

SCHOOLS WEEK

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



Meet the man set to take over at Ofqual



P7

No to online learning, yes to mass testing



P5

Will our politics never reach rock bottom?



P24

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FRIDAY, DEC 11 2020 | EDITION 234



No tablet? Balance your phone on some cans, says elite uni

- Cambridge hopefuls without devices told of DIY interview set-up
- 'One of the most overt barriers to access I've ever seen', says head
- But uni says tin can advice 'workable' and 'no-one disadvantaged'

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

PAGE 4

SCHOOLS WEEK

Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Laura McNerney
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

@MISS_MCNERNEY
LAURA.MCNERNEY@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFBENBERG@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



James Carr
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR_93
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

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

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Christmas books: What to get the teacher who has everything?



Page 31-32



'I did not expect Oak
academy to go as big'

Page 14



The academy boss in line to become children's commissioner

Page 7



Inset day on Friday: what you need to know

Page 6

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163-165 GREENWICH HIGH ROAD
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E: NEWS@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK

No tablet? Use your phone and a couple of cans...

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

A Russell Group university has told students unable to access a tablet for its online admissions interview to instead balance their phone on top of tin cans.

The University of Cambridge has advised candidates they will need a tablet and stylus for interviews for select subjects, as well as a laptop, after the pandemic forced them online.

But, in an email to candidates seen by *Schools Week*, the university has suggested pupils unable to access a tablet could instead balance their phone on two tin cans stacked on top of each other. This is to allow interviewers to watch a student's working out.

One headteacher of a state school, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "There's just no way that that will be an equivalent experience. This really did read to me as one of the most overt barriers to access I've ever seen.

"If you're sitting comfortably working on a tablet you're going to exude far more confidence than if you're trying to balance your work underneath a phone on top of a couple of tin cans."

The university told applicants they would need to be able to use Google Jamboard during the interview and would "therefore need to try to obtain a tablet and stylus."

Applicants are told if they cannot access a tablet they need to open the Zoom interview link on their phones and to use pen and paper to show their working.

The email stated: "There is a method with two tin cans to balance the phone on while you work which I have attached."

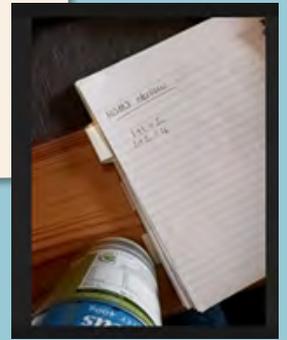
The instructions, which come with example photographs, direct pupils to balance their phone on "one or two tin cans/a stack of books/something similar above the paper that you intend to write on". Their camera should be pointed at their paper and something should be placed on their device to "counterbalance the phone".

The instructions also inform applicants

Subject: Tablet and Stylus required for interview

The subject you have applied for will be using the Google Jamboard in your interviews. You will therefore need to try to obtain a tablet and stylus to use in your interview as well as being set up on a laptop. If they don't have a personal one then you may be able to borrow one from your school. If you can't access one then we will ask you to open the zoom interview link on your phones and then show your working out on pen and paper. Please have pen and paper to hand. There is a method with 2 tins cans to balance the phone on while you work which I have attached.

The email sent to a state school (above), and the picture issued alongside the DIY instructions (right)



to follow this method if they experience technical problems with their tablet.

Cambridge is not the only university that requires the use of a tablet and stylus for interviews, normally for subjects such as maths, physics and chemistry.

But, in contrast, the same state school was also sent emails by the University of Oxford that said it would send a device if needed. The university has since sent the school a tablet that retails at £110 for the candidate to use.

When asked about the emails, a spokesperson for Cambridge said the tin can method was used with mature students during March admissions and no complaints were received.

They also said candidates described as economically disadvantaged, such as those on free school meals or in care, have been sent tablets or been reimbursed for purchasing them.

The spokesperson added "workable solutions" had been found and "no one is disadvantaged as records are being kept of any technical issues faced by candidates so this can be taken into consideration by admissions staff."

"Every effort is being made to ensure online interviews being conducted this year are fair and reasonable in these challenging circumstances."

A spokesperson for Oxford also said the use of a mobile phone with pen and paper was a "completely viable option" which it had used. This ensured "everyone could access the interviews and there is no need for schools or students to purchase equipment".

But Dr Rohan Agarwal, the founder of Oxbridge admission experts UniAdmissions, said the approach potentially left some pupils "on the back foot". Although he understood why it was offered as "everyone has access" to a mobile phone.

Elite universities have been under pressure to be more inclusive.

The Sutton Trust charity previously revealed Oxford and Cambridge recruited more pupils from eight mostly private schools than almost 3,000 state schools combined.

Last year Oxford pledged a quarter of its students would come from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2023.

News

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Durand's compensation claim thrown out by court

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

A charity ordered to surrender land on the site of a south London primary school has had its legal bid for compensation thrown out by the Court of Appeal.

Lords Justice McCombe, Flaux and Newey have dismissed a judicial review from the Durand Education Trust in relation to land occupied by leisure facilities and accommodation on the site of the former Durand Academy in Stockwell.

Their written judgment also revealed that the company operating the commercial facilities "appears to have paid" the school's former head Sir Greg Martin and his companies "upwards of £3.5 million" over a 16-year period.

But despite the company making £8.3 million in profit between 2010 and 2018, less than £1 million "accrued for the benefit" of the school.

Durand Academy became Van Gogh primary school in 2018 after the government terminated its funding agreement. At that point the school land and buildings were handed to Van Gogh's sponsor, the Dunraven Educational Trust.

But Durand Education Trust, a charity set up by the school's governors in 2010, kept hold of land occupied by a private leisure centre and accommodation, including the top floors of the school's main building.

DET was ordered last year to transfer the remaining land to Lambeth Council for the use of



Van Gogh.

The charity officially transferred the land on October 9 this year, but argued in court that it should be compensated for its investment in the facilities.

Government lawyers argued that investment in the leisure centre land pre-dated DET's existence, and Lambeth Council warned that services for "vulnerable children and adults" in the borough would suffer if it was forced to pay out a seven-figure sum.

In the written judgment, Lord Justice Newey said the education secretary was "amply justified in concluding that no compensation should be paid to DET for the leisure centre land", and that there was "no reason to believe that any conduct or expenditure on DET's part enhanced the value of the leisure centre land".

David Boyle, chief executive of Dunraven trust, said it "will be great to be able to focus on the children of Van Gogh without any additional noise related to this issue.

"And it would be excellent if those children felt some benefit again of a provision that was set up for their benefit in the first place - it's been a while since that's been the case."

Durand was thrust into the national spotlight in 2014 after a National Audit Office investigation revealed its complex governance arrangements.

Former headteacher Martin appeared in front of the Parliamentary public accounts committee in early 2015 to face questions about his salary of more than £400,000. Part of this came from management fees for commercial facilities on the school site, run by a private company called London Horizons Limited (LHL).

In the judgment, Lord Justice Newey said that it "might be said" the non-financial efforts of Martin or his companies had "contributed to the development of the leisure centre", they had been "well-remunerated for them".

"LHL appears to have paid the companies upwards of £3.5 million between 2002 and 2018 aside from Sir Greg Martin's salary and pension contributions as head teacher of successively Durand Primary School and Durand Academy."

The judgment also states that the "evidence indicates that, while LHL achieved profits of some £8.3 million between 2010 and August 2018, less than £1 million of this sum accrued to the benefit of Durand Academy".

The case was heard in the Court of Appeal after DET was unsuccessful on two previous occasions to obtain a judicial review in other courts. The judgment was handed down on December 8.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Rapid tests for schools after home learning ruled out

The government is rolling out mass coronavirus testing for secondary school pupils in the worst-affected areas of London, Kent and Essex.

Health secretary Matt Hancock told the Downing Street press briefing yesterday evening an "immediate plan" was in place to test all secondary school aged children in the seven worst-affected areas of London, parts of Essex that border the capital and also areas in Kent.

Although schools have been involved in trials of coronavirus testing in several areas recently, this is the first mass testing programme aimed specifically at education settings.

Hancock said he was "particularly concerned" about the number of cases in

those areas. Testing results show "that by far the fastest rise is among secondary school-age children, 11 to 18 years old, while the rate among adults in London is broadly flat".

"But we know from experience that a sharp rise in younger people can lead to a rise amongst more vulnerable age groups later. We've seen that happen before.

"So we need to everything we can to stop the spread amongst school-age children right now. We must not wait until the review which will take place on December 16, we need to take targeted action immediately."

The plan was developed after speaking to London's mayor and council leaders, Hancock added.

Leadership unions questioned why

England was deploying a strategy of rapid testing to combat rising cases. Wales announced yesterday its secondary schools would move to remote learning from Monday amid a rise in Covid cases.

But Hancock said: "We want to keep schools open because that's both right for education and right for public health.

"We're therefore surging mobile testing units and we'll be working with schools and local authorities to encourage these children and their families to get tested over the coming days."

The DfE said keeping schools open is a national priority. "The right approach to reducing the number of cases is following the protective measures in place," a spokesperson added.

Schools scramble to sort insets after 11th-hour edict

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

INVESTIGATES

Schools are scrambling to reorganise their end of term plans after a last-ditch announcement by the government to ensure contact tracing can stop before Christmas Eve.

Childcare concerns have also been raised after the Department for Education gave schools less than two weeks' notice about running inset days on December 18.

The government finally issued guidance this week about how Covid cases in pupils and staff should be dealt with if they are confirmed after the end of term. *Schools Week* revealed last week how councils had warned schools they could be "on-call" until Christmas Eve.

The guidance states that schools will be asked to remain available for contact tracing for the first six days of the Christmas holidays, but it will be up to them to decide when they will be contactable.

But the DfE confirmed that schools were being asked to participate out of goodwill, and that it would not be a legal requirement.

The clarification comes after a number of headteachers, including Chris Dyson from Parklands Primary School in Leeds, suggested that they would refuse to deal with contract tracing after their schools broke up.

However, following the guidance's issue, Dyson said he would cooperate as he "owed it to society".

"Although not statutory, I will be doing it, but me alone. I won't be ruining anyone else's Christmas as they need a break."

The DfE initially resisted calls to end term early and would not allow one academy trust to run two inset days at the end of term, but this week said that schools could designate December 18 as an inset day, meaning their responsibility for contact tracing could end on December 23.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the government wanted a "clear six days" for contact tracing, "so that by the time we reach Christmas Eve, staff can have a proper break without having to engage with the track and trace issues".

But headteachers' unions said the move was insufficient, and the announcement



came too late.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, said the approach "may still force some hasty reorganisation of activities in the last week of term, which could have been avoided if the government had been more proactive".

Geoff Barton, from ASCL, said a single day was "better than nothing", but added "there is so little time left for schools to make the necessary arrangements".

This has led the Greenshaw Learning Trust to set-up a free virtual "national" inset day with "world-class speakers" to "take away the pressure" from other schools coming up with plans.

Leaders have also flagged the impact the inset day could have on families, who will now have to make childcare arrangements if they go out to work. This would include school staff, who might be required on site for inset.

Writing for *Schools Week*, Robin Bevan, the president of the National Education Union and head at Southend High School

for Boys in Essex, said his school had already told parents of the arrangements for the last day of term, and had notified caterers and private travel providers.

"Our teachers have planned lessons. One assumes the DfE knows this."

In its guidance, the department said that for the six days after term ended, schools would be asked to assist with contact tracing if a pupil or staff member tested positive. This is because the individual "may have been infectious whilst in school".

However, schools will not be asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing "may designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate", and this "can be done by text or email".

Beyond the six days, school staff will not be asked to play a role "in any contact tracing".

According to the DfE, the six-day period will allow enough time for positive cases to be identified and confirmed.

The Xmas contact-tracing rules

- Schools will be asked to help trace contacts of pupils and staff who test positive for the first six days of the Christmas holidays
- But schools should only be contacted about positive cases where symptoms developed within 48 hours of them being in school
- Schools can designate a "limited period" each day when they can be contactable, which can be by email or text
- Schools can allocate December 18 as an inset day with online training so the last day of face-to-face contact is December 17, meaning contact-tracing would end on December 23

Former exams chief set for interim Ofqual role

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH **EXCLUSIVE**

A former exams company chief executive is set to replace Dame Glenys Stacey as the chief regulator at Ofqual, *Schools Week* understands.

Simon Lebus is being lined up to take over the top position at the exams regulator as Stacey's interim period comes to end on December 31.

Lebus served as the group chief executive at Cambridge Assessment, which runs exam board OCR, for 15 years before leaving in 2018.

Schools Week understands the appointment is set to be another interim role, though, and has yet to be fully ratified.

Stacey, who previously served as chief regulator from 2011 to 2016, took up the role in August after Sally Collier left following the exams fiasco.

It was announced this week that she is the preferred candidate for chair of the Office for Environmental Protection.

Asked by the education select



Simon Lebus

committee on Tuesday what advice she would give her successor, Stacey said they should make sure they've "got the stamina for it" and should "really get into the technical detail".

She urged the successor to "learn from 2020", adding: "For example, I don't think Ofqual was particularly visible in 2020. It had a rather established way of sort of communicating.

"We need to be much more visible and much more interested in listening to others' ideas and working them through with them... they may be valuable, they may not... but really listening and engaging."

Lebus was said to have driven Cambridge Assessment through "major organisational and industry change", including technology advances such as the introduction of on-screen marking and computer-based testing.

His roles since include becoming a non-executive chairman at Sparx, an AI online platform for secondary school maths teaching, and a visiting fellow at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School, according to his LinkedIn page.

The decision to make another interim appointment is likely to be controversial, particularly given the huge task ahead of ensuring next year's exam series doesn't become another fiasco.

The Department for Education said a replacement for Stacey will be announced in due course.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

De Souza poised to become children's commissioner

The prominent academy trust boss Dame Rachel de Souza (pictured) has vowed to "level-up opportunities" after being put forward as the government's preferred candidate to be the next children's commissioner.

If the appointment is approved, the chief executive of the Inspiration Trust will take over when Anne Longfield's six-year term ends next February.

The children's commissioner promotes the rights, views and interests of children in policies or decisions affecting their lives.

The choice of de Souza, first revealed by *Schools Week*, is likely to be controversial given her links to the Conservative party. The trust she runs was founded by Lord Agnew, a Conservative peer and former academies minister.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said de Souza would "bring her considerable experience of raising outcomes for every child to this essential role".

Michael Gove, a former education secretary,

once said his "ideal education policy would be to clone Rachel 23,000 times".

De Souza is also a director of the Parents and Teachers for Excellence campaign group alongside Conservative donor Jon Moynihan. The group was orchestrated by Gove allies James Frayne and Rachel Wolf.

The academy boss said it was a "great honour" to be nominated, adding she had always been an "advocate for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and finding ways to support them so they can realise their potential and flourish.

"We all know just how difficult Covid has been for families up and down the country, and - subject to the appointment being approved - I would very much like to play my part in helping level-up opportunities for children, and ensuring their welfare everywhere as we come through this difficult time and look towards a more positive future."

De Souza will attend a pre-appointment hearing before the education select committee on Tuesday that will publish recommendations for Williamson to consider before deciding whether to finalise the appointment.

The committee is likely to question de Souza on Inspiration Trust's patchy record on inclusion.

The trust admitted the number of pupils moving to home education from one of its schools was "too high" after an Ofsted investigation into potential off-rolling found its response was "flimsy".

An investigation by *The Guardian* also found the trust had among the highest numbers of pupils leaving its roll.

Anne Longfield has been particularly vocal in campaigning against off-rolling. Ministers can ignore MPs, however. Nicky Morgan when education secretary appointed Amanda Spielman as Ofsted chief inspector in 2017, despite the education committee rejecting the appointment.



Exams 2021



Exams plan part 1: what we learned from Stacey

Ofqual's interim chief regulator Dame Glenys Stacey was quizzed by the education select committee this week on the plans for exams over the coming years.

The government announced extra measures last week, including more generous grades for pupils and advance notice of topics. Nick Gibb, the schools minister, also appeared before the committee (see page 9). We take a look at the key points...

1 Exam tweaks will give disadvantaged pupils a 'leg up'

Stacey admitted that redressing disadvantage was "beyond qualifications", but said Ofqual was "very certain" this year that the exam changes meant they were not contributing to it, and might be redressing it "to some extent".

She gave the example of using a formula sheet in maths or science. "The brightest and most well-off, the most well-supported student will already know the formula, but the disadvantaged student may not. It is a leg-up in a way."

2 Traffic light rating system for differential lost learning?

One of the unresolved issues in addressing differences is how much time pupils in different areas have had off school.

Ofqual has suggested to ministers that one solution was for teachers in individual subjects to "make some evaluation of that. It would need to be kept straight forward in order to be doable... [you] might be able to rate that in some way, RAG [red-amber-green] or something".

But she said it should not be "imported" into a pupil's grade, nor sit on their qualification certificate.

It would be a "big job" to "recognise the unique experience that each student is having here, but we do need to protect what an examination and qualification is about".

3 Going straight back to 2019 grades in future years 'unfair'

Ofqual has promised grades next year will be as generous as in 2020. Stacey said her personal view on 2022 exams was that it "wouldn't be fair" to students to move "straight back" to 2019 standards.

"I do think it would be a mistake for us to think now we are in a particular position for 2021 therefore it stays the same," she said. "I think it's absolutely right to see how schools are affected to collect the data and reach a position for 2022."

4 'Big ask' to get extra exam markers

Stacey acknowledged that the exam boards would have to recruit extra staff to get marking done as next year's exam series had been pushed back three weeks.

She said teachers would be feeling "dog tired" and "may well yearn for a rest and not be that willing to put themselves out over the summer".

"Yet teachers are the bulk of markers. I know it's going to be a really big ask actually this year and the government, Ofqual and the exam boards must take every step they can to make that possible."

5 'Don't prepare portfolio of evidence for validation,' schools told

For pupils unable to sit any exams next year (including reserve papers), teachers could use validated teacher informed assessment.

But Stacey urged schools "not to do anything now" for this, adding that validation was a "much lighter touch" than moderation.

"Schools and teachers do not need to start building portfolios of evidence now, not at all. If we do end up in this position it will be an opt-in approach for students and it will be something at the time rather than built on performance now because that's not fair for students if we start doing that now."

6 Ofqual needs to know of 'worst-case scenario' changes by spring term

Stacey was asked what preparations Ofqual was making to deal with "a worst-case scenario".

She had told Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, that it there was "any notion" of moving away from exams on a "large scale", the regulator would need to know "pretty early in the spring term to do more comprehensive arrangements".



Exams 2021



Exam plans part 2: what we learned from Gibb

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, also appeared before MPs on the education select committee on Tuesday. Here's what he had to say...

1 Lack of transparency is to 'protect civil servants'

Gibb was grilled about the government's failure to provide the committee with details of key meetings the Department for Education held with Ofqual in the run-up to the exams fiasco, as revealed last month by *Schools Week*.

Robert Halfon, the committee chair, said it was "disappointing" that the documents were not forthcoming, despite "assurances" from ministers. Ian Mearns went further, saying some committee members were "quite angry", and asked Gibb what he had to hide.

The schools minister claimed the government wanted to be "as open and transparent as we can be", and said the committee had been offered "a summary of all the contents of all the different meetings that were relevant".

"The issue for the department is the protection of civil servants in taking informal notes of meetings and that they can give candid and free advice to ministers without worrying that what they say and write will then be published."



2 Pre-pandemic grades 'will need to return at some point'

Gibb said he accepted that "we will need to return at some point, and take a view about what the long-term impact of this will be. That's some work that's already started".

He also said the government had considered pegging grades between 2019 and 2020 levels, but that "this is the wrong cohort with which to start that process, given everything they've suffered".

3 But grades may be boosted again in 2022

The DfE announced last week that although overall grading would be similar in 2021 to 2020, each subject would be given the same level of

generosity so pupils were not disadvantaged.

Gibb said that work on "smoothing the subjects" was "a small step towards getting to the grading that we had before 2020", adding that it was "important that the general grading is similar in 2021 to 2020".

But he said the government would have to "look again, as the pandemic proceeds, to see what happens about what we do in 2022, because again, the 2022 cohort will have suffered some disruption to their education as well".

4 New expert group won't be transparent

Gibb resisted calls for the new expert group that will look at differential learning loss to be made transparent.

The group was announced as part of the package of measures last week, and is not expected to report until the spring.

When asked whether minutes of meetings would be published, Gibb said the experts would want to be able to have a "full and frank discussion".

"This is an advisory group to the secretary of state. It's not an independent commission reporting publicly... If you're asking people to give up their time, experts to come in and give advice to the secretary of state, you need to give them the space to be able to do that without each of their meetings being a public meeting, and I think that's very important."

5 Laptops scheme a 'phenomenal success'

Pressed on issues with the government's laptops scheme, Gibb defended the programme and denied there was any shortage.

"This has been a phenomenal success story, the way this country has procured vast numbers of computers on the global market."

The government recently came under fire after it slashed schools' allocations by about 80 per cent.

Gibb said this was to ensure devices were available to pupils who were self-isolating.

"They were promised a computer for every disadvantaged child in their school who we estimated would not have a device... But those children are in school. They do not need those computers at that point." He said they needed the devices when they were self-isolating "and if that allocation is not enough for those pupils, we will, within 48 hours, send them the relevant computers that they need."



Absence fines plunge, but councils still make tens of thousands

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The number of fines issued for school absence crashed by 90 per cent in the first half-term of this year, but councils still raked in tens of thousands from parents.

Absence fines were waived during partial school closures between March and July, but the government reinstated them from September in a bid to encourage pupils back to school.

Now data obtained under the freedom of information act by *Schools Week* shows that although councils issued thousands of fines in the first half-term of the academic year, the total number was about one-tenth of the number issued during the same period last year.

Half of the nation's councils with responsibility for education responded, reporting 2,699 fines between them during the first half term of this year and income of over £70,000. The same councils issued 27,505 fines in the first half term of 2019-20.

It comes after data published by the Department for Education over the course of this term showed school attendance has fallen, as more pupils have been sent home to self-isolate and more schools have partially closed due to coronavirus outbreaks.

However, several councils pointed out that the fines issued in their areas were for unauthorised holiday absences, not for pupils kept at home by concerned parents.

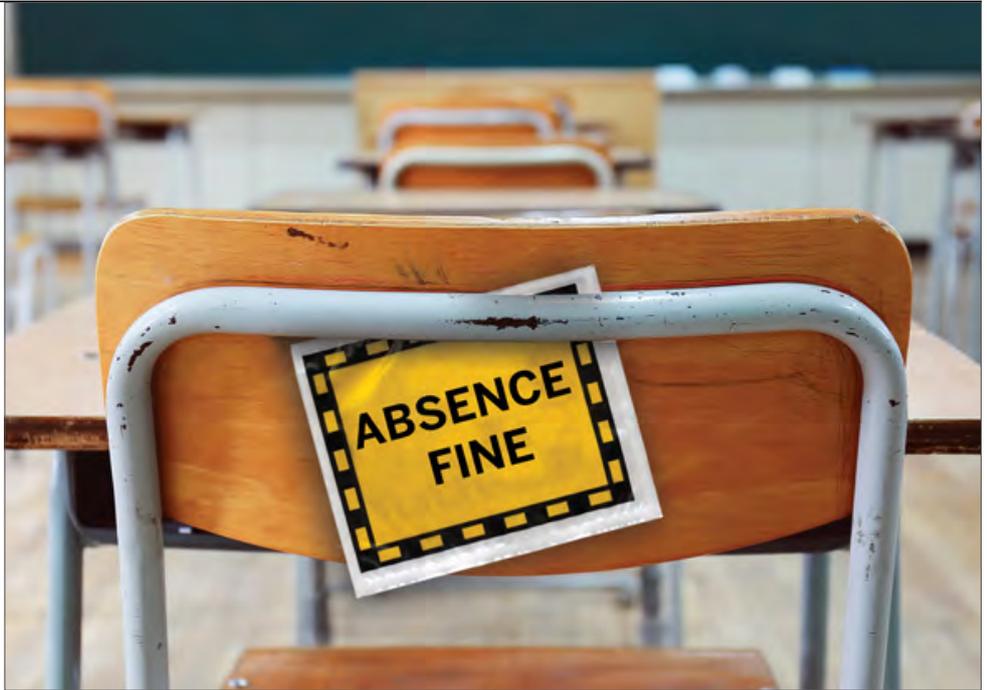
Leaders this week warned that schools were "caught between a rock and a hard place" over fines for non-attendance.

"On the one hand, this is the last thing they will want to do at any time, but particularly in the present circumstances, but on the other hand they have been specifically told by the government that school attendance is mandatory, and that they are responsible for recording attendance and following up absence," said Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL union.

James Bowen, director of policy at the NAHT, said the significant decline in the number



Geoff Barton



of fines issued "comes as no surprise", and added that "many schools have taken the decision not to use fines this term".

"They know that the blunt instrument of a fine is unlikely to be an effective intervention in the current climate. Unauthorised holidays are a different matter, and an area where schools have little discretion."

Although the national picture shows the number of fines reduced by around 90 per cent overall, some councils did not see such a large drop.

In Lincolnshire, 156 fines were issued in the first half-term of the academic year, down from 437 in the same period the previous year, a decrease of 64 per cent. The council made £5,640 in fine revenue so far this year.

Martin Smith, the council's assistant director for education, said the government had "made it clear that it expects children to be in school, and the rules around attendance have not changed".

"However, we have had far fewer referrals from schools this term regarding unauthorised absence, which explains the drop in the number of fines. Ordinarily schools do not inform us of the reasons given for such

unauthorised absences, so it's not possible to say whether these are related to Covid or other issues."

And in Barnsley, the number of fines issued in the first half-term of this year, 119, was actually an increase of 25 per cent on the same period last year.

But councillor Margaret Bruff, cabinet spokesperson for children's services, said the increase was due to an "improvement of processes" which "has meant that notices are issued in a more timely fashion". She said they were down to a "leave of absence", rather than Covid related.

Suffolk council issued 298 fines in the first half-term, down from 2,917 in the previous year.

A spokesperson said the fines "will have been issued for different reasons and many will have been where there have been concerns prior to the Covid-19 pandemic".

"The decision to issue an FPN will be made by a headteacher and an FPN will only be brought forward where there is evidence to do so and all efforts to work with a family have been made."

Education secretary Gavin Williamson warned earlier this year that pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds would suffer if the government did not enforce mandatory attendance in schools.

News

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Ofqual consults on advance topics (but just 10 days to respond)

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ofqual is seeking views on the advance notice of topics ahead of exams next year, suggesting the information should not be so detailed that a student could memorise an answer.

In a ten-day consultation launched on Thursday, the exams regulator has set out three principles on how it thinks the advance topics should work.

The exam boards will decide what information will be provided to teachers and students before exams and will publish it at the end of January, Ofqual said.

The regulator has acknowledged there was a risk that "students who are able to revise all of the content for a subject will be better prepared to progress to higher-level study".

But without the changes, Ofqual said students whose education had been the most disrupted by the pandemic could find it difficult to prepare for exams.



The first principle it is seeking opinions on is that the advance information "should not be so detailed that students are able to memorise answers to write in the exam".

It said this would give an advantage to students who were good at memorising or rote learning, and wouldn't be a "true assessment of the student's ability".

"Students might also memorise answers that someone else had written, so the exam would not be a true assessment of the student's ability in a subject," the consultation added.

The second is that the information should

"not be so extensive or specific that it will damage a student's progression to higher level qualifications in the summer".

"Students will focus on the topics that they know will be covered in the exam, but there are some aspects of the content that will be important to be able to study the subject at a higher level," the document states. "The advance information shouldn't discourage students from investing in further learning."

Finally, Ofqual says it should still be "possible to identify stronger and weaker candidates, despite the use of advance information. It shouldn't allow students to predict the questions and prepare answers in advance."

Ofqual is also consulting on providing support materials, such as formula and equations, as well as any equality implications.

The consultation, which closes on December 20, can be viewed at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

DfE backtracks on laptop limits

The government is returning school laptop allocations to "original levels" less than two months after slashing them by about 80 per cent.

In October, the Department for Education told headteachers their laptop allocations for disadvantaged pupils had been reduced to ensure stocks lasted longer.

However, the department told school leaders in an email yesterday that the allocations would now return to "original levels" because of "the improved flow of stock internationally". It had also bought an additional 96,000 laptops this term.

The government had previously worked out allocations for schools based on how many disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11.

The update adds: "Adjusting allocations ensured that devices reached as many children as possible when they needed them most, and as a result we have been able to continue



delivering laptops and tablets to those young people throughout this term."

Schools Week understands that schools who missed out would now get their full allocations.

If a school needed to make another claim before Christmas, they would be awarded their full allocation then. If not, they would get their full allocation after Christmas – regardless of whether they experienced further disruption.

More details – and plans for laptop delivery next calendar year – are expected before Christmas.

The changes would be made in the "coming days", the update added, although schools could

not place orders over Christmas.

Orders will be accepted until 4pm on Thursday, December 17, and will not resume until Monday, January 4.

The DfE added if a school placed an order next week it must be able to receive devices up to 6pm on Friday, December 18.

Since October 22, a legal duty had been placed upon schools to provide remote education for pupils missing schools due to Covid-19.

But just one day after that rule came into force, the DfE announced it was slashing access to laptops.

Earlier this year the DfE also failed on its promise to deliver laptops to pupils by the end of June, falling nearly 30,000 short.

Despite the controversies, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, earlier this week said the laptop scheme had been a "phenomenal success".

Speed read

What you need to know about new monitoring inspections

Ofsted has published an operational note for how its new “supportive” monitoring inspections will look. These inspections are only for ‘inadequate’ and some ‘requires improvement’ schools and start from January. Here’s everything you need to know.

1 Which schools will be selected?

Ofsted said schools will be selected in the “normal way” for monitoring inspections: those judged as ‘requires improvement’ for at least both of their last two section 5 inspection and those ‘inadequate’ (including if they are subject to a directive academy order).

However, there are some exceptions. Schools that converted to an academy or which have been rebrokered since their last section 5 inspection will not receive a monitoring visit. Nor will new schools whose predecessor was ‘inadequate’.

Other ‘requires improvement’ schools may be visited at the “regional directors’ discretion” and based on risk assessment.

Inspections are normally one day, apart from schools in special measures, which normally have two-day visits. They can also be deferred.

2 The key things inspectors will focus on

- Whether actions [to improve] have been “reasonably delayed or altered by Covid restrictions”.
- Inspectors will discuss with leaders “what they had achieved by the start of the pandemic, where they are currently with their improvement plans and how they are getting back on track”.
- Matters that are “particularly relevant at this time, such as the curriculum and its implementation (including remote education) and attendance, particularly of vulnerable pupils”.
- Whether governors are making an “effective contribution to leadership and management”, including holding the school “to account on its immediate challenges”.
- The effectiveness of safeguarding in the school.
- Whether leaders in schools with serious weaknesses “continue to demonstrate convincingly that the school’s capacity to improve is increasing, taking into account the challenges of Covid”.

3 School context ‘will be taken into account’

Ofsted says the lead inspector will “seek to identify the barriers that appear to be preventing the school” from either progressing to good or coming out of a category of concern.

The inspector will “take into account the school’s context in identifying those barriers, including the impact of Covid on the school. They will also use the school’s context to decide where to focus inspection activities.

“The matters raised at the school’s previous inspection will provide inspectors with a useful starting point. However, schools are not expected to focus on these matters at the expense of the current challenges. Inspectors will be keen to

hear schools’ reasons for any changes in their focus.”

However, inspectors will “not evaluate leaders’ actions during the spring and summer terms 2020”.

4 No deep dives, but curriculum will be scrutinised

Deep dives will not be carried out, but inspectors will check “whether the curriculum is improving”.

Ofsted says that “by getting a deep enough view of the current curriculum, inspectors can support the school to speed up improvement.

“Pointing out weak intent or ill-focused actions will help get the improvement journey back on track. Inspectors will be sensitive to the school’s context, especially the challenges presented by managing Covid. They will support schools to prioritise the right actions.”

5 So how are these ‘supportive’ inspections?

Ofsted promised “supportive” monitoring inspections. The operational note says monitoring inspections are about “giving assurance to parents and being supportive of a school as it improves”.

“Monitoring inspections are about HMI working with leaders and staff to identify where the school is in terms of its improvement, as well as identifying the factors that are leading to sustainable improvement and the barriers that are preventing it.

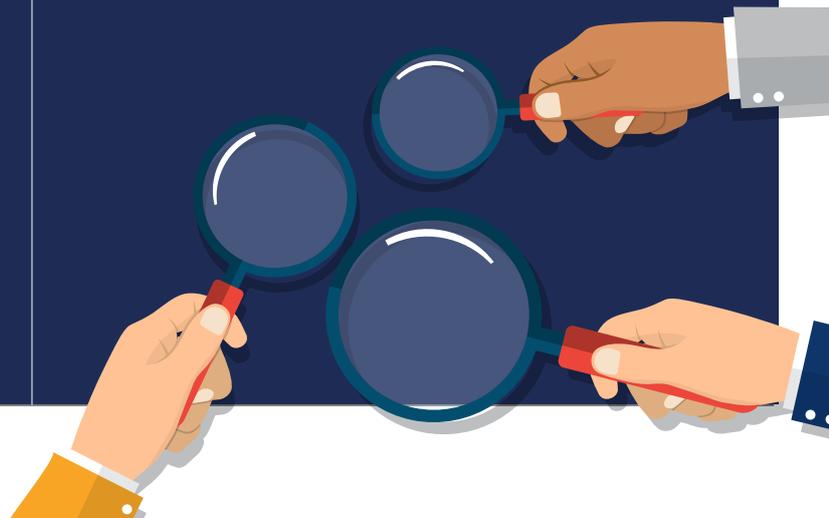
“Inspectors will work alongside leaders during the inspection, providing the right level of challenge, at the right time, to support the school’s improvement.”

6 Schools judged on whether they are taking effective action

Ofsted has said, like all monitoring visits, there won’t be a grade. However, there will be a “single overarching judgment”.

These are that either senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to improve, or that they aren’t.

Reports are normally published within 38 working days of the inspection.



Schools' Covid solutions



The new school day (and it's not as you've known it)

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Headteachers say that Covid-driven changes to the traditional school day - such as staggered break times and longer lessons - have halted playground clashes and reduced low-level disruption.

A major challenge for schools has been how to implement bubbles of pupils, aimed at reducing transmission between classrooms.

To help with catch-up and minimise the movement of students this term, Manor High School in Leicestershire has introduced all-day, single-subject lessons in a 50-day timetable (instead of a fortnight).

Misbehaviour has since improved dramatically, from 1,296 behaviour points in September 2019, to 349 this year.

Liam Powell, the school's headteacher, said: "I always say Covid is a bit like a war. And in wars you have horrible things happening, terrible things, but you also get innovation through necessity."

A survey of students, parents and staff earlier in the term found that 46 per cent either strongly agreed or agreed that they would like the single-subject day to continue after the first 50 days were up.

Another 35 per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 19 per cent nor agreed or disagreed. Some changes were made, such as the spacing of lessons, The second round finishes in February.



Post-Covid, the school is looking at a possible hybrid model, where teachers could request longer lessons over three periods.

Southend High School for Boys in Essex introduced two extended lessons a day of two-and-a-half hours each.

Robin Bevan, the head, said: "You do have to be attentive to what people would refer to as retention and recall, you do need to make sure that when you start your next lesson you bring back to mind in the class the things they were doing in the last lesson.

"But the contrast is, in the two-and-a-half hour lesson, students are getting much more depth. So they tend to come out of those lessons with deeper understanding of whatever they've been introduced to."

He said it had also reduced the number of teachers having to self-isolate, had benefited autistic children and had made pupils' school bags lighter.

While there could be large gaps between

subjects – for instance PHSE and citizenship could be once every five weeks, but maths up to twice a week – early indications were that teachers, pupils and parents would like the school to keep this for next academic year.

Chris Andrew, the head of St James the Great RC Primary and Nursery School in south London, said Covid restrictions had reduced the number of "squabbles, arguments and upset children", particularly during ball games.

Pupils had to stay in their year groups, which meant there were 60 fewer children on the playground. He said the school might keep this for the winter, when children played on the netball courts rather than the field.

But he said there were some drawbacks. "Things like our year 5s would normally be playing with reception... and organise games for them. We are not able to do that. So hopefully by summer we can bring that back."

At Scholars Academy Trust, which has two primary schools in Leicestershire, there have been fewer "clashes" between pupils who now played in year groups. Lunchtime staff have also built closer relationships with the children.

Inderjit Sandhu, the trust's executive head, said low-level disruption at lunchtimes had diminished. "It also highlights the need for children to have personal space both in and out of the classroom."

Government guidance says schools should consider staggered break times and lunch times, as well as time for cleaning dining hall surfaces between groups.

Dressed and ready to play ...

A pandemic policy for children to arrive and stay in their sports kit on the days they have PE is helping to save time and create much-needed space, according to headteachers.

Dr Victoria Carr, the head of Woodlands Primary School in Ellesmere Port, now has five extra spaces for one-to-one or group learning from former cloakroom areas where PE bags would have been stored.

"There is a lot of time taken on getting them dressed and undressed in their PE kit and actually in terms of continuous provision it really benefits that," she said.

Joanne Butterworth, head of St Thomas More RC Primary in Manchester, said pupils coming in wearing their PE kits helped to reduce transmission as they "don't have to get changed, there are not lots of PE bags being stored, and items get washed weekly".

She said the schools would keep the change as it was liked by parents and children.

The Association for Physical Education said that it was up to schools to decide if pupils could come in wearing their PE kit. It recommended schools review their health and safety policy to ensure pupils wore clothing that was "fit for purpose according to the activity, environment and weather conditions".

Schools' Covid solutions



Virtual parents' evenings 'definitely a keeper'

SAMANTHA BOOTH & HÉLÈNE MULHOLLAND
@SCHOOLSWEEK

The traditional parents' evening may be a thing of the past as schools hail the merits of virtual meetings.

Nine months into the coronavirus pandemic, schools are backing innovative digital solutions to meet the challenges they face.

While some were already well ahead on the digital journey, the pandemic has pushed the benefits of online working to the fore.

Scholars Academy Trust in Leicestershire says up to 90 per cent of parents now attend information meetings, which include curriculum workshops and parents' evenings, since a move to Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Inderjit Sandu, the executive headteacher, said staff wanted to stick with virtual meetings. "They are able to undertake the meetings from home without having to spend additional time in school."

Dr Victoria Carr, head of Woodlands Primary School in Ellesmere Port, said online parents' evening through Google Classroom was "definitely a keeper".

"It saved us an inordinate amount of time. If you have in-school parents' evenings, you are paying the costs of the lighting, the heating, the caretakers locking up, everybody being here until the end of the day.

"The beauty of so many online tools now, both as a mum and a school leader, is that the timings are tight, the meetings focused and therefore it is much more 'slick'."

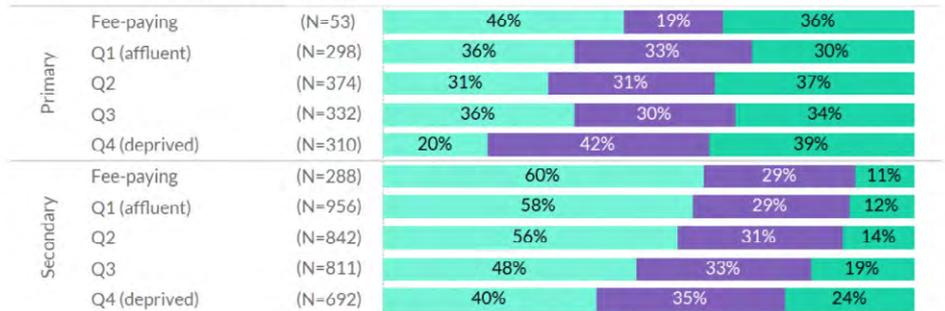
Dr Kate Chhatwal, the chief executive of Challenge Partners, an education charity, said some schools were determined to keep online parents' evenings.

"I don't know whether there'll be a whole-scale abandonment of in-person meetings, but it doesn't seem to be something that people are desperate to get back to."

Labour MP Jess Phillips said her online parents' evening that gave "five minutes before it cut you off", was a "revelation and the only thing I think is actually improved by being online. May this be the Zoom that lasts. For the rest I miss your faces."

TeacherTapp statistics from the end of November suggest

Choice time! Once things are back to normal, which would you prefer?



Question answered by 5,046 teachers on 29/11/2020 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Give parents a choice of virtual OR face-to-face
■ Go back to face-to-face parents' evenings
■ Keep virtual parents' evenings

Credit: TeacherTapp survey

that 40 per cent of secondary teachers in poorer areas would like to keep virtual parents' evenings, with 35 per cent preferring in-person meetings.

However, 60 per cent of teachers in fee-paying secondaries backed virtual parents' evenings.

At primaries, it tends to follow the same trends, but 42 per cent of teachers in deprived areas said they would want face-to-face parents' evenings. Primaries also tended to be more in favour of giving parents a choice.

Meanwhile, virtual sport competitions, in which a pupil's efforts is recorded and sent to be marked by organisers have boosted PE attendance at the BMAT academy trust.

Jeremias Odebode, a PE teacher at the trust, said: "They have given children even more of a chance to try out a wider range of activities, which will help them in the future.

"By making the competitions more inclusive, I have seen a higher rate of children taking part and performances being improved within PE."

Other aspects of the traditional school experience have also been adapted.

Many work placements have been cancelled as businesses continue to work from home.

Academies Enterprise Trust and employment agency REED created a virtual work experience programme in which pupils watched pre-recorded meetings and remotely visited five different departments, such as sales and finance, while



completing a digital workbook.

Teachers' professional development (CPD) and school tours have also been taken online.

The LEO Academy Trust schools held CPD webinars, which allowed staff to participate from home, while the Birmingham-based Robin Hood MAT is expanding its virtual CPD concept nationwide.

The initiative, called Podcast CPD, curates a list of podcasts for self-development across a ten-week period alongside three Zoom meetings.

St James the Great RC Primary & Nursery School in south London has commissioned a video tour of its school that has had nearly 200 views in just over a week.

Chris Andrew, St James' head, said he had tried hour-long Zoom tours, but they only had about six parents on each, compared to about 50 people on the usual physical tours.

"A lot of schools are having to be quite creative. You can't afford not to be full. So it's anything to try and publicise your school at the moment because you can't sell it in person."



Inderjit Sandu

Schools' Covid solutions



Snow days melt into the mists of time

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Most people can remember listening to the radio or checking their school's website to see if snow had shut its gates.

But with the strides in remote learning during the pandemic, could disrupted learning because of the fluffy white stuff be a distant memory?

Dan Bunker, an educational technologist for primary at United Learning, said it has been thinking about the roles digital platforms could have "post-Covid". In parts of the US, for instance, some schools have "e-learning days".

Bunker said teachers had told him "snow days" would become a thing of the past. "Everybody will be working remotely when the school is closed for exceptional circumstances."

"Or if any child is off ill, then we know how to support them remotely. As long as they are physically able to look at a screen and interact in that way, they could be joining their class colleagues in live lessons. We certainly want to keep the best of what we've



been doing."

Schools quickly developed their home learning during the first lockdown, evolving it into the autumn term as children and staff began to self-isolate.

After "dipping their toes" into livestreaming before summer, United Learning now uses it across its 74 academies after seeing how it helped with engagement.

The trust's minimum expectation for primaries is that schools livestream core subjects to pupils isolating at home. Teachers who are well, but self-isolating, can also broadcast into classrooms.

TeacherTapp survey data from earlier this

year shows video conferencing becoming more common: In April 15 per cent of secondary school teachers used it, jumping to 35 per cent in July.

In a survey of 8,000 secondary and sixth-form students by GCSEPod last month, 56.5 per cent said they wanted some or all lessons online.

Inderjit Sandu, the executive headteacher at Scholars Academy Trust in Leicestershire, said Microsoft Teams would continue to be used for homework.

"It has also been considered that should schools ever have a closure due to weather or boilers breaking down, the staff will be able to continue with their teaching via Teams and the children would not lose out on a day of learning."

At Community Schools Trust, evening revision lessons could be set to stay, with 270 students attending Wednesday science revision classes set up during the pandemic.

Simon Elliott, its chief executive, said: "Most schools haven't got lecture theatres where they can comfortably sit 270 kids to learn. Maybe we should have thought about it before."

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Oak academy reaches new heights

The principal of the online Oak National Academy has said he "didn't expect it to go as big or as far as it's gone" with new figures suggesting nearly half of teachers have used the school.

A poll of 3,000 teachers by TeacherTapp found 46 per cent have used Oak, which extrapolated across the country, means more than 225,000 staff.

In an end-of-year interview with *Schools Week*, Matt Hood said he initially thought the platform would be "small" and run "for a term, maybe". It was set up in weeks at the start of the pandemic to provide lessons for pupils during lockdown.

But the academy has become a household name, with nine million lessons delivered since September.

New research also shows how it helped schools in the worst-hit Covid areas. The top ten areas to use the platform by population

are Blackburn, Rochdale, Walsall, Bury, Halifax, Wigan, Bolton, Burnley, Stockton-on-Tees and Dudley – all towns in the north and Midlands.

Three weeks after it was announced that Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Leeds and Sheffield were going into tier 3, use of Oak in those areas increased 60 per cent on average.

After an initial £500,000 from the government to launch in the spring, Oak received an additional £4.3 million to continue providing online lessons into this academic year.

But in terms of what happens post-pandemic, Hood said Oak's leaders were "in the foothills" of those conversations. The academy's future would depend on whether the profession wanted it to continue, and whether it could find uses for its services unrelated to Covid.

"If both of those tests are met, and we can find a way of making the organisation sustainable that would be something that is really exciting."

Some schools have used Oak resources to prepare staff due to cover lessons for absent teachers, while others have used them to help with non-Covid-related pupil absences.

And some early career teachers have watched lessons as part of their professional development, while the Ministry of Defence has used them in schools for the children of service personnel.

But Hood said he wanted to "hear and understand more" from teachers and leaders, and added that the academy was still "way off" questions about how it could be funded and run in future.

The Oak principal also praised the 350 teachers who created lessons for the platform.

Schools' Covid solutions



Hypnotherapist helps to overcome teacher stress

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Teachers at an east London primary have teamed up with a sports hypnotherapist who improves “mental toughness” in elite athletes to combat the challenges and stress of the pandemic.

The initiative, along with online parental support groups, support dogs and yoga, are some of the measures schools have introduced as they prioritise improving mental health in their communities.

All 60 teachers and support staff at Kaizen Primary School, part of the Eko Trust, have engaged with a clinical hypnotherapist who specialises in developing mental toughness and resilience in elite cyclists.

Laura Hewer, the leader of education at the trust, said the online video training session was part of a wider CPD programme at the school, but could be rolled out to all six of Eko's schools.

She said the session taught teachers “mental toughness is a skill that you and your team can build and develop” and suggested steps that staff could follow in stressful situations.

Staff were taught to practise either positive self-talk or mental imagery, with breathing strategies to improve mindfulness and the mantra “there is no failure, just feedback”.

The session cost about £150 – £2.50 for each staff member – and Hewer said the clear steps and strategies had proved popular and effective.

“Wellbeing has always been a priority, but we recognise this year it is especially so.”

In September, a report from the wellbeing charity Education Support found 52 per cent of teachers felt their mental health and wellbeing had suffered during the pandemic.

Headteachers appear to have borne the brunt, with TeacherTapp data showing that spikes in work-related anxiety coincided with government announcements such as schools reopening.

For example, following the announcement that schools would reopen in June, 40 per cent of heads reported very high work-related anxiety compared with 16 per cent of teachers.

The pandemic has also taken its toll on the mental health of pupils. The Ecurio Covid-19 Impact Review found feeling lonely had the highest negative impact on pupil stress in primary and secondary schools. Almost a quarter of pupils were affected.

To help pupils with these issues, the Unity Schools Partnership has recruited four-legged



Mytie, Alfie and Connor take part in yoga at Nine Maidens Alternative Provision Academy

friends to help out in its schools.

Before the pandemic just two of the trust's 30 schools had a support dog, but this has risen to eight dogs in six schools.

Langer Primary Academy in Felixstowe has introduced three dogs this year – Nala the dachshund, Brambles the pug and Oreo the labrador. Martha Hughes, Langer's head, said the trio had “made a real difference” and was used as part of a timeout or breakout strategy.

Children who had experienced trauma developed relationships through spending time with the dogs and learning to care for them, while children anxious about returning to the school during the pandemic were more at ease, Hughes said.

During remote learning the dogs appeared as part of daily challenges which, in turn, boosted pupil morale.

“There is more anxiety now than before the pandemic for some children – it has caused every school to think even more about children's mental health.”

Nine Maidens Alternative Provision Academy in Cornwall has rolled out daily 15-minute mindfulness and yoga sessions as part of its Learning Ninjas Training Programme.

Ceri Skilton, the family support worker



Florence, Thomas Gainsborough School

at the school, said the practices reduced stress and taught pupils self-regulation, which in turn made them calmer and better able to engage in lessons.

Currently 20 pupils across three primary classes take part, but this will be extended after Christmas.

Schools have also recognised the mental strain parents are under and have adapted resources to provide support.

Grinling Gibbons Primary in south London hosts a virtual parents' group every Friday via Zoom on the impact of the pandemic and feedback on how the school can help.

The meetings were introduced to replace regular coffee mornings and will continue after the pandemic as they allow more parents to join in.

Dean Gordon, the head of school, said: “It's helping us to make sure the school works better for the whole community”.



Brambles the pug is one of the new dogs at Langer Primary Academy in Felixstowe

Schools' Covid solutions



Edtech networks keep online lessons from crashing

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Schools are joining together to ensure that the "legacy" of the rerouted EdTech Demonstrators scheme stretches beyond the pandemic.

The government programme was announced as part of the Department for Education's edtech strategy in 2019 to help teachers utilise technology to reduce workload, support professional development and improve pupils' results.

However, the DfE shifted the focus following the outbreak of Covid towards one of the pandemic's most pressing dilemmas: how to ensure pupils could access good-quality remote education.

Tristan Kirkpatrick, the director of computer science at Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT), estimated the trust had reached more than 17,775 pupils at 57 schools since being named as an edtech demonstrator in June.

There have since been three waves of demonstrator hubs, in April, June and October respectively, with 120 demonstrator hubs operating across the country, including 73 from the largest academy trust, United Learning.

The demonstrators have the freedom to design their own programmes of support and meet with schools to assess their needs and create bespoke guidance.

Kirkpatrick said it was clear some schools were "really struggling" with the demands placed on them following Covid.

The goal for many was for teachers to be able to set work online and provide feedback once completed.

The DfE made it a legal duty for schools to provide remote learning for pupils unable to attend school due to Covid from October 22.

This made up "Phase 1" of OGAT's model – with 28 edtech leaders across the trust delivering webinars and online tutorials on how best to utilise Google Workspace.

Kirkpatrick said the project would now move on to help its schools produce



live lessons and develop leadership training through its new resources.

The lack of access to devices and problems with connectivity was a major problem for many children during the pandemic.

Phil Cooper, the headteacher of Brough Community Primary School in Cumbria, another of the edtech demonstrators, said part of his programme provided guidance on how best to procure equipment and best practice to stay on top of pupils' access arrangements.

The demonstrators have also used their expertise to approach schools' dilemmas from a different angle.

Dan Roberts, the head of Devonport High School for Boys in Plymouth, said Devonport had guided schools on repurposing school devices to give to children, but also strategies to prioritise need.

For example, one school needed to provide pupils and staff with new equipment, but could only afford one option.

Roberts helped the school to understand that if staff had the correct equipment and training, they would be able to

provide resources to their pupils through more unorthodox means – such as mobile phones, which more children

could access.

"We've been surprised at times by the support that people need, but also we've been blown away . . . how much of a difference it's been making. It almost brings you to tears."

While the demonstrators expressed interest in extending the programme, the DfE said there was no update on the project's future post-March. Any further information would be provided in due course.

But demonstrators are already ensuring the communities created through the project are not forgotten and progress continues.

Dai Thomas of Sussex Learning Trust said: "The project originally was about strategy and long-term thinking; in many ways Covid and remote working took over out of necessity.

"Although the project has a formal time span, I'd hate to think it is the end of the conversation so we're creating a forum chat system so our cohort of schools can continue to interact."

Similarly, OGAT has installed an online message board that Kirkpatrick said would "help the sustainability" of schools using edtech and provide "a peer-to-peer support network" to aid progression.

Cooper likewise planned to establish a Cumbrian network for e-learning:

"There will be legacy from the project that allows us to maintain these skill sets and enhance them."



Tristan Kirkpatrick



Phil Cooper

Schools' Covid solutions



Schools look outside their gates to help communities

SCHOOLSWEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

From lunch deliveries and food banks to mobile libraries and “reverse” advent calendars, schools have stepped up to the Covid challenge by transforming the way they engage with their communities.

As schools across England closed to most children in March, staff turned their attention not just to supporting vulnerable pupils, but also to vulnerable people outside the school gates.

The efforts of schools to support the needy were brought into sharp focus by Marcus Rashford’s high-profile campaign to get free school meals vouchers extended over summer.

But leaders, teachers and support staff were already doing their bit to make sure those in need didn’t go without during the national crisis.

Cambois Primary School in Cowgate, Blyth, deployed its school bus during the first lockdown to run a mobile food bank, supported by local supermarkets and charities.

That work has carried on this academic year. Marianne Allen, Cambois’ headteacher, said the initiative was important “because, particularly after lockdown, the effect on so many people is apparent”.

The scarcity of essentials in a growing number of households also captured the imagination of The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust (TEFAT), which launched a winter appeal for its Community Boxes initiative.

Schools are distributing boxes weekly made up of surplus food sourced from charities such as FareShare, with donations from local businesses. School staff volunteer to pack and deliver the boxes to families.

Hugh Greenway, TEFAT’s chief executive, said he was spurred into action before the pandemic after being “fed up” seeing “starving children” at his schools, but has worked to expand the scheme after lockdown.

And Landau Forte Academy, an 11-16 comprehensive in Amington, Tamworth, has turned the tables with an advent calendar that has staff donating an item each day until the end of term. The goods will then be delivered to a local food bank and a charity.

Andrew Deen, its principal, said he feared that the 37 percentage of pupils on free school meals would rise as a result of the pandemic.



Singing in the yard, New York Primary School

“It’s a tough time for everyone – in all sectors, including education. We are hoping that to walk through the door every morning and see this pile of donations grow will give us a little boost.”

But schools’ outreach work hasn’t been limited to food.

Oasis Academy Brightstowe launched a mobile library service during the first lockdown, delivering more than 50 books a week to pupils at home. At the end of the summer term, the school also posted a book to every pupil to read over the break.

Since September, the library has continued in different ways, including targeted deliveries to isolating students.

Kat Gardner-Graham, the school’s librarian, said it had been “fantastic to see requests from students who are normally reluctant readers”.

But as well as changes in the way they interact with their communities, schools have also had to change the ways pupils interact with each other.

At New York Primary School in Tyne and Wear, Covid restrictions put at end to whole-school singing in assemblies.

But undeterred by all but the worst weather, the school’s pupils now go out into the playground every Friday at 1pm to sing together.

“They all space out and we have a big speaker and we all sing some of our assembly songs,” said Jill Shaw, the school’s head, who received an MBE in the Queen’s birthday honours for her services to education and during Covid.

“There’s only been one Friday since September when we couldn’t go out because it was absolutely torrential rain, but otherwise, drizzle,



Lining up



Oasis Academy Brightstowe’s mobile library in action

we’re out there, bit of wind, we’re out there.”

Shaw said the initiative was well-received in the community too, with “lovely emails from neighbours to say they really enjoyed hearing the songs”.

“I didn’t want to not do things as a whole school because that’s who we are. We’re a family. While we can’t do things inside, singing outside on a Friday is probably one of the only times in a week now when we’re all together.”



Schools' Covid solutions

It's Christmas, well virtually

HÉLÈNE MULHOLLAND
@LNMULHOLLAND

Schools are refusing to cancel Christmas by applying technological twists to the age-old nativity play.

Castle School, a special school in Cambridge, has employed a scriptwriter and four actors to stage a "panto-esque" performance that will also involve a number of its pupils. The performance is funded by an Arts Council England programme designed to help unemployed people in the arts back to work.

Eight performances – some over weekends – will be livestreamed on Zoom. By last week at least 60 schools, from Lancashire to Warrington and Luton, had bought tickets.

The show will also be watched as far afield as Australia, where Castle has links with a fellow special school, said Chris Baker, its headteacher.

Some of the show, which will include the use of Makaton, will be staged within the school while actors will be performing from their homes.

Baker said that the show was about giving "a bit of cheer" after a difficult year.

"We hope that this can benefit as many families who are looking for something Christmassy this year. The usual options are not there – so we hope that they can tune in and enjoy it and get their Christmas off to a decent start."

Government guidance for schools during the pandemic stipulates schools should consider "alternative approaches" to nativity plays and carol concerts, such as livestreaming or recording performances, "subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and parental permission".

Attendance by families must be restricted, it adds, with schools in tier 3 areas barred from having any audience.

According to a survey last month by TeacherTapp, about half of schools will not stage a nativity this year. A minority was considering a live socially distanced production.

But schools are turning to technology to ensure the Christmas show goes on, while meeting Covid guidance.

St Gregory CEVC Primary in Suffolk is running a "lockdown nativity" in the last week of term that will livestream pre-recordings of classes



The virtual panto produced by Castle school, in Cambridge



Hethersett Academy student rehearsal for Virtual Carol Service (below)



performing different sections of the story, interspersed with live narration to link the sections together.

Local care homes will be able to watch the performances as part of the school's Caring Christmas initiative, either on Zoom or on YouTube, where it will be posted after the final performance.

The school is also delivering 300 Christmas cards to care homes alongside CDs of the pupils singing carols as a replacement for them singing to the residents in person.

Daniel Woodrow, St Gregory's head, said he wanted the school to be "as normal as possible... The more opportunities that we can provide for them to feel festive and cheery and celebrate Christmas, the better."

The audience will be unmuted at the end to allow pupils to hear how the show went down. Malcolm Arnold Preparatory School (MAPS)

in Northampton will also livestream its nativity by splitting the story into "scenes" performed by class bubbles, with the overarching story narrated by pupils as the camera moves through each classroom.

J.D. Hives, MAPS principal, said the online show would allow parents to feel they were not missing out on watching their children take part in a traditional part of Christmas. "It will be rustic; it will be quaint; fun for the parents to see, and it will just rebuild that connection with what's going on inside the building while we have had our doors shut for so long."

Pupils at the Inspiration Trust's 14 schools this week recorded individual music performances and readings for its annual carol service.

John Stephens, the trust's director of music, said: "The time, energy, enthusiasm and talent represented by this video is a true Christmas gift!"

Top tips for running online nativities

The London Grid for Learning suggests schools:

- remind parents not to share images of other children except their own
- ask parents not to attempt their own recording, instead publish an edited version for them to keep
- turn comments off (although if you keep them on, remind parents to only post positive ones)
- make sure private messaging, uploads or screen sharing are disabled

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EDITORIAL



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Bungling ministers make it hard to stay positive

We tried, we really did.

For our last edition of the year, we wanted to end with some much-needed positivity.

We feature some fantastic examples of how schools have navigated the Covid conundrum in our special features this week, coming up with solutions that they say have huge potential to change education for the better post-pandemic.

Our reviews of the year also (mostly) try to focus on the plus points from what has been an extraordinarily difficult year.

But the government really do make it hard. It seems like another week, another new low.

The last-minute decision to advise schools to take an inset day next week seems to have caused more problems than it solves. Another unnecessary headache for knackered school leaders.

And we had the latest example of the government's blundering policy making.

After slashing schools' laptops allocations by 80 per cent seven weeks ago, to much uproar from the sector, the government has now reinstated the original allocations.

As our contributing editor Laura McInerney states in her political review this week, the Department

for Education's Covid response has been defined by a common trend of over-blown promises and inaction.

Schools have consistently been left to pick up the pieces for their communities while being briefed against for headlines in national newspapers.

But in spite of all of that, the leaders who have reviewed the year for us from their respective corners of the education landscape - primary, secondary, special and alternative schools, governance and business - have managed to relentlessly focus on the positives.

This year has, after all, seen schools transform their pedagogy, implement new ways of working, create whole new supportive networks for themselves and their communities and rewrite their policies based on the latest DfE missive delivered at 6pm on a Friday.

And they have done all of that while feeding their communities and being - as NEU president, Robin Bevan noted yesterday - "the only ones to have run an effective track and trace service at all".

We don't know if 2021 will get any easier. But your tremendous contribution over this year will never be forgotten.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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Now the government must show it can stick to its guns on exams

Dennis Sherwood

What is the point of having exams, of whatever form, however 'generously' marked, and wherever the grade boundaries might be set, when the outcomes – the grades actually awarded – are (to quote Dame Glenys Stacey) "reliable to one grade either way"?

Surely a pre-requisite for any and all exams is that the grades are not "reliable to one grade either way" but "reliable, full stop".

Which is very easy to do – but only if Ofqual take a decision to do it.

Schools told they will be 'on call' until Christmas eve for track and trace

Hannah

After two terms at school, as a vulnerable teacher, filled with anxiety over contracting Covid from a child, in a room where I'm not permitted to wear a mask or face shield, my mental health has taken a huge hit, worrying about those children who have been off-rolled but who would benefit from being in school, having to cope with the loss of my great-nan and dealing with the fact I couldn't go to the funeral because there was a cap of 20. But I can sit in a class of 30 where distancing is impossible?

I ultimately now NEED my Christmas. Not through selfishness, but through need. I NEED to have contact with my mum, dad and brother. I NEED to be able to have a break from work and be free to fill my days with walks out and about. I NEED something to desperately look forward to, after two very difficult terms, but at the moment, I can't do that.

I'm worried that a child/staff member in my bubble will test positive in that last week of term and prevent me seeing any of my family, going for my walks or just having a bit of normality. Schools SHOULD close that week early to give us the break we deserve, acknowledge the fact we sacrificed half-term and continue to work now with little safety measures and even as an apology for the public sector pay freeze you have so kindly pulled. I feel disgraced, anxious and broken.

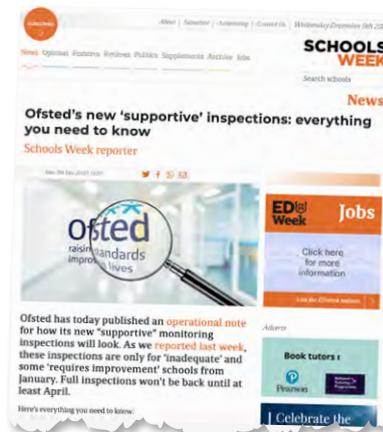
REPLY OF THE WEEK

Sam Johnston

Ofqual chief issues sobering warning over 'intractable' regional learning loss problems

I totally agree with the abandonment of regional grade boundaries and optionality. Using mocks results would devastate some pupils and represent very little in terms of what pupils can actually do within subject areas.

However, with the measures put in place – advance notice of examinable content and exam aids – it's surprising there is a need to match grades to 2020, since these were the results of a completely different process.



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

ITT entrants up 23 per cent after Covid boost

Sharon Watt

What about those teachers who are still qualified but too expensive to work in schools now and have been pushed into other avenues???

Exams plans for 2021 revealed

Alix Stewart

What about the 2020 students who had their CAGs lowered by the school so they were in line with weaker previous cohorts? They are still disadvantaged by this whole mess.

Jonny Veep, @JonnyVeep

Great idea to announce the relaxation of grade boundaries. Bound to have a positive effect on student motivation to work as hard as possible!

DfE hits recruitment target for first time in 8 years

Edward James, @EdwardJames24

Great news for the sector overall! Still under-supply in maths and physics teachers, but thrilled to see oversupply of history teachers.



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2020 politics review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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U-turns, broken promises, gaslighting, deceit and good old-fashioned cock-ups – our government’s response to education in the pandemic has been jaw-dropping, says Laura McInerney



LAURA MCINERNEY

Co-founder of TeacherTapp, Schools Week contributing editor

It couldn't get any worse. Until it did

In last year’s political review, I complained that truth was on the floor weeping and hoped that things might be better in 2020. Oh how the gods laugh.

Standing amid the ruins of this year, it’s worth remembering that however bad it has felt, at least you didn’t preside over a two-week exams debacle causing massive anxiety for a million children, and think that, somehow, the solution was going to be giving kids a mock exam grade. Nor did you screw up sending out thousands of laptops, or meltdown the food voucher system so badly that you had to send letters begging people only to access it in the middle of the night. Or tell schools that they should plan rotas, only then to scrap the rotas.

Every single time I thought we’d finally hit rock bottom in terms of political madness this year, a trapdoor clonked open revealing another vast chamber below. Who could have believed it was possible for an education secretary to be worse than Damian Hinds – a man so plain in his awfulness that it’s hard even to recall his face? And yet, given Gavin Williamson’s 2020 performance, most of us would go back in a nanosecond. Give us dull-and-useless over vain-and-deceitful-to-your-face any day of the week.

For a second it didn’t seem like it would be this way. When Williamson delivered his nine-minute speech

to close schools, cancel exams and employ heads as food-delivery managers, I admit I almost thought he did well. He managed to pull off the sympathetic tones of a sad vicar while giving the appearance of being decisive.

Only later would we realise, one by one, that each promise – of laptops,

promises were broken; it was the rocky relationship with the truth.

‘Lie’ is not a word one bandies around. It is quite something to accuse an education secretary of it. But how else can we explain some things this year?

For example, when Williamson said he wasn’t told about exam problems

“ Give us dull-and-useless over vain-and-deceitful-to-your-face

of daily lessons to be broadcast by the BBC, of magical grades to be delivered without exams – was a false promise.

So began a common trend. A grand announcement, followed by a watered-down version in an email to schools, followed by 73 more clarifications, then months of total inaction, ending either with a massive U-turn or flat out gaslighting by a “senior government source” announcing that nothing of the sort was ever promised to begin with.

The worst bit isn’t even that

until after the grades were released. Yet, as Schools Week revealed, he met with Ofqual twice in the days leading to the results. The only way he can have not known is if he’d put his fingers in his ears during those meetings and shouted “LA LA LA, I DON’T WANT TO KNOW”. Frankly, I can’t even count that out as a possibility. Can you?

Labour, meanwhile, were actually quite good. Their newly elected headboy with the perfectly coiffed hair, Keir Starmer, patiently offered



again and again to help schools re-open as quickly as possible. Boris had little to offer in reply except a weird heckle tantamount to “come and have a go if you think you’re hard enough”. It really was a very odd year.

The only upside is that in the end, most of this politics stuff doesn’t matter in the real world. Year 7 don’t actually care about Gav’s pledges. Year 3 definitely don’t. In fact, if you’re ever taking things too seriously, go sit in a reception class and see what they do to the latest Department for Education missive.

What really matters is how we are to one another. As the departure of Dominic Cummings has shown: these guys move on. Williamson probably won’t make it another 12 months. But you will. So, despite the nightmares, and stressors, and middle-of-the-night panics about calling Public Health England, just know that you have fought through the darkest year regardless of these jokers.

Next year may not be better, I know that now. But at the very least, as long as we look out for each other, we can hope it won’t be worse.

2020 primary review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The pandemic has brought out the best and the worst in people. In the spirit of Christmas, Kate Owbridge presents the best

Stressful. Unexpected. Extraordinary. And not even the worst year I have ever had as a school leader.

Why not? In my worst year as a head, the thing that nearly destroyed me was that feeling of being alone, entirely on my own with my troubles. But Covid? We have been in it together from day one. From the frustration at the Edenred debacle to the challenges of managing staff wellbeing at a distance, every school in the land has been in the same situation.

Who knew when we were tucking into last year's Christmas dinner that we'd be "Zooming" through the year? Of course there are downsides to this. I've really missed the networking with my headteacher colleagues and sneaking a quick coffee together before a meeting. But I have saved hundreds of miles in driving across the county and I don't have to sit in a freezing cold golf club to be in the schools' funding forum meeting any more. For some county meetings I'd like to see much more of this in the future, where business is the most important issue of the day. Online meetings (including those for parents) increase attendance and often make proceedings far more efficient.

Closer to home – and haven't we all been a lot closer to home? – I tear up when I think about the past year at my school. My staff have worked their butts off to make



KATE OWBRIDGE

Executive headteacher, Ashdown Primary School, East Sussex

A challenging year - but I've had worse

things right for our children. They say a change is as good as a rest. Well, not this change, I fear. Staff are all struggling. They've worked around our restrictions and managed the disruption really well (and they were in a good position to start with because we had already dealt with a whole raft of teacher workload

is now, when none of us are in the regular swing of things, for changes to be implemented. What is really important for our 11-year-olds, seven-year-olds and four-year-olds? Sadly, it has been a year of wasted opportunities in that regard.

Like everyone else, I suppose, I have been too busy concentrating

“ It has been a year of missed opportunities for reform

issues) but the past year has really made us focus on what matters most.

If you have to strip back to the bare essentials, what is the most important thing? Learning and teaching. Simple. I would have hoped the powers that be would re-evaluate in the same way for schools and our education system. Is it right, for example, that adults can be awarded lifelong qualifications graded by teacher assessments while 11-year-olds do formal tests? And given Nick Gibb himself has finally admitted they actually make no difference to the children to boot? The opportunity

my efforts on interpreting my 'orders' and making things right in my school and other local schools we work with to agitate much for it. And the country's leaders will always be criticised no matter what they do, so let's leave that for another time and place.

At the start of the pandemic, someone told me we would see the best and the worst in people. They were right. So in the spirit of Christmas, I want to focus on the best. Our community, for example, who have wasted no opportunity to make the best of their school and



to support it. Our attendance figures are evidence enough of their trust in us.

Across the country, we've seen new communities emerge across towns and counties, among school staffs and parents. We've seen people going the extra miles. We've seen people get involved who might not have otherwise. And we've seen and heard for ourselves how people – from Marcus Rashford to the neighbour we'd never met – rallied in whatever way they could to help our most vulnerable children.

Growing that sense of community, that understanding of our responsibilities to our neighbours and friends and what it means to be a citizen – as a nation, we've done that well. And schools have been the beating heart of that effort.

It's what we teach our children. It's what we think is important. And it warms my heart.

2020 secondary review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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RITA HINDOCHA

Executive principal and director of secondary, The Mead Educational Trust



The fundamental lesson of the pandemic is how much teachers and schools matter to the neighbourhoods they serve – and in a huge variety of ways, says Rita Hindocha

An image from March 2020: desperate to continue learning, a year 9 girl sits outside her closed local McDonald's to catch the wifi and do her English work on her phone. Meanwhile, it is not hard to imagine her more affluent counterparts – some perhaps with less thirst for learning – sitting in well-provisioned homes on personal laptops with strong wifi connections.

Nothing better captures how Covid has blown the lid off the searing inequalities that plague all aspects of life in Britain, and education in particular.

A memory now: while we were only open for key workers' and vulnerable children, a boy with three siblings at home walked into our school reception to report that their food cupboard was bare. School was the only place he felt he could turn to.

Let there be no doubt any more of the vital broader role schools play in the neighbourhoods they serve. Yes, we are palaces of learning. But as Amanda Spielman thankfully noted in her speech at the launch of Ofsted's annual report, we are also part of a fraying welfare safety net. Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school holiday meals is proof enough of that.

Yet our schools have shown how resilient and responsive they can be in mitigating the inequities. One of

The year we learned just how vital our schools are

the highlights has been the brilliant work done by all involved with Oak Academy. Some may balk at the idea of nationally produced resources. But provided we work collectively to tackle the important issues of diversity and representation in the curriculum that will not go back in the bottle after this tumultuous year,

guided less confident colleagues into this new world. The work has been truly ground-breaking and we must now take aspects of these ways of working into the post-pandemic world to reduce travel to meetings, reach out to parents who can't make our parents evenings, and also – perhaps regrettably – do online

“ Schools are part of a fraying welfare safety net

I hope we continue to use these into the future. Variation in curriculum and pedagogy has contributed to inequity in outcomes for too long, especially in schools and in subjects where recruitment is so difficult. At one of our schools, the mantra is “planning to the detail” rather than preparing from scratch. We need to be sweating the detail in 2021, not perpetuating workload for little gain.

This year, we have collectively taken a leap into the future. Who used Teams or Zoom before March 2020? Every school has unleashed a cadre of digital leaders who have patiently

lessons on snow days.

In the meantime, please could those awkward and earnest early forays into recorded messages for our communities be magically erased on the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve?

Paradoxically, we have also learnt that tech is not the answer to all of our problems. Schools as living, breathing communities housed in actual buildings within local neighbourhoods are vital. Sorry Sugata Mitra. If there was any time to believe that you could stick a computer in a wall in a village in

India and watch the kids learn by themselves, surely 2020 was it. But it just ain't so. Schools are vital for children.

All the evidence you need is the students' delight to be back in their classrooms with their teachers and friends, rather than cooped up at home on a laptop (if they were lucky). Human connection still matters profoundly. Even with the Oak Academy resources, we have found that our students are less engaged with an explanation coming from the scintillating Adam Boxer than from their sometimes less expert live teacher who has invested in them, knows them and with whom they have a relationship.

Teachers matter. A lot. That is the fundamental lesson of the pandemic. In their supremely messy human way, schools are vital. They guard against loneliness, isolation and harm.

And kids like coming here. They need it. Because learning is a supremely social act, best led by an expert and invested adult and done with 27 others.

Okay, 29 others. It's sub-optimal, but it sure beats home learning.



2020 SEN review

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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During the darkest days of the pandemic, teaching staff dug deep and came up with innovative and creative solutions, writes Madelaine Caplin



MADELAINE CAPLIN

Executive headteacher,
Woodside Academy and Belmont Academy
(LSEAT)

We have redefined what 'good' looks like

It is said that something good comes out of every crisis. In the midst of it, that can be hard to see and even harder to say; but as we take our annual opportunity to reflect on another year gone by, I must agree not least because of the challenges we have overcome with no experience to draw on.

Before the pandemic, our school was good. We did things well, pupils achieved and were safe and happy. We had confidence in our processes and procedures. Yet the pandemic compelled us to analyse everything we do, inevitably leading to improvements and long-term changes which will remain in place permanently. In essence, we have redefined what good looks like – and that alone is incredible.

One such improvement relates to the way children arrive at and leave school. Having to separate children into bubbles has led to staggered start times and different entry points. To assist with this, we have completely pedestrianised the area in front of the school, making the road much safer and ensuring children have a calmer start to the day. This has had a significant impact on many of our special school pupils as well as the improving the confidence of parents.

In March, our trust was selected to provide a range of learning materials for the SEND strand of National Oak Academy. This had a transformational impact on many of our staff, supporting them to deliver

high-quality online learning and giving us all an insight into the very best practice from some inspiring teaching professionals.

As a result, our school has implemented excellent blended learning programmes that mean we can teach children wherever they are. The positive impact of this work

continue to deliver physical packs of work where needed. This crisis has sadly highlighted not just a digital divide but considerable social and economic divides within our school communities.

For me, the most significant positive to come out of the past year is the professionalism, commitment and

“ This crisis has highlighted more than a digital divide

became clear last week when we had to switch to remote learning for a short period. Feedback from parents, students and teachers reflects just how far our remote provision has come. From streaming live assemblies and events to shared virtual storytelling sessions, staff have become much more confident about using technology in creative and impactful ways.

Yet we remain very aware of the barriers many families face trying to access remote learning. We have worked hard to mitigate this with a successful bid to the DfE for extra laptops, but we have also had to

growth of our staff, who were left with no choice but to dig deep during the darkest days of the pandemic. Our schools remained opened for our most vulnerable children, with staff attending despite potential risks to themselves and their own families. Not only did they step up to this challenge, they far exceeded it by developing their skills in terms of creative and digital delivery, improved pedagogy and of course, resilience.

When the school re-opened for full face-to-face delivery in September, many staff members and families were anxious. It made me aware of



the true importance of wellbeing and the need to genuinely ensure people are coping personally. The compassion shown by staff for each other, for their pupils and their families has been immense and such unity is certainly a true positive take-away from this challenging year.

Another is how the pandemic has strengthened relationships, with our partners in health and social care of course, but also with the other schools in our trust with whom we now regularly share best practice, experience and solutions. And beyond that I feel there is increased mutual respect with the rest of the school system, a better understanding of the pressures upon us all, and that we are now being recognised as equal partners to our mainstream colleagues.

So as well as looking back at what we have collectively achieved as a school and as a community in the past year with pride, I can also look forward with real hope for the future.

2020 AP review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Colleagues were sceptical, but a shift into alternative provision is one of the best moves I've ever made, says Hammad Ali



HAMMAD ALI

Difference leader and associate senior leader, Pendlebury Centre, Stockport

A new place for AP as leaders in inclusion

For many teachers and school leaders, 2020 will be remembered for the prolonged disruption that came with bubbles, blended learning and school closures. My own professional upheaval began, not during the first lockdown of March, but in the first quarter of the year, when things were as 'normal' as they can possibly be in schools.

After seven years in mainstream, I had chosen to make the transition to working as a senior leader in alternative provision. My move was driven by a growing sense of frustration at the number of pupils in my form classes who, despite my best efforts, I couldn't support enough to prevent from entering the jaws of avoidable permanent exclusion.

As I left the comfortable familiarity of my mainstream head of year position, I was reassured by the knowledge that I was making a move that would have a real impact in supporting the most vulnerable pupils, including excluded pupils. As the pandemic has played out, the urgency of high-quality education for these young people has become obvious to everyone, and we know this group is only set to grow significantly in its wake.

My decision raised a few eyebrows. I was leaving an enviable middle leader position, in the midst of an unpredictable teacher job market, and taking a gamble on my ability to have an impact as a first-time senior leader in an unfamiliar sector. Among my mainstream colleagues, there

was the unmistakable perception of AP as having low expectations, poor outcomes and terrible standards of teaching and learning. Surely I would just be managing behaviour all day?

Four months in, I can honestly say that this was the single greatest professional decision of my career to date. Not only have I seen first-hand

now part of embodies this vision and these values. Contrary to my former colleagues' assumptions, we all know that if we do not set high academic and pastoral expectations children will not achieve. These high expectations are palpable in every part of the school.

In a post-Covid education landscape, the skill of AP practitioners in getting

“ AP is not just a place to pick up the excluded ”

the transformative power of high-quality AP, but my own practice has strengthened day by day through collaboration, leadership mentoring, inclusive CPD and on-the-job learning supported by an incredible leadership team.

At the Pendlebury Centre, all staff share the belief that wellbeing and safeguarding are central to academic achievement. They are three equal parts of a jigsaw puzzle that, once pieced together, ensures children can fulfil their potential. The team I am

children back on to learning after moments of disruption or periods of absence has become a necessity for all. Pendlebury is relentless in its efforts to ensure pupils are able to thrive and then reintegrate effectively back into mainstream school. Our solutions are sought through a trauma-informed approach to de-escalate situations before they reach crisis point, and I am in no doubt that the inclusive practices I have learned and am still learning would benefit any mainstream setting.

And if there are any positive



consequences of this pandemic year, then it is surely that mainstream settings are recognising this too. The conversations I now have with friends and former colleagues have flipped and there is genuine interest in AP's skillset. I'm able to bust myths and share the finer details of effective approaches. The conversations still raise eyebrows, but it is no longer through shock and surprise. Instead, there is a dawning realisation that there might just be more than a little to learn from alternative provision.

Indeed, at every level throughout the pandemic there has been a growing sense of AP's value to the system – not just as a place to pick up the excluded and make them includable but as a leader in developing the strategies to prevent exclusion in the first place.

In truth, we anticipate a rise in exclusions in the coming year because we can see a growth in the conditions for exclusion. The work must happen now to ensure it doesn't happen, and continuing to see AP as an equal is surely part of that.

2020 governance review



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

Governing bodies have discovered new – and sometimes better – ways of working, but more importantly they have seen their school communities in a new light, writes Ruby Bhatti



RUBY BHATTI

National Leader of Governance,
Yorkshire and the Humber

More than new ways of working, we have new ways of seeing

Like other governors everywhere, when the pandemic struck I initially felt helpless in the face of the challenges my schools were facing. The whole world of governance was turned upside down overnight. All in-school engagement halted and as our communication hadn't yet adapted to video conferencing, all we had was telephone and email with which to deal with the worry and confusion of our school communities, urgent decisions in response to rising cases and the sheer stress of keeping schools running.

As a trustee and chair across MAT and local authority schools, I pivoted rapidly from a monitoring to a supportive role. Amid the uncertainty about the longer-term effect of Covid on pupil outcomes, mental health and wellbeing, one thing was clear: what was important was being a critical friend and a listening ear for school leaders who often felt isolated.

But necessity is the mother of invention, and the upheaval of governance quickly evolved into new ways of working. Unfamiliar technologies quickly became the new norm for board and committee meetings, and these virtual meetings helped us to continue our governance and to support school leaders. Of course there were teething problems. Nothing really prepares you for the learning curve of screens freezing, muted microphones or the occasional

family member turning up but, more than a coping strategy, this new way of working has created unity and strength and allowed the show to go on.

And I have no doubt it's here to stay. Meetings fast-tracked to ensure strategic decisions were taken; better attendance; less stress of travelling; the ability to think differently and include

involved with this transformation of teaching and learning has reminded many governors of the sheer resilience and adaptability that make our teachers so amazing.

Another revelation has been the communication from MATs and local authorities and between them. As chair and trustee, I was fully kept

“Governors pivoted rapidly from a monitoring to a supportive role

governors from all over the country; leaner agendas; sticking to time; more frequent meetings with a more pragmatic and considerate approach... Who would want to lose that?

The teething problems were even harder for teachers, but supporting staff members to enhance their IT skills and adapt their plans in order to keep teaching online was inspiring. Online platforms allowing pupils and staff to work from home were rolled out in a matter of weeks. They are not without drawbacks, of course, but being

abreast of all developments in DfE and county guidance, and there was a lot of it. Likewise, I received timely communications from school leaders about the actions they'd taken to respond to this ever-changing landscape – and far beyond the job description too! Staff worked tirelessly to ensure pupils received food when not at school and visited families wearing PPE just to ensure the community and its pupils were well.

From a purely governance perspective, effective clerking has



been invaluable. Clerks have had an enormous job to support governors to adapt to remote working, to respond to all our frantic emails as we struggled to do so, and to keep on top of essential business decisions which were, if anything, more numerous than the guidance changes. In my experience, their amazing patience and tolerance has been vital to keeping everything going effectively.

Amid such a heroic effort from everyone, none is more worthy of admiration than those staff members who kept going into school throughout for the benefit of key workers' and vulnerable children. If governance has been challenging this year, it is because of the sense of duty to them above all.

The vaccine is here now, but no one is safe until we all are safe. So there is still some road to travel, but as we emerge from the crisis in 2021 and hopefully get back to our normal face-to-face routines, we can do so with the confidence that we now have the tools and the skills to adapt rapidly to any new challenges we may face.

2020 business review



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

From staff rotas to test and trace, school business leaders have shown how vital their contributions are, says Micon Metcalfe

It seems like it must have been a different decade or another life altogether, but 2020 started with a new prime minister. There were big promises on education. Teachers were to be backed on discipline and paid more, but the ones that caught the eye of the school business professionals were £14 billion in additional funding (or £7 billion in new pledges, depending on how you look at it) – including more for special needs, plus one-off additional capital funding. Per-pupil funding would be boosted to at least £5,000 for secondary and £4,000 for primary schools. Although we knew that there would still be a lot for the government to do around Brexit, there was some hope that there would be a renewed focus on schools and education.

The SBL community was going from strength to strength and professional networks were forming at local and national level as we realised that our profession needed access to peer support as well as the professional framework and training provided by the Institute of School Business Leadership.

As the UK left the EU on January 31, 2020, SBLs were turning their thoughts to the HR issues that would emerge as a result. There would be more red tape for hiring teachers from the EU, and EU employees were seeking reassurance about the paperwork they would need. But there were other storm clouds forming. We had seen reports of



MICON METCALFE

Chief financial officer, Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust

When the crisis came, we ran towards it

the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China, and by February a large part of northern Italy was under lockdown, with overwhelmed hospitals. Schools there closed and would remain so for many months.

In the business of school life this seemed like something that happened to other people in other

plans, should schools close. By the second week of March, it was only a matter of when, not if, schools would close, although I don't suppose any of us imagined what we would be up against.

Once schools did close, the profession slipped in to a new normal of staff rotas, working from

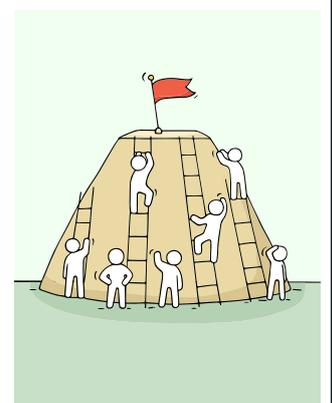
“ We became procurement and contract experts overnight

places. In fact, the virus had started to spread in the UK in a way that was to have profound consequences for the rest of the year.

As schools returned from the February half-term, SBLs were faced with increasing levels of staff and pupil absence and we updated policies to meet the new rules around isolation. As we came into March, many business leaders were trying to make sense of their disaster recovery plans and were at the forefront of discussions around contingency

home, supporting staff, manning phone lines to follow up on pupils, organising food for vulnerable families and working with the wider leadership team to keep everyone up to date.

We became procurement and contract experts overnight, grappling with the Procurement Policy Note 02/20, which sought to keep our suppliers afloat during the crisis. We certainly wanted our supply chain still there when we did get back and we also had to renegotiate services to



meet the new normal.

It dawned on me in April that re-opening would be more challenging than closing and so it proved to be. SBPs spent the summer overseeing the installation of outside sinks and new ways of working. Budgets were re-worked to take account of bubbles and cleaning, and staff were reassured with risk assessments and new policies. Since September school-based practitioners have been at the vanguard of test-and-trace as the year continues in a stop-start fashion.

The online community of business leaders flourished, sharing practical advice and solving challenges. There were online tea breaks which provided space to sound off and kick back a little. No one could say the SBL community flinched when it was asked to step up and be part of the solution. Instead we ran towards the fire. Not only does this make me incredibly proud, but it gives me great hope.

A vaccine offers the hope of a return to normality for schools in 2021 and all that entails. As SBLs, I know we've got this!

Books for Christmas!

Stuck for a present for a teacher? Try our books for Christmas list.

For curriculum thinkers

The Fascist Painting

Phil Beadle
John Catt Educational

“Since its inclusion in Ofsted’s inspection handbook, cultural capital has become a well-worn phrase in schools. But what is it really?” Phil Beadle’s serious and often humorous exploration will have you questioning everything you think you know about this tricky concept.

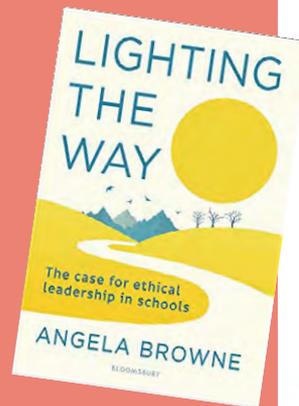


For ethical leaders

Lighting the Way

Angela Browne
Bloomsbury

“Browne begins by systematically listing the ways in which education is racing towards a reckoning with itself,” wrote Aditi Singh. Angela Browne’s popular tome goes on to explore the personal reckonings each educational leader must make to drive a necessary transformation of the system.

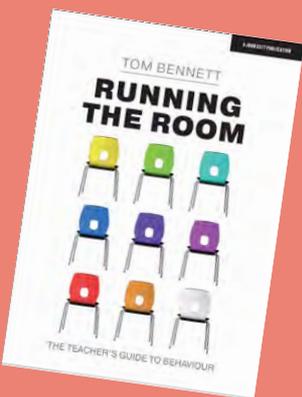


For behaviour managers

Running the Room: The Teacher’s Guide to Behaviour

Tom Bennett
John Catt Educational

“The ultimate test of a behaviour book is whether it can be directly applied to the classroom and *Running the Room* certainly can,” concluded Bennie Kara. Amid a plethora of cultural references high and low, Tom Bennett sets out a behaviour curriculum to support schools and teachers.



For teaching and learning leaders

How Learning Happens

Paul A. Kirschner and Carl Hendrick
Routledge

“How Learning Happens is ambitious in reach, determined in argument and thorough in reasoning,” wrote Amir Arezoo. Its mission: to combat the misapplication of educational theory in the classroom and arm teachers with practical knowledge about the best (and worst) bets for effective instruction.



Books for Christmas!

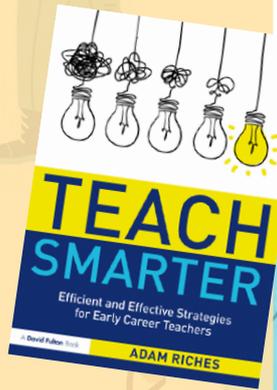
Stuck for a present for a teacher? Try our books for Christmas list.

For new teachers

Teach Smarter: Efficient and Effective Strategies for Early Career Teachers

Adam Riches
Routledge

"This is a book that ought to earn its place in CPD libraries and should probably be read even before trainees have started their course," wrote NQT Sameerah Mussa. Adam Riches covers a range of teaching and learning strategies to make every new teacher's first years that little bit lighter.

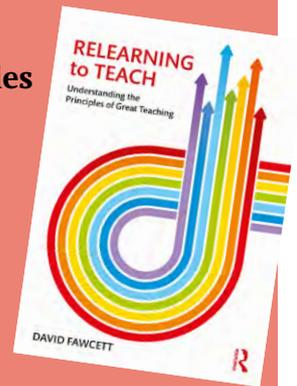


For experienced teachers

Relearning to teach: Understanding the Principles of Great Teaching

David Fawcett
Routledge

"Relearning to Teach is not so much a call to arms as an invitation to pull up a chair, get comfortable and have a good old natter about all things teaching and learning," wrote Rachel Rossiter. Fawcett's book sets out to question not just edu-myths and fads, but how we come to be seduced by them.



For pastoral leaders

Succeeding as a Head of Year

Jon Tait
Bloomsbury

"When so many teaching courses don't cover pastoral matters in any detail, it was refreshing to see these concepts explored without any assumption of prior knowledge or experience," wrote Heidi Drake. Tait's book is as useful for those already in the job as to those just contemplating it.

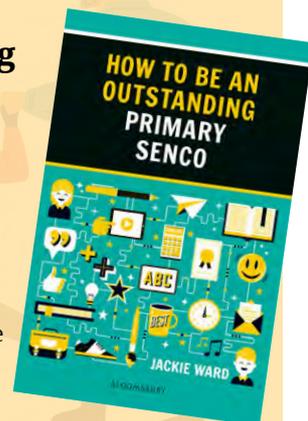


For SENCOs

How to be an outstanding primary SENCO

Jackie Ward
Bloomsbury

"Any aspiring or newly appointed primary SENCO will benefit from the wealth of experience Jackie Ward has drawn on to write this book," said Karen Ferguson. Informed by the latest legislation and evidence of best practice, it's also a handy tool to ensure this complex job is done sustainably.



Reviews



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

@Penny_Ten

Nice White Parents

@serial

As a teacher, if you want to understand schools, you have to include the voices, views and ways that parents and carers can influence, or be influenced by them. And if you want to understand what's wrong with schools, and the marketisation of schools, you have to look at what is arguably the most powerful force in shaping them: white parents. This is a five-part series from the brilliant Serial Productions, and while it hails from the US, there are insights to be gleaned that are easily transferable to the English school system. Many teachers passionately believe in state education and also choose to teach in tough inner-city schools- but to what extent do we put our money where our mouth is and allow our own kids to be schooled by people like us in classrooms and with the kids we teach? Prepare to be challenged, it's good.

Dope Black Mums

@DopeBlackMums

This podcast series is fantastic at the best of times, covering a huge range of topics through five women's experiences of modern-day motherhood, with top tips,



inspirational guests, insightful topics, eye-opening honesty and lots of laughter. The episode I have chosen sees the Dope Black Mums joined by Pia Baker who, after 13 years of marriage to her husband, met the woman of her dreams. This laughter-filled, life-affirming podcast looks at sexuality, love and living your truth whatever the cost. Pia opens up about why it took the breakdown of her marriage to discover she was gay, and how her children have coped with having two mums. Demonstrating the power of the human story, this is a lovely insight into family life that undoubtedly resembles that of some of your students.

The Cult of Pedagogy podcast

@CultOfPedagogy

Despite the vast number of episodes in this popular education podcast series, I had to go all the way back to 2014 to find one that related to parents and carers' experiences of education. This episode, *What the Mother of a Child with Autism Wants Teachers to Know*, hears the eponymous mother talk about how she communicates with her daughter's teachers, the steps she's taken to support her child's social life, and three

things she wishes all teachers knew about children with autism. An insightful and honest look at one family's experience of the interaction between home and school. Again, useful human experience to help bring to life what our efforts as teachers might include for greater positive impact.

NPR Life Kit podcast

@NPR

This is America's National Public Radio (NPR) Life Kit podcast series, and the episode I have chosen is *What Your Teen Wishes You Knew About Sex Education*. This is useful to parents and teachers alike as we all squirm when these conversations arise, and some lucky teachers will this year be delivering elements of the new relationships and sex education curriculum to teenage students for the first time. This episode covers listening with love and humility when teens speak up about sex, how to talk about puberty, sexual enjoyment and healthy relationships, how to explain the false reality of porn and more.

Home Ed Voices

@homeedvoices

This is a UK-based home education podcast that profiles the lives of (real) home educator families and aims to show how diverse home education experiences can be. This is of particular interest as it shines a spotlight on the many families who were home educating before the global pandemic was a thing and lockdown forced us all to pretend that what we were doing was education at home. The episode I have chosen is with Lexy, who talks about home educating her older children alongside infant twins, how home educating freedom can sometimes lead to flakiness and what support is needed for home educating parents of Black and dual heritage children. Contrary to dominant narratives in the education establishment, perhaps schools have as much to learn from what happens in homes as the other way around.

Research

The Chartered College of Teaching will review a research development each half term. Contact @CatScutt if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

How can we foster effective teacher collaboration?

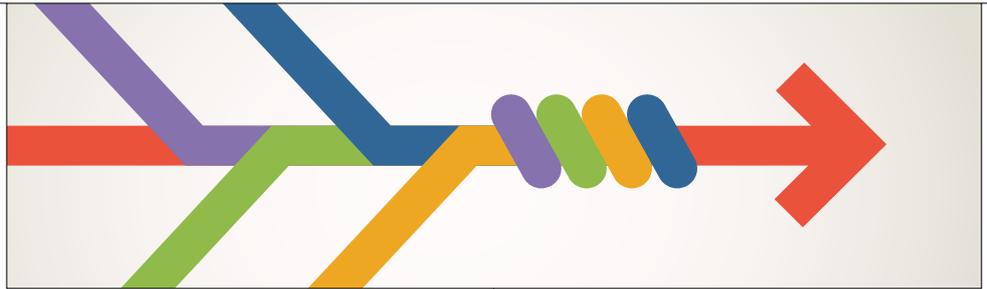
Cat Scutt, director of education and research, Chartered College of Teaching

Research suggests that opportunities for teacher collaboration are a key feature of school environments where teachers have higher job satisfaction and continue to develop their effectiveness over time. Not only that, but Matthew Ronfeldt and colleagues found that the quality of collaboration around instruction reported by teachers was linked to pupil attainment – at teacher and school level.

'Collaboration' is a slightly nebulous concept, however, and can be used to describe anything from teachers simply doing the same thing at the same time through to co-planning, co-teaching, peer coaching, professional learning communities and more. There are also a range of reasons that collaboration may be powerful – sharing knowledge and expertise, being exposed to challenge and alternative perspectives, encouraging reflection and commitment to taking action, and a sense of being part of a whole and building collective teacher efficacy.

Looking at collaboration around instruction specifically (rather than broader notions of collaborative professional learning), Ronfeldt and colleagues' research suggests that it is high-quality collaboration around assessment in particular – including both external assessment results and formative assessment – that most often predicts pupil attainment gains. An analysis of PISA data from Germany similarly found that pupil achievement only seems correlated with teachers discussing aspects that actually specifically relate to pupil achievement, for example, performance.

Vangrieken and colleagues' systematic review of research around teacher collaboration identified a number of preconditions for effective collaboration to take place, and categorised these into three



types of characteristic: personal, structural and group.

Personal characteristics include an individual's willingness to collaborate and belief in the value of doing so. Spillane and colleagues' research into how teachers seek advice and information from colleagues had a fascinating and somewhat unexpected outcome; as they put it succinctly, "Higher performing teachers are not more likely to be sought out for advice; instead, higher performing teachers are more likely to seek advice." It seems that a desire and willingness to learn from others is a powerful driver in improving one's own effectiveness through collaboration.

Structural characteristics, meanwhile, include having the time, space and opportunity to engage in collaboration (often a challenge in schools!). Spillane and Shirrell found that school layout can also influence how and with whom teachers collaborate – unsurprisingly, teachers tended to engage more in informal collaboration through "chance encounters" with those who had classrooms nearby or who they regularly crossed paths with during the school day.

Finally, group characteristics include the group size and the blend of skills and knowledge within the group, and the relationships and culture within the group. Goddard and colleagues also note that the instructional leadership of the headteacher/principal was strongly predictive of how much teachers collaborate to improve instruction.

There is no doubt that fostering effective teacher collaboration

may be more challenging in the context of a pandemic; social distancing and bubbles are not particularly conducive to enabling either formal or informal collaboration opportunities, and one of the biggest challenges we are hearing about from trainee teachers in particular is the inability to go and watch different expert colleagues teaching.

Jackson and Bruegmann found that teachers become more effective themselves when they work alongside highly effective colleagues, and that this is particularly true for teachers at the start of their careers – so this sense of isolation is a real risk. That's why the Chartered College of Teaching has published a series of videos of classroom footage for early career teachers.

There is no easy fix, but in one crucial way virtual collaboration is no different to any other: it requires careful planning of structures to encourage and nurture it. The new online format of our Chartered Teacher, leadership and evidence-informed practice programmes, for example, still builds in opportunity for high-quality interaction with colleagues across the country.

More broadly, we've also seen social media and online events for teachers really come into their own – providing informal and formal collaboration and learning opportunities on a national and international scale.

If we continue to foster the right culture, to signpost opportunities and to provide encouragement, our teachers can continue to benefit from collaboration – even in the virtual world.





MONDAY

The irony that massive grade inflation has had to happen on the watch of a schools minister who has rallied to stamp it out during his years in office doesn't appear to be lost on the man himself.

Nick Gibb looked deflated this week as he was grilled by the education committee about plans for exams in 2021, which will involve grades being inflated to the same level as was seen under this year's system.

Robert Halfon, a former ministerial colleague of Gibb's who now chairs the committee, couldn't resist rubbing his nose in it, remarking that it was "genuinely Goodbye Mr Chips".

Many people then spent the next five minutes frantically Googling the referenced book and film, which followed the life of a teacher who favoured conventional methods and strict discipline.

Gibb won't have needed to look it up though, given he was the schools minister when the book came out in 1934.

TUESDAY

The Department for Education's media blog is well-known for putting the government's spin on the latest stories about education in the press.

But it turns out the department is now using the blog to respond to criticism from shadow ministers.

When shadow schools minister

Wes Streeting tweeted a Mirror article, and stated that the National Tutoring Programme and catch-up premium "is failing to provide the support that pupils desperately need after a year of massive disruption to their education", the DfE's Twitter account replied with no text, but just a link to its media blog post on the issue.

What next? Gavin Williamson showing passages from it at the Downing Street press briefing?

New DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood was made even more permanent this week when she was told she could stay – having acted in the role since Jonathan Slater departed hastily in September.

And we're pleased to see she's an avid *Schools Week* reader. Acland-Hood announced the DfE's compromise on inset days on December 18 by retweeting our story on the matter!

WEDNESDAY

It's not like the Tories to tout misleading and incorrect figures in relation to school funding.

So it was incredibly surprising to see that Conservative Party chair Amanda Milling had to apologise after saying in a campaign video that the party had "increased school funding by a minimum of £5,150 per pupil".

Milling said she misspoke, and had meant to say that school funding had increased TO a minimum of £5,150 per pupil.

But it took the shadow schools minister Wes Streeting calling in the UK Statistics Authority to actually get her to delete the tweet.

THURSDAY

The news that mass testing will be rolled out to schools in parts of London, Essex and Kent in the coming days was hastily announced by health secretary Matt Hancock during last night's Downing Street press briefing.

But anxious school leaders in those areas were told they would have to wait until today to get the full details of the programme, which isn't ideal for people who have to prepare for potential massive disruption.

You'd think the government would have got its act together earlier in order to give further details to schools at the time; but then again, the antics of this shower is hardly surprising by now.

Many school leaders have already asked why the sudden keenness to conduct mass-testing, when schools in the north of England have seen high case numbers for many months and not had any school-specific testing programmes.

That's Week in Westminister done for another year – see you all on the other side!



Department
for Education



School Teachers' Review Body Member - Chair

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB assesses evidence from Government and organisations representing schools and the teaching profession, and visits schools and local authorities to develop its understanding of issues facing teachers. In addition to providing recommendations on annual pay awards for teachers and school leaders, the STRB has been asked to report on a variety of matters in recent years, including moving toward a pay structure with higher starting and early career salaries and relatively flatter pay progression and providing additional guidance to schools through advisory pay points.

Further information on the STRB is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body

The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit a chair that demonstrates the following criteria:

- Expertise of providing strong leadership at a senior level, including chairing groups with diverse skills and experience to deliver consensus.
- A detailed knowledge and understanding of pay, remuneration, performance management, labour market and reward issues and a strong understanding of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions, especially in the public sector.
- Expertise in analysing and interpreting detailed information such as statistical and economic data and information on legal, policy and HR matters and to draw appropriate conclusions.
- Able to communicate effectively and command the respect of others quickly, to challenge and engage courteously particularly those of opposing views, facilitating agreement across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes.

Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 30 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £350 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at: <https://bit.ly/STRBChair>

You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill an additional vacancy for a board member. If you are interested in also applying for this role, then further details can be found here: <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>



Department
for Education



School Teachers' Review Body Member – Economist

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB assesses evidence from Government and organisations representing schools and the teaching profession, and visits schools and local authorities to develop its understanding of issues facing teachers. In addition to providing recommendations on annual pay awards for teachers and school leaders, the STRB has been asked to report on a variety of matters in recent years, including moving toward a pay structure with higher starting and early career salaries and relatively flatter pay progression and providing additional guidance to schools through advisory pay points.

Further information on the STRB is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body

The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit an economist that demonstrates the following criteria:

- A strong track record of professional experience requiring specialist expertise in economics at a senior level
- The ability to analyse and interpret a large amount of complex and sensitive information, clearly communicate economic analysis to a non-specialist audience and demonstrate a working knowledge of the impact of any potential decisions on the teacher workforce.
- An understanding of pay, remuneration and reward issues and an appreciation of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions.
- An ability to communicate effectively in collective decision making, assessing/debating conflicting opinions across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes to form a coherent set of recommendations.

It is desirable if candidates also have:

- A detailed knowledge and understanding of labour market economics, and/or the economics of education.

Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 25 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £300 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at: <https://bit.ly/STRBEconomist>

You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill additional vacancies for a chair and board member. If you are interested in also applying for either of these roles, then further details can be found here:

Chair vacancy – <https://bit.ly/STRBChair>

Board member – <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>



Department
for Education



School Teachers' Review Body - Board Member

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB assesses evidence from Government and organisations representing schools and the teaching profession, and visits schools and local authorities to develop its understanding of issues facing teachers. In addition to providing recommendations on annual pay awards for teachers and school leaders, the STRB has been asked to report on a variety of matters in recent years, including moving toward a pay structure with higher starting and early career salaries and relatively flatter pay progression and providing additional guidance to schools through advisory pay points.

Further information on the STRB is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body

The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit a board member that demonstrates the following criteria:

- A strong track record of providing effective leadership at a senior level.
- A good knowledge and understanding of pay, remuneration, performance management, labour market and reward issues and a strong understanding of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions.
- The ability to analyse and interpret a large amount of complex and sensitive information, providing insight and a working knowledge over the impact of any potential decisions on the workforce.
- An ability to communicate effectively in collective decision making, assessing/debating conflicting opinions across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes to form a coherent set of recommendations.

Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 25 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £300 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>

You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill additional vacancy of chair. If you are interested in also applying for this role, then further details can be found here <https://bit.ly/STRBChair>



Headteacher Bradon Forest School

L25 to L31 (£76,141 to £88,187)



The Athelstan Trust wishes to appoint an excellent teacher and school leader to the post of Headteacher at Bradon Forest School from September 2021.

Our Multi-Academy Trust, formed in 2015, consists of four (soon to be five) secondary schools (Malmesbury School, Bradon Forest School, Sir William Romney's School and The Dean Academy) in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

Bradon Forest is a successful, popular 11-16 school with approximately 1,000 students in the rural village of Purton, surrounded by stunning countryside and easy access to the M4. There is shared sixth form provision with Malmesbury School. An inspection in 2016 judged the school Good in all areas. The Trust's schools share a deep commitment to delivering an excellent comprehensive education.

At Bradon Forest, we continue to develop our attractive site following the construction of our new state of the art sports hall in 2016 and new food and textiles block in 2018. Our mix of modern and traditional learning environments gives a unique, individual feel that is welcomed by students and parents. We provide a friendly, caring, creative and purposeful environment. Students are encouraged to take every opportunity both academically and in extra-curricular activities. We strive to develop confident young adults who show respect and resilience and have high aspirations.

This post offers a talented and ambitious school leader an opportunity to work in a supportive Trust committed to working together to raise standards and high-quality Professional Development for staff.

Closing Date: 12 noon Tuesday 5th January 2021—Interviews 14th and 15th January 2021.

Please send a letter of application (maximum two sides of A4) outlining your skills and experience. An application pack is available on the school's website. Please send your application form and letter to Jo Cummings admin@theathelstantrust.org

Bradon Forest School, The Peak, Purton, Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 4AT
<https://www.bradonforest.org.uk>



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undle CE Primary School

HEADTEACHER

Full Time, Permanent

Pay Scale: Leadership ISR (Group 3)

Points: Headteacher: L16-22

Are you a Headteacher looking for a new challenge or an ambitious Deputy/Head of School ready to take the next step?

The Trust is looking to recruit someone who:

- > has recent, successful experience at Headteacher level or is looking for an opportunity to take the next step in their leadership career
- > shows a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning
- > has the skills to lead, improve and sustain academic achievement for all pupils
- > is willing to embrace and develop the Christian ethos of our school
- > is an excellent communicator and able to build effective partnerships with families, staff, governors and the wider community
- > has a flexible approach to working
- > is driven, ambitious and enthusiastic.

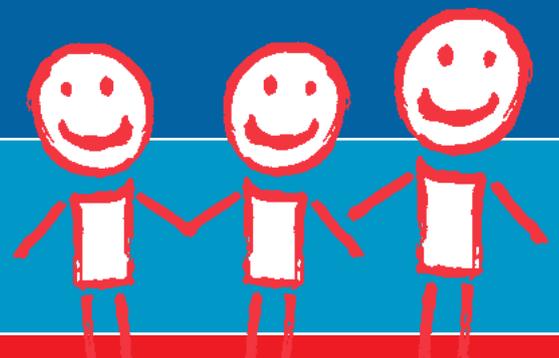
VACANCY

Deadline for Applications: Monday 11th January 2021 at 12:00pm

Interview Date: 18th/19th January 2021

Start Date: 12th April 2021 or 31st August 2021

See the school website listing for more information





Deeping St James Community Primary School

Role: Headteacher

Location: Deeping St James, Lincolnshire
Number of Pupils: 212
Contract term: Permanent

Salary Range: L13-19
Contract type: Full time
Commencing: 19th April 2021

Chair of Governors Message:

We are incredibly proud of our school and wish to appoint an enthusiastic, inspirational and motivated Headteacher from April 2021 who will lead our thriving school into its next stage of success. We are a warm, welcoming and friendly school where pupils are passionate about learning, hardworking and well-behaved, with staff who are dedicated and fully embrace our school's ethos. The ideal candidate will share our school's values, nurture positive relationships and lead by example.

We can offer:

- Passionate and committed teaching and support staff who value professional development
- The opportunity to work with wonderful, enthusiastic children who are committed to their learning
- A well-resourced, interactive learning environment to enable children to be the best they can be
- A forward-thinking, positive and supportive governing body
- An active Friends of the School Association with very supportive parents
- A supportive and innovative network of local primary school partners.

The ideal candidate should possess:

- A clear vision of excellence in primary education with the ability to think strategically
- The highest expectations for pupil attainment, personal

development and welfare

- A track record of being an excellent classroom practitioner
- Excellent leadership skills with proven evidence of understanding and embedding new initiatives to develop and enhance the curriculum
- An understanding of effective management and the ability to develop and empower a team of highly motivated, passionate and dedicated staff
- An openness to the advice and guidance of others
- A desire to develop and nurture strong working relationships with pupils, staff, families and the wider school community.

We hope that you will apply for the opportunity to bring your talents, drive and compassion to DSJ School. If your application is successful, the Governing Body and the entire school community stands ready to support your efforts and do everything possible to help you succeed.

Our school is committed to safeguarding and appointments will be subject to satisfactory Enhance DBS clearance and other significant safeguarding checks. Deeping St James Community Primary School is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

We warmly invite you to visit our school. To arrange a visit please contact our school office by emailing marcelle.russell@dsj.school or calling 01778 342314.

To apply, please complete an application form together with a covering letter outlining why you would like the post and how you would continue to develop and enhance the practices at the school. Application packs are available from the school office or on the school website.

Tel: 01778 342314

E-Mail: marcelle.Russell@dsj.school

Closing date for applications is **12 noon on Wednesday 13th January 2021**
 Interviews will take place on **Friday 22nd January 2021**

St Cecilia's
R. C. High School



HEADTEACHER

Required from: September 2021
Salary Range: L25 to L31 (£76,141 to £87,313)

The Governors of St Cecilia's RC High School are seeking to appoint a well-qualified, ambitious and inspirational Headteacher who will lead the school on the next stage of its journey.

The school is a relatively small Voluntary Aided Catholic High School set in Lancashire's beautiful Ribble Valley with 465 pupils currently on roll.

Since 2015, and the appointment of the current Headteacher, the school has undergone significant improvement and is now the first-choice school for the Catholic community.

It was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2016, and 'Outstanding' in 2017 during its Section 48 inspection. A highlight in October 2019 was being judged 'Good' again by Ofsted under the new EIF.

The significant improvements see school oversubscribed in Key Stage 3 and part of the LA's expansion programme.

There has been a rolling programme of building upgrades for the past six years to the tune of several million pounds. The programme will continue again in January 2021 with another series of building improvements.

School has also been successful in gaining recent awards of Lancashire Secondary Sports School of the Year and Preston Secondary Sports School of the year.

We also play an active part in the local community by attending and supporting the local agricultural show, Longridge Field Day, Longridge Town Council as well as local churches.

The successful candidate will be a practising Catholic, fully committed to developing and enriching the mission of our school. The person will have a vision, enthusiasm and ability to motivate others and a commitment to developing the ethos and successes of our school.

This is an exciting time to join school.

For more information please contact us on 01772 783074 or visit our website www.st-cecilias.co.uk



GOVERNANCE MANAGER & CLERK TO THE BOARD

We have an exciting opportunity for a Governance Manager & Clerk to the Board to join the Mowbray Education Trust Central team. Reporting to the Chair of the Board you will be responsible for the smooth and efficient running of meetings of the Board of Directors and any committees, and to monitor compliance with various legislative and regulatory requirements affecting Mowbray Education Trust Limited (MET).

The role will include clerking meetings, including the preparation of agendas, taking of minutes and distribution of information. You will also manage two clerks who provide clerking to the individual schools.

This role is permanent working 14.80 hours per week (equivalent to 2 days per week), for 52.179 weeks per year (all year round).

Board meetings are generally held at John Ferneley College in Melton Mowbray, however travel to other venues may be required.

Application deadline - midnight on Thursday 31st December 2020

For more information and to apply, please visit <https://www.mowbrayeducation.org/join-us>



We're making a difference, can you? Principal Designate, Liverpool

Join an outstanding Trust as we expand our reach into the North West. This is a unique opportunity for a visionary leader to head up our first academy in Liverpool and make a difference where it matters most.

Dixons Academies is a high-performing Trust currently serving 12 schools across Bradford and Leeds. It offers a rich curriculum and academically rigorous education to some of the North's most deprived communities. Having doubled in size over the past five years, we have exciting plans to double again, adding hubs in Liverpool and Manchester. In collaboration with the existing Governing Body, we are seeking to appoint a Headteacher of Fazakerley High School from Easter 2021, to become Principal of the Academy when the school joins our Trust a few months later.

Full details on our jobs portal - visit www.dixonsat.com/join/jobs and search by job title.

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