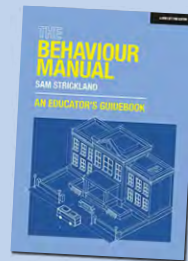


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ACADEMY REFORMS

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Zahawi climbdown after schools bill 'power grab' accusations

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Nadhim Zahawi has scrapped several clauses of his controversial schools bill in a humiliating climbdown following criticism that they add up to a Whitehall power grab.

But ministers say they will come back with new proposals, insisting that new academy standards and intervention powers are “essential to secure the path to a system in which all schools can benefit from being part of strong multi-academy trusts”.

In a letter to peers, academies minister Baroness Barran said the government would “remove clauses one to four” from the bill and support moves to scrap clauses five to 18.

Clauses one to four relate to academy regulation and a proposed power for the government to set wide-ranging new standards for academies to follow. The later clauses relate to government intervention powers and how academy funding agreements are terminated (see box out).

However, Barran said the government would “bring forward revised proposals in the House of Commons”.

“Whilst taking the time to get these measures right is clearly the right way forward, the government is also clear that these measures are essential to secure the path to a system in which all schools can benefit from being part of strong multi-academy trusts.”

The government’s regulatory review, launched yesterday, will be used “to develop revised clauses” that address “concerns” about the current bill (see page 5).

It comes after peers, including former education secretaries and academies ministers, lined up to criticise the bill – tabling amendments that would have stripped 16 clauses from the legislation.

In a recent debate, ex-minister Lord Agnew complained that the reforms were being introduced to tackle “mavericks” representing a minority in the schools community.

“We are going to spend days going through this for one per cent, without having had any consultation and without any regulatory framework in place. I do not understand that, so I urge the minister, however uncomfortable



it might be in the short term, to back off and reconsider.”

But writing for Schools Week, Baroness Barran argued that the government wanted to “establish proportionate enforceability for the department in the very rare cases that issues do occur at trust level”.

“Any argument that this is a disproportionate aim is wrong. Even if it is less than one per cent of trusts, in a fully trust-led system that is many tens of thousands of students affected.”

She also insisted she did “not want to micro-manage academies in areas such as suitability of staff or spending”.

“I am clear that we will protect the fundamental freedoms academies enjoy and which allow them to transform outcomes for children.”

Shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson said the “major climbdown” from Zahawi “confirms this chaotic government has no plan to drive up standards in our schools and improve

outcomes for our children”.

“Just days ago the schools minister told the Commons these were important provisions. Now the government has binned them. The Conservatives are in a mess trying to rush through laws to avoid scrutiny and distract from their own incompetence.”

But headteachers welcomed the row-back. Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT leaders’ union, said the current bill “gave government powers to direct and influence schools in a way that was simply unacceptable”.

“It is positive that government has listened and responded to these widespread concerns. What is now important is that the government engages with the whole sector to ensure the revisions are workable, proportionate and appropriate.”

A DfE spokesperson said the government remained “committed to the schools bill putting clear academy trust standards on a legal footing, and allowing for the government to intervene directly in the rare cases of academy trust failure”.

“The academy trust regulatory review, involving an expert advisory group and extensive sector engagement and running in parallel to the bill, will propose what the standards should be and how intervention should work.”

However, they said they were “listening to concerns from peers about how the provisions in the bill would operate in practice, and will make sure the bill protects and strengthens the fundamental freedoms academies enjoy”.

“That is why we are supporting the temporary removal of clauses one to 18 from the bill, in advance of bringing back revised clauses later in the bill’s passage through parliament.”

The clauses due to be rewritten

1. The power to set new standards for academies to meet
2. Making all existing academy funding agreements void
3. The power to apply or disapply laws to academies
4. A requirement for trusts to follow guidance on standards
5. The power to give ‘compliance directions’
6. The power to give ‘notices to improve’
7. Powers to force trusts to appoint directors
- 8-18: Termination of funding agreements

ACADEMY REFORMS

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Review of academy conversions underway (finally)

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has launched a review of school accountability and regulation it claims will “future proof” the role of academy trusts and “pave the way” for the conversion of all schools.

The regulatory review, which was supposed to be launched in May, was pledged in the government’s schools white paper earlier this year. It forms part of ministers’ plan to get all schools either into multi-academy trusts or in the process of joining by 2030.

It comes as ministers announced plans to scrap many of the initial clauses in its controversial schools bill. They will use the regulatory review to “develop revised clauses” that address concerns about the legislation, particularly around proposed new academy standards and intervention powers.

It follows strong criticism of the draft law, with ministers accused of a Whitehall power-grab over wide-ranging new academy standards and intervention powers.

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, will chair the regulatory review, which will be “directly informed” by an expert group.

A full membership list has not yet been published, but the government said it would include Amanda Spielman, Ofsted’s chief inspector, Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, and LSE professor Martin Lodge.

There will also be “further representatives from



the academy trust sector to be confirmed shortly”.

The review will also “engage throughout with parliamentarians, representatives from unions including ASCL and NAHT, and other interested parties via working groups, visits and workshops to test and iterate proposals”.

As part of the process, the government will consider the “core values and minimum standards by which the school system will operate”, and a regulatory and commissioning strategy “that ensures those minimum standards are met, and exceeded”.

This phase will also “consider the role of inspection as a regulatory tool”.

The review will consider what change “might be needed immediately, in the medium-term and long-term”. But the DfE said that initially its schools bill will not “seek to materially change existing academy trust standards”.

Barran said the “very many strong academy trusts across the country do a great job of improving

their schools”.

But she warned that “not every school is currently in a strong trust or has the option of joining one”.

“Our three-pronged approach between the schools white paper, schools bill, and our new regulatory review, will change that. It will create a new, higher performing school system that parents love and gives every child every chance of success.”

Cruddas said it was “essential that the approach to strategic commissioning and risk-based regulation protects the independence of school trusts and promotes high-quality education as a public good, as we move forward to build a strong and sustainable education system in England”.

The timing of the regulatory review, launched months after the schools bill was laid before Parliament, was questioned during recent debates in the House of Lords.

Baroness Chapman, Labour’s education spokesperson in the Lords, called last month for clarity over the timescales for the review, which “seems to be so significant in the government’s considerations and has come up many times”.

The bill is expected to go through its report stage later this month, just before Parliament breaks for the summer. It is then likely to be introduced in the Commons in the autumn, while the regulatory review is still going on.

The government said the review would inform future law changes “following the third session of Parliament”, which ends next July.



Leora Cruddas

HERE’S WHAT THE REVIEW WILL LOOK

Defining, measuring and judging trust strength

- Minimum standards for trusts
- Developing a ‘strong trust definition’
- Metrics to support the definition
- How judgments made can be ‘nuanced and risk-based’
- What this means for measurement and data collection

Intervention and direction from the regulator

- Regulatory strategy, including ‘harms’ a regulator will focus on
- The ‘risk appetite for intervention’
- Alignment between minimum standards and trust strength

- How the regulatory framework will inform local decisions
- The role for trust-level inspection

Incentivising system improvement

- The DfE’s ‘overall approach to commissioning’
- The incentives for trusts to improve
- How trusts are chosen to take on schools
- How decisions are made about new trusts, trust growth and ‘significant changes to schools’
- ‘Whether, when and how’ it is appropriate to move schools

Delivering regulation and commissioning

- How regulatory and commissioning functions will be distributed
- The skills regulators and commissioners need
- Opportunities to ‘reduce the burden of regulation’
- Making processes transparent so they’re ‘viewed as legitimate’
- What routes of challenge and appeal should be available
- How new legislation will be applied

NEWS

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Ofsted fires 'quick fix' warning over 'coasting' school plan

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

The government will plough ahead with powers to intervene in 'coasting' schools, despite Ofsted warning it was "unnecessary and potentially damaging" for improving schools and risked encouraging "quick fixes".

The Department for Education yesterday confirmed plans to intervene at schools rated 'requires improvement' or below in successive Ofsted inspections.

In a formal consultation response, the department said it expected regional directors (formerly schools commissioners) would "normally" order such maintained schools and standalone academies to join multi-academy trusts.

Schools would receive letters this autumn informing them they were "eligible" for intervention, new guidance states.

The government emphasised decisions would still be "case-by-case", but said it was "not right that some pupils have spent their entire education in schools that are less than good".

But unions argue it could hit headteacher recruitment and trusts warn it could discourage them from taking on struggling schools.

Ofsted says some intervention 'unnecessary'

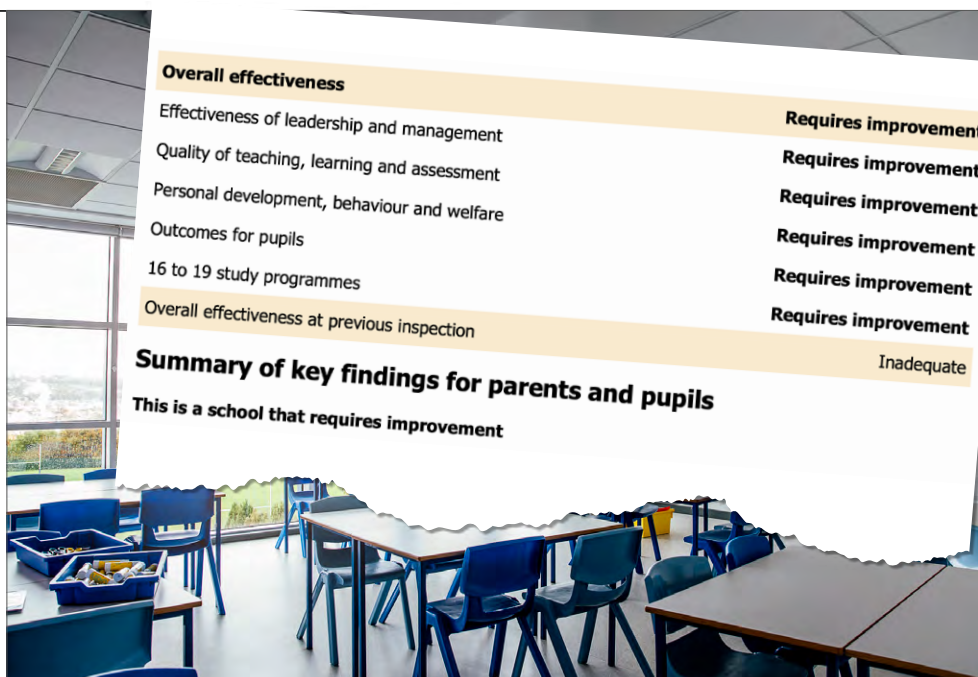
Even the government's own inspectorate, whose verdicts underpin the DfE's case for intervention, says it is "concerned" about the measures.

It said a second 'requires improvement' judgment could reflect continuing or worsening issues, but other schools "may be improving and under strong leadership".

Intervention was "unnecessary and possibly damaging in those circumstances". Ofsted is also concerned that schools with one 'requires improvement' judgment "may implement short-term fixes to avoid a second RI rather than focusing on sustainable improvement".

Legislation will bring 900 schools in scope, but the DfE will only "initially" contact around 300 schools inspected since May 2021 – with the exception of those with five consecutive RI judgments.

But Ofsted warned even five such poor ratings



may not reflect "failure" by the school's current trust, as they may have only run the school during one inspection.

Backlash against 'presumption' of intervention

Other respondents to the consultation opposed mandatory academisation or rebrokering as the default option, "especially where schools can show recent improvement".

The report stated: "A great number of respondents do not think a school with two Ofsted judgments of less than 'good', but that is on an upward trajectory and making improvements, should be in scope."

Even most supportive responses were qualified. Many, including the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), stressed decisions must be case-by-case.

Some respondents said double-RI was "not the correct measure" as certain schools needed more time for turnaround. One unnamed union noted the "very wide range of performance" captured by an RI verdict.

There was also greater opposition than support for including a school's inspection history before it joined its current trust.

The report said the CST warned it could "act as a disincentive to taking on RI or inadequate schools", and a trusts "should not be held accountable for outcomes prior to it taking over".

Officials said decisions were "discretionary" and they would consider representations.

Warning over head recruitment and trust shortage

But some respondents voiced fears of a "negative impact" on teacher – particularly headteacher – recruitment and retention, "as well as the impact of the policy on wellbeing".

Meanwhile, several respondents noted the "scarcity of alternative trusts" in some areas, or MATs that were "not universally strong".

Even supporters said the department "must work to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the MAT system before issuing academy orders".

Thirty-six per cent of respondents said the difficulty in finding the right MAT in 55 new "education investment areas" (EIAs) was among the reasons for their opposition to plans to "initially concentrate" on such areas. Only 27 per cent supported this focus.

Other reasons included "a concern that pupils in schools not in EIAs would be unfairly left behind", but the DfE said regional directors "will consider" swift action elsewhere.

An analysis by Education Datalab found two-thirds of 'coasting' schools were already academies. The study found 869 schools potentially eligible for intervention. Of these, 65 per cent (564) were academies.

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DfE starts to play tough on SEND bailouts

TOM BELGER

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EXCLUSIVE

The government withheld an emergency high needs funding bailout from a council that planned to cut millions in school spending, saying it failed to balance its books fast enough.

Bury is one of 34 cash-strapped councils the Department for Education has struck “safety valve” agreements with since last year. These involve multimillion-pound bailouts in exchange for reforms to cut SEND budget overspends.

Ministers insist the agreements are not a “cost-cutting exercise”. But official documents reveal Bury’s plans include slashing £1.6 million from mainstream and special school funding for SEND pupils, taking £715,000 from its schools’ general funding pot, and cutting £348,000 from inclusion hubs. Another £400,000 will be cut from non-statutory school support services – which could be chopped altogether.

The council even considered raiding the surplus balances of maintained schools, halting the plan earlier this year while keeping balances “subject to review”.

Bury aims to eradicate a £21.7 million school funding deficit by 2025-26.

But council papers show the DfE “delayed” one quarterly payment of its £20 million bailout last year because the borough spent £1.9 million more than planned in 2020-21.

This was attributed to higher than expected placements and education health and care plans.

The government withheld the cash until it received “assurance that the recovery will get back on track”. It then restarted payments.

The amount withheld is not stated, but would amount to £1 million if Bury’s £4 million allocation for 2020-21 was split into equal quarterly payments.

“Is the DfE happy withholding money doesn’t mean withholding provision?” asked Chris Rossiter, the former chief executive of the Driver Youth Trust, a SEND charity.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said it was “disgraceful” that government was “blaming local authorities and withholding emergency funding” when its own 2014 reforms had widened eligibility for SEND support.



The DfE has admitted that more support plans added about £1 billion to council costs.

But a government official said it had delayed the Bury payment while waiting for “greater assurances” the council was following the agreement. Payments have been delayed in other authorities, but each has said to have received its most recent payment.

It comes as the government orders councils nationwide to act “now” on budget black holes that reached a net £269 million last year, confirming next year they will lose their ability to effectively set deficit budgets.

Will Quince, the children’s minister, wrote to every council last week to warn that a “significant number” ran services that were “not sustainable”.

New guidance says councils must “move to a more sustainable position now” as the levelling-up department will remove current protections around core funding “dedicated schools grant” (DSG) deficits in 2023-24.

Local authorities will therefore have a legal duty next year to find savings or use reserves to plug DSG deficits. Currently, they can lie unaddressed on balance sheets.

Rossiter accused the government of “brinkmanship” and warned some services would “inevitably lose out”, with school and other provision for children at risk.

“The government is pushing that decision on to councils. That’s understandable, but it’s a system-level

problem. Yes we can innovate and make better financial decisions, but will that fix issues? No.”

Guidance recommends councils meet needs in mainstream schools, limit placements elsewhere, invest in SEND leadership and give finance and SEND chiefs joint budget responsibility.

Fifty-five councils have also been partnered with advisers to “address the key drivers” of deficits through the “Delivering Better Value in SEND” programme.

Councils will be allowed to tap general funds, but the government has previously told them to find savings within DSG budgets. Bury’s reforms suggest other authorities may seek savings in not only SEND, but also wider school budgets.

A Local Government Association spokesperson said current protections should be extended, as DfE reforms and funding were insufficient to fix deficits.

Councillor Roz Chadd, the deputy leader of Hampshire county council, said SEND funding pressures were a financial “risk”, but there were limits to potential cuts from a “demand-led budget delivering statutory education” for vulnerable children.

A government spokesperson said many councils already targeted high-needs funding effectively, while new advice and “unprecedented” £9 billion funding would help other authorities.

Bury council did not respond to a request for comment.



Will Quince

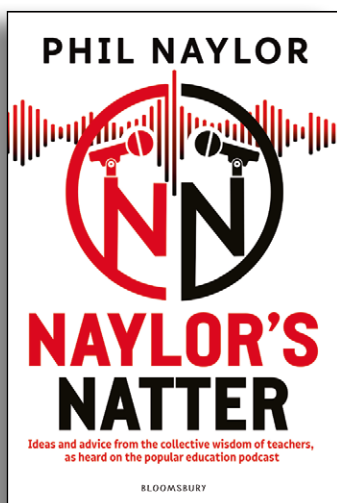


Dr Mary Bousted

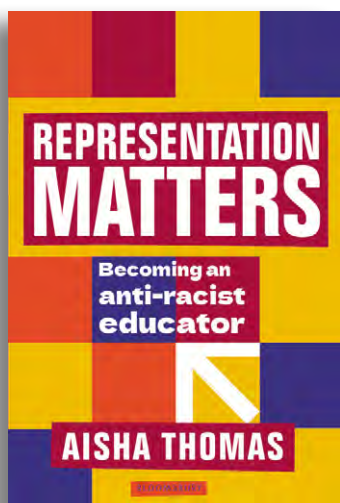
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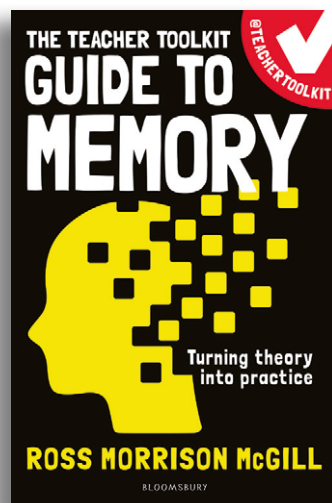
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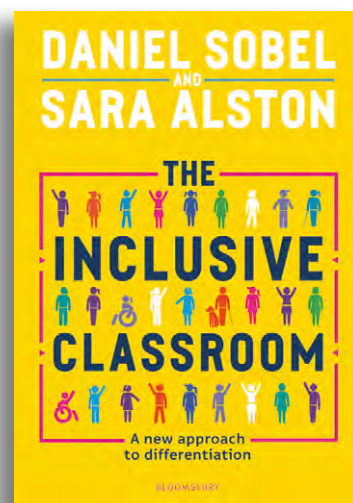
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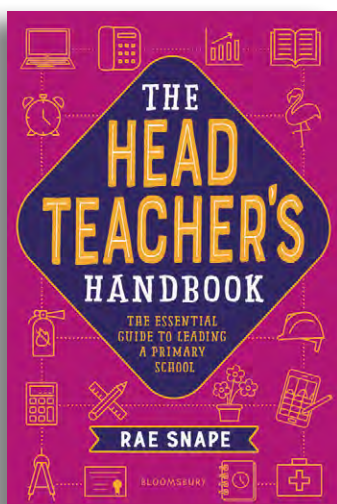
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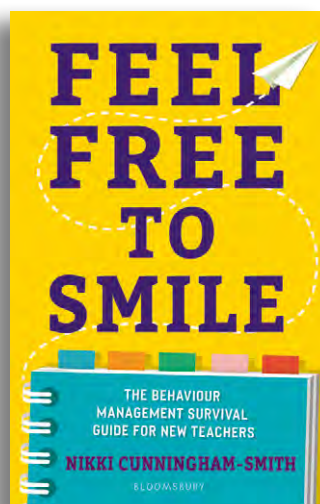
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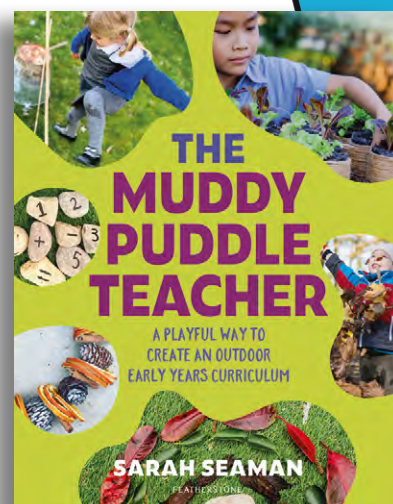
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'Not enough supply staff to keep schools open if teachers strike', say agencies

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Government plans for an "army of supply teachers" to plug gaps if staff go on strike are "not feasible", over-stretched agencies say, with some already "turning down 200 bookings a week".

The National Education Union (NEU) and NASUWT teaching union say they will ballot members for strike action if teachers do not receive an inflation-busting rise next year. Inflation has soared to more than 9 per cent this year.

It seems likely that the school teachers' review body (STRB) will offer an 8.9 per cent rise to starting salaries next year, but only a 3 per cent rise for most teachers and leaders.

At the weekend it was reported that the government was drawing up plans to have an "army of supply teachers" cover classes if teachers strike.

This is illegal, but the government wants to change the law on using agency workers following recent industrial action by rail workers in the RMT.

Supply agencies told *Schools Week*, however, that even if the law did change, they are already over-stretched and unable to cope with demand.

'Simply not enough staff available'

Katy Rees, from Smile Education, said there were "just not enough supply teachers available to create this 'army', and that's without getting into the moral dilemma".

"In the peak times this year we were turning down up to 200 bookings a week because there simply weren't enough staff."

The UK has an estimated 90,000 supply staff, compared with more than 460,000 full-time teachers in England alone.

Jeanette Holder, the managing director of Athona, said all its teachers were already working, "but without permanent colleagues around, schools would simply not be able to cope".

Some agencies pointed to the failure of a recent drive to get former teachers back into the classroom to cover Covid absences.



A recent DfE survey found teachers returned to the profession in just 2 per cent of schools. Of the 13 schools that took them on, eight said the teachers helped to reduce pressure to some extent, while five said they had not helped at all.

Supply teachers already feel exploited'

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the NEU, said the proposal was "yet another example of sabre-rattling by a government that has been unable to summon volunteers in the past".

"We do not expect this latest wheeze to play out any differently. Supply teachers already feel exploited, without the government then adding insult to injury."

Dr Patrick Roach, the general secretary of the NASUWT, said the government's contempt for the rights of working people "is all too evident in these latest proposals to incite employers to deploy agency workers to undermine legitimate industrial action".

Marios Georgiou, from Step Teachers, said teachers were threatening to strike against a "background of shortage and disenfranchisement, and a cost of living crisis".

The hope that supply teachers could "keep schools open" was not realistic. "We have struggled all year to meet demand from our schools."

Samantha Dyson, from Key Education, said the drive was "not feasible. The majority of our teachers are booked and the ones that

are not are generally booked on the day. We are not able to fulfil all of our schools' requirements."

Gavin Beart, the divisional managing director for education at Reed, said "many staff" were already placed for September.

"Seventy-five per cent of our current talent pool nationally at any one time is working."

Few would cross picket lines

In a letter to Nadhim Zahawi this week, Niall Bradley, the chair of the National Supply Teachers Network, said most of the network were members of teaching unions.

The education secretary said last week that a teacher strike would be "unforgivable" in the wake of Covid.

In a recent poll, 92 per cent of supply staff said they would not go to school during a strike, while only 3 per cent said they would. Bradley said 3 per cent of supply teachers nationally would amount to an "army" of 2,700.

"So please, do not denigrate supply teachers any further in the eyes of our permanent colleagues by suggesting we would help to break their strike, should it go ahead."

Covid disruption means demand for supply teachers is still high. The latest attendance statistics shows overall absence rose to 6.5 per cent among teachers and leaders and 5.5 per cent among support staff last week.

Teacher absence has remained above 5 per cent since last September.

NEWS

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Teach First pilots autumn training as recruitment stalls

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Teach First has reopened its teacher training programme amid a “challenging year” for recruitment and unprecedented demand from schools.

The charity is piloting a new autumn institute on top of its usual summer training so students do not have to wait until 2023 to sign up.

It has had 3,500 requests from schools wanting to hire a Teach First trainee, which is “more than ever before” and 25 per cent higher than previous records.

A spokesperson said it had been a “challenging year for all routes” into teaching, but refused to say how many trainees were so far recruited for the summer institute.

They added many students wanted to focus on finishing their exams and “enjoy the end of their time at university” during the typical summer application period.

Teach First has a £113 million, six-year government contract to deliver initial teacher training for high-flying graduates.

It said no additional funding had been agreed with the Department for Education for the autumn run – suggesting it has not hit its targets this year.

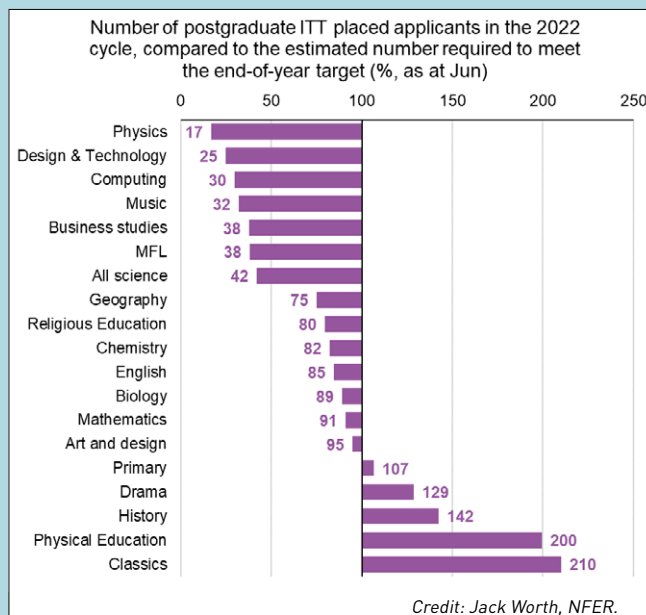
In 2019, it recruited a record-breaking 1,735 trainees, a 38 per cent rise in a year.

James Noble-Rogers, the executive director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, welcomed the move, but said it must lead to a net increase in recruitment without “simply diverting applicants away from other programmes”.

He said the council would be concerned if it “poached” students with places at universities or school-based trainers. However, Teach First’s website says that those with a PGCE place cannot apply.

Emma Hollis, the executive director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT), said Teach First’s move was not “unusual”. “Many providers recruit right through the summer and there are a few who offer multiple start dates. In a year where recruitment is especially challenging this seems like a sensible move.”

A study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in March found the DfE is likely to miss initial teacher training recruitment targets in shortage subjects over the



Most subjects are running behind their recruitment targets

next four years.

Faye Craster, Teach First’s director of teacher development, said “so many” schools would not have enough teachers in September “particularly in priority subjects such as science, maths and computing”.

NFER analysis of postgraduate recruitment figures shows that applications in June were down 7 per cent on 2019 for secondary school subjects. Placements – where a student has accepted an offer – dropped 18 per cent.

But Jack Worth, the foundation’s education economist, said it could “mask big variations” between subjects.

“We are still projected to be running behind

target in most subjects.”

Worth estimates that only 17 per cent of the required physics teachers will be recruited by September, 25 per cent for design and technology and 30 per cent for computing.

This compares to 210 per cent of classics teachers needed, 200 per cent for physical education and 210 per cent for classics.

The application window for the Teach First autumn round closes on July 28, with training beginning on September 12.

Trainees will be in classrooms by the end of October and become members of Teach First’s 2022 cohort.

Cambridge changes its mind on teacher training

The University of Cambridge has reapplied to continue providing teacher training.

As *Schools Week* revealed, the university chose not to apply for reaccreditation in round one earlier this year because of “important inconsistencies” in the government’s training reforms.

But it submitted an application for round two, which closed this week, saying further clarification from government officials allowed it to have “sufficient confidence”.

For example, officials confirmed that

providers will “retain the freedom to use their own expertise and evidence base as the cornerstone of their curricula”, the university said.

But it would “continue to monitor whether the reforms remained compatible with” its standards, which include “personalised programmes that continually evolve on an evidence-informed basis”.

Only 80 out of 216 providers that applied in round one were successful.

NEWS

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DfE monitors staff after edict to return to the office

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education is now monitoring WiFi use to track attendance after ordering staff to return to in-person working at least four days a week.

Officials who do not physically attend an office for 30 days or more will be reported to their managers.

Schools Week revealed in May how civil servants had been forced to work in corridors and canteens because the department has almost twice as many workers as desks.

The DfE confirmed this week it is tracking logins to its virtual private network (VPN) and local area network (LAN).

Headline data on attendance is shared with the Cabinet Office, where the mandate to return to the office originated. Individual data is passed to senior civil servants so they can have discussions with those not coming in.

Helen Kenny, a national officer at the FDA union, which represents senior civil servants, said



it was “very disappointing” the DfE “continues to waste time and energy tracking when staff are in the office, rather than accepting that the world of work has fundamentally changed”.

“FDA members have proven themselves to be just as, if not more, productive when working remotely, and government departments should move with the times. Work is what you do, not where you do it.”

Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary, ordered staff to return to the office at least four days a week earlier this year. It followed a government-wide edict from efficiency minister

Jacob Rees-Mogg, who visited departments and left notes for absent officials.

But the push backfired because the DfE, which encouraged flexible and hybrid working before the pandemic, has far more staff than desks.

Staff outnumber desks by almost two-to-one across the department’s 12 offices, figures seen by Schools Week show. In Leeds, there are just 24 desks for 110 staff. Bristol has 95 desks for 299 people.

There was further criticism at the end of May when staff at the department’s overcrowded Sheffield office, which has nearly double the number of staff than desks, struggled to evacuate after a “suspect package” was discovered.

The order to leave resulted in queues in the stairwell and congestion on upper floors.

A DfE spokesperson said its approach “fits with the amount of desk space we have, gives us full and vibrant offices but also retains flexibility to work in different ways when needed.

“This is good for our business and staff - and good for the children and learners we serve every day.”

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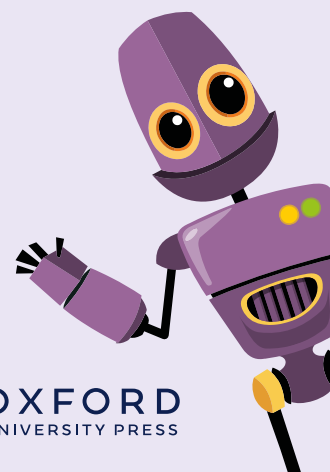
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National music plan expectations hit sour note

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

The government has published a national plan for music education, saying it must not be “the preserve of the privileged few”.

But more than a third of teachers in a new poll say year 9 pupils do not get fortnightly music lessons – when the government wants schools to provide at least an hour a week.

The plan also said pupils should have access to instrument lessons. But 41 per cent of primary teachers surveyed by Teacher Tapp said their pupils lacked such opportunities.

It suggests the Department for Education's newly pledged £25 million investment in 200,000 instruments may not be enough to achieve its “renewed emphasis on opportunities for all”.

Half of primary teachers also said the subject was taught by class teachers not qualified in music, up from 37 per cent in 2019.

The DfE itself admitted provision was “patchy”, the same phrase used in its 2011 plan.

Guidance is non-statutory, but schools have been told to implement it from September. The government will “monitor progress”.

Michael Tidd, the head of East Preston Junior School in West Sussex, said it would be “impossible” to meet every expectation. It could not afford the £20,000 music budget of some “best practice” case study schools highlighted by the DfE.

He said the DfE claim that excellence was possible within existing budgets was “disingenuous”.

DfE data suggests his school receives £1,073 less per pupil than the average case study primary.

Schools Week analysis also suggests six of seven

Teachers who say their pupils... %

Have to study music at least fortnightly in year 9

53%

Can join a choir

64%

Can study music GCSE

77%

Source: Teacher Tapp survey, 27 June 2022

primary and secondary academies featured in the plan had fewer pupils with education, health and care plans than the average academy.

The West London Free School, a case study school praised for offering pupils second-hand iPads, also received £1,251 more per-pupil funding than typical secondary academies.

Almost two-thirds of music teachers polled earlier this year by the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) said budgets were inadequate. One said their school's music budget worked out at less than £1 a year for every pupil.

The ISM had demanded the music plan raise and ring-fence music funding, and tackle other pressures squeezing provision.

Ninety-three per cent of music teachers also said accountability measures such as the EBacc and Progress 8 had “caused harm to music education”. The key stage 3 curriculum “continues to be narrowed”, they said.

The Musicians' Union (MU) also warned this week the latest plan failed to fully engage with “broader issues that mitigate against music in schools”.

The government has also committed £79 million a year to keep funding music hubs until 2025. But the MU said this flat funding was a “significant real-terms cut”.

With new duties on hubs, they risk being “asked to do more for less”. Visiting music teacher pay also could stagnate.

The plan also potentially “sets up a clash” between hubs contractually obliged to deliver services and schools, still not statutorily obliged to use them.

What the national music plan means for schools...

- £25 million for 200,000 instruments
- Appoint a music lead or department head
- Timetable 1+ hours of music a week key stages 1-3
- Draft a music development plan by September 2023
- Offer lessons across multiple instruments and singing
- Run a choir or ensemble
- Offer rehearsal space
- Run termly performances
- Let pupils see live performances annually

... and for music hubs

- Split £79 million a year until 2025
- Bid to keep running hubs in the autumn
- Run fewer hubs covering bigger areas
- Draft inclusion strategies and hire inclusion leads
- Design CPD and support offer to schools
- Run national “centres of excellence” at four hubs
- Pilot music plan for disadvantaged pupils at some hubs

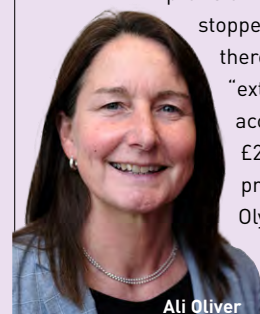
£320m PE premium extended

The government also confirmed its £320 million PE and sports premium for primaries will be extended for at least another year.

Ali Oliver, the chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust, called it a “positive first step” towards building back play, physical activity and sport into children's lives.

The DfE said it would help ensure children had at least an hour's exercise a day. It also promised £11 million to extend the School

Games programme. But the pledge comes just a week after two academics alleged a “clear failure” to deliver on a key premium aim of improving PE teaching – despite “more investment than maths”. Staff have been “sidelined in favour of an army of outsourced providers”, with many reportedly not qualified. Dr Vicky Randall and Gerald Griggs, who have carried out research into the premium, claimed this could mean a “rapid erosion” in



Ali Oliver

provision if funding eventually stopped. They also claimed there had been an “extraordinary lack of accountability” over the £2.2 billion spent on primary PE since the Olympic Games.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Exam board staff back strikes

Staff at the country's largest exam board, AQA, have voted in favour of strike action over pay.

Unison, which represents about 160 staff at the organisation, said 71 per cent of those who voted in a recent ballot supported industrial action – surpassing the 50 per cent threshold. [12:52] John Dickens

The union claimed this could delay exam results, but AQA said this claim was "wrong and only serves to needlessly frighten students and teachers".

All eyes are now on Unite, which also represents staff at AQA and which is also considering a ballot. The board has about 1,200 staff in total.

The unions have rejected a 3 per cent pay increase, plus a £500 payment, claiming the charity is "failing its staff and pupils

by holding down pay", *Schools Week* revealed last week.

AQA said pay rises would actually average 5.6 per cent, with staff not at the top of their pay grades also receiving an incremental increase.

Lizanne Devonport, Unison's north west regional organiser, said the union would now "discuss the results with the employer and branch before a decision is made about the next steps".

AQA said it was "giving our people a pay rise that's affordable and higher than many organisations, so it's disappointing we haven't been able to reach an agreement with the unions".


[Full story here](#)

Ofqual looks for deputy (again)



Exams regulator Ofqual is looking for a new deputy chief regulator for the second time in a year.

Julie Swan (pictured) replaced Michelle Meadows in October last year when she left to join the University of Oxford as associate professor of educational assessment.

But Swan, who joined Ofqual as an associate director when it was set up in 2008, is to become the education and training director at the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Ofqual said in a job advert that the new deputy must have a "commitment to the education system, qualifications and assessment". The annual salary is up to £120,000.

The appointee would be "accountable for the coherence and long-term development of Ofqual's policy positions in relation to the regulation of the development and delivery of qualifications".

Applications close on August 7.

[Full story here](#)

All heads should be SENCo

All headteachers should have a SENCo qualification because "inclusion starts from the top", Will Quince, the children's minister, has said.

Speaking at a Special Needs Jungle webinar about plans for a new SENCo national professional qualification, Quince said too many SENCos were not on senior leadership teams.

He also told parents he was not "wedded" to the SEND green paper's controversial proposal to introduce mandatory mediation for families challenging councils over education, health and care plans (EHCPs).

Families only need a mediation certificate to register at the first-tier tribunal, but do not have to go through the mediation itself.

Tina Emery, the co-chair of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, told Quince that parents were concerned that mediation outcomes might not be legally binding.

"The fact that both parents and local authorities are telling me they don't like it makes me want to sit back and think 'we need to drill into this a bit more'," Quince said.

"If you are genuinely telling me en-masse it's not going to work and these are the reasons why, then of course I'm going to listen.

"But please make sure that is evidence-based and if there are ways in which we can improve it by saying 'yep mediation could work but you need to do x y z', let's explore it."

[Full story here](#)

NRT faces move online

The National Reference Test (NRT) could move online by 2030, Ofqual has said.

The regulator is inviting organisations to run the tests from 2025 on a £10 million, five-year contract.

The year 11 assessments

measure student attainment in English language and maths. Results are used to help set grade boundaries.

Ofqual is also starting to explore how more technology could be used in exams. The NRT contract includes "planning for a

possible move to online tests".

However, the NRT will "remain on paper in the short term".

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) currently runs the tests in about 300 schools.

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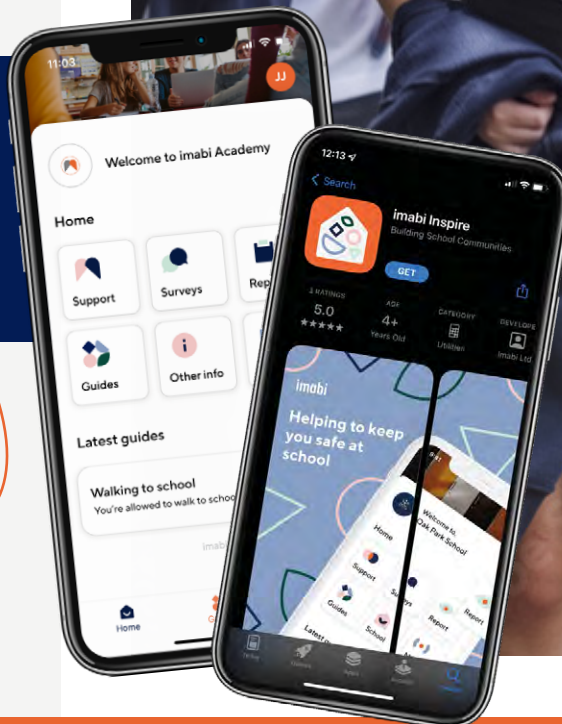
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NEWS



Universities told to advertise drop-out rates

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ministers want universities to advertise drop-out and employment rates to stop students ending up “stuck on dead-end” courses.

The government said the plans would give students “genuine choice” about where to study and would “clearly identify courses with high drop-out rates and poor graduate outcomes”.

However, it would be voluntary, non-statutory guidance. If take-up was “insufficient”, ministers might consider whether to make it mandatory.

A study by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) found that 59 per cent of students said they would choose the same university and course again. This was 64 per cent in 2019, pre-pandemic.

Michelle Donelan, the higher education minister, said the guidance would “ensure that just as every advert for a loan or credit card must include basic information, like the APR, every university advert should include comparable data on drop-out rates and the progression rate of students into graduate jobs or further study”.

“Making such a significant investment in your time, money and future is not made any easier by bold university advertising, which often promises students a high-quality experience even when the statistics suggest they will be stuck on a dead-end course.”

But Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said

it was more complex than “dead-end courses”. The move risked “stigmatising universities and courses that are actually trying to do the right thing for those who aren’t academic superstars”.

“Clearly, they have to make sure that they are putting the appropriate support in place for these young people to help reduce drop-out rates and ensure good outcomes. But this is a much harder job than it is with very confident and able young people.”

The guidance says that while drop-out data is already public, it generally “requires some inside knowledge and a certain amount of persistence” to access it.

The government wants universities to position the data “prominently” on all “institutional and subject-specific advertising”.

It should apply to all new advertising, including on web pages, social media, tv and radio, and influencers.

It suggests the font size should be the same as the main body of text, but it could be smaller than the headline.

The requirement does not apply to foundation degrees, postgraduate degrees or degree-level apprenticeship standards.

Nick Hillman, HEPI director, said the decision would leave many vice-chancellors “wondering whether their institutions are as autonomous as they thought they were”.

Bill Watkin, the chief executive of the Sixth Forms Colleges Association, said the value of universities extended beyond their role in contributing to the employment market and future careers”.

£82m scheme for fast internet to rural primaries

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Up to 3,000 rural primary schools will get fast fibre broadband over the next three years as part of a £82 million scheme.

Funding for up to 2,000 schools will come from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport’s (DCMS) “GigaHubs” programme to deliver fast and reliable broadband to hard-to-reach areas.

Another 1,000 schools will be funded by the Department for Education to enable every school in England to access high-speed internet by 2025.

It is expected to reach an estimated 500,000 pupils.

But it will still leave schools waiting. *Schools Week* has reported how 3,835 schools are in postcodes that did not have access to full-fibre or were not in areas of “proposed commercial build within the next five years”.

The government was urged to move “more urgently” on the issue.

The regional breakdown of the new scheme will be determined during procurement, which will begin in the autumn term. The departments will engage with schools over the “coming months”.

The programme is on top of the DfE’s Connect the Classroom scheme, targeting the 24 priority education investment areas to upgrade technology including WiFi and cloud services.

Robin Walker, the schools minister, said the investment “will open a whole world of possibilities for schools and teachers” in hard-to-reach areas.

“It is more important now than ever for schools to be connected and this welcome investment comes on top of the programme of upgrades to connectivity and WiFi that we are delivering through our priority education investment areas.

NEWS

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DfE forced into NTP target transparency - 15 months on

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have been forced to reveal how their flagship tutoring programme performed during its inaugural year.

The order from the Information Commissioner's Office came after a 15-month transparency battle with Schools Week.

The commissioner told the Department for Education to release statistics on whether the national tutoring programme (NTP) hit its targets when it was run by its founders, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Teach First.

It follows criticism of the programme this year that led to the axing of its new provider, the for-profit HR company Randstad.

While more performance information has been published this year, the sector is still waiting to find out how many pupil premium children have benefited from the scheme.

Last year Schools Week asked the government for any reports it received from EEF and Teach

First on how they were meeting their targets.

The DfE argued that releasing the information would prejudice "effective conduct of public affairs".

However, the commissioner said the importance of the NTP "adds considerable weight to the public interest in disclosure of information demonstrating how well the programme is (or is not) performing".

"Providers fortunate enough to be awarded large government contracts should be well aware of the enhanced public scrutiny that is likely to result."

Katherine Gundersen, the deputy director at the Campaign for Freedom of Information, welcomed the decision.

"It shouldn't have required an appeal by Schools Week to force the department to disclose such basic information about the performance of contractors delivering a £1 billion programme to help pupils.

"Government often complains about the

'burden' of FOI, but in this case the burden has been entirely self-imposed by resisting disclosure of non-sensitive information for 15 months. It's also prevented scrutiny of how the NTP was performing."

Stephen Morgan, the shadow schools minister, said ministers had "repeatedly dodged basic questions" on the scheme.

The three PowerPoints released – from Spring 2021 – show that in April just 19.3 per cent of EEF's target for alternative provision schools was reached. This was 26.4 per cent for special provision, compared with 55 per cent for secondary and more than 100 per cent for primary.

In April, a month after schools reopened, 85 per cent of sessions were still online.

The data will inform the delayed independent evaluation of the NTP, due to be published in the autumn.

The DfE did not respond to a request for comment.

Stephen Morgan



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Private schools 'more generous' with GCSE grades

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

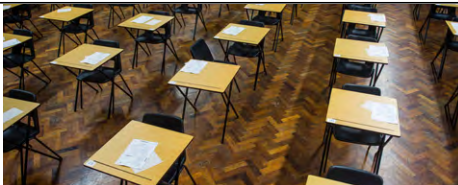
Private schools over-inflated GCSE grades after exams were cancelled in 2020 and 2021, new analysis suggests.

Results of centre-assessed grades in 2020 and teacher-assessed grades in 2021 showed at the time that private school pupils enjoyed some of the largest grade boosts.

Ofqual said as more independent pupils were "clustered around the top grades", a rise across the board was more likely to push more of them above top grade thresholds.

Research by exam boards "did not find that any type of school or college was more likely than others to have provided grades that did not reflect the standard of their students' work", the regulator added.

But FFT Education Datalab said new analysis "does seem to suggest that during the pandemic, under centre-assessed grades and teacher-assessed grades, independent schools gave out



more generous grades than might be expected".

The proportion of GCSE entries by private school pupils graded 7 or above increased from 46.6 per cent in 2019 to 61.2 per cent in 2021, a rise of 14.6 percentage points.

The increase in non-selective mainstream schools over the same period was 7.5 percentage points.

The charity created a model that predicted pupils' grades in GCSE maths and English based on prior attainment and gender for each year from 2017 to 2021.

It then compared estimated grades for private schools and selective state schools, and compared actual grades.

In 2017, pupils in private and grammar schools achieved about 0.4 of a grade higher than Datalab's estimate in English and about 0.3 of a

grade higher in maths.

The data showed "very little difference" between private and grammar schools before 2020, but "something changes" once pandemic-era grades were factored in.

Although pupils in both types of school continued to achieve grades higher than estimates, a "gap opened up between the two".

Private school pupils exceeded their estimated grades more than before the pandemic, while those in grammar schools exceeded them by less in English and roughly the same in maths.

Natasha Plaister, the report's author, said researchers were "still not clear on why that might be".

Private school pupils could have faced less disruption during Covid, but teacher-assessed grades "at least attempted to correct for that to some extent".

"We'll be watching with interest when this year's results come out to see if the gap that opened up between independent and state schools during the pandemic begins to close when we return to an exam-based system of assessment."

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DfE forks out £5m for Covid inquiry lawyers

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

The Department for Education will spend £5 million on lawyers to help put forward its case to the public inquiry into how well the government responded to the Covid pandemic.

The department has contracted DWF, a global legal firm based in Manchester, for five years to "supplement capacity" from the Government Legal Department (GLD), the government's principal legal advisers.

The contract states the prime minister has "acknowledged the large amount of resources that will be involved in the months of preparation for the inquiry and the potentially large amount of time that will be spent by people testifying".

The inquiry – launched this week – will "consider and report on preparations and the response to the pandemic" across the United Kingdom.

The investigation, led by Baroness Heather Hallet, will include examining "the impact on children and young people, including health, wellbeing and social care".

An explicit focus on children was added after it was left out of a draft term of reference published earlier this year.

The department, led at the time by Gavin Williamson, came under scrutiny for blunders over back-to-school plans, as well as stuttering the roll-out of Covid support.

The DfE and DWF did not respond to a request for comment.

Register of interest records show Conservative



MP Mark Harper was a senior adviser to the firm between February 2017 and April 2019. He was paid £3,000 a month for 20 hours of providing "strategic advice".

Staff absence rates rise again

The latest figures suggest Covid disruption is on the rise again. Attendance dropped from 91.5 per cent on June 9, to 89.4 per cent last week. Staff absences are also rising.

The government's attendance survey estimated that 6.5 per cent of teachers and school leaders were away last week, up from 5.5 per cent on June 9.

This was most pronounced in special schools, where 8 per cent of staff were absent, up from 6.9 per cent in the week before.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the constant wave of infections would

cause "fresh disruption. There is absolutely no government strategy to deal with this issue."

He suggested the reintroduction of free Covid testing and more financial support for supply staff cover.

More primary pupils have Covid antibodies

The final round of results from the Schools Infection Survey show an estimated 99 per cent of secondary school pupils and 82 per cent of primary pupils tested positive for Covid antibodies in March.

This was a large leap at primary, with just 62 per cent of pupils tested between January 10 and February 2 having antibodies.

More than three in four (78 per cent) of children aged 4-7 also had antibodies.

Just over 10,000 pupils from 116 primaries and 52 secondaries took part in the trial, led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Office for National Statistics and UK Health Security Agency.

It also found the proportion of unvaccinated primary pupils whose parents said they were "unlikely" to agree to their child getting the jab "significantly increased" from 24 per cent in December to 36 per cent in March.

Dr Patrick Nguipod-Djomo, the co-chief investigator of the study at LSHTM, said: "This underlines the importance of a better understanding of the impact of Covid in younger children to help parents in their decisions and provide appropriate public health messaging, including both the safety and benefits of vaccination."

The results were published on Monday.

Williamson picks up £625 an hour advising private school company

Gavin Williamson, the former education secretary, has landed a plum second job, earning £50,000 – or £625 an hour – advising a private school company run by Conservative party donors.

Williamson will chair an advisory board of RTC Education, known as the Regent Group, a real estate and investment company that owns private schools, higher education colleges and investment businesses.

Its portfolio includes Regent Independent College, based in Harrow. According to the Get Information about Schools website, the 14-19 college has just 40 pupils, despite a

capacity of 200.

Williamson's register of interests shows he will provide 80 hours a year of "general strategic advice on international business expansion and chair regular advisory board meetings".

The appointment was signed off by the government's revolving door watchdog ACOPA. It said he did not meet with RTC while in office, nor make any decisions specific to the company or its competitors.

But Williamson must not draw on any privileged information from his time in office, nor lobby the government on

behalf of the company for two years, ACOPA said.

RTC has given more than £165,000 to the Conservatives.

Maurizio Bragagni, its chair, is also a major Tory donor, reported to have given £650,000 to the party.

He made headlines earlier this month after saying Sharia was "de facto law" in some English towns, and that London was "worse than any African metropolis".



Gavin Williamson

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UKShredding the schools bill (for now)
is right call

Regularly writing about the Department for Education as we do, it's rare that it is criticised for rushing into things (the criticism normally falls on it being slow).

The government wanted its new schools bill to be one of the first to pass. The idea was to start the draft legislation on its (slow) journey, while the important task of drawing up the nuts and bolts of new academy standards and intervention powers was worked out later.

But that resulted in hasty and, more worryingly, wide-ranging draft legislation that, as one former academies minister said, landed like a lump of kryptonite with the sector.

The government doesn't want to seize control of schools. For once, it has actually been a victim of its own haste.

So the move to take those controversial

clauses off the table for now – and come back with properly worded proposals further down the line – is welcome.

It's a humiliating climbdown politically. But that makes it all the more encouraging that ministers have made the call.

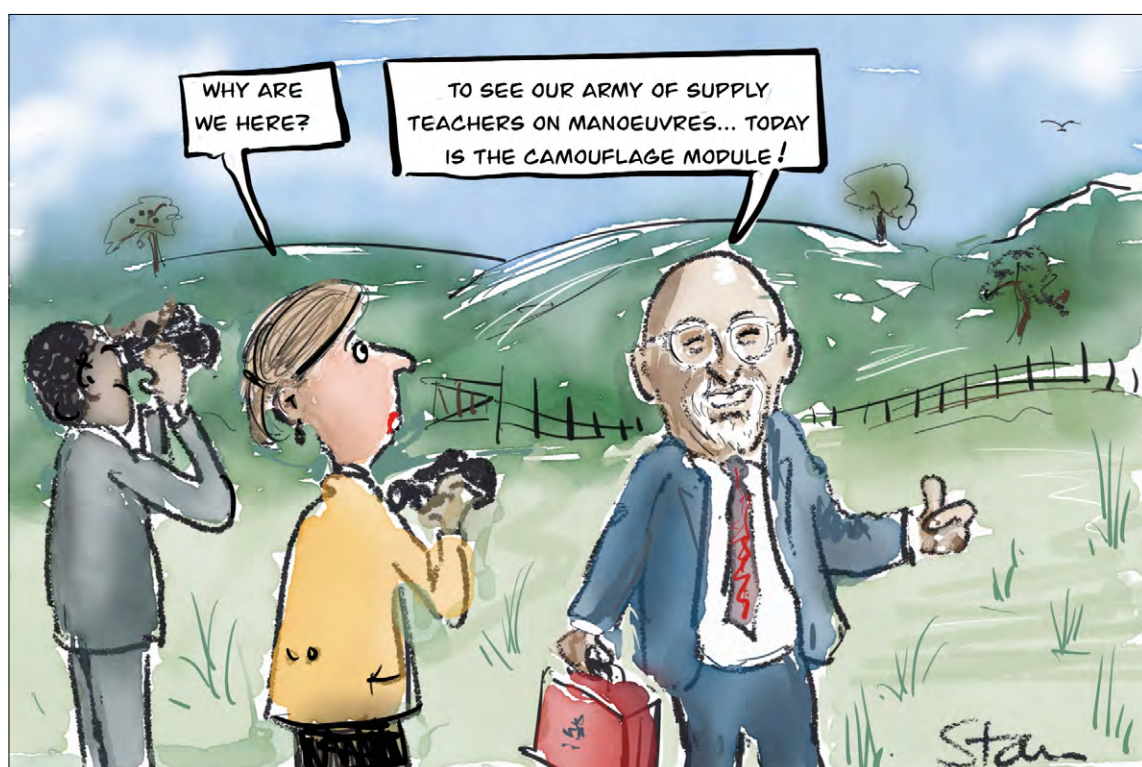
It also takes away a potential damaging distraction from what should be, with thorough consultation with the sector, an important piece of work to solve many issues surrounding the accountability and regulation of academies.

The bill will also continue to pass through parliament in tandem with the review, meaning it shouldn't be slowed down too much.

Ministers hope to have revised clauses in time for the changes to be debated in the commons.

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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

'The biggest challenge is having schools from Great Yarmouth to Grimsby'

Ormiston Academies Trust chief executive Nick Hudson tells Jess Staufenberg how he honours the chain's founding principles of schools rooted in their communities, coping with geographic struggles and thoughts on the controversial schools bill

Nick Hudson, chief executive of Ormiston Academies Trust, is shepherding me into a classroom where a geography teacher is in full flow. With us is one of his 43 headteachers, Claire Stanyer, principal at Ormiston Meridian Academy in Stoke-on-Trent. I'm just commenting admiringly on how spacious the secondary school is, when a pupil stands up.

"Emily is our lead learner," explains the teacher, to the comprehension of everybody except me. Emily then delivers a detailed explanation of a chemical disaster in India, after which the teacher encouragingly presses her with more complex questions:

what is globalisation? Her answer is better, and shorter, than anything I'd have given.

We then enter an English lesson where another "lead learner" is explaining marginalisation. The answers are so impressive, I'm worried I look patronising.

Hudson, who became chief executive in 2018, is smiling happily beside me. He's running one of the biggest academy trusts around, and we're in a school that got a 'good' Ofsted grade this year.

The "lead learner" initiative tells you a bit about the kind of trust Hudson is running. It's Stanyer's own idea: a different pupil is chosen as lead learner every lesson and at any point will be asked to explain topics

to their peers. As a result, the oracy skills I observe are genuinely impressive.

"We don't roll down initiatives from the top like that – this is Claire's idea, and she will now share it with the six other principals in her region too," explains Hudson. When he took over from Toby Salt, who left to join exam board AQA, he ramped up the regional emphasis in the trust. Previously the four education directors for the north, south, east and west regional groups also held other roles, but Hudson made these standalone jobs. He also added an extra director for each region (except the south, which has one, plus a director for London).

"It's because the biggest challenge

Profile: Nick Hudson



Students Jessica, Julian and Amy at Ormiston Meridian Academy

around being chief executive of OAT is its geographical spread," he tells me over a cup of tea. "We have schools in the Isle of Wight, Grimsby, outside Liverpool, west Midlands, Great Yarmouth, all over. Investing in the education directors means they can work in smaller groups, and I think that's absolutely vital as a way of linking principals together in the organisation and to one another."

He continues: "In all my work throughout my life, what I've been trying to do is create a sense of community. That's what has motivated me."

This emphasis has deep roots in Hudson's past. He and his younger brother were brought up in north London by their mother who "dedicated her whole life to bringing us up". Community education mattered to his mum, and she wouldn't countenance her sons going to a grammar school. "My school was a real cross-section of people, and was pretty formative to the way I look at life," says Hudson.

After school, where he was head boy, Hudson studied sociology at the University of Hull and went travelling. Then he studied a PGCE that covered both schools and further education, specialising in post-16 at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, and was soon teaching sociology in a school, communication skills to electricians and plumbers and sociology to adults at a college in the evening.

From then on, Hudson always took on community-oriented responsibilities, whether at Longbenton community school in Newcastle, which also ran day centres for the elderly, social services, a youth club and a crèche – or at Oulder Hill community school in Rochdale, where he



"The job of improvement happens outside Ofsted, and I wanted to go back"

was responsible for community education programmes.

"I became really, really taken by this model, and with the community school movement at the time," smiles Hudson. He got involved with the now-defunct charity Community Education Development Centre, and even won a bursary to study community education in Michigan for six weeks.

After working with local authorities and even in west Africa (see CV), Hudson then became Ofsted's regional director for north-east Yorkshire and the Humber.

But despite enjoying his time at the inspectorate, Hudson tells me "the job of improvement happens elsewhere, and I wanted to go back to that".

He doesn't, however, think Ofsted should do school improvement work too. "There's a real danger there of marking your own homework."

It was OAT's founding principles, he says, which made him apply to be national director of education in 2017. Peter Murray, the founder, created the Ormiston trust fund with an offshoot called Ormiston Families,

which runs children's centres, services and counselling, he says.

The trust fund has raised huge amounts of extra revenue: in 2019, *Schools Week* reported OAT had received £2.7 million since 2017 through charitable trusts and National Lottery-funded organisations.

"When Murray was asked to become an early sponsor of academies, he gave conditions," Hudson smiles. "He said the schools would be rooted in their communities, and that there would always be opportunities for an extended curriculum."

So that's why the "lead learner" initiative at Ormiston Meridian fits with the trust's heritage around student enrichment, he explains. Meanwhile, a parallel student scheme called "I will" involves pupils in social action projects, including community day events and awareness campaigns.

It seems Hudson has come full circle. Most recently he's expanded the trust further into communities by taking on four alternative provision academies in London last September – Latymer, The Bridge, Beechcroft and Courtyard AP.

Profile: Nick Hudson



Hudson on the right with his mum Muriel and his younger brother Peter

Hudson is clear, but cautious, that he wants OAT to grow further given the government’s plans for boosting academisation. But he adds: “We’d want to be part of that in a way that was measured – and not in any way be in a scenario where we would want to take on a large number of schools in quick succession.”

Hudson’s caution seems to stem from elements of the current schools bill that have alarmed many.

“The area that many CEOs are interested in are those aspects of the bill that may compromise our ability to actually maintain our freedoms,” he says. “In the bill, there’s this list of standards the government is saying everyone should adhere to, but at the moment they’re very, very vague.

“We’re hoping to work with government to adjust them in such a way to make it clearer what they mean, and how, or how not, the government may put these new standards on us.”

The recent white paper also promises to “bring together new and existing requirements on academy trusts into statutory academy trust standards”, and will give ministers “new statutory intervention powers” to “underpin” those standards. Hudson’s issue is that it’s not clear what this all means.

“When they can intervene, again that’s vague. It’s fair enough that the Department for Education, through new regional directors, would potentially intervene if an academy trust is not performing. But we need to be clear what the actual perimeters are.”

For now, Hudson’s immediate focus is ensuring the success of the new AP



Hudson on holiday in Guatemala as a young man

“CEOs are interested in those areas of the bill that may compromise our freedoms”

academies. “It’s a big decision to take on AP. We’ve never done that before.”

But this latest expansion also increases the challenge of running so many institutions. In 2019, the now inadequate-rated Ormiston Denes Academy in Suffolk was found to be off-rolling students in year 11, with Ofsted inspectors calling it a “well-established practice”. Hudson tells me the practice has

completely ended. He adds, honestly, that he “would not be being quite truthful if I said I managed to get to every school in one year”.

It presents a real challenge to trusts like OAT that value community embeddedness, and the kind of autonomy Stanyer clearly enjoys as a principal. That challenge will only increase as the government encourages more schools into trusts by 2030.

As Stanyer waves us off at the school gates, I reflect on Hudson’s thoughts.

“It’s really important the principals meet and talk together,” he nods. “It’s important they can act as a community amongst themselves. I want to make sure that’s possible.”

CV

1984 - 1985:	teacher at Minchenden high school, Enfield; lecturer at Southgate College, Enfield; lecturer at Hammersmith and West London College
1985 - 1990:	teacher at Longbenton community school, North Tyneside
1991 - 1996:	assistant headteacher at Oulder Hill community school, Rochdale
1996 - 1998:	education management consultant with the United Nations Association International Service in Mali
1998 - 2001:	education development manager at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
2001 - 2007:	director of excellence in cities; then assistant director of school improvement with Oldham Council
2008 - 2012:	director of children’s services with Wigan Council
2013 - 2016:	regional director for north-east, Yorkshire and Humber, and national director for early education with Ofsted
2016 - 2018:	national director of education at Ormiston Academies Trust
2018 - present:	chief executive officer at Ormiston Academies Trust

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Opinion

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BARONESS BARRAN
academies minister

We have heard you – but our end goal is unchanged

There was always going to be a heated discussion about how we pave the way for all schools to join strong multi academy trusts through the schools bill.

The question at the heart of all this is how to best make sure every child gets the education they deserve and fulfils their potential. If nobody cared, we'd be in a sorry place.

My approach, and this government's ambitions, remain as true today as they were in May when we introduced the bill, and in March when we launched the schools white paper. Without them, we cannot meet our goal of every child achieving their potential.

We want all schools to be in strong multi academy trusts because they bring benefits to their schools, in terms of educational outcomes for all children including the most disadvantaged, and in creating opportunities and building resilience for school staff.

But what we need is a regulatory framework that works for a multi academy trust led system.

As the secretary of state said recently, "the current system is in many ways held together by rubber bands".

The current rules depend on the

model funding agreement in place at the point of each trust's foundation. This isn't sustainable.

But I hear the concerns about how the schools bill, as drafted, implements this change.

I am clear that we will protect the fundamental freedoms academies enjoy and which allow them to transform outcomes for

“I do not want to micro-manage academies

children. I do not want to micro-manage academies in areas such as suitability of staff or spending.

We want to bring clarity about what constitutes a strong trust, so that we can use this in a transparent and trusted way when ensuring schools end up in the right trust for them. And we must also introduce new legal intervention powers in relation to trusts themselves, rather than just their academies, to establish proportionate enforceability for the department in the very rare cases that issues do occur at trust level.

Any argument that this is a disproportionate aim is wrong. Even

if it is less than one per cent of trusts, in a fully trust-led system that is many tens of thousands of students affected.

The government will support amendments to temporarily remove some clauses from the bill, while I continue to engage the sector on implementation through the regulatory and commissioning review. I have said since taking on this role that I want to listen. The secretary of state is of the same mind. So it's absolutely right that we now do that and consider those concerns.

The revised clauses will be reintroduced when the bill reaches the commons to meet our end goal – moving to a common rulebook for all academy trusts, ensuring that the same set of minimum standards can be applied consistently to all.

Through the review we will set out the principles we will follow when setting standards and will be clear about the scope of our intervention powers.

Making this transition is hugely important. It will provide more transparency and confidence in the system for parents and a more level playing field for multi academy trusts.

I want to move quickly to deliver on these hugely important ambitions. The review will therefore run in parallel with our work with the sector and parliamentarians on the bill.

The review will also consider how

we create the conditions in which multi academy trusts are best able to improve schools. We will look at how the government can build motivation for the leaders of trusts and schools to continuously improve their practice and deliver better outcomes for children. This will help drive quality across the school system and shape the future for the vast majority of trusts that are already delivering for young people.

There will be no changes from the current trust standards, bar those we have already set out in the white paper, or where they are directly informed by the outcome of the review.

I want and need the review to command your confidence, which is why you will see a wide range of experts on the advisory group, and why I have committed to continuing to engage on its outcomes.

We will also make sure to engage with sector representatives from every region of the country, representative bodies including leadership unions, and parliamentarians who have significant expertise in these matters.

We are on the right path to strengthening the school system so that by 2030, where a child grows up and which school they go to is not a factor in their chances for success in life.

My door is always open to the sector, schools and families. I always want to talk to those who feel they have new evidence, a new piece of the puzzle to fill in, or something to add to the conversation.

Please keep talking to me. I'll keep listening to you, and we'll deliver together for every child.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Legal enforcement of the Baker clause is long overdue and will benefit all pupils, writes Simon Connell, but it mustn't punish schools who abide by it

The Baker clause, which since 2018 has required schools to give their pupils access to information about technical education providers, has until now too often been ignored. This month, the skills and post-16 education act has finally made it legally enforceable and alongside royal assent, the DfE has also launched a consultation on new guidance for schools.

This guidance, intended to come into force in 2023, includes a prescriptive ladder of intervention designed to support them to implement the clause while also sanctioning those who routinely fail to meet their legal duty.

The Baker Dearing Trust welcomes these changes. What is needed next, however, is support for schools that embrace the clause so they are not left out of pocket if their pupils decide to follow a technical education route.

A need for change

When it was introduced in the 2017 technical and further education act, the Conservatives and Labour both wanted schools to expand the conversation about technical education options for their pupils. The clause was a marker in the sand, as vital then as it is now.

However, allowing university technical colleges or FE colleges to approach their pupils grated with many schools. After all, losing a pupil means losing the funding for that pupil. Letters from MPs and ministers discussing enforcement and talk of limiting Ofsted grades were unlikely to counterbalance that simple calculus.

So Lord Baker, in collaboration with leading MPs such as Robert Halfon, pushed for the new act to make the



SIMON CONNELL

Chief executive, Baker Dearing Educational Trust

The Baker clause requires a carrot as well as a stick

clause harder to defy. The new statutory guidance is designed to complement that and should not be seen as threatening but as giving schools a firmer idea of how to implement the new law.

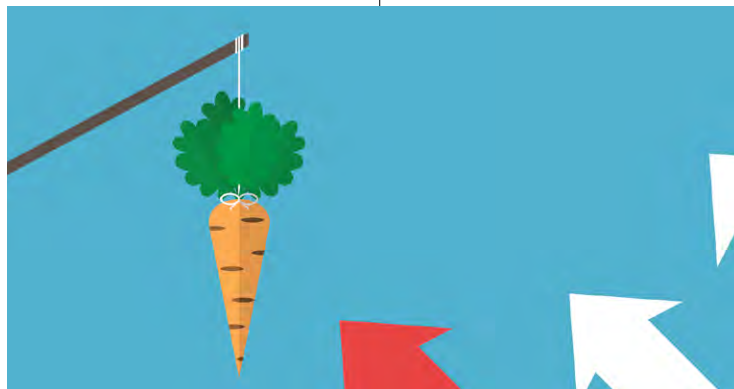
Declines in GCSE entries for design and technology over the past decade

Providers are increasingly offering T Levels, and opening pupils' eyes to a range of promising careers in specialist industries such as marketing, digital and green energy is vital. But not just these. Schools employ apprentices in their thousands to fulfil vital classroom roles. In 2021-22, there

“What is needed next is support for schools that embrace the clause

are reason enough for technical education to have a stronger presence in schools. Ebacc restrictions have limited many pupils' awareness of technical education before they reach sixth form, and they deserve to know just as much about it as they do A-levels.

were more apprenticeship starts in education than in agriculture or the arts. In some ways then, technical education providers are holding the school sector together as well as equipping young people with the skills our country needs.



What next?

But the new ladder of intervention, which could see the education secretary intervene in schools, ought only to be used in the worst cases of non-compliance. It cannot be right to deny pupils information about opportunities that could serve them better than traditional academic routes, and we should all welcome the opportunity to rebalance the perverse incentives that have led schools to shut out technical education providers.

To eliminate them altogether, though, we must push ministers to seriously consider the financial implications for schools. The next consultation on the Baker clause must contain options for mitigating the financial penalties schools take for abiding by this law.

The best way to go about this, as well as by responding to the consultation, is by starting to implement the enhanced guidance right now. We simply can't allow pupils to miss out on learning about technical options for another year because the guidance hasn't come into force.

So it won't do any more for teachers to try to get around the law by handing out literature or showing pre-recorded videos. The best encounters are in-person, with time set aside for Q&A, and providers should be encouraged bring along an apprentice or employer partner to showcase what an apprenticeship, T Level or BTEC can offer them.

The success of the technical education sector speaks for itself and providers, employers and the DfE stand ready to help schools get these encounters right.

The opportunity is too important for pupils to miss out on. So let's deliver for them, and work together to ensure the incentives follow.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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STEVE THOMAS
National secretary, Prospect

Why Dame De Souza is wrong on attendance

Dame Rachel De Souza's criticism of local authorities' work on attendance flies in the face of the schools white paper, writes Steve Thomas

Children's commissioner for England Dame Rachel De Souza recently gave a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts conference. I and the members I represent would agree with much of it, not least its call for a national focus on improving school attendance.

However, our members – and particularly the members of our education and children's services group – will have been extremely disheartened to hear Dame De Souza say in that speech that it can “often feel like LAs have let you down with their oversight over attendance in your schools”. The group represents more than 2,000 professionals working in advisory roles supporting schools and children across local authorities, multi-academy trusts and in self-employed consultancies. At best, this unhelpful comment will have felt to them as out of keeping with the spirit of the DfE's new guidance, ‘Working together to improve school attendance’. At worst, like a pointed insult.

More concerningly still, words like

this neglect the very real challenges local authorities have faced since 2010 in providing specialist attendance services. A combination of cuts to funding, increasing school autonomy and the fragmentation of the education system are only the obvious ones. The idea that any of our members have let schools and their pupils down allows those who

“ Collaboration isn't helped by careless accusations

have created that context and failed to mitigate it off the hook.

Worst of all, the comment reinforces the opinions of those who do not wish to work collaboratively as part of a connected education system. We are looking beyond the impact of the past 12 years on our members and broadly welcomed the schools white paper, especially its proposals for more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for LAs and schools, including on attendance.

We've been in touch with minister for school standards Robin Walker and continue to engage with the DfE on the white paper. Throughout, our guiding principle is that funding for statutory services ought to be sufficient to meet the responsibilities



set out by governments. For example, the DfE's recent ‘new burdens’ assessment concluded that LAs have sufficient funding to deliver their duties despite an increase in those duties. Who do schools feel is letting them down?

A recent DfE consultation on LA attendance services for schools found that the majority provided statutory services or a statutory

service with a wider traded service, and only 14 per cent provided a free universal service to all schools.

Wider attendance work undertaken by LAs includes services such as supporting schools with advice and guidance on keeping registers and pre-legal intervention work around persistent and severely absent pupils; holding meetings with parents/carers in school; carrying out home visits; and speaking to families and pupils at the school gate who are late for school.

The funding for such services through grants has been cut in different ways since 2010, and as a result, funding models for supporting attendance in LAs varies considerably. We have concerns that

there are some with technically zero funding allocated for attendance and others limiting work to legal intervention work funded by penalty notice income.

In addition, LAs face new requirements to work with independent schools. As of January, there were just over 16,200 independent schools and 2,800 non-maintained special schools in England. This is a significant additional burden for all LAs, and considerably worse for some than others.

Prospect supports an appropriately funded education system that provides all children with the necessary support to help them thrive. That is a vision the children's commissioner surely shares. So in the spirit of collaboration, we have invited Dame De Souza to meet with some of our members to tell them about her priorities and hear about their work and some of the challenges they face.

In the meantime, building collaboration across the system won't be helped by careless accusations of letting each other down. We speak to fragmented audiences at disparate conferences, but the education system is in a precarious state, and everyone is listening for solutions.

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Opinion

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The schools bill features a number of important proposals specifically relating to faith schools, writes Vicki Hair

The much-anticipated schools bill has finally been published and a significant section of it deals specifically with putting into legislation certain protections and guarantees historically granted to the faith academies sector.

Back in 2010 the faith schools sector was reluctant to take up the opportunity to convert to academy status until assurances were made (and documented) to enshrine those protections and guarantees into the academy conversion paperwork. Since receiving that assurance, the conversion of faith academies has kept pace with the wider education sector. Hundreds of Catholic and Church of England schools have converted to academy status and some of the largest multi-academy trusts in the country are now Catholic and Church of England MATs.

But will the new legislation lead to the kind of wave of faith school conversions that the white paper's vision of full academisation by 2030 requires?

Legal background

The special protections and guarantees available to maintained faith schools (relating to admissions, employment of staff, curriculum etc) have historically been protected by legislation in place since 1944. Legislation can only be amended by the government in power at the time, so maintained faith schools were confident that only a change of government could risk their protections.

Since 2010, faith academies have had those same protections written into legally binding contracts, which can only be changed with the agreement of all the parties to those contracts, usually the diocese, multi-academy trust



VICKY
HAIR

Associate, Browne Jacobson

What changing government policy means for faith academies

and secretary of state for education. Schools converted to academy status 'as is', which meant that the terms of the faith academy documentation were no better and no worse than the legislation that applied to faith schools.

New provisions

The schools bill seeks to take those protections out of the academy conversion documents and put

government policy at the time of conversion, preferences of individual dioceses etc. The government is seeking to use the new schools bill to remove these discrepancies and place all faith academies back on the same footing.

The provisions set out in the schools bill are almost identical to those that apply to maintained faith schools and almost identical to the documentation

“Maintained faith schools have been protected in law since 1944

them back into legislation in order (it is argued by the government) to standardise provision and apply the same rules to all faith academies. As faith schools have converted over the past 12 years, their documentation has varied slightly from academy to academy due to changes in

that applies to faith academies which have already converted, and so it is unlikely that the terms of the schools bill alone is suddenly going to encourage any reluctant faith schools or dioceses to convert en masse. 'As is' remains the policy of the government, with no appetite shown for widening



or restricting the rights of faith schools and academies.

Government protections

One interesting consequence of legislating for faith academies is that it puts control of the protections and guarantees given to faith academies back under the sole control of the government in power at the time. For existing faith academies, the diocese and multi-academy trusts have the reassurance that their funding documents (and therefore the protections and guarantees contained within them) can only be changed with their agreement; the secretary of state for education cannot unilaterally change those contracts to dilute or remove those provisions without passing an act of parliament.

However, an act can be passed or amended without the consent of the dioceses or multi-academy trusts which would put faith academies back into the same position as when they were faith schools when their rights were contained within various education Acts.

Full academisation

With faith schools accounting for more than one-third of the education sector, it is highly unlikely that any government would be bold enough to unilaterally remove the rights historically granted to faith schools and academies without first consulting with the various faith bodies.

But even the suggestion might lead to awkward questions being asked of the Department for Education by existing faith multi-academy trusts and academies and a potential slowdown in conversions — something that might scupper the government's plans for mass academisation as set out in the recent white paper.

Opinion

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EMILY CARTER
Partner, Kingsley Napley



Facial recognition in schools: innocuous or intrusive?

Facial recognition in lunch queues is the thin end of a wedge that could put schools on a course towards complex legal proceedings, writes Emily Carter

Schools Week readers will be familiar with the fact that a pilot to introduce facial recognition technology (FRT) in nine schools in North Ayrshire was brought to a swift conclusion by the Information Commissioner's Office. The seemingly commonsense solution to unblock an administrative bottleneck (in this case, to streamline student lunch payments) raised serious concerns about privacy and consent. There is a real risk that young people's privacy is gradually being eroded by successive technological developments.

Current and future uses

With stable, fixed populations for whom technology is already part of the fabric, schools are ideal for the rollout of new innovations. Identifying children at a fixed point in a canteen queue is only a starting point.

FRT is also available to identify students' presence at school, both confirming their attendance and monitoring their whereabouts on school premises. Inevitably,

it could be used for disciplinary investigations. In the US, sophisticated FRT systems are being marketed to prevent school shootings. And the technology is already available to monitor students' facial expressions to track their mood or engagement, which could be used to provide real-time feedback to teachers.

“ It has the potential to bake in discrimination

Unlike a student's school records, however, their face is part of their fixed physical identity. FRT therefore has the potential to bake in discrimination and a culture of surveillance. For example, established research shows that it disproportionately fails to match images of darker-skinned people, especially women. And unlike CCTV, FRT allows the creation of new datasets of identified individual students including not just their attendance but also their routes around school, their association with other students and even whether they paid attention in maths.

Regulatory catch-up

Within this context, clear parameters

need to be in place with respect to the collection, use and retention of this data. The data protection framework is able to accommodate emerging technologies, but only to an extent. European data protection authorities have imposed GDPR fines with respect to FRT in schools on two occasions. In Sweden, despite obtaining explicit consent, a school was fined after it failed to conduct a risk assessment or consult the authority. And in France, a fine was imposed where the consent obtained was not fully informed or freely given

and the school could not demonstrate that its objectives could not be secured by less intrusive means.

In both cases, the schools compliance fell short, even though they had paid attention to data protection legislation. But although principles-based data protection legislation allows this sort of flexibility, it is inherently uncertain. Therefore, given the acknowledged risks of FRT, schools need specific guidance to determine whether it is necessary, fair and proportionate – and therefore lawful – in given circumstances.

Consent is a particularly fraught issue, not least given clear ICO guidance that it is not appropriate to rely on consent where there is an

imbalance in power. Note that while 97 per cent of families in the North Ayrshire schools consented to FRT in the canteen queue, 67 per cent of respondents to a recent Ada Lovelace Institute survey disagreed with the use of FRT in schools.

Facing the facts

Further, consent provided on the basis of practical exigency, especially if based on high-level information, would not comply with the gold standard of UK GDPR consent. And further still, there are practical difficulties such as whether non-consenting students can be filtered out without first capturing and identifying their image.

Guidance is also required regarding data minimisation, security, retention and anonymisation. Otherwise, schools will unintentionally become the custodians of intrusive student databases without lawful justification.

The Ryder legal review commissioned by the Ada Lovelace Institute last week called for an immediate ban on the use of live FRT in public places including schools, and called for an urgent review of existing laws and a new legislative framework to coincide with the reforms under way to our data protection regime.

I agree. The introduction and development of FRT in schools needs to be paused to allow for fully informed public consultation and regulatory consideration of its future impact.

While schools are understandably hungry for extra efficiency, leadership teams should remember that the technology is not as innocuous as it seems, and that the potential consequences of early adoption will fall on them rather than on the commercial enterprises marketing it to them.

Opinion

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KATIE OLIVER
Director, Ark Start

Bridging the divide with early years to give children a fair start

Our pilot is proving that schools' involvement in the early years makes academic and financial sense, writes Katie Oliver, and there's no time to wait to get started

As sports days take place across our schools, thinking about children's school careers as a race can be enlightening. Sadly, a growing number of disadvantaged pupils are starting theirs in the changing rooms while their peers are on the starting line.

In that context, while some of the recommendations in the Times Education Commission final report published last week might be controversial, we at Ark Start particularly welcome the suggestions about how to improve the quality of and access to early years provision. Often something of a Cinderella sector, its mention as a key way to 'level up' is encouraging.

After all, this is the starting line, and creating high-quality provision for our youngest learners in the most deprived communities is the most vital work we can be doing to address educational inequality.

Impact on schools

Schools know this, but the wider

public may not realise how early the disadvantage gap opens up. Eighty per cent of a child's brain development has occurred by the time they reach age three. By this point, disadvantaged children are on average 18 months behind their more privileged peers. In essence, they are playing catch-up from day one.

“Early years is too important to be dismissed as ‘childcare’

Yet it is extremely hard to run nursery provision sustainably within schools and not-for-profit settings. Children with working parents can access 30 free hours. Frustratingly, however, schools are unable to get the children who could potentially benefit most in through the door and doing full days. That's why so many who serve areas where fewer families can afford to pay top-up costs for basics have had to close.

Arguably, unfairness is baked into the system from the outset. It makes little sense, for example, that pupil premium for early years children is less than the amount paid in reception. The additional premium only ends up being spent on attempts to close gaps exacerbated

by children missing out on more time spent in nursery developing vital skills.

And this is before we factor in other concerning phenomena. The cost of living crisis is biting, nurseries are closing (300 shut their doors between July 2020 and July 2021) and for the first time in decades women are leaving the workplace as families struggle to pay for childcare. Meanwhile, the long tail of Covid is still with us; the September 22 cohort have had over half their short lives impacted by the pandemic, which means these children will potentially struggle even more at transition.

What should change

We're trying to show that high-quality provision in disadvantaged communities can transform educational opportunities. Our Ark



as baking or hatching chicks.

- Staff trained specifically in techniques for improving children's language and vocabulary throughout the day.
- Working in close partnership with parents. We offer a programme of structured events and programmes including a peer-parenting programme, stay-and-play sessions and a parent empowerment programme in partnership with Citizens UK.

We are fortunate to have support to run a limited pilot programme. Our aim is to show that with sufficient funding schools and not-for-profit providers could close the disadvantage gaps before they opened.

Provision like this costs, but early years education is too important to be dismissed or funded as 'childcare'. We know that for every pound spent here, 13 are saved in later interventions.

So schools don't need to wait for the Times Education Commission recommendations or some version of them to be enacted. We all want a fairer sports day, and working with and in the early years is our best hope of getting all our children on the starting line.

Start programme aims to ensure all our children arrive at school ready to thrive and is based on the following key principles:

- A child-centred, playful and knowledge-rich curriculum, structured around storytelling. By encouraging children to tell their own stories and listening to others', we aim to develop their creativity, their own voice and their listening skills.
- Access to activities explicitly designed to build their understanding of the world and provide them with a rich, stimulating and joyful early education. This might include offsite visits, external guests, forest school and activities such

Reviews

BOOK
REVIEW

The Behaviour Manual: An Educator's Guidebook

Author: Sam Strickland

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Reviewer: Tom Bennett, DfE behaviour advisor and founder, researchED

Well, it had to happen and it has. At last, someone has written a good book about behaviour for school leaders.

It's not a crowded market. Leadership books are ten a penny, and most of them are dreadful, impractical mood boards of their authors' ideological tastebuds. What sets Sam Strickland's *Behaviour Manual* apart from its tree-wasting peers is that it is written by the headteacher of a challenging school that has successfully turned its behaviour around.

That's something of a novelty in this field, where such accounts are frequently self-penned hagiographies of how heads wish things had been, rather than how they are. By contrast, Strickland's lessons in this arena are hard-won, and the experiences he shares in this book are worth the sweat and effort.

The Behaviour Manual covers a comprehensive package of topics that will prove useful to any practitioner. Helpfully, it is divided into three levels of discussion: what senior leaders should do (oddly described here as 'the mothership'); then middle leaders; and finally classroom teachers. This is a taxonomy many commentators miss, as the needs of each group often overlap and diverge in equal measures.

The best advice to be found here is for leaders, because there is such a dearth of it elsewhere. I remember starting my first middle-leadership job. I had no idea what it entailed so I asked the incumbent, "What do I do?". To which

came the reply: "I'm not entirely sure. You have to chair these meetings." And that was it. I made my own way, and as this week's Education Support research shows, too many leaders still do.

The Peter Principle states that in any organisation, people tend to be promoted to the level of their incompetence. In education, I think it's often more a case of *non-competence*. Because how can we hold people accountable for something they were never trained to do?

But with this book in hand, behaviour needn't be anyone's domain of non-competence. Strickland throws the kitchen sink at each section. Every tip, from staff meetings to training to parents' evenings, is solid, reliable and succinct.

Strickland machine-guns every topic with the enthusiasm of Bugs Bunny with a Gatling full of snowballs, and if I have any criticism at all, it's that the result often reads like a list of unconnected issues. This manual would benefit from a more structured, more incremental and more coherent approach, if not an overarching organising theory to drive it.

Yes, it's a how-to and a what-to-do, not a why-to-do. But the potency of its immediate usefulness is also something of a downside, because doing something without a clear reason can lead to a lack of interpretation. The best leaders lean into effective strategies

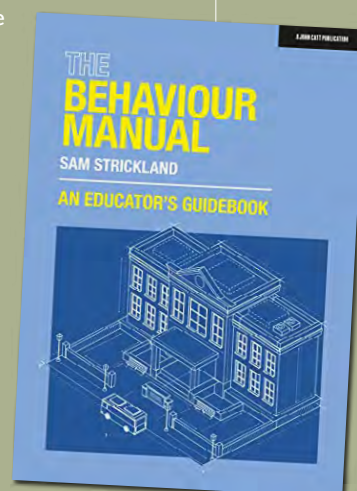
knowing when and how to adapt them. That stems from a clarity of purpose, and following strategies like a recipe can undermine that.

But that's mining for flaws. I don't want to come across like some Chandler Bing complaining that my diamond shoes are too tight, or my wallet's too small for my fifties. Strickland's advice is extremely good. It's terse, practical, and pointed and has no time for small talk. It really is written like a manual, with the expectation that the reader will turn to each sub-section when faced with a new dilemma. At times, I yearned for more biographical colour, but Strickland has explored this well in his previous two books, so he can be forgiven for avoiding further reminiscences here.

This is clear, solid advice for anyone running a school or line-managing others in school. Unlike many of its competitors, it is mercifully free from any attempt to describe its author as an inspirational messiah, beloved by all. It eschews telling us how much the

author loves children more than anyone else. And satisfyingly, it describes in simple terms how someone might create an environment that nurtures and teaches children as effectively as possible, by someone who has actually done such a thing.

Currently, that's almost a revolutionary act. But it had to happen, eventually.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Sonia Thompson, Headteacher, St Matthew's C of E teaching and research school, Birmingham

@son1bun

#LetsTalkGraphicNovels

I open my review of this week's blogs not with a blog but with a wonderful thread that celebrates the power of the graphic novel. More and more schools are catching on to the fact that no library is complete without a sturdy selection of books with comic content. This thread offers a look at the new, the old and everything in between, as selected by some of the most dedicated, ardent and knowledgeable supporters of the genre. This week, the thread led to rich discussion of the inimitable world of Margaret Meek.

Teacher or librarian, if you are looking to expand your knowledge and find some gems for your school, tune in and join the 'GN' party. As contributor Mat Tobin noted, #LetsTalkGraphicNovels has now been going for two years. That's quite a back catalogue to draw from.

Retrieval practice: recalling the end goal
@overpractised

Sarah Cottingham has got the short and sweet five-minute read down to a fine art, and this tasty offering reminds us that the 'why' must be front and centre of any retrieval journey. Quoting Tom Sherrington,

TOP BLOGS of the week

who laments the disparate learning that some students are often asked to recall, Cottingham goes on to speculate about the reason for this, and her argument that "sometimes, we lose sight of the end goal" is persuasive.

Cottingham is clear that retaining "individual bits of information" isn't what we should be striving for, and offers an alternative model of "retain, access and transfer" as a way for students to demonstrate that their knowledge is "stable, accessible and well-organised".

With references to Ausubel and Thompson & Wiliam, it is this breadth of knowledge, clarity of thinking and focus on practical take-aways that make Cottingham's blogs so readable and impactful.

The 7 Hallmarks of a Research-Informed School

@TeacherToolkit

As an EEF research school director, when long-time blogger extraordinaire Ross Morrison McGill asks "Are you working in a research-informed school?", my ears prick up. I was not disappointed. Here, McGill celebrates the work being done to bring often complex research into our teaching spaces and offers some sage advice for schools looking to embed research and reap its benefits.

His focus on teachers' ability "to

interrogate the research" and translate it for their own workplaces is a welcome reminder that practitioners should always bear context in mind. Rather than a universal 'what works', this research literacy is the mark of teacher professionalism.

McGill goes on to offer checklists to determine whether your school is or isn't credibly research-engaged and, as always with his blogs, there are links and further reading to support your thinking and next steps.

So, whether your school is on a research-informed journey or needs a gentle nudge to get started, you'll find plenty to drive you forward here.

Another damned expectation

@MichaelT1979

The publication of the DfE national plan for music education triggered a plethora of responses across the education twittersphere this weekend. From rage that it had been released at the weekend, to rapture at its content, teachers and leaders agreed on one thing: Music has the power to change lives.

Another long-time edu-writer, Michael Tidd captured some of this raw emotion in this blog, which lays bare the numerous concerns about the plan's ramifications. In the end, he argues, schools are faced with an ignominious choice: "There isn't a primary head in the land who wouldn't like to give every child the opportunity to become proficient at piano," he says; but with their focus fully on ensuring children are fed, safe, attending school and mastering an already crammed curriculum, launching this plan right now is just "another damned expectation".

Tidd ends the blog with a poignant and personal reference to our crisis in leadership recruitment and retention. I don't agree with it all, but the heartfelt description of the cumulative toll of these expectations certainly offers up some serious food for thought. Policy makers take heed.

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Research



Ambition Institute will regularly review a research development throughout the year.

Contact @Ambition_Inst if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

Teaching expertise: from great power to great responsibility

**Sarah Bagshaw-McCormick, fellow,
Ambition Institute**

You've been teaching for a while. You notice a gap in your knowledge, some unfamiliar content, pupils' behaviour that isn't solved by your 'go to' strategies.

You visit a fellow teacher's classroom. What you see blows your mind. The teaching is seamless, they delve into a repertoire of techniques that are subtle and effective, they notice things that you don't. They seem to read minds, to pre-empt pupils' needs. It feels like witnessing a superpower in action.

This common observational exercise has provided you with a great model of expert teaching. But it has not helped you to improve your practice.

What superpowers look like

Teaching well may be a superpower, but no one is born with it. To reach this level of proficiency, teachers need opportunities to focus on building their own expertise. Just witnessing others' superpowers can be motivational (or indeed dispiriting), but it misses the important step of explaining what it is that effective teachers do. A concrete understanding of these approaches is crucial to developing them in our own practice.

In Expert Teaching- What is it and How Might We Develop It?, Peps Mccrea explains why teaching expertise is so powerful. He identifies four aspects of behaviour that are a result of teacher expertise.

- Expert teachers are better able to perceive their classroom with insight, using extensive knowledge to recognise cues and make inferences about learning and behaviour. They can recognise early signs that a pupil is losing focus and intervene pre-emptively.



- They make more accurate predictions about pupils' reactions to teacher choices in the classroom. For example, a teacher might better judge the sequence of learning necessary to support their pupils.

- They are more effective at selecting strategies to respond to pupils' needs. In other words, they better understand pupils' prior knowledge, learning needs and personalities and have a bigger repertoire of strategies to draw on to support their progress.

- The cumulative effect of their extensive knowledge means expert teachers are better able to manage the complex and cognitively demanding environment of the classroom.

How superpowers are developed

Watching others wield teaching superpowers can only take you so far. Because it is these expert teachers' extensive knowledge that guides their behaviours and decision making, the only way to truly emulate them is to build your own extensive knowledge and effective practices. Classroom experience is only part of that, and alone leaves teachers to a time-consuming process of trial and error.

Instead, we know that teaching superpowers stem from expertise built on four domains of knowledge:

- Subject knowledge, including approaches to sequencing,

learning and overcoming barriers pupils face.

- Knowledge of the pupils themselves, including their prior learning and attainment, their motivations, their influences and how these change in different contexts.
- Pedagogical knowledge, including a secure understanding of how learning happens and how instruction can increase opportunities for learning.
- Self-knowledge, including understanding your own strengths, areas for improvement and how to change and improve these.

In addition, Berliner found that teacher expertise is highly context specific and doesn't easily transfer between classrooms, year groups or subjects. That's why a teacher with superpowers in one school can feel like a novice again in another. Every change of pupils, curriculum or context requires teachers to adapt and acquire new knowledge, so all teachers need to continually develop their expertise throughout their careers.

It turns out that teaching superpowers are in fact a finely honed and contextually specific expertise, that is developed continuously across a range of contexts.

Let's begin again

You've been teaching for a while. You notice a gap.

You visit a fellow teacher's classroom. What you see blows your mind.

Together, you develop a strategy to help you consider what knowledge you need to build in your current context. You engage in relevant professional development to develop that knowledge, engage in practice and receive feedback.

Before long, you are providing a model of expert teaching for others. You have developed great powers that enhance your classroom, and with them a sense of great responsibility that enhances the profession.

Week in

Westminster

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

MONDAY

Sir Gav has been back in the news this week, off to be a £50k (or £625 PER HOUR!) adviser for an education firm (reminder that anything is possible, people!).

But what seems to have really been playing on his mind this week is ... a local bake-off competition.

He updated his 17k Instagram followers with his jolly antics today: "A weekend of judging the Great Wyrley bake-off. This is a lot harder than people imagine."

This explains a lot.

**

Remember when DfE failed to publish accessible versions of its own SEND green paper for weeks on end? Well, irony seems to have reached another level this week with the department running training sessions on "avoiding accessibility pitfalls and delays to publication".

The three training sessions will help staff "avoid common accessibility when writing reports" and "make charts or tables accessible".

Sounds needed, if you ask us.

**

The advisers on the School Teachers' Review Body have an even more tricky task this year. While deciding the pay settlement for teachers is always sensitive, this year if they go with the government's proposals then they'll very likely be laying the foundation for potential strikes later in the year.

But at least they can't be accused of 'one law for them and another for us' when the inevitable backlash comes. Pay data shows the advisers got £33,400 in fees

and expenses this year – nearly half of the £61,369 they took home in 2020-21.

TUESDAY

When is the best time to catch the minister's ear to discuss the broken SEND system?

Children's minister Will Quince let parents into a little secret that one of his main forums for discussion is when he goes running with former children's minister "Ed" Timpson.

Although whether he listens is another matter entirely. We're still waiting for 24 of Timpson's school exclusion recommendations to be implemented!

Get your running shoes on.

THURSDAY

Eyes down, it's Nadhim Zahawi speech bingo time, this time brought to you live from the Local Government Association conference somewhere Up North.

"I realise that I put an awful lot of faith in data but my friends, I have seen how vital it can be, whether that is in running a company or a *national vaccination programme*..."

DRINK!

"I am a *man on a mission*, my friends, and I know you are with me on this mission."

DRINK!

Erm, hang on. Put that drink down a sec.

The Conservative education secretary is speaking to a bunch of councils and he used the term "my friends" FOUR times.

What fresh hell is this? Has he not heard they are part of the big, nasty, reform-halting, lefty-loving, progressive blob that is responsible for EVERYTHING BAD!

We are sure this is entirely not linked to reforms allowing councils to set up

academy trusts and academise their schools en masse just when Zahawi desperately needs all the help possible to boost the number of academy trust sponsors to achieve his reform goal...

**

Ah, yes, King Irony strikes again.

Punters were waiting patiently for a Teams webinar to hear from the DfE about how its latest foray into the world of edtech – the arm's length Oak National Academy spin-off curriculum body – would work.

Yet, after repeated attempts, no one could get in, and were stuck in the Teams waiting room.

After half an hour or so of radio silence, the webinar was cancelled and rearranged for Friday.

The department followed up to say there had been a "technical issue".

Caroline Wright, from the British Educational Suppliers Association, whose members the new government-funded body is going to be competing with and nicking custom from, said it was "ironic, given the topic – maybe they should ask for some help from the edtech industry..."

**

Seems like DfE has learnt its lessons from the National Tutoring Programme saga over the last two years. After schools found it hard to use the Randstad-developed booking system for tutoring, ministers are now looking to get feedback on a newly developed digital service.

But clicking through to the booking platform to speak to DfE ... doesn't show any free slots. Let's hope they're fully booked already!



Sustainability and education: Brighter futures

With sustainability growing as a hot topic in education, driven in part by the [Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#), it's more important than ever. In the paper, the DfE set out the vital role that education plays in "helping to tackle climate change" and in "creating a better, greener world for future generations". They explore the importance of engaging directly with children and young people, through education, who are "passionate about the natural world, want to do their best to protect it, [and] can influence their wider communities".

Eco-anxiety in the classroom

The [Pearson School Report](#), launched June 2022, found that almost half of teachers have seen an increase in pupils' awareness around climate change and a quarter of all teachers have seen an increase in pupil anxiety on the topic.

This sense of eco-anxiety is something we've come across in some of our wider initiatives working with young people, including our [Twist on a Tale: Our Tomorrow](#) short story competition in 2021. The competition encourages young people in the UK aged 4–19 to let their imaginations run wild, and last year saw stories being entered that centred on the

How can we support and empower young people around this issue? Psychologists and therapists suggest being open to conversations with those struggling, acknowledging and validating their concerns to start. Second, is to navigate the conversation towards a more positive outlook, such as suggesting actions that can be done within the household or community that will support what the learner is trying to achieve:

- litter picking mornings
- reducing household/classroom waste
- discussing energy saving techniques

It's important to centre around solutions, but also to emphasise that this is collective action rather than individual. All those little actions add up and no one person alone can fix those things.



Does the future look brighter for the next generation?

Schools are already being proactive around the topic of sustainability and climate change, with lots of great work happening in this area. In many conversations with teachers and students, we've heard volunteer recycling groups have started, the banning of single use plastic water bottles, and a (where possible) gardens for growing fruits and vegetables on school grounds, turning off electrics when unused, monitoring traffic and pollution around the school, checking classroom temperatures, and using solar energy and selling back into the grid are just some of the initiatives as a step towards a more eco-conscious mindset.

Insights from our [Pearson School Report](#) also found that taking steps to be a more sustainable school (41%), diversifying curriculum topics (41%) and teaching climate change and sustainability (34%) were part of over a third of teachers' two-year plans. These figures were higher among headteachers, with 63% of heads planning to be a more sustainable and eco-friendly school in the next two years, and half (47%) planning to teach climate change.

The rise of 'Green jobs' for the future will mean there is a demand for new knowledge and skills, making it increasingly important for learners to acquire these skills through school,

much like they have through technologic advancements like coding.

What is Pearson doing to support?

At Pearson, we are committed to supporting schools in their mission to become more sustainable and in helping to shape a future generation of sustainably minded global citizens. Over the past few years, we have seen in both our project qualifications and initiatives like our [Twist on a Tale](#) and [World Changers](#) competition, that there is a real thirst for driving proactive change in this space. We are excited to build on this passion and are working with key partners in the sector to support schools, students and parents to make education enriching for all learners.



For more information about mental health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion and sustainability, head to the [Pearson UK School Educators page](#).



STEPHENSON (MK) TRUST

Stephenson (MK) Trust is an organisation committed to supporting young people who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream secondary provision (Bridge Academy) and specialist secondary provision for students with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (Stephenson Academy). We provide inclusive education for young people with a range of educational and social needs in order to maximise and improve their life chances.

Bridge Academy is a two campus Alternative Provision, part of Stephenson (MK) Trust where we are committed to building a strong foundation within our workforce in order to improve the life chances of each young person within our Academy. Our age range is 11-18 and we have an embedded induction programme and Initial Teacher Training scheme, as well as development within the Trust for support staff as well as teachers. Wellbeing is a high priority for us, for staff and students alike. In the autumn term we expect that Milton Keynes Primary Pupil Referral Unit will join the Trust and are currently in negotiation with the DfE around the academisation process.

Stephenson Academy currently provides education for students aged between 11 and 16 years. We are the local secondary SEN provision for students with social emotional and mental health needs. We pride ourselves on delivering a high quality curriculum, truly individualised to meet the needs of our students, ensuring successful outcomes for all. From September we will extend our age range to include children aged 9-11, the upper end of primary. We are currently finalising a £2m build programme with Milton Keynes Local Authority to facilitate this development, this will also lead to a significant increase in student numbers

Business Manager

Salary: £56,228 - £72,253 (FTE)

Monday to Friday, 52 weeks (term time plus weeks will also be considered)

Stephenson (MK) Trust is a niche Trust focussing on alternative and special provision based solely within Milton Keynes. There are no plans to expand beyond the rapidly growing new city of Milton Keynes though we will be welcoming another small niche Academy into the Trust from the autumn term.

We are looking for an experienced and qualified Business Manager who will be member of the Trust's Senior Leadership Team. This role is to ensure the smooth running of all aspects of support to Stephenson (MK) Trust and its staff through strategic management of Finance, HR, Facilities, Catering and other support functions.

The Trust is heavily involved in cross Milton Keynes Partnership, working with the mainstream and special sectors. The Business Manager will also play a pivotal role in shaping the future success of the Trust.

CVs will not be accepted but an application pack can be found on our website: www.stephensonmktrust.org.uk or alternatively email recruitment@stephensonmktrust.org.uk

If you would like further information about any of the positions advertised or would like to arrange to visit please contact Sarah Bridges on 01908 889414

Please note Qualification Certificates and Identification Documents are required at Interview

Closing date for all applications: Midday on Friday 8 July 2022 with interviews to take place on Friday 15 July 2022

Stephenson (MK) Trust is an Equal Opportunities employer. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff to share this commitment. This commitment to robust Recruitment, Selection and Induction procedures extends to organisations and services linked to the Trust on its behalf. An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate is required prior to commencement of this post



Head of Education Outcomes and Partnerships – Education, Inclusion and Achievement

£68,958 – £87,981pa

Permanent – Full time

The London Borough of Newham is a young, culturally diverse, vibrant and ambitious borough with a huge amount to offer. As a Council we put our residents at the heart of everything we do and we promote and embrace innovation and change. Newham is a dynamic and exciting place to work – it has recently seen an impressive investment in services for young people, and our strategy for school effectiveness is leading to sustained successes on our journey to being a centre of excellence for children and young people's services.

We are looking to expand our senior leadership team by appointing a new Head of Education Outcomes and

Partnerships. This role will provide effective and ambitious leadership across the directorate to ensure high quality, inclusive, education experiences for our children and young people. The role acts a senior officer for our education providers, ensuring that the requirements of the Education Inspection Framework (OFSTED) are met whilst overseeing legal duties and responsibilities and the monitoring of statutory functions, such as those required by the DfE.

This is a fantastic opportunity to shape effective, inclusive education for children and young people in Newham, creating a lasting legacy of sustained success.



HEADTEACHER

The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) and the Local Governing Body are delighted that you are considering applying for the post of Headteacher at Chichester High School. The vacancy follows the recent promotion of the current Headteacher to an Executive Headship and lead school improvement position across a growing Trust within Hampshire.

This is an exciting opportunity to lead a team of dedicated, professional staff on the next stage of the school's journey, with the full support of TKAT executives and a passionate Local Governing Body, aiming to build further on existing strong practice to rapidly increase student outcomes as well as providing a rich curriculum and wider learning experience to our students.

Please do take some time to read the accompanying details in this pack so that you are able to gain a glimpse of the school we are so proud of. In addition we strongly encourage you to explore the school's website and to arrange a visit to see our school in action! We are determined to appoint a Headteacher with the vision, passion, experience and drive to take Chichester High School to new heights, where it becomes the choice school in the area due to its excellence across all areas of education. The job description outlines our expectations along with the person specification which we hope you find useful if and when you apply. Candidates who are shortlisted will receive further information about the interview process.

We thank you again for your interest in this exciting opportunity and look forward to receiving your application.



TGAT Primary Data Manager and Analyst

Tudor Grange Academies Trust is a family of academies with a shared ethos, common values, and collective goals. We are working together in a model of meaningful, focused collaboration to achieve excellence in our schools.

We are seeking an enthusiastic individual to join our Data Services team. We are looking for a new team member who will support our mission to improve the intelligent use of data within our primary academies. The successful applicant will be required to travel between academies and so you must have your own transport.

Applicants need to be highly numerate whilst being enthusiastic and positive. Experience working with Microsoft Office, particularly Excel, is a must. Some experience working with school MIS systems (our academies use Bromcom) would be ideal, although training can be provided for the right applicant.



Teaching Assistant

- Fixed-Term
- Scale 4 (point 07-10)
£24,279.00 - £25,614.00 pro-rata
- 30 hours a week (term time only)
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We are seeking to appoint dynamic teaching assistants to work in classrooms offering 1 to 1 support for children with special educational needs.

The New Wave Federation consists of 3 high performing and innovative primary schools in Hackney, London. We aim to provide the best possible primary education in a stimulating and creative environment. The Federation has been awarded Apple Distinguished School Status, which recognises our commitment to innovation through technology. All three schools are in close proximity to one another. Grazebrook is in the Stoke Newington area, Shacklewell is in the Dalston Kingsland area and Woodberry Down Primary School is at Manor House.

The role requires someone who is passionate about children's learning and who has a rich knowledge and understanding of how learners learn. Our parents want the very best education for their children and so do we.

We would like to hear from candidates who are effective communicators, have vision, energy and believe that every child can succeed. You will build friendly and professional relationships with pupils, parents and staff.

HOW TO APPLY: Please download an application pack and return the completed application form to Ms Alia Choudhry: achoudhry@newwavefederation.co.uk



HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING

FULL TIME, PERMANENT

SALARY: L7-L13 (£49,261- £57,000)

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) is a Bradford based Church of England Multi-Academy Trust.

The Head of Safeguarding will create and foster a safeguarding culture across the Trust by being responsible for developing a strategy for implementing high quality safeguarding and pastoral provision across the Trust. This will include creating an environment in which all students are safe and well cared for so that they can realise their individual potential across both in and outside school.

The full information pack and application form please visit [Vacancies - Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust \(bdat-academies.org\)](https://www.bdat-academies.org)

Closing Date: 12.00pm, 13th July 2022

Interview Date: 19th July 2022

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