

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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## NEWS

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## Pay rises must be met from schools' core budgets, minister reveals

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Schools will have to meet the cost of all teacher pay rises over the next three years from their core budgets, the schools minister has confirmed.

But in an exclusive interview with *Schools Week*, Robin Walker (pictured) said the extra £4.7 billion cash allocated at least week's spending review would make such pressures affordable.

The admission is likely to heighten concerns from sector leaders who say school budgets have been "hammered" over the past ten years.

Association of School and College Leaders general secretary Geoff Barton previously warned the extra money could "very quickly evaporate under the weight of extra cost pressures".

It was announced last week around £1.6 billion is set to be added to school budgets in 2022-23, on top of £2.4 billion extra allocated in the 2019 spending review.

A further £1.5 billion a year will be added in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Analysis by Luke Sibieta, from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, shows that even a one per cent rise for all teachers would cost the sector between £270 million and £280 million a year.

But inflation is currently around 2.9 per cent, meaning a real-terms pay rise for all teachers would cost over £800 million.

Treasury documents published last week showed the settlement for schools would also "support delivery" of the government's pledge to raise teachers' starting salaries to £30,000.

It is not straightforward to work out how much this would cost, but it is expected to also run into the hundreds of millions.

A rise in employer national insurance contributions, which will come into effect next year to fund health and social care reforms, is expected to cost schools around £300 million – swallowing up another chunk of the new money.

Walker said: "We recognise there are pressures and there are funding pressures coming through the system which we need to meet. I think this settlement allows us to go above and beyond that."



"I think if this literally had brought us up to a kind of flat real-terms delivery it would have been a struggle to meet those pressures, but the fact that it goes above and beyond that, the fact that we have annual growth in each year of about two per cent above inflationary pressures, gives us the headroom to take on some of these further costs and deliver a real uplift in per pupil funding."

However, Walker did also reveal the increase in revenue funding included a "substantial uplift" for high needs, though how much will not be confirmed until more detailed allocations are announced.

The spending review also committed to £2.6 billion over the next three years to create school places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

"In a perfect world, of course, I might have liked even more capital to deliver more schools across the system," said Walker.

"I think the fact that high needs has been prioritised is completely rational and sensible. And of course, that is where the bulk of the extra capital from the spending review is going."

See profile, pages 19-21

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR\_93

## COP26: new science curriculum, pupil awards scheme and virtual nature park announced

The government will introduce a new model science curriculum, test "energy pods" to replace school boilers and encourage education settings to install bird feeders under plans to be unveiled at a global climate summit.

Ministers will also introduce a Duke of Edinburgh-style climate action scheme as part of the government's draft sustainability and climate change strategy, to be launched at the COP26 summit in Glasgow today.

According to the DfE, a new model science curriculum will "empower teachers in every school to deliver world-leading climate change education".

Pupils will also be able to undertake a new climate leaders award recognising work to improve the environment. Participants will progress through 'bronze', 'silver' and 'gold'

levels, as they do for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They will be encouraged to get involved in the natural world by increasing biodiversity in their school's grounds. This can be done by installing bird feeders, it said.

Pupils will be able to track their progress against other schools via the new virtual National Education Nature Park, which will increase knowledge of different species and develop skills in biodiversity mapping.

Both the awards and virtual nature park will be run by the Natural History Museum.

Zahawi said the measures will "not only raise awareness and understanding of the problem, but also equip young people with the skills and knowledge to build a sustainable future". A final version of the strategy will be published in April.

The education secretary will also reveal plans to test "energy pods" — low-to-zero carbon "plug-and-play" solutions that provide heating and hot water via solar panels and other technology.

The DfE said the innovation was being tested first in "some schools" and could be rolled out to other public sector buildings.

It comes as schools minister Robin Walker told *Schools Week* that he wanted more of the government's public sector decarbonisation funding to go to schools.

He also encouraged more schools to use solar panels. Changes to the way school business rates are paid, due to come in next April, will remove one of the current disincentives to using the equipment, Walker added.



## NEWS

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# Schools told to hike contributions to boost repairs grant bids

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

School leaders have warned vital building repairs might not be completed after the government quietly doubled the school contribution required to secure top marks when applying for grants.

The Department for Education has published guidance on the 2022-23 condition improvement fund (CIF), a pot for repairs, improvement and some expansion work on school estates.

Standalone academies, small multi-academy trusts, sixth-form colleges and some voluntary-aided schools have to bid for the cash, with larger trusts and maintained schools funded differently.

Projects are scored out of 100 for consideration, with some points dependent on school contribution levels.

Last year applicants could score top marks in one section of the bid if they contributed at least 10 per cent for projects over £1 million, 15 per cent for projects over £100,000 and 25 per cent for lower-cost projects.

But this year's guidance says all applicants must pay at least 30 per cent of the cost to achieve full marks for contributions, regardless of project size.

While only six points are now contribution-linked, this is up from five last year. Competition for such cash is also fierce, meaning schools feel "under pressure" to accrue marks wherever they can, said funding consultant Tim Warneford.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, added funding greater proportions meant "additional pressure" on budgets.

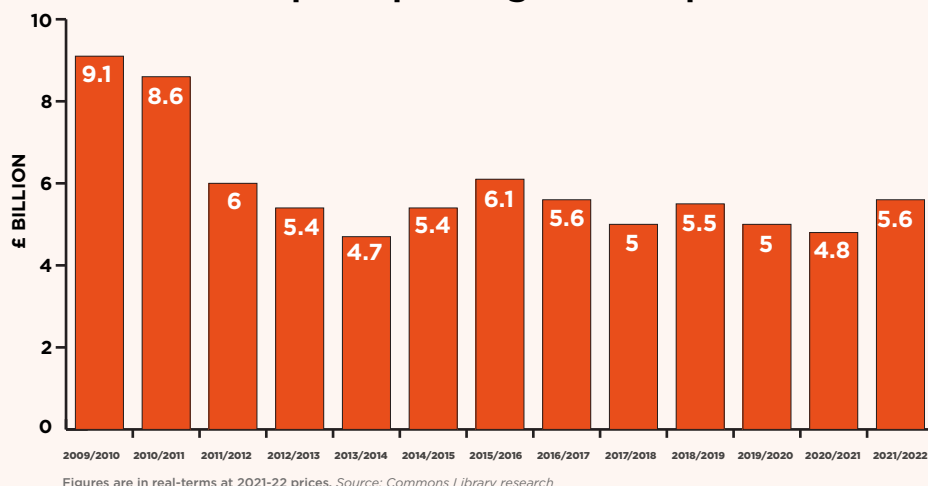
He added: "Members have already told us that they find it very difficult to access the CIF, and this looks like it will only make matters worse."

Whiteman said the government should be making it "easier not harder" for schools to access repairs cash.

Repairing or replacing all defects in England's schools would cost £11.4 billion, Department for Education estimates show.

But analysis published last week by House of Commons library researchers noted planned DfE capital spending this year is down by a quarter on 2009-10 levels.

## DfE annual capital spending over the past decade



Warneford said most of his clients could "barely get to 15 per cent" contributions.

Schools can use spare cash or borrow to fund their contributions. But Warneford said few of his clients typically borrowed, and noted that they would still have to meet borrowing affordability criteria and pay interest.

He said such funding rounds raised a "moral dilemma". The rules are "punishing" schools which consistently repair where possible from existing budgets, compared to others which have not and can thus show stronger need and reserves.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of leaders' union ASCL, said CIF should be linked directly to need, rather than making schools "jump through hoops".

"Raising the bar" on contributions "obviously discriminates against schools and trusts which are the most financially hard-pressed", he added.

Warneford wrote on his blog that cynical observers "may deduce this is a deliberate squeeze on standalone trusts, and another push towards being kettled into joining a MAT".

In August, the government warned small trusts that they should fund urgent works themselves rather than seek funding if they had usable reserves.

Warneford acknowledged the case for making trusts with larger reserves pay more.

"Poor schools with no money will get no marks



Tim Warneford

Photo: David Wright

if they can't put money in."

Officials said schools were not obliged to make contributions where it was unaffordable, and could prioritise obtaining points elsewhere.

Other changes also raised eyebrows. Applicants have always been advised to seek independent surveys, but this year's guidance explicitly warns that surveys by manufacturers or contractors seeking the work will be rejected.

Officials noted vested interests involved, but Warneford said funding independent surveys put further pressure on budgets and could deter applications altogether.

Tony Mills, sales director at waterproofing system supplier Triflex, said "very few schools can afford" roof condition surveys, relying on quoting contractors like them to provide them.

He also questioned whether larger trusts would face equivalent strings attached to their repairs grants.

NEWS

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# Extend the school day? It's too much work, review finds

SAMANTHA BOOTH  
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

A government review concluded that extending the school day would involve "significant delivery considerations", including teaching capacity, new legislation and accountability measures to ensure quality.

The Department for Education has finally published a five-page summary of its review of time spent in school, which ministers had promised to publish before last week's spending review.

Last week's funding settlement for schools included no money for a longer school day for most pupils, instead allocating £800 million for more funded provision for 16 to 19-year-olds and a £1 billion extension of the recovery premium.

The DfE said at the time that it had decided the measures prioritised would be more effective for catch-up, but did not commit to publishing the findings of the review.

However, a short document was released Thursday night, setting out the evidence ministers considered when making their decisions.

It reiterates the findings from a March school snapshot survey, published last week, which found that pre-pandemic, the average school day was 6.5 hours. However, this was only based on a survey of 1,010 school staff.

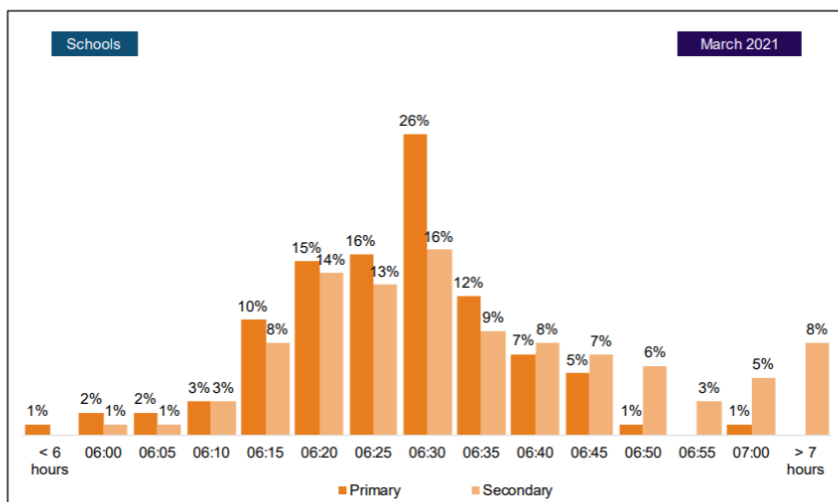
It also stated that "initial analysis" suggested little or no difference in length of school day based on school characteristics, such as free school meals eligibility, urban vs rural settings and maintained schools vs academies. However, there was no reference to where this came from.

Among academic studies and international comparisons, the DfE quoted a Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) which found the average number of instructional hours per year in English primary schools is above the median for pupils in year 5 compared to "participating countries".

At secondary schools it is "broadly median" for year 9 pupils.

Concluding the review, DfE said "any

Figure 10 Length of school day



universal change" to the length of the school day would involve "significant delivery considerations, particularly how to realise the additional teaching capacity required in order to facilitate delivery within existing legislative, contractual and workforce supply constraints".

The challenge of ensuring that any additional time is "not only delivered, but also used well, would require legislation and accountability measures sufficient to ensure quality", the review added.

As teaching hours in 16-to-19 are lower than pre-16, an increase is "much more feasible" particularly "as the legislative and accountability frameworks to do so are already in place", the DfE added.

"Generally too, the structure of teaching and learning time in 16-to-19 education (for example, free periods) provides opportunities to more fully utilise a 'standard' day or week.

"Given international practice and engagement with the sector, we have a high degree of confidence that there is capacity to deliver quality additional time in 16-to-19 education."

James Bowen, director of policy at school leaders' union NAHT, said it is now "important" the sector "moves on" from the "unhelpful debate and focus on things that really do make a difference".

Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi was pushed this week by education select

committee chair Robert Halfon on whether a pilot could be launched, as suggested by former catch-up commissioner Sir Kevan Collins.

But Zahawi wouldn't commit, and instead repeated called for schools operating below the 6.5 hour average to move towards that, but without any extra funding.

He said there are "great examples already" of MATs that have chosen to have a longer day, adding: "I want to look at what they've done and encourage a spread of good practice."

A recent study of around 100 schools by charity Impetus, one of five involved in the set-up of the National Tutoring Programme, found that there is "not a cut-and-dried case of extending the school day to improve outcomes".

While there was a "strong relationship" at GCSEs between longer school days and results, it "all but disappeared" when other schools were added into the sample.

But it added that all the findings "must be taken cautiously" because "they appear to conceal what is really happening within the schools and the impact this is having on their pupils".

The Education Endowment Foundation found that extending the school day could help children catch up by three months – but "are expensive and may not be cost-effective for schools to implement".

## NEWS

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## 'Stock' Covid statement in Ofsted reports 'not good enough'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

Two in five Ofsted reports this term include only a "stock" reference to the pandemic, despite the watchdog's promise to "reflect the Covid context and disruption it has caused" when judging schools.

As of Tuesday, Ofsted had published 48 reports from section 5 visits. *Schools Week* found 19 of these (40 per cent) made no mention of the pandemic aside from a standard line stating Covid was discussed with leaders and "taken into account" (see image).

Two of these reports actually did not include the standard line, but Ofsted said this was in error.

Dame Alison Peacock, chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT), said inspectors were "giving lip-service" to their promises, but Ofsted said "all inspections take the impact of Covid into account and it is always discussed with school leaders".

It added that it "would only write about the pandemic in detail when it is necessary to do so to be able to explain to parents how the school is performing".

**School leaders deserve more recognition**

*Schools Week* analysed reports from inspections, which restarted in September, after concerns from headteachers that Ofsted was not making sufficient allowances. Peacock said she received messages "every day from members concerned by the lack of consideration given to the pandemic".

CCT surveyed its members and one respondent claimed that "our experience and work during the pandemic was completely disregarded ... the

whole experience lacked empathy, compassion or indeed basic kindness".

Another headteacher said there was "no understanding of the impact on the children" and, as an Ofsted inspector themselves, "will be handing my badge back as it was completely inappropriate".

Others reported a "good overall experience but no real consideration of pandemic impact".

Peacock said: "School leaders deserve some recognition for the incredible effort they have made and a stock statement in the report just doesn't feel good enough."

Ofsted's school inspection handbook was tweaked prior to the return so inspectors would "reflect the Covid-19 context and the disruption it has caused".

**Curriculum setbacks and mental health impact**

But 29 of the reports (60 per cent) include findings relating to the pandemic's impact. Many flag how the curriculum has been affected.

At St Anne's Roman Catholic Primary School in Blackburn, teachers "review and adapt their plans regularly to revisit important content that pupils may have missed or forgotten because of Covid-19".

Meanwhile Banks St Stephen's CE Primary, in Southport, has "identified subject content that was not taught ... and made suitable adaptations to curriculum planning".

Some reports recognise the toll on wellbeing.

**Information about this inspection**

- The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

Inspectors noted that attendance at Skegness Grammar School had been affected and "levels of anxiety among some pupils have increased".

Leaders were providing support, including external agencies, and attendance was improving.

At Royal Rise Primary School in Kent, inspectors noted that "rightly, their recent priorities have been on supporting the wellbeing of pupils and staff". But professional development "has suffered".

Two schools have been downgraded in reports published so far, but this is likely to be skewed as critical reports normally face more challenge and take longer to be published.

Both Westacre Infant School, in Wolverhampton, and Willingdon Primary School, in East Sussex, were downgraded from "good" to "requires improvement".

Inspectors visiting Westacre noted the development of the "subject leadership role has been difficult during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the subject knowledge ... needs further development."

They also noted the headteacher had been praised by parents for their efforts.

Both schools were contacted for comment.

In contrast, 18 schools (34 per cent) saw their ratings improve. The remaining schools either maintained their original grade or had not previously been inspected.

EXCLUSIVE

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## Watchdog expansion still on cards (despite budget omission)

The government's pledge to extend inspections to three days is still on the cards despite it not getting a mention at the spending review, Ofsted said.

Boris Johnson committed to extending Section 5 inspections for secondaries and large primaries by an extra day during the election campaign in November 2019. He also pledged to trial "no-notice" inspections to give

a "true reflection" of schools' performance.

*Schools Week* revealed in September that the future of the pledges rested on the outcome of the spending review. But there was no mention of the plan in the budget last week.

However Ofsted told *Schools Week* that it expects further announcements to be made "in due course".

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

The pledge was not considered during the pandemic as Ofsted suspended its normal practices in response to national lockdowns.

In June, chief inspector Amanda Spielman admitted that she "couldn't remember" the last time Ofsted had met with the government to discuss the plans.



NEWS

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# Attainment gap widens as fewer pupils sit EBacc

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The proportion of pupils entering the EBacc suite of qualifications has decreased again this year, leaving the government even further from its target.

Key stage 4 performance data published this week also shows how, according to the government's own metric, the disadvantage gap has widened to its highest level since 2014-15.

According to the disadvantage gap index, the gap widened to 3.79 this year, up from 3.66 in 2020 and 3.7 in 2019. It was already known that the gap had grown after GCSE results were published, but the DfE has only just published its own data.

It shows that 38.7 per cent of pupils nationally entered the full suite of EBacc qualifications – English, maths, science, history or geography and a language – in 2020-21.

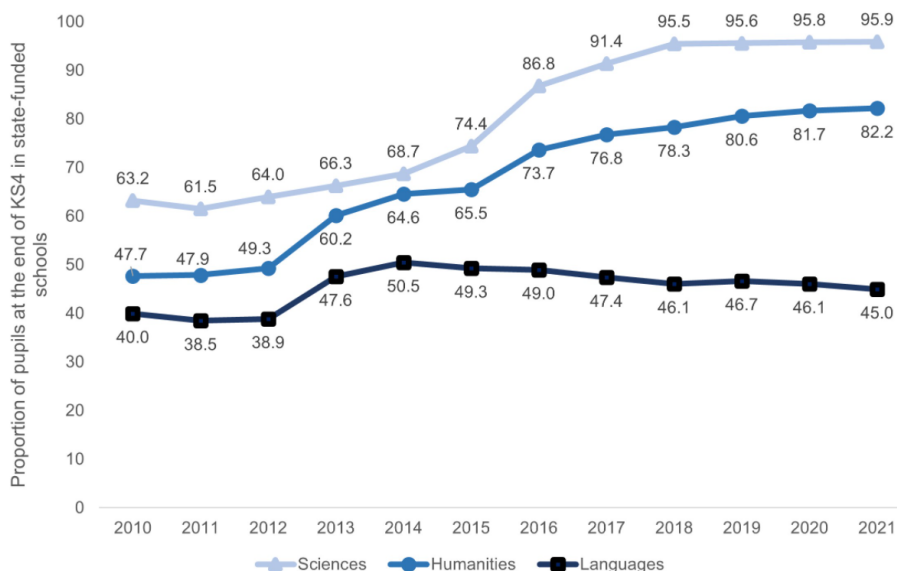
This was down from 39.8 per cent in 2019-20 and 40 per cent in 2018-19.

The proportion of pupils entering four or more components has continued rising, however. This year 87.7 per cent of pupils entered four or more EBacc components, up from 87.3 per cent in 2020 and 86.5 per cent in 2019.

The fall in the overall entry rate appears to have been driven in part by a decrease in language entries.

Although entries to the science and humanities

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils entering science, humanities and language pillars between 2009/10 and 2020/21, state-funded schools, England



pillars increased this year, entries to languages continued to dwindle, with 45 per cent entering that component, down from 46.1 per cent the year before.

The government had initially wanted to see 90 per cent of pupils enter the EBacc by 2020, but this target was pushed back to 2025.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cancellation of exams, most performance data is not being included in league tables for 2020 or 2021.

But the Department for Education has published some data to "maintain the continuity of

information".

It shows the average attainment 8 score of all pupils increased to 50.9 this year, up from 50.2 in 2020 and 46.7 in 2019. It comes after GCSE results showed a big increase in the proportion of top grades following a move to teacher-assessed grades.

The average EBacc point score per pupil also rose to 4.45, from 4.38 last year and 4.07 in 2019.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said the widening of the gap in attainment between disadvantaged children and their peers "reinforces the need for more government investment in education recovery".

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Just half of promised CO2 monitors in schools

More than 144,000 carbon dioxide monitors have been delivered to schools and other education settings, the Department for Education has said. But it is not clear from delivery data how many schools have actually received a monitor.

According to new government data, 144,723 of the devices had been delivered to eligible education settings as of October 29, almost half of the 300,000 first promised.

Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary pledged to get 90,000 monitors out to schools and other institutions by the end of last month,

and then "through November we scale up to all 300,000".

The DfE said it estimated the remaining devices would be delivered by the end of term. Updates on delivery numbers will be published fortnightly.

However, the DfE's delivery data does not break down by institution type, meaning it is impossible to tell how many have gone to schools, early years and further education providers.

It is also impossible to tell whether there are any settings which are still awaiting a delivery,

as schools were told to expect multiple devices.

The DfE had said that each institution would eventually receive around one device per two classrooms and staff rooms.

It follows a slow start to the rollout of the £25 million programme, which was announced in August. *Schools Week* reported in early September that just 41 schools in London were due to receive monitors in the first week of distribution.

Zahawi admitted in early October that just 2 per cent of promised monitors had been delivered.

# EDUCATION FORWARD: TENDING TO THE DIGITAL SHOOTS OF LOCKDOWN LEARNING

With the lifting of most Covid restrictions and precautions came a flourishing, hopeful sense throughout society that the virus was all but beaten, and that life could return to normal. Yet we know that in education, Covid is ever present, with schools dealing with the legacy of lockdown on children and young people's learning and mental health at the same time as managing swathes of student and teacher absences as the virus rips through the younger population.

In this respect, there is at least one aspect of lockdown that merits retention as we strive to do our best for students without overburdening staff – and that is educational technology: particularly the cloud computing tools that for most schools became the bedrock of remote learning.

Of course, there is no substitute for in-person teaching, for the interaction that happens in a real-life classroom and for professional teaching experience and expertise. Yet what we saw emerging from remote provision at a national level is the many ways that technology can be used to enhance planning, resourcing, and teaching.

What we saw is educators collaborating online, creating their own interactive resources or curating the best available free and paid-for sources from the internet to build repositories of resources stored in the cloud and therefore readily shareable and reusable, avoiding duplication of effort not only in-year but through successive cohorts.

What's more, we saw how many pupils engaged with technology with enthusiasm. They liked the fact that they could take a degree of control over their learning, pacing it according to their own needs, rather than being swept along in the general current of a class. Brought into the classroom, this technology could allow over-stretched teachers to focus more time on the individuals who need it most, while also

ensuring that other children are using their time productively.

And we saw a whole new practice emerge in online lessons of using chat, surveys, quizzes, and 'reactions' to increase student participation and offer teachers insight into their students' understanding of a topic. Now faced with classes full of children all at different points in their learning these sorts of tools are particularly useful for ongoing, light-touch diagnostic and formative assessment.

*"We are now asking ourselves how to build on this – what other functionality do we have that we are not using? What other lessons can we learn from other schools and how they have coped?"*

**Chris Cook, IT Manager,  
Manningtree High School**

It's very difficult to make changes to education delivery when to get it wrong could have such far-reaching consequences. However, if the disruption of the past 18 months has

had one upside, it's that it gave us a chance to experiment with the tools and technologies that were already within our grasp and evaluate how they can help teachers do their job more efficiently and students learn more effectively.

In short, we saw the shoots of innovation and transformative practice coming through the cracks of lockdown. Now is the time for schools and technology partners to tend, develop and share them and move forward together.

*"We hope that our communities will recognise the need for investment in IT within schools, now that they have seen just how crucial it can be for the continued learning of children."*

*We hope that blended and hybrid curriculum best practice will be embedded in pedagogical developments for classroom-based learning in the years to come."*

**Paul Kershaw, Deputy Headteacher,  
St Albans Girls School**



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## COVID

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## NHS trust delays HPV cancer jabs over Covid vaccine pressure

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

An NHS trust has apologised after delaying teenagers' first Human Papillomavirus jabs until the middle of next year because "high demand" for Covid vaccines has disrupted its immunisation service.

Hertfordshire's school age immunisation service was due to offer hundreds of year 8 pupils their first dose of the HPV jab this term. This has been pushed back until next summer.

NHS England said the HPV vaccinations "are not being postponed nationally" to accommodate Covid jabs, and that all providers continue to follow public health advice.

New data shows the HPV jab cuts cervical cancer cases by nearly 90 per cent, but the Covid pandemic and school closures have disrupted vaccination timetables.

Figures from October last year show that 59.2 per cent of girls and 54.4 per cent of boys had their first HPV jab in 2019-20. This compared with 88 per cent of girls the previous year.

First introduced for girls in 2008, the HPV vaccine protects against cancers caused by HPV such as cervical cancer and some mouth and throat cancers. It was extended to boys in 2019.

Children are usually offered their first jab in year 8, with the second dose six to 24 months later.

Over-15s who miss the vaccine can be jabbed any time up to their 25th birthday, but have to have three doses.

Hertfordshire told parents last month that first doses will now be offered in summer 2022, with "completion" in the next academic year. However, those due to turn 15 soon will be "prioritised" before the summer.

According to national data, Hertfordshire has around 120 schools with around 1,000 12 and 13-year-olds on their rolls.

Covid vaccine uptake rates for 12 to 15-year-olds were higher in Hertfordshire - at 37 per cent - than the England average of 24.2 per cent, as of Tuesday.

The jabs service said delivering vaccines had been "challenging" during



the pandemic, but children had been prioritised and vaccines remained available.

The NHS's schedule allows flexibility to accommodate different vaccination programmes for teenagers, with HPV not considered a seasonal virus. The service said it was "currently working on" its HPV arrangements for East Anglia, which it also covers.

An NHS England spokesperson said: "HPV vaccinations are not being postponed nationally to accommodate Covid vaccinations and all providers, including the School Age Immunisation Service, continue to follow JCVI advice in relation to HPV, ensuring the first dose of vaccine is administered as a priority and then administering the second dose when operationally able."

But Geoff Barton (pictured), general secretary of school leaders'

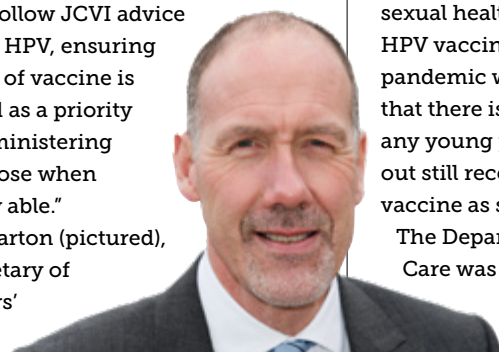
association ASCL, said it illustrated "the huge pressure on the school age immunisation service of running the Covid vaccination programme".

A study in the Lancet this week found a reduction in both pre-cancerous growths and an 87 per cent reduction in cervical cancer as a result of the HPV jab.

Malcolm Clark, senior cancer prevention policy manager at Cancer Research UK, said the research "shows the importance of providing access" to the jabs, so "we would hope to see the vaccination back up and running in these areas as soon as feasible".

Lisa Hallgarten, head of policy at Brook sexual health charity, said she hoped any HPV vaccine programmes disrupted by the pandemic would "get back on track, and that there is a catch-up scheme to ensure any young people who may have missed out still receive their dose of this lifesaving vaccine as soon as possible".

The Department for Health and Social Care was approached for comment.





## NEWS

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## DfE softens BTEC cull plans as new ministers 'listen to sector'

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Ministers have played down the Department for Education's plans to cull most BTECs in the face of mounting opposition.

They have even gone as far as to blame the media for fuelling a belief there will be a binary choice between A-levels and T-levels, despite the DfE's own consultation stating that the two "should in future be the programmes of choice for 16-to-19-year-olds taking level 3 qualifications".

A DfE policy paper on the reforms even asserts that applied general qualifications such as BTECs "will be rare", but ministers now insist "many produce excellent outcomes" and they "won't get rid of quality BTECs".

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, which is spearheading the #ProtectStudentChoice campaign, said he has noticed a "change in tone from ministers" since Boris Johnson's reshuffle.

He told *Schools Week* the new DfE ministerial team "has shown it is willing to actually listen to the sector on this issue". This had "not always been the case" with their predecessors.

The DfE embarked on a highly contentious two-stage review of qualifications at level 3 and below in March 2019 to consider the 12,000 applied general qualifications, including Pearson's popular BTEC courses.

The final outcome was published in July. At the time, the DfE said the reforms would involve stripping public funding from "poor-quality" qualifications that duplicate or overlap with T-levels or A-levels, with then-education secretary Gavin Williamson warning: "There

can be no room in our education system for second-rate qualifications."

At the time the DfE said some BTECs would survive the government's qualifications bonfire if they could demonstrate there is a "real need" for them, or if they are in an area that T-levels do not cover, such as performing arts.

But when challenged on the issue during an education questions session in September, former skills minister Gillian Keegan told MPs: "Poor-quality qualifications benefit nobody, least of all those who are disadvantaged."

Michelle Donelan (pictured), who took on a joint HE and FE brief following September's reshuffle, appeared to water down the agenda last week during an education select committee hearing.

"I would like to bust a myth here, because the media has sold a story that we are abolishing all BTECs and there will be a binary choice between A-levels and T-levels, which is certainly not the direction of travel."

"We know that many BTECs produce excellent outcomes for young people and for people later on in life."

During Monday's education questions, new education secretary Nadhim Zahawi weighed in on the issue. "I want to just squash that misrepresentation: we are not withdrawing funding from BTECs," he said.

"BTECs that are of high quality and are valued will continue, but it is only right that we look at the landscape and see where quality lies and how we can increase the ladders of opportunity, not take them away from people."

And during an accountability hearing with the education select committee on Wednesday, he added: "We won't get rid of quality BTECs. I want to squash that narrative that has somehow built up I don't know where from. We will be evidence-led."

## 60 new governance experts appointed

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

More than 60 new national leaders of governance (NLGs) have been appointed to help struggling schools under reformed government support – and for the first time they will be paid.

The Department for Education-funded support is available for schools rated "requires improvement" long-term, or those given the rating this year.

Regional schools commissioners can also offer the governance support to trusts they think need intervention.

There is a similar support mechanism for school leaders, but the national leaders of education (NLEs) have always been paid. The new NLGs will now be paid too, at £500 a day.

Academies minister Baroness Barran said: "Effective governance absolutely underpins our continuing efforts to raise standards in our schools."

NLGs will recommend how schools and trusts can "develop" so their governing boards "realise their full potential". The experts are required to have a minimum of five years' experience as a governor, including three years as chair.

Contract documents state that between 245 and 265 deployments will be required this financial year for academy trusts, rising to 335 to 355 in subsequent years. Between 130 and 150 visits at maintained schools are expected.

The programme is delivered by the National Governance Association (NGA), which also recruits and assesses candidates before recommending them to the DfE for designation.

A total of 60 have so far been announced, with more to be confirmed in the coming weeks.

Emma Knights, chief executive of the NGA, said: "This should be seen as governance taking its rightful place as part of school and trust improvement."

The programme will cost up to £830,000 to deliver this year, and up to £1 million in later years. The contract currently runs until 2023, but can be extended until 2025.

The NLG programme was set up in 2012. A review in September last year recommended that the experts should be paid, rather than voluntary.

The changes were introduced alongside similar reforms to the NLE support system.



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## IN PARLIAMENT

## Key points from MPs' questions to Zahawi and Acland-Hood

The highlights from education secretary Nadhim Zahawi and Department for Education permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood's appearance at the education select committee on Wednesday.

## 1 HOPE FOR SEND REVIEW IN 'FIRST QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR'

The DfE was accused by committee chair Robert Halfon of "sitting there like a giant, enlightened buddha contemplating" when to publish the SEND review.

The government has already missed three of its own previous deadlines to release the review, which was first promised by September 2019.

Zahawi said "getting it right is probably more important than just simply getting it out", adding: "I'm hoping to have it out in the first quarter of next year."

The review would "dove-tail" with the promised white paper, Zahawi said.

## 2 NO COMMITMENT ON HALFON'S SCHOOL CLOSURE 'TRIPLE LOCK'

Halfon submitted a draft law this week to introduce a "triple lock" of protections over any future government decision to close schools.

Parliament would have to sign off any future closures and advice from the children's commissioner would have to be sought, under the proposals. But Halfon's bill is unlikely to pass without government support.

Zahawi said only that he would "look at it", pledging instead: "My commitment to you is that this secretary of state will keep schools open. We know the damage of shutting schools."

## 3 MOVEMENT ON HOME EDUCATION REGISTER BEFORE END OF YEAR

Zahawi was taken to task about how the government has rolled out a full vaccination programme for the whole country – twice if you include boosters – before delivering on its promise for a home education register.

Ministers set out plans in April 2019 to launch a compulsory register for all children not being educated in school. This would help to identify youngsters in illegal settings who are "vulnerable to dangerous influences", the government said.

But no progress has been made. Zahawi said they were "absolutely committed" to the register and promised to respond to a consultation on the changes by the end of the year. The consultation closed in June 2019 – nearly 30 months ago.

Zahawi added: "We will work at pace but there's a legislative timetable as well."

## 4 'OVERSTATING ANTI-VAXXER DISRUPTION PLAYS INTO THEIR HANDS'

Zahawi repeated that it was "unacceptable" for any school leader or teacher to be harassed or threatened by anti-vaxxers.

He has had a "commitment" from the home secretary Priti Patel that "if the police are required ... [she] will deliver every resource that schools need to make sure that they are protected".

But Acland-Hood said there was a balance to be struck between responding "extremely quickly and vigorously" but not playing "into the hands of anti-vaxxers by suggesting there is more to it than there is". She said the number of weekly incidents was in "single digits".

## 5 NATIONAL INSURANCE RISE TO COST SCHOOLS £300M

Zahawi revealed that the national insurance hike will cost schools £300 million – and as expected will come out of the £1.6 billion extra school funding announced at the spending review for 2022-23.

Earlier this year, the government announced that national insurance contributions would rise by 1.25 percentage points from next April to fund health and social care reforms.

The government said at the time that it would "compensate" public sector employers for their increased contributions.





## LONG READ

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# Now Teach goes nationwide with £3m boost to turn more top bosses to teaching

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

A recruitment programme aimed at persuading high-flying professionals to change career and retrain as teachers has secured £3 million government funding to expand nationwide.

Founded in 2016 by Financial Times journalist Lucy Kellaway and former teacher Katie Waldegrave, it has so far recruited more than 500 teachers across the four regions it formerly covered.

Their aim is to see a “Now Teacher” in every staffroom across the country. But what is the plan? Schools Week investigates

## Is £6k per recruit value for money?

First set up under Ark Ventures, an offshoot of the Ark academy trust that “incubates” new organisations, Now Teach became a non-for-profit charity last year.

The new funding means it has secured £6.3 million in government funding since launching five years ago. Recruits for the programme this year were from four regions: the West Midlands, the South East, London and East of England.

Applicants must show “career success”, which translates to holding a management role or a leadership position.

The 2020 cohort had 3,700 years of work experience in 23 different industry sectors between them. They averaged 25 years’ career experience each.

The new government funding totals £1.5 million per cohort, which equates to about £6,600 per trainee.

Now Teach does not provide the initial teacher training (it partners with 58 ITT providers and 113 schools who do). Instead, it helps to find training courses and support career changers along the way.

Contract documents show this includes a virtual staffroom, access to a mental health counsellor and a WhatsApp group for trainees.

Now Teach reports that 93.1 per cent of its recruits are still teaching one year after achieving qualified teacher status in 2019, compared to 84.5 per cent of all teacher trainees in England.



While they missed a 2018 target to recruit 100 career changers (securing 83 in the first year under a national government contract), they overachieved with 140 recruits last year and 170 this year (see table).

The organisation is now expected to recruit 200 career changers next year and 250 in 2023. The government also has an option to extend the funding for a third year.

Kellaway, who quit her FT job aged 58 to become a teacher, said she would be “amazed and very disappointed” if Now Teach does not hit those numbers.

But, while Now Teach is expanding, other schemes have ended. The Brilliant Club was awarded £4.7 million in 2018 to run a two year Researchers in School programme for PhD graduates. But earlier this year, the charity decided to make 2021 its final cohort due to “significant changes to education funding priorities and the direction of our new five-year strategy”.

## Sluggish flexible working progress a barrier

One hurdle could be the sector’s struggle to offer flexible working opportunities – something Kellaway says is attractive for career changers.

The Department for Education’s 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy promised to



support headteachers to “transform approaches” to flexible working. The plan is to “establish a culture that values ... flexible working at all career stages”.

But while 6 per cent of qualified teachers decreased their working hours last year, another 5 per cent increased their time in school.

Seven per cent of Now Teach trainees, and 20 per cent of their qualified teachers, are working part-time.

“I think that teaching, for some good reasons, has been very slow to adopt flexible working. It’s a shame, because part-time teachers have so much to offer,” Kellaway added.

Another challenge is around pay. According to

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the government's Get Into Teaching website, a new teacher could earn between £25,714 and £32,157. While attractive for graduates, this would be a considerable pay cut for many career changers.

Clare Geldard, executive director at Now Teach, said that while pay questions "often come up", the bigger driver is "giving something back" or "having a life with more purpose".

She added: "I think the difference with our career changers is that it is, 'I can't afford to do that yet'. Or it could be a family situation. So, we keep them in the loop for when they are ready to make that decision."

### Push for more middle-aged men

Part of the new contract is to attract more diverse candidates – including more men aged over 50. The profession is currently 75% female.

The charity will also target more black and ethnic minority recruits, and is "trailing and testing" methodology to reach under-represented groups.

Of Now Teach's 2021 cohort, 51 per cent are male – compared with 30 per cent of overall postgraduate ITT entrants.

Twenty-nine per cent have a declared disability, compared with 12 per cent overall and 29 per cent are minority ethnic, compared with 19 nationwide.

The average age is 47 – with the oldest recruit aged 65.

Contract documents show that communications is also a big part of the plan – with targets to increase the number of PR pieces published from 43 this year to more than 55 in 2022-23.

Covid has also helped, with a 70 per cent rise in Now Teach applications between March and May last year.

Kellaway describes the pandemic as "our biggest recruitment tool ever. All of those people were in their meaningless desk jobs that became even more meaningless once they were having to do them permanently on Zoom in their bedrooms.

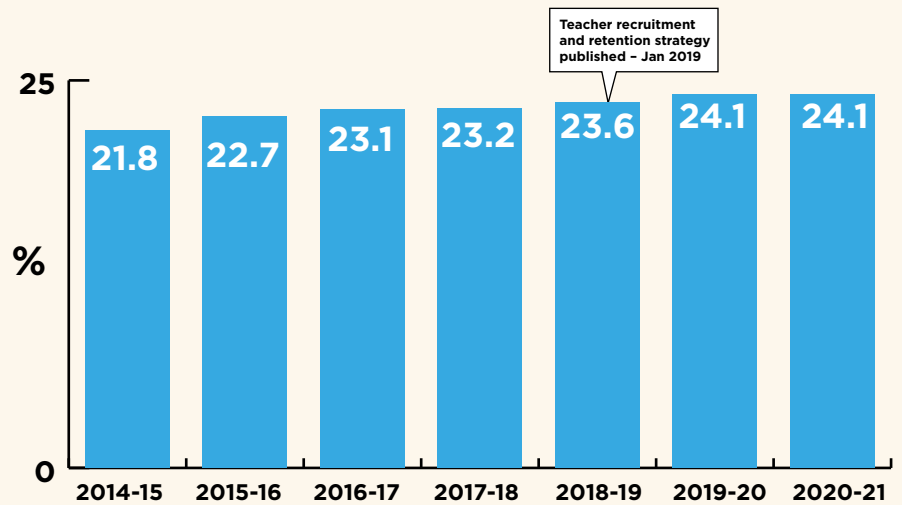
"If you had said to me that, in five years' time, you will have just landed a grant worth a total of £3 million from the government and you will be a national organisation, I would have been amazed really," she added.

"I am just delighted at how far we have come in five years."

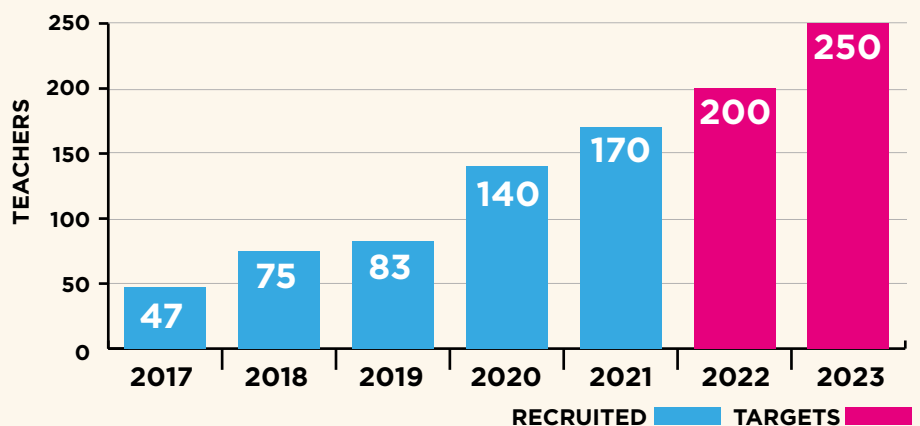


Clare Geldard

### THE PROPORTION OF TEACHERS WORKING PART-TIME



### NOW TEACH RECRUITMENT NUMBERS



NEWS

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## Avoid 'complex language' and sarcasm to make exams accessible, says Ofqual

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

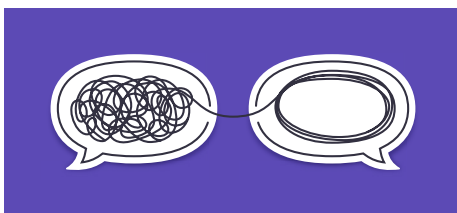
Exams should avoid "complex language", metaphors and sarcasm so they are more accessible to all pupils, according to new draft statutory guidance.

Regulator Ofqual has launched a 12-week consultation for exam boards on designing and developing "accessible assessment".

Although the regulator said its current accessibility rules were "fit for purpose", some boards wanted more guidance on how to comply with the rulebook.

Deaf, blind, autistic and dyslexic students, or those whose first language is not English, are most likely to be "unfairly disadvantaged by irrelevant features" in exams, Ofqual said. This can stop them showing the "full extent of their knowledge, skills and understanding".

Ofqual chief regulator Dr Jo Saxton said: "We regulate so that assessments enable every student to demonstrate what they know, understand and



can do – without unnecessary barriers."

Guidance states that more demanding tasks at the beginning of exams could demotivate some students, so boards should think about the impact of task sequencing.

Complex language should not be used if the task only aims to assess basic numerical skills. Boards should also use straightforward language, for example "with" rather than "in conjunction with".

"Figurative language, including colloquialisms, idioms, metaphors and sarcasm" should also be avoided.

Boards should also consider whether a reasonable adjustment request could raise accessibility issues for a task. For example, how images would be provided in alternative formats,

or how screen-reading software would "read" a table of data.

It follows research this year which found that some exam papers did not work well with assistive technology, causing "frustration" for teachers and students.

Kate Fallon, chair of the Special Educational Consortium, which is hosted by the Council for Disabled Children, said the consultation "starts in a good place".

Martin McLean, senior policy advisor at the National Deaf Children's Society, said it was a "step in the right direction".

Although the guidance is for boards, Ofqual is urging students and those who represent them to respond to the consultation. It closes on January 24, with the final guidance expected in spring.

Both the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf and the Royal National Institute of Blind People reviewed past GCSE exam papers to help shape the new guidance.

Ofqual also held workshops and looked at responses to the 2020 and 2021 consultations for teacher-assessed grades.

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# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Great headlines – but the small print is always less flattering

On the surface of it, last week's spending review announcement was, as schools minister Robin Walker describes it, "a win" for schools.

But as ever, once you drill down into the small print and beyond the headlines, it's not as generous as it first seems.

It is right that pay rises are set annually based on recommendations from the STRB panel. However, one downside of that process is that schools face uncertainty about future rises and their cost, especially when spending reviews allocate core funding over multiple years.

The £30,000 starting salary pledge, while overdue, also makes things more complicated, as whether this is phased in or introduced quickly, the impact on school budgets will inevitably be starker than the incremental rises the sector has become used to dealing with.

When pay rises were signed off in 2018 and 2019, the DfE created a teacher pay grant to cover the rises for several years, as a way of protecting core budgets. It was in the government's gift to do this again, but as Walker has now made clear, they expect the overall uplift to cover all additional pressures.

This approach makes it easier to grab positive headlines, but harder for schools to budget and tougher for those who hold the government to account to work out what is affordable.

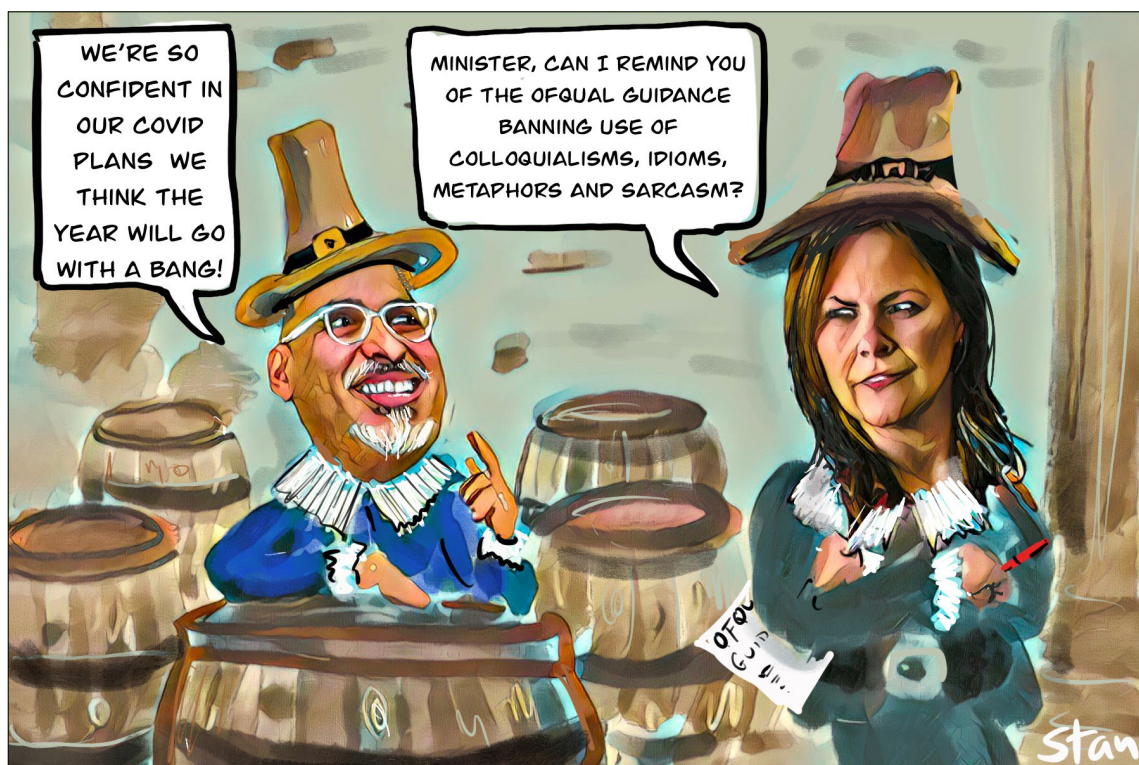
Which brings us to the changes to condition improvement funding guidance the DfE tried to sneak out last week, meaning schools must front up more cash of their own to improve their chances of winning a government grant.

Again, the government is failing to be upfront about how schools are funded, which would seem to suggest our sector isn't out of the woods just yet.

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pandemic



**Jeszemma Howl**,  
Head of Training,  
Fatherhood Institute:  
*Time with Dad*:  
Building on what  
we know about  
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# Profile

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER



**“This is the most interesting job there is, to be able to support teachers, to be able to make a difference to children’s lives”**

**The schools community has a new minister for the first time since 2015.  
Freddie Whittaker sat down with Robin Walker to hear about his priorities for the role**

**N**ew schools minister Robin Walker knows he has big shoes to fill. His predecessor, Nick Gibb, served in the role for almost nine years out of the last 11, and was central to Conservative education policymaking since 2005.

Almost two months after taking over following Gibb’s surprise sacking in September’s brutal reshuffle, Walker still

hasn’t finished redecorating his office.

The spending review and ongoing Covid crisis mean his first few weeks have been a whirlwind, and his predecessor has only gone up in his estimation.

“I’ve always respected and admired Nick Gibb, but I have even more admiration now I recognise the breadth of the brief that he was a master of.”

Elected MP for Worcester in 2010, Walker quickly made a name for himself as a campaigner for fairer school funding. He was vice-chair of the f40 group, which represents council areas whose schools have historically received less than those in other parts of the country.

Given his history on the issue, it seems fitting that one of Walker’s first jobs after



## Profile: Robin Walker



With predecessor, Nick Gibb

### “What I want to see is levelling up in terms of the whole country”

arriving at the Department for Education was to make the case for a spending review settlement for the sector.

He describes the £4.7 billion in extra schools funding announced by the chancellor as “a win”, and said boosting cash levels had been his “fundamental priority”.

Walker also shrugs off criticism from the f40 group he used to campaign with. Its chair, Devon County Council deputy leader James McInnes, said this week that school budgets were still “not equal across the country”, and warned of mounting pressures on schools.

“What I want to see is levelling up in terms of the whole country, making sure that those schools which have been underfunded catch up faster,” Walker tells me.

“That is already happening through the national funding formula, that’s very welcome.”

He believes schools received a “good settlement” and that forthcoming pressures such as teacher pay rises will be affordable.

“I’m not going to say it’s perfect, or we got everything that we wanted. Of course, that’s never the case. But I think, within what we got, we’ve got resources to make a real difference and to deliver our priorities.

“And then of course we’re also thinking about a white paper and how we can drive the system forward in that respect.”



Walker meets pupils at Dunton Green Primary School, Kent

We have had a glimpse of what the government’s planned white paper will contain for schools. Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi said at the Conservative party conference that the reforms would aim to tackle “innumeracy and illiteracy”.

Ministers have also said they want to scale up academies reforms, and there have been rumours of changes to assessment and teachers’ working hours too.

Earlier this year, The Guardian reported that the government was considering the 1,265-hour directed time cap for teachers. In reality many teachers already work over these hours.

A 2019 report found that teachers work an average of 47 hours a week, with one in four working more than 59 hours.

Union leaders warned at the time that any attempt to do so would be “met with fury in the profession”.

Walker says scrapping the cap is “not something that is top of my agenda right now”. But he won’t rule it out “at this stage”.

“I want to look carefully at the evidence on either side before I take a decision on that.

“I think the important thing is we do need to address teacher workload. And I’m not sure that that’s necessarily most effectively done through looking at a particular number that sits in there, and I think a lot of people would argue is theoretical rather than real.”

It has also been reported that ministers were considering bringing back SATs for 14-year-olds. Again, Walker is not ruling anything out.

“We need to look across the piece at where testing is appropriate, where it can help to measure progress, but bearing in mind we don’t want to be unnecessarily increasing teacher workload.

“So that’s certainly not something I’m ruling out, but it’s not something that I’m going to say ‘yes, we’re definitely going down that route.’”

Like his predecessor, Walker is also protective of GCSEs. Less than a week after he left the job, Gibb wrote for the Conservative Home website urging his successors not to scrap the exams in the face of calls for reform.

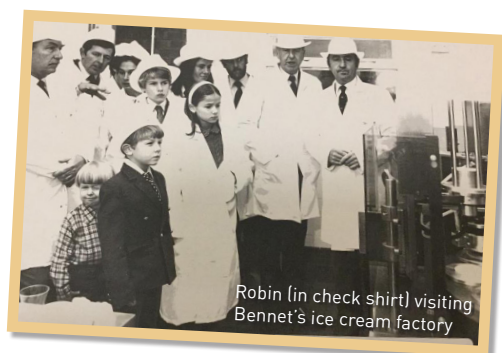
Walker laughs when I bring this up. “I thought it was probably not necessary for him to urge me on that respect, because I think he was preaching to the converted.

“But it was certainly something that I recognise a lot of work has gone into, and we need to make sure that we allow that to bed in, rather than be in a situation where we’re creating uncertainty.”

The new schools minister certainly has his work cut out, but it is a challenge he says he actively sought out.

“You have these conversations with the whips as to what you’d be interested to

## Profile: Robin Walker



Robin (in check shirt) visiting Bennet's ice cream factory

do. It's always been

very high on my list that I wanted to do something in education.

"For me, this is the most interesting job there is, to be able to support teachers, to be able to make a difference to children's lives, and so very much it's what I was asking for over a number of years, hoping to be involved with."

In many ways, Walker's story is that of a stereotypical Conservative MP. Private-school and Oxford-educated, he worked in the City and advised senior party figures before treading his own path to the House of Commons and various ministerial offices.

By the time he was born in 1978, Walker's father Peter had been the Conservative MP for Worcester for 17 years. He would remain the city's MP until Walker was 14 years old, and his son would in turn take the seat 18 years later, at the age of 32.

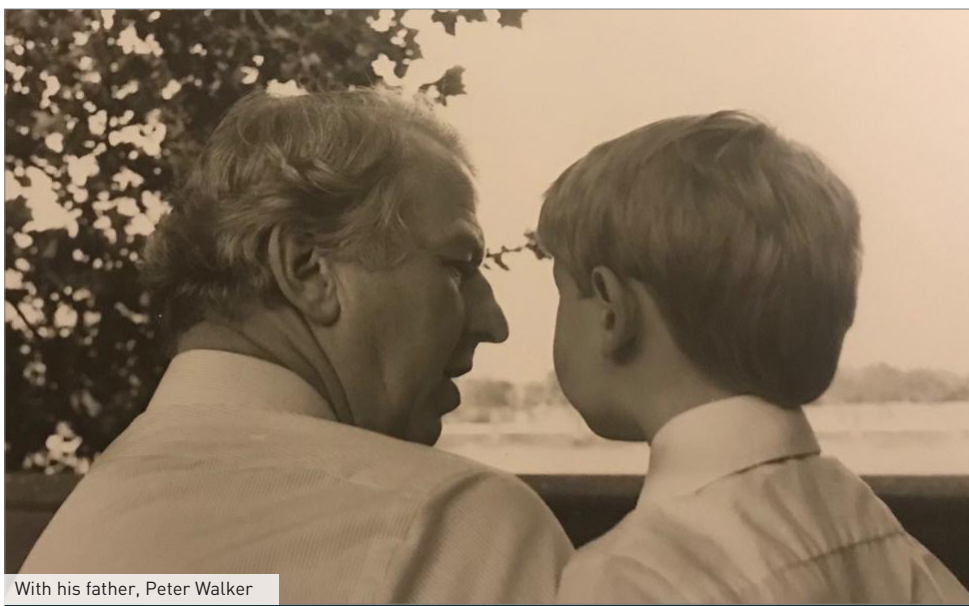
Growing up, Walker's family lived between London and Worcestershire. He attended prestigious private schools Eaton House and St Paul's in the capital during the week while his father was in Parliament, escaping to the Midlands at the weekends.

His mother and father left school at 15 and 16 respectively, and were "passionate" about their children being able to sit A-levels and go to university.

Walker says he enjoyed "bits of school, but not others", learning early on that the "fundamental thing that made a difference and engaged me in different things at different times was really great teachers".

Walker studied history, Latin and politics at A-level before reading ancient and modern history at Bailliol College.

He admits that his childhood was "strange" to look back on. "I remember a moment of realisation when I was really



With his father, Peter Walker

### "I think the important thing is we do need to address teacher workload"

quite old that for most people a weekend consisted of two whole days.

"It had never really occurred to me because I always assumed that a weekend was Saturday and Sunday morning and then you spent Sunday afternoon in the car."

But it proved to be good training. His own family now also splits its time between the capital and the countryside.

Despite his political upbringing, Walker reveals that he did not always want to follow in his father's footsteps and become an MP. While interested in politics, he was "quite ambivalent" in his 20s about "whether it made a real difference to people's lives".

After university, he started an internet business and then worked for financial communications company Finsbury. But he continued to volunteer for the Conservatives at election time.

In 1997, he drove health secretary Stephen Dorrell around the UK to visit target seats. "I think we visited about 100 different places and won none of them, so it was an interesting political education."

By 2005 he was advising Oliver Letwin, and had "made my mind up at that stage" not to become an MP. But that changed

after he became involved in helping the then shadow chancellor fight for his seat.

"I went from doing a theoretically glamorous job of being the media adviser to the shadow chancellor to literally just camping down in Dorset and knocking on doors all day and meeting people he had helped."

The Conservative candidacy for the Worcester seat became vacant in 2006, and Walker was selected to contest it, scaling back his day job so he could spend Fridays in the constituency.

It was during this time that he started to visit schools and identified a problem with school funding. He ran on the issue in the 2010 election campaign, and raised it in his maiden speech.

Eleven years on, and Worcestershire is still in the bottom 40 areas for schools and high-needs funding. The national funding formula will not be rolled out in full for at least three years, and heads are gloomy about their financial prospects despite the spending review settlements.

Is Walker prepared to look leaders in the eye and tell them they have enough to cover the various pressures they will face, I ask?

"Yes," he replies.



# Opinion

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

**These challenging times are not a reason to fear inspectors but an opportunity to seek their validation of our efforts, writes Mohsen Ojja**

After what has been a challenging 18 months for our sector, I empathise with leaders who share Alison Peacock's view that Ofsted represents a "Reign of Terror" over our schools. But I respectfully disagree. Three of the Mossbourne Federation's four academies were inspected in the four-week period before half-term. And based on that experience, a "challenging, time-consuming validation" would be a more accurate depiction.

Fundamentally, this is because we do not wait for Ofsted inspections to direct us in what needs to change. Instead, we look for where we can improve consistently throughout the school year. This means that by the time we get "the call", we are in a confident position to lay out the work we are doing to lead our schools and better serve our student body.

I absolutely recognise that this process of continuous review requires people power and spare time that schools often feel does not exist, especially after the plethora of challenges we have all faced throughout the pandemic. It is little wonder that many schools are playing catch up and feel they simply cannot dedicate time to sit and ponder areas for improvement. Many schools become locked in a cycle of waiting for Ofsted to fit a particular grade descriptor.

Yet, having taken a school from "special measures" to "good" in the course of 18 months as a principal, I can unequivocally say that there is another way. Nobody knows your school and your students better than



MOHSEN  
OJJA

Deputy CEO, Mossbourne Federation

## The error in claiming an Ofsted 'reign of terror'

you do, least of all inspectors who come in for a matter of days. That's not to say that their feedback is not extremely valuable, because it is. But the individuals who are uniquely placed to recognise where change needs to happen within the school and act upon it are its leadership team.

take huge strides in improvement. Rather than cause fatigue and burnout, this can actively help you avoid it, and having direction and goals as a whole school community inspires motivation. It brings all teachers and leaders back to their primary goal as educators, which is to help the students get the best

**"Nobody knows your school better than you, least of all inspectors"**

Carving out some targets to analyse where the school can improve, from your unique and personal perspective, will save time in the long run and will mean your school can

possible education and succeed.

I do not wish to undermine the stress that comes with an Ofsted inspection. These days can certainly be all-consuming and



nerve-racking. But the reason my team and I were able to turn around my previous school from special measures was because we did not wait for inspectors to tell us what was right for our students and our community. We already knew that, and all we expected from inspectors was to confirm our judgments. We trusted that the steps we were taking were being taken in good faith and leading us in the right direction. Ultimately, that always came through in every inspection we had.

We are accountable to our students, parents and communities for our use of public money. That accountability is both necessary and right. So more pressing than any need to criticise the inspectorate, to pause its activities or to overhaul the inspection regime, is the need to focus on our students. To that end, our role is to empower our teachers and support staff to make necessary changes without the go-ahead of inspectors or their acknowledgment.

Rather than wait for inspectors' feedback to guide improvements within our schools, it is on us as school leaders to take the initiative, lead by example and do what is needed to help our students attain their full potential.

Acting in this way without first seeking permission may be a high-stakes business, but that's what we chose to get into when we applied for the job. Once you remember that and start leading consistently and proactively, Ofsted's presence feels less like a reign of terror and more like an opportunity.

Nobody knows and serves your school like you can, and that's worthy of validation.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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JO  
FOSTER

Director, Institute for  
Research in Schools

## Apprenticeships are key to unlocking our science superpower

**Schools must value and recommend apprenticeships if we are ever to become a 'science superpower', writes Jo Foster**

During the Conservative Party conference a few weeks ago, MPs outlined a vision of the UK as a "science superpower", a global leader in exploration and innovation. This is music to the ears of people like me who have devoted years to teaching the subject. But bold statements and soaring rhetoric alone will not get us there. What we need is a comprehensive plan that inspires our scientists of tomorrow.

Research and development is undoubtedly crucial to the UK's profile as a leader in science. Investment in university-level research is now at the highest in real terms it has been for the past 40 years. And this is set to continue with the government's pledge to increase spending in research to £22 billion by 2025. This is clearly a positive step; however, an increase in science research and development investment must be met with a comparable uplift in the number of people in the STEM workforce.

To provide this, we need to go

back to basics and look again at how we can provide an inclusive pathway for students to take up apprenticeships in STEM industries.

At present we face an uphill struggle: data on apprenticeships shows that over the past two years only 200 students in England have started an apprenticeship

in either science or maths. In 2018, more students commenced an apprenticeship in equine grooming than in science and maths combined.

The gap between reality and our hopes of being a leader in science could not be starker. While this state of affairs might do wonders for the UK's position globally in the equestrian world, it does precious little to boost our journey to becoming the science superpower vaunted by government.

In the vast majority of UK schools, the apprenticeship route is often seen as "second best". Most teachers are not even aware that it is possible to achieve an MA in science through the apprenticeship route while earning on the job.

We need schools to make a better effort to raise awareness of apprenticeships. Systemically, from year 7, students should be made aware of the career possibilities they open up.

But schools can't do this alone.

**"The gap between reality and our hopes could not be starker"**

At present, the layout of the school year often discourages high-quality candidates applying for apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are advertised in April, a full term



after year 13 students have already completed their UCAS forms.

And because demand is being kept artificially low in this way, when apprenticeship opportunities are published, there are very few of them. To address this, the calendar must be changed so students can express an interest in an apprenticeship and secure one at the same time as university applications are being written and processed. There is no good reason for university and apprenticeship applications to be mutually exclusive.

Finally, we must strengthen the apprenticeship pipeline as a whole. The UCAS career finder service is a start, but does too little to demystify apprenticeships. One solution could be a "matchmaking" service for students and businesses to proactively engage those who are interested, as well as to support SMEs through the process.

Conference season was an open goal to discuss reform of apprenticeships. But it was missed. Private school students often have a clear route into apprenticeships where they can earn while studying. Meanwhile, state school children who are interested in a career in science often find their opportunities limited by a system that shepherds them towards costly university degrees. This is not levelling up, and it can't continue.

We are fortunate to have a wealth of science talent in our schools, teachers and students. But we are being held back by a lack of understanding of the opportunities that exist in STEM sectors. Apprenticeships are key to building back better, and when schools are empowered to promote them, we will know we are on our way to becoming a science superpower.

# Opinion

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

**As more schools are forced to deal with online criticism, Emma Yates and Peter Davenport set out how to avoid legal action and de-escalate situations quickly**

Whether it's dealing with the fallout surrounding the government's student vaccination programme or managing the wellbeing of staff, pupils and parents, it's fair to say everyone in the education sector is feeling the strain. As the pandemic drags on, issues continue and the result is a rising number of critical social media posts about schools' handling of the pandemic.

In many respects, this is not a new phenomenon. Social media channels have long given parents the opportunity to send highly critical messages and "advice" directly to teachers and to share their opinions with other parents and the wider community.

But the situation has clearly worsened over the past 18 months. Many more schools are contacting us about reputation management issues, and in some instances to find out how they can push back against false claims.

The first step is to understand that, although potentially damaging, not all negative statements or misinformation about a school are defamatory. In order to be considered such, a statement must be in writing and published to a third party. It also needs to lower the subject in the estimation of right-thinking members of society.

Even then, a published statement will only be deemed defamatory if the complainant can demonstrate as a fact that they have suffered, or are likely to suffer, serious harm because of it. This means that statements that may be offensive, embarrassing and/or simply wrong but don't cause serious harm are not legally actionable.

EMMA  
YATES

Senior associate,  
Irwin Mitchell



PETER  
DAVENPORT

Strategic consultant,  
Definition



## How to manage reputational risk in a digital era

Then there are also a number of defences against a defamation claim, and all of this means that pursuing a defamation claim can be difficult.

So what can a school leader do?

In the first instance, even if a published statement does meet

potential harm done.

Those on the receiving end of defamatory comments tend to have one of two reactions: to rebut the allegations line by line in a public statement, or to issue a "no comment" and hope it will all go

**“ Litigation can actually inflame the situation**

the threshold of being defamatory, litigation can actually inflame the situation, so it is better to consider other means of settling matters. Rather than make the publisher more vocal, your main priority should be to contain the situation and limit the

away. Almost invariably, both courses are inadvisable. The first only serves to breathe life into the issue, while the second creates the perception that there's something to hide.

Instead, statements should be short and factual, explain what is being



done to remedy the matter, state the organisation's relevant policy and say there will be no further comment.

A further approach is to remind parents and students what is and isn't acceptable behaviour, ask them to remove the post and remind them where they can access your policies.

If this doesn't work, it may be necessary to take legal action. The first step would be to prepare a legal letter which sets out why the comment is defamatory, what the true position is and invite the publisher to remove the statement in order to avoid action being taken against them.

Should the matter not be resolved, legal proceedings will take place in the High Court. This is an unattractive prospect for any publisher.

But even a court victory won't fully undo the damage, so it's better to be prepared in order to de-escalate a situation early. Crises can't be predicted, but a crisis communications response plan should detail the fundamental actions to be taken irrespective of the specific incident.

Next, know your audience. Engaging with certain individuals can invariably make things worse. And always assume that whatever you write will end up in the public domain. That's why it's essential to be fully aware of all the facts before you start writing legal letters.

However, if you do write a legal letter, it goes without saying that you should be factual, empathetic and truthful. Cover-ups get exposed, and the reputational damage of that can be more harmful than the incident itself.

## COP26 special

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

**Teachers and young people want their schools to be leaders in sustainability, write Lynda Dunlop and Elizabeth Rushton, and our manifesto can make that happen**

As world leaders meet for COP26 in Glasgow to discuss the actions to meet the goals of the Paris climate agreement, we know education has a key role to play in creating more sustainable futures. But it can often be difficult for students and teachers to make the space and time to question the systems and structures that promote unsustainable living.

We have been working with partners and over 200 teachers and young people over the past year. Our aim has been to find out what role they see education playing in helping to achieve environmental sustainability, and to identify priority actions for the sector itself.

On Monday, we launched a Manifesto for Education for Environmental Sustainability based on their ideas and perspectives. The manifesto calls for action in the classroom, the school, community and at policy level to achieve education for environmental sustainability for all.

The first step to enabling action is to remove barriers. According to our participants, these presently include limited funding, curriculum and exam pressures, and lack of recognition for work on environmental sustainability.

The teachers and young people we spoke with see sustainability as a process of care and repair of the environment, dealing with social and environmental injustices and prioritising future generations.

Sadly, they see little space for

LYNDA  
DUNLOP

Lecturer in science  
education,  
University of York



ELIZABETH  
RUSHTON

Rushton, Lecturer in  
geography education,  
King's College, London



## The education for sustainability teachers and students really want

it within the secondary school curriculum. As one astute young participant commented, "Curriculum education is very limited in terms of environmental sustainability. The onus is often put on teachers or senior students to

large, their frustration was that they saw curriculum, assessment and inspection as places where sustainability could and should be valued.

However, our participants weren't reliant on external forces

**“Young people and teachers want greater knowledge to inform their actions**

lead clubs to hone outside interest. Right now," she added, "we tend to only learn the theory about climate change and environment, confined to classes like geography and science."

And, perhaps worse still, they don't believe environmental sustainability is valued in broader educational decision-making and accountability regimes. A teacher participant summed it up well: "Sustainability needs to be a 'must'... and, at the moment, it isn't an inspection must! Even in Scotland, where sustainability is part of teacher ed."

But while some participants were critical of accountability systems, they saw them as influential in determining what happens within schools. By and

to motivate them. They had plenty of ideas for action up and down the education system, which inform the 2021 BERA research commission manifesto.

In class, students and teachers wanted more time and space to learn about climate change and environmental sustainability across the curriculum, with professional development for teachers and sustainable practices implemented. That is, they want teaching and learning for sustainability.

At the whole-school level, teachers and young people call for greater leadership in sustainability. They want actions for sustainability within schools to be tracked and rewarded, and see student voice and agency as integral to

making sustainable decisions on purchasing, transport and estates.

They also want to gain credit for the sustainability work they do in the wider community, which currently tends to go unrecognised. The idea of a no-cost, externally accredited award for sustainability for students and teachers was particularly popular. And conversely, they want their schools to act as local hubs where people from across the community can take part in and lead education and activities and build networks for environmental action.

Finally, at the policy level, they call for a co-ordinated review of the secondary school curriculum. Its aim: to identify ways to foreground and value sustainability regardless of the subjects students elect to study. Importantly, they want to work with policy makers to identify ways that sustainability can feature in existing accountability regimes and policies. They see collective, equitable action as essential to positive problem-solving.

The process of developing this manifesto has highlighted a key problem: that education for environmental sustainability is currently limited by choice, of subject and of school. Instead, young people and teachers alike want greater breadth and depth of knowledge to inform their actions.

And for that, sustainability needs to be more than an add-on, but a core value and objective of every part of our education system.



# COP26 special

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

**It's possible to teach climate change without adding to student anxieties, teacher workload or accountability stakes, write Rebecca Webb and Perpetua Kirby**

At the time of the youth strikes, early last year, Anita was working with her primary class, when nine-year-old Sophie asked her a question she struggled to answer. "Miss, do we have only ten years to save the planet?"

As teachers and parents, we often grapple with children asking difficult questions to which we don't have the answer. We cannot avoid such uncertainty. So the challenge is how to educate children to engage with climate change in ways that do not paralyse them with fear of the future.

We have always lived with uncertainties, and always will. For our generation it was the threat of nuclear war, and for those before, it was the world wars; more recently, it has been the pandemic. Climate change looms larger still.

Teaching climate facts is important, but alone they are stark and anxiety inducing. The latest IPCC report models five possible planetary futures. The most promising sees an estimated rise of 1.6oC by the middle of the century, reducing to 1.4oC by the turn of the century. The most concerning sees temperatures rising to 4.4oC by the end of 2021.

Younger generations are often talked about as our hope. They will study hard and their lifestyle choices and innovations will solve climate change. In this way, we turn the pressing existential crisis of climate change simply into a learning challenge. We put the onus on children to find solutions to the problems we adults created. Our hope for the future does little to foster their hope in the present.

REBECCA WEBB

Lecturer in early years and primary education, University of Sussex

PERPETUA KIRBY

Research fellow, University of Sussex



## How to tackle climate uncertainty without the anxiety

In contrast, our research, funded by the International Development Challenge Fund, Sussex Sustainability Research Programme and the PASTRES Programme, is looking for ways for teachers to engage productively with the uncertainty that

already live with the effects, let alone the threats, of climate change. This includes flooding, deforestation and biodiversity loss. By exploring their experiences through creative tasks, they are challenged to discuss tensions and contradictions in what

**“Teaching about climate is demanding work, but not additional work**

climate change presents. Together with their students, our approach creates opportunities for them to interrogate different sources of knowledge and diverse perspectives and explore their intuitive and emotional responses alongside the rational.

The primary and secondary school-aged students we work with, both in the UK and the Global South, often

might be done now, including with parents, scientists and policy makers, as well as teachers.

Unlike the remote talking-shop of COP26, identifying actions in this way helps put the severity and urgency of the moment into focus, but in ways that avoid naïve optimism and paralysing pessimism.

And what we find is that students convey a deep love for their

locality – its beauty, culture and biodiversity – and a desire to preserve it for future generations. Alongside scientific knowledge, they share their depth of knowledge of cultural, spiritual and family practices. And their discussions lead to identifying technological solutions that are simple and small-scale enough to enact now, such as improved waste collection and techniques for growing on saline soil.

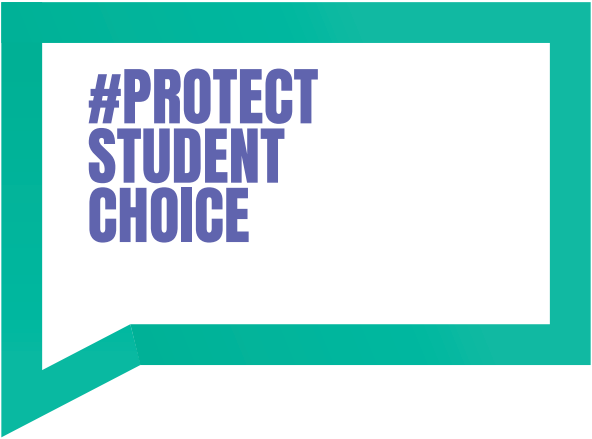
Requiring students to pay close attention to the world, and their place in it, is demanding work. It surfaces multiple feelings and competing agendas. They must work out how to live with others and the natural world in ways that acknowledge and address the current crisis.

But it is not additional work. Such opportunities can be created in and through our existing provision. In the end, what better intent can there be for our school curricula? And if we are willing to hear students' voices in its implementation, then what better impact can we hope for than to tackle the climate crisis with them, now?

Nine-year-old Sophie requires opportunities to pursue her demanding question, with a teacher who can support her to work out how to act, with hope. The latest IPCC report demands it, and a potentially underwhelming lack of activity from COP26 is not the right example to set.

*An exhibition of Objects that Matter, chosen by students to reflect their sustainability concerns, is on show at the Jubilee Library, Brighton, on November 6, as part of the ESRC Festival of Science 2021*





**#PROTECT  
STUDENT  
CHOICE**

# DON'T SCRAP BTECS

The **#ProtectStudentChoice** campaign coalition of over 20 organisations that represent and support staff and students in schools, colleges and universities is deeply concerned about the Government's recent review of Level 3 BTECs and other applied general qualifications in England. 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)**



**FE WEEK**



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The Association for  
Modern Universities



**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union



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

# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



**Title:** The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading

**Author:** Christopher Such

**Publisher:** SAGE

**Reviewer:** Robbie Burns, assistant vice principal, Bede Academy (Emmanuel Schools Foundation)

"Despite decades of research into the subject, [...] many teachers are inexcusably ill-informed about reading." This is a devastating claim for Christopher Such to open his book with.

And yet... even though I received excellent initial teacher training, I had little more than a few hours explicitly learning about how children learn to read. After that, I was left to rely on intuition and observation of more experienced colleagues to work it all out: discerning what the right approach to teaching the sound "ee" to year 1s might be, or helping year 6 infer meaning from a text about characters' emotions. From conversations with many other colleagues since, I know my experience is far from unusual.

But this is not because we as a profession have sought to avoid the research. One major barrier to developing an evidence-informed approach to the teaching of reading is the complexity of the research itself. So complex is the topic, in fact, that the heated debate it has generated within academia over many years is referred to as "the reading wars". That's enough to put anyone off!

But if we do not understand what the best available evidence out there says about what makes great reading instruction, what on earth are we to do? It's little wonder we are left to fend for ourselves and develop our intuition, as if teaching reading was an art. After all, generations of teachers have done this, so maybe we should just carry on.

I'm not the first to say it, but I don't

think this is acceptable. Teaching children to read is far too important to just leave it to handing on hard-fought teaching experience to the next generation. We need to understand the art and the science of teaching primary reading, ensuring that they complement one another.

And that is precisely what Christopher Such has provided us with. With an erudite synergy of complex research and first-hand experience, *The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading* is sure to become an essential manual for ensuring every pupil becomes a fluent reader. It's the book I didn't realise I'd been waiting for.

To begin with, Such pulls off an amazing feat of composition. Out of the fog of the reading wars, we are presented with clear concise summaries of the elements of reading and how they can be applied to the classroom. It's just shy of 180 pages, but this book has everything it needs to pass as a primer to enable primary educators to access and assess for themselves the key contested ideas.

And *The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading* goes far beyond mapping out the research minefield for us. It also manages to make it all relevant to teachers of reading (which we all are!). Such's ample appendices and lists will support anyone planning and developing whole-school reading approaches. Vocabulary lists, Greek and Latin root lists, reading-rich classroom tick-lists and reading leader tick-lists make this book something that can be referred to time and again. I have already planned professional development for colleagues inspired by its content.

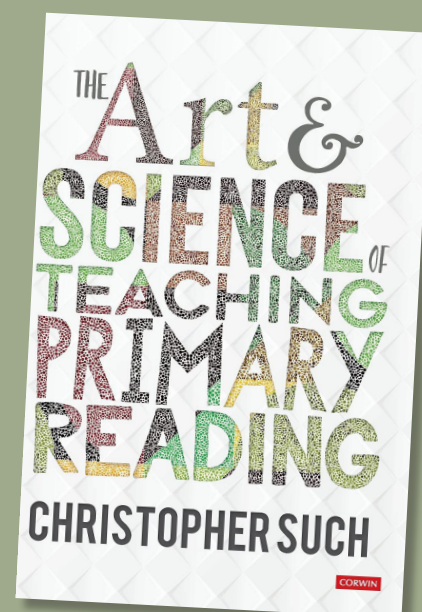
If that sounds too prescriptive, you needn't worry. For sure, those looking for that level of support will find it, including

how to timetable reading sessions across a week, a helpful breakdown of a suggested timetable and how the sessions might run. But everything in this book is underpinned by a rich wisdom about the art of teaching and the value of experience and expertise.

Based on his own observations as a teacher and leader, Such manages to tread a fine line between the one-size-fits-all approach implied by "science", and the perennial and onerous re-invention implied by "art". The result is a balanced text that can be adapted to all contexts.

*The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading* has the potential to be a catalyst for rich educational discourse about how we ensure absolutely every child becomes a fluent reader.

And that gives me hope. Because one thing's for sure: warring over it isn't delivering the goods.





# Reviews



**Gerry Robinson, executive headteacher,  
Haringey Learning Partnership**

@gerryrobin5on

## **The impact of the First Story programme** **@FirstStory**

I couldn't write this round of reviews without including a colleague of mine, Michelle Burke, who has recently written a guest blog post for the creative writing charity First Story. An inspiring teacher and leader in her own right, in this blog Michelle discusses how bringing the First Story Young Writers' Programme to Haringey Learning Partnership was "life-changing" for her and our students.

The writing process, Michelle says, allowed students' voices "to be heard on their terms, without restriction. It was freedom." What more can we hope to give our students? Michelle speaks with passion, conviction and self-reflection in this blog post which will have even the most reluctant writers hunting around for a pen and paper.

## **Singing for continuity and progression in year 7**

@Johnfinney8

We've recently welcomed several musicians to Haringey Learning Partnership to share their talents with our equally talented young people. From an impromptu collaboration

## TOP BLOGS of the week



between one of our year 10 vocalists and a world-renowned bass guitar player, to a deeply moving performance by a member of staff at the recent Black History Month exhibition, music has been in the air since the start of term.

I was pleased, therefore, to come across a blog entitled *Music Education Now* by John Finney, a music teacher and researcher who seeks to "provoke thought" around music in schools. This post explores how Year 7 teachers might harness the positivity many students experience from singing at primary school and also raises interesting questions about a "negotiated curriculum" – the idea that including students in classroom decisions will help them to invest in their learning, including helping them to understand the expertise of the teacher.

At a time when there is often friction between traditional and progressive modes of teaching and learning, this thought-provoking post is worthy of consideration.

## **Education policy beyond the school gates**

@LoicMnzs

In the first of a "two-part thinkpiece", Menzies argues that when it comes to education policy, the focus on "schools" over "education" is disproportionate and limiting if we are to ensure that all young

people are sufficiently supported.

With intense focus in schools on curriculum and pedagogy (two undeniably fundamental parts of their remit) how can we ensure other hugely important areas such as "safeguarding; SEND; speech, language and communication support; deprivation", among other things, are adequately addressed? An important question at any time, it is especially so in the aftermath of the pandemic, when students' and communities' needs are even greater.

Menzies rightfully suggests that in order for this to happen, education policy will need to "cast its gaze beyond the school gates". I look forward to reading the second part in which Menzies shares his reflections on what this could look like.

## **Learning from a transformative managed move**

@marymered

Working in AP, I am constantly seeking to understand school exclusion in all its forms. Some would argue that "managed moves" are simply exclusion by another name, and there are certainly cases where this is true. Indeed, Ella, the young person featured in Meredith's blog, experienced two other placements which had broken down before joining a third mainstream school, where she thrived.

Meredith is not advocating for managed moves all round, though; what she is exploring in this blog is how the third school supported Ella once she arrived and what made the difference for her. What she describes is "wrap-around care" and a trauma-informed approach that changed Ella's educational experience for the better and ultimately allowed her to find her way.

As well as an evidence-based blog full of expert advice and commentary on supporting young people through managed moves, this blog also offers a heart-warming success story of a young person with a bright future ahead of her. What better way to start the long road to Christmas?

# Research



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

## How can we make best use of the pupil premium for recovery?

**Professor Becky Francis, CEO, Education Endowment Foundation**

Giving every young person the best start in life whatever their background and wherever they come from is a mission that unites teachers. The pupil premium is arguably the one government policy introduced in recent decades that is most aligned to this commitment. Since 2010, it has helped sharpen the focus on improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils. By recognising the stubborn link between family income and educational outcomes, it has allowed schools to target additional resources at those pupils who need it most.

As we turn our efforts to education recovery, the role of the pupil premium has never been more significant. We know that students who are eligible for this funding are more likely to be facing bigger challenges than their classmates. The pupil premium – and the additional resources being paid to schools through the recovery premium – is a tool with the potential to make an important difference in mitigating the long-term impact of the pandemic on disadvantaged pupils' learning. There is a clear need to make sure that every pound is spent in ways that will make the biggest difference.

One of the strengths of the pupil premium is that it focuses the conversation not only on the amount of money spent on the poorest young people, but on how those funds are spent, too. We're well equipped to do this. Teachers in England are now some of the most evidence-informed in the world, with schools consistently using evidence when making pupil premium decisions. For instance, in 2020, 69 per cent of school leaders said they made use of the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit when making choices about how best to allocate funds to support their disadvantaged pupils.



This is good news. Evidence has the power to improve outcomes for children, particularly when it comes to pupil premium spending. It can guide teachers towards (or away from) practices and programmes that have been proven to be effective in other classrooms.

A new reporting template from the Department for Education has made the link between evidence and pupil premium spending even more explicit by asking schools to make reference to the evidence they have considered when developing their pupil premium strategy.

Ensuring that decisions are informed by a "range of evidence" is a useful maxim for schools, but also potentially a risk. How do we make sure that evidence empowers school leaders and teachers to make effective decisions, rather than becoming a "tick-box" reporting requirement?

To support this, the EEF has published an updated guide for schools on their pupil premium spending. It builds on our tiered approach to school improvement, which encourages schools to prioritise teaching quality,

alongside targeted academic support, and wider strategies (such as focusing on pupil attendance).

It also offers a new four-step cycle to support school leaders to develop, implement and monitor an evidence-informed approach to their pupil premium strategy. In response to the DfE's new requirement for backing up spending decisions with evidence, it also includes new support for schools to engage critically with evidence from a range of sources.

We want to encourage school leaders to engage effectively with evidence by challenging claims made by external providers. This means questioning whether approaches have been evaluated, and critically assessing whether the evaluation is rigorous, or proves a similar match to their school context.

Perhaps most importantly, our new guide is optimistic. Education recovery is one of the toughest challenges our school system has faced. But used with care and commitment – and in conjunction with a critical engagement with evidence – the pupil premium is one of the best bets we have for addressing this and giving every young person the start in life they deserve.

Week in

## Westminster

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

## MONDAY

Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi boasted that the National Tutoring Programme reached 308,000 pupils last academic year.

Wow! Amazing! So great!

But reader, we feel it is our job to point out the politician spin when we (very regularly) encounter it.

The NTP tuition arm might have met its target of \*enrolling\* 250,000 pupils – but only 205,000 have actually \*started\* having tutoring.

(The remaining 103,000 of Zahawi's stats are legit – Teach First did a smashing job and provided academic mentors for 53,000 more pupils than its 50,000 target.)

Less jazzing up figures, more jazzing up the actual scheme so it gets more tutoring out faster, ta.

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For a senior official at a department that's made multi-academy trusts central to its vision, Dominic Herrington seems remarkably relaxed about how little defined and planned-for that vision is.

The national schools commissioner told a conference this week it was "not a race" to get every school into a multi-academy trust, with "no hard target".

While another speaker stressed the need to debate how big is too big for MATs, Herrington said there was likewise no "magic number" about how large trusts should be.

He suggested some school

leaders were now just getting on with academisation in an "unremarkable, quiet and sensible way", away from the headlines. But new figures show just 20 schools voluntarily converted in October, and there was just one forced conversion.

All of which suggests there's very little to stop maintained schools similarly deciding in an "unremarkable" and "quiet" way to swerve the academisation "race" altogether – leaving a flagship DfE policy as far off as ever.

## TUESDAY

It's been a while since education committee chair Robert Halfon has appeared in this column (\*fondly remembers when we used to spend 300 words talking about how wonderful his colourful ties were\*).

We digress. Anyway, he was back on good form today, channelling his inner zen to produce a lovely metaphor.

Halfon likened the Department for Education to a "giant enlightened buddha" contemplating when it should publish the so far missing-in-action SEND review.

In what was definitely a dig at Zahawi's predecessor \*cough\* Gav \*cough\*, he also praised the new department boss for being "very straight talking".

"You're not a normal politician in that sense," Halfon added. Praise the lord (or, should we say, our giant, enlightened buddha?).

And (one for the more nerdy among you) Zahawi also made the WiW team LOL by countering criticism of his regional schools commissioners by saying their "appetite for engagement is incredibly ... satisfactory". That's one for your CV, Dom! (He did also say they had worked "incredibly hard", yada yada, boring, yawn).

## THURSDAY

Talking about straight talking, Zahawi must have had a word with his statisticians to keep the updates to the point.

The long-awaited update on how many CO2 monitors the government has dished out to schools dropped today.

For once, the DfE actually delivered more than it thought it would have by

this stage (although just under half of the promised 300,000-plus monitors have actually been delivered).

But this update was explained in all of, er, one line. No extra details on school breakdown, no figures on how many have been delivered per school – just the one, total figure. Insightful!







# Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

**Salary: £130,000-£145,000**

**Contract: Permanent**

**Working Pattern: Full Time | Hours: 36 hours per week.**

**DBS Check: Enhanced**

**Closing Date: 03/12/2021 at 18:00**

**Reference: LT/21/170084**

Lime Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) specialising in mainstream primary and all through SEND provision, currently responsible for 8 schools, four of which are in Peterborough and four in London.

Following the retirement of the previous Lime CEO, the Lime Trustees are seeking to employ an outstanding strategic leader who is passionate about improving the life chances of all our learners, driving up school standards and ensuring outstanding performance in all areas of the Trust's operations.

We are looking for a dynamic and suitably experienced candidate who will be relentless in articulating the Trust's vision, values and ethos, and able to inspire and empower others to share in achieving them by providing the necessary challenge and professional development support to staff.

In their capacity as Accounting Officer for the Trust, the CEO will work with the Trust Board and local academy leaders to build the Trust's reputation as the education provider and employer of choice, with a value-led, sustainable business model, and ensure compliance with all statutory duties.

This is also a unique opportunity to work with the Lime Trustees in further developing and growing the Trust as appropriate.

## **We are looking for a CEO who has the following skills and knowledge:**

- Ability to drive cultural change and take ownership of the Trust's strategy
- Proven leadership and management experience, and expertise at senior management level in an educational setting for a substantial period of time, or across a variety of primary and special school settings
- Experience of working as Deputy CEO/Headteacher (minimum of 4 years)
- Experience of working in a MAT or a similar establishment
- Sustained record of school improvement in an education Trust environment
- Experience of effective management of funding and resources, including project costing and budgetary management
- Evidence of effective human and financial resources management
- Proven track record of developing business planning and managing the introduction of new initiatives and, in particular, effective building and premises management/improvement
- Excellent understanding of statutory education frameworks, including governance, current educational issues relating to academies, company, charity and education law, policies, guidance and codes of practice
- Comprehensive knowledge of the schools Ofsted inspection framework, criteria and processes

## **Recruitment timetable:**

**Closing date: 3 December 2021**

**Shortlisting: w/c 6 December 2021**

**Interviews: w/c 10/17 January 2022**

If you would like to visit one or more of our Lime schools, please contact [info@limetrust.org](mailto:info@limetrust.org) to make an appointment.

*Lime Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our learners. The successful applicant will be required to undertake an enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check. References will be taken up prior to interview.*



**Sheiling School  
Thornbury**

## School Business Manager

Sheiling School is an independent school and children's home for children and young people aged 6-19 with special educational needs

Following a review of the senior leadership team structure, Sheiling School is pleased to recruit for the new position of School Business Manager. Candidates must have excellent leadership skills, be educated to degree level or equivalent and must have CIPD level 5 minimum or equivalent with high level ICT skills (essential), with significant, practical and recent experience of HR management. The ideal candidate will also have experience of finance / charity accounting (desirable). This role is primarily HR focussed, with an element of Finance management.

This is an exciting opportunity for a highly motivated individual wishing to progress their career. The post of School Business Manager is crucial to our success in providing the best possible education and care to our pupils. Working closely with the CEO, this post will offer you the chance to make a real difference to the lives of the children in our care.



## ASSISTANT EDUCATION WELFARE ADVISOR

Education Welfare Advisory and Support Service Ltd are looking for an Assistant Education Welfare Advisor to work term time 40 weeks per annum 5 days per week.

We are committed to the principle of improving outcomes for children and young people.

Experience is essential and the candidate should have knowledge of the Education Act and Children Act along with experience in effective models of practice to evaluate and improve school attendance.

The candidate must also have knowledge of government requirements for school attendance and safeguarding .

Use of a car is desirable as you will be visiting different schools in Essex and Havering area along with conducting home visits. Our offices are based in Upshire, Essex.

The post is subject to an EDBS and appropriate reference.

Annual salary is £29,900.00, pro rata amount for 5 days per week, 40 weeks per annum is £23,000.00.

There is a company pension scheme and ongoing training to support your professional development.

**For a discussion and a copy of our safeguarding policy please contact [Lynn.jago@ewass.co.uk](mailto:Lynn.jago@ewass.co.uk).**

Please visit our website [ewass.co.uk](http://ewass.co.uk)



**Best  
Practice  
Network**

## Online Leadership Performance Coaches and Mentors

Best Practice Network, home of Outstanding Leaders Partnership, provides accredited qualifications for education professionals worldwide, with a mission to help every child access an excellent education.

This is an exciting opportunity to join the growing Associate team and work on the reformed National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), a suite of DfE accredited qualifications for school leaders, designed to transform the support and development offer for teachers and school leaders throughout their career.

**You will work online with a group of participants on our specialist or leadership NPQ programmes to-**

- Support and monitor progress
- Respond to participant tasks, activities and learning reflections
- Provide guidance and qualification enrichment activities
- Signpost participants to peer learning communities, multimedia content, research and expert school-led practice etc. on the virtual learning environment
- Undertake leadership performance coaching for each participant

## Roles

**Online Leadership Mentor – NPQ Specialist Route**

**Online Leadership Performance Coach – NPQ Leadership Route**

**Location:** Remote

**Type:** Part-time, Freelance (cohort-based)

**Salary/fee:** Competitive

**For more information and to view the full job descriptions, please visit: [www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/programme-associate-vacancies](http://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/programme-associate-vacancies)**

To apply, please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [bpn\\_hr@bestpracticenet.co.uk](mailto:bpn_hr@bestpracticenet.co.uk).

**Help us build a future for all children, regardless of their background and champion every teacher and school leader to become their very best.**

# Headteacher Vacancy



## Audley Primary School | West Midlands

We are seeking a truly inspirational leader to join the largest school within our Trust. In addition to an impressive track record of school improvement you will have superb leadership skills and the credibility to motivate and empower others. You will have a clear vision for rapid school improvement and the ability to challenge robustly and constructively alongside the knowledge to facilitate success for both pupils and staff.

As a Trust headteacher you will also be an important senior leader within the wider Trust. You will work alongside other school leaders and be fully committed to driving improvement across the Trust through collaborative effort and the sharing of expertise.

If you would like to arrange an informal conversation about this post prior to making an application please call the Trust's Executive Director of School Improvement, James Hill on 07725 984363.

If you wish to apply for this role, please download an application form from the Trust website [www.drbignitemat.org](http://www.drbignitemat.org)

Applications should be addressed to James Hill, Executive Director of

School Improvement and submitted with a covering letter (no more than two sides of A4) outlining your expertise for a headteacher role in the Trust. Once completed, forms can be emailed to: [rhawkins@drbignitemat.org](mailto:rhawkins@drbignitemat.org)

Please note: In line with Safer Recruitment Practice, the successful candidate will be subject to final references before an appointment is formally offered. The Trust is absolutely committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults through its safer recruitment processes. The Trust expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS check will be required for this post.

The Trust Board welcomes diversity and is absolutely committed to equal opportunity.

**Closing date for applications: Friday 12th November 2021 at 12.00pm**

**Interview dates: w/c 22nd November 2021**

**Start date: Easter 2022**

## DEPUTY DIRECTOR REGIONAL SCHOOLS DELIVERY X2

One post based in East Midlands and Humber Region based in Sheffield, the other in the Lancashire and West Yorkshire Region, based in Manchester.



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 nationally, we are seeking two outstanding individuals with a proven track record of excellent leadership skills, 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 resilient and have the credibility to engage with and influence at the most senior levels; including senior Ministers, along with a very wide range of local and national partners and stakeholders.

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 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](https://www.gov.uk/jobs) and search for Regional Schools Commissioner**



# DID YOU KNOW?

As a Schools Week subscriber, your organisation receives a **20% DISCOUNT** on recruitment advertising.

Online listings, classified advertising, and package options available.

“

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

