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- Less than a quarter of required physics and D&T teachers enrolled
- 'Clear sign the system is facing considerable supply challenges again'

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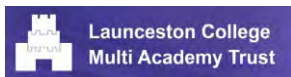
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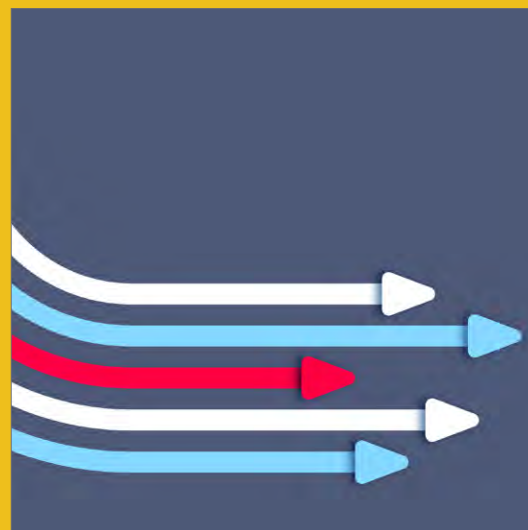
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They think ITTs all over. It could be for Ofsted

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Heads blast ministers as Omicron thwarts plans

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Schools are cancelling Christmas events and moving nativity plays online amid Omicron fears, as ministers are blasted for "getting involved and stoking the fire".

Prime minister Boris Johnson urged schools not to cancel nativity plays this week, despite concerns around Covid absences and the emergence of the new variant.

As of Thursday, 22 cases of the variant had been traced in England. Targeted testing was taking place at two schools earlier this week.

The government on Sunday evening "strongly advised" schools to reintroduce face coverings in communal areas for adults in all schools, and for pupils in secondaries.

Pupils who are close contacts of Omicron Covid cases will also be told to isolate for 10 days (see full list of new measures on page five).

St James the Great RC school, in south London, cancelled in-person nativity performances on Wednesday. Instead, the school is looking to live stream them on Microsoft Teams.

A fundraising Christmas fair, normally attended by up to 1,500 people, has been cancelled.

Headteacher Chris Andrew said the decision was made after discussions with the local council and public health.

"It just seems like a sensible thing to do, we've worked too hard to keep numbers down," he added. "I've got a responsibility to my staff, pupils and to the families to take the bigger picture into account."

Evelyn Forde, headteacher at Copthall School in north London, cancelled a surprise staff pantomime performance for students. She will decide this week whether to cancel the winter concert and move it online.

"It's so close to the end of term that I really need to consider the risks," Forde said.

This is the third year of uncertainty over nativities. Schools cancelled nativities last year as the Alpha variant took off, while activities were disrupted in 2019 as



Boris Johnson

classrooms became polling stations for the snap general election.

A Teacher Tapp poll on Saturday found a quarter of teachers' schools were planning to run virtual nativities, with 11 per cent cancelled altogether.

Just over half of the 2,299 respondents worked for schools that were hoping to allow visitors in person.

Simon Smith, headteacher at East Whitby Primary Academy in North Yorkshire, said their two nativities will be split over four shows so each has fewer visitors.

At Whitehill Primary School in Hertfordshire, headteacher Steve Mills had already taken the decision to spread their plays out over three days before the variant arrived.

"We will have a CO2 monitor in the hall and have the doors open," Mills said. "But if the data changes, I will postpone the performances."

Likewise at Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary School, in Solihull, headteacher Neil Emery planned a shorter, outdoor nativity weeks ago due to Covid.

It's not just nativities. Northern Education Trust, which runs 21 schools, had only weeks ago begun to relax some Covid measures. But on Wednesday it pulled face-to-face year group assemblies. They will instead go online until the end of this term.

The Department for Education tweeted this week that festive events can go ahead this year, adding it is a "matter for schools and early years to decide if they want to host them".

Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi told schools on Monday to "carry on" with nativity plans.

Asked if plays should be scrapped, Johnson said: "We don't want people to cancel such events and we think that, overwhelmingly, the best thing for kids is to be at school."

Headteacher Andrew said while it was "fair enough" that the decision rest with schools, it "feels like they are gaslighting us, that they are setting us up against parents".

Geoff Barton, general secretary of school leaders' union ASCL, said school leaders have been "handed a poisoned chalice with the government's insistence" that performances go ahead.

"School leaders already have enough to deal with without the government getting involved, telling parents that schools can ensure their safety when it is obvious they can make no such guarantees," he added.

ASCL has written to government asking them to "stop stoking the fire and to allow schools to make their own reasoned judgments on whether or not to go ahead with staging performances".

The DfE said it is a matter for schools to decide if they want to host such events, but local public health experts may suggest they do not hold gatherings if Covid rates are high.

Larchwood Primary School, in Essex, moved one class to remote learning and brought in specialist testing after an Omicron case was linked to the school. Similar testing was taking place at a school in Nottinghamshire.

Alamy

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Covid workforce fund returns for schools in dire need

FREDDIE WHITTAKER & JOHN DICKENS
@SCHOOLSWEEK

The government has reintroduced its Covid workforce fund to support schools ravaged by staff illness to keep classrooms open in the final few weeks of term.

The fund originally ran in the second half of the autumn term last year. It provides funding for supply staff and to increase the hours of part-time teachers and support staff.

It has now been re-introduced to cover the cost of workforce absences experienced from November 22 until the end of term.

Two per cent of teachers and leaders and 1.9 per cent of teaching assistants and other staff were absent due to Covid-related reasons on Thursday last week, up from 1.4 per cent a fortnight before.

There were 5.5 per cent of teachers and school leaders also absent from schools for 'other' reasons last Thursday, up from 4.8 per cent on November 11.

However, schools will only be eligible for the extra cash if their reserves fall to less than 4 per cent of their annual income by the end of the current funding year – March 2022 for maintained schools and August 2022 for academies.

They will also only be able to claim if they have a short-term staff absence rate of more than 20 per cent on any given day, or more than 10 per cent over a 15-day period.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said it was a "welcome acknowledgement of the difficulties schools are facing".

But he called for an extension to all schools. An NAHT poll in July showed the cost of supply cover for sick or isolating staff had cost schools an estimated £12,000 each on average during the pandemic.

The latest attendance data estimates just 0.01 per cent of schools were fully closed as of last Thursday, with around 1,000 pupils absent because of closures.

However there are reports of schools across England being forced to partially close because of staff absence levels.

The Oxford Academy moved to remote learning for years 7, 8 and 9 due to "large numbers" of staff being absent. Coppice Spring School, a special needs school in Basingstoke, closed to years 10



and 11 on Monday due to "severe staff shortages".

Meanwhile Outwood Academy Acklam, in Middlesbrough, closed all this week for year 9 pupils over staff shortages.

A survey of 526 headteachers in October by the Association of School and College Leaders found two-thirds said it was more difficult than normal to hire supply staff. Nearly a quarter said supply agencies had hiked rates.

ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton said the workforce fund should be available for "as long as needed, rather than for short windows of time, and this support should come without so many conditions attached".

Schools can only apply if they were open to all pupils, except those complying with clinical or public health advice, on the days in question.

They must also have tried "alternative options",

for example using existing staff and resources. Schools will have to certify that the staffing absences claimed for are "necessary spend to remain open to all pupils".

Schools must also be able to evidence claims, and won't be eligible if costs are already covered by an existing insurance policy.

The guidance states schools "will first need to use any existing financial reserves, as we would typically expect when facing unforeseen costs".

They will therefore only be eligible if their reserves at the end of the current funding year are down to a level of no more than 4 per cent of their annual income.

The DfE said schools would have to make the "necessary payments" from existing budgets, and will be able to make claims in the spring of 2022.

OMICRON MEASURES: WHAT SCHOOLS NEED TO KNOW



Face masks in communal areas for staff and visitors in all schools and for secondary pupils. This is "strongly advised", but not mandatory.



10-day isolation for Omicron close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will identify positive case, but there may be "further actions" for schools over new variant cases.



Reconsider international trips. Parents travelling abroad should also "bear in mind the impact on their child's education" which may result from any quarantine requirement.



Second vaccine doses will be offered to 12- to 15-year-olds, 12 weeks after their first. Just 42 per cent of those pupils have currently had their first dose.



Recommendation on rolling out jabs to 5- to 11-year-olds by Christmas.

COVID

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Ofsted: Out of line or right in step?

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

INVESTIGATES

The emergence of Omicron has led renewed calls to halt Ofsted inspections, but the watchdog this week insisted visits are “carrying on as usual”.

So is the watchdog out of line? *Schools Week* looked at how other inspectors are reacting to Covid.

We identified 16 regulators operating in England that engaged in regular inspections and assessments of their sectors prior to the pandemic.

Just six of these, including Ofsted, have returned to normal inspections.

Of the remaining 10, half are conducting investigations on a targeted or ‘risk-based’ basis, while the remainder have introduced remote measures.

Similar to Ofsted, HMI Prisons initially suspended its planned inspection schedule, before moving to “short scrutiny visits”. It returned to full inspections in May as Covid rates dropped and most adults were vaccinated.

Elsewhere, the Health and Safety Executive continued “to carry out spot checks and inspections by calling, visiting and inspecting all types of business” during the pandemic.

Can Ofsted learn from other regulators?

The Care Quality Commission (CQC), which inspects providers such as hospitals and care homes, has suspended routine inspections since the start of the pandemic “in favour of risk-based inspections”.

Francesca Snape, a solicitor specialising in health and social care regulation, said the services inspected are “the highest risk” including NHS trusts, independent hospitals, GP practices and nursing homes.

The suspension of routine inspections was “a reflection of not sending people in when they don’t need to be,” Snape added.

She cautioned that it was hard to compare different regulators as “while they follow similar processes ... they inspect very different services.”

But former national schools commissioner Sir David Carter said Ofsted should take “more of a risk approach than a framework approach” and identify the “weakest performers” for targeted visits.



Elsewhere, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services said it has used the opportunity to understand how to balance face-to-face and remote activities. It now plans to blend future inspections between online and on-site visits.

Professor Steve Martin, a public services inspection expert, said there was a risk that “relying entirely on remote methods” would make inspections “more process oriented” and “more difficult for inspectors to assess outcomes”.

Carter added that Ofsted should consider a “hybrid” of online and in-person inspections until the end of next year. Only the lead inspector would visit the school, he said.

An Ofsted spokesperson said its inspections “help parents, government and the wider public understand how schools are managing the current situation”.

“To do that properly we need to be on site, speaking directly to pupils and staff,” they added.

Contingency plans ‘guided by government’

Some leaders say Ofsted has not been taking account of the impact Covid continues to have in schools. Full, graded inspections returned in September.

Despite some restrictions being reintroduced because of the Omicron variant, Ofsted said inspections will be “carrying on as usual”.

However, last week, Ofsted inspections in Guernsey were postponed until next year by the island’s committee for education, sport and culture.

Asked if it has similar contingency plans for England, Ofsted said it will be “guided by government and public health experts”.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said Ofsted’s actions were “both out of touch and extremely unhelpful”.

The union is calling for deferrals to be granted automatically upon request and warned the likely impact of Omicron – increased staff and pupil absences – “will further deepen the feeling ... that inspections at this time are inappropriate”.

Schools can ask for deferrals, but the decision rests with Ofsted. As of November 17, the watchdog had turned down around one-third of Covid-related deferral requests.

An Ofsted spokesperson added they had received no formal complaints relating to deferral decisions.

‘Exacerbating an already explosive situation’

But Dame Alison Peacock, chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, said this approach was “tone-deaf”. She wants inspections paused until January, when more is known about the new variant.

Ros McMullen, of headteachers’ wellbeing helpline Headrest, warned that Omicron has “exacerbated what is already an explosive situation” by “deeply damaging” headteachers’ mental health. Her helpline received as many calls last month as it had between Easter and November, she added.

Ofsted national director Chris Russell said on Tuesday they “do recognise that this isn’t business as usual”. He said further changes will be made to the inspection deferral policy. A revised version was published yesterday, but no substantial changes were made.

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The Covid recruitment boom is over, new data suggests

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The government has fallen short of its secondary trainee teacher targets after slashing bursaries and freezing teacher pay, with less than a quarter of those needed in certain shortage subjects enrolled.

Data published by the Department for Education this week shows just 82 per cent of the secondary teachers needed were recruited this year, down from 83 per cent in pre-Covid 2019.

It suggests the Covid recruitment boom – which propelled the government to meeting its secondary teacher recruitment target for the first time in eight years, in 2020 – is over.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said the temporary success “turns out to have been just a pandemic effect”.

The government has come under particular criticism for slashing its £250 million teacher training bursaries spend by nearly half after the 2020 recruitment boom. Some bursaries were slashed by as much as 73 per cent for this year.

James Zuccollo, director for school workforce at the Education Policy Institute, said the speed of national recovery and the improvement of the labour market had meant the drop-off in teacher recruitment “has occurred much more suddenly than expected”.

Subjects with cut bursaries miss targets

Recruitment in some subjects where teacher training bursaries were cut or scrapped entirely this year was not only below the government’s target this year, but lower than in pre-Covid 2019.

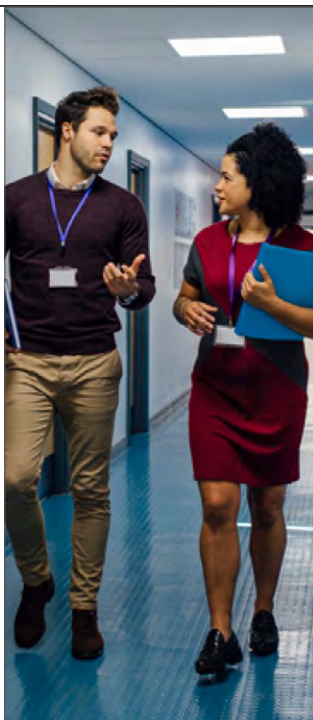
However, some of this can be attributed to a change in how the DfE sets its targets. A new model for this year now takes account of over- or under-recruitment in the previous two years.

It essentially gives a more accurate forecast of how many teachers are needed in future years.

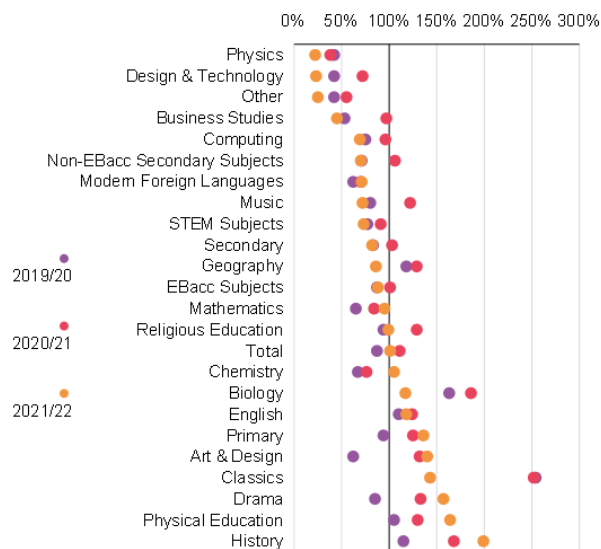
The biggest increases in the teacher training targets this year were in physics (89 per cent), business studies (83 per cent) and design and technology (61 per cent), all of which also saw bursaries reduced.

Computing and music also saw increases in their targets and reduced bursaries.

In physics, which saw its bursaries cut by £2,000, just 22 per cent of the necessary teachers



Recruitment against government targets: 2019, 2020 and 2021



Source: Jack Worth/NFER

were recruited this year. This is down from 45 per cent in 2020 and 44 per cent in 2019, and the lowest on record.

In design and technology, where the £15,000 bursary was scrapped entirely for this year, the government met just 23 per cent of its target, down from 75 per cent in 2020 and 41 per cent in 2019.

The government also missed its own targets for other EBacc subjects – computing (69 per cent), modern foreign languages (71 per cent), geography (86 per cent) and maths (95 per cent).

‘Clear sign of challenges again’

Jack Worth, lead economist at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said this year’s recruitment numbers are a “clear sign that the system is facing considerable teacher supply challenges once again”.

Overall, the government recruited 101 per cent of teachers needed across both primary and secondary this year, down from 111 per cent in 2020.

However, the total figure is inflated by primary entries. The government achieved 136 per cent of its target for primary, meaning the target has been exceeded for four out of the last five years.

The outlook on actual recruitment numbers is more positive. There were 37,069 new entrants to ITT, down eight per cent compared to 2020, but

still ten per cent higher than 2019 – pre-Covid.

The recruitment target was also exceeded for history (199 per cent), English (118 per cent), biology (117 per cent), chemistry (105 per cent) and classics (143 per cent).

MFL EBacc commitment questioned

However, statisticians also sounded the alarm over figures for modern foreign languages, which had its target cut by 36 per cent despite the subject having under-recruited for several years.

Bursaries for languages were also cut from £26,000 in 2020 to just £10,000 this year, leading to questions about whether the government remains committed to its EBacc performance measure.

Jack Worth said adjusting targets to take account of previous years “makes sense”, but it “doesn’t add up” that the MFL target had been reduced. “It’s just inconsistent with previous targets and suggests there’s a change of approach towards the number of teachers required to MFL, the big driver for which is, of course, the Ebacc. So it suggests something’s going on there, but I don’t know what it is.”

The DfE said the EBacc remains “vital in giving all children the same chance to succeed”, but would not explain the decision to reduce the MFL recruitment target.

NEWS

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ITT reforms delayed, but pressure still on reaccréditation

SAMANTHA BOOTH
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Ministers have pushed back reforms to teacher training by a year, but given providers just seven school weeks to apply for the first round of reaccréditation.

The government published its response to the initial teacher training (ITT) market review this week.

The reforms to how teachers are expected to be taught will now start in September 2024, with £35.7 million announced to help implement the changes.

But teacher trainers have only two application windows – both this academic year – to demonstrate they meet new quality requirements by applying for reaccréditation. The first application round closes on February 7.

Emma Hollis, chief executive of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) said government is “almost making it impossible” for any organisations without large teams.

Applications could take ‘hundreds of hours’

Providers must answer four questions, at a maximum of 7,000 words. Professor Sam Twiselton, one of the government’s advisers on the review, said it could take “hundreds of hours” to apply.

Hollis added staff “are dealing with a significant amount of work, they do not know what January will bring, and they only really have January to make these conversations at high levels.”

Providers who do not apply in round one will be able to apply in round two, which closes in late June.

However, they would miss out on the chance to get feedback. This is being offered to those who are unsuccessful in the first round.

Accredited providers will then go through a “follow-up” stage in the 2023-24 year where they must submit curriculum samples before agreeing an action plan with government.

Unapproved providers would have to work with



an approved teacher trainer as a lead partner or need to stop delivering ITT by August 2024.

Twiselton said the application would “certainly need working on most days. Bigger than that, though, are all the discussions you need to have with partners, academic and professional services colleagues before you can write anything down.”

Hollis said they already have a few providers who think they may not be able to make the February deadline.

ITT census data shows there are 108 providers with fewer than 60 trainees.

Jonny Uttley, chief executive officer of The Education Alliance trust, which runs a SCITT, said: “It’s very clear this is a very substantial piece of work at a time when schools are dealing with the challenges of Covid, the return of Ofsted and other issues.”

Concessions made to push through reforms

The review’s initial recommendations caused uproar in the ITT sector. But the government has made some concessions to make its reforms more palatable.

The extra cash includes £25 million for mentor training, with another £5.7 million to help providers with administrative costs of new training requirements. Grants of £25,000 will also be available for approved providers to “implement the review’s recommendations”.

The government has chosen not to “require schools to participate in ITT or require Ofsted to judge a school on the basis of its involvement”.

But Ofsted will inspect providers every three years from September 2024, compared to the current six-year inspection cycle. DfE will also “take a more proactive role in ensuring

there are enough high-quality training places across the country to serve the workforce needs of local schools”.

Leading universities threatened to ditch their teacher training courses over concerns the reforms would force them into running a “highly prescribed curriculum”.

DfE said it will not “define an evidence base” beyond that set out in the core content framework, and committed to regular reviews of the evidence with sector representatives.

Leading universities still concerned

But the Russell Group, which represents 24 leading universities, said some requirements still remain “overly prescriptive” such as the time trainees spend in school placements.

The University of Cambridge said it still has “significant concerns” about “important inconsistencies which continue to prescribe and constrain how teacher training should be delivered”.

But the government has relaxed mandates around new “lead” mentors, with the minimum initial training hours they need to undertake reduced from 36 to 30 hours.

Lead mentors will also not have to take a national professional qualification, or equivalent training. Instead this will be an “ambition”.

Schools minister Robin Walker said the reforms are the “next step in our ambition to create a golden thread of evidence-based training, support and professional development” for teachers.

“We want this country to be the best place to become a brilliant teacher, and that starts with high-quality initial teacher training.”



Emma Hollis



Professor Sam Twiselton

POLITICS

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New shadow ed sec to push Zahawi on Omicron plans

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The new shadow education secretary has requested an "urgent briefing" from her opposite number Nadhim Zahawi about how government will respond to the Omicron variant's impact on schools.

Bridget Phillipson was appointed on Monday to replace Kate Green in a reshuffle by Sir Keir Starmer of his frontbench team.

In her first interview, she told Schools Week she would be pushing the government "to make sure they respond effectively following the emergence of the new variant, and to see whether they've really learned anything over these last couple of years".

The latest government figures show there are now 29 known cases of the variant in England.

Phillipson said the country needed to avoid "any further disruption to children's education as far as possible". She said ministers must avoid "last-minute decisions which cause further and unnecessary alarm and anxiety for everybody", like the confusion over school closures last winter.

"Of course the government must be guided by the evidence they receive from public health experts, and to that end I've requested an urgent briefing with the secretary of state to understand what the current position is to make sure that all measures that are necessary are being put in place."

Zahawi struck a conciliatory tone this week as he thanked Green for working "across the political divide", and welcomed Phillipson to her post.



Bridget Phillipson

Phillipson said she would "always work constructively with the secretary of state to get the best possible outcomes".

But she said she would "also push the government really hard on their complete failure to bring forward a decent plan for education recovery".

The new shadow education secretary also spoke of her "passion" for her brief and her desire to create an "ambitious, forward-looking and positive vision" for Labour as it heads into the next general election.

She said her own "great" state education "transformed" her life, and she was "determined" to give all children the same opportunity.

Born in Gateshead, Phillipson attended John F Kennedy primary school and St Robert of Newminster Catholic School in Washington, before reading modern history at Oxford.

She described the "fantastic support" she received from school staff. "I'm still in touch with many of them and I'll always be tremendously grateful for the impact they had."

Phillipson was just 26 when she became the MP for Houghton and Sunderland South in 2010. She served as an opposition whip and on the public accounts committee. More recently she was shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, before moving to the education role this week.

Beyond Covid, Phillipson said she was concerned about inequality in the education system.

She is also focused on "making sure our children have a rounded education, that they leave school ready for work, but also ready for life". That "has to involve a broad curriculum that allows children to be happy and fulfilled".

Under Starmer, Labour has been coy about its plans for education. It has sought to distance itself from Corbyn-era policies, such as scrapping SATs, but has said little about what it would do instead.

The Labour leader announced some measures at the party's conference in September. These included reforms to Ofsted, improved citizenship teaching and compulsory work experience.

Phillipson isn't giving much away about her party's policy development process, but says she's "excited about the prospect of getting out around the country".

"I'm looking forward to working with parents, families and right across the sector in making that an ambitious, forward-looking and really positive vision for the future of education for Labour at the next election."

Following the reshuffle, shadow children's minister Tulip Siddiq and Lords spokesperson Mike Watson remain in their roles.

But the party is yet to announce replacements for shadow schools minister Peter Kyle and shadow child poverty secretary Wes Streeting, who were both promoted.

Labour's new education team: the ins, outs and unknowns

Kate Green
Shadow education
secretary



OUT

Peter Kyle
Shadow schools
minister



PROMOTED

Wes Streeting
Shadow child
poverty secretary



PROMOTED

Tulip Siddiq
Shadow children's
minister



IN

Bridget Phillipson
Shadow education
secretary



IN



IN



IN

Mike Watson
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Zahawi wants parents warned on 'repercussions' of school no-shows

TOM BELGER

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EXCLUSIVE

Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi has ordered councils to tell parents that keeping their children off school has "repercussions" as he attempts to tackle rising absence rates.

It comes as analysis obtained by Schools Week reveals almost one in five pupils is effectively missing a day a week in the worst-hit areas.

Yet Zahawi faces demands from cash-strapped councils to fund the crackdown on the one hand, and threats of legal action and de-registration from parents worried about Covid on the other. Schools Week investigates ...

Councils told to get tough on absence

In late 2011, then-education secretary Michael Gove vowed to "tackle the truancy tragedy".

But a decade on, new minister Nadhim Zahawi finds himself relaunching the same battle.

Official figures show absence at 4.7 per cent last autumn – the same as 2011. But the more recent weekly attendance figures show Covid pushed up total absence to 10.7 per cent last Thursday.

In a recent letter, seen by Schools Week, Zahawi told council chief executives to ensure parents know absence "has repercussions" – including fixed penalty notices, parenting contracts and education supervision orders.

Applying these is "important" after the suspension of their use during Covid, he wrote.

Councils are also told to improve multi-agency working, ensure children not receiving suitable home or alternative provision are "offered and take up a school place", and consider social care intervention where absence is a "symptom of wider issues".

Another, similar letter tells school leaders to "make full use of enforcement actions".

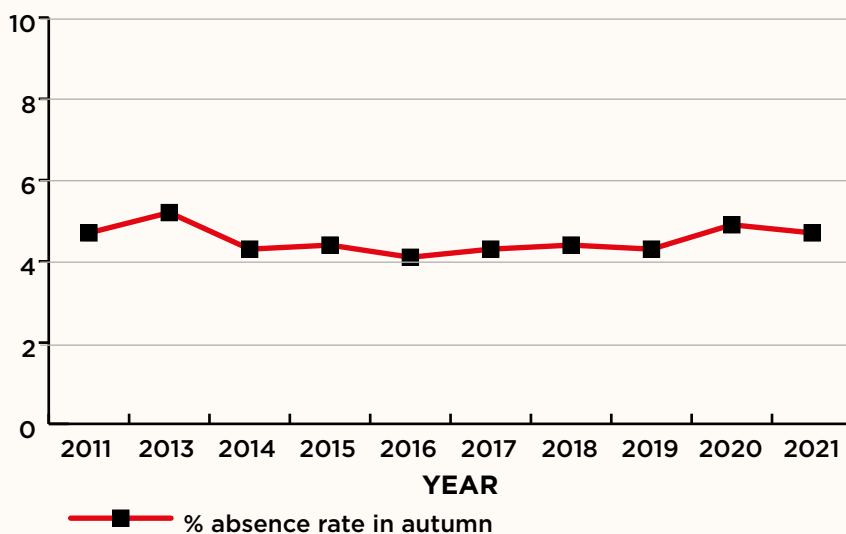
Revealed: areas with most missing children

Analysis of secondary school absence figures, collected by Datalab's FFT Attendance Tracker, reveal the scale of the task.

Gove's clampdown included tightening



National absence rates



definitions of "persistent" absence to target pupils missing over 10 per cent of sessions.

But most councils (82 per cent) had at least one in 10 pupils missing twice that much time (20 per cent of sessions) this term – effectively missing at least one day off every week.

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, chair of the Local Government Association's children and young people board, called the numbers "hugely concerning".

Gateshead and Bradford had the highest persistent absence rates at 18 per cent of pupils, three times higher than the lowest levels in the London boroughs Harrow and Redbridge.

New DfE attendance advisers

Jayne Lowe, education consultant and DfE behaviour taskforce adviser

Scott Walker, a DfE contractor sent into struggling schools

Sara Griffiths, an early help specialist

Michelle O'Dell, attendance manager at the John Taylor MAT

Diane McConnell, an ex-council senior education leader

LONG READ

Schools Week analysis shows 11 of 15 areas with highest persistent absence are in the top half of authorities for Covid infections.

But Covid alone cannot explain the variation. Herefordshire and Cornwall have high absences, but have the 21st and 26th lowest Covid rates respectively.

Five officers don't make up for years of cuts

Government announced an attendance scheme last week. However, it consists of just five new attendance advisers sharing best practice, visiting around 50 trusts and councils with high absence rates.

The Department for Education said the support is not mandatory, and it would not be revealing the names of organisations to be offered a visit.

Knowsley council told Schools Week it is among those accepting support, despite attendance being higher than national averages.

A spokesperson said they had some of the highest Covid rates in the country, adding: "Enforced lockdowns and the impact this has had on people's mental health have also contributed to levels of attendance."

Bramble warned that tackling absence is "hard, due a lack of council powers, funding and resources".

LGA also highlighted "gaps in coordination" of registration, attendance, admissions, exclusions and non-school education.

Steve Thomas, national secretary of education and services at union Prospect, said austerity had seen many attendance-focused welfare posts axed.

One welfare officer said they had less time to visit homes, inspect registers or advise schools.

Salford and Brighton and Hove councils alone announced plans to axe 14 welfare staff between them in the early 2010s, almost three times more than the DfE's new national team.

Thomas highlighted further "short-sighted" £50 million cuts looming to council school

Regions with the highest persistent absence ...

AREA	SECONDARY PUPILS ABSENT FOR 20% OF SESSIONS, SEPT TO NOV
GATESHEAD	18%
BRADFORD	18%
KNOWSLEY	17%
LIVERPOOL	17%
SOMERSET	17%
SHROPSHIRE	17%
BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE	17%
CHESHIRE EAST	16%
CORNWALL	16%
WARWICKSHIRE	16%
NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	16%
NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE	16%
SUNDERLAND	16%
HEREFORDSHIRE	16%
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE	16%

Source: FFT Attendance Tracker

... and the regions with the lowest persistent absence

AREA	SECONDARY PUPILS ABSENT FOR 20% OF SESSIONS, SEPT TO NOV
BROMLEY	9%
HAVERING	9%
HOUNSLOW	9%
SOUTHEND	8%
TOWER HAMLETS	8%
NEWHAM	8%
BARNET	8%
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM	7%
MERTON	7%
EALING	7%
BRENT	7%
KENSINGTON & CHELSEA	7%
HARROW	6%
REDBRIDGE	6%

Source: FFT Attendance Tracker

improvement, which can include attendance work.

Schools Week analysis shows the 15 councils with highest persistent absence will lose on average £256,300 each annually.

Gateshead, Liverpool, Knowsley and Newcastle have also seen among the steepest budget cuts overall, and rank in the 50 most deprived areas.

Austerity and deprivation do not fully explain absences either, however.

One study ranked Somerset seventh least affected by austerity – yet persistent absence among secondary school pupils is joint third-highest in the country, according to Datalab's tracker.

Legal threat presents hurdle

Covid also poses further headaches for Zahawi.

The Good Law Project has threatened judicial review proceedings unless the education secretary clarifies if schools can still allow absence based on medical advice or exceptional reasons.

The campaign group warns clamping down leaves vulnerable households with "no choice but to deregister". A recent survey found elective home education soared last year.

One parent, describing herself and her daughter as vulnerable, said they felt "collateral damage" of focusing on "nativities and attendance". Her daughter's headteacher cited DfE guidance in a recent letter threatening fines.

The school previously supported her, she said, but was in an "impossible position". "We're not school avoiders, but I'm not prepared to risk orphaning my kids."

Attendance will take white paper centre stage

In the longer term, Zahawi told councils he's keen to "work together to ensure the lessons learned during the pandemic help us strengthen and improve the school attendance system to ensure the absence facing us today does not become perpetual".

He said attendance and engagement with education will be "a central tenet" of the forthcoming white paper, due to be published next year. DfE officials have already met council staff to "begin that process".

A DfE spokesperson said being in school was "vital both for young people's education and for their mental health."

They added that children were at low risk of serious illness and vulnerable over-12s could receive the vaccine - but heads can still grant "exceptional" absence.



Anntoinette Bramble



Steve Thomas

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ESFA acts as costs of collapsed trusts double

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Government officials have set up a “rapid response” hub to get on the front foot over “serious” academy failures, as the cost of collapsed trusts doubles.

The Education Skills and Funding Agency wrote off more than £10 million on failed academy trusts last year alone. It is more than double the £5 million written off on academy failures in 2019-20.

ESFA annual accounts for the 2020-21 financial year, published on Tuesday, show the agency wrote off debts worth £4.5 million for just one trust alone, the Shrewsbury Academies Trust.

This appears to be the largest write-off for an academy trust since at least 2017.

ESFA hit by biggest ever academy write-off

The government will sometimes waive debts owed by academies as part of their transfer to new sponsors. If trusts close with money still owed to the government, this is also written off.

The Shrewsbury Academies Trust was dissolved last year. All three of its schools were transferred to the Marches Academies Trust.

Annual accounts for 2020 show the trust was reliant on additional government funding and had a £3.7 million deficit.

A financial management and governance review published in 2018 showed the trust had already been handed £2.2 million additional government funding, set against an income of just £7.2 million.

Finance committee minutes cited in the review “raised no concerns... suggesting that the full extent of the trust’s financial difficulties had not been accurately reported or understood”.

In 2015-16, the trust also misused funding for improving school buildings to “support its cash flow”.

Collapsed trust CEO gets job at schools’ new sponsor

The second largest debt write-off, of £1.9 million, was for the TBAP Trust, which gave up its seven alternative provision schools last year after its financial position became “unsustainable”.

Annual accounts for 2017-18 showed the trust had unknowingly racked up a £2.4 million deficit because of a “systematic” failure in its financial systems.

It has also emerged TBAP’s chief executive,



Seamus Oates, is now regional director for London at Ormiston Academies Trust – which took on four TBAP schools.

While staff from a rebrokered school normally move over to its new trust, it is less common for central staff from the collapsed chain to make the switch.

Nick Hudson, OAT chief executive, said the schools now provide an “excellent education” and Oates has “played a central role in their success.”

“Having both his and his former TBAP colleagues on our team means their knowledge and understanding of these academies is retained and is clearly hugely beneficial for the students,” Hudson added.

Oates said it was a “great opportunity both to work with a trust which has such strong values and to continue to provide [for] some of the capital’s most vulnerable children”. He was “more than happy” to accept the new role.

Rapid response for serious failure

The ESFA has now set up a “rapid response hub to allow greater flexibility and swifter resolution to cases of quick and serious academy trust failure”.

It is part of a push by the organisation to “become less reactive and more preventative in its provider engagement”, accounts state.

Officials spoke to 472 trusts which had forecast declining reserves across the year to “understand the issues and whether any additional help was required”.

Four in five trusts with “serious financial concerns” were “de-escalated within the target time each month, a 9.6 percentage point improvement on performance last year”.

£1.6 million lost on late VAT payment

Meanwhile, ESFA posted “fruitless payments” of £520,000 relating to work staff did on evaluating the feasibility of a successor to the Erasmus+ grant scheme in the run-up to Brexit.

The agency was not chosen as the “preferred delivery partner” so stopped the work.

A fruitless payment is one which “cannot be legally avoided because the recipient is entitled to it even though nothing of use to ESFA will be received in return”.

A £1.6 million fruitless payment was also recorded over a default interest charge levied by HMRC. Accounts state this was for a late VAT payment that related to copyright licences for schools and academies. No further details are provided. The Department for Education did not respond to a request for comment.

An HMRC spokesperson said they “cannot comment on an identifiable taxpayer”.

The DfE buys copyright licences for all state schools – covering “almost all of their copyright requirements” – to save money and administrative time.

Just £4,000 in fruitless payments were recorded last year.

Academy debts written off in 2020-21

Shrewsbury Academies Trust	£4.5m
TBAP Trust	£1.9m
University of Chester Academies Trust	£1.1m
Oxford Academy Trust:	£585k
Hinckley Academy and John Cleveland Sixth Form	£584k
International Academy of Greenwich	£559k
Stratton Upper School	£549k
Watford UTC	£463k

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Minister admits SEND review has 'taken too long'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government's review of services for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has "taken too long", and communication with parents and professionals has been "regrettable", a minister has admitted.

Will Quince, the children's minister, told the Parliamentary education committee on Wednesday the review, launched in September 2019, had to be "started again" in March last year because of the Covid pandemic.

Ministers have in recent weeks finally confirmed that the much-delayed review will be published in the first quarter of next year. The government has now missed three of its own deadlines to publish it.

Quince, who was appointed to his role in September and is now responsible for completing the review, said he agreed "that it has taken too long".

The minister also accepted that communications and expectation management by the Department for Education with parents, the SEND community and other stakeholders "has been regrettable".

"We should have done better at setting expectations as to where we were and the scale of the challenge that we face," he said.

Quince claimed part of the issue was the Department of Health and Social Care being "up to here, rightly, dealing with the pandemic".

The publication of the SEND review is expected to take the form of a government green paper, along with another consultation on the proposals put forward "because of the scale of what we're looking to do", he said.

The delays come in the context of a worsening picture for children with special educational needs.

A Schools Week investigation in October found SEND support



Will Quince

in seven of eight areas visited by Ofsted after inspections restarted this year had "significant areas of weakness".

Ofsted reported earlier this year that over half of local authorities inspected since 2016 had serious weaknesses, forcing them to prepare written statements of action. The DfE also sent a commissioner to take over Birmingham council's SEND services in October.

Indra Morris, the DfE's deputy director for children's services, said the department was currently working "really closely" with 49 local authorities to improve their SEND provision.

She added that there were "another 31, although there's a bit of an overlap between those two categories, of local authorities where their timeliness is below par, and again we're engaging with them".

Quince also defended delays to the implementation of recommendations made in the Timpson review of exclusions and alternative provision. Only six of the 30 recommendations have been fully implemented, but he said it was a "crucial part" of the SEND review.

He is also exploring "light touch" registration requirements for all AP settings. It comes after Ofsted warned that children are being placed in unregulated provision.

But he backed off on committing

to mandatory registration for all settings, saying a blanket registration could affect businesses that offer work experience to pupils in AP.

"I definitely don't want the heavy hand of Ofsted to, in effect, [cause] that really kind, generous garage owner who's giving his time freely

to that young person to come and in effect work experience to say 'this is too much for me, I'm backing out'."

Meanwhile, Quince also told MPs he was "absolutely" concerned about levels of exclusion in England. Although Covid has knocked exclusions to their lowest level since 2013, both the number and rate of exclusions had risen every year between 2012-13 and 2017-18.

"We want to see as few exclusions as possible," said Quince. "It should be very much a last resort."

But he also said he wanted to ensure that "being excluded from school is not being excluded from education", adding that he wanted AP "to be a conveyor belt back into mainstream school wherever possible".

Role Model Resources

Our role model resources are a series of lesson plans, presentations and video case studies designed to support young people into making the right career choice.

worldskillsuk.org/rolemodelresources

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Female heads £17k worse-off by career end, report reveals

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Women in school leadership earn around £17,000 less than men by the end of their careers, according to new analysis of the gender pay gap in education.

A report by school leadership unions ASCL and NAHT, along with the National Governance Association and WomenEd, found that the gender pay gap is more than four times larger for leaders than for classroom teachers. The gap also increases with age and seniority in roles.

Analysis by the four groups of Department for Education school workforce statistics found that male headteachers over 60 earned on average £95,825, while their female counterparts earned just £78,491. This is a difference of £17,334, or around 20 per cent.

This is because at headteacher level, women tended to have “steadier increases in salary by age”, whereas men “tend to see much larger increases, particularly towards the end of their career”.

The analysis found a similar pattern at other leadership levels. The average pay gap between women and men increases from £2,760 at age 35-39 to £4,024 at age 40-45.

Gap four times larger for female heads than teachers

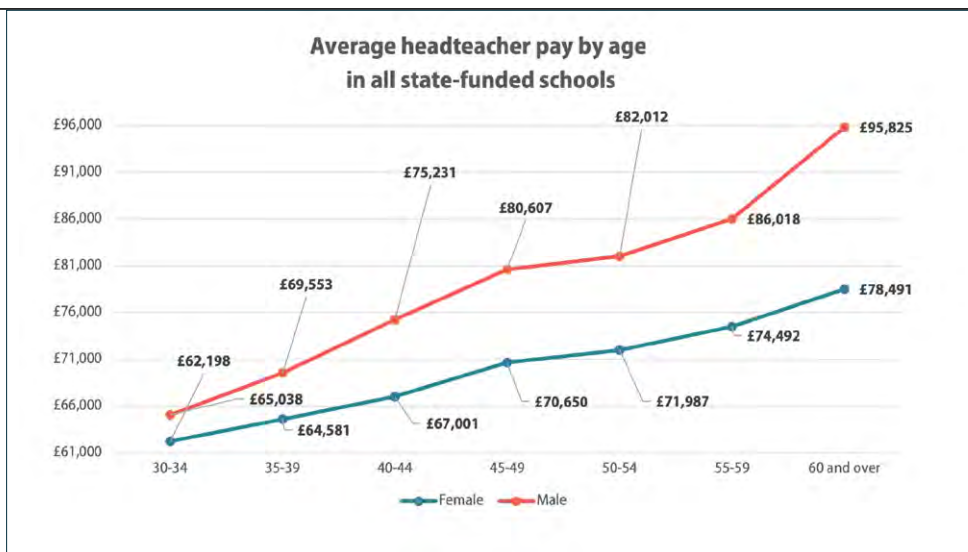
Woman headteachers across all ages already face a greater gender pay gap than classroom teachers. According to the analysis, male teachers earned 2.4 per cent more on average than women, whereas male headteachers earn 11.3 per cent more than women in the same roles.

The gender pay gap for full-time employees nationally is 7.9 per cent as of this April, but 11.9 per cent among the over-60s.

Vivienne Porritt, co-founder and global strategic leader of WomenEd, said her organisation had heard “many examples where women are paid less than men for the same role and with the same or greater experience”.

“This report shows that such inequality is more significant than women realise.”

The report also found that the gender pay gap varied by type of school, with female heads of special and alternative provision academies earning on average £4,165 less than men. And



in secondary academies, male heads earned £3,399 more than their female counterparts.

Women are more likely to manage caring responsibilities, and career breaks “can have a negative impact on pay and career progression which can be a particular issue for female teachers on maternity leave”, the report states.

Other factors include individuals being appointed at different points on pay scales, different job and grade titles for “virtually the same jobs” and performance-related pay being “unfairly awarded”.

Calls for action on ‘sobering’ figures

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT, said the figures in the analysis “should be sobering to anyone that reads them”.

“We’ve seen school leadership pay eroded over the last decade and for our female school leaders there is almost a ‘double hit’ by the inequalities in the system,” he said.

Geoff Barton, from ASCL, said the report had exposed “stark differences in education salaries which we simply must do more to address”.

The report recommends that the government improves national level analysis of pay gap trends, including a change so that it includes executive heads and trust chief executives.

Government should also act on calls from the School Teachers’ Review Body and the sector for a “comprehensive review” of the pay framework for teachers and leaders, and provide greater support to help mitigate “some of the systemic barriers” to flexible working.

Schools and trusts should seek to understand



the situations in their organisations, the report said. Those not legally required to undertake pay gap collections should still collect and analyse data “for internal purposes”.

Where gaps are found, schools and trusts should create a plan to reduce them. They can also help by removing requests for current salaries from recruitment materials and requests for references.

The report also urges governors to review recruitment policies, hold regular reviews of pay policies and setting procedures and review the diversity of their governance teams.

Emma Knights, chief executive of the NGA, said schools needed to “encourage and reward all the talent within schools and trusts”.

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'Hotspot' schools to get crime prevention funding

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Schools in ten youth violence "hotspots" will lead new taskforces backed by £30 million in funding aimed at keeping pupils in school and preventing crime.

The Department for Education has named the ten areas that will get new "SAFE" (Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed) taskforces run by mainstream schools.

Ministers say these will bring headteachers together to "support vulnerable young people and avoid them becoming involved in county lines and criminal activity".

SAFE taskforces will be set up in Birmingham, Newham, Manchester, Lambeth, Leeds, Southwark, Sheffield, Bradford, Liverpool and Haringey.

They will be led by local schools, which have not been named. The DfE said it would be up to each taskforce to decide how the money will be allocated.

The government has also today named 22 alternative provision schools that will benefit from AP specialist taskforces under a scheme backed by £15 million.

Ministers announced in September that the government would create the two initiatives, which are aimed at keeping young people in school to prevent them from turning to crime and help them move on to further education, employment or training.

The announcement comes after analysis by the YMCA charity earlier this year found that spending on youth services by councils had been cut by 71 per cent in real terms – or around £1 billion – since 2010-11.



In 2019, a cross-party group of MPs and peers warned that youth service cuts were linked to violent crime, after finding that the areas suffering the largest cuts to youth spending had seen bigger increases in knife crime.

And this summer, the Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer accused the government of "short-sightedness" over the cuts, which have left young people "without the advice, guidance and support that youth services once provided".

"Youth work is about career guidance, mental health support and community cohesion, but it is also one of the most effective ways of tackling the root causes of crime," he said.

The DfE had already announced the areas that would benefit from the AP specialist taskforces. They have now named 19 of the 22 AP schools to benefit from the scheme (listed).

Children's minister Will Quince said keeping young people engaged with their education "has never been more important".

"These taskforces are helping school leaders and vital support services work together to support some of the most vulnerable young people across the country, helping to keep them on the right track and stop them missing lessons," he added.

AP taskforce schools

Bradford AP Academy Centre, Bradford

Haringey Learning Partnership,
HaringeyManchester Secondary PRU,
Manchester

Orchardside School, Enfield

Saffron Valley Collegiate, Croydon

Sandwell Community School, Sandwell

Snowdon Village (Bristol Futures
Academy), BristolSouthwark Inclusive Learning Service,
Southwark

Stephen Longfellow Academy, Leeds

Tunmarsh School, Newham

Unity Academy, Nottingham

St Wilfrid's Academy, Doncaster

Park Campus Academy, Lambeth

Brent River College, Brent

City of Birmingham School,
Birmingham

Ealing Alternative Provision, Ealing

Everton Free School, Liverpool

Leicester Partnership School, Leicester

London East AP, Tower Hamlets

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Four more leaders wanted for behaviour hubs expansion

Four experienced leaders are being sought to support the expansion of the behaviour hubs programme.

The Department for Education is looking to hire four "school partnership leads" to coordinate support, including providing one-to-one coaching and attending open days to "gather intelligence".

The behaviour hubs project, led by government behaviour tsar Tom Bennett, aims to support 500 schools which struggle

with poor discipline over three years.

It pairs "lead" schools and multi-academy trusts with exemplary behaviour practices with others who want to improve behaviour.

Applicants for the up to £350-a-day role must have experience supporting schools with "effective implementation of system change" and know Bennett's "Creating a Culture" report on behaviour.

The four people will promote the programme's training and support services

to lead schools, help with recruiting schools to support, and build relationships.

The role may be most suitable for those not in full-time employment as they are expected to work a minimum of three days per week, DfE add.

Bennett told *Schools Week* that the feedback has been "incredibly positive" so far and the roles are "building upon" the success of the first year.

EDITORIAL

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DfE may already be regretting trainee teacher bursary money saving

As the government itself predicted, the teacher recruitment boom arising from Covid appears to have fizzled out.

The Department for Education is back to falling short of its recruitment targets for secondary teachers.

Officials have changed how they calculate targets this year, meaning they now take into account past under-recruitment and are more accurate about future demand.

This just exposes the true scale of the issue. Under a quarter of the required physics and design and technology teachers were recruited this year.

Targets were missed in EBacc subjects such as computing (69 per cent) and modern foreign languages (71 per cent).

While overall numbers are up on pre-pandemic recruitment years, the big wave looks to have crashed.

This makes the government's decision to nearly halve its £250 million spend on bursaries to entice recruits look even more short-sighted.

Why make it less appealing to join the profession when they know future recruitment targets are so challenging?

Experts say it's not too late to cash in on the Covid boom, though. One option is raising starting salaries

for new teachers, but the government has punted this years down the road – and seems unlikely to change its stance.

Another option is keeping teachers in the classroom.

It seems a Covid-related improvement in teacher retention has been sustained – leaving a window of opportunity for government to keep hold of existing teachers before the economy continues to improve (and they may look elsewhere).

The Education Policy Institute says policies that financially incentivise new teachers to stay in the classroom are “essential to preventing an exodus”.

Meanwhile, the government finally revealed its hand on controversial reforms to the teacher training sector this week.

While making some expected concessions, the main thrust of the reforms are unchanged: a full reaccreditation process where providers who do not meet the government's new requirements will be failed.

And the timeline for that is tight, with just seven school weeks until the deadline for the first round of reaccreditation. While bigger universities may be able to shoulder the extra work, it might be the government's favourite school-based providers who take the biggest hit.

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Profile

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'We sweat the small stuff'

Asiyah Ravat, one of Star Academies' leading executive heads, tells Jess Staufenberg the recipe for success behind one of the country's best-performing schools

Asiyah Ravat is supposed to be on crutches. The executive principal at Eden Boys' School in Birmingham fell off her bike in August, and as she strides across the school's airy atrium, I can't help feeling responsible for her precarious footwear.

"This is my first day back in heels," she beams, pointing to her feet below an

excellent fuchsia pink trouser suit. For a school leader responsible for some of the best progress results around, I feel we can't possibly risk this woman keeling over.

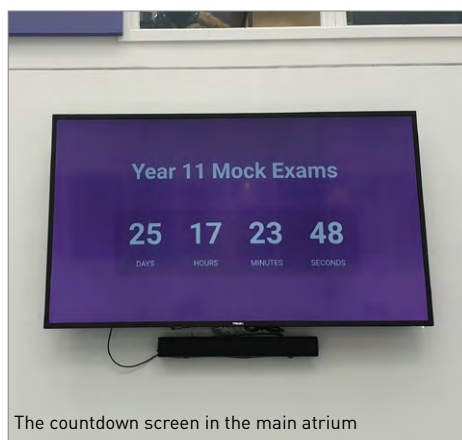
The results have been covered widely already (*The Economist* even ran an article), but to recap: pre-pandemic in 2019, Eden Boys' got the second-best progress scores in the country. It was beaten only by Tauheedul

Islam Girls' High School, under the same multi-academy trust, Star Academies, led by the enigmatic Hamid Patel.

As we sit down over chocolate cake (not a bribe for journalists – staff training session leftovers) I blurt out: but how do you do it? How do you get those results?

Ravat doesn't miss a beat. "Great subject knowledge. You can almost, just by looking

Profile: Asiyah Ravat



The countdown screen in the main atrium

“I give staff a chunk of time to discuss pedagogy”

at a child's frown, see the misconceptions they've got, and get rid of those.”

But how do you ensure your teachers have great subject knowledge? Teachers continue to train up one another, responds Ravat. “So I look at the timetable, and if possible, I try to ensure all the teachers in the same department are free at the same time, and I give them a chunk of time when they can discuss pedagogy and subject knowledge,” she says.

For instance, science teachers with a specialism in chemistry (Ravat's own background) covering all three sciences are trained up in physics by the physics specialist.

“It's about how clear you are when you explain to a child. Questioning to check their understanding is key: how strong, how judicious, is your question?”

Strong teacher subject knowledge is then backed by set targets, she continues. “We intervene as soon as they arrive from primary school, and we set aspirational targets for each child.” All children take reading tests and, if needed, then receive group or one-to-one interventions. Pupils are also set by ability, across year groups and subjects, even art.

“I think both models can work, mixed ability too. But setting can work well as it can then



be quite a competitive environment, and the teaching is targeted at that level. So in set 1 chemistry, I know they're targeted at 7, 8 and 9.”

Is an 8 or 9 not achievable for children with poor key stage 2 results?

“What we're saying is, if a child comes in at below national expectations, you cannot target them at grade 9. What we do is target all pupils a progress of 1.0 in every subject.” In other words, a pupil arriving at Eden Boys' on track for a grade 5 will be stretched to at least a grade 6 – one grade above what's expected.

It works. The latest data for Eden Boys' shows a progress 8 score of 1.69, compared to the local authority average of 0.09, and in England of -0.03. Outcomes for special educational needs pupils are also strong.

Three very polite boys have now lined up outside the door (I wonder if they want cake, but apparently they're here to show me around). They are bedecked in badges, including a '100%' badge to indicate no school absence that term and a 'Star Diploma' badge showing achievement in community service, attainment and punctuality.

Back in the atrium, a big screen is beaming out the countdown to year 11 mock exams. “So we don't forget,” smiles one of the boys. Parents are invited in to learn how to access mock exams online, and are walked through

the exam timetable.

As we roam around, the boys tell me the single-sex set-up helps them “not to get distracted”. (Ravat later says it's a response to parental demand.) Competition for places is very high, with 7.5 applications per place, despite the catchment area being a mere six streets. The pupil population is almost entirely Asian and Muslim, while 29 per cent are eligible for free school meals. Everyone seems very well behaved. All year groups have their own floor, to prevent lost time between lessons, says the head boy.

As I peer inside a science laboratory, the boys explain that if they are on target with grades, they can take some of their exams early in year 10, including two vocational subjects, such as graphic design or health/fitness, or a modern foreign language GCSE, such as Arabic. Ravat explains: “This helps make more time for English and maths in year 11,” amounting to two extra hours a week.

The inspiration for the school's principles are also apparent, with hadiths (traditional Islamic sayings) on boards in corridors, such as: “Whoever guides another to do a good act will receive the same reward as its doer.”

Of course, the school shares many of the same communities as the Birmingham primary schools that experienced huge

Profile: Asiyah Ravat



Ravat outside the school

parental protests at teaching LGBT issues in 2019. I later ask Ravat if the protests affected her school. "Not at all. I think our parents understand that we teach relationships, health and sex education. We are very clear about that."

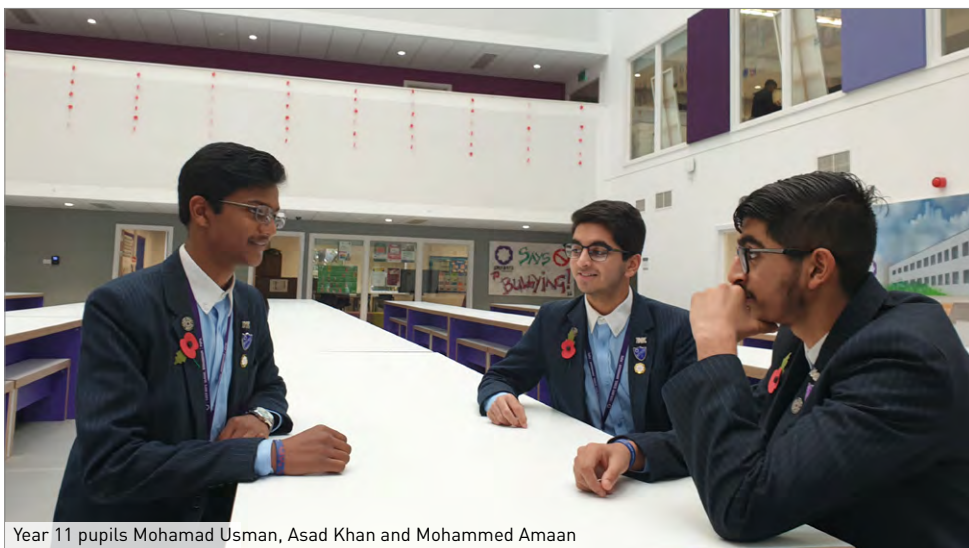
She leans back, thinking. "What I've learnt is there is no real secret to successful schools: faith school, or non-faith school, it doesn't really matter. It's hard work and a relentless focus on improvement. It's sweating the small stuff."

"We get pupils to focus on the little things. If they're worried about making sure they have the right equipment or they've done their homework, they won't get into bigger issues or poor behaviour. Sweating the small stuff is key."

Much of this approach is the model across all Star Academies, explains Ravat, supported by staff workshops.

Ravat herself helped found three free schools at the trust, Eden Girls' School Coventry in 2014, as well as Eden Boys' and Eden Boys' Leadership Academy, opening in 2015 and 2018 respectively. She also holds 'executive principal' title at two other trust schools.

They have all drawn significantly on her past experience, too. Ravat pioneered the effective use of data in previous schools: as head of science at Waverley School in Birmingham she took results from eight per cent A* to C in science GCSE to 84 per cent. Similarly at Park View School, also in Birmingham, she took science results into the top one per cent nationally, winding up



Year 11 pupils Mohamad Usman, Asad Khan and Mohammed Amaan

"You can almost, just by looking at a child's frown, see the misconceptions they've got"

on Teachers TV (which used to be a thing).

"I introduced using data to track pupils' performance, and pupil-level data to identify what the actual barriers were for each child," she explains.

Like many children of immigrant parents, Ravat attributes her success to unfailingly high expectations from her Gujarati parents at home. Her dad had a kebab van, and one of Ravat's early memories is peeling potatoes for chips at the weekends. For him, education was paramount.

"My dad had great aspirations for us. Every day he would ask us after school, what we'd done at school, did we need support, did we need more textbooks? We were all told, 'I don't want to receive a call from school saying you haven't done your homework.'"

Ravat thinks she might even be the first Indian Muslim girl in Walsall (the town near Birmingham where she grew up) to go to university. "I got my first in chemistry at university because of my dad," she smiles.

After her degree at Queen Mary University in London, she worked briefly as a chemical analyst while also tutoring. Finding her tutoring students got good grades, she turned to a PGCE in Birmingham.

The aspirational immigrant culture that Ravat benefited from in her childhood home

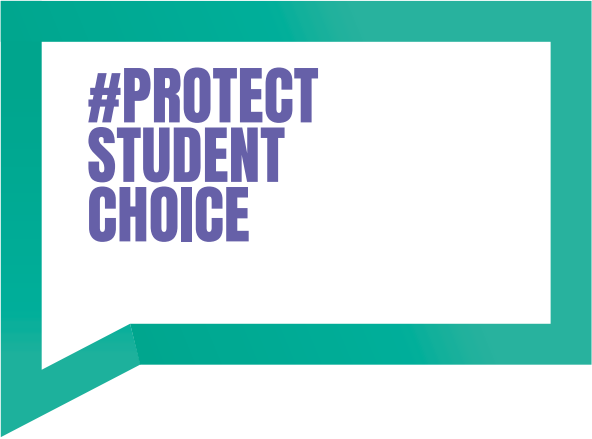
may also benefit many of her students now. Pupils with English as an additional language make better progress than their peers on average, data shows (47 per cent of Eden Boys' are EAL pupils). Schools with top progress scores are often also single-sex and faith schools.

But Ravat warns against a simplistic interpretation of her pupil cohort. "We serve a very, very deprived community. We deal with behaviour issues, there are gangs in the community, there's a knife culture." The idea that most students are arriving from highly aspirational backgrounds is "not true at all", she says.

The additional language can be as much of a hindrance as a help, she adds – some parents have refused to come into school because they can't speak English, for instance. "It's simply our approach. It's personalised support for each child, with high-quality teaching and interventions."

Given her track record in hugely boosting children's grades throughout her career, Ravat clearly has an approach that works. As I leave, she jokes she spent two days after her fall walking around on broken bones without realising.

Watching her stride purposefully back into her school, I can really believe it.



**#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**
- **Write to your local MPs to secure their support**
- **Tweet support for the campaign [#ProtectStudentChoice](https://twitter.com/ProtectStudentChoice)**



FEWEEK



To find out more visit www.protectstudentchoice.org

Opinion

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DOMINIC HERRINGTON

National Schools Commissioner

Why advisory boards – and your vote – matter

With elections under way for new advisory boards, Dominic Herrington sets out why the system is a quiet success story – and why you should be part of it

‘Whatever you do, someone is going to be pretty unhappy here. But you basically have to think above all about the children.’

These words were a reassurance. It was 2015, and I was about to take a difficult decision as a regional schools commissioner (RSC), not long after the first group of us was appointed. The issue was the sad case of a local school that had got into trouble and needed change. The words were from a member of my headteacher (now advisory) board and chimed with my instincts. Others had given me their views about this school.

I learned an enormous amount through four years of working with this group of professionals, and it feels timely to reflect on this little-known facet of our education system as voting has started for new advisory boards. Because, whisper it, we should

recognise that it has been a quiet success.

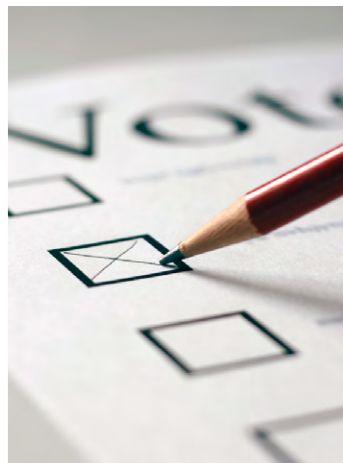
Every month, advisory board members come together to look at the key decisions the RSC has to take in their region about academies and free schools. Whether it’s considering academy

“Their knowledge from running schools is an invaluable asset

orders, matching a school with the right trust, or considering significant changes to schools with the potential to affect the landscape of provision in a local area, board members can ask questions, probe and express their views.

In this way, they ensure that the local context and the knock-on effects for other providers are taken into consideration, and that bringing about the quickest and greatest progress in the interests of local families is always the priority. Conflicts of interest are declared and managed very tightly.

In my experience, advisory boards offers three distinct advantages.



First, their knowledge from running schools and trusts is an invaluable asset. Having personally dealt with a wide range of issues over their careers, they understand how the options and opportunities are felt ‘on the ground’ by the senior leaders

and governors of the schools in question. Decision makers have a ready stream of views informed by direct expertise in their ear (whether they like it or not), and that makes for better decisions.

Second, their presence and contributions are baked into the system. Advisory board members are there every month and never go away. This creates a rhythm and an honesty in decision making – nothing within the board’s remit can be ducked.

Finally, they allow trust leaders to learn about how a modern civil service works, how decision making takes place, and the role of ministers in rightly deciding contentious issues. This experience filters back through

the system and fosters common understanding that ultimately helps give schools more capacity to focus on providing great education.

In addition, some of the old mysteries have disappeared. There is now greater transparency of advisory board agendas and minutes, and better accessibility for representations to be made. Advisory board members also feed back to RSCs about the temperature or the key areas of concern in the system, who in turn feed that back to the DfE.

The importance of these roles has been noticed. This is reflected in the fact that 164 candidates are standing to become members in the current elections. These candidates have a range of skills across educational settings – primary, secondary, alternative provision, special schools, and sixth-form colleges – and come from a variety of roles: heads of academies, CEOs, senior executive leaders of trusts, and retired heads.

So I urge all the academy heads who are eligible to vote in these elections to consider doing so. As with any election, it is a genuine opportunity to help shape the system.

And that school that was struggling in 2015? It is now a thriving academy serving a deprived area. The decision I took then – aided and scrutinised by my board members – is one of the best I ever took in that role.

It helped start the process by which the children in that school are now getting a better education, and there can be no better endorsement for this system than that.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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New research points to a link between 'outstanding' ratings and poorer pupil wellbeing. Daniel Muijs sets out what that means for school leaders

Alongside the national focus on academic catch-up after the school closures forced by Covid, there has rightly been concern about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health. It goes without saying that helping them through the recovery requires us to focus on both, and recent research examining pupil wellbeing has highlighted some new trends which school and trust leaders should heed.

EduRio's Pupil Learning and Wellbeing Review, which I helped to co-write, is a survey of 45,000 pupils in English schools. The report underlines serious, if not surprising, concerns across a number of areas of pupil wellbeing, not least that less than half of pupils (47 per cent) reported that they had been feeling well overall, and a similar proportion reported feeling stressed and overworked.

However, it also highlights some interesting links between a pupil's wellbeing and their school's Ofsted rating. Among pupils at schools rated 'outstanding', scores were worse than for those pupils at schools judged 'good' or 'requires improvement'. The review found that respondents at 'outstanding' schools felt more stressed, slept less well and were more likely to feel overworked.

To conclude that 'outstanding' schools are causing lower wellbeing based on this research alone would go beyond what this evidence tells us. However, the research conducted by EduRio and the subsequent analysis that I was involved in have identified a link, and



DANIEL MUIJS

Former deputy director, Ofsted and dean of the school of education and society, Academica University of Applied Sciences

Why 'outstanding' schools must prioritise pupil wellbeing

this should be seen as a starting point. The research is designed to highlight potential areas for concern, and act as a step on the journey to building better schools, where children and young people can thrive.

So these findings should give

have chosen their homes based on the opportunity to get their children into 'outstanding' schools. Perhaps pupils need support in developing the resilience to deal with increased pressure, or fear of failure, that comes with these higher

“Pupils at 'outstanding' schools felt more stressed and slept less well

school leaders pause for thought and prompt further investigation. One might conclude that these differences are based on pressure put on pupils at 'outstanding' schools to excel academically. This could come from the school itself, looking to maintain high standards and outcomes, or it could come from parents, who may

expectations. In all cases, we have a choice to treat either the cause or the symptoms.

However, it is also important to note that until recently, many 'outstanding' schools were exempt from inspection, and were not inspected for many years. Now this is changing, and the expectation is



that some schools currently rated 'outstanding' will not receive the same verdict.

Interestingly, the increased stress and associated factors do not seem to impact how pupils at 'outstanding' schools feel about their school — they are more likely to be happy at their school, and more likely to recommend their school than their peers at schools rated 'requires improvement'. Although this is encouraging, and perhaps driven by the pride they have in their school's performance, it needs to be viewed within the context of the report's wider findings.

I would urge leaders of 'outstanding' schools to take a look at their wellbeing provision and their overall organisational culture. What are the behaviours that are rewarded in your school? Is attainment the most important metric you track? If this is the case, is it possible that pupils are becoming blinkered? Are they seeing academic success as their only goal, and anything outside that a distraction or detraction from the overall objective?

It's important that pupils know that their attainment is a very important piece of a bigger puzzle, but not the be all and end all of their education. The range of skills that they are building should include resilience, confidence and other broader capabilities that prepare them for life after school and, indeed, for life after Covid.

The end of the pandemic may seem further away again after the past week's news, but that is precisely why no school's focus on academic achievement should come at the expense of securing our pupils' long-term wellbeing.

Opinion

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DAVID SPENDLOVE

Associate dean, faculty of humanities,
The University of Manchester

ITT reforms could spell the beginning of the end for Ofsted

For all the talk of concessions, schools and ITE providers remain at risk from the ITT market reforms and the organisation that will enforce them, warns David Spendlove

We were led to expect concessions as a result of the ITT market review consultation. So it's no surprise the timescale for the reaccreditation of all ITT providers has been slowed and the requirements for school-based mentoring cut back. But the principles underpinning these radical changes remain based on flimsy evidence.

Supporters assert the reforms are founded on American research into 'practice-based teacher education' (PB-TE). Putting aside that ITT practices are profoundly different in each country, neither the market review nor the core content framework (CCF) it seeks to enshrine refer directly to the PB-TE evidence base at all. There is just one indirect, five-year-old reference to a pamphlet from a US organisation. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of PB-TE research is not experimental, as these supporters claim, but mostly case study-based. Hardly 'gold-standard' by their own

benchmark.

Likewise, the CCF itself remains highly problematic, based on amateurish misappropriations of cognitive psychological research, some of which is long past its 'best-before' date. Supporters argue that the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has endorsed the

“Change is pointless unless the Ofsted problem is addressed

CCF as if this is some alchemical device for turning lead into gold. But the EEF has also concluded that the usefulness of “cog sci” theories in the classroom is “limited”, with “uncertainties about the applicability of specific principles across subjects and age ranges”. So which EEF pronouncement are we to believe?

Supporters also assert that there is no evidence that current ITT provision in England is sufficiently good. However, if we are to accept that Ofsted inspections of schools produce some evidence of quality, we have to accept that Ofsted inspections of ITT establish the same. The alternative is to hold that Ofsted doesn't produce evidence of quality. Sadly, there is something in

that. After all, it was only during the preparation of the market review (while schools and universities were disrupted due to Covid) that Ofsted's judgment of the ITT sector turned negative.

Which leads us to the conclusion that regardless of any appearance of the relaxation in the pace of these reforms, change is pointless unless the Ofsted problem is addressed. It is increasingly becoming a damaging distraction, reduced to a mechanism for government policy enforcement (as ministers promised it would during the 2019 election campaign), fatally undermined by the appointment of some HMI who previously wouldn't have been shortlisted and the anointment of a chief inspector against the advice of the education select committee.

I was invited to be a member

of Ofsted's original ITE advisory group for the creation of the new inspection framework, where we were told 'blue-sky thinking' was encouraged. My optimism soon disappeared with the emergence of a framework under heavy political influence, resulting in my then colleague, Viv Ellis (who co-authored this article), resigning from the group because of Ofsted's apparent lack of independence – to be replaced, ironically, with a Conservative parliamentary candidate and four perennial DfE 'experts' with little ITE credibility. Our fundamental impression was of an organisation under pressure to play politics, reject opposition and quite simply 'go harder' when criticised.



So despite these vaunted 'relaxations', schools and ITE providers – and with them the supply of quality teaching staff – remain at severe risk from two critical flaws at the heart of these reforms. First, the CCF is not fit for purpose, despite some promise that it will be reviewed. It will simply churn out teachers who can parrot its limited content, rather than the adaptable, innovative, research-informed workforce our schools need. And second, even more fundamentally, given the move to a 3-year inspection cycle, it is no longer possible to rely on Ofsted's institutional integrity, accuracy or the independence of its judgments.

It may be too late to stop all of these reforms, but there can be little doubt they will continue to cause damage to the sector. The question now is how much we will lose of a sector that Ofsted rated so highly until so recently.

But there is something we can do to ensure education is no longer so politicised, that reforms are truly evidence-informed and independently monitored. And that is to drastically reform, or altogether abolish Ofsted.

Opinion

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REKA
BUDAI

Research and evaluation manager,
Oak National Academy

Pupils spell out what good online teaching looks like

Closures have already caused some to change their practices permanently, writes Reka Budai, and new insights from pupils could help others do the same

Thousands of teachers have used Oak National Academy, but the number of pupils using our platform runs into the millions and they have plenty to say on the subject of online learning. Their perspective and feedback are important to us, so our research team organised a series of workshops with 9-to-16-year-olds to hear their views and compare it to the findings of our teacher research.

As ever in education, the challenge is to balance the needs and wants of different groups (pupils, teachers, parents) and align these with what the research shows makes the biggest difference to teaching and learning.

The benefits of flexibility

Just like us adults, pupils had mixed feelings about learning from home. The obvious pros for being back in school are socialising and getting on-the-spot help from teachers. But, just like grown-ups, children who enjoyed being at home talked enthusiastically about having

more flexibility. Their equivalent of putting on a load of laundry during the day is being able to eat whenever they like.

Many also mentioned they felt less judged than in the classroom, having time to process new materials at their own pace and being less anxious about not getting things right immediately. Fewer

distractions and lower levels of noise were also highlighted by some pupils.

Traits of a good video teacher

Particularly among younger children, certain characteristics of good video teachers were especially important: clarity, passion, kindness and personality.

When it came to clarity, pupils highlighted the helpfulness of chunked content, which they called step-by-step learning that “doesn’t make their brain tired”. And as to passion, they were able to sense a teacher’s enthusiasm for their subject from both verbal and non-verbal cues. As younger pupils put it, they prefer teachers with “happy



voices” and those not reading from the slides.

Kindness was characterised by staying calm and allowing time to get things right, which seemingly reduced children’s anxiety around failure, and the personality aspect was consistently linked to authenticity – that sense that teachers were not acting but being

themselves. For example, one child remembered an art teacher who got ‘messy’ and made the lesson more fun as a result.

Personal feedback

Pupils unanimously talked about the importance of feedback. They wanted immediate feedback about whether and, more importantly, why their answer was right or wrong in quizzes and models. Hint features on quizzes were greatly appreciated, as were increasing levels of challenge for providing a sense of achievement.

But pupils really missed getting personalised reassurance from their teachers, an emotional aspect that can only partly be replicated by

digital tools.

Pupils expressed how fond they are of feedback features that help them see their own progress and learning in context. Some online platforms supply easily digestible individual data, while others provide whole-class challenges coupled with leader-boards. Wider evidence backs the benefit of both approaches in decreasing off-task behaviours and stimulating participation.

Changing practices

A survey earlier this year of Oak users and non-users found fewer than half (42 per cent) said they went back to their usual ways of teaching when the last lockdown ended. For the majority of teachers, the disruption appears to have brought significant changes to their practice.

Indeed, 53 per cent of Oak users say they now use the platform for lesson delivery in the classroom. Closures seem to have enabled some teachers to see the potential of technology more fully, and others to develop the systems and work-flows to make that potential a reality.

Perhaps most encouragingly, pupils too have altered their ways of working. While in a remote setting, they were often directed to work through lessons in a linear fashion. But many are now using Oak in a less structured way. For example, they revisit a difficult concept, watch a short, relevant section of a video or test their knowledge by taking a quiz.

The legacy of school closures could be a completely new relationship between teachers, pupils and online learning. Insights like those above, informed by young people’s voices, hold the key to ensuring that potential is realised.

“Pupils too have altered their ways of working

Opinion

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KATY
MARSH-DAVIES

Senior lecturer in organisational
behaviour and HR management,
Sheffield Hallam University

Menopause: A challenge all leaders must rise to

Menopause is more inevitable than childbirth, writes Katy Marsh-Davies, yet we don't have the systems and policies to manage it that we can and should

You are hot, sweaty, anxious, lacking in confidence, forgetful and possibly bleeding heavily – but you still have to teach. This is happening to you regularly, and you know that changing your working patterns could carry costs to your career and wellbeing.

So you're a teacher experiencing the menopause. What do you do?

Two recent Sheffield Hallam research projects shed light on the key issues. I explored women's experiences of teaching flexibly during the pandemic, and my colleague, Suzanne Brown, looked at career progression for women teachers who work part-time. Our findings highlight menopause as only one of a number of difficult personal challenges women face that lead them to make requests for flexible working.

What makes menopause different is that it isn't often talked about. And it should be: women can encounter a range of challenging menopausal symptoms, precisely at

a time in their lives when their care responsibilities for family members might increase.

But simply going part-time could be counter-productive. Government advice recognises that work "contributes far more than just a salary" for menopausal women. It

“Simply going part-time could be counter-productive

can be a source of fulfilment and self-esteem, as well as meeting social needs.

And why should school leaders care? Well, menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the UK workforce. And yet, in a female-dominated profession, the number of teachers over the age of 50 has decreased over the past 10 years. The average age for menopausal onset in the UK is 51.

Women know that their chances of becoming a senior leader while working part-time are slim. Those in our research reported a lack of role models and a lack of clear, transparent policy around promotional opportunities for part-time staff as particularly problematic.

Those who had gone part-time felt



their commitment was questioned and that their voices were not sought. Worse, rather than helping to manage their work-life balance, many felt their professional and caring roles were still too demanding of their time. They found themselves caught between the

stress and guilt of not doing enough at work and the stress and guilt of not being there for their loved ones. But fear of not coping was the determining factor which deterred them from seeking the full-time work they perceived as necessary to promotion.

And so a negative feedback loop is formed. Few women who work part-time make it into senior positions, their voices and experiences are not involved in developing policies and practices to accommodate them, resulting in women who work part-time continuing to miss out on promotion.

But full- and part-time work are not the only options. Since 2014, all employees with 26 weeks' continuous employment are entitled to seek flexible working

arrangements. Sadly, requests for flexible arrangements are more likely to be rejected for teachers than the wider workforce.

Change is hopefully on the way. The government has appointed eight flexible working ambassador schools to provide examples of workable practices. Meanwhile, our research allows us to set some early guiding principles.

First, working flexibly means different things at different times to different participants. Women should therefore be able to select options that address the challenges they are facing at a given time. Accommodating flexible working can't be a simple question of developing a fixed arrangement but means recognising arrangements as temporary measures. Like good teaching, it should be about supporting individual needs.

Second, managers need to do more than just promote practical solutions. Developing flexible working practices means challenging assumptions about the commitment and competence of those who require different arrangements and about leadership as an exclusively on-site, full-time endeavour.

Menopause is more inevitable than childbirth, and there's no reason we should be any less accommodating of it. It may be less predictable, but in the end disruptive symptoms don't last for ever.

Supporting women at this stage of life will not only improve the quality of their lives. It has the potential to increase gender equality in leadership roles, and to ensure the profession hangs on to a wealth of experience and expertise that it is currently squandering.

What are we waiting for?

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The Juggling Act, How to Juggle Leadership and Life

Author: Professor Toby Salt

Publisher: John Catt

Reviewer: Helen Shapter Wheeler, head of school, Bridge Academy Alternative Provision

If you are not currently in leadership, I'd advise you not to skip this review. Back in 1999, in my induction chat with my new headteacher, I was asked if I had "ambitions for the swivelly chair". I had no idea what she was referring to; I wanted to teach drama and English and the thought of being a head could not have been further from my mind.

Yet just a year later, I was offering a ten-year development plan to SLT to create a performing arts faculty, and my passion for school improvement only grew from there. So my message is: this could be important reading for you, even if it's not on your radar right now.

Having recently entered my second year of headship after completing my National Professional Qualification for Headship over the past 12 months, I was keen to gain valuable insight into how to be more effective in managing my work/life balance. The NPQH ensures you read and consider leadership theory, but putting theory into practice is where the work is, and there is no 'Haynes Manual' for headship (although manuals are discussed in chapter eleven). Professor Toby Salt's book has praise from the great and the good already, but it's people like me, at the start of their leadership journey as new heads, who will benefit from having *The Juggling Act* to hand.

The book is set out in chronological order, leading readers through from

the moment they are appointed to the time they plan their departure. Keeping work/life balance centre-stage at all times, each chapter offers salient advice on a number of vital leadership areas: sharing the mission, balancing autonomy and control, running effective meetings, delegating effectively, money management and human resources.

The Juggling Act is a rare book these days, in that it is not laden with research. Instead, it's based on Salt's own experiences, good and bad. There are some laugh-out-loud moments (one involving a pink limo with a pole, inappropriately ordered for a politician) as well as some painfully honest moments where a skewed work/life balance has had unhealthy consequences.

But while there are few references to theory or further reading, it's no less helpful for it. For example, I will return time and again to the reflective questions at the end of each chapter. This book is akin to a series of coaching sessions, spiced up with anecdotes from a lifetime of service to young people in education. These anecdotes have highlighted for me many areas I should focus on in more detail, from thresholds of decision making to the value of being more prescriptive in meetings; and from how am I leading by example on work/life balance to creating 'manuals' for roles that may not have a contingency for long-term absence.

My key criticism is that, for a book written at the time of the pandemic, it contains too little about dealing with crises. Leadership

in the time of Covid is tougher than at any time in recent history. Decisions that impact on the health and wellbeing of the whole school community have become the bread and butter of heads' duties. So while the final chapter, 'Births, deaths and ambulances', touches on times when staff members are in crisis, or when a whole school community is suffering a tragic loss, it feels insufficient in relation to the daily onslaught of the role as it has been for nearly two years.

Having said that, Toby won me over from the first chapter. You'll excuse me that casual address, but I feel like we are on first-name terms after holding deep and meaningful chats with him in my kitchen for the past fortnight. He is my kind of leader. So as I ask myself whether my decisions 'will make a difference to Darren', I know *The Juggling Act* will be a crucial navigation aid as I try not to crash the ambulance.



Reviews



Ruby Bhatti, national leader of governance, Yorkshire and the Humber

@Ruby_Bhatti_OBE

Inspection Reports: Scratching the Surface

@julespg

Former HMI Julie Price Grimshaw was mentored by someone who believed that the quality of written reports was paramount to inspections' credibility. Here, she analyses 51 recent Ofsted reports for signs of consistency and fairness.

The post is highly critical, highlighting common criticisms of schools, the regularity with which blame is placed on leaders, and the considerable emphasis placed on pupils remembering 'important knowledge'. However, Price Grimshaw recognises that most of the problems arise from Ofsted's decision to inspect schools during a pandemic, rather than the shortcomings of inspectors themselves, who she believes should use common sense and be realistic in their expectations of schools still struggling through Covid-19.

As trustees, governors and chairs, we certainly recognise that we are not in a 'post-pandemic' world. This blog's analysis is a stark reminder that the inspectorate is making few allowances for that.

TOP BLOGS of the week



When Quality Assurance Goes Wrong @MrMountstevens

This is the first in a series of blogs in which Jonathan Mountstevens explores school quality assurance. Here, he looks at why and how it fails.

The post begins with a definition of quality assurance and an account of its ubiquity in school leadership practice. Mountstevens then goes on to examine the challenges leaders face with implementing it, including looking in the wrong place, seeking the wrong outcome, relying on personnel and resources that are insufficient for the task, and finally having an outright malign intent.

The blog has already caused me to think again about the potential consequences of quality assurance, what to quality assure and how to go about it, and I'm looking forward to the next two in the series.

The Role of Governors in Schools – and How Parents can get Involved Nina Sharma via @Parentkind

In this blog, National Governance Association policy officer Nina Sharma writes about the role of governing boards in building positive parent-school relationships. It's about more than having parents on the board, she argues, centring the easily forgotten fact that parents and carers are key to a child's education and personal development.

Sharma lists various ways that governing

bodies can build stronger relationships with parents, and explains why it's vital to a school's success to do so. And for those struggling to go beyond listening and to truly engage, she also reminds us that Parentkind works closely with the NGA to support parents and governing boards to make the most of this mutually beneficial relationship.

A moral call with practical support towards genuine school improvement. What more could you want from a blog?

Pump up the Volume @dogpaws23

Here, Fee Stagg raises pertinent questions which I am sure have crossed many chairs' minds in governing body meetings. Is this the same voice? Why is the same person always asking the questions?

Pointing out that even the layout of the meeting room and where the clerk sits are important factors to encourage participation, Stagg also offers advice on how to encourage quiet governors to get involved. Her simple and effective tips, like offering governors the opportunity to ask questions in advance of meetings and linking governors with key lines of inquiry to build confidence, are sure to ensure everyone's voice is heard.

All of which makes for an important blog, not just for chairs, but for anyone running a meeting in school.

Understanding Wellbeing @greeborunner

Last but not least, Zoe Enser provides a very thought-provoking blog about wellbeing, with useful and practical advice for school leaders on how to promote it (and how not to). Reflecting on the pressures teachers experience during and beyond the school day, she argues that leading for wellbeing can't be allowed to take the form of add-ons and activities. Instead, careful thought needs to go into supporting "our most valuable resource".

The same applies to supporting school leaders, something that is always high on my agenda as a governor and trustee and should be for all of us.

Research



Iain Ford will regularly review a research development throughout the year. Contact him @TeacherTapp if you have a topic you'd like him to explore

Could teacher travel be the key to greener schools?

Iain Ford, senior data and reporting analyst, Teacher Tapp

Part of the business community's response to climate change has been to seize the changes forced on them by the pandemic and to offset their carbon emissions by offering flexible working permanently. But while commuting may be a thing of the past for some, teachers are not so lucky. Not only does teaching not lend itself easily to flexible working, but school days also mean that teachers are often commuting during rush hour.

To build a picture of how teachers are commuting into school and why, Teacher Tapp polled its panel of over 6,000 teachers about all things green. What we learned is that primary teachers have slightly shorter commutes – an average round trip of 44 minutes and 16 miles each day, compared to 52 minutes and just under 20 miles for secondary teachers. Compared to previous surveys about national commuting habits, primary teachers' commutes are slightly shorter than the national average, while their secondary colleagues' are about equal with it.

We also learned that a whopping 83 per cent of teachers commute by car (five per cent with an electric or hybrid, and 78 per cent with a petrol or diesel). That's way above the national average of around 60 per cent. And while these numbers may be inflated due to people's reluctance to use public transport during a pandemic, there is more going on than that.

Schools have a distinct disadvantage when it comes to commuting, compared to the rest of the population. While blue- and white-collar workers often commute into city centres and business parks, schools can be found all over the country, often in places not always well served



by public transport. This is reflected in the responses to the polling: only six per cent of teachers get to school by public transport. Even in London, with one of the best public transport systems in the world, only a quarter of teachers use it, and half still commute by car.

But while the location of their schools is certainly a factor, another is how much teachers have to carry. Teaching resources and bags of marking are just some of the things they have to bring to work. One-third of teachers say that they are carrying a heavy rucksack, with a quarter of them carrying more than one bag. Walking long distances, cycling and even public transport are often off the table regardless of transport links and distance.

Many places offer people incentives to adopt a more eco-friendly choice of commuting, and schools are no exception. By far the most popular option – 30 per cent of schools do this – is to offer cycle-to-work schemes. London and the south-west are the only regions where this number surpasses 40 per cent. And while teachers who work in schools with such a

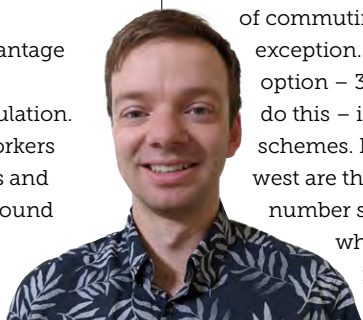
scheme do cycle to school more often, we don't know if this is causal or not. In other words, they may be subsidising those who already did.

Aside from the weight of their bags, there are many other reasons teachers don't cycle. Many see the lack of safe infrastructure as a barrier, for example. Safety more broadly may in part explain why eight per cent of men but only two per cent of women cycle to school each day.

So what about incentivising other means of transport? We found that just seven per cent of schools in London (and next to no schools elsewhere) offer season ticket loans for public transport. Meanwhile, just one per cent of schools have a green car scheme and three per cent (mostly secondaries) have electric car charging points.

On balance then, and for a variety of good reasons, it looks like four wheels are here to stay. However, the political response to climate change is running ahead of schools' policies, and with a ban on new petrol and diesel car sales looming large, more needs to be done to allow teachers to make the switch to electric.

Otherwise, where are teachers going to put all their marking?



Week in

Westminster

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

SATURDAY

Education secretary Nadhim Zahawi is clearly a man who doesn't believe in superstition (we bet he has no qualms walking under a ladder).

On Saturday, after ditching the National Governance Association's annual conference and sending a video message instead, he uttered the words "the dark age of Covid ... is drawing to a close".

WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?!

Remember Bozza telling us all last year that Christmas wouldn't, in no way at all, absolutely not, be cancelled.

Even worse: literally a few days earlier, the world had discovered the scary new Omicron variant, and his own department had told schools to get prepped for on-site testing to get kids back in January.

Gulp.

SUNDAY

What's the best way to celebrate the teaching profession on a Sunday? While attending the National Teaching Awards (NTAs) may be an obvious choice, that's just not how the DfE rolls.

The answer of course is guidance, lovely, lovely guidance. A cheeky Sunday afternoon email to headteachers being their favourite.

Exactly one day after announcing the end of the 'dark age', Zahawi's office brought back masks and stricter self-isolation requirements (all feels a bit Christmas 2020 doesn't it?).

While leaving the decision up to heads on whether to reintroduce masks, they made one thing very clear – schools best leave those bloody nativities well alone this year.

Meanwhile, as schools were still fuming about their Sunday roasts being interrupted, Zahawi popped up at the NTAs to channel his inner Brucie and tell winners to "come on down" to collect their gongs.

And just like that, it was 'nice to see you, to see you nice', as he dashed for the exit before his main course had arrived.

WEDNESDAY

As schools struggled on with rising absences, angry anti-mask protesters and still trying to work out whether they should hold nativity plays – Zahawi provided a masterclass in reading the room.

He declared on Twitter it was the "most wonderful time of the year", tweeting a picture of the gold and red embellished Christmas tree at DfE towers*.

*Note to self: if DfE posts shaky finances this year, make sure to ring Lord Aggers to send round one of his

cost-cutting supremos, who will recommend less snazzy decorations to save a couple of quid.

Saving the world from apocalyptic climate change is high on the government's agenda for several reasons at the moment – and long may it continue.

But schools minister Robin Walker has more to add to the agenda. On the topic of recognising the importance of British birds, he told MPs in Westminster Hall that: "As a Robin, I feel particularly strongly that this is something to be welcomed." A different kind of Tweet, Tweet.

THURSDAY

The extent of this week's Labour shadow cabinet reshuffle surprised many pundits, with very few top frontbenchers staying in their jobs. Many moved elsewhere or were promoted, while others, including shadow education secretary Kate Green, were removed.

But even Labour itself seemed unprepared for the scale of the changes, with a number of junior roles left vacant by promotions, including that of shadow schools minister Peter Kyle, who is now on the Northern Ireland beat.

On Tuesday morning, the party told journalists it would announce junior appointments in the afternoon. By Thursday, officials were saying they probably wouldn't be confirmed until Friday afternoon.

It's good to see education is such a priority!





Athelstan Trust School Improvement Lead

L11-L15 (£54,091-59,581)

From Easter 2022 ideally or September 2022

We are looking to recruit an outstanding teacher to work as a School Improvement Lead.

Your support to our leaders and teachers will be vital in ensuring that all our schools achieve the same successes. Joining a school improvement team led by the CEO, you will use your passion, subject knowledge to drive forward the quality of teaching and learning across the Trust. This will suit individuals who want to take a step-up and work at a more strategic level across a range of schools.

The successful candidate will:

- be an outstanding teacher with a proven track record of securing sustained excellent outcomes
- have up-to-date knowledge of subject curricula and assessment requirements
- be an experienced leader at either primary or secondary level
- have proven experience of identifying and implementing effective strategies for improving attainment in challenging schools
- have a highly effective style that is both consultative and influential
- be able to demonstrate resilience, motivation and commitment to

driving up standards of achievement

- be able to work across a group of schools and show significant impact in developing capacity and improving outcomes for young people

The Athelstan Trust is a family of schools in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire incorporating 5 secondary schools. Details about the Trust can be found on The Athelstan Trust website.

Closing Date: 12 noon on 5th January 2022

Interviews on 18th January 2022

Please send an application form together with a letter, no more than two sides of A4, outlining how your skills and experience make you a suitable candidate for this post. An application pack is available on the Athelstan Trust's website.

Further information:

Sian Jones, Athelstan Trust - sjones@theathelstantrust.org
The Athelstan Trust, Lowfield Road, Tetbury, GL8 8AE

We are a flexible working employer and we are willing to make any reasonable adjustments you require during your interview so please ask us.

Caring, collaborative and excellent

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Chief Financial Officer

Launceston College Multi Academy Trust consists of six schools (primary and secondary) across Cornwall and North Devon.

Our Trust aims for young people to become happy, responsible and successful by learning the knowledge, skills and values which are important for society. We seek to develop adventurous students, who have the character, resilience and self-awareness required to be successful. We have exceptionally high aspirations for our students and support them no matter what their background or circumstances.

The Trust seeks to appoint an experienced and qualified financial professional to join us as Chief Financial Officer to support the delivery of an exceptional education for the young people in our care.

The main purpose of the job:

- Responsible for the effective management, reporting and recording of the Trust's finances, ensuring the highest levels of financial probity and meeting all requirements of both the law and financial reporting standards.
- Develop a financial strategy which considers influencing factors to both

underpin sustainable long-term financial health and which supports the Trust in achieving strategic outcomes, building the competency of the financial function.

- The role will require regular travel to trust sites to develop and maintain key relationships with each school setting, in order to ensure the financial function makes a full contribution to the needs of the schools within the trust.

This role is full time, 37 hours on a permanent basis.

Salary: Grade L, £55,500 - £60,480

Closing date is initially Monday 6th December 2021, 9am.

To find out more, or to apply, please visit our website.

Safeguarding Statement:

Our Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All posts are subject to DBS clearance and appropriate pre-employment checks.



Rocklands



Manor Hall
Academy Trust

Rocklands School is a Primary generic special school providing education for children aged 2-11 years with a broad range of special educational needs.

Following the retirement of the dedicated and very well-respected Head Teacher we have an exciting opportunity to offer the right candidate. We are looking to appoint a passionate and forward-looking Head Teacher to lead our dedicated and skilled staff and support team from September 2022.

Our aim at Rocklands is to create a learning environment where the child is firmly at the centre of all we do. They will be inspired to believe in themselves and strive to become the best they can, ready to take the next steps on their journey through life. Visits to the school are welcomed and strongly encouraged.



Rocklands School is looking for someone with the:

- **Aspiration** to continue our journey to the next level
- **Passion** to focus relentlessly on what is best for every pupil in our context
- **Ambition** to sustain a rich and varied curriculum which engages and inspires every child
- **Ability** to further develop outstanding educational provision, whilst securing what works well, that results in outstanding outcomes
- **Compassion** to support all members of the school community
- **Character** to exemplify the school's vision and values
- **Willingness** to understand what the team has to offer and get the best from them
- **Inspiration** to take us with them on the journey
- **Insight** into the challenges specific to special educational needs provision
- **Vision** to cultivate collaborative relationships with all stakeholders

Further information about Rocklands School is on our website www.rocklands.manorhall.academy or telephone 01543 548700.

Applications should be sent to bursar@rocklands.manorhall.academy

Closing date: Wednesday 5th January 2022 12 noon

Shortlisting: 10th January 2022.

Interviews: Week commencing 17th January 2022



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

To apply, please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to bpn_hr@bestpracticenet.co.uk.

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