

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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



The recovery curriculum that's gone global

P26

The successes of placing social workers in schools



P21-23

'Our collective effort will make a full return possible'



P25

Going back to the future on rebuilding costs



P13

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- No plan for school transport
- Public buses bursting bubbles
- And 30k pupils still without laptops



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Teanna Maguire Midwifery Undergraduate at Manchester University and former BTEC student

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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### Understanding children in or on the margins of care



Page 32



### The schools STILL waiting for laptops

Page 14



### Blended learning is here to stay. It's time to catch up

Page 24



### Always giving, but reward is forever

Page 28

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# Back-to-school plans



## Keep your distance and stay in your bubble

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

Teachers will be allowed to move between classes under the government's back-to-school plans for September, with most at-risk staff expected back in the classroom.

The plans confirm full-class bubbles for primary schools and whole-year bubbles "likely" at secondary.

Measures include teachers keeping two metres away from pupils when possible, and regular cleaning of shared spaces or items, such as textbooks.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, said "significant time" would be needed to implement the plans, which "represent the most significant moment for schools since the partial national closure [following the Covid-19 pandemic] was announced in late March.

"Whilst a model of larger group sizes is perhaps the only feasible way to get all pupils back to school on a full-time basis, no one should underestimate the scale of the challenge school leaders will now face in making these plans work in practice, especially in secondary schools."

If class-size bubbles aren't compatible with offering a full range of subjects, then schools can "look to" implement year group "bubbles". These groups should be kept apart, with limited sharing of rooms and social spaces.

The guidance adds that measures such as enhanced cleaning are "even more important" when larger groups are involved.

But the approaches of "separating groups and

maintaining distance are not 'all-or-nothing' options, and will still bring benefits, even if implemented partially".

Some pupils may be kept in class groups, but also allowed to mix for specialist teaching or transport. Siblings may also be in different groups.

Hamid Patel, the chief executive of the Star Academies Trust, said trust leaders, councils and heads needed to take "creative, flexible and solution-focused approaches" with a "positive mindset".

"Solutions are unlikely to be perfect: class sizes and curriculum organisation contain variables that make the consistent application of the bubble model difficult," he said.

The guidance says that school staff will be able to "operate across different classes and year groups", meaning secondary pupils will be taught by specialist teachers.

To mitigate the impact of adults dipping in and out of "bubbles", staff should "try" to stay two metres away from adults and children and minimise the use of staffrooms.

"In particular, they should avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within one metre of anyone."

Supply teachers and other temporary staff can move between schools.

Following the relaxation of shielding measures from August 1, the government also expects "most staff will attend school".

Those deemed "extremely clinically vulnerable" can return as long as social distancing is maintained, but school leaders should be "flexible in how those members of staff are deployed to enable them to work remotely where possible".

Dr Patrick Roach, the general secretary of the NASUWT teachers' union, said schools must be kept clean to protect staff, with a "health and safety inspection and enforcement regime to give parents and teachers the reassurance they will need".

The government said risks to all staff would be "mitigated significantly" if the "full measures" in the guidance were followed.

Shared resources – such as book and games – should also be cleaned if they were used by different bubbles. Sports, art and science equipment should be cleaned "meticulously" or left unused for 48 hours.

Regular and thorough hand cleaning would be needed for the foreseeable future.

While many schools have installed more basins, a survey by Teacher Tapp earlier this year found that 37 per cent of teachers did not have hot water and soap available for pupils.

Schools will not be reimbursed for the costs of getting pupils back. And they could be closed if they have two or more confirmed cases of Covid-19 within 14 days.

A mobile testing unit may also be dispatched to test others at the school.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said he was "concerned the government does not have a plan B if these guidelines do not work or if cases are higher by the time we get to September.

"A poor plan, such as this one, risks failing children, parents and staff alike."

But Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said it was "doing everything we can to make sure schools ... are as safe as possible for children and staff".

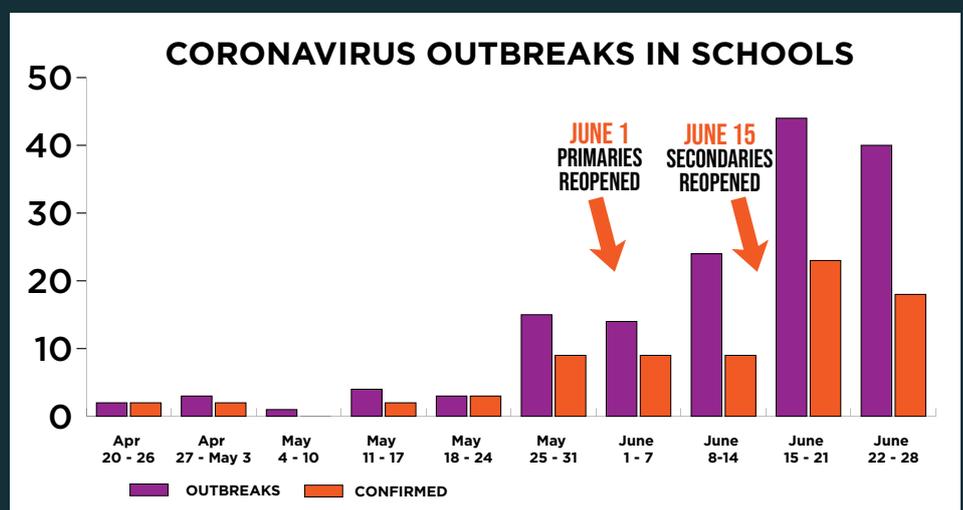
## Covid-19 outbreaks stabilise after spike

The number of suspected coronavirus outbreaks in schools "remained relatively stable" last week, Public Health England said.

New figures show there were 40 acute respiratory infection outbreaks in educational settings; 18 had at least one linked case that tested positive for coronavirus.

That compares with 44 outbreaks and 23 positive tests the previous week.

Dr Jenny Harries, the deputy chief medical officer, said that although the number of Covid-19 cases had declined, it was still in general circulation "so it is important we ensure schools implement sensible precaution to reduce potential transmission and minimise any risk to teachers and their pupils."



# Back-to-school plans



## Prepare 'remote education' for local lockdowns ...

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

The education secretary will consider ordering schools to provide a minimum level of remote education should their area go into local lockdown in autumn.

In its guidance on reopening, the Department for Education said it expected schools to have the capacity to offer "immediate remote education" should a group of pupils need to self-isolate, or if their premises needed to close because of a spike in Covid-19 cases.

In developing contingency plans, schools will be expected to set assignments "so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects".

The guidance also said that the government would explore a "temporary continuity direction" – an emergency power introduced through the coronavirus act – to "give additional clarity to schools, pupils and parents as to what remote education should be provided".

A final decision will be made in the autumn.

Speaking in the Commons yesterday, Gavin Williamson said he would ask Ofsted to examine what schools were doing in this area "because we will see situations ... where you will have



local lockdowns, and we need to ensure there is always continuity of education in those communities".

The guidance on remote education said schools should plan a programme that was the equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school – ideally including daily contact with teachers.

Schools are also expected to avoid an "over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities".

The government said pupils in schools should

be taught an "ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term".

However, schools would also be expected to "make use of existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important missed content", while aiming to return to their normal curriculum by summer next year.

Ben Newmark, a teacher and blogger, urged schools to "make sure you understand the spirit of the document before trying to implement all the recommendations/suggestions in it".

"This isn't necessarily a criticism of the approach. But schools should be really aware that, should they limit activities or curriculum in the aim of achieving total safety, they shouldn't expect this to meet with later governmental support," he tweeted.

The guidance also provides specific advice for each key stage, and for activities where there may be "an additional risk of infection".

For example, in music, the government suggests physical distancing "and playing outside ... limiting group sizes to no more than 15, positioning pupils back-to-back or side-to-side, avoiding sharing of instruments, and ensuring good ventilation".

**JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENSSW**

## ...and update your behaviour policies for the new term

Schools must reintroduce "proper discipline practices" in September to ensure any unruly behaviour is stamped out, Gavin Williamson said.

New government guidance states schools should consider updating their behaviour policies for the new term, including setting out "at the earliest opportunity the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules, and how they will enforce those rules, including any sanctions".

But individual needs should be taken into account and "new expectations into rewards system" should be considered.

This is "particularly the case" for restrictions on movement within schools and

hygiene rules.

Conservative MP Edward Timpson said some children would have experienced social isolation, lack of routine and sometimes trauma.

He asked the education secretary in parliament yesterday what help schools would get to deal with an increase in poor behaviour and to make sure pupils were not "removed from school when they've only just returned".

Williamson said it was "vital" to re-establish proper behaviour and discipline practices for all children... "but we've got to understand where you have good behaviour and discipline policies you have vastly reduced numbers of those children who've

been excluded from schools. That's what we're working with schools to deliver."

Schools should work with pupils who might struggle to re-engage in school, including "providing support for overcoming barriers to attendance and behaviour, and to help them reintegrate back into school life".

Present disciplinary powers, including exclusion, remain in place. Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort.

The guidance said Ofsted would continue to "consider exclusions, including the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusion and to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable."

# Back-to-school plans



## Questions over league tables, but no Ofsted until January

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Schools are none-the-wiser about whether league tables will return next year as the government attempts a return to “business as usual” – but proper Ofsted inspections won’t resume until January.

Although the government’s guidance on school reopening in September confirmed the suspension of league tables for the 2019-20 academic year, it did not do so for 2020-21, despite an expectation that exams will be disrupted again next year.

League tables were cancelled and Ofsted inspections suspended earlier this year after the government announced its intention to partially close schools to help tackle the spread of coronavirus.

This week, the government confirmed that Ofsted inspectors will start to visit schools again in September to look at how the return of pupils is being managed, but formal inspections won’t begin again until January.

Speaking in the House of Commons on Thursday, education secretary Gavin Williamson sought to reassure MPs that visits in the autumn term would be light-touch.

“We understand the additional pressures on teaching staff to deliver such high standards of education in this difficult period,” he said, adding that the visits would be used “to discuss how they are managing to return to full education of all their pupils”.

“The insight that inspectors gather will also be aggregated nationally to share learning with the whole sector, the government and the wider public.”

According to government guidance, inspectors will visit “a sample of schools”, for “collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations set out in this document, and will not result in a judgment”.

A brief letter will be published following the visit, the guidance adds.

Meanwhile, unions and school leaders had been lobbying the government to cancel league tables again next year, arguing that they would be unfair in the context of the widespread disruption expected as pupils return. However,



their pleas appear to have fallen on deaf ears.

The National Education Union yesterday said it was “deeply disappointing” that the government had “pulled back from confirming that performance tables will be suspended for the coming year, given the exceptional circumstances facing families and schools”.

The decision on Ofsted has divided opinion in the education sector. While some school leaders have argued that January is too soon for the return of formal inspections, some leaders of turnaround schools want to get inspectors in as soon as possible to recognise their work with better grades.

The DfE has also confirmed that primary tests will also go ahead as planned next year.

These include the phonics screening check, key stage 1 and key stage 2 SATs and year 4 times tables test. However, there is one exception: the statutory rollout of the reception baseline assessment has been delayed to 2021.

A spokesperson for the More Than a Score

campaign questioned the decision to proceed with primary tests, which they described as “terrible news for parents, pupils and schools”.

“The main priority for schools right now is the mental health and well-being of pupils. This forms the bedrock of all good learning – and especially so after the months of disruption and trauma many children have experienced.

“Preparing for and administering the tests will be a huge additional burden and distraction.”

Routine Ofsted inspections of independent schools, both by Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate, will also remain suspended during the autumn term. The two bodies will undertake “non-routine inspections, as commissioned by the Department for Education, where appropriate”, the guidance states.

“For example, this may be a pre-registration inspection or an inspection to follow up on significant safeguarding concerns. These inspections will have a judgment, as usual, and result in the production of a report.”

# Back-to-school plans



## ‘Think Olympic’ school travel advice fails to impress

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

The government’s “absent thinking” over the hundreds of thousands of children reliant on public transport to get back to school has been lambasted, as leaders are told to find inspiration from the 2012 Olympics.

Government guidance for plans to minimise the risk of pupils getting to school on public buses has few details outside of using staggered start times and encouragement for walking or cycling – including using staff to supervise “walking buses”.

The lack of plans is even more worrying given deputy chief medical officer Dr Jenny Harries said “we should be more concerned with what the teenagers are doing outside school”, which will include getting to and from school.

However, the government said it was “confident that if all available options are considered by all parties, it will be possible to reduce demand and ensure transport is available for those who need it most”.

The guidance adds: “Experience during the 2012 London Olympics showed that it is possible to make a very real difference to travel patterns where there is a concerted effort to do so and where the general public understand the imperative for doing so.”

The capital introduced “games lanes” on its roads, London Overground’s East London Line was expanded and TfL built a £25 million cable car across the River Thames.

But Ian Mack, director of The Green Bus company, said it took two years of “pretty intensive planning”.

“The Olympics were well-funded and they had specialist transport provided, we were one of them, supplying bus services in an extremely coordinated and heavily managed way. It was really good.”

School leaders mocked the Olympics reference online as being ridiculous. The games also took place in school holidays.

Mack added: “The challenge for schools which rely on the ordinary bus network is going to be monumental.”

The DfE has said that given the pressure on public transport, it may have to work with councils to put on additional dedicated school transport



Schools Week’s political editor Freddie Whittaker challenges Gavin Williamson’s transport plans at the daily briefing

services, including areas in which they do not currently operate.

But the government is currently only “evaluating” its position, and will set out the next steps “shortly”.

Mack said additional bus services could see parents recharged for the extra costs.

The national body representing Catholic schools – which has many rural schools – has already warned that charges for school transport could rise by more than £20 a day.

Dan Morrow, CEO at Woodland Academy Trust, said for rural and sub-rural schools in particular, there appears to be “no recognition of the significant existing logistical challenges, let alone the impact of some profound operational changes for September”.

He added: “The result may well mean further isolation – in terms of access as well as geography – for more remote communities in an age when connection is to be valued and cherished more than ever. The guidance is completely absent in thinking, framing and communication.”

For schools using dedicated school transport, guidance states pupils should be grouped together as in their bubbles, use hand sanitiser on boarding and getting off, and to distance within vehicles “where possible”.

The most recent National Travel Survey, of about 2,000 people in England in 2018, found that 21 per cent of secondary pupils used a bus to get to school. Another eight per cent used a private bus.

The figures at primary were much lower, but overall one in ten pupils uses a public bus to get to school. Extrapolated across the 8.9 million pupils in England, that’s nearly 900,000 children.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the



2012 Olympics

National Education Union, said the practical difficulties involved in arranging a separation of year group bubbles are “immense” and will not be possible in many schools.

“In secondary schools the difficulties multiply, because the government guidelines suggest that a whole year-group should be treated as ‘a bubble’, and that these year-group bubbles should be kept apart by staggering arrival times, breaks and lunch times.”

The Department for Transport is asking local authorities to work urgently with schools to survey parents on their typical routes to school and potential alternatives.

They are also asking them to consider a range of options for shifting demand for public transport on to other modes, and to consider using traffic demand management approaches in order to ensure that children are able to attend school from the start of the autumn term.

When asked why a proper plan wasn’t in place, education secretary Gavin Williamson said yesterday he’ll be working closely with councils in “making sure that depending on where we are in terms of dealing with this virus that the proper controls are properly in place on school transport”.

# Back-to-school plans



## Heads must issue absence fines so poor don't 'suffer'

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds will suffer if the government does not enforce mandatory attendance in schools, the education secretary has claimed.

Responding to a question from *Schools Week* at the Downing Street press briefing on Thursday, Gavin Williamson said if the government did not have an expectation of "every child to be in school unless there is a good and proper reason for it", some of the children "from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are the ones that are going to suffer".

Schools were told to record every absence as authorised during the coronavirus outbreak and partial school closures.

However, ministers have said they intend to get all pupils back in September, with Williamson confirming that absence fines will begin to be issued again in the autumn.

But many parents' determination not to send their children back in September could put headteachers in a difficult position, as it is they who decide whether to record an absence as authorised.

"The desire to bring everyone back to school, as soon as it is safe to do so, is correct. But fines are too blunt a way of making this happen," said Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT.

"They drive a wedge between schools and families at the best of times. That is something we can ill afford when getting more pupils back in school will rely on a huge amount of cooperation and understanding between schools and families."

Asked whether heads would be penalised for approving absences of pupils whose parents kept them at home out of fears for their safety, Williamson insisted fines were "not the first step that schools move to" in terms of absences.

"There's a whole series of steps, working with local authority guidance, to be able to work with those families to deal with those



Gavin Williamson

concerns and make sure that you have attendance of all children.

"But if we want to make sure that those people from the most disadvantaged communities do not suffer, and make sure children broadly do not suffer, we have to be clear that attendance at school is something that is expected of every child unless there is a good and proper medical reason for them not to be in attendance."

The Department for Education is also facing calls to clarify what will constitute a "good reason" for absence in September. In normal times, children are only allowed to miss school if they are ill or if they have advance permission.

The government is expected to publish more guidance once schools reopen, and has indicated that it will still be up to heads whether or not they authorise absence.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said fining parents for pupils' non-attendance in September was not the right approach and the government "should not expect schools to take this action."

"There will be many frightened and anxious parents out there, and this is very much a case of building confidence that it is safe to return, rather

than forcing the issue through the use of fines."

He said the government "must show a greater understanding of the realities of the situation. We would recommend that there is a period of grace while normal patterns resume."

Some headteachers have already said they will rebel. Chris Dyson, the head of Parklands Primary School in Leeds, tweeted: "For the record I WON'T be issuing fines, I will authorise absence. The fact less than 50 per cent [of] parents have trust in you to send them to school speaks volumes. Threatening won't help."

The DfE would not comment when asked whether heads would face sanctions if they authorised absences en-masse for pupils of parents who refused to return their children to school on safety grounds.

"We will ask schools to work with families to secure full attendance from the start of the new term, as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education and promote their wider development," a spokesperson said.

"As usual, fines will sit alongside this as a last resort where there is no valid reason for absences."

# Leicester's covid-19 response thwarted by poor data

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Leicester council's education director has said they have still do not have a breakdown by age of the children who have been infected with covid-19.

The admission comes despite the city becoming the first local lockdown earlier this week amid rising case numbers, and highlights again how regional responses to outbreaks are being hindered by poor data sharing from government.

Leicester's minimum two-week local lockdown will mean many teachers may now not see most children for lessons until after the summer break.

Ten schools have either completely or partially closed since the wider reopening of schools, although it is mostly adults who have been affected.

But Martin Samuels, director of education and social care at Leicester City Council, told Schools Week it did not have the data it needed to make any official announcements about the severity of the outbreak.

Detailed pillar two data – tests in the community – was only provided to Leicester at the end of last week and comparative data was only shared on Monday.

Samuels said: "It's a reasonable starting position that there will be greater incidence amongst teenagers than primary school children, but we can't tell that at the moment."

The data does not break down by cohort, he said – it is only labelled as under-18. He has requested a breakdown by nursery, primary and secondary.

He said there had been 21 positive cases in schools, adding: "I'm pretty confident that the evidence I've seen suggests that those under-18s who are getting infected are getting infected in the community and the majority of people who are infected who have attended school have been staff picking it up in the community."

A report by Public Health England said the proportion of positive tests in Leicester was rising, and this was "most marked" in the under-19 group.

On pupils returning to schools, it said: "We



have been unable to provide any analytical link to correlate this observation with any real or apparent rise in new infections in the Leicester area.

"However, it would seem sensible to investigate this association to exclude any evidence of the recent rise in observed case numbers being linked to a return of larger numbers of children to school."

The council will now work with public health to "get some sense of what the prevalence is in the school population to get the breakdown of those under-18s".

Samuels added: "The thing we are sure about are the individuals who have been regularly attending school who have been showing symptoms and who have been tested. And those numbers are very very small. That does suggest that the infections are being acquired in the community, but I could be wrong. So we need to have that more detailed knowledge, we need the breakdown of the under-18s - ideally by actual age, but certainly by age cohort. Then we can make an assessment"

In a list provided to Schools Week, and confirmed by Leicester City Council, 10 schools have had to close in some form – whether fully or a bubble – since May 14 because of a positive case of coronavirus.

Two other schools also had positive cases, but they did not need to close because the adult and child had not been in school for seven days

before testing.

Of the 12 schools in total affected, ten had adult cases – and two had more than one case. There were just two cases of a child testing positive.

After announcing the first local lockdown this week, health secretary Matt Hancock told BBC Breakfast that Leicester has had an "unusually high incidence" in children.

Joseph Wyglendacz, Leicester's secretary for the National Education Union, asked the council on June 19 whether schools could close. He told Schools Week some education workers were "absolutely terrified".

Schools are now only staying open for the children of key workers or vulnerable children in the city, and 39 schools are also now closed to most children in neighbouring parts of Leicestershire.

"Everybody was very surprised at it," said Inderjit Sandhu, the executive headteacher at Scholars Academy Trust, which has two primary schools in Glenfield and Oadby, both in lockdown.

"We've got no milestones, no end of term activities for [year 6] that we had all planned for next week to finish off their time in primary."

Leicester City Council has given schools the option to open to pupils from September 1, rather than its earlier date of August 26, to allow extra time to prepare.

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**George Clarke**

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## News



## 2021 exams plan 'little more than tinkering'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Proposals to delay the start of next year's exams by a couple of weeks into June amounts to "little more than tinkering at the edges". Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the plan to start on June 7 "adds up to a few weeks more learning time to compensate for a shutdown that has lasted four months".

The regulator Ofqual has set out draft plans for 2021, including proposals to delay exams until after the May half term break and various changes to content.

The organisation promised a consultation on its plans before this summer's break to give clarity to current year 10s and year 12s about how the system will work for them next year.

The consultation asks whether the GCSE and A-level timetables should start after half term, even if this meant delaying results' days, to "allow more time for teaching".

But Barton said although he understood that it was difficult to scale back exams in a way that was fair to all pupils "we fear the very minor changes in this consultation fail to recognise the enormous pressure on schools and their pupils to cover the large amount of content in these courses".

Ofqual has also asked what respondents think of delaying exams if results' days in August can be maintained.

Other questions include whether schools should have a choice of topics in GCSE history and ancient history, and whether fieldwork for GCSE geography should be flagged away.

Changes to performances in dance and

drama are proposed, with a relaxation of the rules in design and technology to allow students to watch teachers demonstrate the use of machinery, rather than to use the machinery themselves.

Other subjects also could be adapted to free teaching time, such as removing the assessment on recording the spoken language in GCSE English language, and allowing pupils to observe, rather than undertake, practical science work.

However, the regulator has proposed that generally exams will not include more optional questions than usual, and that the number of exams taken for each subject should be the same.

Nansi Ellis, the assistant general secretary of the National Education Union, said the expectation that the full specification could be covered in most subjects was "unrealistic".

"Delaying exams by two or three weeks next summer can't make up for the months already lost, never mind any further time that may be lost due to subsequent waves of the virus or local spikes and lockdowns... the Department for Education and Ofqual need to go further with changes to exam content, otherwise they risk driving inequality in the system and undermining the results awarded next summer."

Sally Collier, the chief regulator of Ofqual, said the proposals would "help reduce the pressure on students and teachers, while allowing them to progress with valid qualifications which higher educational institutions and employers can trust".

The consultation closes on July 16, and final decisions will be announced in August.

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## Heads' union proposes autumn exam hubs

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Local hubs should be set up to run exams this autumn to stop disruption in schools, a school leaders' union has said.

Ofqual this week confirmed that exams in all GCSE, AS and A-level subjects must be available for pupils wanting to resit if they are not happy with their teacher-assessed grade.

The regulator also confirmed that a pupil's performance in this year's series will be based on tests alone. Only art and design qualifications will be assessed without an exam.

AS and A-level exams are expected to be held in October, with GCSEs in November.

Three quarters of school leaders taking part in an NAHT union survey said this would challenge the academic needs and wellbeing of pupils returning in September.

They also highlighted a lack of space for exams and teaching to run at the same time.

Paul Whiteman, the union's general secretary, said "local hubs" should be set up. This could involve pupils from various local schools coming together in a single location - in one school or a community space - to sit the tests. The government would have to meet the additional costs for these arrangements.

"The government and Ofqual must act to ensure that schools and colleges are given significant support, including the options of setting up local hub centres, to be able to meet the needs of students wanting to take these exams as well as focus on what is needed for their current students," Whiteman said.

Under the new rules, exam boards will be allowed to withdraw an exam if there are no entries by the closing date.

Ofqual said it understood the "logistical challenges" facing schools and would continue talks with the sector. The Department for Education is also exploring ways to minimise additional burdens on schools.

A DfE spokesperson said they will work with the sector to find "practical solutions".

News

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# SEND rules back to normal from Sept (but prepare for local relaxations)

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
**@SAMANTHAJBOOTH**

The government will end nationwide relaxations over providing support for SEND pupils for September – but it will still consider easing requirements at local level.

July marks the third month since the government began relaxing the duty of councils to provide support for SEND pupils during the coronavirus outbreak, to which they face a legal challenge.

Instead, local authorities only need to use “reasonable endeavours” to fulfil their duty.

In new guidance published yesterday for the autumn term, the DfE confirmed it will not be issuing another notice to modify the EHCP duties, unless the evidence changes.

However, it stated that it will “consider whether any such flexibilities may be required locally to respond to outbreaks”.

This would include considering the need for changes on EHC needs-assessments timescales, which are in force until September 25.

This week, experts claimed support for children with special education needs has “dropped off a cliff” after the government relaxed rules around education, health and care plans.

The education committee also heard on Wednesday that schools are using “spurious reasons” to prevent pupils with special education needs from returning to school.

MP Robert Halfon, chair of the committee, said the evidence was “very, very depressing”.

Philippa Stobbs, policy vice-chair at Special Educational Consortium, said the problem is the waiving of the duty has been interpreted “so variably locally”.

She told the hearing: “There is some stunning provision being made for some children and families in some areas, but the difficulty is that in other areas parents have had no contact with



either their child’s school or their LA about what is going to be provided for them through that reasonable endeavours duty.

“The impact of that as families testify is absolutely devastating. The pre-existing inequalities in the system have been exacerbated because so little has been done in some places for children who are already experiencing difficulties in their education.”

She agreed it was a “postcode lottery”, with Imogen Jolley, head of public law at Simpson Millar, adding it was also a socio-economic issue.

She added: “One thing that a lot of SEN children have missed out on is the health provision that they get – the therapy provision, speech and language occupational therapy, physio, all of which has effectively dropped off a cliff in the last couple of months, and actually the impact of getting those children back into that routine and engaging is going to be significant.

“And that needs a real focus. It isn’t just necessarily getting them back in school, it’s planning that properly to make sure health is properly engaged with that.”

In the new guidance, DfE said schools should consider “any challenging behaviours or social or emotional challenges arising as a response to

the lockdown and offer additional support and phased returns where needed”.

On hygiene, they say special education schools will want to consider what frequency of hand-washing is best for which pupils, students and staff and incorporate time in timetables or lesson plans.

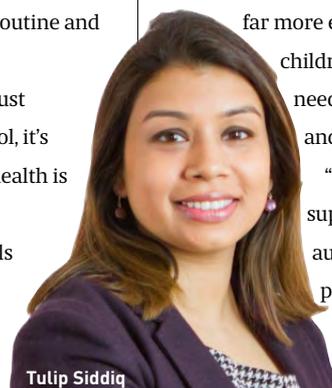
The DfE highlights that while pupils with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, and that it should be considered in risk assessments to support them, it is not a reason to deny them face-to-face education.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual, they confirmed.

But Tulip Siddiq MP, Labour’s shadow children’s minister, said: “The government needs to put far more effort into ensuring that all

children with SEND can get their needs met in educational settings and at home.

“We also need to see proper support given to schools and local authorities to help them deal with problems that have developed in, or been exacerbated by, lockdown.”



Tulip Siddiq

# £1bn pledge takes school rebuilding back to the future

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

**INVESTIGATES**

The government's new £1 billion school rebuilding project could usher in a return to levels of spending seen under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme – once derided by former education secretary Michael Gove as “shockingly wasteful”.

However, only a small number of projects are set to benefit from the scheme, with no guarantee further funding will match up to the first wave.

Boris Johnson (pictured) announced on Sunday that 50 projects would split £1 billion, with work on the first schemes due to begin in autumn next year. He said the funding would form part of a ten-year programme, but schools have been left waiting for details on further investment.

The initial £1 billion is about £20 million per project. According to government figures, this is about the cost of rebuilding an average-sized secondary school under BSF, the flagship Labour scheme scrapped in 2011. Rebuilding or improvement projects were cancelled at more than 700 schools.

The government has only said the new scheme would target schools in the worst condition, including “substantial investment” in the north and Midlands.

Rebuilds would also be “greener” and focus on “modern construction methods to create highly skilled jobs and boost the construction sector”.

But with further details not likely until the autumn spending review, and no guarantees about levels of future funding, school leaders are cautious.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, described the investment as “desperately needed” and “long overdue”, but warned that the school estate would require “further investment over and above that outlined in this announcement”.

Schools Week understands the £1 billion – and as yet unknown amounts for future waves of the programme – will be separate from other capital programmes, such as the condition improvement fund and funding to meet basic need for school places.

However, it is clear that £1 billion on its own will not solve schools' building woes.



In 2017, a National Audit Office report concluded that £6.7 billion would be needed to bring all schools up to “satisfactory” condition. Barton said the situation was “likely to have worsened since then, leaving far too many children studying in buildings that are not fit for purpose”.

The world of capital spending can seem murky – and is not helped by the way the government announces various pots of money.

For example, at the 2015 spending review George Osborne, then chancellor, announced £23.2 billion in school capital cash to last five years.

The government said this was to be spent on reaching its target for new places alongside “refurbishing and rebuilding more than 500 schools”.

But through those five years successive education secretaries have announced different pots of money for different projects, making it difficult to work out

whether funding has gone up, down or remained consistent.

Capital projects have also run alongside routine capital spending, such as the priority school building programme (PSBP). A total of £4.4 billion was allocated for 491 PSBP projects, which works out about £9 million each.

The National Audit Office's 2017 report gives the clearest picture of changes in funding for maintaining the school estate, although it is now three years out of date.

According to that report, actual funding for maintaining the school estate fell from more than £4.5 billion in 2009-10 to less than £2.5 billion in 2015-16. It forecast spending was due to fall again to less than £2 billion in 2019-20.

However, this excludes funding for new school places, which was forecast to fall to £2.4 billion in 2019-20.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said he hoped the government's “newfound commitment to maintaining school buildings ... marks a change in direction”.

Ministers have also announced that an additional £560 million will be spent on repairs and upgrades to schools in 2020-21.



# 30,000 laptops miss June delivery deadline

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

The government has failed on its promise to deliver 230,000 laptops to vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils by the end of June, with heads still waiting for devices calling the scheme a “massive failure”.

Figures published this week show 202,212 laptops had been delivered or dispatched as of Tuesday (June 30), nearly 30,000 fewer than the 230,000 promised by Gavin Williamson, the education secretary.

He told parliament last month the laptops “would all be distributed by the end of June and we are on target to do that”.

Steve Howell, the headteacher of Birmingham City Council’s Pupil Referral Unit, on Wednesday is still waiting for 31 laptops.

“It’s a massive failure: The children have been failed.”

He said the school had sent out physical workpacks, which meant “any impactful teaching has gone out of the window”.

Nearly three quarters of the school’s pupils do not have either regular access to the internet or a device.

The aim of the £85 million scheme, first announced in April, is to provide free laptops and tablets for disadvantaged year 10s and other vulnerable pupils.

It came under fire early on from school leaders who said it did not meet pupils’ needs – with some academy trusts given an initial allocation of less than a fifth of what they needed.

Following criticism in parliament last month, Williamson said the promised laptops were “on schedule. We said that they would all be distributed by the end of June and we are on target to do that.”

A Department for Education publication only states it has “ordered over 200,000”.

But Williamson confirmed in the Commons last month the total was 230,000.

The government has also ordered more than 50,000 4G wireless routers. As of yesterday, 47,416 had been delivered or dispatched.

A DfE spokesperson said it had delivered “over 200,000 laptops and tablets for the children who



need them most, as promised, and will continue to make sure all children are supported as schools prepare to reopen in September”.

The spokesperson said the delivery of laptops peaked at 27,000 in one 24-hour period. They were “manufactured and transported to the UK to meet the scale of the order”.

Nearly a quarter of the total have been sent out in the past seven days.

Howell said his IT team would have to check that the laptops were suitable for his pupils - that the filtering programmes were working, for instance. “I’m not entirely sure any kids are going to get a laptop before the end of term.”

Several school staff tweeted this week that they

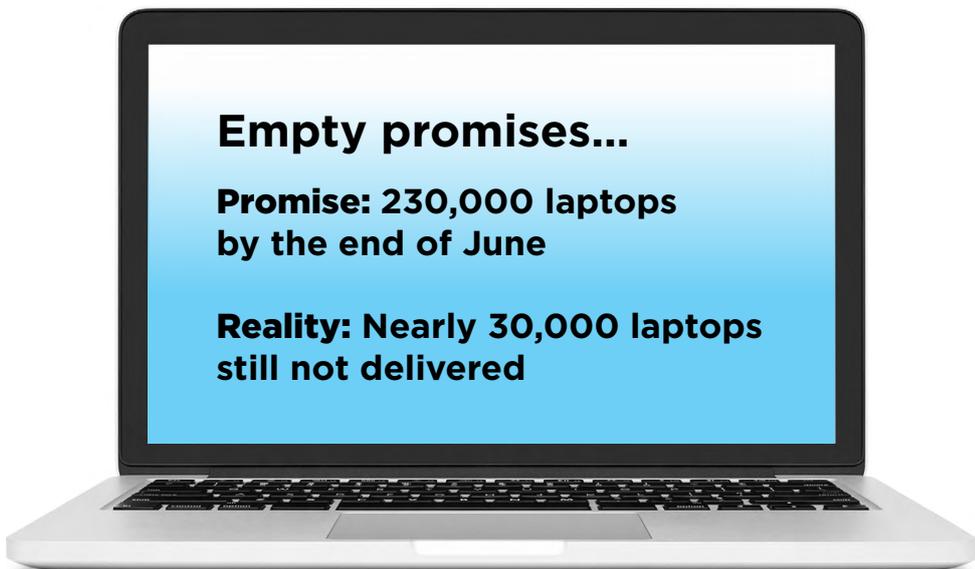
are still waiting for deliveries - although some schools have had problems once they do arrive.

Vic Goddard, the co-principal of Passmores Academy in Essex, had to wait a week to get passwords unlocked after getting his delivery last month.

Patricia Fraser, whose child attends the Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service pupil referral unit in Shrewsbury, had the same issue.

“When we charged the laptop it asks for a local admin password. The school doesn’t know this, so she [my daughter] can’t do anything with it. Other pupils had the same problem.”

The school did not respond when asked to comment.



**Empty promises...**

**Promise: 230,000 laptops by the end of June**

**Reality: Nearly 30,000 laptops still not delivered**

# Academy conversion ruled unlawful – but judge wants cooperation not litigation

**JOHN DICKENS**

**@JOHNDICKENSSW**

A judge has criticised expensive legal wrangling after ruling a regional school commissioner unlawfully approved an academy conversion that “curtailed” a council’s education provision review.

Hannah Woodhouse, the RSC for the south west, granted Swanmead Community School in Ilminster permission to become an academy and join the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust (BCT) in September.

Approval was given despite pleas from Somerset County Council to defer the decision until its review into the area’s “unviable” three-tier structure – of which Swanmead was the only non-academy middle school – had concluded.

The council launched a judicial review, saying the decision had “severely curtailed” its options to reorganise education across Ilminster and Crewkerne.

The high court ruled in its favour, meaning the Department for Education will now have to pay the council’s legal costs of up to £60,00.

The case is one of three judicial review proceedings relating to schools in the area.

In a stinging verdict, Mr Justice Peter Fraser said it was in “nobody’s interests for time, money and effort to be spent challenging one another in legal proceedings in this way”.

“It is certainly not in the interests of the children being educated in this part of Somerset, nor in the interest of all those involved in that important process, including staff and parents.”

He added that “consultation, consensus and cooperation are far more likely to result in

viable solutions for education in this particular area than continuing conflict and yet more litigation”.

The council



Hannah Woodhouse



review of the organisation of education was launched early last year.

The council said Swanmead’s application to become an academy was “made specifically by that school to protect its own specific position within the review”.

Somerset said allowing the school, rated ‘good’ by Ofsted, to join BCT gave the trust a “legal veto over significant changes” across the whole area.

The department argued that Woodhouse could

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**“Consultation, consensus and cooperation better than litigation”**

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not be expected to delay the decision, adding this delay could have also potentially been subject to its own judicial review from the affected school or academy trust.

But Fraser found Woodhouse, who made the decision during her first headteacher board meeting in the post, failed to have regard to the prejudicial impact of the academy order on the council review.

The judge also found there was “no adequate explanation” for why the decision was made when the council had started consultation on “detailed” proposals for change, nor why representations from other aggrieved schools “should have been ignored”. The education review had cost the

council £75,000.

But Fraser said the facts were “highly unusual”, adding the outcome “should not be interpreted as granting carte-blanc to those wishing to challenge the making of academy orders generally, or to contain any finding that there is a general duty to give reasons whenever such an application is approved”.

To complicate matters further, the council had also issued a letter of claim under the judicial review pre-action protocol against a decision, at the same September RSC meeting, to allow another middle school – Maiden Beech – to join BCT. The school was already an academy, and the transfer was completed in December.

Fraser said the transfer was “during the pre-action protocol period which is, in my judgment, somewhat unseemly. It also potentially undermines the purpose of the judicial review pre-action protocol itself”.

Meanwhile, BCT threatened a judicial review in April after the council allowed Hinton St George school to expand from accepting pupils in years 1 to 4 to years 5 and 6. Hinton was a “feeder” for Maiden Beech.

Faye Purbrick, Somerset council’s cabinet member for education, said they “want to make sure that we can bring the biggest educational benefits to families” in the area.

But Swanmead headteacher Mark Walker said the school had already started rebranding and pupils looking at new uniform.

“The school community is devastated,” he added. “Despite the fact government policy encourages schools to become academies and join Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), Swanmead is dumbfounded that they have not been allowed to do this and now need to consider what to do next with regard to this verdict.”

A DfE spokesperson said they “do not believe this process would have obstructed the local authority’s review of education provision”, and added they “welcome the council’s “renewed determination to reach a swift conclusion”.

# New shadow ed sec backed abolishing private schools (and isn't an academies fan, either)

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Labour's new shadow education secretary was among the first MPs to support her party's calls to abolish private schools.

Kate Green, who was appointed on Saturday, has also consistently voted against the expansion of academies and increasing school autonomy.

The MP for Stretford and Urmston, a former chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group, replaces Rebecca Long-Bailey who was sacked last week for retweeting an article that the party said "contained an antisemitic conspiracy theory".

Green previously served as a shadow minister for disabled people, shadow minister for women and equalities and shadow minister for child poverty strategy.

She said it was a "privilege to have been asked to serve as shadow education secretary".

"The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating impact on children's education. I look forward to working with teachers, unions, parents and councils to help ensure we get our children back in school as soon as possible."

Sir Keir Starmer, the party leader, said: "Kate has spent a lifetime campaigning against child poverty and educational inequalities. I look forward to working with her in this new role."

## Eight facts about the new shadow education secretary

**She was born in Edinburgh in 1960.** She is the first shadow education secretary to have been born in Scotland since Michael Gove, the Conservative's shadow before the 2010 election.

**Green has been an MP since 2010, replacing Beverley Hughes,** a former children's minister. She is the fifth MP representing a Greater Manchester constituency to have served as shadow education secretary since 2010, joining Andy Burnham, Lucy Powell, Angela Rayner and Long-Bailey.



Kate Green

**She has held a number of shadow ministerial briefs.** Although she has never held a position in the shadow education team before, she has held a number of education-adjacent roles. She was a shadow minister for women and equalities from 2015-16, and served as a shadow minister for child poverty strategy from April until her latest promotion.

**Her background is in the charity sector.** Green was chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group and director of the National Council for One Parent Families before she entered parliament.

**She chaired Owen Smith's unsuccessful Labour leadership campaign.** The Welsh MP challenged Jeremy Corbyn in 2016, following a mass exodus of frontbenchers after the EU referendum. Green resigned as shadow women and equalities minister.

**She supports the abolition of private schools.**

According to the Labour Against Private Schools group, Green was the first MP to support the #AbolishEton campaign launched last year. She also hosted an event in parliament to discuss the initiative.

**Green has spoken in favour of Labour's academies policy, but voted against expansion.**

In a Commons debate in 2016, she spoke about how the original programme had resulted in a range of different specialist schools in her constituency. However, according to TheyWorkForYou, she has consistently voted against academies and against increasing school autonomy.

**She has campaigned for the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families.** She is chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Gypsies and Travellers, and in 2017 expressed concerns about the "significant numbers" of GRT children excluded from schools.

# DfE plans overhaul of admissions code

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

The government plans to overhaul admission rules to crack down on schools turning away pupils with special education needs because their behaviour is too “challenging”.

It follows Schools Week investigations revealing how vulnerable children were being shut out by schools under fair access protocols (FAPs). We also revealed vulnerable pupils waiting up to ten months to secure a place.

The government is now consulting on changing the admissions code to ensure vulnerable pupils are better served when finding school places during in-year admissions or using FAPs.

All local authorities have to have FAPs in place to make sure places can be found for these children outside the normal admission rounds, as soon as possible.

Panels of headteachers and council representatives are convened to find places.

But the government said it was “aware” schools were misusing rules that allowed them to turn a vulnerable pupil away because the child had “challenging behaviour”.

The consultation report said this rule was “sometimes used to refuse admission to children with behaviour that can sometimes be challenging due to underlying circumstances such as SEND”.

“To ensure it is used appropriately, we propose to set out the circumstances this provision should and should not be used to refuse admission.”

Such refusals seem to be rising. Schools Week revealed last year that pleas from councils for the education secretary to intervene over admission rows soared by nearly 50 per cent.

The government also wants to introduce a limit of 20 school days for a place to be allocated under the FAP.

Proposals also include clarification that “all schools must take their fair share of children via the FAP, even where they are full, and likewise that no school – including those with places available – is asked to take a disproportionate number of children via the FAP”.

However, should a “majority” of schools in the area no longer support the FAP, they can initiate a review with the council.

The government also wants to extend the categories of pupils who can be admitted via the FAP to include those on a child in need or a child protection plan and children living in a refuge or emergency accommodation.

Meanwhile, it said the processes for managing in-year admissions “vary across the country” and can be “difficult for parents to navigate”. It was “particularly challenging” for vulnerable and disadvantaged families, who were more likely to seek a school place outside normal admission rounds.

The government wants a “dedicated” section in the admissions code for in-year admissions, with a requirement that parents must be notified within ten school days of the outcome of their application.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the proposals aimed to “speed up the process for vulnerable pupils and make it easier to secure a school place when they need one”.

“We remain determined to support the most vulnerable pupils to reach their potential in



Schools Week’s investigation last year into how vulnerable pupils were being turned away

school and beyond, which is why we are aiming to reduce the time spent outside the classroom when a child needs to move school during term time.”

## Review won't look at promised summer-born changes

The government has been promising since 2015 to change the code to make it easier for children born between April and August to delay their start at primary school.

Research suggests summer-born children, some of whom are almost a year younger than their peers in reception, struggle to keep up. Analysis by School Dash in 2018 showed that although the gap narrowed throughout primary school, it still existed in year 6.

But the Department for Education said this week its review would not include changes for summer-borns because the change required primary legislation and

“goes beyond” the remit of the admissions code.

Under current rules, parents can request permission from their local authority to have their child start in reception a year later than usual, but it is up to the council to determine the circumstances in which requests are granted.

The government, however, said it remained committed to changing the code “so that summer-born children can automatically be admitted to a reception class at the age of five where that is what their parents want, and can remain with the cohort with which they are admitted throughout their education”.

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# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Better to give schools a sporting chance with proper plans

When is a bubble not a bubble?

We'd suggest it's when a bubble contains 300 kids, teachers coming in and out, and where pupils will then just be shoved on busy public buses with each other to get home.

The government should have been more honest about its plans (which roughly equate to washing your hands a bit more and keeping your distance).

Schools need to go back in September, and this isn't a criticism on that. But the government - while pledging for so long it's got such a super plan - has backed itself into a corner.

What was provided this week for headteachers is more a high-level guide of some things they can do to limit the transmission in schools.

In of itself - that's not a massive problem. There will be many a school leader that's happy to take the overarching principles and do what they know will work best.

But there are some areas they have no control over - one of which is public transport. The dearth of proper plans for pupils cramming onto

public buses is poor. This is one areas schools really needed a helping hand, and it's not been delivered (yet).

It also scuppers the grand ideas for bubbles - taking all that care to keep pupils apart in school for them to sit next to each other on a bus for an hour on the way home.

And we've not even got into the cringe-worthy and totally pointless call to embrace the 2012 Olympics spirit as a viable plan.

There's also discontent about the lack of a Plan B - which is fair. There's the Oak National Academy, but what else?

The government hasn't even managed to deliver the laptops it promised to vulnerable pupils on time - and they only cover a small percentage of pupils in year 10. What about children in other years who don't have access to laptops or the internet if their area goes into lockdown?

There's still some kinks to work out for September, putting it kindly. The government must use the next few weeks wisely.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.

See page 7



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**£1bn for school rebuilding projects in 2021, but details on new ten-year plan scarce**

**Janet Downs**

Wasn't Building Schools for the Future aimed at "replacing and upgrading poor condition school and college buildings with modern, energy efficient designs"? The first thing Michael Gove did when he became education secretary in 2010 was to cancel the programme.

Ten years is a long time to wait for an announcement saying that unconfirmed funding, far short of what is actually needed, will be made available for just 50 projects beginning in the academic year 2021-22.

**Schools need to know 2021 exam plans before summer, says Ofqual chief**

**Susan Willis**

Well-done to the year 10 and 12 pupils coming on here [Schools Week's comment pages] and having their say! Pupils in these year groups are being treated dreadfully. Even the most committed and conscientious of them cannot be expected to virtually teach themselves their GCSEs and A-levels, even with supportive and caring teachers adding online content and activities. But schools have other pupils, and teachers have their own issues to deal with. Difficult and stressful for all concerned. Major changes have to be made to next year's assessments to avoid disadvantaging these year groups. This must not be left to the last minute.

**Head says she was suspended for 'being honest' about teachers 'sat at home doing nothing'**

**Teresa Snaith**

Absolutely appalled at the way Paulie Wood has been treated. Mrs Wood was asked a question, she answered it honestly. As for bringing the school in to disrepute – I've never heard such tosh. There's an old saying "eaten bread is soon forgotten". Well, it seems to me that some have forgotten the tremendous work Mrs Wood and her team have put in to turn this school around.

**Kathleen Andersson**

The teachers in question can't defend themselves because Pauline Woods' comments mean they've all been tarred with the same

**REPLY OF THE WEEK** Terry Murray

**Gavin Williamson promises 'detailed' plan to get all pupils back in September 'by end of week'**

Nobody seems to have addressed how extra children admitted through successful school appeals will allow classes to remain at a manageable number. Appeals for all year groups have been going on throughout lockdown, but

the extra children gaining places by this route, particularly for year 7, will not be going to their new schools until the start of the new school year. While there is a cap on places in infant classes, no such cap exists for secondary or junior schools, and it is up to the discretion of individual appeal panels how many new pupils they allow into an already full-year group at any one time.

Appeals go on throughout the year and schools can be asked to admit extra children via the process at any time. While all this can pose a challenge to schools in normal times, in schools trying to create a Covid-free environment for staff and pupils it will make life very difficult indeed as the number of pupils they are dealing with could suddenly rise without any warning. This is an issue I've not heard anyone from any party talk about, but it is one that, in my view, needs careful consideration and some clear ideas for managing it.



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

brush. A big part of her job is to lead her teachers pedagogically, support them and help them deal with an incredibly difficult situation. They've been on the frontline for months, exposed to a deadly virus every day when they've gone into work. Many children they've been teaching on the rota basis have parents working in hospitals and other frontline jobs where there's a risk they've been exposed to Covid-19. A lot of these teachers have had a great deal of stress to handle and they've had to prepare lessons for their duty days, plus help their own children with home schooling.

# Feature

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



## The programme bringing social workers into schools

**A DfE programme is placing social workers directly in schools - and getting promising results. Schools love it, but what about their new staff member? Jess Staufenberg investigates**

One set of statistics has made for particularly alarming reading in Whitehall in recent years. The number of pupils needing involvement from social services has been climbing at a stupendous rate: 28 per cent more children were in care last year than a decade ago, and an extra 18,000 were placed on child protection plans. Schools, which make up the second largest source of referrals after the police, have been left to frantically contact social services

about pupils in home situations already at crisis point. Something had to be done.

On a small scale something is being done, and with not insignificant success. In April last year, the Department for Education funded a small project to take social workers out of their usual town hall offices and place them directly in schools. The project was not hugely ambitious – out of 30 keen applications, just three local authorities were chosen: Southampton, Stockport

and Lambeth (south London), with 18, 11 and eight schools involved respectively. The aim was simple – to reduce the number of referrals to social services.

Interim reports published last year indicated mixed results, not least because the small sample size made it tricky to draw clear conclusions. But a final report from Cardiff University researchers, commissioned by the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, last month revealed

# “Barriers between us and children’s services have come down”



Pupils at The Norwood School

“promising results”. Despite “low incidence rates across the samples and data quality issues”, the findings suggest “social workers being in schools may have reduced the number of children thought to be suffering or likely to suffer from serious harm”.

It was a cautiously optimistic finding, and the DfE leapt on it. In May, Gavin Williamson announced £6.5 million to extend the pilot, placing about 80 social workers in 80 schools from September, a scale-up from the £1.2 million spent in the original pilot. (There will not be 150 schools, as indicated in the DfE’s press release; this figure includes control schools that won’t get social workers.)

It’s still a tiny drop in the ocean of English schools, a fact that has not escaped senior leaders.



Keshia Coleman

“It’s a complete no-brainer. I don’t know why we don’t have it already,” says Tim Dainty, principal of Ark Evelyn Grace Academy, a secondary school in the Lambeth pilot. “When they asked if we wanted

## “The social worker has become part of our school family”

to be involved I nearly bit their hand off. I’ve thought we should have had this for years.”

Dainty describes the rigmarole of contacting overstretched children’s services to request they fulfill one of their three obligations: early intervention help, a section 17 referral or a section 47 referral. A section 17 assesses whether a pupil should be a designated “child in need” and offers the family extra support. A section 47 assesses for more serious risk of significant harm and could result in a child protection order.

“When I was the safeguarding lead, I can remember sitting on the phone for half an hour waiting to speak to someone at the local authority,” Dainty says. “You have to complete an online referral form and you may also have to tell the parents before making the referral. Then you’d

have to wait on site until the social worker arrives, which could be 7pm, depending on what’s going on and if it’s safe for the child to go home. And then when the social worker arrives, there’s often no relationship there with the child.”

He describes other problems: local authorities set their assessment “thresholds” individually, meaning variation between town halls. “A more affluent London borough can have a lower threshold, so if you’re in an area like ours with high deprivation, you might actually be less likely to get a child to meet threshold. Then you end up in disagreements with the local authority.”

Chris Harvey, the deputy head of The Norwood School, also in the Lambeth pilot, agrees. “It’s very hard sometimes to understand why a case hasn’t



Chris Harvey

**ORIGINAL PILOT:**



**SEPTEMBER 2020 PROGRAMME:**



**“It’s streamlined the whole process and reduced workload”**

met the threshold. And when they’re working externally to us, all that experience we have as a school about that child gets lost.”

So far, so frustrating. It likely explains why Dainty is jubilant about his school’s social worker. “She’s built so many positive relationships with families by actually being based in the school. At first we were going to her, but as she built those relationships the children started going directly to her. So then she was bringing our attention to stuff happening outside school.” A particularly important outcome was that the social worker became well-known to parents, Dainty says.

“She became part of our family, so families were much, much less frightened of social worker involvement.”

Harvey is equally delighted. “What this has done is take away some of the barriers between us and children’s services, because we have someone knowledgeable who can coordinate those services. It’s streamlined the whole process and reduced workload for our staff.”

His school’s social worker has also helped with wider struggles facing families, including housing. “When we’ve contacted the local authority we’ve often been met with a ‘no’. She’s signposted them to help with housing, and it’s faster because she knows how it works.”

The evaluation report makes clear not all schools embedded their social worker so thoroughly, though, warning some were “isolated, in back offices where their computers did not work”. Other schools wanted social workers to visit rather than be based permanently on site.

The authors warn: “The potential for a positive impact seems greatest where social workers were more integrated in the school they worked with.” This perhaps explains why Harvey and Dainty, whose social workers were based in the heart of the school, are so positive about the programme.

In fact, the greatest challenge might not be whether schools get enthused, but whether social workers do. Keshia Coleman, based in The

Norwood School, says she “loves it” and wants to stay on next year. But she has a warning. “My remit was getting bigger and bigger. Teachers don’t always realise how busy you are.”

Coleman clearly has a formidable skillset in building trusting relationships with pupils and parents, with many contacting her for advice. But she says many social workers would be “uncertain” about working in a school. “It’s completely different to working in the office: you need to be very young-person friendly. Some social workers may be uncomfortable with that as they’re used to getting referrals where the family has to comply.”

By helping prevent referrals, the programme turns the traditional social worker role somewhat on its head – they must become more of a practitioner in early intervention than experts in statutory assessment. Coleman recommends a “shadowing period”. This sounds especially sensible given the evaluation report reveals some “clear cultural differences between social work and the schools”, particularly in relation to “how schools communicate with children” around lateness or the wrong uniform. “Social care practitioners felt this was sometimes unhelpful” and used a “social care lens to challenge” existing disciplinary approaches. Whether all schools would welcome such a challenge is another matter.

But the data seems promising. In Southampton and Lambeth, section 47 requests dropped. Meanwhile in Stockport, researchers “found no evidence of a reduction in section 47 enquiries, but instead identified a significant reduction in section 17 starts”.

However, the researchers warn that small sample sizes and data issues means the qualitative feedback from interviewees is more reliable as an indicator of the programme’s potential, and a larger scale pilot is needed to produce more reliable results.

Relationships are clearly the greatest winner. Dainty explains the programme is “efficient, but human”. Harvey adds: “This is a human, personable thing. Too often, we make children a piece of paper.” Coleman adds that her work is now “more creative, less frustrating”. The consensus is resounding.

As with its trailblazer mental health programme joining schools and the NHS, the government has hit on a smart – and urgent – model. Time to stop hesitating and fund the model for tens of thousands of schools, starting with the most deprived.



Tim Dainty

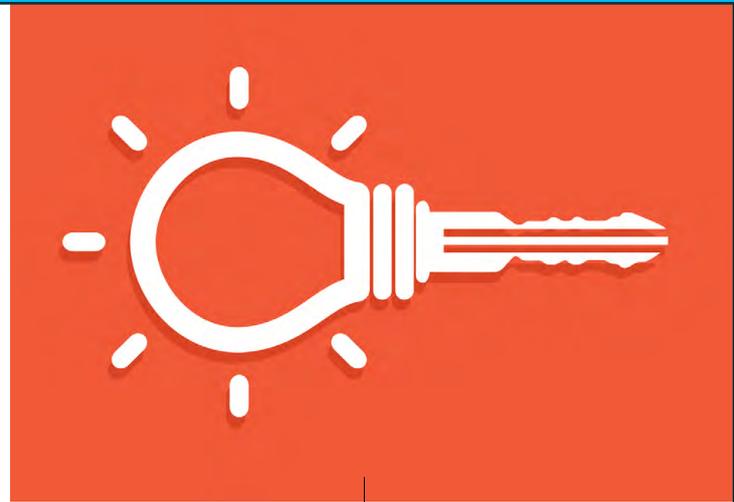
# Opinion

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VIKAS  
POTA

Founder, Global Teacher Prize



## Training is key to ensuring better blended learning

**Blended learning is likely to be the norm for some time, says Vikas Pota. So let's help teachers understand what their new reality could be**

I've spent the best part of the past decade thinking about how we improve teacher status. This is why, in part, I established an annual global prize for teachers, to ensure the world could hear about how important and inspiring teachers are.

While Covid-19 has been a traumatic experience across society, it has more than underscored the same point in a more vivid way. Alongside other key workers, there's a higher level of appreciation for what teachers do, day-in day-out, as parents have been forced to pick up the baton and home-school their children.

We've seen disruption all around us as businesses close, staff are laid off and the way we approach work is changed. Despite such high-risk stakes, our government is doing a woeful job, at best, of helping teachers understand what their new reality could be. In the absence of clarity and direction from our national political leaders, schools are making preparations to return in September (even this week in

some cases) knowing full well the new teaching structures and safety measures may not work.

The "model of schooling last adapted during the first industrial revolution" has been the subject of far too many TED talks – for all the wrong reasons. Over the past century, while technological

advances have propelled other sectors ahead, educationists have been asking "when will we get on this train?"

The answer will have to be now. Technology has breathed life into the way we teach in the past months, opening up a world of resources for those with the know-how. Technology can mean an end to boring homework and to tedious marking. It has the potential to provide us with really in-depth feedback on students gleaned from software, and thus to free up teachers to do what they do best more effectively – teaching and mentoring.

However, limitless though the potential is, how many of our

teachers feel equipped to seize these opportunities? Schools have historically had a single teacher appointed as the IT lead, with the entire staff reliant on him or her to provide advice or fix the jammed copier.

Whether or not one believes the

of recommendations, but are left to decide for themselves which app or product they should use over another.

Over the past few months, schools have been deluged with lists of free apps and software packages for use at home, without much guidance on what works on a practical level in the home classroom. This shouldn't happen to those we've entrusted to educate our future generations; we need to upskill our teaching workforce in a genuine and outcome-focused approach.

The autumn and winter terms are unlikely to be free of disruption; the investment into creating 10,000 hours of teaching through the Oak National Academy reflects this. But our response to Covid-19 has been too reactive and our children can't afford for their education to be blighted by leaps of faith where there should be a logical, planned, front-foot strategy. Blended learning is here to stay, at the very least until a successful vaccine is created. Unions, teachers and the public need to exert pressure on government to take proactive steps to improve the profession's evidence base as well as teachers' know-how.

“ Eighty per cent of teachers want more IT training

change is or should be permanent, let's assume blended learning will be the norm for the next year. According to research we carried out ahead of the T4 conference in May, eight out of ten teachers said they felt they needed more training. If it is to be a success, every teacher in every classroom needs to feel comfortable and confident using technology as a teaching tool.

Governments and local authorities need to prioritise additional training and professional development to incorporate technology and its resources into teachers' and school leaders' practice. Support needs to move away from the current status quo, where teachers receive a host

# Opinion

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NICK GIBB

Minister of state for school standards



## Our collective effort will make a full return in September possible

**Working together, teachers, leaders and government will make a success of this critical return to full education provision from the autumn, writes Nick Gibb**

Over the past few weeks, our country has begun the slow journey back to recovery from the awful effects of the virus. It has not been easy and we still have some way to go. But I hope that everyone working in education can, like me, start to see a path back to helping all young people reach their potential.

Throughout, I have been constantly humbled by the resourcefulness and dedication of our teaching communities, whether supporting pupils to study remotely or continuing to teach our most vulnerable children in a safe and supportive school environment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you have done to keep children engaged in education.

In spite of that work, all children have been affected by closures. For some, there will have been increased anxiety at separation from their friends, loss of routines or exam cancellations. For all, Covid will have made a real dent to their

academic progress. For those from disadvantaged backgrounds, this will have been a double blow.

That's why, whatever their age or year group, it is vital for every child's future prospects that they should be back at school as soon as they can be. Since 1 June more and more children and young people have

been back, and as infection rates have continued to fall, we have now been able to outline our plans for a full return for all in the autumn.

We cannot turn the clock back but we can try and make up for some of the lost teaching time, and we have already announced a £1 billion fund to directly tackle that. Reducing our hopes, standards or expectations for pupils at this point is not the answer. All schools have a mission to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum, and today we have published guidance to help you continue to do that from the autumn. Some adaptations may be needed – and wider government guidance on playing sport and music will inevitably have an impact on

what schools can teach in these areas – but there is no substitute for all children and young people continuing to be taught a wide range of subjects.

To reduce infection risks, we are asking schools to make sure they keep contacts between pupils and staff to a minimum. We have issued guidance on ways of doing this, from staggered timetables to separating year groups, but we trust teachers to interpret this in a way that best suits

department has also been working with Oak to produce a new flexible curriculum map as an optional resource to support planning. It has been developed in consultation with teachers, senior leaders and subject experts to help schools meet curriculum expectations. I have no doubt the time invested in this area will be invaluable in enhancing every child's experience in- and outside the classroom.

For those students due to take GCSEs, AS and A levels next year, Ofqual is consulting to determine what changes if any have to be made to those exams. Ofqual is considering a range of options, including the possibility of moving them back a little to allow for more teaching time.

One of the first things we did when the outbreak first struck was to relieve the pressure on schools by suspending routine Ofsted inspections. Inspectors will visit some schools in the autumn to look at how they are managing the return, but I can reassure teachers they won't be judging schools. We expect full inspections to return in January, when inspectors will of course be sensitive to the pandemic's impacts.

Returning to normal educational routines as quickly as possible will be critical to our national recovery. It is also critical for the hopes and aspirations of a generation of young people. They are depending on us to get their education back on track.

**“ We can't turn the clock back, but we can make up for lost teaching time ”**

their settings.

We have asked schools to continue to build their capacity to deliver remote education, so that if it is needed locally – and we all hope it will not be – it is of a high quality and mirrors as closely as possible a pupil's experience of being in school. Even when schools do return there may be times when some pupils are not able to attend, so we need to be sure that they can continue their studies.

To help with this, we have funded Oak National Academy to keep its virtual doors open for the next academic year. They are introducing much more flexibility into their lessons to fit with individual schools' teaching patterns. The

# Opinion

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**A Derbyshire trust's return to school programme has attracted international attention, writes Matthew Crawford**

Our trust of nine primaries across Derbyshire began to plan early on for supporting children on their return to school after lockdown. That work has resulted in the "reconnection to recovery and resilience programme" that has garnered attention from as far as Australia and New Zealand and been sent out to schools by the Welsh government.

It's a project that has already gone far beyond anything we could have predicted, impacting on so many more children than expected. But that global impact has been assured by thinking and acting locally.

We knew that our students' experiences of the Covid-19 crisis would be hugely varied. Some may have thrived, but many will have suffered a range of effects from poor to no home-schooling to poverty, from economic precariousness to the traumas of bereavement and domestic abuse.

That range means we had to be ready for a challenging period of readjustment for them and for us. We want all our students to thrive, so to bring our school communities back together around that aim we fell back on our core trust values: family, integrity, teamwork and success. They are universal, yes, but their global appeal is precisely because their focus is as local as a can be.

Our first steps emanated from a conversation with Sarah Armitage, Embark's chair of trustees and a national leader of governance, It became obvious that to be successful for all our students, we would need to grow the team around the project. We



## MATTHEW CRAWFORD

CEO and executive headteacher, Embark Federation

### There are no shortcuts on the road to recovery

enlisted the support of leaders and staff from across the trust, from local secondary and special schools, and sought support from Sharon Gray and several specialist and national leaders of education.

Gray, a headteacher of 20 years and an expert in supporting young people experiencing social emotional

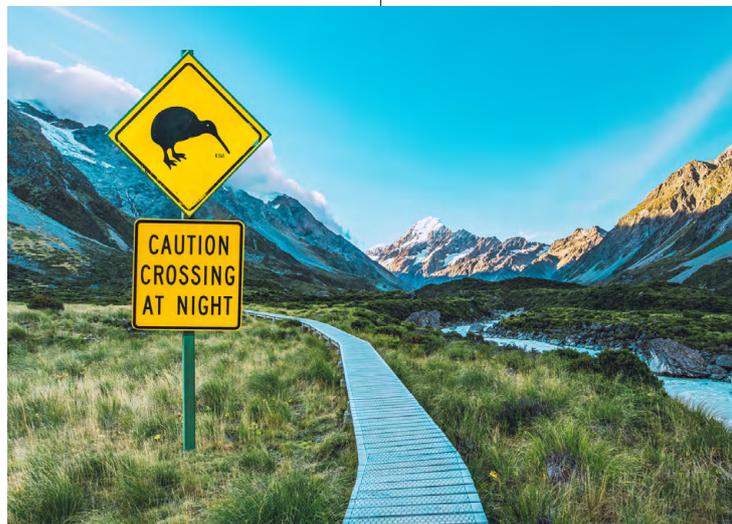
within Embark was able to contribute openly and freely. We didn't want to make any assumptions, so through sensitive outreach school leaders allowed all stakeholders to feel safe in sharing their personal experiences of the pandemic. The result was a detailed picture of the kind of support that was needed for

**“Our plan has garnered attention from as far as New Zealand**

and mental health difficulties, has been instrumental in creating this programme. Working with her and Armitage, we ensured everyone

children - and for parents, staff and local communities.

We set up nine teams, each focused on a waypoint on the



pathway to recovery, according to their expertise and strengths. That pathway starts with connection to the community, then with looking after our staff. Next comes gathering and circulating information and ensuring everyone is well-resourced. Only then can risk assessments properly inform the creation of safe spaces. That is stage six of nine on our road to recovery.

Anna Upton, the head of Chaucer Junior School, led team six - planning and resourcing the interim recovery curriculum itself, under the theme of "rising strong". It's an extensive resource bank of activities that include social and therapeutic stories, transition ideas, wellbeing support and opportunities for outdoor learning. And while Embark is a mainstream, primary-only trust, the resources are for ages 3 to 18 as well as special schools.

Through this and ongoing work at every stage, we can begin the final steps towards full recovery. Stage seven is about ensuring all stakeholders are supported to heal; stage eight about understanding what our new normal is. Taking all assumptions and preconceptions out of the equation means it will take that long to truly understand it. Stage nine acknowledges that support will need to be ongoing.

We know the range of experiences, and we know that different members of Embark's family will be at different stages on the journey from rupture to reparation at different times. But it is only together that we will truly emerge from this disruption, and the solidarity across our trust and our communities gives us solid grounds for hope and optimism that we soon will.

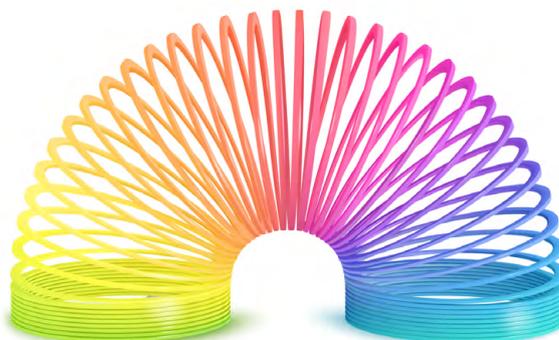
# Opinion

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## SAM HENSON

Director of Policy,  
National Governance Association



## Flexible governance key to solving MAT problems

**Many trusts have proved that they are able to cope with the unpredictable - and the flexibility within their structure has helped them, says Sam Henson**

The pandemic has taught us much about school accountability, but also about the flexibilities school structures give to organisations that need to act quickly and effectively. Across the country, schools within academy trusts have embraced a sense of togetherness with a deep appreciation for the direction provided by their trust board and executive leadership teams.

A sense of stability and clear, confident messaging to stakeholders has also meant that the stakeholders have, in some cases, viewed multi-academy trusts (MATs) through a slightly different lens. Government guidance and sector voice have provided vital information, but much of what has really mattered to our schools and their communities has happened at middle-tier and local level. In the case of MATs, the sense of a collective organisational identity and direction has evolved at a renewed pace.

When I recently interviewed

Professor Deborah Eyre from High Performance Learning, she made the point that governance is all about grappling with the big questions. The past few months have tested trustee boards. Many of these groups of committed, diverse and informed decision-makers have had to agree answers to some of the biggest

questions they will ever have to face.

While trustees have largely put liability fears to one side, they have taken their employer responsibilities extremely seriously. It is to their credit that many boards have retained their ambitious visions and inclusive cultures, going beyond the bare minimum required to provide for their pupils. In cases this has meant rapid changes to key policies and schemes of delegation, sometimes pausing all local governance - which is made possible because of the flexible nature of MAT governance.

This flexibility was a theme identified in our association's *Moving MATs Forward: the Power of Governance* document, published

just a year ago. In this, we discussed how trusts with a strong community ethos have engaged positively with the local voice, and so have engaged more with their local tiers of governance. This has resulted in a collective sense of understanding and therefore active support for and championing of decision-making across the trust and within their communities.

An increased sense of

a different sense of perspective. There will be a "new normal" in September, with trustee boards continuing to grapple with big questions such as the need to maintain an ambitious vision, but with key priorities that must also embrace the fall-out from Covid.

Such questions carry structural implications for a renewed, shared and owned sense of purpose that can be greatly strengthened through strong local governance arrangements that communicate well with the trustee board and executive teams. Developing strong communications during times of stress and anxiety is never easy, and as September beckons, a community perspective seen through the eyes of local governance committees should be sought to assess the longer-term implications of the pandemic at school level.

Getting governance right is the key to ensuring a MAT system that is sustained and that delivers in the interest of children. So many trusts have proved that they are able to cope with the unpredictable, and the flexibility within their structure has helped them.

Governance is the framework that will allow the system and the people within it to flourish. Although it is often perceived to be a hindrance, for many of the problems MATs are facing, it is the fundamental solution.

**“ The past few months have tested trustee boards**

collaboration between schools, trusts, local authorities and government, often with a renewed appreciation of the challenges faced by each, has emerged since the pandemic. For as long as public health guidance is needed, this broader engagement will continue to be needed and should be acknowledged as critical for dealing with any local outbreaks. This collaboration has also strengthened the management of risk and the determination of risk appetite. Having something in common is a great equaliser and witnessing this collaboration has been one of the few positives arising from the pandemic.

The past few months have brought

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



DAVID PHILLIPS

Headteacher, Chilwell School, Beeston

### Monday June 22

Key worker provision continues and year 10 and 12 students are starting their second week. Faculty leaders discuss structuring the delivery of the September curriculum: our model offers us the greatest flexibility in case there is a second spike, but we are awaiting the government update due next week.

I return to school in the afternoon to meet a local head whose school has been a victim of flash flooding. We walk a portion of our site and discuss whether it is suitable as a temporary base.

### Tuesday June 23

I greet the year 10 students in our sports hall before another day of learning. Our school is like a greenhouse. Fans can't be used to keep the temperature down so I start by apologising and asking them to think cool thoughts.

My interim review with governors is based on targets that we set before Covid-19 was heard of. Strangely, we have kept our focus on being outward-looking, and have maintained

high behaviour expectations and developed our curriculum, although perhaps not in the way we had imagined.

I keep forgetting to keep my water intake up, especially important on a hot day when I am booked to donate platelets for cancer treatment. Donations have continued through lockdown, although my last session was cancelled as the machine was needed for convalescent plasma for Covid-19. Five pints of water at the last minute feel like an error of judgment as I stay strapped up to the machine with 40 minutes to go.

### Wednesday June 24

We hold our first online evening for parents of year 6 students. I have practised breakout rooms, screen-sharing and sound, and a tight agenda still gives parents time to talk about their concerns. With a couple of glitches in the first meeting, the technology holds up in the second and we feel it has been a success.

I then see the update guidance on the ability to claim on the



Covid-19 fund. After the Edenred FSM voucher debacle we have continued to use Wonde vouchers. The government has shifted the goalposts and issued changed guidance that says we will not be refunded for the Easter and half-term breaks. I leave a late-night phone message for my MP to call back tomorrow and go to sleep cross.

### Thursday June 25

A day of exchanging emails with our MP's office and speaking to some news providers. I have been more involved with the media through the months of lockdown than for the whole of last year.

Our social care laptops finally seem to be on their way, even though the number allocated is a couple short of our list. Our year 10 laptops will be way behind these. We are hoping to get the 18 we ordered back at the beginning

of May, but it appears the order is only now being processed.

### Friday June 26

An interview on local radio first thing and potentially positive news regarding our ability to be reimbursed for the holiday vouchers. However, the article in *Schools Week* on secondary "bubbling" prompts further detailed discussion in our senior meeting to be ready for the faculty meetings next week. We do not want to throw the timetable in the air, so we are considering re-rooming year groups so that the school will be geographically divided on year lines rather than faculty ones.

Home for a relaxing evening in the garden with plans to see my daughter tomorrow. Instead, the car breaks down and the visit will have to wait. Must everything be an exercise in delayed gratification?

# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Succeeding as a head of year

By Jon Tait

Published by Bloomsbury

Reviewed by Heidi Drake, literacy and key stage 3 English coordinator, Colchester Royal Grammar School, Essex

I have found myself at a career crossroads this academic year. Do I go down the pastoral or subject-based route? As an English teacher, it makes sense to approach this problem like I do every other in my life; through reading a book. Therefore, I leapt at Jon Tait's *Succeeding as a Head of Year*.

First things first, it is a great read. The writing is accessible and interesting, with a good mix of information and real-world examples. I read it in one sitting!

If you're contemplating applying for a pastoral care role or just joining the profession, this book offers a realistic look at the nature of the job and how it differs from that of a classroom teacher. When so many teaching courses don't cover tutoring or leading a team in any real detail, it was refreshing to see these concepts explored without any assumption that the reader has prior knowledge or experience.

Tait explores the processes of applying and interviewing for these roles: the explanation of the sort of tasks you might face was so clear that it should be read by everyone planning on moving into middle and senior leadership.

I would also recommend the chapters on leadership and setting standards to anyone in teaching. The importance of working as a team is made clear

throughout and Tait provides excellent advice on establishing the various teams that make sure pastoral leaders and their work are successful. He regularly reminds readers of the importance of considering all stakeholders, as improvement will only follow if all these people are lead and supported. But he doesn't neglect the needs of individuals and there are reminders in all sections about the importance of dealing with individual cases as just that.

The section on rewards contains suggestions that I know full well would be unlikely to work in my current context, but that is my only criticism - and it is a pretty rubbish one as the section also has some excellent ideas that I'm certainly going to try. The fact that it gives as much importance to rewards as sanctions makes it clear that Tait has put a lot of thought into supporting others to make pastoral care central to inclusive practice.

*Succeeding as a Head of Year* in places operates as a workbook, with regular pauses

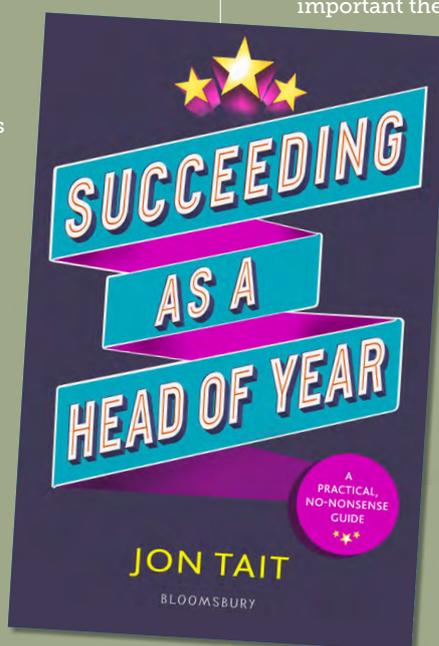
for self-reflection. This mirrors Tait's key contention that the role of head of year (and other similar roles) is pastoral leadership that is vital to the good functioning of schools. Anyone thinking of a move ought to have deeply thought about it and carefully considered the implications before firing off their application.

Which takes me back to my crossroads. While the opening chapter says that it is entirely possible to be a head of year and a parent - that the work/life balance is possible - it also points out the amount of organisation that goes into making it balanced so that nothing gets lost along the way.

This book left me in no doubt about how much I love being a form tutor, how important the role is to me and how

crucial it is that schools get the right people to lead pastoral teams. It has also left me aware that I don't think it's the right road for me to take right now.

And that's probably the most valuable thing *Succeeding as a Head of Year* does. It helps you realise if it's the right thing for you.



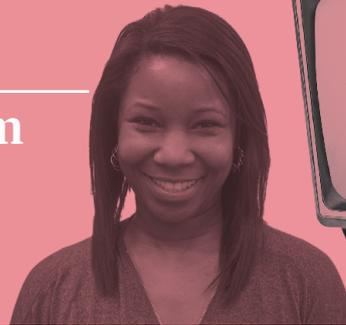
# Reviews

## TV REVIEW

### The School that Tried to End Racism

Channel 4  
Thursday, 9pm

Marie Gentles, programme and partnerships, The Difference



**A**s a black teacher and mother of two, my initial response to the programme's title was "wow". I was deeply sceptical about its impact on an important message at a crucial moment.

But I was pleasantly surprised, and felt proud of the year 7 pupils at Glenthorne High School in south London in communicating the complexity of the topic. Their dedication to this three-week project showed a responsibility some adults would not be capable of. Their growth – academic and personal – really came across.

The ethics of running a segregation experiment with impressionable young people has been questioned, but the creation of a safe environment allowed them to clearly express their thoughts and feelings. The familiar "it's not fair" highlighted their youthful innocence, but their ability to process the emotions the programme stirred up was impressively mature.

I've always been passionate about getting the balance right between letting children be children and not underestimating their capabilities. The activities and the adults leading them here did just that, so that they (and we as viewers) were able to go deep, fast.

I suspect black viewers will welcome American educator Mariama Richards' explanation of the cycle of systemic racism that starts with fear of difference and results in subconscious, internalised oppression. I know it exists, but that knowledge and the language to speak it are vital to breaking something so deeply embedded it becomes part of who we are, defines what we think we can and can't do, and shames us into



feeling "unworthy" when we do achieve. The way this was clearly and visually explained was as powerful as it was simple, never overwhelming the viewer.

A National Portrait Gallery sequence, in which the students learned that slave compensation went to slave owners, captured the raw initial reactions of the white students and how those feelings were transmuted to empathy with their non-white peers. The way it brought the group closer truly brought out the importance of whole-child education in the fight against racism.

How bias influences learning was touched on. I learned from the white students that their voice too can sometimes be lost as they try not to do or say the wrong thing. Creating the mental space to process systemic racism and enable a more sophisticated understanding meant the programme was respectful of and empowering for viewers of all ages and races.

For all the concern then, the programme will no doubt have impacted positively on the lives of those who took part. I don't think anyone watching could be left feeling anything but proud of them in their

focus on solutions. It also showed the importance of character education in child development - something that is too often desperately squeezed into the curriculum.

The programme took us through wave after wave of emotions, gently yet overtly challenging us. Good. We all bear responsibility, because racism is part of all our lives. We mustn't be afraid to dig deeper into it and to embed knowledge of it in our schools' curricula.

I desperately want my children and my children's children to know their contribution to society is as valid and valuable as that of their white friends and peers. *The School that Tried to End Racism* did leave me wondering: for inclusion, acceptance and equal opportunities to become a reality, do we need to look again at teacher training? And wouldn't it be better to start such an education in primary schools?

One participant, Beth, made me hopeful of change. She described herself as intimidated and nervous at first, and open and ready to share at the end. If education about unconscious bias can do that in three weeks, imagine what we can achieve together in a lifetime.

# Reviews



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

@Penny\_Ten

## MoreTeacherTalk podcast

@moreteachertalk

MoreTeacherTalk describes itself as devoted to producing podcasts that give teachers a voice, sharing insights that can lead to powerful change. This episode is with Dr Kulvarn Atwal, a London head, who shares his insights into how schools can become safe and inspiring places by becoming "rights-respecting schools" and placing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of their community. Drawing on real-world experience and his expertise in successful school improvement strategies, Atwal demonstrates how we can give children a voice through authentic, compassionate leadership with transformational outcomes for schools. He talks about behaviour, exclusions, curriculum and values-led approaches to leadership.

## The WOSDEC podcast

@wosdec

Many educators have been thinking about how we might address recent world events with the young people we teach. Building



on the concept of rights-respecting schools and young people as engaged citizens, this West of Scotland Development Education Centre (WOSDEC) podcast looks at practical ideas for citizenship and how we can bring global ideas into the classroom. The episode I have chosen, *When Mandela danced in the square*, was made to sit alongside a useful resource and to inspire and encourage educators to bring the issues of apartheid, civil rights and racism into their teaching, while making connections to history and current affairs, locally and globally.

## Cornerstones: The curriculum podcast

@Cornerstonesedu

Mary Myatt, an education adviser, speaker and writer on curriculum matters, discusses the implications of this period of curriculum disruption. She looks at national curriculum coverage, forward planning, the importance of curriculum coherence and the balance of knowledge and skills in primary curricula. She is challenging, insightful, practical and inspirational, reminding us that including the full range of lived experience in our school communities is integral to successful curriculum design and delivery.

## A recovery curriculum

@EFL\_Insights

The idea of a "recovery curriculum" has gained a lot of traction and currency as schools slowly reopen to all pupils. Professor Barry Carpenter has hosted a series of conversations with school leaders, practitioners and researchers to explore and develop what such a thing might look like in the context of a school's existing curricula. Here, Vijita Patel, the head of a special school in west London, considers the strategic implementation of a recovery curriculum for children with special needs. She does this from a stance of compassionate leadership, with a clear focus on engagement in learning. Her penetrating analysis shows how children's needs should inform organisational judgments, and that the emotional wellbeing of each child should be a constant focus. Patel asserts that a mutually respectful relationship with families as co-educators is vital - especially now.

## Education today

@bbcworldservice

Just for fun, I decided to go back in time in the BBC World Service archives and found myself cruising episodes of the 1980s programme, *Education Today* where my eye (or ear), caught a programme from May 1988 about the worldwide education service to support homeschooling. The episode looks at alternative ways of educating young children at home while providing them with a full curriculum. All of this was before the internet, before households had home computers or even colour TVs. It's fascinating to consider this against the backdrop of our lockdown experience of home learning, the digital divide and concern about disadvantage gaps. I would urge policymakers beavering away at plans for an army of tutors to offer catch-up programmes to have a listen. Innovation might be found in ideas from the past, rather than in imagining what the future might yield.

CLICK ON LINKS FOR PODCASTS +

# Research

The Centre for Education and Youth regularly reviews the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact them on Twitter @TheCfEY if you have a topic you want them to cover

## Pupils on the margins and how we can support them

**Will Millard, head of engagement, The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY)**

Children in need” is a broad term that refers to children who come into contact with social services, including those formally taken into care. It wasn’t until I began researching the children’s social care system for CfEY’s forthcoming book *Young People on the Margins* that I realised the scale and breadth of the challenges they face.

In 2018, one in ten children had been in need at some point in the previous six years, and the number of children in need is increasing. This means that most schools cater for children who have needed support from a social worker.

On average, outcomes for children in need are concerning. Analysis by the Department for Education shows they are more likely to be persistently absent from school and permanently excluded. Their academic outcomes tend to be lower and they are at higher risk of becoming NEET or becoming involved in crime, and they experience worse mental and physical health.

Why is this? In her qualitative research, Julia Shaw suggests that while children’s pre-care experiences (which can include abuse and neglect) can increase problematic behaviour and likelihood of involvement in crime, the care system itself can exacerbate these issues and even create new ones. However, government data indicates that outcomes for children “on the edge” of care experience worse on-average outcomes than children taken into care. While this doesn’t necessarily negate Shaw’s claim, it highlights the potentially supportive role social services and the care system can play in children’s lives.



This ambivalence is explored in Lisa Cherry’s autobiographical account. Her book highlights the care system’s many flaws, but acknowledges the immense (and growing) strain placed upon it and the tireless work of many professionals working within it.

Shaw and Cherry both touch on poverty. This plays out strikingly in the data. Children living in the most deprived 10 per cent of neighbourhoods in England are more than ten times more likely to be looked after or on a child protection plan compared with children in the least deprived 10 per cent.

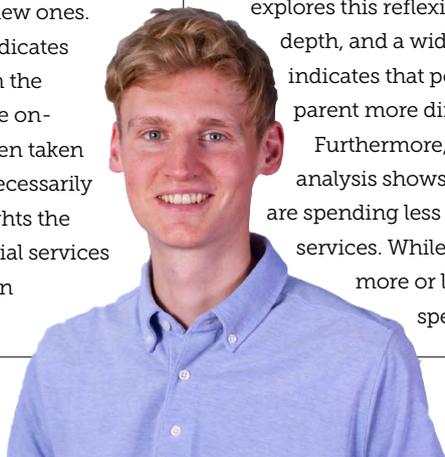
Why should this be? Children in need are particular likely to have directly or indirectly suffered from domestic violence, mental health issues and substance abuse. These problems are on the rise, and while each makes poverty more likely, the relationship is not one-way. Katz et al’s evidence review explores this reflexive relationship in depth, and a wide body of evidence indicates that poverty makes being a parent more difficult.

Furthermore, National Audit Office analysis shows how local authorities are spending less on preventive services. While authorities have more or less maintained spending on reactive

services (with many diverting funds from other services to do so), the challenges facing children in need have grown as support has declined. Worryingly, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has collated evidence suggesting that factors placing strain on families have worsened during lockdown.

So what can be done to support children in need as schools reopen? Sanders et al’s recent evidence review for the What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care highlights two consistently effective school strategies. First, children in need appear to disproportionately benefit from a focus on numeracy and literacy. Second, it is important to work closely with families, a finding corroborated in Hart et al’s systematic review of the residential care system.

Schools will not be short of challenges as they reopen, but we cannot forget that children in care carry with them additional and often hidden forms of vulnerability. During lockdown many schools have sought to strengthen their relationships with their most vulnerable children and families. However, while everyone is feeling their way forward, it is vital that we continue to pay particular attention to the wellbeing of children in need.



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## MONDAY:

There's been no better indicator that the world has gone mad than the newfound love everyone seems to have for TV presenter Piers Morgan.

But, Conservative MP and former teacher Jonathan Gullis isn't among the converted – the opposite, in fact. He was that angry with Piers tweeting that Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer would be appearing on his show.

Gullis tweeted: "Piers Morgan, one of Sir Keir's left-wing elite media cheerleaders, using the airwaves to push his boy."

Yes, that's the same Piers Morgan who said he voted Conservative in last year's general election!



## TUESDAY:

Education secretary Gavin Williamson hailed his "transformative ten-year school rebuilding" today, saying it will be "driving opportunity and prosperity for all".

Unfortunately, because it was such a spin-tastic announcement (and totally lacking any proper details), it means we can't judge whether that's actually

the case.

Rather than just waiting to announce the scheme – with things like actual full costs – in the spending review, the announcement was pulled forward to fit in with BoJo's "Build, build, build" speech this week.

Instead, all we know of the ten-year scheme is that there will be £1 billion to rebuild a few schools sometime from 2021. Politics at its best, folks.

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While we're on the competency of DfE and policy – it turns out the government has potentially left more poor families going hungry.

Despite eligibility for free school meals being extended to some children with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), and the maximum household earnings threshold for this support being increased from £7,400 to £16,190 per year, the government didn't bother to tell anyone.

Since June 25, the government's guidance for parents on who's eligible has referred to the incorrect £7,400 threshold.

Well, at least the government's national free school meal voucher scheme has gone swimmingly and not left any families going hungry...

## WEDNESDAY:

What is a ministerial statement without a bit of love for the favoured academies crews?

This time it was more schmooze for Dame Rachel de Souza while universities minister Michelle Donelan was berating universities for not being driving up standards for poorer pupils.

"In the school system we're fortunate

enough to have visionary leaders such as Rachel de Souza, and they reject low expectations," Donelan said. "What they and their schools have achieved for some of the most disadvantaged children in the UK is outstanding, delivering phenomenal results and getting them into some of the best universities in the country, into courses that are right for them."

Meanwhile, there was little substance in the speech apart from calls for universities to sponsor more schools – which, as we've written about several times, doesn't really work (several un-led academy trusts have closed amid poor standards or financial problems).

## THURSDAY:

Conservative MP Edward Timpson harangued the government again today over whether they are going to actually implement any of the sensible recommendations from his review into exclusions last year.

Instead of giving a proper commitment, Williamson just went into suck-up mode and praised the report's "thoughtful" author.

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We know the Nation Citizen Service has had a chequered past, what with the millions spent on unfilled places and the government's botched attempt to force schools to promote it, but a name change at this point would be rather drastic.

Williamson appears to have other ideas, calling it the "National Citizenship Service" several times during a debate on his back-to-school plans on Thursday.

Get it right, Gav!

# HEAD OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE



37 HOURS PER WEEK, ALL YEAR ROUND  
SALARY: NJC SCALE POINTS 33 TO 41  
£35,934 - £43,662 (APRIL 2019)

**Are you interested in joining a Trust with a commitment to making the difference to children and young people? Do you have an interest in governance, education and ensuring schools can be the best they can be?**

We are looking to recruit a dynamic Head of Corporate Governance and Compliance with a strong understanding of school and academy governance and excellent organisational and interpersonal skills. In this role you will be a key part of a small but friendly central MAT team, and have the opportunity to make a difference to the governance of 17 diverse schools across Bradford, supporting the education of over 8,500 students.

In return we can offer you the opportunity to join a family of schools who are committed to providing high quality education within the context of Christian beliefs and values. We truly believe our staff are our greatest asset in delivering that vision, and we are looking for an exceptional and motivated individual to join our Governance team.

The core responsibilities of the post include central and local governance management, acting as Company Secretary and oversight of quality assurance and compliance across key areas within the Trust. To read the full job description and to find out more visit <http://www.bdat-academies.org/vacancies> where you can download a candidate information pack and an application form and set up an informal discussion.

**Closing date: Noon on Monday, 27th July 2020**  
**Interview date: Monday, 3rd August 2020**

# HEAD OF SCHOOL



The Shared Learning Trust  
**THE CHALK HILLS ACADEMY**

**Start Date: January 2021**  
**Salary: L30 – 33 (£83,757 - £90,145)**  
**Job Role: Full time, Permanent**

The Chalk Hills Academy is seeking an exceptional candidate to provide outstanding leadership to our academy. You will work closely with the Executive Principal to ensure that excellence and high standards are attained in all areas. As Head of School, you will provide operational leadership, making marked improvements in teaching, learning and student performance.

This is a pivotal role in our academy's leadership structure; a role where you will shape our future with drive and ambition, building on the good work that is already taking place.

**We are looking for a student focused leader who will:**

- lead from the front
- be visible to the school community
- be concerned about rewards

- be consistent
- build on current good progress and move the Academy to an Outstanding Ofsted rating
- encourage high standards of achievement and behaviour through rewards and structure
- build strong relationships by being approachable and getting to know students
- build strong relationships by being approachable and getting to know staff
- have experience of Sixth Forms and will continue to build this in terms of both student outcomes and financial viability

If you share our vision for education and are passionate about raising educational attainment and standards to ensure all learners reach their full potential, you will be well placed to join our academy and make a difference.

**Visits and discussions with the Executive Principal are warmly welcomed.**

**Closing Date: Friday 11th September at 9am**

**Interviews: 21st & 22nd September**

(successful candidates on day one will go through to day two **22nd**)

If you are interested in this job opportunity, please do apply online today via our career site on <https://www.mynewterm.com/trust/The-Shared-Learning-Trust/135337>

# PRINCIPAL, SUTTON COMMUNITY ACADEMY



**Salary: Competitive**  
**Start date: 1 January 2021**

## You won't just transform our academy. You'll transform our students' lives.

You could wait a lifetime for a challenge like this to appear again. Sutton Community Academy has exceptional potential, but we need an exceptional leader to take us there. Having been placed in Serious Weaknesses, we recognise that the only way is up – but we also believe that with you at the helm, the sky's the limit.

At the heart of the Academy Transformation Trust, we deliver the best possible education to young people from relatively deprived urban backgrounds. We can't boast extensive outside space or all the facilities you might find in another academy. We can boast a closely-knit, welcoming and passionate teaching team, students who want to make something of their lives, and a place at the very centre of the local community.

In short, we're an ambitious academy and we need an equally visionary Principal. We're currently investing significantly in our school theatre, which is a focal point for local activities, but we regard you as the most important investment we'll ever make.

Let us be perfectly clear: we're not just looking for another Principal and we're not just looking for rapid improvement. As our trust's name makes clear, we want you

to deliver transformation: of the way we teach and learn, of our extensive academic, vocational and leisure programmes, and above all of the way our students see themselves and their futures.

Your dedication will make them realise that education is the key to success in life, and that with the right attitudes, skills and qualifications anyone can transcend their circumstances. In return, we offer 38 leadership development pathways to give you the ongoing professional development you need to become the school leader you've always wanted to be. What's more, once you've made your mark on Sutton Community Academy – and more broadly on an entire region of Nottinghamshire – we have a wealth of other schools that could benefit from your imagination and integrity as a member of the Trust's senior management team.

If you're a seasoned school leader with an appetite to become much, much more, this is your chance to shine and take us all the way to Outstanding.

**Closing Date: Monday 6th July 2020, 9am.**

*Sutton Community Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We particularly welcome applications from under represented groups including ethnicity, gender, transgender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.*

# 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**