

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Breaking through the glass ceiling



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Who really designed the exams algorithm?



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Kerching: '15k' for back-to-school tweets



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Ofqual must be able to say 'no, minister!'



P24

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Operation Moonshot

REALITY CHECK

The promise:

'We'll ensure it's as easy as possible to get a test through locally accessible, fast and convenient routes'



The reality:

'We'll ensure it's as challenging as possible to get a test through inaccessible, slow and inconvenient routes'

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Delay exams by 3 weeks? It won't change the world but I'll take it



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To prepare or not prepare, that's the Ofsted question

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Investigation



Covid testing chaos threatens school restarts

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Thousands of pupils returning to the classroom for potentially the first time in six months are missing yet more learning as the government fails to deliver promised access to Covid-19 testing.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of Schools and College Leaders (ASCL), has warned the chaos is undermining the reopening of schools, with more than 200 headteachers reporting delays in getting tests.

Pupils and staff have said they are unable to get a test or have been told their "nearest" testing centre is hundreds of miles away.

David Lammy, the Labour MP for Tottenham, said a pupil in his area had been offered a test in Inverness, Scotland – a 1,100-mile round trip.

"The result is they are being kept home from school. This is bonkers. The government needs to quickly explain and fix its approach to testing," he said.

More than 200 ASCL members on Wednesday reported difficulties getting tests, further disrupting the education of pupils attempting to make up for lost learning.

While this number represents a small percentage of the open schools in England, ASCL said it meant "thousands of children and teachers unable to come into school".

In July, the Department for Education pledged: "The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient."

But Barton said his association was concerned that the "fantastic" work of schools and colleges to ensure an autumn term reopening could be derailed because of a lack of capacity in the test and trace system.

The government had "failed to live up to its promise to ensure that the test and trace system is able to meet the level of demand that it must have been perfectly obvious would be needed".

In September, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, promised that pupils or staff members with Covid-19 symptoms would be given "priority in the testing regime".

But Matt Hancock, the health secretary, said the testing system had struggled because "we've seen a sharp rise in people without symptoms coming



forward. That has led to people with symptoms, who need a test, either not being able to get one or having to travel long distances."

He also claimed "whole schools" had been attempting to get Covid testing, which was "not appropriate". He could not provide any evidence for his claim (see story, page 5).

In late July he had urged people with symptoms or who "have any doubt" to get tested.

Barton added: "Even now, the health secretary seems to be in denial, choosing to blame people for seeking tests when they are not eligible, rather than addressing the problem."

Sarah-Jane Marsh, the director of the government's test and trace programme, this week offered "heartfelt apologies to anyone who cannot get a Covid test at present".

While testing sites had capacity, the system's laboratory processing had reached a "critical pinch-point".

She said additional labs were "due to open-up imminently" to deal with the bottleneck, but Hancock told MPs on Tuesday it would take a fortnight to resolve these processing problems.

Angela Rayner, Labour's deputy leader, said the situation was "a shambles".

And Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, added: "The government cannot side-step its responsibility, leaving schools and colleges to carry the can for its inadequate preparations."

Despite the current problems, a leaked government document obtained by *The British Medical Journal* outlines plans for teachers to get regular testing under the £100 billion "Operation Moonshot".

Boris Johnson said millions of Covid-19 tests could be processed daily, including some that gave results within minutes. A mass testing programme could be ready by spring, although the technology for such tests does not yet exist.

BROKEN PROMISES AND SHIFTING BLAME

May 20

Boris Johnson has "growing confidence" test and trace system will be "world-beating"



July 2

The government promises to "ensure" it's "as easy as possible" to get "locally accessible, fast and convenient" tests



July 21

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, urges people with symptoms or who "have any doubt" to get tested



Tuesday

Schools report staff and pupils unable to get tests, with some told their nearest testing centre is hundreds of miles away



Wednesday

Hancock blames the testing shortage on people applying for tests who "are not eligible" (without symptoms)



Thursday

Union analysis finds thousands of pupils and staff at more than 200 schools are isolating because they can't get tested



Continued on next page

Investigation



Hancock blames schools - but where's the evidence?

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The government has failed to provide evidence for the health secretary's claims that "whole schools" are attempting to secure Covid-19 testing.

Matt Hancock made the assertions during several media interviews on Wednesday when he was questioned on the lack of available testing across England.

Despite repeated requests from *Schools Week* to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education, no evidence has been produced.

Explaining why the government's Covid testing was struggling to meet demand, Hancock told the LBC's Nick Ferrari: "We've seen a sharp rise in people without symptoms coming forward and that has led to people with symptoms, who need a test, either not being able to get one or having to travel long distances.

"We've had whole schools saying that they want to come forward for testing and send all the pupils for testing - this is not appropriate."

He repeated the claims on the Today programme: "I've read stories of whole schools



Matt Hancock

being told to get a test, but that is not what testing is there for."

During an interview on the BBC's *News at Ten* he reiterated: "There's been stories of whole schools, or parts of schools, being all sent to get a test. That is not, not acceptable."

Schools Week approached the DHSC to corroborate the statement but, after repeated requests, was told to contact the DfE.

The DfE did not show evidence supporting the health secretary's claims.

Just 1 in 4 symptomatic pupils could get test

Since Friday, 44 pupils within the year 3 "bubble" at East Park Academy in Wolverhampton have exhibited Covid-19 symptoms, but just ten have been able to book a test.

It means that all 90 pupils in the bubble have to self-isolate.

"Everywhere parents are trying to book a test there is no availability," says Hayley Guest, the school's head.

While some pupils were tested after they turned up at testing sites without an appointment, the struggles are a "massive stress" for school leaders attempting to orchestrate a return to the classroom.

"It has implications for how long they are off, we can't see how this system is manageable," Guest said.

"These children have a massive mountain to climb this year and all that this system is going to do is derail that."

Those who test positive will have to receive a negative test before returning to the classroom, while other pupils can return following their two-week isolation.

Two-week rota follows staff shortages

Most schools have confined closure to one year group of specific bubbles, but Samuel Ward Academy, in Suffolk, shut the whole school for two days this week.

It followed positive tests for eight members of its SEND team.

Tim Coulson, the chief executive of Unity Schools Partnership, which oversees the school, said it had to shut as it was "impossible to absolutely identify how many other people might have been affected".

"During normal school timetable they [SEND staff] are quite spread out and they are part of different groups.

"We were anxious about how much of the school we could actually identify might have been affected."

Sixteen members of staff and 130 pupils from years 7 and 10 are self-isolating. The consequent staff shortages has forced the school to reopen on a two-week rota system until later this month.

Staff have also been banned "making anyone else a drink or sharing food or snacks".

Schools burn through emergency kits

The government has sent schools ten Covid-19 home-testing kits each, to be used "only in exceptional circumstances".

However, delays in accessing the government's testing is forcing them to break into their limited supply to ensure teachers and pupils can get back to the classroom as soon as possible.

Andrea Howard, a school business manager in Cornwall, told *Schools Week* one pupil at her primary had been attempting to book an appointment since Friday - with their siblings also forced to stay at home.

She said a lack of available spaces and a constantly crashing testing website, compounded by limited internet access, made it difficult for some parents in their "high deprivation area".

The school sent out one emergency test. "But if we have to hand them out every few days because parents and staff can't book tests, then we will be without very quickly."

Schools Week also spoke with a teacher from the Midlands who has been self-isolating since Monday after her son exhibited symptoms of Covid-19.

After failing to secure a government test, her school said it would send an emergency kit for her son so she could get back to the classroom as soon as possible.

"Situations like mine are going to be replicated over and over as children come back to school," she said. "When the whole family has to isolate it has a knock-on effect."

The Department for Education has said schools can order more tests if required.

PA

News

EXCLUSIVE



Exam board 'proposed algorithm – then raised concerns about it'

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

An exam board which revealed that it warned ministers of flaws with the ill-fated algorithm had actually proposed the approach adopted by the regulator in the first place.

Cambridge Assessment, which runs exam board OCR, had originally submitted the direct centre performance (DCP) model that was chosen and then developed by Ofqual as its algorithm for the awarding of calculated grades.

The admission comes amid a continuing blame game following this summer's results fiasco. CA said that it had warned the government about flaws with the algorithm two weeks before the A-level results were published.

In a submission to the education select committee hearing last week, CA also said that it had warned the regulator of problems with the grading model the day after the A-level results were released. It said Ofqual should have delayed and rerun GCSE results, which were due to be released the following week.

An Ofqual spokesperson called the CA comments "astonishing", adding that the organisation were "totally key to the development, testing and quality assurance of the algorithm right from the beginning".

Following the new disclosure, a member of Ofqual's exam advisory group has now questioned CA's motive behind the criticism.

Professor Jo-Anne Baird, director of the University of Oxford's department of education, told Schools Week: "I could not understand why Cambridge Assessment were criticising the model to ministers, when they proposed it and it predicted the grades best in the modelling that was conducted."

A CA spokesperson said they had submitted various approaches, of which DCP was just

one, to Ofqual. The regulator had considered 12 different approaches before choosing to go with DCP.

They added: "We put forward suggestions to ease computational transparency and public explanation, and some of these were adopted.

"Ultimately, Ofqual developed a model based on a wide range of input and provided a comprehensive summary of the decisions it took in its recent technical report."

A spokesperson for the regulator said that it asked all exam boards to "put forward some proposed approaches" and that while "elements of the final approach" were based on suggestions from Cambridge Assessment, "this was only part of the approach that we took".

CA and OCR were also part of the technical group that "reviewed aspects of the model", and CA had a representative on the advisory group.

But regulator reneges on promise to publish communications

Ofqual chair Roger Taylor promised MPs the regulator would "publish all the communications and minutes" of meetings they had with Department for Education.

But the regulator has now said the DfE must be asked to release the correspondence as they arranged the meetings and recorded minutes.

They also claimed that a paper prepared for a briefing with the number 10 policy unit on August 7 was "written by the DfE, therefore the committee should approach DfE regarding these documents".

Despite promises to be more transparent, Ofqual has also refused to confirm to Schools Week how many times it met with number 10.

Prime minister Boris Johnson last week dodged questions on when he first knew of the grading flaws.

Ofqual will publish long overdue board minutes later this month.

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Ofqual cancels £80k media recovery plan

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Ofqual has abandoned plans to spend £80,000 on media strategists to lead its "recovery plan" following the exams fiasco.

The exams regulator had run a tender to recruit a "senior press office service to provide media advice and strategy".

The contract for the 15-week project, worth up to £80,000, was due to start this week. But Schools Week can reveal that Ofqual has abandoned the project.

It follows criticism of the regulator by education select committee chair Robert Halfon over its spending on communications.

Halfon questioned the value for money of having a director of communications with 10 staff beneath them at a committee hearing this month. He added: "Why on earth did you hide yourselves away in the Ofqual attic, refuse to reassure anxious parents and the public, and ignore the media across the land, who were trying to explain what was going on?"

The Conservative MP challenged the £80,000 tender, saying that he would look at the spend "at a future date".

But Ofqual told Schools Week that it has managed to secure "additional capacity" from Ofsted up until Christmas.

A spokesperson added: "Given the progress on these discussions, and after careful consideration, a decision has been made not to take the tendering process forward."

This follows the drafting in of Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman to oversee a new committee of Ofqual's board. Under the leadership changes, Dame Glenys Stacey has taken over from Sally Collier as Ofqual's acting chief regulator.

When questioned by Halfon about the spending, Stacey said that the 10 staff included junior ranks and those involved in writing reports. But she added that she had "got the message loud and clear".

Ofqual had advertised for a "senior press office service" to deliver a "demand-responsive and resilient service on a full-time basis which will include weekend". It was also intended to "develop and lead media campaigns and to implement Ofqual's recovery plan".

Starting the Autumn Term in the right frame of mind – how can Alps help?

Following a tumultuous Results Season which has proved challenging for schools and colleges and for our students, our attentions turn to the new Academic Year. How do we do our best for our returning students, both those who have not been through the CAG process and those returning to start their KS5 courses? Here we discuss a few of the issues facing us at this time and provide some pointers as to how Alps analysis and Connect Interactive, our online platform can support you in the coming year.

As tough as these last five months or so have been, and as tough as this coming year is shaping up to be, we would be wise to approach it with a sense of optimism. Our students mirror much of our emotions, even in large classes, and they need us to be positive, constructive, and encouraging. They need us at our very best. In our classes, the experiences of lockdown and of returning to school will give rise to a range of emotions and mindsets amongst our students. There will be those that are nervous and who are unsure of what their future holds, those who are convinced that they have fallen behind, whether true or not, and those who have become disaffected entirely. There will be students who have sailed through the work that we have set and those who have genuinely struggled to make progress on their own. Couple this with the fact that we are likely to have classes full of students that we do not know. Our approach to the year ahead must aim to foster trust from the outset and instil the confidence in all of our students that they can develop the skills, bridge the gaps and master the content for the next impending examination season whatever form that that might take.

In the full version of this article, available online at <https://bit.ly/2GKPgEP>.

I discuss six areas in which Alps analysis can support with some of the specific situations facing schools and colleges this Academic Year:

1. The new Year 12 intake – target setting
2. Learning habits
3. Students returning to Year 13 and Year 11 – back on track
4. Targeted support and intervention
5. New skills to continue to build upon
6. The importance of accurate monitoring

At Alps it has always been our philosophy to enable schools and colleges to track the progress of individual students. Alps analysis has never tried to mimic Government accountability measures, but to provide a compass for teachers and senior leaders to identify underperformance and to take the necessary steps to ensure equality of progress for all their young people.

This year is no different. The fact that we have a baseline which is less well defined than others does not detract from this Alps principle. We are still providing you with the tools you need to make that difference to your students. Now more than ever, they need you to be absolutely certain in demonstrating to them how they are performing against the national progress picture. They need you to know where and when to intervene to allow them to excel, and they need you to be able to have the tough conversations when there are barriers and where progress is not happening as it should.

Join one of our free 'Why Use Alps' webinars across this term to see how Connect Interactive can support you across KS4 and KS5 this Academic Year.

To register, go to alps.education/webinars

 Alps Helping students aim higher

Sue Macgregor

Director of Education and Product Development at Alps Education



Sue's role is at the centre of helping staff get the most out of their Alps analysis in order to drive aspiration in their students. Sue joined the Alps team in 2016, having worked as Deputy Head at Windsor Girls' School. As a Deputy, Sue used Alps extensively to raise standards of attainment across the sixth form and now uses this experience to drive the development of the Alps product, delivering world-class analysis to schools and colleges all over the world.

'Fury' as vulnerable kids miss out due to PPE issues

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

A headteacher is "furious" after having to tell parents of pupils with complex medical needs that they must stay at home because of a struggle to source appropriate protective equipment.

The Department for Education (DfE) is being urged to clarify arrangements for children who require specialist care, such as those with chronic lung disease, so that they do not miss out on any more education.

One school cannot access clinical personal protective equipment as required by government guidelines, while others say they are struggling to find space to carry out "aerosol-generating procedures" (AGPs), such as tracheostomy procedures.

Dominic Wall, executive principal and SEND lead for Co-op Academies Trust, said: "There are 102 families in Bradford with children who need AGP. I have had to write to parents of 17 of those children in my school [informing them they can't start school again] and I am furious about it."

The DfE updated its guidance in May to say that staff carrying out AGPs should wear PPE, such as respirators and gowns used on Covid-19 red wards. The department updated the guidance in July with stricter rules on where to carry out AGPs.

Wall, who has failed to source the required PPE from various authorities, said it was an "absolute priority" that instructions are sent to local partnerships to help get these children back to school. He said reports from other schools showed the national picture was "pretty chaotic".

Wall, part of the Medicine in Specialist Schools group, added: "This was predictable and avoidable if an effective dialogue between policymakers and providers had taken place in April, May, June and July.

"Instead, we saw central government pass the buck back to enfeebled local authorities for implementation of hot-off-the-press C19 policies."

Hayley Mason, a director at SEN legal, estimated that hundreds of children could be in this position.

INVESTIGATES



She added: "If schools are saying you can't attend because we haven't got the PPE, the local authority is naturally in breach of their legal duty to perform the education, health and care plan for this child by not allowing them back into the school."

DfE guidance on AGPs says staff performing procedures should follow Public Health England's PPE guidance. This includes wearing respirator equipment that must be fitted by a trained person, and a long-sleeved fluid repellent gown.

Guidance states that the procedure should be carried out in a separate room, with the doors closed and any windows open – causing problems due to a shortage of space in school buildings.

Graham Quinn, chair of Special School Voice, said the PHE guidelines are based on – and written for – hospital environments. "This, in turn, means some schools are confused as to how to best support children with a return to school," he said.

However, the issue is further complicated because the National Tracheostomy Safety Project has issued its own guidelines, saying that some of the DfE's guidance will be "challenging to implement" and suggests other forms of PPE, such as surgical masks.

The guidance, written by eight medics including Brendan McGrath, national clinical advisor for tracheostomy at NHS England, raises concerns that "children

could be subject to discrimination on the basis of their healthcare needs and their access to education unfairly restricted".

Rob Williams, a senior policy advisor at the NAHT union, said schools needed "clear cross-sector agreed advice" and "enough additional funding and capacity" in the wider supply chain.

"The issue with PPE we're hearing is that schools are eventually sourcing it – but it is a time-consuming process and they often cannot obtain it through their normal resource supply routes."

Williams added that the guidance should not be "diluted in any way unless the scientific evidence changes, but it needs to be recognised that to deliver the current guidance safely, schools will inevitably sometimes face capacity issues".

But a DfE spokesperson said that schools, health and local authority partners needed to work together to understand how the guidance applies in their setting, so pupils can return to school safely.

They said they had heard of "good practice locally" and were working with PHE and NHS England to establish whether guidance changes were needed.

They said that schools with PPE shortages should initially approach their local authority.



Dominic Wall

News

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TV star and celeb GP hired for 'back-to-school' promo

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have come under fire for paying a television presenter up to an estimated £15,000 for social media posts promoting the government's back-to-school campaign.

Kirsty Gallacher used her Twitter and Instagram accounts to "reassure parents on the changes and safety measures in place at schools".

In a post last week, she was pictured with Dr Philippa Kaye, a celebrity GP, visiting Charles Dickens Primary School in south London to "hear about the new measures put in place to make schools as safe as possible on our kids' return". A hashtag made it clear it was an advert. (Social media posts qualify as adverts where the person is paid "in some way" and where a brand or company had some form of editorial control.)

The government said using social media influencers allowed it to "reach a wider audience than using only traditional advertising", but has refused to say how much the posts cost.

Experts told *Schools Week* they could cost anywhere from £4,000 to £15,000.

They come as school budgets are squeezed by coronavirus-related costs - and a government refusal to pay for preventive measures such as cleaning.

"There's a point where you wonder whether the government is running a safety campaign or a PR one," said Hilary Goldsmith, a school business leadership consultant,

"I'm sure that most parents would far rather that the public money used to pay for these celebrity endorsements was directed to schools to buy the resources and equipment needed to keep their schools safe, rather than see it spaffed up the wall of a celebrity photo shoot."

Gallacher's tweeted about the campaign to her 430,000 followers on August 27 and September 4.

She also posted to her 337,000 followers on Instagram about the visit to Charles Dickens, saying the safety measures were "really great... as a parent, to know that our children's health is a priority when they go back to school".

The Instagram post attracted about 1,900 likes, while her two Twitter posts received 200 likes combined and fewer than 30



Instagram
1,890 likes
gallacherkirsty AD Anyone else looking forward to the kids going back to school? I'm supporting @educationgovuk #backtoschool campaign to reassure parents on the changes and safety measures in place at schools. Today I visited @cdps_southwark with @drphilippakaye to see these changes first hand and it's really great, as a parent, to know that our children's health is a priority when they go back to school. For any parents who want advice or more information, visit gov.uk/backtoschool #BackToSchool2020



retweets, including one by Gillian Keegan, the skills minister.

Jodie Cook, of JC Social Media, estimated a Twitter or Instagram post for an account with 500,000 followers could cost about £4,000.

"You wonder whether the government is running a safety campaign or a PR one"

Alan Stevens, a media coach, said a typical fee for someone with Gallacher's number of followers could be above £15,000. He said a rough rate per Instagram post would be about £6,000-£10,000.

"However, a government department is not going to pay full commercial rates, so I suspect there would be a package deal, rather than per post."

Representatives for Gallacher did not respond to a request for comment.

Schools Week revealed in July that the government had spent tens of thousands of pounds to present positively its response to the impact of coronavirus on education, including a sponsored post on *Mail Online*.

It also paid social media influencers, including contestants on the TV show *Love Island*, to promote its test and trace scheme.

Kaye, who has featured on national television, posted on Instagram and Twitter about the back-to-school campaign.

On Instagram, she said: "As a parent and

GP I completely understand that it's normal for parents to feel anxious about sending their children back to school, but schools are doing everything they can to reduce the risks of transmission to our children."

She did not include an ad hashtag, but later apologised for the "error" and amended the post with #ad and #paidcollaboration.

Schools Week has also been told that the popular Instagram page @thisismothership, which has 58,000 followers, had posted about the campaign on its Instagram story - a format that is usually available for 24 hours.

It typically charges £1,500 + VAT for an Instagram story. The company said partnerships are confidential and they won't comment on a commercially sensitive matter.

However, the communications agency Freuds later told us that any questions should be directed to the Cabinet Office.

Freuds did not respond when asked if it was involved in the government's social media influencer work.

The Cabinet Office said "all costs involved in the campaign will be published as part of the regular transparency reports on gov.uk".

However, it refused to say whether there would be a breakdown for this spend, or whether it would be rolled up in other coronavirus spend.

The spokesperson added it would use "every means possible to keep the public informed during the pandemic and to deliver on our priority of ensuring all students return to schools and colleges safely".

This was "just one part of a wider campaign utilising TV, radio, social, print and other advertisements".

News

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EXCLUSIVE



Council wants schools to 'prepare' for Ofsted visits

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

A council in the south of England is insisting schools consider "adequate preparation plans" ahead of Ofsted's autumn "visits", despite reassurances from the inspectorate that no preparation is needed.

Unions say the action by West Sussex confirms school leaders' fears that the "visits" will create extra pressure and work for staff trying to get back on track after the nationwide closure of schools.

Ofsted announced earlier this year its inspectors would make interim visits following the return to full education this term. Routine inspections are suspended until next year.

The watchdog said inspectors would focus on helping parents and the public understand how schools were returning to their normal curriculum, insisting schools did not need to do anything to prepare.

But on August 17, two weeks before schools reopened, West Sussex distributed an "aide memoire" that included: "Does the school have in place adequate preparation plans for a one-day visit by Ofsted in the autumn term?"

After intervention from the school leaders' union NAHT, the council said it would put off asking schools how prepared they were until later this term. However, it still planned to help them get ready for the visits.

When pushed for clarification, a council spokesperson said the aide memoire was issued "to guide informal discussions" around preparations ahead of the new academic year, adding the council had reiterated "Ofsted do not expect them to undertake any additional preparation for single-day visits".

However, the spokesperson also confirmed the council "will be providing schools with some guidance on the key areas Ofsted have identified as their focus, ahead of any visits".

It will not include additional tasks, but will allow the council to "provide any additional support as is required to assist schools who might be considered for a visit".

A spokesperson for Ofsted reiterated that school leaders and teachers, who were "busy enough" at present, "should not do anything in advance of our visits this autumn".

But Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the NAHT, said West Sussex would not be "an isolated case" and the council's actions were "completely predictable" given Ofsted's sway Ofsted within the sector.

He labelled the watchdog's assertion that schools should not prepare as "lazy" and a "failure to acknowledge and accept" its impact on education.

"Whenever the name Ofsted is mentioned schools want to make sure they are adequately prepared."

The inspectorate confirmed last week that an "outcome letter" would be published within 38 working days of a visit, a decision heavily criticised by unions.

Brook said these letters meant "light-touch research activity" had "morphed into inspection-like activity" and warned the watchdog's approach risked schools hiding problems.

"For the sake of a letter to parents we could be losing something that could be really important in providing the government with information in terms of what is going on on the ground."

Last week, Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, and Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, wrote an open letter to Ofsted asking it to reverse its decision to release letters.

They said the letter would "feel like an inspection report" and "create an extra pressure on schools at a time when they are already juggling many demands".

However, Ofsted said that "suggesting that we should not publish any information at all for parents after a visit to their child's school is not acceptable".

The watchdog said the aim was to provide parents with information about "what leaders are doing to help pupils back into full-time education" and letters would "not provide any evaluation or graded judgment".

About 1,200 schools will be visited during the autumn term, including all 'inadequate' schools. Should "serious issues" be identified, the visits could become full inspections

Inspections could follow area SEND visits - Ofsted

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Inspections of local area SEND provision could prompt emergency visits to individual schools if "serious concerns" emerge, Ofsted has said.

In July it was announced that full SEND inspections, normally conducted across whole council areas by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, would not go ahead in the autumn. Interim visits would be carried out from October instead.

The watchdog has now published guidance on how these visits will operate.

Inspectors will meet with education, health and care leaders and talk to children and their families, but will not inspect individual schools.

However, Ofsted told *Schools Week* that serious concerns flagged during a visit could prompt an emergency inspection – or a full inspection next year.

"Our local area visits are about understanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the SEND system, and supporting improvement," a spokesperson said. "They are not school inspections, which remain suspended.

"However, if very serious concerns about a school came to our attention, we could choose to carry out an emergency inspection using HMCI's discretionary powers.

"And in some cases we may prioritise the school for a full inspection once they resume."

Local area SEND inspections focus on how education, health and care services interact to serve pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. They are separate from school inspections.

Ofsted is now developing a new SEND inspection framework. *Schools Week* revealed in February that the number of town halls given a second warning over falling SEND services had almost doubled in less than six months.

Full inspections of schools were suspended in March and won't resume until January at the earliest.

However, inspectors will visit some schools to look at how they are returning to their normal curriculum following Covid closures (see story left).

T Levels launch but classes not full

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Schools have missed their T-level enrolment targets, with digital proving to be the toughest subject to sell to students'.

But leaders are still celebrating the initial figures, which could increase slightly as recruitment continues in the coming weeks, because of the impact of Covid-19 and the chaos of this summer's GCSE exams.

Skills minister Gillian Keegan said the early indications were that recruitment had progressed "well in the circumstances" and produced a "viable cohort" across the country.

The first ever T Levels – which have been five years in the making and described as the "gold standard" in technical education to sit alongside their academic equivalent A-levels – launched this month in three subjects: construction, digital and education and childcare.

In what is believed to be the first analysis of T Level recruitment, sister paper FE Week asked each of the 44 colleges and schools set to teach the new qualifications how many learners they had managed to enrol against the target they set in each subject at the beginning of the year.

Twelve colleges and four school sixth forms were able to provide breakdowns and, between them, they had set 28 different enrolment targets. Of those, 19 (or 68 per cent) were under target.

Colleges and schools found construction the easiest subject to attract students, followed by education and childcare.

Digital proved to be the biggest challenge. Eleven of the 16 colleges and schools that spoke to FE Week are teaching the digital T Level, and nine of those failed to meet their "modest" targets.

Colleges said that there was an issue with young people's understanding of the careers available through a digital qualification.

When combining all of the data provided by the 16 schools and colleges, the figures show that 143 students have enrolled on construction courses against a target of 118 (21 per cent above target), 267 students



have enrolled on the education and childcare T Level against a target of 289 (8 per cent below target), and 127 have started a digital T Level against a target of 168 (24 per cent below target).

Some colleges were able to buck the trend, however, with Chichester College Group – which is based in Keegan's constituency – standing out.

The recruitment success at the group, which encompasses five colleges in the south of England, has led to it forming additional T Level classes to cater for the larger than expected cohorts.

A Chichester College Group spokesperson put the success down to an "integrated but consistent" marketing approach over the past year.

This included a "dedicated digital marketing campaign" that mostly involved paid-for social media adverts, targeted at 16 and 17-year-olds mainly on Facebook, as well as Google adverts.

The group's "robust" school liaison team had also made pupils in neighbouring schools fully aware of T Levels over the past year, including virtually when the pandemic hit.

While FE Week's survey offers an indication of early T Level recruitment, a full comprehensive view of demand is unlikely to be available for some months to come. Some providers are staggering enrolment, for example.

When the timeline for rolling out the first three T Levels was announced, the Department for Education set a target of recruiting around 2,000 students in the first year.

In order to increase interest, ministers launched a £3 million "NexT Level" campaign in October 2019. This was controversially put on hold in the first few months of lockdown following orders from the Cabinet Office to focus adverts on updates about the coronavirus pandemic.

Schools struggle to hit T level targets

La Retraite RC Girls School, in the London borough of Lambeth, is offering just the digital T Level. They set a target of 20 and achieved 10 enrolments

Lordswood Girls' School & Sixth Form Centre, in Birmingham, is offering education and childcare. They set a target of 20 and achieved 6

Painsley Catholic College, in Stoke-on-Trent, is offering just the digital T Level. They set a target of 12 and achieved 5 enrolments

Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form, in Norwich, is offering the digital and education and childcare T-levels. For digital, their target was 10 and they achieved 7. For education and childcare their target was 15 and achieved 14 enrolments

BTEC WORKS



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Councils to meet cost of extra psychologists

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Councils will have to use existing funding to pay for extra educational psychologists to help pupils readjust to school.

The Department for Education this week called for recently retired educational psychologists, or those still working but with capacity, to make themselves known to councils to assist with pupil wellbeing as schooling resumes.

However, when pressed on whether town halls would receive additional funding to pay for the temporary cover, the department pointed to £500 million already provided to councils to respond to the pressures of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Local Government Association today welcomed the DfE's invitation, but warned that councils needed "dedicated, long-term funding" to be able to recruit the right people.

The DfE's call follows warnings from psychologists that the lockdown has exacerbated "feelings of entrapment,



loneliness, hopelessness and anger" in pupils. They have also been away from school for the best part of six months and would struggle to adjust to their return to the classroom.

However, the push for more support comes after a long fall in the numbers of educational psychologists in schools.

Between 2010 and 2015 the number employed by local authorities dropped by 13 per cent, while a government-commissioned report last year warned

that more than 90 per cent of LA principal educational psychologists could not meet the demand for their services.

The DfE now wants to hear from educational psychologists who left the profession after 2017 or who are still registered, but are unemployed or working part-time.

They will provide "temporary support for children and young people returning to educational settings in September 2020 . . . for up to 13 weeks".

However, it looks like the government does not expect them all to be in place this month, setting a closing date of November 30 for expressions of interests.

Professionals have been asked to contact the relevant local authority by email. A list of contacts is provided online.

The DfE announced last year that it would provide more than £30 million to train new educational psychologists, with more than 600 receiving grants and help with tuition costs. The first cohort of 203 trainees are due to begin their training this month.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Pupils 'at risk of harm' over closure contact failure

Ofsted has accused one of the largest special schools in the country of failing to contact pupils often enough during partial closures – leaving children "at risk of harm".

Safeguarding arrangements at Severndale Specialist Academy in Shrewsbury were judged "not effective" after an emergency inspection in July, the watchdog said.

The "no formal designation" inspection was prompted by concerns about the arrangements and "aspects of leadership and management at the school".

In its report, which does not include a formal grading, Ofsted said initial risk assessments by the school during the pandemic "did not ensure that contact was made with all pupils frequently enough", and that leaders subsequently reviewed their approach "so they can ensure visual contact is made with all pupils weekly".

Other agencies were also investigating safeguarding at the school, but this "had no

impact on the inspection outcome".

Routine inspections have been paused since March following the government's decision to partially close schools. But Ofsted can go in if it has safeguarding concerns.

Before wider reopening, institutions stayed open for vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and the children of key workers.

According to Ofsted, around 130 of Severndale's 407 pupils attended during partial closures. "Daily remote learning sessions" were provided for those not in school.

Inspectors looked at documents relating to safeguarding and met the principal, Sabrina Hobbs, senior leaders and those responsible for keeping children safe.

They found that leaders "do not have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of safeguarding". Consequently there was "inconsistency in how staff identify and

address safeguarding issues".

"Leaders are not confident in their ability to use school-based systems to analyse patterns of concerns over time. As a result, the risk of harm to pupils and students might go unnoticed."

The visit would normally have been "immediately" upgraded to a full inspection. But because of the pandemic, Ofsted recommended that the next inspection be a full one, and "brought forward once routine inspection resumes".

Hobbs called the report "disappointing" but sought to reassure parents that their children were safe. She said the trustees had decided to move the school into a multi-academy trust to "bring stability to what has been an extremely challenging time for us all".

She added: "We hope that our actions assure parents and carers of our unwavering dedication and commitment to their children."

Let clerks become NLGs and pay them, says advisory group

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Clerks and non-chairs should be eligible to become national leaders of governance - and they should be paid for their time, an advisory group has said.

The Department for Education today published the recommendations of its national leaders of governance (NLG) advisory group, formed earlier this year to discuss reforms.

Under the old system, in place since 2012, NLGs were experienced chairs accredited to work unpaid to mentor and support chairs in other schools. But ministers decided last year to reform NLGs and national leaders of education (NLE) – the equivalent role in school leadership.

The advisory panel, which included Richard Gill, the chair of the Teaching Schools Council, Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, and Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, has now presented its findings.

The group said NLGs should be paid and should focus on supporting schools and trusts with "significant need", rather than mentoring on a voluntary basis.

Knights said the panel had "thought the time had come for NLGs to take their place alongside NLEs as a paid role".

However, it felt the Department for Education should explore mentoring schemes outside NLG, as access to a mentor "can be an invaluable support".

It also recommended "substantial changes" to eligibility, including an extension to include governance professionals who were not chairs, such as clerks, and the removal of a requirement that NLGs could only be drawn from schools with a track record of strong performance.

At present, they must be chairs of schools "with sustained high pupil performance and progress over the last three years and be above current floor standards".

The advisory group recommended opening the role to chairs "with experience of leading improvement, whose current governance role may not be in a school or trust with strong performance".

However, the panel did say that NLGs should only be used where they had "relevant expertise", and only at academy trust board level if they had experience in trust governance.

New standards should set "clear expectations of NLGs and define the expertise required", with requirements for professional credibility, problem-solving and influencing, and "capacity building and knowledge transfer".

A "robust two-stage" selection process was also proposed. Would-be NLGs would be assessed against the standards and tested on their expertise "in specific governance sectors". Candidates would then go through a "high-quality training and development programme".

Successful appointments would be fully reviewed every three years.

A DfE spokesperson said: "We are committed to continuous improvement of the school system, and the national leaders of governance programme will continue to play a vital role in improving the quality of governance."

"We welcome the findings of the expert advisory group . . . and will set out our response in detail following the spending review."

A separate advisory group on the future of NLEs published its recommendations in February, including a call for "transformative" academy chief executives to become eligible.



Emma Knights

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Chairs at odds with boards over workload

The organisation that represents school governors has warned of a "disconnect" on workload between chairs and their boards.

A survey by the National Governance Association found that while 81 per cent of chairs believed their school was effectively addressing the issue, just 49 per cent of staff governors and 61 per cent of other governors believed that was the case.

Thirty-six per cent of governing boards that responded to the survey said workload was their top concern.

Steve Edmonds, the NGA's director of advice and guidance, said it was "not surprising that so many governing boards consider addressing

staff workload and wellbeing issues to be one of the top issues facing their school or trust".

The association expected the problem to get worse "given the significant strain that school leaders and staff have been under maintaining continuity of education during the Covid-19 pandemic".

"Governing boards working alongside school leaders have substantial responsibilities to support the wellbeing of those employed in their schools and trusts, including their work-life balance.

"Now, more than ever, it is important for boards collectively to take a lead in considering and supporting the mental health and

wellbeing needs of their school community, particularly their staff."

The survey also highlighted concerns about school funding and staff recruitment.

Almost a third of boards (31 per cent) said the additional funding announced last year was unlikely to make a difference, although 48 per cent said it would.

On recruitment, 62 per cent of governors in 'inadequate' schools said they had trouble attracting good candidates for senior leadership roles, such as headteachers, executive heads and academy trust chief executives. Thirty-six per cent of governors in good schools raised similar concerns.

Trustees and CEOs 'should be barred too'

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Ministers have followed through on promises to ban headteachers involved in academy scandals – a move that will “protect the reputation of the majority of leaders who play by the rules”.

But critics say the government must go further to ensure that chief executives and trustees involved in such scandals also face action.

It follows news this week that Liam Nolan, the former head of the Perry Beeches trust, and Thomas Marshall, the former head of Baverstock Academy, both based in Birmingham, have been barred from running schools.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said the pair were “unsuitable” to hold management roles in schools. It is the first time the government has used its powers to bar those involved in academy finance scandals (see box below).

Michael Pain, the chief executive of Forum Strategy, which runs trust CEO networks, said: “This is essential for encouraging ethical leadership right across the sector and for protecting the reputations of the majority of leaders and volunteers who give so much to society and who also play by the rules.

“Unfortunately, we see these issues arise in other sectors – it’s not just in education – but the key is ensuring that where mismanagement is found to have taken place, it is dealt with appropriately.”

Under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the education secretary may give a direction prohibiting a person from taking part in the management of an independent school, which also includes academies and free schools.

The prohibition follows Nolan’s ban from teaching after a Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) hearing in 2018 found him guilty of misconduct.

Nolan’s trust paid almost £1.3 million to a private company – Nexus Schools – without a contract or adequate tendering. The company paid the former “superhead”



a second salary of £160,000 over two years, on top of his £120,000 headteacher salary.

Marshall was banned from teaching last year after awarding a contract to his mother’s consultancy firm. Payments totalled nearly £100,000.

However, Nolan can appeal his TRA ban this year, while Marshall can appeal to have his ban set aside next year.

But the new barring orders, published this week although issued in July, mean the pair cannot work in schools, even if the bans are set aside.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said while such action was “welcome”, there “needs to be much more consistency; academy trust CEOs and founders who have engaged in financial misconduct should also be barred from setting up or running schools.

“The academies system is too open to abuse and when scandals are uncovered – frequently by whistleblowers – investigations are often slow with government sitting on the findings and not taking meaningful action.”

Eileen Milner, the chief executive of the Education, Skills and Funding Agency, told MPs in 2018 the government was looking to “test the powers they already

have” over banning rule-breaking trustees, for instance by disqualifying them as directors.

The Charity Commission has powers to disqualify people from being trustees.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said it was “important” the Department for Education and Charity Commission “work together” to ensure disqualification was considered for trustees who were “responsible for, contributed to or facilitated misconduct or mismanagement”.

A DfE spokesperson said it had a “range of powers to address cases involving financial or governance misconduct and will take swift action where there is evidence to suggest individuals are unsuitable to manage schools.

“We have used these powers against several individuals to date and have strengthened our internal processes so that we can better identify and investigate alleged misconduct.”

They added the barring powers of section 128 applied to anyone currently, or who might potentially, “become involved in the management of an independent school (including academies), not just teaching staff”.

Nolan and Marshall have until October to appeal against the new barring orders.

News

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PRU leader wins award for mentoring project

FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FCDWHITTAKER

A former pupil referral unit leader who founded a mentoring service for children at risk of exclusion is among the winners of this year's Fair Education Alliance (FEA) innovation awards.

Hussein Hussein's organisation, CAPE Mentors, is one of five projects to receive six months of support. Ancestors unKnown, GriffinOT, the Bridging Project and Life Lessons will also get support.

As an assistant head of a PRU in London, Hussein observed that excluded children were poorly served, particularly in terms of the standard and consistency of support from unqualified teachers. Hussein said he was "thrilled" with the award.

CAPE Mentors, which combines daily tutoring and meaningful mentor conversation, will now recruit a small cohort of teachers to expand its reach across London.

Life Lessons is an online platform aimed at supporting the teaching of relationships and sex



Will Cole



Jaine Stannard



Nicole Rodden



Hussein Hussein

education.

Founder Nicole Rodden, a Teach First alumna, said the award would "equip us to bring real-life RSE stories from young people, for young people, into more secondary schools".

The FEA has also announced the five winners of its intrapreneurship awards, which recognise potential for internal innovation and the seven winners of its scaling awards, which identify projects that need support to grow.

One of the intrapreneurship award winners

is Power2, which develops employability skills in disadvantaged 14 to 16-year-olds with work placements and one-to-one support.

Will Cole, the organisation's head of impact and programme development, draws on his experience growing up in south London, and the "fantastic role models" who helped him throughout his education.

He said the award was a "gold dust and rare opportunity - for me, for Power2 and for 14 to 16-year-olds who lack the networks, confidence, communication skills and self-esteem to secure work".

Among the scaling award winners is School-Home Support (SHS), which works with the most vulnerable families to improve student outcomes.

Jaine Stannard, the project's chief executive, said she feared that persistent absence and its impact on attainment would get "significantly greater" this year, and reported seeing increased demand for SHS's programmes from schools and local authorities.

"We're incredibly proud, it's perfect timing, SHS is never more needed," she said.

INNOVATION AWARD

Ancestors unKnown

Curriculum, workshops, and community-focused programming that introduces students to family history research and other untold histories.

CAPE Mentors

Tuition and mentoring services to children at risk of exclusion and those permanently excluded without school placement.

GriffinOT

Online children's occupational therapy advice for schools and families.

The Bridging Project

Works underrepresented students to 'bridge' the transition to university by matching them with trained leadership coaches, to develop confidence and problem-solving skills.

Life Lessons

Supports teachers to deliver the length and breadth of government-recommended relationships and sex education curriculum both in and out of the classroom.

Power2

Intensive, early intervention approach to develop employability skills through local work placements and 1:1 support for disadvantaged 14-16-year olds considered 'the hardest to place' in work experience.

Springwell

Early years alternative provision for children who have been excluded, or who are at risk of exclusion.

The Centre for Education and Youth

Research tools to leverage a growing archive of qualitative and quantitative data, gathered over a decade of research with practitioners, policymakers, and most importantly disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people.

Yes Futures!

Promotes skills and wellbeing alongside academic attainment, including through 'My Strengths Toolbox', a personal development workbook that helps young people understand their strengths and how they can use them to be successful.

SCALING AWARD

Action Tutoring

Uses volunteer tutors to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve at least national standards in English and maths.

Boromi

Creates in-school play libraries to empower parents to support and nurture their child's

early development through powerful, purposeful play together at home.

Get Further

Works with colleges to identify students in need of extra help with GCSE English and maths, matching these students to top tutors, who deliver a bespoke 'catch-up' tuition programme.

ImpactEd

Works with schools and other education organisations to help them better understand, evaluate, and improve the impact they make on young people.

Learning with Parents

Leads parental engagement policy work and partners with schools to drive and monitor effective parental engagement and to support disadvantaged families through their Maths and English with Parents programmes.

School Home Support

Partners with schools to provide specialist practitioner support to disadvantaged children and families to maximise educational opportunities, improve life chances and wellbeing and address root causes to education barriers.

Tutor Trust

Right Angle Project supports children in alternative provision and looked-after children and their families through tuition and counselling.

INTRAPRENEURSHIP AWARD

Coach Bright

Academic coaching, including a key stage 2 tutoring programme targeting the primary to secondary transition.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The PM needs bringing back down to earth over testing failures

The government's response to the shambolic coronavirus testing problems that have derailed schools' efforts to get pupils back into the classroom would be shocking if it was not so predictable.

As school staff and pupils were denied access to Covid-19 tests - or told that they could get one, but that their nearest testing centre was 500 miles away - news broke of a new government promise to provide millions of tests per day that could yield results in just 15 minutes.

Ignoring whether the plan, dubbed "Operation Moonshot", is even realistic (the technology required does not exist as yet), it shows a flagrant disregard for the issues of the here and now.

(A less charitable view could be that it is a deliberate tactic to shift the focus away from the current failings - and it wouldn't be the first such attempt by this government).

Schools have moved mountains to get children back into school. The only thing they need from

ministers is a test and trace system that works. It is integral to making the whole back-to-school operation work, as the government knows all too well.

Even more demoralising is that the government has been promising for months that an effective testing regime, which gives priority to teaching staff and pupils, would be in place by September.

The lack of accountability from anyone in government is bad enough, but for the health secretary Matt Hancock to pin this on schools for attempting to send pupils for testing en-masse (claims for which he cannot provide any evidence) is outrageous. This is a health secretary who in July was telling everyone with "any doubt" over whether they had symptoms to get a test.

While gazing towards the fanciful £100 billion Operation Moonshot, the government has missed its current system crash landing. School leaders have been failed - again.



SCHOOLS WEEK



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Williamson claims reopening is 'very much' under control despite spate of Covid closures

Beth Bodycote, @bebod
Gavin Williamson feeling confident about schools really does not reassure the rest of the country in any way, shape, or form - in fact, it suggests another disaster is looming...

Danielle Ottey
How hard is this to understand? This is exactly how it is supposed to work, there will be infections, bubbles will be sent home, occasionally schools will be closed. That is literally the point of the guidance. Sixty schools out of tens of thousands, a handful of staff and pupils out of millions. What is wrong with people? Of course there will be infections but it is how they are managed and controlled that matters.

Academy scandal heads barred from running schools

Trevor Jarman
Financial compliance procedures in academies were clearly nowhere near tight enough, or this would never have happened. One can only hope that they have since been made much more rigorous.

New Ofsted 'visits': The details that schools need to know

Andrew Stanley
If inspectors can't provide a negative Covid test and an assurance that they have isolated from the period between the test and arrival at the school, they should be turned away.

Unions demand U-turn on Ofsted 'visit' letters that will 'create pressure on schools'

Mary Douglas, @MaryDouglas10
It would seem to me common sense that schools should be given some space to welcome children back and concentrate on their mental and academic well being in that order. Ofsted 'inspections' looming will not help.

Ofqual and the exams fiasco: 7 super interesting things we learned

Nick Harrop
Instead of assessed ('would have got', 'should have got', 'might have got') grades after abandonment of exams, could pupils not have been awarded actual ('really did get') grades after sitting exams

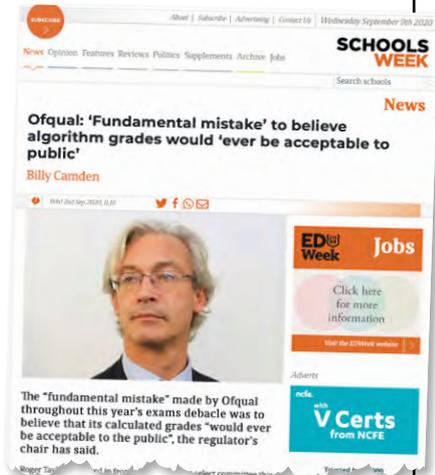
REPLY OF THE WEEK

Huy Duong

Ofqual: 'Fundamental mistake' to believe algorithm grades would 'ever be acceptable to public'

Ofqual's fundamental mistake was to force the automated grading far beyond what statistics could support and still not allowed meaningful human dialogue into the process. It could have done much better if it had been more honest and open. For example:

- 1) It could have admitted early on with the public that statistical modelling was going to have only limited reliability. Instead, for months it hid that behind "we are still refining the details of the model", as if "refining" could magically solve fundamental statistical problems.
 - 2) Once it knew from simulating 2019 actual results that grades for some cohorts may be wrong by up to 45%, it should have come clean and discussed an alternative route for those cohorts that will involve more human dialogue, but it charged on.
 - 3) Once it knew how unreliable the calculated grades were going to be, it should have scaled down the attempt to control grade inflation. Eg, instead of keeping that down to around 2%, it could settle for, say, 7% as a compromise that would reduce the level of injustice (incorrect downgrading). That would in turn reduce the number of appeals, so it could widen the appeal criteria to something meaningful.
- Instead, it chose to feed the public with spins and half-truths, while it charged on dogmatically.



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

which really did take place but under modified conditions? Might this have been possible with earlier, more imaginative planning?

Janet Downs
It's clear Ofqual is not an independent body but subject to interference from ministers.

Ofqual: 'Wrong to assume' students with deflated grades have been 'disadvantaged'

Mani Chauhan, @theiconoclast
Of course, they have been disadvantaged! All the top tier universities got filled up with the 'high grade' students on the day results were announced! Explain that. #CAGsAppeal

And the NCFE Aspiration Awards 2020 winners are...

Designed to honour the success of learners, educators and educational organisations across the UK, NCFE's Aspiration Awards have grown in popularity year on year.

In light of the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic created for the education sector, this year's Awards were extra special, bringing to the forefront some outstanding nominees who blew our judges away with their tenacity and dedication to succeed against all the odds.

Attracting a record total of 200 entries across the four categories, the judging panel, which comprised NCFE's Chief Customer Officer, Victoria Orr, Head Teacher, Tom Sherrington, Managing Director at Hawk Training, Crawford Knott, and the Association of Colleges representative, Catherine Sezen, spent hours reviewing and deliberating over the high calibre of candidates.

Nottingham-based, Stone Soup Academy, scooped the hotly contested 'Centre of the Year' Award. An Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' Alternative Provision for students who are either at risk of, or who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school, Stone Soup Academy wowed the judges with its innovative approach to learner engagement to help young people who have lost their way to turn their lives around and "create unimagined futures".

Kerrie Henton, Principal at Stone Soup Academy, commented: "We entered the Aspiration Awards because it resonated so closely with what we do. When our learners come to us, they have no aspirations of their own, so we have to aspire for them. It's always lovely to get a pat on the back for a job well done, so winning the award is truly fantastic, but for us, it's all about the learners - about celebrating their achievements and demonstrating what can be achieved with the right level of support."

The Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Dawn Waite from Halesowen College, who despite only embarking on her career as a health and social care teacher a few short years ago, has supported hundreds of learners into careers in nursing, residential care, paramedic science and midwifery. Dawn has also gone above and beyond the call of duty to support a learner in her class who is completely blind - helping to make the entire Level 3 curriculum accessible to her, as well as the college campus itself.

"I get learners who come to me with very little self-confidence and by building them up, I get them to go to university and enjoy what comes after that - having a career, not just a job," Dawn commented.

"I think if anything, winning this award has made me realise that I am a good teacher and I am good at my job but I'm still in shock to be honest!"

The Learner of the Year Award was presented to Aisha Aslam, a dedicated mother of five young children from Oldham in Greater Manchester, who



Staff at Stone Soup Academy, winner of the Centre of the Year Award



Learner of the Year Award winner, Aisha Aslam

has rediscovered her love of learning as an adult and between her other responsibilities, has found the time to complete both a CACHE Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools and Colleges, and a Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning to support her in her pursuit of a new career as a Teaching Assistant.

"When you've got kids, you just get on with whatever's thrown at you. It is hard to be a mum and stay at home, constantly putting your children's needs first and feeling like you can't do anything for yourself. I just hope that in winning this award, it might help to inspire other stay-at-home mums to think, hey if she's got five kids and she can do it, why can't I?" said Aisha.

18-year old Elica Hale, a Health and Social Care student at Halesowen College, was also recognised in the Learner of the Year category with a Highly Commended Award for her incredible dedication to her course work while working full-time as a Health Care Assistant at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham during the worst of the Covid-19 outbreak.

"I'm so excited to have won the Highly Commended award," Elica commented.

"I really want to get into University to study towards my adult nursing qualification and having this award will look great on my application and my CV in the future. I am really proud of myself and I can't thank my tutors enough for putting me forward."

The final winner in this year's awards programme was 18-year old Holly Bailey from Southampton, who

nife.

beat the competition to secure the 'Against all Odds' award which recognises learners who have overcome difficult personal circumstances in order to succeed in their studies.

Currently studying towards her CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education at Itchen Sixth Form College, Holly has had to juggle her studies between her responsibilities as a young carer, helping to support her parents in looking after her older brother who has Autism, a younger sister with ADHD, and a further younger brother who also needs close care.

"I was so surprised when I got the email to say that I'd won, I didn't think it was real!" Holly said.

"A lot of working with children is about being able to overcome struggles and this award proves that I am still able to do what I want to do, irrespective of challenges in my personal life."

Victoria Orr, Chief Customer Officer at NCFE, added: "We were overwhelmed by the incredible response to this year's Aspiration Awards and completely humbled by some of the amazing work that learners, educators and centres are doing day-in, day-out across the UK.

"Now more than ever, it's important to recognise achievements within the sector and share inspirational stories. We hope that by bringing some of these to the forefront through our Aspiration Awards that we might inspire more people to share their achievements and give themselves a pat on the back for coming through what has undoubtedly been one of the education and skills sector's most challenging years to date."

To find out more about the Aspiration Awards and read the winner's stories in full, visit: <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/aspiration-awards/winners-of-2020-aspiration-awards>.

Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



“Every school I’ve worked for in 18 years, there’s been no one BAME on SLT”

T’Challa Greaves, lead practitioner for science, Meridian High School

Jess Staufenberg meets a middle leader intent on breaking the glass ceiling, if only for others

It’s rare for Schools Week to feature a middle leader (our main readership base is senior leaders), but T’Challa Greaves, lead practitioner for science at Meridian High School in Croydon, is a powerful voice to listen to. In January we heard him deliver a thought-leadership talk at the Diverse Educators conference, weaving together personal narrative and structural analysis. He has a YouTube channel called Science and Muscle, which aside from fitness tips and lab lessons, sees Greaves deliver talk pieces to camera on subjects including ‘The effect that racism has on mental

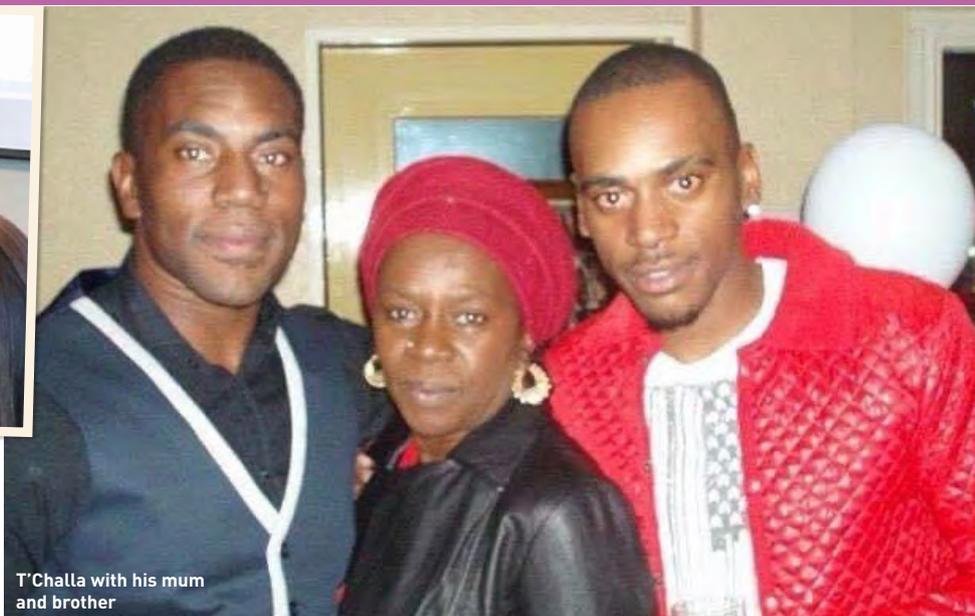
health’, ‘Toxic masculinity’ and ‘Is there racism in teaching and education?’. He talks not just about one issue, but a combination of intersecting issues that face teachers and pupils across the system; mental health, racism, gender, vulnerability and ambition.

It’s a good job he’s speaking out, given the significant lack of high-profile school leaders from black, Asian or ethnic minority (BAME) backgrounds. Our summer investigation revealed that 98 per cent of the largest academy trusts were run by white bosses, a higher proportion than two years earlier. It’s discouraging to say the least, even more so as Black Lives Matter marches protest problems of representation and brutality around the globe.

Greaves is someone staring up the ladder at top academy roles, wondering whether he’ll be given a chance.

One thing he says really hits home. “Every school I’ve worked for in 18 years, there’s been no one BAME on SLT.” It’s clear talking to Greaves that he has a great passion for his subject, his sector and chosen profession, but a real sense of sadness that for all his efforts, there seems to be an invisible ceiling he’s seen other staff, largely from a white background, pass through more easily. He left a teaching job at a school in his hometown of Birmingham after a decade because “deep down” he felt unsupported by senior staff to aim high. “It was seeing the same faces on SLT. It was seeing people I had trained

Profile: T'Challa Greaves



T'Challa with his mum and brother

up in my department go on to be assistant headteachers elsewhere in five or six years.” The relative lack of vertical movement is not for shirking responsibility: at his current school he is the oracy lead, NQT mentor, works on the beginner teachers’ programme and is a form tutor lead. “People from BAME backgrounds need to stop being given pastoral leadership roles and be promoted properly.”

That feeling of looking upwards and seeing no one with a face like his started young. Greaves’ mum is from Jamaica and dad from Barbados, and in 1980s Birmingham he had peers from a similar background around him but no staff. “The big struggle for me at school was not seeing a lot of teachers who looked like me. Partly because of that, at secondary school I was trying to fit in with the kids who rebelled.”

The importance of having two parents who hugely valued education is clear in what happened next. “It got up to year 9 and my mum showed me my year 7 results compared with what I was getting now. That was kind of eye-opening. She’d also kept a piece of paper I’d written when I was 11, saying ‘I want to be the first in my family to go to uni’ and she showed me that. That made me realise that maybe, deep inside me, there was a drive in me to go and achieve more.” It’s a powerful moment of parental guidance.

Teachers both helped and hindered him on his way. Greaves attributes his failure to pass GCSE maths the first time to his unthinking teacher keeping a pet tarantula on the front desk (sending a young Greaves straight to the back row). Another, his English teacher, Mrs Deane, he talks about with deep affection. “More than anyone,

she was the only person who really understood me. I think mostly because of her I got through English.”

But when he followed his role model into teaching, Greaves soon found himself unsupported in a profession that requires you to

“People I had trained up went on to be assistant headteachers in five or six years”

emotionally support others on a daily basis. In one of his first jobs, he recalls “year 11s spraying their arms with aerosol at the back of the class and lighting them” and feeling overwhelmed by how many pupils he wanted to help. “When I first started teaching I genuinely panicked about ‘how am I going to get these children to understand that even though they’re not in the right circumstances, there’s a much bigger picture out there for them’”

The sense of responsibility made him impatient for change. “I was a defensive and angry person at this point. If I thought something should change, I would go straight into the headteacher



T'Challa aged 12

and say, look, this isn’t right, why isn’t this happening? Now I know it’s about going through the right channels.” Determined to make a difference, Greaves went for six jobs in four years, succeeding in two but never receiving feedback on how he could improve. In one of his YouTube videos, he talks about how his African name, T’Challa, may have had an impact on job responses. Without mentoring, the constant drive to try to make a change and advocate for his students was slowly draining him.

Aged 32, Greaves stood back and took stock. He signed off work with depression and saw a counsellor. For the first time he discussed his feelings and events in childhood, including that when he was 10 his mum had a stillborn child – a

Profile: T'Challa Greaves



T'Challa, his dad and brother

traumatic ordeal for the family. “It’s so important to seek help and get things off your chest. I was a big jovial character, that alpha man in the changing room. For 15 years, I’d never said no, I was one of those people who always said yes to everyone. It was about learning I could take time out.” He pauses and unfolds his arms. “Most men don’t like to fail. I see it in the boys I teach now, they don’t want to fail or seem weak so they won’t speak up. I want to help young men realise that regardless of what childhood experiences they’ve had, it’s not the end. Speaking up about feelings and emotions helps.” Greaves decided to leave his home city and move to London. Perhaps even more bravely, he chose not to leave teaching. Instead, he landed a job tutoring young footballers at Chelsea F.C. Academy – where better to help young men feel they don’t have to project a particular persona?

In a perfect segue, it is at this point that Greaves mentions his pet rabbit. “Me and Wolverine...,” he begins. Who, sorry? I say. “My rabbit. Wolverine. I’ve got two more now. Thor and Jubilee.” Fans of X-men will recognise a theme. Naming fluffy animals after heroes with superhuman powers is a lesson for all of us in not judging by appearances. Greaves also shares his first name

with a superhero, the legendary king T’Challa of Wakanda, in Marvel’s Black Panther.

What Greaves really nails is the importance of bringing people in – of ensuring everyone feels deeply accepted and invested in. It’s not enough to assume it’s happening. I ask what he’d do as a headteacher.

“I believe in myself. But it’s about growing that faith and belief in other people”

“A massive part of any school is the community. I want the community of the school to feel they belong to the school. I’ve been to parents’ evenings where teachers aren’t talking about the community or what the school is doing, just the individual child. We should be talking more about ‘this is where we’re going, this is what we’re doing with your child. Come to this play, this event, this club’. The strengths of the school are always there, but I don’t think parents always see the



Celebrating Christmas with Wolverine

strengths. The more you engage the parent, the more students are engaged.” It’s a perspective that sounds quite obviously beneficial to any SLT.

But when I ask Greaves whether he’ll be a head, he hesitates for the first time.

“Even with 20 years left of my career, I’m still not sure. There are so many factors involved – being in the right place at the right time. I’d love to. I have the belief in myself. But it’s about growing that faith and belief in other people. I just can’t say.”

Opinion

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SIR JON COLES

Chief executive, United Learning

Delaying 2021 exams is a good idea – here’s why

Pushing exams back a few weeks next summer is the best option. Arguments for more major exam reform fall into a series of traps, writes Jon Coles

It’s clear that the Covid-19 impact on 2021’s exam groups will be greater than on 2020’s. The debate about next summer’s GCSEs and A levels is already well underway, with some of the ideas proposed better than others.

One of the issues is whether 2021 exams should be delayed to later in the summer, in order that pupils get much-needed time to catch up. Although Ofqual published the outcome of its consultation on 2021 GCSEs and A-levels last week, the document didn’t include any decision about delaying 2021 exams.

It’s my view that a delay of a few weeks is a good idea. This won’t solve all the problems, but it avoids some pitfalls of other suggestions.

First, it is generally mistaken to think educational problems can be solved through the assessment system. Pupils have missed time in school; on average cohorts will know and understand less than they normally would; gaps between rich and poor will be wider. These are real-world problems. You could

design an assessment system which tries not to illuminate the facts, but that would do nothing to solve the problems and nothing to create equity.

Second, major reform of the exam system is not a solution for this year. Introducing such change initially depresses raw achievement

and widens gaps – because test familiarity has such a big effect and because the most advantaged have the most capacity to prepare for change. This is true always and everywhere.

Third, making rushed changes to exam questions is anyway a terrible idea. Questions are developed, tested and researched over years before being included in exams. As a result they usually differentiate well between candidates. Introducing untested items into exams carries an extremely high risk of unintended consequences.

Fourth, trying to run an exam system without exams is not a good idea. Whatever the case for reforming exams, this year’s



experience does not strengthen it.

The fifth and final argument is that we should just run with teacher assessment again. But this typically produces wider deprivation gaps than exams. While Ofqual should have provided training for teachers this year, it takes a huge leap of faith – unsupported by evidence –

impact on destination institutions, etc. Three weeks isn’t enough to save the world, but I’ll take it.

Government should do everything it can to make a normal exam series workable. One obvious change is that the “tier 2 local lockdown” guidance should prioritise year 11 and year 13, so they attend at all times – even where there is a rota system. This could be achieved with minimal health impact by removing the requirement for 100 per cent attendance of vulnerable and key worker children in a rota system, since the rationale which existed for that in national lockdown has disappeared.

Finally, we will need plans B and C in case full exam series are not possible. These can use assessments closely similar to those in a normal series. There are viable options for a cut-down exam series and for differently timed interim exams using properly pre-tested assessment items.

We can’t solve this year’s problems with the exam system, but we can avoid making them worse. Meanwhile, solutions to the educational problems lie where they always lie – in the classroom, in the hard work of teachers and pupils and in supporting families.

“Government should do everything it can to make a normal exam series workable”

to think training or “moderation” would fully solve that problem.

So, what should we do?

Ofqual’s relatively modest proposed changes are actually quite sensible. Those who say the changes don’t go far enough generally make one or more of the five mistakes above.

Next, it is sensible to delay exams as much as possible – but that’s at most by three to four weeks. The marking and awarding process has, at best, two weeks’ slack within it. We could additionally delay results from their usual August slots by perhaps a fortnight. Beyond these changes, problems multiply fast – end of term, getting scripts marked in teachers’ summer holidays,

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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PROFESSOR JO-ANNE BAIRD

Director, Department of Education,
University of Oxford

'No, Minister.' Why Ofqual's autonomy is no joking matter

There is room for improvement at the exams regulator, but its independence is crucial to a functioning system, writes a member of its standards exams group

The exams regulator has been in the firing line over the way A-level, GCSE and BTEC results were awarded this summer. But we need Ofqual and we need it to be independent of government.

On September 2, Ofqual was grilled by the education select committee. We learned that ministers ignored its advice several times this year and that when it tried to make sense of the education secretary's policy announcement that mock exam results could be used as part of the appeals process, he over-ruled them. Sally Collier, the chief regulator, resigned and no minister has, as yet, lost their job over this summer's results.

All of this begs questions about who is responsible, but let us not forget that one of the points of a quango can be to act as a scapegoat when things go awry.

Ofqual was born out of the bonfire of the quangos in 2010, when the Coalition government slimmed down the public sector by slashing

106 bodies. Michael Gove, then education secretary, was troubled about grade inflation undermining the currency of examinations. Competition between exam boards has been almost forgotten, but a decade ago there was real concern that it was dumbing down standards.

“Ofqual keeps exam standards at arm's length from politicians

Most countries have a nationalised exam board. England has an unusual quasi-market with multiple boards. Ofqual has very effectively controlled grade inflation in a way that never stuck when exam boards tried to self-regulate it through the Joint Council for Qualifications. We need a regulator as long as we have a quasi-market or the door to rampant competition is left open and the country's education will suffer for it.

Ofqual advised the government to hold socially distanced exams this year, but Gavin Williamson announced that exams were cancelled. He also decided that the results should be as similar as possible to outcomes in previous years and that there should be no



appeals against the model put in place.

As Roger Taylor, the chair of the Ofqual board, pointed out, there is a role for “democratically accountable politicians” to decide policy. Ofqual's role is to advise, but ultimately to

implement policy. Following the abandonment of the calculated grades in favour of centre-assessed grades, Taylor offered his resignation before Williamson gave Ofqual his public support. He must write a good resignation letter.

I have my own list of things that Ofqual could have done better – more communication in advance of results day, a more open appeals system and ensuring political backing. But the overarching impression from this year's process is that it was aware of the issues and communicated them with its most powerful stakeholder, the government.

Whilst Ofqual is responsible to parliament, the chief regulator, chair

and board members are appointed by the Department for Education. Ministers have the final say on these appointments. When ministers have the decision on hiring and firing - and on policy matter - maintaining independence is a high wire act for the chief regulator. Being too outspoken is a recipe for getting the push and may achieve little. Yet parliament holds Ofqual to account for its independence.

If exam standards are closely controlled by politicians, those politicians will quickly be mired in accusations of interference to make their own policies look better. Ofqual serves the purpose of keeping exam standards at arm's length from politicians, and making sure that those standards are not dumbed down by competition between exam boards.

As for independence, it needs at very least to be transparent about the advice that was given to ministers so that politicians can be held democratically accountable. Ofqual needs to be able to say no to ministers because policies with a political rationale may be expedient, but they may not stand the test of time.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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School business professionals have worked their magic again this summer – but, like hand sanitiser, stores of fairy dust could run out, writes Micon Metcalfe

This has been a year like no other. Since March, school business professionals (SBPs) - a group that includes school business leaders (SBLs), estates and premises staff and network managers – have grappled with the fallout from Covid-19. They have geared up for on-line learning, produced risk assessments, set up new supply chains, reforecast budgets, made claims to the Department for Education and, in some cases, furloughed staff.

In a normal year, the SBP community looks forward to term 7 (aka the summer holiday). It is a time for catch-up and planning, but it is also when any major work to school sites has to be done. It is mainly free from the typical school distractions and SBPs take pride in delivering sites and services that are ready for the new academic year.

When our colleagues breezily ask if we've had a nice summer we tend to smile and mutter something about how busy the summer holiday fairy has been – as if all of this work happens by magic. We've usually managed a week or so in the sun, so we are feeling chilled and proud of the differences we've overseen around our schools.

This year, the summer holiday fairies have needed to dig deep into their dust reserves of resilience to do all the usual stuff and so much more. Your SBPs will not be looking as chirpy as usual - so what's been going on over the summer and what are the challenges of the new term?

One head of IT procured, set up



MICON METCALFE

Chief financial officer at the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust

Care is needed to sustain exhausted school business professionals

and delivered more than 1,000 Chromebooks and set up internet access so that every pupil in the 7,000-pupil trust would have a device for home learning. The normal holiday work included a 14-school infrastructure project. Another trust operations team procured visors for everyone, employed additional

distancing and oversaw two major building projects.

Many SBLs talked about the challenges of procuring PPE and sanitisers. I mean, who had even heard of a “fogger” in early March? One colleague was frustrated at the time spent “sourcing [...] stuff we've never used before [and] the

“Some SBPs have not had any real downtime since March

cleaners, installed outdoor water troughs, leased space for additional classrooms to allow for social

deluge of overpriced profiteering [...] from suppliers”. Another had hand sanitiser units installed in March,



only to see the stock diverted to the NHS. The new units from a new supplier were finally on the walls on September 4.

Many colleagues have had to deal with increased correspondence – from checking for DfE updates and much more social media and email queries, to making sure orders can be placed and invoices paid. A high proportion of office and finance staff work term-time only, leaving only a skeleton staff - or worse, someone working free – to get this done.

SBPs were noticeably tired at the end of the first week of September. Some had not had any real downtime since March. The off-switch had been forgotten. Others found hard-sourced sanitiser or hygiene stocks had been liberated. Some faced demands for immediate action because the normal department orders had not been placed and one SBL, working from home on an INSET day, discovered at 6.45am that the newly installed automatic car park gate was stuck. All felt exhausted simply from the challenges of leadership in uncertain times.

There is uncertainty over how the ongoing additional costs can be absorbed, and crucially whether our plans to keep our schools Covid-safe will stand the test of local lockdowns or a second wave.

SBPs will no doubt rise to those challenges while keeping the plates spinning for the benefit everyone else, but it's important they remember themselves and plan downtime. Heads and governors also shouldn't forget the back-office powerhouse when considering workload. This year is not going to let up any time soon.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Now is the time for all schools to act on the stand-out lesson from lockdown – that partnerships are central to overcoming challenges, writes Leora Cruddas

We all know the challenges of Covid-19 have been significant for educators, pupils and families. So it is really important to understand how schools have coped. A new impact report from Edurio helps us do this. Based on very extensive survey data, this report captures how schools and trusts have responded to Covid-19. With deep dives into the data on learning, well-being, community, leadership and safety, this research is an important social and educational artefact.

As our young people have completed their schooling in the face of a global pandemic, at an extraordinarily difficult moment in history, the survey shows that schools and families have worked together with a spirit of generosity and reciprocity. Teachers and parents alike have rapidly adapted and found new ways to educate and support children and young people through distance learning and home education. And those who have fared best have done so by working together.

It is heartening to see, for example, that 7 out of 10 parents surveyed gave an overall positive response to schools' handling of Covid-19 during lockdown. This flies in the face of some media coverage, but it is important to note that parental satisfaction differs considerably across schools - the proportion of positive responses ranges from 100 per cent to under 40 per cent.

This potentially means that not all schools were able to satisfy parental



LEORA CRUDDAS

Chief executive, Confederation of School Trusts

Parental engagement is key to overcoming continued disruption

demand, but it does not mean that any were negligent. The challenges facing some smaller stand-alone schools was considerable. A few staff illnesses could result in the best-laid plans falling over – a compelling case for all schools to be in strong, sustainable groups with single governance structures.

An important finding from the research and a crucial lesson from lockdown is that educating a child is a shared responsibility. More than 60 percent of staff reported being satisfied with the communication they had had with parents and guardians and 70 percent of parents rated their relationship with teachers and school leaders as positive. These

documents and resources to support schools in the effort. My own recommendations are six-fold:

- 1. Be prepared.** Make sure your school or trust can move rapidly between classroom teaching and remote education. Your classroom and remote curriculums must be aligned.
- 2. Create a communications plan with families and use it consistently.** The EEF recommends that you audit your current communications, especially with less-involved families, to assess what works. Personalise messages as much as possible.

“A crucial lesson from lockdown is that educating a child is a shared responsibility”

are positive findings, but we now know more about the importance of partnership and how to leverage it, so ought to expect even better results in any future lockdowns.

Schools don't need to do this on their own. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a series of important guidance

- 3. Ensure your teachers know and understand the best evidence on remote education.** Ensuring the elements of effective teaching are present – for example clear explanations, scaffolding and feedback – is more important than how or when they are provided.



4. Create a planning framework for teachers. Learning sequences over the course of a series of sessions should involve explicit instruction, practice, retrieval and opportunities to revisit.

5. Make arrangements for access to and submission of work. Ensuring clear expectations in this regard means also actively considering and planning for those without internet access. Be clear about what arrangements are in place when work is not regularly accessed and submitted, for example supportive phone calls home to include discussions about consistent learning routines and wellbeing.

6. Plan support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, those with SEND and English as an Additional Language. Many students will benefit from a linked teaching assistant or teacher to provide support and continue building positive relationships.

While ultimately nothing can replace the classroom, pupils can learn through remote education. It requires schools and families to work together to ensure that children and young people continue to access education, and while this has always been true, it has never been more important than amid the continued disruption of this pandemic.

Get back to school with BBC Bitesize this Autumn

Schools have opened their doors again but this Autumn term looks very different with staggered school days, year groups in bubbles and possible localised school closures.

Following the success of last term's Bitesize Daily lessons, we have launched **BBC Bitesize Autumn 2020** to support teachers, parents and students during this uniquely challenging term.

We've done that by working with teachers across the UK to enhance the special curricula developed by schools, trusts and local authorities over the last few weeks. Bitesize Autumn 2020 offers collections of resources for teachers to use in the classroom, to incorporate into homework projects, or for parents to use if they're in a lockdown situation.

"Going back to how we do things is simply not an option."

Dr Emma Kell, teacher and author.

There are four Autumn 2020 offers: catch-up lessons for primary children who missed out on key concepts last term; resources for years 1-9, we've called This Term's Topics; weekly Live Lessons for primary schools; and the usual great resources for GCSE, Nationals and Highers students.

This Term's Topics is all about what the BBC does best, delivering engaging short-form video, clear concise text, quizzes and infographics - along with extra content from teams like BBC News and Natural History Unit - all mapped to this autumn's special curricula.

The topics content will also include an array of fantastic resources from a range of educational publishers and partner organisations including Twinkl, White Rose Maths, Chester Zoo, the Met Office, Eden Project and the National Literacy Trust.



Primary Catch-Up Lessons are here to help children who have missed key concepts in Maths and English.

Home schooling hasn't been easy, so our catch-up lessons are simple guides to help students in years 1-6 catch up on any learning they may have missed, delivering key learning from last term's Maths and English curricula including content from Bitesize Daily lessons.

Weekly Live Lessons will bring primary schools and year groups together for fun and interactive shared learning.

The new season of Live Lessons kicks off on September 14th with a special lesson looking at well-being and the impact of lockdown, produced in partnership with the Premier League.

The first Live Lesson will be broadcast live on the BBC Teach website at 2pm on September 14th. Then from September 21st, there will be weekly programmes for KS1 and KS2 classes, alternating between literacy and numeracy.

GCSE: Our comprehensive suite of GCSE and Nationals/Highers self-study modules, which cover the majority of topics and exam boards, will continue to form the backbone of the BBC Bitesize offer to Year 10 and 11 students.

Bitesize functionality allows users to save favourite guides and monitor their own progress, offering an ideal complement to classroom based learning.

"Catching children up will present a challenge to teachers as they return, easing them into a new routine of learning will be another test altogether."

Andrew Cowley, Deputy Headteacher at a South London school.

BBC Bitesize Autumn 2020 content will be updated regularly throughout the year and can be used whether children are learning in school or at home.

BBC Bitesize is there for teachers and students this Autumn to help them make a success of a challenging term.

All BBC Autumn 2020 content can be found on the BBC Bitesize website.



Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Leading Academy Trusts. Why Some Fail But Most Don't

By Sir David Carter with Laura McInerney

Publisher John Catt

Reviewer Dan Morrow, trust leader, Woodlands Academy Trust

I must admit to awaiting this book and the opportunity to take a trip down Sir David Carter's memory lane with relish. I was keen to discover the authentic story behind a career that in many ways epitomises the transformation of the English education system in the past decade. It did not disappoint.

Part CEO handbook, part system reflection and review, part memoir and part call to arms, the narrative is robust and compelling. Underpinned with case studies, models and analysis. *Leading Academy Trusts* offers a coherent journey through Carter's career and the maturation of the multi-academy trust model.

The book is steeped in learning and skilfully avoids the clichés of a memoir by being candid about the tougher, more challenging times. Carter's honesty about his own fallibility – as a head and as national schools commissioner – allows a more critical approach to the current MAT landscape, good and bad, that he was involved in developing. The distance offered by an approach that is as scholarly as it is personal allows readers to engage with the arguments without feeling that it is overly proselytising.

In fact, despite the title, this book is mainly about failure. But the framing of Carter's own leadership maturity, running in parallel with a system scrambling to catch up, puts the onus on responsibility and growth rather than blame. This highly personal account of growth becomes somehow talismanic of a system still struggling

to truly understand itself. One of its strongest conclusions about why some trusts fail is that they don't accept that failure itself is part of excellence.

As a reflection on the past 20 years of the English educational system, chapter one offers an unrivalled account of why multi-academy trusts exist. It is followed by a highly useful "how to" guide for emerging and current CEOs in which the author's teacher persona comes to the fore. The next three chapters strongly articulate the idea that effective and efficient education systems rely first and foremost on people as their essential ingredient.

Grounded in school improvement, Carter's leadership ethics are based in talent management and the idea of the leader as chief information officer, the locus of communication and thus coherence and clarity. The lionisation of "surgeon leaders" of the early days of the MAT world is replaced with a preference for "architectural leadership" for sustained improvement and community transformation.

In these chapters, Carter attempts to rise above the political narratives of the previous decade to posit academy leadership as civic leadership. Chapter five, on governance, is as concerned with transcending

credentialism as it is with reinforcing the values of charity directorship; the moral imperative, he argues, is an "and", not an "or" of sector leadership.

Overall the book charts a shift in thinking from a "fixed mindset" conception of talent to a growth mindset of dynamic talent management, with an onus on creating environments for others to thrive.

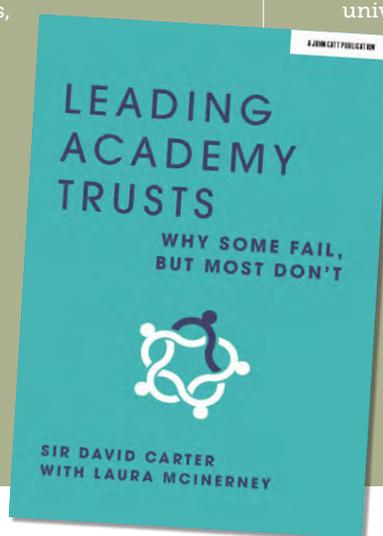
Carter's account of his own journey from seeking perfection and eliminating mistakes to accepting failure as part of learning makes for a truly engaging "teachable moment". As he asserts, a maturing system doesn't mean problems won't recur. Maturity isn't typified by perfection, but by the ability to reflect on learning from marginal successes and failures. In that sense, this is a very mature piece of writing indeed.

He has perhaps missed an opportunity to confront policy failures from a system design point of view, and he doesn't comment on prevailing orthodoxies within MAT structures to any depth.

But this book is not about revealing a universal truth to success. Instead, it

is about habits: practical ones that are evident in routines and systems that become "the way of doing business around here", but also habits of mind that become firm beliefs in our communities' potential.

So while it is imperfect, from a talent management perspective it is certainly worth recognising that what it does, it does very well indeed.



Reviews



As Black Lives Matter protests fade from the media limelight, Penny Rabiger picks five podcasts to keep anti-racism current in educators' thinking

@Penny_Ten

The Anti-Racist Educator

This podcast challenges educators to constantly reflect on their teaching, realising the opportunity we have to recognise the power to reinforce and dismantle racial hierarchies in education. The episode I have chosen looks at the theoretical roots of "decolonising the curriculum", a popular catchphrase that often risks losing its meaning. Two members of the podcast discuss decolonial theory and explain how it can be applied to the secondary English curriculum, presenting examples of good practice and providing opportunities for listeners to reflect on how they too could apply it to their own subjects, classrooms and other learning environments.

Educating While Black

This interesting series acts as a virtual staffroom in which black educators share and reflect on their experiences. This episode, "From Bashment to Boardroom", features Chantelle looking back on some of her most formative experiences as a black educator. She gives a brilliant account of



assumptions made about her suitability for university education, through to her experiences at Teach First and later having a line manager casually confess that the school's leadership team had a "secret" question mark on her suitability for a role, based on her giving feedback that was deemed "too honest". This powerful episode is an open chat about the impact of affirming words, intentional deeds and how the job isn't done until you've "Hoovered the whole house", making it a down to earth and highly informative listen.

Have You Heard

An American journalist and a scholar explore issues in education, one policy at a time, in this entertaining and informative series. In episode 92 they ask, "Is it time to cancel Teach Like a Champion?" Two leading American charter school chains who had used this methodology as part of their organisational DNA made the news this summer for deciding to do just that. *Teach Like a Champion*, the best-selling guide to effective teaching by Doug Lemov, has sold millions. But is it

racist? This episode hears from teachers and researchers who argue that Lemov's approach embodies "carceral" pedagogy. The hosts trace this concept back to 1895. Special guests include leading thinkers on this subject, Ilana Horn, Joe Truss and Layla Treuhaft-Ali.

Anti Small Talk

Host Shuaib Khan, teacher and blogger, has meaningful conversations on all things relating to education, politics and sociology. The most recent episodes have featured discussions with teachers and educationists about inequality from a variety of perspectives and experiences. In episode six, Khan talks with Audrey Pantelis, who discusses racism, bias, racialised gatekeepers, the curriculum, histories and much more.

PersYou

This series brings together stories from across the globe to explore what education might look like in the future. It delves into the minds of leaders and experts about the challenges and issues they face. In the episode I have chosen, Hannah Wilson and Angie Browne, both former headteachers, discuss building diversity in education. Wilson has a wealth of experience establishing networks across education sectors that specialise in diversity, equality and inclusion. Browne's new book, *Lighting the Way* explores the case for ethical leadership in schools and offers a counter-narrative to current approaches. They unpick what is holding education back in terms of achieving diversity, offering ideas and strategies for how to better promote it. Topics cover training, early career recruitment and curriculum. This is an insightful exploration of a sensitive and complex topic that requires urgent and focused attention, but is too often held back by the highly emotive responses it engenders.

Research

Teacher Tapp will review a new research development each half term. Contact them @TeacherTapp if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

Have changing attitudes made masks this season's must-have?

Laura McInerney, Co-founder, Teacher Tapp

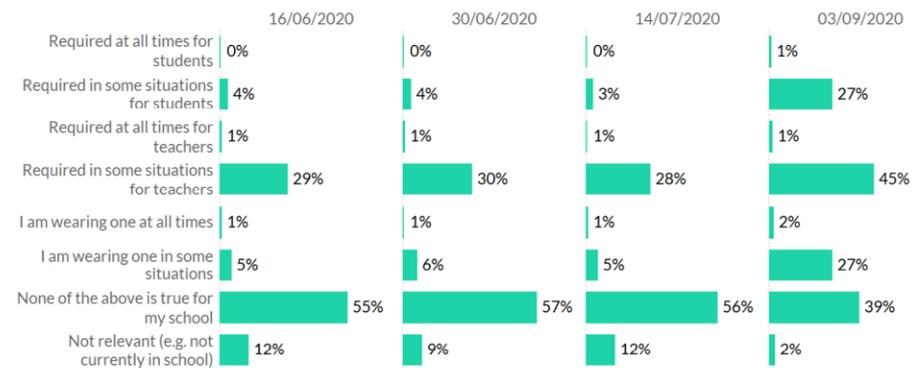
Dystopia is not what it was. Photographs from the Second World War show children sitting behind small wooden desks, in tiny school rooms, wearing gigantic gas masks full of vulcanised rubber. Boxes for the masks hung around their necks, tied on with twine. Documentary footage shows children having bomb practices, where they hid under their desks or traipsed into underground bunkers. Those of us raised on end-of-the-world literature have been trained to believe this is what the end of the world looks like.

Whizz forward and it turns out that pandemics are less dramatic. Corridors smell of hand sanitiser. Fewer children whoop down corridors at once. And the issue of masks? Well, that's quite different this time too.

At Teacher Tapp we've been surveying teachers about the changes to health and safety precautions through Covid-19. In March, the week before lockdown, few schools were mandating that children washed their hands at set times and only one in three had instituted no hand-shaking policies at the parents' evenings they were running that month. Less than 10 per cent had parents mandatorily sanitise hands as they entered – a figure that now seems unbelievable, though it reflected difficulties getting hold of sanitiser as well as concerns about how it would come across to worried parents.

Public health officials were strongly of the view that masks were unnecessary or counter-productive. It was such a no-no we didn't even think to ask questions about it. There was no way it would happen.

Which of the following is true about mask wearing at your school? (Tick any that apply)



Question answered by 6,632 teachers on 03/09/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



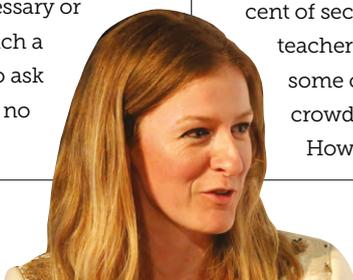
Attitudes have since shifted, slowly. In June, when primary schools brought back some year groups, few staff wore masks. Still, no one expected it of children. At the time, more teachers thought the downsides of masks outweighed the benefits. As term now starts in full, things are reversed. A small majority of teachers (57 per cent) think the benefits of masks outweigh the disbenefits, and mask requirements are more in vogue – 41 per cent of primary schools and 48 per cent of secondary schools are asking teachers to wear masks in at least some circumstances (eg corridors or crowded spaces).

However – a thing of note for

school leaders – although teachers tell us there are rules in their schools about mask-wearing, many fewer said they have worn a mask or are planning to. We don't think this is because teachers are bounding around breaking the rules. Instead, it seems that teachers are more often avoiding communal spaces. Why sit in the staffroom to chat to friends if they're going to be sat far away and you can't easily hear them?

Other safety measures are even more common than masks. More than 70 per cent of schools have staggered their start/end times, much to the chagrin of working parents, and the same proportion are banning the sharing of classroom items such as scissors and pens. About one in five schools has banned the marking of physical exercise books (as a way of reducing surface transmission). But one thing that has barely changed is the use of uniform; almost no school has relaxed rules on ties or blazers.

One day historians will look back on this period with the same sense of wonder with which we look back at the gas masks. The only question is how long these measures will need to go on. Sadly, our survey can't predict the future, but we will keep asking to see how things change.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Gavin Williamson had warm words for schools earlier this week.

In a letter to teachers, the education secretary gushed about how "the safety and wellbeing of you, your staff and your pupils has always been my priority".

He has clearly forgotten the months his department spent terrorising teachers with update after update at antisocial hours.

Schools Week readers will remember our June revelation that school leaders had to read almost 100 updates to government guidance during the first few months of the coronavirus crisis – a quarter of them published after 5.30pm or at weekends.

And on August 29, the Saturday before many schools reopened, the government issued an 11th-hour edict on how to plan for local lockdowns, angering headteachers and prompting questions about resources.

Good job looking out for teachers' wellbeing Gav!

Talking of wellbeing, Castle Rock school in Coalville, Leicestershire, was one of many schools forced to send pupils home this week following Covid-19 cases.

The same Castle Rock school where just weeks ago Boris Johnson urged pupils not to be nervous about the virus.

Susan Acland-Hood, the new interim permanent secretary at the DfE, has had a busy first week that included a personal tour of Ofsted towers with

the chief inspector.

Cait Mellow, the organisation's head of digital content and publishing, tweeted on Monday: "I'm not saying it's quiet in the office, but Amanda Spielman just introduced me to Susan Acland-Hood."

TUESDAY

We learned this week that Liam Nolan, of Perry Beeches academy scandal fame, has been banned from running schools.



However, as avid reader Janet Downs points out, a promotional DfE video trumpeting academies and prominently featuring Nolan is still live on YouTube.

Still, at least he didn't speak at the Conservative Party conference...oh wait.

WEDNESDAY

Labour's unrealistically ambitious bid to force the government to publish ministerial communications about the exams fiasco unsurprisingly failed this week after government MPs voted against the motion.

The reason for opposing the transparency call? It could stop

ministers having "open" conversations with officials.

"As members of this house will know, policy can be made only through open discussion between ministers, their advisers and departmental officials," Gavin Williamson said during the debate.

"This motion fundamentally undermines that. Officials must be able to give advice to ministers in confidence."

But the education secretary seems more amenable to providing relevant documents to the parliamentary education committee, which will grill him about the fiasco next Wednesday.

"I will commit now to working with its members to provide the information that they request wherever it is possible," Gav said.

Our illustrious ed sec also had no qualms about revealing his "open" conversations with Ofqual when the shit was hitting the fan about who was to blame for the exams fall-out. Alas, the claims that Ofqual had reassured him there were no problems with the dreaded algorithm were rapidly shown to be a load of old cobblers (not that many people believed them in the first place).

THURSDAY

The DfE has urged retired educational psychologists to offer their services to local authorities to help pupils adjust to life back at school. The department even supplied a handy list of contact details for each LA.

Unfortunately, however, EPs say that some of the email addresses are out of date. Oops!



Education Manager

Are you an outstanding education leader, who wants to transform how schools and colleges build the essential skills of their students?

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

If you want to be part of an inspiring team, and benefit from opportunities for rapid growth, development and challenge, we want to hear from you.

Salary: £38,000-£44,000 subject to review in 12 months

Closing Date: Monday 21st September 2020

Locations: The Midlands
Visit www.skillsbuilder.org/jobs to find out more and apply.

ASHTON PARK SCHOOL

A member of the
GATEHOUSE GREEN LEARNING TRUST
Headteacher: Mr. N. John BA (Hons)



DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

Start Date: 1st January 2021

Full Time/Permanent

Pay Scale: L19 – L23

We are seeking to appoint a highly effective Deputy Headteacher to join our professional, supportive and committed team at Ashton Park School, which forms part of the Gatehouse Green Learning Trust. We are a small Multi Academy Trust looking for professional and ambitious people with a passion for supporting the achievement, development and well-being of our young people. This position is a permanent contract starting January 2021.

If you are an inspiring leader who, through leading by example, will promote high expectations and support the delivery of high attainment for all students we look forward to hearing from you.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Ashton Park School Website and should be submitted electronically to jacquisheehan@ashtonpark.net

Closing Date for applications: 18th September 2020 (noon)



FALKLAND ISLANDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Principal of Secondary

Contract term: Up to 4 years

Start date: January 2021 or April 2021

This role is a unique opportunity to live and work overseas, leading a secondary school in an English school system.

We will provide:

- an environment for an effective leader to flourish
- competitive salary Grade A – ranges from £60,302 to £76,209 plus annual 25% gratuity at the successful completion of contract, maximum annual package £95,260
- collaborative executive leadership team
- financially secure school
- favourable income tax rates
- a unique and beautiful environment to live and work
- airfares for the post holder and dependants at the beginning and end of contract, as well as airfares for return flights after every full year of the contract
- a relocation grant
- accommodation to rent
- free education locally for dependent children to GCSE level and possible allowance for overseas studies thereafter

Closing Date: Applications by Sunday 27th September 2020

The successful applicant will join a well-resourced, financially secure school with a supportive staff team, small class sizes and students who are keen to learn. You will work closely with the Executive Headteacher and Principal of Primary to ensure all learners have opportunities to reach their full potential. We are looking for a school leader who will build on the recent, excellent progress and ensure it is embedded into the core of our school to secure a sustainable future and good outcomes for all. The capacity to innovate and shape pathways for our all-ability intake is essential. The successful candidate will inspire the Senior Leadership Team, work closely with the Primary School and engage the entire community in the pursuit of continued excellence.

School Website: <https://www.secondary.ac.fk/>
For more information please contact Kim Greenland
E-mail: kgreenland@sec.gov.fk or **Tel:** 00 500 27420



Head of Academy

Pennyman Primary Academy is a large, complex academy for over 400 children. This includes a specialist designated unit provision for around 55 children. Therefore, Pennyman is a fully inclusive and exciting learning community, where unlocking each child's unique potential is at the heart of learning. This is reflected in the Pennyman motto 'Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day'.

This Head of Academy role is varied and complex in scope and would therefore be ideally suited to an innovative, forward-thinking school leader who has an unequivocal commitment to serve children and their families with a commendable proven impact. Being able to demonstrate this for outcomes and life opportunities for children in areas of disadvantage, including for those with special needs would be advantageous.

Visits to the academy are actively encouraged and should be arranged by contacting **Mrs Lucy Simpson**, PA to the Executive Head Teacher, on **01642 304406**. During the visits, masks will be provided and there will be no access to classroom bubbles.



ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: BEHAVIOUR

This is an exciting time to join Landau Forte Academy, Amington. We are a forward thinking 11-16 academy on a mission to provide high quality education for our local community. We have high expectations for our students and our academy is built upon our shared values: ambitious, brave and kind.

Our Assistant Principal will be responsible for all aspects of student behaviour and attitudes, organising and implementing sustainable structures and routines. They will lead and develop a team and contribute to strategic planning.

If successful you will become part of our community. You will be supported in your career with opportunities to achieve nationally recognised qualifications. We care about our staff and staff well-being is integral to our decision making. We also offer a meal allowance, free parking, gym membership and a Healthcare Cash Plan.

For further information and to apply please visit lfct.org.uk/careers.



Chief Executive Officer

Remuneration: Competitive
Blackpool

Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT) is the major educational provider in the Fylde peninsula. It has now received approval to become an academy sponsor in its own right.

FCAT is looking for an inspirational leader, with vision and imagination who understands the unique structure of a Multi Academy Trust, builds relationships and influences others. The CEO would work closely with the board and the chair in setting and driving a strategy of relentless improvement.

The individual will be comfortable with a corporate governance style and the required financial reporting and planning regime. Education or CEO experience is not essential however, candidates must demonstrate ability to lead a multi-disciplinary organisation and drive its growth and development.

For an informal and confidential conversation please contact our advising partners at GatenbySanderson: Ross Highfield or Paul Aristides on 07891 138 886.

To apply please visit www.gatenbysanderson.com/job/GSe62312.1/chief-executive-officer-44/

Closing date: Monday 7 October 2020.



Are you an inspirational leader with a passion for inclusion and improving the life chances of all pupils? If so, this is a chance to join the high achieving team at Avanti Trust Schools.

We are looking for two inspirational leaders with a passion for inclusion and improving the life chances of all pupils.

We wish to appoint an excellent Assistant Headteacher in Frome & Exeter to lead whole school SEND and ensure that pupils receive the support they need to be successful.

Avanti Park is a community (non-denominational) middle (deemed primary) 3-13 maintained school located in the Somerset town of Frome.

Avanti Hall is a community (non-denominational) all through 4 - 16 maintained school located on the outskirts of Exeter.

If this sounds like you then head to our careers page avanti.org.uk/careers or get in touch with carolyn.dickinson@avanti.org.uk for more information.

**Closing Date: Midday (12 noon)
Monday 28th September 2020.**



Director of Primary Education

Start Date: 1st January or as soon as possible thereafter

Exciting opportunity following the promotion of the current post-holder to her first CEO post, for an ambitious and effective senior leader, with QTS and a strong primary background, to take on a crucial strategic leadership role in this highly regarded and successful Church of England Trust.

Our successful candidate will lead, support and coach a strong and committed team of Primary headteachers across schools in Kent and East Sussex and will play a lead role in the further

development of the quality of education and professional development across the Trust's primary school portfolio. The successful candidate will also have a unique opportunity to contribute to the wider educational work of the Trust; a Trust that is well-known for the quality of its work and the significant contribution it makes to the shaping of national policy, and which benefits from strong relationships across the education sector.

Full candidate pack at www.tenaxschoolstrust.co.uk/employment



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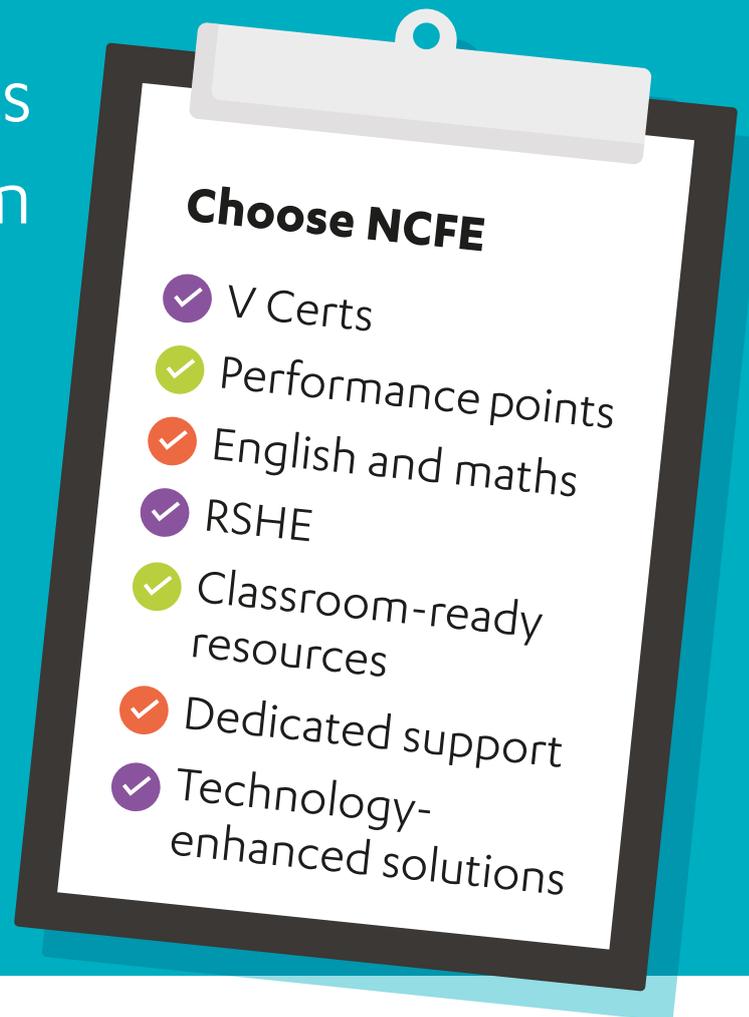


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