

SCHOOLS WEEK

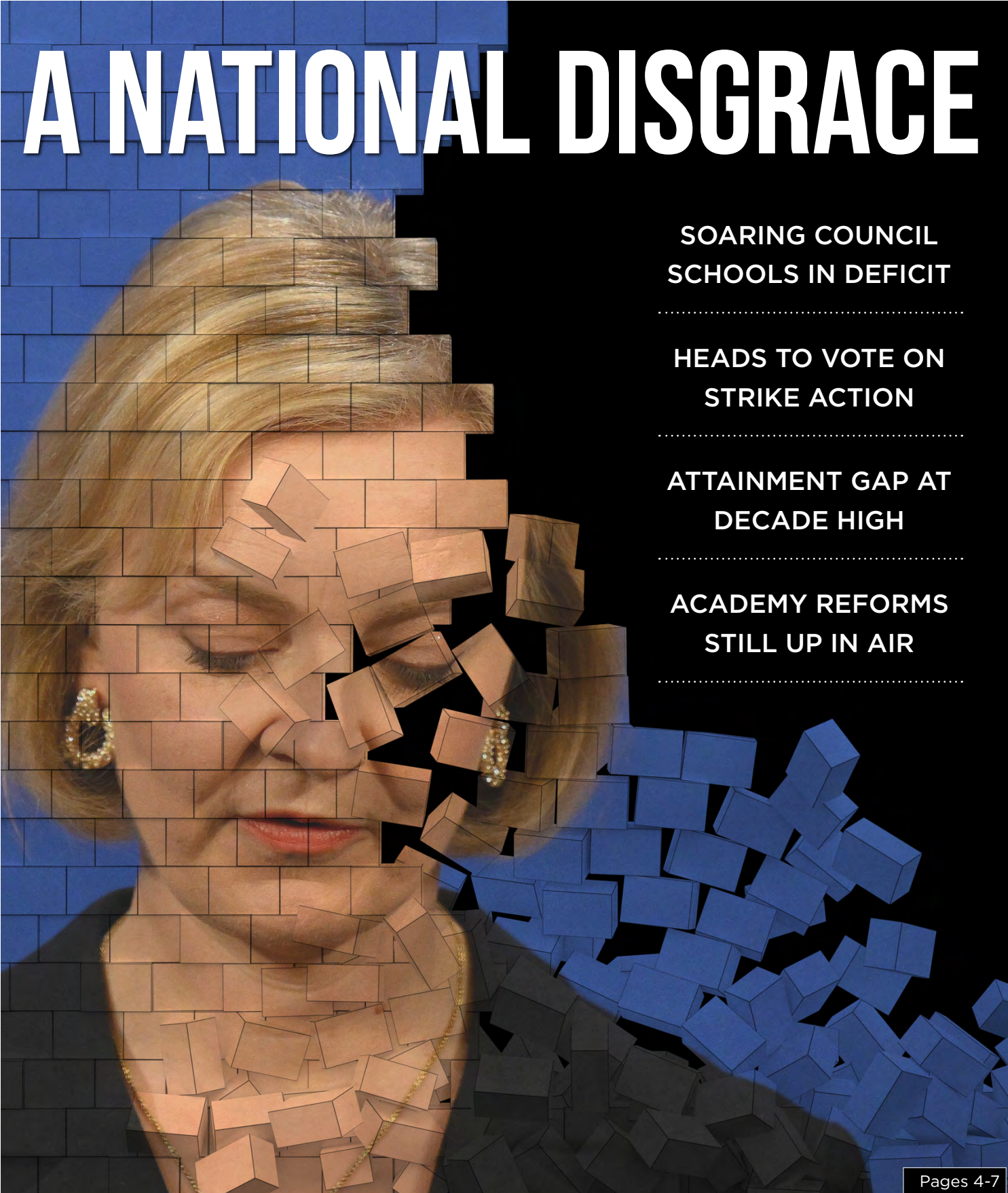
A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.



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A NATIONAL DISGRACE



SOARING COUNCIL
SCHOOLS IN DEFICIT

HEADS TO VOTE ON
STRIKE ACTION

ATTAINMENT GAP AT
DECADE HIGH

ACADEMY REFORMS
STILL UP IN AIR

SCHOOLS WEEK

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Schools are being failed, it's time for a general election

The Conservative party's arrogant belief that it is best-placed to choose another leader to get us out of the catastrophic mess its last one has created – in just 44 days – is a disgrace.

Schools are crying out for support.

We have the biggest disadvantage gap for a decade (page 6).

Nearly half of schools in one area are facing financial ruin (page 5).

Headteachers are considering going on strike because they feel abandoned by this government (page 7).

Key academy regulation reforms are still in limbo (page 4).

At the very least, we need a functioning government. And it would help if it could include some competent people who can put aside their egos and political dick-swinging to tackle the issues facing society.

But the Conservatives have shown they are unable to do that. Appointing their third prime minister in two months will not change that (and God forbid they think our

saviour is Boris Johnson).

And where is our education secretary? All we've heard from Kit Malthouse is a masterplan to put "constant pressure" on schools (as if that will solve any of their problems).

One of his two tweets in the past five days was this zinger: "The PM is right: we will get through this storm and stimulate the growth our country needs. Tough times don't last, tough people do."

At least schools minister Jonathan Gullis hasn't gone into hiding. But his response to the 10-year-high attainment gap? This apparently shows kids are "getting back on track". Fantasy land.

We need a plan for our most vulnerable children, and one that can be seen through and isn't constantly thrown off course by political meltdown.

The current status quo will not hold.

The Conservative party has had its chance, and it has (spectacularly) failed. It's time for a general election.

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IN PARLIAMENT

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Schools bill in limbo after Truss 'omnishambles', but cuts still on radar

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Another chaotic week in politics has left key school reforms in limbo and heads fearing fresh budget cuts, with leaders condemning the latest "omnishambles".

The Conservative party will hold a rapid week-long leadership contest after Liz Truss stood down yesterday after 44 days in office. A new prime minister will be announced by Friday, the third in two months.

It plunges schools, again, into a period of uncertainty.

Jeremy Hunt, freshly anointed chancellor following the sacking of Kwasi Kwarteng, on Monday signalled a new era of austerity.

Announcing several U-turns on Truss's original tax-slashing mini-budget, he said "some areas of spending will need to be cut".

In a further sign of turmoil, the government's once-flagship schools bill was due to be scrapped today.

Officials and ministers were on Wednesday working on a last-ditch plan to save its most important elements to bring back as smaller pieces of legislation next year.

This included academy intervention powers, a register of children not in school and new levers to clamp down on illegal schools.

But the Truss resignation has thrown that into limbo again, with any decision presumably now waiting for a new prime minister.

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said: "As the government once again turns inward to decide who will become November's prime minister, school leaders are looking outward at an ever-worsening situation on the ground.

"The attainment gap between rich and poor stands at a ten-year high,



Liz Truss

recruitment of new teachers is heading for a ten-year low; costs are spiralling and morale is plummeting. What a complete omnishambles."

Provisional school-level GCSE results data published yesterday confirm again that the Covid pandemic has exacerbated inequalities between poorer pupils and their better-off peers.

But instead of additional funding, Hunt warned this week that "all departments will need to redouble their efforts to find savings, and some areas of spending will need to be cut".

He denied the government was planning austerity on the "scale" of 2010, and said it was "likely that cash spending will continue to go up". But it was still "going to be tough".

It follows reports over the weekend that government departments were due to be asked to find savings of between 10 and 15 per cent of their capital budgets, and 2 per cent savings in revenue budgets. However, this was before Kwarteng was sacked.

A 2 per cent resource cut would slash the DfE's total budget by £1.8 billion. A 2 per cent cut to the core schools budget as it stood in 2021-22 would equal £996 million, or the equivalent of more than 18,000 teachers.

A 15 per cent capital cut to the DfE's budget would amount to about £840 million.

Unions have also

called for urgent clarification on energy cost support after the chancellor said that universal help for households would end earlier than planned.

Last month, ministers announced that rates for non-domestic energy users, such as schools, would reduce to a "government-supported price" for the next six months. A school with monthly £10,000 energy bills would save about £4,000 a month.

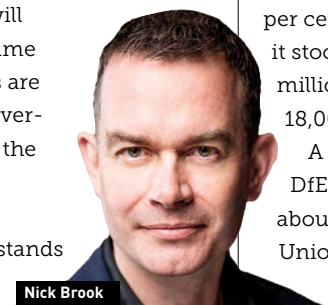
This scheme was always going to be reviewed beyond April. But the chancellor's announcement about household support has prompted fears about its future.

Hunt wants to "design a new approach that will cost the taxpayer significantly less than planned, whilst ensuring enough support for those in need.

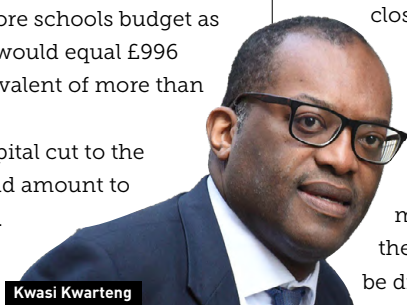
"Any support for businesses will be targeted to those most affected. And the new approach will better incentivise energy efficiency."

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the school leaders' union ASCL, said "significant investment in a coherent plan for education recovery" was needed to close the attainment gap.

"Instead, it seems likely that the government is going to reduce spending on education even further. If that is the case, our children and young people, who made enormous sacrifices during the pandemic to protect others, will be disadvantaged yet again."



Nick Brook



Kwasi Kwarteng

INVESTIGATION

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'Untenable': Council school deficits soar as costs keep rising

DONNA FERGUSON
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As many as half of all the maintained schools in some areas are expected to go into financial deficit this year, putting councils in an "utterly untenable and unsustainable" position and "jeopardising" education.

Policy experts said the dire situation could "force" local authorities to "relinquish" their maintained schools to balance the books, with the government keen for new powers to allow academy conversions en-masse.

Brighton and Hove, the local authority with the fewest academies in the country, expects at least 30 of its 62 maintained and faith schools to end the current financial year in deficit.

Only 14 of its schools were in deficit in April.

The trend is similar in other councils with high numbers of maintained schools.

Nearly one in four (22 per cent) of the 56 maintained schools in Wakefield are also projecting a deficit at the end of the financial year, up from 2 per cent last year, when just one was in arrears.

Meanwhile, over a quarter (28 per cent) of the 107 local authority schools in East Sussex are expecting to end the year in the red. Previously less than one per cent of schools were in deficit.

The Local Government Association told Schools Week that "many schools" were concerned about their financial stability as rising costs of fuel, energy and school meals ate into budgets, alongside the need to fund the teacher pay rise.

"This comes as the financial sustainability of councils and local services is already at a cliff-edge, with the dramatic increase in inflation undermining councils' budgets," a spokesperson said.

Alongside national living wage and higher energy costs, this had added "at least £2.4 billion in extra costs on to the budgets councils set in March this year," they added.

"This is why we are calling on the Government to come up with a long-term

plan to manage this crisis as part of our campaign to save local services."

A spokesperson for Brighton said its schools could be forced to cut staff. The situation was "utterly untenable and unsustainable", he said.

"We believe this could seriously jeopardise the quality and provision of education to children and young people in the city."

Like many other councils, Brighton was facing "very severe financial pressures".

"We simply do not have any spare cash to bail out schools that are suffering financial hardship," the spokesperson said.

Latest figures from the Department for Education show 8.4 per cent of local authority-maintained schools nationally were in deficit last year.

Academies were much better off, with only

“We simply do not have any spare cash to bail out schools

2.6 per cent of trusts reporting they were in deficit in 2021.

Lincolnshire said just over 10 per cent of its schools have set a deficit budget or believe they will have one by April. Thirteen of Wiltshire's 123 schools (11 per cent) are in deficit, at a cumulative cost of £2.6 million. Both expect numbers to rise, too.

The schools bill proposed giving local councils the option to convert some or all of their remaining schools into academies at the same time.

Tom Richmond, the director of the EDSK thinktank, said councils "may be forced to consider relinquishing schools to balance the books".

Councils are also dealing with huge funding black holes in their high-needs



Jeremy Hunt

budgets. Estimates from earlier this year put the combined deficits at £2.4 billion.

The government has pledged £780 million to bailout some councils in return for cost-cutting pledges under its "safety valve" programme.

Richmond in west London said it would be "very disappointing for the drive towards full academisation to be propped up by schools falling into financial difficulty, rather than conversion being seen as a positive choice".

Heather Sandy, who chairs an educational achievement policy group for the Association of Directors of Children's Services, was sceptical about academisation.

"Trusts also face financial pressures and schools that want to join academy trusts, but aren't able to fund their provision, would present a real challenge."

She said schools faced "very hard decisions – and all of those impact on children, whether that's staffing decisions, curriculum or sometimes, unfortunately, decisions ... around extra support within schools to protect the most vulnerable pupils."

She suggested maintained schools could find efficiencies by working with others.

Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, has signalled public spending cuts are on the way as the government grapples with plugging its own deficit.

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said: "Schools are in the grip of a major funding crisis. Without further investment, education – like many other public services – will be harmed, and ultimately it will be pupils that suffer."

Attainment gap widens to a 10-year high

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

The secondary school attainment gap between poorer pupils and their better-off peers has widened to its highest mark in a decade, although ministers say students are “getting back on track”.

Provisional key stage 4 performance data, published yesterday, shows the disadvantage gap now stands at 3.84, the widest it’s been since it hit 3.89 in 2011-12.

Sir Peter Lampl, the founder of the Sutton Trust, said Covid had “reversed a decade of progress”.

“There has to be a step change in what is done to enable young people to recover from the pandemic.

“The government needs to step up to the challenge immediately. There is no time to lose.”

But the government shows no signs of boosting its catch-up funding. Sir Kevin Collins, its former recovery commissioner, resigned last year over a “feeble” catch-up funding package of just £1.4 billion. He wanted £15 billion.

Jonathan Gullis, the schools minister, this week said that the hard work of teachers and the National Tutoring Programme, had helped pupils to get “back on track”.

He admitted the pandemic “impacted children’s learning”. The data showed why it was important to keep “our foot on the accelerator” and continue to roll out the recovery programme, which is now worth £5 billion.

The attainment gap was already widening before the pandemic – rising from 3.66 to 3.7 between 2017 and 2019.

But it narrowed in 2020 when centre-assessed grades were used.

The Department for Education said the widening “may reflect the difficult circumstances that many pupils will have experienced over the past few academic years”.

The measure shows the relative attainment gap – based on average grades achieved in English and maths GCSEs – between disadvantaged and all other pupils.

It mirrors what happened at key stage 2, where the gap is also the widest in 10 years.

The gap for GCSE pupils achieving grade 5 – deemed by the government as a strong pass –



and above in English and maths widened from 25.2 percentage points for disadvantaged pupils in 2018-19, to 27.3 percentage points in 2021-22.

Meanwhile, wealthier pupils had an average Progress 8 score of 0.15 compared with -0.55 for their disadvantaged peers.

Lee Elliot Major, the professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, said that if the government did not address “these growing education divides”, its targets to improve GCSE grades overall would remain “fanciful dreams”.

The schools white paper set out to boost the average grade in GCSE English language and maths from 4.5 in 2019 to 5 by 2030.

“The biggest concern is that disadvantaged pupils still make up the lion’s share of teenagers who fail to secure grade 5s in GCSEs in English language and maths as we know these passes are so critical for future life prospects,” Elliot Major said.

Language EBacc problems persist

The data also showed how languages still thwart the government’s EBacc pledges.

The percentage of pupils entering the full five EBacc subject groups has remained stable at 38.7 per cent – the same for 2020-21.

Of those missing just one EBacc component, 87.6 per cent missed languages – compared with 86 per

cent in 2018-19.

The percentage of pupils entered for languages this year is 44.8 per cent, the lowest in 10 years. This compares with 94.9 per cent in science and 81.4 per cent in humanities.

Meanwhile, an analysis by FFT Datalab found “very little” change in Progress 8 scores by region, despite previous fears of uneven Covid impact.

For example, in the north east, scores fell from -0.24 in 2019 to -0.27 last year. Scores in the north west changed from -0.18 to -0.16 and fell in the south east (-0.01 to -0.03). Progress 8 scores in London dropped from 0.22 to 0.23 over the same period.

Looking at characteristics, the DfE said the highest average Progress 8 score was for Chinese pupils at 0.99, followed by Asian and others at 0.54 each.

Black pupils had an average score of 0.18 while pupils from mixed and white backgrounds had negative scores – -0.04 and -0.14 respectively.

Girls continue to do better than boys across all the headline attainment measures, but the gap is narrowing.



Sir Peter Lampl

Heads set for historic vote on strike action

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Tens of thousands of school leaders are to be balloted for strike action over pay for the first time, as unions representing teachers and support staff also vote on walkouts.

The NAHT school leaders' union will ballot its members on whether they want to go on strike or take action short of a strike over a pay deal worth 5 per cent to most teachers and leaders.

It will be the first national strike ballot over pay in the union's 125-year history.

Paul Whiteman, its general secretary, said school leaders' salaries had lost 24 per cent of their value in real terms since 2010.

Heads felt "demoralised and undervalued. It is almost unprecedented for the relentlessly reasonable professionals I know our members to be, but we have no choice but to move to a formal industrial action ballot to establish what next steps they would like to take."

The ballot follows a survey of 64 per cent of members, in which 84 per cent said they wanted to be balloted on action short of a strike "should a suitable agreement on pay and funding not be reached". Fifty-five per cent said they wanted to be balloted on a full walkout.

If these figures are repeated in a formal ballot, the union would meet strict thresholds for industrial action. Since 2016, unions have had to show 50 per cent turnout and 40 per cent support among voting members for action to be legal.

The NAHT represents heads, senior and middle leaders, most of whom work in primaries.

Teacher strikes pencilled in for January

It comes as the National Education Union (NEU) and NASUWT teaching union prepare to send ballot papers to their members.

An indicative ballot by the NEU showed 86 per cent of teacher members and 78 per cent of support staff members supported a strike, on turnouts of 62 per cent and 68 per cent respectively.



Paul Whiteman

“Our members are relentlessly reasonable, but we have no choice

Formal ballots of about 300,000 teachers and support staff in England and Wales will open on October 28 and close on January 13. Dates for potential strike action "are yet to be decided, but likely to be from week commencing January 30, 2023".

Kevin Courtney and Dr Mary Bousted, the union's joint general secretaries, said the "strength of feeling should not be underestimated".

"Our members are reluctant to strike ... but they have been undervalued for too long."

The NASUWT also announced last week that ballot papers would be issued to its members from October 27, and that the vote would close on January 9.

Dr Patrick Roach, its general secretary, said the government had "failed to recognise the damaging impact of years of real terms pay cuts on the morale of teachers and which is fuelling the teacher recruitment and retention crisis."

Striking teachers have public support

Polling by Savanta Comres for the NASUWT suggests most people would support a

teacher's strike.

It found 56 per cent of UK adults felt teachers would be justified in taking industrial action over a below-inflation pay rise. Support was higher – 64 per cent – among parents.

ASCL, the country's other school leadership union, is still consulting with members about whether it will ballot for strike action.

In a recent survey by the union, two-thirds of respondents backed a ballot on industrial action short of a strike, and were split on the idea of a full-blown walkout, a response that Geoff Barton, the leader of the usually strike-shy union, called "remarkable".

But only 16 per cent of eligible members responded to the survey.

A DfE spokesperson said it was "incredibly disappointing that some unions are threatening industrial action in schools".

Whiteman said school leaders would do "everything in their power to avoid disruption to pupils" but were telling him that they could not continue to run their schools in the current circumstances.

MFL 'attainment benchmarks' proposed to boost take-up

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers plan to draw up new "benchmarks" setting out expected attainment levels in languages as they attempt to "improve" primary pupils' transition into secondaries.

It is part of the government push to increase the uptake of languages at GCSE level and its pledge for 90 per cent of year 10 pupils entering the English baccalaureate (EBacc) by 2025.

Official data published yesterday shows that 87.6 per cent of pupils taking four EBacc subjects in 2020-21 were missing the language component, compared with 86 per cent in 2018-19.

The Department for Education plans to appoint a new advisory panel to draw up non-statutory guidance for languages education for 7 to 14-year-olds. It will be published later next year.

As part of that, an early contract notice states the panel will produce a document that "seeks to improve transition between key stage 2 and key stage 3, benchmarking expected attainment levels".

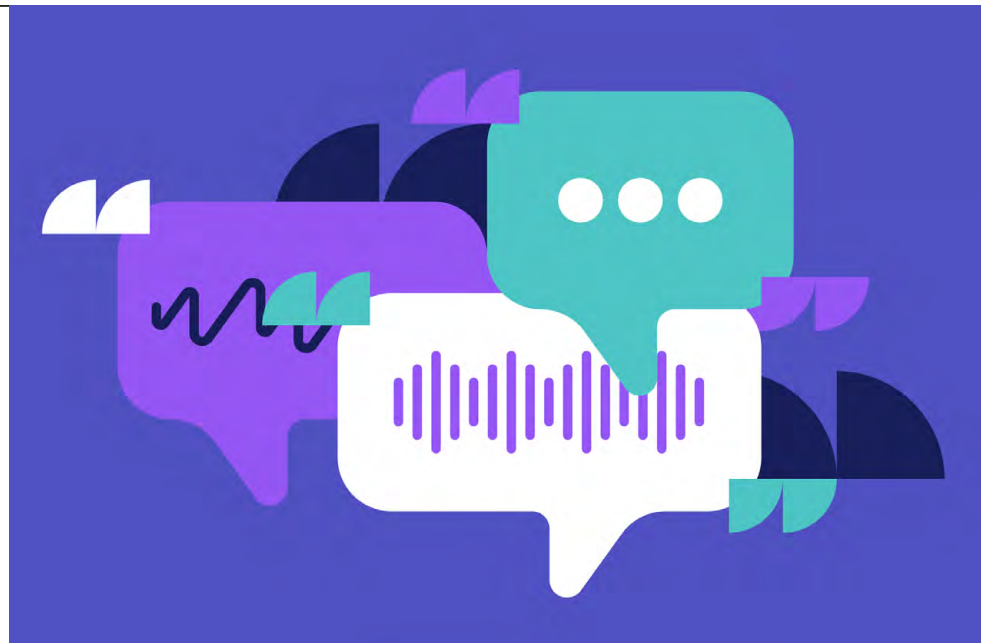
The DfE said it could not provide further information as the benchmarks had not been drafted yet.

But Suzanne O'Farrell, a modern foreign languages consultant for the ASCL leaders' union, said primary schools "did not have the infrastructure" to follow benchmarked attainment levels. There was a lack of specialist teachers and access to training, she said.

"You can't just say pupils have to achieve this, and this is what it looks like, without investing in the training that's going to get teachers to be able to deliver that confidently."

The annual Languages Trends Survey, which polled 6,000 state primaries in England, found that 52 per cent cited "staff language proficiency" as a challenge to meeting national curriculum requirements. One-fifth also said accessing language-specific professional development was a barrier.

Meanwhile, Ofsted's research review of



languages education last year also cited "staff expertise" at primary school as a barrier to learning.

ASCL's general secretary, Geoff Barton, said school leaders were "best placed" to make decisions relating to the curriculum based on the "individual needs" of children.

"New demands and expectations should not be introduced by the back door."

But Ian Bauckham, the chief executive of the Tenax Schools Trust and chair of the Modern Foreign Languages pedagogy review in 2016, said a lack of joined-up teaching within primaries left year 7 teachers "having to start again from scratch because everyone has learnt something slightly different".

Ofsted and the Primary Languages Network said in a 2018 white paper this could lead to "demotivation" and could be a "contributory factor" to low uptake of languages at key stage 4.

GCSE entries for German fell 5 per cent between 2021 and 2022, while French and Spanish entries also fell 1.6 and 1.4 per cent respectively.

"Having guidance read by primary schools around the country that sets some sort of expectations for what should be taught in ks2 is potentially a first step to addressing the problem," Bauckham said.

It could also provide

"sensible and worthwhile" support to non-specialists.

John Bald, an independent languages consultant and former Ofsted lead inspector, suggested guidance could also help to alleviate workloads.

"If you can assess where children are just by comparing their work with the guidelines, then you don't have to do extra work to assess where they are," he said.

But ASCL said it could limit schools' ability to tailor language provision to specific circumstances.

"We remain concerned by the increasing centralisation of the curriculum beyond the national curriculum, through the growing frequency of non-statutory guidance," said Barton.

O'Farrell said there were fears the guidance could be "used by Ofsted inspectors to judge schools rather than just be 'non-statutory'".

Non-statutory guidance has been published by the DfE for subjects including maths, religious education and music.

Ofsted said it did not inspect against "non-statutory guidance, although some of it, such as the Department of Education's governance handbook, underpins the handbook".

The DfE did not comment.


 Ian Bauckham

INVESTIGATION: BUDGETS

Ministers ratchet up scrutiny of trust reserves

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government wants reassurance that hundreds of academy trusts with savings worth a fifth or more of their annual income have plans to spend the cash. But trusts say the crackdown disincentivises long-term school rebuilding planning. Schools Week investigates ...

The government is investigating whether academy trusts with reserves worth a fifth or more of their annual income have “robust” plans to use the cash.

Schools Week analysis suggests hundreds of trusts’ budgets could be under scrutiny, despite many saying the reserves are for Covid-delayed building projects or are helping them stay afloat as costs soar.

But ministers ratcheted up scrutiny after the National Audit Office (NAO) called for “action” over those building up “substantial reserves”.

NAO analysis found 22 per cent of trusts had reserves amounting to one-fifth of annual incomes in 2019-20.

However, one senior trust leader said any potential “cap” would disincentivise long-term school rebuilding plans.

Guidance to ensure trusts aren't 'holding back too much'

In March, MPs on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) made similar pleas, and in June Labour’s Baroness Wilcox warned that “these institutions cannot be cash cows”.

The DfE said earlier this year it was “strengthening” trust data requirements to help “challenge the robustness of their financial reserves’ plans”.

It was also “exploring” new guidance to help trusts hold cash for contingencies and big investments “without holding back too much that could otherwise be used to benefit current pupils”.

Questions were added to this July’s budget forecast return about how trusts would use reserves exceeding 20 per cent of income,



“Placing a cap on reserves isn't sound policy

and about planned project costs and timings.

A DfE spokesperson confirmed officials were “working through the data” to ensure it was being “invested back into schools and pupils”.

The latest data has not been published, but last year’s accounts suggest at least 699 trusts would face scrutiny if they have broken even since.

Single-academy trusts were more likely to meet the threshold. Forty-two trusts’ reserves were more than half their annual income, and three had savings exceeding income.

Ashton West End Primary Academy, a 459-pupil standalone trust in Greater Manchester, received about £2.5 million last year with £671,000 not spent, pushing reserves to £3.7 million or about one-and-a-half times income – the highest of any trust.

Accounts said some of the excess would be used on staffing and infrastructure, but some was held because of the risks of “diminishing funding”. It did not respond to a request for comment.

Reserves now a lifeline for rising costs

Many trusts would bridle at suggestions they are “cash cows”.

Reserves rose in both 2019-20 and 2020-21, partly because of Covid lockdowns limiting everyday and capital spending.

But many trusts are now forecasting deficits. Some 350 leaders warned the government this month that rising inflation and unfunded pay hikes put trust viability at risk. Several chief executives recently told *Schools Week* reserves were a lifeline amid soaring energy bills.

Stuart Gardner, the chief executive of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust, even warned of a culture of stockpiling if trusts “know government won’t step in”.

Officials are also scrutinising out-of-date budgets. Ministers’ and councils’ unexpectedly high pay decisions came after many trusts had already submitted their budget figures.

Trusts’ circumstances vary too. Thirteen of the 20 trusts with the highest-ratio reserves in 2021 run special schools or alternative provision. Four are multi-academy trusts with one school, suggesting growth

INVESTIGATION: BUDGETS

ambitions requiring investment.

An Apollo Schools Trust spokesperson said its reserves had risen because of Covid-linked staffing shortages in its new alternative provision, and cancelled refurbishment and IT projects.

A National Autistic Society Academies Trust spokesperson said reserves were for planned investments in therapists and IT training.

Delta Academies Trust, the Bishop Hogarth and Bishop Bewick Catholic trusts, Star Academies and the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust were the only five trusts with 20 or more schools to meet the 20 per cent threshold.

The chief executive of Bishop Hogarth, Mike Shorten, said the data was "misleading" as it included 18 schools' income but 29 schools' reserves. Some £8.9 million of "essential" maintenance and construction would cut reserves to 8.7 per cent, he said.

A Delta spokesperson said it was set to spend nearly £15 million this year on capital investment across its schools. Projects were delayed during Covid, which led to a "build-up" in reserves. The spend included the Dallowgill outdoor education centre in the Yorkshire Dales, which would give every



Sir Martyn Oliver

pupil across the trust a two-night residential experience.

Suthan Santhaguru, the finance director at the Vine Schools Trust, said reserves were paying for material cost increases and urgent capital projects not funded by the government.

'Capping reserves isn't sound policy'

Sir Martyn Oliver, the chief executive of Outwood Grange Academies Trust, said placing a cap on reserves "isn't sound policy".

"We should be asking all those responsible for public buildings to have a long-term plan in place to maintain them. Reserves should be judged against this."

The trust, which has 40 schools, boosted its overall reserves from £22.8 million in 2020 to £31.9 million last year.

"We have a long-term estate plan," Oliver said. "We take on many schools that are broken educationally and which are often in poor buildings with urgent estate needs.

"So we save hard and build up enough money to be ready to undertake capital expenditure projects - without needing to go to the government to ask for additional funding."

No large trusts had reserves ratios above a quarter, while some had ratios as low as 5 per cent.

A spokesperson for the David Ross Education Trust, with a ratio of 3 per cent, said it had been "gradually strengthening" reserves after rapid expansion.

A Department for Education spokesperson said schools nationally had "high standards of financial management".

The government would take current financial challenges "into consideration", but would take "appropriate action where necessary".

DONNA FERGUSON | @SCHOOLSWEEK

SCHOOL MEAL PRICE RISES LEAVE BITTER TASTE

Councils are increasing the prices of school meals as the cost of food, energy and wages for catering staff continues to rise.

Some schools have been forced to swallow the extra costs from their own budgets or pass the increase on to parents.

The rises come as the County Councils Network warns that local authorities will face "a winter of difficult decisions" as they set their budgets for the next financial year.

Cuts to school support services and home-to-school transport are among the services that could be affected.

Derbyshire County Council has approved a 10p increase in the price of a primary school meal this term, pushing up the cost of school meals by 4.5 per cent for 352 schools in the area.

The council told *Schools Week* it did not subsidise the cost of its catering service and would not be offering any additional support to schools to cover the rise.

"The increase is, of course, a decision we've

made reluctantly," said the council's education councillor, Alex Dale. "But I am more reluctant to compromise on the size and quality of our children's meals."

Hampshire County Council's school meal provider, HC3S, will also increase prices by 20p a day from October 31 for 440 schools.

To help schools cope with these costs, the council said it was awarding schools nearly £1.6 million in discretionary grants from the Household Support Fund.

Councillor Roz Chadd said: "The decision to increase the price of a school meal is regrettable, but unavoidable, and reflects the continuing increase in food, energy and other costs nationally, with which government funding has not kept pace.

"Our focus now is on doing all that we can to bolster our support for vulnerable families over the challenging winter period and ensure that schools are adequately equipped to cover these additional costs."

Stoke-on-Trent City Council also looks set to

increase its charges for school meal catering and school crossing patrols, although the council said it was "limiting" and "subsidising" these increases to protect school budgets.

Many schools are already struggling to find the money to pay for school meals for their most vulnerable pupils.

Latest estimates from the National Education Union reveal the Department for Education is currently underfunding free school meals by £395 million a year.

Last week, the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver backed the Feed the Future campaign for free school meals to be extended to about 800,000 more children in households on universal credit.

School and education leaders representing more than one million teachers, support staff and others working with children have this week backed the calls.

Organisations include education unions, the Confederation of School Trusts and the National Governance Association.

EXPLAINER: TUTORING

Tutoring failed to focus on disadvantaged pupils

The early National Tutoring Programme failed to achieve its “intended focus” on helping disadvantaged pupils catch up, a long-awaited evaluation has found.

A National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) study looked at how pupil-premium students performed through the £350 million first year of the programme, which launched in November 2020.

1 More tutoring = better grades

The NFER compared pupil-premium students in schools using the tuition partners’ arm – run by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) – against those that did not.

Researchers found that “higher amounts” of tutoring using partners were associated with better teacher-assessed grades at year 11 in English and in maths.

Two months additional progress was made in maths and English in schools in which 70 per cent of pupil-premium GCSE students were tutored.

But the EEF’s own toolkit on small group tuition says the impact can be, on average, four months’ progress over a year.

The NFER analysis was also based on a small sample of schools and ran into “methodological challenges”, meaning caution should be used on interpreting findings.

2 But NTP ‘failed to achieve its focus’

There was no pupil-premium target for tuition partners’ (TP) inaugural year and schools had discretion on who needed tutoring the most, with a focus on disadvantaged pupils.

Just 46 per cent of 184,000 pupils receiving tutoring through this pillar were pupil-premium students.

However, pupil-premium eligibility was missing or withdrawn for an additional 48,000 pupils.

The NFER said: “The lack of clarity in the pupil selection guidance for the TP programme resulted in failure to achieve the intended focus on socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils.”

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary at the heads’ union NAHT, said it was “essential” the National Tutoring Programme was “precisely targeted at those that need it most” to make headway in closing the attainment gap, now at a 10-year high.

But the NFER acknowledged that while pupil-premium targeting was “below expectations”, these pupils were still “over-represented” compared with the national average of 24 per cent.

3 Over a third did not complete tutoring

Just over half – 56 per cent – of pupils attended 12 or more hours of tutoring. By the end of year 1, a “substantial minority” – 35 per cent – did not receive a full block, with “missing data” on another 8 per cent.

On average, primary pupils received 8.8 hours of tuition in English

and 8.9 hours in maths before assessments in June and July.

In year 11, this was 7.6 hours in English and 8.4 hours in maths by the time teacher-assessed grades were submitted in June.

The NFER said attendance was felt to be higher “where schools had the capacity to proactively monitor it and encourage it” and seemed to be easier in primary and smaller schools.

Some schools incentivised attendance by offering raffle tickets and free snacks.

4 Most tutoring in lesson time

The EEF’s evidence said effective tutoring should be additional to classroom teaching. But the NFER’s data shows 63 per cent took place during lesson times only, followed by 19 per cent outside lesson times. Eighteen per cent had a mix of both.

Almost two thirds of school staff reported that reduced time in lessons was the most common challenge for the programme.

Over a quarter – 26 per cent – of 777 staff said that tuition resulted in pupils falling behind in lessons.

But researchers found that for primary English, sessions during school hours were associated with better English scores than a mix of both.

5 No conclusion on academic mentor scheme

The low number of pupil-premium students taking part meant the NFER was unable to gauge the impact of academic mentoring, run by Teach First.

There was a “degree of uncertainty” on results showing that it gave pupil-premium students one-month’s additional progress in maths in year 11.

Ben Styles, the NFER’s head of classroom practice and workforce, said: “As schools now receive funding to spend on whichever model of tutoring they choose, it is vital that the research community provides them with the evidence they need to guide decisions.”

6 Do more to target poorer pupils, DfE told

The Researchers said “more should be done” to target support at disadvantaged pupils.

Future programmes should have clearer goals and guidance on pupil selection or acknowledge that schools might have different views about which pupils most needed the intervention.

But a new 65 per cent pupil-premium target has been ditched in the past school year, with no target publicly announced for year 3.

The NFER also suggested a randomised controlled trial to find out which models of tutoring were most effective.

A DfE spokesperson said it had “taken on board feedback from schools and stakeholders”. All funding this year went directly to schools, giving them “greater autonomy and flexibility.”

NEWS

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DfE faces legal challenge over pupil data

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The government could face legal action over the way it handles pupil data as pressure grows to publish a full audit of its practices.

The campaign group DefendDigitalMe has issued a letter before claim to the Department for Education over its handling of “extremely sensitive information” about children, warning that it will seek a judicial review if it does not receive a “satisfactory response”.

The organisation said the department has “repeatedly” failed to provide details of steps it has taken to ensure it meets data protection law, and has not properly informed parents about what is done with their children’s data.

A damning audit by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) in 2020 found the DfE broke data protection laws in how it handled pupil data.

The audit was prompted by complaints about the national pupil database (NPD), which holds information on millions of past and present school pupils.

A summary of the report warned that data protection “was not being prioritised”, which had “severely impacted the DfE’s ability to comply with the UK’s data protection laws”.

The watchdog issued 139 recommendations for improvement, with more than 60 per cent classified as “urgent or high priority”. The DfE said it had reviewed “all processes for the use of personal data”.

But the government has not published an update on its work to address the ICO’s concerns since January 2021. The full report, which the DfE promised to publish, is also still under wraps more than two years later.

DefendDigitalMe’s director, Jen



Persson, said there seemed to be “no sense of urgency”.

“[There is] no commitment to even recognising they have a serious problem, when there is no mechanism in place to automatically indicate a child at risk should have a sealed record protected from distribution.

“When you ask ordinary pupils and teachers, they are shocked to know more than statistics leave the school and are given away to an unlimited number of businesses.”

Her organisation wants a response detailing how the DfE is now complying with data protection law.

The department told Schools Week that while it was under “no obligation” to publish the full report, it had “committed in the future to publish the full report once we have concluded the work to the ICO’s satisfaction”.

As part of its investigation, the ICO looked into how the NPD, learning records service and “internally held databases” at the DfE were managed.

The sharing of data from the NPD with external organisations has been a subject of controversy for some years, and children’s rights’ groups have called for it to be halted.

This came to a head in 2016 when the government began collecting data on pupils’ nationality and country of birth, eventually admitting it had planned to share the data with the Home Office for

immigration control. The collection was cancelled in 2018.

The DfE releases anonymised sections of the NPD to organisations – including private companies - that request them. However, the ICO found the reasons for doing so were not always justified.

But access to pupil data is important for academics and

research organisations, such as the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Its director of research, Lesley Duff, said analysis of important data sources played a “critical role in creating new evidence for teachers and other practitioners about what works in the education system”.

It could also provide “important insights that help the government develop new policies to improve educational outcomes”.

However, she warned it was “imperative that any data is handled and managed extremely sensitively, in compliance with GDPR principles, and is only shared with accredited academics and researchers who have been trained to use the data in a safe and secure manner”.



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Exam fees hike 'make a mockery' of budgets

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

GCSE and A-level exam fee rises of up to 17 per cent midway through a term "makes a mockery" of financial planning, say academy leaders.

Edexcel, run by Pearson, and OCR have increased fees for all 2023 exams by a flat 6 per cent.

England's largest exam board AQA has hiked prices by between 5 and 17 per cent, although it still has the lowest prices overall.

The boards, which will earn several million more from schools after the rises, say they need to cover higher costs.

But leaders say the increases are "really disappointing" as schools battle soaring energy and staffing costs.

E-ACT, which has 13 secondary schools, expects the hikes to cost an extra £180,000.

Tom Campbell, its interim chief executive, said another "unfunded cost increase" made it "increasingly difficult to do anything resembling thoughtful financial planning".

"It risks causing confusion amongst accounting officers and trust boards, making it impossible to deliver the budgets agreed with the Education and Skills Funding Agency at the start of the year.

"In-year changes to costs like these make a mockery of the funding agreements and annual budget-setting cycle."

Frustration over fees grew last year after *Schools Week* revealed boards were raising prices, despite cancelled exams and teacher-set grades.

AQA has hiked prices for A-level art by 17 per cent – from £89.65 to £105.10. Other subjects have risen between 5 and 12 per cent.

The not-for-profit organisation said increases for most of its qualifications were "well-below inflation" – currently at 9.9 per cent.

Rises above inflation were to "better reflect the market and true costs of delivering these qualifications".

Fees for A-level biology, chemistry and physics have risen by 10 per cent while



GCSE geography and art are up 12 per cent. A maths GCSE now costs £41.20, up from £39.15.

An average-size secondary with 200 year 11s taking nine of the most popular GCSEs with AQA could now pay an extra £4,840. An average multi-academy trust with seven secondary schools faces about £30,000 extra.

AQA could gain an extra £4.9 million if entry rates remain the same as this summer. Tracey Newman, the board's director of customer and sales, said: "As an independent charity, we don't charge more than we need to for our qualifications and services, and we've kept entry fee increases well below the rate of inflation for the majority of our qualifications."

Ofqual's conditions say boards should publish fees "sufficiently far in advance" of exams to "satisfy the reasonable planning requirements" of schools.

All three boards published fees in the past three months – OCR and Edexcel in August and AQA last Friday – but schools set budgets months in advance.

Rebecca Boomer-Clark, the chief executive officer of the 21-secondary Academies Enterprise Trust, said: "It's just really disappointing that when the

financial challenges facing schools have been so well documented, our exam board partners have chosen now – well into the first term of the school year – to issue the sector with yet another in-year cost increase.

"We shouldn't underestimate the impact on school and trust leaders who are already facing difficult choices to balance their budgets."

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of school leaders' union ASCL, said "an increase that is above the pay award for most teachers is difficult to swallow".

A maths GCSE with Edexcel now costs £46.80, compared with £44 last year.

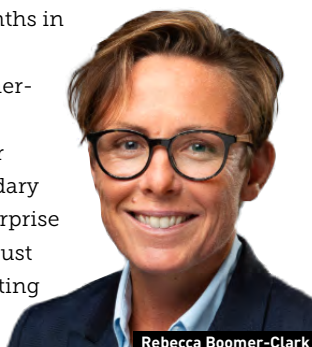
Across nine subjects for 200 year 11s, this works out an extra £5,060 – or £35,420 for a trust with seven secondary schools. Based on last year's entry rates, Pearson will take in an extra £2.1 million.

A spokesperson said it recognised school budgets were "stretched" and "we will always aim to keep fee increases to a minimum while providing as much value for money as possible".

Likewise OCR, a not-for-profit owned by Cambridge University Press & Assessment, is hiking fees 6 per cent. A maths GCSE now costs £47, up from £44.25.

With similar entry rates to last year across nine GCSE subjects, this would see OCR gain an extra £383,000.

An OCR spokesperson said it aimed to keep any fee increases "as low as possible".



Rebecca Boomer-Clark

Damning child sex abuse inquiry exposes Ofsted flaws

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ofsted “did not do enough” to identify serious child protection weaknesses in some schools, a damning inquiry has found. Inspectors even gave clean bills of health to settings in which children were sexually abused.

The seven-year Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse found there were “limitations on an inspectorate’s ability to judge the adequacy” of schools’ child protection approaches.

The current inspection system might also “lead to false assurances about children’s safety”, it warned.

Despite an “enhanced focus” on safeguarding, the inquiry found that schools were “not as safe for children as they should be, and children’s interests do not always come first when allegations or concerns of sexual abuse arise”.

It recommended mandatory reporting of sexual abuse for school staff and others working with children, which would make it a crime not to pass on disclosed or witnessed abuse.

It also called for a child protection authority for England with the power to inspect institutions and settings “as it considers necessary and proportionate”.

The inquiry, launched in 2015, conducted 15 investigations, research and analysis and a “truth project” giving 6,000 victims and survivors the opportunity to share their experiences.

Inquiry finds ‘limitations’ to inspections

It found Ofsted and other inspectorates “on occasions did not do enough to identify the serious weaknesses in the protection of children in some of the care and educational settings the inquiry examined”.

Inspections were “not routinely targeted at child protection”. When it came to schools, there were “limitations on an inspectorate’s ability to judge the adequacy of an institution’s approaches to child protection”.

For example, the inquiry found instances “where education inspectorates considered that an institution met or exceeded



expectations of safeguarding only for it subsequently to come to light that children were being sexually abused at school or otherwise experiencing harm because of poor practice”.

Where reports included positive comments about safeguarding or children’s feelings of safety, readers “could be left with a false impression that the institution’s child protection practices have been rigorously examined”.

It is not the first time Ofsted has been criticised over its handling of the issue.

In a 2016 report, the women and equalities committee found that Ofsted did not refer directly to sexual harassment or sexual violence in its guidance to schools or inspectors.

The report said Ofsted should be “monitoring state-funded schools’ actions in preventing and tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence, and supporting survivors”.

The inspectorate was last year told to review sexual abuse in schools, following allegations shared on the Everyone’s Invited website.

Its report accused school leaders and teachers of “consistently underestimating” the scale of sexual abuse and harassment among pupils.

But Ofsted also admitted it was unable to say whether its own inspections were “sufficiently assessing” the extent of harassment and violence.

‘Many shortcomings’ in school system

The inquiry also found widespread failures by schools themselves, and the report detailed harrowing testimonies from victims, some of whom said their abuse was ignored by staff.

Allegations of abuse made to the inquiry had to be reported to the police.

Of 10,431 referrals, 4,065 were linked to a specific institution in England. Of those, 1,704 related to incidents that allegedly took place in schools. Referrals relating to schools were higher than those from any other type of institution.

The inquiry identified “many shortcomings” in current protection, regulation, oversight and enforcement, including the scope and practical operation of the Disclosure and Barring Service, workforce regulation, inspection systems and standards.

Statutory guidance was also “not always sufficiently precise and clear”.

Some school staff “were reluctant to report concerns, in part fearful of the consequences of doing so”. When concerns were raised, they were “not always referred to statutory authorities when they should have been”.

“Where the threshold for formal referral was not met, there was confusion regarding what, if any, further steps should be taken, and by whom.”

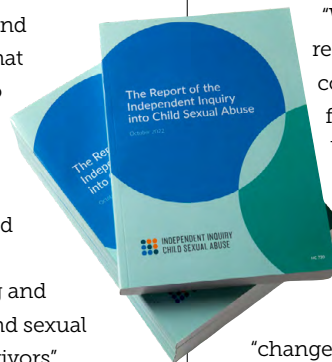
Victims and survivors also said clear physical signs of abuse went unnoticed. And some of those interviewed felt racism led to adults ignoring

“changes in their behaviour, such as poor performance or attendance at school”.

Education secretary Kit Malthouse said the “scale of historic abuse and exploitation suffered by these children is horrifying”. Services were now more joined-up. The government will respond within six months.

Ofsted admitted it was unable to say whether its own inspections were “sufficiently assessing” the extent of sexual harassment and violence.

They will consider the inquiry’s findings “with the diligence and care they deserve”.



NEWS

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Trusts can get £100k to take on top-rated schools

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The government is offering “strong” academy trusts grants of up to £100,000 to take on ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ schools in better-performing regions.

Experts say these “capacity-giver” schools will boost a trust’s ability to drive up improvement at its other schools.

The new strand has been added to criteria for the second window of the 2022-23 trust capacity fund (TCaF), which has now opened.

The capacity fund, worth £86 million over three years, is to help trusts “develop their capacity and take on underperforming schools, particularly in education investment areas”.

Ministers named 55 investment areas (EIAs) – those with the lowest education outcomes – to be prioritised for support.

But trusts can now get between £50,000 and £100,000 for taking on “good or outstanding schools outside an EIA”.

Grants of up to £300,000 are available for taking on at least one ‘inadequate’ or ‘requires improvement’ school in an EIA area. Up to £200,000 is available for taking on an underperforming school or any school in an EIA.

Applications for underperforming schools will be prioritised.

Jonathan Gullis, the schools minister, said the fund supported the government’s “vision” for every school to be part of a



Jonathan Gullis

family of schools in strong academy trusts.

Giving trusts more money to take over good schools is likely to be controversial.

But Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, pointed to comments by Sir David Carter, the former national schools commissioner, about the “importance of capacity-givers in school trusts”.

“The widening of the TCaF criteria to include good and outstanding schools joining trusts helps to build the capacity for improvement in our trusts,” Cruddas said.

Winners for the first lot of £18 million TCaF were announced yesterday. A total of 104 trusts were awarded on average £170,000 each.

The winning trusts had an average of 11

schools – which is more than the average of seven schools per MAT in 2022, suggesting the cash will help bigger trusts get bigger.

The Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust received £406,093, the largest grant. The Harris Federation, the largest trust to get cash, received £92,400.

Under the new round, applications can include MAT mergers, single trusts joining together or local authority “spin-off” trusts. Applicants must be “of sound financial health”.

Successful applicants who do not meet the standards of 90 per cent of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics and half of students entering the EBacc will “need to commit to improving your performance”.

“In general, this will mean aiming to reach that level of performance after three years,” the criteria said.

Applicants will also be expected to host teacher training placements. Points may be deducted from applications if the government has written to the trust about excessive chief executive pay.

The cash can be used to establish new central processes, set up new central team posts or pay staff relocation costs.

It cannot cover capital expenditure, consultancy for delivering the expansion or due diligence on takeovers.

The application window runs until December 16. Details of the next round – which will look particularly for projects that “address [government] priorities” in the EIAs – will be published later this year.

BILLY CAMDEN | @BILLYCAMDEN

DfE delays scrapping level 2 qualifications

The government will scrap thousands of qualifications at level 2 and below, but a year later than planned.

Proposals, described by sector leaders as “devastating”, were set out by ministers earlier this year to streamline the level 2 post-16 qualifications market.

Officials claimed they had become too confusing for employers and students to navigate.

The Department for Education confirmed on Tuesday that it would axe almost 3,500 courses from entry level to level 2.

However, plans to defund those

qualifications will not begin in 2024 as first planned, but will start from 2025 and be carried out in a phased way to 2027.

The delay follows serious concerns, including from the exams regulator Ofqual, that the timeline for implementation overlapped with significant changes to level 3 qualifications and could “overwhelm” educators.

But officials have ignored Ofqual’s other concern that the DfE’s plans risk adding further confusion to the level 2 qualifications space.

Under the plans, the surviving qualifications

would be placed into 17 new “groups” – eight at level 2, five at level 1 and four at entry level.

Ofqual warned that “there is a risk that the large number of proposed groupings are not sufficiently clear or straightforward for students and others to differentiate between”.

Andrea Jenkyns, the skills minister, said: “Only qualifications that are necessary, meet a high-quality bar and are proven to lead to good outcomes will be approved for public funding, ensuring better value for money for the taxpayer.”

AWARDS

Awards recognise special education provision

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools, individuals and organisations across England have been recognised at the annual nasen awards for their work for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The sixth awards, organised by the National Association for Special Educational Needs, were presented on Friday.

The winners include Westlea School in Wiltshire, Upton-by-Chester High School in Cheshire and Moon Hall School in Reigate, Surrey.

Pearl Barnes from Somerset has won the SEND leader of the year award, while Patricia Hetherington from West Yorkshire was named as learning support staff member of the year. Jemini Patel won teacher of the year.

Young people were also recognised, including Ashley Webber from Lincolnshire in the 16 and under category, and Joshua Earnshaw-Potts from Essex and Faizan Sheikh from Greater Manchester in the 17 to 25 category.

Collecting the award for technology was the Skylark Partnership Multi-Academy Trust in Northamptonshire, where a “pioneering



Teacher of the Year - L-R Jemini Patel, Dale Pickles from SENDcast and compare and BGT Finalist Robert White

robotic project”, AVI, has helped to provide education for children with medical and mental health difficulties.

Winners should ‘inspire others’ says nasen chief Annamarie Hassall, the chief executive of nasen, said: “It has been a great honour to recognise and reward the people who are making a real difference for SEN.

“We received an amazing number of nominations this year, and are thrilled to celebrate the inclusive work of individuals, teams and settings who go above and beyond,

every day, to help children and young people thrive and achieve.”

She said she hoped the stories of the winners would “inspire others to share their practice”.

“Children and young people with SEND have a right to an equitable education, to have choices and opportunities, let’s continue to celebrate the great work in the sector and help strengthen our community’s sense of unity and collaboration.

“For children and young people, that means acceptance, awareness and belonging.”

THE WINNERS

AWARD	WINNER(S)
Early years	Kids Planet SEND Team: SEND to Learn, Northumberland
Primary provision	Westlea School, Wiltshire
Secondary	Supportive Education Department – Upton-by-Chester High School
16-25	Harrison College, South Yorkshire
Specialist provision	Moon Hall School, Reigate, Surrey
Co-production with families	Lincolnshire Young Voices
Young person aged 16 and under	Ashley Webber, Lincolnshire
Young person aged 17-25	Joshua Earnshaw-Potts, Essex; Faizan Sheikh, Greater Manchester
SEND leader	Pearl Barnes, Somerset
Learning support staff member	Patricia Hetherington, West Yorkshire
Teacher of the Year	Jemini Patel, London
Technology	Skylark Partnership AV1 Project, Northamptonshire
Teacher development in digital accessibility	Oldham College, Greater Manchester
Award for publication	SENDcast
International Provision	RA International School, Bonny Island, Nigeria
Person of the Year	Philippa Stobbs



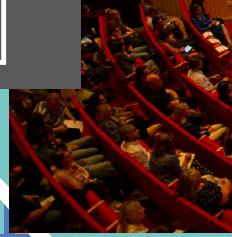
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Feature

DONNA FERGUSON | @SCHOOLSWEEK



‘The Conservatives must return to being the party of social justice’

With the government in meltdown and facing electoral obliteration, will the already-endangered ‘Tory teacher’ become a thing of the past? Donna Ferguson tried to find out ...

Walk into any school and you will find plenty of teachers who feel despair about the current political chaos and the impact successive Conservative governments have had on them and their pupils. But, there are some who still remain hopeful and positive about the leadership of this country. They are the four per cent of teachers who,

according to a recent poll by Teacher Tapp, would vote Conservative in the next general election. It’s a record low – down from nine per cent in September 2018 – but even so, it is a curious statistic.

Given the cost-of-living crisis and the economic bedlam unleashed by the Conservative government over the last few weeks, we wanted

to find out why those teachers are still holding fast to their true-blue colours.

Fear of abuse

Perhaps it’s not surprising, but Tory-voting teachers are hard to find. A keyword search on social media brought up hundreds of posts, but all of teachers declaring they would never

Feature: Tory teachers



James with Kelly Tolhurst and Sir David Evennett



Stephen James with Liz Truss

vote Conservative. None of the teaching unions Schools Week contacted could supply us with a Conservative-voting teacher to interview.

The Conservative Education Society was equally unable to help.

A call-out to the Conservative Friends of Education, which has 300 members, did yield four Tory-voting teachers. But most were only willing to be interviewed under conditions of strict anonymity. This was due to fear of “abuse”, we were told, “not embarrassment”. Another Tory teacher pulled out after their CEO told them not to participate.

According to Stephen James, the education consultant and former year 3 teacher who founded Conservative Friends of Education, many teachers who vote blue prefer not to admit it to their colleagues. If they drop even a hint, he said, “they find themselves hushed up in the corner.” And that’s the “tamer side”.

He said “five or six” openly Conservative-teachers – who did not wish to speak to Schools Week – had been “hounded out” of their jobs because of their political views. Some had been repeatedly asked “politically motivated” questions by senior leaders and union reps such as: “Is this the right place for you? Do you think you fit in here? Do your values align with the school’s?”

When James was delivering Conservative party campaign leaflets in 2019, an anonymous letter was sent to the headteacher of his state primary school in Kent, suggesting he should not be teaching children because he was a fascist. “My headteacher obviously had to investigate it.” The head then concluded that there was nothing

‘I’m an educator and you can’t learn on an empty tummy’

untoward going on. “It was a massive waste of time,” he added.

James thinks there should be room in the education system for diverse views and values, and says any vitriol aimed at Tory teachers by their colleagues is both unnecessary and unhelpful: “It’s disappointing. And it doesn’t encourage respect for each other’s ideas.”

Compassionate Conservatives?

Last week, Robert Halfon, chair of the Education Select Committee, advocated in *The Times* for “compassionate Conservatism”. He said this is what “our previous prime ministers stood for, including Boris Johnson when he promised to level up the UK. The Conservatives must return to being the party of social justice, the real workers’ party of the United Kingdom.”

Most of the current and former teachers Schools Week spoke to could be characterised as “compassionate Conservatives” or ‘one nation Tories’.

Kieran Isaacson, a Conservative party member who teaches humanities at a Catholic secondary school in Barking and Dagenham, said the government’s top education priority should be “properly funded” free school meals for all

children. “A lot of my students are on free school meals. I do worry about some of them and their families. Will they come to school hungry? Will they be cold at home?”

Isaacson, who is from a working-class background, also thinks teachers should get a pay raise at least in line with inflation, and would be “very supportive” of going on strike to get it. “As a teacher with a young family, I’m worried about inflation, bills, the cost of living... I don’t feel like teachers are adequately valued or compensated for their time.”

He votes Conservative because he supports “a knowledge rich, quite traditional curriculum” – the education ideas and reforms that have shaped the system since Michael Gove was education secretary.

While he doesn’t “100 percent trust Labour” with education, if they pledged to put up teachers’ wages and introduce universal free school meals at the next election – he would struggle to continue to support the Conservatives.

Christine Cunniffe, principal of a private co-ed day and boarding school in Ascot, is another Conservative party member who would like the government to introduce universal free school meals for pupils. Like Isaacson, she is also from

Feature: Tory teachers



Steve Mastin



Christine Cunniffe

a working class background (“my parents were fiercely Conservative”, she says), adding: “I’m an educator and you can’t learn on an empty tummy. Catering en masse is also a lot cheaper than families trying to cater for the children.”

She continues to have faith in the Conservative party because she thinks a Labour government would be “a disaster” for the independent sector and threaten the existence of schools like hers.

She doesn’t have any faith that a Labour government would have handled the cost-of-living crisis any better. Yet she is aware that “all the time that politicians are arguing and education ministers come and go, we are failing children.”

Dr Spencer Pitfield, a former principal of a SEND school who has voted Conservative all his life, would also be in favour of giving all primary school children a free school meal, even though it would mean helping children whose families could afford to pay. “I think that’s a very fair way of ensuring every youngster in that age group gets a hot meal – and that will really help their education.”

Grammar schools ‘big distraction’

James was the only Conservative we spoke to who supports repealing the ban on grammar schools. “What I’m in favour of is choice – parents being able to choose schools that suit their children,” he says. “But if I’m quite honest with you, the issue divides my organisation, Conservative Friends of Education.”

Cunniffe thinks repeal of the ban on grammar

‘I think it’s a big red herring saying we’re going to have more grammar schools’

schools should be put on the “back burner”. The government should instead address “the real, pressing issues” in education, namely “we’re trying to prepare a workforce for the future and our curriculum and our exam system is not fit for purpose”. Pitfield wants the government to stop its “relentless drive for change” and focus on “the basics” like smaller class sizes, good standards and giving children the best possible teachers.

“I think it’s a big red herring saying we’re going to have more grammar schools. Firstly, I don’t think that it can happen in 18 months. Secondly, it just takes away from the fact that all schools should be provided for, better.”

Like most of the Conservatives we spoke to, he would not be in favour of turning all schools into academies. What teachers urgently need from a Conservative government is stability and continuity, not “massive top-down change”, he said.

Steve Mastin, a former secondary school teacher who is vice president of the Conservative Education Society, thinks discussions around grammar schools are a “big distraction”.

“It won’t happen because

there’s not support for it. It’s fundamentally unconservative, because Conservatives are in favour of parental choice – and grammar schools choose which pupils get into their schools, not parents.”

He is equally against forcing existing schools to become academies. Instead, he thinks the top priority for the government should be to “cough up the cash” to fund the 5 per cent teacher pay rise that was announced in July, followed by a cut in fuel duty and VAT, to reduce the cost of food.

“That will help some of the most disadvantaged homes where my pupils come from,” he says, “and it will help teachers who drive to school as well.”

John Bald, an independent education consultant, has consistently voted Conservative since 2005, but has grave doubts about mass academisation too. “I don’t see it as improving education,” he said. “I think a lot of academy trusts have all the weaknesses of local authorities. Some of them have been downright corrupt and incompetent.”

Despite the current political turmoil, James feels confident that whatever this government has in store for schools over the next 18 months, it will be what’s best for the country and for children. “What we need to do is just roll up our sleeves and get on with it.”



Dr Spencer Pitfield

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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TABITHA MCINTOSH

Head of key stage 5 English,
Nower Hill High School

How I learned to stop worrying about my stroke and love cogsci

After a stroke affected her executive function, Tabitha McIntosh explains how her journey of recovery has meant embracing ideas she once dismissed

Since the fashion for cognitive science (cogsci) overtook education, I have been that teacher. The one with their arms crossed and their eyes rolling during whole-staff training. The one who's not taking notes during the presentation.

The one who says they've seen it all before, that what goes around comes around in education, that they'll be riding out this fad just like they rode out learning styles, lollipop sticks, and diamond nines.

As far as I was concerned, I knew it all already. The three breathlessly amazing, astonishing and profession-changing insights from cogsci and researchEd and most of eduTwitter seemed to boil down to the oldest and most basic teaching methods in the world:

- Tell people stuff (direct instruction)
- Don't say all the stuff at once because it's overwhelming (Sweller's cognitive load)
- People forget things in predictable ways, so ask or quiz them about the stuff on the regular (Ebbinghaus' gloriously named 'curve of forgetting')

But then I had a stroke. Eight weeks ago, while I was eating a cheese sandwich, the artery supplying blood to my right parietal lobe was blocked by a clot, causing irreparable damage to that part of my brain. Damage to the right parietal lobe doesn't cause any of the classic symptoms of stroke: no facial droop, no problems with speech, no

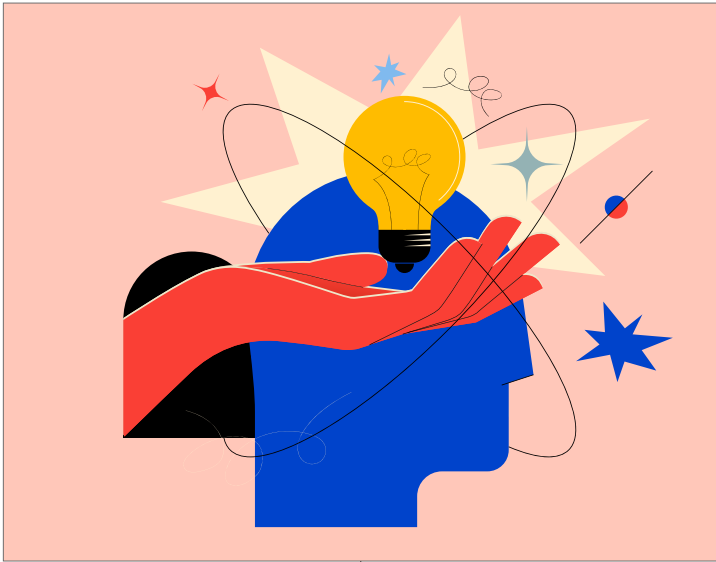
“Oops. Dear everyone: sorry for all the eye rolling!”

muscle weakness. It manifests in much odder ways.

The right parietal lobe contributes to, or controls, executive function, visuo-spatial attention, verbal and numerical working memory, and the management and regulation of all sensory input. It is how the brain manages cognitive load, sequencing tasks, and the attention and working memory required to do those tasks.

If that seems naggingly familiar, it's because it maps perfectly onto those three core insights from cogsci and researchEd and most of eduTwitter – the very ones I've spent the past two years laughing at. Oops. Dear everyone: sorry for all the eye rolling!

I now realise that I knew very little about the classroom experience of my students. Teachers are a self-selecting group. We're not



representative of the general population: all of us were able to manage the cognitive demands of learning or we wouldn't have the degrees that are required for professional qualification.

But many cannot. No, they have not had strokes. They are simply experiencing perfectly normal levels of cognitive overload and forgetting. I learned far more about it when the rehab specialist set me my first homework last week and chose an English teacher task.

It was the type of task that requires the same underlying cognitive demands I require of my students: read a chapter of a novel, wait a while, then write a summary of it. Cover themes and character depictions.

Such tasks rest on managing cognitive load, processing information, and keeping it in your working memory. They require that we use our prior knowledge; they demand that we sequence a learning activity and maintain focus on it until completion.

Here's what I learned from trying to do that homework: I owe my year 10s an apology and a very large cake.

It's impossible to tell yet what damage from my stroke will remain six months or a year from now. I am – as the neurological rehabilitation service is fond of telling me – at the beginning of my recovery journey. But when I recover, if I ever fully recover, I will not forget or regret the insight this has given me.

Opinion

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REKA BUDAI

Research manager, Oak National Academy

We need to talk about workload (again)



Workload problems continue to cause a retention challenge, writes Reka Budai, but we're missing an important detail to help tackle it

data from our platform along with research we have conducted among teachers in a new report, Teachers' Views: Workload and Curriculum to explore it in more detail and what might help reduce it.

to find are high-quality, evidence-based and free resources.

Ideally, they want these to be easily adaptable and sequenced into full schemes of work too. All of which makes finding resources

for understanding, give feedback and build relationships.

Lesson planning is a vital part of the job, but lots of teachers we talk to see the benefits of drawing on externally developed resources. As part of our independent annual evaluation, ImpactEd found just under half (42 per cent) of Oak user teachers said that using the resources reduced their workload, on average by three hours per week.

Discussing teacher workload can feel a bit like Groundhog Day, and the most recent evidence suggests there'll be no escape any time soon. Almost two-thirds (61 per cent) of teachers say they are working longer hours than a year ago, according to Teacher Tapp, up from 47 per cent in 2018.

The same Teacher Tapp study also reminds us yet again that teaching is far from a 9-to-5 job. The proportion of teachers now working a 50-hour-plus week is 48 per cent.

Workload has a corrosive effect on the sector. The NFER's annual report states that "workload is the reason most cited by ex-teachers for why they left teaching", and right now that is particularly pressing because too many teachers are leaving before retirement age.

Workload is a complex problem but it's the contribution made by lesson planning that we are most familiar with at Oak National Academy. It is the single most time-consuming, non-teaching task, and an activity almost all teachers need to do. So we have pulled together the

“ Perhaps the focus on lesson planning needs to be more nuanced

To search or to create?

The more research sessions we conduct with teachers at Oak, the more apparent it is that teachers approach lesson planning in two distinct ways (plus a combination of the two), each with its own benefits and pitfalls.

One approach is to create resources from scratch, which 46 per cent of primary and 29 per cent of secondary teachers say they do. Some of our own research participants told us that using readily available resources can feel like a 'cop-out', as if they are not doing their jobs properly, which might explain this.

The second is to search for existing resources. This might seem on the surface to be a cure-all to make lesson planning less time-consuming, but the 5,000 teachers we surveyed told us what is hardest

online a significant exercise. A Teacher Tapp survey found that the average primary teacher spends between one and three hours searching for resources each week, and secondary teachers up to an hour.

Rightly, more than two-thirds of teachers say that they can't imagine using resources created by someone else without adaptation. After all, they know their pupils and contexts best.

A change of culture

The NFER also notes that a sense of autonomy is an important factor in teacher retention. However, we should remember that teachers add tremendous value during lesson delivery itself, regardless of the resources they use. It is they – not resources – who provide explanations, continuously check

In turn, this allowed them to spend this newly found time on other things, such as supporting more vulnerable pupils. Non-specialist teachers in particular found readily available resources created by specialists helpful with their planning process.

So perhaps the focus on lesson planning as a driver of workload needs to be more nuanced. Planning lessons is a series of complex processes, of which creating or finding resources is only one. External resources have a part to play here and should not undermine teacher autonomy. If we can get the balance right, teachers will have more time to do only the things only they can, and they can get closer to a reasonable working week.

They are the ones in charge. Resources should take the back seat.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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With two-thirds of governing bodies reporting at least one vacancy, Simon Hay offers an edtech solution to recruitment – but it’s not what you might think

Recruiting school governors and trustees is a familiar challenge for many boards. According to the National Governance Association (NGA), two-thirds of governing boards have at least one vacancy, and 38 per cent have two or more.

Overall, the NGA estimates there are 20,000 vacancies and that things are worse now than pre-pandemic.

I’m chair of governors for a large primary school in London. We’re one of the lucky ones: we generally don’t have more than one vacancy. Two or more vacancies, we are keenly aware, would have a substantial impact on our ability to drive improvement and provide scrutiny.

When we do have a vacancy, we use as many ways as possible to try to recruit: school newsletters, advertising and through our own networks. But the recruitment challenge needs creative solutions. I’m also the co-founder of an edtech company, so you won’t be surprised to hear me say that I think the edtech sector can help – but perhaps not how you think.

There are more than 1,000 edtech companies in the UK, as well as many international companies with offices here. Their workforce is one that is committed to education, so let’s encourage them and their staff to become governance volunteers.

After all, volunteering is already a win-win. The organisation benefits, as well as the individual. Being a school governor has helped me to become a better leader, to work more effectively with my own board and to better understand how our offer interacts with the real life of a school. I can see how government legislation



SIMON HAY

Chair of governors, The Priory CE Primary School, co-founder and CEO, Firefly Learning

Recruitment: Edtech’s solution to the governance gap

is impacting schools, make more informed decisions about when to engage with school staff, and appreciate the wider pressures and challenges educators and leaders

also bring their experience of business and entrepreneurship. Although different in their purpose to commercial companies, the responsibilities for governors and

“ The sector can provide a wealth of relevant expertise

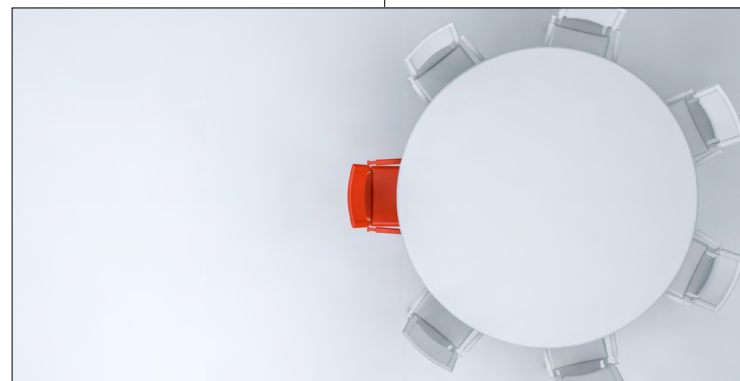
face.

In turn, many in the edtech sector can provide a wealth of relevant expertise. The pandemic has accelerated schools’ understanding of how technology can support teaching and learning, but those in edtech have a depth of experience that is a valuable addition to the school board. They also understand the right questions to ask edtech suppliers.

Those leading edtech companies

trustees are surprisingly similar to those of a board, including strategy, risk and finance, and overall performance.

The National Governance Association (NGA) reports that the number of governors and trustees under 40 is just six per cent, the lowest on record since 2015. Only one per cent are under 30. Edtech is a young sector, as a visit to one of the edtech trade shows demonstrates.



Recruiting from edtech has the potential to bring younger individuals into governance.

For those earlier in their careers, being a governor or trustee offers board-level experience – invaluable for anyone hoping to become a future edtech leader. The NGA also reports that governance volunteers develop skills in finance, staff recruitment, problem solving, teamwork and communication – all areas relevant to their career ambitions.

The best way to reach out to edtech companies to talk to them about governance is through the British Education Suppliers Association (BESA), the membership body that represents many edtech companies. BESA operates a free-to-use job board and publishes a weekly newsletter about opportunities. Sending information about your vacancy to BESA should help you to reach edtech companies.

The NGA has also launched a film about volunteering as a school governor or trustee which provides an engaging introduction to the role.

I have been a governor for four years and it’s been better than any training I could have imagined. It’s been hugely inspiring and helped me to become even more embedded in a sector I value a great deal. In turn, I hope my expertise and experience has helped our school to be its very best and provide an excellent education for all our children.

By bringing more edtech professionals into governance, we can ensure every school has their full complement of committed governors and improve the sector’s understanding of its clients.

That really would be a win-win.

Opinion

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HANS BROEKMAN

Headteacher, Liverpool College

MAT-isation: A culture of lowered expectations for heads

The white paper proposes a new system-wide tier of leadership that will see headteachers reduced from professionals to store managers, writes Hans Broekman

School leaders are constantly enjoined to have high expectations for their pupils. Sadly, the emphasis applied by the Department for Education when it comes to pupils and teachers does not seem to extend to them.

Both the DfE and Ofsted sprinkle the commandment to have high expectations for all pupils in all guidance and all regulatory frameworks. In practice, these expectations are to be communicated through curriculum, standards of behaviour, presentation of work, teaching, assessment, and academic ambition.

It is difficult to argue against this emphasis because high expectations are the starting point for meaningful educational progress. It is necessary to have a target, an ideal, a standard to measure progress and achievement. Low expectations for certain kinds of pupils or groups of pupils are, as is sometimes asserted, a form of bigotry and a limitation of the educational journey.

Yet, the recent government white

paper, which sets out how the government proposes to develop a state-funded school system in which all headteachers work in the context of a multi-academy trust makes a crystal-clear calculation. Almost all MAT models provided by the government as case studies are led by a CEO who directs the work of several so-called local headteachers

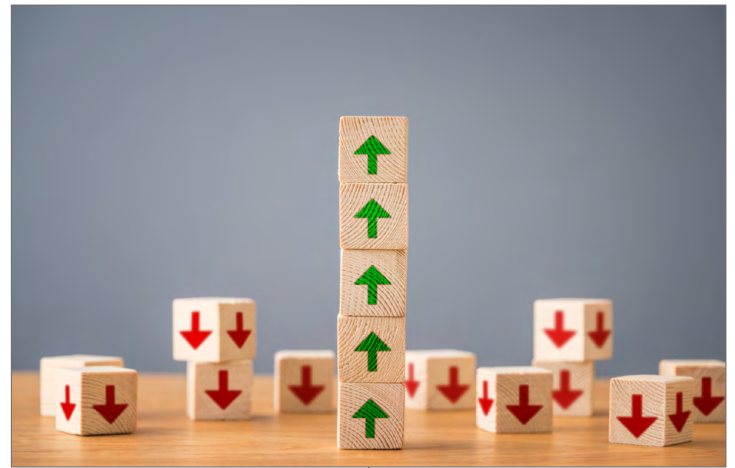
and their local governing bodies.

This policy of MAT-isation and its concomitant and dominant CEO model is a surrender to lowered expectations for the headteachers of this country.

It is the government essentially despairing of the quality of self-directed and professional leadership in individual schools, and rather lamely and suddenly surrendering after many years of seeking to raise expectations of headteachers as the leaders of their schools.

Developing Ofsted by proxy

Raising standards is now simply a matter of asserting that headteachers need a boss, a CEO, who will make sure their schools improve and to whom they will be



accountable. Ofsted by proxy.

Such a strategy of lowering expectations is strictly forbidden to teachers and headteachers, yet promoting this line-management model is clearly based on the belief that – left to their own devices or bound to each other in mutual support – headteachers will not

improve their schools at the rate or the pace required. They need, in the words of our new secretary of state, “constant attention” and “constant pressure”.

What’s more, the government is so convinced by this that they are willing to put aside their chief policy obsession: ‘value for money’. Effectively, ministers have come to a view that giving headteachers a higher-paid manager and boss is a worthwhile investment.

The equivalent policy in a profession such as medicine would require consultants to report to a CEO consultant and take direction from them in diagnosing and treating patients. Architects would need to report on their designs, their plans, and their buildings to a CEO architect. This policy is not about sharing best practice among equals or about the organic emergence of systemic leadership: it is about a predetermined model of infantilised and de-professionalised line management.

This policy may indeed be effective, but it nevertheless marks a clear vote of no confidence in the headteachers of this country who still report to governors and not a CEO. (It isn’t a show of confidence in governing bodies either.) It implies their practice has not been good enough. It makes them managers of franchises rather than captains of a king’s ship. It reduces them by lowering expectations of them.

It is based on a calculation that there are not enough good leaders able and interested in leading individual schools as single and distinctive institutions under their care and leadership. This may very well be true, and the policy prove to be a wonderful way forward. But nothing of quality has ever been achieved by lowering expectations, so its success would be unique in that regard. Either way, it is most definitely not part of a culture of high expectations or independent learning. The things we expect of pupils we will not need to expect from headteachers.

“ This policy is a model of infantilised line management ”

Opinion

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JANE CRUICKSHANK

Trust-wide ECF lead,
Learning in Harmony Trust

ECF: Getting the best from our second-year trainees

As trainees across the country settle into their second year under the new early career framework, Jane Cruickshank sets out her trust's successes and adaptations

The new academic year signified the first-ever cohort of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) to enter their second year of the Early Careers Framework (ECF). While this new requirement provides teachers at the start of their career with further opportunities to develop their skillset, it has drawn questions from school leaders on how to implement the second stage of the framework successfully.

With the support of Ambition Institute, whose programme we deliver through our delivery partner the London District East Teaching School Hub, our ECTs thrived throughout their first year.

They've hit the ground running in their second, and to build on their success we knew it would be imperative that we continued enhancing and expanding the support we provide them.

A culture of success

To do that, we have trained two more senior leaders as visiting fellows to maximise our capacity in delivering training internally.

Training them is a leadership priority, and should be supported accordingly.

Next, encouraging collaboration has been central to their success so far, so we are increasing our efforts to enable our ECTs to build a network of support to share best practice and advice with their peers. While it's common practice within schools to encourage collaboration

at senior levels, we believe all staff can benefit from learning from their peers.

To facilitate this collaboration, we are planning to utilise the three mandatory training clinics planned for this academic year to bring our second-year cohort together. Instead of hosting these training sessions remotely, we will hold a full training day, providing our ECTs with the opportunity to meet and form connections with others across the cohort.

This enables us to provide our ECTs with bespoke training sessions that are specific to our Trusts' procedures, assessments, and leadership development.

To continue encouraging this collaboration, we have also



organised a research visit to the Eden Project for this cohort. During the trip, we will encourage our ECTs to discuss why they wanted to be a teacher to support them to cultivate an understanding of their goals and the impact they are already having.

We have had to adapt our implementation of the mentor programme to the changing circumstances within our schools. While the programme has been set up to ensure the same mentor is assigned to each ECT over the two years, this is not always possible. Staff move to new schools or are promoted to senior leadership positions. What is important is that our ECTs feel supported, and therefore we have placed greater emphasis on building a full support network to ensure a change in mentor does not impact their progression.

Our success in implementing the ECF has given us significant confidence as we support a larger ECF cohort this year. In part, this is due to the strong investment we have made in ensuring our full network of staff, from ECTs to senior leaders, feel well-supported in their career progression.

As we continue to adapt to the new ECF, we will continue to put wellbeing and success at the heart of our approach to its implementation. Our teaching workforce is our greatest resource, and our ECF strategy is just one way of fulfilling our desire to make every employee happy and fulfilled.

“ Collaboration has been central to our ECTs' success ”

Distributed leadership

One of the biggest lessons we learned is the impact of the mentor programme and the importance of ensuring we are fully supporting our mentors to succeed. As a part of this, we have embraced the benefits our mentors gain from being engaged with the programme by creating opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills.

Deliberately up-skilling our mentors has provided us with a valuable resource that can be deployed within schools and across the trust. Our mentors have conducted wider staff training using the instructional coaching skills they developed as an ECT mentor, helping them to move on to more senior roles.

THE REVIEW

SO WHAT NOW?: TIME FOR LEARNING IN YOUR SCHOOL TO FACE THE FUTURE

Author: Malcolm Groves and John West-Burnham

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Publication date: 17 July 2022

ISBN: 1915261236

Reviewer: Stephen Lockyer, Primary teacher

I'm a big fan of related expected outcomes. Pavlov famously trained dogs to salivate when he rang a bell. What's less well celebrated or recognised is that he trained us too: every time we hear Pavlov's name, we think of salivating dogs.

Likewise, I love reading an educational book which not only makes me think directly of the impact it could have, but of the unintended impact it might have; that I might gift the book to a friend, try and start a scheme or project as a result, lend it to a friend who isn't in the same sector as me.

This is not one of those books. It may well be the most frustrating book you decide not to read in 2022. I promise you that few people will read it beyond 2023. It will be a bargain by 2024.

But first, a little experiment.

In your mind (or physically), walk into your school. Up the path, in through the entrance. How far do you go before it is definitively a school and not, say, a leisure centre, or mid-budget hotel? How soon is it that there is evidence of actual children in that building, either in pictures, or work or...anything?

The same test can be carried out with an educational book. There are books billed as practical guides for pedagogy, and others which are clearly aimed at a more theoretical abstraction of education and learning. This pretends to be the former but is far more the latter, describing itself as a thought-provoking book.

No, instead this book decides to wear a cloak

of smug worthiness. Its argument in a nutshell is this: climate change is bad, and deep thinking in education can sort it out. This feels akin to a book sponsored by BP. IT'S NOT OUR FAULT. LA LA LA LOOK OVER THERE. IT'S THE KIDS' FAULT. I dread *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Daily Mail* getting a whiff of this book, as it will be another stick to beat teachers with.

You can't argue *So what now?* is not well-researched, but it reads like there was an air of panic just before publication about its lack of practicality. A section on developing challenge, for example, is followed by a list of add-ons from the *SLT Fantasy Initiative Guidebook*, including my favourite, 'Organise a Thinking Olympics'. No, seriously. A lovely idea, but not a genuine thing to do – aand a timetable initiative rather than anything curricular at that.

One note of praise should go for the book's hard-working graphic designer. There are graphics in here which I wouldn't have believed even existed. Among the myriad tables and charts are the OECD sun model of co-agency (a classic), several doughnuts and a delightful pyramid of knowledge.

While I adore a graphic which communicates an idea more efficiently than prose, some of these models impressively make their point more complex to unpick. You need a satnav to find your way through some of them. If graphics and prose obfuscate your point, you are creating a barrier, not tearing one down.

Of course, some ideas and theories are complex to unpick, but the authors could have

BOOK

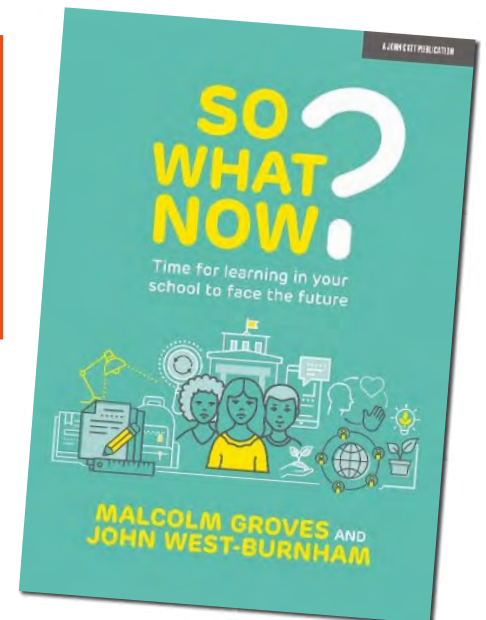
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RESOURCE



spent a little longer doing this unpicking. Look at the speed at which the message got through when we distilled mindset into 'Fixed' and 'Growth', for example.

To be fair, the research and effort that has gone into the book is enormous, and being critical of it is hard to do. Despite the growth in paper straws ruining the whole milkshake experience for me, I am acutely aware of the climate catastrophe. Sadly, the authors appear to have caught onto the climate emergency while grappling for a hook, and the result is a book that won't make me teach any differently on that topic.

They would have been far better to pitch this as a book on deep learning, or even action learning, since that is the basis for much of its research. By forcing the climate hook, it's far weaker as a result.



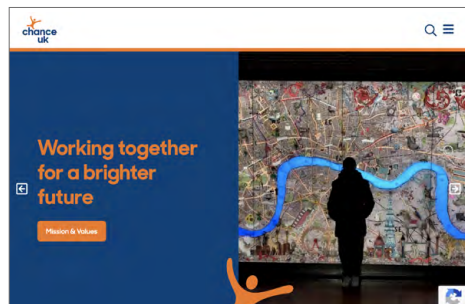
Rating

THE CONVERSATION
LISTENING IN ON
THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM

Neil Miller
Deputy CEO, London
and South East
Academies Trust

REDUCING EXCLUSIONS

While I'm not an advocate of a blanket zero-exclusions policy (they are sometimes needed for the good of the child, other children, and staff), reducing exclusions as much as possible should be a priority across the board.



Changing the way schools address difficult behaviour is not easy, but taking a more holistic approach – as set out in this blog by an assistant head of inclusion – has undoubtable benefits.

Efficient cross-team and multi-agency working is fundamental, ensuring everyone is pulling in the same direction to support the child. Therapeutic and learning interventions are also crucial, ensuring we understand and unpick any underlying issues.

But as ever, despite having the best intentions, many schools are scuppered financially – simply having no way to fund these 'extra' services.

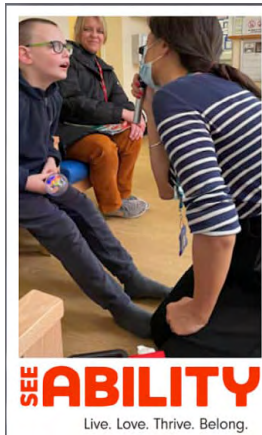
Yet the irony is that the cost will end up being far higher when dealing with children

who haven't been properly supported early on in their education, with the risk of exclusion increasing significantly when young people enter secondary school.

A longer-term approach, improved mental health services, and much earlier interventions are therefore needed if we truly want to reduce exclusions.

THE RIGHT TO SIGHT

SeeAbility is a fantastic charity which has been working with NHS England to establish an eyecare service for special schools. One of our own special schools – Woodside Academy – has been involved in this scheme and it has had an extremely positive impact on many of our pupils, who all have ASD and moderate learning needs.



The service provides sight tests and glasses to children in the familiar environment of their own school. This reduces stress and anxiety for the child as well as making it easier for families to access tests. We see this happening first-hand at Woodside.

The importance of this is clear when you consider that half of children in special schools have a sight problem, yet four in ten have never had a sight test. What's more, children with learning disabilities are 28 times more likely to have a sight problem than other children.

So, it is worrying to read from SeeAbility's Aylee Richmond in this Special Needs Jungle blog that NHS England may not be progressing such a vital programme as planned. The focus seems to have shifted to residential special schools, leaving concerns for the many children in day special schools who need the service.

We can't underestimate the importance of eyecare for these children. A child who can't see well cannot fully engage with their learning – particularly when they are facing many other challenges. We must absolutely ensure every child has an equal right to sight.

POVERTY AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS



Jamie Oliver has added his voice to the increasingly loud calls to extend the threshold for free school meals (FSM), currently set at an annual family income of less than £7400.

This shockingly low figure means that there are many families living in poverty who don't receive this basic support. Schools are doing their best by offering breakfast to many children, but more help is needed.

Children coming to school hungry has a detrimental impact on their learning. They will be tired and lethargic, making it hard for them to focus. Sadly, this is becoming more widespread as the cost-of-living crisis bites – and is something we are certainly seeing in our own schools.

These are also the children most negatively affected by the pandemic in terms of learning gaps – and hunger is a key element of this.

Food poverty shouldn't be a political issue. Our entire society should be working together to address it as no child should be going hungry. Research shows that children who have breakfast and lunch learn better – which to me is obvious. So surely extending FSM to every family on universal credit at the very least is also obvious?

It certainly shouldn't take a celebrity chef to raise awareness of an issue that affects so many, but hopefully action will now follow.

Click the subtitles to access the blogs and podcasts

The Knowledge

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



Lee Elliot Major responds to the NFER's evaluation of the first year of the government's flagship tutoring programme

Guest contributor

Lee Elliot Major, Professor of social mobility, University of Exeter

The national tutoring programme (NTP) was heralded by Boris Johnson as the government's great education leveller after the mass school closures of the Covid pandemic. I was one of the policy's most vocal champions and even helped create the toolkit that so powerfully backed its use.



But unsurprisingly, it turned out to be a little more complicated than the former PM's rhetoric made out.

This is one of the biggest education experiments ever conducted in England's schools, and the long-awaited evaluation of its rapid roll-out is essential reading for all who still believe targeted tuition can be a powerful equalising force for poorer pupils. **The NFER report** reveals nothing if not just how difficult that ambition is, even for the best-evidenced bets.

The review concerns the Tuition Partners (TP) programme, delivered by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and its charity partners between November 2020 and August 2021. Drawing on extensive evidence that tutoring can significantly boost pupil progress, the EEF allocated £80 million to provide tutoring (through a range of organisations) with the aims of reversing Covid learning losses and closing attainment gaps.

Targeting

The finding that will doubtless raise eyebrows is the relatively low numbers of poorer pupils who actually received tutoring. A total of 232,892

pupils in 6,082 primary and secondary schools were enrolled, and fewer than half (46 per cent) were eligible for free school meals (FSM) or pupil premium (PP) (compared with 22 per cent nationally).

With regards to the other 54 per cent, the report suggests schools may have focused support on other vulnerable pupils. Yet a lack of understanding of the programme's aims and the preponderance of pupils picked in the run-up to examinations suggest schools may have deployed tutoring to improve results in general. Indeed, a parallel report into the academic mentoring programme found that most PP-eligible pupils did not benefit from mentoring.

Impact

By picking a subset of secondary schools, the researchers suggest 'a positive and significant impact [...] for both maths and English achievement' (using teacher assessed grades (TAGs)). But frustratingly, the low numbers of FSM pupils being tutored prevent them from making robust estimates of its impact for this group.

In addition, a substantial minority of pupils (35 per cent) had not completed the requisite number of tutoring sessions thought to be needed to affect their learning.

Unsurprisingly, secondary school pupils who completed more sessions had significantly higher English and maths TAGs than peers who completed fewer, but it is unclear whether poorer pupils were more likely to be non-completers.

Primary and secondary school differences

School leaders across both phases felt that face-to-face tuition was more effective than online due to better attendance and perceived quality, but some interesting differences arose.

For example, 63 per cent of all programme tuition took place during lesson times. Primary school sessions scheduled in school hours were associated with better English scores, but the timing of delivery for maths didn't seem to make a difference to maths scores at all.

For secondary schools, the inverse was true for online sessions. Those scheduled outside



school hours were associated with better results, yet the timing of face-to-face sessions didn't make a difference one way or another.

Meanwhile, though only associations, some of the evidence gives further confidence that a proposed university-led tutoring programme could make a real difference – and some ideas as to how.

Primary school pupils assigned a tutor with an undergraduate qualification got better scores for English and maths than those assigned a tutor with a postgraduate degree. And secondary school pupils working with a tutor with a postgraduate qualification got higher results in English and maths than their peers whose tutor was simply qualified to teach.

Future implications

One key lesson has already been learned: that targeting support to the most disadvantaged pupils should be a crystal-clear priority. This year's reconstituted NTP is already doing that.

The challenge, now that schools are free to decide how to deploy tutoring, is to ensure it is delivered consistently and effectively. Insights from this report should help guide future efforts, but detailed guidance and continuing evaluation need to be part of the ongoing programme if it is to deliver on its levelling promise.

And that matters even more now, amid the developing cost-of-living crisis.



Week in

Westminster

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



MONDAY

Robin Walker, a former schools minister (and one of the three in just over three months), pressed new prime minister, sorry, chancellor Jeremy Hunt on education funding today.

"Does he agree that money invested in the skills and education of the most disadvantaged is money well spent and will benefit the future fiscal growth and stability of our country?" he asked in the Commons.

Hunt said it was "scandalous" that for "decades" governments of all colours have "not been able to deal with the fact that about 100,000 people leave school every year unable to read".

"There are important issues, but I want to be honest: this is not something that the government or I can address in the next two weeks, but it is absolutely something that we will have to come back to."

Reminder: his government has been in power FOR 12 YEARS.

Bangs head on the table repeatedly

TUESDAY

We'd hope no schools are lopping loads of trees down, especially in the midst of a climate crisis. But it turns out the DfE doesn't actually know how many have vanished.

Schools minister Jonathan Gullis said the DfE doesn't collect data on the number of trees planted and felled on school grounds.

But that's about to change. In future the data will be collated in the education estates' biodiversity, part of the new National Education Nature Park scheme, part of the DfE's climate strategy!

It's official.

Puts on best on tenor voice No compare!

No compare!

Ahead of performance tables being

published one Thursday for the first time since the pandemic, ministers have rebadged "find and compare schools in England" to "find and check the performance of schools".

That'll definitely soothe the concerns of heads...

2002. Robbie Williams was a permanent soundtrack in our heads. Low-rise jeans were, somehow, still a thing.

And Rachel de Souza was the children's commissioner. Wait, what?

Oh no, it's just a typo in de Souza's letter to the education select committee. She wrote: "Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the committee at the accountability hearing on 5 July 2002".

I mean, a lot has happened since then. Arguably, it really does feel like 20 years ago...

Introduced initially as "Andrea Leadsom" by the former education secretary Lord Blunkett at the AoC's Colleges Week parliamentary reception, the skills minister Andrea Jenkyns began her remarks: "Thank you, David. And it's a great pleasure to follow you actually. A man himself who was in education."

Ah yes, his time in education. Including school and college? We have so much in common.

Enthusiasing about her government's skills plans, Jenkyns later said: "We believe that levelling up and raising standards in technical education, to a parity of esteem with academia, is important for me, certainly it's a big passion of mine as a BTEC girl."

This comes in the week she confirmed that 106 level 3 qualifications – including



BTECs – are getting the chop. And there's likely to be more in the years to come.

BTEC girl to the rescue!

WEDNESDAY

The Sun revealed how a group of "Tory plotters" met for a curry on Tuesday night to "carve up Liz Truss's future over a korma and bhuna feast".

And who was there? None other than the education sector's old friend Nick Gibb.

Apparently there was "lashings of curry and naan" at the "poppadom plot".

But the real question is, what curry did Gibb have?

A dependable, traditional crowdpleaser, such as chicken bhuna? Popular, nutty (and beige) korma Or maybe he surprised us all with a hot and spicy, unpredictable vindaloo?

THURSDAY

It's happened, the lettuce has won.

Yes – a lettuce has more staying power than our (former) prime minister Liz Truss.

We have no satire left.



Principal at Vanguard School

Location: Vanguard School (Kennington, Lambeth, SE11 6QH)

Salary: Competitive

Contract: Permanent

Closing date: 9am Monday 21st November

Interview date: Wednesday 30 the November

School Visit: Visits to the school can be arranged and are welcomed.

About the school:

We are a forward-thinking Autism Specific Specialist Free School seeking a new Principal to advance our school in its next stage of development.

This is an exciting opportunity for you to join a dynamic team and be part of the school's journey in establishing excellence in the education of autistic pupils.

The NAS Academies Trust (NASAT) in partnership with Lambeth Local Authority established a special free school (NAS Vanguard School) for autistic pupils. The school opened in January 2020 in fantastic purpose-built facilities. Vanguard school is an extremely popular 11-19 school looking to build a strong reputation and foster local links.

Every child is entitled to an education and every child deserves the best possible developmental opportunities so that they learn more and do more, preparing themselves for life after school. Our autistic pupils learn in happy and safe environments that are able to support their individual needs as autistic learners.

NAS Academies Trust currently includes two other free schools, Church Lawton School & Thames Valley School.

This role will enable you to influence & contribute to the future of the NAS Academies Trust schools.

Who we are looking for:

We are seeking to appoint an outstanding individual who will have a wide range of skills and experience and an evidence-based approach to leadership, who is looking to work in an ambitious and rewarding environment.

This is an exciting opportunity for a passionate and inspirational leader within specialist education to shape the future direction of the school and lead the way in transforming the lives of young people on the autism spectrum and develop a true community school which is linked with community groups, parents, local authorities, and other schools in the region.

What we can offer you

In addition to a competitive salary, the following benefits are offered:

- Cycle scheme.
- 24/7 employee assistance programme - a confidential support programme designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems.
- Headspace membership - Headspace is a global leader in mindfulness and meditation through its app and online content.
- Occupational sick pay.
- A range of discounts from hundreds of retailers and hotels.
- Salary Finance - Our charity partner offers Salary Finance loans as a financial wellbeing benefit for our staff.
- Eyecare vouchers – employees who need glasses to use computer screens.
- Pension.

How to apply

- To apply for this role please complete the online application form which can be accessed [HERE](#).
- When completing the supporting statement, please refer to the job description and person specification and highlight any information that shows your suitability for the role

We adhere to all the necessary safeguarding checks as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, including checking ID documents on all site visits (entry will not be allowed without this), all pre-employment vetting checks must include; references from previous employers, an enhanced DBS with barred list check, a section 128 check and a check on the Teaching Regulation Agency.

We are an equal opportunities employer.

Starting 1st January 2023 or Easter 2023



Principal

Location: Rosedale Primary School

Grade: Leadership Scale 15 - 21 (£59,581 - £69,031 – Pay award pending)

Responsible to: CEO, Deputy CEO/COO, Director of Primary Education, Trust Directors, School Governors

The Directors of Exceed Learning Partnership are looking to appoint an outstanding strategic leader who will inspire our pupils and empower our staff to continue to strive for the very best education. This is a great opportunity for an exceptional individual to join a highly successful and outstanding team. Taking accountability and responsibility for academy performance and with a commitment to creating optimum educational opportunities for all pupils across the organisation.

The ideal candidate will have:

- A record of outstanding and inspirational strategic leadership
- A strong background in Teaching and Learning
- The drive and commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils at Rosedale Primary School
- A proven track record of accelerated pupil progress and raised standards
- Strong literacy and numeracy skills
- Excellent organisational skills
- Experience of working with children with a range of needs
- Good understanding of the importance of transition into all phases.
- A good communicator with excellent interpersonal skills
- A team player who contributes to whole academy and trust improvement.

The Trust will offer:

- Excellent career development working alongside a CEO and Director of Primary Education who are passionate about education, teaching & learning
- Talented and hard-working professional colleagues who are committed to children's success across the curriculum
- The most up to date research and opportunities to influence national policy.
- Wonderful pupils and parents who support the school in all its' aspirations.
- Lots of fun and inspiration to achieve your very best!

Further information including Recruitment Pack and Application Form please visit the Trust Website <https://www.exceedlearningpartnership.co.uk/vacancies/> or by contacting the Trust office

Email: admin@exceedlearningpartnership.com
Telephone Number 01709 805175

Closing date for applications: Monday 28th November 2022 – 12pm



LEAD PRACTITIONER FOR MATHS

We are seeking to appoint a Lead Practitioner for Maths to work across the Trust to support the delivery of the TKAT Secondary Improvement Plan and improve the quality of teaching and leadership in maths departments trust-wide. You will be working under the direction of our Maths Strategy Lead as part of a wider team of cross-subject Lead Practitioners.

The role would suit an exceptional practitioner who has a proven track record in raising outcomes and developing provision in their department, is able to successfully coach both teachers and heads of faculty, and who is able to develop strong working relationships in line with the TKAT ethos.

The role has the flexibility to be either full or part time, depending on the working patterns that best suit the successful candidate.

If you would like to know more about this role, please contact Matt Batchelor, Senior Director of Education at matt.batchelor@tkat.org

The closing date for applications is noon on 14th November 2022.

To apply for this role please visit <https://www.tkat.org/666/careers-at-tkat>



Ark Alexandra Academy

Executive Principal

Start date: April 2023 or sooner if possible

Salary: Highly competitive with relocation package available if required

Closing date: Monday 31st October, 9am (please notify us if you intend to apply and need more time)



We are looking for an inspiring Executive Principal with passion and rigour to lead Ark Alexandra through its next phase of development. You will be a committed leader with a clear vision and the ability to embed high aspirations and exemplary teaching.

Our school is entering a new stage of growth and we're looking for an Executive Principal to lead the school to further success. You will provide strategic leadership across the school working closely with the Principal on a daily basis. You will have the full support of the Regional Director and the network to ensure that Ark Alexandra makes a lasting contribution to its community.

We are a large secondary school, with 6th form, in Hastings, East Sussex. A popular school, Ark Alexandra is growing from a 10 to 12 form entry, working across a split site, which brings with it unique opportunities for development. At its most recent

Ofsted inspection in September 2021, Leadership & Management, Behaviour & Attitudes, Personal Development and Sixth Form were all judged to be Good. The school works closely with three Ark primary schools, all highly successful both in terms of academic outcomes for pupils as well as creating confident, kind children ready for the next stage of their education.

We welcome applications from experienced Principals who are ambitious, but who wish to remain in a busy school environment, or experienced Executive Principals who gain most satisfaction from engaging with staff, parents and pupils.

For more information and for a confidential conversation, please contact our Head of Talent, Lexy di Marco at Alexia.Dimarco@arkonline.org.



CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Leadership Non-teaching £67,364 - £78,025

37 Hours per week – full time to meet the needs of the role

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust is an established Multi-Academy Trust of primary and secondary academies across the West Midlands.

Our reputation is built on our core values of innovation, collaboration and inspiring individuals within our care.

We want every single person that comes through the doors of one of our academies to leave having grown as an individual, in terms of their skill set and their respect for others.

We believe that every person who passes through our doors deserves the very best that we can offer. Everyone who works with and for the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust does so because they believe in children and want their futures to be happy and successful.

As part of the central support team the postholder will provide strategic and operational financial management and reporting to the Trust and to be the finance director for the trading subsidiary.

To be the strategic lead for the effective management, reporting and recording of the Trusts and its subsidiary companies' finances to include budget planning, monitoring, system controls, contingency planning, asset management and reporting to ensure effective and informed decision making.

Applicants will:

- Have experience of financial management and accounting in a senior role, experience within the education sector would be an advantage.
- Be able to demonstrate extensive experience of managing a successful team.
- Have the ability to generate financial models and concepts and translate them into tangible strategies and approaches for all relevant stakeholders.
- Have excellent knowledge and understanding of budget planning, controls and management.
- Hold an accounting qualification e.g., ICAEW, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent qualification

We Offer:

- Access to an extensive employee assistance programme
- Access to salary sacrifice schemes
- Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme
- Supportive friendly colleagues
- A technology rich environment

We pride ourselves on being an employer of choice where all staff can thrive. We believe that supporting our staff both personally and professionally allows them to give their very best to our students. Our aim is to foster a working culture that recognises and reflects the importance of good mental health and wellbeing and provides effective support when colleagues need it.

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects its entire staff to share this commitment. All post-holders will be required to have an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), including a Children's Barred List check for post carrying out a regulated activity.

For further details and to apply:

[Careers - Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust \(shirelandcat.net\)](http://shirelandcat.net)

For an informal conversation please contact our Human Resources Director on: **0121 565 8811**

Closing date: Friday 28 October 2022

**Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust
Waterloo Road
Smethwick
B66 4ND**



Holte School



HEADTEACHER

L36 – L42 £99,681 TO £115,483

Full-time

Permanent

Required to start 17 April 2023

HOLTE SCHOOL, WHEELER STREET, LOZELLS, BIRMINGHAM B19 2EP
0121 566 4370 (Option 1)

Holte School seeks to appoint an inspirational, visionary, innovative, tenacious, highly skilled and highly effective Headteacher. This is an exciting opportunity to lead an already successful secondary school and build upon the strong reputation of the school as being at the forefront of education. The school's ethos emphasises high quality teaching to achieve excellence and enable pupils to maximise their full potential.

The new Headteacher will be an experienced senior leader with strong academic qualities, vision and ambition for the further development of the school. They will be highly skilled with the resilience and determination to deliver an outstanding curriculum and pastoral education, have excellent communication skills, hold high the values and ethos of the school, and a commitment to wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.

Previously categorised as an "Outstanding" school, Holte School is currently rated as "Requires Improvement" since its September 2019 Ofsted inspection. We are looking for an exceptional individual who has the vision to restore the school to its former "Outstanding" status. It is a PFI school and occupies buildings on a shared site with a primary and special school. A key priority for the school is to maximise its learning environment, particularly for Sixth Form learners. The Governing Body is currently exploring opportunities for academisation.

Holte School has a strong track record of working with and supporting other schools, including links with the adjoining Lozells Junior & Infant School & Nursery and is co-sponsor of Blue Coat C of E Academy in Walsall.

Due to the retirement of the current highly successful Headteacher there is an opportunity for a strong, ambitious and exceptional candidate to continue to drive the school forward, to meet the challenges it faces and to continue its development.

Holding high expectations and aspirations for our pupils the successful candidate will:

- be an experienced senior leader with a proven track record of managing and implementing change

- be able to inspire and motivate others
- have extensive experience of working in a multi-cultural environment
- have high standards and expectations of self and of others and be able to lead by example
- be aspirational, ambitious and committed to excellence in teaching and learning
- demonstrate a clear strategic vision and proven ability to generate support and commitment from all stakeholders
- have an understanding and commitment to strong financial management and a firm grasp of the concept of value for money
- be an excellent communicator able to work successfully with both internal stakeholders and external agencies

We offer:

- enthusiastic and ambitious pupils who are keen to learn
- a supportive community and Local Governing Body
- a talented staff team that welcome new challenges and are committed to supporting and developing colleagues and pupils
- opportunities to work in collaboration with partner schools where available
- quality continuous professional development for headteachers
- an opportunity to work with a coach/mentor

Potential candidates are encouraged to visit the school. Requests for visits should be made prior to 7 November to **Miss Monyque Collins, HR Manager** on **0121 566 4370/4371**.

Closing date: Monday 7 November 2022, 10am

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will take place on **Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 November 2022**; candidates may be required to attend both days. CVs and applications from Recruitment Agencies will not be accepted.

Please download an application pack or alternatively email **CSURecruitment@birmingham.gov.uk** quoting reference **ES2303**.

Governance and Policy Lead

Salary Range: Grade 10, Point 36 - Point 42 (£40,578 - £46,662)

Hours: 37 hours per week, 52 weeks contract with annual leave entitlement (no of days dependant on length of service) This role involves evening and flexible working. We will consider job share roles or term-time requirements

Location: Central Trust Office and all academies

Responsible to: Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Responsible for: Governance Professional

The Directors of Exceed Learning Partnership are looking to appoint an enthusiastic, forward thinking and dynamic individual to join our trust in the new post of Governance and Policy Lead. The successful candidate will be responsible for the Governance Professional and work with the Board of Directors, Local Governing Boards, Executive Leadership Team, Central Team and the academies senior leadership teams to design, implement and support the highest quality governance across the Trust.

The role will ensure that all layers of Exceeds governance arrangements operate as a coherent whole. This strategic position is responsible for ensuring that the Trust and all the academies are compliant with regulatory requirements, whilst consolidating local arrangements that provide robust challenge and support for academies.

The post holder will be the lead in the Trust for ensuring high standards of governance including the smooth and efficient administration of the Directors Board and its Committees, as well as advising the Chair of the board on governance process and practice.

The post holder will oversee compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements, ensure the Board's decisions are acted upon and at all times they are in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and continue to provide public benefit.

At academy level, the post holder will be proactive and creative in identifying where governance is working well but also where interventions may be required. They will build strong relationships with Principals, Chairs and National Leaders of Governance, ensuring governance at each Academy is fully 'Ofsted-ready'. As the Trust's Governance and Policy Lead, the post holder will design and rollout a professional governor-training programme, and lead on governor recruitment and retention, with a licence to be innovative in attracting high calibre volunteer.

The post holder will need to provide leadership as well as operational management; they will be innovative and creative in developing

system-leading governance across the trust, whilst also ensuring statutory and regulatory requirements continue to be met. In addition to this, they will be an expert on the theory and approach to governance with the ability to implement and safeguard high standards of challenge and support;

The ideal candidate will have:

- A record of outstanding and inspirational strategic leadership
- A strong background in Governance and Policy development
- The drive and commitment to improvement

The Governance and Policy Lead will work closely with:

- CEO and Deputy CEO
- Governance Professional
- Trust Central Team
- Academy Principals and Leaders
- Directors and Local Governing Bodies
- Local Authority, Department for Education and other educational partners

The Trust will offer:

- A dynamic, driven and supportive team of colleagues across the Trust
- A comprehensive programme of professional learning opportunities
- A commitment to providing the very best possible opportunities for the pupils and people within our Trust.

Prior to applying:

If you are unclear about any aspect of the application process or you would like any additional information about Exceed Learning Partnership or the role, then please contact:

Mr A Hibbitt: coo@exceedlearningpartnership.com

Application is by application form and must be sent: bfs@exceedlearningpartnership.com



Exceed Learning Partnership

• EVERY CHILD • EVERY CHANGE • EVERY DAY •

**Closing Date for Applications:
Wednesday 2nd November (Midday)**