

# 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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## We cannot rob our most vulnerable pupils of the funding they deserve

There's one big problem with the £2.3 billion extra in school funding. While it is guaranteed to reach and hopefully improve the education of pupils in mainstream school classrooms, their counterparts in special schools might not see a penny.

As leaders say this week, withholding cash from our country's most vulnerable children is unforgivable (page 4).

The additional school funding announced in the 2021 spending review was handed straight to mainstream schools via a grant – and will be rolled into the national funding formula.

But the equivalent cash for special schools and alternative provision was handed to councils – with the advice that schools should “discuss” with their local authorities “any increases”.

Councils – themselves on the brink of bankruptcy with huge funding deficits – perhaps unsurprisingly did not feel able to pass on the cash. A study suggests a quarter might not have handed on any at all.

While councils' struggles cannot be ignored, we agree with leader Warren Carratt that

special schools can “no longer be scapegoated for the mismanagement or underfunding of high needs budgets”.

And we are fully behind the campaign led by Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, who is lobbying the government to ensure the new funding boost does reach our most vulnerable children.

While SEND funding is complex, as Robert Gasson points out in The Conversation (page 32), there are plenty of special school leaders ready to point out how a new and better system could work.

After playing a pivotal role in securing the £2.3 billion for schools, the move by the School Cuts campaign – led by the National Education Union – to now highlight the plight of SEND school funding (page 7) is also hugely welcome.

Special school leaders often say they feel like an afterthought in the school system. This is an opportunity for ministers to show that is not the case.

Any decision that does not protect SEND schools from being robbed of funding increases would be criminal.

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NEWS: SEND

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# School leaders warn ministers over 'robbed' SEND funding

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Schools educating the country's most vulnerable children must not be "robbed" of their share of the £2.3 billion funding boost, ministers were warned as new analysis suggests scores of councils did not pass on previous uplifts.

The government has yet to confirm how an extra £2.3 billion in school funding from next year, announced at the Autumn budget, will be distributed.

Schools Week investigations have revealed how some councils seized millions of pounds in previous funding boosts, with special schools having to go with "begging bowls" or threaten legal action to get cash.

A total of £1.2 billion in extra cash this year was passed straight to mainstream schools. But £325 million allocated for special and alternative provision schools went to councils as part of their high-needs budgets.

Schools were told to "discuss" potential increases with councils. But Schools Week revealed last week how two cash-strapped local authorities had kept up to £4.3 million.

New analysis by SEND specialist Matthew Keer suggests that around 40 councils (just over 25 per cent) did not increase top-up funding for special schools this year, despite the funding boost.

Senior sector leaders have called it a "great robbery".

Leora Cruddas, chief executive at the

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 "begging bowls" plans ahead to let them evade passing on more rises next year.

The extra money special schools are being starved of extra cash that seemed to have 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 budgets. 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.



'Shameful and indefensible decision'

and care plans. Kilders Council kept its £2.4 million "top-up" funding for 2023-24, but only increased it by 4 per cent this year.

Confederation of School Trusts, has now raised the issue with senior officials at the Department for Education (DfE).

It was "very important" the funding goes "directly" to special schools, alternative provision and specialist settings, she said.

"We cannot have a rerun" of councils being given "the discretion about what funding (if any) that would pass on", Cruddas added.

Government said a new minimum funding guarantee (MFG) next year will require councils to increase special schools' top-up funding by 3 per cent.

But councils can still apply to keep the cash.

Many councils are struggling with their own funding woes. Councils' combined deficits in their dedicated schools grant funding is estimated at £1.9 billion, rising to £3.6 billion by 2025.

Louise Gittins, chair of the Local Government Association's children and young people board, said councils



Leora Cruddas

NEWS

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## Special schools left 'begging' councils for tax hike cash

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_95

INVESTIGATES

Special schools are having to take "begging bowls" to councils who are refusing to hand over hundreds of thousands of funding allocated to cover essential hires.

The autumn spending review confirmed £1.6 billion for schools to cover the health and social care levy "and other cost pressures". The levy aims to raise £12 billion each year to help tackle backlogs from Covid.

Mainstream schools will receive the £1.2 billion Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG) directly. But the £325 million allocated for special and alternative provision schools goes to councils as part of their high-needs budget - with these schools told to "discuss" potential increases with their local authority.

Schools Week understands special schools in at least 15 councils have been told the SSG funding would be passed to them.

Warren Carratt, the chief executive of Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, said the trust was now considering legal action.

The health and social care levy will come into effect next month, but a survey of more than 120 schools by the National Network of Special Schools (NNSS) found two thirds of schools had no communication



provisional letter. Despite the fact the trust was now considering legal action.

need "long-term sufficiency of, and certainty over, funding to support children with SEND".

But Graham Quinn, chair at Special Schools Voice, said: "The way the system is set up means that some special schools, depending on their councils, are being robbed of funding that they need to support our children. Overhaul is urgently needed."

Warren Carratt, chief executive of Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, said it means "the most vulnerable pupils in our society have faced the biggest real terms funding squeeze over the last decade".

He said they need "direct, guaranteed additional funding. We can no longer be scapegoated for the mismanagement or underfunding of high needs budgets."

DfE would not comment on the calls for funding reform. They pointed to the 3 per cent funding guarantee, adding high needs funding has increased to £9.1 billion overall this year.

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

## Ministers abandon pledge to decide SEND reforms this year

Ministers appear to have abandoned their pledge to decide on sweeping reforms to the broken special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system by the end of the year.

The much-delayed SEND and alternative provision (AP) green paper included a commitment to identify children's needs more quickly and introduce new national standards for provision.

When it was announced in March, ministers said they would publish a "national SEND delivery plan" on how proposed changes would be implemented "later this year".

It would also set out the government's response to the three-month consultation, which closed in July.

Since then, the Department for Education has had five ministerial

teams amid the Conservative party leadership chaos. Any timelines from minister statements have now been ditched.

Helen Hayes, Labour's shadow children's minister, accused the Conservatives of "sitting on the sidelines" of the SEND system, adding "months of chaos" within the party "must not be allowed to hamper reforms so evidently needed".

"Families had to wait almost 1,000 days for the SEND review to be published. The secretary of state must commit to no further delays in bringing forward plans which respond to the consultation feedback from parents and professionals working to support children with SEND."

In September, then-children's minister Kelly Tolhurst pledged government would "set out its plan for delivering improvements to the SEND

and AP system later this year".

But her wording changed several days later, committing only to publish "an implementation strategy in due course".

Last week, current children's minister Claire Coutinho dropped any timeline from her response. Instead, she said DfE was "currently reviewing the feedback received during the consultation period" to "inform the next stage of delivering improvements".

DfE will "continue to support the system in the immediate term", she added. DfE would not comment further.

Launched in 2019, the review was delayed three times before its publication alongside the schools white paper in March.



Helen Hayes





# Is it really the 'biggest funding injection ever', minister?

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The education secretary has been accused of a "sleight of hand" after claiming the government is making the "biggest injection of funding ever" into schools, when actual growth will be lower than in the 2000s.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced last week that school budgets will increase by £2.3 billion in each of the next two years, though £300 million is not new funding.

In an email to schools this week, Gillian Keegan said the funding was "over and above what has been previously committed both next year and the year after and is the biggest injection of funding ever".

Asked what figure Keegan was referring to, the Department for Education (DfE) pointed *Schools Week* towards the planned £9 billion cash-terms increase in core schools funding between 2021-22 and 2024-25.

And while that increase is likely to be the largest in cash terms over a three-year period, this is not much of a surprise, given pupil numbers are the highest they've been since the 1970s, and inflation is currently at a 40-year high.

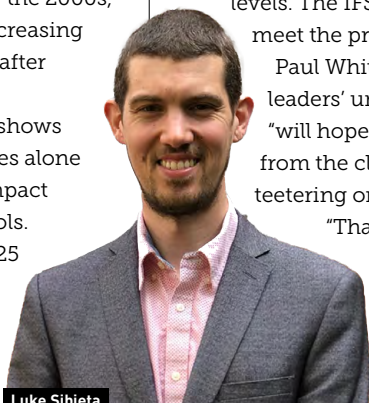
Luke Sibieta, from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), warned that when making historical comparisons "it is crucial to account for increases in prices and changes in pupil numbers".

"When we do, we see that spending per pupil is due to increase by 9 per cent after inflation between 2021-22 and 2024-25, or about 3 per cent per year.

"That's clearly a change of pace compared with recent cuts and it will help schools facing big cost rises. However, this is slower than the increases during the 2000s, when spending per pupil was increasing by about 5 to 6 per cent per year after inflation."

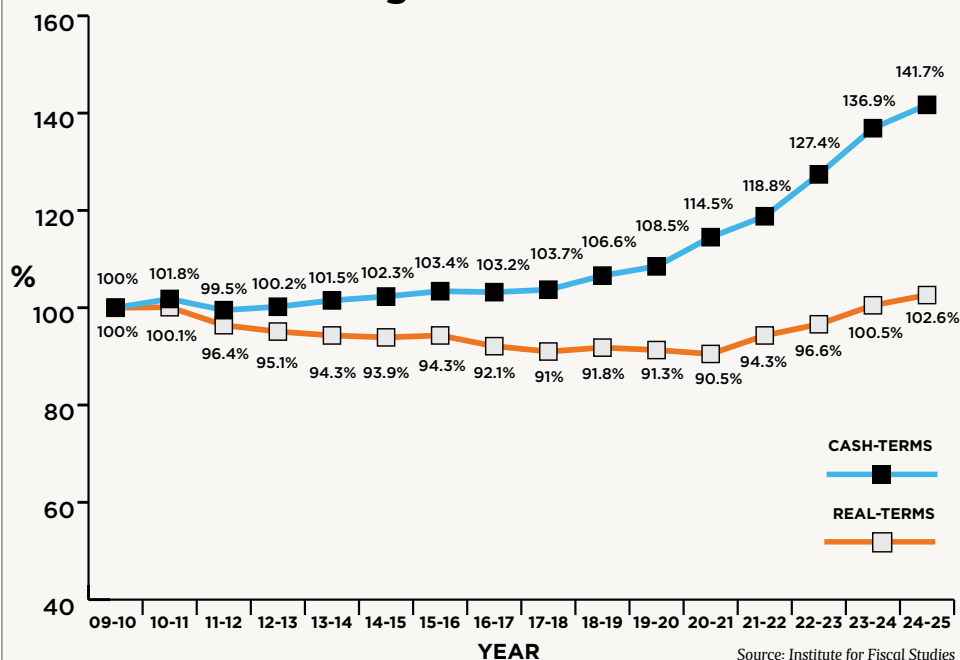
Analysis by the IFS (see graph) shows why relying on cash-terms figures alone does not adequately show the impact funding decisions have on schools.

While school funding in 2024-25 will be 41.7 per cent higher than it was in 2010 in cash terms, it will only be 2.6 per cent higher



Luke Sibieta

## School funding relative to 2009-10 levels



in real terms.

Philip Nye, a data scientist at the Institute for Government, said the additional cash "will undoubtedly help schools deal with the cost pressures they're facing".

"But it probably isn't going to provide enough headroom for pay awards big enough to mean that teacher and support staff salaries have kept pace with inflation between 2020 and 2025."

Keegan pointed to IFS analysis and said the funding settlement "would allow schools to return to at least 2010 levels in real terms – the highest spending year in history – and is what the sector said it needed".

Unions had demanded ministers deliver their promise to return funding to 2010 levels. The IFS said the new cash will meet the promise.

Paul Whiteman, from the NAHT leaders' union, said the money "will hopefully bring schools back from the cliff edge they have been teetering on".

"That said, this doesn't mean schools are completely off the hook. The truly dire cuts we have been warning about will



Gillian Keegan

hopefully no longer have to be made, but there are a myriad of pressures still facing schools that will need consideration very soon."

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said claiming the funding announcement as the "biggest injection of funding ever" was "typical sleight of hand from a government that has been reluctant to address the real problems facing schools".

"It will take much more to restore schools and colleges to a point where efficiency savings can be avoided and they can grow in terms of staffing, resources and building renewal."

## NEWS: FUNDING

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## Influential school cuts campaign to highlight plight of special schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The influential school cuts campaign will now refocus on highlighting the plight of special schools and post-16 institutions after claiming success in its push for more funding.

For the first time, its website will give funding figures for non-mainstream schools amid fears their high teacher-pupil ratios will put them in greater financial difficulty.

"Our campaign worked", a new home page for the union-backed campaign's website now states, after the chancellor announced an extra £2 billion of school funding in each of the next two years.

The campaign exists to show families, school staff and their local communities the impact of national funding decisions on individual settings and council areas. It also asks parents and others to sign open letters to their MPs, lobbying for more funding.

Unions behind the initiative relaunched the service in October amid warnings of a growing school funding shortfall caused by rising costs and unfunded pay rises.

It predicted at the time that 90 per cent of schools would have lower per-pupil funding in real terms in 2023-24, compared to the current financial year.

That has changed following the autumn statement last week, and National Education Union statisticians are working on updating figures to factor-in the additional funding.

**'The work isn't over'**

It is not the first time the school cuts campaign has claimed a victory. After the 2017 election, polling suggested 750,000 changed their vote because of concerns about school funding.

A £1.3 billion funding increase was announced just weeks later.

The campaign lobbied again in 2019 for more funding, and Boris Johnson announced a £7.1 billion increase over three years.

NEU joint general secretary Kevin Courtney told Schools Week he was "confident" the campaign was one of the reasons the chancellor



Kevin Courtney



## Our campaign worked

At the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced an extra £2bn for English schools next year.

We would like to thank everyone who signed the Open Letter.

We will update the website as soon as we have the details of how the funding will be distributed.

[Close and search for your school](#)

The school cuts website



announced the funding last week, but said the fight had not yet been won.

"There's not enough money in school budgets. But what it's shown is that campaigning can be effective."

The website, he said, allows the campaign to "break down for parents a big number like a £2 billion spending gap ... where nobody can understand what that number means for their child's education".

But "even now there's not enough money to allow inflation-matching pay rises, so the work certainly isn't over. But you have to note your successes along the way."

The union is now "working to understand" how the £2 billion will be distributed. Department for Education permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood told MPs on Monday it was "highly likely it will go out through a version of the [existing funding formula]".

However, allocations are unlikely to be published before next month, and it is also not clear how much of the funding will be for high needs or post-16 education.

**'Deep concern' for special schools**

The campaign's focus on SEND is prompted in part by concerns about the disproportionate impact of rising costs on special schools. Even Mark Lehair, a former DfE special adviser, admitted this week that special school funding was "still in a pickle".

Margaret Mulholland, SEND specialist at the ASCL school leaders' union, said they were "deeply

concerned about the impact of inflationary costs on special schools".

"These schools by necessity have high staff-to-pupil ratios in order to provide the support that is needed by their pupils. The lack of government funding for national pay awards for teachers and support staff is therefore even more unaffordable than it is for mainstream schools."

Schools Week investigations have also revealed how extra cash for special schools is not being passed on by local authorities, who are instead using it to plug huge high-needs funding deficits.

"It is essential that the government urgently addresses the pressures on special schools, and indeed on special needs provision in mainstream settings, as this is key to supporting the most vulnerable children in our society," added Mulholland.

The school cuts campaign is not without its critics, especially in the Conservative Party.

In 2019, spurred on by a complaint from the then party chair James Cleverly, the UK Statistics Authority concluded a claim that 91 per cent of schools were facing funding cuts gave a "misleading impression".

But Courtney said the campaign "survived that complaint", and only had to change the tense to state the schools had been cut.

"They didn't do what James Cleverly wanted at all which was to take the website down," he said.

"That's the other thing about our campaign that really matters, of course, is that the data behind it, the figures that we put have been shown to be really robust."



## INVESTIGATION: FUNDING

# Leaders demand clarity after energy support hokey cokey

**TOM BELGER & AMY WALKER**

**@SCHOOLSWEEK**

School leaders are demanding clarity over the government's energy price guarantee, with some schools likely to pay tens of thousands of pounds more if it ends in April.

Mixed messages from government about extending support next year have raised hopes, dashed and then raised them again.

September's energy bill relief scheme announcement included a review after six months, determining which sectors would receive continued support.

Energy brokers report trusts have been holding off deciding on new contracts – sometimes against brokers' advice – to find out whether schools are included.

But last week the autumn statement stated public sector organisations would “not be eligible”. Government figures have argued £2.3 billion extra school funding would help instead.

Yet on Tuesday, schools minister Nick Gibb mentioned the review, saying it would “determine support” when asked about school bills – suggesting an extension is not impossible.

Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the sector needs “clarity” to plan its spending, with April only five months away.

The government's boost to core budgets is “welcome but not sufficient to cover very steep rises in energy costs”.

Hugh Greenway, CEO of the Elliot Foundation, also welcomed it but said it marked a “significant shortfall” versus inflation – and would not reach trusts till September.

Energy quotes seen by *Schools Week* suggest schools taking out 12-month fixed contracts now would pay 42.2 per cent more for gas and 37 per cent more for electricity from April than the current price guarantee.

For the average secondary in a recent small-scale DfE energy survey, that could mean paying £47,200 more a year. The figures only cover the wholesale part of bills, with actual costs potentially higher.

The average school polled is likely to have already seen wholesale costs more than double if its contract



has expired, even with the government's price guarantee.

*Schools Week* analysis of Zenergi figures indicates schools renewing now face paying five times more from April than the contracts available in April 2021.

Wreake Valley Academy in Leicester's £12,282 bill for last month marked a 123 per cent hike year on year. Government support only reduced it by £142, according to headteacher Tim Marston.

“People think ‘what will happen if the government help stops in March?’ Well the government help has had minimal impact.”

The school has managed to reduce electricity usage but only by four per cent, including running IT updates in the day to turn computers off overnight. Its gas is fixed until July, but Marston predicted costs will treble thereafter.

“It feels like the problem is too big for us to solve. Personally, I think there will be some [support] after March but I'm an optimist. But until we can budget costs, you don't know how much you will be able to invest.”

Tim Golding of Zenergi said some school clients were “disappointed” by the complicated relief scheme. While households see a fixed cap per unit of energy used, schools receive grants nominally covering the gap between a

“supported price” and what they pay.

But grants are actually calculated based on weekly average prices, not prices schools have agreed – leaving some saving less than expected and budgeted for.

Janine Owen, chief finance officer at Ace Learning, said she was “frustrated” her trust would not know its current bills until Christmas, with suppliers still finalising them. One of its schools also uses heating oil, like other schools without local gas access.

The autumn statement confirmed alternative fuel users will have to apply to a still-unfinished scheme, and only receive £150, with unspecified top-ups for larger users.

But more than 20 Conservative ministers and senior MPs are reported by the *i* to have claimed £16,000 collectively in energy expenses this year – including a £1,808 claim for heating oil by Gibb.

The price guarantee is expected to mean much bigger savings for one East Yorkshire secondary in the Education Alliance Trust, however. CEO Jonny Uttley said bills would still cost between £125,000 to 150,000, but could have been £250,000 without help.

A government spokesperson said the energy scheme would reduce school bills and provide “certainty” over the winter, and highlighted a £4 billion boost to this year's funding.



Julia Harnden



Jonny Uttley



Tim Marston

NEWS IN BRIEF

## Edtech scheme results 'unproven'

The government can't say whether schools taking part in an £850,000 education technology support scheme improved because of the help they received or because the wider sector became more "confident" with tech.

An evaluation of the second year of the edtech demonstrator programme found "no statistical difference" in results between schools that received support in four of the five areas and those that did not.

In fact, schools that received help in most of the specific areas that formed part of the scheme actually improved less than those that did not receive support with the same thing.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published an evaluation by the Government Social Research department of the second year of the scheme, which was run by the United Church Schools Trust (UCST), the sponsor of United Learning.

The scheme offered support with technology to help with five areas – education recovery, teacher workload, school improvement, resource management and curriculum inclusivity and accessibility. It was scrapped after its second year.

The evaluation, which used 296 survey

responses to score participating schools in the five areas by percentage before and after the scheme, showed settings that received support saw their scores increase across the board.

But the DfE said it saw "similar improvements" that were "also statistically significant" among schools that did not receive support in the same specific outcome areas.

"This means that schools and colleges have made progress across the board, not just in the areas that they received support in."

The department said there were "two potential interpretations".

The first is that schools made progress during the programme even for areas where they did not receive support, for example because demonstrators provided support in more than one area, or because support "spilled over" into other areas.

The second is that schools made progress "regardless of taking part in the programme", for example as a result of the sector nationally becoming "more confident" in using technology.

The DfE looked at the results of schools that received support in a specific area and those that did not, finding "no statistical difference in endline scores between the two groups".

## Autumn suspensions spike



Suspensions from schools reached their highest rate in at least six years last autumn, new data shows, but permanent exclusions are still not yet back to pre-pandemic levels.

Poorer pupils, those with special educational needs and members of the Gypsy and Roma communities remain more likely than their peers to be excluded or suspended from school.

The Department for Education has started publishing termly data on suspensions and exclusions, meaning data for last autumn term is available earlier than it would usually be.

The statistics show there were 183,817 suspensions – previously known as fixed period exclusions – last autumn, equivalent to 221 suspensions for every 10,000 pupils. This is the highest level since current records began in 2016.

Exclusion rates are generally higher in the autumn term, and the rate of suspensions had been increasingly steadily, from 162 per 10,000 pupils in autumn 2016 to 217 in 2019.

However, the rate fell again to 194 in autumn 2020, which the government has put down to the Covid pandemic.

The number and rate of permanent exclusions had not gone back to pre-pandemic levels last autumn, however.

Today's data shows there were 2,097 permanent exclusions last autumn, equivalent to three per 10,000 pupils. This is below the 3,167 exclusions, or four per 10,000, in autumn 2019.

## Air monitors for every class

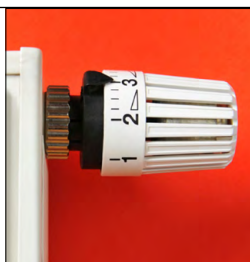
Schools will get enough carbon dioxide (CO2) monitors to put one in every classroom, the DfE has announced, as figures show a steep rise in the number of severe flu cases in England.

The Department for Education (DfE) told headteachers in an update on Thursday that it would provide CO2 monitors to be placed in the "remaining 50 per cent" of classrooms.

It introduced the £25 million scheme last September to help staff identify when ventilation needed to be improved, in an effort to prevent more Covid disruption.

DfE said the extension would be backed by an additional £24 million in funding, adding that the monitors would help schools with "energy efficiency" amid soaring bills.

It added that "good ventilation" in schools remained important, "both for managing the



transmission of airborne illnesses like Covid or flu, as well aiding concentration and alertness".

Schools will also be able to apply to the reopened air cleaning unit programme, although it is not known how many units will be available.

NHS England data released on Thursday shows the number of people hospitalised with flu last week was more than 10 times the number seen at the beginning of December last year.

The ASCL school leaders' union welcomed the latest move.

But business leadership specialist Hayley Dunn said it "would have been better if this had happened earlier in the pandemic as it could have reduced the scale of Covid-related disruption in schools and colleges, but it is better late than never".

[Full story here](#)



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## INVESTIGATION: MATS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# Welcome to the MAT merger era

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

One hundred academy trusts have disappeared over the past year amid growing numbers of mergers and takeovers.

Sector leaders highlight the benefits of scale, limited other ways to grow as academisation has slowed and chief executive retirements that make tie-ups easier.

But merging trusts also face hostility to takeovers, logistical headaches and limited guidance and funding, threatening to undermine the recent white paper's consolidation drive.

Schools Week investigates...

## MAT merger numbers

Trust numbers have soared over the past decade, but more recently begun tailing off. The decline comes in spite of academy numbers growing, with the average trust getting larger.

New analysis of government figures shows 2,460 trusts were running schools in October, down by 100 or 3.9 per cent year on year. There were 23 fewer multi-academy trusts (MATs) and 77 fewer standalone academies.

The pace of trusts disappearing has also increased slightly, from 8.1 a month between June 2019 and October 2021 to 8.3 a month since.

The real figure for closing-down trusts could be even higher if they were offset by new trusts – though it could also be inflated, as some disappearing trusts will have rebranded rather than closed.

Andrea Squires, education partner at Winckworth Sherwood, said the law firm had been busier with mergers than conversions for three years.

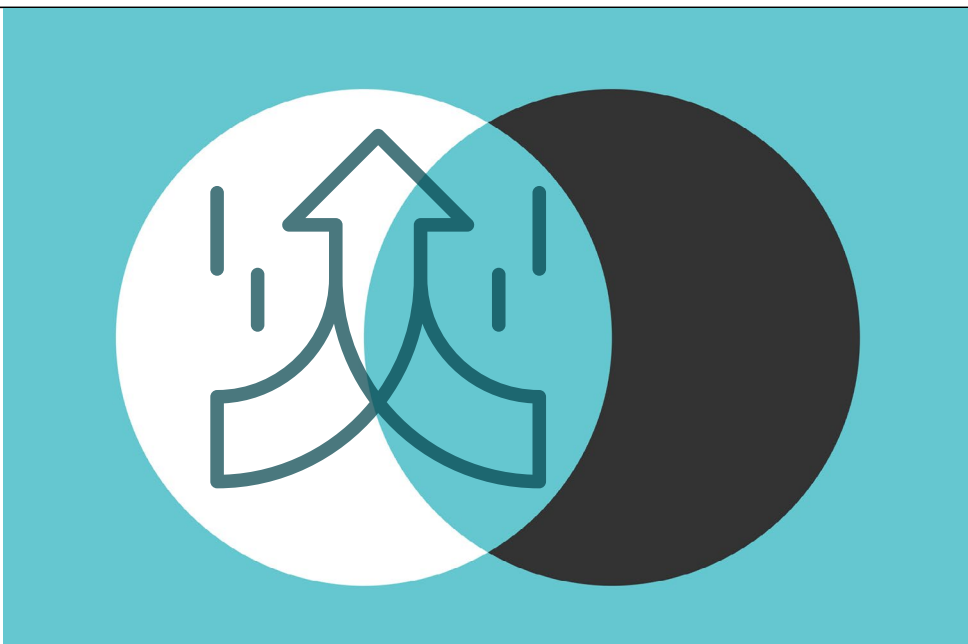
Jeff Marshall, an academy consultant, reports a "steady increase" since 2020.

Schools Week analysis also shows more trusts seeking government sign-off for mergers this year. The Department for Education's regional directors weighed up 12 such proposals at their most recent advisory board meetings this term, versus eight proposals a year earlier.

Meeting minutes from July show a similar trend, up from nine last year to 13 this year.

## 'Taking the best of both trusts'

Marshall said he saw interest spike after



## 'As MATs grow they see the sense in working together more'

ministers revived their all-MAT vision last year, and again with March's white paper. It set a 2030 all-MAT target, with most trusts expected to be "on a trajectory" to have at least 10 schools or 7,500 pupils.

But experts and leaders interviewed by Schools Week said many trusts were warming to tie-ups independently of ministers' wishes. Most proposed mergers scrutinised by government this term were voluntary, and highlighted educational and financial benefits.

"As MATs grow they see the sense in working together more," said Squires.

Garry Ratcliffe, CEO of The Galaxy Trust, said launching joint peer support groups for both

inclusion and business staff with The Pathway Academy Trust had already proved "really useful" ahead of a formal merger in January.

"We're taking the best bits of both trusts. Staff also looked at what worked best from each of our finance, personnel and safeguarding systems."

Andrea Arlidge, CEO of Futura Learning Partnership, said its ongoing merger would enable "investing where we couldn't before, like automating processes and hiring for data and insight posts."

## 'Covid exposed SATs' limited resilience'

For some trusts, tie-ups are responses to challenges.

A spokesperson for Rawlins Academy said it did not feel "pushed" to join the eight-school Embrace MAT, but it had been "continually reinventing the wheel" as a standalone trust (SAT).

He said Covid highlighted SATs' limited resilience. "If one person wasn't in, that was in some cases a whole function out of action."

Advisory board minutes highlight its 19th century buildings too. The spokesperson said the move will "strengthen" its access to capital



Andrea Arlidge, CEO of Futura Learning Partnership



## INVESTIGATION: MATS

funding and expertise to manage it.

Ian Anderson, education director at the Skinners Company, said merging its five sponsored SATs was mainly to share “expertise, experience and economies of scale” in a “tight” budget climate.

But it is also to avoid losing almost £1 million in guaranteed annual building funding, with government reportedly tightening eligibility for grants.

Larger trusts and some other groups receive such cash automatically, whereas trusts with under five schools or 3,000 pupils must bid for it.

### ‘Lacklustre’ academisation drives up rate

Meanwhile, recent “lacklustre” academisation rates have encouraged MATs keen to grow to consider mergers instead, according to Squires.

She claimed regional directors have been “targeting SATs and smaller MATs” too, while school resource management advisers’ visits have “tended to drive trusts towards merger” to strengthen central teams.

One regional director recently agreed a SAT-MAT tie-up followed intervention over £1.5 million in overclaimed maintenance funding at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Penrith.

Last week Lord Knight, chair of the E-ACT trust, also predicted trusts rescuing “unviable” peers amid financial pressures will become increasingly common.

Emma Knights, CEO of the National Governance Association, which co-released merger guidance this year, expects numbers to keep rising – but noted they still remain relatively uncommon.

Most mergers see one trust’s schools legally transfer to another’s, so mergers could be expected to partially show up in academy transfer data. But only 1.8 per cent of academies moved trusts in 2021-22.

### Calls for merger guidance and cash

Leaders highlight logistical challenges. Ratcliffe said it felt like “the stress of a house buyer pulling out nine times”.

“Putting the business case together’s a hassle, convincing everyone’s a hassle, but it’s your job to sell the dream.” He noted many small trusts lack capacity.

Rob Pavey, head of Cheney School, part of a three-school trust that joined the now 28-school River Learning



Jack Mayhew, CEO of Learning Partners

## ‘Expectations have to be reset through clear communication’

Trust in February, was one of several leaders who want more government merger guidance and examples. He said their merger had been “overwhelmingly positive”, but initially finding the “right fit” trust had not been easy, and it had “taken work to harmonise finance and HR systems”.

Learning Partners is also still combining compliance, assessment and management information systems, 14 months post-merger.

CEO Jack Mayhew noted it had had to align different top-slices and do some limited “open, but not forced, rationalisation” of roles.

Arlidge said merging had been “really exciting” but “hard work”, and the lack of dedicated merger funding – unlike conversions – “could mean some don’t happen”.

### Is it a merger, or takeover?

For Ratcliffe, the biggest challenge is “perception”, however. “When’s a merger a merger, or a takeover?”

Polling by Arbor found most trusts keen on mergers are seeking similar-sized or smaller trusts, not larger ones. Most signed off recently are either similar-sized trust mergers, or SATs joining MATs.

“The words never used are ‘take over’ as this tends to trigger sensitivities,” said Squires.

Q&A documents for Learning Partners’ merger last year illustrate common fears, with questions like “will the new trust take money?” and whether “savings mean redundancies”.

Similar-sized trusts often stress plans are “mergers of equals”, sometimes underlined by new names – such as Learning Partners, which united a five-school and seven-school trust.

The largest such merger signed off recently is 14-school Futura Learning Partnership’s tie-up with 13-school Cleveland Learning



Garry Ratcliffe, CEO of The Galaxy Trust, with his TPAT staff discussing merger plans

Trust, though Arlidge said it was not unusually large.

Leaders say extensive consultation can settle nerves and secure buy-in, however.

Some trusts launch joint shadow boards and staff working groups pre-merger to build relationships and help design the joint trust, as well as parent forums and staff drop-in sessions.

### ‘Easier with shared values’

Merging is “much more likely to be successful” when trusts share values and do thorough due diligence, Squires said.

For Nick Osborne, CEO of the Maritime Academy Trust, which merged in 2020 with Barnsole Primary Trust, “the biggest challenge is aligning culture”

Even similar values may be defined differently, and “expectations have to be reset through clear, frequent communication”.

Trusts need “brutally honest” conversations pre-merger about their rituals, expectations and less tangible things “not normally on a tick list”.

It also often takes significant change to make mergers conceivable. Arlidge said she was unaware of any mergers that hadn’t been partly triggered by one CEO’s departure. These can prompt serious reflection on trusts’ futures, and make choosing the post-merger CEO easier.

Mayhew noted many founding CEOs were likely to retire over the next decade. “Does that provide an opportunity to consolidate MATs?”

But Marshall said many strong, smaller trusts were happy with the status quo. The white paper contained few levers to force growth. One leader said recent political upheaval was beginning to “take the pressure off”, with fewer people “jumping around to join a MAT”.

**Avoiding the pitfalls of joining and forming MATs, page 25**

## NEWS: TUTORING

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

# Heads bemused over catch-up clawback, as tutors offer discounts amid stalling take-up

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Bemused heads who say they've used all their tutoring cash have demanded answers, after being told they could end up having money clawed back.

It comes as some tutoring providers warn they are having to fundraise so they can afford to give cash-strapped schools a discount just to keep them providing catch-up under the National Tutoring Programme.

Schools started to receive letters from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) this week confirming whether any of the ring-fenced, school-led tutoring grant would be recovered.

Schools had to fill in a year-end statement detailing their total spend and completed tutoring hours. Any unspent cash will be clawed back by the Treasury. Initial estimates suggested this could be more than £100 million, former schools minister Jonathan Gullis said.

But, some headteachers who say they spent all their tutoring allocation are now being told they will have money clawed back.

Nigel Atwood, headteacher at Bellfield Junior School in Birmingham, said he knew of 20 heads querying their ESFA quotes. Atwood employed a retired teacher as a full-time tutor with the 75 per cent government subsidy, which he then topped up with the 25 per cent required contribution from schools.

He said the school had also met its tutoring hours allocation. But he's been told that £2,929 will be taken back. Funding will be offset from their budget next year.

"I've been talking to other heads to make sure it wasn't just us, it seems that it's very confusing, it's not clear why they are claiming it back. Some haven't used all their funding, but for many that have used all their allocation – it doesn't make sense."

## 'Furious' heads

The ESFA told schools its clawback calculations are based on two points. Officials used schools' submissions to work out the average hourly cost of tutoring per pupil. This is capped at £18 per hour, per pupil.



Schools were told their requirement to fund 25 per cent of the costs were also considered.

But the letter does add: "This means you may have spent more than your allocation, but we still need to recover some funding from you."

John Draper, head teacher at Swaythling Primary School in Southampton, said he was "furious" at being told they will have £2,480 taken back, despite employing a tutor and paying them the full amount.

"We've just about set a balanced budget and got the governors to agree last week to about a £1,600 surplus. But we've had a £2,500 clawback so that pushes us into deficit budget."

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary at school leaders' union NAHT, urged heads who believe the sums are wrong "to contact the DfE immediately".

"We would expect honest mistakes to be put right quickly, with the minimum of fuss. No school should be penalised for attempting to do the right thing for those children that were hit hardest by Covid disruption."

A DfE spokesperson said they were "clear from the outset that any funding not used for school-led tutoring or used incorrectly will be recovered".

"We are supporting schools with this process and have provided clear information on how schools that have concerns can contact the DfE."

## 'Completely unaffordable'

Schools minister Nick Gibb has been urged by tuition partners on the NTP to increase the subsidy for next year.

Schools must pay 40 per cent of tutoring costs this year, which will rise to 75 per cent next year. The organisations warn this is "highly likely to be completely unaffordable for schools".

Gibb has also snubbed calls from the ASCL union to drop the requirement for schools to top-up funding entirely.

## Turning to charity

Charity tutoring providers are now offering discounts on top of the government subsidy just to keep schools using the scheme. Others are fundraising so they can afford discounts.

One organisation leader, who wished to remain anonymous, said "several TPs, particularly charities, have reported supporting some of their partner schools who are really struggling with further discounts on top of the NTP subsidy".

This was to "ensure that those pupils that really need the support, especially those eligible for pupil premium, can access it".

Another said they have always done extra discounts, but "this year more schools than ever are asking for help".

"Next year, unless NTP discounts or school budgets are far bigger than currently planned, it will be totally unsustainable."



## NEWS: MATS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# 'Ego-free' trusts group to push diversity and female leaders

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

A "no-ego" group for trusts has vowed to champion diverse school voices and help more women reach top jobs, as the previously low-profile network doubles its membership.

The Queen Street Group (QSG) – which has evolved from an informal group of CEOs in 2015 to a formal network of 35 trusts, largely serving disadvantaged communities – this week launched its three-point agenda for the year.

The group has pledged to find practical ways to tackle under-representation of women among trust chiefs, help growing trusts avoid older trusts' mistakes and make multi-academy trusts (MATs) "leaders in their communities".

## 'Different voices are heard'

Steve Taylor, CEO of the Cabot Learning Federation and QSG chair, said the group first emerged as a place for leaders to provide mutual support and "swap ideas".

They could be "authentic" and "candid about things we're wrestling with, not just things we're confident about", speaking together under Chatham House rules.

He brushed off past characterisation of the group as "secret", saying it initially did limited public work simply as it "wasn't fully formed".

Given the sector's "tough accountability structure", leaders can seek help when "outcomes dip and then it's a 'bad trust' – we've all experienced that". The group's new annual report stresses most of its schools are "good" or better sponsored academies, however.

While Taylor says QSG does not claim to speak for the sector, it has sought to influence policymakers and regulators, meeting ministers, the opposition and other sector bodies.

QSG has lobbied ministers on issues including defining "strong" trusts and provided them with case studies on schools' experiences of joining MATs.

The QSG also submitted proposals ahead of the white paper and Education and Skills Funding Agency review, including calls to scrap "cumbersome" regulations and efforts to find the "perfect" MAT size.

They proposed extra funding too for trusts to take on financially vulnerable schools, warning



QSG board members Rowena Hackwood, CEO of Astrea Academy Trust, and Steve Taylor, CEO of Cabot Learning Federation

that otherwise only less experienced – rather than prudent – trusts will do so.

## New-look board for invite-only group

Multiple new board members joined late last year, including not just trust leaders but also Natalie Perera of the Education Policy Institute and Professor Becky Francis of the Education Endowment Foundation. The invitation-only group also expanded from 22 members to 35 this year.

A key focus in its lobbying work is to ensure "difference voices are heard" and not "accidentally chat ourselves into one single view of the world", said Rowena Hackwood, CEO of the Astrea Academy Trust and QSG vice-chair.

"A primary trust in North Yorkshire's going to have a different perspective from mixed large MATs in the south, or a faith MAT. If you take Covid, you hear things like 'children only lost three months of learning and gained two months back' – you end up with an average of an average that doesn't represent lived experience.

"People can find it hard to know how to get their voices heard, and feel a long way from policy."

## Plans on growth, female leaders and communities

The group will provide case studies and a network to share learning from older trusts on growth.

Government wants all trusts to have 10 schools or 7,500 pupils.



"It's always tricky to tell the next generation 'don't do it or do it as I did', but I fear some of what happened in the past, things we didn't anticipate when trusts were first growing, may now be repeated," Hackwood said.

Her trust is leading on the second priority, developing female leadership. "Something happens between senior leadership and the transition to chief executive – we see a big drop-off in numbers."

She highlighted Zoom calls of large trust leaders where only around five of 30 or more faces were female, saying it stopped some women speaking.

QSG held a conference of 60 senior female leaders last month, with sessions on cultural change and allyship.

Senior leaders below CEO level said it was an "ego-free zone" that gave them confidence and role models, Hackwood said.

It has sparked plans to launch a mentoring programme. Hackwood has called QSG itself a "no-ego safe space" for leaders.

A third priority this year is improving how MATs support local communities and agencies.

"There's been a slightly under-nuanced perspective in the past – 'I thought this was someone else's job' – that's gone now," Taylor said. "So we can have a collaborative approach."

They have held meetings with fire, housing and police representatives, and debated best practice within trusts.

"People are struggling. The sector's seen huge take-up of foodbanks by our students, families and staff, which is horrific," Hackwood added.

"We've got to think bigger, more creatively, learn from others, stop being so inward-looking and stretch our minds a little bit."

## NEWS: MENTAL HEALTH

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Mental health pushing school leaders out faster than ever

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

More than a third of senior leaders are actively looking to leave the education sector, a new study that shows heads are at high risk of depression has revealed.

The findings from the 2022 Teacher Wellbeing Index, shared exclusively with Schools Week, also shows mental health and wellbeing among heads, assistants and deputies has worsened in recent years.

It comes amid concerns about retention rates in such roles, with heads' telephone wellbeing service Headrest saying it was "sadly unsurprised" by the report.

In the poll of 707 senior leaders working across primaries, secondaries and further education, 67 per cent said they thought about leaving the sector in the 2021-22 academic year.

It marks a four percentage point increase from the previous year, when 63 per cent of senior leaders told charity Education Support – which conducts the index – they had considered leaving education in the past two years.

Of those considering leaving this year, just over half had actively sought to quit. This equates to 37 per cent of all those polled.

Schools Week recently



revealed headteacher turnover had risen by a third since before the pandemic.

SchoolDash data shows there were 2,127 headteacher changes this September, when appointments usually peak, up from 1,584 in September 2019 – a 34 per cent rise.

An analysis of official figures by school leaders' union NAHT earlier this year also found more than a third of new secondary heads left the profession within five years.

Ros McMullen, a secondary head and co-founder of Headrest, said: "Sadly this report is not a surprise to us: we are deeply concerned at the loss of many headteachers due to a variety of factors."

She added that these included the "oppressive nature" of Ofsted inspections, budget pressures and "increasing difficulties" in recruiting other staff.

"This is all proving too much for so many headteachers," said McMullen.



Ros McMullen

Senior leaders in Education Support's survey included headteachers, principals, deputy and assistant heads, as well as heads and deputy heads of departments.

The report shows the average wellbeing score of senior leaders is at 43.37 – the lowest in four years. During lockdowns in 2020, the figure stood at 45.20.

Those with scores of between 41 and 45 on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale are considered at high risk of psychological distress and increased risk of depression. The average wellbeing score for England's population is 52.40.

Asked if their workplace supported employees experiencing problems with mental health, 51 per cent of senior leaders said they did not feel well supported. This was a 10 per cent increase on 2020-21.

They also showed signs of faring worse than other school staff. A total of 37 per cent reported signs of burnout – higher than teachers and support staff – and a five per cent rise on the previous year.

Paul Whiteman, NAHT's general secretary, said the report reflected its members' concerns on "crushing workloads" and lower salaries in real-terms that had left them at "breaking point".

"Unless the government acts urgently to restore pay and make school leadership an attractive proposition for teaching professionals, the school leadership supply pipeline is going to run dry."

The Department for Education was contacted for comment.

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Study calls for catch-up cash to boost pupils' mental health

Schools should be able to use their catch-up cash to provide mental health support for pupils, academics said.

Research by UCL and the Sutton Trust shows more than two in five 16 to 17-year-olds in England had "probable" mental ill health, classed as having high levels of psychological distress.

This is nine percentage points higher than the 35 per cent reporting distress at age 17-18 in a similar 2017 study by UCL's Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

*The Covid Social Mobility & Opportunities Study* looked at how events during the pandemic years

had impacted the mental wellbeing of the 2021-22 GCSE cohort.

Pupils who had long Covid or had to shield during the pandemic were more likely to have high psychological distress.

More than half of the 12,828 youngsters who responded last year said they were less motivated to study and learn as a result of the pandemic.

Of those with high psychological distress, 68 per cent said they felt the pandemic's disruption had made them less motivated to learn, compared to only 37 per cent of other respondents.

Dr Jake Anders, deputy director of the UCL Centre for Education Policy and the report's principal investigator, said the findings were "shocking", but added the pandemic only "sped up" already declining mental health.

Academics said mental health and wellbeing support should be added to catch-up activities in schools, with "specific interventions for those with existing mental health issues who feel that the pandemic has affected their academic progress".

They also say a chunk of catch-up cash should be added to school funding allocations and ringfenced for mental health support.

# Congratulations to our 2022 Gold Winners announced on BBC One's The One Show from 21st-25th November



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Carlton Keighley



Kalam Neale,  
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## INVESTIGATION: CURRICULUM

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# Lords lobbying minister to scrap Oak paid by ed tech firms

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

Politicians calling for the Oak National Academy to be scrapped are on the payroll of ed tech or publishing firms, *Schools Week* can reveal.

A letter to Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, last week said the £42 million earmarked for the curriculum quango was a waste of "vital public funding on what looks set to become another unwanted and ill-fated government technology project".

Four of the five members of the House of Lords who signed the letter have paid roles with potential rivals to Oak.

The letter, coordinated by the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), said the Oak money should be handed to schools instead.

Will Bickford Smith, a former senior advisor at the Department for Education while Oak was being established, said it was "disappointing" to see peers oppose the investment for classroom teachers.

"It's even more disappointing to learn that they are doing so whilst in the pockets of edtech companies and publishers, speaking up on behalf of private interests against a demonstrable public good.

"Oak must ignore the vested interests and continue to serve teachers and their pupils across the country."

The register of interests for Lord Vaizey, a former culture minister, show he is a paid adviser at Perlego, an online textbook company billed as the 'Spotify for textbooks' and ScaleUp, an investment firm.

ScaleUp owns Kapow Primary, which sells "digital training content" in "non-core specialist subjects" to more than 3,000 schools.

Vaizey also asked a question in the Lords about the "impact" of Oak funding "on the education technology market" earlier this month.

He queried why ministers had decided to "nationalise



the education technology and publishing sector" with a quango "nobody wants".

Lord Knight, a former schools minister who also criticised Oak during the debate, is a non-executive director at ed-tech firm Century-Tech and director of Suklaa, an education consultancy whose clients include ed tech companies.

He told *Schools Week* "partially because they [the Lords] are involved in the industry – they understand the impact that this clumsy intervention would have... I think there's a good case for a quango to drive up standards, but that's not what this is."

Both Vaizey and Knight declared their interests during the debate, as is required. Vaizey did not respond to a request for comment.

The BESA letter was also signed by two peers linked to publishing firms – Baroness Rebuck, former chair now non-executive director (NED) at Penguin Random House and Lord Strathcarron, chair and joint-owner of Unicorn Publishing House.

Strathcarron said his objection is "entirely political and not remotely financial". Unicorn has no connection to academic publishing.

But he said "taken to its logical conclusion under secondary legislation this will give the secretary of state ultimate authority of what

goes into children's learning books, with obvious dangers in terms of what is taught in subjects like society and history".

Rebuck did not respond to a request for comment.

Lords are not required to state how much they receive for outside roles. Knight said he was bound by confidentiality, but added "we are talking small businesses who would not be paying much to NEDs".

The BESA letter stated "ed tech investors are already deserting the UK as a result of the market distortion caused by Oak". BESA said this was based on conversations with a number of "prominent" investors.

One was Simon Phillips, who said he would be "forced to pull away" from "several new investments" because of Oak. Phillips is CEO at ScaleUp, the company which pays Vaizey as an adviser.

The government's own business case for Oak concluded bodies representing commercial curriculum providers had "some evidence of an impact on the market, but not for the level of impact they are suggesting."

The fifth signatory was Baroness Hooper, who is honorary president of BESA, which is currently suing the government over the quango.

A failed high court legal case could cost the claimant upwards of £1 million. BESA said this shows "how serious the sector considers" Oak's impact on its "future viability".

A government report yesterday found more than 1,000 active companies in the English edtech market with between 32,000 and 49,000 employees. The business generated between £3.7 billion to £4.0 billion in gross value added to the economy last year.

A Department for Education spokesperson said they "value the importance of a competitive commercial market and so it will always be teachers who choose" whether to use Oak.



Lord Vaizey



Lord Knight



Will Bickford Smith

## SPEED READ: TIMES TABLES

## First times tables test results: what you need to know

More than a quarter of year 4 pupils scored full marks in the first year of the government's new times tables test, but there was an average two mark gap between poorer children and their peers.

The first "multiplication tables check" results were published yesterday.

The tests became statutory in all state schools last year to determine whether pupils can "fluently recall" up to their 12 times tables by the age of nine.

The tests are taken online, and pupils have to answer 25 questions with just six seconds for each.

Schools minister Nick Gibb hailed the results, calling maths "vital for doing essential calculations like how a higher base rate will affect your mortgage or working out the best multi-pack bargains in a supermarket".

The government also announced £59.3 million in funding for another year of its maths hubs programme.

Gibb said the funding was "also crucial, as we continue raising the standard of maths teaching across the country and driving towards our target for 90 per cent of children leaving primary school with the expected standard in mathematics and English by 2030".

Here's what you need to know...

## 1 OVER A QUARTER NET FULL MARKS ...

The most common mark on the test was full marks – with 27 per cent of pupils achieving this score.

A further 12 per cent achieved 24 marks, while seven per cent gained 23 marks.

The average score was 19.8 out of 25. As it's the first year of results there is nothing to compare this performance to.

Boys tended to do better – with a mean average score of 20 – compared to 19.6 for girls. This is a similar pattern to key stage 1 and 2 SATs results. Girls tend to outperform boys in reading and writing.

## 2 ... BUT POORER PUPILS HAVE LOWER SCORES

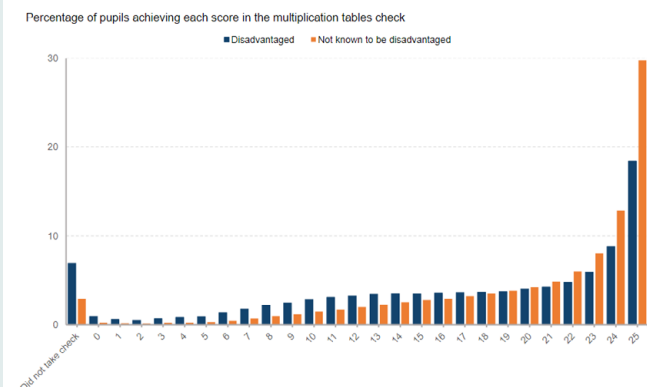
Disadvantaged children who took the test achieved an average score of 17.9. This compares to 20.5 for their better-off peers – a 2.6-mark gap.

When looking at those achieving top marks, 18 per cent were disadvantaged, compared to 30 per cent who were not.

Pupils whose first language isn't English outperformed their counterparts with an average score of 21.2 compared to 19.4 for those whose first language is English.

Chinese pupils were the highest achieving ethnic group with an average score of 23.5, followed by Indian pupils with 22.7. Pupils of Irish Traveller heritage were the lowest-performers with an average score of 13.2.

### A smaller proportion of disadvantaged pupils scored full marks than other pupils, but it was still the most common score for both groups



## 3 16K PUPILS WORKING BELOW LEVEL OF TEST

The DfE said pupils should not take the test if they are unable to answer the easiest questions or are working below the national curriculum expectation, or year 2 level, in their times tables.

In total, 95.9 per cent of eligible pupils took the test, which is 625,831 children. But 26,692 did not.

Of these, 16,682 were working below the level of assessment. Another 3,724 were absent.

More than half of pupils with an education, health and care plan did not take the test. Six per cent of those who did achieved full marks.

Seven per cent of disadvantaged students did not take the test, compared to 3 per cent of their wealthier counterparts.

## 4 LONDON HAS HIGHEST AVERAGE SCORE

The average score was highest in London at 20.9, with the lowest in the south west at 19.1. The north west and West Midlands average score was 19.9.

But the most common score was still 25 – full marks – in all regions.

Broken down by local authority area, the highest average score was achieved in the London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, at 22 and Harrow, at 21.9.

The lowest average scores were in the Isle of Wight at 18 and in Norfolk and Kingston upon Hull, at 18.2.

Free schools had the highest average score of 20.9. Sponsored academies ranked lowest with an average score of 19.2.

## 5 SEPTEMBER BABIES PERFORMED BEST

The average score was highest for September-born pupils at 20.6, compared to 19 for August babies.

Thirty-one per cent of September pupils gained full marks, compared to 23 per cent of August-born children. This is similar to key stage 1 and 2 maths SATs results.

## NEWS

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# Most top-rated schools lose coveted grade

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

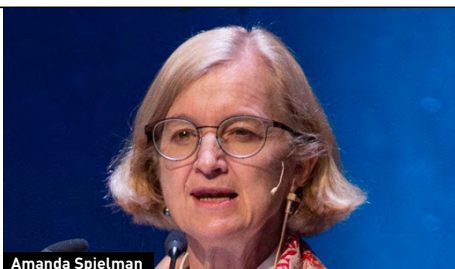
More than 80 per cent of 'outstanding' schools inspected last year lost their top grade after the exemption from inspection was finally removed.

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman said the findings "show that removing a school from scrutiny does not make it better". A fifth dropped at least two grades.

Schools rated 'outstanding' were exempt from re-inspection between 2012 and 2020, unless inspectors had concerns about their performance or safeguarding arrangements, and some schools had not been inspected for 15 years. The exemption was lifted in 2020.

In its latest report, Ofsted said that 308 of the 370 previously exempt schools that had a graded inspection in the last academic year were downgraded, equating to 83 per cent.

The majority (62 per cent) dropped to 'good', but over a fifth fell to 'requires improvement' (17 per cent) or 'inadequate' (4 per cent). Primary schools were more likely to lose their top grade.



Amanda Spielman

Spielman said exempting outstanding schools "deprived parents of up-to-date information", and "left a lot of schools without the constructive challenge that regular inspection provides".

"The exemption was a policy founded on the hope that high standards, once achieved, would never drop, and that freedom from inspection might drive them even higher. These outcomes show that removing a school from scrutiny does not make it better," she added.

Schools are being prioritised for inspection on the basis of how long they have gone without one, with Ofsted due to inspect all previously exempt schools by 2025.

The watchdog said the average length of time since the last inspection of schools visited last year was 13 years, with some not visited for as long as 15

years. Ofsted said "many" of the schools inspected had experienced "significant change" since their last inspections.

This "may mean that schools inspected in 2021-22 are not typical of all exempt schools, and the pattern of inspection outcomes may change later".

But analysis from FFT Education Datalab found secondary schools that had not been inspected for 14 years or more were actually more likely to keep their 'outstanding' grade than those last inspected in the last 10 years.

Schools rated 'outstanding' after September 2015 usually receive ungraded inspections – meaning they cannot change their overall rating. But inspectors can flag concerns that a school may not be 'outstanding' anymore.

Last year, Ofsted carried out 130 ungraded inspections of previously exempt schools, identifying concerns in 59 per cent of them. They will receive a graded inspection within about a year.

A Department for Education spokesperson said being judged 'outstanding' was "tougher than ever".

They claimed that "despite raising the bar schools need to reach, the government has rapidly improved school standards, thanks to the tireless efforts of school leaders".

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Recruitment crisis sees schools turn to non-specialists

Nearly half of secondary schools have used non-specialists to teach maths, physics and foreign languages amid an ongoing teacher recruitment crisis.

A National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) study found that teachers were being asked to deliver classes for subjects in which they did not hold degrees.

In the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, 45 per cent of surveyed state-funded secondaries reported using non-specialist teachers for at least 'some' maths lessons. The figure for physics and MFL was 39 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

All three subjects have failed to meet initial teacher training (ITT) targets over a number of years. *Schools Week* analysis of ITT recruitment for this year showed government has missed its secondary school targets again, with physics likely to be hardest hit. Official numbers will be published next week.

Vacancies are at record-breaking levels. The website TeachVac has posted 100,000 adverts for teaching posts so far this calendar year. It



typically has around 60,000 jobs in a "normal year".

Schools have reported budget pressures as a key recruitment challenge, as well as the lack of available and qualified applicants.

Across the two years, a total of 650 responses were received from senior leaders in secondary schools.

Schools with the greatest recruitment issues were more likely to use teachers without a specialism to deliver key subjects.

In the 20 per cent of schools that experienced the most difficulty in recruiting, 62 per cent said that at least some maths lessons had been taught by non-specialists.

Around 70 per cent of secondary schools also reported senior leaders doing more teaching than

usual.

The report warned that this could "reduce the school's leadership capacity and, in turn, limit the schools' ability to function well operationally and make improvements to teaching".

It also suggests a link between low Ofsted ratings and increased recruitment challenges. Only 15 per cent of primary and secondary schools rated 'outstanding' and 20 per cent rated 'good' were among those classed as experiencing the most difficulty with recruitment.

Some 26 per cent of schools requiring improvement or rated as inadequate were among this group.

NFER said this could "exacerbate the challenges of improving the quality of education in the school" whether through reduced leadership capacity or lower-quality teachers being deployed.

A Department for Education spokesperson pointed to recent pay rises and increased bursaries, but recognised there was "more to do" to attract and keep "talented individuals" in classrooms.



## NEWS

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## CEO leadership scheme 'could breach competition rules'

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government has been warned plans to launch a trust leadership development programme could "seriously undermine" existing providers and risk breaching competition rules.

The Department for Education's (DfE) white paper in March promised extra training and support to ensure trusts have enough "highly effective leaders" as more schools academise and trusts grow in size. Ministers want all schools to be in or planning to join strong trusts by 2030.

Contract documents show it has begun searching for operators to "build a sector-leading multi-academy trust (MAT) CEO training programme", ready for a first cohort next September.

Alumni should build "capacity to grow their groups of schools into a large MAT, and then lead that MAT effectively".

But the move has sparked alarm among organisations already offering leadership development support to trust leaders.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of school leaders' union ASCL, Alice Gregson, executive director of Forum Strategy and Ann Palmer, director of Fig Tree International, raised "major concerns" in a letter to education secretary Gillian Keegan.

They warn that government could use its dominant position as a



regulator and founder of trusts to "ensure its CEO framework and leadership development programme achieve a monopoly" or undermine other providers – even if "unintended".

They say the government could further undermine existing provision by using "significant" public funding to subsidise its programme.

A third criticism involves an advisory group appointed to shape the government's programme, with meetings and decision-making "not public".

They write: "Those on the group, and any organisations they are associated with, would be at a significant and unfair advantage should they decide in the near future to apply to deliver the ... programme."

They want to "engage in a constructive conversation

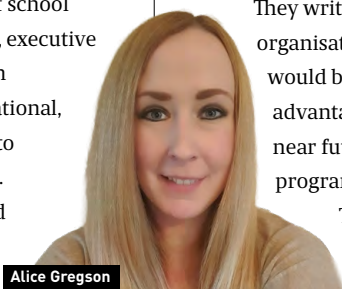
before considering next steps, including raising our concerns with both the Competition and Markets Authority and the Cabinet Office."

Palmer, whose Fig Tree International programmes include training for diverse leaders, said she understood the need for "consistency in terms of the skills CEOs are expected to have".

But she said the government should look at how existing successful programmes could "complement any national framework", and called for it to include indicators for increasing diversity.

The plans could see the DfE embroiled in yet another procurement row, after the British Educational Suppliers Association threatened action over its curriculum plans via Oak National Academy earlier this year.

A DfE spokesperson said its programme would help existing leaders "step up" to run larger trusts, and external advisory group members could not "directly partake in any bid".



Alice Gregson

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Vaccine taskforce book for schools could prove a long shot

A private equity investor has paid for a book on the UK's vaccine taskforce to be sent to every secondary school in England.

Ian Armitage, who is also director at education support service The Key, said he wanted to "inspire a few students to pursue careers in science and applied science and think more positively about the world".

*The Long Shot*, written by former taskforce director Kate Bingham and former *Times* journalist Tim Hames, charts the success of the vaccines squad in enabling the UK to

become the first country in the world to deploy approved Covid vaccines.

Armitage paid Hames' co-writing fee. He said the story explored "what's involved in getting a drug or a vaccine approved and all the barriers faced".

"We've forgotten vaccines, we take them for granted. In my life it's one of the most impactful events I've witnessed," he added. "I thought it was a really important story and we needed a book of record."

His hope now is that copies will end up in

school libraries. Such an endeavour had cost "a few bob", including in distribution fees, he said.

But it's unclear how well this message is getting across to headteachers receiving the books. An accompanying note from The Key reads: "We hope [the book] inspires young readers to learn how to make calculated choices, to build things from scratch."

"The Long Shot is to be read and shared so that readers at your school will find something that scratches an itch".

## NEWS

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# Step aside Eton: new trust joins 'elite' sixth form race

JASON NOBLE

@JASON\_NOBLE89

A Bradford-based academy trust has unveiled plans for an "elite" all-girls STEM sixth form college. But, the proposals have gathered a mixed response from local education chiefs.

Feversham Education Trust is consulting on its early proposals with a view to submit a bid to wave 15 of the Department of Education's free school application process.

Government ambitions for new "elite" sixth forms emerged earlier this year as part of its levelling up white paper, targeted at the 55 education investment areas (of which Bradford is one) where it aims to bolster opportunities for disadvantaged pupils.

To date, the most high-profile bids have been from renowned private school Eton College, which has teamed up with Star Academies to submit proposals for selective sixth forms in Dudley, Middlesbrough and Oldham.

The government's plan proved divisive at the time of the announcement, with the response to Feversham's bid similarly mixed.

Luminate Education Group, which runs schools and colleges in the proposed catchment, said it was "short-sighted" and "saw little value in the concept of elite sixth forms".

Gemma Simmons-Blench, deputy chief executive for quality and curriculum, told sister title FE Week: "In an educational context, the elitist model inevitably leads to fragmentation of provision and a 'winner versus losers' scenario – the opposite of the inclusive, collaborative approach we and other colleges have been successfully pursuing".

She said elite sixth forms "will offer nothing for the many students who would benefit from a more technical or vocational approach, rather than a narrowly academic one."

The group warned that "unnecessary



Imran Hussain, Labour MP for Bradford

competition" could put some institutions and their programmes at risk of closure.

The sixth form would have 250 students in each year group and admit girls aged 16 to 18 from Bradford and the neighbouring cities and districts.

But a Feversham Education Trust spokesperson defended its plans.

"Given the ongoing need to improve female representation in the STEM sector, and the clear demand from related businesses for jobs and talent both regionally and nationally, we are in the very early stages of considering the establishment of an all-girls STEM sixth form college, to provide a proactive and innovative solution to these challenges."

As part of its consultation, Feversham is asking interested parties whether other specialisms should be considered, such as humanities, English, law or social sciences.

It is also asking for feedback on the types of courses it should offer, including A-levels, T Levels, BTECs and apprenticeships.

The trust already runs two girls secondary schools and a primary, meaning the sixth form would likely provide an avenue of progression for its current students.

The bid has been backed by Bradford

Council. A spokesperson said Feversham has "a track record of delivering outstanding Ofsted-rated provision that is valued by the local community."

"We remain committed to working with all partners to deliver improved outcomes in the post-16 phase in the Bradford district."

The spokesperson added that while there was "not a basic need for places in the district," the proposal contributes to ambitions of improving post-16 education and "also the national challenge that not enough young women are pursuing STEM pathways into higher education or as a career choice".

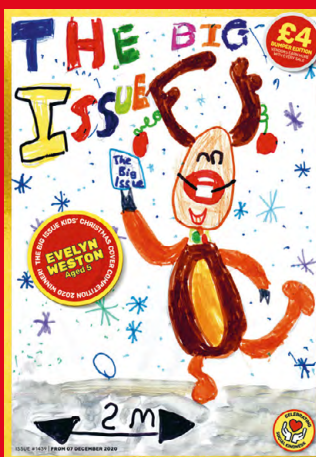
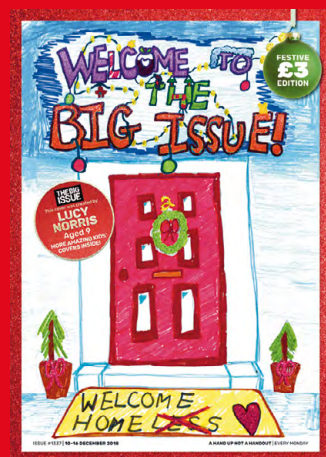
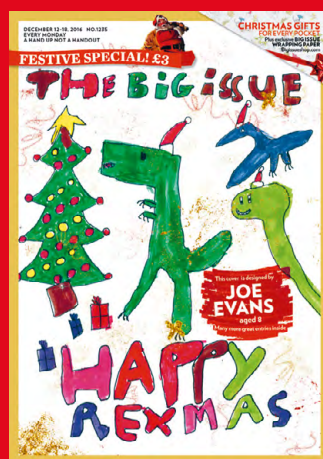
Imran Hussain, Labour MP for Bradford East, also said he was delighted with Feversham's plans in "opening new doors" for girls' participation in STEM.

"With girls woefully underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and maths fields and careers, particularly computer science and engineering, the whole country is missing out on the potential that they can bring, and we need to be doing much more to break down the barriers that many women and girls face in taking up these subjects and seeing it as a viable future career."



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# Investigation

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



## The ‘ticking time bomb’ leaving schools ‘liable to collapse’

Ministers are urgently asking for details about a “crumbly” type of concrete used widely in flat-roofed school buildings, often hidden from sight but now feared to be leaving schools “liable to collapse”. Jessica Hill investigates

### How widespread is the problem?

The collapse of a primary school’s flat roof in 2018 – luckily at a weekend and resulting in no casualties – is believed to have brought the potential danger of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete’s (RAAC) fragility into sharp focus.

While RAAC may look like traditional concrete,

it is weaker, with chocolate Aero-like bubbles. Because the concrete is often obscured from view above ceilings, schools are often unaware of its presence.

But this September, the Office for Government Property (OGP) issued a safety briefing notice to all property leaders warning RAAC is “now life

expired and liable to collapse”.

They warned “this has already happened in two schools with little or no notice”.

In the incident that prompted concerns about RAAC in schools, at Singlewell Primary School in Gravesend, signs of structural stress only appeared 24 hours before the roof gave

# Investigation: School buildings



Steve Barclay

way. It happened above the school staff room, also damaging toilets, ICT equipment and an administration area. The collapse prompted Kent Council to write to other local authorities warning them to check for RAAC in their schools.

A 2019 safety alert from the Standing Committee on Structural Safety on the “failure of RAAC planks” recommended all those installed before 1980 were replaced.

But while the government has pledged to eradicate them from hospitals, it has not made the same assurances to schools.

In fact, the information for schools applying for grants in next year’s condition improvement funding round says that “not all RAAC is dangerous”.

The concrete has nonetheless moved up the Department for Education’s priority list. DfE has recently updated guidance to schools on identifying and managing RAAC amid concerns it is little understood, and that many remain unaware the problem exists in their buildings.

But the department is also in the dark. In March, responsible bodies of state-funded schools were invited to complete a survey so ministers can get a clearer picture on the prevalence of RAAC in the school estate.

But many have yet to respond. The survey was recirculated in October with a message urging a response as soon as possible.

The issue has been picked up by former education select committee chair Robert Halfon, now skills minister. Responding to a parliamentary question last month, then schools minister Jonathan Gullis said an “initial estimate” from survey findings “may be issued in April”.

Graham Hasting-Evans, president of the British Association of Construction Heads, described RAAC as a “ticking time bomb” that “nobody



RAAC sample showing 'bubbly' texture

## ‘The problem may be more serious than previously appreciated’

wants to face up to”.

Hasting-Evans estimates that around half of the four million non-residential buildings in the UK could be affected by RAAC.

“There’s just not been enough talk about it,” he said. “People are worried about Grenfell – there are companies thinking ‘I’m going to go bust because I’ll get sued’. And they don’t want to worry about [RAAC], even though they know it’s there.”

He said that “it’s not just about cladding, it’s about the structural integrity of the building itself – if it was built with a reinforced concrete frame and that concrete isn’t strong enough, the building starts to fall apart.”

Experts say it is more of a problem in the eaves of buildings exposed to rain and corrosion, with schools on the coast more susceptible to problems because of the higher concentration of salt in the air.

Ian Harrington, partner at Eddisons chartered surveyors, compares the challenge to “catching cancer in time”.

“For some, it’s so bad you’d have to remove the whole structure. But for other schools, they’ve caught it in time and if you cover it and keep it wind and water-tight, it will be OK.”

### Disagreement on severity

Health Minister Steve Barclay told health leaders at the NHS Providers conference earlier this month he understands “the seriousness of this issue and I am committed to delivering the government’s commitment to eradicating RAAC from the NHS estate”.

The DfE is publicly advising trusts and councils to assess the RAAC condition and “develop the most appropriate measures to mitigate any building safety risks, particularly when managing older estates”.

Daniel Grant, a technical manager for Alumasc Roofing, based in St Helens, said RAAC has been “moved up the list by DfE to ‘urgent structural deck’, so they are saying buildings with that deck in have to be stripped out as a matter of urgency.”

But it can be difficult to understand if a school has any RAAC in its structure, or how much of a danger this poses.

The OGP warned that “RAAC planks may look the same as precast concrete and may be hidden above false ceilings”.

A February report from the Institution of Structural Engineers explained that although visual surveys help assess the condition of the



# Investigation: School buildings

panels, “the nature of any warning signs of the sudden failure at the bearings are not fully known”.

“Not all defects are visible ... panels which appear to be in a good condition may conceal hidden defects which could present a risk to the integrity of the panels,” it said. “The corrosion of reinforcement could lead to large pieces of RAAC falling which presents a risk to occupants.”

Hodge Hill primary school in Birmingham was told by surveyors part of its roof deck is made of RAAC and urgently needed replacing. But the DfE's own surveyor is contesting the findings.

A spokesperson for the school said they checked the roof as part of the process to invest in rebuilding an older section of the school.

They said the “complexities” mean there are still “some differing viewpoints. If it is confirmed, then we will be working with the DfE to understand what it means and what the next steps are. It is important to stress that there are no current concerns about the safety of our building.”

But the Local Government Association said the sudden collapse of the two schools' roofs this year suggests the problem “may be more serious than previously appreciated and that many building owners are not aware that it is present in their property”.

They added it was “vital checks are urgently carried out”.

## Schools at the forefront of RAAC crisis

But what happens when RAAC is identified? Of the 1,129 academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided schools receiving a share of this year's £498 million condition improvement fund for building repairs, 317 projects (28 per cent) were specifically for work on roofs.

Only six of these specifically mentioned RAAC removal. Four of these – Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe, The London Oratory School, Sandbach School in Cheshire and Chesterton Primary School in Wandsworth – were described as “urgent”.

Maintained schools are beholden to their local council for capital funding. But current funding pressures mean some local authorities may be reluctant to undertake expensive, large scale renovation projects on schools which could be likely to academise in the coming years.

However, some have been proactive. Norfolk Council carried out RAAC exploratory work at 58 of its schools built between 1955 and 1980. It is understood to have deployed remediation work to tackle RAAC where it was uncovered.



RAAC roof panels in sports hall

## ‘For some, it’s so bad you’d have to remove the whole structure’

Sheffield City Council has just approved £520,000 funding to remove a roof partially built with RAAC from a 1960s extension block at Abbey Lane Primary School amid “risk of collapse”.

Sale Grammar School, in Manchester, has also had an RAAC roof recently replaced at a cost of around £400,000.

A DfE data collection programme on the condition of school buildings indicates a third of teaching blocks were built between the 1960s and 1980s when RAAC was in common use. Government estimated £11.4 billion was needed to get the schools estate up to scratch.

Some school buildings with RAAC may need a complete rebuild. But the government's ten-year rebuild programme will reach just 500 – less than half of the 1,105 schools that applied this year.

The latest round does welcome applications for blocks containing RAAC planks “in poor condition”.

“Evidence submitted for any blocks containing RAAC should clearly demonstrate how the presence of RAAC may result in imminent closure and that localised replacement is not viable,” it stated.

But repairs are expensive. *New Civil Engineer* revealed that five of the worst affected NHS trust



Graham Hasting-Evans, president of the British Association of Construction Heads

have applied for £332 million in government funding to fix RAAC issues.

However Adam Johnson, a building surveyor deployed to carry out some of the surveys in Norfolk, said at least knowing if RAAC is present means a caretaker “can check on it once every couple of months”.

“It will be quite obvious if there's something wrong when suddenly you start seeing quite a large deflection in the ceiling.”

A spokesperson for DfE said it is “working proactively to identify and manage reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete across the school estate”.

Survey responses will establish its prevalence and be used to provide updated guidance to help schools manage it, they added. More than £13 billion for school repairs has been handed out since 2015, including £1.8 billion this year.



# Opinion

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ROBIN  
WHITE

Assistant vice principal,  
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Schools Foundation)

## Why new 'unofficial' trans pupil guidance is not fit for purpose

**Sector organisations have tried to fill a gap in guidance regarding trans rights but this is leaving schools dangerously exposed, writes Robin White**

**T**he rise in the number of pupils identifying as transgender or non-binary has not been matched by guidance for schools.

A partnership of sector organisations, including the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), the ASCL and NAHT unions, the Chartered College of Teaching and ISBL, have tried to step into the breach. Sadly, their published guidance is not fit for purpose.

It's important to note that the sector has been let down by many instances of ghost guidance. Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance was promised for many years, eventually drafted then never issued. With the appointment of Kishwer Falkner as the EHRC chairwoman, it has been reported that fresh guidance – much less supportive of trans pupils – was drafted but could not be made legally compliant.

Various ministers have suggested that guidance may be on the way, but nothing has emerged from the chaos that is British politics and nothing seems likely to do

so soon. Other worthy-sounding organisations such as Transgender Trend, Sex Matters and the Safe Schools Alliance have issued their own, but all are unsupportive of trans people and should be avoided.

It's in this context that, earlier this month, the "unofficial"

and present outlying views as mainstream. For example, they say that "deliberate repeated" misgendering of a trans pupil by a member of staff "may" amount to indirect discrimination. But if it is "deliberate" and "repeated", it isn't an error and is done with

**“It poses significant risks for schools if followed**

Guidance for maintained schools and academies in England on provision for transgender pupils was published. Regrettably though, it poses significant risks for schools if followed. Rather than setting out the challenges that trans pupils face and suggesting sensible, practical solutions, it appears to spend most time suggesting how trans pupils should not be supported and how those who do not support trans people should be accommodated.

This publication appears to have been created by two lawyers without any involvement by trans people, pupils or those with experience of managing them. It fails the "not about us without us" test, important in discrimination.

Even more strangely for guidance produced by lawyers, they get the law wrong in a number of respects

knowledge of the pupil's trans status. This will (not "may") be direct (not indirect) discrimination and for a tertiary pupil, harassment is the alternative.

An example of the "outlier" presentation of law is the page taken to explain why, in the opinion of the authors, non-binary pupils are not protected under the "gender reassignment" characteristic. Most discrimination lawyers think they have had protection since the case of Taylor v Jaguar Landrover, which the authors mischaracterise in the guidance. I was counsel for the claimant in the case.

Perhaps the most horrific example of bad advice is the suggestion that a trans pupil must "out" themselves to all the other pupils and parents or be excluded from school visits with external accommodation. The

sensible and far less discriminatory course action is for the school to make its policy on trans attendees known and to allow parents to make choices based on that. But this doesn't appear to have occurred to the authors.

Equally awful is the recurring theme that trans pupils pose a risk to the rest of the school community, without ever identifying that risk.

It seems hard to escape the conclusion that this "guidance" has gone wrong at either the commissioning or writing stage and been "captured" by someone whose intention is to exclude trans pupils.

It would take me many pages to deal with all the problems. In fact, I have done so and supplied those comments to the CST chief, Leora Cruddas. Any school leader or other relevant person can have a copy from me or her.

In the meantime, this so-called guidance should be binned. To follow it will lead to discrimination against trans pupils. Instead, a fresh process needs to be initiated by gathering a group of those with experience of managing these issues and the related legalities to write sensible, practical guidance to accommodate trans pupils and to deal constructively with the legitimate concerns of others – not phantoms and spectres.



# Opinion

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**Recruitment and retention are no longer a distant problem affecting some, but a clear and present crisis for all schools, write Dan Cowling and Alex Russell**

Since before Covid, the media has been reporting gloomy predictions of a recruitment crisis in education. In 2019, teacher training targets were missed for the seventh year running and the government's response was to publish the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. As we approach 2023, it is clear that it has failed and the predicted crisis is upon us.

A survey undertaken by the National Governance Association (NGA) in September found that just over half (53 per cent) of schools and trusts were struggling to recruit teaching staff — an increase from 29 per cent in 2021. The proportion of schools struggling to recruit support staff had more than doubled from 22 per cent last year to 53 per cent this year. And all-through schools (81 per cent), alternative provision (73 per cent) and special schools (70 per cent) were the most likely to struggle with teacher recruitment.

What these statistics don't show is the impact of the recruitment challenges at a human level. The expectations of children, parents, carers, governors, trustees, local authorities, dioceses, regional commissioners and Ofsted remain undimmed. They don't want to hear excuses. Rightly so, but how can school leaders meet these expectations without the staff to deliver them? And what impact is it having on them to keep trying?

Recruitment, retention and shortages are the subject of most of our conversations — and these are growing more alarming all the time. Typically, reaching the October half-term is a moment of relief because

DAN COWLING

Headteacher,  
Oak Wood School

ALEX RUSSELL

CEO, The Bourne  
Education Trust



## Recruitment: Leaders can't make do and mend this crisis

the resignation date has passed and we can be confident of our staffing position for January.

But this year has been different. At Oak Wood School, we appointed two good teachers before half-term only to find that one new appointment

leaving at the end of term because their new school would like them to start in January. To top it off, an ECT also resigned, citing travel costs and time.

Four teachers down for January and the school has little or no

“ We are no longer sleep-walking into a crisis; we are in it

would no longer be taking up their post due to the lack of affordable accommodation and the second had received an improved offer from their current school. Meanwhile, an existing staff member attending interviews for April 2023 starts announced that they would be

prospects of recruiting before then. An English advert (with TLR) has been on the website since September with no applications.

This is not an isolated case. At a recent headteachers' conference, every colleague had recruitment woes to share, regardless of their



reputation or Ofsted grading.

But what options are available against the backdrop of the financial challenges facing schools? According to the NGA's survey, only 30 per cent of respondents report being financially sustainable in the medium to long term, and last week's surprise cash injection is unlikely to change that substantially.

Rewarding existing staff is straightforward but often unaffordable. The overseas staff pool has reduced to a trickle since Brexit and Covid. Recruitment agencies offer schools candidates, but their excessive fees are an unwelcome sting in the tail and many don't have the experience we need.

And the situation is only going to get worse. The forecast decrease in the school-age population will take a long time to work its way through classrooms. Add in union warnings that 40 per cent of staff plan to leave within the next two to five years and the unfilled teacher training places, and we are no longer sleep-walking into a crisis; we are in it.

Schools might consider offering flexible working across sites. But this is clearly more straightforward for multiacademy trusts and established partnerships. Embracing technology to deliver lessons to more than one class at a time might help, as might retraining staff to teach in shortage subjects. But both are likely to affect quality (not to mention wellbeing) at least in the short term.

The fact is that teaching is no longer an attractive or well-rewarded proposition for young professionals. And the stress and anxiety of 'make do and mend' is starting to cost us good leaders too. It's time for government action to meet everyone's expectations.

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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EMMA  
KNIGHTS

Chief executive, National  
Governance Association

## Avoiding the pitfalls of joining and forming MATs

**Renewed interest in joining and forming MATs has seen a resurgence of old traps, writes Emma Knights. These tips can help you avoid them**

Last term, with Browne Jacobson and ASCL, the National Governance Association updated its guidance for schools considering joining or forming a MAT in light of the government's schools white paper. But the NGA has been in the business of advising schools on this matter for a long time. Welcomed by minister for the schools system at the time, Lord Nash, the first edition of the guidance was launched in 2015 in the House of Commons, when most other commentators were still supporting the official Department for Education line of converting single schools into single-academy trusts (SATs).

A couple of years before that, discussing academisation on stage at the Schools and Academies Show, the panel was asked whether a small primary should convert to a SAT. I caused a stir as the only panellist to suggest forming a MAT instead, which remains the only time I've been booed in my time at the NGA.

Taking to the stage again at last week's show reminded me of those years. I am concerned that some governing boards are in danger of

repeating mistakes that have not been officially documented.

To that end, these key points have stood the test of time for making a well-informed decision.

**“The aspiration of 2030 gives time to consider this properly**

### Do not rush

There are no shortcuts. Begin by understanding what you are trying to achieve for your pupils and what matters to you and your community. It is vital that the board, whether a maintained school or a SAT, has access to all the information it needs to determine the school's future. The government's aspiration of 2030 gives time to consider this and consider it properly.

### Meet with potential partners

First and foremost, make sure the trust's ethos, values and culture echo yours. Establishing a trusting relationship can take a while and it is a prerequisite for success. Be honest, and demand honesty in return.

Remind yourself of the Framework for Ethical Leadership as you begin the process. If it feels like a partnership that might work, adding value to the pupils in all schools, then talk about the detail of what being part of that particular trust means.



Existing MATs who are part of these conversations need to be completely clear about their expectations too,

have the capacity and infrastructure to support a rapidly increasing number of schools. Others invested in central capacity and didn't find the schools to join them.

### The business of the school must continue

There are other draws on leadership and governing board capacity – never more so than now. Most won't think this even needs to be said, but we have seen leadership teams distracted by structural change.

### Do what governing boards are set up to do

Interrogate the information, ask for evidence, consult stakeholders and have courageous conversations. Get past the sound bites. Do not make assumptions and choose carefully who you listen to. Some seemingly authoritative voices do not always understand the legal changes and can generalise terribly when, in fact, there is a whole array of practice in the sector.

With these tips in mind, governing boards will be able to steer a course that avoids the pitfalls of joining or forming a MAT – and better lead their schools to reaping the benefits of doing so.

especially what is non-negotiable.

In the early days it was easier for governing bodies and leaders to help to shape practice, but now it is much more likely you will be joining an established trust.

In any case, due diligence must be conducted into any potential partner.

### Speak early on to your DfE regional office

Don't invest a lot of time, energy and commitment on an option that the department is unlikely to support.

A frequent question (addressed in the guidance) is: "Will we be allowed to form a new MAT?" This varies from place to place. Overall the DfE vision is not for lots more small trusts, but some parts of the country don't have a lot of options. If that is what you want to do, you will need to make your case well.

### Beware of plans to grow too quickly

Some trusts fell over because their plans were unrealistic. Some didn't



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**SIR HAMID PATEL**  
CEO, Star Academies

## Oak: A liberating solution to workload and quality problems

**Oak National Academy can be instrumental in meeting the post-Covid challenges of teacher burnout and weak curricula, writes Hamid Patel**

**O**ak National Academy recently completed its engagement on its new curriculum resources. Everyone has had their say and been heard. It's now time to get on with making a difference.

Oak's success in convening talent and problem-solving is awe-inspiring. Throughout the pandemic, with the unprecedented challenges faced by our young people and their teachers, it made a rapid and game-changing contribution to our country. During troubled months when classrooms were hastily reimagined as cyber-learning spaces that required teachers to master digital pedagogy at lightning speed, Oak marshalled excellent practitioners whose high-quality recorded lessons enabled our children to continue learning.

Given its success over nearly three years, and the purposeful collaboration and creative thinking with which Oak did its work, it is only right that it should now be a key partner in addressing other challenges besetting the sector: teacher burnout and weak curricula.

These serious issues threaten the quality of education, particularly for children whose learning gaps

are most severe. Oak will offer well-sequenced curriculum maps, supporting information, lesson plans and associated resources (slides, quizzes, independent tasks, worksheets) for a broad range of subjects across the primary and secondary phases. These will be

**“Seeing a great model is empowering for development**

designed by teachers, quality-assured and tested in classrooms.

Planning a high-quality curriculum is arduous and time-consuming. Schools and trusts revisiting their plans in the light of Ofsted's research reviews have wrangled with the organisation of component knowledge. For those starting from a low base or struggling to recruit and retain phase or subject specialists, the challenge is doubly daunting. Time lags between intent and implementation compound learning loss.

In this space, Oak offers a liberating solution, freely available to the sector for adoption or adaptation. Judicious use of Oak resources reduces the need for teachers to spend hours planning lessons from scratch. At a time of alarming teacher attrition, a solution that addresses workload and safeguards emotional wellbeing

without compromising quality is most welcome.

Rightly, Oak is not compulsory and can never be so. Indeed, it has committed to signposting three alternative schemes per subject from other providers. Professionals are free to choose from Oak's

resources to suit their needs through a spectrum of blended approaches.

At Star Academies, teachers will continue to use the trust's own excellent materials in conjunction with those provided by Oak and by commercial publishers. Their points of entry to Oak's curriculum repository will depend on their own contexts. Oak provides a toolkit, not a straitjacket.

Oak's curriculum will continue to be generated by teachers whose skills and creativity can inspire others. Subject advisory groups, including established subject associations, will oversee quality and consistency. Research evidence confirms that seeing a great model is empowering for professional development, particularly during the formative stage of a teacher's career. This is the core of Oak's offer.

Oak has taken steps to protect the interests of the commercial sector. The market is poised to capitalise

on the possibilities of digitisation and artificial intelligence. Oak will spur creativity and stimulate our national capacity at the forefront of educational thinking.

Our education sector cannot afford to stagnate. Attainment gaps are at their highest levels since 2012, with the poorest pupils falling ever further behind their peers and mental health concerns persisting.

The significant financial investment in Oak is positive recognition of the need for innovation. If we don't grasp the entwined nettles of workload and quality, we will continue to see young teachers quitting and schools struggling to provide the enticing curricula that every pupil deserves.

I embrace Oak as a positive legacy of the pandemic. We need innovation to help teachers to retain their energy and flair and to make pupils' learning impactful. Our sector's response to the Covid crisis showed its resilience, maturity and creativity – essential traits that we must retain in the challenging years ahead.

Ultimately, Oak will help to improve the life chances of young people in some of our most deprived communities, and that is why it has my whole-hearted support.

Oak National Academy chief executive Matt Hood is chair of trustees at Bay Leadership Academy, one of the Star Academies schools





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# Opinion

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LEE  
MASON-ELLIS

CEO, The Pioneer Academy

## How in-house CPD is saving our time, money and staff

**Lee Mason-Ellis explains how The Pioneer Academy has brought training in-house to save money, ensure quality CPD for all and drive recruitment and retention**

We are unquestionably a profession in crisis. The sector has seen a whopping 40 per cent cut in professional development budgets between 2018 and 2021, and teachers are leaving in droves — an alarming 12% increase in workforce leavers last year. We have to do more to retain staff and give them the skills to weather this storm. And it is an almost perfect storm. For evidence of how tough education is right now, nothing confirms the dire situation better than this survey for MyTutor, which shows that more than 80 per cent of us believe the current economic crisis to be the “worst in living memory”. And as primary-aged children continue to struggle to catch up after the pandemic, the same survey reveals that many schools are set to cut back on Covid catch-up support. In this context, and however tight the current times are, we simply cannot afford not to invest

in our staff and colleagues. That’s why, despite having to make hard choices and find creative workarounds like everyone else, our trust is clear that we will not be reducing our commitment to CPD.

**“We simply cannot afford not to invest in our staff**

Instead, we have chosen to bring all our training in-house. Since launching our in-house CPD in 2015, we have created our own network of facilitators, drawn from training or teaching backgrounds, to run our training. This helps our schools to drive down costs. All of our leaders, teachers and support staff have access to more than 30 training programmes that are offered at a cost to schools at least one-third cheaper than using an external provider. If our schools are still unable to pay, places are offered free of charge so that no one misses out on valuable professional development. As a result, we are in a position to invest over £140,000 in training this year, focusing on pedagogy and genuine skills development rather than mandatory training or



one-off courses in safeguarding or technology, for example.

As an illustration, our training model enabled a two-form entry

primary school to spend £10,000 last year, and a three-form entry school has a training budget of £15,000 this year. The amount spent on CPD is part of The Pioneer Academy’s ICFP metric and is checked termly to make sure spending is maintained, ensuring our staff are valued and developed.

This in-house approach also means that we are able to tailor training to our specific context. A standard course in quality-first teaching for early-career teachers (ECTs), for example, may include everything from early years provision to key stage 4, spanning the learning needs of a pre-schooler to a school leaver. This kind of ill-targeted offer is not a good use of teacher time or school resource. By contrast, our approach allows tailoring, and gives us an

opportunity to embed the trust’s values from the start – as well as all-important value for money.

Leaders across The Pioneer Academy are trained in outstanding facilitation and coaching in a range of areas so that we can offer our trust-wide training programme to more staff, in more schools, from a range of experienced colleagues.

To further incentivise take-up of training, for those schools whose leaders are involved in the training as facilitators, we offer free places for their staff members. This has the knock-on effect of encouraging new facilitators, which itself raises ambition and standards in our schools.

The approach is paying dividends. Of our intake of over 30 ECTs last year, more than 90 per cent have stayed with the trust. This will help us to manage the recruitment crisis we all face. But more than that, it means we can continue to support our staff to achieve their best, delivering outstanding teaching and learning and improving pupil outcomes.

Because if anyone should be protected from these crises, it is surely our youngest.



# THE REVIEW

## IMPACT

**Author:** Nick Hart

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Publication date:** 18 August 2022

**ISBN:** 180199014X

**Reviewer:** Robbie Burns, Assistant Vice-Principal, Bede Academy  
(Emmanuel Schools Foundation)

We are in the business of making a difference. Whatever the subject, age group or time of year, teachers and leaders across the land want to walk away from school each day knowing they've played a small part, alongside their colleagues and their teams, in helping young people to flourish and become all they are capable of being.

But as school leaders specifically, we have to be honest: it is not always clear what impact our actions are having on student learning. We are biased towards our vision, aims and plans being successful and will mine our environments for evidence that supports this. Ultimately though, all our desires to make a difference, manifested in our actions, will never succeed entirely. That's the bit of leadership we like to ignore or forget about.

In *Impact*, Nick Hart proposes a "five-part framework" for leaders to analyse their impact across all aspects of school life. He is by no means the first to develop such a device (they are a feature of previous and current NPQs), but his does offer something worth considering.

A strength of this book is its simplicity of written expression and exposition of ideas. It's something Hart has become known and loved for. There is no way you can come away from reading this and misunderstand the nature of the framework and how it might be applied.

As a senior leader, I found it helpful to look at my strategic thinking and daily work through different lenses to the ones of culture, climate and outcomes that we are used to. As Hart emphasises throughout, it is important to

recognise that our actions as leaders won't always positively impact all domains. That's par for the course. Indeed, it is sometimes worth negatively impacting a particular domain for a period of time if it results in better outcomes for students long-term.

Another strength is the book's structure. Each chapter maps out the domain clearly so that the reader can develop clarity about its aspects. The similar structure of each section meant I could easily compare and contrast the differences between them, and I've been able to do so with leaders I work with too.

For this reason, I can see *Impact* being a helpful support for new and fledgling leaders to make sense of what they do, build knowledge and consider the decisions they are making more carefully.

However, although I think this book should be read widely and used as a tool for talking about impact, there was something missing for me. The simplicity of structure was a blessing. I felt it set the stage perfectly for Hart's leadership wisdom and hard-learned lessons from a career well spent. Sadly, it never emerged in the way I wanted it to.

As a trusted and inspirational blogger for so many in education, myself included, Hart could have offered more reflection on his hands-on experience. I wanted a sense of how the framework he presented emerged from his own leadership, and how he is applying it now – in his own practice and through his work developing leaders. I wanted to hear about how he made mistakes and rectified them, about

BOOK  
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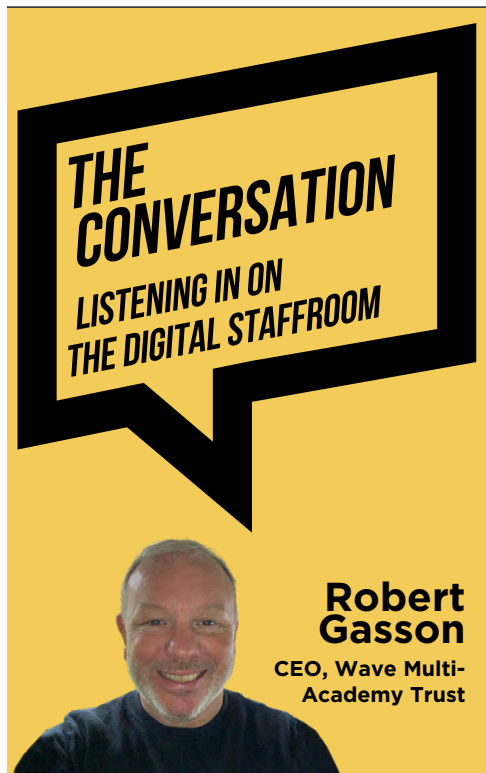
some of the tough decisions he's faced and how this framework has (or could have) helped him through those situations.

For leaders to develop knowledge as deeply as they possibly can, it is the model set by the experiences of others that really sheds light on ideas and their implementation. The book does include two case studies and examples of how the framework applies to two different leadership areas but I wanted more.

A few paragraphs or even several pages per chapter of Hart's reflections on his journey and what has led him to see each domain as so crucial would have supplemented the book far better than these. Without it, the framework lacks grounding in the concrete realities of new and experienced leaders' daily challenges to achieve what we all seek: impact.

Perhaps he can blog about it instead.

★★★★☆  
Rating

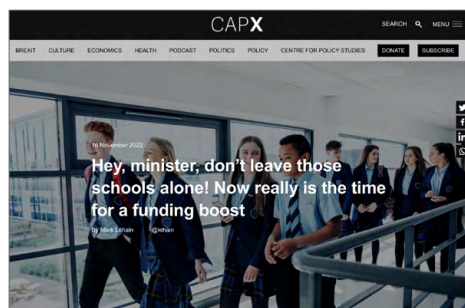


**THE CONVERSATION**  
LISTENING IN ON  
THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM

**Robert Gasson**  
CEO, Wave Multi-Academy Trust

## AUTUMN WINDFALL

It would be remiss of me to put together what's happening in the digital staffroom without mentioning the autumn statement and funding for schools. Obviously much has been written — and will continue to be written — while we wait to see what the promised extra funding looks like.



This blog by the former Bedford Free School founder and principal Mark Lehain, now head of education at the Centre for Policy Studies, makes a short but interesting case for why ministers should consider increasing funds for education.

Non-combative in his reasoning for such an approach (as you might expect from a government supporter), it is hard to argue with his political reasons for doing so. Lehain cites "the noise around School Cuts", how effective it was at getting through to voters and the growing appeal of its message "even [to] moderates".

As we all know, the government clearly heard the message. But the fact is that even with the proposed increase in funding,

as was articulated recently [in these pages](#) unless the DfE and ESFA come up with a mechanism that avoids councils' high-needs budgets to ensure the funding reaches special and AP schools, the most vulnerable and challenging pupils in our system will face a significant real-terms cut in funding.



I'm happy to help (as are many of my colleagues) with suggestions as to how to this can be achieved.

## THE FALL OF TWITTER

Like many of my colleagues, I use Twitter as a tool to share ideas, to give a flavour of what is happening in my schools and to gather best practice. And like many, I've been watching horrified at what appears to be the imminent implosion of a social media platform that has been instrumental for the education sector for many years.

This blog by Connor Gleason, who has spent the past decade working in marketing and communications with independent schools and colleges in the US, takes us through a coherent, relevant and timely series of questions and scenarios that I'm sure many of us have struggled with recently.

I treat what I tweet with a great deal of care, so it is perhaps disappointing to find out from Connor that (in the US at least) "only 11% of all parents, across the four generations in schools, say they tweet or follow Twitter posts always or often". Even among the youngest parents, 79% of Gen Z parents say they never use the platform.

But while Twitter may be only the world's seventh-largest social media platform, it has been essential for professional learning



networks and it's clear it would be missed. So I am adopting a wait-and-see approach, and I'll keep coming back to this post to help me to decide whether and when to take myself and my schools elsewhere.

## HEADING FOR A FALL

The *Two Heads* podcast, featuring headteachers Jonathan Rice and Sarah Shirras, is a must-listen for the sector. More than that, I would urge Gillian Keegan and her ministerial team to listen to this week's episode, recorded in front of a live audience at Educate Norfolk, for an unfiltered view of how school leaders are really feeling. *Question Time*, eat your heart out!

This episode sounds and feels like the type of conversation you might have in the bar at a conference. That's not a criticism. It's one of its strengths. The hot topic is the significant worries around funding and how this is manifesting through recruitment and retention challenges, as well as worries about having to make significant cuts through redundancies.

The episode also covers leaders' concerns about possible strike action, including potentially their own, as well as the increasing needs of pupils, which are driving some to take decisions that are solutions for them but problematic for the system as a whole, namely by raising the number of exclusions.

The podcast completely chimes with the discussions I have been having recently everywhere from Tyneside to Penzance. And while it's short on solutions, its candour is refreshing, not to say therapeutic.



Click the headings to  
access the blogs and  
podcasts



# The Knowledge

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



## How can we close the enrichment gap?

**Adam Hawksbee, interim director, Onward**

School leaders will have been reassured by the Autumn Budget. Following heavy pitch rolling about difficult trade-offs, that the schools budget did not fall victim to the Chancellor's red pen is good news. But the new Government must know that an additional £2.3 billion alone will not be sufficient to give children the education they deserve.

Young people were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Half of pupils in state comprehensive schools feel their progress suffered in school due to Covid. Two in five do not feel ready for their next step. Referrals to children's and adolescents' mental health services (CAMHS) are at an all-time high.

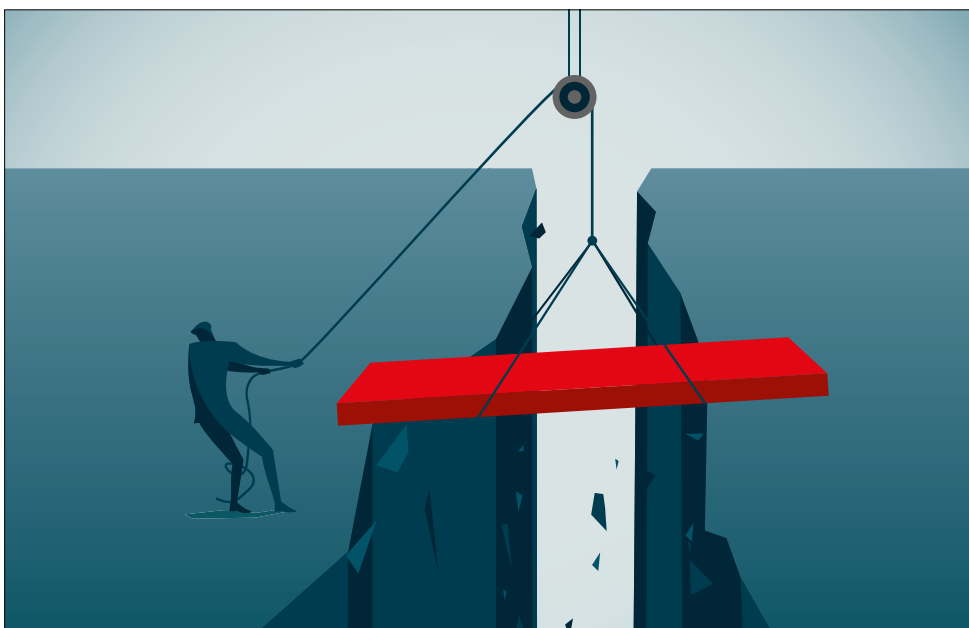
These problems did not start in 2020. Despite overall attainment rising, the disadvantage gap has scarcely closed in over a decade. Employers are frustrated because pupils are leaving school without the softer skills needed to operate in a workplace: the CBI reports two in five of its members feel school leavers are not 'work ready'.

Maintaining funding at 2010 levels, while positive, is not going to shift the dial. We need to invest in interventions that work.

### Benefits beyond grades

School enrichment is vital to boost outcomes. The Education Endowment Foundation attests that it can lead to up to three months academic progress. A study of international evidence carried out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport found that numeracy improved by an average of 8 per cent when pupils participated in organised sport. The greatest improvements were seen from previously underachieving pupils.

The benefits of enrichment are not limited to students' grades. The extended services in schools programme, from 2003 and 2010, repeatedly demonstrated pupils were more engaged in school, showed better attitudes to



learning and were more confident with better social skills. That is why Sir Kevan Collins made school enrichment central to his education recovery plan.

### The enrichment gap

Too many pupils miss out on the enrichment education they need. Recent Onward research shows that almost half of young people in the wealthiest decile by the index of multiple deprivation attend clubs after school, like youth clubs and scouts, compared to a quarter of those from the most deprived decile.

The wealthiest are also three times more likely to sing in a choir or play in a band and almost twice as likely to play a musical instrument. They are more physically active and report greater levels of self-belief and life satisfaction.

### More than money

As budgets tighten extracurricular activities are first on the chopping block. So we need to find a way for schools to maintain these programmes affordably. Yes, schools need financial support to do this. Which is why Onward has called for a ring-fenced enrichment premium to

facilitate partnerships with local charities and businesses.

But it takes more than money. Schools face workforce constraints and, despite the best intentions, struggle to target intervention at the pupils who could benefit most.

So ministers respond inventively to these challenges. They must create new guidance on how heads can extend their school day without overburdening teachers, drawing on the success of multi-academy trusts like Inspiration or Star.

They should also involve parents, who are vital to get onside and a large pool of potential volunteers. In the UK, only 6% of parents help with extracurricular activities, compared to 23% in the United States.

And they need to help schools to confront the barriers to extending the school day, like opening buildings for longer and making sure pupils can get home safely.

The new Prime Minister has called education the closest thing to a silver bullet we have. Last week, he showed his commitment to it. But at some point ministers will need to stop playing catch up and start making progress. An ambitious plan for school enrichment would be a good place to start.



Week in

# Westminster

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

## SUNDAY

Courageous Matt Hancock, flying across the world to be sleep deprived and eat kangaroo testicles all to raise awareness of his campaign for all primary school children to be screened for dyslexia. (In non-related news, Hancock is reportedly being paid £400,000 to appear on the I'm a Celeb show). So, a fortnight after arriving in the Australian jungle, Hancock finally mentioned his struggles with the condition. A tweet from his account then explained more about Hancock's parliamentary bill that calls for change.

## MONDAY

As revealed by *Schools Week*, the government's controversial ITT review denied accreditation to some providers rated 'outstanding' under Ofsted's tougher new framework.

To further confuse matters, Ofsted was involved in assessing the curriculum part of applications.

Amanda Spielman, the watchdog's chief inspector, was quizzed about this by education committee MPs today.

She said Ofsted has since "looked at the places where there were different outcomes, and as far as we can see ... it's a difference between perhaps how people describe what they do and what it translates into on the ground".

"The processes are not quite capturing the same thing. We've reviewed our inspections in the light of what we've seen in the accreditation outcomes and we're confident in the judgments we've made."

Asked if this cast doubt on the DfE accreditation's system, Spielman said that was a "question for ministers".

Nothing like shifting the blame ...

## TUESDAY

Fancy deciding what pay rise teachers should have next year? Well you're in luck – the School Teachers' Review Body is looking for a board member.

It's £7,500 for 25 days a year. Not bad. But you'll need to get the OK from ministers, who have the final say on appointments.

And then you'll have the totally unenviable position of having to decide pay rises based on sometimes really strict parameters from government on what they think it should be, whilst apparently operating "independently".

## WEDNESDAY

We like to think *Schools Week* is influential in the edu sector. But we didn't quite realise how much.

As we tuned into a Westminster Education Forum on the future of assessment, Labour's former education spokesperson Lord Michael Watson was summarising the various reviews into exams.

Our ears pricked up, as what he was saying sounded \*so\* familiar. Last year, we ran a feature on all of these different reviews, with the headline "The battle for the future of assessment".

Some of Watson's speech appeared to mirror, word for word in places, this exact story. Mimicry is the highest form of flattery, right?

\*\*\*

Looks like prime minister Rishi Sunak's love for a slick social media video is rubbing off on his ministers.

Alongside a letter boasting about the recent funding uplift being the "biggest injection of funding ever" (more on this claim on page 6), education secretary Gillian Keegan released a snazzy video with a few warm words for the sector, and on her department dream team.

However, when introducing Nick Gibb, she said he was previously schools minister from

2010 – which was obviously an error. He actually joined the department in 1610.

## THURSDAY

Results from the first times table checks today were accompanied by a government press release in which Gibb talked about how vital the tests were.

"Mathematics is vital for doing essential calculations like how a higher base rate will affect your mortgage or working out the best multi-pack bargains in a supermarket," the schools minister said.

Nice of Gibb to troll us all about why maths is more important than ever because his government has screwed the economy so badly that none of us can get a mortgage and those who have one can't afford to keep it.

Oh, and we also need help with that little spare cash we have left at the end of each month to find the best bargain basement supermarket deals.

\*\*\*

The DfE's evaluation of the second year of the edtech demonstrator scheme makes for somewhat gloomy reading.

The fact they can't say whether improvements in tech use stemmed from the scheme's support or from growing "confidence" in the sector will doubtless raise questions about whether the £850,000 budget was well-spent.

But the findings aren't the only thing that's bad about the evaluation report. In several places, bar charts overstate the success of schools that received support from the scheme, even where schools that did not receive the same support achieved the same score. D'oh!

■ Support ■ No Support

67% 72% 72%





Department  
for Education

## School Teachers' Review Body – Educationalist (primary) and Generalist Member roles

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is now seeking to fill two vacancies, we are looking to recruit an educationalist and generalist member.

These roles will provide the right individuals with an exciting opportunity to influence the recruitment and retention of teachers, creating a career path that motivates teachers to thrive and excel.

### About the School Teachers' Review Body

Being a member of the School Teacher's Review Body (STRB) is an opportunity to use your experience and expertise to make a positive contribution to school education.

The STRB is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB is a multi-disciplinary team. The members bring a diverse range of skills, experiences and views to bear, in order to give balanced and evidence-based

recommendations. Further information on the STRB is available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body)

### Key responsibilities of the members of the STRB

Members of the review body contribute to crucial decisions impacting on the future of the teaching profession in England, working alongside a range of members from diverse professional backgrounds.

As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

### How to Apply

The closing date for applications is **Monday 19 December 10am**

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of these vacancies and information on how to apply, available at:

**School Teachers' Review Body – Primary Educationalist Member**

**School Teachers' Review Body – Generalist Member**

## Deputy CEO To commence Easter 2023



Bishop  
Hogarth  
Catholic Education Trust

The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and Directors of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust invite applications for Deputy CEO, to commence Easter 2023.

### We want an inspirational leader to work alongside the CEO who:

- Is a practising Catholic.
- Is an outstanding, dynamic, innovative, and visionary Catholic leader.
- Is passionate about improving the life chances of all children and young people.
- Has proven leadership and management skills within diverse and complex organisations.
- Has substantial experience in and understanding of the education sector.
- Has a proven successful track record of raising standards.
- Will inspire, challenge and encourage staff.
- Will enable every child to reach their highest potential.
- Will nurture the spirituality and wellbeing of our staff and the community.

### We can offer:

- Dedicated staff and a challenging Trust Board of Directors.
- 86% good or outstanding schools
- Supportive relationships with the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle.
- A strong support network in an environment that strongly encourages CPD.

Please contact the CEO Mike Shorten for a further discussion with regard to the post on 01325 254525 or email [PA.Hayley.Wooding@hwooding@carmel.bhct.org.uk](mailto:PA.Hayley.Wooding@hwooding@carmel.bhct.org.uk)

## Deputy Head



We have an exciting opportunity for an inspirational Deputy Head to join us at a significant moment, as we begin a new chapter in our schools' history and unite to become Broomwood. Both valuing traditions and preparing for the future, you will belong to a group of schools who embrace a commitment to 'Be our Best'.

We are looking for someone who isn't afraid to jump out of a cupboard dressed as a super hero, yet is equally comfortable dealing with more challenging issues. We want someone who will give of their best. In return, we promise that we'll do all we can to make this your best move yet.

Broomwood is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. As all roles within the school involve some degree of child safeguarding responsibility, safeguarding checks will be undertaken including an enhanced CRB check for the successful applicant.



**wildern**  
multiacademytrust

# 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 reaccredited 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)



# 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**



## 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**

# DID YOU KNOW?



As a recruiter for an MAT of 34 Academies, I have been very impressed with the professional support we have received from Schools Week and the quick turnaround time they provide for our advertised vacancies.

**David Ross Education Trust**

As a Schools Week subscriber, your organisation receives a  
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