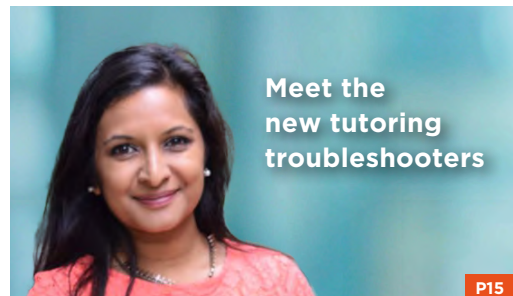


# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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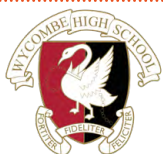
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## Funding boost is huge win, but austerity scars hard to heal

Asked about the potential for school funding increases earlier in the week, a well-connected source said there will be "bugger all. No white rabbits, hamsters or even a grubby gerbil out of hats".

Given just how bleak everything is, and against the backdrop of no expectations for help, the school funding settlement announced yesterday by Jeremy Hunt (page 4 and 5) is big.

For a sector used to over-promises and under-delivery, this seems like the opposite.

It's a huge victory for everyone who has written to parents, spoken on radio or lobbied their MP about just how squeezed things are right now. The co-ordinated campaigns by unions have also made a difference. And well done on those inside government who made the case for more cash.

Hunt said this was a "thank you" to the sector for its "brilliant work" – a rare bit of recognition, to boot. But, it's not all rosy.

Will the cash be enough to solve schools' funding woes? Probably not, things will continue to be tight.

Inflation is set to reach more than seven per cent still next year, and the cash will have to cover any pay rises. It will also likely have to cover energy cost rises, with the signs indicating

support to cover costs for schools will end in March.

And what happens when students head into a post-16 education sector that is supposed to prepare them for work but has been utterly starved of cash (again)?

We also don't know the details of where all the cash is coming from. The Institute for Fiscal Studies says most is from cuts to overseas aid spending – which is bad enough. And what about the rest?

There is also something galling about being made to feel thankful after a decade of government-enforced austerity.

This extra funding means that real-terms school spending returns to 2010 levels. Another way of phrasing it is that schools, by 2025, will have endured a 15-year spending freeze.

Times are tough. The pandemic and war by Russia have changed the landscape. This week's announcement is incredibly welcome.

But we must welcome it while also stepping back and looking at the bigger picture: by the time the Conservative government is likely booted out by voters in 2024, schools will be operating with the same amount of cash they had when the party was elected 14 years earlier.

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## NEWS: FUNDING

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## Hunt gives schools £2.3bn 'thank you' funding boost

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt gave schools a surprise multi-billion pound cash boost in yesterday's autumn statement, saying it was a "thank you" for the sector's "brilliant work".

But most of the cash will come from the government cutting its overseas aid spending, and it is uncertain whether schools will get energy support after March.

But they will get an extra £2.3 billion in each of the next two years – an annual rise of 4 per cent.

Education was one of the few sectors to benefit in a bleak statement that came as official forecasts predict the biggest drop in living standards since records began.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) confirmed the additional funding would at least restore real-terms per-pupil funding to 2010 levels.

The Treasury said the rise equated to an "average cash increase for every pupil of more than £1,000 by 2024-25, compared to 2021-22".

The 2021 budget forecast that core school funding would rise to £56.8 billion in 2024-25. It will now rise to £58.8 billion.

The £300 million difference is already-committed extra cash that no longer needs to cover the health and social care levy.

## Will it solve schools' funding woes?

Increased pay rises for this year cost the sector £1.3 billion. The additional cash will also have to cover any pay rises awarded for next year, which have yet to be decided.

Schools have also been hit by other rising costs, and Hunt said inflation was forecast at more than 7 per cent next year.

Sam Freedman, a former government adviser, said: "Until we know what's happening with energy prices, inflation and pay next year – we can't be clear exactly how generous this is."

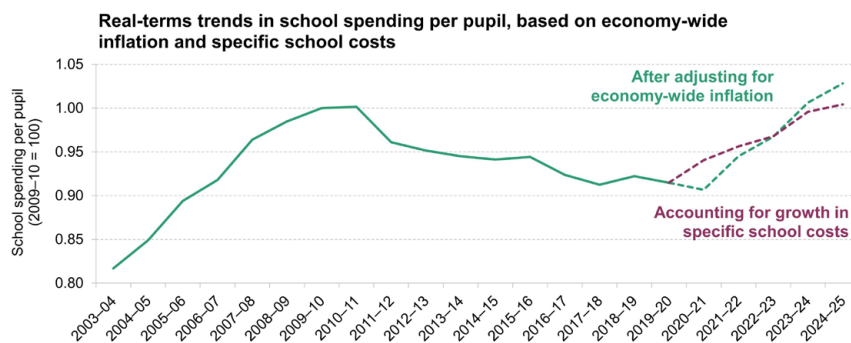
Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the leaders' union NAHT, said additional cash was "welcome" but it did not mean schools were "completely off the hook".

Geoff Barton, who leads the Association of



Chancellor Jeremy Hunt

## Extra £2.3bn in school funding will return spending per pupil to above 2010 levels and cover expected cost pressures



Source: Updated version of Figure 3, 'School spending and costs: the coming crunch', Luke Sibieta, IFS Briefing Note BN347

IFS Institute for Fiscal Studies  
Nuffield Foundation  
Economic and Social Research Council

School and College Leaders, said it was not clear where this "leaves special educational needs and post-16 provision which are both facing extraordinarily difficult financial circumstances".

The IFS said spending per pupil in 2024-25 would be about 3 per cent above 2010 levels, using an "economy-wide inflation captured by the GDP deflator".

However if this was adjusted for an estimated index of school-specific costs, spending per pupil would "return almost exactly back to 2010 levels".

"This means that school funding is now

forecast to exceed growth in school costs, such as growth in teacher and support staff pay levels," an IFS spokesperson said.

It said the funding was in large part from "recycling £5 billion previously earmarked for increasing overseas aid spending to 0.7 per cent of national income". Instead, it would remain at 0.5 per cent.

Between 2010 and 2020, school spending per pupil in England fell about 9 per cent after inflation, the largest decline in school spending per pupil in at least 40 years.

Continued on next page



## NEWS: FUNDING

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### 'Thank you to staff'

Announcing the extra cash, Hunt said: "Our message to heads and teachers and classroom assistants is thank you for your brilliant work."

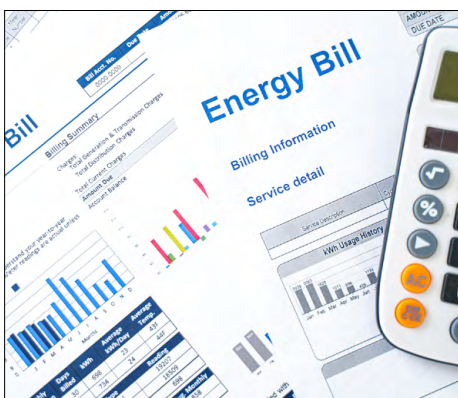
The chancellor said "being pro-education is being pro-growth", adding education was "not just economic but a moral vision".

He "wants to ensure" that "even in an economic crisis school standards continue to accelerate", adding "world-class education" was at the "heart" of its vision for the country.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said she was "delighted".

"Schools and school trusts have the talent and expertise to find innovative and cost-effective ways to keep improving education and supporting their local communities. The announcement today will help them to plan ahead."

Capital funding rises from £6.3 billion this year to £7 billion next year, and then down to £6.1 billion in 2024-25.



### Questions over energy support next year

Schools and other non-domestic energy users, including businesses, currently get

help through the government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

It reduces rates to £211 per megawatt hour for electricity and £75 for gas until March 31 next year.

But the government is reviewing what support it can offer beyond this date, saying it is "not sustainable" to continue supporting large numbers of businesses.

However, public sector organisations would "not be eligible for support through the review", making it unclear if they would receive any support from April next year.

Schools could therefore face a big hit in extra costs, although the government seems hopeful that prices will drop next year.

### HOW MUCH EXTRA CASH SCHOOLS ARE GETTING

	2021 BUDGET FORECAST	2022 AUTUMN STATEMENT	CHANGE
2022-23	£53.8bn	£53.8bn	
2023-24	£55.3bn	£57.3bn	£2bn
2024-25	£56.8bn	£58.8bn	£2bn



AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Think about inflation, Keegan tells pay body

The education secretary has warned the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) to consider the impact of next year's pay recommendations on inflation.

In her remit letter to the body, Gillian Keegan said it was "particularly important that you have regard to the government's inflation target" when drawing up proposals for 2023-24 pay awards.

She said it must "strike a careful balance, recognising the vital importance of teachers and other public sector workers, whilst [...] not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive prices even higher in the future".

The government has set the Bank of England a target to keep inflation at 2 per cent. The current rate is 11.1 per cent.

The STRB is expected to deliver its proposals on salaries for teachers, unqualified teachers and school leaders for the next academic year in May.

It comes after teacher pay rises announced by the government this year were unfunded, forcing schools to find other ways to cover the cost.

Keegan's letter advises the STRB to take into account the "cost pressures that schools are



Gillian Keegan

already facing".

Government to consider wide role for pay body  
The Department of Education can choose to be more explicit in the remits it sets for the STRB, as when public sector pay rises were capped at 1 per cent between 2011 and 2017, or when pay for most staff was frozen in 2021.

This prompted accusations that the DfE was seeking to "constrain" the supposedly independent review body.

But Keegan's latest letter is broader, with no specific constraints placed on the rises it can recommend.

It asks the STRB to "take into account" the government's commitment to boost starting salaries to £30,000. It does not state that this aim must be achieved by next year, although the government has previously committed to

delivering this.

In its 32nd report, published in July, the STRB set out its desire to review and make proposals for a "coherent [pay] framework" that "incentivises" teachers as recruitment and retention worsen.

Responding, Keegan invited the body to come up with "an initial view" on areas within its scope that would "most benefit from future exploration" to support this aim.

If the DfE decided to progress, "it would consider engaging the STRB through the remit process for future years".

The department awarded experienced teachers a 5 per cent pay rise from this September. The STRB had recommended a 3 per cent rise and higher rises to starting salaries in 2023.

Starting salaries also rose by 8.9 per cent as planned, as part of the pledge to raise starting pay to £30,000.

But unions argue the increases do not go far enough, with ballots for strike action underway. An analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates the value of experienced teacher pay will be 14 per cent lower in real-terms than in 2010.

## INVESTIGATION: SPECIAL SCHOOLS

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# Councils seize millions earmarked for special schools

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

Councils have seized millions of pounds in extra funding designated for special schools, with “shameful” plans afoot to let them evade passing on more rises next year.

The move means special schools are being starved of extra cash that instead is being passed on to their mainstream counterparts.

Last year’s spending review promised £1.6 billion extra for schools this year to cover increased cost pressures. Of this £1.2 billion was passed to mainstream schools directly under the Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG).

But the £325 million funding increase allocated for special and alternative provision schools goes to councils as part of their high-needs budget. These schools were told to “discuss” potential increases with their local authority.

Schools Week has found at least two cash-strapped councils who kept up to £4.3 million of additional high-needs funding this year. Others said they were still in talks with schools.

To resolve this next year, ministers will introduce a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) that will require councils to increase special schools’ top-up funding by 3 per cent in 2023-24.

But in another blow to the special schools sector, the government has said councils can ask to keep the cash to plug black holes.

Rob Williams, a senior policy adviser at the leaders’ union NAHT, said this was a “shameful and indefensible decision and shows that this government does not appear to prioritise the needs of our most vulnerable pupils”.

“Instead, they seem content to see local authorities use funding that should be used for SEND support and provision, be redirected to plug a local deficit.”

Special schools have been hardest hit by unfunded pay rises as their pupils’ additional needs generally mean staffing costs make up a larger part of their budgets.

Graham Quinn, the chair of Special School Voice, said budgets in real terms have fallen 25 to 30 per cent in the past eight years.

It was “totally untenable and unacceptable”, with schools closing hydrotherapy pools, cutting back holiday provision and compromising their statutory objectives to deliver education, health



## 'Shameful and indefensible decision'

and care plans.

Kirklees Council kept its £2.4 million “in order to maintain levels of funding for 2022-23”. The council has a dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficit of more than £30 million and is on the government’s “safety-valve” programme, where it is given a bail-out in exchange for cutting costs.

A spokesperson said there was “no expectation through discussions” with the Education and Skills Funding Agency that the additional cash had to be passed on.

“In Kirklees we are continuing to make a huge commitment to supporting children and young people with additional needs.”

In an FOI response, Hillingdon Council in north London said its “agreement” was that its £1.9 million was used “to further fund dedicated school grant-related expenditure”. The high-needs budget formed part of DSG. The council did not respond to comment.

A decision is still to be taken in Stoke-on-Trent, also a safety-valve council. An FOI response says it will use some of the funds for the minimum funding guarantee next financial year.

Schools Week understands one academy trust, which wishes to remain anonymous, sent a letter before action threatening judicial review to three local authorities as they did not pass any extra funding on to schools. The councils then agreed a 4 per cent rise.

Decisions also show a postcode lottery. In Salford, just 12 per cent of £1.9 million was passed on to special schools. In Doncaster, special schools top-up rates increased by 4 per cent for 2022-23. Croydon increased top-up funding by 5 per cent.

Recognising that some councils have already passed the extra cash on, the 3 per cent rise in MFG will be compared to funding base lines in 2021-22.

But the government told Schools Week that councils could still request the secretary of state’s permission to exclude some or all of their schools from the top-up funding requirement. No decisions relating to next year had been made yet.

Julia Harden, a funding specialist at heads’ union ASCL, said the increased MFG was a “step in the right direction”.

“But the underlying problem is that the government is not providing enough money to support children with special educational needs, and the complexities of different funding pots is a case of shifting the deckchairs on the Titanic. Special schools and the young people they serve deserve better.”

DfE said it is “committed to providing a world class education system for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, which is why we have increased high needs funding to £9.1 billion overall this year”.



## NEWS: FUNDING

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# Ministers mull funding blackhole immunity extension

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers are considering a U-turn on plans to force councils to fill a huge black hole in school budgets next year, as some local authorities say they risk bankruptcy.

Soaring demand for support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities has left councils with a £1.9 billion deficit on everyday school funding, according to Local Government Association (LGA) estimates.

The government issued a "statutory override" of standard accounting rules in 2020, letting councils leave dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficits unaddressed. It acknowledged they may otherwise have to raid reserves or cut wider services.

Earlier this year the Department for Education said that the reprieve would end next April.

It ordered councils to make SEND spending "sustainable", issuing savings guidance and programmes. Only a few dozen authorities were offered bailouts, with cost-cutting strings attached.

But this week Hampshire and Kent county councils warned that without "immediate" aid, they would consider declaring effective bankruptcy through so-called section 114 notices.

The LGA then warned councils faced "existential crisis" amid £2.4 billion a year of unforeseen energy, pay and other costs.

Devon County Council said its school budget deficit would reach £124 million by March. Its SEND task group said councils needed "certainty" about the future of the statutory override.

Only the tweaked accounting rules are protecting Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council from "non-viability and therefore...[consideration of] a section 114 notice", according to LGA analysis.

Ministers announced extra school funding and

lifted the cap on council tax hikes on Thursday, giving authorities "additional flexibility" to hike charges by up to 5 per cent without a referendum. But Schools Week can reveal the government is also "consulting on the need to extend" the override on school deficits, according to Devon Council documents. A government source said details would be set out in due course.

Micon Metcalfe, a school funding expert, said extension would be a "helpful stopgap", adding: "If it wasn't, you could see immediate pressure to take more from other services or the schools' budget. It highlights the SEND funding black hole."

An LGA spokesperson backed an extension, but said the government must also help councils to eliminate high-needs deficits.

A Hampshire spokesperson suggested extension would be "welcome" – but said it did not "adequately deal with the fundamental issue" of insufficient resources. BCP and Kent were also approached for comment.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership, agreed it would be "positive, but only a sticking plaster".

Joanne Pitt, the local government policy manager at the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, which sets council accounting standards, said it would give councils time to engage with the DfE's "safety valve" and "deliver better value" programmes to rein in deficits.

But she warned such programmes would "take time to realise future benefits". More than 50 councils were not invited on to either scheme, and *Schools Week* recently revealed inflation risked jeopardising cost-cutting drives in bailed-out councils.

Pitt added that statutory overrides should generally be "used sparingly".

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has previously admitted tweaking budgets rules makes accounts less transparent and comparable with other bodies, and should only be used where "absolutely necessary".

## Councils' SEND provision dips even further

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

More than two thirds of councils inspected by Ofsted last year had "significant weaknesses" in how they supported pupils with special educational needs (SEND) – the worst record since the watchdog started visits six years ago.

*Schools Week* has extensively covered the failures of councils in their SEND provision. About half of inspections have already resulted in councils being ordered to produce a written statement of action.

New Ofsted figures show 68 per cent of councils effectively failed inspections in 2021-22.

This is worse than the 56 per cent in 2019-20 before the pandemic, and since inspections started in 2016-17.

Overall, 55 per cent of councils visited since inspections began have been ordered to produce action plans [82 of 149].

But there are stark regional divides.

As of March, more than four in five inspections in the east of England and nearly three quarters in the north west had to produce action plans. That compares with a third in London.

Ofsted aims to revisit such councils within 18 months. As of August, 46 had been done – but just under half were making "sufficient progress in addressing all significant weaknesses".

The government makes a call on whether to intervene if an area is not making enough progress.

*Schools Week* reported last week how Kent council faces intervention after failing to address nine significant weaknesses.

Three councils – Birmingham, North Somerset and Devon – have been issued with improvement notices or statutory directions following reinspections.

Ofsted said the reports were "very concerning. As before the pandemic, we're seeing children and young people with special educational needs, and their families, being let down by the system".

Ofsted will introduce revamped SEND inspections early next year. It is carrying out revisits until the new framework starts, claiming this means "there will be no accountability gap".



# New ESFA boss to tackle 'fear factor'

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

The new chief executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) wants to build the academy sector's "trust", with more focus on prevention and partnership to tackle "the fear factor".

David Withey, who joined the agency three months ago, told sector leaders this week that the agency needed to make sure it doesn't "jump to punitive measures too quickly".

But he suggested recent developments on school funding had underlined the value of having a regulator with a "laser-like focus on financial management".

Speaking at the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham, Withey set out how he had begun trying to encourage a "shift of perception" of the body that is responsible for distributing and keeping an eye on £67 billion of funding for education and training.

## Reducing the 'fear factor'

He said he had "gone around the country asking: how do you perceive ESFA?" – and while there was lots of positive feedback, some respondents highlighted "the fear factor".



David Withey

"I'm not sure calls from ESFA are enormously welcome."

He said a "culture shift" was needed, with change on "both sides", adding: "We want to build more trust with you – so you feel more able to come and talk about the financial issues you're facing."

Withey said the agency needed to ensure it did not "jump to punitive measures too quickly", and recognise that most trusts were doing the right thing. While a minority did not, it was usually not down to "malicious intent", he said.

## Tackling 'unwieldy' and 'complex' regulation

While ESFA would still pursue the recovery of misused funds, it would also continue "looking at trusts based on risk" and be "thinking about our risk appetite".

While auditors were often "rightly risk-averse"... "my sense is the sector is now in a much more mature position". He stopped short of stating ESFA would allow trusts to take more risks, however.

Trust leaders and sector bodies, such as the Confederation of School Trusts, have called for the regulator to minimise the regulatory burden on strong trusts.

The government is currently reviewing regulation and commissioning rules for academies.

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, stressed in her conference speech that this would seek to minimise and simplify reporting burdens.

Withey, the former chief operating officer at the New South Wales Department for Education – which he compared to an "uber-trust" directly running more than 2,000 schools – acknowledged some of ESFA's frameworks could feel "complex" and "unwieldy".

## Reserves not for managing long-term pressures

The agency was monitoring financial challenges "very carefully", and was aware leaders would face "ongoing tough decisions" for the next couple of years, he said.

"We are under no illusions it's a really difficult time for school leaders."

There was an argument trust financial reserves were for rainy days – and "it's raining" – but it was not "prudent to use reserves to manage longer-term operational pressures".

ESFA was also working on a "prototype digital funding system", a "one-stop shop" for trusts to see their funding lines in one place.

TOM BELGER | @TOM\_BELGER

## Barran admits more transparency needed on push for academies

The academies minister accepts more "transparency" is needed in government decision-making over academisation and transfers of schools into new trusts.

Baroness Barran has also pledged to "simplify" regulatory burdens, and highlighted the importance of trusts having "geographical coherence".

The government's academy system has faced criticism before over transparency about significant decisions over schools' futures.

Struggling maintained schools and academies can be forced to academise or join new trusts through "rebrokering".

But decisions are signed off at private regional government advisory board meetings, with limited minutes often published months later.

Barran told the School and Academies Show that the government's external advisory group on academy regulation and commissioning had been working "tirelessly" since the summer on reforms.

"One of the things that's been clearly fed back to us is that we need to be much more transparent about trust quality, the metrics that we use, and where we use them, and how we use them in our commissioning and rebrokering and brokering decisions about schools."

She said she had heard from "many" that regulatory burdens could feel "duplicative". The government was working to "strip out any unnecessary reporting".

The minister spent most of her speech setting out aspects of the government's definition and

examples of "strong" trusts, repeating themes such as collaboration, culture, economies of scale and career opportunities.

But she also placed fresh emphasis on how the government often saw "geographic coherence" in strong trusts.

This was not "trusts operating in a single area", but instead having clusters of schools "so they can benefit from some of the collaboration that can take place between schools that are close to each other".

Hannah Woodhouse, the DfE's regional director for the south west, said there was "lots of interest" in the government's 2030 MAT vision.

But she acknowledged "the most pressing" issues for schools were finances, recruitment and retention.





# Ofqual promises to edge slowly towards online exams

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Moving exams on-screen must not result in an "experiment with young peoples' futures", Ofqual's chair has warned.

Ian Bauckham said greater use of technology for GCSEs and A-levels was "coming down the track and is probably a case of when not if".

But he told the Schools and Academies Show that Ofqual's job was to regulate exams, not to be an "evangelist of technology".

Bauckham, who is also the chief executive of the Tenax Schools Trust, said risks could not be taken with young people's qualifications and must be led by "robust evidence".

Ofqual is conducting research on online tests, including adaptive testing – a computerised test that adjusts the difficulty of questions as students go through it – to replace tiering.

The exam board AQA has launched an



Ian Bauckham

online pilot in which thousands of students sit onscreen tests.

Bauckham said Ofqual would be "cautious", but added greater use of technology could benefit some pupils such as those with special educational needs and disabilities.

"We will need to make a detailed and sober assessment of risk and benefits and not experiment with young people's futures.

"If exam boards tell us they want to use technology for some aspects of their exams, we need as a regulator already to have done the spadework to know what it is we should be expecting from boards to make sure they

use technology well and fairly and in the interest of the students."

The Ofqual chair also told schools to expect next year's results to be lower than 2022, with a return to pre-pandemic standards planned, albeit with some protections.

It was "very misleading" to compare results in 2022 with any other year.

"And looking ahead to next year, lower results in 2023 compared with this year will not mean by itself that your school's performance has fallen...it will much more likely be a reflection of the return nationally to normal grading standards.

"I know that it really can feel worrying when results come in and they look lower than the previous year. But let me repeat this point, we should not compare 2023 with 2022, and certainly not with 2020 and 2021 when we had no exams at all."

*Schools Week* revealed how dozens of school leaders have agreed to stay tight-lipped over their A-level and GCSE results, warning against "futile and potentially damaging" comparisons given Covid upheaval.

**TOM BELGER | @TOM\_BELGER**

## No rush to join a trust, Knights reassures governors

Schools should not rush to join multi-academy trusts, despite the government's 2030 vision for an all-academy system, says the head of the National Governance Association.

Emma Knights (pictured), the group's chief executive, told the School and Academies Show in Birmingham that it "really worries me when people say 'we're being told to do this'".

One headteacher in the audience said the schools white paper earlier this year "had everybody scrambling suddenly not to be last one to be picked for the team".

But Knights said: "For those of you that are leading or governing 'good' or 'outstanding' schools, the decision is still yours.

"I think sometimes the mythology feels



different, but actually that is the way the system is set up. That is what the law says."

She said the past decade had shown that when trusts rushed and grew too quickly, it "didn't necessarily work terribly well".

Mergers had not been that common so far, but the NGA expected them to pick up. The diminishing number of maintained schools was gradually limiting trusts' ability to grow through conversions.

Meanwhile research by Arbor, a school management information software provider, shows 92 per cent of multi-academy trust leaders surveyed expected their trust to add at least one school over the next three years.

While 58 per cent said their preference was adding new schools, 26 per cent said they would prefer mergers. But the vast majority said they wanted mergers with similar or

smaller trusts, not larger ones.

The poll, shared exclusively with *Schools Week*, also asked maintained school leaders if they expected to be part of a multi-academy trust by 2030.

Almost half (45 per cent) agreed, but almost as many answered "I don't know", and 14 per cent said they did not.

At another panel event, Lord Knight, a former Labour minister and chair of the E-ACT trust, said he feared that some trusts would grow "just because they're rescuing trusts, because they've become unviable" as financial pressures increased. "That's no way to start a partnership and relationship."

Hannah Woodhouse, a DfE regional director, said four single-academy trusts had joined MATs in the past month in the south west. She said there was a "question about how...we consolidate small trusts who can't all grow."



# Elite sixth forms will benefit poorer pupils, Eton promises

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

@FCDWHITTAKER

A private school teaming up with an academy trust to open elite sixth forms in deprived parts of England has promised a “laser-like focus” on ensuring poorer children benefit.

Eton College and Star Academies have commissioned academics to “road-test” admissions’ policies, and say an outreach programme in the areas where the schools are proposed will target pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The two organisations submitted bids to open new selective sixth forms in Dudley, Middlesbrough and Oldham. Ministers have said they want to see a wave of elite post-16 institutions across England as part of the “levelling-up” agenda.

But campaigners warned earlier this year that the new settings would lead to “selection for a lucky few and rejection for the majority” after a study found elite sixth forms taught few poorer pupils and recruited heavily from neighbouring areas.

Challenged by Schools Week at the Schools and Academies Show about how the new schools would avoid these problems, Tom Arbuthnott, Eton’s deputy head, said the two organisations had a “laser-like focus on the kind of kids that we want to help”.

This included recipients of the pupil premium and those who would be the first in their families



Eton College

to go to university.

Arbuthnott said it was “premature” to set out the proposed schools’ admissions policies, but said Eton and Star were working with the Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities at UCL.

“We’ve asked them what we can do in terms of our post-16 admissions policy to make sure that the project is focused on the kids who really need our help.

“They’re currently doing a phase two of that project where they’re interrogating the pupil database to road-test potential policies.”

But he admitted that target pupils “may not necessarily be in the exact localities that we’re talking about...because in a sense, our strategy is regional”.

Schools Week revealed earlier this year that FFT Education Datalab analysis found that 6 per cent

of pupils attending the most selective sixth forms outside London were disadvantaged, compared with a national average of 17 per cent of all year 12 pupils.

Meanwhile, just 60 per cent of pupils at such schools lived in the same local authority area, compared with 82 per cent across all sixth forms.

According to Arbuthnott, the two organisations would also run an “outreach programme” in the three areas, which all have “lots of 11-16 schools”.

This would aim to “identify bright kids in those 11-16 schools and to start working with them at the age of 13, 14 to start raising eyes from the ground, to start getting them to think about their pathway into high top-tier universities”.

Eton-X, the private school’s online learning platform, which was rolled out free to state schools during the pandemic, would be a “very successful part of that outreach model”, Arbuthnott said.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Free jobs site to include support staff

The government is looking to expand its free teacher jobs board to include other school staff, including business leaders and catering personnel.

The service, launched in 2019, allows schools to advertise teaching, leadership and classroom support staff vacancies online free, in a bid to save leaders some of the estimated £75 million spent each year on recruitment.

After initial slow take-up and moves to better promote the service to schools, a

Department for Education official today claimed the service was now a “credible alternative to national paid job boards”.

Will Bourke, a stakeholder and engagement lead at the DfE, said 83 per cent of state schools were now signed up to the service, which was now the “largest source of primary school jobs” directly listed in England, and the second-largest for secondary.

Visits to the site peaked at 350,000 in May this year, with almost 50,000 jobseekers

signed up for alerts, Bourke said.

But the DfE is eyeing further expansion, after feedback showed schools wanted to know why other roles, such as business managers or catering staff, could not be advertised on the site.

“We’ve fed that back to the team. And at the moment our policy team are looking at widening our function,” Bourke said.

He said all roles could be advertised on the site in a year, making it “a one-stop place for school recruitment”.



## ANALYSIS: ACADEMIES

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## £18m growth cash 'shows coasting double standard'

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The National Education Union has accused ministers of “double standards” after they offered several trusts extra funding to take on under-performing schools when some of their own academies are “coasting”.

New rules this term enable the government to force schools with two consecutive less-than-good inspections into new trusts.

School leaders are also angry about rehashed “coasting” rules, and warn against “naming and shaming”.

Last month, the Department for Education awarded £18 million in trust capacity fund (TCaF) grants to 104 trusts with a “focus on supporting strong” trusts to expand.

But analysis by the National Education Union (NEU) shows that eight winning trusts have nine “coasting” schools, as defined by the government. They received a combined £1.8 million, almost a tenth of the pot.

Four of the schools were rated ‘requires improvement’ (RI) twice in a row. For instance, the Orme Academy in Staffordshire, which joined the Shaw Education Trust in 2015, was rated RI in 2018 and 2021. Shaw recently received £283,500 in growth funding.

**‘Double standards for MATs’**

Kevin Courtney, the union’s joint general secretary, said: “There is a double standard at work whereby trusts with schools that meet the unfair threshold for DfE intervention are being provided with cash to expand, whereas the same opportunity is not extended to local authorities, which are being starved of funding.”

The government has begun alerting schools if they are designated as “coasting”.

If they are maintained or standalone academies, officials have a “presumption in favour” of transferring them to new MATs. But no such transfer presumption applies to schools already in trusts.

Courtney accused the government of focusing on its MAT drive “rather than seeking to provide support for effective school improvement”.

However, the government’s



expansion cash could equally be seen as undermining its own “coasting” label – rather than the idea recipient trusts are not strong.

Five of the successful applicant trusts’ “coasting” schools actually improved from ‘inadequate’ to RI at their latest inspection.

**Trusts criticise ‘coasting’ labels**

Tim Coulson, the chief executive of Unity Schools Partnership, criticised the “naming and shaming” of schools such as Felixstowe School.

He said staff were “heroes” and Ofsted had dubbed it as ‘improving’, even amid Covid’s challenges. Seven of Unity’s secondaries are ‘good’, Coulson added, and growth funding helped to improve trust-wide HR and take on a school.

Meanwhile, inspectors said leaders at Marden Vale CofE Academy in Wiltshire had “improved the school markedly”, albeit with “significant work” needed to become ‘good’.

The Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust school is rebuilding its curriculum “subject by subject”, with leaders praised for avoiding “quick fixes”.

Mark Lacey, the trust’s chief executive, said its schools were “in no way coasting” and its “significant track record bringing about improvement” had the confidence of the government.

Other schools drew Ofsted’s praise even where headline RI ratings remained unchanged. Senior leaders at the Orme Academy have “begun to make the changes the school needs”, and it was rated ‘good’ for personal development and leadership.

A Shaw Education Trust spokesperson said staff were

“incredibly disappointed” by the ratings. He said most of the trust’s 28 schools were rated ‘good’ or better.

Even Ofsted previously cautioned that schools with RI ratings “may be improving and under strong leadership”. It has warned the government the coasting label may encourage “quick fixes to avoid a second RI”.

**‘Urgent action needed’**

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), said “poorly drafted” coasting regulations should be amended as they could disincentivise trusts from sponsoring struggling schools.

CST and others also say the coasting label is unfair as schools are included even if one poor rating was before a trust took over.

Six of the schools at trusts given growth cash joined new trusts between inspections, and several trusts noted they had improved a grade since.

Carol Dewhurst, the chief executive of Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust, said the DfE recently sent a letter designating one of its schools as “coasting”, but said improvements meant no intervention was required.

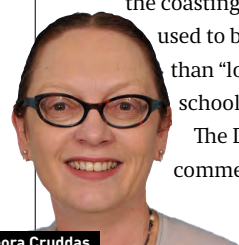
New guidance has also “clarified” all intervention decisions are case-by-case.

But Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the coasting policy was confused and used to boost MAT growth rather than “looking at what is best for the school concerned”.

The DfE was approached for comment.



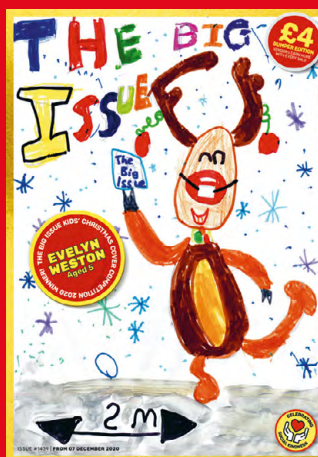
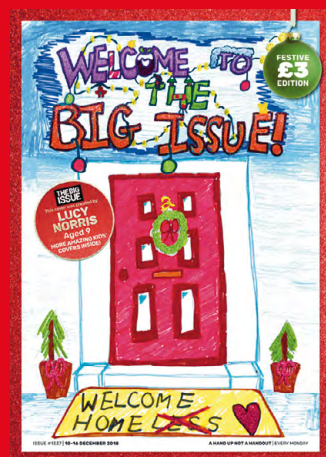
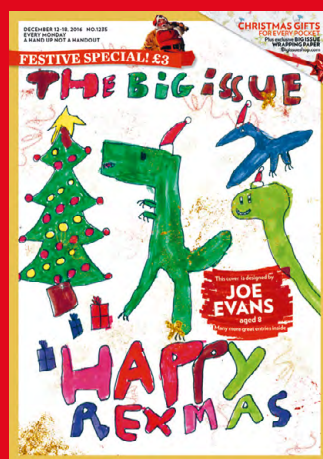
Kevin Courtney



Leora Cruddas

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NEWS: STRIKES

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# Trusts prepare for sixth-form college teacher strikes

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Trusts running sixth-form colleges across England are drawing up contingency plans after teaching staff voted to strike for the first time in six years.

Managers in one trust will take registers and set work if staff walk out as planned later this month.

It comes as the NAHT headteachers' union, which is balloting for strike action, sought to reassure its members it "cannot envisage" asking them to close their schools (see box out).

The National Education Union (NEU) announced on Monday that a formal ballot of more than 4,000 staff in 77 sixth-form colleges had returned a 88.5 per cent "yes" vote on a turnout of 63 per cent. Support was similar to an indicative ballot earlier this year.

This more than meets the thresholds needed to make strike action legal. The first planned day of action is November 30, although the union has appealed to the education secretary to make the case for larger pay rises.

Sixth-form colleges are standalone 16 to 19 institutions that offer similar provision to school sixth forms. Most are now academies and some are in multi-academy trusts with schools, a different landscape to when staff last took action in 2016.

Teachers and support staff in schools are also being balloted by the NEU and NASUWT, but those votes won't close until the new year.

The Tees Valley Collaborative Trust runs Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth-Form College, set across two sites in the north east of England. Joanna Bailey, the trust's chief executive, told *Schools Week* that about 45 of its 225 staff are eligible to strike, "but their intentions are not known".

However, she said the trust would try to keep the college open, adding that "managers will take registers and set work as far as is possible.

"We will remain open for students and staff if safe to do so. We will minimise the disruption to education as far as is possible, utilising managers and senior staff."

The Summit



Learning Trust runs Solihull Sixth-Form College. Vince Green, its chief executive, said it respected any decision by staff to take strike action.

The trust would do everything it could to ensure that learning was "as disruption-free as possible".

"We have contingency plans in place for however many staff members decide to take strike action, and all include college facilities remaining open with the majority of timetabled lessons still taking place."

Most staff in schools and sixth-form colleges have been offered pay rises of 5 per cent, although starting salaries are due to rise by 8.9 per cent this year. Inflation is currently at 11.1 per cent.

The NEU warned this week that sixth-form

college teachers had suffered a "20 per cent cut in real terms pay since 2010".

Dr Mary Bousted, the union's joint general secretary, said further below-inflation pay increases were "simply unacceptable".

"Strike action is always taken with great regret, but the sentiment of this ballot result is clear: enough is enough."

Bill Watkin, the chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, acknowledged staff salaries were "being eroded, as energy costs and other inflationary pressures increase".

But he said the government funded sixth form colleges "at a lower level than schools, universities and other colleges. [They] simply do not have the resources to meet demands for such a high pay rise."

## NAHT: Heads' strike won't close schools

The National Association of Head Teachers is balloting members over pay for the first time in its 125-year history. If members vote in support of the action, the union will have to decide what form that would take.

Paul Whiteman, its general secretary, sought to reassure those "worried" about its advice to vote yes.

He said they were in "safe hands. Any action we ask you to take will be determined by the national executive committee, which consists of 46 serving school leaders who have the same concerns as you."

"I cannot envisage circumstances where

we instigate action that will call on you to close your school."

But he said the law controlling industrial action "prescribes a very wide definition of the term strike. For instance, your attendance at a rally – even if this left your school operational in your absence – could be defined as strike action".

"We, therefore, have to ask you to vote yes to strike to offer us a wide range of activity that affords you the protection of legal industrial action."



Dr Mary Bousted



## IN PARLIAMENT

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## Careers advice pledge ditched, but schools do improve

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has watered down its careers advice targets for schools after new figures showed most do not meet eight key “benchmarks”.

The Department for Education announced in 2018 that it expected all schools to meet the eight “Gatsby benchmarks” by the end of 2020.

The benchmarks come from the Gatsby Foundation’s “good career guidance” report. They range from linking curriculum to careers, and arranging encounters with employers and experience of workplaces.

But the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), tasked by government with boosting these figures, revealed this week that just 12.8 per cent of schools had self-assessed as meeting all eight of the benchmarks as of the past academic year.

This does represent a substantial increase – just 7 per cent met all eight in 2020-21. But it still remains below the 100 per cent envisioned by ministers just four years ago.

Statutory guidance on careers advice no



longer sets a target for when the benchmarks should be met, simply stating that schools should “demonstrate how they are working towards” meeting all eight.

The CEC insisted this week that the picture is improving. The average number of benchmarks met has risen from 1.8 five years ago to 4.9 today. More than 43 per cent of schools now meet at least six benchmarks, while just under 28 per cent meet at least seven.

But chief executive Oli de Botton admitted there was “more to do”.

Careers leaders are a “growing force” in

schools, and the government’s careers hubs programme – in which schools work together to improve their offer – is “driving improvements in careers provision and outcomes for young people”.

“By extending careers hubs to all schools and colleges our goal is to ensure more young people benefit from high-quality, inclusive careers provision, especially those that need targeted support.”

The CEC has been handed £142 million by the DfE so far, and is due up to £30.7 million this year.

During an evidence session with the education committee, Conservative MP Andrew Lewer asked if the money could be better spent by handing it to schools.

Roger Cotes, director of careers at the DfE, said the funding amounted to about £5,000 per school. Funding for the CEC was instead “designated as improvement support”.

De Botton said the CEC aimed to deliver its work “as efficiently as possible”. He said it did not always claim the full grant funding available each year.

“Careers education deserves public investment. Of course we can disagree about who does that, but I think it deserves public investment.”

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Walker takes Halfon’s chair at select committee

Robin Walker has been elected as the chair of the parliamentary education select committee.

The former schools minister, who resigned in July after questions over Boris Johnson’s leadership, received 228 votes in a ballot on Wednesday.

Robert Halfon, who had served as chair since 2017, returned to the Department of Education last month as skills minister.

Jonathan Gullis, a fellow former schools minister, David Simmonds, a former committee member and ex-chair of the Local Government Association’s children and young people board, and Caroline Ansell, a current committee member, were also nominated.

Walker said he was “honoured to receive the support of some of the people I respect most in parliament from opposition and government alike”.

“Nothing can be more important than education, which unlocks opportunity. The work



Robin Walker

of the education select committee is more relevant and important than ever.

“I am looking forward to working with the committee on issues such as childcare and the cost of living, to keep up the great work which former chair Robert Halfon started on attendance, safeguarding, skills, careers and SEN and to hold ministers to account.”

He told *Schools Week* he would also

like to work with colleagues to seek an “early inquiry” into childcare and early years.

Nominations for the position ran from October 31 until noon on Tuesday. Only Conservative MPs were able to stand for election.

Each needed to gather at least 15 signatures from fellow party members – Walker’s backers included David Davis, the veteran Tory MP.

In his candidate statement, Walker said: “I am informed enough to hit the ground running, but independent enough to hold ministers to account.”

Gullis went out in the first round with 56 votes, compared to 70 for Simmonds and 108 for

Ansell. In stage two, Simmonds received 84, Ansell 124 and Walker 228.

Gullis held the schools minister post for 50 days, but left in October following the announcement that Nick Gibb, a former long-serving minister, had returned.



Jonathan Gullis



NEWS

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# Panel to keep an eye on struggling NTP

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have appointed tutoring troubleshooters to ensure the flagship catch-up scheme stays on track.

The Department for Education has set up a “strategic tutoring advisory group” to make sure the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) succeeds and embeds tutoring into the sector.

It comes after faltering take-up last year and criticism that the programme is too complicated.

The contractor Randstad was axed and all £349 million goes directly to schools this academic year.

The recently formed group will be chaired by Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, who has advised the DfE on tutoring in the past.

Lee Elliot Major, social mobility professor at the University of Exeter, and Carole Willis, the chief executive of the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), also confirmed their membership.



Nick Brook

## National Tutoring Programme

Other members include Geoff Barton, the general secretary at school leaders' union ASCL, James Turner, the former chief executive of the Sutton Trust, and Dame Christine Gilbert, a former Ofsted boss and visiting professor at University College London.

Natalie Perera, the chief executive of the Education Policy Institute, Dr Kulvarn Atwal, headteacher of Highlands Primary School in Ilford, Essex, and Leora Cruddas, who leads the Confederation of School Trusts, are also on the group.

Brook told Schools Week that while the NTP's ambition was “sound”, the implementation had been “problematic” and at times “downright poor”.

“Tutoring is no silver bullet but, done right, it could help significantly more

disadvantaged young people to succeed.

“The potential for good is simply too great for us to stand by the side and watch the NTP struggle or fail. That is why the advisory group has been formed, and that is why I have agreed to chair it.”

At its first meeting last week, Brook said the ambition was to “help steer tutoring policy and practice in the right direction for the remaining two years of the programme and that we shape the longer-term vision for what could be achieved in the years beyond that”.

Elliot Major said a key aim was “to identify and signpost” tutoring evidence for schools on different subjects and phases.

Willis said she would feed in the NFER's evidence on tutoring to the group's work. Its researchers found that the early NTP “failed” to achieve its “intended focus” to help disadvantaged pupils catch up.

Schools Week revealed how ministers face having to hand back more than £100 million of unspent tutoring funding to the Treasury after schools struggled to access the flagship scheme last year. A DfE spokesperson said the group would “ensure that the programme continues to provide value to schools and pupils”.



Natalie Perera

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Watchdog consults on SIMS break clause plan

Schools will be consulted on proposals to exit contracts with England's largest school management information system (MIS) provider a year early.

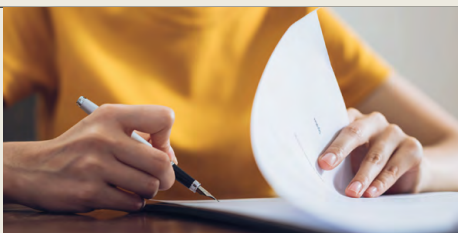
The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) seeks to end its investigation into “suspected breaches of competition law” by Education Software Solutions (ESS) SIMS.

The investigation was launched in April, the same month ESS scrapped its one-year rolling contracts in favour of three-year deals.

Schools reacted to the announcement of the changes in autumn last year, saying they did not have enough time to find new deals.

On Thursday, the CMA said the company had offered legally binding assurances allowing some schools to apply for a new 12-month break clause to escape their current three-year deal.

The “commitments” would apply to schools given “insufficient” time to switch providers before the new contracts were brought in, while applications would go through independent adjudicators.



Schools would be informed of decisions by March 31 next year, and given the option to end contracts with ESS in March 2024, escaping one year of the agreement.

The watchdog said the proposal would address its concerns by “giving affected schools the choice to exit their three-year contract and switch to another MIS supplier, facilitating competition”.

The CMA is proposing to formally accept the commitment. Under the move, the investigation would end without a decision on whether the Competition Act had been infringed.

The break clause would not constitute an admission of any infringement by ESS, the CMA said.

But in its notice of its intention to accept, the CMA said its “preliminary view” was that ESS's initial conduct constituted “the imposition of unfair terms and trading conditions”.

An “original” six-month break clause was announced by ESS in January. It gave schools until March 31 to find a new supplier, but they had to notify ESS by February 20.

The CMA said schools may have found it “particularly challenging” to switch within the time allowed because of the pandemic after-effects and reintroduction of national school tests.

A “significant” proportion of ESS customers who responded to a CMA survey said they needed 10 or more months to switch providers.

The CMA must now consult third parties likely to be impacted before formally accepting the proposal.

Schools can send in comments until December 8 for the CMA to consider before it makes a final decision.

ESS “welcomed” the announcement.

## SOLUTIONS: FUNDING

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Can a 'magic formula' cut spend without cutting standards?

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

**Government has listened to desperate pleas of leaders for more funding. But an extra £2.3 billion a year is unlikely to solve all of schools' funding woes. *Schools Week* looks at whether a 'magic formula' to link finances and curriculum can bring savings while also increasing standards ...**

Integrated curriculum financial planning has been around for years. But with schools having to hack away at their spend during times of austerity, the government has increasingly seized on its benefits.

Lord Agnew, the former academies minister, made it his "personal priority". Its use is now baked into the system, with the academy handbook encouraging trusts to adopt it.

Put simply, integrated curriculum financial planning (ICFP) lets schools work out the core costs of running their curriculum.

There are several models, but most focus on a few key metrics, such as teacher contact ratio and class size.

Outwood Grange Academies Trust's model, now used and adapted more widely, involves planning the curriculum first – the ideal number of maths classes, class sizes, etc – and adapting finances to achieve it.

If the model is too expensive, you can toggle the key metrics, such as increasing staffing contact ratios, to see what is affordable.

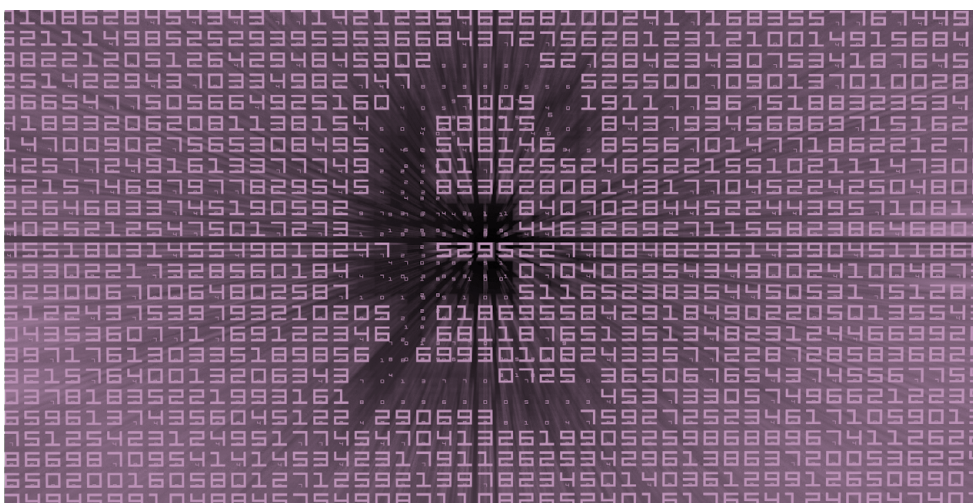
A second popular "Equation of Life" model, developed by the Association of School and College Leaders, starts with what is affordable and fits the curriculum to that.

Sam Ellis, its developer, says it helps schools "make the most of what you've got by working in the most efficient way... even if it's far short of what you want to do".

**It undoubtedly saves money ...**

ICFP was not developed as a cost-cutting tool. Outwood Grange (OGAT) says it has been "part of its DNA" for years, "in times of plenty and in more difficult financial times".

But it undoubtedly helps schools to deliver their curriculum for less, essentially by ensuring efficient staffing.



**'It ensures you make the most of what you've got'**

For instance, a key plank of OGAT's model sets the contact ratio for all teachers at 0.79. But headteachers and deputies must be included in the average – everyone has to do some teaching for it to work.

Essentially, 79 per cent of teachers will be teaching at any one time, with the other 21 per cent off timetable.

Paul Tarn, who helped to pioneer the approach at OGAT but who now leads the Delta Academies Trust, says it has delivered "great success financially", with in-year surpluses peaking at almost 10 per cent of funding during Covid.

He credits this partly to delayed capital works, but mainly to using ICFP across its secondaries.

Writing for *Schools Week* in 2019, Tarn estimated using Delta's metrics nationally – classes averaging 27 pupils, salaries averaging £50,000, including on-costs, and staff teaching just under four days a week – could save secondaries at least £1 billion.

A more recent calculation shows similar findings.

Jonny Uttley, the chief executive of The Education Alliance Trust, says the approach has "underpinned" the trust's strong financial health for some time.



Martyn Oliver

It returned a secondary in special measures with a projected £2.5 million deficit to surplus by "realigning the timetable and better financial planning". Teacher numbers fell, but through staff "leaving naturally".

The Department for Education does not collect evidence on such savings as it would be "difficult to attribute to the use of ICFP alone", however.

**... But is it just cuts? (And what about standards?)**

Lee Miller, a government troubleshooter and deputy chief executive of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT), says "reducing costs and raising standards may seem like opposing forces to some", but they can "work in a mutually-supportive way".

Before it joined TSAT in 2015, the government issued The Victory Academy's predecessor school a financial warning amid "significant concerns" over its deficit.

Miller says problems were "almost entirely down to a staffing structure that did not match its curriculum". The trust, which uses its own ICFP model, reduced costs by more than £2 million in three years.

But it also improved standards – with the former 'requires improvement' school now rated 'good'.



## SOLUTIONS: FUNDING

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Others also point to OGAT's and Delta's track records turning around failing schools as evidence ICFP does not conflict with boosting standards.

### 'It's not painless – and is prescriptive'

Core Education Trust cut nearly 18 teaching posts – saving just over £1 million – after implementing curriculum financial planning across its four Birmingham schools.

"If we hadn't gone down this route, we would have been in big trouble now," says Jo Tyler, its chief operating officer. Rather than a projected £3 million deficit, the trust has balanced the books.

She describes the approach as planning based on "what you need first, rather than 'here's what I've got'". While it allowed "equity" across schools, she admits it was "not painless".

The trust had to be "more prescriptive". For instance, it now mandates minimum class sizes of 26. The number of GCSE subjects has been cut to eight.

"It is restrictive," she says. "In an ideal world we wouldn't have to. But some classes had just six children... we are sustainable now."

Micon Metcalfe, the chief finance officer at the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, says said while leaders "may not want to put ourselves in that commercial mindset, it's discipline about looking at possibilities: tweaking your class size, or the number of classes, teachers with less management responsibilities".

But Tyler said she's not sure whether this approach would deter a strong school from joining her trust now and having to give up a "Rolls-Royce" curriculum.

Another trust leader, who uses the model for benchmarking, questions whether it treats schools like "a supermarket".

Standardised formulas strip heads of autonomy and flexibility, he says, while acknowledging its effectiveness turning around failing schools.

Metcalfe says the direction of travel does pose the question of "what do we want from our public services? Are UK schools saying we're happy to have less spent on education – and for it to be much more standardised, with less flexibility and innovation."

However, Miller says it's not a one-size-fits-all. "But it helps headteachers and timetablers understand the core costs of their timetable."



## The OGAT curriculum-led approach

THE FORMULA: $(NOR / BCS) \times P \times CB = \text{NUMBER OF SESSIONS}$
NUMBER OF SESSIONS / TEACHER LOAD = NUMBER OF FTE TEACHERS NEEDED (including principal and senior team)
NOR = numbers on roll
BCS = benchmark class size
P = periods in a week/ cycle
CB = curriculum bonus (this is a theoretical measure of the amount of extra curriculum time/ by way of periods, allocated to a student population above the notional basic provision to achieve targeted group sizes smaller than the benchmark class size)
TI = Teacher load (calculated as a contact ratio of 0.79 x 25 periods - for a 25-period week/cycle)

Worked example for a school of 1,200 pupils (Y7-11) where:

- Number on roll = 1,200 (Y7-11)
- Benchmark class size = 27 (this is a fixed number for Outwood)
- Periods in a week = 25
- Curriculum bonus = 8% (giving a multiplier of 1.08)
- Teacher load = 19.75 / Staffing contact ratio = 0.79

$(1,200 / 27) \times 25 \times 1.08 = 1,200 \text{ sessions/periods}$

$1,200 \text{ periods} / \text{teacher load of } 19.75 = 60.75 \text{ FTE}$   
(Including principal and senior team)

This approach works for Outwood. It has been part of their DNA for a number of years, in times of plenty and in more difficult financial times. This important strategic work on curriculum and finances runs alongside and complements the work to achieve strong outcomes for young people.

Using this approach for a school of 1,200 pupils, the school can deliver a curriculum for Y7-11 pupils with 60.75 teachers.

## 'It's not painless – and it is more prescriptive'

### Builds in extra curriculum time

Sir David Carter, the former national schools commissioner, says ICFP can become "unhelpful" if it is run too rigidly. "You end up saying that subjects at GCSE with small numbers should be cut."

But he says the "curriculum bonus" metric in OGAT's model helps resolve this, building in extra curriculum time.

Once leaders know the non-negotiable costs, Miller says, "you can then have a conversation around added value. That could be smaller class sizes, because that's right for the school. But it means they can say 'I'm going to run this, and I understand the costs around it'."

"When times get tough, you can look at the added-value stuff too for where to step back on."

While admitting it is a "lean" staffing model, Sir Martyn Oliver, OGAT's chief executive, says it essentially "helps you make intelligent decisions".

On concerns over flexibility, he says OGAT is "breaking" its own metrics to allow schools to implement catch-up and deal with high staff illness absences.

But the trust is "doing it on purpose. I'm in control, and if I can't afford the model, I know where to look."

It does seem more effective at larger trusts, which Oliver says can give a struggling school more leeway because of the savings made at its more stable schools.

### Not as effective for primaries, special schools

Many ICFP advocates agree the model is less effective in primary and special schools.

One leader went further to say it also falls short at mainstream schools with larger number of SEND pupils, as it generally means fewer pastoral staff.

A DfE survey found that 90 per cent of all-secondary MATs used financial curriculum planning, compared with 58 per cent of all-primary MATs.

Of maintained schools or single trusts, 78 per cent of secondaries had used it or planned to in the next year, compared with 52 per cent of primaries.

Feedback from leaders visited by one of the

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government's cost-cutters back up concerns about the model not working in special schools.

Sudhi Pathak, the chief operating officer at the Eden Academy Trust of special schools, says this is because the teacher-pupil ratio varies.

One of his schools has one teacher and two teaching assistants (TAs) for a class of ten.

Another, for pupils with more profound needs, has one teacher and four TAs for six pupils.

"This makes benchmarking extremely difficult as we are not comparing like with like or consistent environments."

However, the government is "user testing" a model put together by the Esteem MAT, specifically for SEND and alternative provision schools, to "explore" how it can be improved.

**The metrics 'just won't hold now'**

The Pioneer Academy Trust, which has 14 primary schools, has developed its own primary-specific model, now promoted on the DfE website.

It uses it as a "conversation starter" with heads about their provision, says Lee Mason-Ellis, its chief executive.

Savings have allowed it to invest in a cultural capital programme. Staff are also given extra time off-timetable and schools have access to specialist subject teachers.

But, speaking before government committed to extra school funding, he said pressure meant the metrics "just won't hold now".

Energy costs have quadrupled to 8 per cent of budget. Unfunded pay rises have pushed salary costs from between 70 and 72 per cent of expenditure to 76 per cent. One school, always previously in surplus, now has a £47,000 deficit.

The trust is dipping into reserves to underwrite losses this year to limit cuts.

Analysis last week by the Confederation of School Trusts shows more than half of its members could fall into deficit within two years. They include some of the country's biggest trusts, and those that pioneered the ICFP model.

Delta predicts its energy costs could rise from £1.9 million to £9.6 million.

Even Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the Institute of School Business

Leadership that runs the school resource management adviser programme, thinks it's impossible to balance the books.



Baroness Barran

## The ASCL Equation of Life model

THE FORMULA: $PTR = ATC / (I \times Pt)$
NOR / PTR = NUMBER OF FTE TEACHERS WE CAN AFFORD
PTR = pupil teach ratio
ATC = average teacher costs
I = revenue funding per pupil
Pt = proportion of funding spent on teachers
NOR = number on role

Worked example for a school of 1,200 pupils, where

- The average teacher costs are = £45,000
- The revenue funding per pupil is = £4,500
- The proportion of funding spent on teachers is = 60%

$$PTR = 45,000 / (4,500 \times 0.6)$$

$$PTR = 16.67$$

Using this approach for a school of 1,200 pupils, the school can afford 71.9 FTE teachers (1,200 / 16.67)

"There is variability, but it doesn't matter how well you're doing with staff costs. No matter what magic formula we have, it's just not going to work."

Leaders are hopeful the additional £2.3 billion school funding per annum will help alleviate these pressures, although there is no news yet on further support with energy costs.

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, said in the Lords last week that the school resource management strategy aimed to help schools

"save" another £1 billion.

She claimed £1 billion had already been saved since the scheme launched in 2018, but a funding expert said "cuts" was a more accurate term.

However, Metcalfe says there's "not going to be much to spare" for those that have been through the ICFP process. "The next savings are in cutting support staff, admin roles – but we need those."

"We can't take more cuts if we're also picking up everything that has been cut from elsewhere."

Micon Metcalfe

## Curriculum financial planning: in numbers

MINISTERS PLEDGE TO HELP SCHOOLS FIND  
**£1 BILLION** MORE 'EFFICIENCIES'

**54%** OF BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE USED ICFP...

... BUT MATS MORE LIKELY TO USE **(74%)**  
COMPARED TO PRIMARIES **(52%)**

**12,500 VIEWS** ON DFE'S ICFP TOOLKIT  
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# Profile

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

## 'Ofqual was hated, that we were somehow incompetent or evil'

**Dr Michelle Meadows was second-in-command at Ofqual during the 2020 exams fiasco, a grading disaster that will echo in schools for years to come. She reveals to Samantha Booth what happened behind closed doors ...**

**D**r Michelle Meadows is used to a grading crisis. She helped to handle at least five that hit the headlines in her two-decade career at exam board AQA and qualifications regulator Ofqual.

But perhaps none was as big as the 2020 pandemic grading fiasco. As Ofqual's deputy chief

regulator until last year, Meadows was deeply involved in creating the unprecedented alternate awarding system for grades when exams were cancelled.

So much has been written about what went wrong: from government pressure for Ofqual to ensure grading standards were in line with

previous years to communication failures and a lack of public trust in the regulator.

Meadows says that with hindsight it is "easy to say that was a policy mistake". But Ofqual was being pushed to the limits of its remit as a regulator during 2020, with just four months to roll out the alternative plan.



# Profile: Michelle Meadows



Giving evidence to the education select committee

"Ofqual stepped into a role that was not really what it was set up to do," Meadows tells me from her University of Oxford office, where she is now an associate professor and course director of a masters in educational assessment.

On the other hand, she accepts Ofqual – and importantly government ministers – should have been out there "explaining, explaining, explaining".

## School reports were 'pretty indifferent'

Born in the north west, Meadows describes herself as a "problem-solver". Working in regulation was the dream as it's "problem-solving on a day-to-day basis".

For someone who ended up working in education, though, the 54-year-old admits her own academic performance at her comprehensive was "truly unremarkable".

She remembers thinking performance was an "inherent ability" rather than "if I worked harder or engaged better".

"If you look back at my school reports, they were pretty indifferent. I had a very ambivalent relationship with the whole business of being educated."

But she was nevertheless put in the "upper" stream for O-levels, something she now questions "because there was no standardised assessment".

After obtaining "average" O-levels, she did A-levels at Stockport College, also the alma mater of Labour's deputy leader Angela Rayner.

One thing she did know from 13 was that she wanted to be a psychologist. She scraped two Cs to study at Hatfield Polytechnic in Hertfordshire and became the first person in her working-class family to go on to tertiary education.

Although psychology is hugely popular now at A-level (there was an 11 per cent rise in entries last year), it was an unusual choice in the 1980s. Her college didn't even offer it as an option.

Her parents – a shorthand typist mother and



At a conference in Oxford university's department of education

## 'I had a very ambivalent relationship with the business of being educated'

electrician father – had both studied at technical colleges so going to university was a "mystery, but a serious thing".

Her love of education really began at 19. She credits this, and a chance to retake A-levels, as her driver for "fairness and second chances" in life, adding: "I wouldn't have had the opportunities that I had."

"I feel very strongly that for the vast majority of students, how they do .... in terms of their qualifications, it's just a reflection of them – a snapshot – at that point in time."

After graduating, she worked as an assistant psychologist at St Mary's Hospital in west London and completed a PhD in driver behaviour before unexpectedly helping to create the "blueprint" for the national speed awareness course in Lancashire.

She was perfectly happy working in academia, but wanted a "good chewy problem" and was hired as a senior researcher at the exam board AQA in 2002.

## 'I didn't know what I was getting myself into'

"I did not know what I was getting myself into at all really," Meadows reflects, arriving to see staff exhausted from the demanding curriculum 2000 reforms on post-16 education.

Her first crisis came in 2009 when Ofqual, the new regulator in town, decided to lower grade boundaries in GCSE science at AQA, as grades

couldn't be aligned across the boards.

The second was in 2012 with grading the-then modular GCSE English, which led to a High Court judicial review by 150 schools, 42 councils and 167 pupils. Many received lower than expected results.

It boiled down to the qualifications structure, which the judge said was "the source of such unfairness".

Meadows says the modular structure allowed some schools to do the exam in January and wait until June to take coursework. This meant some were "able to work out what mark their students needed to get the magic grade C", which "broke the awarding process", making grade boundaries higher than usual.

At the time, heads' union ASCL said for it was "outrageous" for Ofqual to suggest that teachers and schools were to blame.

Meadows said at first it was difficult to spot what was causing the issue. But a bright researcher dug into the data and found huge spikes on grade boundaries for those schools that took the exams early.

Not long after joining Ofqual as director of research and evaluation in 2014, she faced a "mini-crisis" around the difficulty of GCSE maths.

She had three months to find out whether claims stood up that AQA's sample exam papers were easier than the other boards. The research backed the claims, so the materials were updated

## Profile: Michelle Meadows



Winter Railway 19-mile run in 2020

and standards aligned in time for the 2017 Michael Gove reforms.

"If we'd not made those changes, we would have been in a much bigger crisis."

Meadows thinks the Gove reforms to linear GCSEs made sense as the qualification modules were too small, and the introduction of more grades through the 9-1 system gave more meaningful information on a student's performance.

But she thinks it's a "great shame" that AS courses are now fading away, narrowing post-16 study for some students.

"That fabulous feedback mechanism at the end of year one has now been removed," she says, adding "a lot of people working in education would welcome" it back.

### From exams are on to schools shutting...

Meetings began with exam boards and the Department for Education in early March 2020, just as the Covid pandemic was spiralling. Meadows had been promoted to deputy chief regulator, as well as overseeing the risk and research teams.

Early meetings were about how to spread out exams to mitigate any disruption.

"We were working out how to make exams work. Almost overnight we went from exams will go ahead in some form to, oh, schools are shut. It just proved impossible for exams to go ahead."

At the outset of creating a standardisation model, Ofqual knew some grades would have to be downgraded with estimates of 30 per cent (which was similar to UCAS predicted grades).

While it worked to keep results in-line nationally, it was disastrous for many pupils.



## 'Ofqual are good, earnest people trying to do the right thing'

In the end, almost 40 per cent of grades awarded by teachers were pulled down after going through the standardisation model.

Come results' day, with pupils in tears on television over how their grades had been unfairly hauled down by this faceless regulator, Ofqual and ministers – who had made the decision to standardise grades – were forced to make a U-turn.

Consultation with the sector before drawing up the model was "incredibly positive", but Meadows says there was a difference between "theoretical propositions and practical realities".

"We knew it would be problematic and in our risk analysis we had identified a probability that the public wouldn't accept these grades," she says. "But having said that, we had four months to deliver something, so we were heads down trying to create the best possible model in no time whatsoever."

Meadows says what was unexpected was the extent to which different schools and colleges would behave in "different ways". Some tried to "pre-standardise" to try to reduce the chances of downgrading; others awarded many A\* and As despite previously having a full range of grades.

When results dropped, many staff in the



Meadows at university (middle with striped top)

relatively small organisation were diverted to answering the phone from distressed members of the public.

"[Results day] took a massive toll because whatever we think about Ofqual I can hand on heart say they are good, earnest people trying to do the right thing. It felt like Ofqual was hated, that we were somehow incompetent or evil. Neither is fair at all."

Meadows takes particular aim at a *Daily Mail* article on chief regulator Sally Collier, who resigned after the fiasco, as being "deeply unpleasant and personal". The article included details of Collier's marriage.

Collier is one of five chief regulators in Meadows's seven years at Ofqual. "That is a lot of turnover, and I think speaks to the difficulty of doing the job. You can be guaranteed that within your three or five-year term, you're going to have one big doozy of a crisis or you're going to have something where you disagree with government."

"It makes it tremendously difficult. That's a terrible shame as it puts experts off doing these jobs."



# Opinion

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HELEN  
KING

Head of safeguarding,  
Judicium

## We need to be alarmed by safeguarding pressures

**A new survey reveals the toll of increasing demand on safeguarding leads as the cost-of-living crisis bites, says Helen King**

School leaders know that pupil safeguarding is under increasing pressure. Government data shows that school referrals to children's social services rose by more than 50 per cent in the past eight years.

With families now enduring the fallout of an economic crisis this isn't likely to abate any time soon, so the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) role continues to grow. Take the DSL's bible, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) as a measure: it's a beefy 180 pages today – three times the size of the 2015 edition.

The strain safeguarding is under was one of the reasons we did our own research. In our survey, carried out with Supporting Education Group, we asked more than 620 DSLs and senior leadership team (SLT) members across England to rate how they were doing across a range of key safeguarding activities.

Filtering and monitoring ICT use, with safeguarding training and updating safeguarding records, were rated as the least effective areas with the highest personal

challenge.

Just 18 per cent said filtering and monitoring were as effective as they could be in their schools, with 59 per cent claiming they were among their biggest challenges. Twenty-five per cent thought that their current safeguarding and

“The DSL remit is becoming too big alongside other responsibilities

child protection training worked well, with 43 per cent claiming it was one of their biggest challenges.

Updating and reviewing safeguarding records to identify patterns of events or behaviour was another pressure point: 30 per cent found this activity challenging.

DSLs drove the concerns in all these areas. Just 16 per cent of DSLs found that training worked as well as it could, compared with 49 per cent of SLT members, for example.

Failing to address these concerns puts children at risk and means schools could fall foul of the accountability system. Our analysis of inspection reports shows that safeguarding errors can have a serious impact. Of 130 'inadequate' Ofsted judgments between 2019 and 2021, 45 per



cent cited ineffective safeguarding, with record-keeping most often mentioned in inspector feedback.

Policy-makers ought to take a fresh look at the DSL remit, which is becoming too big for professionals who have other responsibilities.

Extra funding wouldn't go amiss, but it's a distant prospect so it will be up to schools to make some changes themselves.

Taking filtering and monitoring out of their existing silo is a first step. They typically sit under an ICT manager or lead in secondaries. In primary schools, an external ICT manager might be the likely owner.

Either scenario makes it difficult for DSLs to effectively review filtering and monitoring systems, which is a key KCSIE requirement. SLTs can ensure DSLs are able to directly monitor these systems for incidents and draw off regular reports that can then be reviewed for trends and issues "in the round" with other leaders.

DSLs know what training is required but there's never enough

time to cover every need. Including safeguarding training "nuggets" as a standing short item in school briefings and staff updates could incrementally increase safeguarding training time – and keeps safeguarding front of mind.

Record-keeping is a time-consuming, high-stakes nightmare. Schools are pretty effective at handling high-level concerns but can struggle to tie up lower-level concerns (most cases), especially in large volumes.

Schools are reluctant to use admin support because of the sensitive nature of safeguarding, but given the scale of the challenge there is a strong case for training an admin team colleague to support record-keeping (capacity allowing).

These tweaks could sharpen up safeguarding practices. But they won't fully compensate for the fundamental government review of DSL roles and responsibilities we need.

Many pupils and their families will continue to be under great pressure for some time to come, and it shouldn't be this much of a struggle for schools to step in effectively when pupils need protecting.

# Opinion

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**Balancing short-term budget pressures with long-term investment in efficiencies and carbon reduction is complex but possible, writes Steven Reynolds**

After this summer's record-breaking temperatures, we are all willing this winter's weather to be kind so that we can keep thermostats down and energy bills in check. The six-month guarantee of a "government-supported price" that kicked in in October is a much-needed short-term measure that, it is claimed, could save schools up to 40 per cent on their energy bills over that period.

But the support is insufficient and secondary school heads are warning MPs of the pressure rising costs are putting on their already squeezed budgets. The short-termism is also an issue: schools and trusts lack the certainty they need to make decisions in the face of an ongoing energy crisis.

Government firefighting is leading schools to take the same attitude to the problem. Yet tackling energy efficiency within a school estate, thereby releasing money to be spent elsewhere, requires a longer-term horizon. This is a debate we often have with our academy trust and school clients. We appreciate that thinking strategically and investing in the estate when there are so many pressing short-term budget issues is a tough call, but this is a decision that needs to be made sooner rather than later.

## Shifting from reactive to planned maintenance

It is difficult for a school to look beyond works that need to be undertaken in a single year. But taking a short-term view often costs more, with uncoordinated projects and inefficient procurement strategies leading to wasted money, ultimately delivering less and costing more.

# STEVEN REYNOLDS

Partner, schools and academies lead,  
Rider Levett Bucknall



## Energy costs: Decarbonising is now an achievable priority

A longer-term approach starting with the development of a five to ten-year estate strategy, which aims to co-ordinate areas such as planned maintenance, future capital spend, decarbonisation, compliance issues and other funding priorities is much

and strategy around how they will be delivered. It ensures money is spent wisely in the places where it will have the most impact, and minimises waste. Reactive maintenance is significantly more expensive and puts a huge strain on

“Reluctance to invest capital is understandable

more effective.

An estate strategy enables a planned approach to implementing improvements. It identifies priorities for investment and puts a timescale

finances, so the aim is to shift that balance. And the larger the estate, the bigger the rewards.

With pressures on schools to reach carbon targets as well as

reducing energy costs, overlaying a decarbonisation road map on to a plan for maintenance and capital works can ensure economies of scale. The aim is to look at energy reduction and efficiency at every stage. For example, if a trust is replacing a roof, what would the impact be of increasing the insulation to minimise carbon usage? Can they install photovoltaics at the same time, to save paying for scaffolding twice?

## Payback times are reducing

As energy prices rise, innovations around thermal technology become even more affordable because the payback periods are shorter.

Again, this means prioritising early investment to secure longer-term benefits, but the reality is that such investments bring returns in the form of reduced energy bills in less than a year. Better still, the reduction in energy bills over the lifespan of the units could significantly offset the cost of replacing the roof.

When budgets are tight, reluctance to invest capital is understandable. However, schools and trusts can apply for funds for such works from the £1.4 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which aims to reduce emissions from public sector buildings by 75 per cent by 2030.

Education settings are eligible. And while any grant under that scheme is likely to be insufficient to cover all costs, its contribution is not to be ignored.

The only question remaining is whether the fund – or indeed school budgets – will survive the autumn statement. Either way, investment in energy efficiency is now a top priority, and some progress is within everyone's reach.





# Opinion

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ELEANOR  
STAINES SHAW

Year 13 pupil and member of UK  
Schools Sustainability Network

## COP27: Sealing education's role at climate action's heart

**COP27 is bringing green education further into the climate change policy mainstream, writes Eleanor Staines Shaw, but action is still not urgent enough**

It's easy to get drawn into the insane amount of greenwashing that companies and governments engage in and to feel disheartened when the news only showcases failures. However, a lot of good came out of COP26 in Glasgow last year and this year's COP27 is building on that. Change mostly happens from the outside and works its way in, and there's plenty of evidence that education's place as a change-maker is no longer on the sidelines.

Last year's conference was a landmark moment for climate education with the first dialogue between global education and environment ministers and the unveiling of the Department for Education's draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. I can still remember the empowerment I felt when I took part in a panel at the launch of the draft strategy as a pupil member of the UK Schools Sustainability Network (UKSSN).

I also remember the shock of hearing in the news that nothing much had come out of all that international energy. But I remain hopeful. The full DfE strategy published earlier this year, for example, is incredibly exciting

“Education's place is no longer on the sidelines

(barring some important points that need addressing). It makes me jealous of anyone who still has most of their school life ahead of them.

The mobilisation of people in the streets and the policies and panels untainted by greenwashing are hopeful signs that change is happening. Meanwhile, a crucial part of tackling greenwashing is to keep holding leaders accountable, so while UKSSN can't be at COP27, I've been keeping a close eye on proceedings.

The events that I've tuned into, including the Climate and Education Hub and the UK Pavilion panel 'Creating a sustainable future through education', are full of people saying realistic and radically



Ana Romero delivers UKSSN's letter to Baroness Barran, COP27

hopeful things. Moreover, every time I've logged on to our UKSSN site, I've seen more new photos of our COP27 asks and letter to the DfE being handed to those with power – and it's uplifting.

I also heard from Ana Romero, the staff lead for the UKSSN Berkshire network and a COP negotiator for Mexico, who told us about events involving many organisations and NGOs that highlighted the essential role education plays in tackling climate change.

COP27 has been a great success from Ana's point of view because an agreed action plan acknowledges a wide range of human rights for the programme she works on. Action for Climate Empowerment is the central platform of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change for empowering the public to engage in climate action through education and training.

Meanwhile, the National Education Union's COP27

representative, Jenny Cooper, has reported the emphasis at side events and meetings on consulting young people and delivering on education. Many have been attended by UK government representatives.

Jenny believes that every government needs an urgent strategy to make our schools resilient to the impacts of extreme weather events. The union's call at COP27 for more engagement with its members on climate education is vital. After all, the government will need their support (with public funds) if it is to deliver its strategy and not see it written off as another attempt at greenwashing.

On the whole, I'm not hopeful that we'll see the urgent change that science says we need. However, calls for change are moving from the outside into the centre meaning we can forge change for ourselves.

The language of urgency, zero tolerance of delay and calls for support are all heartening for green education. So are the steps many schools are already taking to decarbonise their estates. Let's see what another year of holding ministers accountable can deliver.

# Opinion

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UNITY JONES

Director of insight and innovation,  
Academies Enterprise Trust

## Our schools are now a testbed for tackling systemic issues

**AET is launching a platform that will share data and insights to drive improvement in its schools and beyond, explains Unity Jones**

A funding crunch, a cost-of-living crisis, acute recruitment challenges and looming strikes. It's tempting to hunker down and focus on keeping our own house in order, but now more than ever we need to work together to meet the scale and complexity of the challenges ahead.

Our capacity as a sector is vast, yet we've failed to leverage this latent potential. Instead, we've developed some collective bad habits that prevent us from developing resilience and improving sustainably. It is essential that we do this.

In 2022, England had the widest disadvantage gap for key stage 2 SATs on record and key stage 1 attainment is the lowest it has ever been. This national picture hides stark regional and local disparities, and that is just as true within our trust as it is across the country.

Although our primary school results this year were positive compared with national outcomes, we still had a 40 percentage point

spread between our highest and lowest-performing schools in phonics, and a 52 percentage point spread in reading, writing and maths at key stage 2.

That's why we've launched Project H, a platform and approach to

**“This is not a cosy club for like-minded people**

mobilise talent and expertise from across the system to solve big, seemingly intractable problems such as this. Our plan is to share insights, resources and reflections about what it takes to embed school improvement at scale.

With 57 schools spread across every region of the country, AET is one of the largest networks in England. We have a disparate footprint, and that makes our schools more exposed to the structural complexity of the education system and to regional challenges.

So Project H is not a “side hustle”. It's a fundamental and deliberate effort to unleash improvement across our network and beyond – a vehicle to move beyond individual efforts and to collectively drive



progress by sharing the perspectives and understanding of educators who work in all manner of circumstances.

Nor is it a cosy club for like-

a GCSE grade 4+ in English and maths than those with attendance below 80 per cent. Among those not eligible for pupil premium, it's 3.2 times.

It's hardly surprising that attendance is critical to improving outcomes. Yet there is so much that we still do not truly know about how to respond, including causes of and opportunities to reduce absence.

So we are offering Project H as a shared space to explore this and other stubborn issues by using our schools as a living testbed. The platform will be crucial for us as we develop as a network, and we hope that it will help others to accelerate and sustain improvement too.

Academy trusts such as AET have an opportunity to be net givers to the system. That demands refocusing our attention to think about our impact on the system, rather than just the impact in our own backyard.

Institutional learning – even in a trust as large as ours – has hard limits. By challenging ourselves and each other openly, we have an immense opportunity to overcome those and finally to deliver the self-improving system we've all been aiming for.



# Opinion

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



**ALISON KRIEL**  
Founder,  
Above & Beyond Education

## Stereotypes limit our ideas of success for our pupils

**Assumptions of what success looks like – and for whom – lead us to narrow the curriculum in ways that perpetuate disadvantage, writes Alison Kriel**

Stereotypes and perceptions of one another – acquired through what we see and hear in the media, the gender cap we are given at birth, the homes we grow up in, institutions and wider culture – have the potential to cause harm to all of us.

Assumptions are also made about what we excel at in school. A Chinese pupil told me that her talent in art was overlooked as she was expected to be good at maths. Black pupils are pushed to be athletes, rather than academics; girls nudged to be carers; boys to be doers. These assumptions of what their educational path or future careers should be inevitably turn into feelings of failure.

These stereotypes, subconscious or otherwise, narrow our learners' opportunities. They keep them stuck to a path that may not be theirs and prevent us from seeing and celebrating their unique talents.

One of the most pervasive stereotypes in our sector is that

attaining white middle-class status – regardless of race, background or identity – is a measure of success. This devalues the cultural capital of all other groups and leads us to make all sorts of choices that can

turn out to be detrimental to our pupils.

When it comes to the curriculum, for example, should we still be prioritising traditional core subjects for all? They are obviously

important, but a child whose greatest strength is music and finds themselves withdrawn from those lessons to do catch-up maths will not only experience a feeling of failure, she could also be denied her A\* in music and the opportunities for future success that come with it.

A narrow curriculum widens the social divide. Some subjects simply become elitist. Eighty-two per cent of pupils studying arts and architecture at degree level are white and middle class, while 57 per cent of those studying to be administrators are black.

We had high results in my school, year after year, because we realised that confident pupils who felt celebrated for their strengths and

**“A narrow curriculum widens the social divide**

uniqueness made the best learners. Narrowing the curriculum and hoarding for core subjects gave us lower outcomes and destroyed the joy in teaching and learning. And it would appear we are not the

only ones who value a broader more inclusive curriculum.

Pearson's recent School Report reveals that teachers want to see core life skills incorporated into the curriculum with as much time and emphasis as core subjects. They also want to develop tolerance of diverse opinions and social and cultural awareness.

The key is opening our eyes to the diversity of successful outcomes. The recent appointment of our first British Asian and Hindu prime minister shows every learner that they can reach the top.

In my own school, we support learners to combat stereotypes by exposing them to role models that do not fit the mould. Leaders, creatives and adventurers who are making great strides in their fields, all of them from non-stereotypical backgrounds; people who started out doing what was expected, then pivoted to follow their dreams.

We can teach our pupils that they are global citizens and develop their empathy for others. We can invite parents to see what their children love and support those passions by keeping options open. We can stimulate classes to think about the future in practical ways, asking: What do they want? Which routes will lead there? How can they take responsibility? What is their Plan B?

The more we acknowledge and value diversity, the more our learners can collaborate and succeed. We need to keep asking ourselves how we see each other and our pupils. We need to make sure we're not making assumptions about ability, lifestyle or cultural groups but look at each pupil as an individual, celebrating their uniqueness, culture and true potential.



## THE REVIEW

## ESSAYS FOR EXCELLENCE

**Authors:** Becky Jones and Laura Webb**Publisher:** John Catt Educational**Published:** 22 August 2022**ISBN:** 1915261333**Reviewer:** Gwen Nelson, secondary English teacher, Leicestershire

Somewhat surprisingly for an English teacher, I am incredibly nervous of sharing my own writing with pupils – academic writing especially. As one of the generation who was never taught grammar, or how to write an academic essay properly, the neurosis and imposter syndrome run through me like a stick of Blackpool rock. So I was excited for this collection of exemplar essays for GCSE literature, and I wasn't disappointed. It will prove useful for my pupils' progress – and mine.

The introduction is thorough. Set out using familiar Ofsted terminology of intent, implementation and impact, it's helpful for any quality assurance, internal or external. The rationale of the book and the merits of using exemplar answers with pupils are rooted in the authors' own teaching, and it's comforting to know this is more than well-intentioned pedagogical theory, but based on their pupils' successes.

The exemplar essays cover three commonly taught literature texts – *Macbeth*, *A Christmas Carol* and *An Inspector Calls* – as well as the "Power and Conflict" comparative poetry option. These are wise choices given their popularity, but I let out a small whelp of disappointment that my school's 19th-century novel, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, was not included.

Each section is well thought out and carefully structured with at least two extracts and exam questions, including different planning formats with "clear", "thoughtful" and "critical" exemplar essays for those questions. A further three

extracts, questions, plans and "critical" exemplar essays complete each section, and I was pleased that the language of grades was not used, placing the emphasis instead on quality writing.

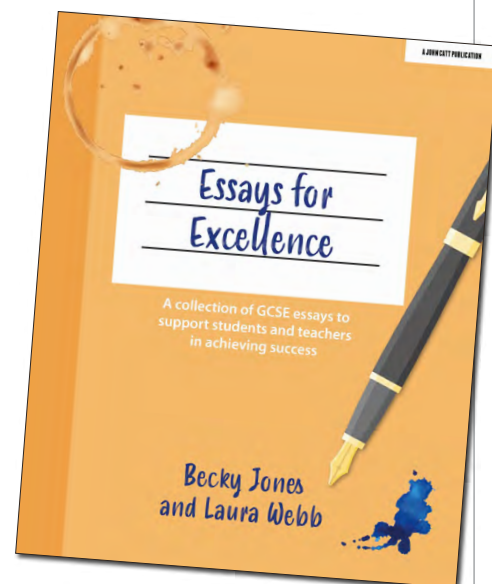
Three different standards of essays allows for comparison and useful analysis to learn why one is better than another. There are a myriad of other uses for them, and my mind is still whirring with what I could do with this resource to prepare my pupils for their exams.

I particularly liked the use of the same quotations across each of the three essays of different quality, showing that it is what a candidate does with the quotations that really matters. Pupils and teachers would have benefited from the inclusion of the "10 key quotations per text" resource mentioned in the introduction too.

Even if you teach different texts, it is still worth investing in this book. The beauty of the essays, tasks, plans and comment prompts in the margins make it a useful crutch to build your confidence and ability to write model essays of your own.

Any criticisms that I might have are not directed at either author or the content, but at the publishing format. The text was created as a means of saving English teachers their most precious resource: time. The standard paperback format somewhat negates that. It cannot fold flat under a visualiser or on a photocopier bed without cracking the spine and wrecking the binding. Spiral binding would have been much more suitable.

BOOK  
TV  
FILM  
RADIO  
EVENT  
RESOURCE



It would also have been useful to have access to an electronic version in order to manipulate the text (for example by placing three introductions side by side to compare this specific element). Should a teacher wish to do that, it would either need scanning and cropping, or old-school photocopying, cutting and glueing to create the resource you want. Surely password-protection could have made this possible? If a resource is meant to save teachers time, then the time-saving element needs to be a consideration for the publisher too.

That aside, *Essays for Excellence* is a much-needed addition to subject-specific educational publishing for English teachers, no matter how many years you've been teaching. There is scope for additional volumes, given the range of text options for GCSE alone. I hope to see more resources like this one.

★★★★★  
Rating



## THE CONVERSATION LISTENING IN ON THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM



**Fiona Atherton**  
Headteacher,  
Ladypool  
Primary School

### MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

This week, headteachers all over the country have been lamenting their schools' financial situation and some have taken to sharing their concerns online.



Charlie Rome  
@charliejrome

Watching @Jeremy\_Hunt on #bbclaurak speaking about school budgets

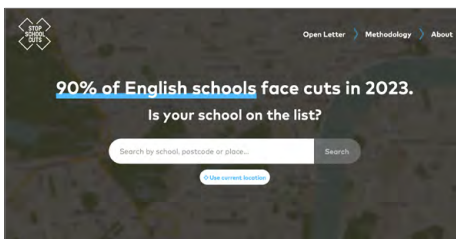
He simply doesn't get it, schools CANNOT balance the books without significant additional funding

Talking abt increased utility costs, but that's nothing in comparison to unfunded pay increases for staff

It seems likely that we will be heading into even choppy financial waters and many schools will be unable to set a balanced budget for next year. Any small reserves are being swallowed up in unfunded pay rises and soaring energy bills, and with the ballots for teacher strikes going out across the country, including for school leaders, it seems as if the teaching community are gearing up for a fight.

Meanwhile, the School Cuts website has relaunched. A powerful force in the electoral campaign of 2017 when it highlighted the local toll of 88 per cent of schools facing cuts, its home page now says 90 per cent will see their budgets fall.

But no election seems imminent, so rather than letters to parents about funding, it will be support staff redundancies and deep restructuring that instead will be discussed at many governors' meetings. Schools will start to try to budget for next year, knowing



that the children who will suffer the most will be those with special educational needs who have extra staff to support them in the classroom.

### OAK – MONEY BETTER SPENT?

With money so tight, many are still asking whether the money for Oak National Academy could be better spent going directly into disadvantaged schools.

But the conversation still seems focused on whether the organisation is truly independent. Jon Coles, United Learning's chief executive, has made his doubts clear in these pages and continues to do so online. Most convincing, perhaps, is the idea he put out this week that a new government could use Oak as a vehicle to put out its own supportive materials for a curriculum with less knowledge-rich rigour.

The bigger issue for me is that underpinning all of this is no longer the supportive ethos that saw Oak created during the pandemic, but a narrative of "curriculum mediocrity" in many schools, a mediocrity that needs fixing from Whitehall. I wonder what well-funded schools might be able to do with a little more independence and a little less ministerial interference.

### 'TIS THE SEASON

Money isn't just tight for schools. Across the country, the numbers of families falling into crisis is increasing – upping demand on schools to provide support. As we head into Christmas, the impact of increased poverty is likely to cause even more problems.



This blog from Hampshire head of inclusion **Marie Greehalgh** is a timely reminder of what schools can do to support young people and their families – and to prevent making matters worse!

Signposting that mental health problems have always manifested more strongly around and in the lead-up to Christmas, Greehalgh sets out some tips that include explicitly teaching how to manage anxiety around the holidays and keeping the seasonal stress at the forefront of our minds when dealing with behaviour incidents.

### REFLECTING REALITIES

And finally, returning to educational publishing, the annual **CLPE Reflecting Realities report**

has been released this week. The headline data seems to indicate a rapid rise in the number of children's books that feature a minority ethnic character from 4 per cent in 2017 to 20 per cent in 2021, but the reality is that only 9 per cent of the books published this year feature a main character from a racially minoritised background.

And while the reviews are mainly positive and really celebrate CLPE for the work it does and has done to bring important work like this to the forefront of children's publishing, there are still some significant groups where the growth has not yet been significant enough to bring about change.



Gabrielle Kent  
@GabrielleKent

Replying to @DapsDraws @deestevens and @clpe1

It breaks me each year to see South Asian representation barely changed. I always knew it was bad, but the reports highlight the extent of the problem and how little is being done. It's great to have figures to talk about it, but devastating that half my family isn't represented.

Click the links to access  
the blogs and podcasts



# The Knowledge

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



## Retention: leadership matters more than you think

Owen Carter, Co-founder and managing director, ImpactEd

Retaining teachers is a tricky business. About one in three entering the profession leave after five years. The averages conceal even greater challenges: retention is lower in secondary schools than primaries, in STEM subjects, and varies across the country.

A few causes spring to mind. Workload would likely be number one; pay another. And for those working in schools in challenging circumstances, issues such as pupil mental health, classroom behaviour and a lack of resources all play their part. All these contribute to teachers leaving the classroom.

You would be forgiven for thinking the fix is simple. Pay teachers more. Reduce their working hours. No doubt these would help, but the challenge for school leaders is that some of these factors might be beyond control; the pressures schools face are systemic, and can't always be solved quickly.

But I have a hopefully reassuring message: school leadership matters, and more than you might think.

ImpactEd recently published [findings from a survey](#) of more than 40,000 pupils and nearly 900 school staff sampled during the 2021-22 academic year. The report, *Working Well* explores the links between teacher satisfaction and pupil wellbeing.

The research presented some surprising findings. On a correlation scale of 0-1, leadership and management factors were most associated with overall staff happiness. Statements such as "I feel supported by the leaders and managers in this school" and "I think that the senior leadership team is doing a good job" saw correlations of more than 0.9 with staff satisfaction. By contrast, having an acceptable workload and being able to control disruptive behaviour were less strongly linked (0.7 and 0.61 correlation respectively).

The importance of school leadership was also evident when we looked at pupil wellbeing. Here, we found that staff perception of school leadership was closely linked to pupil happiness



at a 0.57 correlation, behind only staff's perception of behaviour management.

This isn't to say that workload and pay don't matter for staff satisfaction and retention. However, the data suggests that confidence in a school's direction and feeling supported can have a significant impact. This supports other research that finds that the nature and perception of workload matter more than sheer quantity.

Our findings lead to three key ways school leaders can use the levers they do control for positive effect.

### Context matters

The drivers of staff satisfaction and retention vary strongly by school. Using high-quality surveys and diagnostics to evaluate these drivers in each setting is a must. The key is to go beyond workload or wellbeing surveys and ask a broader set of questions about what would help staff to thrive.

Tools are available to support this, but even running this process yourself is a useful start.

### Get stuck in

School improvement bookshelves groan under the weight of strategic visions. While the big picture is important, our research shows staff

place greater value on supportive management structures, effective communication and a clear direction.

Aim to spend as much or more time on clear communication of the school's direction than writing grand development plans.

### Be holistic about wellbeing

We found a substantial correlation between staff engagement and pupil wellbeing. Interventions that might support one group's wellbeing at the expense of the other are likely to be detrimental.

The report concludes with a case study from one of our partner schools, Stanley Grove Primary Academy in Manchester, which uses reflective inquiry coaching to allow time for positive wellbeing conversations. Interestingly, this did not immediately lead to uplifts in staff engagement or wellbeing. However, it did create the conditions in which staff could identify the actions that might help the most.

This is a useful analogy for schools everywhere. Much is out of our hands, but leaders should never underestimate the power they have to influence the conditions in which teachers and pupils can succeed.

Given the challenges ahead, embracing this may be the best bet for hanging on to our teachers in resilient and thriving schools.



Week in

## Westminster

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

## MONDAY

Returning schools minister Nick Gibb showed his fun side today with a picture on Twitter of him wearing odd socks.

It wasn't a sartorial statement, but a nod towards the start of Anti-Bullying Week.

"Odd Socks Day is a chance for us to celebrate what makes us all unique and to embrace difference," he said.

Let's hope some of his favourite turnaround academy trusts don't find out as they'd likely chuck him in isolation for breaching uniform rules.

PS: Awkward timing given the emerging bullying allegations facing deputy prime minister Dominic Raab (he's now requested an "independent" investigation after two formal complaints).

PPS: Awkward given Gibb's former boss at the Department for Education was one Gavin Williamson, who last week stood down as cabinet office minister amid a mountain of bullying allegations.



Nick Gibb  
@NickGibbUK

Wearing odd socks to mark the start of Anti-Bullying Week. #OddSocksDay is a chance for us to celebrate what makes us all unique and to embrace difference. @educationgovuk



## TUESDAY:

A month is a long time in politics. From leading the charge inside government to open new grammar schools, the former schools minister Jonathan Gullis is now back to shouting questions from the outside and being ignored (like the rest of us Jono!).

Nick Gibb didn't answer Gullis' parliamentary question over whether any assessment has been done on the "potential merits" of ending the ban on new selective schools.

Given the "selection" brief has been removed from ministers' portfolios and new education secretary Gillian Keegan says she's more focused on the kids that don't get into selective schools, it's (heartening) to see the grammar school folly has been well and truly ditched.

## WEDNESDAY:

Looks like we've got a glimpse into the excuse ministers will trot out next year when they give teachers a pay rise well under what the sector deserves.

Gillian Keegan, for instance, told the pay review body that it must ensure any pay recommendation does not "drive prices even higher in the future".

Presumably, the government will also take such a view on bankers' bonuses? Erm, nope. Last we heard was that ministers were still going ahead with removing the cap on City bonuses.

One rule for some ...

\*\*\*

Keegan has told that as a teenager she wanted to become a hairdresser because she said it was a "glamorous" thing to

do. But she ditched the plan when she realised it would only buy her a house that was "not so nice".

Nowadays, the Rolex-wearing minister still enjoys a good old pamper.

On Wednesday, South and City College in Birmingham tweeted that the education secretary had her hair and make-up done by its beauty students during a recent visit. *Schools Week* wonders if she paid for the service...

## THURSDAY:

Announcing his autumn statement, chancellor Jeremy Hunt thanked heads, teachers and classroom assistants for their "brilliant work". His £2.3 billion in extra funding for schools would allow such work to "continue", he gushed.

To be fair, given how far we are up Shit Creek, it was a huge win for the sector.

But what's not clear, is whether schools will get any support for soaring energy prices from next April.

A review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which currently supports schools, will only look at how the private sector can be further supported beyond March 31.

Charity begins at home, or so they say.

The government seems to have taken the proverb to heart. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the chancellor found most of the extra cash for schools by recycling £5 billion previously earmarked for increased overseas aid.

Among other things, foreign aid supports the improvement of girls' education in low-income countries.





# Trust CEO

**Role:** CEO

**Location:** Hampshire

**Start Date:** September 2023

**Salary:** c£130,000 depending on experience

**Hours:** Full time (Part time may be considered)

We are delighted to be offering an exciting opportunity for a highly committed passionate leader to join our Multi-Academy Trust.

The key principles and ethos of the Wildern Academy Trust are built on Care, Opportunity and Quality. Our aim across the Trust is to provide an outstanding learning experience for each child within the school community. We are ambitious for all our students and offer a clear focus on achievement for all and high quality teaching in a stimulating environment.

The Board of Trustees is looking for a creative, inspirational and talented CEO to lead and further develop our well established and successful Trust. The CEO will lead a cohesive and talented central team and head teachers. We encourage each school to establish its own identity while maintaining the high expectations and standards set by the Trust. We foster collaborative working and sharing of best practice across all our schools. The continued development of strong networks and partnerships is enhanced by our successful and recently reaccruited cross phase SCITT providing high quality teachers for our local schools.

## Application Procedure:

Please visit the Trust Website following the links below where you will be able to view the CEO brochure outlining more details about the Trust and application requirements. Applications should be on Wildern Academy Trust application forms, **our application form does differ from the standard Hampshire County Council form and individual CV's will not be accepted.** The Trust Board also requires a statement, no more than one page of A4, outlining 'What attracts you to this post?'. Covering letters and application forms should be e-mailed to [hr@wildern.org](mailto:hr@wildern.org) or sent by post for the attention of Mrs P Weston, Wildern School, Wildern Lane, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EJ.

CEO brochure link please [click here](#)

**Closing date:**

**Midday Monday 28th November 2022**

**Interviews:**

**Week commencing 12th December 2022**







**Leeds  
Mathematics  
School**

## Teacher of A Level Mathematics and Further Mathematics

### Teacher of A Level Computer Science

Location: Leeds

Start date: September 2023

Scale: MPR/UPR

The GORSE Academies Trust, one of the highest performing academy trusts in the country is opening a unique sixth form, providing a specialised curriculum for students who have a passion and flair for Mathematics. We are seeking to appoint two well-qualified, outstanding teachers who are committed to transforming the lives of young people in the Leeds City region. Our standards are high and we expect our new staff to lead our continuing drive for excellence in the classroom. Applicants need a strong record of academic personal achievement in the subject matter and a strong track record in nurturing a passion and love for the subject in the young people that they teach.

For more information or to apply please visit  
[www.tgat.org.uk/jobs/](http://www.tgat.org.uk/jobs/)

Closing date: 1 December 2022 at 12.30pm



## Chief Executive Officer

Due to the pending retirement of our founding CEO, the Trustees of Scholars Academy Trust are now seeking to make a permanent appointment of an exceptional individual to lead the Trust towards the next stage of its development.

It is important to us that the leader we appoint will follow the seven principles of public life and have the confidence, vision and skills to lead the continued improvement and growth of the Trust, whilst at the same time ensuring the health and wellbeing of children and staff. We are also looking for a leader who will support and nurture the unique ethos of the academies across the Trust.

Full recruitment pack and application details can be found on our website - [www.scholarstrust.co.uk](http://www.scholarstrust.co.uk). We hope it gives you a flavour of the inspiring and exciting opportunity this post offers.



## STUDENT SUPPORT AND SIXTH FORM SUPPORT ADMINISTRATORS, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OFFICER



Wycombe High School have exciting term time support staff opportunities within our outstanding all girls' grammar school. We are currently advertising for Student Support and Sixth Form Support administrators, both full and part time positions.

In addition to the above mentioned administrative roles, we are now also recruiting for our newly created role of Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer (part time). Mental health and wellbeing are very high on the Wycombe High School agenda and we are proud to work in partnership with the mental health charity Mind who, in 2021-2022, awarded us their Silver Index Award for 'making demonstrable achievements in promoting staff mental health, demonstrating progress and impact over time'.

If you would like to work in a friendly, vibrant, outstanding school, with staff access to a free award-winning EAP, extremely generous employer pension contributions, cycle to work scheme and mental health first aiders for staff in addition to students, then please apply now!

Informal visits in advance of application are welcomed.

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

Closing date for applications: as soon as possible

Interviews will be held: as soon as possible

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

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

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

[www.whs.bucks.sch.uk](http://www.whs.bucks.sch.uk) | [mbrookling@whs.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:mbrookling@whs.bucks.sch.uk)



## Headteacher – Delce Academy

Permanent and Full-Time | April 2023 or September 2023 Start  
Competitive Salary



Delce Academy is a school on a journey of transformation and we are seeking a headteacher who will be relentless in the pursuit for achieving a consistently good quality of education for our children. We seek an ambitious and inspiring headteacher to lead the whole school community to a stronger future.

Central to our improvement is the implementation of our global curriculum. Developed by practitioners from across the Medway hub, learning is brought to life through current contexts that connect to our children's lives.

Along with pursuing high standards of curriculum outcomes and excellence for all, inclusivity is central to our core mission. We work hard to ensure that the needs of every child are met in order to reach their full potential.

Our core values of Respect, Collaboration, Honesty, Kindness, Perseverance and Responsibility, define the way we care for, enrich and teach every child. We focus on the importance of relationships,

and using a trauma-informed approach to support children to make sense of their experiences and find ways to manage their emotions and feelings. We host a resource-based provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). The Delce Education Centre (DEC) caters for up to 30 primary aged children who have an Education Health Care Plan with SEMH as their primary need. The DEC provides a supportive and caring environment for learning. This role offers a fantastic career opportunity for a headteacher to lead in shaping the strategic vision and direction not only for Delce, but for the Trust as a whole.

Further information is available at:  
<https://www.inspirepartnership.co.uk>.

To arrange your visit please email  
[awong@inspirepartnership.co.uk](mailto:awong@inspirepartnership.co.uk) or phone 07761 918457.

**Application Deadline: Monday 28th November 2022 at 9am**

**Interview date: Monday 5th December 2022**



## Assistant/ Vice Principal

**Start date:** As and when suitable for the right candidate

**Salary:** Highly competitive, negotiable depending on experience

**Location:** Birmingham, Hastings, London & Portsmouth across Primary and Secondary schools

**Closing date:** Monday 21st November at 9am but expressions of interest will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Ark is a charity that exists to make sure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a great education and real choices in life. By joining us, you will be joining a network of 39 schools and a team of experts who are working together to overcome some of the biggest challenges in education. Our 2022 exam results saw our students perform better than the national average at every age and stage and we hope to continue to build on this success this year.

We are looking for strong Assistant & Vice Principals to join our network as part of our ambitious senior leadership teams to lead in areas such as curriculum, SEN and teaching & learning in addition to setting the agenda for the school and defining the strategy and future direction.

This would be a great opportunity for an existing Assistant/ Vice Principal who is looking for a new chapter or someone looking to take a step up and develop their career.

We understand the importance of developing and growing our leaders. We know that our schools are only as good as our teachers and leaders. You will have the opportunity to work with some of the best Principals and leaders nationally, as well as access to exceptional training, including nationally recognised qualifications such as NPQSL and NPQH.

If you want to find out more about these speculative vacancies, contact us for an informal, confidential chat. Please send a brief career summary or up-to-date CV to  
[shevonnae.sokoya@arkonline.org](mailto:shevonnae.sokoya@arkonline.org).







## 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](mailto:admin@exceedlearningpartnership.com)

Telephone Number 01709 805175

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