

SCHOOLS WEEK

FEWEEK

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2022



'And when peace comes, remember it will be for us, the children of today, to make the world of tomorrow a better and happier place'

Queen Elizabeth II

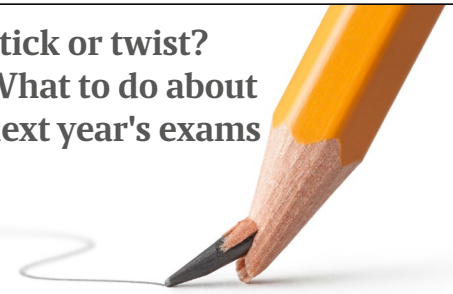
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SCHOOLS WEEK

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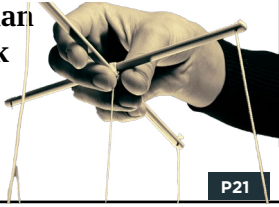
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would want Oak
this way



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crisis



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Sector demands urgent action
from new boss Malthouse**

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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School sector pays tribute to Queen Elizabeth II

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

The schools community has paid tribute to the Queen's "dedication to public service" after it was announced she has died at the age of 96.

The royal family announced the news on Thursday evening.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL leaders' union, said the Queen's "dedication to public service has been an inspiration to children and adults alike over the past 70 years".

"We are deeply saddened by her death. She will be hugely missed by the nation, including all those in the world of education where many people will have fond memories of jubilee and other royal events during her reign.

"Through her dignity and unswerving sense of duty the Queen has set an extraordinary example to us all, and she has been a reassuring presence through many turbulent times. We pay tribute to her and we send our deepest sympathies to her family."

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said: "This is a terribly sad time for the royal family and the nation. Queen Elizabeth has been a constant in all of our lives. Her service to the nation cannot be underestimated and will never be forgotten."

Sir Martyn Oliver, chief executive of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, said the Queen's dedication was "unparalleled", and announced its schools' flags would fly at half mast.

"Our trust will observe the mourning period while continuing to support our pupils."

The Queen had a long relationship with the education sector

The monarch had a long-established relationship with the sector, spending a significant amount of time during her 70-year reign visiting schools and



meeting children.

Over the past two years, her public outings have been stymied both by Covid and her own ill health, with the Queen having to pull out of many key events due to ongoing issues.

One of her last visits to the sector was to King's Bruton School in Somerset, where she opened a music centre and spoke to students in 2019.

To mark her platinum jubilee earlier this year, every child at a state primary school in the UK received a commemorative book commissioned by the DfE.

With the input of royal experts and historians, it gave children a glimpse into her tenure, including her most famous quotes and facts on the coronation ceremony.

The Queen was also the patron of several private schools including Royal Russell School in

Croydon, South London and Berkhamsted School in Hertfordshire.

With parliamentary business expected to be suspended for 10 days, a list of priority issues in the new education secretary's in-tray will likely be on hold.

The day of Her Majesty's funeral will be one of national mourning, but it is up to employers whether their staff can take the day off.

Government advice sent last night said schools should remain open during the period of mourning, but leaves for absence should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Prime Minister Liz Truss says Queen Elizabeth II leaves a "great legacy".

"Today the Crown passes, as it has done for more than a thousand years, to our new monarch, our new head of state, His Majesty King Charles III.

"With the King's family we mourn the loss of his mother and come together.

"We offer him our loyalty and devotion, just as his mother devoted so much to us for so long."

Education secretary Kit Malthouse said Her Majesty's "devotion to public service has been an inspiration, and her wisdom and strength have often provided solace to her people in times of darkness, most recently during the pandemic."



Queen Elizabeth II speaks with pupils during a tour of Sydney Russell School in Dagenham, east London



Queen Elizabeth II meeting schoolchildren as she and the Duke of Edinburgh arrive at Slough Station to mark the 175th anniversary of the first train journey by a British monarch

THE TRUSS TEAM

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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It's all change at the Department for Education

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

A new prime minister and the fourth education secretary in just over two months arrived to overflowing in-trays this week.

Liz Truss has already announced measures to help households, businesses and public bodies with rising energy bills.

But leaders are already warning these are likely to fall short, with staffing costs skyrocketing and teacher recruitment and retention expected to worsen.

The new education secretary Kit Malthouse, a former Boris Johnson loyalist, was appointed over other contenders such as Kemi Badenoch, Penny Mordaunt and Edward Argar.

He is the fourth holder of the office in just over two months, the fifth in a year and the ninth since the Tories took charge in 2010.

"A daunting prospect and a singular honour," the new minister tweeted after his appointment, prompting inevitable jokes about how long he would last in post.

By Thursday he had been there longer than Michelle Donelan, who resigned in July after just 35 hours.

The change of government comes at a critical time for education policy, with key schools, SEND and teacher training reforms all in motion.

But Truss shows no desire to maintain continuity.

Will Quince, the former children's minister who took on the schools brief in July and who has stewarded the SEND review reforms since last autumn, was moved to health on day two of this week's reshuffle.

Rory Gribbell, an education policy adviser to Johnson since August 2020, was swiftly fired by team Truss as part of a massive clear-out of Downing Street staff.

Caroline Elsom, a special adviser at the



Kit Malthouse

Department for Work and Pensions, has been lined up to take on a wider "public services" brief, factoring in education, health and equalities, prompting Sam Freedman, a former DfE adviser, to warn that "no one can cover a brief that big".

School reforms have also been delayed. *Schools Week* revealed yesterday that the schools bill, due to have its third reading in the House of Lords next Wednesday, is now on hold while the new line-up reviews all reforms.

The landmark legislation, which aims to establish a new accountability regime for schools, creates a new register of children not in school and greater powers for Ofsted, was already in trouble.

Earlier this year, ministers were forced to slash clauses one to four, which related to academy standards and intervention powers, and promised to come back with updated plans.

It followed widespread criticism of the proposals, with the Department for Education accused of an attempted "power grab".

Truss may have different ideas for reforming the school system, having pledged new grammar schools.

The prospect of new selective schools has repeatedly reared

its head, despite the ditching of former prime minister Theresa May's pledge to remove the ban.

Evidence suggests while grammars may slightly stretch brighter pupils, they increase inequality overall as the attainment of other pupils suffers.

Truss previously told the Conservative Home website: "I want people around the country to have the choice that we have to be able to send our daughters to a grammar school."

It was "about parents and children having the choice of that range of good schools. And the more good schools we have the more choice people have."

Any government bid to open new grammar schools would require primary legislation to end the ban on new selective institutions introduced in 1998.

This presents more of an issue in the House of Lords, where the government does not hold a majority.

The significant churn in personnel also presents a challenge.

Will Bickford Smith, the DfE's schools policy adviser, leaves this month for a job at the University of Exeter.

It means two of the main architects of teacher training reforms, Gribbell and Bickford Smith, are leaving at a critical time, with fears the ITT review will lead to a deficit of teacher training places, and gloomy predictions about recruitment over the next few years.

"[Kit Malthouse] is starting his role at a critical time," said Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union.

"To put education back on an even keel will require sharp elbows in securing emergency funding from Treasury.

"But it will also require a willingness to listen to and work with the teaching profession, to achieve our shared goal of improving life-chances for all. Right now, the stakes could not be higher."



Will Quince



Liz Truss

THE TRUSS TEAM

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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12 things you need to know about the new education secretary

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

1 Malthouse is 55, older than the average for education secretaries. But he is a fair way off being the oldest. Keith Joseph was 63.

2 The MP for North West Hampshire is not the first education secretary from the county in recent history. Damian Hinds was the MP for East Hampshire.

3 Like his latest predecessors Michelle Donelan and James Cleverly, Malthouse was first elected to the Commons in 2015. He has been a work and pensions minister and crime and policing minister, but served more recently as chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

4 He is the fourth education secretary in just over two months, and the fifth in the past year. Cleverly, now foreign secretary, was in post for less than two months. His predecessor Donelan served for just 35 hours. Malthouse will no doubt be hoping for a longer tenure.

5 Born in Liverpool, Malthouse studied at Sudley County Primary School and Liverpool College, a private school that became an academy, before studying politics and economics at Newcastle University.

6 After graduation, he moved to London and qualified as a chartered accountant, working for Deloitte. He was also involved in a "number of start-ups" including County Finance Group, of which he remains chair and a majority shareholder.

7 He was elected to Westminster Council in 1998 and became its deputy leader, standing down in 2006. He was elected to the London Assembly two years later, the same year Cleverly was elected to the same body.

8 In 2008, Boris Johnson, then London mayor, appointed Malthouse as his deputy for policing, a role he held for four years before becoming

deputy mayor for business and enterprise.

9 An often touchy subject, but as the role involves children so directly it will be mentioned at times: Malthouse has three.

10 He is perhaps best known for the eponymous "Malthouse compromise", a Brexit plan he brokered between leave and remain-supporting MPs in 2019.

11 During his time as policing minister, Malthouse said he believed schools should teach boys how to treat women and girls with respect. His comments came in the wake of the murder of Sarah Everard.

12 While Johnson was on holiday this summer, Malthouse was responsible for coordinating the government's response to the extreme heatwave and was criticised for telling schools to stay open.



Grammar schools fan joins DfE's ministerial team

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER
@SCHOOLSWEEK

Grammar schools fan Kelly Tolhurst has joined the ministerial ranks at the Department for Education, as former schools minister Will Quince moves to health.

Tolhurst, the MP for Rochester and Strood and a former housing minister, is the first junior minister to be appointed to the DfE under Liz Truss.

Quince has overseen the schools brief since July alongside responsibility for SEND policy. However, it is not known whether Tolhurst has directly replaced Quince, or if she will take on another role in the department once portfolios are confirmed.

On Thursday evening, Downing Street

announced that Andrea Jenkyns, who has held the further and higher education brief since July, had been reappointed as a DfE minister, though again, her brief has not yet been confirmed.

Brendan Clarke-Smith, who succeeded Quince in the children's minister brief in July, has moved to the Cabinet Office.

It means the DfE has three confirmed ministers, after Kit Malthouse was made education secretary on Tuesday night.

Tolhurst was elected in 2015 when she defeated the former UKIP MP Mark Reckless in the Kent seat he won the year before in a by-election.

She has had a string of junior ministerial jobs,

including small business minister, aviation and maritime minister and minister for housing and rough sleeping.

Tolhurst became deputy chief whip following the resignation of Chris Pincher earlier this year. Her Rochester and Strood seat is in Medway, a selective area.

Truss pledged during the Conservative leadership campaign to lift the ban on new grammar schools.

She has previously said that "grammars in Kent have worked and have done wonders for the education of many of our young people, and I am proud that family backgrounds have not been a restriction to learning".

Truss's reshuffle may be held up by the Queen's passing.



Kelly Tolhurst



Six-month energy 'guarantee' not enough, say school leaders

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

School leaders say the government's promised energy price "guarantee" for six months' aid is not enough, as bills soar by up to 587 per cent.

A *Schools Week* investigation, published earlier this week, revealed leaders plans to axe jobs, books and building work, turn down radiators and raise class sizes if support fails to plug widening budget gaps.

New prime minister Liz Truss promised the public sector "equivalent" support to households, who will see average bills capped at £2,500 from October.

But she only committed to six months' help on Thursday, with a review to decide who gets further aid – suggesting the sector may need to battle hard for a longer-term lifeline.

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, and Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, both said they were pleased by the "desperately needed" intervention.

Cruddas said the six-month timescale poses "difficulties", as schools needed budget security and certainty over the whole year. Barton said ASCL would seek clarification about what happened next and how the guarantee will work – with details still vague.

Bills rise, and rise, and rise

One broker told *Schools Week* he understood guarantee levels and logistics were still being thrashed out with suppliers. But National Education Union joint general secretary Kevin Courtney warned prices would likely be fixed at an "unmanageably high level".

The £2,500 household cap is still more than double 2019 levels.

The belated announcement comes after months of escalating prices that have left many schools in an "apocalyptic situation",



Liz Truss



according to Leigh Academies Trust chief executive Simon Beamish.

Energy consultants estimate around two-thirds of schools renew annually, and more than 350 renewed through one broker, Zenergi, in August alone. In January, its clients' average bills doubled. But by August (after Russia's Ukraine invasion) they had soared 274 per cent for electricity and 499 per cent for gas.

Leigh Academies Trust was recently quoted a staggering £8.7 million rise – up 514 per cent. That could rise again too, as it is on a variable tariff, with many suppliers ditching fixed deals altogether. "How do you budget when you don't know month-to-month costs?" asked Beamish.

Woodbridge High School in London was quoted an eye-watering 587 per cent gas hike.

John Haw, managing director of Fidelity Energy, said clients have "gone white" when shown projected costs.

Schools Week analysis suggests trusts' combined bills for autumn and winter have likely more than trebled on 2020-21 levels – up more than £400 million across 10,000 academies. With around 12,000 schools still maintained, the whole sector's extra costs will be far higher.

The key question remains how much of such rises the "guarantee" will cover. Leaders will also pray it covers struck deals already, not just new or variable ones.

Deficits and austerity 2.0

Energy bills, unfunded pay deals and wider inflation – all higher than expected months ago – are forcing leaders to tear up budgets. Several call plugging shortfalls "impossible".

The Elliot Foundation recently forecasted energy would cost £1.4 million and wages £1 million more than expected, trebling its deficit. Stuart Gardner, CEO of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said quadrupling electricity bills and other increases left a £3.2 million black hole.

Leaders warned shortly before Truss' announcement that unless support was sufficient in plugging such gaps, austerity would return. "Spiralling energy costs will inevitably lead to resource and staffing cuts, unless schools are given additional support," said Dr Karen Roberts, CEO, The Kemnal Academies Trust.

Aylsham Learning Federation executive head Duncan Spalding said it could otherwise only save enough through "large-scale redundancies, a diminished curriculum [and] stopping vital maintenance work".

THE SCHOOLS IN-TRAY



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On Monday, parents across the Saffron Academy Trust received a letter warning that without adequate DfE intervention, not only job cuts but also bigger classes and more requests for parents' donations could be needed.

Meanwhile, Caroline Barlow, head of Heathfield Community College in East Sussex, said trips, clubs, music classes and reading books could prove "collateral damage". David Collins, head of the Knole Academy in Kent, said new playground and astroturf facilities were "off the table".

Turning down heating

Many leaders' priority is simply curbing consumption. "If it's a choice between switching off lights and turning down heating or paying teachers, it's not a difficult one," said Hugh Greenway, The Elliot Foundation CEO. His trust will share usage data with pupils and parents to encourage behavioural change.

Chris Felgate, director of consultancy Ginger Energy, reports "mass installations" of solar panels among school clients, as well as LED lights and efficient boilers.

Ex-government adviser Jonathan Simons recently called for £2.5 billion in solar panel grants for schools, to also "progress on net zero".

But Lee Mason-Ellis, The Pioneer Academy trust CEO, said even though accelerating its green drive through measures like insulation could shave a fifth off consumption, it would "not significantly dent" extra costs. Knole Academy's solar panels only contribute one-twentieth of its electricity.

John Winter, CEO of the Weydon Multi Academy Trust, and Caroline Derbyshire, his counterpart at the Saffron Academy Trust, had voiced fears earlier in the week of more "unpalatable" decisions. "Limiting the use of heating during the winter" was an option for Derbyshire.

Winter said he could not rule out "sticking kids in body warmers" to cut heating bills, or even reducing time in school. "Everything is on the table." Felgate said clients were even considering closing pools, flood-lit sports pitches or under-used classroom blocks.



Caroline Barlow



Sector not 'awash with cash'

Most trust leaders expected to use reserves, preventing immediate redundancies. Savings during Covid lockdowns pushed academy surpluses to £3.96 billion last year, enough to pay off combined deficits of £22 million in the sector 178 times over. Maintained schools also recorded a net £2 billion surplus in 2020-21.

Despite likely Treasury views on the matter, reserves are "not universal and will run out pretty quickly," said Stephen Morales, chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership.

A DfE spokesperson said (before Truss spoke) that schools had received an extra £4 billion and wide-ranging value-for-money support. But, unfunded hikes in pay and other costs have wiped this out, knocking off track the government's vow to revive budgets to 2010 levels.

Greenway noted DfE figures masked lower per-pupil rises for some schools, and said it was "government's job to intervene" in market failure. For Gardner, leaving trusts without enough support risks driving a flawed "culture" longer-term of stockpiling cash.

Some trust chiefs warn the DfE further risks undermining its MAT drive, as trust or maintained school deficits make both unappealing partners.

Schools' ability to cut costs varies, too. Weydon MAT includes three special schools, where Winter said scope to cut staffing or temperatures is limited. Hydrotherapy pools are also very energy intensive.

The buying dilemma

Tim Golding, of Zenergi, expects wholesale costs won't fall for a year at least – longer than the six-months' aid offered by government. Yet more schools than usual face renewal headaches this year just as prices have skyrocketed, brokers say.

Many have struck short-term deals or stayed on variable tariffs recently, as Covid and a long previous winter had already inflated fixed tariff prices.

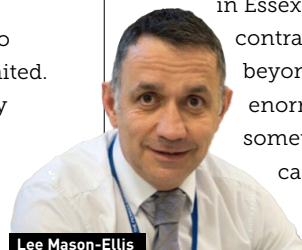
Felgate said such moves were understandable, but then Russia invaded Ukraine, leaving more schools exposed to further rises.

Lots of his clients have since struck expensive three-year deals simply as they cannot afford one-year contracts. It suggests the crisis will cause lasting problems when any guarantee below three years ends, even if market prices fall.

Morales said smaller trusts and primaries were typically more "hand to mouth" and vulnerable. Larger trusts and councils often have more strategic capacity.

Some operate flexible forward buying models. Ormiston Academies Trust constantly monitors markets, buying in smaller chunks. Before Truss' statement, Ormiston predicted a £9.2 million annual rise as it renews this month. But it marks a relatively less severe 186 per cent increase.

Vic Goddard, head of Passmores Academy in Essex, called the timing of the contract expiry a "lottery ticket" beyond schools' control. "The enormity of the challenge is something I've never seen in my career," added Beamish. "It's looking slightly dystopian."



Lee Mason-Ellis



Secondary schools face 6k trainee teacher shortfall

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

INVESTIGATES

New education secretary Kit Malthouse has been urged to prioritise teacher shortages as new analysis suggests the government could recruit nearly 6,000 fewer secondary trainees than required this year.

It would mean ministers missing recruitment targets for the ninth time in ten years. Teacher retention rates are also worsening with a big jump in vacancies this year, suggesting the crisis is really starting to bite.

A Schools Week analysis of latest recruitment data published on August 15 – a fortnight before schools reopened – suggests only 73 per cent of this year’s postgraduate initial teacher training (PGITT) secondary target will be met.

But some subjects are likely to see the brunt of the shortfall, with only 25 per cent of physics teachers recruited so far.

A quarter fewer secondary teachers have also been recruited than at this time last year – when the target was also missed.

Professor John Howson, the chair of the teacher vacancy website TeachVac, said solving shortages “must be No 1” in Malthouse’s inbox.

“Schools face a battle to recruit teachers during 2023 unless the recession encourages more to return to teaching. At present, that is wishful thinking and not a way to staff our schools.”

The August data for the 2022-23 school year – the last to be published before the new school year – shows just 13,970 postgraduate secondary candidates had been offered places. The Department for Education wanted 20,945.

Of those, 7,156 trainees had conditional offers (51

per cent), while 4,844 (35 per cent) were recruited.

A further 177 had not responded to an offer, while 1,793 (13 per cent) were awaiting decisions.

However, the data does not include Teach First or those who have applied directly through their provider.

Few candidates apply directly through their provider, but 1,294 new secondary trainee teachers were recruited through Teach First last year, making up 6 per cent of the overall secondary teacher target.

If their recruits make up the same percentage this year, that would leave a shortfall of 5,718 trainees (27 per cent of the target).

But Teach First launched a new autumn institute on top of its usual offer after a “challenging year” for recruitment, suggesting it might also fall short.

Sara Tanton, the deputy policy director at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the analysis was “ominous”. Many schools would have to increase class sizes and use supply staff and non-subject specialists.

Recruitment is getting worse. As of August 16 last year, 16,070 secondary trainees with a secure or conditional place had been recruited, compared with 12,000 by August 15 this year – a 25 per cent fall.

The Initial Teacher Training Census, published in December, showed that just 16,571 secondary trainees were recruited last year – 82 per cent of the target.

Long-standing shortage subjects will also feel the pinch; 23 per cent of physics teachers have been recruited so far, 25 per cent of design and technology.

Subjects including computing, modern foreign languages, music, geography, English, RE and

Subjects with the biggest new trainee shortfalls

Secondary subject	Percentage of target met
Physics	23%
Design & Technology	25%
Business Studies	33.50%
Computing	40%
Modern Languages	41%

*Including those recruited, with a conditional offer, who have received an offer but not responded and those still awaiting decisions from providers.

biology are likely to under-recruit. Classics is the most oversubscribed, with double the required number of trainees signed up.

Teacher recruitment issues are not isolated to the UK. A recent Financial Times analysis found that more than 80,000 teaching positions remain unfilled in Germany, Hungary, Poland, Austria and France.

British international schools also need to recruit an additional 18,000 teachers in the next ten years, according to a recent report from the Council of British International Skills (Cobis).

But a survey of international school leaders earlier this year suggested more staff were actually planning to return to the UK than in previous years.

Fiona Rogers, the council’s deputy chief executive, also said the DfE’s plan for an international qualified teacher status (iQTS) could lead to “a great deal of movement in both directions”.

A DfE spokesperson said recruitment had been challenging, but bursaries of up to £24,000 and scholarships would “encourage talented trainees to key subjects such as chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics”.

DfE fails to lure physics teachers back to the classroom

A government scheme to lure back physics teachers recruited just 23 staff in two years.

Freedom of Information figures obtained by *Schools Week* show the Return to Teaching scheme faltered in recent years as recruitment dimmed.

As a “priority” subject under the Department for Education’s scheme, those interested in returning to teach physics are eligible for support from an adviser.

But just eight returned in 2019-20, and 15 in 2020-21.

It comes against a backdrop of chronic under-recruitment in the subject, with last year’s initial teacher training numbers in the subject the lowest on record.

The department added chemistry and computing to its priority subjects earlier this year. It had hoped more staff could help pupils catch up after the pandemic.

But there were low numbers in other priority subjects, with 49 maths and 56 languages teachers going back to the classroom over the two years.

This is despite more than 600 former teachers in the subjects being given an adviser after showing an interest in returning. For physics, 111 potential returners were given advisers.

The government said additional numbers may have returned to teaching without telling their adviser.

The Department for Education said about 15,000 teachers returned each year – more than a third of all qualified entrants.



Truss faces triple strike threat as unions consult members

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Liz Truss's government faces a potential triple whammy of industrial action this year from teachers, support staff and school leaders in response to ministers' pay proposals.

The ASCL school leaders' union is consulting its members on whether to ballot for industrial action for the first time in its 16-year history.

And the NAHT, another leadership union, has said it is listening to members to understand the "depths of their frustration", and is not ruling "any action in or out".

Unions were unanimous in their condemnation of pay proposals announced earlier this year.

The government is offering a 5 per cent rise for most teachers and leaders, while starting salaries will rise by 8.9 per cent.

Support staff have been offered rises of £1,925, working out as a 10.5 per cent hike for the lowest-paid, but just 4 per cent for higher earners. Inflation now stands at 10.1 per cent.

The National Education Union has promised the "largest teachers' pay ballot in a generation"



when it formally asks about 250,000 members in November if they want to strike.

The NASUWT, another teaching union, is consulting members on the proposals until September 23 "and will then decide next steps in terms of whether we go ahead with any ballot and the timing if so after that point".

National teacher strikes are infrequent and winning ballots was made harder by new ballot thresholds in 2017. But a walk-out of heads would be unprecedented.

ASCL has not consulted members on potential national industrial action since its formation in 2006.



Paul Whiteman

NAHT members have only walked out en-masse once – over pensions – in 2011.

Geoff Barton, ASCL's general secretary, said his union was asking members whether they would support an indicative ballot for strike action or action that fell just short, such as "withdrawing from certain tasks".

"We have never felt the need to ask this latter question before and the fact that we are doing so is a sign of how frustrated people feel after over a decade of real-terms pay cuts."

The NAHT's Paul Whiteman said there was "anger and dismay as schools are forced to make cuts that will directly impact children and education".

"We are currently working hard to hear from all our members and to understand the depths of their frustration. At this stage we cannot rule any action in or out."

The GMB and Unison are consulting support staff members on whether to accept or reject their pay offer. Unite, which also represents some support staff, is balloting for strike action.

COST OF LIVING

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

Teacher hardship charities swamped by demand

Hardship charities for current and former education staff are facing soaring demand for help to cover bills, food, petrol and other essentials.

The Teaching Staff Trust (TST) received an "unprecedented" 231 applications for grants this year as the cost of living squeeze bites – more than twice pre-pandemic levels. It was so overwhelmed by demand recently it had to temporarily stop taking applications.

Meanwhile, Education Support reports "huge demand" from teachers, teaching assistants and other staff for its grants service – currently up 63 per cent on last year.

Staff needed help with essentials including food, rent, mortgage payments, utility bills and travel-to-work costs, said chief executive Sinéad Mc Brearty.

Applications to Unison's school clothing grant fund also jumped 30 per cent this year. The union, which represents school support staff and

other council employees, funded clothing for 1,627 children.

Judith Smith, the chief executive of the Kent-based TST charity, said it faced a "perfect storm" as reserves no longer generated enough investment returns. The charity is now seeking grant-making partners to plug a £240,000-a-year shortfall.

The charity will pay supply teacher Naomi Carter's bills this month after Covid forced her to take time off work without sick pay, followed by an end-of-term lull in demand. She started summer with "nothing in the bank", and said it was "mortifying" that she needed family and charity help. She is worried she will have to limit heating this winter, and is seeking more work locally to curb soaring petrol costs.

Smith and Carter describe agency staff – the most common group seeking TST's help – as "invisible". Applicants reported draining savings during Covid. Many received no

or limited furlough support, according to the National Supply Teachers Network.

TST grants focus on unexpected problems. Becky*, a school administrator in the south west, applied after illness forced her husband to stop work, and then their oil tank broke.

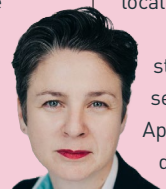
The charity helped to replace it after the couple expected to be "stuck without heating or hot water this winter".

She remained concerned support staff still have not had their April pay rise, and worried about soaring oil bills.

Meanwhile, TST vouchers will help Jasmine* cover groceries and children's clothes. Mental ill health forced her to give up secondary teaching, which she attributed to burnout and bereavements. She has "struggled" on universal credit since.

"I can't thank TST enough. Most days my husband and I eat cereal for an evening meal."

* Not their real names



Sinéad Mc Brearty



Judith Smith



Attainment gap widens to a 10-year high

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A decade's progress in narrowing the primary school attainment gap has been wiped out, prompting demands for greater investment to help poorer pupils catch back up.

Data from the Department for Education shows the disadvantage gap index, used by government to track the gap between poorer and better-off pupils, increased from 2.91 in 2019 to 3.21 this year, the largest since 2012.

The attainment gap between London and other regions of England has also widened. But gaps between girls and boys, and between pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and those without, narrowed slightly.

Ministers said the pandemic "had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils", but policy experts said Covid simply exacerbated existing inequalities.

Headline data published earlier this year showed attainment fell for all pupils in all subjects except reading.

However, the new data, published on Tuesday, showed attainment of disadvantaged pupils fell further than for other pupils.

Natalie Perera, the chief executive of the Education Policy Institute, said the disadvantage gap for primary-school pupils was already widening in 2019. "The pandemic has made it worse."

Addressing "increasing inequality" in education "should be an urgent priority for the new prime

minister", she added.

Dave Thomson, from Education Datalab, said the gap was also wider than first thought earlier in the pandemic.

Just 43 per cent of poorer pupils reach 'expected standard'

The proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils meeting the "expected standard" in reading, writing and maths fell from 71 per cent in 2019 to 65 per cent this year. The drop for poorer pupils was from 51 to 43 per cent.

In reading, the proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard rose from 78 to 80 per cent, while the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the milestone stayed the same, at 62 per cent.

In writing, poorer pupils' attainment fell from 68 to 55 per cent, while better-off pupils fell from 83 to 75 per cent.

And in maths, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard dropped from 67 to 56 per cent, compared with 84 to 78 per cent among non-disadvantaged pupils.

Lee Elliot Major, professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, said the widening gap "reveals the stark impact of the pandemic".

"What is particularly

worrying is that results at age 11 shape so much of outcomes during secondary school."

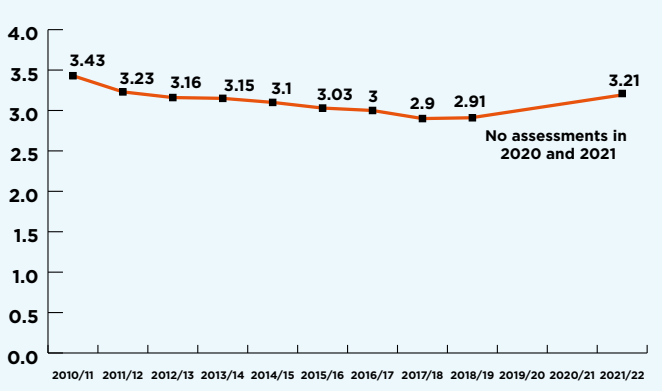
Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT leaders' union, said: "In five years' time these same students will be sitting their GCSEs – only through proper investment in education can we expect to see an improved picture then."

Gender gap narrows

Attainment fell among all pupils, but slightly more among girls, although they still outperformed boys in all subjects except maths. This closed the gender gap between boys and girls from ten percentage points to nine.

The proportion of boys meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths fell from 60 to 54 per cent, while for girls the drop was 70 to 63 per cent.

Disadvantage gap among 11-year-olds widens to highest level since 2012



SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Capita apologises for 2,000 lost SATs papers

More than 2,000 SATs papers have been lost, leaving hundreds of schools without results for their pupils as the new school year starts.

In July, 3,339 key stage 2 test scripts were missing across reading, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. More than 1,000 schools were affected.

About 1,150 papers were found over the summer, but the 2,186 still missing (about ten times more than usual) has impacted about 500 schools.

The Department for Education said papers went missing for a "variety of reasons – including human and equipment errors".

Capita – the £107 million contractor that oversees SATs – searched warehouses for

the papers, but those not found are now deemed lost.

This year, the first under Capita, has been beset with issues. The company's results service crashed, a helpline was overwhelmed and markers complained of slashed pay.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said the process had been "grossly mishandled" and called for a full investigation.

"Although this may be a small percentage of the number of papers overall, it still leaves hundreds of pupils without marks – pupils who are now entering secondary school without the end of primary results the

government deems so important."

A DfE spokesperson said there would be no impact on children's progression to secondary school. A "lessons-learned" review was ongoing, with Capita promising a "robust plan" to stop it happening again.

A Capita spokesperson apologised but said the "overwhelming majority" of 3.8 million test scripts from 16,000 schools were marked. The missing number accounted for 0.05 per cent of the total.

"We recognise that it is unacceptable for there to be delays in a result being received, or for any paper to be lost in the process of being scanned and marked."

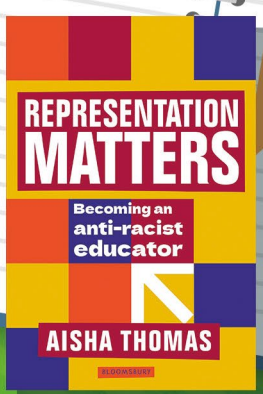
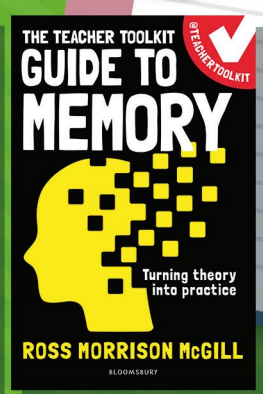
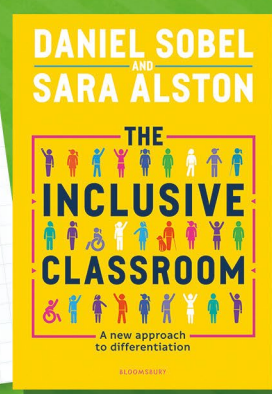
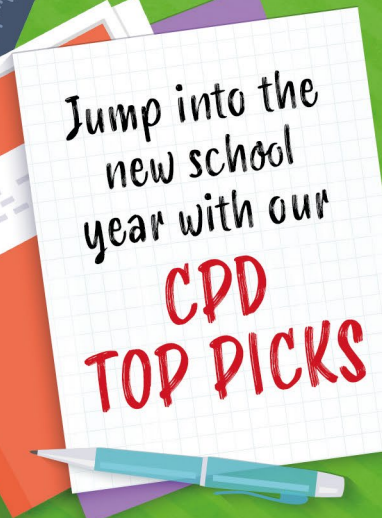
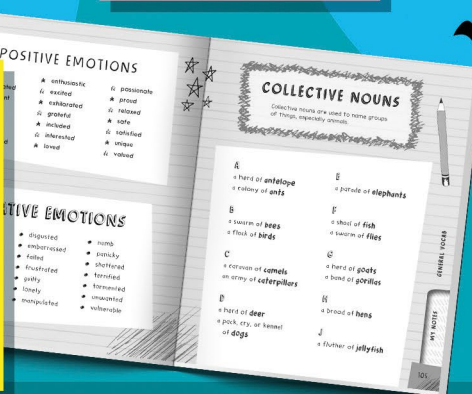
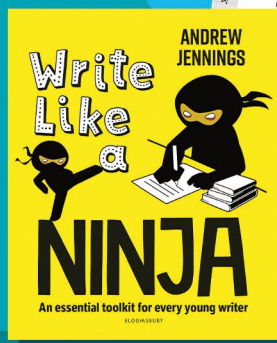
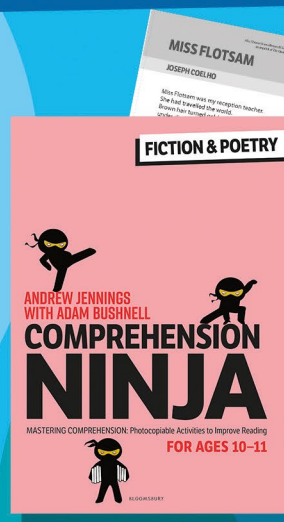
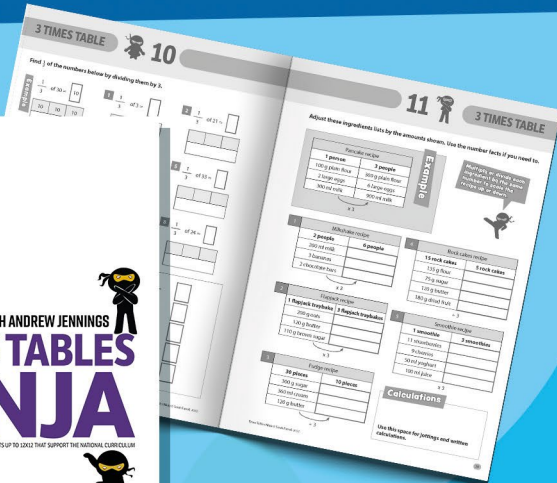
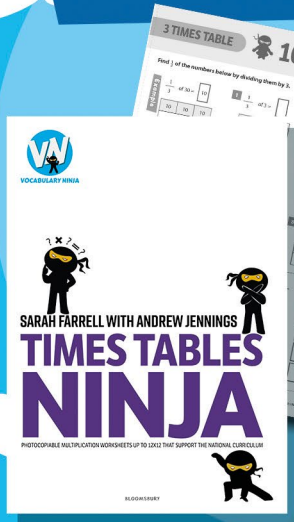


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DfE goes shy on 'try before you buy'

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government has quietly slashed funding for "try before you buy" trust partnerships, a flagship initiative unveiled last year to revive its multi-academy trust drive.

The catchy-sounding policy drew national headlines in April 2021, with new guidance on MATs offering temporary support to maintained schools and standalone academies.

Gavin Williamson, the former education secretary, encouraged all maintained schools to use such partnerships – albeit not new in themselves – to test academisation before committing.

A Department for Education webpage outlining its "trust and school improvement offer" to schools previously offered those rated "requires improvement" up to £10,000 credit towards such partnerships.

But the funding was removed without explanation on Friday.

A Department for Education spokesperson told *Schools Week* it had "reviewed the offer, taking into account ongoing dialogue with the sector,



Gavin Williamson

and has redirected funding".

The funds will instead increase the number of days' help schools can get from a strong school trust chief executive or national leader of education. They can help leaders "identify and implement improvements" and support building MAT relationships "where appropriate" for ten days, rather than between three and five as previously. Schools can still "choose to work together" through partnerships, but will not get

extra cash.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said it was "broadly sensible" to consolidate funding in an initiative that "allows a deeper relationship focused on improvement".

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of teachers' union NEU, said it showed try before you buy was a "failure".

But he said he was not surprised, claiming schools had a "waning interest" in MATs, given the loss of "autonomy, identity and control over finances".

Jeff Marshall, the managing director of conversion advisers J&G Marshall, said he had seen the scheme work well, but it was "always open to abuse".

"A school could look for support with an eye on an inspection ... with no intention of joining. Similarly, a trust could invite schools to 'try before you buy' to help the trust out of a financial issue, with no intention of taking the school in."

But Alice Gregson, an executive director of Forum Strategy, a membership organisation for trust leaders, said try before you buy was a "good opportunity to incentivise more schools to join trusts". The government wants all schools in "strong" MATs by 2030.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Weller heads MAT leadership advisory group

Ministers have named 10 academy "experts" who will help to create "world-class" professional development for other trust leaders.

Nick Weller, the chief executive of Dixons Academies Trust, will lead the Department for Education's MAT leadership development offer expert advisory group.

Other members include Rebecca Boomer-Clark, chief executive at Academies Enterprise Trust, and Maura Regan, chief executive of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust (see full list, right).

The group will help ministers devise and deliver a new content framework for MAT leadership development, as promised in the schools white paper.

It will "define the knowledge, skills and behaviours individuals need as chief executives

of large MATs, and advise on the scheme's target audience, length and design.

The group met for the first time on August 30, and will continue to meet monthly, with ministers receiving its advice by the end of the year.



Nick Weller

The group members

- Nick Weller, CEO, Dixons Academies Trust (chair)
- Rebecca Boomer-Clark, CEO, Academies Enterprise Trust
- Leora Cruddas, CEO, Confederation of School Trusts
- Nikki Edwards, CEO, Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust
- Stuart Lock, CEO, Advantage Schools
- Thomas Meakin, Partner, McKinsey and Company
- Jeffery Quaye, National Director of Education and Standards, Aspirations Academies Trust
- Maura Regan, CEO, Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
- Paul Tarn, CEO, Delta Academies Trust
- David Tibble, Chair of Trustees, Inspiration Trust

NEWS

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Oak vows to resist meddling ministers, but issues remain

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Oak National Academy's chief executive has vowed to tell ministers "no" if they try to interfere with the new £43 million curriculum quango – but concerns still dog the project.

Sir Jon Coles, chief executive of United Learning, has urged new education secretary Kit Malthouse to ditch its "state control" of Oak. The trust last week pulled 1,500 of its lessons from the online platform.

The British Educational Suppliers Association, which says the new body will threaten millions of pounds in investment and hundreds of jobs, is also now seeking legal advice on Oak's formation. The body threatened legal action earlier this year.

Oak officially launched as an arms-length curriculum body this week, and its framework pledges that the education secretary is "committed" to giving the Oak board "freedom to operate" and will be "operationally independent" from government.

However, the secretary of state approval is needed to appoint the chief executive, appoint up to five directors, as well as sign off spending above certain thresholds.

Matt Hood, Oak interim chief executive and founder, said Oak would stand up to the Department for Education if they tried to overstep the mark, telling *Schools Week* they "have worked in detail to make sure everyone is clear on who is responsible for what. Oak will have total operational independence, including over the curriculum and resources we create".

"The DfE knows how crucial our independence is – they put it in our founding documents to protect it. But if they try to get involved in areas beyond their remit, we will tell them 'no'."

However, others are not convinced. Coles said the body is a "long way from the original charitable Covid response".

"It is to procure and promote a set of curriculum resources which exemplify ministers'

curriculum ideals."

Writing for *Schools Week*, Coles alleged former schools minister Nick Gibb thought the Oak quango was a way to "promote his own view of the curriculum". Gibb has been approached for comment.

The curriculum packages on Oak must be aligned to the national curriculum, but also have "due regard" to non-statutory guidance, which includes Gibb's model music curriculum and Ofsted research reviews.

Legal action could also impact plans. Caroline Wright, director general of trade association BESA, told *Schools Week* it is "seeking legal advice on the DfE's latest announcements and will be considering next steps after consultation with our members".

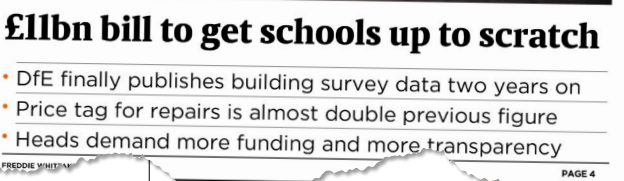
The body has already put the government on notice over a potential judicial review.

Coles added a new government is "a chance for ministers to look again. Let's hope that they identify that this level of state control is not only undesirable – but fundamentally un-Conservative."

Investor and former Michael Gove adviser Henry de Zoete was appointed a temporary board member this week. De Zoete advised the Oak team on their original proposal to privatise the body. As revealed by *Schools Week*, the proposal detailed how Oak bosses would have made millions under a future sale, but it was dropped after the Reach charity – which incubated Oak – expressed concern.

Ministers have now set aside up to £43 million to fund Oak over the next three years. A total of £8 million will fund the first procurement of new materials, with government seeking £6.6 million from its contingency fund to get the body up and running. Another round will take place next year.

Hood said the "biggest part" of



its resources will "go to schools, publishers, subject associations, national centres of excellent and others to create our full curriculum packages".

"We've a big, national remit – support the building of curriculum expertise and help reduce teacher workload," Hood added. "We think we're good value for money."

Supplier's will grant Oak a "perpetual and irrevocable" license to all curriculum resources that underpin "full curriculum packages".

All new intellectual property created in the developing of the curriculum packages will be the sole property of Oak. But providers will retain the right to commercial and other use of its original resources. Hood said they are paying a "fair price" to buy the license that is then built upon.

"We want to recognise the expertise and quality of an organisation's resources. And updates with Oak will then benefit thousands of pupils and teachers, and they'll be free to continue to use any underlying existing resources as they do now."



Matt Hood



Nick Gibb

New tutor custodians vow to 'win hearts and minds'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

A new custodian of the flagship National Tutoring Programme has admitted it needs to win headteachers' "hearts and minds" to revive its fortunes.

The beleaguered HR firm Randstad was axed from running the programme (NTP) last year after continual problems led to ministers handing £349 million for tutors directly to schools.

Three new contractors will now run the scheme, including recruiting, training and quality assurance tutoring over the next two years.

But tutors are already warning of a "very real danger" money for the scheme will be pulled as soaring costs stretch school budgets.

It comes as a leading academy trust, Unity Schools Partnership, also pulled out, saying that while tutoring was a good idea, its implementation was a "nightmare" (see opinion piece, page 15).

Yalinie Vigneswaran, a senior programme director at the Education Development Trust (EDT), one of the three new contractors, said there was an "element of winning hearts and minds about tutoring and about the NTP".

EDT has a £7.4 million contract to train school led-tutors and academic mentors – as it did last year under Randstad.

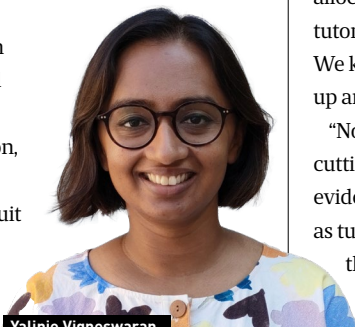
The former assistant headteacher added: "It will be a challenge for many reasons: schools are still recovering, they'll still be thinking a lot about the impacts of Covid."

The NTP was criticised last year for being a "bureaucratic nightmare".

But Vigneswaran, who led the original academic mentors' programme at Teach First, said: "I'm hoping the engagement will be really obvious. It's about getting our faces out there, making clear who the leaders of the programme are and having live feedback, live data, live insights back out to schools."

Tribal, the education services provider, will quality assure tuition partners and Cognition, a global education consultancy, will recruit academic mentors.

Tim Coulson,



Yalinie Vigneswaran



Unity's chief executive and a former regional school commissioner, said the "PR battle that tutoring is a good idea hasn't been won". With rising costs, "getting tutoring still on the agenda is a harder battle".

Unity launched SP Tutors in 2020 to ensure the government's catch-up money did not get "dissipated" on profit-making companies.

In 2020-21, Unity made £407,000 from tutoring, according to accounts. Coulson said it would break even this year. More than 5,000 pupils in 150 schools were helped by the scheme.

The remaining 56 tuition partners will have to meet Tribal's new quality framework, which ministers are signing off. It will include "zero tolerance" for compliance failures.

'Danger' tutoring will be overshadowed

Other heads have also told some tuition partners that catch-up is on the chopping block as energy bills rise. The government subsidises 60 per cent of tutor spend, with schools having to put in the rest.

Susannah Hardyman, the chief executive of tuition partner Action Tutoring, said schools needed "additional support and investment".

"There is a very real danger that funding allocations for valuable interventions such as tutoring will get removed from school budgets. We know that this is already happening up and down the country.

"Now is not the time for schools to be cutting down on staff or stripping out evidenced-based interventions, such as tutoring, in order to balance their budgets."



Clare Grundy

Statistics showing how many pupil premium children got tutoring this year will be published in the coming months.

Lee Elliot Major, the social mobility professor at the University of Exeter, said it was "becoming evident" that England's education recovery efforts were not sufficient in countering education inequalities.

"Tutoring must be targeted for specific needs, addressing foundational skills of literacy and numeracy for example. It needs to complement what is being taught in the classroom. So much more could have been done to gain the trust and support of teachers."

NTP widened for SEND pupils

The programme's scope was previously criticised as being too narrow, but tutoring cash can now be spent on "alternative, established" interventions for children with special educational needs and disabilities, such as speech and language therapy.

The government said this could help with "learning capabilities, sensory development and communication".

All schools are now also eligible for an academic mentor – funded at 60 per cent. Previously just schools with 20 per cent disadvantaged children were eligible.

Cognition, the £7.9 million recruiter of up to 3,600 mentors, said it would work "closely" with schools in poorer areas. But "a wide range of pupils will have been affected by school closures and we are keen to ensure that our service is accessible to all", according to Clare Grundy, the firm's UK operations director.

Opinion

After two years of changing the programme for the better from the inside, we will be going our own way to deliver tutoring's promise, writes Tim Coulson

Small-group tutoring was meant to be the great idea to address lost learning due to Covid. But implementing it has been a nightmare – for NTP providers, schools and the DfE. That doesn't mean it still isn't a great idea – but Unity Schools Partnership is going its own way, leaving a legacy we are proud of.

We are a trust of 32 primary, secondary and special schools as well as a research school and teaching school hub. We want to work widely with colleagues well beyond the trust and to be seen as a partner in many contexts.

In 2020, we applauded the DfE's decision to follow the advice from the Education Endowment Foundation that the most effective use of additional funding to support post-lockdown recovery was small-group tutoring. This was such a different approach to the more usual DfE grants where heads are left to make their own decisions about what is the most effective use of funding. It was brave, and we supported it as a trust in spite of the inclinations and hunches of individual schools because it was backed by research.

But our optimism was quickly punctured by the scepticism of many schools about tutoring and their dislike of many agencies providing tutors. One weekend, I made the mistake of testing the system by looking for a tutor to support a ten-year-old to accelerate progress in maths. I was offered a range of tutors at a range of prices – all individuals with no link to any school or recognised programme of learning.

So we decided to have a go at



TIM COULSON
Chief Executive, Unity Schools Partnership

The NTP has been a nightmare – but its aims still matter

becoming a provider of tutors ourselves – a very 'brave' decision in itself given the work involved. We were proud to be approved by the NTP as the only school-led tutor among the first 32 organisations approved from several hundred applicants. Getting started from scratch was hard, and we didn't

the tutors we recruited, developed apps for tutors and students, and provided 'tutor tea time' for tutors to chew over their challenges.

Our ambition from the start was to provide tutors as required by schools, but our much-preferred model was to accredit people schools already knew so that they

“The DfE has finally hit on the model we were promoting from the start

always meet the expectations of schools to get a tutor up and running the next day, but we developed training materials to support all

could justifiably claim the large discount the DfE was providing on the costs of tutoring. We felt that tutors who already knew



the students, the staff and the curriculum were in a much stronger position to deliver effective tutoring.

Two years on, we are bringing this work to an end. We remain firmly committed to supporting tutoring in our schools, but Unity is pulling out of being a NTP provider. Faced with the challenge of persuading schools to take up tutoring, and seeing the contortions we had to make so that the rules would work for schools, the DfE has finally hit on the model we have been promoting from the beginning: school-led tutoring.

We now have much greater confidence that schools that are serious about tutoring know how to go about finding, supporting and funding tutors. We are not a slick organisation whose motivation is to maximise business; There are better organisations out there, not least the latest three the DfE have recruited to develop the programme.

Being a NTP provider has been a privilege. We witnessed DfE officials' efforts to promote the benefits of the programme first-hand, their endless attempts to find ways to explain funding to school leaders and to weather the constant brickbats for not achieving the rather wild initial targets they were set.

This year's primary school results show 10 per cent fewer 11-year-olds meet expected standards in reading, writing and maths than in 2019. Bizarrely, the same circumstances have led to higher grades for 16- and 18-year-olds. How to make sense of young people's true progress nationally after the pandemic with such different assessment priorities is anyone's guess. But we remain committed to small group tutoring for all our students who need it.

MAT schools happier with their lot – but others need convincing

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

Schools within multi-academy trusts are increasingly positive about their value, suggests a poll that gives a significant boost for the government’s all-MAT vision.

But the National Governance Association (NGA) survey also reveals many schools outside MATs remain unconvinced, despite a renewed government drive since last year.

The poll of 4,185 governors marks one of the most comprehensive attempts to take the pulse of the sector since the schools white paper, published in March, laid out the government academy plans.

Here are the key findings:

1. Schools warm to MATs ...

The NGA found a “continued positive trend” in which 77 per cent (up from 64 per cent in 2017) of school-level governors or committee members within multi-academy trusts said their trust added value.

The finding will be welcomed by the Department for Education. Critics have repeatedly alleged limited evidence underpinning its MAT drive.

But three-quarters of governors said they felt their voices were heard, and half said they were happy with trust-wide budget pooling. More trusts now have school-level governance too, as encouraged by the department.

Some governors are likely to be new trust appointments, however, rather than only pre-MAT governors who have changed their minds.

The findings back up anecdotal reports from trust bosses who say their schools valued their work more during the pandemic. Trusts were able to take a load off headteachers by working out trust-wide Covid risk policies, for instance.

2. ... But community engagement worries

Critics have long accused MATs of being insufficiently accountable locally, sparking even the recent white paper to state they



Standalone academy and maintained school governors' views		
	2021	2022
Decided to join a MAT soon	7%	11%
Not considered joining a MAT	60%	43%
Decided not to join a MAT	13%	17%

Source: NGA survey of governors, April-May 2022

must be “responsive to parents and local communities”.

The NGA found only 55 per cent of local governors felt their MAT engaged effectively with parents and the wider school community – down from 64 per cent in 2020, when Covid boosted engagement.

Parents “still often have no concept of the trust, which remains distant to them, sometimes literally,” the report’s authors noted, calling the decline “disappointing”.

3. MAT cash fears and growth

While MAT respondents were more likely to highlight positive finances, they also felt they did not have “sufficient funding for their vision and strategy”. The survey was done in April and May, before higher than expected energy and wage bills.

Cash could be one reason that economies of scale surged as a factor in trusts’ reasons for growth, from 30 per cent of respondents to 58 per cent. The DfE will be pleased 55 per cent also listed the white paper as a factor, suggesting it is influencing decisions, despite lacking new formal requirements for expansion.

MATs with fewer than 10 schools were the most likely to say they planned to expand - another positive boost for the white paper’s 10-schools-per-trust message.

But 56 per cent of small MATs had not grown in the past year, suggesting

expansion may not be easy. Regional divides also appeared, with London trusts adding fewest schools.

4. LA and SAT schools still wary

Encouraging maintained schools and single-academy trusts to join MATs was one of the white paper’s main aims. The DfE had launched a renewed MAT drive a year earlier.

But only a quarter of governors at standalone academies, 12 per cent of those at maintained schools and 7 per cent of federation governors said schools planned to join MATs.

While the figures have risen – and the NGA expects the white paper to have generated further momentum – it suggests many schools will not willingly embrace the DfE’s all-MAT vision. A third of single-academy trusts and 60 per cent of maintained schools had not even considered joining a MAT.

Respondents highlighted ongoing concerns about losing autonomy, identity, reserves and focus on the school’s best interests. They said more “conclusive evidence” was needed on what MATs offered that other local partnerships did not.

Emma Knights, the NGA’s chief executive, said: “There is still much work to do to convince many of our respondents this is indeed the right way forward for the future of their school and pupils.”



Emma Knights

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JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



'I am confident that Truss will expand our grammar system'

Anna Firth is a co-founder of the online learning platform Invicta Academy and a member of the education select committee. The Conservative MP tells Jess Staufenberg how her teacher mother inspired her – and why she wants the ban on grammar schools lifted

"And that's 246 students now, Mr Cole. You can start." Teaching assistant Sheila Shah beams out from my screen. Also on this 10am Zoom is maths teacher Walter Cole, a buoyant Australian, who beams back. "All right! Rock and roll!" he says, before sharing a maths problem. This is an Invicta Academy lesson – the live online platform co-founded during lockdown by Anna Firth. But, the Conservative MP for Southend West,

tells me, this summer might be its last. I think hard about the maths question (see image), which is apparently for years 9 to 11. Cole reveals the answer is 30, which 72 per cent of pupils achieved. Did you get it? Forty-five minutes later and English lessons begin at 11am, so I drop into years 1 and 2. Here, teacher Zonaira Khan and teaching assistant Tianna Oti are explaining conjunctions. Oti reads out pupils' answers

from the chat box and Khan enthusiastically keeps the lesson moving along. The online platform currently has 20 regular teachers and ten teaching assistants on its books. The teachers must hold qualified teacher status and be a secondary subject specialist. The lessons are free and were set up voluntarily by Firth and her co-founder, teacher Stephen James. Since launching in 2020, the academy has delivered 230,000 live online maths and

Profile: Anna Firth



Firth being sworn in as an MP to the House of Commons on 7 February 2022

English lessons to about 20,000 children, according to Firth. No small feat.

She seems to have been inspired into action out of pure indignation, while a district councillor in Kent.

"My son was very lucky, he was at a private school. School closed on the Friday, and on Monday he had a full timetable. He had to be at his screen."

Meanwhile, she was "out delivering food parcels, and parents were tearing their hair out about how they were suddenly stranded and only had worksheets." She especially remembers one "really depressed" mother.

"I just thought, it can't be rocket science."

So during a Zoom with colleagues, Firth began "sounding off" in the chat bar, with James heartily agreeing. Soon she had pledged her skills in fundraising and organising, while James pledged curriculum resources and the technical end.

Firth soon secured £30,000 from the Henry Oldfield Trust charity; a trustee at Sevenoaks School then donated £10,000. By August 2020 there was £80,000 in the coffers. All of it went towards paying staff and Zoom licences, she says (£30 an hour for teachers and £15 for teaching assistants). So Invicta – which means "invincible" – was born.

It hasn't been without controversy, though. In January last year the founders were forced to stop describing senior Conservative MPs – including then education secretary Gavin Williamson and education committee chair Robert Halfon – as "sponsors" after comments from James in a newspaper article.

Politicians were instead switched to

Today's Topic → Be able to complete a table of values to plot a straight line graph

In Maths you need to look very closely at the Question – sometimes the trick is in the Question

What do you think the answer is ?

$$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$$

$$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$$

$$1 + 1 \times 0 + 1 = ?$$

An Invicta Academy maths lesson with teacher Walter Cole

“David was an absolute legend in Essex”

“supporters” after Halfon intervened.

Firth tells me the “sponsor” tag was a mistake; that although it “doesn’t necessarily mean finance, it was interpreted that way”.

James had bluntly blamed teaching unions for blocking live lessons in an interview with the *Daily Mail*, claiming “for every solution, they come up with a problem”.

But Firth is more careful, recognising that staff opposed Williamson’s summer schools suggestion in 2021, for instance, because they were exhausted and needed a holiday.

So is it the resources gap that explains the difference between her son’s experience and state school pupils?

“Resources didn’t explain the difference, no,” she says. “Schools that had the will to innovate got on with it. Sadly that wasn’t the case across the whole sector.”

Firth’s interest in education follows being “brought up in a school. My mother was a teacher and she was a very big influence in my life.”

Born in Southend, the constituency she now represents, Firth was brought up by her mother Margaret after her parents divorced when she was seven. She was also close to her godmother, a headteacher. At one point the two women worked in the same school, Grove Wood primary, and a young Firth would play in her mother’s classroom as she

set it up.

She got an early introduction to politics, too.

“I remember in 1979, there was a general election coming that was hugely significant and I was allowed to stay up. The big blue teddy was brought out,” she says with a smile. It was the year of Margaret Thatcher’s election.

Her mother even did a PhD on belief systems within education, interviewing the late Sir David Amess, who held the Southend West seat before Firth, as part of her research.

Firth clearly remembers the MP who was murdered by an Islamist State group terrorist. “Sir David was an absolute legend in Essex,” she says, comparing him with “a prep school headmaster”. “He knew all 70,000 children on his patch.”

Firth, who went to a private school, studied at Durham and did stints as an investment banker and medical negligence barrister, was enjoying life as a local councillor when everything changed. She was on holiday scuba diving when she heard Amess had been attacked during a constituency surgery.

“We were all praying he would pull through.”

It meant that as she was setting up Invicta,

Profile: Anna Firth



Firth and her brother William in a playground in Southend on Sea in the 1970s



Firth in her constituency this year

“Oak is really no different to going on YouTube”

2025”.

“But we’re only looking at a 3 per cent increase for education over the same period.” She wants to tackle the new government on this.

Incidentally, who did she want to become prime minister? Penny Mordaunt was “the clear frontrunner” in her area, but she says she supported Truss’s campaign.

Meanwhile, she describes the new education secretary Kit Malthouse as an “extremely talented” minister and says she looks forward to holding him to account.

Aside from school funding, Firth’s other bugbear is that she is struggling to secure long-term cash for Invicta. Oak National Academy has videos that aren’t live, which Firth says is really “no different to going on YouTube”.

Meanwhile the National Tuition Programme is a “schools-based route”



Firth as a three-month-old baby with her family in Southend on Sea

that doesn’t address the summer holiday learning loss, or excluded or home-educated children.

But she has so far failed to persuade ministers. Nick Gibb, a long-serving schools minister, apparently wanted to see “proper impact data” and Robin Walker, another schools minister, was committed to the NTP.

“Unfortunately, unless Invicta does attract serious funding, this will have to be its last summer.”

MP friends were telling her to stand for the Conservative candidacy. She was selected from 100 applicants, she believes, and elected in early February this year.

Sadly, she runs her constituency surgeries from Conservative offices in Southend, rather than in community spaces as Amess did – and a security officer searches everybody on entry.

More positively, she has also joined the education select committee and says she “listens hard” to her Labour colleagues. “No one party has a monopoly on good ideas.”

But where she clearly departs from many on the left – and some in her own party – is on grammar schools. As a councillor, she helped get permission from then-education secretary Nicky Morgan for the Weald of Kent Grammar School to open a satellite site in 2015, despite the ban on new grammars. Like prime minister Liz Truss (and despite failing the 11-plus herself), Firth wants the ban lifted.

“I am confident that [Truss] will expand our grammar system, and there is no better template for her to follow than the three brilliant ones we have in Southend West!” she tells me.

It’s a view opposed by most educators as only about 5 per cent of pupils at grammar schools are eligible for free school meals (far below the national average) and evidence shows a wider attainment gap in selective school areas.

Where the sector will agree with her is on funding, however. She makes the powerful point that “health spending will have increased by 42 per cent between 2010 and

Opinion

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SIR JON COLES

CEO, United Learning

Why we're abandoning Oak – and the new DfE should too

What started as a charitable and collaborative venture has become a vehicle for creating a government-approved curriculum, writes Jon Coles

When we came together to create 'Oak National Academy' in 2020, it was simply to support children and teachers in a national emergency. By offering a set of video lessons online, we could help as many children as possible to continue to learn when schools were forced to close their doors.

There was no other agenda for those involved. 'Oak' was not a company, a business, or a government project – it was a collaboration. Reach Academy Trust are its particular heroes – employing the initially small central staff at their own risk and securing philanthropic funding to make it possible.

Government provided some funding, which accelerated progress, but has gradually assumed more control – through a period of extended funding, a management attempt to 'float off' as a private profit-making body and then, when that was blocked by Reach, proposing to take the assets over.

Earlier this year, the DfE established a legal entity, which it owns. Initially called 'FCNDPB Limited (new provider)' this 'Future Curriculum Non-Departmental Public Body'

has been renamed 'Oak' – and has taken control of most of the assets of the former Oak collaboration. Its purpose is a long way from the original charitable Covid response. It is to procure and promote a set of curriculum resources which exemplify ministers' curriculum ideals.

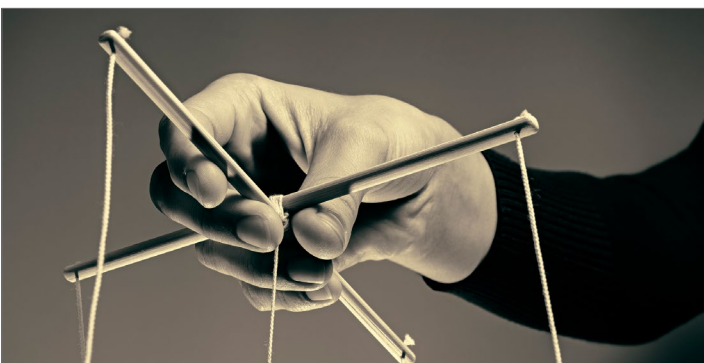
“Only a totalitarian government would want to control what schools teach

When I talked to the then minister about his ideas for the future of Oak, he gave me a clear sense that his aim was to promote his own view of the curriculum in this country and abroad, expressing concern that a skills-based 'World Bank' curriculum was being promoted to less developed countries.

Officials now deny that the aim is to create a predominant curriculum model or to promote a single government view. But nothing substantial has altered in this project since that initial conversation.

NDPBs are not meaningfully independent of the government department which owns and funds them. Officials pointing to their framework agreement as providing protection know it has no legal basis and that there are plenty of ways to exert influence.

And hard-pressed school leaders



often accede to the latest government proposal, even when it has no regulatory or statutory basis, as the easiest and best way to 'stay safe'.

Publishers who object to this nationalisation are in part protecting their own interests. But if major publishers like Pearson or HarperCollins decide that there is no UK market for education resources, they will stop investing and close

bullet points (e.g. 'ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain 1745-1901').

Now, however, government has decided to have a preferred model of how to teach everything, for how long and lesson-by-lesson, which books to read and what it wants said and not said. Would the preferred curriculum on controversial topics like empire change with a change of government? And without parliamentary scrutiny or approval? What if a new minister isn't that interested and bureaucrats make the decisions?

Officials say that none of this will be compulsory. But what if other resource-providers are crowded out and choice diminishes? Look at the 'slippery slope' of ever-growing government control since 1988. Ask yourself: how happy am I with there being a government-approved curriculum?

We made clear last year that we couldn't support this and have now made three different suggestions for a future for the Oak resources. When it became clear last week that no compromise was on offer, we confirmed we would not put our resources on the government site and set up our own site to keep them freely available.

This week, we have a new government and a chance for ministers to look again. Let's hope that they identify that this level of state control is not only undesirable – but fundamentally un-Conservative.

Opinion

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PROFESSOR GERAINT JONES

Executive director and associate pro-vice-chancellor, National Institute of Teaching and Education, Coventry University

Exams: Stick or twist, we need quick decisions from the new DfE

It is right to return to pre-Covid grade boundaries as soon as possible, writes Geraint Jones, but we now know we can reduce the pressure of exam season and we should

As the dust settles from this year's exam season and thoughts turn towards the next, we find ourselves in a stick-or-twist situation: Do we continue with support measures for another year, or do we move to the second half of Ofqual's post-Covid recovery plan and go back to a pre-pandemic approach? Whether to show faith in the system and back our teachers for a quick return to normal will be an early test of the new DfE team's mettle.

This year's grading arrangements rightly acknowledged the extraordinary impact of the pandemic on students' learning. But by next summer most students will likely have had two years of 'normal' education – the length of a GCSE or A level course – so there is a strong reason to bring grade boundaries in line with pre-pandemic levels.

As reported in these pages, 73 per cent of GCSEs were marked at grades 4 and above this year - down from 76.9 per cent in 2021 when

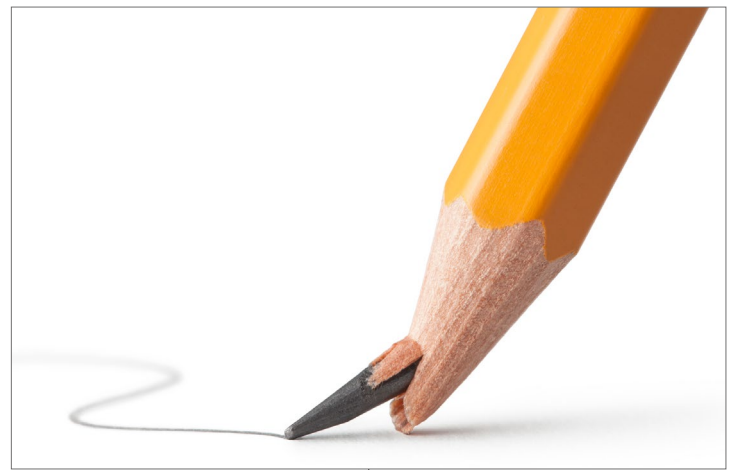
grades were based on teacher assessments but still some way from the 67 per cent of the last pre-pandemic exams. Similarly, 26 per cent of students received the top grades of 7 and above – higher than 2019 (20.6 per cent) and lower than 2021 (30 per cent).

At A level, the proportion of A and A* grades (36.4 per cent) also fell

in comparison with 2021 (44.8 per cent) but remain much higher than 2019 (25.2 per cent).

So one of the concerns about removing the assessment stabilisers is that grades will fall. But that is okay. The past couple of years have been extraordinary, and what matters most is that the grade system in any particular year is fair and enables students to move forward to their next stage of education, training or work. In the majority of cases, students will be competing against their in-year peers for those places, and the fact that comparisons with pandemic years are unreliable is well understood by all.

Some students may not achieve



what they hope, and we should not be afraid of that kind of normal disappointment. Because just as the exam system is returning to something closer to normality, so too will the experiences of results day.

But as the new ministerial team sets about making this decision –

worked well in 2021) or by taking a student's coursework over the year into consideration. We could also evaluate whether some of the measures introduced in 2022 create a fairer system so that grades truly reflect a student's ability.

As outlined by Ofqual, these interventions were never meant to be permanent. There was always going to be a time when the plaster needed to be pulled off, and we have reached that point. What heads, teachers, students, and parents need now is clarity and a definitive plan so they can adequately prepare over the coming year.

That plan should be about delivering the fairest system we can, not just a return to a comfortable normal. And a 'fair system' means that all children are given every chance to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The impact of Covid will be felt for years to come, but its legacy on assessment can be a positive one if the system recognises the importance of giving merit over the duration of a student's course.

Not only because it's fairer, but because it enables more accurate grading should learning be disrupted again in future.

“What must not be lost is a focus on students' mental health

and quickly so that there is time to implement it – what must not be lost is a focus on students' mental health and wellbeing. The pressure cooker environment of exams has only been exacerbated by Covid. It was already there before, and it surprises me that we are looking to return almost without question to wholly exam-based grades in spite of some of the successes of the past two years.

If anything, more should be done to evolve out of our reliance on examinations. Judging two years of learning by a student's performance on one day ramps up the pressure. We could take the heat out by having at least some form of teacher assessment (which

Opinion

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REZA SCHWITZER

Associate director, Public First

PM Truss could spell revolution for school-based childcare

If it's a priority for the new PM and the opposition, it's likely schools will have to wrap their heads around the knotty problem of wrap-around childcare, writes Reza Schwitzer

"Guess the treasury's feedback this time", someone would shout across the DfE office. Knowing smirks would appear on officials' faces. "The chief secretary wants more on wrap-around childcare. And she wants it yesterday."

Many politicians have a core single priority. Large portions of speeches I wrote for Nick Gibb about school funding were replaced with paragraph after paragraph about phonics. Andrea Leadsom's office never sent anything out that didn't talk about the first 1,001 days of a child's life.

When Liz Truss was chief secretary to the treasury, her core education idea was wrap-around childcare – breakfast and/or after-school activities allowing parents to work longer hours without paying for a childminder. In the new PM's case, it also forms part of a wider view that more schools should open nurseries.

She has spoken about this for many years. In 2011, she wrote for Conservative Home about 'a

revolution in childcare'. She was rewarded in 2012 with a post as the junior minister responsible for it. In 2013, she said: "Inspired by examples like Durand Academy, I want far more schools to offer childcare and early-years education." The Durand comment hasn't quite stood the test of time, but almost a year later she went on to say: "School

“Wrap-around care was Truss's core education idea

nurseries are an under-appreciated part of childcare... But the hours are sometimes inflexible. Most only do 9 to 3. That's if parents are lucky. Just imagine if they did 8 to 6. It would revolutionise parents' options."

Meanwhile, the Labour party is talking about childcare more than it has for a long time, and you can see why. Politically, it means hammering the Conservatives on something that parents feel every day – that childcare is increasingly unaffordable. That's why in July shadow education secretary, Bridget Phillipson said that Labour 'would deliver extra investment into our early years, but also provide breakfast clubs and after-school activities for all children too'.



If both parties are keen on something, you can bet that at some not-too-distant point in the future schools are going to be asked to do something about it. But why hasn't it already happened? And why did the Extended Schools Programme not last long-term? The reality is that it's not actually that simple, for a number

of reasons.

First, our school estate is pretty dire and getting worse. If your roof is leaking or you're lacking in space, opening a nursery or extending your hours may not be at the top of your to-do list. And even if you have space, you need to staff it. Our recent report for EdSupport highlights just how poor work-life balance already is for many in the sector. Teachers, leaders and support staff already struggle to find the time to do the basics, and an early-years provision won't run itself.

That's before taking costs into consideration. Even without counting the extra energy costs of extended provision, setting these things up costs money, and even with parental contributions schools (especially

in deprived neighborhoods) may struggle to break even. Is government committed enough to pay for this?

Then there's the admin. Parents in focus groups consistently mention the lack of flexibility of their schools' clubs, as schools crack down on parents trying to put their child in a club at 10 minutes notice because they're running late from work. Managing this is a pain. To actually open a nursery is even more burdensome – and particularly on the safeguarding front. When schools are increasingly pulled into pastoral support and mental health provision post-pandemic, do leaders really have the time and space to prioritise extra-curricular activity?

Finally, much of this assumes parents actually want wrap-around care. Some undoubtedly do, but others are less convinced. Even those who do don't necessarily want their children doing an activity they don't love or eating breakfast food they don't like. Unsurprisingly, we found that parents overwhelmingly want what's best for their children!

So the new PM may want wrap-around care, and the opposition may be happy to push her on it. But unless the result is carefully implemented, the consequences won't be just for the politician who failed to deliver it.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Andrew Tate may be banned from social media but misogyny still proliferates, writes Zahara Chowdhury, and we must do more to protect young people from it

Andrew Tate is a name many teachers may not have heard of until very recently, but a name so many students are all too familiar with. Tate, a former kickboxer, Big Brother contestant and now social media influencer has been banned from TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (where he had 4 million followers alone) for creating extremely concerning misogynistic and hateful content. But not before the hashtag of his name had been clicked on 13 billion times.

Sadly, we know Tate is only one of many online influencers who create such toxic content. And consider the implications: The tragic murders of Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Zara Aleena, and the thousands of disclosures made on the Everyone's Invited platform tell us that women are commodities, 'easy targets', lesser beings. Our students are consuming this material, and it won't do to pretend we can ban our way out of the problem.

Yes, Tate has been removed from social media platforms – but his content is still available. He has a strong following that loyally support him, attack anyone who speaks out against him and claim he is merely exercising freedom of speech. We know social media platforms need to do more to keep people, especially young people, safe online. But we also have an important role in ensuring our students are safe and know how to protect themselves.

Meanwhile, many schools have no-mobile phone policies with the aim of limiting access to social media. That



ZAHARA CHOWDHURY

Diversity, equality and inclusion lead, Beaconsfield High School and The Beaconsfield School

After Andrew Tate: How to confront online harms head-on

provides much-needed respite, but there is so much more to we can do to promote healthy relationships with and through social media.

For example, according to Ofcom two thirds of children see harmful online content but only 16 per cent report it. With a concerted effort, we

teachers are using at least one.

Familiarity will help teachers have discussions with students about managing their privacy and location settings, and means more safeguarding-trained adults have eyes on what's trending.

“ We can't ban our way out of the problem ”

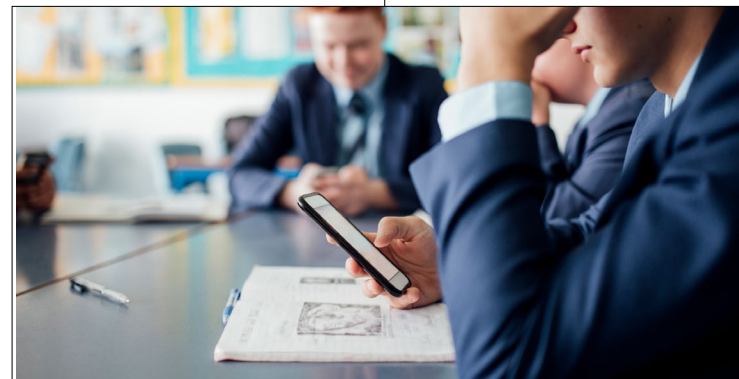
could drive that up. Here are a few ways we can do that.

Be familiar with all platforms

To keep students, parents and teachers safe, it is important every teacher has a working knowledge of all social media platforms. This can be fairly simple to achieve, especially if

Talk to students about content

We cannot deny that our students are growing up in a digitally rich world – one with which they are familiar and one that has already learned a lot about them before they've even stepped a school. That's why lessons on managing content consumption are extremely important – in my view



as important as any other part of the curriculum.

Discussions about the impact of trolling and how to engage healthily with comments, direct messages and tweets can be lifechanging for a student's wellbeing. We can't fully control every piece of content a student sees or shares, but we can shape how they receive it.

Don't blame the victims

From school policy to immediate classroom reactions, our responses and those of peers can often 'gaslight' the victims of online bullying or gender-based scrutiny. 'She just shouldn't have posted that!' 'Just ignore the comments.' 'Her skirt should be longer'. To keep young people safe online, it is important to recognise they have every right to be online (depending on their age), to express themselves freely and to not experience hatred, abuse and danger.

If students experience the latter, support them to report it and address the hatred and abuse first, while encouraging them to keep themselves safe. It is very important we protect a young person's wellbeing and remind them they are not at fault for the hatred and bullying they may experience.

Familiarity and awareness of social media is now more important than ever for teachers and schools. This is an ever-growing body of work, one that school leaders and teachers will need to engage with more and more, from policy to practice, to keep all of our students (and all stakeholders) safe.

Because we can be sure of two things: There will be other Andrew Tates, and no amount of banning will reduce the threat they pose.

Opinion

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GEMMA DUXBURY

Partner (education law),
Forbes Solicitors

Don't lose time: Prepare now for the academy trust boom

The process of creating and joining MATs is complex and the 2030 target is likely to stay – so schools shouldn't delay planning for the future, writes Gemma Duxbury

On 29 June, the DfE launched a review of how it works with academy trusts to ensure children in schools within trusts get the right support to fulfil their potential. The review – expected to be concluded by the end of 2022 – is intended to give clarity about how the powers in the Schools Bill will be applied. It will explore the standards which academy trusts are held to and how the government supports the growth of existing trusts and the creation of new strong ones, in line with its vision for all schools to be in or joining strong academy trusts by 2030.

But while the Department has set out its intended destination, the journey to it is still largely up to individual schools and academy trusts. And with so much uncertainty and furore surrounding the schools bill, schools may understandably be reluctant to start considering the changes they need to make to reach this goal.

With other pressing priorities brought on by the cost-of-living

crisis and with the announcement of a new prime minister and DfE team, schools may be more inclined to wait for the final passing of the Schools Bill and the outcomes of the review before beginning to build a strategy around academisation.

However, Liz Truss appears committed to the overall aims of the schools white paper, and the

policy landscape governing the formation and running of academy trusts is complex, so schools would be well advised to start looking at their options now. Regional School Commissioners have extensive criteria when assessing trusts for growth and any failure to properly prepare for changes could impede future development and leave schools falling behind.

Schools looking towards academisation should first consider how much flexibility they have to be wholly independent in their choice. Catholic and Church of England schools, for example, are likely to find their local diocese has significant control over how they academise. Starting the process will therefore



first entail getting an understanding their options. Does the diocese have its own multi-academy trust, an approved list of trusts, or is it open to new trusts being set up? Have these conversations early to set expectations right from the outset.

Next, there are multiple resources

the line.

When it comes to creating their own trusts, academies should give early thought to their proposed organisational structure, starting with consideration of what is already in place and identifying gaps. One of the key issues is that certain talent is required for growth, particularly with regards to finance functions. Funding new hires and additional resources isn't always easy, and if growth doesn't follow, it could leave an academy in a challenging position.

Participation and/or collaboration agreements can help to mitigate this. They are already recommended for schools looking at sharing expertise in curriculum specialities and leadership, and offer a good avenue for schools to work together before entering into a formal academisation process.

This week's change at the top hasn't changed the basics; Multi-academy trusts are going to be the norm, and a lack of preparedness for academisation could limit and slow the growth of schools. This is a long-term vision, and taking steps now to pick the right partners could avoid delays and enhance schools' prospects for the future.

“ Schools would be well advised to start looking at their options now ”

which set out how to choose the correct trust to join. Amid the options, twenty-nine local authorities have applied to be part of a pilot to set up their own trusts, which may be attractive for maintained schools that are happy with the status quo.

Of course, MATs are also preparing for growth and will expect to carry out full due diligence in relation to schools' policies and procedures, as well as any issues that may cause them future problems. These include liabilities for building and maintenance work and other contractual issues. Schools should therefore be vigilant about entering into new contracts, as existing obligations may hamper efforts to join or create a trust further down

THE REVIEW

BOOK
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HOW TEACHING HAPPENS

Author: Paul A. Kirschner, Carl Hendrick and Jim Heal
(illustrated by Oliver Caviglioli)

Publisher: Routledge

Publication date: 23 June 2022

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

Whether we realise it or not, our work in the classroom stems from our ideas. This being the case, we need to be far more self-conscious of our bias, our mental models and our beliefs about our personal pedagogies.

So if any reading can truly help us to develop as critical practitioners, it ought to be a text that gathers together the seminal ideas that have shaped our profession. Through it, we might hope to develop clear ideas of their original forms rather than depending on representations handed down to us and distorted in the process.

In *How Teaching Happens*, Kirschner, Hendrick and Heal have provided us with a touchstone book for this exact purpose – a chance to learn about the ideas that have shaped educational policy and practice in the cold light of day, rather than as footnotes in a policy agenda, initiative or development plan.

It's a complex undertaking full of complex ideas and rich in references and resources. But don't let that put you off. The structure and Oliver Caviglioli's influence on illustrations and design mean the book achieves much-needed balance with lucid explanations and simplicity of layout.

As a result, ideas I'd seen time and again and thought I knew were revealed in a completely new light. I realised more than once that I had never really understood them the way they were meant to be understood.

Take, for example, the chapter on learning objectives and the work of Mager. Debates still rage about their need and use in lessons. Should they be posted on the first slide of every PowerPoint? Should they be written down by

students? Kirschner and Hendrick cut through this debate with pithy wit and without rhetoric to highlight the most important issue at stake: If you don't know where you're going you might end of someplace else. The question is not whether or not to have objectives in lessons, but how explicitly the teacher will outline it and how focused they will be on ensuring all their students achieve that goal. All other considerations are simply red herrings. Examples of this sort of dissection abound throughout the book.

Of course, there is always a danger with a book about ideas that the authors will embellish it with their own. And I confess, I wanted know more about how the authors chose the ideas to look at and ensured their own biases towards particular schools of thought didn't affect their output. But on the whole it's clear they are not partisan commentators. Far from it. The tone throughout is one of plain speaking about the conclusions they believe the research points to.

More than this, *How Teaching Happens* is filled with humour. Kirschner's example of teaching his granddaughter about traffic lights through explicit instruction and the integration of The Liston Effect to introduce the book are both funny and fascinating additions, taking the

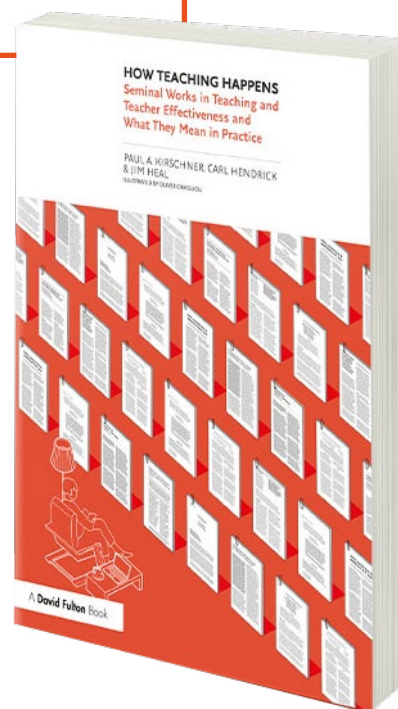
book beyond being about school-based education and into the realm of universal lessons for living. .

If I have one criticism, it is the absence of a section engaging with the philosophical aspects of education – the purpose or telos of teaching. We have

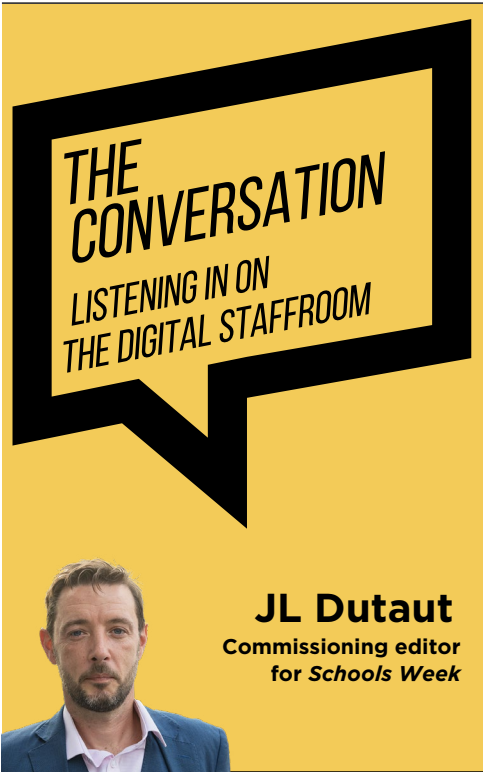
a tendency today to skip over questions like these and straight to thinking about effectiveness and student learning gains, and it's a great shame. There were scholars I would have liked to have seen included, particularly on teacher development, not least Mary Kennedy and Pam Grossman. Philosophical or

ethical considerations on the nature of teaching, including scholars such as Gert Biesta, David Carr, Paul Hirst and Richard Peters, might also have made a valuable additions to such a section.

All the same, summarising all of the important ideas that have influenced our profession is a tall order indeed, and the book represents a valiant effort at it. It's a must-read for everyone in the profession. (Even if they'll have to look elsewhere for greater depth.)



★★★★☆
Rating



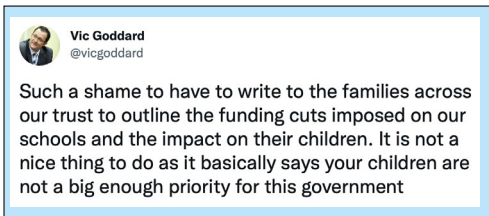
For all the pressing priorities our contributors this week have put forward for the new DfE leadership, Weatherall's quick take should perhaps be of most concern. With a maximum of two years until the next election, even with a stable pair of hands school leaders will be looking back on nearly a decade of uncertainty, shifting priorities and a dysfunctional legislative agenda.

Perhaps there's something to be learned from this sardonic reply, echoed by so many. Rather than to counter these problems with a strong agenda, definite priorities and a parliamentary blitz, now may be the best time to start a genuine listening exercise and to commit resources to supporting schools beleaguered by Covid and inflation.

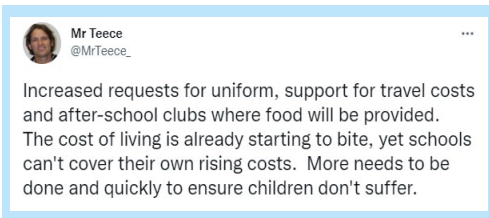
BILLS, BILLS, BILLS

But if anything is concerning school leaders and their teams this week, it is surely the start of an autumn term in the shadow of a growing cost-of-living crisis. A regular contributor to these pages, Passmores co-headteacher, Vic Goddard has been drawing attention to the looming bills crisis facing schools all summer.

Revealing increased energy costs of £320,000 for the year for his school alone, Goddard has been trying to draw national attention to the problem all summer. This week, he's had to write to parents, and doesn't hesitate to share his assessment of what it all means.



Whether the uncapped energy market schools operate in can be brought under control by Truss's team remains to be seen. But schools' bills are only part of the concern as principal, Mr Teece explained.



Schools performed heroically for their students and communities during the pandemic, as was widely demonstrated in these pages. As they reopen after the summer break to more absence calls

because of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, it's clear they will be asked to do so again – with fewer resources, rationed power, and perhaps less energy for the fight.

FALLING ON DEAF EARS

Amid the political upheaval, it's unclear Amanda Spielman's bid to make literacy the focus of staffroom conversations at the start of term is getting any traction. Quoted last weekend in the *Daily Mail*, the Ofsted chief inspector inferred from this year's SATs results that 175,000 11-year-olds – or about a quarter of this September's year 7 intake – have left primary without the requisite literacy levels to access the secondary curriculum.

Twenty-four hours after tweeting out the article, Ofsted's chief of strategy and engagement had received no likes, replies or retweets for it. Perhaps the strategy of publishing such claims with few solutions, in a paper teachers widely disapprove of – and whose editorial line is broadly dismissive of them – is a strategy that needs a rethink.

Ms Spielman blames the pandemic's impact for the recent slump. She does note signs of a post-Covid recovery, but suggests the lack of phonics training for secondary teachers may present a new barrier for this year group. And that could be an important contribution – if only we had the political focus and the profession's engagement to do something about it.

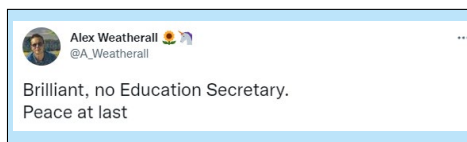
EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION.

We now know our new ministerial team, the seventh in six years, and responding to that has dominated the online staffroom conversations this week. But even before the announcement, rumours and leaks about Liz Truss's likely appointments were causing teachers to show their more cynical side. A nice warm-up before the start of term.

On Saturday, *The Times'* Tim Shipman published a list of the names of who he'd learned would most likely form the new PM's cabinet. Only, something was missing. Can you spot it?



Quickest off the mark was tweeter, Alex Weatherall, who perhaps best summed up the profession's response.



But following hot off the heels of the inspectorate's announcement that Covid would no longer serve as an adequate reason to defer inspection, there is likely to be little goodwill for the organisation, even if there were the time and resources to act on its suggestions.

The Knowledge

What we've learned about schools and their communities this week



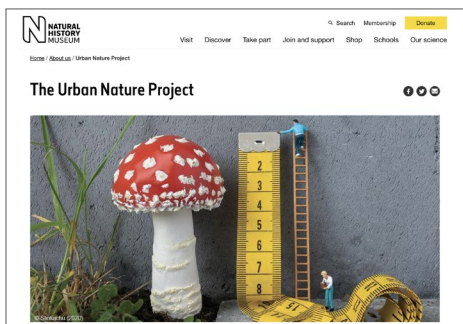
JL Dutaut picks out a selection of this week's interesting research publications and findings for the evidence-informed professional

On-screen nature

Launching its fundraising appeal to turn its five-acre central London site into a free-to-visit green space from next summer, The Natural History Museum published results of a survey looking at how the capital's children interact with nature. The survey found that young people in London are now more likely to connect with local nature through social media than a walk in the park, with the biggest barrier being time spent inside the classroom.

The survey gathered the views of 2,003 young people, 85 per cent of whom – rather unsurprisingly – thought students would learn more about the natural world by experiencing it first-hand rather than from a textbook.

There's an evidently self-justifying argument for increasing outdoor learning opportunities here. But even more concerning, perhaps, is the idea that hours spent in school are actually encouraging young people to spend more time on screens. Is all that screen time spent watching David Attenborough? Would we be less concerned about it if it was? And why are so many organisations' educational work pitched as necessary because of a failure of schools?



Teaching nanotech in primaries

Sticking to themes related to the DfE's sustainability strategy, will its promised new model science curriculum for primaries due next year be ambitious enough?

Understanding climate change may require more complex ideas to be tackled at a younger age, not least for tackling [growing climate anxiety among young people](#). So a new study showing that a well-constructed sequence can demonstrably increase year 6 pupils' grasp of nanotechnology seems particularly relevant.

The trial scheme saw most students improve their answers about three topics (size, the Lotus effect and water filtration) as a result of instruction, and sustained improvement (though to a lesser degree) three months on.

On a related topic, Routledge is this month publishing *Big ideas in primary science: The climate crisis*. Contact jl@schoolsweek.co.uk if you'd like to review it.

The spiralling cost of noise

To classroom environments now, and could the least engaged pupils actually be the most sensitive to distractions? A new study by the University of Portsmouth has found students who struggle to concentrate at school are often negatively impacted by noise.

Research lead, Dr Jessica Massonnié explained the importance of the findings: "[...] they question the assumption that children who are perceived as difficult to engage in schoolwork 'do not care' about distractions – they do particularly care. The danger is that these children, who are already being labelled as less focused, will face a downward spiral if noise levels in classrooms are not controlled."

The research concludes that interventions aimed at reducing classroom noise can benefit sensitive children, who may otherwise be at risk of falling out of the education system.

Changing behaviour

Sadly for those hoping to reduce noise, however, the Children and Young People's Mental Health coalition chaired by Norman Lamb today publishes preliminary results of a survey under the heading, 'School behaviour policies are ineffective in creating change'.

The survey is part of its inquiry in response to 'growing concern' about 'the rise in the use of punitive approaches' in schools 'set against a backdrop of growing mental health need'. It gathered the views of 111 young people, 495 parents and carers and 234 professionals including teachers, mental health practitioners and representatives from the voluntary and community sector in May and June this year, and its results are not encouraging.

Only 21 per cent of young people and 7 per

cent of parents felt that schools are responsive to young people's mental health needs when dealing with behavioural issues. Even among professionals, only 32 per cent agreed (while 46 per cent disagreed).

The survey also found that 59 per cent of young people, 80 per cent of parents and carers and 56 per cent of professionals think behaviour management techniques used by schools are not effective.

The full results will be published with the inquiry's final report. Watch this space.

Girls in STEM



More encouragingly, some change is evidently possible, and it's precisely the kind of change fighting climate change will require oodles of. We need more students, and particularly more female students to pursue higher education and employment opportunities in science, technology, engineering and maths. But how?

New research by the Danish School of Education at Aarhus University suggests that girls' and boys' interest in pursuing science only differs materially in one respect: "beliefs about the utility value of science [its perceived usefulness for accomplishing future goals] are more important for female adolescents' development of an interest in science than for their male peers. This implies a need for strategies for enhancing students' perceptions of utility value in science education."

The solutions put forward by science lead, Shamsa Mahmood [here](#) may help achieve exactly that.

Contact jl@schoolsweek.co.uk to feature your education research in next week's column



Week in

Westminster

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



FRIDAY

On the 10-metre long list of mounting education crises facing new education secretary Kit Malthouse is teacher recruitment (or lack of it).

The government is preparing to spend up to £4.8 million on an "experimental and digital youth marketing" company called BAM Agency to target students on university campuses.

As we report this week, return to teaching plans aren't working. So we wholly welcome civil servants doing interpretive dance to lure graduates into teaching.

MONDAY

Talking about splashing the DfE cash. Our eyes collectively watered when we saw the department spent £4.9 million on communication staff pay, pension, overtime and travel last year.

But not satisfied with that, it has now awarded a £700,000 contract for "media planning services to support departmental communication campaigns". *MASSIVE EYE ROLL*

The lucky company is SMRS, which claims to "design campaigns and create communications that include and inspire people to make some of the biggest decisions in their lives".

Good timing for Liz Truss who is having to convince people to join her government.

TUESDAY

We said bye-bye to our caretaker education secretary James Cleverly.

But turns out he's not so clever after all (finally! We've been desperate to use that pun all summer).

He was given a telling-off by primary school teachers for his use of grammar. He had tweeted Liz Truss had been "a great friend to Susie and I".

However, minutes later he tweeted out a correction: "Susie and me!"

One teacher even suggested sending him year 4 lesson slides to understand the rule. Didn't stop him getting a nice sideways step to foreign secretary, though...

Who's that taking a pop at the "astonishing" use of taxpayers' money to fund salary costs at a non-departmental government body?

No, it's not the unions. It's Sir Jon Coles, the chief executive of the largest academy trust in the country, who is ... one of the best-paid chief executives of the country on a cool quarter of a million-pounds a



year.

WEDNESDAY

One of Caretaker Cleverly's only contributions to the schools sector was a weird explanation on Twitter about how BTECs work (ironically he was explaining to his Labour counterpart Bridget Phillipson, shadow education secretary since November last year).

After thousands of results were delayed in August, Phillipson said: "Labour believes all students deserve to know their results, on results day."

Cleverly quipped: "You do realise that because of the flexible nature of vocational qualifications at level 3 there's no such thing as 'results day'. I can get a briefing document over to you if you want."

But a letter from Ofqual top dog Dr Jo Saxton, published this week, kicks that can to the side. She said a "significant number" were issued at the same time as A-level and GCSE results.

"For a student not to receive their results when they either legitimately expect them, or need them for the purpose of progression, is unacceptable."

Think that sets the record straight.

Speaking of short-lived secretary of states, Nadhim Zahawi surprised us by appearing as a Department for Education minister on its homepage today.

One of his many new roles is minister for equalities – which used to be a DfE responsibility. However, it moved to the Cabinet Office back in 2019 and has stayed there since. His face vanished a few hours later.



Primary Headteacher

ESSA Foundation Academies Trust | Bolton
 Salary: Competitive to attract the best

The Board of Trustees at ESSA Foundation Academies Trust (EFAT) is looking to recruit a highly motivated, resilient, and focused Primary Headteacher to join us on our journey of success.

The Essa Foundation Academies Trust is a charitable company established to set up and run academies and free schools in Bolton, and potentially further afield, and provide recreational and leisure facilities in the interest of social welfare. There are currently two academies in the Trust – Essa Academy, an 11-16 school which opened in January 2009, and Essa Primary Academy, a free school for primary aged children which opened in September 2014.

EFAT aims to provide the very best learning opportunities and outcomes for all our children, so that they can flourish academically, socially, and emotionally. We have a strong focus on our children and families as members of both the school and the local communities, actively seeking to forge strong links between our schools and their close surroundings.

The Primary Headteacher will be in responsible for:
 Providing the vision, leadership, and direction for ESSA in order to ensure continuous improvement.

Motivating and working with others to create a shared culture and commitment to the values, aims and objectives of ESSA Trust.

Promoting the highest standards of teaching and learning and aim to develop the highest quality education for every student.

Providing the leadership in organisation and management to ensure the very best of education for every student.

To arrange an informal, confidential discussion regarding this role, please contact Liz Hayden at Satis Education on 07706 333575 or email anne.casey@efatrust.org.

Visits to the academy are highly encouraged, please contact the EFAT CEO at anne.casey@eftrust.org.

The closing date for applications: Monday 26th September 2022 at 9:00am.

**Interviews:
 Thursday 29th and Friday 30th September 2022.**

**Further details, including the job pack, can be found at:
www.joinessa.co.uk.**

ESSA Foundation Academies Trust is committed to the safeguarding of children and young people. An enhanced disclosure from the DBS will be required for this post.



Students first: raising standards and transforming lives.

Principal – Outwood Academy City (Sheffield)

Ofsted rating: GOOD with Outstanding Leadership

Start Date: Negotiable

Salary: L33-L39 (£92,624 – £107,239)

Outwood Grange Academies Trust, one of the largest multi academy trusts in England, is seeking to appoint an exceptional professional who can lead Outwood Academy City (Sheffield) by providing an outstanding level of education; putting students first, raising standards and transforming lives.

Outwood Academy City offers a truly comprehensive education, serving a diverse and vibrant community with over 1100 students aged 11 to 16. We are seeking a Principal who prioritises inclusion, having

high expectations for all and is committed to supporting disadvantaged communities.

Outwood Academy City is one of ten secondary schools in the Trust's southern region; the schools span a close geographical cluster that work collaboratively on all aspects of school improvement. Working together, we ensure the best possible educational experience for our young people, equipping them to impact positively on the broader community.



Oxford Spire Academy



Principal

Oxford Spire Academy | Location: Oxford

NoR: 1,330 (including 228 in Sixth Form)

Contract type: Permanent | **Hours:** Full time

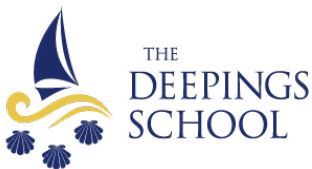
Start date: January 2023

Salary: Group 7 (L34 – L40) depending on experience

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking an exceptional individual to lead Oxford Spire Academy forward into the next chapter of its exciting journey. It is looking to appoint a Principal with a proven track record at either Principal or Deputy Principal level. As a senior leader in our organisation, the post-holder would be expected to embrace Anthem's values of integrity, collaboration and excellence and work closely with other schools across the Trust, whilst enjoying the autonomy to further develop the school's distinctive ethos.

Discover more about this exciting opportunity at www.anthemtrust.uk/jobs-principal-osa or contact recruitment@anthemtrust.uk

Find out more about Oxford Spire Academy at www.oxfordspireacademy.org



HEADTEACHER

Location: Peterborough

Contract type: Permanent | **Hours:** Full time

Start date: January 2023

Salary: Group 7 (L34 – L40) depending on experience

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking an exceptional individual to lead The Deepings School forward into the next chapter of its exciting journey. It is looking to appoint a Headteacher with a proven track record at either Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher level. As a senior leader in our organisation, the post-holder would be expected to embrace Anthem's values of integrity, collaboration and excellence and work closely with other schools across the Trust, whilst enjoying the autonomy to further develop the school's distinctive ethos.

Discover more about this exciting opportunity at www.anthemtrust.uk/jobs-headteacher-deepings or contact recruitment@anthemtrust.uk

Find out more about The Deepings School at www.deepings.anthemtrust.uk



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