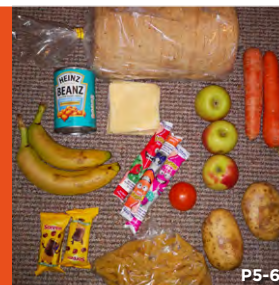


SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Who are food parcels really best serving?



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Meet the CEO with a 100-year plan



P20-22

Return of the never-ending academy saga



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Is the media making a hard job even harder?



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FRIDAY, JAN 15 2021 | EDITION 236

Williamson to MPs this week on Greenwich legal threat

'None of us were aware of the new variant'



Erm ...

3:38PM DEC 14TH

'We have identified a new variant of coronavirus ... we have seen very sharp exponential rises in the virus across London'

One hour later ...

4:54PM DEC 14TH



14 DECEMBER 2020

THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020

ROYAL LONDON BOROUGH OF GREENWICH TEMPORARY CONTINUITY DIRECTION

The Secretary of State for Education, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 38 of, and paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 17 to, the Coronavirus Act 2020¹, gives the following direction.

Before giving this direction the Secretary of State for Education:

(a) has had regard to any advice from the Chief Medical Officer or one of the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of the Department of Health and Social Care relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus; and

(b) is satisfied that giving this direction is a necessary and proportionate action for, or in connection with the continued provision of, education.

Greenwich council ordered to withdraw letters asking schools to close

SCHOOLS WEEK

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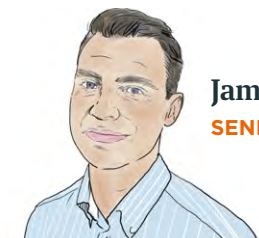
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Exams to be replaced with ... exams?



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Lockdown diary: '80 hours. I hope not all my weeks are this long'

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Williamson accused of rewriting history after denial he knew of new Covid strain

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The education secretary stands accused of “rewriting the past” after claiming not to have known about a new Covid strain before ordering a council to withdraw its plea for schools to close early for Christmas.

Gavin Williamson is facing calls to clarify his comments to MPs on Wednesday. He told them he was not “aware” of the new variant when he issued a legal direction to Greenwich Council on December 14.

However, the direction was issued over an hour after a high-profile warning in the House of Commons about the potential dangers of the new strain (see box out).

The government was roundly criticised for ordering Greenwich to withdraw guidance urging schools to move to online learning for most pupils during the last week of term. The council’s leader, Dan Thorpe, had appealed to leaders amid an “exponential growth” of Covid cases.

Less than three weeks later, the borough was placed on a Department for Education Covid “hotspots” list, meaning that its primary schools were told to stay closed to most pupils after the Christmas break. The government later closed all schools.

Appearing in front of the Parliamentary education committee this week, both Williamson and DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood claimed they did not know of the government’s concerns about the new strain of the virus when the direction was issued.

However, Parliamentary records show that health secretary Matt Hancock warned about the dangers of the new variant in the Commons at 3.38pm on December 14, and the direction to Greenwich Council was issued at 4.54pm, over an hour later.

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said: “I was watching as he [Williamson] gave evidence and, as he said that, I thought to myself ‘I don’t think that’s right’.

“Everyone misremembers things, but this rewriting of the recent past is very concerning.”

Thorpe said that Williamson’s claim was “simply not true” and that, as a result of the direction, the council “had no choice but to ask



local schools to remain open for the wider school population, potentially putting many people at risk of catching Covid-19”.

The development comes after infection survey data from the Office for National Statistics showed that as many as 1 in 18 secondary pupils and 1 in 23 primary and early years pupils in London tested positive over the Christmas period.

In a letter to committee chair Robert Halfon, Thorpe urged the committee to “seek urgent clarity” from Williamson over his comments.

The letter adds: “The secretary of state for education may not have been present in the House of Commons for the statement made on the new variant, but I would most certainly hope that as a senior figure in the cabinet he was aware of the latest updates with regards to the coronavirus.”

Schools Week approached the committee for comment.

Williamson told MPs that the direction was issued to Greenwich because the council had

acted unilaterally and without consultation with the government.

But this is also disputed by the council, which said it was in “regular contact” with the DfE, which was “aware of the increasing concerns in Greenwich schools”.

Williamson told MPs that his department was “in a position where the knowledge of the new variant was certainly not something that we had any understanding or knowledge of”.

He added: “At that stage, none of us were aware of the new variant and we were not aware of the impact that it would ultimately have in terms of case rates and the impact more widely across the country including in London.”

Acland-Hood was also asked if the DfE was aware of the health secretary’s statement before the direction was issued. She mistakenly claimed Hancock’s announcement was on December 15, before adding: “No, we weren’t aware of the announcement on the new variant at the point the direction was issued.”

HANCOCK’S GRAVE WARNING BEFORE DfE’S SCHOOL CLOSURE LEGAL THREAT

Matt Hancock told the House of Commons a new variant had been identified that “may be associated with the faster spread in the south-east of England”.

“Initial analysis suggests that this variant is growing faster than the existing variants,” the health secretary added, with over 1,000 cases predominantly in the south of England and numbers “increasing rapidly”.

Hancock said: “I need to tell the house that over the last week we have seen very sharp

exponential rises in the virus across London, Kent, parts of Essex and Hertfordshire. We do not know the extent to which that is because of the new variant, but no matter its cause, we have to take swift and decisive action.”



Matt Hancock

Investigation

Food parcels fiasco: Free school meal failures exposed - again

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government is facing questions over its handling of the free school meals fiasco after it emerged that ministers pushed schools to prioritise food parcels following lobbying by the catering industry.

Department for Education guidance initially told schools late last week to adopt a “food parcel first approach” to replace free school meals for children at home during partial closures this spring.

However, updated guidance issued this week gave schools the “freedom to decide on the best approach for their pupils”, allowing settings to choose between lunch parcels, local vouchers and the government’s national voucher scheme, which will relaunch next week.

The U-turn followed a fierce backlash in response to images of pitiful food parcels shared by parents on social media. The uproar prompted an apology from the country’s largest school catering provider, Chartwells, and a move by industry body LACA to update its guidance on what hampers should contain.

One parent who posted a picture of a limited offer told Schools Week that the parcel was packed in a “flimsy carrier bag” and the food was “squashed”.

Another tweeted a picture that soon went viral of what her family had received, saying she could have bought the same from Asda for just over £5.

The initial move to encourage food parcels was claimed as a win by LACA, which said the guidance was updated following “discussions” last week between its representatives and the DfE.

WEEK 1:

- 1 loaf of bread **or** pack of rolls / 10-inch wraps
- 2 baking potatoes
- 1 cucumber
- 3 large tomatoes **or** 1 pack of cherry tomatoes
- 1 standard tin sweetcorn in water
- 5 portions of fresh fruit (e.g. apples, satsumas, bananas) **or** 3 portions of fresh fruit **and** 1 tin fruit in juice (e.g. pears, peaches, fruit cocktail)
- 2 items from the following: 1 pack sliced cooked meat (e.g. chicken, ham or vegetarian alternative) **or** 1 tin meat **or** 1 tin tuna in water **or** 6 eggs
- 200g block of cheese
- 1 tin baked beans
- 1 500g pot plain low-fat yoghurt **or** 3 individual serving yoghurt pots



Questions over Chartwells' involvement

Tulip Siddiq, the shadow children’s minister, called on the government to “come clean about who was involved in drawing up the guidance on food parcels”.

“Making sure children get proper, healthy meals should be the top priority for ministers, not listening to lobbyists from the catering industry.”

LACA’s chair is Stephen Forster, a director of Chartwells – which was criticised this week over providing sub-standard food parcels.

The firm works with around 2,000 schools and is the country’s largest school caterer.

Regarding one widely shared picture claiming to show a £30 hamper containing only about £5 worth of food, Chartwells said the image “shows five days of free school lunches (not ten days) and the charge for food, packing and distribution was



Another Chartwells offering. Source: GoBronson (Twitter)

actually £10.50 and not £30 as suggested”.

“However, in our efforts to provide thousands of food parcels a week at extremely short notice we are very sorry the quantity has fallen short in this instance.”

But despite the concerns over poor-quality hampers, caterers will now be getting paid more.

Following the meeting with LACA, the DfE

Continued on next page

Parcel guidance found lacking - but will be updated

Johnson claimed this week that the images of food parcels shared online “do not reflect the government’s guidance, which is for about double, if not more, the quantity of food for lunch packs for five days”.

But Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer pointed out this week (see tweet on next page) that the most prominent of the images bore

“striking similarities” to guidance circulated by the government on what parcels should contain.

The guidance, put together by LACA, said a parcel for one child for five days should include a loaf of bread, rolls or wraps, two baking potatoes, one cucumber, tomatoes, a tin of sweetcorn, five portions of fresh fruit,

two items of protein, such as cooked meat, tinned tuna or eggs, 200 grams of cheese, a tin of baked beans and yoghurt pots.

The image that went viral this week was missing only a few items from the list, but was largely in keeping with its requirements.

LACA has said it will review and update its “example parcel” guidance.

Investigation

announced it will be providing top-up funding of £3.50 per-pupil, per-week to schools to cover food parcels.

This comes on top of the £11.50 weekly funding already provided to pay for free school meals and brings the amount available for parcels into line with the value of vouchers.

School food campaigner Andy Jolley said ministers "must now explain the level of influence the catering industry had on [their] decisions".

PR push and Tory links

Prime minister Boris Johnson told MPs on Wednesday that Chartwells and other firms had been "hailed over the coals" and asked to apologise for the parcels.

But, earlier that day, education secretary Gavin Williamson admitted to the education select committee that it would be up to schools to take action against firms that provided an inadequate service.

The Harris Federation, one of England's largest academy trusts, dropped Chartwells as a provider of food parcels to its pupils after being "appalled" by the quality.

Following the backlash, the firm has now said that schools will be refunded for food parcels that don't meet its "high standards", and that it will ensure its hampers reflect the additional £3.50 in funding available from Monday.

It will also add free breakfasts to the parcels from January 25.

But Chartwells' good news push doesn't seem to have stemmed the fallout.

The firm is the UK schools arm of the Compass Group. In its latest annual results announcement Compass said it made an operating profit of £561



Boris Johnson speaks to MPs this week

million in the year to September 30, 2020, a fall of almost 70 per cent from the £1.8 billion made in the previous year.

Accounts show Compass chief executive Dominic Blakemore received pay, pension and bonuses of almost £4.7 million in the year to September 2019. *The Guardian* reported this week that his salary fell to £1.2 million with no bonus the following year, in recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on the industry.

The group's former chair, Paul Walsh, who stepped down as a director in December, is a former member of David Cameron's business advisory group. He donated £10,000 to the Conservative Party in 2010.

Stephen Morales, from the Institute of School Business Leadership, said the "constantly changing" policy position on schools had made it "very difficult to implement appropriate checks and balances".

"With the pressure the system is under I am not surprised there are examples of providers taking shortcuts."

Over ten per cent of LACA's 556 full and corporate members are from Chartwells. The firm



Keir Starmer
@Keir_Starmer

Boris Johnson just said to me that the images of Free School Meals shared on social media were "disgraceful".

But there are striking similarities between the shameful meal parcels and his Government's guidance.

#PMQs

Widely shared image on social media	Government guidance
1 x loaf of bread	1 x loaf of bread
2 x potatoes	2 x potatoes
1 x tomato	3 x tomatoes
5 x portions of fruit	5 x portions of fruit
7 x cheese portions	3 x cheese portions
1 x tin of baked beans	1 x tin of baked beans
3 x yoghurts	3 x individual serving yoghurt pots
1 x bag of pasta	1 x cucumber
2 x packets Soreen	1 x tin sweetcorn
2 x carrots	1 x bottle milk
	2 x tin of meat

contributes five per cent of LACA's total budget, paying £71 plus VAT for each member, around £4,700 a year.

LACA told Schools Week its chairs were elected on an annual basis by its board, and that all of its national steering group members "commit to not show bias or preference to the company or local authority they represent".

"Decisions made by the officers of LACA, including the chair and vice chair, are separate from their day jobs and represent all our members' interests. They are signed off by the LACA national steering group who are members of the LACA Board."

DfE facing another fiasco over half-term vouchers

The national free school meals voucher scheme will relaunch on Monday, run by Edenred. Schools that switch to the scheme will also be able to claim back any money spent on providing parcels or local vouchers over the past two weeks.

However, the government has come under fire after stating in guidance that schools "do not need to provide lunch parcels or vouchers during the February half-term".

"Time and time again this government has had to be shamed into providing food for hungry children over school holidays," said Labour's Tulip Siddiq.

But the DfE pointed to the £170 million Covid winter grants handed to councils in December, which are meant to help struggling families until March.

Funding is ring-fenced, with at least 80 per cent earmarked to support with goods and bills, the DfE said.

The cost of providing free school meals over two weeks could cost around £40 million.

The DfE has also launched a tender process to find an organisation to support the wider rollout of its school-holiday activities and food programme.

Ministers announced in November that the

programme, which has been in a pilot phase for three years, will be rolled out to all council areas in England and cover the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021; £220 million in funding is being provided.

According to tender documents, the £2 million support contract will provide "support, advisory and performance monitoring services to assist local authorities with ensuring holiday provision for school-age children across England".

The successful bidder will have to report regularly to the DfE on progress in local areas.

Schools asked to open facilities for public testing

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

A council is exploring the option of using its schools as mass testing centres for the wider public.

Birmingham City Council sent a short survey to its secondary schools, in partnership with Birmingham Public Health, asking if schools have the capacity to stay open between 4 and 6pm "for public sector workers to access lateral flow testing if funding was available".

The schools were also asked if they would allow local primary school staff access to testing centres, which were set up last week, during the day.

The council caveats the questions by stating that the responses do "not commit your school to offering additional tests" and a spokesperson told Schools Week that plans were still at a "very early stage".

Meanwhile, the government revealed this week that the mass testing programme will be rolled out to primary schools, with tests arriving from Monday (see box-out). However the plans were placed into doubt after *The Guardian* revealed last night the testing in schools had not been formally approved by the regulator.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, a senior school business manager in Birmingham and former chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), praised the council's approach. "The survey isn't applying any pressure for schools to take part – it's a scoping survey which makes a lot of sense," he said.

He predicted that using "public buildings for public health efforts" in light of the partial closure of schools would probably be supported by schools "provided it is genuinely an opt-in for those that have capacity".

The move follows offers from school leaders to use their testing sites – set up last week – as vaccination centres while they remain closed to the majority of pupils.

Gavin Williamson pledged support for the initiative on Wednesday, telling the education select committee that there was a "real appetite and a real ability" for schools to "play a major role in the rollout" of the vaccination.

However, his announcement about the testing programme being rolled out to primary schools came despite warnings from experts that the strategy will "inevitably" lead to more Covid cases in the classroom.

Currently staff are tested weekly in secondary



schools and colleges, while pupils and staff who are identified as close contacts of confirmed cases are tested daily for seven days in order to allow them to stay in school.

But Professor Jon Deeks, of the Institute of Applied Health Research at the University of Birmingham, told Schools Week that the testing used by schools "isn't good enough" to inform decisions allowing close contact pupils to stay on site.

Studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England found the Innova test used in schools was 76.8 per cent accurate when identifying positive cases. However, more recent studies have suggested it is less accurate – with only 40 per cent of cases detected during a community mass testing pilot in Liverpool.

Deeks also questioned why schools were being advised to use the tests to keep children in school, when authorisation of the tests explicitly prohibited such actions.

On December 23, the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted an application for exceptional use of the rapid test to be used by members of the public. But it states:

"Anyone receiving a negative test result should continue to follow the latest guidance for their area."

Government guidance states that, if you have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for Covid, "you must stay at home and complete 10 full days' isolation".

Deeks added: "If you are using a negative result to make a decision, that's the wrong way of using these tests completely and will inevitably lead to more cases in the classroom."

In minutes from December, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) likewise warned that "lateral flow testing should not be seen as a way on its own of enabling high-risk activities to take place".

Before the mass testing programme, pupils who were close contacts of somebody with the virus would be sent home to self-isolate.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said it was examining how "repeat testing can help find people without symptoms of coronavirus and break the chains of transmission". The MHRA has been contacted for comment.

Primary testing: what you need to know

- Primary schools will be sent rapid testing kits from Monday
- Instructions on how to carry out the test will be provided
- Staff will be expected to self administer the tests at home
- While the tests are only to be used by staff at this stage, parents will perform the tests at home on their children when it is rolled out further
- Leaders have been told to set up testing processes so they are ready for when schools reopen

Ofqual gives backing to replacing exams with ... mini exams

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Plans for pupils to sit short, externally-set exams this summer to help teachers award grades appear to have won Ofqual's support, but the wait for full details continues.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has asked the exams regulator to look at the "possibility of providing externally-set tasks or papers" to inform teacher assessments after exams were cancelled this year.

Ofqual chief regulator Simon Lebus seemed to support the proposal in a letter to Williamson. He said that the "more the evidence comes from students' performance in externally-set papers, the fairer and more consistent teachers' assessments are likely to be, because all students are given the chance to show what they can do in the same way".

Last week, Williamson assured schools that he and Ofqual had already drawn up contingency plans when announcing that exams would be cancelled. However, a consultation promised this week with the full details has yet to be published.

Andy Byers, head teacher at Framwellgate School in Durham, said it seemed "perverse" that exams were being replaced with "mini-exams".

He added: "The secretary of state has said that a form of teacher assessment will be used but, if all these tests do is inform (and not replace) teacher assessments, the government should have continued with the planned examinations.



"It is not clear how these mini-exams will be marked or moderated, when the content will be published, how multiple test dates can maintain the integrity of the process, or how the original problem (that not all students have covered the same content) can be mitigated."

Lebus said that appeal arrangements would probably be "more straightforward" with papers set externally, but added that this approach "will mean teachers have less flexibility in terms of the evidence they could use".

He continued: "The consultation will carefully consider the issues related to this and, given the advantages of students taking consistent papers, whether teachers should be required to use them."

In a letter setting out some direction for Ofqual, Williamson said that teacher assessments should be informed by a "breadth of evidence", but that

plans must "minimise additional burden". The consultation should propose students are assessed only on the content that they have learnt so far, he added.

Williamson also said that grades should be decided "as late as possible", to maximise teaching time, and that any changes to grades as a result of quality assurance should be "the exception" and based on human decisions, not an algorithm.

"The process will not involve second-guessing the judgment of teachers but confirming that the process and evidence used to award a grade is reasonable," he added.

Lebus also warned that overall outcomes this year would "likely look different" from 2020 – when results soared because centre-assessed grades were used – and previous years.

Asked for a further explanation, an Ofqual spokesperson said: "The checks and balances, which normally make sure standards are maintained, will not be possible this year. We cannot say how overall results might be different – that will depend on how students perform and on how their teachers assess them."

Geoff Barton, general secretary at heads' union ASCL, said one of the key issues will be "precisely how any system of externally set assessment would work and how this can be done in a way that ensures fairness for students who have been heavily disrupted by the pandemic".

He added that Williamson's letter sets out "broad and sensible parameters" for replacing GCSEs and A-levels, but "the devil will be in the detail".

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Boards return just 25% of fees for cancelled exams

Exam boards gave back to schools just a quarter of the exam fees paid last year.

The country's three main boards had pledged to return any savings after exams were cancelled last summer. The boards are waiting to find out the final exam replacement plans before amending their fees for this year.

AQA, the UK's largest provider of academic qualifications, returned £42 million to schools and colleges in 2020, which was 26 per cent of entry fees collected for the summer, according to newly-published annual accounts.

A spokesperson said last summer was "still costly", including extra costs such

as building a "completely new system" for grades.

The awarding body said that it had "no wish to gain financially from these extraordinary circumstances" and will return any money it does not need this year.

OCR gave back to schools and colleges 23 per cent of its fees for GCSE and A-levels last year, a total of £7.9 million.

Jill Duffy, the board's chief executive, said it had to cover substantial costs, including "the sums we had spent on exams before they were cancelled, such as creating and printing exam papers, as well as the costs of developing the new IT system to deliver results this year. On top of that, we decided

to take care of our assessors through a variety of payments."

The board said it will amend the fees "if necessary" when it knows the arrangements for awarding grades this summer. It plans to publish its fees "imminently".

Pearson said it was still "too early" to set out what any exam fee arrangements would be for this summer, but it also did not wish to gain financially.

A total of 23 per cent of its exam fees was refunded as credit notes for GCSEs. Pearson refused to confirm how much this figure came to.

'Live' lessons not always best for remote learning, says Ofsted

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Live lessons are not the "gold standard" of remote education, Ofsted has warned as part of a guide for schools on what works well when teaching online.

The advice comes after it was revealed that the inspectorate's upcoming monitoring visits will have a "particular focus" on remote learning and that parents with concerns about a school's offering can report the matter to Ofsted.

The watchdog's advice, compiled from research and visits to schools last term, said that live lessons have a number of advantages, such as making it easier to align the curriculum.

However, the report stated that, because pupils find it harder to concentrate when being taught remotely, "filming a classroom lesson may be ineffective". It is better to divide content into smaller chunks, teachers were told.

But, while Ofsted sought to play down live lessons, education secretary Gavin Williamson told MPs on the education select committee on Wednesday that live lessons play an "important role".

Department for Education guidance states that remote education should include both recorded or live direct teaching time, as well as time for pupils to complete tasks independently.

The Ofsted guide, put together



by deputy director Daniel Muijs, said it was important for teachers to stay in regular contact with pupils. This can be done by "using technology to automate communication".

The report continued: "Some teachers have set up automated check-in emails to pupils to identify where they are with set tasks. This also gives a perception that teachers are 'watching' while pupils are learning remotely."

Muijs advised schools to consider enabling chat group and video-linking functions to allow for interaction.

This can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes, as well as "help pupils maintain their social skills".

The research from the watchdog also revealed that pupils using a laptop tended to spend

longer accessing a remote lesson than those using a phone or tablet.

Schools should therefore "think carefully about whether pupils have access to the right kind of device when we're using digital remote education".

Due to the disparity in devices available to pupils, the guide advises it may be more effective "to deliver remote education through worksheets or a textbook".

This is because a "good textbook can provide the curriculum content and sequencing pupils need" and will be easier to access for some pupils.

The DfE also published a remote education framework this week to help schools identify "strengths and areas for improvement" in online lessons. This follows remote learning expectations released last week for the third national lockdown.

Elsewhere, Williamson's call last week for parents to report their child's school to Ofsted somewhat backfired as some took the opportunity to praise schools instead.

The inspectorate has pulled in extra staff to sort through an influx of more than 10,000 emails, as of Monday. The watchdog would not say how many emails represent genuine complaints, but it is thought the majority are positive.

However, Chris Jones, the watchdog's director of strategy, warned on Twitter that the surge in emails "just increases the chance of a genuine safeguarding risk taking longer to be resolved".

Daniel Muijs

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted switches back to remote monitoring after inspector opposition

Ofsted performed a U-turn this week on plans to conduct monitoring inspections in person after opposition from its own inspectors. It means the new "supportive" inspections will now take place remotely until at least February half-term.

Ofsted said on Tuesday that the decision followed a "change in emphasis from the government and clear advice to 'act as if you have the virus' over the next few weeks".

The watchdog said it remained "satisfied that our planned on-site activity would

be safe and appropriate under current restrictions", but added: "However, the new government messages and the practical challenges of deploying inspectors across England have prompted this change."

Ofsted had planned to test inspectors before they conducted on-site visits. However, its inspectors who are members of the FDA union voted "overwhelmingly" on Monday evening to call for a suspension of on-site visits "as a matter of urgency".

Duncan Woodhead, FDA national officer for Ofsted, said as well as "clear risks to

the health of HMI staff undertaking the visits, with inspectors moving from site to site, there are clear risks posed to the health of students and school staff".

Monitoring inspections are due to begin on January 25 and will have a "particular focus on how well children and learners are being educated remotely".

The watchdog will continue on-site inspections where it has "immediate concerns" about a school's provision, for instance over safeguarding or leadership issues.

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Speed read

When will schools reopen? Here's what we know ...

After announcing the current partial schools closures will last until at least February half-term, politicians are now increasingly being quizzed about how and when they expect schools to reopen fully.

Prime minister Boris Johnson suggested this week it was still too early to tell if any rules can be relaxed by the middle of next month – suggesting possible further delays to schools reopening fully.

However, health secretary Matt Hancock said there are four conditions that must be met before schools can reopen. Here's what we know ...

1 NO 'MAJOR NEW VIRUS' THAT'S VACCINE-RESISTANT

Hancock told The Andrew Marr Show on Sunday that for schools to reopen there shouldn't be a "major new variation in the virus itself".

The UK has imposed a ban on direct flights from South Africa, as well as Brazil and its surrounding countries, amid concern about new Covid variants that emerged in each of the countries.

The UK variant has also been behind a surge of cases in this country, but the latest data suggests that infections in some parts of England are beginning to fall.

Speaking this week, Johnson said that the reopening of schools depends on new variants – such as the South African or Brazilian mutations – not being vaccine-resistant.

He said there was no evidence at present to suggest this, but added, the schools reopening plan "depends on us not finding out something else about the disease that makes us recalculate."

2 VACCINE ROLL-OUT MUST BE 'PROCEEDING EFFECTIVELY'

The second condition Hancock set out is that the vaccine roll-out should be proceeding "effectively", adding that it "currently is, it's going very well and we've got the new vaccination centres opening next week".

Latest figures show that as of Wednesday, 2.49 million first vaccine doses and 415,656 second doses had been given in England – a total of 2.91 million. That was 250,000 up on the previous day.

Hancock said the government is aiming to have offered a vaccine to everyone in the top four most vulnerable groups by February 15.

"Now we are on track for delivering that, but then it still takes two to three weeks for them to get immunity, and during that time we will keep going down the age spectrum," Hancock said.

Johnson also told MPs it depends on the "success" of the vaccination programme whether schools can reopen.

3 COVID DEATH RATE MUST DROP

The number of deaths must come down, Hancock said. On Wednesday, the UK reported its highest daily death figure since the pandemic began, 1,564 died within 28 days of a positive Covid test.

Hancock said the number of Covid deaths is "highly concentrated in the most vulnerable group, more than four out of five deaths have sadly been amongst the over-70s and the clinically extremely vulnerable who are in those top groups".

Those are the groups the government hopes to vaccinate by mid-Feb, and Hancock added: "That means I hope we can see the number of deaths going down once we've got the vaccines done and two to three weeks afterwards to get the immunity."

4 REDUCE THE PRESSURE ON THE NHS

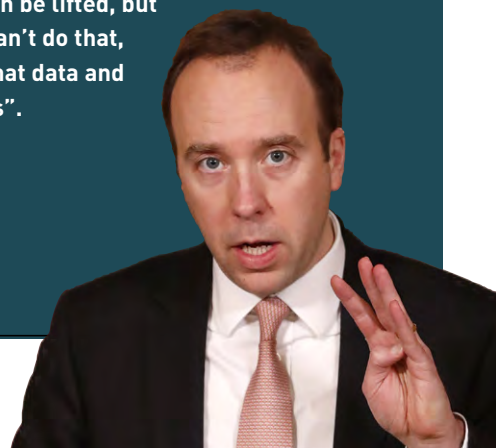
The final condition set out by Hancock was reducing the pressure on the NHS which he said is facing a winter "like no other".

Some hospitals are now using overflow Covid hospitals, with Professor Stephen Powis, NHS England's medical director, saying on Monday that hospital admissions will continue to rise into February.

But hospital admissions in some areas – such as London and south-east England – have fallen for the first time after rising steadily throughout December.

Johnson said they are seeing some "early signs of progress in restraining the growth of the virus", but added it is "far, far too early for us to say that that means we can go into any kind of relaxation in the middle of February".

Hancock added he "would like to put more precise timings on when the restrictions can be lifted, but unfortunately you just can't do that, we've just got to track that data and see how things progress".



Ministers must do better on attendance data

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

The government has been criticised for holding back publication of “incredibly informative” data showing secondary schools had as few as 14 per cent of pupils attending in the last week of term before Christmas.

The Department for Education statistics published this week showed the number of pupils missing school due to Covid-related closures nearly trebled in the last week of the autumn term.

Secondaries in Thurrock, in Essex, had just 14 per cent of pupils present, while London councils Redbridge and Havering both had fewer than a quarter of pupils in their secondary schools (17 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).

The attendance release was originally planned for December 22, but it was not published until Tuesday so that the DfE could “enable a fuller explanation of



attendance trends”.

Luke Sibieta, research fellow at the Education Policy Institute (EPI), said: “Frustratingly, this data was not made available at the beginning of January – having these figures would have been incredibly informative for the recent debate about whether schools could or should re-open.

“In future, it is important that all government data on schools is released in a timely and transparent way. This is key to an informed public debate.”

Analysis from the EPI found secondary attendance dropped on average to 72 per cent in the final week of term – in line with a surge in Covid-19 infections in December.

Attendance across all schools fell from 84.6 per cent on December 10 to 79.2 per cent on December 16.

In total, around 872,000 pupils, up to 11 per cent of the total population, did not attend school for Covid-related reasons – 178,000 more than in the previous week.

The number of pupils absent because their schools closed for Covid-related reasons rose from 53,000 to 137,000.

Meanwhile the government’s weekly attendance survey – responded to by 82 per cent of state-funded schools in England – found that 14 per cent of pupils were in school on Monday.

In primaries, 53 per cent of schools reported having more than a fifth of children in. Two per cent had more than half of their primary cohort in school.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

300k more laptops, but no target date for delivery

The government has promised to supply an additional 300,000 laptops and tablets to assist poorer pupils with remote learning, but has not said when they will be delivered.

The new pledge takes the total number of devices to be dished out by the Department for Education (DfE) to 1.3 million, but unions have accused the government of “trying to make up for lost time” almost a year into the crisis.

The DfE also announced that all primary schools have now been invited to apply for devices. The scheme was previously only open to secondary schools.

Ministers have come under growing pressure to get more devices out to poorer families following the decision last Monday to close schools to all but the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL school leaders’ union, welcomed the extra laptops but said it was “pretty poor that nearly a year after this crisis began we are only now



inching up to the number of devices that are needed”.

The DfE had already pledged in December to provide a million devices for schools and councils to distribute to those in need. This week’s announcement takes the total planned spend on the programme to £400 million.

But Barton said the government had been “slow off the mark to address the digital divide early in the crisis and is now trying to make up for lost time”

Education secretary Gavin Williamson said

last week that the government would supply 750,000 devices by today.

Latest figures from the department suggest they were on track to reach this goal, with 702,000 devices delivered as of January 11, 140,000 of which have been sent out this term.

The additional allocation will allow schools and colleges to apply for “top-ups to their original allocation”.

But no target date has been set for delivery of the remaining devices, with the DfE pledging to deliver some “by early February” and the rest “as quickly as possible thereafter”.

“I know just how difficult the past year has been for parents and teachers, now more so than ever,” said Williamson.

“I want nothing more than for every child to be in the classroom with their friends and teachers, but with that not possible we are doing everything in our power to support schools with high-quality remote education.”

DfE plans two more years for catch-up tutoring scheme

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education intends to extend its tutoring scheme for a further two years, *Schools Week* can reveal.

Launched in November to help children catch up on learning lost during the pandemic, the £350 million National Tutoring Programme is due to run until 2022.

But a contract notice to find a delivery partner to run it for the 2021-22 academic year, worth £130m, states that "a further two years of the NTP are planned". It adds, however, that this is subject to the outcome of future spending reviews.

It is not clear whether the further two-year commitment includes the 2021-22 academic year, or means two more years after that. The DfE refused to comment.

Natalie Perera, chief executive at the Education Policy Institute, said there was a "strong case" for a multi-year catch-up plan targeting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. The EPI is planning to publish its own proposals for how that support should be provided.

"It's important that policymakers continue to assess the impact of the National Tutoring Programme and other pupil catch-up

National Tutoring Programme

schemes," Perera added.

The prior information notice is looking for a provider to deliver "programme governance" and report on "all activities undertaken" under the two pillars of the NTP – the tuition partners and academic mentors.

It will also "monitor the effectiveness of the NTP as a whole in supporting schools to narrow the disadvantage gap".

An invitation to tender for the 2021-22 NTP is expected to be advertised in February.

The current programme has been designed by five charities – the Education Endowment Foundation alongside the Sutton Trust, Impetus, Nesta and Teach First.

When asked if it will be bidding to run the programme next year, the EEF said it was "keen to ensure the NTP has a positive legacy in the system and is currently considering how it can best support this".

News of an extension comes after *Schools Week* revealed that the NTP faced slipping behind schedule this year. Providers were

told they could "re-forecast" delivery milestones after schools closed.

Currently, 28 of the 33 partners can deliver online tutoring in school. Furthermore, 26 providers can now offer online tuition to pupils at home, compared with 14 last Monday.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson told the education select committee this week that the programme was "very rapidly moving to ensure all [partners] will be able to deliver online".

Geoff Barton, general secretary of school leaders' union ASCL, said that, while the principle of tuition was a good one, "the idea of using public money to subsidise private tuition on an ongoing basis while schools are desperately short of funds is problematic".

He said the NTP was "set up in the specific circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic to address learning loss. If the government wants to turn this into long-term provision, all the options need to be properly considered."

Simon Burgess, professor of economics at the University of Bristol, said "small group tutoring is the best way to remediate the lost learning, and the NTP has made a good start. But the problem is very large and they need to keep on doing this and, importantly, to reach far, far more children."

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Good news! Telecoms firms agree to free Oak access

School pupils will get free access to the Oak National Academy and BBC Bitesize platforms on certain mobile networks after telecoms providers said they would move to "zero-rate" the platforms.

EE, O2, Three and Vodafone have announced they will "subject to technical testing over the coming weeks, open up free access to the Oak National Academy online lessons".

The firms originally rejected the idea, but are now on board after Oak moved all its content to its own domain, solving a technical issue with zero-rating third-party content.

BT has also announced that it will remove mobile data charges for BBC Bitesize across

its EE, BT Mobile and Plusnet Mobile networks. It comes after the BBC reported on Monday that there were 1.6 million unique visitors to its education service.

It means most networks now offer some form of support to pupils struggling to access remote education following pressure on the telecoms industry to do more to help during partial school closures.

Ofcom estimates that just under one million pupils rely on mobile devices to access the internet, and around one in ten pupils using Oak's lessons does so via a mobile.

Matt Hood, Oak's principal, said the news



was a "game-changer" and pledged to share the technical solution with other platforms.

The measures come on top of offers by most mobile providers to give free data to poorer pupils.

EE, O2, Sky Mobile, SMARTY, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile and Vodafone have all joined the Department for Education's "get help with technology" scheme, meaning pupils can apply through their schools for an increase to their mobile data allowances.

However, giffgaff, Lycamobile, Asda Mobile, Lebara Mobile and Plusnet are not currently members of the scheme. Labour MP Siobhan McDonagh said this meant remote education support was now a "lottery by network".

News

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Council seeking £500,000 back from ex-superhead over 'unauthorised payments'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

A council is attempting to recover damages of potentially £500,000 from a former superhead alleged to have received unauthorised payments, court papers reveal.

The development follows news that Sir Craig Tunstall is suing Lambeth council and the Gipsy Hill Federation (GHF) in south London for at least £200,000, over claims that an "excessive workload", exacerbated by plans to open a new free school, left him depressed.

But, as *Schools Week* revealed last year, court documents submitted to the High Court by Lambeth claim that Tunstall allegedly received "unauthorised" payments of nearly £300,000 that plunged the federation into deficit.

The council has now launched a counterclaim to seek "financial recompense", a spokesperson said, nearly three years after Tunstall was dismissed as GHF chief executive for "gross misconduct". He was formerly England's best-paid primary teacher on £367,000 a year.

If found liable in Tunstall's claim, the council said it will "seek to reduce or extinguish" his claim with its own, alleging Tunstall was in breach of his duties.

The council said it suffered losses and damages of £528,980, including £269,758 in salary and £12,027 in pension paid to Tunstall and £220,550 in payments to senior colleagues.

It claims that Tunstall breached his duties, including "causing or permitting" the council to pay him the salary without the approval of the governing body.

It says he also breached his duties by "causing or permitting" Natalie Walters, GHF's former head of human resources, to submit payrolls using electronic signatures of the governors without permission, resulting in the council paying £112,304 to Walters and £108,247 to the federation's finance director Kevin Sparkes.

Tunstall also stands accused of "causing



Craig Tunstall

or permitting" use of council funds to pay £23,643 in legal fees to get advice for Walters. The council alleges that Tunstall also signed payroll forms for some payments he received.

Lambeth's lawyers claim it is "inferred" that Tunstall and Walters "combined and conspired" to "cause harm" to the council by using "unlawful means".

The council launched an Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Service investigation in 2016 into pay at the federation. Court papers claim the probe uncovered evidence that Walters had been using electronic signatures without approval to procure payments from Lambeth's payroll department – including "substantial" payments to Tunstall.

The court documents say that referral for criminal investigation and proceedings "remains under consideration".

The papers also allege that, in 2015, Tunstall received £3,000 expenses for a flight to Australia for an education conference when he had already been paid by the organiser.

Lambeth claims that he also received a payment of £14,398 from council funds for another trip to Australia for a conference in 2016, for which he was "not entitled to be paid".

In 2017, Tunstall repaid the council £5,646 in respect of funds paid to him by conference organisers.

Tunstall's legal representatives declined to comment. Walters has been approached for comment. Sparkes could not be reached.

In a previous legal response to the council's

original submission, Tunstall's representatives say that no allegations of fraud or dishonesty are made against him, and that it is not alleged that he was aware he was receiving unauthorised payments.

They say the fact that any such payments were unauthorised or unlawful is denied. They also previously said it was not alleged that Tunstall "colluded" with Walters or Sparkes, or anyone else, to procure unauthorised payments to himself or others.

The council, which denies that Tunstall's dismissal was unlawful, is asking for an account of all the money it claims was wrongfully paid out and for it to be paid back in full.

They are also claiming "damages for conspiracy, for breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty".

The details of Tunstall's dismissal were secret up until the court documents were filed, despite requests by *Schools Week* for investigation reports to be published.

Tunstall has also issued papers for a separate employment tribunal hearing into claims that he was unfairly dismissed and for damages.

A Lambeth council spokesperson said: "The council and GHF are preparing the High Court and employment tribunal cases and the High Court defence and counterclaim set out their position.

"Both sets of proceedings are being robustly defended and the council is seeking financial recompense."

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News

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The never-ending saga: Durand takes fight to Supreme Court

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A charity demanding compensation in exchange for giving up commercial facilities on a school site in south London has applied to take the case to the Supreme Court.

The court this week confirmed to *Schools Week* that the Durand Education Trust (DET) lodged an application on January 6 for permission to appeal. The move is the latest development in a protracted legal battle between DET and the Department for Education over the site of the former Durand Academy in Stockwell.

A judicial review of the government's decision to demand the return of the land without payment was thrown out last month. The case was heard in the Court of Appeal after DET was unsuccessful with two previous attempts to obtain a judicial review in other courts.

The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for civil cases in the United Kingdom. Any appeal is likely to significantly increase the charity's legal bills. Accounts show that DET spent over £340,000 in legal and other professional fees between 2018 and 2019.

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 in 2019 to transfer the remaining land to Lambeth Council for the use of Van Gogh, and officially did so on October 9 last year, but argued in



The site of Van Gogh primary school, formerly Durand Academy, with the private leisure centre seen on the right

court that it should be compensated for its investment in the facilities.

The charity claimed the decision not to award compensation was disproportionate, and that there was no "fair procedure" in place to determine whether payment was due. It also argued that the decision violated its right to peaceful enjoyment of property and its right not to be discriminated against.

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.

Lords Justice McCombe, Flaux and Newey dismissed the case, saying in their written judgment that education secretary Gavin Williamson 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".

They added: "The simple fact is that no works were carried out on the leisure centre land when DET was its owner. The leisure centre was constructed in 2004, the accommodation block dated from 2001 and the upper floors of the school building had been converted in about 1995. In contrast,

DET did not even come into being until 2010."

A spokesperson for the Supreme Court said the application for permission to appeal would now be considered by a panel of three justices, but that no date had been set for those deliberations to take place.

A spokesperson for DET declined to comment. The DfE was approached for comment.

THE DURAND LEGAL SAGA

- **October 2016:** DfE moves to terminate Durand Academy Trust's funding agreement
- **September 2018:** Durand Academy reopens as Van Gogh Primary School, with school land and buildings transferred to new sponsor the Dunraven Educational Trust
- **May 2019:** DfE issues "second direction", requiring the remaining land and buildings to be transferred to Lambeth Council for use by Van Gogh
- **August 2019:** Accounts first reveal a legal battle between Durand Education Trust, the original academy's sister charity, and the DfE
- **February 2020:** DET is granted permission to take its case to the Court of Appeal after failing twice to secure a judicial review in other courts
- **October 2020:** Commercial land is officially handed to Lambeth, but DET continues its claim for compensation
- **December 2020:** Court of Appeal throws out Durand's judicial review
- **January 2021:** DET applies to the Supreme Court for permission to appeal

Government urged to rule on board conflict issue as trustees resign in protest

JESS STAUFENBERG

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EXCLUSIVE

Governance experts have warned against a "fundamental conflict of interest" of school leaders also being trustees after all the non-staff members of an academy board resigned over the issue.

Trustees at Denmark Road High School, a grammar school in Gloucester, quit in protest before Christmas after the headteacher refused to step down from the board.

Sources close to the school have accused the Department for Education of "sitting on the fence" about school leaders being trustees, meaning it is "not easy" for boards to remove dominant chief executives.

Now Emma Knights, chief executive at the National Governance Association, has called for guidance to say "don't have your chief executive or principal as a trustee".

She said: "It would be much clearer. It would also seem less personal," adding that the set-up is an "in-built conflict of interest".

Five trustees, including the chair, at Denmark Road High School resigned in November and December after seeking to move the single academy trust to new model articles of association, according to sources close to the school. The only trustees that remained were the headteacher and two staff trustees.

The move to the latest model articles of association was a

condition laid down in a financial notice to improve prompted by a £62,000 deficit sent in October 2019.

According to a source close to the school, "members were considering not re-appointing the headteacher" to the board on the advice of trustees.

But the situation "became deeply unpleasant because the head wanted to stay on as a trustee, and the trustees thought it best for her to step away, to allow for independent challenge", the source claimed.

A letter seen by *Schools Week* from the head, Claire Giblin, to the board shows her arguing to remain because "the headteacher as a trustee is legal" and "the headteacher as a trustee strengthens the trustee board".

Excluding her would reduce her role to "occasional invitee to board meetings", the letter stated.

The latest Academies Financial Handbook and Governance Handbook states that members can decide whether to make the school leader a trustee, but advises against having "other employees" on the board.

But many academy trusts still use old model articles of association – which automatically list the school leader as a governor.

In 2014, the model articles changed to say that heads may be a trustee "if their appointment is ratified by members".

The school source said "the DfE are basically sitting on the fence about this" and called for "clear direction that

this is not good practice".

However, Andy Collyer, the school's new chair appointed last week, said having the headteacher as a trustee follows the rules.

"The board has recently been reformed, in accordance with the current articles of the trust, following the resignation of some of the trustees," he added.

"Our present board of trustees recognises the importance of, and abides by, the Nolan principles; they are stewards of our school, for which we are grateful."

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said chief executives also being trustees had some positives, but she added: "CEOs holding themselves to account is a fundamental conflict of interest... we would like to see a clear separation between executive and non-executive roles".

However, she said the decision should be left with trusts – rather than ordered by the government.

There are also broader concerns over academy "oligarchs" who hold multiple governance roles.

A government-commissioned report published in October found academy governance was at risk of being "too insular" and a lack of separation in roles was "common practice". For instance, the report found more than half of academy trust chairs also held positions as members of trusts.

But the government's most recent governance handbook failed to outlaw the practice.



Emma Knights

Trust 'misused funds' to pay for private nursery tuck shop

A single academy trust misused funds by paying for a tuck shop at a private nursery where the headteacher was a director, an inquiry has found.

Trust funds also paid for the sport and dance clubs of the nursery on the site of the Penny Bridge Church of England primary school in Cumbria, an Education and Skills Funding Agency investigation published last week revealed.

It said the trust paid for "nursery cash meals totalling £198" and "the VAT for the nursery direct debit meals totalling £799.50, with no apparent recharge" between August 2018 and July 2019.

Lynn Smolinski, the school's principal, and former chair of governors Caroline Huntington are listed as directors of the Penny Bridge Nursery.

The investigation report also found that the school's budget was being amended to match expenditure. The school was last inspected in 2011 and judged "outstanding".

Funding agreements clearly state that the annual grant must be spent on the normal running costs of the academy.

Debbie Francis, the new chair of governors, said academy money was no longer being spent on the nursery and governors were working closely with the ESFA. Smolinski is on extended

leave.

Micon Metcalfe, a school business management expert, said leaders must "keep really good accounting records to make sure that public and private funds are properly accounted for".

Emma Knights, chief executive of the National Governance Association, suggested primary schools could move into larger federations to ensure access to a chief financial officer.

"There has also been a bit of a view that, as long as you declare the conflict of interest, it's fine," she added. "But we need to move towards encouraging people to avoid there being any conflict of interest at all."

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Who are food parcels really serving best?

You'd have thought by now that the government would have got the hang of ensuring free school meals provision is adequate for pupils stuck at home because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

But the events of the past two weeks show ministers have learned little from the chaos and anguish they caused last year.

The Department for Education made no attempt to ensure catering providers had a contingency plan in place for providing food parcels in case schools had to close.

But nor does that excuse the pitiful examples we saw shared on social media this week. Catering firms should have been doing better. It shouldn't take some bad publicity for them to make a little less profit and provide a better service.

Nor should it take another national furore to push the DfE into doing the right thing: allowing schools to choose the free school meal replacement that is best for their communities – not foisting a “food parcels first” policy on them.

Williamson hasn't learnt his lesson

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has had a rough couple of months, culminating in his relationship with the sector hitting an all-time low.

Relations would not have been helped when Williamson claimed this week to MPs that he wasn't aware of a new strain of coronavirus when he ordered Greenwich Council to withdraw its plea for schools to shut early for Christmas.

His colleague, the health secretary, had stood up in parliament to deliver a serious warning about the variant over an hour before the direction was issued.

For Williamson to be effective, he has to win back the trust of the profession.

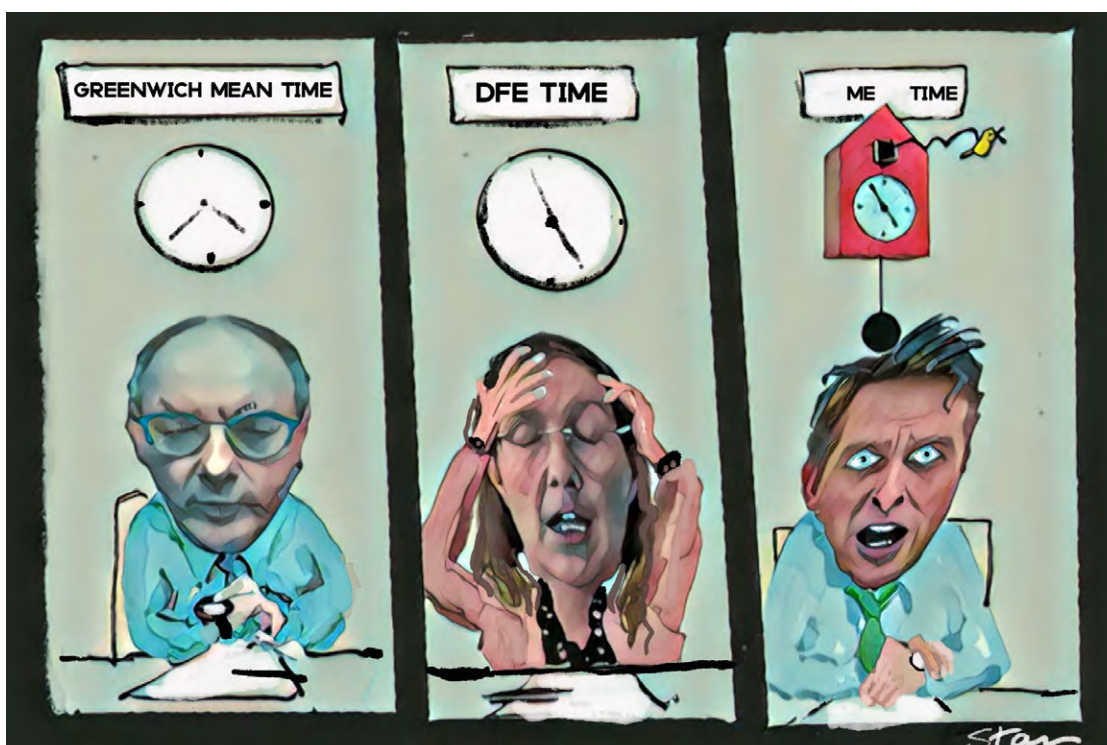
Being economical with the truth won't help. But being honest – especially when events are moving so quickly – would be much more welcomed.

Better, he could follow the lead of DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood, who apologised to the sector for any problems her department may have caused.

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Ofsted deploys extra staff as emails surge past 10k following school praise campaign

... Beverley Knight-Davis

This pandemic has provided deeper insight into the importance of home learning. Providing home learning packs for pupils with SEND has been very hard and needed a lot of thought and personalised planning – especially for those pupils with sensory needs. This has been time-consuming for SEND teaching assistants and SENCOs.

Children who are still accessing school are supported by TAs 60 per cent of the time as teachers are planning and marking online learning.

Ofsted deluged with 5,000 emails as parents turn tables on Williamson by reporting 'superb' schools

... James Avison

Thoroughly disgusted with the government and Williamson. The schools have bent over backwards, teachers and staff working long hours, weekends to communicate and manage through the ongoing epidemic. Over Christmas and New Year and even this weekend my children's school staff have spent time communicating updates about what is going to happen. The staff have been brilliant, thinking first and foremost about the children. Williamson and his government cronies are quick to blame everyone else and deflect their utter incompetence. If they worked for industry they would have sacked months ago for their disgusting incompetence in all aspects of the economy and pandemic.

... Maria Lima-Smith

Both my teenage boys attend Chipping Campden High School in Gloucestershire. Given the last-minute changes made by the government, the school's head, and their staff, deserve the utmost respect, gratitude and praise for providing the level of support that they are doing, remotely or/and within. Headteachers, teachers, teaching assistants, support staff, lunchtime supervisors and cleaners have done, and are doing, everything within their power to continue providing this vital service for our children, whilst putting themselves in a vulnerable position.

REPLY OF THE WEEK

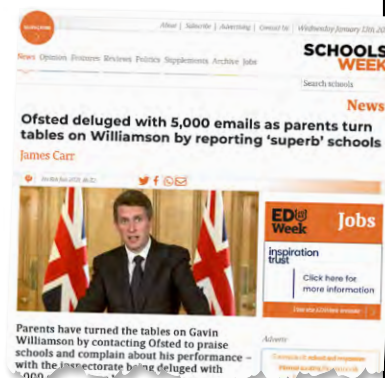
Christine deGraft-Hanson

Ofsted deluged with 5,000 emails as parents turn tables on Williamson by reporting 'superb' schools

What Gavin Williamson, the most out of touch secretary of state in living memory, doesn't know is that in schools such as mine, during the first lockdown, we had a pregnant teacher choosing to work with her class, remotely, till the day before having

a C-section. We are teachers who have dedicated ourselves to our students. We do not need to be directed or chastised before delivering high-quality learning, both in person and remotely. It is our privilege to contribute to the education of our students and we take the greatest pride in this.

As a headteacher, I am proud of each of those parents/carers who wrote to Ofsted. Gavin needs to listen more, use his eyes more and speak less. He'd learn more and alienate fewer of the school staff he is meant to represent and support.



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

Well done and a huge thank you to them all, and to the parents trying to work and home-school their children at the same time, too. It's not an easy task by any means, but for our future generation to succeed in life, both school staff and parents need to work together and support each other in what are unprecedented times.

Hurrah! Telecoms firms WILL now make Oak National Academy free-to-access

... Lucrecia Wilkinson

I think it is a wonderful idea that more internet providers should step up and do more to enable the more vulnerable and lower-income families access to the network so children can do their schoolwork.

I have noticed that the cost of laptops and tablets has doubled since the advent of home schooling. A lot of parents can't afford to purchase a laptop and so the big companies like Apple, HP, Lenovo, Dell need to also step up by reducing pricing to enable parents to purchase. We are all in this pandemic together, so let's do the right thing for the generations of young people who are struggling.

Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

'I call it cathedral thinking. Great cathedrals take generations to build and were built to last'

Meet the philosopher CEO determined to prove that academy trusts can - and should - come up with 100-year visionary plans for their schools

I was driving to work with the radio on and they were talking about Disney's acquisition of the Star Wars franchise, for billions of pounds. And that just inspired me," says a beaming Mark Wilson, chief executive of Wellspring Academy Trust and local Leeds lad.

Since taking the helm at the trust just six years ago, he has expanded the trust from one school to 25 primaries, secondaries, special educational needs and alternative provision schools.

Wellspring seems to have become the national go-to example for a trust that can deliver good Ofsted outcomes with a zero-exclusions approach – challenging the "no

excuses" approach favoured by ministers.

A giant media monolith is not quite what I imagined to be its inspiration for the future.

"Disney had paid this extraordinary amount of money and they'd set this acquisition within the notion of a 100-year plan," continues Wilson. "Disney was thinking in the long, long term, which means those billions were just a drop in the ocean to them."

Inspired, Wilson and his principals are now coming up with not just a "vision 2025" but also, quite extraordinarily, a 100-year plan. A 100-year plan?, I hear myself say. Is such a thing possible? As with many questions directed at Wilson, he answers by the long

road, weaving a narrative of principles and visions.

"I'm calling it 'cathedral thinking'. That's my attempt at a pithy slogan," he smiles. "I want it to reference the fact that great cathedrals take many generations to build, and were built to last."

He has climbed Cologne cathedral in Germany, which, in the 13th century, was the tallest building in the world and stands to this day. "The issue at the moment is that in Covid times, school leadership has become about managing moment by moment. Much of it is just responsive. My experience in school leadership is that schools get into trouble, in the main,

Profile: Mark Wilson



when there's that absence of longer-term thinking."

It's a good point, and I imagine that perhaps Wilson (who once ran a primary school in Wakefield, where the use of technology was so innovative he was visited by international heads and even, astonishingly, Iceland's president) is imagining what skills and attributes his communities might need in a century's time. "Future-focused" school curriculums are gaining traction. But it turns out Wilson is citing cathedrals because he really is talking about buildings.

"I'm thinking about the trust in terms of two eras," he explains. "Era One was the trust's birth, growth, and who we are. We're about humanism, and relationships, and education, the place of second chances. That's been our story 25 times over now. So the organisation is set now in terms of its personality, principles and values."

The zero-exclusions record is an example of this: Wilson says it's not a "hard rule" but the trust's values mean it's very unlikely any head would choose to exclude.

"Now I'm saying, we've entered Era Two. It's a distinctly new era." In this way, Wilson echoes many commentators for whom one silver lining of Covid-19 is the



opportunity to set new directions. But he is not seeking to radically re-think the past six years – with the trust's 13 out of 14 Ofsted inspections returning a 'good' or better judgment (and three moving schools straight from special measures to 'good'), he is confident about the foundations. "Did you know that when we take on an academy, we sign a lease for over 100 years?" he says. "We are just leaseholders – the council is the freeholder, and at the end we theoretically hand the academy back. So my thinking is, the buck stops with us for at least that 100 years. The quality of the physical estate is us providing a stable platform for communities and their life chances."

"Schools get into trouble when there's that absence of longer-term"

It seems a simple point, but as Wilson explains his team's experiences, it makes increasing sense. He describes taking on schools with leaking roofs, awful smells from "putrefying rats", where none of the



burglar or fire alarms had been tested and boilers not serviced for years. I particularly sympathise with his next statement.

"Actually, what the bogs smell like is important. It's an important measure as far as I'm concerned. And also, are school dinners decent? [He is speaking before this week's food parcels scandal, which showed the huge difference poorly prepared food makes to people's sense of dignity.] And are we investing in our buildings, and are they fit for purpose?"

What does this look like in practice? I press. "In 100 years we want all our buildings to be energy self-sufficient. They will be carbon positive, not just neutral. We will be making a contribution to the planet through our physical estate. Unless we do it, who will?"

The whole ambition is laid out in the trust's new Vision 2025 strategy, which includes two 'spotlight' sections: "Environments we are proud of" and "Sustainability". The development plan for the first includes

Profile: Mark Wilson



The £6 million new building for Elements Primary School in Middleton



Wilson at the Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce Awards, 2018

"delivering aesthetically appealing environments through intuitive design and inspirational use of colour", which is an ambition perhaps now quite absent from national conversations around school improvement, compared to New Labour's "Building Schools for the Future" years.

Wilson's point is that environments have a significant effect on those who work within them. Under his watch, the trust has spent £70 million on 30 new buildings or facilities, and has taken on eight new free schools. By 2025, the goal is for £100 million to have been spent on the environment and 12 new schools built.

When I ask him what he's proud of, he responds: "We've attracted millions of pounds worth of public funds to new schools in the north of England. I can say that is a source of great pride for us."

The regional press coverage reflects this: "Louth primary schools 'transformed' following academy sponsorship"; "Amazing feeling as new alternative school is ready"; "Sevenhills Academy 'unrecognisable' after £500,000 refurbishment".



The trust team collecting an award for wellbeing

"A 100-year plan is so exciting because it allows you to be agnostic of cash"

Just this September, one of its primary schools opened in a new £6 million building. But Wilson dreams even bigger. A 100-year plan is so exciting because "it allows you to be agnostic of cash".

In a way, Wilson is a philosopher chief executive. He speaks in terms of great strategies, visions, principles and values, answering questions in a rather lovely, slow, measured way with plenty of context and drawing on multiple ideas before giving the final answer.

Nowadays, some academy trusts' CEOs seem to be more focused on the finances and operations, as the sector lurches closer to the corporate world.

"What I've done is build a team of people cleverer than me. The COO is a genius. The finance director is a genius," says Wilson. Perhaps he demonstrates that for a whole academy trust to be truly values-driven – not just having the values painted on walls – the person at the top should be, above all else, a philosophical person.

But Wilson's philosophy has perhaps

made an impact because it is grounded in experience, not lofty imaginings. His parents left school at 14. At his failing inner-city secondary school, with vast year groups of 330, he was one of only three students across three years to get into university. As a headteacher many years later, he met one of his former teachers, now a school improvement officer. He asked him why so few children had got to university from that institution. "He said, 'We did the best we could with the kids we had.'" Wilson shakes his head. "That guy had taken that philosophy throughout his education career."

The trust's exact strategies for its 100-year plan are yet to become clear, but the ambitiousness of Wilson's approach is worth noting. After all, no one has ever tried to celebrate the glory of God in a block of offices – cathedrals were built for a reason. Why should places dedicated to huge personal growth, eye-opening education and deep relationships be very much different?

Opinion

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

The venom habitually directed at the teaching profession by the commentariat has plumbed new lows during the lockdowns, writes Sarah Gallagher

I was 16 and my teachers were on strike when I first saw the profession smeared in the press. I remember my parents saying it would be ever thus. "If you choose this, you'll always be portrayed as a leftie waster who's paid too much and gets long holidays."

I chose it anyway, and those words stuck with me, but it wasn't until this year that I really saw how hateful some right-leaning newspapers and radio programmes can be to the profession I love. (And the left-leaning ones didn't do much to stand up for us either.) In nearly 30 years as a teacher and head, this is the first year I've felt crushed by reading it and had to take active steps to avoid doing so.

It's also the first time I've realised how influential those words can be, even with those close to me. I've read about teachers who are lazy, headteachers blocking children going back to school and the profession insulting other key workers who have had to work in lockdown. I've read that we were paid to do nothing at home during the first lockdown, that we are single-handedly causing the breakdown of mental health among our children and that we're failing in our duty to educate them, giving them years of catching up to do.

On the whole, I'm left with the impression that we're the scum of the nation. We are certainly not to be clapped or celebrated. After all,



SARAH GALLAGHER

Headteacher,
Snape Primary School, Suffolk

How the media are making the hardest of situations harder

schools are safe.

This year has been the hardest of my professional life, made harder

multiplication, that's what we did.

If it took weekly lessons in a pupil's garden holding up whiteboards

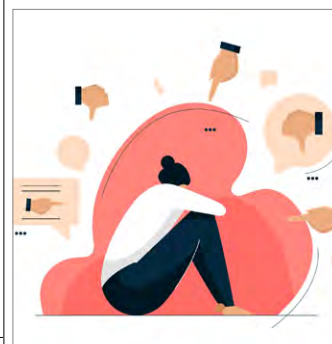
"I'm left with the impression that we're scum"

by having this as the backdrop to our efforts to keep children and families safe – our own as well as everyone else's. The hardest thing about it is that it's almost impossible to rebuff this stuff because we're working so hard. Our hours have mushroomed, not least because of constantly changing government guidance – a government that is given a free pass by the same outlets.

Sure, some children haven't experienced such a good offer. But none of the friends and colleagues I've made over the past 30 years would have dreamt of doing anything less than reaching out to, encouraging and supporting every child in our care through lockdown. If it took standing at a doorstep explaining long

while the postwoman walked through, that's what we did. If it took driving round the countryside to deliver a pack of drawing pencils, that's what we did.

So it's astonishing that so many have such a poor opinion of the teaching profession. I've had bad landings but I couldn't fly a plane. I've been a patient many times but I can't offer medical advice. Yet some would have us as the villains of the piece. And the irony is that all their hatred and venom is so ill-informed. Or at least it's ill-informing. I can't help but think they know the reality full well. After all, the great pay and long holidays hasn't tempted them to have a go. In fact, many of the same people wrote candidly about their inability to even home-school their own



children.

Then there's their concern about disadvantage gaps, headlines about children's wellbeing and socialisation. Lots of schools and teachers do lots of things families used to do. But lots of schools also do lots of things other government agencies used to do. It's been like this for years, long before Covid. We've been shouting about it, but it has fallen on deaf ears.

Yes, schools closing doors to all but small groups has had a catastrophic effect on families and support structures. But the simple truth, and it is one I am certain most families can see, is that we are those support structures.

Yet here we are. Again. Clapping for heroes. Again. Closing schools and bashing teachers. Again. It seems no lessons have been learned.

So you can spare me the agonising over catch-up from a government still playing catch-up with the virus, or about lost learning from a commentariat stuck in an ill-informed loop.

If headteachers led this way, we'd deserve all the vilification we get.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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DR SHOBA
ARUN

ALEKSANDRA
SZYMCHYK

Reader in sociology,
Manchester Metro-
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Research associate,
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University

We must look beyond curriculum to help migrant children through lockdown

These are the strategies we need in order to address the particular problems faced by migrant children during the Covid lockdowns, write Dr Shoba Arun and Aleksandra Szymczyk

When children with migrant backgrounds are discussed in educational terms, much is made of immigrant communities' high levels of aspiration – particularly educational ambition. This is in sharp contrast with other discussions about disadvantage and, amid concerns about growing attainment gaps and the impact of Covid restrictions on disadvantaged children, these children are seldom discussed.

Partly, this may be because defining migrant pupils is not easy. Across the UK in 2019, six per cent of under-18s (896,000) are born abroad and eight per cent (1,082,000) are non-UK/non-Irish citizens. Children born in the UK to a migrant parent are not necessarily British citizens. In an education context, the English as Additional Language (EAL) classification is used to try

to capture this disparate group, but it includes new arrivals with no prior experience of English as well as second- or third-generation children who speak another language at home.

Of course, many of the problems faced by disadvantaged children with migrant backgrounds are equally

faced by disadvantaged pupils more generally. As a group, however, they are more likely to face them. This is true for refugee minors in all the settings (leisure environments, reception centres and schools) and in all ten nations the MiCREATE project monitors and evaluates.

For example, there is the risk of increased isolation that comes with a reliance on digital learning, as well as the lack of adequate learning spaces, digital devices and internet access and of traditional school supplies, including stationery and books.

This is why access to learning devices and unlimited access to good internet is crucial for

all disadvantaged learners. But it is particularly important for families with a greater number of children or living in shared accommodation, which disproportionately affects migrant pupils. As we await further government action to that end, supporting families in the meantime to create a whole-family timetable that addresses sharing devices, allocation of time and spaces can be useful.

Teachers note increasing gaps in attainment among children since the first lockdown, with pupils falling behind in reading and maths. Limited access to libraries or reduced reading time has impacted reading habits, affecting expression, vocabulary and verbal reasoning – essential skills for general attainment.

This is further compounded

“A lack of practical information, rather than language, is a barrier

in bilingual or multilingual families where English is not always spoken. So although teachers are under pressure to deliver a structured curriculum, monitoring these basic skills is vital. Moreover, specific instructions for carers, parents or older siblings who could 'liaise' or 'broker' home learning is necessary. It is often not language that acts as a barrier but the lack of practical information that parents, or carers, need for structuring learning.

Online weekly [book clubs](#) where children meet under adult supervision to review and discuss age-appropriate

books – many started by migrant community groups themselves – have been shown to help greatly. Parental feedback shows that children grew in confidence, increased reading habits and engaged more in creative writing, all of which impacted on their overall attainment.

Unfortunately, a teacher-centred approach is difficult to overcome in online learning, and teachers have lamented the reduction in pupil input. With plans for a recovery curriculum scuppered by this new lockdown and its restrictions on schools, these book clubs can be a model for at least some of teachers' online learning practice over the coming weeks and months. Not only do they provide an opportunity for more pupil-centred learning, but also much-needed opportunities to socialise – especially given the wintry conditions of this lockdown.

Because it isn't all about attainment. Over the past few months, many children with migrant backgrounds have lost close relatives and been unable to visit families abroad, leaving emotional torment behind. Sadly, this is only likely to continue, so there is an urgent need to tend to the emotional wellbeing of this diverse group, as well as to address their cognitive needs.

Their future prosperity demands we prioritise both, and that means online learning must not only go beyond curriculum delivery to focus on age-appropriate key skills but maximise opportunities for pupil input and socialisation.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Lockdown diary – New year's revolutions



**DAN
MORROW**

CEO, Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust

Monday, January 4

New week. New year. New trust leader role. And what a day to start on.

Transition has been flat out preparing for mass testing. A good thing too, because as of today, it's compulsory. A whole-trust INSET is a godsend.

Section 44 letters arrive from reticent staff but it's clear to all, including me, that the prevailing context is not OK. Having worked in Kent and south-east London in December, I know this isn't about to get any better. Thankfully, the board back me to limit our primaries to vulnerable children and those of critical workers for Tuesday and Wednesday to address staffing levels.

I drive home worrying that I've over-reacted. Communications went out late in the day. Not the notice we'd ideally want to give our communities, and some pushback is already manifesting.

I walk in as the prime minister begins his briefing. It's much worse than even I feared, and the exam cancellation – with details to follow (!) – is a shock. But from worrying about over-reaction, my

fortunes have flipped. We're now ahead of the curve!

WhatsApps keep flying in as it starts to snow heavily. Oh for the simplicity of a snow day.

Tuesday, January 5

Guidance meets reality. With our outstanding union representatives, we quickly ensure staff are able to work safely and remotely where possible. Section 44 letters are withdrawn.

Our doors open to critical worker and vulnerable children and it is immediately clear numbers are much larger than in lockdown 1.0. By lunchtime, we are already adjusting plans.

Free school meals for those at home is a top priority. I quickly come to appreciate what a logistical nightmare that can be in a rural setting.

The DfE confirms BTEC exams are proceeding, at odds with all the other guidance. We make the hundreds of calls needed to ensure we communicate this properly.

The headship team gathers to reflect on the day and sharpen next steps. 22 already weary faces look back at me, but they are



doing, and will continue to do, whatever it takes. Just as they've done throughout.

Wednesday, January 6

Hundreds of Chromebooks and routers/dongles are delivered and we are confident our offer is rigorous, but debate continues over live teaching. We settle on giving our staff agency to provide for their pupils while we work to ensure our resources and teams are coordinated to avoid reinventing the wheel.

BTECs are no longer going ahead. Sigh. We rely on the trust that our students place in us and government is not helping.

Staff testing is well under way and returns some positive results which need to be followed up.

Keep smiling. Schools are safe! (And freezing cold.)

Thursday, January 7

Senior leaders have been instructed to focus on their schools and leave the national guidance to us. Taking the pressure off heads is a key focus for our shared leadership, and everyone seems to be in the swing of things as a result.

Meanwhile, concern is growing nationally about attendance

figures.

Section 44 letters were withdrawn based on risk assessments we have to be able to adhere to. So is it one critical worker parent or two? Government and media messaging is confused and unhelpful. But at least we're no longer surprised by that.

Friday, January 8

Numbers are still increasing, and keeping key stage 4 and 5 students motivated is becoming a pressing concern. "What's the point?", many are asking. And who can blame them? The team decide on a programme for character, wellbeing and resilience. All traits they model daily, I reflect.

Strangely, messages of support come in throughout the day. This must be what nurses felt like when we clapped for them at the start of all this, and I gather we have Ofsted to thank for it. How thoughtful! It sends a few leaders over the edge – kindness always gets to us most.

80 hours. I hope not all my weeks here are this long, and any that are at least end with a drink and a curry with my team. When that's possible again. But then I'm asleep by 9, so it may never be.

Reviews

DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

Excluded

Produced by: Sarah Wishart, creative director, EachOther

Release date: December 10, 2020

Reviewer: Cath Murray, chief development officer,
Right to Succeed



It was a fairly standard GCSE results day morning in the *Schools Week* offices. I'd just finished transferring JCQ data into subject tables and was trawling Twitter for stories from comprehensive schools. People were tweeting photos from the London Underground, where a group of pupils had done an ad-hack protesting what they called the "school-to-prison line".

Overlaid on the maps of the Northern line, the first stop on the new posters read "Sent out of class". After this point, the track branched into two: one line progressed through detention, isolation, temporary exclusion and finally to a circle of prison and reoffending. On the other line, labelled "Out of service indefinitely", the stations had names like "Support" and led to "Success".

Another poster set out their demands for a "more compassionate education system with a supportive approach to behaviour and discipline" and the funds for schools to implement it.

The story was picked up by the press, and in less than two years, the group had emerged from anonymity to present to Ofsted, witness to the Commons education committee, and begin work with human rights charity EachOther to make this documentary.

The opening credits flash up the over-simplified claim that, "Every year hundreds of thousands of students are excluded around the UK", at which point I braced myself for a documentary that plays fast and loose with the facts. About 8,000 pupils are permanently excluded every year and the larger number (about 200,000 pupils) refers to fixed-term exclusions, which include children sent home for a single day. This is still



problematic. As the young people in the documentary point out, "exclusions are wrong because they are supposed to be keeping you in school and they're keeping you out of school" but it's perhaps not what the uninitiated will think of when they read that statistic.

Still, the film introduces some concepts then moves on fast to the stories, which is where its strength lies. It features exclusively the voices of young people (those who've been excluded as well as representatives of the "other 29 in the class") and their moral compass comes through clearly: "If you've got a student you should keep hold of them"; "People have got stuff going on in their lives and teachers don't take that into consideration"; "If you get to the point where the only thing you can do is to exclude a young person from school, that's a failure".

The young people relate stories illustrating how exclusions are treating only the "symptom", when

the root problems include mental health difficulties and unsafe home environments.

Their solutions are simple but powerful: have trained counsellors available in schools; be aware of the challenges your pupils may be facing beyond the school gates; don't have low expectations for your pupils just because they live in a deprived area; repeat positive messages, like telling young people they can become leaders; support parents to understand school processes, so that they can support their children. And crucially, while it may be necessary to remove a child from the classroom to allow others to learn, the important thing is "what do you do after you remove them from the lesson?"

EachOther uses stories to build support for human rights, and it opens this film by citing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically: "The right for young people to express themselves on issues that concern them and to be listened to and taken seriously."

It has done a great job of illustrating how this can be done — which is no mean feat. At Right to Succeed, the charity where I now work, we are having this debate right now. How do we authentically involve young people in the decisions that affect them? In this case, the producers employed young people as consultants and researchers on the documentary, as well as interviewees.

Ultimately, though, the power of this film lies beyond the abstract concept of rights. It lies in the stories, and the young people themselves — in short, in its ability to kindle understanding and empathy in the viewer.

Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Jon Hutchinson, assistant head, Reach Academy Feltham and visiting fellow, Ambition Institute

@JON_HUTCHINSON_

Remote teaching during a pandemic

@MrLauLearning

If you're anything like me, the past few weeks have felt like treading water, barely keeping your head above the surface. This makes it all the more remarkable that so many teachers have written blogs to help others navigate remote learning. As teacher educator Lee Donaghy put it on Twitter: "Teachers are bloody ace, aren't they? Can't imagine how busy they've all been the last few days and yet Twitter is awash with people sharing what is and isn't working for them in setting work online and live online teaching. I'm just in awe." One of my favourite examples is this blog from computer science teacher William Lau, who has scoured the evidence that exists around remote learning so you don't have to. The blog distils a wide range of research into key principles and handy tips to keep "pupils cognitively active and involved" during your online lessons.

Means of Participation – quick wins for ratio in the remote classroom

@JesnickMark

Moving from learning principles to

TOP BLOGS of the week



practical teaching tips for the remote classroom, many schools have opted to provide live lessons for pupils during this national lockdown. This brings with it a whole host of challenges, not least the fact that even adults struggle not to tune out from a video call. So how on earth can we be expected to keep generation 'instant gratification' engaged? Well, assistant principal, Mark Jesnick has you covered with this blog detailing five top strategies to ensure pupils regularly participate in the call. The focus is on Microsoft Teams, but each of the strategies is easily transferable to Zoom, Google Meet or whichever software you use. Like telling everyone to type their answer in the chat box but not to press enter until you say "go", all the ideas here are quick and simple to implement, and seem so obvious once you hear them. The blog even comes with a handy table to share with staff.

Falling apart at the how

@saysmiss

In a way, it's good to know Covid hasn't disrupted every normal aspect of education. Our propensity to reach for

polarised responses to new initiatives appears to go on unabated. It doesn't seem to matter whether it's doing remote lessons live, prioritising staff subject knowledge development or resolving conflicts through restorative conversations, for every evangelist you can find a dissenter. Assistant principal Kat Howard believes that it all falls apart at the 'how', or, to put it another way: "In short, most ideas in principle are good ideas, until they reach the point of execution." What follows is a measured and powerful argument for how school leaders in particular might secure change in a more meaningful, sustainable and shared manner. Sure, what is advocated within Howard's blog may be a slower approach than the classic INSET announcement of "oh and by the way we're doing knowledge organisers now, save them here", but with stronger foundations in place those 'good ideas' might just stick.

The curse of content coverage

@marymyatt

Meanwhile, albeit complicated by simultaneous delivery online and in the classroom, most schools are continuing to engage in a root-and-branch overhaul of their curriculum offer. In many cases – guided by a hefty steer from Ofsted and DfE pronouncements – leaders have tried to ensure that their subjects are more "knowledge-rich". In reality, this has led to what Mary Myatt calls "the tyranny of content coverage", where teachers pack too much stuff into units and lessons, leaving pupils with "a superficial impression of learning". Instead of focusing on amassing fragmented details and racing through thoughtless task completion, Myatt argues that we should be spending more time considering the conceptual "holding buckets" that pupils will use to organise and connect what they are learning.

Research

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

What are schools' emerging priorities in this new lockdown?

**Laura McInerney, Co-founder,
Teacher Tapp**

This year's lockdown is not like the other! Despite the fact that this year's spin to remote learning actually came with less warning (in that it happened literally overnight), schools were nevertheless readier for its consequences.

Since October, schools were legally required to provide remote learning to any students at home and isolating. Hence, most schools already had a system for sending work and giving feedback to children at home.

The trickier bit has been managing critical worker children. Teacher Tapp data on this blew up across the media last week – from *Newsnight* to *The Andrew Marr Show* on Sunday – after we revealed that one in three primary schools have at least 20 per cent of their children in attendance at the moment. During the last lockdown, the figure was one in every 100, and no one had more than 30 per cent of children in. This time, it's around 15 per cent of schools.

What we haven't seen are swathes of schools with 70 per cent of pupils attending, nor are schools in the poorest areas most likely to be overrun. Though this is often claimed, it is based on presumptions.

Instead, our data suggest that primary schools in the most affluent areas have the highest numbers – and this is particularly true in the north. It's rare that northern, affluent areas stick out in our data. Typically, when something is happening a lot in the north, it's because that phenomenon is happening in poor areas. So what's causing it?

Simply, northern England has higher rates of public sector employment. Around 20 per cent of people in work in the north-east are in the public sector, compared with around 12



per cent of employees in London and the south-east. This means there is a higher proportion of people in the north working in the services typically thought of as 'critical', e.g. the NHS, police, civil servants and so on.

Also, London and its surrounding areas have the highest hospitalisation rates as they were the epicentre of growth for the 'mutant strain' that ruined Christmas. There is more urgent messaging from local media and from headteachers, not least because more of their staff are off sick. Add this to the lower public sector employment rates, and you can see how a primary school in the south may be less attended this week.

Unfortunately, teachers in affluent schools also have the highest pressures on them to do 'live' video lessons – presumably as more families have a child in private school, where this sort of lesson has been common since March. Primary school teachers in affluent northern areas are therefore suffering a double whammy of needing to deliver the most online learning and the most in-person teaching!

Of course, teachers in disadvantaged communities face other pressures. There, the number of vulnerable children is likely to be higher so there is a significant safeguarding and food

package burden.

The Sutton Trust has also published data this week showing that a majority of school leaders in the most disadvantaged areas haven't been able to provide even half of their pupils with the necessary equipment for home learning. Again, primary schools have been the worst hit by this.

In the last lockdown the focus was on getting laptops to older secondary students, but primary-aged children are much less likely to have their own device. Ofsted's guidance, published this week, notes that children who work on phones and tablets are less likely to spend as long on their tasks. (Notifications probably don't help with concentration!) Laptops are therefore vital if young people are to have the best at-home experience.

One final piece of data, which I'm afraid verges on the anecdotal: just like last lockdown, I've done several radio phone-in shows in the past weeks. Back then, there was a great deal of frustration at what was being offered by schools. Now, there is almost universal praise and surprise at how well schools have pulled their lessons together.

It really does seem that this lockdown is different from the last one. Ideally, there won't be another to compare it against!



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Dame Rachel De Souza, the government's controversial pick to be the next children's commissioner, is busy shedding any roles that could prompt accusations of a conflict of interest.

Updated appointments information sent out by the DfE this week shows that De Souza will resign from her directorships of the Ambition Institute and Parents and Teachers for Excellence before taking up the role in March.

Dame Rachel had already confirmed her intention to stand down as chief executive of academy chain the Inspiration Trust.

TUESDAY

Seemingly not content with just being a top footballer, MBE and food poverty campaigner, Marcus Rashford proved this week that we should add another title to the list: education secretary.

As the furore over embarrassingly dire food parcels broke, Rashford did the job Gavin Williamson should have undertaken, by meeting with catering firm Chartwells to get some answers on what was going on.

Later, playing the role of government press officer, he then informed everybody about how the meeting went – including the assurances he had won from the under-fire firm.

This was all before the DfE had even managed to have its own meeting with Chartwells. What a guy.

With mounting outrage over plans to start sending Ofsted inspectors back into schools in the middle of a national lockdown, it seemed inevitable by the beginning of this week that a U-turn was on the horizon.

And sure enough, Ofsted announced its plans to switch to remote inspections shortly before 5.30pm on Tuesday just days before the new regime was supposed to begin.

We've lost count of the number of government U-turns on schools, but we estimate it's now at around 5,445.

WEDNESDAY

With school staff desperately clamouring for details of when they might receive the coronavirus vaccine, Gavin Williamson was his usual reassuring self in front of the education select committee this week.

The education secretary told MPs he was fighting "tooth and nail" to make teachers a priority for the vaccine.

Given everything Gav touches at the moment seems to turn into a massive dumpster fire, we suspect an announcement is on the way putting education staff at the bottom of the list for a jab.

With a new year and a new term, the government has seemingly been doing its utmost to confuse school staff – and the public more widely – about its approach to tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

Leaders have once again ended up sounding like a broken record over the

past couple of weeks, with complaints about confusing and often missing guidance from the DfE.

DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood was taken to task on the issue during the education committee hearing this week.

After acknowledging that DfE mistakes put additional pressure on schools and apologising, the top civil servant revealed there is now a dedicated team that looks at all guidance together.

This would appear to be a positive development, but it does beg the question: if there's a special team now in charge of guidance, why did it take days after partial closures were announced to update key advice for schools

It's fair to say that parliament has gone through a rapid period of modernisation since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. With MPs now able to dial in from home, it has left many people wondering why such an approach wasn't adopted ages ago.

However, education committee member Jonathan Gullis proved this week that remote participation doesn't always work. The Stoke MP and former teacher tried to dial in from his seat on a train, but the connection was immediately disrupted, probably because he was, you know, on a train.

Still, maybe train operators might finally have some incentive to address their dodgy wifi connections.



We are looking for inspirational leaders to join our team in Cornwall –
PRINCIPAL AT CARRICK (THREEMILESTONE)
PRINCIPAL AT RESTORMEL (ST AUSTELL)

WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU?



Here's what matters to us:

BEING POSITIVE - We value positivity, no matter what the circumstances. It is our intention to stay constructive, optimistic and confident both for and with our young people and their families.

HAVING EMPATHY - We are kind, we have empathy. We consider the consequences of our decisions, large and small on those around us.

SHOWING RESPECT - We conduct ourselves in ways that earn the trust of those around us. We respect each other and those we work with.

WORKING AS ONE TEAM - We depend on teamwork and the relationships we have. When we work together we are stronger. Together we will achieve more.

BEING INCLUSIVE - That everybody is treated fairly and equally; no-one is marginalised or left behind. We are inclusive, we embrace the human spirit. We value diversity of people and thought.

We are committed to progressing the social, emotional and academic outcomes for all of our students to enable them to achieve their true potential. Our Vision is to significantly change pupil lives for the better. Our values, as a Trust, empower our young people to succeed, these values are at the core of everything we do, and embody what we are looking for when we seek new colleagues.

If you are up to it, come join us

Wave Multi Academy Trust comprises eleven AP academies and two special schools in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. Our regional APs provide education for mainstream pupils who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion or on an intervention basis. All of our schools have been consistently judged to be good or outstanding.

We are looking for two inspirational leaders to join our team in Cornwall

As a result of internal promotions, we are looking to appoint two outstanding and enthusiastic Principals whose purpose will be to provide professional leadership and management within these academies. Both schools are currently judged to be Good. The successful candidates will work alongside the Executive Principal to lead a successful education team, providing vision, leadership and direction for the continuing development and improvement of their academies.

So, who are we looking for?

As well as someone who embodies our values, we are looking for someone who:

- has a comprehensive understanding of the needs of our cohort, including pupils who may be coping with trauma and attachment issues.
- has thorough understanding around teaching and learning and is committed to further developing the quality of teaching in the school.
- has the skills to lead, improve and inspire both pupils and staff
- is an excellent communicator, and able to build effective partnerships with families, staff, partner schools, outside agencies and the wider community

We are a values based trust that cares passionately for our pupils their families and our colleagues. Wave Trust is in a strategic partnership with Cornwall Council, that is enabling us to think long term about how to continue to innovate to meet the needs of the pupils and schools in Cornwall.

Cornwall is a beautiful place to live and work and the Wave family are a great group to work with. Wave MAT is dedicated to the safeguarding of children and Safer Recruitment Procedures will be followed. The position requires a satisfactory enhanced DBS check.

For an informal discussion please contact Lianne Ward (Executive Principal) on lward@waveedu.org. To request an application pack please use the link on www.wavemat.org

Start date: 01/04/2021
Salary: up to £66,031.00





IMMANUEL COLLEGE HEADTEACHER

Over 1600 children require an exceptional Headteacher to lead their school from September 2021. Could you be their perfect candidate?

FULL TIME, PERMANENT, REQUIRED FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

SALARY L36 - L42 | £99,681 - £115,483

We are looking for an inspirational Headteacher to join our vibrant and bustling school filled with incredible children. We would like a strong leader and team player who will build on the existing strengths of the school and support us on the next steps of our journey. If you think you can be our exceptional candidate, we can't wait to meet you.

We need from you

- ✓ A love of teaching and learning
- ✓ A passion for developing your team
- ✓ Strong, innovative and strategic leadership and management
- ✓ A firm commitment to achieving success through partnership and teamwork
- ✓ Commitment to the Christian values of the school and the Trust
- ✓ Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- ✓ Drive, ambition and high expectations
- ✓ A commitment to ensuring our children achieve their biggest and bravest ambitions

We can offer you

- ✓ Engaged, happy, well-behaved and well-motivated children
- ✓ A dedicated, enthusiastic staff team committed to our school and our children and who will support you every step of the way
- ✓ High levels of Trust and Governor support – you won't be in this alone when you join the BDAT family of schools
- ✓ A welcoming, friendly and vibrant school
- ✓ A career in a forward thinking Trust

Visits to the school are welcomed and encouraged but are by appointment only. We are proud of our academy, we want you to have the chance to visit and see it for yourself, it will convince you so much more than any advert can.

Please contact Emma Williamson (PA to the Director of Secondary Education) to arrange your visit via email: emma.williamson@bdac-academies.org

Closing date	Monday 25th January 2021 12 noon	Tour dates	Thursday 14th January 8.30am
Shortlisting	Wednesday 27th January 2021		Tuesday 19th January 3.30pm
Interview day 1	Wednesday 3rd February 2021		Thursday 21st January 8.30am
Interview day 2	Thursday 4th February 2021		

For the Full Job Description and Application Form please visit <https://www.bdac-academies.org/employer-of-choice/vacancies/>

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our children and we require all our staff to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced criminal records check via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Please see our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on the BDAT website www.bdac-academies.org/bdac-business/bdac-policies/

Perseverance

Character

Hope

Executive Director of Learning (Principal)

Hours: Full time role

Start date: Easter 2021 or September 2021

Salary: Negotiable, circa L25-L31 dependent on experience, plus performance bonus

Office base: Livingstone Academy Bournemouth



**LIVINGSTONE
ACADEMY
BOURNEMOUTH**
an Aspirations Academy

The Executive Director of Learning (EDoL) will lead this new school. This person would be performing the role of the Principal but without the full range of responsibilities, enabling a full focus on learning. This role would focus primarily on the provision of high-quality teaching and learning, overseeing the work of the Director of Digital Curriculum and Innovation (responsibility for the curriculum) and the Head of Secondary and Head of Primary (both would be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school). The regional CEO and Aspirations central team will support the EDoL with the finance, premises and IT management of the school.

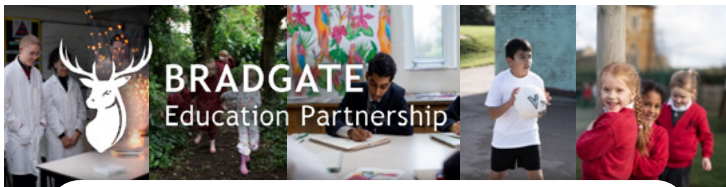
Learn more about Livingstone Academy at www.livingstone-aspirations.org

If you would like to discuss the Trust's vision for this role before applying, please contact Steve Kenning, Managing Director, at stevekenning@aspirationsacademies.org or on 07753 496548.

Please complete the online application form and your supporting statement, setting out your vision for education in the 21st century to: jobs@aspirationsacademies.org

Closing date for applications is **4pm on Monday 25th January 2021**.

Interviews due to take place on **Thursday 4th February 2021**.



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

Executive Head Teacher

Permanent

Leadership 27 – 31, £79,957 to £88,185 per annum

Start Date: April 2021

An opportunity has arisen for an experienced and qualified professional to join our Trust Senior Leadership Team to lead on school improvement and quality assurance strategies across a group of primary schools, notably those schools joining the Trust from a position which is below good and those which are already part of the Trust but who require some additional support.

This role is perfect for someone who has experience of driving positive change in schools and has a proven track record in school improvement.

We would strongly encourage candidates to arrange an informal meeting either socially distanced or MS Teams and/or a telephone conversation with the Director of Schools.

These can be arranged by contacting
Dean Pomeroy, dean@bepschools.org

To apply for this position please visit our careers website
<https://www.eteach.com/careers/bepschools/>



HEADTEACHER

Kingsley Primary School

Full time, Permanent

Pay Scale: Leadership ISR (group 3)

Points: Headteacher: L12 - L24

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

InMAT is looking to recruit someone who:

- has successful experience at Head Teacher level or is looking to take the next step in their career
- shows a deep understanding of learning and is committed to developing quality first teaching
- has the skills to lead, improve and sustain academic achievement
- is able to build effective partnerships with all stakeholders
- is driven, ambitious and enthusiastic

Visits: Week commencing 25th Jan 2021

Closing date - Monday 1st February 2021 at 12pm

Interview date: 8th or 9th Feb 2021

Please contact Beverley Walker on 01604 434600 / admin@inmat.org.uk to book a visit or obtain an application pack.

For more information see our website www.inmat.org.uk



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>