reinspect the school under the current leadership.



Baroness Berridge

They added: "Unless an inadequate academy is already with a sponsor that the DfE has confidence in, the department will look to find another sponsor and Ofsted will not carry out routine monitoring, dependent on a new sponsor being found."

Khalsa said it will "continue to fight against this injustice and will do everything we can to get the DfE to reverse their decision".

Ofsted inspectors originally visited the school after a complaint raised "serious concerns". While inspectors found "many pupils are very happy", leaders had "not made sure that pupils are safe" and not followed "essential safeguarding processes when recruiting staff".

The report stated: "Leaders, including those at trust and governance level, have not learned from serious safeguarding failures".

Pupils also focused on GCSE examinations from year 7 which does "not provide them with similar breadth of learning to the national curriculum".

The trust said it had taken steps to improve following a minded to terminate notice issued in March, including appointing new trustees, an experienced headteacher and a "rapid" improvement plan that "should reasonably address any concerns".

However, Dame Kate Dethridge, regional schools commissioner north west London and south

central England, recommended the funding agreement was terminated.

The decision was escalated to Berridge because of the "level of interest shown by community stakeholders in the future of the academy".

She said the funding agreement will be terminated on October 31 "at the latest".

The trust, which runs two other schools – one of which is 'good' and the other 'outstanding' – was also issued a financial notice to improve in February.

It followed concerns the board "failed to act quickly to ensure that the trust had adequate financial skills in place following concerns around the financial performance of the trust".

Accounts for last year show the trust posted a deficit on general funds of £186,568.

This is due to a prior year adjustment of £256,607 relating to a reclassification of historical capital spend from the general funds to the restricted fixed asset reserves.

The accounts state that auditors Haines Watt have "accepted responsibility for the historical classification mistake".

The trust said it has a "three-year financial plan in place to resolve the deficit position through significantly increased lettings income and other income generation activities".

News

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

# DfE will monitor school staff happiness

**JOHN DICKENS**  
**@JOHNDICKENSSW**

The government has promised to monitor how happy school staff are and to publish the findings as part of a new wellbeing charter.

It has also committed to implementing all seven recommendations put forward by the expert group on education staff wellbeing (see below).

The Department for Education published the pledges on Sunday, burying them in a press release that detailed other announcements.

It said it would measure the wellbeing of staff at regular intervals and publish the findings, integrate wellbeing into the department's schools workload policy test and improve access to online mental health resources.

It also committed to publishing a wellbeing charter that would set out actions educators could take to boost staff mental health.

However, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the charter would be voluntary.

"It would not be an accredited 'kitemark' or an accountability tool, but would act as a public pledge from employers and government."

He said officials would now work with the advisory group and others to "develop, test and launch" the charter later this year.

"Keeping people safe at this difficult time continues to be the government's top priority."

In May last year, the Education Support Partnership (ESP) charity revealed that the number of education staff calling its counselling helpline rose by more than 25 per cent in the past 12 months to reach a record high.

The 2017-18 labour force survey also found that teaching was one of three professions with the highest reports of stress and depression.

Alongside the wellbeing commitments, the department will fund a £95,000 pilot for ESP to provide online peer support and telephone supervision from experts to about 250 school leaders.

Paul Farmer, the chief executive of the mental health charity Mind, who led the advisory panel, said the announcement was a "welcome first step" that "will be the start of a sincere commitment to address issues like stress and other mental health problems ... helping make sure we build a fairer and kinder working and learning environment for everyone".



He added: "What is most important is that concrete action comes out of this...making sure mental health and wellbeing are prioritised within our education system."

As more pupils return to the classroom, the DfE has announced grants totalling more than £750,000 for charities to help "hundreds of schools and colleges build relationships between pupils, boost their resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online".

But Gibb added: "I recognise that these

recommendations are the start of a long-term collaborative process. The evidence is clear that wellbeing relies on a combination of other factors, so we will need to monitor and review progress periodically."

The wellbeing panel was announced in March last year by Damian Hinds, the then education secretary. It was the fifth expert group he set up after his appointment in early 2018.

The panel is made up of union representatives, education experts and school leaders.

## The staff wellbeing advisory group recommendations

- 1 Set the direction** Work with the sector to develop a wellbeing charter for all education staff. This should capture the main conclusions of the group's work, as well setting out expectations, roles and responsibilities. The charter should have full ministerial backing.
- 2 Improve access** Launch a project to improve online access to resources relevant to teacher wellbeing and mental health.
- 3 Evaluate staff wellbeing** Measure the wellbeing of staff at regular intervals, and publish findings. DfE should commit to reviewing the impact of its approach at regular intervals
- 4 Design-In (i)** Integrate wellbeing into its schools' workload policy test and encourage schools and colleges to build staff wellbeing strategies into their structures.
- 5 Design-In (ii)** Embed staff wellbeing into any relevant training, standards and guidance for which it has responsibility.
- 6 Send the message** Build staff wellbeing and mental health into its wider communications strategy around tackling stigma and recruitment and retention, linking to existing campaigns in the third sector.
- 7 Clarify and confirm requirements** Work with the Health and Safety Executive and Ofsted to clarify and confirm employers' regulatory responsibilities around wellbeing (this should be articulated in the new charter).

# Close UTCs that don't meet finance targets, DfE told

**BILLY CAMDEN**

@BILLYCAMDEN

Government should set three-year financial targets for university technical colleges – and close those that don't meet the grade.

A Public Accounts Committee report this week questioned the value for money of the government's UTC programme, specifically the £3 million paid to the Baker Dearing Trust (BDT), the UTC membership body.

Despite the Department for Education launching a three-year programme to improve the financial and educational performance of UTCs in 2017, the PAC said ministers did not have a clear vision for UTCs in the future.

Meg Hillier, PAC chair, concluded that the taxpayer was paying over the odds for a programme in which good results were "alarmingly thin on the ground".

It follows a National Audit Office (NAO) inquiry last year laid bare the extent of financial failure among UTCs.

PAC has now called on the government to set "clear" three-year financial targets for each UTC, and to close those that do not meet them.

MPs also want the DfE to work with UTCs to "obtain the information necessary to gain assurance about the "value schools are getting from the licence fee they pay to the BDT", and write to the committee with its findings within three months.

Schools Week analysis of BDT accounts found that since the programme launched in 2010, Baker Dearing has taken almost £2 million in "licence fees" from the technical colleges, while also receiving £1 million from the DfE.

Hillier said the costs "smack of a far too close, special relationship with too little scrutiny from government and too much entitlement from the BDT".

She said it was "very curious" how Baker Dearing, which she claimed had not offered value for money considering the poor performance of most UTCs, had "managed to brand a type of school and milk the taxpayer and schools just for their brand to be used".

The annual licence fee each of the 48 UTCs must pay Baker Dearing rose from £5,500 to £10,000 this year, despite most struggling to survive as



Lord Baker

student numbers dwindle. Eleven have closed or announced closure.

The committee's report highlighted an "apparent lack of interest in what UTCs are getting from paying out taxpayer's money to the trust in this way... on top of the already generous funding that the department gave to the trust".

A spokesperson for Baker Dearing defended the licence fee and claimed the increase was suggested by UTCs themselves.

He said the payment went towards BDT's work in delivering "hands-on educational, financial, student recruitment, and multi-academy trust rebrokerage support for all UTCs, as well as fulfilling the central role of government liaison and raising the programme's profile".

Schools Week analysis of BDT's accounts also show the trust has spent £60,000 since 2011 on a personal secretary for its chair,



Meg Hillier

the former education secretary and UTC architect Lord Baker.

The trust's spokesperson said the payment was "very good value for money". He said Baker, who devoted a few days each week unpaid to the trust, needed help to arrange his diary, and with drafting letters and speeches.

The £1 million DfE grants were for the trust to support the opening and running of UTCs. The grants stopped last year.

The UTC model, originally for students aged 14 to 19, has been fraught with setbacks since its inception.

The PAC's report cited many of the findings from last year's NAO inquiry that found £792 million was spent on the programme between 2010-11 and 2018-19.

Most of this was capital funding, but the DfE has also propped up financially struggling colleges with £36.8 million in extra cash between 2015-16 and 2018-19.

The report also found that the 48 UTCs open as of January last year were, on average, at 45 per cent capacity; more than half were rated as less than "good" by Ofsted in October 2019.

Hillier added: "The Department must show us how it is going to make UTC education worthwhile – for students, their parents and the taxpayer."

The DfE said UTCs have a "key role" in improving technical education but are "still relatively new". "We have always sought to make improvements and address challenges that individual UTCs may face," they added.

## The 4 recommendations for DfE

- Work with popular UTCs to identify and share lessons and good practice for those struggling
- Set clear three-year financial targets for each UTC, and close those not meeting the grade
- Explain, within three months, how student destination data is used to track UTC performance
- Obtain assurances from UTCs that the Baker Dearing licence fee is value for money

# Speed read

## Population bulge slims down this year

Statistics covering school places, GCSE entries and exam appeals were all published yesterday. Here's what you need to know...

### Secondary applications fall for first time in seven years

Applications for secondary school places have fallen for the first time since 2013.

Department for Education statistics show 600,352 applications were received for a place at secondary school in 2020, a 0.7 per cent decrease on 2019, when 604,496 applications were received.

This is in contrast with a 3.7 per cent increase between 2018 and last year and is the first fall since 2013 when the population bulge of the early-2000s started to make its way into the secondary sector.

The data also shows the proportion of pupils getting their first choice of secondary school rose to 82.2 per cent, up from 80.9 per cent last year.

Fewer parents got their first choice of primary school: 90.2 per cent this year compared with 90.6 per cent last year.

This corresponds with a 0.5 per cent increase in primary school place applications, from 608,957 in 2019 to 612,146 this year. It is the first time primary applications have risen since 2016.

#### SECONDARY APPLICATIONS SINCE 2016

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
First preference rate	84.1%	83.5%	82.1%	80.9%	82.2%
Number of applications received	548,006	562,487	582,761	604,496	600,352

### GCSEs: Citizenship and Spanish up, PE and media down

GCSE entries increased this year as the number of 16-year-olds rose, Ofqual has reported.

According to the exams regulator, there have been 5,281,745 entries for GCSEs this year, up from 5,185,840. The increase of 2 per cent is more than double that of last year, but is to be expected as it corresponds with a 3 per cent increase in the number of 16-year-olds.

The largest increases in entries were in combined science, history, Spanish, statistics and citizenship, with the biggest falls in PE, media, engineering, computing and "other modern language" courses.

Meanwhile, A-level entries have continued to fall, dropping 2 per cent from 745,585 in 2019 to 731,855 this year. This corresponds with a 3 per cent decrease in the number of 18-year-olds.

The government said the increase in GCSE entries was mostly driven by a boost in entries to EBacc subjects, up from 4,206,700 in 2019 to 4,297,100 this year, up 2.1 per cent. Entries to non-Ebacc subjects rose by 0.6 per cent, from 979,140 to 984,645.

The biggest rises were in combined science (up 4 per cent), history (up 4 per cent) and Spanish (up 5 per cent), while entries in computing and

"other modern languages" (which excludes French, Spanish and German) were down 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.

Among non-EBacc subjects, the largest rises were in statistics and citizenship (both up 9 per cent) and economics (up 6 per cent) while the largest falls were in PE (down 7 per cent), media film and TV studies (down 5 per cent) and engineering (also down 5 per cent).

AS-level entries continued to slump, down 26 per cent this year from 117,595 to 86,970.

The pandemic means pupils will not sit exams this year with schools instead issuing teacher-assessed grades and ranking pupils on their performance in each subject.

#### THE UPS AND DOWNS OF 2020 GCSEs

INCREASES		DECREASES
CITIZENSHIP +9%	↑	PE -7%
STATISTICS +9%		MEDIA -5%
ECONOMICS +6%		ENGINEERING -5%
SPANISH +5%		OTHER MODERN LANGUAGES -4%

### Exam appeals rise again as reforms rolled out to all GCSEs

The number of appeals against GCSE and A-level grades rose 45 per cent last year as new grounds were extended to all GCSE subjects.

Ofqual statistics published yesterday show there were 1,240 appeals in 2019, up from 857 in 2018.

A total of 675 were upheld, up from 406 the previous year – an increase of 66 per cent.

The statistics also show the number of grades changed ballooned 152 per cent to 512. This rose at a higher rate than the proportion of grades challenged, which increased by 124 per cent.

The new rules give schools a second chance to challenge results if they have concerns regarding marking errors.

The change was introduced for A-levels in 2017 and applied to some GCSEs in 2018, before it was rolled out fully last year.

The most common reason for a challenge was a marking error. Overall, 3,159, or 0.05 per cent of all certified GCSE and A-level grades were challenged.

The number of GCSE appeals increased from 489 to 763, up 56 per cent.

And the number of appeals upheld increased 63 per cent from 263 to 428, while the number of appeals that led to a grade change increased from 148 to 272 – 84 per cent.

The proportion of GCSE appeals upheld also increased, from 54 to 56 per cent.

# EDITORIAL

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

## PM's latest soundbite can't be another empty promise

The government's continued woeful response to coronavirus school closures seems to have achieved the impossible - it has brought the education sector together in harmony.

From a Conservative former education secretary to the left-wing National Education Union - all quarters of the education realm seem to be calling on ministers to produce an actual plan for getting pupils back in school.

It follows the exposure of the government's "ambition" to get all primary pupils back before summer for what it really was: an ill-thought-out and impossible (under the social-distancing rules) soundbite passed off by politicians to make it look like they had a plan.

It's heartening to see the sector united - hopefully the strength of feeling will kick the government into action to prepare properly for all pupils to return in September.

Prime minister Boris Johnson was full of the usual bluster this week, saying he had a "very big plan to get all pupils back to school" (he

said the same in April, too).

But, as academy leader Sir Jon Coles points out, it looks increasingly like this may be impossible, with social distancing measures in classrooms, such as spacing desks apart.

So, if the government's "plan" is to allow schools to reopen with classes of 30 again - then this needs to be communicated clearly with education staff and parents, and in good time, too.

But it's not just about getting pupils back in the classroom. Nearly three months since schools first closed, the government has done little to help those pupils left at home to catch up.

Under pressure to show that education hasn't been forgotten about by his government, Johnson promised a "massive catch-up operation" will be announced next week.

Hopefully, it's the start of a proper plan for education, and not another vacuous soundbite from the prime minister to appease his critics.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.



CONTACT:  
NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK  
OR CALL 0203 4321 392



School Streets

Sarah Nield, Green councillor for Brighton and Hove City Council

Before Covid-19, we knew that particles in the polluted air around our children's schools were implicated in asthma, heart disease and dementia. Now study after study is linking pollution to increased Covid-19 morbidity rates.

School Streets is a scheme, proven successful in other cities, where the road in front of a school is closed to through-traffic for a limited time at the start and end of the day, enabling families to walk safely to school, encouraging kids to be active and independent, and eliminating dangerous fumes from around the school gates.

Now, as we plan for our children's return to school, the need for change has become urgent. Social distancing for families on the school run will be enormously difficult: schools are planning staggered pick-up and drop-off times, but many routes are not wide enough to accommodate several people. School Streets offers a solution to these logistical challenges - even the government's guidelines to councils now recommend them.

The need to address the safety of the school run has always been with us. Instead of wasting time, to protect our children and our environment, we need councils to deliver School Streets now.

Boris Johnson's former prep school to close over 'coronavirus impact'



James Laikie

Interesting, that comment about Ashdown House's rich traditions and heritage: it can only offend dozens of ex-pupils and their families. As Tom Beardmore-Gray and the Cothill Trust well know, Ashdown House will first be remembered for its terrible history of failure to protect children, and its harbouring of known child abusers. That story has already resulted in one teacher sentenced to 11 years in jail, and Sussex police are still seeking others.

REPLY OF THE WEEK



Gary Phillips, headteacher, Lilian Baylis Technology School, south London

George Floyd

I cried when I watched the recent killing of George Floyd. The video clip is haunting. It makes me angry. It has also made me feel overwhelmed and numb.

That is my response as a white man. It must be far worse for those who are black, Asian and minority ethnic, for it must represent their lived experience and fears.

It has been wonderful to watch the increased activism of the past week. A movement is growing that will help us to create a fairer society, a movement led by those who know and understand the issues because they are a lived experience.

As a white headteacher of a predominately BAME school, I feel I am in a privileged position. I hope over the next few weeks, months and years to be able to play a part to challenge racism within and outside our school.

Our work will be informed and challenged by our BAME staff, students and families and will, I hope, start to radically question all that we do.

Inside the school I want to see our curriculum revised so that we look at the whole range of BAME contributions in all areas. I want to see the books that we read better reflect BAME writers and experiences. I want to see more staff question their unconscious biases and question each other, including me and our governors.

I desperately want to see a better school - one that responds far better to the lived experience of our BAME students. A school that helps all our students make their community and far further afield a fairer, more just place in which racism is all its forms is always challenged.

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

New parent and pupil panel to aid Covid-19 policymaking

Stuart Ross, @TheStuartRoss

Why not a panel of 5,000 education staff? Mainly senior leadership team/teachers, but also teaching assistants, admin, site managers, unions, etc.

Imagine if the Food Standards Agency produced new restaurant policy by only talking with customers, ignoring chefs, restaurant owners and food producers. Bonkers!

Free schools can follow Nightingale lead

Liliana Albertine-Glover, @Liliana\_AGlover

Those were field hospitals. Do we want schools that are merely desks and chairs inside a hangar, with no staff or other equipment to facilitate a sustainable education? Whoever thinks this is a reasonable comparison clearly has no idea about either hospitals or schools.

**ncfe.**



# we support learners.

Help your students succeed with V Certs – vocational alternatives to GCSEs, offering a mixture of practical coursework and written assessment to help your students shine.

**Many include performance points**

They also cover a range of subject areas and levels to give students choice.

## What students say

“I love this qualification because it equips me with real skills I can use in my future career.”

**Grace, V Cert student**



## find out more.

Discover our range of subjects and resources to support your delivery.



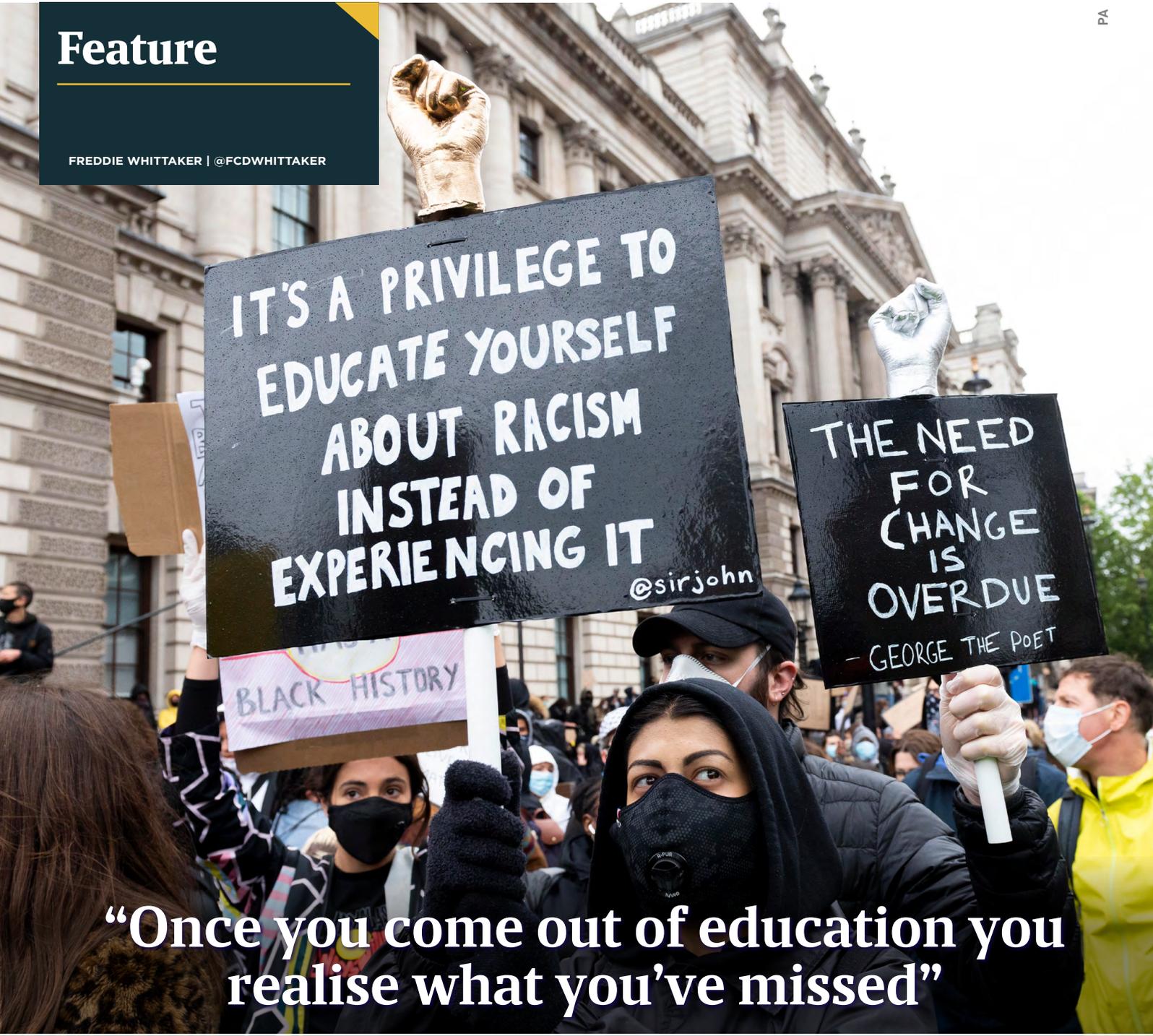
[ncfe.org.uk/schools/subject-areas](https://ncfe.org.uk/schools/subject-areas)



[TechAwards@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:TechAwards@ncfe.org.uk)

# Feature

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER



“Once you come out of education you realise what you’ve missed”

## How curriculum reform can help in the fight against racism

The killing of George Floyd and following protests across the world have rebooted an important national debate about how schools teach black history, migration and the British Empire.

Petitions calling for reform of the national curriculum have gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures - and this week the National Education Union, the UK’s largest teaching union, said that education “must lead the way in breaking down the barriers caused by racism”.

So what do schools teach?  
At present, the only study of black history in the national curriculum is in the context of

the transatlantic slave trade, and, even then, its teaching as part of history at key stage 3 is entirely optional.

Schools also have the option of teaching a module on migration and empire as part of some GCSE history specifications, but, again, these are optional and take-up has been low.

Last year, a report by the TIDE Project and Runnymede Trust entitled *Teaching Migration, Belonging and Empire in Secondary Schools*, found that just 4 per cent of GCSE history students studied the “migration to Britain” module offered by the exam boards AQA and OCR.

The report called for migration, belonging

and empire to be covered at key stage 3 and across different disciplines. It was published almost a year ago, but its authors say none of its recommendations has been followed up.

One of those authors is Kimberly McIntosh, a senior policy adviser at Runnymede, who also works for the Child Poverty Action Group.

Although she is encouraged by the recent activism – particularly among young people – and a push for change from some individual schools, teachers and local authorities, she believes results will be “really piecemeal” if ministers do not act.

“It would be really, really helpful to have government leadership on the issue,” she tells



Black Lives Matter protesters



Kim McIntosh

Schools Week.

But school leaders have a part to play too. "Are they doing the same thing every year? Have they done that for the past ten, 20 years? "Having a serious think about changing some of the things that are being taught, particularly in history, and not leaving it to BME teachers and staff to...take leadership on the issue would make a massive difference."

Events in the US and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests in the UK have boosted support for various campaigns focusing on the school curriculum, such as Fill the Blanks and The Black Curriculum.

These campaigns, and the various petitions circulating on social media, differ slightly in their approaches and what they're calling for, but they all bear the same core message: education on these issues is not good enough.

Melody Triumph, from The Black Curriculum, warns that young people face an "absence of black narratives in the classroom", which is then repeated when they go on to higher education.

"Once you come out of the education system, you realise what you've missed, and what that's done to your sense of identity in Britain."

Her organisation believes schools need to incorporate "black narratives, black stories and black history, whether it's music history, social history, economic and cultural history" into the curriculum. Crucially, these things should be taught "all year round", she says, not just as month-long standalone modules that are then left behind.

Triumph gives an example: thousands of men and women from the Caribbean joined the British armed forces, but their contribution is rarely recognised.

"It was Britain and black Jamaicans, not just black Jamaicans' own world war and then

---

## "Don't leave it to BME teachers to take leadership on the issue"

---

Britain's world war, it's the fact that they came together."

She gives another example: "If your English GCSE required you to learn something like *The Lonely Londoners* by Sam Selvon, a story about the first black Britons and their experience coming from the West Indies and Africa, that could help make it mandatory."

Calls for changes to GCSE specifications are a common thread of the campaigns and petitions. But exam boards say they are bound by content criteria set by the government.

The boards also point to efforts made in recent years to broaden the teaching of black history and literature from BAME writers.

OCR, for example, says it introduced a pre-

colonial African Kingdoms unit at A-level, and included "a range of authors of colour across our A-levels". The board also says that 25 per cent of schools that set its GCSE history A paper now teach the migration option.

But a spokesperson admits there is "more work for all of us to do".

AQA said it had been working with partner organisations and academic historians aimed to incorporate the recommendations of the Royal Historical Society's 2018 Race, ethnicity and equality in UK history report into its content, "not only in terms of Black British history, but the histories of all BAME peoples in the UK"

Edexcel says it has ensured its history qualifications "cover a range of cultures and countries".

WJEC says it is "very keen to include more on black British history", but adds this "depends entirely on the direction of reform both in England and Wales".

Some school leaders are already thinking about the changes they can make.

At Lilian Baylis Technology School in Kennington, south London, headteacher Gary Phillips has announced plans to revise the curriculum "so that we look at the whole range of BAME contribution in all areas".

"I want to see the books that we read better reflect BAME writers and experience. I want to see more staff question their unconscious biases and question each other, including me and our governors."

But although much of the focus of media

change.org

Start a petition My petitions Browse Subscription

Log in

# Make Black British History Compulsory in Schools



155,825 have signed. Let's get to 200,000!



Dawne Williams signed 3 minutes ago

First name  
Last name  
Email

[Signature field]

- Yes! Tell me if this petition wins, and how I can help other relevant petitions
- No, I do not want to hear about this petition's progress or other relevant petitions.

[Sign this petition](#)

Please share my name and email address with Black British History, so that I can receive

Black British History started this petition to SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION and 5 others

This petition is to call for British Black History to be made mandatory throughout schools in the UK. Many people today do not know that black communities have been in the UK from the beginning and as the growing population of people of colour and mixed children continues, it is a shock that it is not part of our education system.



Melody Triumph



Jason Todd

## “The curriculum has to be part of a bigger conversation”

coverage has been on calls for curriculum reform, many activists and academics believe change has to go beyond the classroom.

Jason Todd, a history expert in the University of Oxford's education department and co-author of the teaching migration report with McIntosh and Professor Nandini Das, says that changes to the curriculum are part of a “whole package of structural changes” needed in schools.

He pointed to a lack of action from government on housing, policing, schools, health, “all of those types of inequalities that BME people are currently dealing with”.

“I could change my history curriculum, and make it quite dynamically black-orientated, but that's not addressing the kid who's coming into my classroom who's still being harassed by the police. The kid who's come into the classroom who's still the primary carer for his mother because they can't access healthcare because of the postcode they're in.

“So the curriculum's part of the solution, but it's got to be part of a bigger conversation.”

But campaigners don't just want schools to

teach about black history. They want them to teach it well, and believe this requires improvements to initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

A survey last year of teachers by the website Our Migration Story found that 78 per cent wanted additional training on how to teach migration, and 71 per cent wanted training to teach about the empire.

Last year's Runnymede report recommended that the Centre for Holocaust Education, a part-government funded institution based at University College London, be used as a blueprint for a future programme to support teachers with teaching about migration, empire and belonging.

But will this national discussion lead to change? Todd and McIntosh report no interest from the government in their recommendations, and a recent blog post from the DfE shows little appetite for change.

In the post, the department says that black history “is an important topic that schools can teach to children of all ages as part of the history curriculum”. Emphasis on “can”.

Campaigners, however, are cautiously optimistic.

“There's definitely been a lot more renewed interest,” McIntosh says. “But I don't think that next week we're going to suddenly have migration and empire as a statutory, or even as a suggested topic.

“What is really important and exciting is that it has galvanised a much wider breadth of people. I think people are ready to take action.”

Triumph says “strategising” needs to start now. “Once all this noise has died down, what are we doing to make our demands stick? We don't want a scheme or programme that lasts until the end of the year and in 2021 we're back to where we started.”

Bennie Kara, Opinion, page 24

# Opinion

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

**Education is key to tackling racism, says Jeffery Quaye. But what obstacles have school leaders and teachers had to overcome when it comes to race and what does the future hold?**



DR JEFFERY QUAYE

Regional CEO,  
Aspirations Academy Trust

## Tackling racism is about more than curriculum

The senseless and horrific killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis has ignited a global discussion about racism and the need for change. It has also brought into sharp focus the traumatic prejudice I and other black people in this country have experienced.

The killing and protests dominate the political arena. Boris Johnson has said that “racism and racist violence have no place in our society”. But it should not take an unlawful public execution to stun the consciousness of the British people.

Sajid Javid, the former chancellor, has called for the government to set “a new ambition for breaking down” racial barriers. Meanwhile, Matt Hancock, the health secretary, has been forced to defend the diversity of the government after critics pointed out that there are no black members of the Cabinet. He also claimed the UK is not a racist country, yet black people in British society continue to experience racism.

As a black teacher and leader in education, I see the transformational power of education to eradicate racism in our society. Huge strides have been made over the past two decades to tackle institutional and structural racism within education and to promote diversity and inclusion. Schools have championed this work with a focus on educating pupils about multicultural Britain. The introduction of British values has raised the expectations for mutual respect and schools are tackling racism when it manifests in pupil behaviour.

However, there are still disparities in

the experience of black teachers that we need to have honest conversations about. I have faced obstacles because of my race since I started teaching in 2003. At Aspirations Academies Trust, race is not a barrier to development and career progression, but elsewhere others appear to have wanted to make teaching difficult for me. From being

As a classroom teacher I encountered many situations in which white colleagues were not performing at the required standards, but school leaders did not raise any concerns. However, the expectations set for my work remained high, even when the conditions did not enable me to reach such goals. I experienced a deafening

“I felt pressure to work ten times harder to be recognised”

given incredibly challenging classes to lack of leadership support, my awareness of the covert racism people of BAME background face in schools has been sharpened over the years.

silence among white colleagues when black staff were treated unfairly by their leaders. I found my leadership role in one school to be lonely - and one where



I felt pressure to work ten times harder to be recognised. We still have a disproportionately low number of school leaders from a BAME background because education does not always actively encourage and promote black leaders into senior management. Consequently, the senior leadership can be entirely white in a school that serves predominantly black pupils.

The dominant worldview is that black leaders are not up to the role of leadership or not of equal value as their white colleagues. This can create spaces where minority ethnic teachers feel uncomfortable in their job.

While we are inspiring the next generation and raising the aspirations of all pupils, black teachers and education leaders experience an institutional racism that manifests in many subtle forms, such as schools not providing the same level of recognition or opportunities to black teachers and negative perceptions of black colleagues going unchallenged. To tackle that structural racism, teachers need to be educated about unconscious bias, and internalised negative views of black people need to be challenged with an alternative worldview.

It can be done. The working model Aspirations uses gives black teachers equal value through a collegial working environment. The trust leadership ensure all teachers and staff are made to feel equal and valued, and black staff have good representation in decision-making processes across the trust.

Education should be an equaliser of all men and women, regardless of race. But eradicating racism can't simply be the work of curriculum. It is about changing our practices too.

# Opinion

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



## BENNIE KARA

Writer, speaker and deputy head, The Bemrose School, Derby



# Diversity cannot be a curriculum bolt-on

**Educators from all backgrounds and contexts have been asking for guidance on curriculum reform in the light of recent events. Bennie Kara sets out some key principles**

The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the realisation that black, Asian, and minority ethnic people are more likely to die of Covid-19 and the global response to systemic racism mean that, quite rightly, questions are being asked as to how the curriculum in the UK can be improved for the greater good.

We may be aware of Edward Colston, a Tory MP once heavily involved with the slave trade, now that protesters have removed his statue in Bristol. Did we know that in Bath in 2018, two teenage boys tied up their black classmate, holding a mock slave auction, prodding him with sticks and calling him racist names? Have we moved on? No. Two teenagers were arrested at the beginning of June for re-enacting the murder of George Floyd, finding it a source of amusement and worth sharing on Snapchat.

These incidents might be products of a curriculum that has always glossed over colonialism and racism.

One that has narrowed its lens, eliminating the contribution of BAME communities to the fabric of our society. One that views racism as a historical artefact and not as a current and lived reality.

Without a concerted effort to teach anti-racism through a powerfully diverse curriculum, we will miss

“ Racism is still viewed as a historical artefact

the chance to educate our students about how they fit and how they are connected in our society.

I have been delivering “Colouring in the Curriculum” workshops for two years and my advice always centres on two areas: meaningful, balanced representation and developing teacher expertise.

First, audit your curriculum for how BAME people and cultures are represented. Are your students exposed to the beauty of African civilisations, such as the kingdom of Benin, through art, history and architecture? Or do they just see images of famine and civil unrest? Do you include the presence of BAME soldiers in both world wars and other major conflicts? Do

your students understand that the numbers and letters we use in maths and English are linked to Arabic academia? Or do you only discuss the Middle East in light of religious fundamentalism and violence?

Highlighting the racist treatment of Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* is important, but where else in the

English curriculum is there a positive, powerful representation of BAME characters and culture? Where in your curriculum is there space to explain how statistics on BAME deaths from Covid-19 might be linked to current social disadvantage and systemic racism – and how we can change this?

Teachers will have to step out of their comfort zones. As Christine Counsell, the director of education at the Inspiration Trust, suggests, dedicate CPD to filling out knowledge of the “hinterland” of your subjects, but look outside of white, western European borders for sources of disciplinary depth and richness.

Overhauling the curriculum

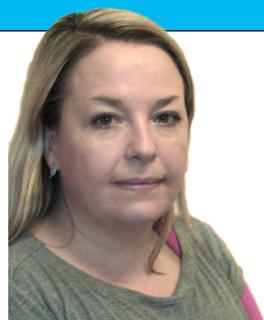
becomes a lot easier after reading seminal anti-racist texts and gaining a better understanding of systemic oppression. And if you don't know where to find this material, ask. This is how teacher networks such as BAMEed and DiverseEd can be powerful sources of support. Once teachers are on board with developing subject-specific, global knowledge, that's when you can review schemes of work. Give your staff the time to add in meaningful and culturally diverse material.

Quite simply put, it is no longer acceptable to claim your school celebrates diversity because there are posters of black sportspeople in the PE department corridors, or because there is an effort to put in an assembly on black history in October every year. Diversity can't be a bolt-on to your curriculum.

An honest review means acknowledging where our curriculum has failed all our students, BAME or otherwise. The result might be that your school delivers a curriculum that usualises and commemorates diversity, so that more of our students understand that the murder of a black person is not a joke, but an affront to our common culture and decency.

# Opinion

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



JO HUTCHINSON

Director for social mobility and vulnerable learners, Education Policy Institute



## Patchwork AP provision needs a tailor's eye

**There's been a welcome policy focus on vulnerable students throughout the coronavirus crisis, but little evidence of a strategic response. Jo Hutchinson lists foundations for a new approach**

one pupil against the needs of the rest and venerates "zero-tolerance" approaches to behaviour with little understanding of the impact of multiple and complex disadvantage. In our recent submission to the

The teachers in AP, who will be working tirelessly to support pupils, are nevertheless unlikely to have had the chance to understand the abilities and potential of these pupils before schools closed in March. So it is unrealistic and unfair to

at the age of 16 and are offered no further specialised provision in most cases. This doesn't make sense in normal times, let alone when those children have lost a critical portion of year 11.

As it is, the labour market is expected to contract as a result of the economic impact of Covid-19. It would be naive to expect that young people who already have poor educational outcomes will be able to leave school this September and gain sustained employment. Having missed several months of school, it is also unrealistic to expect that these vulnerable pupils will be able to make a successful transition to a further education college.

The AP system needs more than a modest cash increase (which will be paid by the DfE on receipt of evidence of spending – meaning that providers will need to cough up the money upfront) to a handful of pupils. It needs systemic reform, including an adequate funding system that can attract the best teachers and professionals, and funded post-16 provision.

The current patchwork of provision has not worked for decades and it needs now, more than ever, the attention, investment and commitment that the country's most vulnerable children deserve.

The government last week announced that "up to" £750 would be made available for each pupil in alternative provision (AP) to aid their transition into post-16 education or training.

While this may seem like a welcome cash boost for many of the country's most vulnerable pupils, it barely touches the sides of what is actually needed.

The Department for Education acknowledges the poor outcomes experienced by these pupils. Fewer than 2 per cent of those in AP achieve a good pass in English and maths, and about half leave AP and end up being NEET – not in education, employment or training.

Many of these pupils are already vulnerable, coming from poor backgrounds, with special educational needs or in the social care system. Many will have been excluded from school or subject to a "managed move", the result of a system that pitches the needs of

education select committee, we proposed the introduction of a pupil premium-style grant for pupils with child protection plans to help schools to support and retain children experiencing trauma.

There has been a welcome focus on the impact of Covid-19 on educational attainment and outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. But little attention has been given to pupils in AP, whose outcomes are likely to be worsened as a result of the pandemic.

Many year 11 pupils will have been moved into their current AP placement during this academic year, perhaps a result of a high-stakes accountability system that disincentivises schools to keep year 11 pupils on their roll beyond January.

expect AP teachers to make an informed and accurate prediction of GCSE grades this summer. It is a struggle too for teachers in mainstream schools who have had at least two years working with their pupils.

In our response to Ofqual's recent consultation on exam grading, EPI recommended that AP settings should receive additional funding to support pupils for a further year – to develop their learning and support their transition to the next phase of education or training.

It is astonishing that the education funding system assumes that children with some of the greatest needs – that the school system has decided cannot be accommodated in mainstream schools – suddenly have those needs magically disappear

“ These children's needs do not magically disappear at 16 ”

# Opinion

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

**Amid uncertainty, we can narrow down likely scenarios to ensure all learners get the best from our schools no matter what happens, writes Leora Cruddas**

Despite our best efforts, the Education Endowment Foundation's rapid evidence review suggests that school closures are likely to widen the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers by as much as 36%. But the impact is not only educational. It is also social and economic.

We know some families are under considerably more pressure confined in their homes, and this is not limited to the families schools had concerns about before the pandemic. There has been a significant increase in domestic violence, and there will likely be implications for mental ill-health, not least from bereavement.

And in spite of the government safety nets, the strong likelihood is that we will see a rise in child poverty and unemployment, especially youth unemployment with the broader welfare issues that go along with that.

For these reasons, we need to ensure as many pupils as possible return to formal schooling in the Autumn, yet we don't know what it will be possible to do safely. That's why we need to think about education continuity planning now.

Broadly, there are only really three scenarios to plan for: rotas with blended learning, an eventual full return, and school closures and/or local lockdowns where this becomes necessary.

The first will require schools and trusts to put blended learning in place and ensure curriculum continuity between classroom provision and remote education while implementing some protective measures.

A full return to school will need to focus on curriculum recovery and emotional and family support as necessary. Even in this scenario, we may still have to implement some



**LEORA CRUDDAS**  
Chief Executive,  
The Confederation of School Trusts

## Continuity planning must start without delay

protective measures for a while – possibly a long while.

In the event of local lockdowns and more school closures, it will be important – if at all possible – to retain some onsite provision for those pupils who most need our care and support, as well as examination groups. The probability is that other groups will

ensure the just provision and distribution of resources to pupils in a way that reflects their needs and requirements. We need to find solutions that adapt well in the face of multiple stresses on individuals, families, schools and the sector. And leaders must be trusted to exercise discretion and good judgement

**“Gaps in learning are a grave concern, but they aren't insurmountable**

need to move to remote education for a short time.

Whatever the scenario, our plans should be informed and underpinned by three key principles: equity, resilience and flexibility. We must

to suit their context and the best interests of their pupils, parents and communities.

Gaps in learning are a matter of grave concern, but they are not insurmountable. When a trust

sponsors a school, the gaps in curriculum and knowledge are often extensive. These are repaired through a systematic approach to the curriculum allied with precision in pedagogical delivery.

So in the first instance, our provision needs to prioritise those pupils who have the most significant gaps in their learning and address those who have increased vulnerabilities.

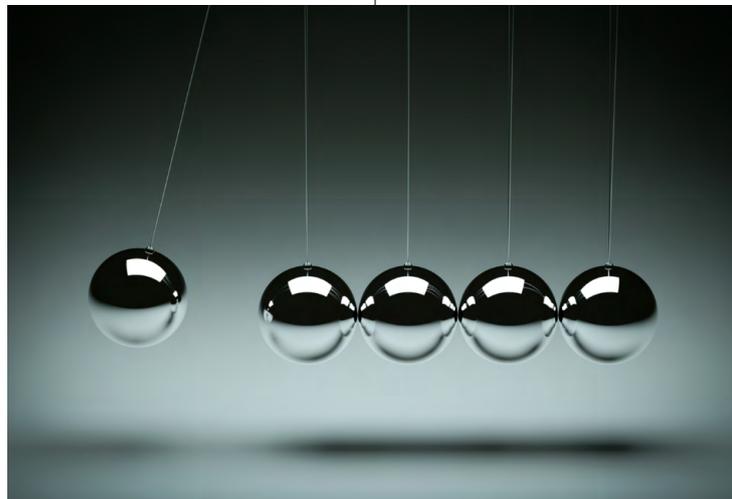
But our duty is to all our students, and because we are planning for multiple scenarios, we need to consider how we build curriculum resilience and agility. To safeguard pupils' learning, a refined approach to blended learning will be necessary that allows pupils to move quickly between complementary programmes of remote and school-based learning, with schools seeking to optimise the benefits of each paradigm.

The Confederation of School Trusts would caution against layering multiple interventions onto schools at this time. Introducing more complexity could mitigate against those things that schools do best – strong, purposeful quality first-wave teaching; a well-planned curriculum; powerful welfare and pastoral systems.

Where schools can be supported is through local authorities and health commissioners reviewing family support in their areas – mental health provision, bereavement support and provision for adults and children fleeing domestic violence.

In addition, a campaign of communication and training for families is needed so that more can adapt successfully to make the most of blended home/school provision over the coming 12 months.

It won't be school as we know it, but by working together we can address the impacts of COVID-19 and prepare for education continuity for next academic year.



# Opinion

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

## Lockdown diaries – a week in the life of...



### JANE MANZONE

Year 6 teacher and director of New Voices

#### Jane Manzone and her year 6 class adapt to a brave new normal

I had a few bizarre dreams before I went back to school this week. Hazard tape and metre rulers featured heavily, as did an odd militaristic incarnation of a rather unassuming member of staff who had been put in charge of “social distancing patrol”. The reality was much less sinister and rather more like... well... school.

A significantly reduced cohort returned, some rather quiet, but all eager to work, and, I guess, like adults, resume some semblance of normality. Unspoken though it was, I could tell that for many of my charges lockdown was not a succession of carefree sunny days. Several said on our online classroom that they really missed school; a few bounded through the door with huge smiles.

Their unguarded joy made me realise how much I had missed them all. Online teaching is not the same and it was a relief to

see some children who I hadn't communicated with as often as others.

The school looked different. The staffroom was remarkably clean and fresh; the fridge empty of expired soup and half-eaten pots of houmous. Classrooms were marked out with taped boxes and each child had his or her own set of resources.

A one-way system in the corridors was marked with dots on the floor brandishing the slogan “keep your distance”, which did lend rather a dystopian air. But not many children seemed to need reminding of this - one of the more surprising observations on the first day. During the first of three playtimes my nine students stood around shouting instructions from afar for newly amended games, showing that children really do accept and adapt with remarkable ease.

Health and wellbeing were top of the agenda in our “return to school” curriculum, which to me meant the comfort of the familiar. As far as possible,



I constructed a first morning of reassuring routines and activities: handwriting, arithmetic, grammar and reading. The children got straight to work and when I asked had they forgotten how to write with a pen, lots laughed and said they really needed the practice.

The initial silence was soon replaced by familiar comments, questions and behaviours, but reducing a class by two thirds makes life much quieter. Even when they're excited by a topic, nine voices do not fill a classroom in quite the same way as 27. Some children seemed to thrive in the smaller class and enjoyed the added attention, whereas others clearly missed absent friends.

Lunch was a highlight, brought to the classroom and served by the headteacher – a novelty the children seemed to appreciate. I never look a gifhorse in the mouth so discarded my unappetising sandwich in

favour of macaroni cheese. In the afternoon, a colleague took my class while I worked on my online lessons for pupils still at home and made phone calls. This will be school for the foreseeable future.

I have often wondered over these strange past few months how these children will look back on their unique year 6: no SATs, no school journey, no production, no end of year assemblies or discos or barbecues. Will they feel they missed out?

If my class is anything to go by, they have accepted all this without complaint. They have shown that rather than thinking about themselves, they have been concerned about the wider world and society. They have shown a maturity I did not expect, and a resilience that puts many adults to shame.

Hopefully, they will realise they have lived through a momentous period in history and be proud of themselves for coping so well.

# TEACH BTEC

**“THE SKILLS BTEC TAUGHT  
ME HAVE STAYED WITH ME  
THROUGHOUT MY CAREER.”**

**Max Whitlock**

Double Olympic Gold Medallist and World Champion

**LEARN MORE ABOUT  
TEACHING BTEC**

**BTECWORKS.COM**

 **Pearson | BTEC**

# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### The Purposes of Education: A Conversation Between John Hattie and Steen Nepper Larsen

Published by Routledge

Reviewed by Stephen Turnbull, former lecturer in media and education

What are the purposes of education? How do we know what works best in teaching? And what is the relationship between research and policy? This book bravely sets out to explore these complex and interlinked questions through a “wide-ranging” conversation between two scholars from very different backgrounds: John Hattie and Steen Nepper Larsen.

Hattie needs little introduction. He’s the “meta-man”, or to be more accurate, the “meta-meta-man”. His magnum opus, *Visible Learning*, synthesised more than 800 meta-analyses and became a handbook for educators worldwide, drawn no doubt to its user-friendly ranking of teaching strategies by their impact on learning outcomes.

So did Hattie find the Holy Grail of education? Far from it, according to Larsen, a Danish associate professor in education science. In his 2019 paper, *Blindness in seeing: a philosophical critique of the visible learning paradigm in education*, he dismisses quantitative educational research as “utilitarian calculations” and argues that learning does not equate to “an accumulation of form-similar knowledge bricks”.

Many academics would be cautious about responding to such a strong critique in writing, let alone engaging in face-to-face conversation. However, to his credit, Hattie agreed to exactly that.

But how well does the resulting book answer the considerable questions it poses? Well, it certainly illuminates them: if you’re something of a philosophy and pedagogy nerd like me,

you’re in for a highly stimulating read. I found it fascinating to be immersed in a conversation between two minds with such contrasting perspectives. Reading on though, I was increasingly struck by how much common ground the statistician and the philosopher share.

The discussion keeps returning to the German concept of “Bildung”, which Larsen reinterprets as a combination of (traditional) character-building and (modern) critical citizenship, earning approval from Hattie. Second, they have a similar position on top-down policy-making, so-called 21st-century skills, and deep vs surface learning. Third, they are both sympathetic towards Gert Biesta’s influential critique of “learnification” – the increasing emphasis on the student as consumer of learning/constructor of knowledge and teacher as facilitator. Finally, sharing a left-liberal political outlook, they are in broad agreement on the progressive purposes of education.

The book is certainly challenging, partly due to the back and forth conversational format that can feel repetitive and sketchy at times, and partly to the complexity

of the content, which covers everything from Popper’s concept of falsification to PISA results. However, it is well structured, helped by the graphic organiser cartoons at the start of each chapter.

In addition, Larsen’s nuanced approach teases out the underlying assumptions and contradictions in Hattie’s argument, and the apparent flaws in his research. However, he struggles to convince his conversation partner that making learning increasingly “visible” to measure “impact” more effectively is a false quest.

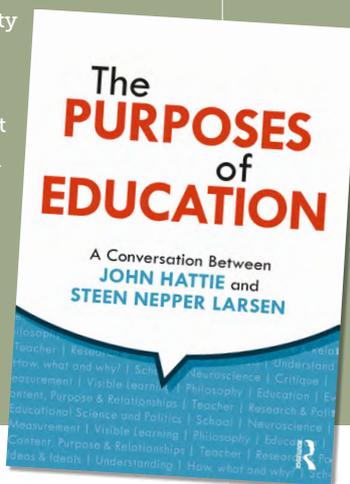
To be fair to Hattie, though, he makes a strong case that his research has been widely misinterpreted. He claims he never meant to provide tools for teaching, rather a framework for further research.

Likewise, Larsen soldiers on, arguing for the “decentring” of student thinking to foreground the relationship between knowledge and power in general, and the problematic nature of scientific research and policy discourse in particular. However, the story Hattie shares about Tiger Woods nearly losing a golf tournament because he was too “centred” suggests he’s lost the thread.

It is perhaps a bit picky to be critical about the numerous typos in a book that offers so much food for thought, so I’ll assume these are down to transcription. But I’m less inclined to be charitable over the pervasive use of “mankind” when, to my mind,

everyone in academia should now be using gender-neutral alternatives.

These quibbles and the above-mentioned issue of coherence aside, this book offers a mind-stretching breadth of content, a refreshingly respectful approach to debate, and an insightful analysis of the perennial “purposes” question.



# Reviews



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

@JMSREFLECT

### My open letter to educators

@ShuaibKhan26

This powerful piece by Shuaib Khan draws on his own experiences to reflect on the responsibilities of teachers to address racism. He challenges the ideas that 2020 is already too tiring to tackle systemic racism and that not knowing how to confront the issue or being concerned that it is not our place to speak out are valid reasons for silence. Khan makes a powerful case that “the faith BAME teachers, parents and students place in the system must now be reciprocated through dialogue and change”.

### If #BlackLivesMatter, we have to stop the discriminatory use of exclusion

@marymered

Mary Meredith focuses on exclusions and patterns that show a clear imbalance between ethnic groups. “A black Caribbean boy, eligible for free school meals and who has SEND, is 168 times more likely to be excluded than his white female counterpart who is not eligible for FSM and who is not identified as having SEND.” As shocking as such statistics are, it can be



easy to disassociate one’s own work as a teacher from this larger picture. However, Meredith astutely uses one child and one teacher’s experiences to illustrate some of the underlying causes of this terrible reality. As she acknowledges, while we may not be able (as individuals) to change the law “one thing is absolutely within our power as educators, and that is to examine our own unconscious biases, and to advocate for the marginalised”. Reflecting on a time when she has failed to do this has shaped her thinking and led her to bravely share a story from which we can all learn.

### How the British education system failed me: as a student and a teacher

@SarahOlu\_

Sarah Olunmi reflects on her experiences as a pupil in state and private schools and as a teacher who experienced racial abuse from students and colleagues. Whether you find some of her stories shocking or whether you find them sadly all-too-familiar, this piece is worth reading and reflecting on. As Olunmi powerfully argues: “we are not just talking about over-policing of black bodies in the US, we are talking about the institutions that exist here in the UK too!”

### Catch up!!!

@BaldHeadteacher

We are all aware of the overwhelming likelihood that lockdown is going to hugely increase the disadvantage gap. The Education Endowment Foundation’s rapid evidence assessment on the impact of school closures on the attainment gap suggests that the progress of the past ten years could be reversed. In this piece, headteacher Jeremy Barnes reflects on the implications, arguing that proposals for quick-fix solutions, such as summer opening, understate the depth and seriousness of this issue. He says that with “innovative thinking and strong, principled leaderships” education can play a powerful role in closing the disadvantaged gap. However, the issue deserves deep thought and focus, not glib solutions.

### It’s time to stop attacking PowerPoint

@TeacherBusy

It can at times be a little hard to distinguish between ideas that should be constantly challenged and those that are not inherently harmful, but should be used in an evidence-informed way. Kirsty Pole provides a powerful counter to those who want to ban PowerPoint from the classroom. Without proselytising, she outlines some of its many benefits for workload, organisation and lesson delivery. She also recognises some of its weaknesses when used badly, particularly when downloading others’ resources without thought. If, like me, you have many years’ worth of resources stored on PowerPoint then do not despair that it has fallen into some teachers’ bad books. If you follow Miss P’s advice, you can be reassured that “you can use PowerPoint and be a really good teacher”.

# Research

Jeremy Hodgen reviews the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact him on Twitter @jeremyhodgen if you have a topic you would like him to cover

## How can we fix low attainment in maths?

**Jeremy Hodgen, professor of mathematics education, UCL Institute of Education**

Every year almost 40 per cent of young people leave school without a “good” level 4 grade in GCSE maths. This low attainment is one of the most persistent problems in education and is almost certain to get worse as a result of the lockdown.

Today we publish a report of our study, *Low attainment in mathematics: an investigation focusing on year 9 students in England*, which was funded by the Nuffield Foundation. We examined how low-attaining year 9 students understand and progress across number, multiplicative reasoning and algebra. Are low-attainers on basically the same trajectory as other students, just a bit delayed, or do they have substantively different routes of progression through the curriculum? Most importantly, what can be done to support them so that they progress in their learning of mathematics?

We developed a new computer-based test, designed specifically for low-attaining year 9 students, and, for comparison, gave the same test to year 5 middle and high-attainers (almost 4,000 students altogether). As you might expect, we found that the strongest factor associated with students’ future attainment was their prior attainment - this mattered more than gender, socioeconomic status and attitude.

We found no magic bullets when we looked for evidence that there are particular concepts and areas of mathematics that are crucial determiners of future learning.

However, although we found some evidence that low-attaining students have some weaknesses in number and calculation, our study indicates that, in general, low-attaining year 9 students



seem to have broadly similar mathematical profiles to the year 5 students we tested who were operating at a similar overall level of mathematics. The year 9 students were some four years or so behind their peers, but they were on the same mathematical path.

From our review of the literature, we found that most strategies that are effective generally are also effective for low attainers. We identified 12 evidence-based strategies and approaches that appear to be effective and relevant for teaching low-attaining students in mathematics (see the report for the full list).

Among these, we found particularly consistent evidence to support the use of explicit teaching (including what is often called direct instruction). Explicit teaching does not just mean careful explanations or clear descriptions of step-by-step procedures, but includes structured practice materials that have often been designed and evaluated by expert teams, incorporating conceptual and procedural aspects of knowledge. These approaches may take the form of at least partially scripted lessons and usually involve feedback.

But we found that explicit teaching is not a silver bullet; the effect on attainment was only of a moderate size. Indeed, a contrasting approach, student-centred

learning, was also found to have a similar size of effect, albeit with a much weaker and less-consistent evidence base. Research indicates that the strategy of explicit teaching should be used alongside other approaches, including problem-solving and collaborative learning.

We also found evidence to support early intervention for students at risk of low attainment. In general, the effect of an intervention reduced as the duration increased, although higher frequency was associated with increased benefits. We also found that support from teaching assistants to small groups could be effective when provided through structured programmes.

Our study also suggests that interventions directed exclusively at increasing motivation or improving attitudes are less likely to be effective than interventions focused more directly on improving attainment.

These findings indicate that there are effective strategies that could improve the attainment gap in maths as schools reopen over the next few months, but we also found that teachers need guidance and support to make best use of these strategies. Given the challenges our school system faces, providing this is a matter of urgency.

The full report can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/3h95aqo>



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## SUNDAY

"It is encouraging to see the majority of primary schools open their doors to more pupils," beamed a typically excited Gavin Williamson in a DfE comment that was definitely written for him and then signed off by 160 people.

The education secretary was talking, of course, about attendance figures released this week that showed how the wider reopening of schools last week had gone.

Sure, it's technically correct that 52 per cent of primary schools represents a majority, and we know this government has form in assuming that 52 per cent means 100 per cent (sorry Remainers), but you'd think even Gav would want to steer clear of making a big deal of such disappointing figures.

## WEDNESDAY

Being well-briefed is key for those appearing in front of select committees.

However, it appears Ofqual did not anticipate its chief regulator being asked about diversity in its own ranks during an education committee hearing that focused on how the exams system this year risks discriminating ethnic minority pupils.

Asked what proportion of Ofqual's senior staff are BAME, Sally Collier told MPs: "I'm not going to quote a figure, because I'll probably get it wrong."

Given the current national conversation and structural racism



SALLY COLLIER

and representation, you'd have hoped the head of a prominent government agency would have been better briefed!

\*\*\*

"Lightning a bigger risk to pupils than Covid," *The Telegraph* bellowed from its front page as the paper continued with its crusade to get kids back to school.

If the claim sounds familiar, that's because Toby Young (a man so clever he had to ask his father to get him into Oxford) made a similar claim in a tweet late last month.

"So far, only two children under the age of 15 have died from Covid-19 in the whole of the UK, which means that if your child is 14 or under they're four times more likely to be struck by lightning than die of coronavirus," he blustered.

But, as Mike Cameron skilfully sets out in his blog, Young's claims don't add up.

Not only was Tobes using the

incorrect number of deaths of children, he hadn't extrapolated the data on lightning strikes over a year.

Doing so, as Cameron has done, and applying ONS population spread figures to work out the likely proportion of youngsters struck, brings him to the conclusion that under-15s "are in fact twice as likely to die of Covid-19 than be struck by lightning".

But as Cameron points out, these are lightning strikes, not deaths. As far as deaths are concerned, he calculates that 0.13 under-15s die from being struck by lightning every year, "making it around 160 times more likely that an under-15 will die from Covid-19 than they will from a lightning strike".

Best stick to PPE, eh Toby?

## THURSDAY

The National Education Union issued a new ten-point "national education recovery plan", calling on the government to back its proposals.

Point 9 of the plan states: "We must not lose a generation because the pandemic makes even more children poor. This requires a 'can-do' mentality – around unemployment, training and benefits as well as direct support to schools."

That's right folks – the NEU, which has for weeks been ordering its members not to engage in back-to-school planning whatsoever, and threatening heads that did so – now wants everyone to have a "can-do attitude". Oh the irony.

# PRINCIPAL

**Iceni All Through Academy – Secondary Provision | Methwold, Thetford**  
**Salary: Circa £80k**  
**Interviews: Thursday 2nd July 2020**  
**Start Date: January 2021 or earlier**



## Help us make learning central to every child's life.

Iceni Academy is an all-through academy and we are seeking a Principal to lead the secondary provision. Iceni Academy aims to be a centre of excellence within the community and deliver a "platinum standard" of education. Success is our watchword and we give both pupils and our staff everything they need to get ahead and realise their full potential in an increasingly technological society.

More than just a Principal, you'll be an ambassador and inspiration to colleagues and students alike. You will embrace the vision of Academy Transformation Trust and be an advocate for brilliance in the wider education community. Your fresh and exciting ideas will transform the way we teach and learn, set new standards for academic achievement, and develop a curriculum fit for the twenty-first century.

Experienced within secondary settings, you'll bring an

impressive track record of success and be a genuinely compelling leader. Whether you're dealing with teacher and student recruitment, collaborating with the Trust's network of academies or building the secondary provision at Iceni Academy's profile on the local and national stage, you will make a measurable difference every day – transforming both expectations and outcomes.

If you're ready to shape the future of Iceni Academy's secondary provision, please apply

**Closing Date: Friday 19th June 2020, 12 noon**

*Academy Transformation Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. All offers of employment will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure*

# PRINCIPAL

**Ravens Academy**  
**Clacton-on-Sea, Essex**  
**Salary: Competitive**



## An amazing opportunity to lead a high-performing academy.

At Ravens Academy, we are a friendly, welcoming academy committed to achieving together. We work alongside children, their parents and the wider community to provide a rich and rewarding education for all of our learners. We are very proud of each of our children and we continue to work hard to inspire every pupil in our academy to succeed and develop.

The rich, engaging curriculum is designed to ensure that all pupils are supported and challenged to be the very best they can be, resulting in ambitious and highly successful learners. There is an unwavering commitment to ensure that every child gains the knowledge, skills and character needed to succeed.

More than a Principal; you will be an ambassador and inspiration for colleagues and pupils alike. You will embrace the collaborative, ambitious vision of Academy Transformation Trust and be an advocate for success and evolution in the wider education community. Experienced within primary education, you'll bring an impressive track

record of school improvement and be an ethical, forward-thinking leader who will make a difference - every day.

Equally importantly, you will have an excellent knowledge and understanding of child protection and safeguarding legislation, be absolutely committed to best practice and determined to champion our children and support their families in order to make a difference - every day.

If you're ready to shape the future of our Ravens Academy family, and are excited by the opportunities for collaboration and career development within our expanding network of 22 academies, please apply now.

**Closing Date: Sunday 5th July 2020, midnight**

*Academy Transformation Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. All offers of employment will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check, 2 satisfactory references and any other necessary checks.*

**SCHOOLS WEEK | FE WEEK | EDU  
WEEK JOBS**

# Recruitment advertising during the Coronavirus Pandemic

To assist organisations over the forthcoming weeks, Schools Week, FE 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 digital editions**
  - A **free of charge** second insertion of your advert

**CLICK HERE TO****ADVERTISE  
A ROLE****CLICK HERE TO****SPEAK TO A  
MEMBER OF  
THE TEAM**