

SCHOOLS WEEK

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



Why we want students to join our trust board



My Week:
Gavin Williamson



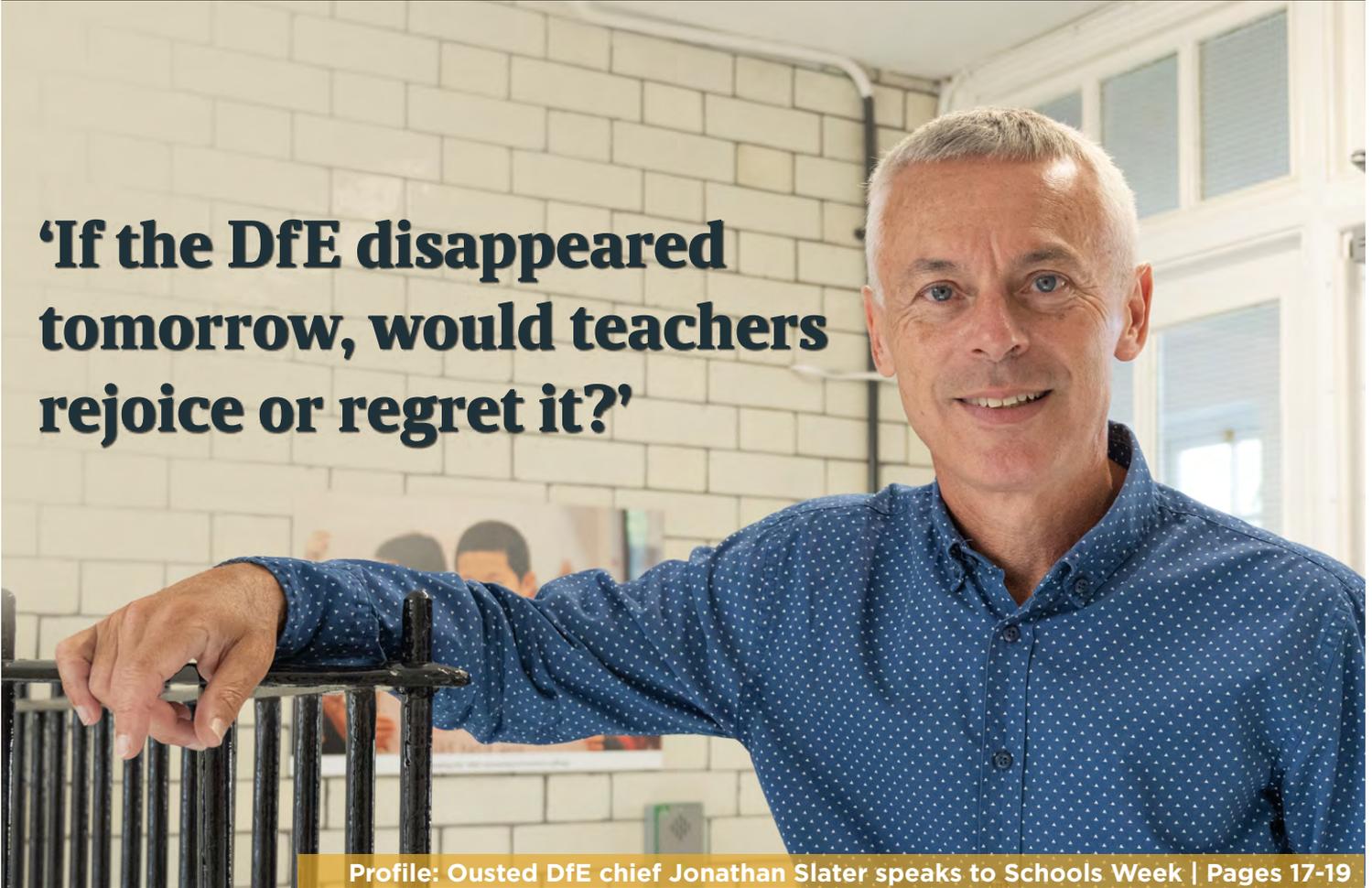
Longer inspections would reduce anxiety



SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK | @SCHOOLSWEEK

FRIDAY, SEP 10 2021 | EDITION 258

‘If the DfE disappeared tomorrow, would teachers rejoice or regret it?’



Scandal-hit trust ex-bosses sued over missing millions

- DfE funds High Court legal action against former Schools Company trustees
- Ministers hope to recover £2.8m in ‘lost public funds’ after conduct probe
- Case ‘sets precedent and sends message directors must act with care’

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE PAGES 4-5

SCHOOLS WEEK

Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFEENBERG@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



James Carr
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR_93
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



Tom Belger
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM_BELGER
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

THE TEAM | Designer: Simon Kay | Sales Manager: Bridget Stockdale | Sales executive: Clare Halliday | Executive Assistant and Finance Officer: Victoria Boyle
Event Manager: Frances Ogefere Dell | Office Administrator: Evie Hayes | Office Administrator - Apprentice: Zoe Tuffin

EDU WEEK JOBS



**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH - DIOCESAN
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS - ATTRACTIVE AND COMPETITIVE SALARY
FOR THE RIGHT CANDIDATE**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/EP1E](https://httpslink.com/ep1e)



**CAMPFIRE EDUCATION TRUST - SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR -
COMPETITIVE SALARY**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/BLPK](https://httpslink.com/blpk)



**NEW WAVE FEDERATION - MULTIPLE ROLES - SALARY DEPENDENT
ON ROLE**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/U3KG](https://httpslink.com/u3kg)



**BRIGSHAW LEARNING TRUST - HEADTEACHER - L16- L22 (£61,166 -
£70,745) DEPENDENT ON EXPERIENCE**

[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/O8ZP](https://httpslink.com/o8zp)



**UNITED LEARNING - MULTIPLE ROLES - SALARY DEPENDENT
ON ROLE**

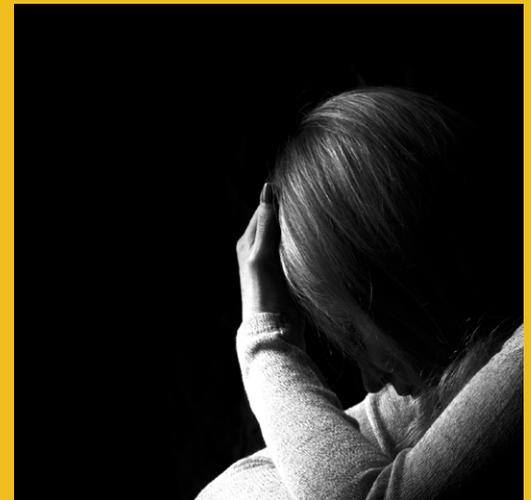
[HTTPS://HTTPSLINK.COM/KS75](https://httpslink.com/ks75)

TO ADVERTISE YOUR VACANCY WITH EDUCATION WEEK JOBS AND
PLEASE CALL 020 81234 778 OR EMAIL ADVERTISING@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK

Coaching: Should you believe the hype?



Page 26



Sexual abuse: Culture change starts now

Page 22



New Ofsted director sets out his off-rolling stall

Page 10



Why Ofqual can't solve the private school grade rise

Page 7

Disclaimer:
Schools Week is owned and published by Lsect Ltd. The views expressed within the publication are those of the authors named, and are not necessarily those of Schools Week, Lsect Ltd or any of its employees. While we try to ensure that the information we provide is correct, mistakes do occur and we cannot guarantee the accuracy of our material. The design of the digital newspaper and of the website is copyright of Lsect Ltd and material from the newspaper should not be reproduced without prior permission.

If you wish to reproduce an article from either the digital paper or the website, both the article's author and Schools Week must be referenced (to not do so, would be an infringement on copyright).

Lsect Ltd is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites linked to. Please address any complaints to the editor. Email: John.Dickens@Schoolsweek.co.uk with Error/Concern in the subject line. Please include the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is.

ADVERTISE WITH US

If you are interested in placing a product or job advert in a future edition please click on the 'advertise' link at the top of the page on schoolsweek.co.uk or contact:

E: advertising@schoolsweek.co.uk
T: 020 81234 778 or [click here](#)

SCHOOLS WEEK IS PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF



LEARNING & SKILLS EVENTS,
CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING LTD
C/O MINDSPACE, 9 APPOLD STREET, LONDON
EC2A 2AP
T: 020 8123 4778
E: NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

INVESTIGATION

FORMER BOSSES OF COLLAPSED TRUST FACE LEGAL ACTION



TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

A scandal-hit academy trust is suing former trustees to recover up to £2.8 million of "lost public funds".

Experts say the case sets a precedent that should serve as a warning for the sector.

Normally the government would just write off liabilities owed by collapsed trusts.

An investigation by Schools Week has established the government is funding the defunct SchoolsCompany Trust to take legal action against several ex-trustees.

The trust was stripped of its three Devon pupil referral units and Kent secondary in

2018 after damning Ofsted reports and claims of financial mismanagement, inflated results and unsafe premises.

The trust stopped paying invoices and had a multimillion pound deficit before it collapsed. The government wrote off £3 million of bailouts, but newly published trust accounts show the Education and Skills Funding Agency is still owed £2.807 million.

Schools Week understands the trust is seeking to obtain up to this amount via the legal claim. The accounts say the legal action follows an ESFA probe into "the conduct of the former trustees which had resulted in the loss of public funds".

High court documents seen by Schools Week reveal claims have been filed by

SchoolsCompany lawyers Michelmores against four trustees who left in 2017 and 2018.

The grounds for legal action are not given and described only as miscellaneous "Part 7" claims, typically used when facts are contested.

The defendants named are Elias Achilleos, the former chief executive, Everton Wilson, the former finance director, Patrick Eames, the former executive principal and operations director, and Heinrich Zimmerman, a former trustee and consultant.

SchoolsCompany Limited, a still-active management consultancy, is also facing action. Companies House lists Achilleos as its

Continued on next page

WHERE IS ELIAS ACHILLEOS?

Schools Week has tried to track down Elias Achilleos, who led SchoolsCompany from its launch in 2012 until wind-up began in 2018.

We wanted to ask about the legal action, the wide-ranging problems engulfing the trust pre-collapse, and why it appeared to have simultaneously been seeking expansion in Nigeria, China, Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

An email address for Elias yielded no response. Court documents suggest he has no lawyer.

The trust, its lawyers and other defendants did not provide details for Elias.

Electoral roll records revealed only one current residential address, a basement flat in Torquay, for an Elias Achilleos.

Schools Week visited the property this week, but this Elias Achilleos was a retired Greek carpenter.

Companies House lists Archilleos' correspondence address while at the trust, but

it is Goodwin Academy – a school rebrokered in 2018. The school and its new trust did not reply.

Another correspondence address for his SchoolsCompany Limited consultancy firm is a slick City of London office.

But when Schools Week visited, a puzzled receptionist could not find him or the firm on a list of tenants, physical and virtual. Regus, which manages the relevant floor, did not respond to emails.

We discovered two other Companies House pages for Elias Achilleos, listing seven companies between them where he has held directorships.

But all are now dissolved. Six listed the same City address as SchoolsCompany Limited. None had featured on the receptionist's list, and the only other was an insolvency firm.

Company names signal

past ambitions if not his whereabouts, from "Bureau for International Education" and "International Teacher Training College" to IT firm "NexDefence Global".

Meanwhile, Nigerian government records reveal a "UK SchoolsCompany Africa Ltd" registered in Abuja in 2017, shortly after the UK trust received a financial notice to improve.

A business listing website names Achilleos as director. But it is "inactive", and an email provided for a US co-director also produced no response.

A Nigerian senator, who proudly announced a deal with SchoolsCompany to build a "construction and fabrication academy" in 2017, similarly did not respond to emails. When a press notice confirmed its launch earlier this year, Achilleos' face and name were nowhere to be seen.



SchoolsCompany ex-CEO Elias Achilleos

Photo credit: Kent Messenger Group.

INVESTIGATION

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

sole director.

In 2016 it recorded £125,000 in gross profits, but its latest accounts reveal assets of £30,000.

Court officials said defendants had been served notice and an application hearing was held last month, but defences had not yet been filed.

Eames said he could not discuss live proceedings, and Wilson declined to comment. Other defendants were approached for comment.

Academies minister Baroness Berridge said: "Any type of financial mismanagement in schools is completely unacceptable, which is why I have agreed for the department to provide financial support to SchoolsCompany's legal action against its former directors, to help recover taxpayer funds."

She said new measures to strengthen financial transparency mean government can spot "irregularities much more quickly".

"Normally we would see ESFA write off liabilities, so this seems to set something of a precedent," said Micon Metcalfe, a financial management expert. "It sends a message trust directors must act with reasonable skill and care and in the best interests of the company."

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), said it was important all trusts were "properly held to account" over public funds.



SchoolsCompany's office in central London - according to Companies House

But academy financial regulation had "never been stronger", she added. A new CST report argues academies are more accountable to government than other schools.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership, said some problems flowed from academisation initially being sold as the freedom to "do whatever you like", with few questions asked.

But the government was "between a rock and a hard place" resolving trusts' financial troubles.

Bailouts could prevent disrupted education and be paid back, but promoting them "flies in the face of encouraging schools to be diligent with finances".

ESFA's investigation reports into

alleged "impropriety", conflicts of interest and related-party transactions at SchoolsCompany – as well as financial scandals at two other failed trusts – have still not been published.

Sarah Drew, whose son attended the trust's North Devon Academy, welcomed efforts to seek accountability.

"It's too late for kids like him who left with no qualifications. My son went through hell. The school was meant to be there to help kids with problems, but it wasn't. They said because of funding they didn't have enough teachers."

A SchoolsCompany spokesperson said legal claims followed "detailed investigation", but it could not comment further with proceedings ongoing.

HOW THE GOVERNMENT IS BEGINNING TO BARE ITS TEETH ON ACADEMY SCANDALS

The DfE has faced flak for not taking tougher action on academy management scandals, from unions demanding it show "teeth" to warnings by MPs it lacks effective sanctions.

The legal action against former SchoolsCompany trustees seems to be the latest sign of the government beginning to flex its muscles. The education secretary possesses once little-used powers to ban individuals from running independent schools, including academies and free schools, under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Schools Week could only find six such bans published online in relation to academy financial issues, but all have been since last summer. Thirteen other bans that date back

to 2015 involve radicalisation, illegal schools, indecent images and other issues.

Leaders can also be banned from teaching if found guilty of misconduct by the Teacher Regulation Agency. Liam Nolan, the former Perry Beeches Academy Trust "superhead", received such a ban in 2018, followed by a management ban two years later.

Potential criminal offences can be referred to the police and prosecutions can follow. Samuel Abayomi Kayode, the former accounts manager at Hatcham College in south London, was banned from school management last year following his conviction on theft and fraud charges.

But the ESFA acknowledged in 2019 that there was nothing to stop people involved

in malpractice from acting as trustees or governors elsewhere, such as in FE colleges, or as directors of education-related companies. The DfE struck a deal in 2019 to boost information sharing with the Insolvency Service, which can disqualify company directors.

Meanwhile, the Charity Commission and High Court can order charity trustees' removal for misconduct or mismanagement.

The charity regulator has received at least four academy trust referrals from the DfE since 2018, but took no regulatory action in those cases as there were "investigation and enforcement options available". It would not disclose the trusts' names.

NEWS

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

'Clueless' Williamson clings on, despite that gaffe

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Gavin Williamson has headed off rumours of an impending demotion this week, despite his latest gaffe mixing up two black sportspeople.

The education secretary was tipped to be moved or sacked in a reshuffle on Thursday. But Downing Street eventually confirmed it had no plans to move ministers this week.

However, Williamson (pictured) was widely criticised after confusing the footballer Marcus Rashford with the rugby player Maro Itoje in an interview with the Evening Standard.

The newspaper reported on Wednesday that Williamson claimed to have met Rashford, who campaigned for better free school meals provision during school holidays, on a Zoom call. He described the footballer as "incredibly engaged, compassionate and charming".

But the paper reported that Williamson's team later clarified that he had, in fact, met Itoje.

David Lammy, the shadow justice secretary, called the gaffe "appalling", adding: "Gavin Williamson, what was it about Maro Itoje that made you mistake him

for Marcus Rashford?

"You must be the most ignorant, clueless and incapable education secretary in the UK's history."

Williamson was forced to issue a statement via the Department for Education. He said he made a "genuine mistake" towards the end of a "wide-ranging interview in which I talked about both the laptops and school meals campaigns".

"I conflated the issues and made a genuine mistake. We corrected this with the journalist before publication of the story.

"I have huge respect for both Marcus Rashford and Maro Itoje who run effective and inspiring campaigns."

Despite rumours of his imminent departure, Williamson was publicly defended by Boris Johnson this week. Polling of Tory members by Conservative Home gave him a net approval rating of -53.



The education secretary has faced heavy criticism for his handling of the pandemic's impact on schools. They include the way closures were planned, the lack of contingency planning for exam cancellations and his department's reticence last year to provide free meals in school holidays.

Most recently a group of scientists has accused him of endangering the health of hundreds of thousands of pupils with his "reckless" decision to proceed with a return to school without "robust mitigation measures".

During prime minister's questions on Wednesday, Peter Kyle, the shadow schools minister, asked if Johnson could "get to his feet, put his hand on his heart, and promise the country, this House and his own supporters that the education secretary is the right person for the job and he's up to the job".

The prime minister replied: "I think the whole House will recognise that the education secretary has done a heroic job of dealing with very difficult circumstances in which we've had to close schools."

EXCLUSIVE

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

£6.7m school cost-cutting plan is cut back

Government plans to expand its army of school cost-cutters have themselves been cut back, with the recruitment of just a third of the advisers previously hoped for.

Schools Week revealed this year that the Department for Education wanted to recruit up to four providers to deliver 600 school resource management advisers (SRMAs) over the next three years.

It had earmarked £6.7 million to recruit and manage 200 SRMAs a year, but tender documents list the total value of awarded contracts at £1.14 million.

The DfE has now confirmed that only two providers have won contracts, and they are only expected to deliver "at least 200" advisers between them over the three-year period.

The DfE describes SRMAs' free service to schools as "expert support to help them make best use of their available resources".

Former academies minister Lord Agnew, who launched the scheme, claimed his advisers found £35 million of "essentially misdirected resources" in a pilot.

But *Schools Week* revealed that one school was told to replace experienced teachers with support staff to save money, with another advised to cut lunch portion sizes for pupils.

A pilot review found that schools were able to implement only half the recommended savings within the next few years.

Baroness Berridge, the academies minister, said SRMAs had helped more than 1,000 settings and become "system leaders

and vital partners", encouraging schools to seek their help.

The Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), which currently delivers the SRMA programme, has won a contract to recruit new and supply existing SRMAs from September. North Yorkshire County Council received a similar deal.

A separate contract was offered to "develop and deliver a consistent induction service and a robust accreditation process" for SRMAs, won by Education Performance Improvement.

ISBL is also currently recruiting 50 people with experience as chief financial officers to mentor other CFOs, after winning a related 12-month contract to run a DfE pilot.

NEWS

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

NTP row: Randstad can 'confiscate a tuition business at will'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

National Tutoring Programme contracts could allow new lead provider Randstad to remove its partners and take their business and staff "without compensation", the Tutors' Association has warned.

Nine leading tutoring organisations are still to sign up to the government's flagship NTP scheme – a week after it launched – as a contract dispute drags on.

Schools Week revealed last week that the providers, including leading tutor charities and education giant Pearson, were refusing to sign up to Randstad's contract demands.

The Tutors' Association (TTA), a membership body for tutors, has now said that a "litany of disasters" by the new NTP contractor is jeopardising the programme's future.

One disputed contract clause would allow Randstad to remove a provider and force it to transfer its whole NTP business – including tutors and staff – to the recruitment firm without any compensation.

TTA president John Nichols told Schools Week: "Randstad seem to have given themselves the right to confiscate a tuition business at will; how much more anti-competitive or unfair could this be?"

As well as running the scheme, Randstad is also an approved provider. Nichols called this a "clear conflict of interest, with Randstad acting as both administrator and tuition partner itself".

The NTP launched for its second year on Thursday last week. Just 29 approved providers were announced.

The Department for Education has since been called in to solve the dispute. Sources say that although Randstad has provided verbal assurances, the contract wording has not been changed. Providers were due to meet the DfE again last night.

Nichols said Randstad could resolve the issues "within just a few hours. They have even been provided with the exact wording for the contractual amendments that are required.

"The DfE could, with a single call or email, solve the problem. Worst of all, it is the millions of children who desperately need and deserve the help that the NTP could provide who will pay the price if urgent action is not taken."

The aggrieved providers are believed to account for around 50,000 pupils, nearly 10 per cent of the government's pupil tutoring target this year. The government has doubled its target to more than 500,000 pupils.

The TTA has also claimed that there is "inconsistency" in the way tuition partner applications have been processed. It claims that

10 linked organisations applied with "practically identical" applications and policies. But only two were accepted and the remaining eight were rejected for "different reasons".

Randstad has said it would run "evaluation assessments" across providers to ensure a "fair and consistent approach". The NTP's website says that an independent analysis would also be done by safeguarding consultancy firm The Athena Programme.

Concerns also rumble on about the NTP's new online portal, which Randstad said will make it "even easier" to access tutoring. However, Lucy Spencer, TTA's vice president, said the "unfinished" platform requires tuition providers to "hand over all of their commercially sensitive data with no safeguards".

There is also confusion over whether providers will have to cap tutoring places to ensure that more poor pupils are benefiting. The DfE expects 65 per cent of tutoring this year to go to youngsters eligible for pupil premium.

Sixteen organisations involved in the NTP last year are missing from the list while 13 of this year's providers are new. Only five of those describe themselves on their website as being primarily or exclusively tuition firms.

Six advertise themselves mainly as recruitment firms, albeit with tuition services highlighted on most of their websites.

Randstad and the DfE have been approached for comment.

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

NTP was a rough ride (and January didn't help), says Francis

Running the government's flagship National Tutoring Programme for its inaugural year was "a bit bumpier" than expected, but there are no regrets, says Professor Becky Francis.

The chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) said "serious disruption" caused by Covid impacted the scheme.

Although the programme met its 250,000-pupil enrolment target, just 205,538 youngsters had started sessions by the end of August.

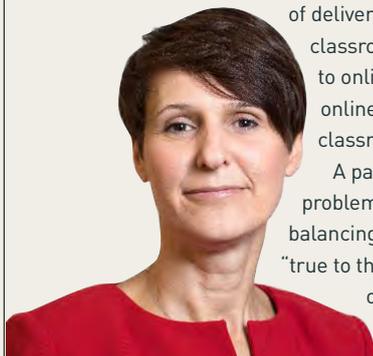
The last-minute lockdown in January left the EEF, which oversaw the scheme alongside four other charities, rapidly putting tuition providers through safeguarding checks so they could offer online support for pupils stuck at home.

As well as disrupting getting tutors into

schools, the lockdown hit leaders' "appetite to try new things or be able to extend themselves," Francis said. "It's been a hugely challenging year for everybody.

"If we'd known [there would be more waves] we might have thought more or been able at least to anticipate the need to move models of delivery from classroom based to online, or from online back to classroom again."

A particular problem was balancing being "true to the evidence" on tutoring, while



"being flexible with responsive demands and needs on the ground".

The EEF normally points out what works best in schools, rather than delivering a scheme.

And Francis said while the foundation was "determined" it would not be "deliverers" again, it would be "more hands-on" in future work.

However, she was "disappointed" the new charity set up by the EEF, the National Tutoring Foundation, was not selected to run NTP year two. Randstad, a Dutch HR firm that submitted a much cheaper bid, won the contract.

Under the new scheme, the government will start to taper the subsidy it provides for schools to access tutoring. But Francis urged "really careful scrutiny" over how this impacted the scheme.

We Need You to Help Shape the Future of Learning and Assessment



Get up to £100,000 of funding to bring your assessment design ideas to life.

NCFE is dedicated to promoting and advancing learning – it's our core purpose. We also believe that great innovation needs great collaborators.

This is why we're investing £1million worth of funding over the next 12 months to support you in piloting new and innovative approaches to assessment.

Who can apply for funding?

- Training Providers
- Awarding Organisations
- Ed Tech Organisations
- Qualification Developers
- Quality assurers
- Colleges

Applications for phase 1 funding now open – closes 1 October 2021

We are offering up to £100,000 to fund two pilots as part of our phase 1 funding round.

Apply today if you think you can help to develop new and innovative assessment solutions that meet the evolving needs of learners and educators.

Find out more www.ncfe.org.uk/aif

Ofqual won't be able to explain private school grades boost

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

No private school pupil sat national reference tests this year, which means they are unlikely to show why the sector had the biggest jump in top GCSE and A-level grades.

The finding casts doubt on the usefulness of the NRT, which is run every year to monitor over time how well cohorts of pupils are performing.

The government has been criticised over the rise, with ministers facing more questions from MPs this week.

It is not known whether the higher results reflect that poorer pupils were more likely to have their education disrupted by Covid, or are a result of the teacher grading system used this year.

Schools Week understands not a single private school took part in this year's NRT, leaving Ofqual unable to reveal the true reasons behind the rise.

Sarrah Raffray, the headteacher of St Augustine's Priory, a private school in Ealing, west London, said it was "extremely odd" that there was a data set on learning loss without the independent sector in it.

"It makes the data less meaningful – it doesn't make sense," she said. "It perpetuates the problem of narratives on what is perceived to be driving the gap, without the evidence."

The year 11 test in English language and maths at about 300 schools usually helps to set standards at GCSE. The sample is based on school size and prior GCSE results.

But because exams were cancelled this year, Ofqual said the test instead would "identify gaps in learning for catch-up planning, identifying patterns to see how things differ from normal years".

State schools in England must take the test if asked, but it is voluntary for independent schools. However, private schools pupils are asked to take part to ensure the test sample is nationally representative.

Eight private schools took part in 2018, rising to ten in 2019 before dropping again to six in 2020. Ofqual has refused to publicly reveal the data for 2021 until results are published in the autumn.

Jo-Anne Baird, an Ofqual adviser who sits on the regulator's NRT sub-group, said: "There's a question about whether [the law] should apply to all schools."



Absence data shows that poorer pupils missed 30 per cent more school days last autumn than their better-off counterparts, which supports the argument that the gap reflects the pandemic.

But a Sutton Trust report also found that teachers at affluent schools were more likely to be pressured by pushy parents to boost grades.

Appearing before the education select committee on Tuesday, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the bigger rise in top grades for private schools was a "consequence of the pandemic, rather than the awarding system, [which has], of course, hit children from more disadvantaged backgrounds harder than it has for children from more affluent backgrounds".

But Ian Bauckham, Ofqual's interim chair, said it was "impossible" to say that the changes were "simply due to the pandemic or simply due to the approach we've taken in grading".

National standardised tests were the only way to know for certain the underlying changes in attainment trends for disadvantaged pupils.

Bauckham said the NRT results would be able to "give us some objective reference points on actual underlying standards", despite a "reduced

number" of schools taking part this year.

Caroline Derbyshire, the chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable, said the gap was a "scandal. It may well have widened not because students in independent schools achieved more, but because their schools awarded more high grades and they did not fear the consequences of doing so."

But Barnaby Lenon, a former Ofqual adviser and chairman of the Independent Schools Council, said it was "nothing to do with the assessment system this year".

He was "surprised" no independent schools took the NRT, as they were a "significant subset". He urged exam boards to look at teacher assessed grades to see what was driving the gap.

Raffray suggested that private schools may have had less resource to carry out the test in the context of the pandemic.

Ofqual refused to comment on any NRT data from this year. A spokesperson said: "The NRT will be used this year to identify gaps in learning for catch-up planning, identifying patterns to see how things differ from normal years. We are really grateful to the schools that took part."

EXAMS: WHAT WE'RE WAITING FOR

1. 2022 EXAM ADAPTATIONS PLAN DUE "IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS"
2. DECISION ON 2022 GRADING IN OCTOBER
3. JOINT DFE AND OFQUAL CONSULTATION ON PLAN B DUE IN AUTUMN

NEWS

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

Ofsted sets out new off-rolling intentions

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted has told its inspectors to explicitly state in their reports when evidence of off-rolling is found after schools falsely denied it had taken place.

Previously, inspectors were simply told to “address” evidence of off-rolling in reports. But the documents did not always use the phrase “off-rolling”, even when the practice was identified.

But in guidance for inspectors released yesterday, new Ofsted national education director Chris Russell said standard wording would now be used “for any inspection that finds off-rolling”.

The Ofsted director, who replaced Sean Harford in the role this month, said the move followed cases where “some schools have issued press releases stating that off-rolling was not found because Ofsted did not use those words”.

“We do not want to leave any ambiguity, because we act in the interests of pupils and parents,” Russell added, saying this will leave schools and others “in no doubt about what we have found”.

In the past questions have been raised over potential off-rolling taking place when language used in reports failed to clearly state whether or not school had engaged in the practice.

In a 2019 report into Inspiration Trust’s East Point Academy, in Suffolk, Ofsted described the school’s response to high levels of pupil



Chris Russell

movement as “flimsy”.

A spokesperson for the trust stated at the time that the report “explicitly makes clear that there is no evidence of any off-rolling”. The school remained ‘good’ following the inspection.

But TES subsequently revealed Ofsted inspectors’ notes stated that the school was “no longer off-rolling to AP but this is new”.

In 2019, inspectors visited The Farnley Academy in Leeds following a complaint about potential off-rolling.

The report found that some pupils were moved from onto the roll of the trust’s alternative provision, and that leaders “could not convincingly explain why it was in each pupil’s best interests”, but did not explicitly mention off-rolling.

The school said in its statement to parents at the time that Ofsted had “found no evidence of ‘off-rolling’ taking place within our academy”.

There is no legal definition of off-rolling, but Ofsted describes it as the “practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil”.

The new guidance now says when off-rolling is identified as part of the reason for a school earning a requires improvement or inadequate judgment, reports will include the phrase: “This practise constitutes off-rolling according to Ofsted’s definition”.

This will be accompanied by “context and nuance as the lead inspector sees fit”.

The school inspection handbook states when a school is found to be off-rolling its leadership and management is “likely to be judged inadequate”.

Ofsted told Schools Week it would be “highly unlikely” for off-rolling to be identified and a schools not be judged inadequate. If this were to happen the inspector would “explain the circumstances very clearly in the report” and use the standard wording as a starting point.

If a school’s poor performance around pupil movement is associated with moving pupils onto the roll of alternative provision, wording reflecting this will be used, explaining that leaders “did not have convincing explanations as to why they had not followed the Department for Education’s guidance or why pupils had been removed from the roll”.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Councils won’t get heads-up on ‘inadequate’ judgements

Ofsted will no longer notify local authorities of provisional inadequate judgements of their maintained schools and academies.

The decision has been met with opposition from the Local Government Association (LGA), which warns schools need immediate support.

The schools watchdog released updated guidance for schools and early education yesterday.

Ofsted provides early notification of provisional inadequate judgements – which are pending moderation – to the Department for Education of maintained schools and academies.

The guidance states: “Historically, the

local authority has also been copied into this notification, but this will no longer apply”.

Instead, the local authority will continue to receive notification of the inadequate outcome “only when the final judgement has been made”.

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, chair of LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said it was “disappointed not to have been consulted” on the guidance and the organisation “oppose this change”.

She explained maintained schools judged inadequate would remain under council control for months until a sponsor is found. It was “vital for pupils and student’s prospects and wellbeing, and staff morale, that support

is immediately available”, she added.

But an Ofsted spokesperson said the watchdog “thinks it is unnecessary to inform local authorities” before the moderation process.

They said this will ensure action is only taken when the grade is confirmed.

Ofsted explains there may be some cases where it decides the local authority should be notified of safeguarding concerns.

This may happen “promptly after” or even during an inspection, the guidance states.

Local authorities have the overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area.

Interview

Sean Harford, Ofsted's former national director of education

The Ofsted boss who's happy with 'good'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

In his final interview as Ofsted's national director of education, Sean Harford talks to James Carr about the future of inspections, his proudest moments and plans for the future

After 18 years, six chief inspectors and countless hours of commuting, Sean Harford has retired from Ofsted.

He had intended to remain in post as national director of education for all of Amanda Spielman's tenure. But, following the chief inspector's two-year extension and, he admits, perhaps a change in perspective during the pandemic, he opted to take early retirement at the end of last month, just before the start of the new academic year.

He has been replaced by Chris Russell, Ofsted's regional director for the south east.

This term full, graded Ofsted inspections will return for the first time since March last year.

Under normal section 8 inspections of 'good' and 'outstanding' schools, two inspectors visit for two days. But, given the impact of Covid on schools and their pupils, Harford believes two days might not be enough.

"Not because we think it [a school's grading] may have gone down, but is it more difficult to gather the evidence in that short time, given all the things that have happened?"

His own view is that Ofsted is already "at the limit of what you can take in terms of assurance from the model we have".

The watchdog will, for the time being, have no access to evidence such as exam results before visits. In their absence "you've got to do a lot more gathering when you're on site".

He says the solutions are either more time for inspectors in schools, or more section 5 follow-ups.

Harford suggests a "middle ground"



"One of the most valuable things we can do is talk directly to teachers"

between the current and previous systems – when 15 inspectors would visit for five days - allowing Ofsted to get a "clearer picture".

"It would be better all round . . . I think the time has come to really think about that extra resource being needed."

While schools may be anxious about extended inspection, Harford claims, "ironically it would actually reduce the anxiety" and "probably reduce the workload" as more time would be available to discuss evidence on site.

Harford made headlines in 2018 when he tweeted that the National Education Union was "impossible" to work with because of its constant calls to abolish Ofsted. He later left the social media platform.

Three years on, he has no regrets "because it's true". It is "common sense" that if you "have a stance to abolish an organisation then it makes it harder to engage."

While other top Ofsted officials continue to have informal discussions with the union, Harford admits he didn't experience the same "fleet of foot dynamic" with the union since its reorganisation.

His proudest moment is how Ofsted introduced the new inspection framework (EIF), and the months of preparation behind

it, gathering views from more than 20,000 educators.

"I don't think we had done as much discussion [in previous projects] as we did with the EIF . . . it made me feel really good that we'd actually done something with the sector to bring it in.

"One of the most valuable things we can do is talk directly to teachers."

Harford also highlighted his first few years with the watchdog monitoring and helping schools in special measures as "very rewarding".

"I think to be honest, in a direct way, that's probably the most impact I've had in this job."

Having completed a masters in early modern history earlier this year, he is hoping to use his time to conduct further historical research and work with a charity that helps adults learn to read.

The former assistant head joined Ofsted in 2003 as an inspector before moving into management. In 2015 he was appointed national director of education, a move from his previous post as national director of schools.

And what Ofsted grade would he give himself for his time with the inspectorate? "I'm happy to be thought of as 'good'".

LONG READ

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

When opening a window is simply not enough...

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Has England been left flapping in the wind as other countries race ahead with ventilation policies for schools? *Schools Week* investigates...

The government's "minimal" and "negligent" approach to ventilation in England's classrooms is failing to protect pupils, say scientists and campaigners, including a leading epidemiologist.

Instead, they say, it should immediately provide air filters.

The experts, worried about the safety of children as they return for the new academic year, believe unnecessary air filter trials are delaying any action.

England 'outlier' in back to school approach

Last term's safety measures, such as masks and class bubbles, are no longer part of government advice.

Professor Christina Pagel, the director of UCL's Clinical Operational Research Unit, warned England was an "outlier" in reduced mitigations compared with other nations.

The government's own scientific advisers have said schools would likely experience "exponential" increases in Covid once they reopened.

Last week, an open letter signed by more than 30 scientists and campaigners called the back to school Covid strategy "reckless". Their nine-point plan included calls for an urgent investment in air filtration devices, as well as vaccines for children aged 12 and above.

Ventilation rules? Open a window

The Department for Education announced in August it would provide about 300,000 carbon dioxide monitors to identify rooms in state schools with poor ventilation. The monitors would cost £25 million.

Schools are set to receive one device per two classrooms and staffrooms, with special schools and alternative provision prioritised to receive their full allocation this month.

But an official delivery schedule revealed just 517 devices would be distributed this week, all to London schools.

Just 4 per cent of the devices promised are due for distribution over the next three weeks.

Dr Deepti Gurdasani, an epidemiologist at Queen Mary, University of London, said it was "completely negligent" as the Delta variant was highly transmissible through the air. "Measures against aerosol transmission

are the most effective."

Operational guidance for schools advises opening external windows and internal doors to improve "natural ventilation", or mechanical ventilation systems. But no funding has been provided for the latter.

Meanwhile the Health and Safety Executive advises only opening windows and doors partially to ensure spaces are "adequately ventilated without being too cold".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said ministers "should have grasped the issue of ventilation much sooner ... rather than relying on guidance about keeping windows open, which is very obviously problematic in the midst of a British winter".

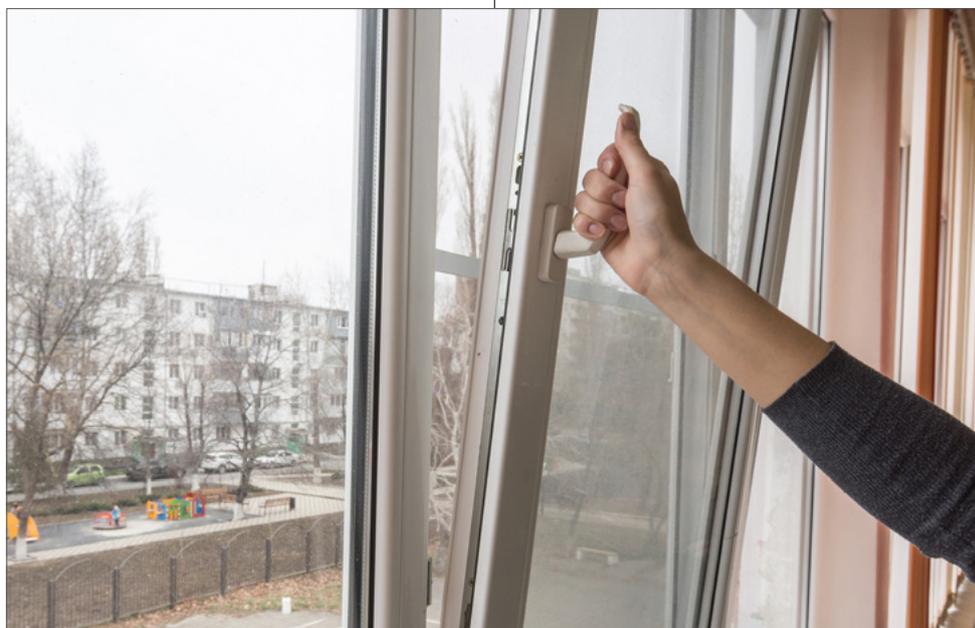
A Teacher Tapp survey of about 4,700 teachers in June found that 4 per cent of primary and 7 per cent of secondary teachers could not open their classroom windows.

However, just half of primary teachers and 41 per cent of secondary teachers said the rooms were well-ventilated. Less than 10 per cent of all teachers said their classrooms had good temperature control.

The DfE said it expected the monitors would confirm that existing ventilation was sufficient in most schools.

Question marks over need for the trial

Elsewhere, the Department of Health and



LONG READ

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



Dr Deepti Gurdasani

Social Care (DHSC) is funding a £1.75million pilot on the use of HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters at 30 Bradford primaries.

Ten schools will form a control group, ten will be fitted with HEPA air filters and ten with ultraviolet devices that kill bacteria.

But Gurdasani, an adviser to the independent SAGE committee, said: "You do a trial when you are unsure whether what you're doing is going to be inferior or superior to standard practice – there is no question about this."

In July, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a United States study that found HEPA air cleaners could "reduce exposure to simulated SARS-CoV-2 aerosols in indoor environments, especially when combined with universal masking".

The study acknowledged the use of HEPA cleaners to reduce the number of airborne infections particles was already widely known.

James Bowen, the director of policy at the NAHT, said it would be "hugely frustrating if the necessary action comes late on this" given the "relatively strong scientific consensus".

Will the poorest children be worst affected?

Last month, the Labour party published an analysis that found classes of more than 30 had increased 20 per cent since 2010. Areas of low social mobility, such as Barnsley and Swindon, had the most overcrowded classrooms.

Gurdasani said there was "no doubt" the more crowded a classroom, the higher the risk. "When you don't have good mitigations in school, the pupils affected will always be

the most disadvantaged," she said.

Peter Kyle MP, Labour's shadow schools minister, said the lack of carbon dioxide monitors distributed to schools and the lack of evaluation of existing trials of air purifiers was "too little action, and far too late".

The DfE said monitors would be rolled out as quickly as possible.

What are other countries doing to fight Covid in schools?

In October last year, the German government invested £452 million in improving ventilation systems in public buildings, including schools.

It might be one of the "cheapest and most effective" ways of containing Covid, said Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In March the United States government directed \$81 billion for PPE and improved ventilation in schools, among other measures.

While there has been a mixed approach across the country, New York City vowed to equip each of its 56,000 public school classrooms with two

HEPA air purifiers by September – having distributed more than 100,000 by July.

Other schools opted to build their own DIY Corsi-Rosenthal air filter box, a DIY alternative that costs a fraction of normal air filters.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) also highlighted "better classroom ventilation" and "smaller class sizes" as key deterrents to keep schools safe.

Schools and parents taking action themselves

Reports on social media suggest some schools are taking matters into their own hands and purchasing air

purifiers, while others are opting to introduce the DIY approach popular abroad.

The Fresh Air School campaign from Parents United told *Schools Week* parents had been fundraising locally to purchase equipment for schools.

Elsewhere, schools have ignored government advice and kept bubbles and masks in place.

Gurdasani called for the introduction of two HEPA filters in each classroom – which would cost about £800 per class.

The NAHT is due to survey its members shortly to gauge how many have bought the filters, while Barton from ASCL called on the government to make funding available for ventilation systems "as a matter of urgency".

The DfE said: "Although we are not out of the pandemic, compared with last September, we have stronger defences in place, with every teacher and every 16 and 17-year-old having been offered a vaccination, and extra safety measures in place, including testing."

NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

NPQs with expertise from the classroom and beyond, designed to challenge you and support your growth.

Great leaders can create great change **Apply now**

www.EducationDevelopmentTrust.com/NPQs

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: Education Development Trust, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Institute of Education

FUNDED BY: Evidence Based Education, Department for Education

Schools keep watchful eye on proposed DfE cuts

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The Department for Education has been asked to find savings of "at least" 5 per cent as part of the spending review.

It now faces cuts of up to £4.5 billion, prompting fears of an impact on school budgets.

But schools should not have to foot the bill for proposed reforms to health and social care, as the government plans to "compensate" public sector employers for any increase in their National Insurance (NI) contributions.

The Treasury announced this week that the spending review, a plan for public spending over the next three years, will accompany the autumn Budget on October 27.

Although the proposed NI rise will fund increased spending on health and social care in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, is looking to find savings elsewhere.

Given the impact of Covid-19, the Treasury said spending plans would be "underpinned" by a focus on ensuring every pound of taxpayer funding is well-spent, so that we can continue to deliver the highest-quality services to the public at the best value".

Departments have "therefore been asked to identify at least 5 per cent savings and



Rishi Sunak

efficiencies from their day-to-day budgets as part of these plans, which will be reinvested in our priorities".

Spending on schools represents almost two thirds of the Department for Education's £89.6 billion resource budget. A 5 per cent cut overall based on 2021-22 spending would leave the department having to find almost £4.5 billion.

The Conservatives pledged in 2019 to raise overall school funding by £7.1 billion in cash terms over three years. But that settlement only lasts until 2022-23.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, said schools "require more investment, not further cuts".

It was "imperative" frontline services, such as education, got the "funding they require to perform their part of the nation's recovery mission".

Geoff Barton, the leader of the ASCL union, said he was "fully aware of the pressure

on public finances", but the education of children and young people was a "national priority".

"If levelling up is to mean anything at all then it must certainly mean a better-funded education recovery package and better-funded education system."

Sunak said he would set out "how we will continue to invest in public services and drive growth while keeping the public finances on a sustainable path".

Plans to raise NI by 1.25 percentage points to find about £12 billion a year for health and social care were announced by the prime minister earlier this week.

Schools pay employer NI contributions on behalf of their staff, meaning their budgets will be hit.

However, the government said it intended to "compensate departments and other public sector employers" in England at the next spending review for the "increased cost of the levy".

In its policy paper, the government acknowledged that if it did not take this step, then the "spending power of public services, including the NHS, would be reduced".

The adjustment reduces the amount that is available from the levy to spend on health and social care by "around £1.8 billion per year". It is not known what proportion of this will go to schools, or how the funding will be passed on.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

£339m of catch-up funding comes from existing budgets

More than a tenth of the government's £3.1 billion education catch-up funding is coming from existing Department for Education budgets.

After MPs demanded answers, Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, provided a full breakdown of how much money will be spent across various education recovery pledges over the coming years.

In a letter to the education committee, he admitted £339 million of the £3.126 billion allocated so far will come from existing budgets.

This includes £173 million of the £542 million allocated in 2020-21 for the catch-up premium and tutoring packages announced last year, and £100 million due to be spent on various initiatives this year. A further £66 million from existing budgets is due to be spent in 2022-23.

In March, *Schools Week* revealed that although "over half" of £405 million in additional funding pledged in February was from the Treasury, the rest was from DfE budgets.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies found in May that the DfE had raided existing budgets

for a third of its £4.3 billion Covid spending, but this analysis also took into account things such as the cost of free school meals.

The breakdown also shows how funding for tutoring – a key pillar of the government's recovery plan – will fall dramatically in 2024-25.

According to the document, £163 million was due to be spent on tutoring interventions in 2020-21, while £404 million has been allocated for this year. A further £393 million has been set aside in 2022-23, £359 million in 2023-24, but just £110 million in 2024-25.

NEWS

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

Schools must avoid 'crossfire' over jabs for young teens

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government must ensure schools are not "caught in any crossfire" of family disputes over vaccines, school leaders say, amid confusing messages over consent.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, confirmed this week that vaccines for 12 to 15-year-olds will be administered in schools if medical officers give the go-ahead for their use in that age group.

But he faced questions from MPs over whether parents' wishes would be final, after fellow ministers made conflicting statements.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, told ITV News in late August that it would be "reassuring" for parents to have a choice over whether their children had the vaccine. "It always has to be based upon parental consent."

But Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, told Times Radio on Sunday that teenagers could

decide if they were "deemed to be able to make a decision that is competent".

Gibb confirmed this week that the government would "always seek the consent of parents before vaccinations happen in schools", but that "in some circumstances, and it is rare, children can consent themselves if they are competent to do so".

In situations where a parent and child disagree, there would be "discussions between the school and the parent in resolving those issues".

However, Williamson appeared to contradict Gibb too. In an interview with the *Evening Standard* he said it was "not for schools or teachers to be adjudicating" where there was conflict.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, has asked the government for clarity to ensure school leaders are not "caught in any crossfire around family disputes".

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, added school staff were not medical experts and should not be asked to "become involved in complex conversations around topics such as consent".

It comes after the government claimed it was "right" that all children were supported to return to class after it was threatened with legal action over its attendance guidance.

The Good Law Project has written to Williamson asking him to issue guidance that protects vulnerable children and families.

Attendance is now mandatory for all pupils, including those previously considered extremely clinically vulnerable, and parents risk fines or prosecution if they keep their children at home.

But the government this year has dropped some safety measures, such as wearing masks in communal spaces. Lawyers say vulnerable children or those with vulnerable family memb

Make results happen

Become an examiner

The last couple of years have been a tough test. And teachers like you have worked hard to help students get through it. In Summer 2022 take your expertise to the next level and become an examiner.

Apply now and make results happen.

aqa.org.uk/apply



AQA
Realising potential

EDITORIAL

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

New year, same old story?

Given the previous back-to-school debacles, this term seems to have gone a little smoother.

But, we are in new waters. The potential problematic consequences of running schools with far fewer Covid mitigations won't show up until a few weeks into term.

The re-opening of schools in Scotland led to a spike in cases. The English government is pinning its hopes on self-testing stopping the pandemic running out of control again and overwhelming the NHS.

While the vast majority of adults are now vaccinated, the government is still mulling over whether to roll vaccines out to children aged 12 and above. Should the roll-out get the go ahead, many will probably look back at why the decision wasn't made a few weeks earlier to ensure immunity kicked in for the return to school.

Last year the government botched the roll-out of its national free school meal voucher scheme. It was far too sluggish on delivering

laptops to pupils in need.

And it looks like those mistakes are in danger of being repeated with the National Tutoring Programme (see page 7). A week after its launch for year two, leading providers are still not officially signed up.

It is disappointing lessons have not been learned. Delays only mean the most vulnerable children falling even further behind.

Finally, despite a new year, and despite repeated speculation of a demotion, Gavin Williamson is still clinging on as education secretary (despite his recent gaffe, see page 6).

There's clearly going to be more bumps in the road. We're by no means out of the woods yet.

But *Schools Week* will have your back. We're here to fight your corner, to fearlessly and without favour investigate the issues that matter to you, and help make sense of the changing schools world so you don't feel overwhelmed.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.



CONTACT:
NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK
OR CALL 0203 4321 392

Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



‘Civil servants spend too much time in a room with other civil servants’

After four years in the job, Jonathan Slater was unceremoniously sacked as permanent secretary of the Department for Education. Now he’s calling for much more accountability within the civil service

Jonathan Slater, former permanent secretary at the DfE

Jonathan Slater is on the phone to one of his daughters. The former Department for Education permanent secretary and his family have just moved to south London, with his 13-year-old braving the local bus route.

“It’s the first time she’s done it, it’s no big deal,” he says, airily, before adding with a

sheepish grin, “I’m probably overdoing it.”

He laughs: “One of the advantages of the prime minister having had enough of me is I have more time with the family!”

Following the public outcry over last year’s grading fiasco in August, Slater lost his job. Boris Johnson said the DfE needed “fresh official leadership” (although Slater was not blamed personally). He first learned of his possible imminent departure from a Times journalist’s enquiry.

But Slater remains sanguine. “When you become permanent secretary, part of that is the risk that you might be asked to step down.”

He’d lasted for four years of his five-year term, and lost his job alongside several other permanent secretaries last year. None too impressed, one civil service union boss said the government was “prepared to throw civil service leaders under the bus without a moment’s hesitation”.

Profile: Jonathan Slater



Jonathan Slater, former permanent secretary at the DfE, at Charles Dickens primary school, part of the Charter Schools Educational Trust in south London, where he is a trustee

But Slater is determinedly politer about his former bosses. Plus, he’s enjoying the family time. He’s just visited his mum, a former social worker, and later this month his family are celebrating the life of his dad, who passed away last February and was himself a teacher across schools, further education and university. Both his parents were Guardian readers and lifelong public servants, says Slater.

“I felt very proud of dad my whole life. It did mean when I went into the department, I was always thinking, I wonder what dad makes of what I’m doing.”

Since leaving, he’s also been bugged by what the public – notably teachers, like his dad – think about government decisions, and how they are impacted by them.

A key question he used to ask new civil service recruits is what teachers and students would miss if the DfE disappeared tomorrow. “Half a billion pounds would be saved. Would schools and colleges rejoice, or regret the fact there wasn’t a central organisation to disseminate best practice? The point is, we have to be the latter.”

And he’s concerned that decisions made in Whitehall aren’t necessarily matched to what’s needed on the ground. “Civil servants spend too much time in a room in meetings with each other and ministers and not enough time in schools, with families, teachers, parents,” Slater adds.

This was a criticism levied at Slater’s department during the pandemic. Among many mishaps, schools were left infuriated

“Half a billion pounds would be saved if the DfE disappeared tomorrow. Would schools rejoice, or regret it?”

with last-minute communication of decisions, unable to secure vouchers for hungry families under a new national system and waiting months for promised laptops.

An explosive report from the Institute for Government, where Slater sits on the board, stated Johnson told officials not to make contingency plans for schools last year in the event of another lockdown.

Government insiders described Johnson’s reasoning as “if you prepare for these things not happening then the outcome is that they are far more likely not to happen”.

As it turned out, a surge in cases around December led to another lockdown, with schools closed and exams cancelled at the last minute. The government made five U-turns in a week of utter chaos over the Christmas break.

So who is to blame? “I don’t want to comment on whether ministers made the right decisions,” Slater says. “I have my own views but they are views I want to hold onto.”

But, he adds, “if you look back at the pandemic, what you find is an insufficient focus on what the public at large will find acceptable and will work for them”.

Slater highlights the DfE’s decision only to allow certain groups of learners into schools during lockdown. “A different approach” would have been to let parents and carers

decide whether to send students in, having told them only half of the usual placements in schools were available, he says.

However, I point out, the public and profession made their voices clear on plenty of issues. So why weren’t they heeded? I ask about the ill-fated grading algorithm.

“So I would say [...] these are difficult decisions, that ministers should be allowed to make,” Slater answers slowly. “The lesson is that at the DfE and more generally across government, we should be more mindful at looking at things from the perspective of those on the ground.”

Slater wants more civil servant accountability around decisions like this. He’s investigating why the civil service is “not as accountable as it should be” in a new role as visiting professor at King’s College London. A lecture on his findings is due out in November.

His solution for now is that government uses more qualitative rather than quantitative information before making decisions and measuring impact.

One of the policies he’s proudest of is Opportunity Areas, but interestingly he doesn’t think hard government targets are the way forward: “It’s a relatively recent phenomenon, this idea that you judge the success of something on a numerical target.”

Profile: Jonathan Slater



Dear Damian,

T-Level timetable: direction

The T-Levels programme presents an opportunity to improve significantly the quality of technical education for 16-18 year olds in England. A very large amount of design and development work has taken place already in support of the successful delivery of the programme, both within Government and in partnership with employers and the Further Education sector.



Charles Dickens primary school

The advantage is “you can say tick, it’s done, but the disadvantage is it might not relate to reality and how people are actually finding it on the ground.”

Slater’s views on accountability partly arise from his time as director of education at Islington council, where he says he felt more accountable than when he was in Whitehall.

“At the council, my job was to go to a public meeting and have to explain directly why we had to close this school. Contrast that with the civil service model, where [...] I work for the minister, and it’s my job to explain what

the minister thinks. In local government I had to explain what I think.”

But he took the rare step of publicly telling a minister what he thinks in 2018. He told then education secretary Damian Hinds in a formal direction that his ambition to have new T-levels ready for 2020 would “clearly be very challenging”.

Slater was the first permanent secretary to use a written direction under the “feasibility” category, which had been introduced a decade ago.

“That’s one of the most difficult things I did. It felt hard, going against the prime minister and secretary of state.” Slater did allow himself “a moment of humour” when Anne Milton, who had been the skills minister at the time of his letter, also later criticised the government over its unrealistic timeline.

Hinds ignored the advice, and the first T-levels were rolled out last year. So, do ministers listen?

Sort of. Rather than abandoning a policy or its timeframe, says Slater, “they might change the language around it”.

For instance, Slater says his team

“It felt hard, going against the prime minister and secretary of state”

challenged a proposal by Hinds to halve the vocabulary gap among five-year-olds by 2030 over feasibility concerns.

Hinds went ahead with his announcement, but instead labelled it a ‘moonshot ambition’. “That’s a minister not making a cast-iron commitment. That’s the sort of thing that would happen.”

He also pushed back on schools minister Nick Gibb’s ambition for 90 per cent of pupils to be taking the full suite of EBacc subjects.

“Of the various education ministers I worked for, the most determined was Nick Gibb,” says Slater, nodding to his “strong views”.

Gibb is a staunch traditionalist, whereas Slater seems more on the progressive side of the divide. He was his department’s diversity and LGBT champion, having himself proudly supported one of his stepdaughters through transition in her 20s. He also made efforts to increase minority ethnic representation in the DfE. Did he fall out of favour with No 10?

Again, Slater won’t be drawn, but he does say later, “certainly No 10 has a strong influence on all the government departments at the moment”.

One of his last acts was to advise Johnson that if the government wished to take ‘levelling up’ seriously, it should consider evidence that “the attainment gap is the same in an ‘outstanding’ or ‘inadequate’ graded school.” “Clearly you can imagine a system in which you can’t be outstanding if that is the case,” says Slater. He didn’t hear back on the proposal before he was fired.

It turns out Slater’s daughter does need picking up and, like any doting parent, he must go. He’s determined to stay involved in education, he says, only now, like his parents before him, at the grassroots level. He leaves me with a parting shot about the system he has left. “My concern about the civil service is it’s spending too much time in meetings with itself – and not enough time on the frontline.”

Opinion

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



**DALE
BASSETT**
Former director, AQA

Assessment reform must go hand-in-hand with resetting standards

There are no easy options for re-standardising exam results post-Covid, writes a former AQA director, and that's reason enough to revisit how we assess students

Two years with no GCSE or A level exams have stretched qualification standards to their limits. The number of A levels awarded a top grade in 2021 increased by three-quarters from 2019, with A and A* now accounting for over 44 per cent of all grades.

This was the inevitable outcome of cancelling exams, and perhaps the only way to be fair to those students. But a system in which standards bear no resemblance to previous (or future) years is not helpful for students who need qualifications to have currency, or colleges, universities and employers who need them for selection.

The pandemic has thus shown the importance of exams, and simultaneously highlighted the weakness of our all-or-nothing linear system. With exams set to return next year, the Government, Ofqual and the exam boards face an extraordinary challenge. Where – and how – should qualification standards be set in 2022?

There are broadly two options. One, recommended in a recent Institute for Government report, is to accept that the standard has moved forever and re-baseline it in line with, say, the 2020 outcomes. This may be the simplest option, and perhaps fairest to future cohorts, but it would destroy the whole idea of a 'standard'.

The past two years have been genuinely exceptional; if we accept that standards can be permanently abandoned, the credibility of our exams cannot last long. This solution would also be deeply unfair to those who took their exams before the pandemic, and could be in breach of Ofqual's statutory objective to secure standards over time.

Re-baselining could be accompanied by wider reform, such as moving A-levels to a numerical grading scale. This was tried when GCSEs moved to 9-1 grades, but they ultimately had to be anchored to the previous A*-G scale because of the importance of comparability over time. Adding a grade 10 at



GCSE and an A** at A-level could allow for more differentiation, but would permanently move the 'old' standard.

The second option is to try to revert to the old standard. This presents its own challenges, not least that the learning of the 2022 and subsequent cohorts will still have been heavily affected by the pandemic. This could be offset by tapering back from the 2021 or

to help compensate students for lost learning. This means there's really no way of directly relating the standard back to 2019. Standard setting next year will be, by definition, arbitrary to some extent.

Compounding this is the lack of exam data from 2020 and 2021, which would normally be used in standard setting in future years. Standards are normally tweaked each year using prior attainment data for each cohort, so that a more able cohort receives more top grades. But the cancellation of exams means there is no GCSE data to use in A level standard setting in 2022 or 2023, and no KS2 data to use for GCSE grading in 2025 and 2026. While the National Reference Tests could help at GCSE, there's no obvious solution for A level.

It's clear that there are potential disadvantages to past or future cohorts whatever decisions are made. Meanwhile, however, some vocational qualifications with a more nuanced approach to assessment have shown a striking consistency of standards.

That's why, as policymakers grapple with the unenviable task of restoring standards, they must also take this opportunity to consider whether the structure of GCSEs and A levels should evolve, so that in future standards don't rest solely on a final exam.

“ The pandemic has shown the weakness of our all-or-nothing linear system

2020 standard to the 2019 standard over several years. There is some precedent for this, albeit on a much smaller scale, in the way Ofqual proposed tackling harsh grading standards in modern foreign languages and in the way standards were realigned between legacy linear and modular maths GCSEs when they became out of kilter.

The chief downside, as Ofqual has recognised, is that this risks further breaking the link between students' actual performance and the grades they receive. Another issue is that exams won't be the same in 2022 as they were in 2019, with DfE and Ofqual intending to introduce changes such as advance notice of topics and greater optionality

Opinion

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

As schools welcome new and returning pupils, the NFER's Julie Nelson and Caroline Sharp warn transition may not be as smooth as usual

This week, some children will be starting school for the very first time while others will be moving to a new one. All will be embarking on fresh routines, with new teachers and classmates.

Transition has always been a time of mixed emotions – excitement, hope, nerves, uncertainty. But our latest research suggests the pandemic has left pupils feeling more anxious and under-prepared than usual.

We interviewed school senior leaders in 50 mainstream primary and secondary schools across England, serving deprived populations. They told us their transition year groups had not adjusted as smoothly as usual last year and predicted this would also be true in 2021. Despite schools' best efforts to create virtual or socially-distanced transition events, many felt pupils had experienced a reduced transition offer.

The youngest face the biggest challenges

Recent evidence from Leeds University and NFER has indicated very young children have been particularly affected by the pandemic. It has, after all, accounted for a very large proportion of their lives.

Many of the primary leaders we interviewed said that, due to Covid-19 disruption, their nursery, reception and year 1 children were not emotionally or academically ready for the next stage of education.

A minority of primary leaders said their young children's transition experience was not affected because they provided all-through education from nursery to reception on one site. This meant nursery pupils were already

CAROLINE SHARP

Research Director, NFER



JULIE NELSON

Senior Research Manager, NFER



Transition years require unprecedented support

sharing facilities with reception pupils and were familiar with staff and routines.

In spite of the widespread focus on missed learning, our leaders were most concerned their year 6 pupils

3. However, they worried that pupils would struggle, both organisationally and motivationally, with their ability to manage more a rigorous timetable and their general stamina for learning.

In addition, some year 6 pupils

“ Policy makers can't assume a return to normality will happen simply or quickly

would not be adequately prepared for secondary school in terms of their skills for learning, social skills and emotional control.

They acknowledged pupils had some learning gaps, but hoped these could be caught up during key stage

were said to be particularly anxious about the move to secondary school.

This ties in with other findings from our research, which show how the pandemic has contributed to a deterioration in some pupils' wellbeing and mental health.



Older pupils face specific challenges

Though secondary leaders felt their older pupils had coped better with remote learning than younger pupils, they said the removal of national exams in 2020 and 2021 affected year 11-13 pupils' academic readiness for their next steps.

With regard to year 13 students leaving for university, leaders worried that having missed out on the rigour of A level exam preparation and the development of essay writing and enquiry skills that comes with that would set them back. One said starkly: "I don't think they're ready for university. I worry for them."

Leaders were also concerned about pupils' preparedness for FE colleges or work-based learning. A few predicted a rise in the number of young people who would be NEET as a result of the pandemic's impact on their education.

And while the new cohort of year 11 and 13 students can hopefully look forward to a less disrupted year ahead, they are also facing a particular form of anxiety, brought about by a lack of certainty about 2022 assessments. Leaders' call for urgent clarity on this issue isn't just about certainty for them and their teams; it's just as important as a safeguard for pupils' mental health.

Looking to the future

Hopefully the removal of Covid-19 restrictions in schools will consign many of these challenges to the past. But education policy makers can't assume a return to normality will happen simply or quickly.

For pupils who made key transitions in 2020 and 2021 to reach their full potential, their schools will need adequate funding as well as support from external agencies to provide the enhanced wellbeing, behaviour and academic support they are likely to need.

Opinion

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



ANE VERNON

Partner and head of the education team, Payne Hicks Beach LLP



Sexual abuse: Time to set the tone for a new culture

Ane Vernon sets out the key policy requirements for dealing with reports of sexual abuse, and says school leaders have a duty to go far beyond them

Pan environment of increasing publicity about incidents of sexual abuse and harassment between pupils, schools and colleges find themselves under enormous pressure. With all the normal pressures of the start of a new school year as well as Covid's ongoing disruptions, leaders already have plenty to contend with, but the urgency of Ofsted's June review on the topic has not abated. New statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education has come into force this month, and now is an opportune time to set the tone for the new culture that is so evidently required.

The prevalence of what has been termed 'rape culture' is not a new revelation, but that's all the more justification for the urgent need to address the issue. As a reminder of the shocking state of affairs, Ofsted's report found that "nearly 90 per cent of girls, and nearly 50 per cent of boys, said being sent explicit pictures or videos of things they did not want to see happens a lot or sometimes to them or their

peers". Further, "92 per cent of girls, and 74 per cent of boys, said sexist name-calling happens a lot or sometimes to them or their peers". For some children, incidents are so commonplace that they see no point in reporting them.

One of the key points flowing from the Ofsted report is that school and

college leaders should assume that sexual harassment and abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports. They are then obliged to create a culture in which such conduct is not tolerated.

Good practice models recommend encouraging children to discuss issues around abuse and cultivating trusting and positive relationships with members of staff. Pupils can be reluctant to report abuse for fear of losing control, being ostracised or blamed, or getting their peers into trouble. They are more likely to open up to an adult when they feel their concerns will be treated with empathy and handled sensitively.

Once a report has been made, the school is faced with many often seemingly competing

considerations. Both the pupil accused of wrongdoing and the complainant require sensitive attention. Existing policies and relevant guidance should be applied with care and an effective risk assessment carried out.

When talking to the complainant it is recommended to have two members of staff present whose

“ Leaders must to create a culture in which such conduct is not tolerated ”

approach should be listening and non-judgemental. A comprehensive note is important, avoiding commentary and recording only what the child said.

Pupils will often seek an assurance of confidentiality when coming forward with a report of abuse. Care needs to be taken not to make promises that cannot be kept, although schools should do everything possible to protect the anonymity of children involved in reports of sexual violence or harassment, particularly in cases that are progressing to court. Normally the child's parents should be informed (although there can be situations where it is reasonable or appropriate not to do so), and certain information needs to be

shared with the police or social services.

Both the complainant and the accused need ongoing support. In addition to continuing provision of education, this includes counselling, pastoral support and involvement of families or external agencies.

A practical aspect that is difficult to manage is rumours spreading amongst the children, often on social media. Having clear and robust policies in place and promoting a culture of respect and empathy in the school community will go a long way to reduce the occurrence of further incidents requiring intervention. It will also avoid possible further trauma for those involved in the underlying events.

Schools have a range of sanctions at their disposal. Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly and proportionately, and take account of individual circumstances. The Ofsted report suggests that the threat of punishment can be a weaker influence on pupil behaviour than a culture in which abuse and harassment can thrive. It may be that pupils do not know enough about the sanctions that may be applied, but it highlights the importance of creating a school-wide culture that will not tolerate abuse of any kind.

Opinion

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



LIZ DAWSON

Director of governance,
Ark Schools

How an ex-student as trustee will help Ark Schools to soar

Former students have been invited to apply for a unique new role on Ark Schools' board of trustees. Director of governance Liz Dawson explains the trust's reasoning

Like many organisations, Ark Schools continuously reviews its governance structure to ensure it remains fit for its purpose and provides maximum benefit for the trust. We're fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteer trustees and governors who support our schools, and over recent years we have expanded our board to broaden the range of skills and experience further.

In July 2021, trustees decided to specifically recruit from among our student alumni community - someone who could offer a unique perspective on the wide range of issues our board handles. While many of our current trustees are involved in our local school governance, we strongly believe that having someone who studied in one of our schools will be invaluable to our board discussions.

We have seen this approach work well at a local level, with a small but growing number of alumni joining a local governing body (LGB). They offer a genuine insight into the real

experience of being a student at one of our schools and a young person living in the diverse communities we serve. We plan to increase the number of alumni on our LGBs, and we will be drawing on those signed up to our alumni platform, which

now has over 7,500 members.

Yes, there are risks. The pandemic has highlighted the enormous responsibility of being an academy trustee, and Ark Schools now has

39 schools, so every decision made by our board has a huge impact. The idea of being a trustee and having 'a seat at the table' will no doubt feel exciting for the successful candidate, but we have given a lot of thought to how we are approaching recruitment and how we will support our new trustee.

When talking to candidates, we have aimed to give them the right balance of risk and reward. Ark Schools has an income of about £200m, nearly 29,000 pupils and almost 6,000 staff. Very few young people have to consider the responsibilities that come with that or understand the statutory frameworks that academy trusts must operate within and the

“ Very few young people have to consider such huge responsibilities

consequences if something were to go awry. Our existing trustees have been working at a senior level for many years, so as welcoming as they will be, we've also given a lot of

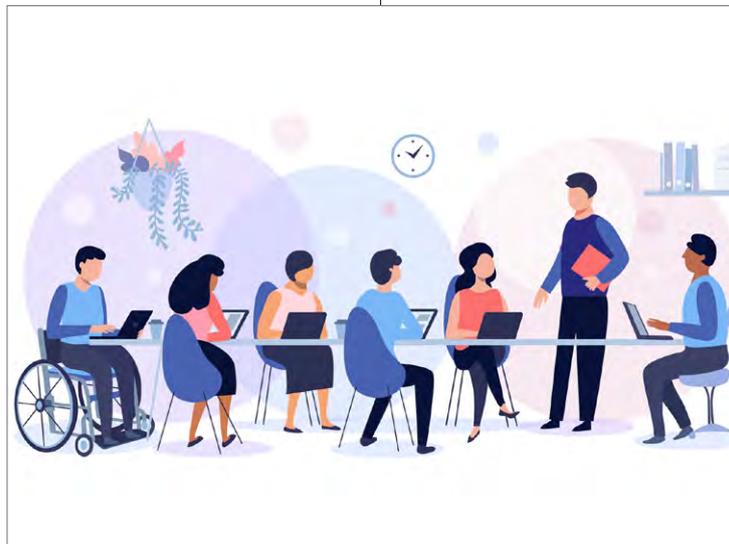
thought to how daunting joining the conversation will be initially.

As with any plan, risk and mitigation go hand-in-hand. Ark Schools has a strong executive team that provides advice and guidance to the board, underpinned by clear policies and embedded practices. Although we can't foresee every eventuality, we work hard to reduce any risks to the trust and its schools, which minimises the risks held by trustees. Alongside the detailed induction that all new board members receive, one of our trustees will act as a mentor offering support and advice. There will also be a member of the governance team meeting with them regularly.

Why go to all that trouble? Simply put, we see the rewards for us that will come by having an alumnus as trustee, and we hope the rewards for them will be even greater. Along with the alumni on our LGBs, we also have some of our alumni as interns at our parent charity Ark, as venture partners supporting the projects we incubate and support. We know how these opportunities increase their skills and confidence, how they expose them to a wide range of experiences, opportunities and networks they might not otherwise have and how it helps them to build their CV and consider where they want their future to take them.

The experience of the past 18 months demonstrates the need to further involve and engage students and the wider communities we serve in everything we do.

Our mission to transform lives through education doesn't end when a student leaves school. And if there's a chance it'll also strengthen our decision making, then that's a chance worth taking.



Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The Magic in the Space Between

Author: Ian and Hilary Wigston

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Reviewer: Zoe Enser, specialist adviser, The Education People

Mentoring is high on the agenda in education at the moment, heavily emphasised in the new Early Career Framework for Teachers in England, and an essential part of any teacher training programme. There are many forms of mentoring of course, and coaching too. And as the profession tries to chart its course through all these ideas and practices, *The Magic in the Space Between* promises to shine a light on the territory by looking at how one “unique mentoring programme” transformed women’s leadership.

The reasons for focusing on women are well publicised. The fact that two-thirds of the teaching profession is female but men represent more than half of the school leaders currently in post is reason enough. What’s more, the picture is even more worrying when you factor in race.

The authors developed the programme at the heart of this book in response to this seemingly perennial problem. Drawing on a wealth of experience from both within and beyond education, including businesses, the military and the public sector, the programme involved nearly 100 women in exploring what they could have to offer school leadership, encompassing work on self-belief and self-awareness in a drive to develop the potential of all.

The book, however, is not a step-by-step guide but more a reflection on some of the programme’s key learning points. The Wigstons have a wealth of experience themselves as mentors and coaches and there is a great deal here that reflects their experience. Hilary was also a teacher and school leader

in both the independent and maintained sectors, which allows many of the lessons contained within to be contextualised for those schools.

The bulk of the text is devoted to the experiences of those participating in the mentoring programme, with question-and-answer sections reflecting on the links between education and other sectors as well as case studies on how mentoring has made a difference.

A chapter is also specifically devoted to race and gender bias. It unpicks issues as they present in school, offering insightful reflections on the participants’ role models and the influences that have led them to this point in their lives and careers.

There are also reflections on the conferences and projects the authors and participants have been involved in. This too offers some valuable insights into the relationship a variety of people have with leadership and how they developed themselves and those around them. The breadth of voices throughout is one of the book’s real strengths.

Overall, *The Magic in the Space Between* does a good job of emphasising the importance of providing opportunities for women to explore their potential and see leadership as both valid and desirable. More than that, it makes a strong case that this is necessary if we really wish to address equality in education and model that for our students and society more broadly. The book’s lessons are just as valid for the representation of social, economic and ethnic groups as they are for women, and demonstrate the importance of effective leadership structures in realising everyone’s potential.

However, if you are looking for something which has immediate practical

application then you won’t find it here. That is not necessarily a bad thing. Increasing awareness of the importance of these kinds of human conversations in education is valuable in itself. Good mentoring and good coaching are nuanced and bespoke, and *The Magic in the Space Between* rightly doesn’t offer an off-the-peg solution.

What the book does offer are opportunities to consider the potential of mentoring and how you might employ some of its key concepts, even in the smallest of settings. The personal stories within are thoughtful, humorous and, perhaps most importantly, very human. They allow us a glimpse into the factors that have guided these women towards effective leadership.

Informing our reflections in this way is valuable enough, and true to the values of mentoring. It won’t give you all the answers, but it will help you find some. And that might be just the thing we need to bring school leadership into a modern, diverse world.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is **Gerry Robinson, executive headteacher, Haringey Learning Partnership**

@gerryrobin5on

Not every young person has had a good summer

@AmandaWilson910

Arriving back at school after soaking up this year's somewhat limited summer sun, it's all too easy to forget that some students (and staff) will have found the time off challenging.

Primary headteacher Amanda Wilson's excellent blog is a timely reminder about how we navigate those "welcome back" conversations in the first days of term. Seemingly innocuous questions, such as "so, what did you get up to over the summer?", can be tricky for students who had no choice but to sit at home by themselves every day while their parents worked, or those who perhaps lost a family member to Covid over the break.

Wilson offers personal reflections on the impact these conversations can have and calls for much-needed mental health and wellbeing support in schools to help students navigate the start of term.



Back to school, or not, 2021

@stephstwogirls

This blog is vital for all school staff, especially those who work closely with students who have autism, pathological demand avoidance (PDA) and/or any form of school-based anxiety. Steph Curtis is the parent of two girls, the youngest of whom has autism and, more specifically, PDA. Her blog details family life, including their experiences with the education system.

As with Wilson's post, this one is especially important to read at this point in the year. Curtis reminds us that for some young people, the start a new academic term is fraught with stress, anxiety and despair. Not only that, there is a risk that school staff don't see the extent of the distress, perhaps because of "masking" or because they avoid school altogether.

It's a timely reminder of why we should create spaces for parents and carers to have a voice in our school communities. Not only can they help us see what we're missing, but with insights like these, they can truly help us to improve.

This much I know about...

@johntomsett

I recently reviewed John Tomsett and Mary Myatt's new book, *Huh – Curriculum conversations between subject and senior*

leaders, so I was delighted to discover this blog, which highlighted why the book is so important.

As a recently retired head, Tomsett is well-placed to reflect on the common practice of senior leaders line-managing leaders of subjects outside their areas of expertise. He wryly points out that in such situations we quickly find ourselves "the proverbial chocolate teapot" because we are essentially novices trying to hold experts to account.

Better still, he insightfully proposes that senior leaders should approach this inevitable aspect of the job by being honest with colleagues (and ourselves) about what we do and don't know - and being willing to learn by working collaboratively.

The alternative is to adhere to a strict hierarchy to the detriment of curriculum and teacher development. And that surely wouldn't do.

Building a reading culture

@elucymay

The network of alternative provision schools and services of which I'm executive head has just opened its first school library. We are resolute in wanting this space to be more than just a room full of books; our vision is for a well-used and well-loved space that is integral to a wider culture of reading for pleasure.

It's for this reason that I returned to this post by Elisabeth Bowling. Her love of literature and determination to share the joys of reading with her entire school community radiates through her blog.

There are no shortcuts, but Bowling helpfully offers a range of practical strategies that will support schools to build a reading culture, with the library at its heart, that brings staff, students and families on board to celebrate the joys of reading.

And what better aim could there be for the new academic year?

Research



The Carnegie School of Education will regularly review a research development throughout the year. Contact @EducationLBU if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

Does teacher coaching lead to school improvement?

Professor Rachel Lofthouse, Leeds Beckett University and Dr Trista Hollweck, University of Ottawa

As the new school year starts, there is a renewed interest in coaching for teachers and leaders, especially with many Early Career Framework (ECF) providers adopting coaching as a model for mentoring. But does the reality live up to the hype? Does teacher coaching lead to school improvement?

We define coaching in education to be a confidential, interpersonal and sustained dialogue-based practice in which the coach works with a coachee to facilitate self-reflection and effective decision making in the context of their own personal and professional challenges. Coaching allows current practices to be expanded and refined, and its advocates in education draw on research evidence to highlight how it improves student outcomes and enhances professional development.

But the term 'coaching' has come to encompass varied models and practices. A glance at social media shows there is no shortage of pre-packaged training and newly published books to support the profession's appetite for quick results. In contrast, our research looked at the efficacy of what we term 'contextual coaching'. We aimed to shed light on the nuances of coaching in specific education settings and to recognise the reciprocity of the relationship between coaching practices and school contexts.

Our paper, recently published in the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, drew on two examples of teacher coaching and sought to understand the extent to which they contributed to conditions for school improvement. The first was a DfE Strategic School Improvement Funding (SSIF) project for improving maths teaching and attainment through metacognitive teaching in ten primary schools. The



second example was a large secondary school in Western Quebec, Canada. The former involved lead practitioners developing a bespoke coaching approach for their regular engagement with teachers. The latter saw all newly appointed teachers (regardless of prior teaching experience) working with a mentor-coach as part of the regional school board initiative.

We collected data from each case through interviews, focus groups and documentation, and used Hargreaves and O'Connor's (2018) conceptual framework of collaborative professionalism for school improvement as the basis for our abductive analysis. Collaborative professionalism is an evidence-informed process that promotes solidarity among educators through the development of deeper relationships and ensures the solidity of the collaborative work's output through the use of precise protocols.

Our findings demonstrate that effective teacher coaching does lead to conditions that underpin school improvement.

Specifically, the positive effect was most evident when there was alignment between the coaching approach and the tenets of collaborative professionalism. Coaching is, after all, founded on mutual dialogue, joint work, collective responsibility and collaborative inquiry – characteristics that suggest a collaborative working relationship between the coach and coachee.

But collective autonomy, collective initiative and collective efficacy among teachers take time to develop and embed. These were all more evident in the Canadian example, a sustained coaching programme that was funded for over a decade, than in the shorter-term SSIF programme.

Most importantly perhaps, the impact of coaching was enhanced in both cases as the programmes evolved through iterative design and co-construction by the participants, who made decisions based on their own contextual challenges and opportunities.

Our study also offers insight into how contextual coaching can lead to school improvement through the development of staff capacity for leadership. As coaches and coachees worked together, they expanded their coaching repertoire, engagement, competency and confidence. This had significance for their career development and helped to further embed contextual coaching in a positive feedback loop.

In the SSIF programme, both coaches and coachees took on new leadership roles in their schools or alliances because of their coaching experience. In the Canadian example, many coachees became mentor-coaches and even school principals.

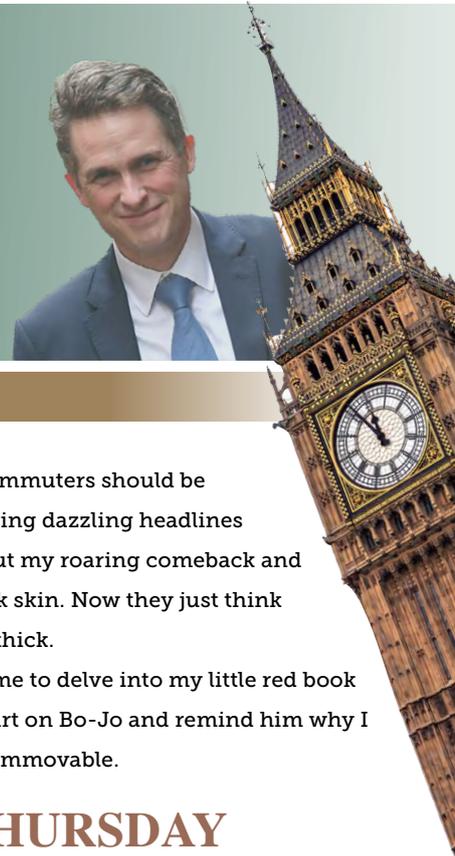
So yes, coaching can lead to school improvement. But with more coaching being rolled out in schools, it is important to note that although its principles can be generalised, the best evidence appears to support contextual coaching specifically, which means models must be developed in a bespoke fashion for (and with) each setting.



GAV'S

Week in

Westminster*



MONDAY

It's the first full week back at school for most pupils and I couldn't be more excited to see the children filing into those classrooms which, I must add, are absolutely safe and swimming in record amounts of cash.

We have been clear in the numerous guidance updates for school leaders over the summer about our Covid measures. Not sure why the education sector keeps kicking off. All makes sense to me...no more bubbles unless they want to have bubbles, but if they have bubbles and we don't think they should have bubbles, I'll set the Gibbmeister and his rottweiler RSCs on them.

We've been extremely clear as well about when schools might, or might not, want to ramp up their mitigation measures. We feel that by leaving it up to heads, maybe the unions will bleat at them and not me about "ventilation", whatever that is.

Why the fuss? Just open a window. Although if schools' heating bills spiral, then I'll have to get Agnew's cost-cutters on to them.

Anyway, I feel soooooo good about the return of schools that I have barely had time to think about these reshuffle rumours.

Colleagues are being supportive. Kemi (pretty certain it was Kemi) stopped by the other day to offer me her unwavering backing and to ask whether I'd consider moving my desk to the other side of the

office.

In other news, we are distributing CO2 monitors to all schools, except it turns out I sent the order form to the wrong Sunak, which is why only 41 London schools will get them by Friday, bad Gav. Surely they can just use their noses.

TUESDAY

I am feeling on top of the world. I've given a blockbuster interview to the *Evening Standard*, which should knock the rumours about my demotion off the news agenda. Operation Save Gav is a go!

I do hope they headline the piece on my killer line about having the hide of a rhino, and not my slip of the tongue about our unflattering Queen.

That reminds me, need to get a better picture of Lizzie for the office.

I wonder whether Matt "cock-in-his-hands" Hancock left his artwork behind when he departed the health gig. I'll give Raj a call tomorrow and see if I can have it.

Right, need to get back to those few follow-up questions from the *Standard*. Can only be a good thing that they want to hear even more from me, right? Gav. Is. Back!

WEDNESDAY

Oh no. It was a *tiny* mistake, mixing up two sportspeople. And it was at the end of a very, very long interview.

Commuters should be reading dazzling headlines about my roaring comeback and thick skin. Now they just think I'm thick.

Time to delve into my little red book of dirt on Bo-Jo and remind him why I am immovable.

THURSDAY

OK, so maybe I was wrong about the interview. It turns out, such a spectacularly public show of incompetence has headed off the reshuffle. Boom! The Gavlar strikes again.

I'm also glad my colleague Helen heeded my advice on never answering questions. She was asked on LBC whether I was racist or incompetent - and said she didn't know! Classic Gav vibes. Although not so sure it looks good on me? Need to ask the team what the optics are like on this one.

Anyway, I've been unavailable for any further media because I've been preparing for my speech to the Universities UK conference in Newcastle.

I can't wait to make it clear that I expect a full return to in-person teaching, because learning cannot continue over video link for a second longer! Must check that the tech team has got the link for my virtual appearance ready to go.

*As told by *Schools Week*

Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough

DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS

**(Attractive and Competitive Salary
for the right candidate)**



Required April 2022.

The Bishop of Middlesbrough the Rt Rev Bishop Terence Patrick Drainey is seeking to appoint a practising Catholic to the important leadership position of Diocesan Director of Schools. Leading the Diocesan Schools Service Department, you will be an experienced high-quality leader with extensive knowledge and understanding of Catholic education and a proven track record of success. The Director of Schools will work directly to the Bishop to ensure the Bishop's vision for Catholic education is lived out in all Diocesan schools where children and young people will know and love Christ, access excellent Catholic education and share their encounter with others.

Formed in 1878, the Diocese comprises the local authority areas which historically formed the North Riding of Yorkshire namely Redcar and Cleveland, parts of Stockton on Tees, Middlesbrough, York, parts of North Yorkshire, parts of East Riding and Kingston upon Hull. Across the Diocese there are 45 Primary and 8 Secondary Schools. 52 of the 53 schools are voluntary Catholic academies in one of 3 large regional Catholic Academy Trusts.

The Director of Schools will provide guidance and direction on Diocesan policy to schools and Trusts and lead on securing the Bishop's oversight on the performance of all Diocesan schools. The Director will liaise with national bodies on behalf of the Bishop including the DfE, Ofsted, RSC and the CES. The Director will also lead a team of Diocesan Inspectors to undertake the statutory Catholic Schools Inspectorates inspections of all Diocesan schools.

Working with the Diocesan Deputy Director of Schools, the Director of Schools will develop and implement the Bishop's religious education programme by providing direct training and support across all 53 Diocesan schools. With the Diocesan Director for Standards and Catholic Leadership Development, the Director will also support the formation and development of future Catholic leaders, providing guidance and formal CPD whilst fulfilling the role of Diocesan adviser on the recruitment processes for reserved posts.

For further information and an 'in confidence' conversation about the role please contact Kevin Duffy, Diocesan Director of Schools on 01642 850515.

A full Job Description, Person Specification and Application Form can be downloaded from the Diocesan website <https://www.middlesbroughdioceseshoolservice.org.uk/Vacancies/Director-of-Schools-vacancy/>

KEY DATES

Closing Date:	Noon Friday 1st October 2021.
Shortlisting:	Wednesday 6th October 2021.
Assessment and Interviews:	Wednesday 20th October 2021.

The Diocese of Middlesbrough is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An acceptable Enhanced DBS disclosure and references will be sought from the successful candidate prior to appointment.



School Performance Director Campfire Education Trust

Responsible to: Chief Executive Officer | **Location:** Office base – Moorland Primary, Milton Keynes
Hours of work: 37 hours per week. There may be a requirement to work outside normal working hours
Holiday: 30 days to be taken outside term time | **Salary:** Competitive

This vacancy comes at an exciting time for the Trust, and the role offers the successful candidate an opportunity to take us through a phase of controlled growth. The challenge will be one of maintaining our current high standards while bringing new schools into the Trust as we seek to build to an optimum mix of schools.

We seek an experienced and innovative senior education professional who understands the power of curriculum and how it can be used to create sustainable success. They will have a record of successful strategic leadership and sustainable school improvement. They will have imagination, be flexible and determination to succeed along with an understanding of the

need to be empathetic to the needs of the schools and their leaders.

If you feel you can bring the experience and credibility this high-profile role requires and you would like further information, or to arrange confidential conversation please contact

Jacqui Collins on: M: 07895 498128 T: 01908 671803:
 E: JCollins@campfiretrust.co.uk

All applications are to be completed no later than noon on **Friday 1st October 2021.**

Interviews Wednesday 13th October 2021

Applications to be made through www.mynewterm.com

NOW HIRING LITERACY SPECIALIST & ENGLISH HUB MANAGER



Grazebrook Primary School Lordship Road London N16 0QP | 020 8802 4051

New Wave English Hub is one of the 34 DfE-designated English Hubs and a designated Coordinating Hub and Delivery Hub for the government's post-Covid Phonics Accelerator Fund. Our mission is to support schools in achieving excellence in early literacy, developing children who are confident, enthusiastic readers.

We are looking to appoint an additional outstanding Reception/KS1 teacher to develop phonics and early reading across the region and support schools to access funding for accredited SSP programmes.

The Literacy Specialist will:

- Have an excellent understanding of early language and reading development;
 - Have a proven track record of fantastic teaching in Reception and/or KS1, including age-appropriate phonics;
 - Be passionate about instilling a love of reading in all children;
 - Have experience of delivering effective school to school support.
- The deadline for applications is 24.09.21**

We are also looking to appoint an outstanding English Hub Manager to support the delivery of the hub's intensive and medium level support offer, as well as the allocation of accelerator funding.

The Hub Manager will:

- Have an excellent understanding of early language, reading development & phonics;
- Be passionate about instilling a love of reading in all children;
- Have experience of delivering effective school to school support;
- Have experience of collaborating with school leaders and other stakeholders. **The deadline for applications is 8.10.21 for the Hub Manager Role**

The successful candidates will work 3-4 days (to be negotiated) on the leadership scale salary (Inner London, L9-L13). This is initially a fixed-term, one year contract.

For more information and an application pack, please email Lisa Langley at englishhub@newwavefederation.co.uk.



HEADTEACHER

ALLERTON BYWATER PRIMARY SCHOOL



Salary L16- L22 (£61,166 - £70,745) dependent on experience
 Required: January 2022

The opportunity:

The Board of Trustees at the Brigshaw Learning Partnership are looking to appoint an enthusiastic inspirational new Headteacher to one of our schools - Allerton Bywater Primary School.

The Brigshaw Learning Partnership is a multi-academy trust in outer east Leeds, established in 2016. Allerton Bywater is a Primary School with 430 pupils on roll.

You will provide dynamic and strategic direction and leadership to Allerton Bywater Primary School and the wider Multi Academy Trust and will establish a culture of continuous improvement in our mission to provide transformative education for our children.

The successful candidate will:

- Have a proven record of effective teaching and learning with at least 3 years' senior leadership experience.
- Demonstrate success in raising standards and setting challenging

targets at Trust and/or school level with the ability to embed a rigorous academic curriculum for all.

- Lead by example, to grow a powerful aspirational and values-driven culture which motivates both staff and students.

We would strongly encourage interested applicants to arrange an informal and confidential discussion about the role. Please contact Aidan Sadgrove on Tel: 0113 287 8925/07713234203 or email: sadgrovea01@brigshawtrust.com to arrange a suitable time.

Application packs are available from Katie Hollis, EPM, tel. 07731 082859

or email: katie.hollis@epm.co.uk Applications should be returned to Katie Hollis via email.

Closing Date: 20th September at 12pm

Interview Date(s): 27th & 28th September 2021

This Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to have an up to date DBS disclosure



EYFS and Primary Curriculum Writers

United Learning is developing a coherent, ambitious and aspirational curriculum to support our growing number of primary teachers across England. The curriculum and its resources aim to both reduce teachers' workload, and ensure that all our pupils receive an excellent education.

We are therefore expanding our team of curriculum writers, and are recruiting for five roles in EYFS, Art, RE, English and Geography. The EYFS, Art, RE, English and Geography specialists will each take ownership of their subject's curriculum and resources.

As a primary curriculum writer, your main responsibility will be to develop and refine an outstanding curriculum for our teachers to deliver. This will include the careful sequencing of substantive and disciplinary knowledge across the key stages and, where appropriate, across subjects. The sequencing should allow pupils to gradually develop second order concepts, and should have spaced retrieval built in.

You will also develop the resources that can help teachers explicitly teach this curriculum, for example: teacher subject knowledge packs; assessment materials; knowledge organisers; and slides and resources for individual lessons.

You will work alongside primary teachers to test, refine and improve the resources and, where needed, support teachers to implement the curriculum with bespoke CPD.

This an exciting opportunity to work alongside the wider curriculum team to help to shape our vision for our curriculum, and to develop resources that will have a very tangible and positive impact for teachers.

For more information about each of the roles, please visit the United Learning vacancies page: <https://www.unitedlearningcareers.org.uk/current-vacancies>



**THE BAY
CE SCHOOL**
Believe • Inspire • Excel

Headteacher (Secondary)

Leadership Range - L27 - 33 / Required for January 2022

The governors, staff and students are looking to appoint an inspirational and passionate leader to join our successful and rapidly improving Church of England School. Working closely with the Leadership Team, staff and governors, the successful candidate will have a key role in shaping the future of the Secondary school building on its success. The post offers a tremendous opportunity for a visionary and collaborative leader to drive the school forward through the next exciting stage of its development within the Cornerstone Federation.

We are looking to appoint a Headteacher who:

- Is dynamic, motivational and has a proven track record of raising standards and creating a learning environment in which staff and students can thrive.
- Is strategic in their thinking.
- Is an excellent communicator who can develop strong relationships with students, staff, parents and the wider community.

- Can articulate a clear Christian vision, founded on Christian values focused on providing a world-class education for the students they serve.

We can offer a welcoming school, committed to providing the very best education and care for the children. The Bay CE is an all through (4-16) school that aims to transform the lives of all our children who attend the school.

Visits are warmly encouraged. For more information please contact Duncan Mills, Executive Headteacher on **01983 403284**.

Closing date:
Friday 1st October 2021

Interviews:
Monday 11th &
Tuesday 12th October 2021

For more information please visit our website bayceschool.org or contact recruitment@bayceschool.org

The Cornerstone Federation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful applicants will be required to obtain an Enhanced DBS clearance.



Head of School

Leadership Scale 7-11
Required for January 2022

The Governors and Executive Headteacher of Niton Primary School are looking to appoint a highly effective and dedicated teacher to lead Niton as our Head of School from January 2022.

The post offers a tremendous opportunity for a visionary and collaborative leader to drive the school forward through the next exciting stage of its development within the Cornerstone Federation.

We are looking for a Head of School who will be:

- Passionate about learning
- Strategic in their thinking
- Resilient and flexible
- FUN!

We can offer a welcoming school, committed to providing the very best education and care for the children at our community school.

Travel and relocation package available.

For further information on the post please contact Duncan Mills, Executive Headteacher on **01983 730209**

For an application pack please email recruitment@niton.iow.sch.uk or download via our website www.nitonprimary.org

Visits are welcomed and encouraged

Closing date: 1st October (noon)

Interview dates: Thursday 14th and Friday 15th October 2021

The Cornerstone Federation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful applicants will be required to obtain an Enhanced DBS clearance.



Whittingham Primary Academy
The best in everyone™
Part of United Learning

Principal

Location:
Whittingham Primary Academy

Closing date:
Midday on 30th September 2021

Interview date:
14th and 15th October 2021

Start date:
1st January 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter

Salary:
£60,000 - £85,000 dependent upon experience, including TPS and the option of private healthcare or relocation allowance if required.

This is an excellent opportunity to build on your previous experience and lead Whittingham Primary to drive school improvement in securing excellence in the quality of educational provision.

Whittingham Primary is one of the six primary schools within

a local cluster based within East London. The East London primary cluster has a highly effective back-office provision and school-to-school collaboration supporting staff development and school improvement.

As Principal, you will model excellence and demonstrate a clear commitment to the school and its communities. Your expertise and enthusiasm for education and the difference it makes to the lives of children and families will be evident each day, in all that you do.

If you are looking for an exciting and highly rewarding role within a Group that offers excellent professional development, and if you have a strong commitment to improving the lives of all young people, we encourage you to visit us.

Find out more and apply here 



Associate Education Director - Secondary

Location: All Anthem secondary schools

Contract type: Permanent

Hours: Full time

Start date: January 2022

Salary: L23-L28

Application closing date: Monday 27 September 2021 at 12 noon

Interview date: Week commencing 4 October 2021

An exciting opportunity has arisen for an Associate Education Director – Secondary Phase to join our Anthem School Improvement Team and work alongside the Education Directors who are responsible for a group of five secondary schools in London, the South East and the East Midlands. We are seeking for an inspirational and experienced Educational Leader, with the skills and expertise to contribute to the work of the Anthem School Improvement Team and add significant value to our schools through implementing the Trust's School Improvement Strategy.

For more information about this role and how to apply, please go to <https://www.educationweekjobs.co.uk/job/9633-associate-education-director-secondary/>

Find out more about Anthem at www.anthemtrust.uk