

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Meet the principal whose mum accepted no excuses



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The heads leading a school in virus hotspots



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Schools and EU pupils: the next hostile environment?



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We need to talk about exams



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YES MINISTER, YOUR RECOVERY PLAN IS A 'CATALOGUE OF CHAOS'

PM incorrectly claims 6m kids will get tutoring

DfE saves tens of millions by handing tutor contract 'on the cheap' to Dutch HR firm

Minister 'doesn't know' why catch-up tsar resigns (despite him saying last week)

PS... Schools still waiting on whether ministers will continue £320m sport premium next year

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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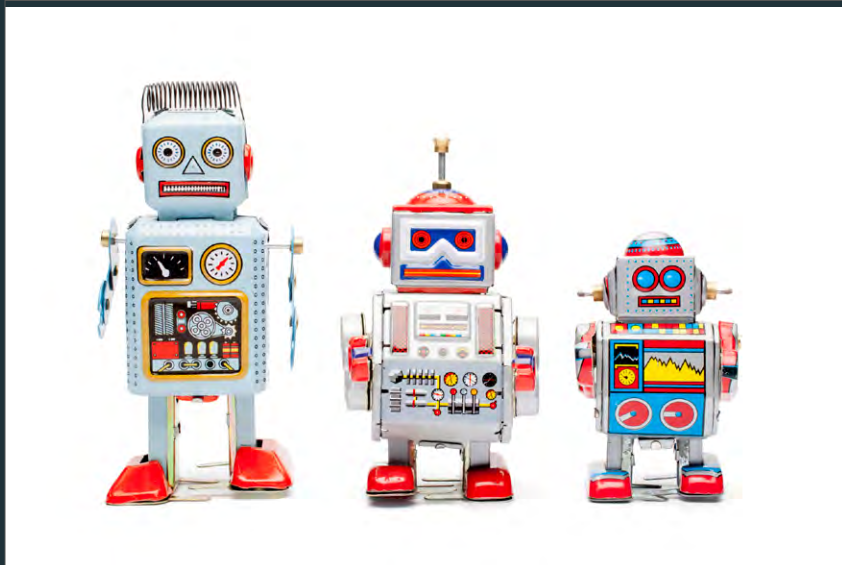


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No, the robots are not coming. So let's get serious about AI



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Campaigners fear another 'hostile environment' over EU pupils' status

TOM BELGER

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EXCLUSIVE

Schools will face "inappropriate" pressure to snoop on EU pupils' immigration status from next month, say heads and campaigners afraid of a "hostile environment" damaging relationships with parents.

EU nationals who have not applied for settled status by June 30 will become undocumented and could risk losing the right to work or their children's right to schooling.

IT problems and school confusion over new rules could also result in unfair discrimination against staff, including those waiting for the digital-only status in a 305,000-case backlog.

The3million, a campaign group for EU nationals, is urging schools to remind staff and parents from the EU, European Economic Area and Switzerland of the deadline.

The settlement scheme was set up under the Brexit deal, with most EU nationals required to apply to maintain their right to work, enrol in education and access benefits and free healthcare.

But campaigners are worried many have not registered, including those unaware that children must register and workers believing they can rely on national insurance numbers or residence cards.

The campaign group is also alarmed over government guidance telling schools to report "concerns about a particular child's immigration status" to the Home Office, and how it could affect unregistered European pupils.

A spokesperson for the3million said it was "highly problematic" to put such pressure on schools.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said schools should not be required to "police immigration status".

He said ASCL did not regard the guidance on reporting concerns as encouraging schools to "proactively carry out checks", and said the Home Office was clear it was parents' responsibility to check eligibility for schooling.

The guidance also tells schools they must not refuse enrolment or remove pupils over immigration concerns.

But Paul Whiteman, the general secretary



of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said there was "confusion" over immigration rules, and heads could not advise pupils, parents or staff about applications.

He agreed involving schools in immigration enforcement was "inappropriate" and risked damaging relationships with parents.

Whiteman fears even perceived involvement could result in parents withdrawing their children from schools. The lesson of Windrush was "policies such as the hostile environment can all too easily result in catastrophic consequences".

The Department for Education deleted its controversial migrant children database in March, years after a fierce backlash and Schools Week investigation into secret plans to share census data with the Home Office.

Julie Moktadir, a partner and head of immigration at law firm Stone King, said it was "disappointing" the government had not clearly spelled out the consequences if children were not registered by June 30. "We don't have that information to definitively advise people."

Moktadir said it was difficult for school HR teams to stay informed about rapidly changing immigration law.

Independent schools do have to carry out pupil checks, however. Claims that one private school asked all pupils to bring in passports last month sparked controversy on social media.

Moktadir said some trusts were also "extremely concerned" about rules for staff.

Stone King advises them to notify school

communities about settled status, but staff cannot be ordered to apply or show applications.

Ludi Jones, a French national and languages teacher in Lancashire, said she applied immediately, but had friends unwilling to do so. "It's a massive shift for lots of people to be classified as French citizens working in the UK. Before I was a European citizen working in the EU. Some feel it's unfair."

New staff from the EU will need status checks or sponsored visas from next month. But the Home Office only confirmed recently that schools should not check existing EU employees' status, even if they might lack settled status. Checking EU staff alone would be discriminatory, Moktadir said.

"Some schools have contacted EU nationals asking for evidence of status, but they don't have to," she said. "Schools want to do the right thing but don't want to be discriminatory. I see major confusion."

Narmi Thiranagama, a policy officer with the union Unison, said it was an "anxious and unsettling time" for affected staff, particularly those waiting for decisions to be processed.

A Home Office spokesperson said 4.9 million applications had been approved, with 1,500 staff working on it and 72 organisations handed grants to help hard-to-reach groups.

But he encouraged urgent applications to "secure the rights they deserve", saying the Home Office accepted a range of evidence.

Applicants' rights would be protected, even if their case was still being processed after June 30.

Schools underestimate scale of sex abuse, says Ofsted

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted has accused school leaders and teachers of “consistently underestimating” the scale of sexual abuse and harassment suffered by their pupils.

But it admitted it could not assure its own inspections were picking up issues. Inspectors will now interrogate schools that fail to provide a log of sex abuse cases and speak to pupils.

The watchdog yesterday published a rapid review into sexual abuse within education settings, following the avalanche of allegations shared on the website Everyone's Invited.

Inspectors visited 32 schools and colleges across England, including primaries, and spoke with more than 900 children and young people, as well as leaders, teachers and other stakeholders.

Staff “underestimated the scale of the problem” and relied too much on children speaking up about their abuse, rather than recognising other indicators such as emotional changes, Ofsted found.

But it said current guidance did not equip schools to navigate the “grey areas” of dealing with sexual violence, such as when criminal investigations did not lead to a prosecution or conviction.

Pupils were “rarely positive” about relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), saying it did not equip them to navigate the reality of their lives.

In about half of the schools, teachers had not received any formal training to deliver RSHE. Many leaders confirmed staff were “generally not very confident” delivering the curriculum.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said she was “shocked” by the findings. It was “alarming” that many children and young people, particularly girls, felt they had to accept sexual harassment as part of growing up.

Eighty per cent of girls questioned said they had been being pressured by peers to provide sexual images of themselves. Almost three out of four said pictures or videos they sent were shared more widely without their consent.

Everyone's Invited has published the names of the 2,700 schools and colleges in England named in testimony on its website from sex abuse survivors. That amounts to one in ten schools.

Spielman said



the “core recommendation” for schools is their “default assumption should be this [sexual harassment] is affecting a substantial proportion of children in any given school or college”.

The review also identified areas where the watchdog and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) could “sharpen their practice”.

Both inspectorates will now “make it explicit” to inspectors they should speak to single-sex groups of pupils to “gather evidence about sexual harassment and violence”.

Since Ofsted's education inspection framework was introduced in September 2019, schools have been required to present records and analysis of sexual violence and sexual harassment by 8am on the first day of the inspection.

But Ofsted found when no information was provided, inspectors did not record how

they followed-up to ensure “a nil return was an accurate picture”. This meant the watchdog could not say if its inspections “are sufficiently assessing the extent and nature” of sexual harassment in schools.

Inspectors will now interrogate schools that fail to provide a log of sex abuse cases.

Vicky Ford, the children's minister, said this would allow inspectors to check if there was “something in the culture of that school that children don't feel comfortable coming forward”.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said the review “rightly highlighted where we can take specific and urgent action to address sexual abuse in education”.

The government has encouraged schools to hold training on inset days and will look at giving “greater status” to designated safeguarding leads (see box out).

But ministers have long been criticised for avoiding the issues. In 2016, the parliamentary women and equalities committee found that 29 per cent of 16 to 18-year-old girls had experienced unwanted sexual touching at school.

Jess Phillips, the Labour MP who met government officials to relay concerns, said yesterday ministers had been “rolling their eyes at girls for years”.

But Ford claimed the government had “absolutely taken action”, including introducing statutory safeguarding guidance in 2015.



Jess Phillips

WHAT THE DFE WILL DO ABOUT IT...

- 1 Schools “encouraged” to use inset day to train staff how to deal with sex abuse.
- 2 Consider how to “give greater status and support” to designated safeguarding leads.
- 3 Extend the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care trial to strengthen support for designated safeguarding leads to ten more local authority areas and 500 more schools.
- 4 Online hub for DSLs to “better share advice and planning” as well as training.
- 5 Work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to make sure the Online Safety Bill addresses safeguarding controls.
- 6 Ask Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner, to investigate how to reduce young people's access to harmful online content such as pornography.
- 7 Require the ISI pass on all information on complaints about schools not meeting standards to the DfE.
- 8 Ministers to hold a roundtable with youngsters to inform any future communications campaigns.

Masks in place and onsite testing returns in 'Delta' hotspot schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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INVESTIGATES

Headteachers in "Delta" variant hotspots are "praying" the virus does not rip through their schools again in the coming weeks, with one having to send seven in ten pupils home last term.

Mask rules remain in place in many north-west schools, while some have resumed in-school testing and have hosted temporary vaccine centres.

Analysis of government attendance data shows Covid-related absences increased by as much as 6,200 per cent in some areas over the course of last half-term.

In Bolton, 31.5 per cent of secondary pupils and 21.3 per cent of primary pupils were absent because of the virus on May 27. This is up from just 0.5 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively on April 22.

But headline figures mask even higher absence rates in some individual schools. In the penultimate week of last term, Essa Academy in Bolton had more than 700 of its 1,036 students self-isolating.

Headteacher Martin Knowles said the school started detecting "a significant amount of cases" after bringing lateral flow testing back on site, "and then of course the variant of concern emerged in Bolton".

The school also volunteered to host a mobile vaccine centre on its site. Knowles said it delivered 14,500 shots, including to families of pupils.

In Blackburn, secondary absence rates rose from 0.8 to 13 per cent, while primary absences increased from 0.7 to 15.1 per cent.

Haslingden High School in neighbouring Rossendale, Lancashire, was forced to close four days early for half-term after case numbers rocketed.

Head Mark Jackson said the school had seen "nothing for a couple of months really, and then it just went 'bang'".

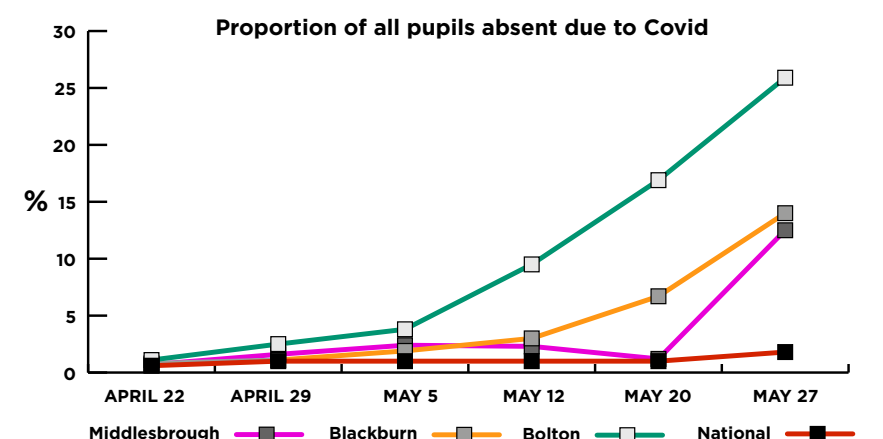
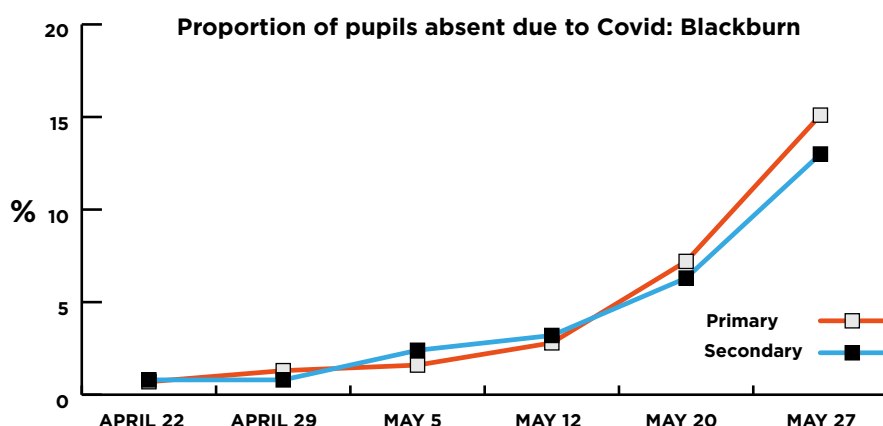
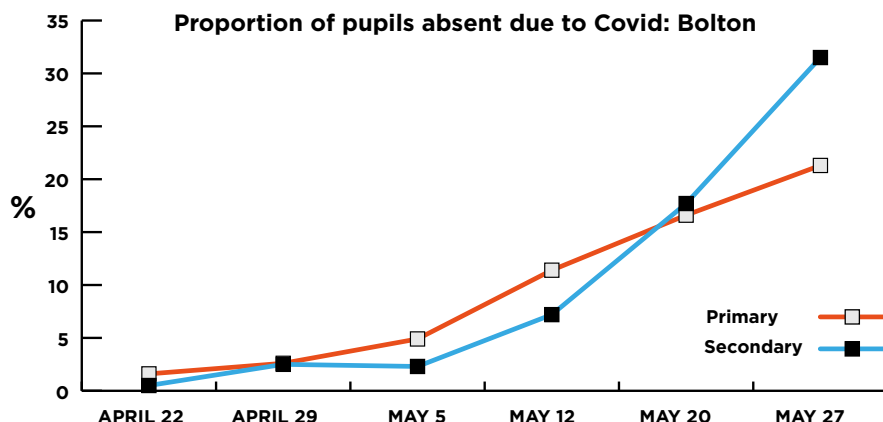
By the morning of the last Monday of term, the school had over 60 cases, and the test and trace operation became "unmanageable".

"Last term it spread pretty quickly, and we're just praying it won't again."

Westhoughton High School in Bolton is part of a government testing trial. Under the scheme, close contacts of positive cases don't self-isolate if they agree to daily tests.

Principal Patrick Ottley-O'Connor said it meant the school avoided sending hundreds of pupils home in the last week of term.

"Five bubbles had burst. That would've been massive. That would've been 500 children. But we



Source: Department for Education attendance statistics published on Tuesday

had about 120 sent home, because the rest could do testing in school."

All three schools still have mask rules in place, following advice from local public health officials.

Unions are now demanding the reintroduction of masks rules in all secondary schools.

They also called for the rollout of vaccinations for older pupils once these are approved for use in teenagers. Ministers have said they are waiting for approval from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation before proceeding.

According to the Office for National Statistics data, secondary-age pupils currently have the highest rates of Covid infection.

Public Health England data shows Covid outbreaks in schools have reached their highest level since December last month. There was also a rise in the number of outbreaks relating to the Delta variant.

But health secretary Matt Hancock insisted the vaccination programme was "breaking the link between infections, hospitalisations and deaths".

PIXL: PROUD TO WORK WITH SCHOOLS

The last 15 months have shown how committed, creative and determined the teaching profession has been. Whether it has been learning new IT systems, turning a school virtual overnight, dealing with frequently changing guidance or managing complex issues such as Covid testing, a different approach to transition or TAGS, teachers and leaders in schools have given it their all.

PiXL exists to serve school leaders, their staff and their students through whatever situations arise. This year especially, we have been proud to stand alongside a profession who, in the face of adversity, have done the most remarkable things. Despite everything that they have had to face, schools have acted with the best interests of their young people at the very heart.

As our school colleagues have adapted, PiXL has adapted to support them. When our national conferences in London had to be cancelled, we moved to our new PiXL TV platform – enabling colleagues to watch any meeting they wanted either live or on demand, at a time that suited them. This new approach has enabled thousands more colleagues to engage in what PiXL are offering and to watch the events with colleagues so that they can share ideas more easily. We have held national and regional networking hubs on the big issues of the moment, Leadership Live events to hear from panels of Headteachers and we have had three festivals: the Leadership Festival in June, the Curriculum Festival in October and the recent Primary Reading Festival in May. All of this is on top of the many strategies and resources we offer for leaders, teachers and students, including the Oracy package at Primary, the Stretch Talks at Secondary and Post-16, as well as the focus across all sectors on reading.

PiXL itself has also undergone a period of significant change too. In January 2020, the founder, Sir John Rowling, died after a short illness and Rachel Johnson, who had previously been Head of Strategy, was appointed as PiXL CEO. Since then, many things have changed but one thing has not: PiXL exists to serve schools, to harness the power of the network and to make a difference to young people.



Rachel Johnson, CEO of PiXL

What PiXL aims to do:



To improve life chances and outcomes for pupils



To influence leadership at all levels, regionally and nationally, as the best way to improve schools



To equip school leaders to be agents of change and betterment

PiXL achieves these things through leadership development, networks, strategies and resources, as well as our events.

As we move into the next academic year, we are determined to continue supporting and equipping our school colleagues. Across all sectors, we are committed to helping schools improve life chances and outcomes for students in 2021-2022 by investigating what a range of evidence suggests and finding practical ways to have impact.

We have some new and exciting things coming this year. At PiXL Primary, the focus is on challenging the most able and the launch of a new 'Readers and Writers project', in collaboration with national experts and well-known authors. At PiXL Secondary, there are new long-term projects on reading, teaching and learning and oracy, as well as the launch

of a new 'Insights' series. PiXL Secondary will also be re-introducing a focus on subject specialist support for middle leaders through our programme of subject conferences. At Post-16, the focus is on supporting students in their studies now, and on securing the future best suited for them, with a focus on academic writing as well as academic reading.

PiXL believes we are better working together. We can all learn from each other and, in doing so, we can achieve even greater things.

If you are interested in joining PiXL or would like to come to the June National Conferences (Primary, Secondary and Post 16) as a guest, then please email membership@pixl.org.uk to receive your invitation.

Ministers struggle to defend 'paltry' catch-up cash

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ministers have attempted to pacify critics of their "paltry" education recovery plan by promising that more cash is coming "down the track".

Gavin Williamson and Vicky Ford were hauled into parliament to defend a £1.4 billion package that Sir Kevan Collins, the catch-up tsar, says is a tenth of what is needed. He resigned in protest last week.

Boris Johnson says school catch-up is his "biggest priority". But Education Policy Institute (EPI) analysis found next year's catch-up cash amounts to little more than what was spent in one month on the "Eat Out to Help Out" initiative for businesses affected by the pandemic.

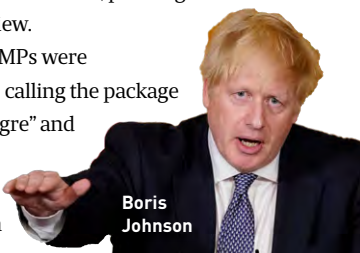
Speaking this week during a vote forced by Labour calling for more generous investment, Ford, the children's minister, claimed the plan was not a "catalogue of chaos".

"It is a catalogue of cash targeted at evidence-based support for our young people who have shown huge resilience and patience throughout this pandemic," she said.

But Williamson, the education secretary, repeated promises that more cash would be "coming down the track", pointing to the autumn spending review.

Opposition MPs were unimpressed, calling the package "paltry", "meagre" and "inadequate".

Williamson will appear in



Sir Kevan Collins

front of the education select committee later this month to be quizzed on the plans.

Johnson also incorrectly claimed in Parliament that six million "pupils" would benefit from the government's tutoring reforms, when in fact six million, 15-hour tutoring "courses" were pledged.

While defending the recovery plans on Wednesday, he also claimed to have "introduced" a £30,000 starting salary for teachers – more than two years before the policy is due to be finally implemented.

Ford also claimed she did "not know the rationale" behind Collins' resignation, although his resignation letter – published by several newspapers – said he did not "believe it will be possible to deliver a successful recovery without significantly greater support than the government has, to date, indicated it intends to provide".

Meanwhile, Schools Week revealed the Department for Education appears to have saved tens of millions of pounds on its flagship national tutoring programme (NTP) contract.

Tender documents published in February stated that up to £62 million was available to bidders for the second phase of the NTP. But documents show the contract for successful bidder Ranstad, a Dutch HR firm, is worth £25 million – just 40 per cent of

the maximum value.

Kate Green, the shadow education secretary, challenged Williamson over schools' fears the contract was "being handed out on the cheap".

"Will he confirm that that is to cut costs, to the detriment of our children?"

Williamson did not respond, but he did repeat concerns about the school lunch hour "being increasingly restricted to a school lunch half-hour".

Collins wanted to extend the school day, calling for an average of an extra 30 minutes a day.

Schools would have been funded to pay teachers.

But the government has delayed any decision, instead promising a review on time spent in school and college, which will be ready in time for the autumn review.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said it would consult parents, teachers and pupils as it would be "a big change and would require significant funding and more teachers".

Last week, a government-commissioned report by the EPI and Renaissance Learning estimated that pandemic learning loss had undone progress on the disadvantage gap by two thirds.

When analysing the £1.4 billion recovery package, EPI found it averaged £467 million a year.

The government has already allocated about £215 million to the national tutoring programme for 2021-22, and £302 million of the previously announced "recovery premium" will also be available. This adds up to about £984 million.

In contrast, the government last August spent £840 million on its flagship programme to encourage people to eat out in restaurants, cafes and pubs.

Schools STILL waiting on future of £320m PE premium

The leaders of 40 charities and sporting organisations have written to the government demanding "urgent clarity" on the future of the £320 million PE and sport premium.

With less than six weeks to go until the end of the summer term for most schools, leaders are still waiting to hear whether the funding, worth £18,000 to the average primary school, will continue from September.

Charities have even reported that at least one council is advising schools to budget "on the assumption that this funding will not

continue".

In an open letter to education secretary Gavin Williamson, the organisations warned growing uncertainty about the funding was leading to a "scaling back of initiatives and of jobs" among groups that support schools to use the cash.

The uncertainty also comes at a "critical time for schools who are planning their provision for the next academic year".

The premium is a ring-fenced grant for primary schools to improve the quality of PE, sport and physical activity. Since 2013, schools have received funding based on

pupil numbers, and the average one-form entry primary school usually receives around £18,000 a year.

In 2019, the continuation of the funding was announced in April, but last year schools had to wait until July for confirmation that they would continue receiving the cash.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said his department was "aware of the importance of giving schools as much notice as possible of future funding", and would "confirm arrangements" for the premium in 2021-22 "as soon as possible".

2021 grades

Markers demand transparency on exam boards' costs and savings

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Exam boards will save millions by using only one-seventh of the examiners they would usually need in a normal year, while teachers spend their spare time marking assessment papers for GCSEs and A-levels.

It comes as 10,000 educators signed a National Education Union letter requesting £500 compensation for teachers involved in deciding grades this year.

Some heads have called for a 50 per cent refund on fees this summer, but exam boards have defended themselves, saying they are working harder than normal too.

All boards have pledged to hand back any savings to schools, but they won't say how much. Last year, just 25 per cent was refunded.

This year, the exam boards are quality assuring teacher assessed grades (TAGs) through random sampling and targeted checks.

To do this, they have recruited "centre quality assurers" (CQAs) from their pool of "experienced assessors", as well as involving internal staff.

But the numbers hired look to have dropped drastically this year.

The Joint Council for Qualifications did not provide Schools Week with exact details, but said the number of examiner roles this summer will be in the "4-figures" – so a maximum of 9,999.

In 2019 – the last standard year of exams – there were 67,000 examiner roles needed by exam boards for GCSE and A-levels, according to an Ofqual blog. Some examiners work for more than one board in a normal year, but that could mean an up to 85 per cent drop in the number of examiners needed – potentially saving boards tens of millions of pounds.

According to 2019-20 accounts, AQA spent £62.2 million on "examiner costs" that year, but there was no further breakdown of what was spent specifically on marking.

But JCQ warned against comparisons with normal years, saying it would be "inappropriate" as the processes this year "are unique".

Head teacher Jules White, founder of the WorthLess? campaign, said there is "frustration" because schools "need to know exactly what legitimate costs of all exams boards are, and they should publish that with comparisons".

"The department needs to realise that teachers



who have worked extremely hard are being asked to go to the wall again."

Although exams are cancelled, schools have been given the option of running in-class assessments to gather evidence for TAGs this year.

Roisin Davison, head of history at John of Gaunt School, in Trowbridge, said she has had to mark and internally check 240 GCSE exam papers, many in her spare time and often until midnight.

She added: "This is not the fault of the schools, rather the government, which has imposed a huge workload on teachers."

The NEU sent its letter to education secretary Gavin Williamson last month, calling for £500 compensation, in line with teachers in Scotland, who are receiving £400 for their work in grading this year.

A survey of over 2,000 members by the teachers' union found that 94 per cent saw no reduction in their teaching load to mitigate the extra work.

In January, boards were slammed after Schools Week revealed they were raising fees despite exams not going ahead.

Geoff Barton, general secretary at heads' union ASCL, said it will go down "incredibly badly" if exam boards fail to "stump up a rebate that fully recognises" schools have "shouldered the burden".

He added: "It will be crucial that the boards set out very clearly and publicly an itemised list of their costs, together with the resulting rebate that will be paid to centres, and that they do this as soon as possible. There is a real strength of feeling about this issue."

AQA, which asked for 50 per cent of fees upfront, has said it will refund schools the money it normally spends on marking "for them to use

in any way they choose". The rebate is still being decided, dependent on final costs, but they hope to do it by the school holidays.

Pearson said it "remains fully committed to passing on net savings to schools, wherever they exist". OCR said it needs to cover its costs and hopes to confirm savings in July.

OCR add that in "the interests of transparency" they will "explain clearly" in communications to schools how they've calculated this year's rebate.

Meanwhile, Schools Week has seen an email AQA sent in April to senior examiners asking about being involved in stage three of quality assurance.

Examiners were asked their availability from June 23 to July 13, with online training taking place in early June. It also asks whether they would be free between results days through to the middle to end of September, for GCSE, or mid-October for A-level, for appeals.

OCR told examiners in March that it would not be using the furlough scheme this year. Last year, Cambridge Assessment, which owns exam board OCR, furloughed some examiners but offered others a £250 one-off "goodwill" payment instead.

The board told examiners it decided not to use the scheme this year because it still needs "assessment specialists to undertake tasks associated with providing materials and support to teachers" as well as planning for the autumn exam series.

The Department for Education said "many elements" of the awarding approach this year were designed with "workload in mind". They added that exam boards "will need to cover their costs" adding: "We expect they will make commercial decisions on fees and refunds on that basis."

2021 grades

DfE to pay £75 for each priority appeal as schools left 'picking up the pieces' again

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Schools will receive £75 for every "priority appeal" to compensate staff forced to oversee the process during the summer holidays.

This year students can request that schools review their teacher assessed grade to look for procedural problems or administrative errors. The appeal can then be escalated for exam boards to decide whether an "unreasonable exercise of academic judgment" was made.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) on Tuesday published 45 pages of guidance for schools on this year's appeals process, following an Ofqual consultation.

It says schools must have "a clearly documented process and appropriate resource in place to handle reviews and appeal requests" from results days in early August.

The Department for Education confirmed it would provide £75 for each priority appeal to "compensate staff for the work involved in processing" appeals.

The DfE wrote in a blog that subject teachers would not be needed for reviews during the holidays "in most cases", as much of the work could be prepared in advance.

But in a "minority of cases where a previously unforeseen issue or error arises, a teacher may need to input to help to resolve the appeal swiftly".

"This would only be in the summer for priority appeals – where a student needs the outcome of their appeal to take up their 'firm' higher education offer." Further details on administering funding would come in due course, the department added.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said the DfE had recognised the



"implications" of appeals in August. The funding was welcome, but he remained "very concerned" that schools are "once again left having to pick up the pieces".

While some of the appeals process would be picked up by exam boards, "there is still a lot that is being landed on schools".

"The process entails them having in place systems, resources and staffing from results days onwards in August for priority appeals from students in danger of missing out on university places.

"Then in September, when schools and colleges are managing the start of the new school year, they will also have to deal with all other appeals.

"As appeals are free and available on demand, there is a risk that schools and colleges may face very significant extra workload at a time when they are already at full stretch."

In response to its consultation on the appeals

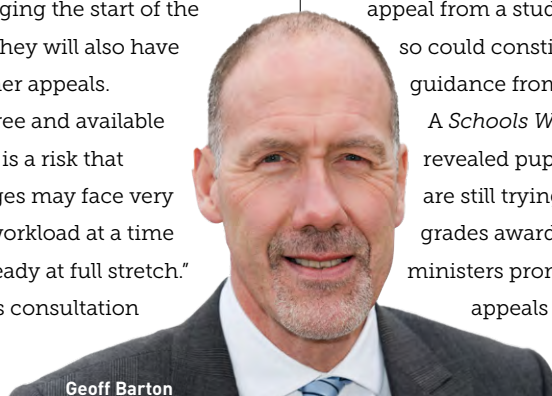
system, published this week, Ofqual said it recognised there was a "possibility" that some appeals might be submitted by students who "simply disagree with reasonable decisions made by their centres".

"Where reasonable decisions have been made such appeals should not succeed".

The DfE earlier this year said it would cover the cost of appeals to exam boards, after possible grade inflation and grade variation between schools prompted fears about the cost of unsuccessful appeals.

Schools must accept any request for an appeal from a student – a failure to do so could constitute malpractice, guidance from the JCQ says.

A *Schools Week* investigation revealed pupils and their families are still trying to overturn teacher grades awarded last year, despite ministers promising a "swift" appeals process.



Geoff Barton



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News



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'No frills' private school racks up £170k loss

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

The country's first "no frills" private school – charging pupils just £60 a week – has posted a £170,000 loss in its second year of operation.

The Independent Grammar School: Durham (IGSD) opened in 2018 with just six pupils. It now has 47 children on its books.

New accounts for the firm behind the school, The Education Partnership (UK) Ltd, show it had a cumulative £174,175 loss as of August last year.

But founder Professor James Tooley (pictured) said the school will be at its 65-pupil capacity from September, claiming it will for the first time break even.

"It was always in our minds that creating a school like this would cost about £150,000 to £200,000 pounds to reach breakeven," he said.

Accounts for the 2019-20 year show just under £60,000 has been paid, or promised to be paid, by shareholders. That leaves a deficit of £114,173.

"Bank loans and overdrafts" account for £37,622 of creditors, while £80,000 is categorised as "other creditors". Tooley said the £80,000 related to cash from other investors.

"The aim of this [project] was a philosophical point, this was not to make massive money," added Tooley, who has set up low-cost private schools in developing countries across the world. He believes the state should not be involved in education.

While acknowledging the project was perhaps a year behind schedule, which he blamed on delays opening the school and also on Covid, Tooley said: "It is much slower than we wanted, but a disruptive business like this anyway will be slower than you expect... We're in a very positive position. Absolutely no one has to put any more money in.

"We really stuck our necks out in the beginning saying 'we believe there's a market for people out there who want private education but can't afford it'. And we've proven that," he added.

Tooley said the school's pupils have "mostly" come from the state

sector. "They wanted a private education, but they couldn't afford it," he added.

The school's £2,995 annual fees are way below the average for private day schools, at £14,289.

IGSD was inspected by Ofsted earlier this year before being granted permission to extend its age range to accept pupils from age four up to 13.

Ofsted's "school material inspection change" report, published in February, stated the 47 pupils are taught in two classes. There are five full-time equivalent and two part-time equivalent teaching staff.

However, IGSD is hamstrung by its current building, a converted church, capping capacity at 65 pupils. Tooley said they have identified a new building – after a previous favoured site was refused planning permission – meaning the school could cater for up to 200 pupils.

"We are turning parents away," he added. Ofsted rated the school 'good' in March 2019.

But the model behind the school has proved controversial. Tooley, who was appointed vice chancellor of the University of Buckingham in October, previously said he would be "absolutely happy" for the model to make state schools unviable.

Staff salaries and terms and conditions have also been challenged. Low-cost private schools in developing countries are run largely by unqualified teachers on low wages.

Tooley would not reveal salary amounts but claimed staff are "not paid less than if they were in the state sector".

Schools Week revealed last year Tooley wants to set up another seven "no frills" schools in the north-east. But he said this week no further progress has been made.

"People think you need millions to start a school," he added. "We've shown you need less than £200,000.

"I couldn't be happier. We're in a position where clearly we have proven there's a market for this, and we've created a sustainable project out there. And others can emulate this."



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Wilshaw takes over the reins (again)

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The former chief inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw (pictured), has stepped back into headship after almost a decade, with an interim role at a London Jewish school.

JFS, in Brent, has told parents that Wilshaw has agreed to serve as its interim executive principal for the "remainder of this term", following the departure of Rachel Fink, its previous head, at the end of last month.

According to *The Jewish Chronicle*, the school was inspected by Ofsted last month with a report due to be published soon.

Testimonies from pupils featured on the Everyone's Invited website, set up earlier this year to shine a light on sex abuse. The school said it had shared the testimonies with authorities to "seek advice as to what further steps we should take to investigate".

In a letter to parents this week, seen by *Schools Week*, Andrew Moss, the chair of governors, said Wilshaw would be supported in the role by Dame Joan McVittie, a former London head, safeguarding expert and a senior Ofsted inspector.

Dr Oliver Walton and Anna Joseph from JFL's senior leadership team "are also taking lead supporting roles".

"We appreciate that changes of this nature cause concern. We have full confidence in this team, along with the entire staff body, to deliver the educational priorities and to maintain the Jewish ethos of the school," Moss said.

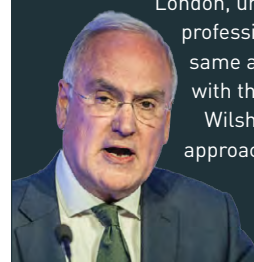
The governors would "outline" plans to recruit Fink's permanent successor "in due course".

Wilshaw was executive principal of Mossbourne Community Academy in Hackney, east London, before his appointment as chief inspector in 2012. He was succeeded by Amanda Spielman in 2016.

Last year, the 74-year-old returned to the classroom to teach history at St Thomas More Catholic School in north

London, urging other retired professionals to do the same as schools grappled with the pandemic.

Wilshaw has been approached for comment.



School drops sports course questioned by Ofsted

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

A Liverpool school has dropped a controversial sports science qualification that Ofsted said might not be in the pupils' "best interests".

St Francis Xavier's College, one of ten schools found not to be providing effective education during the pandemic, said it decided to drop the course before the inspectors' visit.

A monitoring inspection conducted in March also ruled safeguarding was not effective.

Inspectors found all year 11 pupils were entered for the Cambridge national award in sport science, which is equivalent to one GCSE. The course was introduced two years ago.

They warned some pupils "did not understand why they were entered for this qualification" and they "could not establish that the reasons for the school using this qualification are in pupils' best interests".

David Hayes, who took over as head in April, said Ofsted "rightly" identified the course as "an area that needed to be addressed".

He said that the qualification "took time away from students engaging in physical activity and was not conducive to us providing a strong and sound curriculum".

Hayes said the school decided before Ofsted's visit to drop the course and inspectors "reinforced" this conclusion.

Core PE time will now be increased from four to five lessons each week as part of a strategy to support the mental health and well-being of pupils, he said.



In 2019, Ofsted raised concerns with St Antony's Catholic College in Trafford, which enrolled pupils in the same sports science course – but the school denied that it was "gaming".

Ofsted also raised safeguarding concerns at St Francis Xavier's, with staff highlighting "disrespectful comments" to and about female staff members and a lack of confidence in leaders' actions to resolve concerns.

An independent safeguarding review later highlighted the school had "recently raised expectations about how teachers should manage pupils' behaviour".

Hayes said St Francis Xavier's would "continue to make the appropriate changes needed to ensure that this school meets the standards that we all want and expect".

Ofsted identified another two schools not taking effective action to provide education and with ineffective safeguarding.

A remote monitoring inspection of Wennington Hall School in Lancaster – a specialist provider for pupils with special

education needs and disabilities – raised numerous concerns over the safety of pupils.

Staff reported fears about how well pupils were supervised during the day and areas in which "pupils could leave the site without being noticed".

Ofsted said the local authority had provided extensive support to help the school develop its curriculum but it still "lacks ambition".

The school's future is in question with a public consultation on its potential closure to be held in September. Lancashire County Council failed to find a private provider to run the school.

Wennington Hall did not respond to request for comment.

Earlier this year leaders at Hunters Hill College in Bromsgrove told inspectors they had been "frustrated" by a lack of support from their local authority ahead of the special school's closure. The school was judged to not be supporting children effectively in the "current circumstances".

Stantonbury International in Milton Keynes received the same judgment.

The school featured in national media last year after a pupil was stabbed on site. Ofsted found that while pupils' behaviour "appears to have improved, leaders' actions have not been effective enough", with bullying and serious behaviour incidents still "too frequent".

The Griffin Schools Trust had been stripped of the school, which will join the Tove Learning Trust.

The school did not respond to a request for comment.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

No mark-down if schools let pupils leave early, says Ofsted

Ofsted has clarified schools won't be marked down for letting their Year 11 cohort leave before the end of the academic year, despite its chief inspector raising concerns over the practice.

Amanda Spielman told The Guardian last week that it was "concerning" to see secondary schools allowing pupils to end the summer term early due to learning lost during the pandemic.

She said the watchdog would "want to know" how schools used the remainder of the term to support these pupils.

However, Ofsted has clarified that such a

decision "wouldn't have a direct impact" on a school's grade when full inspections resume next term. Instead, it would be a source of evidence for inspectors looking at a school's catch-up provision more generally.

A school could still receive an 'outstanding' judgment if they let their Year 11 cohort leave early, but Ofsted would "have to see that the school had taken positive action on catching up on lost learning".

The Department for Education (DfE) issued guidance in March giving schools the freedom to choose whether to implement a period of study leave but warned "it may not

be applicable", suggesting schools make "appropriate judgments".

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, added it would have been "entirely inappropriate to feed this issue into the inspection process".

A Teacher Tapp poll from mid-May suggests most schools would have already let their Year 11s leave prior to Spielman's comments. Three-quarters of teachers in the most affluent quartile stated they would be leaving by the end of May, while 63 per cent of the most deprived said the same.

News

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Williamson reluctantly extends pupil premium cash

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools will be able to claim additional pupil premium funding for children with “no recourse to public funds” who were given temporary free school meals eligibility last year.

The Department for Education extended free school meals last April to children usually denied them because of their parents' immigration status.

This included undocumented children considered to have “no recourse to public funds”, and the children of failed asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups. Legal experts believe the move will affect thousands of young people.

The government did not initially extend eligibility to this group. Pupil premium funding of between £955 and £2,345 per pupil is issued to schools for children who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past six years.

However, the DfE has now made the extension for the 2021-22 financial year, following a threat

of a judicial review by Matthew Gold & Co solicitors on behalf of two unnamed claimants.

New guidance states schools can now claim additional pupil premium funding for children on-roll on the date of the autumn census who were eligible for free school meals under the extension “at any time” between April 1 and October 1 2020.

However, claims must be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday, June 30.

In its response to the judicial review pre-action letter, the Government Legal Department (GLD) said Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, accepted that the existing approach meant those given temporary free school meals eligibility last year did not count.

The GLD also said Williamson considered the judicial review claim to be “without merit”. But he has “now decided to treat pupils eligible for FSM under this temporary extension as ‘eligible’ for the purposes of calculating the pupil premium grant for 2021-22”. The legal action was then withdrawn.

Rachel Etheridge, a solicitor, said the concession “should see vast amounts of additional educational funding for these children”.

The government has already committed to a review of free school meal eligibility. It would keep the extension to children with “no recourse to public funds” in place until the outcome of that review.

The eligibility extension applies to children who are supported under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but whose families are subject to a restriction meaning they have “no recourse to public funds”.

It also covers the children of failed asylum seekers who are reliant on support from the Home Office under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

The other two groups covered are the children of Zambrano carers – non-European Economic Area citizens with a child or dependent adult who is British – and the children of those granted leave to remain under article eight of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Gavin Williamson

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Share deal thwarted by ESFA's 'fear of the different'

TOM BELGER

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EXCLUSIVE

An outsourcing firm has urged the government not to be "hung up on fear of the different" after officials thwarted a multi-academy trust's bid to take shares in the for-profit company.

Schools Week revealed in March that Transforming Futures Trust (TFT) had signed a £1 million deal to outsource most of its central staff and services.

But it has now emerged that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) blocked a more radical plan — dubbed "Project Blaze"— in which the trust would become a shareholder in the company it transferred staff to.

School finance experts said such models deserved wider debate or a pilot, but others defended ESFA's caution.

Board minutes for the Plymouth-based trust, which runs several alternative provision sites and special schools, suggest HR and IT were "huge problem areas" when Covid struck last year.

Annette Benny, the trust's former chair, introduced the trust to Delt, a back-office services company founded by Plymouth council and the NHS which she previously worked for.

Delt installed a new IT system, but then proposed a much bigger move — outsourcing staff and the trust becoming a shareholder.

Giles Letheren, Delt's chief executive, said it wanted to deliver "real value" in education, and saw the trust as "willing to try something bold". The trust would have kept all savings.

Trustees approved the move last June, with minutes suggesting ESFA and the regional schools

commissioner were informed and "comfortable".

But the plan was later rejected. The reasons remain unclear, with the agency and the trust declining to give further details.

Sources close to discussions said ESFA was concerned about the limited oversight of non-education bodies, and perceived risks of shareholding. Trust board minutes show discussion of ESFA having reportedly "moved some of the goalposts" and wanting "full procurement procedure".

The trust initially planned the Delt deal without competition, which a legal loophole known as the "Teckal" exemption allows if bodies retain control over contracted parties. It carried out a "soft market" test, but other interest was apparently limited.

After ESFA's intervention, a watered-down outsourcing deal without shareholding went out to tender in November.

Delt was the only bidder and won in March. Savings will be split 50:50, but the trust noted no money would "exit into private hands" as Delt is publicly owned.

A DfE spokesperson said the trust "decided to follow a conventional procurement process that provided the services it requires".

ESFA also voiced concerns over trust governance, but Dr Clive Grace, who became board chair in a wider trustee shake-up, said it was now "significantly improved".

A trust spokesperson said Benny's departure last year was for personal reasons and she had played



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

no part in decisions about Delt.

Letheren said Delt was disappointed Project Blaze was blocked. Business and education "can work really effectively together if we don't get hung up on fear of the different".

Abi Agidee-Adekunle, an education business consultant, said joint ventures were an "interesting model" worthy of debate.

There was room for innovation if trusts' purpose, DfE oversight, Nolan principles and vulnerable stakeholders were not undermined. But she cautioned innovative solutions were "not silver bullets".

Susan Fielden, a school finance specialist, said such arrangements were best explored through a DfE pilot, adding: "ESFA might have concerns about transfer of risks."

She said there could also be concerns about trusts being junior in existing joint ventures, and "significant professional adviser costs and risks" in launching new ones.

David Bagley, the chief executive of DRB Schools and Academies Services, said ESFA had been "bitten too many times due to business interests and related party transactions".

James Gare, a partner at chartered accountant Monahans, said academy rules put financial security ahead of maximising income. Rulemakers knew that poor investments "would go down like a lead balloon with the public".

A DfE spokesperson said it worked with trusts to ensure the "right balance" between innovation and maintaining "robust accountability and transparency".

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

Biggest trust gives up struggling school

England's biggest multi-academy trust is set to hand a struggling Leeds school to another chain, ending a seven-year effort to turn around its fortunes.

United Learning will transfer John Smeaton Academy to The Gorse Academies Trust (TGAT) in September.

Sir John Townsley, TGAT's chief executive, told parents in a letter that pupils would benefit from its "intimate knowledge" of the region, as it had other schools near by. The academy was "somewhat geographically removed" from other United Learning clusters of schools.

Jon Coles, United Learning's chief executive, also highlighted geography in his letter, and apologised that the transfer had taken so long. Proposals were first made in November 2019, following an "inadequate" Ofsted report that January.

Ofsted repeated concerns raised at a previous inspection over behaviour, low attendance and high fixed-term exclusions.

There had also been considerable staff turnover and governors were replaced by a school improvement board.

A more recent Ofsted monitoring visit said leaders were taking "effective action", but

highlighted limited support for remote SEND provision, including from the trust.

The school became an academy under United Learning in January 2014. But later that year the trust signed a five-year deal for Rodillian Multi Academy Trust to provide school improvement services.

The 2014 conversion marked the school's fourth attempt to become an academy. The conversion was also delayed over Smeaton's private finance initiative contract.

Coles later said United Learning was unlikely to take on any more PFI schools as "the cost is too high".

News in brief

Fire safety plans 'backwards step'

Fire chiefs are set to challenge a government consultation on sprinklers in classrooms, claiming the proposals are "taking the standards of fire safety in schools backwards".

A long-awaited consultation to the Fire Safety Design for Schools bulletin was launched last month.

The non-statutory guidance proposes that automatic fire suppression systems – such as sprinklers – should be installed in new special schools and new school buildings over 11 metres tall, effectively four storeys or higher.

Fire safety campaigners want to make sprinklers mandatory for all new and refurbished schools.

Gavin Tomlinson, the chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) protection and business safety committee, told *Schools*



Week the draft review "appears to be taking the standards of fire safety in schools backwards".

"If approved in its current guise [it] will almost certainly factor sprinklers and the building protection afforded from them out of any new builds.

"This would be a really missed opportunity and our [NFCC] intention is to push back on this as much as possible. I want to see new

and future buildings safer, not less safe, as we invest in them."

Jonathan Dyson, the NFCC's sprinkler lead, said: "We have been clear that we want to see a requirement for the installation of sprinklers in schools, including the retrofitting of sprinklers in existing school buildings when relevant refurbishment takes place."

The DfE said all responses would be considered and a final revised version of the guidance published in due course.

A spokesperson said the consultation proposed "a requirement for sprinklers to be fitted when constructing sleeping accommodation and in all school buildings over 11 metres - in addition to the existing requirement for sprinklers in any other circumstances required by building regulations."

£3m cyber security scheme

The government is set to spend £3 million on a new programme to make secondary pupils more enthusiastic about cyber security.

It is hoped the programme will help to "inspire" 11 to 14-year-olds to consider a career in cyber security before deciding their GCSE options. Schools will be able to run the scheme as part of extra-curricular provision.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has launched a tender to find a skills provider as part of its cyber security talent pipeline.

It said the programme would provide a free online platform for young people to develop "foundational problem-solving and cyber security skills in a fun and engaging way, and should be delivered as part of a schools' extracurricular provision".



The bidder should also offer regional pilots to support the programme and "importantly, to embed and deepen engagement of it with under-represented groups and in areas of disadvantage". It should also offer a targeted communications campaign.

GCSE entries for computing have risen from 69,350 in 2017 to 77,245 this year, but there was a slight dip in 2020 to 76,180. Entries at A-level have risen 10 per cent this year to 12,930.

Free webinars on flexible working

Heads, school business leaders and governors will be able to access free online webinars from September on how to implement flexible working.

It follows a government commissioned report last year that found a "culture shift" was needed to encourage school leaders to be more open to changed patterns of working.

The Department for Education has awarded Timewise, a flexible working consultancy, a £57,000 year-long contract to carry out the training, alongside the work of the eight Flexible Working Ambassador Schools.

Three live webinars will be uploaded to YouTube, with three follow-up clinics and eight interactive drop-in clinics.

The company has a target to enrol at least 1,000 participants and reach at least 500 schools.

Muriel Tersago, a principal consultant at Timewise, said the sessions would cover topics such as "how to take the learnings from the pandemic, and build on them to create a more proactive, whole-school approach flexible working".

Lucy Rose, the co-founder of Flexible Teacher Talent, said it was "always helpful" to get a push from the DfE on flexible working.

She welcomed the "close collaboration" with ambassadors. "However, with the biggest factor affecting whether a school will adopt flexible working practices being the opinion of the headteacher, it is likely that this will not alleviate the workplace 'lottery' which currently exists for staff."

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Yes minister, your recovery plans ARE in chaos

Ministers' excuses for their paltry education recovery plan have ranged from shameless to pure fiction this week.

First education secretary Gavin Williamson tried to deflect attention by having a pop at schools for "restricting" lunch breaks and closing too early.

Children's minister Vicky Ford then had the audacity to claim the plans weren't a "catalogue of chaos" (as described by Labour), but were instead a "catalogue of cash". The £1.5 billion for education recovery initiatives is actually *a tenth* of the amount that catch-up tsar Sir Kevan Collins said was required.

Ford then went on to claim she didn't know why Collins resigned – despite his resignation letter, published by various newspapers, clearly explaining why.

Not to be outdone, prime minister Boris Johnson later stood up in parliament to declare (incorrectly) that six million pupils will benefit from tutoring under the plan.

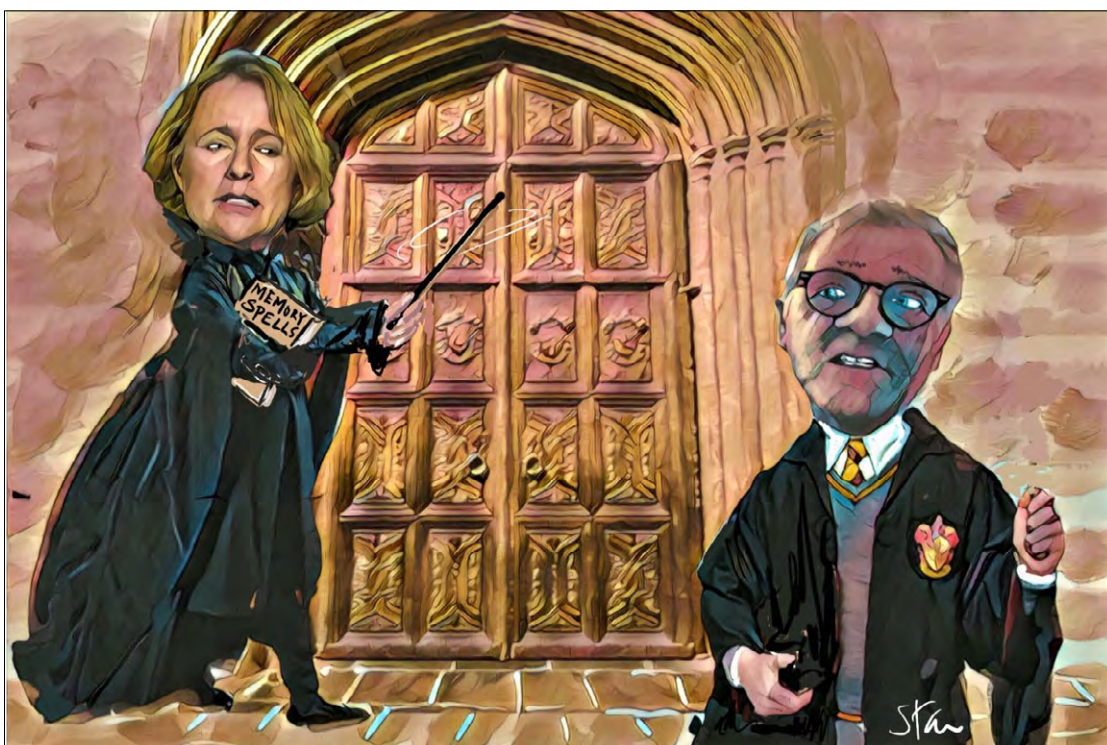
But the pledge last week was for £1 billion

to support up to six million, 15-hour tutoring courses for disadvantaged schoolchildren. The government isn't limiting the number of courses schools can buy for individual pupils – meaning it's likely those most in-need will get multiple sessions.

This all follows our story this week revealing the government has potentially saved tens of millions by awarding the national tutoring programme contract on the cheap to a Dutch HR company that undercut more experienced rivals.

Johnson declared his "biggest priority is to help children catch up on education". But the evidence reveals the truth: it's just another grand promise that the government has failed to back up with cash.

As the Education Policy Institute revealed this week, recovery funding in the next academic year amounts to little more than what was spent *in a month* on the "Eat Out to Help Out" initiative to support businesses. It leaves a bitter taste in the mouth.



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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



‘The culture of my school is the culture my mum brought me up with’

Marcus Shepherd fell in love with teaching by accident and was a principal at just 27. He tells Jess Staufenberg why a super-strong mentor is the key for leadership

**Marcus Shepherd, principal,
The Wells Academy**

When Marcus Shepherd, principal at the Wells Academy in Nottingham, landed the top

job, he made an unusual request. He knew behaviour at the school was very challenging and he had an idea.

“I said, ‘Can I do a day as a supply teacher? Don’t tell the kids who I am.’ The thing is...,” he explains to me, “...if the kids know you’re

the head, they act differently. So I did a whole day teaching maths.”

It was a chance for Shepherd to be treated the same as any other staff. It showed him the “great things” about the school, where 63 per cent of students are on pupil premium

Profile: Marcus Shepherd



Shepherd as a baby



Shepherd, his mum, sister and brother

funding, he says – but also the problems.

"It was kids not listening, kids being difficult, kids walking out of lessons. The worst thing in teaching is kids flat not listening to you. It was almost like a lesson was going on but no one had told a number of students it was happening."

It was a different experience for Shepherd who, remarkably for such a young headteacher (he was only 30 when he took the role), had already been a principal at a previous school. He was used to being listened to, and yet here were distracted students, swinging off chairs. "I thought, if I'm feeling like this, how is the NQT down the corridor feeling?"

It was a situation not far removed from Shepherd's own experiences as a child. Growing up in Coalville, an ex-mining town outside Leicester, he took his own approach to students disturbing lessons. "If kids messed around, I'd turn around and say, 'If you want to mess around, do it outside,'" he smiles, before growing serious. "I knew education was it for me. This was my chance."

He was up against other people's

assumptions. His mum was a single parent and he was mixed race, on free school meals in a largely white neighbourhood. His mum made absolutely clear to him and his two siblings – no excuses. "My mum was constantly pushing me to be the best I could be. I had to be well behaved, or I'd be in a lot of trouble. I had a massive drive to be better. She knew a lot of people, and me being one of the only mixed-race kids, she'd say, 'People will know who you are if you mess around.'"

Shepherd laughs, recalling a time where his school was celebrating his score of 99 out of 100 in a maths test. "My mum said, 'What did you lose the mark for?'" He grins again. "I look back now and think, she sacrificed pretty much her whole life. She gave up everything to raise us. We may not have had trainers, but we always had school shoes. She was such a strong influence on me."

It showed. He took maths, further maths, chemistry, biology and physics at AS level and from there got into Bristol University to study engineering.

Those years took Shepherd abroad for the first time, to study in Australia. While out there, the importance of pursuing enjoyable work became clearer. To earn money in the holidays he "was getting up at 5 o' clock to start on the vineyard until 3.30pm. Then I'd work at the pizza shop from 4pm until 11pm, then I'd start again. I thought, I want to work hard at university so I don't have to do this as a living. This is tough, tough living."

After graduating, Shepherd applied for some business graduate schemes, but was left uninspired. In one interview, he asked the interviewer: what do you do? "And they said, 'I'm a senior executive assistant', and I said, 'What does that actually mean?' And this

"We may not have had trainers, but we always had school shoes"

Profile: Marcus Shepherd



Shepherd and a pupil outside the Wells Academy

person said, 'I'm in charge of a multi-million-pound budget for refuse management.' So I was like, 'You oversee the bins.' His face splits into a broad grin. "I thought, I can't do this – this is a job that exists so someone else can make money."

Instead, Shepherd found Teach First. "It was the element of challenge to it. I love it when people set me a challenge. It's just the motivation I need." He adds: "I definitely wouldn't have gone into teaching if I hadn't found Teach First."

Speaking to Shepherd, you begin to wonder why there is a retention crisis at all. He buzzes with energy, despite taking on more exhausting responsibility very early in his career than most teachers. He's clear that in his first headship, aged just 27 at an academy in Derby, he struggled to turn his vision for the special measures school into a clear strategy. But he still managed to move it to 'requires improvement', and moved on to his second headship after about two years, joining the Wells Academy in 2019.

Instead, the experience has convinced Shepherd that "having a really strong mentor" is critical for new leaders like himself.

He praises his mentor, Pete Kirkbride, a

senior education adviser at Greenwood Academies Trust (which runs Wells Academy), who "comes and challenges and supports me – he's very hands on. Without Pete, the school wouldn't be anywhere near where it is now," explains Shepherd, with real humility. He says leaders can feel they need to "save the world", and don't always realise they have "a team desperate to work" for them.

I'm thinking of the NQT down the corridor. Why are so many leaving? I ask. "Like every career, some people realise, this is not for me," he begins carefully. He recalls about 35 minutes into his first ever maths lesson a pupil named Lauren suddenly saying "I get it!" I remember the look on her face, and I thought, I want to be a principal." For Shepherd, teaching is his out-of-work hobby. "When I found teaching, I found this thing I would give hours to. I sit at the weekend, and it's not work for me."

Inspired by the work-hard culture of his upbringing, and his university education, Shepherd's school is oriented around these two goals. Returning to the NQT, he notes: "What we say is behaviour management is 90 per cent the responsibility of the leadership

"When I found teaching, I found this thing I would give hours to"

team. We have to create that culture. Then we can focus on supporting them to be a great teacher."

As such, pupils are expected to use "indoor voices" in corridors, walk single-file and line up at all break times. Pupils are expected to have two pens and "perfect uniform", and lessons use the well-known SLANT technique – sit up, listen, ask and answer, never interrupt, track the teacher. The trick, says Shepherd, is always to give the student a chance to correct themselves and apologise before escalation. More importantly, expectations must always be communicated beforehand. "The fundamental thing to understand is lots of poor behaviour is just because boundaries aren't clear."

Shepherd's second drive is to make university available to all. "Some people don't like that we talk so much about higher education, but I want every single child to have the qualifications to do that if they so choose."

Ofsted are yet to revisit, but Wayne Norrie, chief executive of Greenwood Academies Trust, forwards me his latest emailed feedback to Shepherd. It's a small insight into the huge network of effort and support that goes into leaders and schools.

"I gave you the challenge last time of turning the 'honeymoon into the habit'. It's safe to say you have smashed that one!" Norrie wrote. "I have never seen the academy as good as it was today. The attention to detail, which really moves a school to 'great', is there in buckets."

Has he ever told his mum how she influenced him? I ask Shepherd. "Yes, definitely. It wasn't until I was older, that the penny dropped. She was the first leader I had as a kid."

He smiles broadly again. "The culture of my school is very much built on the culture of how she brought me up."

Opinion

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

Whatever the decision, now is the time to have a national conversation about our assessment system, writes Jo-Anne Baird

In the midst of the ongoing Covid crisis, as we begin to look with increasing hope at some sort of recovery, the National Education Union has launched an Independent Assessment Commission. Chaired by Professor Louise Hayward, the commission seeks to engage stakeholders and to consider their views on the future of the assessment system.

I have committed to working with the NEU's commission because it is important that young people feel they have a stake in post-pandemic society. And the assessment system will have a role to play in this.

The pandemic has overthrown assumptions about many aspects of society, our daily lives and our relations to one another. The notion of universal healthcare provision has been put into question by the stark inequalities in Covid survival rates linked to class and ethnicity. And we are now discovering that long Covid symptoms are more prevalent in women.

Occupations, housing, access to food, electricity and the internet have all had significant impacts upon how individuals, families and local neighbourhoods have experienced the pandemic. For the many children who have missed education (and their families), there were childcare issues, in addition to lost learning and its effects on young people's life chances. Digital poverty has played into this.

In England, one in 20 parents surveyed said that their child did not have access to a device for homework. Almost one-third of private schools were able to provide four or more lessons online a day during the first



JO-ANNE
BAIRD

Professor of educational assessment,
Oxford University and member of
Ofqual's standing advisory group

We need to talk about our assessment system

lockdown, but only two per cent of state schools achieved the same. Only two per cent of teachers working in the most deprived schools consider that their pupils have adequate access to learning. Sir Kevan Collins' report on learning loss concluded that children

assessments. In England, teacher assessments are being used for the second year running to produce the results pupils need to progress in education or employment.

These adaptations demonstrate resilience to fundamental overhaul,

“The notion that individuals can succeed through merit is fundamentally undermined

were set back by two to three months by the pandemic.

And to cap it all off, examinations – a stalwart of almost all school education systems internationally – were disrupted for fear they would be a source of contagion. Some countries, among them China, delayed exams. A few moved rapidly to on-screen

but the logic underpinning the results changed radically and we saw tensions across the UK regarding the statistical models (aka 'the algorithm') that were initially used to validate those results.

Why? Because use of statistics from previous years' school performance incorporated inequalities in school

intakes driven by local social demographics. As a result, the notion that individuals can succeed through merit of their performance in the examination alone is fundamentally undermined.

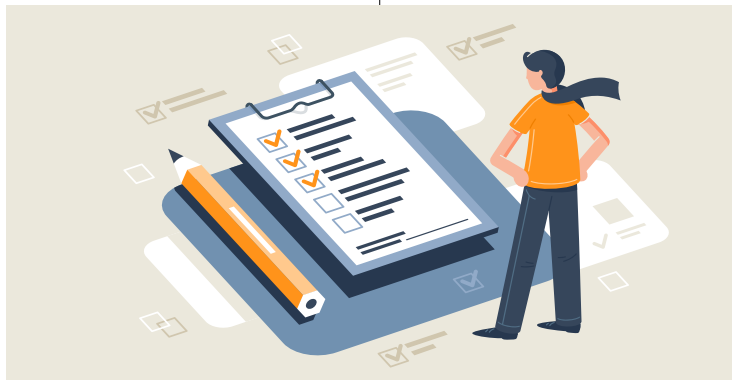
More positively, we have seen a widespread resurgence of respect for teachers throughout the crisis. Parents recognise that teachers not only educate their children; they have a wider concern for the development of character, social skills and wellbeing. Trust in teachers' judgments in assessment has been bolstered. Given so much angst in normal years about the reliability of marking across examiners under much tighter conditions, this surge in trust for teacher assessment defies predictions.

England's examinations were last reformed in 2010, when Michael Gove was education secretary. His drive towards end-of-course examinations and his focus on raising standards have been implemented.

But concerns have now shifted. Only having end-of-course exams left the system vulnerable during the pandemic. Pupils', parents' and teachers' concerns for equity, transparency and access should be heeded as we look to the future.

Rethinking our assessment system is no small feat. Many will be keen to keep it just as it is as we emerge from the pandemic, and their concerns should be heard too. But we owe it to ourselves and the next generation to do that hard work now, to have a national conversation, and consciously decide what to do next, rather than falling back on old ways by default.

That will require teachers, pupils and families, policy makers and professors, unions and communities, exam boards and regulators alike to play their part.



Opinion

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

Money and MAT expansion alone won't ensure vulnerable learners can progress to their next steps, writes Sam Parrett. We need to involve the experts

Over the past few months, our education group has seen the stark reality of the pandemic's impact on disadvantaged groups. As well as worsening inequalities, Covid has revealed divisions in the education sector that make tackling the problem even harder, and our experience suggests catch-up plans are missing an important piece.

Everyone understands that, despite our best efforts, school and college closures have affected academic progress as well as mental and emotional health. For young people leaving alternative provision at age 16, the challenges are even greater.

Already vulnerable, these children have a far greater risk of becoming NEET than their mainstream peers. And beyond the pandemic's direct effects on their education, taking their next steps in its aftermath only adds to the difficulties.

The DfE has recognised this with the announcement of its AP transition fund. First launched last year, AP settings are being offered up to £750 for each of their year 11 students to support transition and progression. This additional funding is both necessary and welcome at a particularly difficult juncture. But money on its own is not enough.

We know from our own experience of running successful alternative provision that several systems must be in place to secure positive transitions for our Year 11 students. As the DfE's own research in the development of its transition fund set out, this crucially includes high-quality post-16 transition set-ups with strong employer, industry and FE



DR SAM
PARRETT

Group principal and CEO, London
& South East Education Group

Colleges are the missing link in the post-Covid reform chain

partnerships.

Meanwhile, ministers have been clear about their renewed MAT expansion plans, recognising that trusts can provide greater financial resilience, centralised decision making and strong, systemised leadership to drive school improvement.

better transition, with established progression pathways and close working relationships between school and college staff.

We have a 14-16 provision based in the college, offering young people in one of our boroughs the opportunity to study a vocational subject two days

“MATs alone don't automatically mean effective partnerships

But MATs alone don't automatically mean effective partnerships with external organisations, employers or colleges.

Our trust is unique in that regard: seven AP and special schools and one mainstream form part of our FE college-led education group. This FE-MAT structure facilitates

a week while continuing to attend their mainstream school for the other three.

From college tours to guaranteed interviews and confidence-building sessions with college mentors, year 11 pupils in our AP schools are shown the progression options on offer and are supported to make the choices that are



right for them.

With an FE-MAT collaboration, employer links across the group can be maximised too. Apprenticeships and other benefits are extended to our school leavers as well as our college students.

Like most other APs, our schools can decide how to use their transition funding. Many are planning to put 'transition mentors' in place. But while personalised support is undoubtedly valuable, a wider network is a fundamental ingredient of successful progression. And that wider network must include FE providers, who are the sector's experts in employer engagement and partnerships.

This is true for all learners heading towards a fundamentally altered and somewhat volatile world of work. But it is especially true for AP school leavers, many of whom have additional safeguarding and learning support needs that mean ongoing care is needed to ensure they continue in their chosen routes.

This requires real understanding between institutions, with all sides committed to communicating longer-term about individual students, sharing information and supporting them and their families. This is far more likely to happen if there is a genuine link between schools and colleges, as our own experience testifies.

So while the row over catch-up funding inevitably continues, more thought must be given to how the whole system works together. MAT expansion promises to maximise available funding and increase collaboration, but it is only a partial solution.

FE providers' expertise is the missing piece that can ensure the young people who most need it are supported to recover and thrive.



IAN ROWE
Director of business development, GCSEPod

Better funding will only come with a better evidence base

Looking past our disappointment at the Treasury's funding of the recovery package, it's easy to see why the DfE failed to secure more money for interventions, writes Ian Rowe

The £1.4 billion offered by the government to help children catch up on their education after the pandemic was largely condemned as insufficient. The former recovery tsar, Sir Kevan Collins, clearly agreed that the proposal, amounting to £22 per child in the average primary school, was inadequate as he resigned over it.

It seems unlikely that schools will receive the £15 billion package Sir Kevan reportedly recommended. There are murmurings that the Treasury picked apart his proposals line by line, questioning their effectiveness and cost.

Though the Treasury could have loosened the purse strings, seeking value for money by asking that initiatives have proven benefits is sound. Organisations undertaking educational research, such as the Education Endowment Foundation and the Sutton Trust, do admirable work, but as charities their focus is rightly on helping the most

disadvantaged and on social mobility.

What we need is a centralised approach to examining how successful teaching methods are. The scientific systems of evidence gathering used in the pharmaceutical industry must be adopted in educational research to ensure that money schools receive

is spent shrewdly.

When I completed a pharmacology degree, I didn't imagine myself working in education technology. Edtech wasn't a flourishing industry in the 1980s! I started my career working for pharmaceutical companies observing the way drugs are developed, tested and trialed. Drug regulation is time consuming, and a rich and sturdy evidence base is collected before a treatment gets near a patient.

This process is laborious to prove that medicines are safe. However, The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) also investigates how cost effective treatments are when deciding

whether to allow it on the NHS.

This sounds heartless, but where there is vast demand and scarce resources, difficult decisions will arise. NICE analyses the benefit of a treatment based on how many quality-adjusted life years (QALYs), or years in perfect health, it provides. This means that even if a treatment is effective, if it is costly and its benefits marginal, then NICE may reject it.

We should transfer this approach of evidence gathering and economic scrutiny into our education provision. The pandemic has left children stressed about their lost learning and the government is not providing a large sum to help them. Therefore, it is imperative that any funding is spent on educational initiatives that provide the most value. But without

a robust evidence base, how can we possibly know what those are?

The edtech sector has always had to prove its efficacy. We provide a product, and schools like to know that we deliver results before they invest in us. This means we are at the forefront of analysing how children learn and how to help them retain information.

GCSEPod, for example, is a founding member of the EdTech Evidence Group. The group's core function is to help schools assess the impact of edtech in the classroom through evidence gathering and analysis. Integrating technology into assessment simplifies this process, allowing for data to be collected and arranged,



ready for interpretation, at the click of a button.

A stringent methodology needs to be adopted in analysing the impact of more traditional and less conventional teaching methods so we can start to understand what works for students. Whether it's working out sums on a blackboard, handcrafting something or engaging with content on a smartphone, we need to do more research on what the most effective teaching methods are.

There are some practical difficulties when it comes to proving where impact on educational progress comes from but this doesn't mean we shouldn't try. Clearly, the controlled situations in which clinical trials are conducted cannot be replicated in schools.

However, in the absence of a substantial funding U-turn by the government, we must create a system by which the success of educational approaches can be better measured. Only then can we ensure that the money the DfE does secure is spent as rewardingly as possible.

And more to the point, only with that kind of evidence can the DfE ever hope to secure more of it.

“Vast demand and scarce resources mean difficult decisions will arise

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Dismissing AI's educational potential is wasted energy. Worse, it could leave the sector exposed, writes Priya Lakhani

There's an idea in psychology called the 'thought-terminating cliché'. Popularised by psychiatrists analysing the effects of political propaganda, the term describes the deliberate use of loaded, emotive language to quell critical thinking. Trite sayings or proverbs are used to end a discussion without actually addressing the argument at hand.

It's a rational conflict-avoidance tool, and you can find thought-terminating clichés everywhere, often used benignly. "It is what it is." "That's just how it's done here." "I'm just saying." And now, the thought-terminating cliché is thriving in the world of technology.

Take, for example, "AI is just a marketing gimmick". OK. I'm as baffled as anyone by AI-powered cat flaps. And OK, a study of almost 3,000 start-ups found that 40 per cent of European AI start-ups don't actually use AI in any meaningful way. There is valid criticism to be made against companies found to be making false claims about their technological prowess and thereby undermining confidence in genuine innovations.

But that shouldn't lead us into generalisations about the technology itself. Accusations of gimmickry are too often made without evidence, and increasingly so in the world of education technology. Claiming that "AI is just a marketing gimmick" has itself become a marketing gimmick, used both as a fig leaf by less technologically advanced edtech innovators and as a thought-terminating cliché by ideological technophobes.

Developing an AI is no mean feat – it takes years, millions of pounds and a talented team of engineers (and in



PRIYA
LAKHANI

Founder and CEO, CENTURY

AI is here to stay – and no cliché is going to stop it

the case of CENTURY, teachers and neuroscientists too) to develop. Genuine AI products use a range of machine-learning algorithms and systems that are fed masses of data to enable them to make decisions and learning recommendations.

Forming a forceful argument against an advanced technology that is helping

cognitive work than reaching for your trusty cliché.

And yet there are plenty of legitimate criticisms to be made of education technology more generally. That classroom cupboards often resemble a scrapyard of failed technologies is testament to that. But while we should handle innovation with prudence, we

“Reformers should be setting out to ensure AI's aims are met ethically

teachers and students to thrive in schools as diverse as Eton College, Michaela Community School and schools educating Syrian refugees in the Middle East requires a lot more

shouldn't let past mistakes restrict present and future successes.

Teaching will always be a human-led sector. To the disappointment of nobody but the most zealous techno-



evangelists, robots will never take over the classroom. In fact, they barely exist. Instead, AI's role is twofold: giving each child an education tailored to their needs and liberating teachers from the administrative work that causes so many to burn out.

Reformers should be setting out to ensure these aims are met ethically. Unlike the relics clogging up classroom cupboards, AI has the potential to be more transformative for education than any previous technology. But making good on that promise will require us to leave behind the lazy cliché of gimmickry.

The facts are that AI's prominence across all facets of our lives is steadily increasing, that it is forecast to surge over the next few decades, and that Britain's AI sector is currently the third-largest in the world. Education – our second biggest economic sector – will increasingly come under its influence. And dismissing it as gimmickry actually prevents us from focusing on the real and potentially serious ethical challenges it presents, such as data privacy and algorithmic bias.

Should these critics succeed, an educational and economic powerhouse would be lost. But they are unlikely to, and when they fail, these ethical questions will still need solving.

In my new role as a non-executive board member at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, I'm hoping to help policymakers to ensure all sectors – including education – benefit from these technologies ethically.

Meanwhile, a framework thankfully already exists to support leaders and teachers to deploy them safely in schools and classrooms. But doing so requires careful attention from all stakeholders. And that has to start with dropping the clichés.

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Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Middle Leadership Mastery: A toolkit for subject and pastoral leaders

Author: Adam Robbins

Publisher: Crown House Publishing

Reviewer: Kristian Shanks, curriculum leader for history, Sherburn High School

As Stuart Lock references in his foreword to Sarah Barker's excellent chapter "Leading a Department", middle leaders are often referred to as "the engine rooms of the school". Yet a common experience for many new middle leaders is that you find yourself going from the frying pan of classroom teaching to the fire of leadership without much by way of structured support to manage the transition. And that's the gap Adam Robbins' comprehensive yet concise guide proposes to fill.

Middle Leadership Mastery is organised into nine chapters that consider a range of topics, from the bread-and-butter of leading teaching, learning and assessment to more nebulous aspects of the role, such as decision making and wellbeing. Each chapter ends on a recap summary and questions to stimulate personal reflection or discussions for line management meetings.

A standout feature of this book is the way it synthesises much of the current education debates in an easily digestible form, illuminated with helpful diagrams to summarise some of the trickier content. So, for example, Robbins' first chapter "Leading the Curriculum" draws on the work of other influential teacher-writers such as Ruth Ashbee and Pritesh Raichura, as well as scholars like Michael Young.

This chapter also reveals the author's sympathies from the outset, very much favouring the former in the knowledge vs skills debate. This perspective also shines through in the chapter on teaching and learning, where Doug

Lemov's seminal work is synthesised and the importance of routines is emphasised. These preferences reflect my own, but those less sympathetic towards the 'knowledge turn' will perhaps disagree with some of the conclusions therein.

There will likely be a lot more agreement in later chapters, where Robbins takes aim at the nonsense adjectives that permeate job descriptions for senior roles, or highlights the flaws of many strategies for improving teaching and learning. For example, Robbins critiques the use of universal criteria for good teaching, noting that these create perverse incentives that make workload balloon.

The author is extremely well versed in a range of issues particular to leading a subject department. His analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of different types of assessment will allow readers easily to make determinations about how to use these in their own contexts. Later, he uses Adlerian psychology in the section on wellbeing and explains how John Rawls' 'veil of ignorance' could be applied to decision-making. As a middle leader, I found these sections to be extremely insightful.

Robbins also successfully drills down into more granular elements of middle leadership practice. His 'snag lists' – a strategy for managing the things that need fixing as they emerge during the year, which all team members contribute to – are a perfect example. These feed into department meeting time and help

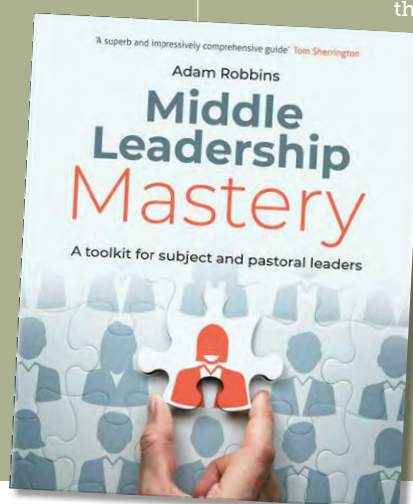
the overstretched head of department keep on top of issues as they arise while showing team members that their opinions are valued.

The downside of this book being so fully inspired by Robbins' experience is that subject leaders in secondary schools will have most to gain from it. It's unclear that primary colleagues will be able to extrapolate as much from it. In addition, while there is a short section on pastoral middle leadership, it feels as though it has been tacked on to broaden the potential audience. There are still some valuable insights, but it is an area that would benefit from much greater attention.

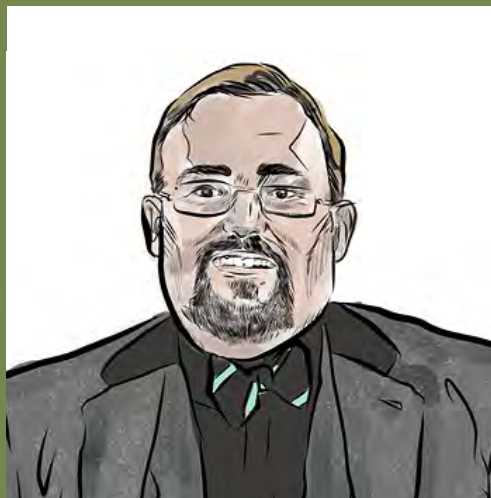
The role of middle leaders in dealing with issues relating to SEND is another area that is overlooked, as is the challenge for teaching middle leaders to line manage non-teaching members of staff, who often come to schools with a very different set of working practices and values that don't always mesh with those of their teacher-managers.

These shortcomings aside, this is an excellent book with a range of insights that will enhance the

professional learning of middle leaders everywhere. It would be naïve to expect one book to cover every corner of schools' engine room, and with this book at least, middle leaders have a practical and accessible guide to their core mission.



Reviews



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

@JMSREFLECT

Our Vision For Confident and Articulate Students

@MissTBegum

This is an excellent blog which has at its heart a simple vision: building in students the confidence and communication skills they need to succeed outside of the "safe, comfortable and validating" environment of school.

Miss Begum explains the moral drive behind the use of SHAPE and SLANT strategies to build confident oracy and pro-social behaviour in listening and communicating. She summarises the key strategies she has used to build positive habits of discussion, and the most common errors teachers and students make and argues that these skills are "fundamentally a lever that will serve our students well beyond school". This is a piece I intend to share widely with our team.

Curriculum: The Mirror and the Window

@steveadcock81

In many schools, the events of the past year may have slowed progress in some areas of curriculum thinking and development. As we now start to pick up those threads, I am always on the look-out for think pieces to share that will inspire and facilitate discussion. Steve Adcock's piece on his

TOP BLOGS of the week



curriculum review is such.

A succinct and easy read, it explores a powerful metaphor of the curriculum as a mirror and a window. "The mirror signifying that all pupils would see themselves in our curriculum. The window representing our ambition to show all pupils the world beyond their immediate experience." The idea has already had an impact on one other blogger, whose own reflections on the curriculum as a mirror actually led me to Adcock's piece. So an honourable mention is due to Mr Mountstevens, and I'm sure it won't be the last reflection inspired by this perceptive blog.

World-building the American West

@HistoryKss

This is a slightly niche piece targeted at history teachers of the American West. However, it may well be worth a read for teachers of other topics, if you're struggling to get your students to truly understand the mind-world of the people, place or culture you're studying.

Here, Kristian Shanks explains how he worked to break down his own and his students' negative perceptions of this marmite unit. Core knowledge, liberal use

of maps and photographs and a focus on individual stories all helped. The piece is generously illustrated with examples of Shanks' activities and classroom practice. He notes that "I'm not saying I've been brilliantly successful in my world-building attempts... But I do think I've come a long way in my teaching of this topic."

Some of the most useful blogs are those from people sharing their work in action rather than a 'finished' product, and this piece is great example of the genre.

This much I know about...having the courage to be different from the rest

@johnTomsett

As his departure from headship approaches after 18 years, Tomsett has promised a series of blogs sharing the key lessons he has learned about headship. The posts promise to be brief, readable and to share some insights from someone who is always worth listening to. In this first piece, Tomsett reflects on the courage to be different – a powerful approach to headship, but one he recognises "has always been conditional" on the context of his schools and the work of his predecessors. I am looking forward to the rest of the series.

Another Myth About Exclusions

@oldandrewuk

"Lies, damned lies, and statistics". So exclaimed Mark Twain and so might we when faced with some education stats. This is not so much a blog on exclusions as the story of one man's efforts to track down the truth behind some of these.

Whatever your opinion on the exclusions debate, it is hard to disagree that it should be based on sound evidence. Yet, in pursuing the truth behind the claim that the UK's "exclusion rate... is ten times higher than that of any other country in Europe", Andrew Old uncovers quite the complicated history. This piece is unlikely to shape your opinion on exclusions specifically, but is a salutary lesson about the need to dig a little (or a lot) further before repeating claims.

Research

The Research Schools Network will review a research development each half term. Contact them @rs_network if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

What does it take to implement an off-the-shelf intervention?

Rowena King, deputy director, Greenshaw Research School and assistant headteacher, Greenshaw High School

In these times when schools are under pressure to help their pupils 'catch up', intervention is the new buzzword. Gather teachers together – in person or online – and you will hear versions of the same question repeated over and over: "What do you do about X in your school?" Listen in to SENCo forums and the question has a slightly different inflection: "What intervention do you use for Y?"

This is all well and good if the questioner has an understanding of what to do with the answer they're given; but if they buy the book/practice/intervention the next day and head into implementation in blind faith, the chances of positive outcomes are slim.

A recent contribution to this column made a welcome point about the importance of tailoring interventions to specific settings. Its focus was on the cultural context of schools and their communities, but there is more to this complexity.

Consider the different facets that make up a school culture: buildings, local community, pupils and parents, yes, but also staff beliefs and values, leadership and governance. Each of these taken on its own is unique to a school. Multiply them together and we are in a world of difference, even for schools down the road from each other.

None of which will come as a surprise, but it all needs to be taken into account before making any changes in practice. Thankfully, there is an evidence-based method to ensure interventions are implemented effectively.

The EEF's guidance report on implementation recommends a four-stage approach: explore, prepare, deliver, sustain. Most crucially, this approach is



underpinned by two key principles. First, treat implementation as a process, not an event. And second, create a leadership environment and school climate that are conducive to that process.

If we truly grasp that implementation is a process, then the necessity of a September launch event dissipates. We find time to explain to governors and trustees that progress won't necessarily be seen for a number of years, albeit with staging posts to evaluate progress along the way. Most importantly, we feel comfortable with that idea.

Reflecting first on our current school climate encourages us to recognise where things need to change or where adding new things might over-complicate matters. For example, if staff's beliefs and values don't align with those of the leadership, they need to be given the capacity, opportunity and motivation to adapt to the change.

Capacity and opportunity might

come from a re-designed, systematic delivery of professional development, in which case the EEF's supplementary summary on professional development may prove useful.

But key to implementing any off-the-shelf interventions is to avoid a casual relationship with the research evidence surrounding it. Take an intervention like Accelerated Reader, for example. Another contribution to these pages called the whole programme into question, but the problem is clearly one of implementation. The article in question describes the use of AR as a universal initiative, but the current evidence indicates that it is a useful intervention for targeted pupils. There are also indications that very weak readers will need support and adaptations to its delivery in order to make gains with their reading.

That's why digging into underlying reports to understand the conditions that will increase the chances of a positive impact is crucial. It is these that allow schools to replicate with fidelity.

Finally, the importance of evaluation can't be overstated. As odd as it sounds, a well-planned implementation has evaluation at its heart from the very start of the process. When and how will you check that the intervention is having the desired impact? This needs to be mapped out. And most importantly, are ready to pivot or change tack entirely if the evaluation suggests you should?

With the pressure on schools to support children to 'catch up' after Covid, off-the-shelf interventions are vital for busy teachers. But it is careful planning and the execution of a nuanced implementation that will decide the level of their success – and prevent them from adding to workload in the long run.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

FRIDAY

The latest DfE-sponsored reports on lost learning make for grim reading. Perhaps that's why the government waited until a Friday afternoon in half term to publish them...

MONDAY

Gavin Williamson was back on his high horse again over schools with "early" finish times. Funnily enough, he's been banging on about it since the government was attacked for leaving plans for an extended school day out of its latest education recovery package.

"I question whether it is justifiable that some schools send their children home at 2.45pm when others keep them in for much longer," he told MPs as he sought to defend the government's plans.

This caused many in education to wonder: just how widespread is this issue if the education secretary is moaning about it in parliament?

The answer is, of course, not that widespread at all. In 2018, when TeacherTapp asked staff whether their school day ended before 3pm, it found

just 2 per cent of primary schools and 13 per cent of secondary schools shut up shop early.

But TeacherTapp acknowledged this week that Covid had changed things, with staggered start and finish times often now the norm. So the polling app asked again, and found that despite the staggering of the school day, only 1 in 20 primary schools and 1 in 5 secondaries finished pre-3pm.

Still, Williamson's efforts to make much ado about nothing did pay off to a certain extent – suddenly journalists were writing about his comments and not about his lead balloon of a recovery package...

WEDNESDAY

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the move by the government to subsidise tutoring for hundreds of thousands of pupils, tuition is no longer the preserve of the better off, the PM proclaimed during prime minister's questions.

However, Boris Johnson couldn't resist dipping his toe in the old "scroungers vs strivers" debate, just for old time's sake.

"The kids of well-off parents - thanks to their hard work - have been able to rely on private tutoring. What the government is now doing is coming in on the side of all the other kids who don't get access to that tutoring."

We doubt hard-up families whose children are set to benefit from the subsidised tutoring will look kindly on the PM's suggestion that somehow they haven't worked as

hard as wealthier parents, especially as the number of working families in poverty hit a record high last year.



Ben Kentish [@BenKentish](#) · 1d
Boris Johnson twice says that children of wealthy parents have access to private tutoring "because of their parents' hard work".

1,278

2,056

7,890



Ben Kentish [@BenKentish](#)

PM: "The kids of well-off parents - thanks to their hard work - have been able to rely on private tutoring. What the government is now doing is coming in on the side of all the other kids who don't get access to that tutoring."

It's official: Michael Gove, the former education secretary, broke the law when his department gave contracts worth more than £500,000 to a lobbying firm run by friends of his ally, the former government adviser Dominic Cummings.

A court ruled this week that Gove acted with "apparent bias" when he handed contracts worth more than £560,000 to Public First, which is run by former government education advisers Rachel Wolf and James Frayne, close pals with Cummings, himself a former DfE SpAd.

But although the court case was over Cabinet Office contracts, it wasn't the only government department or organisation to splurge money with Public First. The company was also handed tens of thousands to support Ofqual as it dealt with last year's exams fiasco.





Director of Programmes

Salary: from £55,000 – subject to skills and experience

A very exciting opportunity to work in the education sector and make a real difference.

SFCA is the membership organisation for England's sixth form colleges. It supports, champions and strengthens the work of its 116 member institutions through a suite of events, CPD and services.

SFCA seeks to appoint a Director of Programmes, who will play a key role in initiating, developing and delivering a suite of membership activities associated with curriculum, leadership, governance and quality.

Recent experience of a management or leadership role in a 16-19 environment would be an advantage.

Please apply by letter, setting out your experiences and why you think you are suited to this post, as well as a CV, giving two referees. One referee should be your current or most recent employer.

Applications by email to: info@sixthformcolleges.org.uk



SENCo/Head of Inclusion Vacancy

Salary: We would encourage applications from UPS teachers

Interview: We reserve the right to interview and appoint at any stage during the recruitment process.

Closing Date: 18th June 2021

Commencement: ideally September 2021, or January 2022

Highwood Primary School, Woodley near Reading, is looking for an experienced SENCO to be our new full-time Head of Inclusion.

The role would oversee all aspects of SEND at Highwood, including leading our Speech and Language Resource base Team. This full time position would be non-class based, but have a commitment in the mornings to support children and staff in their classrooms.

The salary package would include an SEN allowance and we would encourage applications from teachers on the UPS.

Please contact Cindy Edwards, School Business Manager (finance@highwood.wokingham.sch.uk) for an application pack, job description/person spec and application form available at: <https://www.highwood.wokingham.sch.uk/page/?title=Vacancies&pid=19>

Chief Finance Officer



Start Date:	September 2021 or earlier if possible
Location:	Cheshire
Salary:	Grade 12 - £45,125 - £51,768 (pro rata) to be negotiated depending on qualifications and experience
Contract type:	0.6 FTE in the first instance, with the opportunity to increase the fraction as the Trust grows and develops
Contract term:	Permanent

This is a unique opportunity for an enterprising and inspirational leader to join the Senior Leadership Team at what is currently a four school multi academy trust with an exciting growth plan.

The role requires strong financial acumen and the ability to prepare and maintain accurate monthly management accounts, annual budgets, and all the statutory audit reports in accordance with DfE regulations, VAT accounting and payment, responsibilities to HMRC, pensions and other regulatory bodies.

Application documents can be found on the HFNCAT website:

<https://www.hfncat.org.uk/copy-of-work-with-us>

Completed application forms should be sent to ed@allhallows.org.uk



BPET Director of Operations

Bellevue Place Education Trust (BPET) is an ambitious multi-academy trust with eight primary schools across London and Berkshire, with a long-term plan to sustainably grow to 15 schools.

We are seeking to appoint an ambitious **Director of Operations** who has a successful track record of performance and delivery as part of the BPET Central Senior Management Team. Provide leadership over HR, health and safety, risk, contract and asset management and legal support across BPET.

The ideal candidate will:

- have a track record and managerial experience having successfully delivered a range of projects/services against contractual requirements within the education sector
- have ability to think clearly and plan, anticipating 1 to 3 years ahead.
- commitment to delivering the ethos and values of Bellevue Place Education Trust

To apply, please complete the application pack and form is available on the [BPET website](https://www.bpet.co.uk)

Deadline for applications being **12 (noon) on Monday 14 June 2021**.

To discuss this role further, please contact Mark Greatrex, Chief Executive on mark.greatrex@BPET.co.uk or call **020 3108 0363**.

To Apply Visit: <https://www.bpet.co.uk/careers/currentvacancies/>

Join one of the UK's largest education services businesses in our HR and Finance Partner roles

We're embarking on an exciting period of growth and are looking for HR and Finance professionals across all levels of experience to join us on the journey.

As part of a successful business, whose performance in the market has been (and continues to be) exceptional, you'll be part of something special with the company's full support to reach your potential and career goals.

Whether you're an experienced HR or Finance professional, ideally (but not necessarily) with sector experience, or you're just at the start of your career, gaining experience and developing your skills, we would love to hear from you!

This is a great opportunity to work for an entrepreneurial company that is forward-thinking and fast-paced, with the added flexibility to work from home or the office. In return you'll receive a competitive salary, plus excellent benefits and holidays.



If you are interested in finding out more about the roles, please visit www.epm.co.uk/epm-careers

For an informal chat contact:

Tierney Jeffs (People Partner)
Tierney.Jeffs@epm.co.uk

To apply send your CV to:

PeopleTeam@epm.co.uk
by 8th June 2021.



HEADTEACHER THE CAMBRIDGE PARK ACADEMY From January 2022



The Cambridge Park Academy



Salary: Leadership Group 7: L24 – L39* (£74,295 - £106,176) pay award pending
Salary Range: L26 – L32 (£78,025 - £90,379) Salary negotiable for the right candidate
Responsible to: CEO and Humber Education Trust Board

Due to the retirement of the current post holder, we are looking for a committed and ambitious Headteacher with a proven record of sustained school improvement to lead The Cambridge Park Academy.

The Cambridge Park Academy is a special school which caters for children and young people aged 3 to 19 with a range of severe and complex learning needs. A high proportion of learners have autistic spectrum conditions.

If you are innovative, creative, forward thinking, and have a passion for working with staff and communities to ensure children with additional needs get the education they deserve, this may be the opportunity for you to make a real difference.

For an informal discussion regarding the post and Humber Education Trust please contact Rachel Wilkes, CEO Humber Education Trust on 01482 755674 or at rwilkes@het.academy

Visits to the school are welcomed and can be arranged via the

school office on 01472 230110. Further information about the school can be found on the school website www.cambridgepark.co.uk

Application forms, job descriptions and person specifications are available from **Sharon Herrick**, Human Resources, Humber Education Trust at sherrick@het.academy

You can find out more about our Trust at www.humbereducationtrust.co.uk and can follow us on Twitter @HumberEdTrust

Electronic, signed application forms or a hard copy must be returned to Sharon Herrick in line with the timetable shown below.

- **Closing Date 21st June 2021 12pm**
- **Short listing will take place w/c 28th June 2021**
- **Interviews will take place w/c 5th July 2021**
- **You will be interviewed by members of the HET Trust Board and local governors from the school.**



Chief Executive Officer

Salary: L28-L35 (£79,748 – £94,669)

Start Date: from January 2022 or earlier if possible

The Skylark Partnership (TSP) is seeking to appoint an exceptional leader, with a strong track record of school improvement, in a setting that includes SEND and/or alternative provision, to join us as our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO). We currently have two medical alternative provision academies in our Trust, Hospital and Outreach Education AP Academy in Northamptonshire and the Cherry Tree Learning Centre in Dudley, rated outstanding and good respectively by Ofsted, prior to conversion. We are very aspirational for our young people and do not allow their medical or mental health difficulties to limit their potential. We are passionate about making a difference to them and their families, giving hope for the future. We are keen to grow the Trust and encourage other alternative provisions for young people with medical needs to join us.

Our Trust is defined by our core values of resilience, respect, co-operation, compassion, honesty, trust, and hope, along with our ethical leadership. This is a rare leadership opportunity for someone to make their mark and contribute to ensuring that TSP continues as an educational influencer both regionally and nationally.

As an experienced professional, you will be able to demonstrate strategic leadership and excellent people management skills. You will lead and promote the Trust and be a driving force for innovation. You will be able to demonstrate extensive staff development experience and expertise. Most importantly, you will have a passion for education for young people with medical needs, ensuring that they have equal rights to and in line with their peers. You will need the determination to make a positive difference and commitment to continuous improvement across the Trust.

As an exceptional leader, you will be able to deliver and lead on the TSP vision and strategy. You will have the support of a committed Trust Board for your own professional development which will include mentoring and induction. You will be leading a passionate team of senior leaders across both academies to secure the best outcomes for our young people.

You will be an excellent ambassador with a proven ability to form productive partnerships, particularly with health colleagues, that support the long-term future of our highly ambitious MAT. We are looking for an outstanding individual to lead us into the next phase of our development. Emphasis on staff wellbeing is an integral part of our culture and we provide a highly supportive working environment.

If you are inspired by what you read in this pack, Trustees would encourage you to arrange an informal and confidential virtual meeting to discuss the post in more detail with the Chair, Frances Jones, prior to applying.

This appointment is supported by ASCL's Leadership Appointment Service. If you feel this opportunity is for you, please contact Bal at ASCL Leadership Appointment Service on 07492 353368 or email Bal.Kaur-Pierpoint@ascl.org.uk for further information. To arrange an informal and confidential conversation / virtual meeting about this post with Frances, please contact Bal.

Please email your completed application form to s.valentine-swallow@skylarkpartnershiptrust.co.uk.

Closing date for applications is: Monday 14th June at 12 noon

Shortlisting will take place on: Wednesday 16th June

Interviews will be held on: Fri 18th (remote), Tues 22nd (remote), Wed 23rd June (F2F).

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Agarwal, Paul Kirschner.



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