

Flexible working:  
The revolution  
education missed?



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UTCs architect  
now wants mini  
ones in schools



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Our new-look  
DfE must show  
leadership on  
diversity



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## ANTI-VAXX PROTESTERS TARGET SCHOOLS

- Police up patrols as one school gets death threat
- Protesters tell children jab will 'make you infertile'
- 'Abhorrent': minister slams 'outrageous lies'
- DfE promises action as heads say 'let us do our job'



INVESTIGATION

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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Department  
for Education

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**CAMPFIRE EDUCATION TRUST - SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR -  
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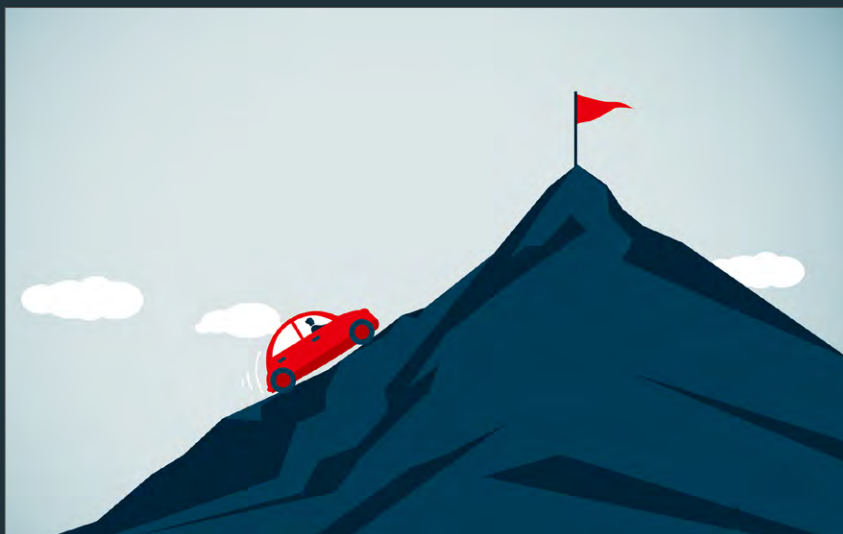
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**UNITED LEARNING - MULTIPLE ROLES -  
SALARY DEPENDENT ON ROLE**

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### Revealed: The uphill struggle to win MAT battle



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### SATs mental health claims challenged by new study

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### Freedom or bust for the self-improving system

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### Three strategies to build better rapport

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## INVESTIGATION

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# 'Abhorrent': schools caught up in anti-vaccine crossfire

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

Ministers have slammed "abhorrent" anti-vax protests after demonstrators live-streamed themselves outside school gates claiming the covid jab causes cancer, infertility and death.

Police have upped their presence at schools that have been repeatedly targeted, although others say the protests have had "no impact at all".

One council is demanding extra powers to deal with protesters directly, claiming current legislation "simply isn't fit for purpose".

Headteachers say the protests are "pathetic" and demand they be left to do their jobs as unions warn the intimidation of pupils is "unforgivable".

Schools are now being told to contact the Department for Education directly if they come under attack.

Schools Week investigates...

## Police put on 'reassurance patrols'

A school-based vaccination programme to inoculate 12 to 15-year-olds started on Wednesday. The government approved the roll-out last week after the UK's four chief medical officers said it would reduce further disruption to education.

Angry anti-vaxxers are now turning their rage towards schools – which have no legal responsibility and little involvement outside of hosting the programme. It is carried out by the

NHS.

Leicester City Council confirmed one school in its area had received a death threat over the vaccine.

Madeley Academy, in Telford, was targeted three times last week. Protesters held yellow placards bearing the slogans "the media is the virus" and "please don't jab our kids".

West Mercia Police has increased its presence at the school with "reassurance patrols".

Shaun Davies, the leader of Telford and Wrekin Council, said similar protests had been held throughout the borough, although the behaviour of the protesters varied.

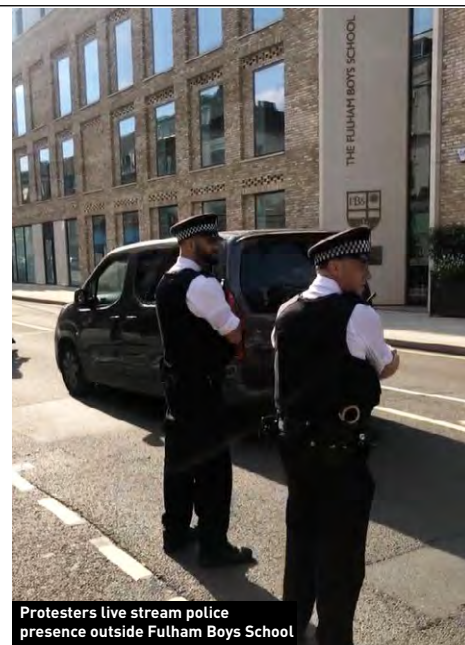
"But when we are talking about children as young as 11, their presence clearly causes some distress and can be disruptive to education."

Davies has written to West Mercia's police and crime commissioner requesting "more powers to move people on" from some targeted schools or where protesters are causing "significant distress" to pupils.

"The police are relying on public order legislation, which simply isn't fit for purpose in this set of circumstances."

The Local Government Association said it was "concerned the activities... will put parents and their children off being vaccinated and leave them at greater risk of Covid-19 as a result".

The right to peaceful protest is protected under the European Convention of Human Rights,



Protesters live stream police presence outside Fulham Boys School

but the police can place restrictions or prohibit protests that threaten to cause disruption.

In a letter to local headteachers, Kent Police tell them not to contact police unless there is an obstruction to the highway, serious disruption is likely or someone is in immediate danger.

But guidance from the Department for Education says schools should alert the vaccine team, council and police to "discuss the best way to manage the situation" in the event of a protest or planned disruption.

Continued on next page

## WHY THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO VACCINATE YOUNG TEENS

Inoculating teenagers will help to manage disruption to schools and mitigate against the impact of a potential winter pandemic "surge", England's chief medical officer has said.

Professor Chris Whitty made the case for 12 to 15-year-olds to get the jab during a hearing of the Parliamentary education committee.

He said modelling released last week suggested that vaccinating the younger age group could prevent as many as 12 million days of absence.

Whitty also pointed to "substantial transmission" among teenagers.

Data from the latest Office for National Statistics infection survey shows that children in



years 7 to 11 had the highest level of infection of any age group.

Attendance data also showed that pupil

absences as a result of confirmed or suspected covid cases reached a record high last week, with more than 100,000 pupils off with suspected or confirmed infections.

Whitty told MPs it was important to compare vaccinating a child with "a near-certainty that child will get covid".

"Our view is firmly that people who have an infection are likely to be off school for longer than people who have a vaccination on average."

Professor Jonathan Van Tam, the deputy chief medical officer, added: "We are not looking at a theoretical risk of children 12 to 17 becoming infected – I think it is really quite inevitable that they will be so at some point."



## INVESTIGATION

The National Police Chiefs Council said forces were “working closely” with local authorities and schools, and officers would “work to ensure that lawful and peaceful protests take place”. Protesters, however, could be removed from private property.

### Anti-vaxxers tell pupils ‘jab can make you infertile’

Piers Corbyn, the conspiracy-theorist brother of the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, protested outside several London schools this week, with some live-streamed online.

On Monday he appeared alongside supporters outside Twickenham School in the west of the capital.

In a video posted to his Facebook page, Corbyn can be seen yelling at pupils: “If they try to jab you – beware. The jab is dangerous, it can cause illness and kill you and means when you grow up you’ll be infertile.”

The group attempted to distribute “warning notices” to staff and leaflets to pupils.

Schools Week revealed earlier this month schools were being threatened with legal action by campaign groups opposing on-site jabs and told they could face fines of up to £20 million or “life imprisonment”.

The same group, minus Corbyn, appeared outside The Fulham Boys School, also in west London, the following day. They claimed their presence had resulted in pupils being kept in class for more than two hours after the end of the school day.

But Alun Ebenezer, the school’s head, said protests had “no impact at all on our day” and the school always finished at 5pm, except on Friday.



Corbyn protesting outside Westminster City School

He said the police told the school about the protest in the morning. Staff on duty were informed and pupils were told not to take leaflets or engage with protesters.

### ‘Do your job and let us get on with ours’

Ebenezer said it was “a bit of a pathetic protest” that was wrongly directed at schools.

In a message to protesters, he said: “Just go to work, do your job and let us get on with ours. We’ve all had a hard 18 months. If you don’t agree with it [vaccinations], make that point to whoever you need to ... but don’t turn up berating schoolchildren and inconveniencing everyone

else.”

Corbyn also protested outside Westminster City School and the DfE headquarters this week.

The Met said there has been no requirement for police intervention in London. But it would “respond accordingly” if any behaviour “goes beyond the parameters of reasonable exercise of protest rights”.

Another headteacher, who wished to remain anonymous, said protesters at their school had told pupils the jab caused cancer.

On Monday, Simon Langton Girls’ Grammar in Kent was targeted for a second time.

And the police were called to the nearby The Abbey School earlier this month after a woman was assaulted at an anti-vax protest.

Elsewhere, schools in Leeds, Bradford and Dorset have faced protests.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it did not seem school protests were widespread, but demonstrations were “hugely unhelpful”.

Death threats and intimidation ‘abhorrent’

Alex Burghart, the skills minister, told the Commons on Thursday the protests were “abhorrent”.

He advised any school facing intimidation to contact the DfE so it could “follow-up”.

Earlier this week Maggie Throup, the vaccines minister, said schools should “not be afraid to speak to the police” if they faced intimidation.

Burghart added: “It’s totally unacceptable that any teacher or headteacher is being placed under pressure in this way.

“The lies that have been told by certain groups are outrageous. They have unquestionably made life uncomfortable for some people working in schools.”

## SCHOOL CANCELS POST-VACCINATION CLOSURE

A school in Middlesex has cancelled a proposed day of remote learning for its newly vaccinated pupils, following criticism by a senior MP.

Teddington School had written to parents earlier this week asking students to “work remotely from home” today.

“This allows for any students that are not feeling 100 per cent to work from home and for all new year 7 students and those new to the school in other years to experience remote lessons for the first time,” the school said.

But yesterday, the school cancelled the day and said it would instead “open as normal”.



The plans to close were questioned by Robert Halfon, chair of the education committee.

“If that’s going to happen across the country, or in a lot of schools, that’s going to significantly impact on one of the reasons you’re saying the vaccinations need to

happen in the first place,” Halfon said.

Professor Keith Willett, from NHS England, told the education committee on Wednesday that sending pupils home for a day after receiving their vaccine was “not a part of the policy ... that we have laid out with the School Age Immunisation Services.

“Schools have had extensive communication and that has not been part of any of those communications.”

But he added that headteachers could make their own decisions.

Halfon also raised the case during an urgent question in the Commons on Thursday.

## NEWS

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## Ministers ponder pilot scheme for 'mini-UTCs' within schools

FRASER WHIELDON

@FRASERWHIELDON

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers are considering plans to open mini-university technical colleges (UTCs) within schools.

The Baker Dearing Trust, the licensing body for the colleges created by former education secretary Lord Baker, is hoping to pilot what they call "UTC sleeves" in ten schools across England.

Discussions were held with the Department for Education this month about the plan. The trust was hopeful of a final decision within the next couple of weeks but fears this may now be pushed back following last week's reshuffle.

Simon Connell, the trust's chief executive, told *Schools Week* the "sleeves" would "mirror what a UTC does" on a smaller scale.

But experts warn the scheme could create a place where only academically low-performing pupils are sent. One union boss has also labelled the idea as another "vanity project" of UTC architect Lord Baker.

Much like the 48 UTCs, the miniature versions would focus on science, technology, engineering and maths subjects and would be open to students from age 14.

Each school's sleeve would have two specialisms, again like a normal UTC, such as health or engineering.

This UTC pathway would run alongside a school's academic pathway, with an employer board to shape the curriculum.

Since 2010, schools have been judged on their GCSE entries to English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects, such as English, maths, science, languages, to the detriment of technical subjects.

But the new pathway would be judged on destinations and exam results, not on EBacc.

Connell told *Schools Week* the "sleeves" could be created instead of building full, brand new UTCs that "cost a lot of money".

He said the Baker Dearing Trust has already passed the names of ten "willing" schools to the DfE who want to take part in the pilot. He suggested the DfE could use part of the £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to pay



for the equipment, facilities and extra staff capacity needed to "embed the curriculum".

Before Gavin Williamson left as education secretary and a new DfE ministerial team was appointed last week, the department was "working really closely" with the trust on a pilot, Connell added.

But details such as when it could run, for how many students and what resources it could need are still being ironed out.

A DfE spokesperson said officials "continue to have productive discussions with the Baker Dearing Trust on how best to strengthen technical education".

But "no decision has been taken on piloting new approaches" so far.

Jonathan Simons, director of lobbyists Public First and a former government education adviser, said the trust should "stop trying to make 14 to 19 happen".

While integrating students within existing school and having wider teaching and learning was a "good idea," mini-UTCs suffer "from the same sheep and goats route at age 14" as UTCs, he told *Schools Week*.

"Ultimately, we need a broad and balanced – and academic – education for all until 16, and then a choice of different and well-funded routes after that, including on technical education."

When asked by *Schools Week*

if UTC sleeves could become a "dumping ground" for students who are struggling academically, Connell said schools "can't really do that any more" as they are "found out by Ofsted and the DfE". Another disincentive would be that the student would remain within the school.

National Education Union joint-general secretary Kevin Courtney said the sleeves would have to be "a genuine choice for learners rather than a place where they are sent if they are not going to get their target grades".

The union boss also slammed the scheme as a "vanity project", and expressed concerns it would not "solve the fundamental issues about how our curriculum is organised".

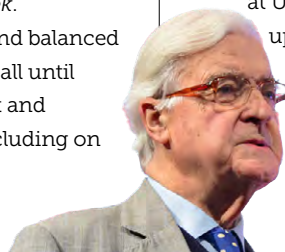
UTCs have been fraught with recruitment and quality issues since they were launched by Lord Baker in 2010. Eleven have been forced to close their doors due to low student numbers or poor Ofsted reports.

However, the Baker Dearing Trust reported this week the number of students on roll

at UTCs across the country has shot up by ten per cent on last year,

increasing from 15,861 to 17,504.

The numbers have risen by 42 per cent since 2017, when UTCs had 12,304 learners on roll in total.



Lord Baker

## INVESTIGATION

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# MAT drive in danger of hitting the buffers

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The new education secretary faces an uphill struggle to revive the multi-academy trust agenda, with new figures suggesting efforts to nudge schools into converting are failing to cut through.

A National Governance Association (NGA) member survey reveals just 5 per cent of maintained school governors and 15 per cent of single-academy trustees plan to join a MAT in the near future.

The findings, shared exclusively with Schools Week, lay bare the scale of the challenge facing Nadhim Zahawi in completing the government's push for every school to join a MAT.

The limited enthusiasm comes despite Gavin Williamson's MAT "vision" speech and raft of policies supporting growth in April. NGA members also report growing appreciation of their own MATs during the pandemic.

Sam Henson, the association's policy and information director, said the findings were the survey's "biggest surprise". Almost two-thirds of NGA members at maintained schools have not even considered joining MATs.

Many were "doing OK by themselves" and were

happy with council support, Henson said. "The same old messages won't work."

It is not clear how much encouragement maintained schools have received directly to convert and join MATs. Jeff Marshall, of academy advisers J&G Marshall, said he had seen "little if any". Without further messaging, schools would "sit there as they are".

Only 259 academies opened between January and August, the second lowest in a decade, as schools grappled with the pandemic.

More struggling schools will be sponsored by MATs as inspections resume. But forced conversion remains controversial, with ongoing campaigns in places such as Peacehaven, East Sussex. Ministers have not dared mandate all schools convert since an ill-fated push in 2016.

Heavy rhetorical pressure could backfire too. Recent ministerial warnings about single-academy trust (SAT) leaders sitting in "splendid isolation" had "really wound them up", Marshall said.

Forty-three percent of NGA members at SATs said they had not considered a multi-academy trust. Another 24 per cent said they had actively decided against it.

The survey suggests MATs are keen to grow, though, with 57 per cent of multi-academy trustees and local governing body members saying their trusts planned to expand. It marks a slight increase on last year's 53 per cent.

But the largest trusts were the most lukewarm about growth, despite reporting most pressure to from government officials. Just 42 per cent planned expansion.

Fewer MATs want "massive empires", Henson said, with lessons learnt from over-rapid expansion in the past.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the poll was "probably too early" to assess whether the renewed MAT drive was working.

Structural reform was not a "panacea" in itself, but she urged schools in MATs to promote the benefits.

Other NGA findings will make better reading for the sector. Nearly 75 per cent of academy committee members feel heard by MAT leaders, versus 57 per cent in 2019. Just over 50 per cent are happy pooling school resources at MAT level, up from 41 per cent two years ago.

"Key things are improving," Henson said.

But Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said schools would "have to wait and see" new ministers' interest in more major measures to complete reforms.

He warned significant upheaval could "divert time and resources away from teaching".

DfE said it "continues to urge schools and single academy trusts to explore the benefits of being part of a strong multi-academy trust".

## STATS

**"We're financially unsustainable without big change"**

**9%**

MAT/Multi-academy trustees

**11%**

SAT/standalone trustees

**26%**

LA/Maintained school governors



**Separation of powers: MAT trustees who are also members**

**12% - 2021**

**32% - 2020**



**Respondents who say MATs plan to grow**

**2-5 school trusts/ MATs -**

**66%**

**31+ school trusts/ MATs -**

**42%**



\* Based on May-June 2021 survey of 3,848 NGA members, including 2017 maintained school governors, 728 MAT trustees, 516 local governing body or equivalent committee members, 391 SAT trustees and 146 maintained federation governors.



## INVESTIGATION

# CEO pay name and shame policy under review

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government is reviewing its policy to name and shame academy trusts that pay their chief executives excessive salaries.

The review sparked calls from sector leaders not to abandon the crackdown altogether, although some said the warning letters were too crude a measure.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has written to hundreds of trusts about high salaries since 2017, but blamed unspecified data collection issues earlier this year for pausing the letters.

Now a freedom of information request shows ESFA has decided to review its overall approach on pay “and ensure that we deliver robust challenge on high pay in a way that is fair, reasonable and transparent”.

Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, said: “It’s really important the spotlight’s kept on executive pay to ensure public funds are used to best effect for education.”

She said only a small number of leaders were paid excessively, but it “brings trusts into disrepute”.

The government would not provide further details of what the review would look at.

It is understood that before the reshuffle, ESFA was considering new methodology for deciding which trusts to target, rather than scrapping letters altogether.

New ministers’ views are not known.

“The DfE should not only reflect on the quality of their data, but also improve the apparent inappropriate, over-simplistic way the data is used,” said Sharon O’Ryan, the founder of Pay in Education, the salary benchmarking specialists.

All trusts with leaders paid more than £150,000, or multiple £100,000-plus salaries, receive letters asking for justification. The trusts’ names are published on the government’s website.

An NGA survey, published today, suggests most trustees balance many factors when setting leaders’ pay.

The most cited was the School Teacher’s Pay and Conditions Document, which includes leadership pay scales based on pupil numbers, location, performance and other factors.

More than 66 per cent of respondents in MATs said they referred to this statutory guidance on pay in maintained schools, despite academies’ freedom to ignore it.

Kevin Courtney, the general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), said the statutory framework “needs strengthening” however, as well as extending to academies.

This should not only eliminate “excessive” salaries, but also ensure fair pay for other school leaders who “aren’t paid what they deserve”.

Executive performance was the next most common factor used to determine chief executive pay (63 per cent), down from 72 per cent last year.

Benchmarking with similar trusts was the third most-considered factor (60 per cent).

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said it was working with partners to build much-needed national benchmarking data. But Knights warned benchmarking could spark a “rush to the top” on pay.

Affordability was ranked only fifth among the most-considered factors. Only 54 per cent of 728 MAT board members and 515 local governing body members polled said their trusts considered it, although 31 per cent said they did not know.

The larger the trust, the less likely it was to mention affordability.

“Larger trusts are multi-million pound organisations where leadership skill and functional expertise required is more specialised and complex, and this comes with a higher price tag,” O’Ryan said.

Chief executives were essential, but the size and scope of the talent pool drove salaries, leaving trusts “between a rock and a hard place”.

Only 16 per cent of NGA survey respondents said their trusts considered the gap between top pay and average or lowest paid-employees.

The Department for Education did not respond to a request for comment.

## 117 trusts sent warnings based on dodgy data (on A-level results day!)

Schools Week’s FoI also reveals 177 trusts received letters last August based on incorrect data.

Two months later, follow-up letters revealed the ESFA “had to reconsider the basis of this high pay exercise” and halt naming trusts. It blamed a “significant number of trusts” for “incorrectly” submitting 2019 pay data, with re-analysis of data ongoing last month.

The ESFA also chose A-level results day to send the letters, with headteacher board minutes showing that angry school leaders raised the issue with one regional schools commissioner. A trust leader told Schools Week it was “superfluous summer holiday meddling”.



## Factors which determine trust senior leader’s pay

68%

SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PAY AND CONDITIONS DOCUMENT

63%

LEADER’S PERFORMANCE

60%

BENCHMARKING WITH OTHER MATS

58%

TRUST ETHOS AND VISION

54%

ORGANISATION AFFORDABILITY

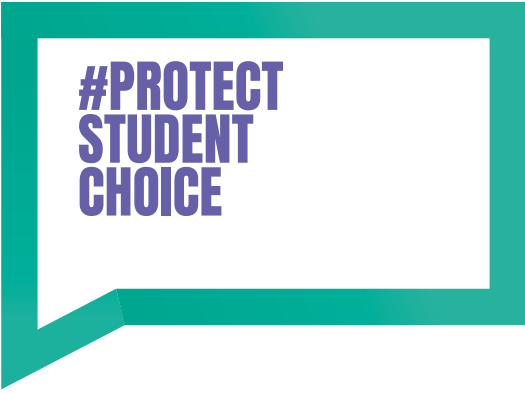
26%

PENSION COSTS AND OTHER BENEFITS

16%

RATIO OF LOWEST TO HIGHEST PAID





#PROTECT  
STUDENT  
CHOICE

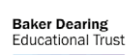
# DON'T SCRAP BTECS

The Government has recently completed a review of Level 3 BTECs and other applied general qualifications in England. The main proposal is to introduce a twin-track system of T levels and A levels at Level 3, where most young people pursue one of these qualifications at the age of 16. As a result, funding for the majority of BTEC qualifications will start to be removed from 2023.

## #PROTECTSTUDENTCHOICE

The **#ProtectStudentChoice** campaign coalition of 15 organisations that represent and support staff and students in schools, colleges and universities is deeply concerned about this proposal. We urgently need your support to protect the future of BTECs and other applied general qualifications:

- Sign our petition on the Parliament website and share with your colleagues, governors, students and parents – [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/592642](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/592642)
- Write to your local MPs to secure their support
- Tweet support for the campaign [#ProtectStudentChoice](https://twitter.com/ProtectStudentChoice)



To find out more visit [www.protectstudentchoice.org](https://www.protectstudentchoice.org)

## POLITICS

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# Who's who in the new DfE ministerial team

**It's all change at the Department for Education after Boris Johnson's reshuffle. Of the six ministerial roles, just one incumbent remains – Michelle Donelan, universities minister. The DfE said their portfolios are yet to be confirmed. Meet the new team...**

## Nadhim Zahawi

### EDUCATION SECRETARY

The former vaccines minister is believed to be the first-ever non-white education secretary.

The MP for Stratford-upon-Avon was children's minister from January 2018 to July 2019.

Zahawi has struck a conciliatory tone since his appointment, vowing to "work with" school staff to beat Covid and "transform the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged".

He said it was "such an honour

to have been appointed education secretary", adding that he knew "profoundly, and at first hand" how important the work of education staff is, having come to the UK aged nine from Iraq when his family fled Saddam Hussein's regime.



## Robin Walker

### SCHOOLS MINISTER (MINISTER FOR SCHOOL STANDARDS)

The MP for Worcester, who was a Northern Ireland minister, once served as parliamentary private secretary to education secretary Nicky Morgan.

He was also vice chairman of the f40 cross-party campaign, which lobbied government over cash for schools in the lowest-funded areas.

Walker told *Schools Week* he was "very excited, thrilled to be taking on the role".

"It's an area that I am passionate about, having both served as PPS and indeed made a large chunk of my maiden speech about education."

Walker has been an MP since 2010.

His father was Peter Walker, also MP for Worcester and a cabinet minister under Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher.



## Baroness Barran

### ACADEMIES MINISTER (MINISTER FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM)

Barran joins the DfE from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, where she was the minister for civil society, youth and loneliness.

She founded domestic abuse awareness charity SafeLives in 2005 where she was CEO until 2017. She is also a former trustee for Comic Relief.

She replaces Conservative peer Baroness Berridge, who unexpectedly left her role in the

reshuffle after less than two years in post.

Barran tweeted that it was a "great honour" to be appointed to the DfE's ministerial team and that she was "excited to get to work".



## Will Quince

### CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Quince, MP for Colchester, was a work and pensions minister before the reshuffle. He replaces Vicky Ford who has joined the Foreign Office.

The politician has been an MP since 2015 and previously served as a parliamentary private secretary to Gavin Williamson when he was defence secretary.

As children's minister he will cover the children and families brief, which is under the spotlight.

Over the past year, Quince's predecessor Ford has had to respond to the free school meals crisis, preside over the extension of the holiday activities and food programme and steer the SEND review, which has been much delayed.



## Alex Burghart

### APPRENTICESHIPS AND SKILLS MINISTER

Burghart, MP for Brentwood and Ongar, was previously a parliamentary private secretary to the prime minister.

His website states he is a former teacher and son of two teachers.

Burghart previously worked at the DfE on the Munro review of child protection. He is also a former adviser to former children's minister Tim Loughton.

In parliament, he has been a member of the joint committee on human rights and the work and pensions select committee.



## Michelle Donelan

### UNIVERSITIES MINISTER

Donelan, MP for Chippenham, is the only surviving member of the former ministerial team.

A former member of the parliamentary education committee, Donelan became an education minister in February last year.

As well as being minister for universities, Donelan has also previously held responsibility for the opportunity areas and Opportunity

North East programmes.

However, it is not yet known if she will continue to preside over those policy areas as she takes on her new expanded brief and attends cabinet.



NEWS

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# Ofsted to review tutoring and training reforms

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ofsted will carry out independent reviews of government tutoring and teachers' professional development reforms.

Ministers have commissioned the watchdog to review the two catch-up policies. It will investigate how they are working on the ground through research visits, evidence from inspections and "other methods".

The reviews will "assess the progress and, where possible, the effectiveness of the government's education recovery plans".

Ofsted's review of tutoring will cover schools and 16 to 19 provision, and will consider the "overall quality", whether it is provided directly or through the National Tutoring Programme.

It will also publish a wider review of tutoring practice, due to be published in summer 2022 and summer 2023.

## Tutoring review to look how pupils are selected

The review will also consider how well schools "integrate" tutoring into their curriculum planning and delivery, its effect on the overall quality of education, and the likelihood that it will help children catch up.

Ofsted will also consider the rationale for selecting pupils for tutoring and the selection criteria for recruiting tutors.

How much time and resources schools use on managing and monitoring tuition, and whether this detracts from other



activities or leads to "any other unforeseen consequences", will also be looked at.

Inspectors will also investigate whether pupils receiving tutoring "still have access to the whole curriculum", and if not, what they are missing.

Ofsted will visit a sample of schools and 16 to 19 providers that are taking a "range of different tutoring routes", and carry out interviews, focus groups and observations.

Inspectors will also interview leaders of a "small number" of NTP tuition partners, and survey parents and students.

## Teacher training review will focus on ECF and NPQs

Ofsted will also review the quality of training and development received by all teachers, with a "particular focus" on the early career framework (ECF) and national professional qualifications (NPQs).

The inspectorate will collect evidence this year and the next to "establish the main features of effective teacher development in schools".

This data "will also help to determine whether the reforms are having an impact on education recovery priorities", Ofsted said.

The review will look at the training and development teachers and leaders receive, whether senior leaders "value and prioritise the development of teachers", the quality of professional development and whether improvements in professional development have "led to teaching and leadership improving in schools".

It will also examine whether improvements in professional development "have had an impact on pupils' catch up". Findings will be published in "early 2023 and early 2024".

## Research visits to start next spring

As part of the review, Ofsted will commission a "large-scale" questionnaire this autumn and then repeat it next year to "observe changes over time".

The watchdog will also carry out research visits to schools in the spring terms of 2022 and 2023 to focus on "what makes different models of deployment for professional development effective".

A "small-scale teacher cohort study" will track a sample of early career teachers and other teachers through their professional development. This will run for the "duration" of the review.

Finally, the inspectorate will also retrieve data from ECF/NPQ monitoring inspections to supplement evidence from other activities, beginning in the summer term of 2022 when provider monitoring visits start.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

# NRT will again look at pandemic's impact on learning

The National Reference Test in 2022 will again be used to look at learning lost during the pandemic.

But a final decision on whether it will be used to set standards has yet to be made.

Ofqual introduced the NRT in 2017 to help set standards in GCSE English language and maths. The results are considered by the

watchdog and exam boards before grades are awarded.

However, the tests were used to "consider the impact" of learning loss last year. Results are expected to be published in autumn.

Ofqual has now confirmed that the 2022 results "will again provide important

longitudinal evidence about the impact of the covid pandemic on education for school leaders, exam boards and policy-makers".

The tests, administered by the National Foundation for Educational Research, will take place between February 28 and April 8 2022.



## NEWS

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# Year 6 tests don't make children unhappy, says study

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Year 6 SATs have little effect on children's happiness and wellbeing, a new study suggests.

John Jerrim, from University College London (UCL), said the findings provided an "important counter to conventional narratives" that the tests could have a "serious negative impact upon children's wellbeing".

However, critics have questioned the findings, which are based on data from 2012. There have been major changes in curriculum and tests since then.

Jerrim, the report's author, said more research was needed to "better understand both the positive and negative effects these tests have on young people, especially in light of the challenges teachers and pupils have faced throughout the pandemic".

But he concluded there "does not seem to be strong enough evidence to support key stage 2 tests to be scrapped on wellbeing grounds".

The peer-reviewed study analysed data from about 2,500 year 6 children in England, where tests are carried out, and other UK countries that do not run tests.

A release of the report's findings said there was "little difference" in the wellbeing and happiness levels reported by children, regardless of whether they took tests or not.

Among those that did SATs, there was "no



significant change" in how they felt about themselves, their school or family life in the weeks around tests.

Nearly 25 per cent of children in England said they felt unhappy about their schoolwork before the tests compared with 28 per cent for children in the rest of the UK. This figure did not significantly increase or decrease in the weeks before and after testing.

The findings challenge the views of school staff. A 2019 UCL study, conducted for More than a Score, which campaigns to scrap SATs, found four in five headteachers thought the tests had a negative effect on pupils' wellbeing.

A 2018 National Education Union (NEU) survey of 1,200 primary teachers found nine in ten believed the tests were "detrimental to children's wellbeing", causing



John Jerrim

"harm" and "stress".

The union's report included examples of children having nightmares and making themselves ill so they did not have to attend school.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the NEU, dismissed the new study, which is based on 2012 data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS).

"Unfortunately, the researchers have drawn conclusions about the future of primary testing based on analysis of the regime almost ten years ago."

A "radically changed" curriculum meant it would be "much more helpful to study the impact of more recent testing".

A press release accompanying the report said reforms since 2012, while "unlikely to undermine key findings", could affect pupil wellbeing "if the importance attached to these tests has increased".

Responding to Courtney's comments, Jerrim said the mental health debate was a "fairly long-running argument", adding: "Show us the money – let's get some high-quality unbiased evidence that's not funded by an interest group and let's see what the data says."

He said the tests played a "fundamental role feeding into school accountability metrics and our findings suggest they should continue in their current form for the foreseeable future".

TOM BELGER | @TOM\_BELGER

## Trust could lose top grammar pervaded by 'sexist culture'

An academy trust could be stripped of its only school after Ofsted found a "pervading culture" of sexism and other discrimination had created a "hostile environment".

Colchester Royal Grammar School, which has reportedly sent more pupils to Oxford and Cambridge than any other grammar in England, is awaiting its fate after receiving a termination warning notice.

The inspectorate visited in July following online allegations by current and former students about their experiences of sexual harassment. The school was among those



named on the Everyone's Invited website.

Ofsted found some pupils did not feel safe because of a "culture that allows them to be victimised for being themselves", and that "does not promote equality and respect".

The government has warned the school

could be handed to another trust, a move that sends a significant signal to other schools of the sanctions it is prepared to use to stamp out harassment.

In a letter, Sue Baldwin, the outgoing regional schools commissioner for the east of England and north-east London, said she had "serious concerns that the trust does not have the capacity to make rapid and sustained improvement at the academy".

A school spokesperson said the inspection report had been "very difficult" to read, and the school was acting on it.

## NEWS

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# Chair of 'toxic' Holland Park school resigns

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

The chair of governors at a school facing investigation over claims of a "toxic" working environment and "public shaming" of students has resigned.

Anne-Marie Carrie (pictured), a former chief executive of the children's charity Barnado's, has stood down at Holland Park, a west London state school dubbed the "socialist Eton".

Schools Week understands Carrie resigned on September 10, two days after The Guardian reported that more than 100 former students had signed an open letter to governors, Ofsted and the government claiming serious failings at the school.

Pastoral care was "inadequate" with "public shaming" of students, the letter alleged. A month earlier the same newspaper reported allegations from staff of a "toxic" working environment.

The governing body of the school, once attended by Nadhim Zahawi, the new education secretary, promised an independent investigation into the allegations.

But nearly two months on, aggrieved teachers fear it has been shelved.

It is not known publicly why Carrie resigned, and there is no suggestion of wrongdoing. She refused to comment.

News of her resignation comes as the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) launched a "learning review" into allegations of safeguarding failures.

The investigation by the borough's Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) will be supported by the school, the council, the health service and the police.

It is expected to take three months with an independent lead yet to be appointed.

A RBKC spokesperson told Schools Week the review would "seek to understand the organisational culture within the school and make recommendations to strengthen the areas of safeguarding practice".

There are concerns the learning review will now replace the investigation promised by governors.

Parents received a letter on August 4 from Carrie about the staff allegations. It read: "Whilst it would appear that many of the complaints have already been considered by our regulatory bodies ... we take all such allegations seriously.

"To provide assurance and create a forum for these matters to be independently considered, the board has taken immediate steps to commission an independent, external review which will report back next term."

An former teacher at the school, representing a collective of more than 140 former and current staff, said: "We have not been contacted at all, despite repeated attempts on our part to learn the identity of the investigator and the terms of reference of the investigation."

The teacher, who wishes to remain anonymous, said that "given our collective experience ... of the school, we have doubts that it will ever

happen. It remains our hope that the culture of the school will change to ensure all current teachers and students are treated properly."

The regional schools commissioner is "working closely" with the school as part of the review. The Education Skills and Funding Agency has also contacted the school over the allegations.

Ofsted said it did not comment on complaints, but any it received were taken seriously and "investigated where appropriate".

The watchdog conducted a no-notice inspection at the school in January last year over safeguarding and leadership concerns.

However, inspectors judged the school's safeguarding as effective. Bullying was not tolerated, staff were "unanimous" in feeling well supported by leaders, and there was a "strong awareness" of safeguarding incidents.

The school did not respond to requests for comment this week. But a statement on its website says: "The wellbeing of our pupils and staff is, and always will be, our foremost priority."

A Schools Week investigation in 2019 revealed the school had spent £15,000 on luxury Farrow & Ball paint and £6,000 on Jo Malone scented candles.

Colin Hall, its chief executive, is among the highest paid academy bosses in England, earning at least £280,000 last year – despite being in charge of one school.

The Department for Education did not respond to a request for comment.



EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

## Tuition providers finally join national programme

The stand-off between leading tuition providers and the National Tutoring Programme contractor Randstad is set to be resolved.

More than two weeks after the flagship £450 million scheme launched, the tuition providers are set to sign up to the programme.

The organisations had concerns about the contract that allowed Randstad, a Dutch HR firm, to "confiscate" tutors and staff.

Education giant Pearson signed its contract last week, after receiving a "legally binding"

letter of assurance.

The remaining aggrieved providers had been seeking a similar letter. Schools Week understands assurances have been given over email, so the providers have decided to settle.

Six providers signed their contracts this week, with the final one expected in the coming days. It will take the number of approved tuition partners up to 39 – six more than in the first year of the programme.

In a statement, the seven organisations said they have had reservations about

the programme's set-up and contract management, but were "pleased" to have "resolved" concerns.

"For all of us, our desire is to be able to get on with our shared mission: supporting disadvantaged pupils through impactful tutoring programmes," the statement read.

"In order to do this well and sustainably, the contract needed to be fair and the management of the programme operationally achievable."

Randstad and DfE did not respond to requests for comment.

## INVESTIGATION

# Ratings in free fall as teacher trainers fail new Ofsted test

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

When he unveiled plans to create an international teacher training qualification that could be exported overseas, Gavin Williamson had nothing but praise for the sector.

"Here in this country we are blessed with some of the world's finest teachers and this is down to the quality and rigour of our teacher training," the former education secretary wrote. "I want as many people as possible to be able to benefit from this."

But that reputation is facing a very public shredding – a move that some providers believe the government is secretly cheering on. Schools Week investigates ...

## Half of teacher trainers downgraded

Ofsted began inspecting providers under a new framework in May. As with the new school inspection regime, the focus has shifted from what results you get, to what you teach.

Before May, every initial teacher education provider in England was rated as 'good' or 'outstanding'. Just over a third were rated 'outstanding'.

But when the first 11 Ofsted ITT inspections were published in July, two providers were rated 'inadequate'. Both had previously been regarded as 'good'.

An analysis of the reports published by the beginning of this week shows that just one of the 20 inspected under the new framework was 'outstanding'.

Eight were rated 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement'.

Schools Week analysis of solely primary and secondary age trainers shows that seven out of 14 were downgraded this year. Two have closed, and one has stopped its secondary provision.

The judgments have angered sector leaders. James Noble-Rogers, the executive director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), said they "appear to be aimed at discrediting ITE provision whenever possible, rather than arrive at a balanced and informed



## "The reports discredit ITE provision whenever possible"

judgment of quality".

He claimed reports were "often poorly written and reflect a lack of knowledge about ITE and the regulatory framework that it operates within."

"The behaviour of individual inspectors has been described as 'belligerent'. The integrity and independence of the Ofsted ITE inspection process is being questioned. We will be monitoring the situation very closely."

But an Ofsted spokesperson said it was "too early" in the inspection cycle to say whether "initial judgments are representative of the sector as a whole – this is a small sample and we have prioritised new providers and those not inspected for the longest time."

The Solent SCITT in Hampshire, one of the first inspected, was rated 'inadequate', down from 'good' in 2015.



James Noble-Rogers

Ofsted reported trainees praised the provider as "warm and welcoming" and were "generally satisfied with the support and guidance they received".

But inspectors said they had "no benchmark so

their satisfaction with training is misplaced".

The Solent closed its doors over the summer, relocating its trainees to other providers.

### 'It was a painful and negative experience'

Chris Anders, head of the Park Community School that ran the SCITT, said: "I've been through over 25 inspections in various guises and there was only one that was as negative as this. It was a completely different experience. We've moved on ... but it was painful."

The government has favoured school-led training routes. But it appears they are hit hardest under the new Ofsted regime.

Consilium SCITT in Salford has also closed. A spokesperson said: "It is increasingly difficult to both deliver on our school improvement agenda and correctly resource a small SCITT, which had a limited number of candidates across a significant number of subjects."

However, Sutton SCITT in south London has retained its 'outstanding' judgment. Nine primary and secondary providers remain 'good'.

Ofsted says inspections will "seek to understand the specific impact of covid-19 on the provider and how leaders have responded to the situation".

Continued on next page



## INVESTIGATION

The pandemic was mentioned once in The Solent report when it said trainees appreciated the “care leaders have shown for their wellbeing during the pandemic”.

Anders added: “We know it was a much harder framework, that side of it wasn’t a surprise, but I was taken aback by how the challenges of covid and getting ready for the framework did not get any consideration.”

Cumbria Teacher Training was downgraded to ‘inadequate’ in May. It was rated ‘good’ at its last inspection in 2014.

Inspectors found trainees were “failed” by the provider, and the partnership’s work was underpinned by a “plethora of weaknesses”.

### ‘No acknowledgement of Covid challenge’

Wendy Kendall, SCITT lead, claimed “there was no acknowledgment” of covid. Since the inspection, it has ended its secondary provision as it did not have the capacity to “rewrite the curriculum”.

“They kept saying: I get what you are saying, but we have to inspect to the framework.

“I’ve had to do things during covid I’ve never done for trainees before, to support them. There was no acknowledgement of that. We don’t have pastoral officers, we are small.”

Ofsted had introduced a “transition statement” to allow for covid disruption. It meant a provider could be rated ‘good’ as long as its curriculum plans would be “fully executed” in time for

September.

In a blog for #TeachBest, which was set up by UCET. Terry Russell and Julie Price Grimshaw, two former Ofsted inspectors, claim that Ofsted is not “adhering to its own procedures”.

“The reports indicate that no such consideration was given and indeed providers are criticised for not having the new curriculum ‘fully embedded,’” they added.

## “The challenges of covid did not get any consideration”

An Ofsted spokesperson said it recognised some “partnerships” may not have been able to deliver the new curriculum plans fully because of the pandemic.

“However, in order to be judged ‘good’, providers must demonstrate that they have designed an ambitious ITE curriculum with the core content framework embedded.”

Ofsted guidance says that partnerships judged as either ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ will be re-inspected within 12 months. Providers may have their accreditation withdrawn if their



provision is repeatedly rated lower than ‘good’, according to the DfE.

Noble-Rogers said “had it not been for the way” universities and SCITTs responded to the pandemic then “schools would have faced with a serious shortage of teachers”.

### Ministers considering a delay to reforms

The negative judgments come at a delicate time for the relationship between ministers and teacher trainers.

Providers are waiting for the government to respond to the controversial ITT market review. Proposed reforms will cause “significant market reconfiguration”, with every provider having to be reaccredited.

Universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, have already threatened to pull out of teacher training if the reforms go ahead.

Sir Andrew Carter, who led a government-commissioned review of ITT in 2015, warned on Friday the proposals could lead to schools pulling out too.

“It won’t take much for a number of schools under the current funding models to ‘say look we can’t get involved with this we would love to but we can’t”, said Carter, who runs South Farnham School Education Trust.

“We have a large primary SCITT and we are already experiencing schools saying sorry we can’t do it now.”

With the review landing just as the harsher inspection findings were published, providers are concerned about a link between the two.

Ofsted said the ITE framework was not pre-emptively designed to align with the ITT market review.

But industry bodies have now written to Nadhim Zahawi, the new education secretary, urging him to “reconsider and perhaps pause” the review.

It appears the government is ready to listen. Schools Week understands that Nick Gibb, the recently departed schools minister, was about to delay the new ITT courses by one year to 2024.

Any decision now lies with the new ministerial team.

## HOW ITT PROVIDERS HAVE FARED IN NEW OFSTED INSPECTIONS

PROVIDER	OFSTED 2021	PREVIOUS OFSTED
ALBAN FEDERATION	GOOD	OUTSTANDING
COMPTON SCITT	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	OUTSTANDING
CONSILIUM SCITT	INADEQUATE	OUTSTANDING
CUMBRIA TEACHER TRAINING	INADEQUATE	GOOD
INSPIRATION TEACHER TRAINING	GOOD	GOOD
LEICESTER COLLEGE	GOOD	NA
LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	GOOD
MIDDLESBOROUGH COLLEGE	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	NA
NEW COLLEGE DURHAM	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	NA
SOUTH BIRMINGHAM SCITT	GOOD	GOOD
SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGE	GOOD	NA
SOUTH WEST TEACHER TRAINING	GOOD	GOOD
ST GEORGE’S ACADEMY PARTNERSHIP	GOOD	GOOD
SUTTON SCITT	OUTSTANDING	OUTSTANDING
THE HAVERING TEACHER TRAINING PARTNERSHIP	GOOD	GOOD
THE NATIONAL MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICS SCITT	GOOD	NA
THE NATIONAL MODERN LANGUAGES SCITT	GOOD	NA
THE SOLENT SCITT	INADEQUATE	GOOD
UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	OUTSTANDING
UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON	GOOD	GOOD

## NEWS

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# Starmer goes long on soft skills, short on policy

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has said he wants all children to have a chance to play an instrument, join a sports team and visit the seaside by the time they're 10.

In his Fabian Society essay *The Road Ahead*, published yesterday, Starmer said the country must "help young people from all backgrounds develop their potential".

He said a Labour government would focus "not simply on grades and qualifications, but the so-called 'soft skills' that help develop and round young people".

By the time they are 10, all children should also have the chance to visit the countryside or city, go to cultural institutions, ride a bike and "learn how to debate their ideas".

The essay does not propose any specific policy initiatives for schools, while Labour

frontbenchers remain tight-lipped about what will be in the party's next manifesto.

In a section on the "best start in life for every child", Starmer warned that changes to education over the past decade had "left us lagging other parts of the world", with young people's life chances "severely impacted".

He said it was his "simple belief" that "every parent, no matter where they live, should be able to send their child to a high-quality school that prepares them for the future".

"I want every child to leave school ready for work and ready for life. That means modernising education. The future workforce will need to adapt to change throughout their working lives."

He said the education system should be "working with employers" to make education and training "ready for a world of work that will look very different". That "cannot mean

a narrow focus on university", he said.

"Higher education is vital to transforming the prospects of so many young people, but to be fit for the future we are going to need skills, education and training at every stage of our lives."

Starmer also warned that smaller class sizes was one of the "key drivers" of people choosing to send their children to independent schools.

It was a "disgrace that secondary school class sizes are now at their highest for 20 years".

He also said he wanted to make vocational routes "far more exciting, accessible and rewarding options – designing a system for those young people that is just as ambitious as they are".

Sir Keir Starmer



FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Heads boost education voice on children's commissioner board

Three school leaders appointed as advisers to Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner, have increased the education sector's influence on the ten-member board.

Ed Vainker, Michael Merrick and Tim Coulson have joined the board with Jon Yates and Natasha Porter, both former Department for Education advisers.

Russell Viner, the president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and professor of adolescent health at the UCL Institute of Child Health, has also joined.

The board was previously made up of Nick Bent, the chief executive of the Tutor Trust, Jacqueline Sebire, Bedfordshire's assistant chief constable, Bernadette Brown, a social worker and council official, and Baroness Philippa Stroud, the Conservative peer and chief executive of the Legatum Institute.

De Souza said she "couldn't ask for better challenge and support for me and for the team".

Members of the advisory board are appointed for three years through "fair and open competition", although there "may be occasions



Dame Rachel de Souza

when their terms of office can be extended", according to the children's commissioner's website.

The shake-up follows the appointment of de Souza, a former chief executive of the Inspiration Trust academy chain, earlier this year. Her predecessor Anne Longfield came from the children's charity sector.

This week de Souza released a report and policy papers in response to her "Big Ask" consultation, which surveyed more than half a million children across England.

The consultation found that although 56 per

cent of 9 to 17-year-olds were happy with life at school or college, 16 per cent were not. Children in more deprived areas or attending schools rated 'inadequate' were more likely to be unhappy.

In her education policy paper, de Souza called for a "comprehensive three-year catch-up package", with the "greatest investment possible".

As well as boosting catch-up spending, the government must also invest in schools "in real terms", and link the pupil premium to the rate of inflation "so that its real value is not eroded".

The paper also called for a "voluntary third session" in the school day for catch-up support and activities.

She also called on the government to prioritise "bolstering and increasing" the capacity of schools to provide pastoral interventions to children who needed them, and a faster roll-out of mental health support.

Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary, said he was "encouraged to see most children and young people are happy, resilient and ambitious", but acknowledged there were "concerns too and we must address them".



Ed Vainker



Michael Merrick



Tim Coulson



# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## More substance, less fluff, please Labour

Sir Keir Starmer's 11,500-word essay has plenty of platitudes, but few policies. Yes, nearly 12,000 more words, but the sector is still no clearer what a Labour government would actually do for schools.

There are some hints. Starmer won't concentrate on just grades and qualifications, "soft skills" will be back in vogue.

A focus on extra-curricular activities is promised too, with all children having the chance to visit the seaside, ride a bike and play an instrument by the time they are 10.

Labour would also target large class sizes (but this isn't new).

For every hint at a policy, there's a load more fluff. Take this: "I want every child to leave school ready for work and ready for life. That means modernising education. The future workforce will need to adapt to change throughout their working lives."

Labour has kept quiet on its schools policies for long enough. Time to cut the waffle and tell the sector what it stands for.

## ITT reform delay a no-brainer

Tensions between teacher trainers and the government are at an all-time high (see pages 14 and 15).

A slew of poor Ofsted judgments has rattled providers, at the same time the government looks to push through disruptive reforms.

The market review proposals would require them all to get reaccreditation by spring next year - and both universities and schools have threatened to pull their training if the reforms go ahead.

Teacher trainers seem to agree that this is too early. They are worried that some providers will give up and shut up shop in the rush to get reaccreditation.

The Department for Education has proposed that the teaching of trainees under the new reforms begin in September 2023.

But plans to delay this until 2024 is sat on ministers' desks. It's a no-brainer for the new ministerial team.

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JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



## “Schools can’t do this all by themselves”

**The former children’s commissioner Anne Longfield has unfinished business, particularly around child poverty. She tells Jess Staufenberg why she’s leading a new commission**

**A**nne Longfield is not often out of the headlines. Once a highly vocal children’s commissioner whose parting shot to the government was that it is “institutionally biased against children”, she’s now back generating debate again. As ever, she’s pushing the case for vulnerable children.

Longfield is chairing a Commission on

Young Lives, which launched two weeks ago. The commission, hosted by the Oasis trust charity, is looking at what schools, local authorities and charities can do to protect children from gangs and county lines, with the aim of designing a new, joined-up national system of support. Longfield tells me it is a “policy and systems piece of work”, in which her team of five

experts will “gather the evidence, look at solutions, and put forward a case for how the system has to change”. The full report will be out in October next year, with interim findings shared throughout.

In particular, she is determined to alleviate pressure on schools. “Schools are already doing a huge amount of work around this, but schools can’t do it by themselves.



## Profile: Anne Longfield



Longfield and her son

### “The biggest thing I failed on with the government was child poverty”

I’d like schools to have a whole range of partners to work with.”

This will be a welcome message for schools. But as children’s commissioner for six years until February – and one with no qualms about publicly criticising poor practice – Longfield occasionally ruffled feathers by asking schools to do more, too.

While shining a spotlight on schools illegally off-rolling pupils, she also regularly criticised the use of exclusions – irritating some heads who feel schools are unfairly berated for using a legitimate, final resort, disciplinary action.

But some of her findings as children’s commissioner were hard to argue with. Making for particularly uncomfortable reading was her 2019 report that just ten per cent of schools in England were responsible for 88 per cent of all exclusions in 2016-17. Half of excluded children had mental health problems and perhaps even more damningly, her office found no

evidence of more violent behaviour among students, even though exclusion rates had increased.

The ensuing headlines weren’t kind, and the Department for Education has now switched to monitoring changes in exclusions use “in real time”.

When challenged on her exclusion views, Longfield says: “I don’t say there should be no exclusions, but I do think there needs to be an increased emphasis on inclusion. It turns out that exclusions are not only down to the characteristics of the child, but also the school they’re in. At the end of the day, the children are the school’s children.”

With the latest government data showing that exclusions – particularly of primary school-aged pupils – rose in the autumn term before lockdown, I wonder whether Longfield’s commission is now about unfinished business for her. She tells me there are initiatives she helped to introduce while in post that she is proud of, but that



Longfield at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan

there is much left to do.

Where did she succeed?

“One of the most useful pieces of work was on how often children in care were being moved around. We called it a ‘stability index’, and it measured moving home, moving school, moving social worker.” The 2019 report, called *Pass the Parcel*, highlighted how unhappy children are at changes to schooling or having to wait for a new school place. “What the index really showed was that children’s care wasn’t being organised around their school,” explains Longfield. “School is stability. If you start to disrupt that, they will have even more challenges.”

Longfield says the stability index, which her team ran for four years, helped ramp up the role of the virtual school head in local authorities, and is now being carried on by the DfE.

Even more promisingly, she says, it was Nadhim Zahawi as children’s minister who was “very concerned with stability” and who set up a ‘stability forum’. Given he is now education secretary, schools can imagine an emphasis on stability of placements for students will continue. To play their part in this, Longfield says “schools need to be very sympathetic to children being moved, and give



## Profile: Anne Longfield



Longfield at the Calais refugee camp



Longfield with students in Derbyshire

special attention to their exceptional circumstances".

But there is indeed unfinished business too. "The biggest thing I failed on with the government was reducing child poverty. There isn't even a unit any more," Longfield grimaces. The civil service's once high-profile Child Poverty Unit, jointly run by the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Treasury, was abolished by ministers in 2016. "I'd actually like child poverty to be placed right at the heart of the 'levelling up' strategy," she continues.

In this Longfield sees schools as natural allies, in part because of Covid. "For schools, the pandemic put them in a place where they were very actively involved in children's home lives. If I talk now about child poverty, the people with the loudest voices are those in schools."

Longfield's mission has really been for every pupil to be understood more completely in the context of their families and circumstances (before becoming children's commissioner she was chief executive of 4Children, a charity focused on family support). She seems to feel that she and schools, more than ever, are singing from the same hymn sheet. "During the pandemic, schools saw it all first hand."

So not only is Longfield continuing to bang the drum, but she is encouraging schools to do so too. Despite the warm

words from Boris Johnson about levelling up, she reminds me that this government is "very different" to the coalition during which she became children's commissioner, in 2015. (After all, Sir Kevan Collins, the education recovery chief, recently quit over the government's unwillingness to invest. Just this week, Longfield announced he is joining the Commission on Young Lives). "Things like expansion of provision for two-year-olds, and pupil premium, were being introduced. There was still a lot of interest there." The problem, Longfield says, is that the Treasury is wedded to a cost-benefit analysis of family support initiatives that fails to understand children's lives in the round.

"Apart from the fact children don't have the vote, the way the Treasury works and calculates just doesn't work for kids. So much of what we spend from the public purse is spent on things [like prison] that have their roots in childhood, but which we don't properly invest in early enough. It's the ultimate invest to save later, but it doesn't have a powerful enough voice yet."

So staying vocal is one of Longfield's key goals. She reveals this was one of her key aims on landing the children's commissioner post all those years ago. "There hadn't been a very external profile for the office before that. I knew, partly because I'd worked for so long in a charity punching above its weight, that your main

### "I know that your main marketing tool is yourself"

marketing tool is yourself."

Her replacement, Dame Rachel de Souza, is taking a slightly different tack. In an interview with *Schools Week* as the new children's commissioner, she delicately stated: "Some in this role have found where the problems are, and then very strongly and publicly held ministers to account." Just this week the results of de Souza's survey of the nation's children, called *The Big Answer*, came out, and she was careful to emphasise the positives: a "heroic" (not "lost") generation, who are "optimistic". However, de Souza has called for more money for the pupil premium, which Longfield also specifically tells me needs to happen.

Longfield has not much to say about the appointment of de Souza, adding only "every commissioner does it differently". However, it doesn't look like she herself is going to be quiet any time soon – barely out of the commissioner role, and she's already en route to designing a new national set-up.

As she puts it: "All I want is for people not to be able to ignore the lives of these children."

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

**You can safely ignore the 'liability notices' regarding Covid vaccinations, writes Vic Goddard. The real liability is our government, who keep putting us in the firing line**

One of the biggest pressures of the past two years has come from having to take decisions with a potentially devastating impact on people's health. So I know I wasn't alone in looking forward to a new year with a lot less government interference (sorry, guidance!) and being able to focus fully on teaching and learning.

Sadly, it took under two weeks of term for the gap between expectation and reality to grow back to its full, pandemic-long size. We learned that 12-to-15-year-olds were going to receive a dose of the Covid vaccine... in school! And headteachers found out at the same time as everyone else... again.

Within hours of that announcement, I had received five emails and letters informing me that I was 'formally put on notice' due to my compliance with government policy in relation to Covid. The first one featured lots of mentions of St George and the crusades, and it would be easy to laugh it off, except that as I write this we have reached double figures and their sources are increasingly varied.

I have no intention of giving any free publicity to any of the groups involved by naming them, but chances are that these or some version of these are either already in your inbox or headed your way. The ones that purport to come from lawyers are generally more guarded in their language – until you get to the end and find threats of fines ranging from £180,000 to £20 million and prison sentences of three years to life. No



VIC  
GODDARD

Co-principal, Passmores Academy

## Anti-vaxxer threats show how alone headteachers are... again

matter how robust you are or how confident in the support you receive, reading this type of thing does make you take a deep breath.

The connections between schools and their communities of parents/carers have probably never been stronger following the pandemic

because of that, as well as more praise and thanks, we have also received more challenges stemming from their frustrations and anxiety. I think this is a very clear manifestation of that.

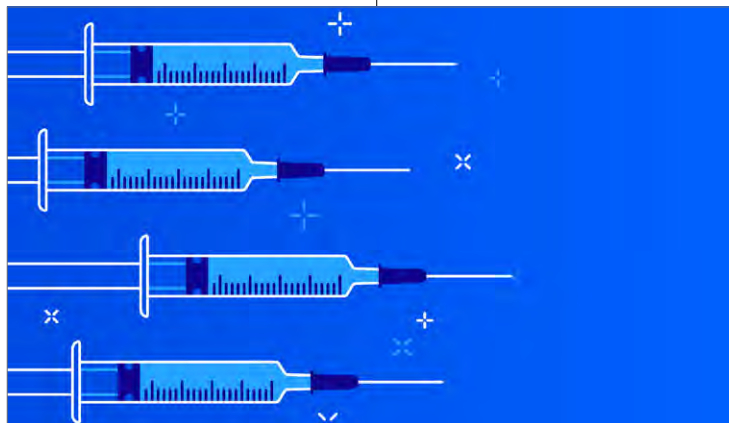
We know the full spectrum of views are spread across our

“It's another flashpoint in our rudderless journey through Covid

response. The increased level of communication and trust required to navigate our way to this point has ensured that.

But the flip side of that coin is that teachers have been among the few authority figures that families have been able to contact easily. And

communities, and those who have a different view from the government's about the best approach to the pandemic are deeply frustrated that they are not being heard. Schools are seemingly filling that gap, but it is not easy to remember that



when you are in receipt of yet another threatening 'formal' communication.

Like other heads who have received these letters, I have read them from cover to cover and faced up to the contradictions and half-truths that are prevalent within them. The kindest way to summarise the majority of them is that they have been written by convinced people in an unconvincing way.

But however poorly written or researched they are, they are coming from our communities. Later, we will need to reflect on what that means for our educational role. In the meantime, it's natural for our main concern to be what happens on the days when young people are being vaccinated.

I am lucky that I have a co-principal and a very experienced chair of trust to talk these things through with. Our local authority has also been excellent at offering advice. And robust as I am assumed to be, I have needed that support on a few occasions already, to convince me that I was not about to end up in court.

So my advice as we head towards this potential flashpoint in our rudderless national journey through Covid is that we need solidarity more than ever. Reach out to other heads, especially if you are well supported, as I am. Find the ones who aren't, and make sure that they are.

And if or when you receive something similar, rest easy. If you end up in court, there will be thousands of us there with you!

# Opinion

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**MICHAEL PAIN**  
CEO, Forum strategy

## There can be no reverse gear on academy freedoms

**A growing body of policies and recommendations threaten to curtail the very purpose of academy trusts just when the self-improving system is within reach, writes Michael Pain**

Last week's blueprint from ASCL marks the latest stage in a growing misunderstanding around the original philosophy and vision for academy trusts — envisaged by Tony Blair and Andrew Adonis, and later expanded upon by Michael Gove. It's a philosophy and vision that seem to have been increasingly clouded by the passage of time and the tenure of multiple education secretaries.

Blair, Adonis and Gove may be controversial figures, but in generating academy freedoms they recognised that one-size-fits-all national solutions devised in Whitehall rarely translate into improvement and innovation. Their aim was to create a system where the vision and direction of our schools, the development of collaborative improvement models and the content of the curriculum were shaped by those best placed to do it, governing boards and expert leaders and teachers on the ground. These are, after all, the people

who know their profession, their subjects, their communities and their contexts best.

Sadly, in recent weeks we have seen a number of proposals put forward that seem to misunderstand this philosophy. A private member's bill has been introduced in parliament that

would give Ofsted powers to create a national, one-size-fits-all, inspection framework for academy trusts. This was reinforced by a new paper from ASCL, which seems to call for something similar, and goes further in proposing that all academy trusts and schools should adhere to a national curriculum.

So much for the once-cherished notion of giving the profession more freedom and autonomy, and communities a much greater role in providing accountability; these developments simply demonstrate a faith in national solutions devised far away from the school gates.

But in reality these are just the latest in a slow creep of top-down solutions placed on trusts and schools. Some have



been curtailed in their decision-making by government when making seemingly sensible calls around opening dates and remote learning. We've seen regional schools commissioners look to increase their involvement in the appointment of chief executives, potentially undermining the autonomy of trust boards; not to mention a deluge of

**“Solutions devised in Whitehall rarely translate into improvement**

government-designed professional qualifications, hubs and funding rounds. This Conservative government, at least until now, seems intent on getting very involved in the detail of running schools.

On inspection, Ofsted's current approach of undertaking summary evaluations of trusts (a model that provides insights rather than formal judgment) seems to strike the right balance between oversight and the freedom to create local solutions. There's no reason why this should be compromised.

Just last week, in announcing the expansion of summary evaluations, Ofsted's Lee Owston said the inspectorate “has no view on the best structure of a

MAT and we don't want to have a preference on how individual MATs operate”. Moving towards a national inspection framework would be a reversal of that position. It would generate a template for running trusts and undermine the innovation and flexibility around models of educational delivery that are fundamental to the trust model.

So does a new ministerial team in Sanctuary Buildings herald more of the same, or a rediscovery of the potential of schools' and leaders' autonomy? Recent trends certainly seem to leave the freedoms given to trustees and trust leaders in a very precarious place. The implications of proposals like those put forward by ASCL are profound. Trust boards and leaders would spend more time looking upwards to government and centrally prescribed frameworks and less time looking within – to their teams – for ideas and solutions, or outwards – to their communities – for insight and accountability.

At heart, this is about a fundamental difference in approach to system leadership. On the one hand is professional autonomy reinforced by intelligent oversight. On the other, a culture of top-down prescription that can only discourage sector-led improvement and stifle innovation.

In other words, the question of trusts is a question of trust. So before they move forward, let's hope the new team of ministers reflects on their underlying purpose. Because if there's any top-down activity to be carried out from the Department for Education, it is surely to safeguard the progress we've made towards the much-heralded self-improving education system, and to enable leaders and teachers to realise its full potential.



# Opinion

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

**Giving teachers the flexible working options everyone else now expects could stem an exodus, writes Emma Shingleton, and may even tempt some back**

When I was told on my PGCE that one in five teachers leave the profession within the first five years, I didn't believe for one moment that I might be one of them. Yet I'm one of teaching's many, many reluctant leavers, a retention figure somewhere in the DfE's workforce spreadsheet. I loved being a primary teacher, but when I needed more flexibility to re-balance work and life, it became clear the profession would never allow it.

Now in the private sector, I've watched over the past 18 months as the working environment has been transformed. Office-bound roles have now moved towards a more 'hybrid' way of working, combining working from home with perhaps a couple of days in the office.

Employers who initially had no choice but to support the remote working transformation have now fully embraced it. And a good thing too, because employees who have discovered the benefits of flexible working for their work-life balance are in no hurry to revert to pre-Covid work patterns.

Not so for my ex-colleagues, for whom an expectation of a full return to the classroom seems simply to have gone unquestioned. While other employers have made Covid-led changes permanent, education hasn't followed suit.

But why? Of course, children learn best in the classroom alongside their peers. Some flexible working arrangements are not practical for schools. But there's far more to the job than what happens in the classroom, and not all of it needs to



EMMA SHINGLETON

Former primary teacher and resource creator, PlanBee

## Why have teachers been left out of Covid's flexible working revolution?

happen 'on site'.

Teachers were fully part of the national re-think of the office during lockdowns. Sure, some were in each day to look after key workers' children. And sure, most of the media and political focus was on delivering online lessons and remote learning.

But they also planned and prepared

doing many of these crucial activities more flexibly.

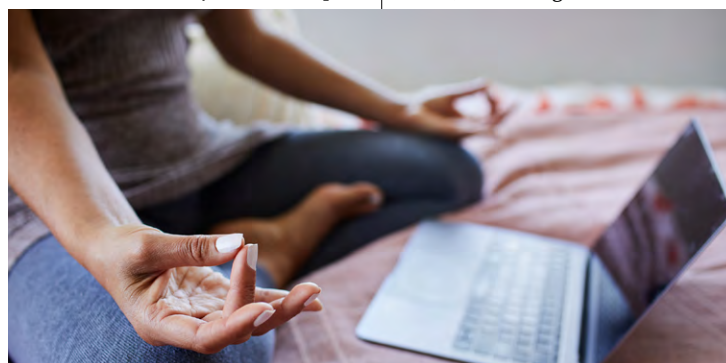
Surveys have consistently shown a high level of job dissatisfaction within the profession, and the latest from the NEU is stark. It shows that one-third 'definitely' plan to leave by 2026. So the need for change pre-dates Covid, but the pandemic

“Teachers have proven themselves and so have these practices

lessons and resources, and collaborated with their teams to moderate and quality-assure that work. They marked work and assessed students. They attended meetings and professional development sessions. They conducted parents' evenings. And more...all from their kitchen tables. With suitable equipment and the right motivation, there's no reason they couldn't keep

experience has accelerated the agenda.

We conducted our own survey of 300 teachers (40 per cent of whom are parents themselves) about post-Covid flexibility in schools. Sadly, 82 per cent responded that the pandemic had not had a positive impact on their work-life balance. In fact, confirming the NEU's



findings, many said that it has made pressures and expectations worse.

“Nothing has changed except expectations have increased due to so much lost learning,” said one. Another echoed the sentiment, saying that “extra pressure on us to close the gaps [has] meant working longer hours”.

And it's not just catch-up. Many teachers also cited “dealing with mental health issues of parents and children” as a whole package of higher expectations.

But while the NEU survey shows some two-thirds of respondents blame government for a perceived decline in their professional status, ours is more optimistic. A massive 90 per cent of our respondents said they felt flexibility in schools could be improved, and they know exactly how to achieve it:

- Allowing teachers to work from home during their planning, preparation and assessment time.
- Continuing with online parents' evenings.
- More virtual staff meetings and training.
- Being more open to part-time working/job shares.
- Allowing flexible start/end times to allow teachers to pick up and drop off their own children.

Teachers told the NEU they felt the government didn't listen to them. With a new top team at the DfE, a perfect opportunity presents itself to change that. After all, the teachers have proven themselves, and so have the practices.

Creating a more trusting culture through more flexible working conditions could be the policy ticket to retaining more of our hard-working teachers.

Who knows? It might even tempt me back.

# Opinion

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EMMA SLATER

Director of Education, GCSEPod

## Time for DfE leadership on diversifying the curriculum

**It won't do to say schools are free to diversify their content when workload and accountability make it impossible, writes Emma Slater. The DfE must take the lead**

Last week saw Nadhim Zahawi MP become the first non-white secretary of state for education and he has already written an open letter to the sector. In it, he promises to "listen to you and work with you to make sure we do right by children and learners". I hope he listens to calls for the curriculum to be diversified, along with the demands to include the teaching of Britain's colonial past.

The government has argued that the current history curriculum provides teachers with the freedom to determine what examples they use when exploring the history of Britain. One junior education minister said teachers should use their expertise to decide what they teach.

But saying that nothing is stopping teachers diversifying the curriculum is passing the buck. There's a difference between not being prohibited from doing something and being supported to do it. Teachers have been under pressure during the pandemic, and their professional life wasn't easy

before it. The slog is far from over for educators who are responsible for ensuring that children catch up on all their lost learning.

Couple that with the anxiety teachers experience about covering the topics necessary to prepare

students for exams and it seems unlikely many will voluntarily deviate from the prescribed curriculum. The fear of sacrificing precious teaching time dominates and can be paralysing.

That's why it's imperative that leadership in this area comes from the Department for Education, and Mr Zahawi should make this a priority. If the department agrees

that children should learn about something, they should issue clear requirements that it is taught to them.

As a previous head of English, I know there's an appetite among teachers to explore a more diverse range of materials. However, teachers need to be provided with support to make this a reality in the classroom. Without this, teachers will continue to teach the same topics they always have. For schools to provide children with a broader education, diversifying the curriculum must be less of a risk.

We know our students are keen to engage with topical issues. And the need to expose young people to themselves and each other through

of lesson plans and resource packs that colleagues have carefully prepared and generously shared.

But the fact remains that those creating those resources are few and those with the time to explore them, curate the ones that are most appropriate for their students, adapt them for their contexts and deliver them in class are all too rare.

That means that students are missing out, and so are our communities. Because that process is better than nothing at all, but it is no match for engaging parents, local groups and even students themselves in developing and delivering a bespoke and relevant curriculum with breadth and depth.

Saying teachers and SLTs need to give themselves permission to step away from the tried-and-tested curriculum is political cover for a lack of leadership. Teachers might devote some time in a lesson to covering something they personally find interesting, but they are most likely to do this where accountability pressures are less – another way students in the most challenging schools lose out.

True, the No 10 petitions website hosts calls for all sorts of things to be added to the curriculum, from yoga, to sign language to feminism. It's impossible to cover everything and please everyone. But it must be possible to create a better balance between the assessment evidence we need and the curriculum content our communities deserve.

Diversifying the curriculum is a matter of community cohesion, and that must surely be a government priority. So it's time the DfE stepped up to it and stopped laying the responsibility at the feet of tired and overworked teachers. Mr Zahawi, over to you.

**"Saying that nothing is stopping teachers is passing the buck"**

literature and the arts and to explore their diverse and shared histories is ethically unquestionable.

In response to that demand, publishers, organisations and charities have made free resources available. The internet is rife with thoughtful packages that include everything from reading lists and lesson plans to quizzes. Teacher forums also have a growing number





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# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Irresistible Learning: Embedding a Culture of Research in Schools

**Author:** Graham Chisnell

**Publisher:** John Catt Educational

**Reviewer:** Cassie Young, head of school and SENCo, Brenzett CE Primary School

Research can be an intimidating word for teachers and school leaders. It conjures up visions of scrutiny and paperwork, and feelings of inadequacy. Yet the current educational landscape is designed to ensure we recognise its value and invest in it, so by choice or incentive, schools up and down the country are dipping their toe in this daunting world.

Teachers are reading journals, papers, articles and attending conferences to gain knowledge and a wider perspective from experts in every aspect of curriculum, pedagogy and leadership.

Graham Chisnell is someone who understands why taking that first step is scary, but also why all this engagement means it's a really exciting time to be part of the profession. So with *Irresistible Learning: Embedding a Culture of Research in Schools* he has set out to help more of us over the threshold.

Anyone who starts their book with the line "I unwrapped my first guitar, a classical acoustic, on my 11th birthday" is a winner, in my opinion. But while the comparison between beginning to learn the guitar and beginning to build a research culture eases you into the book in an accessible and gentle way, in truth this is not a gentle book. It's an in-depth, pragmatic and wholly useful text with a singular mission and an unwavering approach.

Chisnell's book is jam-packed with brilliance. The eight key steps of his research cycle provide the book's structure and each chapter helpfully

includes the key takeaways that, put together, give you everything you need to get started with research-informed practice.

From defining the issue and building a question to be answered, to deciding on your methodology and analysing and reflecting on your findings, the book challenges your opinions of research and continues to ensure you refine your approach throughout.

What is really refreshing about Chisnell's book is the theme of what is possible in schools. His lived experience of schools and his current role in school leadership mean he is a realist. He understands the challenges teachers face with workload and accountability, and manages to embed his research culture among it, rather than adding to it.

The biggest challenge is the culture shift, which really does have to come from the senior leadership team in order to be successful. With this in mind, *Irresistible Learning* offers a complete guide to making research not just part of the practice but part of the ethos of your school.

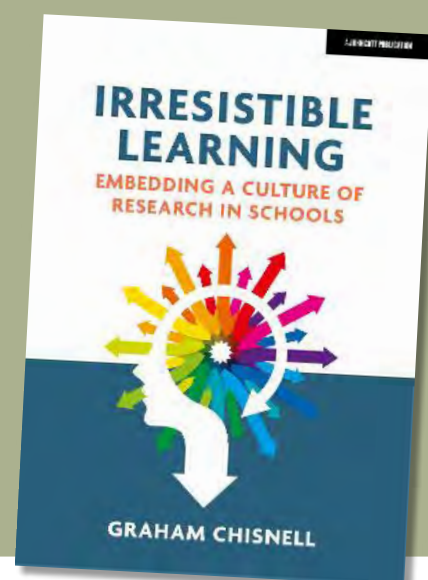
But the book isn't simply aimed at school leaders. It offers tips for influencing and driving a research culture from any position in a school. Chisnell talks about the importance of justifying change, knowing your team, building trust and having integrity, which is just really good culture setting, whether its focus is research or something else.

And throughout, the theory is backed up with evidence from Chisnell's own practice. He writes with pride about his staff approaching this new way of working and about their lightbulb moments. But

he doesn't shy away from the realities of challenging conversations and opportunities for reflection either, which make his pursuit of his staff's success all the more believable. His concept of 'talent pathways' and the open coaching culture he describes are certainly refreshing and unique, and the breadth of application on show gives the impression of something truly forward thinking and wholly supportive.

True to its title, *Irresistible Learning* doesn't stop at lighting the research fire. It goes on to describe coaching models to ensure the fire stays lit, as well as strategies to take that culture beyond the school gates to help it spread. Its warts-and-all approach, and the lived experience in which the book is grounded, gives the reader the confidence to beat all the challenges that will have to be faced.

*Irresistible Learning* is worthy of a top spot on every leader's book pile and on every staffroom bookshelf.



## Reviews



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

@Penny\_Ten

#### Team Early Childhood podcast

@AaronEarlyYears

This podcast series focuses on practice and research within early years education, child development and health, including social aspects of childhood too. In the episode I have chosen, host Aaron Bradbury explores key questions about the new guidance for early years practice with Birth to Five Matters project lead Nancy Stewart.

But despite its focus on how the guidance will support early years practitioners, the discussion is useful and relevant well beyond that. Anyone with an interest in young people and their development will find plenty to reflect on.

#### The SENDcast

@theSENDcast

The SENDcast is a weekly podcast that bills itself as a new way to keep up to date with policy changes in the UK with regard to special educational needs and disability. It invites listeners to discover suggested best practice and sets out to improve their knowledge around SEND at the same time.

I have chosen an episode with the brilliant Lorraine Petersen, who talks about



transition to the next phase of education for children and young people with SEND. Petersen draws on her 25 years' experience in mainstream schools and as former CEO of nasen, a charitable organisation supporting all those who work with SEND children and young people.

Humorous, straight-talking, deeply practical and eye-opening thoughts and advice in this episode make it a compelling listen.

#### The Forest School podcast

@COTF\_UK

The hosts of this podcast series are two teachers turned forest school practitioners who run Children of the Forest in Devon. They are constantly reading, reflecting and learning more to develop their own practice, and began the Forest School Podcast to share their explorations with a wide audience of outdoor educators, teachers and early years workers, parents and anyone who works with children.

The episode I have chosen is a discussion of the book *The Play Cycle: Theory, Research and Application* by Pete King and Gordon Sturrock. We often forget how important play is to children's time at school, and to their development socially and intellectually. This episode reminds us forcefully that play is in fact a sophisticated and complex process.

#### Inside Education

@Insideed

This podcast series is a real gem with a wide range of guests, topics and discussions. I have chosen part one of a two-part recording with the brilliant Gert Biesta. The Brunel University professor of education is always challenging and inspiring, and this half-hour podcast contains more philosophy of education than most fit into a lifelong career.

Biesta and host Sean Delaney discuss the international emergence of a competitive mindset in education, what good education might mean in our age of measurement, how to balance the three purposes of education, the place of equity, diversity and social justice in education, and the gradual disappearance of teaching in favour of a focus on learning over the past 25 years. You won't think the same about teaching again!

#### Key Voices podcast

@TheKeySL

In an age of fragmentation, marketisation and the erosion of local education authorities, one might assume that MATs are the only future for schools that want to work together effectively. To provide an alternative view, this episode is about Haringey Education Partnership (HEP), which provides the glue that helps the London borough's schools "work together in a high-challenge, high-support, high-trust environment for the good of all pupils".

Here, HEP's CEO, James Page, discusses some of its recent work on school improvement, curriculum and Black, Asian and minority ethnic achievement. In particular, the focus is on how the HEP steering group for equity in achievement is helping schools to recognise and understand the systemic issues preventing all pupils achieving their potential and to find concrete ways to make meaningful change.

It's inspiring and transformative work, and if I sound biased, it's because I am. I live here and I'm part of it. But don't take my word for it, have a listen. And while you're at it, Key Voices is a solid provider of good content from a range of perspectives, so have a browse for more.

CLICK ON LINKS FOR PODCASTS +

# Research



Harry Fletcher-Wood will regularly review a research development throughout the year. Contact him @Ambition\_Inst or @HFletcherWood if you have a topic you'd like him to explore

## How can we improve our relationships with students?

**Harry Fletcher-Wood, Associate dean at Ambition Institute**

**B**y this point in the school year, we've made some sense of our new classes. We know who's enthusiastic, who's sceptical and who's unsure. Often, this leaves us wondering how we can reach some students, how we can build a better relationship with an individual or group.

Some things are obvious: listening, being firm but fair, explaining our actions. But beyond the obvious, can research tell us anything more about improving relationships? I went looking for an answer, and found three studies with interesting prospects for classroom application.

The first comes from a review of the field of 'relationship science' by Harry Reis, which led him to conclude that responsiveness was of paramount importance. Responsiveness, he argued, meant feeling that others were doing four key things:

- Understanding and appreciating what matters to you
- Being aware of, and responsive to, you and your needs
- Offering care and support
- Being warm

Much of the research he cited looked at family relationships, but he also described relationships in public service. For example, researchers found that patients reported better health outcomes when they felt their doctor was more responsive. So being more responsive seems to improve relationships; being unresponsive – even if we're trying to be helpful – doesn't.

The second study concerned similarity – a key factor in promoting our sense of liking someone. When we have something in common with another person, we tend to like them more – even when that thing is as arbitrary as a birthday, or a favourite sports team.

This doesn't appear immediately useful. After all, we can't change



our birthday or favourite team, and our advanced age limits how much we are likely to have in common with our students.

But researchers at Harvard found a clever way to use similarity to build relationships. They asked teachers and students to answer a series of questions, such as, what they looked for in a friend, and what sporting event they'd want to go to next. Then, researchers told students five things they had in common with their teacher, and told the teachers five things they had in common with each student.

In essence, researchers had found – or created – new similarities. Compared to control groups, teachers and students saw themselves as more similar. Teachers liked their students more – and students got higher grades. And what's more, the effects were strongest for minority students: teachers reported interacting with them more, and they gained higher grades.

So much for building better relationships, but another key factor is to not let them fall apart again. For example, students often perceive teachers' feedback as personally motivated criticism. This means they don't benefit from the feedback – and relationships get worse. So what can we do to make feedback palatable, and strengthen relationships?

In a series of experiments,

researchers tried tackling students' perceptions of feedback. For example, researchers asked teachers to mark students' work as normal – then added handwritten post-its saying either "I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them", or "I'm giving you these comments so that you'll have feedback on your paper."

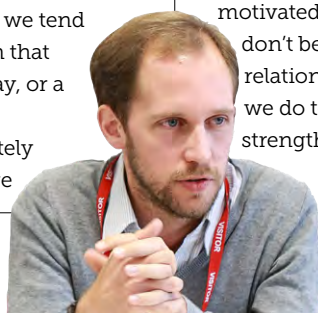
Students who received the first note were more likely to resubmit work, received higher grades, and trusted the school more. And, as in the previous study, the effect was strongest among minority students.

The researchers argued that critical feedback "must be conveyed as a reflection of the teacher's high standards and not their bias", and the student must be assured that they have "the potential to reach these high standards".

While this study applies to feedback, there's no reason not to apply the same principle to other classroom situations.

Taken together, I find these studies encouraging. There are specific strategies we can pursue to improve relationships in class: being responsive, identifying our commonalities and defusing those tricky moments.

The better relationships these promote are worthwhile in themselves – and seem likely to help students achieve more as a result.





Week in

## Westminster

Your guide to what's happening in the corridors of power

## MONDAY

When the sackings of Messrs Williamson and Gibb were announced in last week's reshuffle, one notable feature was how the sector reacted to each man's departure.

While Williamson's ousting barely elicited a relieved peep, even fierce critics of Gibb's legacy were quick to thank him for his service.

After all, the man has woken up every day for the best part of 11 years and gone to work to do what he believes is right by the children of this country.

And so it was spiriting, if unsurprising, to see that he barely let his feet touch the ground before he was campaigning on education from the back benches.

In an article for *Conservative Home*, the long-serving schools minister urged his successors to resist calls for GCSEs to be scrapped and for reforms to the EBacc performance measure, praising academies across England in true Gibb fashion.

For anyone who thought he might go quietly, think again. Expect Westminster Hall debates galore on the writings of ED Hirsch and backbench bills on strengthening phonics.

Maybe Gibb will even join his former ministerial colleague Robert Halfon on the education committee... Anything's possible in the brave new world!

\*\*\*

With the news over the weekend that the reshuffle of education ministers was finally complete, readers of the Department for Education's website

could be forgiven for assuming the roles and responsibilities for each postholder would be up-to-date.

But no, officials were this week unable to confirm exactly what everyone's doing in the new team, nor put a date on when they would be confirmed.

This would be unsurprising if it were the first reshuffle, but having gone through five secretaries of state in just over a decade, you'd think they'd have it down to a fine art.

## TUESDAY

Critics of Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner, may have thought they accidentally stumbled upon a report by her predecessor when they read her "Big Answer" report this week.

De Souza, whose former trust, Inspiration, was often criticised for its use of exclusions, not only repeated her call for "fewer exclusions" as part of a "multi-year project to design higher quality support as part of our basic offer to children", but also advocated giving some pupils a chance on behaviour as they returned from the pandemic.

"We have developed school systems and routines that increase learning time and set high expectations of behaviour," she said.

"As we recover from the pandemic, returning to school will be particularly hard for some children, so the 'scaffolding' of expected behaviour will have to be sensitive and inclusive,

to make all children feel welcome."

Of course, de Souza has been on a journey as far as exclusions are concerned, having admitted they were too high at her trust at one point. But this will raise eyebrows among those who have previously called her out.

## THURSDAY

If Sir Keir Starmer's 11,000 word-plus essay on what he stands for is anything to go by, we could be in for a dull conference in Brighton over the coming days.

The Labour leader used the document to argue for the "best start in life for every child", and speak of his "simple belief" that "every parent, no matter where they live, should be able to send their child to a high-quality school that prepares them for the future".

Groundbreaking stuff – why didn't anyone else think of that?

Starmer also spoke about the need to focus on "soft skills", a phrase politics nerds may remember from the party's 2017 manifesto.

And while his desire to see pupils given the chance to learn an instrument and visit the seaside by the age of 10 is admirable, the vagueness of the document does make us wonder when we will ever see the next actual school policy from Labour.





## DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER

**Are you an ambitious senior leader looking for a Deputy Head post in a school of hard working and well-behaved students? Could you inspire a team of teachers determined to deliver an engaging curriculum and secure the best possible outcomes for our committed students? Are you a leader who will develop staff, including the leadership team, and help them realise their own ambitions?**

### The post holder will be expected to lead on:

- preparing the school for the current EIF
- personal Development
- behaviour and Attitudes
- safeguarding
- transition from Key Stage 2 to 3
- attendance
- We offer an exciting and stimulating environment and a dedicated, hardworking and supportive staff team.

### We are looking for a Deputy Head who:

- has the strategic vision to motivate and inspire our learning community to educational excellence
- has a passion for pastoral care and personal development, with high expectations of staff and students

- is willing to support every individual to fulfil their potential
- has an up to date understanding of current educational research and policies and can use this to drive continued school improvement
- can understand and analyse data to inform strategy in school
- will innovate, cultivate and recognise outstanding practice in the fields of personal development and behaviour and attitudes
- has excellent interpersonal, communication and organisational skills
- will lead and inspire good behaviour outcomes to enable learning
- will foster a positive and effective partnership between students, parents and the community
- will work closely with the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team and governing body

**Closing Date: 30 September 2021, 12 midday**

<https://sellyparkgirls.org/staff-vacancies>

## FOUNDING PRINCIPAL – HOUSTONE SCHOOL

**£70,307 – £89,357  
FULL TIME, PERMANENT**

The trustees of Advantage Schools are seeking to appoint a Principal Designate from Easter 2022 (or earlier by negotiation) for our brand new secondary school, Hustone School.

Hustone School is due to open in September 2022 in Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire.

We are interested to hear from experienced school leaders with an established track record, who possess the knowledge and expertise to lead a school in line with our trust ambition of offering a world-class education to pupils of all backgrounds.

Informal and exploratory conversations are welcomed – please contact Sophie Heron – [sheron@advantageschools.co.uk](mailto:sheron@advantageschools.co.uk) for an informal and confidential conversation with Stuart Lock, CEO. We encourage in person or virtual visits to the schools in our trust in line with the most recent school risk assessments.

To apply, please download and complete the application form available on our school website: [www.houstoneschool.co.uk](http://www.houstoneschool.co.uk)

**Closing Date: 9.00am, October 11 2021**





## Director of School Improvement

**Salary:** £95000

**Contract Type:** Full time, all year round

Following BEP's successful bid for the Birmingham School Improvement Contract through to 2028, we are now recruiting a Director of School Improvement who will create the conditions for our success by championing and leading school improvement activity across the city. The work of this contract sits at the heart of BEP with its diverse range of services.

This is high profile role at the leading edge of the sector, so you'll need to bring a deep understanding of how schools improve at pace, alongside the personal skills to influence, persuade and negotiate at the highest level.

So, if you're passionate about making schools better and ready for a new challenge in a high profile role in Britain's second city, visit [www.bep.education](http://www.bep.education) or talk to Tim Boyes or Debbie James on 0121 285 0924.

Closing date **1st October 2021**  
Interviews are **15th October 2021**



## Consortium Partner

**Salary:** £65000-72000 per annum

**Contract Type:** All possibilities considered to a minimum of 3 days per week

Following BEP's successful bid for the Birmingham School Improvement Contract through to 2028, we have an exciting opportunity to appoint an expert team of Primary school improvers to drive forward our model. These Consortium Partners will engage with existing groups of schools developing strong relationships in their localities. They will help them implement robust plans and strategies to support all of their schools in delivering better outcomes for children. This team will also contribute to and draw from work across BEP's many programmes and partners at a city wide level.

To find out more about BEP and its vacancies please visit <https://bep.education/job-vacancies/>

We encourage informal discussions and ask that you contact Nicola Gowans on 0121 285 0924 to arrange these.

Closing date **1st October 2021**  
Interviews are **20th October 2021**



**Swanshurst School**

## Director of Support Services

**Salary :** GR7 £57,698 – £74,887

**Closing Date: Friday 1st October 2021 9am**

Swanshurst is a large, "Outstanding" and oversubscribed school. We expect the best from everyone who walks through our door as we strive to be a provider of an exceptional education to all pupils in our care.

**We are looking for an inspirational leader with:**

- Excellent attention to detail
- An excellent track record
- The knowledge and skills needed to strategically lead to ensure provision and outcomes are outstanding, the ability to think and do it, not just talk it.
- A relentless commitment to outstanding support for staff and pupils
- A driving ambition to make a difference to every pupil
- The interpersonal skills to grow and develop highly effective teams
- A vision and passion for growth and development of colleagues at all levels

**For more information please visit <https://www.swanshurst.org/vacancies2/1139.html>**



## EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

**L28-L35 £81,942 – £97,273**

As Executive Principal, you will lead The Forest School in the charming town of Knaresborough and be the designate Executive Principal of our new build specialist school in Osgodby, Selby (due to open in September 2023).

This is a unique opportunity to not only lead a flourishing and highly regarded special school but also shape the development of a brand new, purpose built, special free school. We are looking for an inclusive, experienced and committed professional to join us.

This role would suit a head teacher or principal who is looking for a move to executive leadership or an experienced executive leader who recognises the unique opportunity to be involved in something special and exciting.

This is a once in a career opportunity to contribute to the design and build process of a new school and also join the community of a thriving school in the beautiful county of North Yorkshire.



## 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 Draney 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.middlesbroughdioceseschoolservice.org.uk/Vacancies/Director-of-Schools-vacancy/>

### KEY DATES

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

*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.*

## REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER - EAST OF ENGLAND AND NORTH EAST LONDON

Salary up to £120,000 per annum

Location Cambridge or London with travel in the region, and attendance at meetings in London and other RSC regional offices.



Department  
for Education

Dedicated to delivering first-class education to children and young people across England, the Department for Education is a stimulating and rewarding place to work. With over 9700 open academies and free schools, we're looking for an outstanding leader with a track record of significant achievement and delivery, a good understanding of the education landscape both nationally and locally, a commitment to diversity and an ability to lead through change.

You will be part of a strong team of commissioners, making important operational decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State for all academies, free

schools and sponsors in your region. That means monitoring performance of academies and free schools, driving improvements in underperforming schools, facilitating multi academy trust development and growth, and leading on the opening of new free schools. You will also lead a Civil Service regional team that plays a key role in Covid response work, wider school improvement plans and sufficiency of pupil places. Engaging effectively with trust leaders and stakeholders is key, as is commanding respect in support and challenge in the sector.

**Please visit CS Jobs and search for Regional Schools Commissioner.**



## 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>

# 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: [JCcollins@campfiretrust.co.uk](mailto:JCcollins@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](http://www.mynewterm.com)**



## 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](http://bayceschool.org) or contact [recruitment@bayceschool.org](mailto: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.



**AYLESBURY  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
*Founded 1598*

## Head of Computer Science

A truly exciting opportunity to lead and develop the School's Computer Science department from January 2022 following the retirement of the current post holder.

We are seeking a highly motivated, well-organised, innovative leader who will be able to shape, direct and deliver an exciting future for Computer Science as part of the School's commitment to developing and nurturing character.

The successful candidate will be a strong leader able to take the department forward. For the right candidate, there is an opportunity to also lead the Design, Technology and Engineering team, to bring together all aspects of technology in the curriculum.

Aylesbury Grammar School is an academy grammar school for boys. Our uncompromised curriculum and extraordinary care & support create a culture of respect and aspiration.





**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**



## Principal Designate

Paradigm Trust is working closely with the DfE and Suffolk County Council to build, open and operate a new special free school, Woodbridge Road Academy. We are looking to appoint a Principal Designate from January 2022 and the intention is to lead the opening of the school in September 2022, at which point the postholder will move into the Principal role.

Our vision is to run a special school where pupils can thrive in a stimulating but structured and well organised environment which provides every opportunity for social and academic development.

You will have the ability to establish, develop and maintain professional and effective working relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

You will strive towards ensuring there is a positive ethos in the school in which individuals feel valued, and where you will encourage your team to ensure that the school provides an excellent education for all pupils.



**Click here to apply**



## 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](mailto:recruitment@niton.iow.sch.uk) or download via our website [www.nitonprimary.org](http://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.*



## 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](http://www.anthemtrust.uk)

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I have always found Schools Week very helpful. They reach a large audience and support with many of our vacancies. I am very satisfied with their service and would recommend them highly.

**The Shared Learning Trust**

**Click here** to contact our team

