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SCHOOLS WEEK

Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFGENBERG@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
DEPUTY EDITOR

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



James Carr
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR_93
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



Tom Belger
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM_BELGER
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

THE TEAM | Senior designer: Simon Kay | Sales Manager: Bridget Stockdale | Senior Sales Executive: Clare Halliday | Operations and Finance Manager: Victoria Boyle
Event Manager: Frances Ogefero Dell | Senior Administrator: Evie Hayes | Office Administrator - Apprentice: Zoe Tuffin

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NEWS

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Ex-Tory MP says he was told to tow party line or lose free school

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Labour has called for an investigation into allegations the government threatened to pull the plug on a free school project if its local MP "didn't vote in one particular way".

Christian Wakeford, who defected from the Conservatives to Labour on Wednesday amid criticism of Boris Johnson's leadership, made the claim yesterday (Thursday) in another blow for the embattled government.

Wakeford, the MP for Bury South in Greater Manchester, announced last February that a new free school had been approved for the Radcliffe area. The new school is due to open in 2024 and will be run by Star Academies.

Any evidence that decisions about free schools are political is likely to call into question the process for approving applications and the role of independent regional school commissioners.

Applications to open free schools are currently assessed on the "basic need" for school places and evidence of low educational standards in a particular area.

Wakeford made the claims after he was quizzed about allegations by a Conservative MP, William Wragg, that politicians had faced "pressures and intimidation from members of the government" in the ongoing furore over parties held in Downing Street during lockdown.

Wragg, a former member of the parliamentary education committee, alleged that whips had threatened to "withdraw investments" from MPs' constituencies "which are funded from the public purse".

Labour's deputy leader Angela Rayner called for an investigation into "grave and shocking accusations of bullying, blackmail and misuse of public money."

"The idea that areas of our country will be starved of funding because their MPs don't fall into line to prop up this failing prime minister is disgusting."

Stephen Morgan, the shadow schools minister, said it was "utterly disgraceful



Christian Wakeford

that the government has been using children's learning and opportunities as a political football to corral votes in Westminster".

Wakeford did not respond to repeated requests for comment from *Schools Week*.

He told the BBC yesterday morning he was "threatened that I would not get the school for Radcliffe if I didn't vote in one particular way", adding that the town had "not had a high school for the best part of ten years."

"How would you feel when they hold back the regeneration of a town for a vote? It didn't sit comfortably, and that was really the starting to question my place where I was, and ultimately to where I am now."

It is not known which vote in parliament this relates to, or when the alleged threat was made, or by whom.

A Downing Street spokesperson said in response to Wragg's comments that it was "not aware of any evidence to support what are clearly serious allegations. If there is any evidence to support these claims, we would look at it very carefully."

But another Conservative

MP, Michael Fabricant, tweeted that "if I reported every time I had been threatened by a whip or if a whip reported every time I had threatened them, the police wouldn't have any time to conduct any other police work".

The Department for Education said it was a political matter.

The government's rationale for selecting free schools was scrutinised by the National Audit Office in 2013. A report found over 23 per cent of higher-scoring applications had been rejected at that point, while 17 per cent of low-scoring applications were approved.

The report said most high-scoring applications were rejected on "practical grounds".



Angela Rayner

COVID

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Schools ignore masks rule change to 'protect children and staff'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Secondary schools are ignoring the government's last-minute rule change and will instead keep face masks in the classroom in order to "protect the health of children and staff" amid continued disruption.

Prime minister Boris Johnson announced on Wednesday the Department for Education (DfE) would lift its recommendation that face coverings be worn in secondary classrooms the following day.

It gave leaders just a few hours to inform parents of changes. Heads criticised the move as "shameful" and throwing them a "hospital pass", pointing out it was a "cheap way" to deflect from the ongoing party-gate crisis engulfing government.

Under the changes, which reflect the end of Plan B arrangements across England, rules requiring masks be worn in communal indoor areas will also be scrapped from next Thursday.

But many schools are persisting with masks. Andy Byers, headteacher of Framwellgate School in Durham, is encouraging students to continue to wear them for the next "two to three weeks".

The school currently has around one in ten staff and around one in 20 pupils off because of Covid.

"We felt that masks were brought in for a reason, and for us, in that school, that reason hasn't disappeared yet," he added.

Horndean Technology College in Hampshire will also continue with its mask-wearing policy.

Headteacher Julie Summerfield said: "I'm trying to protect the health of the young people and I'm trying to protect the health of my staff."



The move would protect upcoming exams and keep pupils in school.

ONS data estimates around one in ten primary age pupils and one in 20 secondary age pupils tested positive for Covid-19 last week.

The north-east has 1,485 cases per 100,000 people – the highest of any region.

Four in five of the 1,150 schools represented by the Schools North East regional network will keep some Covid measures in place, the organisation revealed.

Director Chris Zarraga said "schools are still facing real challenges" with "local pictures often radically different from the national".

South Tyneside Council said schools may consider recommending face covering based on their own risk assessments.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, warned schools are "still very much in the eye of the Covid storm".

Paul Haigh, headteacher of King Ecgbert School in Sheffield, told parents they are keeping masks "for the time being" due to having the "highest level of Covid infection we've ever seen".

The 1,400-pupil school has 20 staff off. Haigh said he received a "flurry of emails from parents with thanks and supporting the decision".

In the week ending January 16 there were 123 confirmed Covid outbreaks at primary schools in England, according to the UK Health Security Agency.

An outbreak is defined as two or more test-confirmed cases of Covid. There were 100 outbreaks at special schools and 17 at secondary.

Latest DfE attendance statistics show an estimated 315,000 pupils and around 60,000 staff missed school for Covid-related reasons on January 6.

David Phillips, head of Chilwell School in Nottinghamshire said the timing of the decision showed a "complete lack of respect for school leaders".

Byers added he was made aware of the change an hour before pupils went home.

Jonathan Mountstevens, a deputy head, said using masks "as a cheap way to distract from a crisis is shameful".

"Clear communication and consistency are key to routines and high standards in schools, so last-minute changes like this ride roughshod over them, throwing heads a hospital pass. Again."

The recommendation for masks had been reintroduced in January, while masks in communal areas has been advised since November.

Meanwhile education secretary Nadhim Zahawi praised teachers and school staff for "following the science" and getting vaccinated.

Just over four in five education professionals aged between 40 and 64 had received three vaccinations, second only to health professionals.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted gets back to full strength

Ofsted will have a full team of inspectors to send into schools at the end of the month after weeks of reduced activity.

The inspectorate has had access to just over 10 per cent of its usual inspection workforce since schools returned this term. Frontline leaders who were also part-time inspectors were stood down to "focus on their leadership responsibilities".

However, the watchdog will be back to

full strength from the end of this month, suggesting inspection activity will return to pre-Omicron levels.

It will be for leaders to decide whether to offer their services to Ofsted, "as has always been the case", the Department for Education said.

Ofsted was forced to rely solely on the 185 inspectors it directly employs, 13.6 per cent of its normal school inspectors' roster.

The reduced workforce meant far fewer schools were visited at the start of the term than was expected.

The watchdog's deferral policy "remains in place and Ofsted will continue to remind providers about it for the remainder of this half-term".

Last term about a quarter of requests to defer inspections were turned down.

NEWS

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Third time unlucky for Midlands academy

14 January 2022

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

An academy rated 'inadequate' three times over the past decade has finally been threatened with transfer to another trust.

The leeway given to Nuneaton Academy in Warwickshire has sparked calls for a level playing field, with other academies and all maintained schools facing far swifter intervention.

Government guidance says regional school commissioners (RSCs) will "act swiftly and robustly where there is failure in an academy".

Ministers say this is a cornerstone of their academy revolution - failing maintained schools were regularly "left languishing" under councils.

Nuneaton Academy was converted in 2010, joining the Midland Academies Trust.

It was rated 'requires improvement' in 2012 and 'inadequate' two years later. Ofsted criticised teaching and a lack of "urgency" about change, which the trust promised to "accelerate".

But results slipped further in 2015 and by 2016 it was again rated 'inadequate'. Ofsted praised progress under new leaders, but repeated its criticism of "weak teaching".

Yet it avoided rebrokering until a third 'inadequate' rating last November when Ofsted said pupils did not learn the curriculum "well enough".

This month Andrew Warren, the West Midlands RSC, finally issued a termination warning notice.

He said the gap between leaders' expectations and reality, and the decade of poor inspection ratings, left him "very concerned" about improvement. The trust declined to comment.

Schools Week's analysis of 29 termination warning notices since 2019 found most followed one 'inadequate' rating. One other trust escaped swift threats - the Sprites Primary Academy in Ipswich was warned after its second 'inadequate' rating.

While several trusts avoided notices for more than a year after a poor

Dear [REDACTED]

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Directors of The Midland Academies Trust in respect of Nuneaton Academy.

I received an Ofsted notification dated 9 November 2021 confirming that Nuneaton Academy was judged to be inadequate and has serious weaknesses. For the reasons set out below, I now consider it necessary to issue this Termination Warning Notice.

These challenges indicate a gap between leaders' expectations for the school, and what is being delivered and achieved. This, combined with the fact that Nuneaton Academy has not received better than an Inadequate or Requires Improvement overall Ofsted judgement since opening in 2010, means I am very concerned about the trust's ability to deliver the required sustainable improvement.

inspection, most delays were attributed to Covid.

Landewednack Community Primary School in Cornwall received a recent warning after one 'inadequate' rating last year, the Southerly Point Co-operative MAT school's first inspection since conversion.

Rachel Holder, its chair of governors, said: "There does seem to be an inconsistency, with some schools given several opportunities to implement changes, whilst others are given no time to show improvements are underway."

She said RSC scrutiny was "not unreasonable", but called for notices to be issued and potential transfers evaluated only if re-inspection showed limited progress. The "unhelpful" uncertainty distracted from improvement efforts, she said.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, said that when a school was underperforming, support and expert advice were vital.

"Simply rebrokering does not automatically improve a school any more than academising does. It is the leadership and people in a school that make the difference, not the name over the door."

Academy transfers remain rare. In 2017-18, just 255 of 7,600 academies moved trust, with about 60 of those the result of

government intervention.

Guidance states rebrokering decisions are "on an individual basis". There is also a contrast to the intervention powers for local authority schools.

While RSCs have the "power" to rebroker failing academies, academising failing maintained schools is a "duty".

RSC performance goals also include improvement rates for converting schools, but not rebrokered academies.

Anne West, an education professor at London School of Economics, urged more consistency. "Maintained school procedures are far more draconian and don't allow discretion."

The government has grudgingly allowed schools that turn around poor Ofsted ratings to resist conversion.

But Yew Tree Primary School in Walsall had to go to court to stop conversion after Covid inspection suspensions removed its chance to show improvement. Jamie Barry, the school's head, also backed consistency, but said all schools deserved discretion and support, not "automatic changes".

A DfE spokesperson said RSCs take "swift action". They work to improve or rebroker 'inadequate' academies "with the same energy as we would with a maintained school".

But they added trusts have effective internal school improvement structures, highlighting 2019 Ofsted figures suggesting more than seven in 10 sponsored academies were now 'good' or 'outstanding'.



Andrew Warren



Anne West

NEWS



Supreme Court ends academy dispute

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

A charity demanding compensation for giving up commercial facilities on the site of a school in London has had its bid to take its fight to the Supreme Court thrown out.

The UK's highest court confirmed to *Schools Week* that a permission to appeal application by the Durand Education Trust has been denied.

It ends the organisation's long-running legal dispute with the Department for Education over leisure facilities and private accommodation in Lambeth.

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, welcomed the Supreme Court's decision, but warned that Durand was just "an extreme example of issues that are unresolved in the academy system", particularly around the ownership of school land.

She added: "The fact it's had to go to the highest court in the land just shows how inadequate the checks and balances were when the academies programme was set up."

The Supreme Court application was lodged after the Court of Appeal threw out Durand's judicial review of the DfE's decision to demand the return of the land without payment.

The school closed in 2018 and reopened as Van Gogh primary school. At that point the school land and buildings were handed over to its new sponsor, the Dunraven Educational Trust.

But the Durand Education Trust kept hold of land occupied by a private leisure centre and accommodation, including the top floors of the school's main building.

Durand was ordered in 2019 to transfer the remaining land to Lambeth Council for the use of Van Gogh. It officially did so on in October 2020,

but argued in court that it should be compensated for its investment in the facilities.

The court dismissed the case, saying the government was "amply justified in concluding that no compensation should be paid to DET for the leisure centre land".

The DfE this week welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to refuse permission to appeal, and said it would "continue to focus on securing the best outcomes for pupils, families and staff at Van Gogh Primary and across the school system".

"Academy trusts' status as companies, charities and public sector bodies mean they can be rightly held up to great scrutiny, and in the very rare circumstances such as these, where action needs to be taken, we do so."

However, the future management arrangements for the running of the commercial facilities on Van Gogh's site remain unclear.

A deal was struck in 2020 for Durand's trading arm, London Horizons, to continue to run the facilities for another 18 months.

That agreement comes to an end in April. Lambeth Council told *Schools Week* that the council and Dunraven were "continuing to review future arrangements to ensure transparency in the operation and management of the leisure centre and accommodation that was built on the school site".

Schools Week also understands that the land and buildings in West Sussex that once housed Durand's failed state boarding school project have now been sold.

But it is not known how much the sale made, nor how much will be retained by Durand Education Trust and how much will go to Van Gogh.

The boarding school closed in 2017 after the Department for Education withdrew its offer of more than £17 million in funding.

Give staff concessions in London driving charge plan, say heads

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

School staff and other key workers should have concessions on proposed new driving charges in London that will "inevitably impact" them, leaders say.

Sadiq Khan, London's mayor, is exploring implementing a smart charging system in which existing charges are replaced by a pay-per-mile scheme.

But with that technology "still years away", shorter-term measures such as an expansion of the ultra-low emission zone and a "small" charge for all but the cleanest vehicles are also being considered.

It follows a report by City Hall last year that found that 98 per cent of schools in London are in areas exceeding World Health Organisation pollution limits.

Campaign groups welcomed the announcement, but school staff are likely to be affected by the new charges.

Teacher Tapp polling last year found that half of teachers in the capital still commute by car. In London more generally, about one in five car journeys are for work.

David Boyle, the chief executive of the Dunraven Educational Trust, said any change would "inevitably impact on some teachers' ability to get to their schools".

But he added: "We need to do something about pollution - we owe that to our children. And we will have to manage the consequences."

"There's no doubt that such changes would lead to schools losing staff who couldn't reasonably make a journey unless by car."

Jon Chaloner, chief executive of GLF Schools, said it was "essential" to reduce pollution in London, but added that "while we would support realistic measures to improve air quality, concessions on charges and subsidies (including for electric car purchase) must be a factor for key workers".

"We cannot disincentivise our staff or add further to their current pressures."

Stewart Keller, the operations director of the Knowledge Schools Trust, which runs four central London schools, said his organisation would "support any initiative to ensure that the children in our care get cleaner air to breathe".

A spokesperson for the mayor said that "for too long it has been accepted that children growing up in London will breathe more polluted air than their friends and family outside this city".

Any new schemes would have to "strike the best balance" between health and environment benefits and costs.

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NEWS

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Ofsted shuns own style guide to label pupils 'lower ability'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted reports that describe pupils as "lower ability" have been criticised for "perpetuating the myth" that certain children are innately inferior.

Experts say such phrasing disproportionately impacts pupils from poorer backgrounds and have called on the inspectorate to stop using the terminology.

Ofsted admits the description goes against its own style guide, which says inspectors should refer to pupils with "lower prior attainment" rather than "lower ability". But it would not comment further.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of Schools and College Leaders, said it was "disappointed" to hear Ofsted reports describe pupils in a way that implied an "immutable value judgment".

'It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy'

Pie Corbett, the founder of the Talk for Writing teaching framework, told *Schools Week* that "lower ability" was an "old-fashioned phrase that is unhelpful in education" and could become a "self-fulfilling prophecy".

The education consultant and former Ofsted inspector added it would be impossible for inspectors to determine ability as "everyone can get better".

When Jane Jones, Ofsted's national lead for mathematics, contributed to the Mr Barton Maths Podcast in 2018, she said the phrases "most/least able" were shorthand for the highest and lowest prior attainment.

However, she admitted Ofsted could not measure ability and the phrasing was problematic as it implied "ability is innate and you can't do anything about it" instead of a principle where "all pupils can succeed".

The inspectorate appeared to have moved away from using "ability" after the Education Inspection Framework of 2019.

Its previous school inspection handbook noted inspectors "pay particular attention" to



the "most able pupils". The new handbook dropped such phrasing.

But in a report for Coalway Community Infant School, in Gloucestershire, published on Friday, inspectors said the school "lacks ambition for some lower ability pupils and some pupils with SEND".

It also said pupils were set work that was "too easy", which "leads to low expectations for some pupils of lower ability".

The school declined to comment.

Steve Lomax, the leader of the GLOW Maths Hub and Teaching School in Cheltenham, said Ofsted's prominence led to the terminology becoming "the language of schools".

This could lead to learners "given provision that is limiting. You're almost fixing outcomes and expectations."

Hopefully a 'slip of the pen'

Schools Week found more than 20 examples of the phrase used in reports since 2019.

Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School in East Sussex was told "teachers do not plan effectively for the lower ability pupils".

In 2020 inspectors said books "read by lower ability readers" at Atkinson House special school in Northumberland were in poor condition.

McCulloch said the union

believed this was "a slip of the pen in individual reports, but more care does need to be taken".

Corbett said that poorer pupils from working-class backgrounds were "very often" the children highlighted as "lower ability".

A report commissioned by the National Education Union in 2017 found "ability grouping" was "often based on the child's background" and therefore "has a detrimental impact on social mobility".

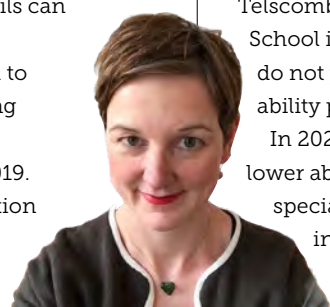
Experts say descriptive terminology such as low or high attainers and achievers should be used instead.

Shirley Clarke, a formative assessment expert and consultant, said: "Ability implies permanence ... low achiever and high achiever is much more appropriate as it implies at this moment."

The experts say Ofsted should replace the phrase with more appropriate language.

"It would be nice if there could be some very clear, explicit guidance given to all Ofsted inspectors about some of the most important language that they must use and must not use," Clarke said.

Ofsted would only say: "Our style guide suggests inspectors refer to 'pupils with lower prior attainment' in reports, rather than 'lower ability' so there should be very few that use this terminology."



Julie McCulloch

NEWS

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'Discrimination': Small trusts denied two-thirds of repairs cash

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

Small academy trusts have been denied almost two-thirds of repairs funding over the past five years, leading to accusations of discrimination against rural schools.

Just £2.6 billion of the £7.2 billion requested has been handed out in Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) grants since 2017, according to data obtained by Schools Week. The total includes repeat applications.

Julia Harnden, a funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said capital access had "inequality baked in".

CIF grants allow small trusts, sixth-form colleges and some voluntary-aided schools to fund significant repairs, improvements and expansion projects.

But they must bid for the cash - and success is not guaranteed.

Schools Week used a freedom of information request to ask for data on rejected CIF applications.

Analysis reveals only 51.5 per cent of applicants secured any funding in an average year since 2017. Collectively, winners also secured only 36.4 per cent of the cash requested. Some 1,329 applicants missed out in an average year.

Figures also do not include schools keen for funds, but deterred by low success rates, past rejections or application cycles that Harnden dubbed "complicated and time-consuming".

By contrast, larger trusts and councils get



guaranteed School Condition Allocations (SCA) funding, which they can choose how to invest across their schools.

Our analysis found SCA funding has jumped 435 per cent since 2015, versus a 5 per cent rise for CIF applicants and 12 per cent decline for maintained schools.

A Department for Education spokesperson said both pots followed the same methodology, based on pupil numbers, building conditions and size.

But Michael Johnson, the chief executive of the Chulmleigh Academy Trust which runs Lapford Community Primary School in Devon, said the system discriminated against rural schools.

Meeting the 3,000-pupil threshold for SCA funding was easier for trusts in densely populated urban areas, he said.

His school is awaiting news on its latest application, following six failed bids.

"It's a question of levelling up in a disadvantaged village. Some areas are more equal than others.

"We want to replace an antediluvian hut that wouldn't be fit for chickens to live in. The roof's pressing on the bowed walls - some have fallen away. You can push and they move."

Reception and pre-school pupils share another temporary classroom instead, with year 1 pupils initially with them too.

Clare Willmott, the head of school, said it had been a noisy, "constant battle" as staff taught simultaneously. "It's heartbreaking their first school experience is a shed."

Space constraints limited enrolment and even deterred would-be staff, Johnson said.

Protests and support from Tory MP Mel Stride have not yielded results either.

Tim Warneford, a CIF consultant, said his seemingly strongest bid last year failed. "Their 40-year-old boiler may not get through winter, and the primary could close for weeks," he said.

Yet some larger trusts and councils envy CIF applicants. The DfE spokesperson said CIF funded multimillion-pound projects which "may not be affordable" through SCA.

Andy Walls, a senior policy adviser for the National Association of Head Teachers, said the bigger issue was "not enough capital funding to go round".

Harnden said the DfE estimated that £11.4 billion of repairs were needed nationally.

But the department spokesperson highlighted £11.3 billion of school refurbishments since 2015, and a ten-year rebuilding programme.

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

Academies urged to report structural concerns after school collapse

The Department for Education has admitted not knowing how many schools have suffered partial building collapses, as it urges academies to report structural concerns.

A ceiling collapse at one London school saw 12 pupils hospitalised in mid-November.

It affected fee-paying Rosemead preparatory school - but government appears concerned about state schools too.

An Education and Skills Funding Agency bulletin sent out weeks later asked about

"structural issues".

The poll, shared with academies, further education providers and council skills teams - rather than all schools - asked about problems which "may cause harm or ... closure". ESFA will then "consider further support".

Tim Warneford, an academy consultant, said it suggested officials wanted to know more than they had been able to gather in their condition data collection programme, run

between 2017 and 2019. He also said his clients had not seen the poll.

Meanwhile, a Schools Week FOI reveals the DfE knows of at least three other partial school collapses in recent years.

But it also confirmed it lacks full data, suggesting real figures could be higher. Councils are not required to report such information, and only incidents involving serious injuries require Health and Safety Executive notification.

NEWS

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Covid delays release of long-awaited phonics study

FREDDIE WHITTAKER & JOHN DICKENS
@SCHOOLSWEEK

The independent charity set up to find out which education interventions work best has defended its decision not to publish an important study on the effectiveness of popular phonics programmes until next year.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) announced a £1 million trial in 2016 into Read Write Inc. Phonics and Fresh Start, two systematic phonics-based literacy programmes run by Ruth Miskin Training.

But the foundation says a decision was made in 2019 to instead publish the findings alongside a second study funded by the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund (TLIF). This would provide the “most useful and consistent messages around the findings”.

But constant Covid delays mean the results are not expected until spring next year.

It comes as a new study this week reignited a row over phonics teaching. UCL researchers claim a “narrower focus” on phonics in the past decade has made English schools “less successful”.

Jonathan Solity, a director of Optima Psychology consultancy that develops reading and writing programmes, said the Ruth Miskin initiatives were “effectively the government’s flagship systematic synthetic phonics programme”.

The honorary lecturer in educational psychology at UCL added: “The EEF mission statement confirms its commitment to transparency, and its guide to ‘Improving Literacy in KS1’ claims to provide evidence of what works – and what doesn’t work – to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children.

“Therefore, surely teachers deserve to know whether evidence shows a programme used in 25 per cent of schools and 24 out of 34 English hubs works?”



The EEF told *Schools Week* its decision to publish both trials together was made before any delays caused by the pandemic.

The studies were due to be published in spring last year, but the second trial was “severely impacted by school closures” during Covid, an EEF spokesperson said.

The second study was rescheduled to run in schools last year, but the spring closures pushed it back again to this academic year.

The EEF told Solity in an email that it had received a draft report of the first study in February last year.

However, it claimed Covid-related delays with the national pupil database meant it had only received “all necessary information” for the report in December.

The report would now go through its “internal reporting process”, the spokesperson said in December. “The findings have not been shared externally.”

The spokesperson added publishing both results together would ensure “best utility to schools and to ensure the integrity of the two trials”.

Read Write Inc. Phonics is a whole-school approach for early readers from reception to year 2 and for children in years 3 and 4 who are not yet accurate and speedy readers.

Fresh Start is a catch-up programme for those children struggling to read at the end of primary school.

Annual accounts published last month show Ruth Miskin Literacy Ltd posted a £2 million profit after tax in 2021, up from

£1.4 million in 2020. Its turnover last year was £5.9 million. It also opened a branch in Australia with school and local government contracts.

A report from UCL this week found synthetic phonics – the practice of breaking words up into units of sound – has become the “dominant approach” in England after reforms introduced in 2012 by Michael Gove.

However, researchers claimed teaching reading in England “has been less successful” under the new approach. The conclusion was based on an analysis of 55 “robust” longitudinal experimental trials.

An open letter to government signed by more than 250 people said teaching should instead “centre on a wider range of approaches to teaching phonics and reading, enabling teachers to use their own judgment about which is best for their pupils”.

But Tom Bennett, the founder of ResearchEd, said it was “odd” to claim teachers only used phonics.

Evidence showed it remained the best way to introduce young people to reading, although there was “still a strong anti-evidence instinct in many educationists”, while some teachers had been misinformed and let down by phonics “denialists” in their teacher training.

The Department for Education said phonics teaching had been “proven the world-over to be the most effective method of teaching children to read”.

The EEF rates phonics as having a “high” impact of five months of progress for “very low cost”, based on “very extensive evidence”.

In the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), England rose from joint tenth to joint eighth place out of 50 countries for reading among ten-year-olds, its highest-ever ranking.

The DfE said its guidance was “clear that phonics is just one part of becoming a fluent reader” alongside “speaking and reading stories to foster a love of reading among children.”



Tom Bennett, founder of ResearchEd

NEWS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK**'Demoralising': Top primaries lose their status under 'harsher' inspections**

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Smaller staff numbers in primary schools and limited access to subject specialists creates disadvantages under Ofsted's curriculum-heavy inspection framework, leaders have warned.

It comes after new analysis suggests primaries are far more likely to be stripped of an 'outstanding' grade, although researchers caution that it is still early days.

Downgraded schools call the inspection experience "demoralising", while unions say a "lack of understanding" from the watchdog leads to suspicions that primaries are dealt with "particularly harshly".

But Ofsted says its framework "is not disproportionately tougher" for primaries with inspectors taking a school's size and phase into account.

84 per cent of 'outstanding' primaries downgraded

FFT Education Datalab analysis of Ofsted's monthly management information found that 57 of the 68 'outstanding' primary schools (84 per cent) inspected during the autumn 2021 term were downgraded.

In contrast, 47 per cent of 'outstanding' secondary schools were downgraded in the same period. However, inspectors visited only 15 such schools.

Ofsted's inspection framework places more emphasis on a well-planned curriculum than results, once given more prominence.

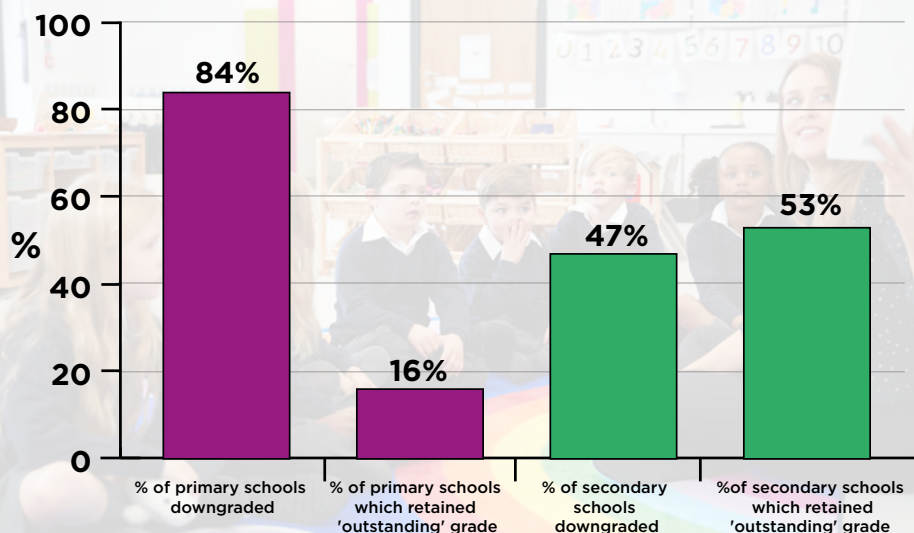
Kinoulton Primary School in Nottingham was downgraded to 'good' following an inspection in September.

The watchdog noted the school's curriculum was "not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects".

Simon Paramore, the school's head, said the inspection fell just three weeks after the school began implementing a new curriculum.

"We're a very small school, we've only got five classes, so for us to get every single subject to the standard is incredibly tough because we just haven't got the manpower of a big secondary."

Primary schools often had one staff member co-ordinating four subjects, while secondary schools might have four staff members per subject, he said.

'Outstanding' inspection outcomes 2021**Lack of subject specialists**

Jessica Mair, the head of John Betts Primary School in west London – which was downgraded following a November inspection – admitted the school knew it was likely to lose the top grade because of the demands of the new framework.

"We're never going to be as specialised as a secondary," she said. Most of her staff lead two subjects each.

Primaries and secondaries needed separate frameworks to take account of the differences, she said.

"Having gone through it, it's quite demoralising."

Peter Cansell, of the National Association of Primary Education, suggested a "lack of understanding" in Ofsted that the distinct subject boundaries in a secondary school were not applicable to the integrated curriculum of many primary schools.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of Schools and College Leaders, said: "The suspicion lingers that primaries are dealt with particularly harshly."

But Ofsted said that "transitional arrangements" – which will run until at least March – allow it to "recognise that not all schools, particularly smaller primaries, will have had the opportunity to complete the process of constructing their curriculum fully".

Covid impact on primary 'not recognised'

Cansell said inspectors had shown "significant disregard" for the impact of Covid in primary schools. This was less of a problem at secondary level where pupils have "already developed the patterns of learning needed".

Headteachers have long said that Ofsted has not considered the toll of Covid on schools, with Mair believing her school's efforts were not acknowledged.

However Ofsted has said this is not the case and that it does "recognise the huge efforts" of schools.

FFT analysis revealed that 77 per cent of 'outstanding' schools inspected in 2021 were downgraded. Top-rated schools were exempt from inspection for more than a decade until routine re-inspection began in September.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, has said it was "more realistic" to halve the number of 'outstanding' schools.

Chris Russell, the watchdog's national director of education, admitted last year that some 'outstanding' schools that have improved since their previous inspection may still be downgraded because the bar has been raised.

Paramore agreed: "It's not that the school has got worse – it's just the goalposts have moved so much."



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Slam poets, site visits and accelerate curriculum...

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

As the education committee launches an inquiry into challenges faced by Gypsy and Roma pupils, schools share their secrets on turning things around ...

Roma parents used to ask Petr Torak for help taking children out of Peterborough's Queen Katharine Academy.

Now they ask the chief executive of the local migrant charity Compas how to enrol in the school that recently won a Pearson Teaching Award for its Roma inclusion work.

Understand and build links with communities

The "turning point" for Queen Katharine (QKA) came after it sought Torak's help in 2016 to tackle the disproportionately poor behaviour amongst Roma pupils.

Torak, a governor and also Roma, helped deputy principal Jane Driver and principal Lynn Mayes visit Slovakia, the birthplace of many pupils. They saw "harrowing" living conditions, children in special schools without good reason, and a general acceptance that Roma education ended at primary level. Torak claimed such marginalisation was behind the decision of many European Roma to move to Britain.

Leaders then educated staff about pupils' likely backstories and how behaviour was a "response to lived experiences", as well as Roma history, culture and values.

"We came back determined to give these young people aspiration and a sense they deserve to stand shoulder to shoulder with everybody else," Driver said.

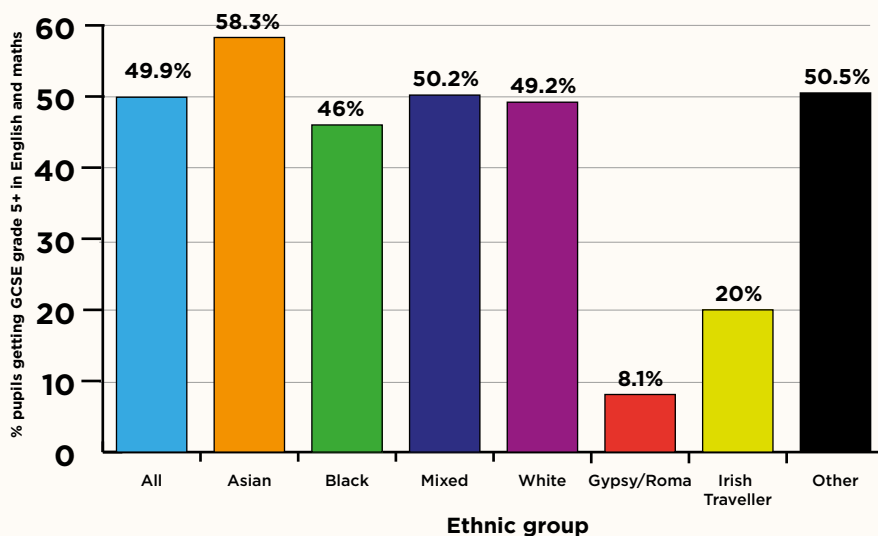
Compas also sent Roma workers to visit families of absent children.

When Paula Strachan became head of St Teresa's



All smiles: Queen Katharine Academy won a Pearson Teaching Award for its Roma inclusion work

Roma pupils way behind on GCSE outcomes



Catholic Primary in Darlington, she visited a nearby site where many Roma pupils lived.

"I wasn't afraid to ask honest questions," she says. "If heads don't understand the groups we're serving, we can't do our jobs."

She saw how common illiteracy was, and now telephones parents who cannot read letters and stands outside her school each morning so parents can flag concerns in person.

Driver says schools must be brave trying new approaches – like QKA's "accelerated curriculum".

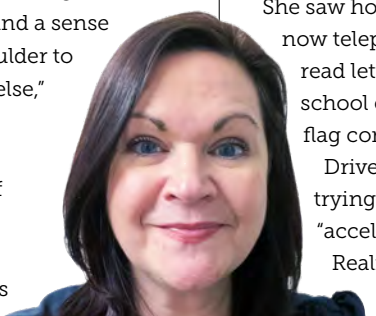
Realising many Roma pupils' poor English and frequent spells



St Teresa's map display showing where GRT children have travelled

away make traditional teaching unviable, leaders cram most of the curriculum into half the time. Classes are smaller and language-learning is weaved throughout all subjects.

Roma Progress 8 performance and attendance have both improved. The school also runs a Roma gifted and talented



Paula Strachan

LONG READ

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scheme, and staff receive training to make all lessons accessible to pupils with English as a second language.

St Teresa's similarly offers tailored support, from learning packs for parents who home educate or travel for long spells, to videos of authors reading stories for parents who are illiterate.

But QKA does not bend its attendance rules; Roma parents who take their children out of school in term-time still face fines.

Promote GRT culture and history

Many agree teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) culture can help pupils and parents feel welcome and tackle wider prejudice.

Emma Nuttall, policy manager at the charity Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT), says the Department for Education should encourage all schools to promote GRT history month.

Strachan takes her pupils to visit a local caravan site, letting them ask questions and showing them traditional vardo wagons and new caravans.

QKA has held exhibitions and brings in slam poets to get pupils writing about their identity. Driver said it also seeks to build "belonging and hometown links" in Peterborough that unite all pupils.

FFT argues GRT history should be in the curriculum too. A survey it carried out in 2019 found that most UK adults did not know 500,000 Roma and Sinti people died in the Holocaust.

Tackle racism

Another poll found GRT children highlighted racism and bullying as their main problems at school, which campaigners say explains the high GRT drop-out rates and poor outcomes

Nuttall urges schools to use the Anti-Bullying Alliance's GRT audit tool online, record incidents as "racist" and analyse data annually. Charities such as Compas help schools to teach pupils how to spot and report hate crime.

Academic Margaret Greenfield said her research found pupils beaten unconscious, teachers "reiterating negative stereotypes" and prejudice taken less seriously than other racism.

Strachan says she has been rung by



Petr Torak



Queen Katharine Academy celebrates Roma culture

schools "irritated" that a Gypsy pupil has arrived before SATs

Experts say tackling bullying can also help pupils to disclose a GRT heritage they often hide, enabling targeted support and monitoring. QKA estimates Roma numbers are twice what families declare. Charities say the same of UK census data.

Prioritise funding

Schools and campaigners agree they cannot overcome challenges alone, however.

A call for evidence from the education select committee to inform its inquiry into the challenges facing GRT pupils closes next week.

Demands MPs are likely to hear include ring-fenced catch-up funds for GRT children, and the release of a cross-government GRT strategy promised in 2019.

It followed a similar inquiry from the women and equalities committee that concluded GRT communities had been "comprehensively failed" by policymakers.

GRT pupils are almost four times as likely to be permanently excluded and around six times as likely to score below grade 5 in English or maths as white British pupils - a group labelled "forgotten" by MPs.



QKA pupils learn about traditional and new caravans with Gypsy leader Billy Welch

Brian Foster, of the Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers, says the £200,000 allocated to six GRT pilot projects across government in 2019 is "insulting", and doubts national schemes will follow.

Cuts to council outreach services also need reversing, he says, as focusing on attainment misses that many GRT children have left schooling altogether.

A DfE spokesperson said it was investing £5 billion in tutoring, teacher training and extra school funding. "This support is especially focused on helping the most disadvantaged, vulnerable or those with least time left in education - whatever their background."

NEWS



Falcon set to spread its wings

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

EXCLUSIVE

The “turnaround” trust set up by ministers to take on the schools no one else wants is going national.

New annual accounts for the Falcon Education Academies Trust, published this week, show it is looking to take on schools across the country after its remit was extended.

The trust, set up in 2019 to take on challenging schools in the north, has sponsored just two schools. Accounts say cancelled Ofsted inspections because of Covid led to a “lack of new pipeline schools”.

Anne-Marie Holdsworth, Falcon’s chief executive, told *Schools Week* the expansion was down to “early indications of success” at its two schools. A “wider geographical reach could potentially benefit more schools”, she said.

The trust’s accounts highlight a “financially efficient curriculum” and an increase of 0.99 in the Progress 8 score at Thornaby Academy in Stockton-on-Tees, one of its schools, as a success measure. However, comparisons are made difficult by the lack of exams last year and the awarding of generous teacher grades.

Falcon also used the Covid delay to “develop strong, best practice systems and processes that will support future onboard and a move to our national remit”.

The trust aims to transform “higher risk” schools before handing them over to permanent sponsors.

It wanted three schools by August 2020, warning the delay would “lengthen the time before the company achieves capacity”.

But Holdsworth added: “Moving to a nationwide pilot enables wider testing of the ‘turnaround trust’ concept ... and ensures that all schools which would benefit from the pilot are able to do so.”

Falcon is carrying out due diligence on “a

number of schools”, but would not reveal how many. It has also worked with government to “simplify and streamline the process” for schools to join.

As the trust is likely to target schools with expensive or legally tricky finances, such as private finance initiative arrangements, the rebrokering process could drag on.

Meanwhile, government troubleshooter Nikki King has taken over from David Earnshaw as chair. Earnshaw stepped down in March to focus on his role as chair of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust. He remains a Falcon trustee.

King has previously been parachuted in by government to sort out scandal-hit trusts.

Holdsworth said King saw Falcon as an “exciting opportunity and refreshing change of direction”.

The trust is still reliant on purchasing school improvement services from others. It purchased £443,000 in such services from the Delta Academies Trust last year, up from £271,000 in 2020.

This included secondment costs totalling £172,000 and school improvement support of £260,000.

Gareth Mason, Falcon’s former chief executive, left in unexplained circumstances in 2020. A recent recruitment drive failed to secure a new permanent chief executive.

Chris Mitchell, deputy chief executive of Delta, was brought in as Falcon’s director of education and Holdsworth has been appointed permanently.

Accounts state its improvement plans require a “significant level of school improvement support, which may be challenging to achieve” given Covid and the “needs for trusts to support their own schools”.

Falcon is now working with more organisations to secure support, including regional school commissioners, trusts and teaching school hubs.

London UTC becomes 12th to close

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

A university technical college in London will close four years after it opened.

Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC, named after a former Conservative politician, announced last May that low student numbers had forced it to consider its future.

Andrew Christie, the chair of governors, told the college’s 20 staff this week that he was “saddened” to confirm the college was no longer financially viable and would close at the end of this academic year.

“Over the coming months, we will be working tirelessly with our students to help them secure the very best outcomes as they complete their courses. We will also be supporting our valued staff as they prepare for new roles in September.”

The UTC opened in 2017 to specialise in science, technology, engineering and maths. It has capacity for 550 students aged 14 to 19, but only had 150 on roll last year, now down to 75. It is also yet to be inspected by Ofsted.

According to its financial statements, the UTC recorded an operating loss of £486,000 in 2019-20 and required extra government support to stay afloat for the past two years. It has also received almost £2 million in capital grants since 2017.

Its building is set to be taken over by Ada, the National College for Digital Skills, which opened in 2016 and has been in search of a new home for a number of years. This will ensure “the needs and aspirations of the young people of Westminster and the surrounding boroughs will continue to be met,” Christie said.

Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC will be the twelfth UTC to close.

To mitigate low student numbers, a number of the colleges have begun recruiting students as young as 11, rather than the traditional starting age of 14. Many have also joined multi-academy trusts to ease financial troubles.

Sir Simon Milton Westminster had been in discussions to join Fulham Boys School multi-academy trust, but the move fell through in 2020.

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Reformed language GCSEs will 'alienate' pupils

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Pupils may be put off reformed language GCSEs because of their "prescriptive" new approach, ministers have been warned.

The government announced it would press on with new content for GCSE French, German and Spanish, albeit with a one-year delay and minor amendments to controversial plans to bring in lists of common words.

The proposals (see box out) are supposed to make the subjects "more accessible". They follow a lack of entries hampering the goal of a 90 per cent take-up of EBacc subjects.

But subject associations and leadership bodies have said the proposals could have the opposite effect.

David Moss, from the National Association of Language Advisers, said it was "difficult to see how this reformed GCSE in its current format will help motivate pupils and improve uptake".

He was also "concerned" about whether reformed GCSEs would provide a "firm basis for continuity to A-level", and how the content would relate to learning in primary schools and at key stage 3.

The government announced last week that schools would teach the new content from 2024 with the first exams in 2026, a year later than first suggested.

But the Association for Language Learning said the proposals should be delayed another year.

"As it stands, current year 7 students will be sitting these new GCSE languages exams, who won't be following a key stage 3 curriculum that necessarily prepares them for this new GCSE content."

The announcement of the amended proposals also prompted criticism from school leadership unions.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said a curriculum that focused on memorising a long list of words would alienate pupils and prove counter-productive.

"At a time when pupils need to be enthused to learn languages, the government has chosen to make GCSEs prescriptive and grinding. The idea that this will help it fulfil its target of 90 per cent of pupils taking up these subjects is pure fantasy."



Friday's announcement included only minor amendments to proposals set out last year, which were backed by about half of consultation respondents.

The government initially said students would be "expected to know 1,200 lexical items for foundation tier, and a further 500 lexical items for higher tier".

The Department for Education has updated its proposals to the need to know up to 1,700 "word families", which it said would mean "the number of words on which students can be assessed is higher".

The proposal requiring exam boards to select 90 per cent of the words from the 2,000 most "frequently occurring" in each language has also been relaxed to 85 per cent to provide "greater flexibility".

But one MFL head of department said proposals would still lead to a "very grammar-heavy curriculum, which involves the teaching of remarkably few words by international standards".

"For the first time ever, we appear to have low

standards by design, not by accident. Change of this order - and it is a big change - is a massive gamble."

More than half the respondents to the consultation said their "main concern" was that the DfE was not setting any expectations on exam boards to list vocabulary "thematically".

The subject content would now provide a "clearer expectation" that boards identify "broad themes and topics as one of the ways to select and organise the vocabulary, with examples of which ones could be chosen".

Robin Walker, the schools minister, said the government wanted more young people to take up modern language GCSEs. "These evidence-based changes aim to do just that - making these qualifications more well-rounded and accessible, and helping more young people to enjoy learning languages."

Ofqual has also confirmed it will reduce the number of assessment objectives for the three GCSEs from four to three, despite half of respondents disagreeing with the proposals and only a third supporting them.

GCSE language reforms – what's changed

- First teaching from 2024, first exams in 2026 (changed from 2023 and 2025)
- Students expected to know up to 1,700 'word families' (changed from 1,700 words)
- 85% of words must be from 2,000 'most frequently occurring' (changed from 90%)
- Exam boards can add up to 20 'cultural, historical geographical' words
- Subject content will require exam boards to identify 'broad themes and topics'

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Schools play second fiddle to political skin-saving

The government made a big commitment to updating the sector with Covid rule changes at reasonable hours and with enough time for leaders to prepare.

The January announcement on bringing back face coverings sort of stuck to this. Rather than piecemeal announcements disrupting holidays, changes were communicated after the new year and with a few days to sort stuff out.

It wasn't perfect, but it was a lot better than earlier in the pandemic.

Ministers had also called off Ofsted before Christmas, to give schools time to put together Omicron contingency plans, which was a welcome sign of forward thinking from the department.

But giving school leaders an hour or so to inform parents of a change to the sensitive policy of masks in classrooms the next day is just not good enough.

It's a lot easier to ditch face masks than to make plans to re-introduce them. But other Plan B rules will be dropped next week. Would it have been

that much harder to do the same for schools (even 24 hours would have been more helpful)?

Put simply, it shows a complete lack of consideration and compassion. Political skin-saving has taken priority.

But the fall-out is not just being felt in the classroom. Labour's newest MP Christian Wakeford alleged this week that, during his time on the Conservative benches, whips used the threat of pulling a new free school from his area as leverage for his vote.

Similar claims have been made by other MPs in the party.

The explosive claim raises questions about the transparency and independence of the process for school capital projects.

It also undermines the position of regional school commissioners if politicians or their advisers are using free schools – and the potential they have to change young people's lives – as political pawns.

Wakeford should report details of his claims to the appropriate authority for a full investigation.

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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

‘Career changers can push back on what’s not reasonable’

Katie Waldegrave’s charity, Now Teach, has won £3 million to go fully national. She explains why career switchers can have a radical influence both in and outside of the classroom.

If you know of Now Teach, the charity that supports career changers into teaching, it’s likely you’ll know one of its founders, Lucy Kellaway, who became the poster girl for the organisation after leaving the newsroom for the classroom.

Less covered in the media is her co-founder, Katie Waldegrave, who, before setting up Now Teach, had already been a

teacher, set up another successful charity, published a critically acclaimed history book and lectured in India.

So how did it all happen? “Lucy had met my mum at a party, and she was then thinking of becoming a teacher,” Waldegrave says. “My mum said, you should talk to Katie!

“She came in the morning, and we talked and talked. By the time she left, Now Teach

had probably been born.”

It was not long after Waldegrave had had twins. Around that time, a book had been published called *The 100 Year Life*, which estimated that about half of babies born since 2000 might live to 100 years old. The pair discussed the babies, the book and “talked about the profound changes in the ways people were experiencing their lives and their

Profile: Katie Waldegrave



Waldegrave with her twins, Sam and Ellora, in June 2016

work," says Waldegrave.

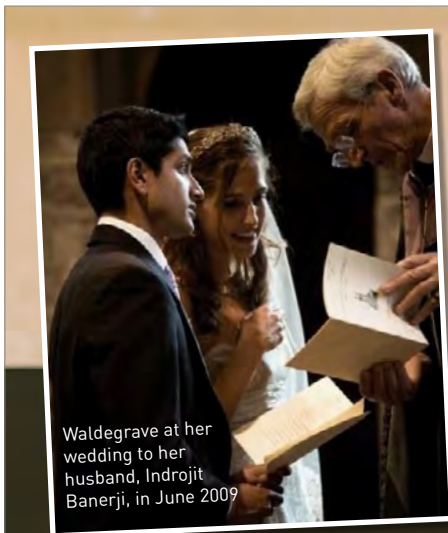
The conclusion: a new model for entering teaching was needed, one that did not assume young graduates were the obvious recruits.

If Kellaway represents the late career switcher, Waldegrave represents the other side. Her career is perhaps closer to the flexible, multi-role route that commentators tell us is the future of work. She joined Teach First's inaugural cohort in 2003, after having come from what she describes as a "very privileged background.

"I lived in the proverbial bubble," she says of her early life, with admirable frankness. "I went to private schools, and then to Oxford, and that didn't seem particularly surprising." There was one unusual aspect of Waldegrave's life, even compared with her peers: her father, now Lord Waldegrave, was health secretary to Margaret Thatcher and John Major, and MP for Bristol West.

"We had a split life, between London and Somerset, so I lived between these two worlds," she says of herself and her siblings. They lived in a big, old, "dilapidated" house, with Waldegrave's mum constantly "in overalls" trying to fix things while also successfully running a cookery school with chef Prue Leith. "I remember Mum had this bell she'd ring, and we'd all arrive, covered in mud! I was a very free child."

Her father, who is regarded as being on the moderate wing of the Conservative Party, also instilled a sense of public service in



Waldegrave at her wedding to her husband, Indrojit Banerji, in June 2009

Waldegrave and her daughter, Ellora, at a family wedding in India in 2018



"Career changers know how to be efficient and prioritise"

Waldegrave. "It was a deep and ingrained sense that if you can, you should give back in public service."

Nevertheless, Waldegrave's career does look different to her father's: she has worked in challenging schools in deprived areas, while Lord Waldegrave is now the provost (chair) of Eton College, where he was also a pupil. His public comments show he is a strong proponent of bursary provision, but he also got into hot water the same year Now Teach launched when he threatened to resign from the Conservative Party over government plans to make employers ask job applicants if they went to private schools. The plan was quickly ditched.

But again, Katie is being overshadowed. It's partly her modesty. She tells me in passing she wrote a "totally irrelevant book" (it's called *The Poets' Daughters*, is about Wordsworth's and Coleridge's daughters, and received glowing praise from the *Sunday Times*, *Observer* and *Spectator*).

Similarly impressively, in 2007, she set up a

creative writing charity with award-winning author William Fiennes, called First Story, which now reaches about 170 schools.

In 2013, she and her husband moved to India, where she lectured at Ashoka University in New Delhi.

That same modesty made Teach First a slightly uncomfortable experience at times, while she was teaching at Cranford Community College in Hounslow, west London. "It didn't always feel straightforward. I didn't realise how controversial it still was in the staffroom. And I think I personally also felt acutely conscious of being this girl with the posh voice."

What really interests me about Waldegrave is her insight into enticing the very young, and inexperienced, into teaching – and how it has shaped her view that career changers could really be the more radical cohort.

"One of my pet theories is that because teaching remains such a young profession, people are working every hour that is possible. I certainly was, and so was everyone

Profile: Katie Waldegrave



Waldegrave receiving her PhD in 2013

else," she says. But "career changers know how to be efficient and prioritise. They know when to say, actually, 'what I'm doing now is no longer helping. I should sleep.'"

She makes an important point. Figures from 2019 show just 67 per cent of early-career teachers remained in the profession five years after they joined. One in three teachers last year planned to quit within five years, citing workload.

It's here that the value, and radical potential, of Now Teach emerges – it is called *Now Teach*, rather than *Teach First*.

"I would love to think that Now Teachers could support colleagues by setting a different model that says, 'I will be good enough,'" smiles Waldegrave.

So far, the charity's track record is promising. A report by ImpactEd found 76 per cent of Now Teachers remain in the profession after two years, compared with 39 per cent of other trainee teachers the same age. Meanwhile, 93 per cent of Now Teachers are still in teaching one year after qualifying, compared to 85 per cent nationally.

The numbers are small, though. Of the roughly 6,000 people who joined ITT programmes this September, only 168 were with Now Teach. But that's rising to 200 in 2022, and 250 the following year.

She adds: "If you've been doing something else well for 30 years, this is very hard in a different way, [but] there's something about being a bit braver. When I was 23, I might have moaned, but I would moan to my mum. But if you have seen the way other places are, you can have a little more confidence about pushing back against things that are not reasonable."



Waldegrave with her parents, siblings, children, nieces and nephews in 2018

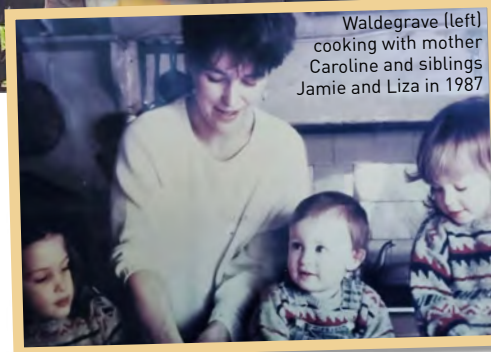
"The goal is to have a Now Teacher in every staffroom"

This point is particularly relevant with the shift to flexible working in many other sectors, which doesn't seem to be mirrored by schools yet.

Waldegrave is conscious, as ever, of not sounding pompous: "The last thing you want is Now Teachers coming in and saying 'do it this way.'" But many Now Teachers "have signed off on flexible working, so they know how to ask for it".

And there are some brilliant stories: she tells me of one former NASA scientist who "rearranged the footflow" of his school so children stopped jamming the corridors. Another Now Teacher reworked data input, so it took staff minutes rather than hours.

It is this potential that Waldegrave wants to scale up, using the charity's £6,600 per recruit (for one year of marketing, and two years of support). "Where next will be how we capitalise more on what's happening organically, and amplify Now Teachers." With £3 million in government funding to go



Waldegrave (left) cooking with mother Caroline and siblings Jamie and Liza in 1987

nationwide from September 2022, the goal is to have a "Now Teacher in every staffroom".

With the potential of career changers in mind, Waldegrave also has her eye on strengthening them across the public sector. She's been advising two Frontline alumni (the Teach First for social workers) to create a similar programme for foster carers, also aimed at older, experienced people. "It would be great to have a big network of career changers all over!"

As someone who has successfully taught, written, and set up charities – resulting in her MBE this summer – Waldegrave understands the reality of the 100-year life perhaps better than most school leaders. She's definitely on to something with the radical power of career changers.

"Now Teachers see things differently. If you went school-university-school, you might just think this is what work is like."

Opinion

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

The solutions to the widening attainment gap are to be found in the south-west as well as in Westminster, write Dan Morrow and Ed Vainker

As school and MAT leaders, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the size of the challenge we face in minimising the impact of Covid on disadvantaged children. After all, even before the pandemic the disadvantage gap was widening again after a decade of gradual progress in the right direction.

In Devon and Cornwall, the gap is wider than the national average at every stage of education. Plymouth, one of the largest cities in our region, has one of the largest gaps nationally. On average, disadvantaged children here finish school the equivalent of two years behind their wealthier peers.

Meeting a challenge of this magnitude requires focused collective action. Collaboration, not competition. That's why, along with the Ted Wragg Trust, Education South West, Westcountry Schools Trust and Cornwall Education Learning Trust, we are using the pandemic as a catalyst to heighten schools' focus on supporting disadvantaged children in our region. Our starting point, through the SW100 leadership programme, is to develop a cadre of headteachers whose animating purpose is ensuring all children can enjoy lives of choice and opportunity.

What makes the SW100 partnership special is that it is entirely driven by school and MAT leaders and exclusively focused on the needs of children and schools in our region. We are not responding to a government tender or framework. Instead, our guiding questions in creating the programme were how to develop school leaders whose core purpose is enabling

DAN MORROW

CEO, Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust

ED VAINKER

CEO, Reach Foundation



How regional partnerships can begin to reverse widening gaps

disadvantaged children in Devon and Cornwall to thrive, and how to help them develop the knowledge and relationships required to achieve this shared purpose.

A focus on disadvantaged children is central to all discussions on the

national terms. The rural poverty we experience here in the south-west looks very different to poverty in other parts in the country. We want our leaders to gain a deep understanding of disadvantage in their local communities. That's why

“Our goal is locally rooted, nationally connected leaders

course. In a region where – if we are honest – this has not historically been common, we hope it will help people reframe the nature of being a south-west school leader. One participant has already been heard to say that SW100 is “changing my narrative”, and that's precisely our aim.

Our goal is to develop leaders who are locally rooted. It's not enough to discuss disadvantage in generic,

our programme is modelled on community organising practices such as community mapping, listening campaigns and relational meetings. Our participants are learning to connect with their communities and fulfil their roles as civic leaders.

Of course, we also want them to be nationally connected, to learn from the best schools and school leaders



across the country. Too often, that's out of reach for teachers and school leaders in coastal and more remote parts of the country. So SW100 leaders have termly visits to some of the highest performing schools nationally – from King Solomon Academy and Totteridge Academy last term to STAR, Outwood and Dixons schools this term.

Our virtual knowledge-building webinars always include live discussions with leaders from across the country. The investment of time and money in these school visits is substantial, but worth every penny; the collective knowledge and inspiration flowing into our region (not just one or two MATs) is significant.

Finally, we place significant emphasis on developing strong relationships between our south-west school leaders. Maintaining the rigour, relationships and energy required to close the disadvantage gap is tough; it is even tougher when you are working alone. Recognising this feels especially important now when head teachers are under such significant pressure and many question the wisdom of ‘stepping up’.

We urgently need people who want to take that step, and we are already hearing from participants that SW100 – and specifically its networking component – “reduces the barriers to stepping forward”.

National solutions to closing the attainment gap will always be blunt tools on their own. With locally grown collective action at the heart what we do, we can have more impact on the future of our pupils and the profession. And make the size of the ‘levelling up’ challenge that little less overwhelming.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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DONNA BRADBURY

Year 4 teacher, Reepham C. E. Primary School

How to support teachers with cervical cancer

To mark cervical cancer prevention week, Donna Bradbury recounts her journey from diagnosis to remission, with tips to support other teachers through the ordeal

In September 2020, amid hope of a 'return to normal' in schools as the pandemic's first wave ebbed, I was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

I'd never missed a smear, so it came as a shock. My symptoms – abnormal bleeding and discharge – had started in May. I managed to get an online appointment during my dinner break at school thanks to my GP's use of a new app, and I believe it saved my life.

Multiple inconclusive swabs and ultrasounds later, I was passed on to the hospital. It was there over the summer holidays that my diagnosis was made. A week of MRI, PET scan and blood tests later, I was on the phone to my headteacher.

I remember it vividly. He reassured me that I didn't have to think about anything to do with school. I said I'd like to start term and await my treatment plan before deciding what to do. He supported me. I said I'd prefer for all the staff to learn my news at once, and he accommodated that too. Come

INSET day, I left the hall 'for a drink' and he told everyone. Social distancing made the next bit hard. Hugs went begging. But the support steered me for the next step – my new year 1 class the next day.

my cancer hadn't spread (stage 2B), but treatment would involve chemotherapy and radiotherapy. My cover was appointed on a Monday, I met them on Wednesday, and Friday was my last day. I didn't know if I would ever teach again.

I decided from the start to be open and honest with everyone. Another teacher might respond differently, and that's fine too. What matters is two-fold: first, that they feel heard and supported; and second, that parents know there's a plan for their children. It makes transition easier, and alleviates feelings of guilt about the impact of absence.

On the other hand, no one wants to feel pressured to return. I was actually grateful for the distraction

to do any work, I was just kept a part of things. (And the small presents collected by my TA and delivered to my door lifted my spirits immensely!)

By March, I was in remission. I wasn't due back until September, but I felt I could start in May.

I won't lie: 'chemo brain' had affected my reading and my memory, and all the changes brought by Covid made coming back tough. Never very good at asking for help before, I quickly learned, and my colleagues were great.

But admitting weakness is hard. My recommendation is to ask your returning teacher if they would like help, rather than wait for them to ask you. I still struggle at times. I am going through early menopause due to my treatment, which doesn't help my memory. A full recovery to pre-cancer days is not a given, but what value a staff member provides is directly related to how valued they feel.

And time, of course. For appointments (I still have check-ups every three months), and just to get back into the swing of things. Conscious of Covid's impact on my colleagues, I felt I needed to make up for my absence. My headteacher and colleagues alike protected me from myself when it came to that. Returning after nine months of physical and mental suffering was quite enough, and I'm glad I wasn't allowed to overdo it (despite my best efforts).

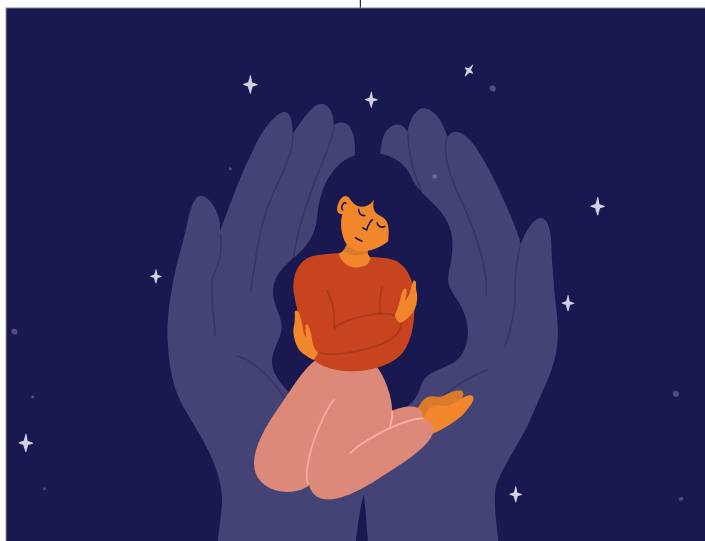
So I'm privileged to be back in my classroom. I have a lot of people to thank for that, and I hope talking about @my_cervical_cancer_journey can help others be as privileged.

(It doesn't have to apply just to cancer sufferers either.)

“I decided from the start to be honest with everyone

Keeping going kept my mind off things. But the truth is I was so fatigued I knew I would have to stop soon. And it happened fast. The following week, I found out

of work emails throughout my treatment, but this should also be a personal choice. And if that's what a teacher wants, it isn't a difficult balance to strike. I was never asked



Teacher training reforms

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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JANE
CRUICKSHANK

ECT visiting fellow and deputy
headteacher, Learning in Harmony Trust

Top tips for implementing the new Early Careers Framework

Supporting early-career teachers through the new framework is more demanding, but can be far more rewarding for all concerned too, writes Jane Cruickshank

While the introduction of the new Early Career Framework (ECF) has been a steep learning curve, the reforms provide Early Career Teachers (ECT) and schools with significant benefits. However, in order to get the most of these changes, there are a few steps that we have taken to ensure a successful implementation.

Benefits of visiting fellowship

As the trust-wide ECF coordinator, training as a visiting fellow with the DfE's ECF programme provider, Ambition Institute, has been a key part in our success in adapting to the new framework. As a visiting fellow, I have been trained to deliver the programme to our ECT cohort. But more than that, it means I am able to provide our ECTs, their mentors and senior leaders with insight into how the next two years will look and the best way to prepare for each stage.

It also allows me to provide them with personalised training in small groups. I can focus on areas they

are particularly interested in or struggling with, and I can offer them trust-specific training sessions that focus on vital parts of the job that are often left out of generic ECT training, such as planning assemblies or organising school trips.

Start as you mean to go on

We see ensuring our ECTs make

“Going beyond the ECF is crucial to our trainees' success

a successful start to their careers with us as an investment in their future and ours. So creating an environment where they feel comfortable and supported is about more than settling them in quickly; it's about hanging on to them for the long term too.

Our ECTs are given an early start in June/July so they can become familiar with their school, meet other ECTs, begin training and start getting paid, offering them financial security over the summer. Encouragingly, our ECTs often express how this constant support from the get-go makes them feel valued and allows them to flourish in their new roles.



Collaboration between ECTs

But we also know that no teacher can flourish alone. That's why we encourage our ECTs to build a support network with one another before starting their trust career journeys together. Through this network, they can build unique working relationships with their peers and other colleagues across the trust, as well as gain experience of different school environments.

provide them with specific advice on navigating their first years in the profession. But for mentors to support ECTs effectively, they need to be supported too. We have always placed the utmost importance on providing our mentors with the guidance they need to do the job, and we are pleased this is now a requirement for those delivering the ECF.

When providing this guidance, it's key to remember that mentors need to understand the responsibilities of their role and how they can mentor in the most constructive ways. But trusts and schools should not stop at offering such guidance. Leaders should also make themselves available to answer their questions and help them tackle challenges.

Because challenging though ECF implementation might be, it is after all only a minimum requirement. Going beyond it is not only imperative to our ECTs' success, but to solving the retention crisis.

At Learning in Harmony Trust, we continue our ECT training into their third year. Our offer also includes CPD beyond the statutory requirement, and we pay ECTs a retention allowance for their first five years.

We go the extra mile for them, because we know they'll go the extra mile for our students.

To support these, we facilitate our ECTs visiting one another's schools throughout the programme and organise team bonding experiences, such as the end-of-year residential weekend. And each year, we see the benefits of this collaboration as our ECTs grow and thrive together.

But we don't stop there. Ongoing provision of CPD for them as a group as they go into their second year of teaching enables their bond to continue to strengthen.

Invest time in your mentors

Lastly, of course, none of this is possible without good mentors. We carefully select mentors for our trainees who are best placed to

Teacher training reforms

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Teacher training reforms impact everyone from trainee to leader. The key to retention and progress is to offer consistency across your provision, writes Katie Waring

The flurry of recent changes to teacher training and development, together with the ongoing pandemic, has made navigating the complex world of recruitment and professional development even more of a minefield for schools. Yet, it is increasingly imperative to attract, recruit and retain the best teachers to provide the best education for our young people.

At Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) we decided to take a proactive approach to strategically manage this shifting landscape across our family of 17 academies. Over the past two years, we have forged a multi-faceted BDAT People Strategy to ensure we live up to our values and that every member of staff, at every level, has the opportunity to fulfil their professional potential. Our strategy, which formally launched in September, is designed to deliver consistent, tailored and high-quality professional development that streamlines the complex processes and reforms.

Key to our approach was securing successful partnerships in which we could help shape the delivery of our programmes. For example, for BDAT Initial Teacher Training (ITT), after extensive research and experience of working together, we carefully selected the successful GORSE SCITT to share in provision of teacher training across the trust. Crucially, we work alongside GORSE to supplement the programme to include the frameworks we use at our academies, preparing our teachers specifically for BDAT classrooms.

For our Early Career Teachers (ECT), we partnered with Ambition Institute



KATIE WARING

Director for professional and career development, Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

Weaving a 'golden thread' through professional development

to provide the quality professional development and mentoring they need to consolidate their practice and become effective and satisfied in their roles. We've also partnered with national providers and other trusts to deliver the new National

trust also removes workload for our headteachers and leaders, who would otherwise have to conduct research and set up their own offers individually.

And among their many other benefits, these partnerships also

“ A new people strategy is already helping our staff feel valued

Professional Qualifications (NPQs). These partnerships give us the benefit of working to deliver a high-quality research-informed programme that is based on the needs of teachers in Bradford.

Vitally, they also allow us to follow the national frameworks and reforms while ensuring that we have the breadth and capacity to adapt the content to best support our staff and communities. Having the provisions centralised within the

ensure we continue to drive up standards for the benefit of our communities, many of which are in areas of high deprivation. They facilitate meaningful collaboration and connection between teachers across our academies. We have formed networks of ECTs, subject specialists and more, reducing a sense of isolation that is common among new teachers, and accelerating the sharing of best practice.



A final, crucial thread of our people strategy is our career pathways framework, which we specifically created to identify development opportunities for teaching and support staff alike. It outlines various opportunities for staff to develop within their current roles and progress on to their next steps. Line managers use these pathways to support appraisal and annual careers discussions.

Though early days, we have already found that a strong people strategy grounded in our values and ethos is helping our staff feel valued. They know we are prioritising their progression and this will, we hope, lead to establishing higher rates of retention through increased satisfaction at work and in their careers. Importantly, it is also building capacity for each of our senior academy leaders to focus on their academies, improving the education of their pupils while prioritising the development of their staff.

Our people strategy is unique to our trust, and our schools and their needs. But the lessons we've learned in its development are universal. First, take time to digest the new policies and frameworks and their underpinning rationale. Second, listen to the needs of your academies. There is plenty of scope for flexibility. Next, don't try to go it alone. Forge new partnerships that match your academies' needs and give you a voice in how programmes are delivered.

And finally but crucially, be proactive. These changes have happened with us, not to us. So let's keep it that way!

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



The Next Big Thing in School Improvement

Authors: Rebecca Allen, Matthew Evans and Ben White

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Reviewer: Zoe Enser, Specialist adviser, The Education People

Anyone working in education knows that significant time and energy are devoted to school improvement. How do we encourage pupils to learn? How can we 'see' this happening and how can we measure it? In *The Next Big Thing in School Improvement*, Professor Becky Allen, Matthew Evans and Ben White set out to tackle this complex topic by presenting us with the ghosts of school improvement past, present and future, and much of it makes for bleak reading for those of us working on it!

From the outset, the authors argue that school improvement is messy and even potentially impossible. This is especially true, they say, when scaling up, out, or seeking universal answers to recurring educational conundrums. They remind us too that even the most successful academy trusts as defined by outcomes can still have schools within their communities in which they struggle to replicate those same results. However attractive the idea might be, the complexities of schools are unlikely to allow simple transference of ideas and systems.

Allen and her co-authors go on to state that as a species, we find comfort in patterns to help us create meaning, but this means we can kid ourselves into believing learning is much more manageable and visible than it is. We can also believe the knowledge we hold is sufficient to understand this process. But the truth is, they say, that learning is varied, and difficult to define and measure. We can get caught up in positive feedback loops which create an illusion of causation, but the "inherent complexity of the school

system means we know far less about how we would like schools to function". Our intentions are good but our attempts to improve are built on shaky ground.

But it's not all doom and gloom for school improvers. The experience, knowledge and insights within the book are vast, and it covers a huge range of topics. I found the chapter on the hidden lives of teachers particularly interesting, for example. As co-developer of Teacher Tapp, Allen has opened the doors of countless classrooms and invited teachers to share their unique perspectives. Acknowledging that variety within the profession is a key factor for our consideration if we really want to improve - something the book seeks to emphasise.

The other key emphasis throughout the book is on the idea that for real improvement to happen we need to let go of some of our preconceived ideas. Being conscious of what we don't yet know, as opposed to focusing on what we think we do, offers some interesting possibilities. Some readers might find a concentration on the gaps in our knowledge frustrating, but it is refreshing to read something that doesn't claim to be 'the next big thing' or the answer to all our problems.

Each chapter comes replete with questions, designed to encourage deep reflection on, and exploration of, what we don't know. This is very much in keeping with the thrust of the book, and is a marked difference in approach from the usual formula of recapping what we have learned and how we will apply it.

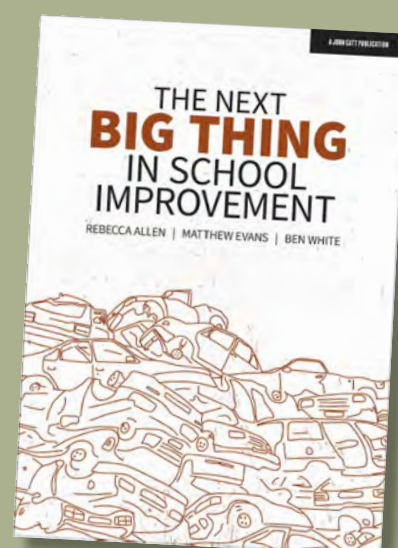
Overall, *The Next Big Thing* tells the story "of an education system conceived of as a 'beast' [which continually] resists our attempts to tame it". It highlights the complexity of the problem, the attempts we have made to resolve them and the

significant gaps we still have in our understanding of what 'improvement' means.

Sometimes, it feels like it somewhat over-emphasises the impossibility of the task that would-be school improvers have set themselves. Some readers will certainly find it makes for uncomfortable reading. But evidence-informed challenge is never a bad thing, and it's hard to disagree with the authors that understanding what we don't know (and appreciating what may indeed be unknowable) is key to honing our efforts.

It isn't without some useful suggestions, either. How we might make more precise and streamlined use of educational research particularly stood out for me.

All of which makes it essential reading for anyone in or aspiring to school leadership – albeit that readers need to come to it prepared for challenge.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Mary Hind-Portley, assistant subject leader (English), Hillside High School, Bootle

@Lit_liverbird

Ten Things I Still Hate about Data @jpembroke

I've always enjoyed James Pembroke's writing about data, and this 50th birthday blog is a distillation of his no-nonsense approach to the topic in primary and secondary schools. Pembroke gives a pacy, detailed and robust run-down of everything problematic about our use of data. For those newer to the profession, he outlines the various incarnations of data accountability over recent years. Some of us will remember CVA, and may even feel a pang of nostalgia for it.

He goes on to examine at how things look now, with a detailed exploration of the many issues with primary data, their implications for primary schools and their effects on secondary data and progress. This is essential reading for all in leadership roles, not least because of this salutary statement: "Up and down the country, every department in every school is expecting what can only be achieved by 50 per cent."

Supporting Our Pupil Premium Students: An Evidence-based Approach @GauravDubay3 via @StMattResearch

Gaurav Dubay presents an argument that "strips away the noise" around pupil premium and focuses on how to increase

TOP BLOGS of the week

the progress of disadvantaged students. Bringing together a range of recent research alongside seminal EEF sources, his argument supports the central importance of the expert class teacher within a culture of improvement.

While interventions are often necessary, Dubai says, recruiting strong teachers and investing in their training will undoubtedly narrow the attainment gap. After all, he reminds us, the classroom is where pupils spend the majority of their time. And with four simple steps from the EEF's *Guide to Pupil Premium* (2021) the blog makes a persuasive case for slowing down to get our approaches right.

The question now is: are we brave enough to strip away the noise and reduce teachers' workload so that they can focus on perfecting their practice?

A New Class

@MrsBallAP via @EImposters

I was asked to take on a new class during the autumn term, and this post by The Educational Imposters' Rachel Ball really resonates with me. It's full of evergreen advice about meeting a new class, and entirely focused on the ways we can make students' and staff's experience of transition a positive one.

Even as experienced practitioners,

thinking through the process of establishing our nuances with regards to school routines and building relationships is important. Nothing should be taken for granted, and Ball's own humble approach is a model to us all. She is honest about her own anxiety around transitional moments "even after 20 years in the classroom", and the result is a highly reflective approach that combines her own experiences with those of other practitioners such as Lodge Park Academy's Ben Newmark, as well as literature on the subject, including Peps Mccrea's *Motivated Teaching*.

Ball's focus throughout is about creating a culture of "credibility, care and consistency". And who could want for more?

Building Leadership Awareness Through Presence of Self @msybibi

Building on Ball's humility and sense of imposter syndrome (see the title of her blog), my final selection this week comes from Yamina Bibi, who here addresses directly that nagging voice of doubt which affects so many teachers, and especially women. Bibi addresses the topic with honesty and clarity, discussing how this affects her personally and that many female teachers are held back by it.

This is a practical post at heart, in which Bibi outlines ways to address negative self-talk. One of the ways this manifests is as over-positive self-talk about others. We persuade ourselves that we are surrounded by superhumans and natural leaders and, by extension, that we cannot live up to those standards. It's something we're good at addressing with our students, but are we taking our own advice?

Bibi's openness and vulnerability inspired me to challenge my own negative self-talk as I started this week, encouraged by her statement that "we have a duty to model vulnerability and authenticity" as leaders. If doing that can encourage others who feel this way to continue their leadership journey, then I'm all for it.

Research



Our guest research post this week comes from Education Policy Institute.
To learn more about this new research, contact them @EduPolicyInst

Which school groupings are most effective and why?

**Bobbie Mills, senior researcher,
Education Policy Institute**

The pandemic has forced school leaders to deal with a totally new set of new challenges, and the government has largely left those leaders to make often difficult decisions about safe reopening, managing transmission risks and supporting pupils to catch up.

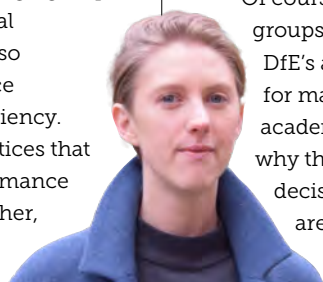
While few would argue against leaders being the right people to make these decisions, they are doing so in the face of increasing pressure. Our own research has found that additional Covid funding made available for staff cover, cleaning and catch-up have never fully met schools' needs, and costs have mostly had to be covered by other means.

For better or worse, the successful running of schools has never been more reliant on the effective decisions, actions and policies of school leaders, and now is the moment to start capturing that decision-making. We must seek out the best examples with proven results, so that they can be celebrated and shared.

This is why the Education Policy Institute is this week launching recruitment to a new national survey that seeks to understand the decisions of schools made in their groups: the Decisions in Education in England Panel survey – or DEEP survey for short.

We are inviting around 200 school groups, representing many hundreds more schools, to be part of this longitudinal study which will examine key actions and policies, and how schools work together through groups.

This is not just about traditional attainment outcomes. We are also focusing on inclusion, workforce sustainability and financial efficiency. We want to identify school practices that achieve strong academic performance without compromising these other, important features.



The experience of delivering education in a pandemic has cast light on the importance of these wider features of school practice. Schools have had to come up with novel ways of reaching the most vulnerable at home as well as focusing on their emotional health and wellbeing, not just their academic progress.

The stability of staffing (as well as staff's wellbeing) has also been crucial in supporting pupils through the pandemic. Yet we have seen increasing staff absences due to Covid and only a limited amount of financial support from the government. Understanding how schools respond to such challenges is key to this study.

Another consequence of the pandemic appears to be strengthened networks of leaders. Collaboration and sharing of resources and information has happened by necessity and there is a fruitful opportunity for those strong collaborations to be embedded in the system if we can capture and codify them.

Of course, schools working together in groups is nothing new. It has been the DfE's answer to school improvement for many years through the academies programme. This is why the DEEP survey on schools' decisions will focus on schools that are part of groups.

Nearly 20 years on since

the first multi-academy trusts were incorporated, we know that some MATs, academies and free schools are achieving good results. But we also know that some are struggling, while others have failed.

There's also still a huge amount we don't know. We don't yet know how to assess a MAT's performance in the round: how can we balance academic performance with other areas, to ensure the system doesn't reward groups that compromise pupil inclusion or increase teacher burnout? We don't know whether MATs really are the best model, or if any 'best' group model exists, when there are also federations, dioceses, cooperatives, learning trusts and local authority-level cooperation to look to for other examples.

The current DfE is coy about the future of the academies programme. The latest clue as to their current direction is the recent consultation, which some have suggested signifies 'academisation via the back door', but whatever form school groups take, it's clear they're here to stay. That's why we must fill these gaps in our knowledge now.

With everything going on, filling out a survey might feel like the last thing school leaders need. But given the future of education is in their hands and the partnerships they are forming, we simply must get better at finding and sharing the best examples of effective practice.

Week in

Westminster

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

SUNDAY:

We all read with disbelief the rumours a few months back that the Gavster (Williamson, former education secretary) was set for a knighthood. It looked like a load of hot air (like Gav's tenure in charge of our schools, LOL, LOL) when he was left out of the New Year's Honours list.

But *The Sunday Times* says he's back in line for the gong as embattled prime minister Boris Johnson tries to save his skin.

Another rumour: Nick Gibb is up for a knighthood too. The former schools-minister-for-life was unexpectedly dumped in the last reshuffle from the post he's held since 1907. A tad disappointing that any honour he might get would now be for political posturing rather than his dedication to the schools role.

TUESDAY:

Children's commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza told *The Daily Telegraph* of a new inquiry she was launching to find children no longer attending schools after national lockdowns.

Between 80,000 to 100,000 children are thought to not be on any school roll. "Literally, I am going to go out and find them," she later told *BBC News*.

Quite the turnaround. Inspiration Trust, which de Souza used to run, was among the chains that had the most pupils "disappearing" from its

classrooms in the run-up to GCSEs, *The Guardian* reported in 2018.

A school in her trust was also investigated by Ofsted over off-rolling.

WEDNESDAY:

The shock defection of Tory MP Christian Wakeford to Labour caused ripples among Westminster and dealt another blow to BoJo's embattled reign.

But it's also causing quite the headache for the education select committee, where Wakeford is a member.

WiW hears there is no automatic mechanism for replacing a member who defects. Whether he stays or goes is now down to negotiations between government and opposition whips.

If there is a change to the committee's membership, a motion must be put before the Commons for the move to be approved. Wakeford keeps his committee seat while it's all sorted out.

As Covid rates fall nationally (and definitely not to distract from the government imploding) schools have been told that face masks in classrooms are no longer needed.

Bad enough dropping it on headteachers at the last minute, giving them a few hours' notice to inform parents of new plans.

But a hastily deleted tweet from the Department for Education a few minutes after the announcement led to more head-scratching.

It said rules requiring masks in

communal areas would end on "Thursday January 26". Next Thursday is January 27 - which the DfE has confirmed is the date it meant.

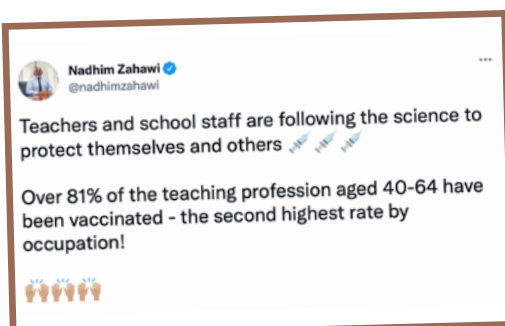
Ofqual's hunt for new trustees is going so well it's had to extend the term of two of its current board members (academy leader Hywel Jones and deputy FE commissioner Frances Wadsworth) for a couple of months.

Having to preside over the first mass deflation in grades over the coming years - it does look like a bit of a hospital pass!

THURSDAY:

Some better news today for the Nads: the education secretary got to post his all-time fave emoji, the needle!

No, this wasn't to describe the unending needling of his boss this week. It was instead to celebrate new Office for National Statistics figures showing more than 81 per cent of the teaching profession aged between 40 and 64 have been vaccinated - the second highest rate of any occupation.



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Trust School Improvement Lead

L11-15 (£54,091 - £59,581)



As our current postholder is leaving to become an Ofsted Inspector, we are now seeking to appoint an excellent Trust School Improvement Lead, who can continue the improvement of teaching and learning across the Trust. This post is to commence at the start of the summer term 2022.

The successful candidate will work in partnership with the Headteachers across the Trust to lead on an exciting journey to help all Schools within the Trust provide an inspirational education for all, helping every child to achieve the very best that they can.

Ad Astra Academy Trust in early 2022, will have grown significantly to 8 primary schools across the Tees Valley and the successful candidate will work in all of our schools. This is a unique opportunity for an ambitious school leader to undertake this key strategic role.

This post would ideally suit a teacher or leader that has led on teaching and learning; co-ordinated assessment or curriculum development within their own school, an Academy Trust, Local Authority or have been a Specialist Leader in Education for example.

The post provides the successful candidate with an opportunity to add significant experience of working for a developing, innovative and forward-thinking academy trust to their portfolio. If the successful candidate aspires to be a headteacher we would fund any leadership development such as NPQH or Future Leaders.

Please see our promotional Trust video "Thrive with us" via https://youtu.be/Apps8_Q1W5I

For a confidential, informal conversation about this exciting role, please contact Andy Brown OBE, Chief Executive Officer via: Andy.Brown@adastraacademytrust.com

Candidates must only apply using the application form provided; CV's will not be accepted.

Ad Astra Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. As such the successful candidate will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check.

Closing date for receipt of applications – 9am, Monday 7th February 2022.

The interview process is to be undertaken on the 14th and 15th February 2022.

Requesting an application form

Application forms and further details are available via the Ad Astra website site:

<http://www.adastraacademytrust.com/careers/>

Completed application forms to be emailed to **recruitment@adastraacademytrust.com**

Kernow Learning

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Salary: £150k maximum total package
(includes employer pension contributions and non-consolidated performance-related bonus)
Start Date: September 2022

Due to the retirement of our current CEO, the Board of Trustees is seeking an inspirational strategic leader to take up the role of CEO, who will continue to grow the Trust's regional reputation as an outstanding primary trust. Our new CEO will have a passion for, and demonstrable success in, school improvement, and will build on the current position of strong senior leadership and thriving schools. They will not only be a team leader, but also a team player, engaging all stakeholders to build excellent schools together.

Our ideal candidate will be a qualified teacher with school leadership experience, and Trust-wide leadership experience at senior level. They will have a broad understanding of school finance and academy trust operation. They will join our Trust at an exciting juncture as we move to open our new free school, Sky Primary, in partnership with the Eden Project.

We offer:

- A competitive salary
- Generous Employee Pension scheme
- Contribution to relocation costs (by negotiation with successful candidate as appropriate)
- A committed Board of Trustees
- A culture which seeks to be fair, developmental, and supportive of staff and pupils
- A focus on staff wellbeing, with access to our wellbeing services
- Generous holiday entitlement (35 days rising to 40 days) plus bank holidays
- Cycle to work scheme

There will be an opportunity to tour some of our schools at a date to be arranged (COVID-19 guidance dependent).

Application Process

Please refer to the **Information for Candidates** brochure for further information. If you require any further information or would like a printed copy of the brochure, please contact our Trust HR Manager, Jane King, on 01637 303106 or e-mail HR@kernowlearning.co.uk. Our CEO, Jennie Walker, is happy to have an informal conversation with potential candidates prior to applying. If you would like to arrange a conversation, please contact Jennie's PA (Bernie Blacklaw) on 01637 303106 to arrange.

Closing Date: Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

Shortlisting: Applications will be reviewed w/c 14th February, 2022.

Interviews: The interview process is planned to take place over two days on 28th February and 1st March 2022.

Application form can be downloaded from our website www.kernowlearning.co.uk

Please send completed applications to the HR Manager, at the address below

Kernow Learning is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and follows the Safer Recruitment process; the successful applicant will be expected to share this commitment and will be subject to checks including an enhanced DBS and prohibition checks. We are an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all.

The HR Manager
Kernow Learning
The Old Cricket Pavilion
Treninnick Hill
NEWQUAY TR7 2JU

Director of School Improvement - Secondary

L25 - L29 | £76,903 - £84,81 | Full Time, Permanent



**Bishop
Hogarth**

Catholic Education Trust

We are seeking to appoint an outstanding senior leader as our Director of School Improvement Secondary Education. Reporting to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, you will lead on the school improvement strategy, develop leadership capacity and provide clear support to the Headteachers of our five secondary schools and also organisational leadership as part of BHCET School Improvement team. Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust currently comprises 30 academies, rising to 35 in May 2022 across Darlington, Stockton, Billingham, Hartlepool and the Durham area.

BHCET is a highly successful and vibrant organisation that provides exceptional education across our family of 30 schools across the Teesvalley and South Durham. Established in 2013, teaching and learning is at the core of all our work, underpinned by an extensive programme of professional learning for our staff.

BHCET has a recognised reputation for supporting schools both regionally and nationally through its DfE accredited school support programmes such as our SCITT, Behaviour Hub, Research School, Teaching School Hub, Maths Hub, Science Learning Partnership and Computing Hub.

This is an exciting time to join BHCET and lead on school improvement and quality assurance strategies across our five secondary academies, 3 of which have Post-16 provision. Recognised for our collaborative and aspirational culture and success in improving the outcomes for the children of our region, BHCET is an ambitious Trust that welcomes those who want to inspire, develop and enhance the life-chances of children.

The post holder will be based at one of the schools within the Trust to be agreed to suit the requirements of the Trust and the successful candidate. For more information or to discuss the role please contact the DCEO, Mike Shorten on 01325 254525. **Applications forms should be returned by 2 February 2022, 9 am** to Mrs H Wooding PA to the CEO/DCEO, Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, Carmel College, The Headlands, Darlington, Co Durham, DL3 8RW.

Application forms are available from <https://bhcet.org.uk/vacancies/> and should be returned to recruitment@bhcet.org.uk

Closing Date: Wednesday 2 February 2022, 9 am



**Elaine
Primary School**



**Inspire
Partnership**

Headteacher - Elaine Primary School (Rochester, Kent)

**September 2022 Start or sooner
Competitive salary**

The Inspire Partnership is a successful and thriving education Trust proud to serve diverse communities in Medway, Croydon and Greenwich. We have recently reviewed our leadership structure to provide the Partnership with greater education capacity resulting in the requirement to recruit a Headteacher for Elaine Primary School.

Our core values of Collaboration, Excellence, Friendship, Resilience, Respect and Responsibility, define the way we care for, enrich and teach every child. What sets us apart is the opportunity to work at the cutting edge of educational thinking and practice, supported by excellent training and development, and opportunities to take part in ground breaking research projects and collaborative work, both at local and national level.

Elaine is a two-form entry school with a specialist resource-based provision providing education for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. We are seeking an innovative and enthusiastic Headteacher who will build on the school's existing strengths, to lead and motivate a team who are passionate about all pupils in our care.

Recognising that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve life chances for our children, we are focused on providing the best teaching that we can. Our teaching staff at Elaine are an experienced group with a culture of sharing learning: bringing curriculum and pedagogy together to deliver improved outcomes for our children. We are looking for a Headteacher who has a passion for teaching and learning and will be relentless in their pursuit of excellence for our school community.

For information visit <https://www.inspirepartnership.co.uk> or contact mcarpenter@inspirepartnership.co.uk.
For school visits email awong@inspirepartnership.co.uk.

Closing date: Monday 31st January 2022 at 9.00am

Interview date: Tuesday 8th February 2022

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to a DBS check. As an equal opportunities employer, we welcome applications from all backgrounds, including disabled candidates.



Senior Administration Officer

Salary: Scale SO1 (point 23 – 25) £32,301.00 – £33,474.00 pro-rata term time only

Contract: From February 2022 – February 2023 (Fixed-Term)

Hours: 36 hours a week, Monday – Friday, 7.45am – 4.00pm

The New Wave Federation consists of 3 high performing and innovative primary schools in Hackney, London. We have a passion for high standards and want all of our children to be inspired to go beyond their potential.

At Grazebrook Primary School, we are looking for a confident, organised, highly motivated and flexible Senior Administration Officer to join our team.

As a key player in the effectiveness of the school, you will oversee all of our administrative systems and processes. You will develop effective communication strategies, document office procedures and systems, document receipts for payment, order supplies, and ensure integrity of data on SIMS.net our pupil/staff database. Effective

management of databases is preferred. Training is available for the right candidate. Strong admin and interpersonal skills and the ability to function calmly under pressure is essential.

Our school is vibrant, diverse and inclusive. If you are an effective communicator, have vision, energy and believe that every child can and will succeed, we would like to meet you.

Application packs are available from the Federation Business Manager, Ms Alia Choudhry at achoudhry@newwavefederation.co.uk

Closing date: Friday 28th January 2022 at 12pm

Interview date: w/c Monday 31st January 2022



Headteacher (Secondary)

Leadership Range - L27 - 33
To commence April 2022 or September 2022

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

We are looking to appoint a Headteacher who:

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

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

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

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

Closing date:
Friday 4th February 2022 at 12 noon

Interviews:
Monday 14th and Tuesday 15th February

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



Head of School

Leadership Scale 7-11
Required for April 2022

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

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

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

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

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

Travel and relocation package available.

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

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

Visits are welcomed and encouraged

Closing date: Friday 4th February 2022 at 12 noon

Interview dates: Thursday 17th and Friday 18th February 2022

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

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



DEPUTY HEAD (PASTORAL & BOARDING) COMPETITIVE SALARY

Ryde School is looking to appoint someone with clarity of vision, a creative mind, excellent management skills, good humour and strong on empathy to the new role of Deputy Head (Pastoral & Boarding). The post is likely to suit someone looking towards Headship in a few years' time. She or he will be an experienced teacher and be expected to teach around 1/3 of a timetable. No particular subject background is required but some experience of boarding and/or pastoral roles is likely to be an advantage.

Applications, which should include a short letter of application, should be addressed to Mr M A Waldron, Head Master, by post or emailed to shrw@rydeschool.net

If you have any further questions or require further information about this post please contact Mrs Samantha Webb on 01983 618346 or shrw@rydeschool.net

Closing date: 9am Tuesday 1 February 2022

For the role and person specification and further details of how to apply, please visit the Employment Page of the School's website at: <https://www.rydeschool.org.uk>



Westerton Primary Academy



Principal (Head of Academy) Permanent Salary: Group 5 (L23-29)

Closing date:

7 February 2022

Interviews:

10 & 11 February 2022

Required for:

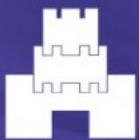
1 September 2022

Westerton is an educational centre of excellence where we pride ourselves on our ability to develop all aspects of our learners. We are a large three form entry school at the heart of a supportive and welcoming Trust, looking for an inspirational and

innovative leader to build on the existing successes which our current Principal will leave as her legacy.

We can offer an opportunity to use your skills and knowledge to make a real difference to the children within our community. Our school is inclusive, valuing each and every person, embracing diversity and addressing individual needs through personalised approaches. We have confident and enthusiastic children who respect and encourage one another. In addition, we have skilled and knowledgeable staff, experienced Governors and Trustees.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.



**Launceston College
Multi Academy Trust**

Chief Executive Officer

Launceston College Multi Academy Trust is made up of six distinct and unique schools located in beautiful, coastal and moorland settings in Cornwall and North Devon. We are immensely proud of the educational settings within our Trust.

Our vision is to develop adventurous and ambitious students, who have the character, resilience and self-awareness required to be successful, whatever their background or circumstances. We seek to teach and support them to be responsible as well as happy and successful young people by learning the knowledge, skills and values that are essential for society.

We are looking for an exceptional leader, who has a passion for education and who will work to achieve excellent progress for all the young people in our care and who will foster our culture of achievement, improvement and wellbeing.

The main purpose of the job:

- Reporting directly to the Trust Board, the CEO will lead the delivery of the Trustees' strategic and operational vision, putting pupil and student outcomes at the heart of everything they do.

- The CEO will be responsible for overseeing and working with our strong and dedicated team of Principals to ensure the continued improvement of educational standards, equality of access and achievement for all, and effective use of resources across the Trust.

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

Salary: L33-L43 (£92,624 - £117,197)

Closing date is Sunday, 23rd January 2022.

If you would like to learn more about this position, or would like to apply, please visit our website: www.launceston-college.cornwall.sch.uk/vacancies/ to access the CEO applicant pack.

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.





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.

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



Principal The John Roan School, Greenwich

Closing date: 6th February 2022

Interview dates: 2nd and 3rd March 2022

Start date: September 2022

Salary: Competitive salary and benefits package

The John Roan School has a long and distinguished history of educating the young people of Greenwich since its founding in 1677. Today the school remains at the heart of the community, and is part of United Learning, a successful national group of academies and independent schools.

The John Roan School is brimming with potential, and we are looking for a principal with a clear vision, the focus to drive improvement at pace and shares the Trust's determination to do their best for young people.

The position is a great match for someone with the highest expectations, determination, resilience, audacity and compassion in equal measure. We are seeking substantial and sustainable improvements under the leadership of a principal committed to the long-term success of The John Roan School's pupils and community.

The school is also part of a cluster with two other Southeast London United Learning schools, Bacon's College, in Southwark and Sedgill Academy, in Lewisham.

Find out more and apply <https://unitedlearning.our-careers.co.uk/>

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HEADTEACHER

Required for September 2022

An indicative salary range of L33-L39 (currently £92,624 - £107,239)
This is a guideline and the salary is negotiable for the right candidate.
A relocation package is also on offer for the right candidate

Wycombe High School's Board of Trustees is seeking an inspirational headteacher for this nationally and internationally renowned girls' grammar school. The current headteacher is retiring in August 2022, after almost 14 highly successful years in post, during which time the school has gone from strength to strength.

Applications are welcomed from existing headteachers wishing to develop their leadership impact and/or strong experienced deputy headteachers. This is an exciting opportunity for a forward-thinking, driven leader who will embrace the ethos and values of this ambitious school and take it to new heights. Applicants must be dedicated to our unwavering commitment to girls' education. Wycombe High School is a national Initial Teacher Training provider, operating an innovative state-independent sector partnership across England and a Mathematics Hub. As the successful candidate will be expected to live within a reasonable commute of the school, a relocation package is available for applicants looking to move to High Wycombe, Henley, Marlow and surrounding areas.

We go above and beyond for our staff, and are proud to work alongside Mind, having achieved their workplace Gold Award in 2020-2021 for 'successfully embedding mental health into our policies

and practices, demonstrating a long-term and in-depth commitment to staff mental health'. Informal visits in advance of application are welcomed.

For full details and an application form please visit our school's website or contact Mrs Maggie Brookling, HR Manager

Closing date for applications: 9am on Monday 28 February 2022

Interviews will be held: Thursday 3 & Friday 4 March 2022

(We reserve the right to close the vacancy if we have sufficient applications)

Wycombe High School and WHSAT are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be subject to a disclosure of criminal records at an enhanced level and must provide proof of the right to work in the UK.

Marlow Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1TB
01494 523961

www.whs.bucks.sch.uk | mbrookling@whs.bucks.sch.uk