



**Solutions: How taster days can boost recruitment**

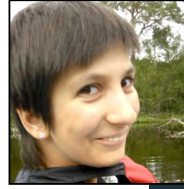
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Capacity checkers to help councils challenge academies shunning pupils



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Frankie's death was preventable. Is your school safe?



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## Mental health: How schools are dealing with the 'new normal'

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# Those who can, won't teach

- 'Catastrophic': just 59 per cent of trainee secondary teachers recruited
- Biggest shortfall since at least 2010, with primary target also missed
- Calls for 'immediate' response as just 17 per cent of physics target met

# SCHOOLS WEEK

## Meet the news team



**John Dickens**  
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW  
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



**Freddie Whittaker**  
DEPUTY EDITOR

@FCDWHITTAKER  
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



**Samantha Booth**  
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH  
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



**Tom Belger**  
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM\_BELGER  
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



**Amy Walker**  
SENIOR REPORTER

@AMYRWALKER  
AMY.WALKER@SCHOOLSWEET.CO.UK



**JL Dutaut**  
COMMISSIONING  
EDITOR

@DUTAUT  
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



**Jessica Hill**  
INVESTIGATIONS AND  
FEATURES REPORTER

@JESSJANEHILL  
JESSICA.HILL@LSECT.COM



**Nicky Phillips**  
HEAD DESIGNER



**Shane Mann**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN  
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

### THE TEAM

Senior designer: Simon Kay | Sales Manager: Bridget Stockdale | Senior Sales Executive: Clare Halliday | Sales Executive Tony Hudson | Operations and Finance Manager: Victoria Boyle | Event Manager: Frances Ogefere Dell | Senior Administrator: Evie Hayes | Office Administrator: Zoe Tuffin | Office Administrator - Apprentice: Sanchez Nandi

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## 'I'm afraid we don't have any teachers'

We knew recruitment this year had gone badly. But yesterday's official figures show that the gloomy forecasts were actually pretty optimistic.

Just 59 per cent of the required number of secondary teachers were recruited this year. That is simply catastrophic.

Things are already unsustainable. Schools have record vacancies. Recruiting a physics teacher is already a nightmare. Too many students are already being taught by non-specialists.

But, unlike funding – where fears of four-day weeks and bankrupt schools won national media attention – this won't get the big bang cut through.

A lack of teachers just means a steady decline in the standards schools can offer. Classes will slowly get bigger, and more pupils will be taught by unqualified teachers.

It all comes at a critical time for industrial relations in the schools community, and will only buoy the unions in their argument that pay erosion is harming recruitment and retention.

On the picket line this week, sixth form college teachers warned their colleagues are quitting to take better-paid jobs elsewhere (page 10).

Private sector wages are outstripping those in the public sector, plus you can work from home for half the week, too.

The "new normal" of mental health among pupils brings its own struggles and extra pressures (page 7 to 9).

The government has pledged to raise starting salaries to £30,000. But three years on, the soaring inflation of today means that is much less generous.

So, what is the solution? The government is banking that reverting to more generous bursaries for next year will help. The number of pupils in schools is also set to fall over the next decade.

But the current crisis needs urgent intervention. Options likely to turn the tide aren't cheap, whether it is to remove tuition fees for all teacher training routes or offer a salary to all trainees.

If radical solutions aren't forthcoming, then the likely incoming government needs to prepare now to start its reign with this message: 'I'm afraid we don't have any teachers'.

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## NEWS: RECRUITMENT

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## Calls for urgent response after 'catastrophic' trainee teacher recruitment

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

The school recruitment crisis will worsen after the Government missed its own target for new secondary teachers by a “catastrophic” 41 per cent this year, with fewer primary teachers also signed up.

Initial teacher training census statistics published by the Department for Education (DfE) on Thursday show just 59 per cent of the secondary teacher recruitment target was met in 2022-23, down from 79 per cent last year.

Against a target of 20,945 postgraduate secondary trainees, the government recruited just 12,356. It is the ninth time in the last 10 years that the target has been missed.

**‘Nothing short of catastrophic’**

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL school leaders’ union, said it was “nothing short of catastrophic [and] teacher shortages are already at crisis point, and such a substantial shortfall in recruiting trainees means this situation will become even worse”.

The government also missed its target for primary trainees by seven per cent – the first time since 2019. Of a targeted 11,655 new postgraduate primary trainees, 10,868 were recruited.

Last year, government recruited nearly a third more primary teachers than required.

Overall, it means the target for postgraduate ITT recruitment across all phases was missed by 29 per cent, with 23,224 out of a targeted 32,600 trainees recruited. Numbers fell by 23 per cent from last year.

Analysis by the Institute for Government (see graph) shows this year’s recruitment is by far the worst on record since at least 2010.

**Just 17% of physics teachers recruited**

Physics has taken the biggest hit, with just 17 per cent of the teachers needed recruited. The DfE’s target was 2,610. It recruited just 444.

Recruitment was also very low in design and technology (25 per cent), computing (30 per cent) and modern foreign languages (34 per cent). Of a targeted 2,140 languages trainees, only 726 were actually recruited.

The figures do come in the context of changing



targets. The DfE reduced its targets in subjects such as maths, chemistry, business studies and music, but raised them in languages, design and technology and computing.

STEM subjects face a particular teacher black hole, with targets missed by 46 per cent. The government also only recruited 62 per cent of its target in EBacc subjects.

Barton said a “key cause of this crisis is the long-term erosion of teacher pay which has fallen in real-terms by a fifth since 2010, making it uncompetitive in the graduate market place”. This is “compounded” by “underfunding” which Barton said had driven up workload.

“The government has to recognise and address these pressures instead of constantly burying its

head in the sand,” he added.

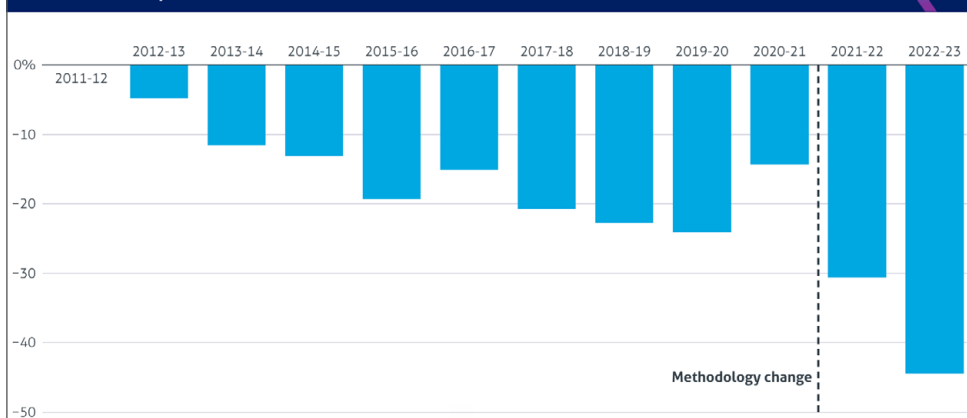
**Vacancies already at record levels**

Since the short-lived, Covid-induced surge in applications in 2020-21, private sector wages have outstripped those in the public sector.

Having missed its own recruitment target by a fifth this year, Teach First said earlier this month that potential recruits had been “attracted to the security of careers with higher wages”.

A recent report from High Fliers Research found four top graduate employers offering starting salaries of more than £50,000 this year, with a quarter of top 100 employers offering even higher salaries. Qualified teacher starting salaries sit as £28,000 outside London.

**Underlying shortfall in postgraduate initial teacher training recruitment for secondary school teachers, 2011-12 to 2022-23**



Source: Institute for Government analysis of Department for Education, initial teacher training census, 'ITT new entrants and targets by subject time series' table, 2015/16–2022/23, supported by CIPFA. • Notes: Underlying shortfall is calculated as the cumulative shortfall across individual subjects, ignoring over-recruitment in other subjects. Comparable figures are not available for 2009–10 and 2010–11. There was no shortfall in 2011–12. Since 2021–22 DfE has taken under-recruitment in the preceding two years into account in setting subject targets.

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## NEWS: RECRUITMENT

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The school workforce census showed teacher vacancies were at their highest level last November since records began in 2010. Recruitment this year is way below pre-pandemic levels.

The biggest fall was in the number of biology recruits, which dropped from 1,937 to 664 (66 per cent) between 2019-20 and 2022-23. Recruitment fell in 12 other subjects across the same time period and rose in just five.

This year, the number of postgraduate ITT trainees fell across all regions. London experienced the smallest decline from 2021-22, at 17 per cent, while the south east experienced the greatest, at 31 per cent. Yorkshire and the Humber experienced the second largest decline, at 27 per cent.

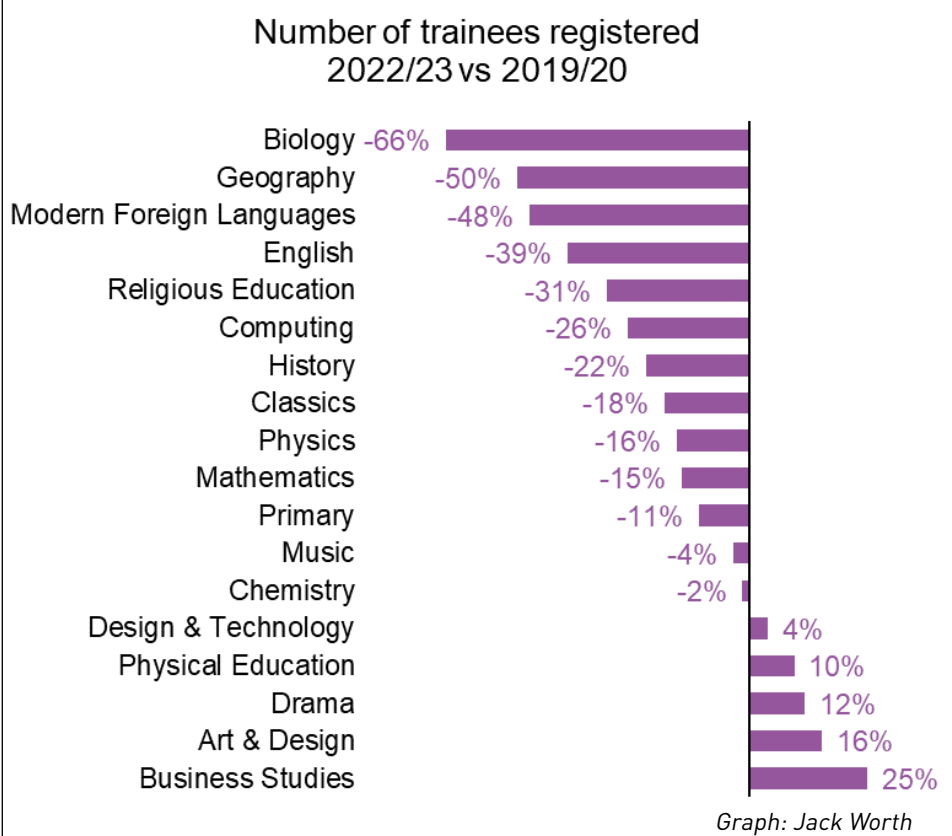
A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We understand that teacher recruitment is challenging, which is why we have taken action to raise the profile of this important and prestigious profession."

They added that bursaries worth up to £27,000 and scholarships worth up to £29,000 for key subjects such as physics would be available for trainees recruited for 2023-24. The DfE also said it remained "committed" to raising starting salaries for teachers to £30,000 next year.

**What are the solutions?**

Jack Worth, school workforce lead at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), said there was "fairly good evidence" that bursaries increased the number of trainees.

NFER analysis based on monthly ITT statistics from September this year showed a 67 per cent drop in placed applicants in biology compared



with September 2019. The subject also had the biggest bursary cut for trainees with a 2:1 degree in the same timeframe, falling from £26,000 in 2019 to £10,000 in 2022.

But Worth added that "potentially we could see targets increase next year to counter this year's gap".

"The bursary boost will probably increase recruitment a bit," he said. "But the target could end up running away a bit."

Recruitment expert John Howson suggested offering a salary to all trainees to make career-switching more attractive, adding: "Some decisions must be taken, otherwise the levelling up agenda is dead in the water as far as schools are concerned."

Former government adviser Sam Freedman said "immediate policy response" was needed. He suggested removing tuition fees from all teacher training routes.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Trusts' vacancies copied to free teachers jobs board

The government's free teacher jobs board will be able to automatically copy job adverts from academy trusts' websites under a new scheme piloted with England's largest chain.

The Department for Education has revealed its teaching vacancies service has been trialling "ATS integration", which pulls through vacancies automatically from a trust's application tracking system (ATS) to the national website.

The scheme was piloted with United Learning after trusts asked if the DfE could make it "quicker to bulk upload vacancies", according to a blog post from outreach and engagement manager Will Bourke.

He said the aim was "to reduce the time it takes for hiring staff to post vacancies, streamline recruitment, and do it with no cost

to the trust – all helping put money back into the classroom".

Lisa Cole, the deputy director of HR, and Vicky Button, the HR services manager at United Learning, wrote that the recruitment process "can be quite clunky and involve a lot of different steps".

"We were getting some negative feedback from our schools and HR teams about having to list roles on our own website, and then again on recruitment sites. We hoped we could work with teaching vacancies to streamline the process and integrate our application tracking systems."

They said there were a "few minor technical issues, but the teaching vacancies team resolved them quickly".

She would "definitely recommend"

integration to other MATs, as it meant the recruitment team listed a vacancy just once. "We've given them one less thing to worry about."

*Schools Week* asked the DfE for more details about the pilot and the wider rollout of the scheme, but received no response by the time of going to press.

It comes after Bourke revealed at the Schools and Academies Show last month that the teaching vacancies service was due to expand to allow more school roles to be advertised, such as business leaders and catering staff.

Government figures show that schools spend about £75 million on recruitment adverts.

## NEWS: CAPACITY

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## DfE plans to check pupil capacity in schools

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers plan to send capacity checkers into all secondary schools to see if they can fit in more pupils.

Local authorities could then use the updated numbers to force schools to take more pupils, documents obtained by *Schools Week* reveal.

Government officials also believe the checks would help to boost funding – as schools could take in more pupils – and would relieve pressure on the government to build new schools to meet any rise in pupil numbers.

A pilot involving “net capacity assessment” (NCA) visits in more than 200 mainstream schools found 6,000 potential extra places, the documents show.

**‘Critical we have accurate figures’**

The Department for Education now plans to carry out two years of assessments at 4,500 secondary and special schools from May next year.

Simon Lindsay, the department’s stakeholder manager, told the Schools and Academies Show last month: “Capacity data is so important. It underpins decision-making at every level. It’s critical we have accurate figures.”

Lindsay said the government “just don’t know enough about capacity in special schools”. As revealed by *Schools Week*, the DfE will start to record capacity figures after revelations that heads have been forced to cram pupils into converted therapy spaces and staffrooms.

Secondaries would be prioritised because of increased place pressure in recent years, he added.

Slides from a government presentation earlier this year showed officials were concerned about “significant levels” of difference between the DfE’s annual School’s Capacity and Places (SCAP) survey.

At present local authorities fill in a survey on what they believe are place numbers and unfilled spaces in their primary and secondary schools.

**Question:** If the NCA finds additional places will the DfE be directing academies to operate at a higher capacity where there is a need for additional places?

**Answer:** At present, the plan is for the programme to provide the updated NCAs to both the responsible body for the school and the relevant Local Authority, regardless of school type to support discussions about the need for additional places. We are also working with school organisation policy colleagues with regard to the White Paper proposals, specifically the Academy collaboration standards, and the proposal for LAs to be able to object to the schools’ adjudicator where an Academy was unwilling to increase PAN in an area of need. We would envisage the NCA data being supporting evidence in these cases.

The latest SCAP results from May last year show that one in five secondaries in England were full or over capacity.

**New capacity used for LA objections**

Officials will contract “data collection organisations” to measure room size and usage with an updated net capacity assessment tool and methodology.

Visits will not be mandatory, but officials will “strongly encourage” schools to take up the offer. Funding sign-off is expected early next year.

The DfE said visits could help to save money. For instance, schools could identify where additional pupils could be accommodated without the need for major building work. It also meant funding for new school places was “targeted most effectively”, the DfE told *Schools Week*.

Documents presented to councils in June show officials “envisaged” local authorities would use the assessments as evidence in objections against academies unwilling to increase their published admissions number (PAN).

The government’s white paper pledged a beefed-up role for councils over admissions, including “backstop powers” to force trusts to admit children and the ability to challenge a school’s PAN if an increase was needed to provide “sufficient places and no suitable school otherwise agrees to provide them”.

The DfE did not respond to questions about whether this was still the plan. The schools white paper proposals are still in

limbo after the recent political upheaval.

**MATs ‘not confident’ on accuracy**

In total, 268 schools, mainly secondaries, were visited during the pilot between November last year and February.

Before the pilot, a third of responsible bodies – such as councils – were not confident about the accuracy of their pupil capacity figures. MATs were likely to be the least confident, Lindsay said.

After the pilot, 89 per cent of schools were happy overall with their site visit. But 20 per cent – particularly special schools – suggested site visits out of term time to avoid disruption.

Many responsible bodies saw the programme as “an opportunity to endorse” capacity data used for their PAN.

Hayley Dunn, a business leadership specialist at the school leaders’ union ASCL, hoped the programme led to “positive decisions” in the best interests of pupils and staff, such as the need for additional places for some schools.

But she said the condition of school buildings should also be considered, with schools given further capital funding to address problems.

Visits must also “take into account the infrastructure and resources schools have available to ensure pupil needs are adequately supported”.

The DfE is also hoping to release a new NCA tool for local authorities to measure special schools, which will also be included in the SCAP survey from next year.

## INVESTIGATION: MENTAL HEALTH

# 'All you do is pray it's not one of yours'

SAMANTHA BOOTH & AMY WALKER  
@SCHOOLSWEEK

**One in six pupils has a probable mental disorder – that's more than one million young people. Primary pupils talk about suicide; more secondary pupils are self-harming. Schools and mental health services are struggling to help and teachers find themselves stepping in to do a job they are not trained for. Schools Week investigates how leaders are dealing with 'the new normal' ...**

School leaders fear it will take a "Baby P" incident in their classroom to trigger proper support to deal with the "new normal" of heightened mental health issues among their pupils.

NHS figures published this week show that one in six school-age children in England has a probable mental disorder.

The figure hasn't risen since last year, but it is still much worse than the one in nine pupils pre-Covid. And services are now struggling more than ever to cope.

Headteachers told *Schools Week* that primary pupils are now talking about suicide, with backlogs for support meaning schools are becoming quasi-social workers.

Vic Goddard, headteacher at Passmores Academy in Essex, said: "Sadly what will happen is there will be a child that's really let down and loses their life for whatever reason because we just weren't resourced enough."

Likening the situation to the Baby P scandal, whose killing in 2007 resulted in a public inquiry to prevent similar cases, he added: "That created a lot of change in social care. I worry it's going to take something like that before anybody spends any money. All you do is you pray that it's not one of yours."

## 'The new normal for mental health'

While the rise in mental health rates has plateaued, the rate among 17 to 19-year-olds – who would have

Vic Goddard



## 'We all try and patch it up but it isn't enough'

been at school during the pandemic – has risen to one in four, up from one in six last year and one in ten in 2017, NHS figures show.

There has been a drop in primary pupils with probable disorders (from 18.1 per cent in 2021 to 15.2 per cent this year), but a rise in secondary (from 17.7 per cent to 20.4 per cent over the same period).

Boys are more likely to be affected at primary, and girls at secondary. Those with probable disorders are also three times more likely to miss 15 days of school than their classmates.

Among all 11 to 16-year-olds, a quarter had accessed mental health and wellbeing support at school.

At Passmores Academy, pupils raised 330 mental health-related concerns with school staff between June and November 2021. In the same period this year, the figure stood at 311.

Although there has been a slight drop, it's still

way above pre-pandemic levels, Goddard said.

Concerns about anxiety have risen from 54 to 82.

"When we came back from Covid and cases were incredibly high, we hoped to return to normal," he said. "But cases haven't come down and this is the new normal."

Jamie Barry, head of Yew Tree Primary School in Walsall, West Midlands, said for the first time in his career he's heard pupils "saying explicitly 'I'm going to kill myself'".

A Teacher Tapp survey earlier this year found 90 per cent of secondary teachers had reported witnessing a safeguarding issue relating to mental health in the past six months. For primaries, this figure was 74 per cent.

## 'I feel my job is a social worker'

Barry said the severity of mental health issues was impacting his own wellbeing.

Caroline Barlow

## INVESTIGATION: MENTAL HEALTH

**KIDS IN CRISIS: THE TOLL OF OUR COLLAPSING CAMHS**

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

**Schools pick up the pieces as suicidal kids turned away**

By JESS STAFFORDS and SAMANTHA BOOTH

Suicidal children are being turned away from over-reliance on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Mental health services with schools are being told to "keep them safe". Many mental health services are also refusing to see children with a diagnosis of autism and other neurodevelopmental differences on the grounds they do not meet the criteria for therapy. Schools Week can reveal.

Heathfield, Sussex say they are left to "keep children safe" as they either wait or are rejected from tier 3 and 4 CAMHS free diagnosis. This proves schools being left to "plug the gap".

**Suicidal children rejected**  
One parent in Warwickshire says that her 13-year-old daughter had made four attempts to kill herself in 2018, but CAMHS told the family there was a "two-year wait" for an assessment. "My husband was driving in front of the front door at night because she said she was going to run up to the front of a car in the middle of the night," she says.

Heathfield's daughter ended up in A&E five times after suicide attempts. The word was "half full of teenage girls waiting for CAMHS," says the mother. Margaret Emily, a mother in the Midlands, says her daughter was referred to CAMHS by a paediatrician in January 2019, but was only seen in August 2021.

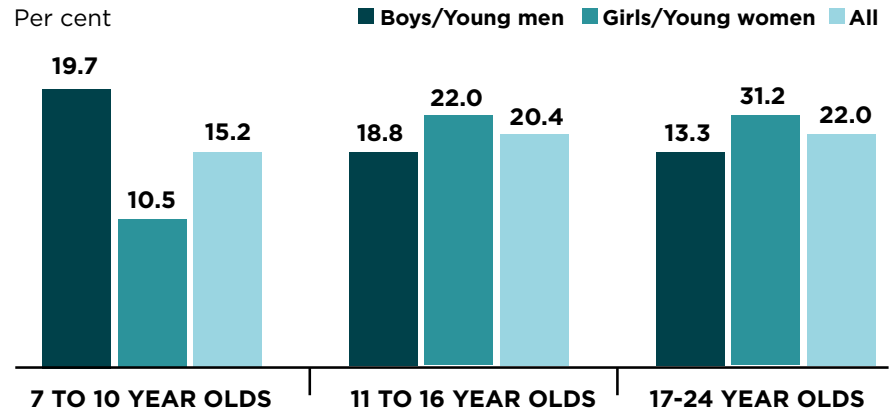
However, when CAMHS assessed her daughter, they said her suicidal feelings "were to do with her autism" and no therapy was offered. In the same week CAMHS wrote to say they intended to discharge her daughter due to the girl not being able to self-harm, says Emily.

"Then they had to keep her on after that, because of the [CAMHS] admission."

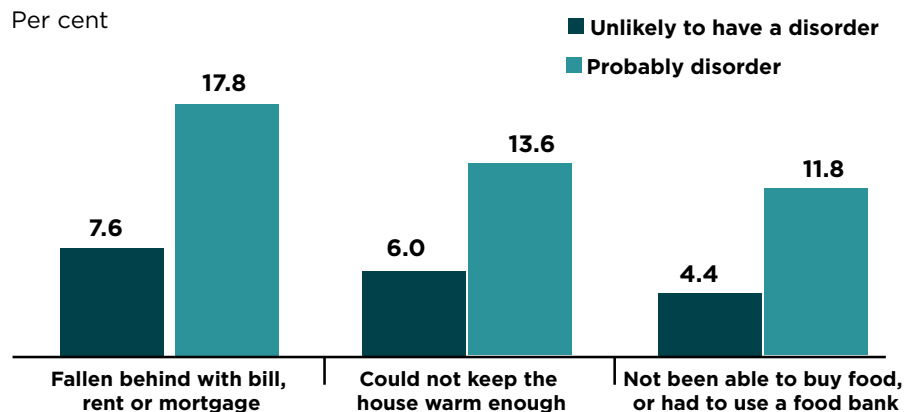
**Schools told to 'keep kids safe'**  
Schools contribute to the problem, reporting that CAMHS thresholds are too high. Kent Croydon Schools Partnership said CAMHS referrals "are frequently rejected". Even for some people who have attempted to take their own lives. Academy Transfer Institute Trust said "if the child is not in crisis at that exact moment but has told us that they want to kill themselves - and tries repeatedly even when in school... [the school is told to] keep them safe".

Caroline Barlow, headteacher at Heathfield Community School in East Sussex, adds schools are expected to "plug that gap but we do not have the expertise of a CAMHS level to be able to do that". Our FOI request found 17 NHS trusts

### Rate of probable mental disorder 2022



### Children, with probable mental disorder more likely live in households facing financial, energy and food insecurity



"Some days I feel like my job is a social worker and that's not what I wanted to do," he said. "I would leave if I could afford to and that breaks my heart to say that. I've only ever wanted to do education. I'm 40 and I can't imagine doing this until I'm 65."

Goddard said there were "huge increases" in the numbers of children self-harming since the pandemic, which can be hard to spot.

Rates have begun to drop, but this is because of the work the school has done in providing support.

At Heathfield Community College, a secondary and sixth form in East Sussex, headteacher Caroline Barlow said students' anxiety levels have "not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels".

The school has six non-teaching staff members with entry-level mental health support training and pays for an external counsellor.

Since September, it has also employed a safeguarding and wellbeing lead, who supports students struggling with their mental health.

But in more "serious" cases, children are referred to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

"You're either looking at a long waiting list or an expensive private

solution. What happens in the interim is that we all try and patch it up and it isn't enough," she said.

Leaders say they are also finding it increasingly difficult to get external help for children with lower-level mental health problems.

A *Schools Week* investigation this year found that 17 NHS trusts were rejecting on average 18 per cent of CAMHS referrals, with parents and schools saying thresholds are too high.

"For a full CAMHS appointment, the threshold is higher and higher," Goddard said. "They've got a certain amount of resource and they need to target the most vulnerable children. But what you really want is prevention not cure."

Yew Tree has two counselling

students on placement at present, providing services to children and their families with "lower-level needs" to plug the gap.

Passmores has its own counselling, provided through the charity Young Concern Trust, as well as a former staff member who retrained as a counsellor.

But 20 children are on the list and face a three-month wait.

### 80 per cent rise in children contacting CAMHS

NHS figures show 733,000 children and young people were in contact with mental health services in the 2021-22 financial year, compared with 398,000 in 2018-19.

The average waiting time for treatment has dropped – from 53 to 40 days. But this can vary, with children in Gloucestershire and



Jamie Barry

## INVESTIGATION: MENTAL HEALTH



Credit: Brighton &amp; Hove Citizens Assembly

## 'I feel like my job is a social worker'

Brighton and Hove waiting on average 70 days.

Claire Murdoch, NHS mental health director, said staff were "working harder than ever to meet this increased demand".

The children mental health workforce had increased by more than 40 per cent, she said.

But Andy Bell, the deputy chief executive at the Centre for Mental Health, said the NHS was "running towards a goal post that is running away from them."

"The system could've got better if demand remained stable, but it didn't because of the pandemic."

Pupils in the poorest areas are hardest hit.

A school-age child with a probable disorder was more likely to live in a household that could not afford to keep the home warm – 13.6 per cent – compared with 6 per cent of children who were unlikely to have a disorder, NHS figures show.

The same is true of pupils in households that have fallen behind with bills, rent or mortgage (17.8 per cent compared with 7.6 per cent) and where the household could not afford enough food or had to use a food

bank (11.8 per cent compared to 4.4 per cent).

Experts warn this winter could also be the crunch point, with soaring energy bills and food prices.

The number of vulnerable pupils at Yew Tree primary – such as those with financial instability at home – has risen from 18 in autumn 2021 to 46 this term.

Barry said the school has its own foodbank and offers "poverty-related support", but added: "All of that impacts on mental health."

### Campaigners say support will save costs

Squeezed budgets forced Vardean School, in Brighton to reduce its external counsellor provision from five to three days. It costs about £190 a day to see six students.

Shelley Baker, the school's head, said: "We've done a lot of work to help students. We pay for this, but it's still not enough. There must be something drastically wrong in the system."

Campaign groups in the area have been pushing for school-based counselling in every school, costing the NHS and council about £2 million a year.

But Brighton and Hove Citizens, an alliance of civil society organisations, estimate that for every £1 invested, £8 could be saved as children might avoid crisis services.

Brighton and Hove Council said that "in the context of 12 years of government funding cuts to our council totalling more than £100 million we cannot commit" to the request.

The Department for Education said it wanted schools to provide "safe, calm and supportive learning environments that promote and support mental wellbeing with targeted academic, pastoral and specialist support that helps every young person fulfill their potential".

Just over a third of pupils next year will have access to new mental health support teams that provide early intervention in schools. But there are no plans for further roll out.

The government has promised all schools and colleges will have access to senior mental health lead training by 2025.

The DfE is also looking at procuring "resources hubs" and a separate mental health "toolkit" for schools to "make it easier for staff by saving their time and reducing uncertainty around which resources are most useful".

Sarah Hannafin, a senior policy advisor at heads' union NAHT, said education staff were not mental health specialists and should not be expected to deliver any kind of therapeutic support or treatment to pupils.

Kadra Abdinasir, strategic lead at the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, said it was concerned not enough was being done to meet the growing need.

"It is more important than ever that mental health and wellbeing is put at the heart of education."

### SAMARITANS

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ON LOCATION : STRIKES



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# First strike for 6 years is 'warning shot', says union

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Sixth-form college staff across England walked out on Wednesday in the first national teacher strike in six years, with one union leader warning disruption could be repeated on a greater scale next year.

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) took action at 76 colleges after voting overwhelmingly in favour of a strike over pay. Like their colleagues in schools, most sixth-form college teachers have received below-inflation pay rises of about 5 per cent.

The NEU said the action was "strongly supported", although it would not say how many of its 4,200 eligible members walked out. It is understood no college had to close.

The union is currently balloting teaching and support staff members in schools. The NASUWT and leadership union NAHT are also balloting members for action.

Dr Mary Bousted, the NEU joint general secretary, said the union would "seek to coordinate further action" in sixth-form colleges with wider walkouts.

"The strength of feeling across the public sector is as one. Today is a warning shot to government if they continue to take no action on calls for a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise for teachers.

"This demonstration of anger



Staff from Woodhouse College, north London, on the picket line

will be even more visible should, as we expect, NEU teachers and support staff in schools and academies across England and Wales vote to take strike action in 2023."

About 60 staff at Woodhouse College, a sixth-form college with academy status in Barnet, north London, were eligible to walk out, with about a third joining a picket outside the gates on Wednesday morning.

Laura Wall, an English teacher and NEU rep, said the issue was "pay stagnation", which made teachers feel "undervalued and left behind".

"We've worked incredibly hard. We've struggled away through the pandemic teaching. We did all the [teacher-assessed grades] and [centre-assessed grades], put all this work in and we're still having to ask and beg for pay rises that reflect what's going on in the larger economy."

Sarah Alaali, who has taught maths for nine years, said she had considered

opting out of her pension "just so I could afford to keep paying my mortgage. I don't feel like the government values education."

John Brennan-Rhodes, the college's head of maths, said his biggest fear was colleagues leaving the profession.

"I love working here. I'm not really angry at the college itself. I think that they should be given more money so that we can earn more money."

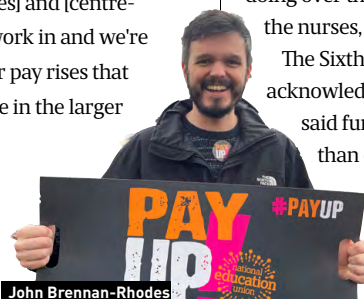
David Makepeace, a physics teacher, pointed to the government's decision to scrap the cap on bankers' bonuses.

"Now they're back where they were earning loads of money. And yet we haven't been compensated for all the hard work that we've been doing over this time, working through Covid, like the nurses, like other public sector employees."

The Sixth Form Colleges Association acknowledged salaries were being "eroded", but said funding was lower for their members than other settings, leaving them without the resources to "meet demands for such a high pay rise". The DfE was approached for comment.



Sarah Alaali



John Brennan-Rhodes

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## VAT ruling leaves sixth-form colleges eyeing up academy status

The decision not to exempt sixth-form colleges from paying VAT following their reclassification as public bodies will encourage more to consider becoming academies.

But about a dozen would-be converts are hamstrung by a rule that requires them to form or join multi-academy trusts, the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) warned.

College leaders had hoped that the ending of private sector status would afford them the tax-free benefits enjoyed by schools, but the government did not extend the exemption.

Since 2016, sixth-form colleges have been allowed to become academies and so benefit from VAT exemption. There are now 65 16-19

academies and free schools in England and 44 sixth-form colleges.

Bill Watkin, the chief executive of SFCA, said the announcement "will encourage more sixth-form colleges to consider the academy option".

He said the government's reclassification had missed a "golden opportunity to address the long-standing and indefensible inequalities that exist between colleges and other providers of 16-19 education".

"For example, the imposition of VAT on sixth-form colleges will continue to act as a tax on learning that redirects funding away from the frontline education of students."

He also urged the DfE to "adopt a much more

flexible approach to academy conversion".

For example, ministers expected sixth-form colleges to join or form a multi-academy trust when converting.

The SFCA said about a dozen colleges were stopped from converting because they were not able to find schools to team up with. In some cases, neighbouring schools were already in trusts; in others struggling schools could not afford to wait for colleges to convert to support them.

He said it was "odd to have so many high-performing institutions knocking on the door of the government's flagship education policy but not being let in".

ANALYSIS: ACADEMIES

# School could transfer to FOURTH trust

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

An academy could be transferred to its fourth trust in under a decade in what critics dub a “taste of the chaos” to come under a fully academised system.

Figures obtained by Schools Week reveal more than 50 schools have been run by three different trusts. Some transfers were trust-initiated, others forced by the government.

Twenty-two were transferred within four years of the previous move, and six within two years.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), said it provided “a taste of the chaos, churn and top-down interventionism” likely under the government’s all-academy vision. She said a “fixation on structural change” created fear and pressure that undermined schools’ work.

However, others said the movement of failing schools showed the system “is working”.

Last month the government confirmed it had threatened to transfer Pembroke Park Primary School in Wiltshire to its fourth trust unless Magna Learning Partnership (MLP) could deliver “rapid” improvement.

The school, rated ‘inadequate’ three times since 2012, lasted five years in The Education Fellowship and two years in Salisbury Plain Academies before joining MLP in 2020.

The Education Fellowship faced two regulatory investigations in three years, including governors’ £45,000 expense claims and a New York “fact-finding” trip.

It was one of the worst-performing trusts nationally in 2014-15 and became the first to relinquish all its schools.

Then Salisbury Plain Academies also agreed to close, with accounts highlighting low pupil numbers.

This year, Pembroke Park’s first inspection under MLP highlighted “significant changes” in leadership and other areas, but accused senior leaders and trustees of not tackling declining standards “quickly enough”.

Ricky Rogers, a former governor and local Labour councillor, said parents were “fed up” and “cynical” over past changes, and claimed uniforms had changed twice.

The multiple transfers showed academisation was a “disaster that’s done nothing for my



community”, he said. “There are dedicated staff but they desperately need more support.”

Sarah Busby, the chief executive of MLP, said the school had faced unspecified “historic issues” plus Covid, but issues raised by inspectors were being addressed.

“They also noted progress was being made. Conversations with our stakeholders are very positive.”

She invited Rogers to see improvements “first-hand”, noting he had not visited recently and MLP had not changed uniforms.

Lime Tree Primary Academy in Greater Manchester was also transferred for a second time last year following a financial scandal, although the move was the result of a merger. Regulators found the Dunham Trust paid out tens of thousands to related parties.

The school had, at local governors’ request, been allowed to leave its previous trust in 2017.

But not all transfers reflect school-level challenges, with Lime Tree rated ‘outstanding’ and winning three awards this year. It is the lead primary for new trust Bright Futures’

teacher-training provision.

A trust spokesperson said the Dunham-Bright Futures merger, aimed at scale and sharing skills, was handled “carefully” and reflected shared values.

In 2017, just two academies had been

rebrokered twice.

In total, 1,489 schools – more than one in seven academies – have been moved at least once since 2013, official data shows.

Helen Josue, who has campaigned against Holland Park School’s planned transfer to United Learning, said parents, children and staff were “completely powerless” in transfers, with consultation not legally required.

The west London standalone academy is embroiled in a legal battle over whether stakeholders were properly consulted, while NEU members walked out and the local council spoke out over joining England’s largest trust.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, a consultant and former chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership, said transfers alone were no “panacea”, but were a “sign the system’s working”.

They allowed a “reignition of momentum” to get the leadership schools needed, although he was concerned that rebrokering was “breaking leaders along the way”.

He said trust strategies successful elsewhere might not work because of a “difficult” context, personality clashes or lack of community confidence, “even with the best of intentions”.

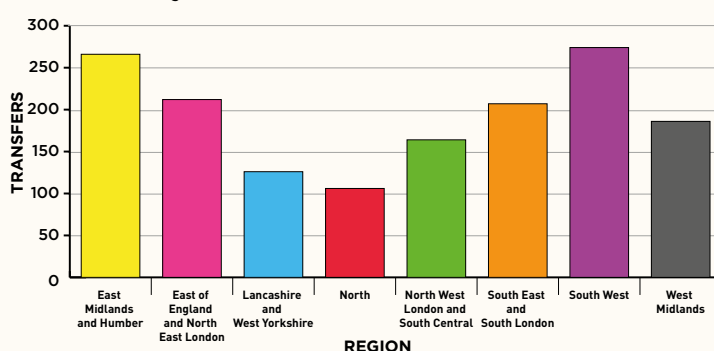
Jonathan Simons, the head of education at consultancy Public First, said “dynamic” systems needed movement, and multiple transfers were likely to reflect schools in “tricky” financial positions.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “Only a small number of academies are not meeting the required standards, but when concerns do arise, we will always explore ways to secure rapid and sustained improvement. This may include transferring the school to an alternative trust when it is in the best interests of pupils.”



Ricky Rogers

Academy transfers between trusts to date



## NEWS: ACADEMIES

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## Academy reform limbo risks 'good chap theory of government'

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

A large multi-academy trust has been warned four times in six years that it could be stripped of four schools following 'inadequate' ratings.

Experts said it justified the government's bid to strengthen intervention powers – but a U-turn and delays to the controversial schools bill have left reforms hanging in the balance.

The Active Learning Trust received a termination warning notice (TWN) last month after Burrowmoor Primary School in Cambridgeshire was rated 'inadequate'.

Inspectors had claimed trust leaders were not "rigorous enough" appraising the curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding.

It came four months another TWN threatened to transfer Littleport and East Cambridgeshire Academy if it did not improve following an 'inadequate' rating. Inspectors said leaders were "bringing about improvements", but both schools were criticised for disruptive behaviour, "low" expectations and aspects of the curriculum and SEND provision.

Stephen Chamberlain, the former chief executive of the trust, resigned in May, citing personal reasons.

The trust, which runs 21 schools across eastern England, had already received notices over Kingsfield Primary in 2020 and Grove Primary in 2017, although both are now 'good'. Three other schools are rated 'requires improvement'.

Jonathan Duff, the Department for Education's regional director, warned the trust twice that he was "concerned" by multiple poor inspections.

But Jonathan Simons, head of education at consultancy Public First, said there was virtually "nothing" regional directors (RDs) could formally do to directly address systemic concerns at trusts.

"They are incredibly powerful, but if a trust says 'no', all they can do is take away failing schools and suggest through back channels that it merge, hire new leaders or broker schools away."

School-level notices were a last resort and sometimes "treating the symptom, not cause". They exposed a "weakness in the system" the schools bill and regulatory review were grappling with, he said.



Matthew Clements-Wheeler



Sam Freedman, another ex-government adviser, called it an "excellent example" of the need for trust-level intervention powers.

His recent Institute for Government report claimed many weak MATs survived partly because there were no formal MAT expectations or accountability mechanisms for educational performance. RDs were unsustainably reliant on "menace" and limited rebrokering powers.

The DfE has admitted its powers could be "slow" or "ineffective". It promised a "range of options" for acting "proportionately and quickly" at trust level in its schools bill earlier this year.

Simons said RDs might want to change trustees or leaders, or transfer more schools other than failing ones to better "reposition" a trust and "repackage" schools for another trust.

But the government delayed and cut down its bill in June. It followed a revolt by sector leaders and peers over handing ministers "unprecedented" powers.

Reforms remain in limbo. Baroness Barran, the academies minister, promised in November to confirm the position "in due course".

Simons said: "If the bill's watered down or review punted into the never-never, are we going to have to work on a 'good chaps theory of government'? If trusts don't engage in discussions, you need that hard-edged recourse."

Some MATs relinquish schools without compulsion.

Mark Blackman, the interim chief executive of Southerly Point Co-operative MAT, said it "jointly agreed" with the DfE



Baroness Barran

to transfer its 18 schools to other trusts this year. It had received three TWNs in two months.

Meanwhile Matthew Clements-Wheeler, a consultant at Keystone Knowledge, warned new powers could be "misused". Perceived bureaucratic weaknesses could become a "pretext" for forcing small trust mergers.

Yet a recent National Governance Association poll of 100 MAT trustees found most backed "more stringent" trust standards and inspection of MATs. It said this marked a "very different picture" to the high-profile backlash over "what now appears to be the doomed bill".

Active Learning Trust's acting chief executive, Craig D'Cunha, said new leaders and improvement plans were already yielding "swift and positive changes" after the "turbulent" Covid period. Seven trust schools were recently rated 'good'.

His replacement by Lynsey Holzer, an Ofsted inspector and chief executive of Evolution Academy Trust, would also help to ensure "consistently high standards"

The DfE did not want to comment.



Jonathan Simons



Jonathan Duff

## NEWS: CURRICULUM

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## Oak faces 'last resort' legal challenge

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Ed tech and publishing firms have launched a judicial review over Oak National Academy, saying the curriculum quango poses an "existential risk to the future viability of the sector".

The British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), the Publishers Association, and the Society of Authors said formal action was lodged with the courts earlier this week.

The National Education Union is also backing the action as an "interested party".

Caroline Wright, BESA's director general, said Oak "poses an existential risk to the future viability of the sector, which in its current form will result in an erosion of teacher choice over how to deliver the national curriculum".

She said the judicial review was "the sector's option of last resort", claiming the Department for Education "refused any meaningful mitigations that would protect competition within the market".

Dan Conway, the chief executive of the Publishers Association, said Oak would be an "unprecedented and unevidenced intervention that will cause irreparable damage to the education sector as we know it".

It is understood that the bodies have applied for a request to submit a judicial review. If the courts decide there are grounds to take it forward, the claimants can then formally launch the process.

*Schools Week* reported last week that the cost of a failed high court bid could be upwards of £1 million.

However, the bodies would not reveal details of the legal challenge. Court documents had not been published as *Schools Week* went to press.

An Oak spokesperson said legal action was "essentially an attempt to block free, high-quality resources for teachers that want them".

"Oak has a clear purpose to work alongside the commercial market to improve the



quality of curriculum materials that support teachers and pupils. It is extremely disappointing to see commercial providers seeking to prevent us from doing so."

BESA said the action was funded by "financial contributions from UK publishing and ed tech companies".

Oak's transition to an arms-length government body has proven controversial and led to United Learning, one of the scheme's original academy trust partners, pulling 1,500 of its lessons from the platform.

Sir John Coles, the chief executive of United Learning, said the quango "is to procure and promote a set of curriculum resources that exemplify ministers' curriculum ideals".

Coles alleged that Nick Gibb, the schools minister, thought the Oak quango was a way to "promote his own view of the curriculum".

Matt Hood, Oak's interim chief executive and co-founder, said ministers would be told "no" if they tried to interfere with the quango's plans.

Its framework pledged that the education secretary was "committed" to giving the Oak board "freedom

to operate" and would be "operationally independent" from government.

However, the secretary of state must approve the appointment of the chief executive and sign off spending above certain thresholds. They could also appoint up to five directors and must sign off spending above certain thresholds.

Business case documents for Oak also show it "should be continuously strategic aligned with government policy as it develops".

Coles tweeted recently that ministers had "created the perfect vehicle for a future government – perhaps two years away – to take precisely the opposite view and use it to promote a skills-based curriculum or otherwise undo everything Nick Gibb [schools minister] has worked to achieve".

A DfE spokesperson said it was "disappointing to see businesses operating in the education sector seeking to undermine plans that have been designed by teachers, are in demand from teachers, and ultimately are in the best interests of pupils up and down the country".

"We value the importance of a competitive commercial market and so it will always be teachers who choose whether or not to use Oak's or any other provider's materials."



Caroline Wright



Matt Hood

NEWS: SEND

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# SEND inspection change worries campaigners

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Campaigners have sounded the alarm over a move by Ofsted to allow “improving” special educational needs and disabilities services to achieve the top rating in new inspections from January.

The watchdog is amending its proposed new framework for joint area SEND inspections conducted with the Care Quality Commission, after councils argued its original proposed approach would “set the bar too high”.

The change will allow local areas to get the highest “outcome” in new inspections from January, even if they need to make improvements in some areas, as they show they are taking action to address their “weaknesses”.

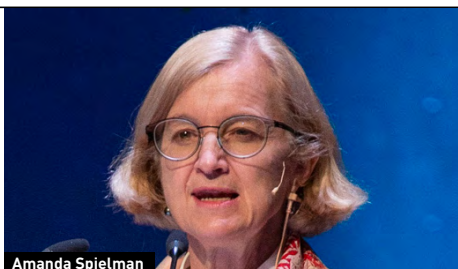
More than two thirds of councils inspected by Ofsted last year had “significant weaknesses” in how they support pupils with SEND.

From next month, new inspections will focus more on the impact SEND services have on children and young people, use children’s experience as a “starting point” and increase scrutiny on alternative provision.

Services will be rated with three new inspection “outcomes”. The first will be for services that “typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND”.

The second will be for when services lead to “inconsistent experiences and outcomes”, while the third will highlight “widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns”.

But Ofsted will now change the wording of the



Amanda Spielman

first outcome slightly, so it covers SEND services that are “taking action where improvements are needed”.

Ofsted said the change “will ensure that a local partnership that is performing well in many areas, but may still need to make some improvements, could receive this outcome if it is aware of weaknesses and is taking action to address them”.

But campaigner Hayley Harding said it was “naïve to think that cash-strapped local authorities will keep their promises when to do so would mean spending more money”.

The Let Us Learn Too group founder, which campaigns on behalf of disabled children and their parents, said: “Speak to any parent and they will tell you the issue is of accountability – no one is checking up on councils to make sure they are doing what they should – and this will mean one of the very few methods of holding them to account is now going to be weakened.”

Special Needs Jungle, another campaign group, said it was “highly concerning that LAs can get credit for a promise of improvements that might not happen”.

Ofsted said feedback, “mainly from local authority representatives and some professional associations”, stated that the outcomes were



“worded negatively”, and that the first outcome “set the bar too high”.

Claire Coutinho, the children’s minister, has confirmed that the government’s response to the SEND review has been delayed until “early” next year, as revealed by Schools Week last week.

Amanda Spielman, Ousted’s chief inspector, resisted calls in the consultation to delay new inspections until government reforms were implemented.

Doing so “would risk creating an unacceptable accountability gap in a system that needs to improve urgently”, she said.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## DfE hopes free training will swell ranks of educational psychologists

The government has extended its scheme to train 200 educational psychologists a year.

The scheme, which is run by 12 universities and an NHS trust, offers a free postgraduate doctorate degree in exchange for at least two years working for a local authority or alternative setting after graduation.

The Department for Education said it was launching a “market engagement” exercise for the new contract, which would run from September 2023 and be worth up to £32.2 million for three cohorts.

About £21 million in funding for the first two

cohorts was confirmed this week. A further £11.2 million for the third cohort is dependent on the next spending review.

The budget “would be expected to fund the full three-year tuition fees for trainee educational psychologists, as well as a first-year bursary payment for trainees and associated course administration costs”.

Ministers have been funding training for educational psychologists for several years, as the number available to work with schools falls. They play a key role in allocating education, health and care plans

to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

But *Schools Week* revealed in 2017 that the number of educational psychologists working for councils dropped from 1,900 in 2010, to 1,650 in 2015.

Government research in 2019 found more than 90 per cent of local authority principal educational psychologists experienced more demand for their services than they are able to meet. Two thirds of councils said they were struggling to fill vacant posts.

## NEWS: EXAMS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Hold on to your Covid contingency plans, says Ofqual

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Don't put Covid exam contingency plans "in the bin", Ofqual's chair has said, as ministers confirmed schools should again collect pupil performance evidence.

Finalised guidance published this week told schools to collect and retain evidence to be used for possible teacher grades for GCSEs and A-levels.

While ministers believed it was "very unlikely" exams would be cancelled again, "good public policy means having contingency, even for extremely unlikely scenarios".

The government faced fierce criticism for not having an "off-the-shelf plan B" when exams were cancelled for a second time in early 2021.

Last year, schools were asked to collect evidence throughout the year by internal assessments, although exams went ahead.

Ian Bauckham, Ofqual's chair, said a lesson learned from the pandemic was that "we need to just think hard about the resilience of the system".

He told Schools Week: "We ran exams in 2022, which was an enormous success, a really big important step-return to normality. But we knew that we had to think about system resilience and know what we would do in the unlikely event those exams couldn't go ahead.

"It would not be sensible to put all of that in the bin at this stage. I think everyone accepts that we have to have that at the back of our minds, however unlikely the scenario now seems."

A three-week consultation was held this term on draft guidance that aimed to "improve and streamline" the process by creating the "minimum possible burden", while allowing a "broadly consistent approach" across all pupils.

But half of teachers, senior leaders and schools and colleges that responded said the arrangements would create additional teacher workload.

However, only 94 school and college staff replied to the consultation, which had a total of 213 responses.

Only two-thirds said the guidance should remain in place beyond 2023. Ministers plan to



consult on this in the summer term.

Bauckham said Ofqual would "keep an open mind" on long-term resilience planning.

**'Sensible to test once a term'**

The government and Ofqual said schools should plan test opportunities in line with their usual assessments, such as mock exams. These could be varied if a school needed more evidence.

But they stopped short of repeating advice on the frequency of testing from last year's guidance, which said a "sensible approach" would be to test once a term.

Teachers should also "guard against over-assessment", and normally would "not need to spend longer on these assessments than they would on their existing" test plans.

Ofqual made some tweaks to its proposed guidance, such as clarifying that evidence could be kept digitally or physically, and that students should normally only be assessed on the content they had been taught.

Students should be supervised during tests, but external invigilators would

not be needed.

Overall, 158 of the 213 respondents agreed the guidance was helpful.

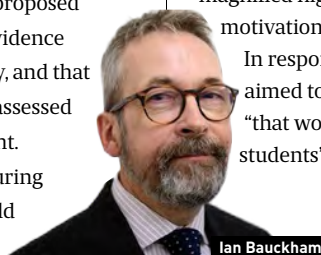
However, the DfE and Ofqual said a "key theme" in responses was the impact on teacher workload.

One senior leader responded that there was "no question" the system added to teacher workload: "Marking and moderating two sets of exams instead of just one set of mock exams doubles the workload."

But officials said they had not stated how many tests should take place. One exam board told the consultation it feared students might focus on responding to assessments rather than on learning opportunities.

And a school said "previously valuable formative assessments" could be turned into "magnified high-stakes" tests that impacted motivation and corroded "love for learning".

In response, officials said the guidance aimed to help schools to use arrangements "that work best for them and their students".



Ian Bauckham

## Exam aids plan gets go-ahead

Ofqual has decided to go ahead with plans to provide exam aids, such as formulae and equation sheets, in GCSE maths, physics and combined science exams.

More than 93 per cent of respondents said they agreed with proposals for a maths formulae sheet in 2023, and more than 95 per cent supported having an equation sheet for physics and combined science.

As confirmed this term, summer GCSE and A-level grades will also return to pre-pandemic levels with a "soft landing".

Bauckham said Ofqual was "missing no opportunity to explain" 2023 arrangements "and give people opportunities to ask questions and really understand what these decisions are and why they are being made".

REVEALED: THE 2022 TEACHING AWARDS WINNERS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# Inspirational staff go for gold

Fourteen schools winners have been honoured in the 2022 Pearson Teaching Awards for their dedicated work in education.

The “inspirational” gold winners have been revealed following a week-long celebration of teaching on the BBC’s The One Show.

Now in their 24th year, the awards celebrate the best teaching across the UK and thousands of nominations were received for the gold award winners.

The week ended with all the award-winning teachers, schools, leaders, teaching assistants and lecturers being presented with their trophies at a ceremony at The Brewery in the City of London.

Education secretary Gillian Keegan said the winners’ “fantastic work and dedication to their students is truly an inspiration, and these awards provide well earned recognition of the work of incredible teachers and school staff up and down the country”.

“We have some of the best teachers in the world and I want to thank every single person working so hard to support children and young people for their expertise and commitment.”

## Primary teacher of the year

**Nicola Richards, Caegarw Primary School, Mountain Ash, Wales**

Nicola is described as an “inspirational teacher who places staff and pupil wellbeing at the heart of the whole school curriculum”.

Her “sunny and positive approach to school life is infectious, and she is a much-loved member of staff”.

## Secondary teacher of the year

**Tara Hall, Fir Vale School, Sheffield**

Tara started as literacy co-ordinator at Fir Vale School in 1999 and “has been a leader at all levels, from head of English to mentoring early career teachers and those in teacher training”.

She mentors a teacher, and former pupil, “who couldn’t speak English when they joined the school, who credits Tara with turning their life around”.

## Outstanding new teacher

**Simon Wheatcroft, Outwood Academy Adwick, Doncaster**

Simon is a motivator and is described by colleagues as “an inspiration to his entire school community”.

He “brings a love of technology and a wealth of knowledge and industry experience into the



Primary teacher of the year: Nicola Richards



Secondary teacher of the year: Tara Hall



Outstanding new teacher: Simon Wheatcroft

classroom to bring alive for students the impact of technologies in society”.

## Primary headteacher of the year

**Helen Stott, Allerton CE Primary School, Leeds**

Helen has “shown throughout her 30-year career a burning passion that the arts are not the advantage of the privileged but a right for every young citizen”.

She is a “strong, inspirational, and open leader with the courage to take risks”. Helen is “determined to make the school a home from home”.

## Secondary headteacher of the year

**Andrew O’Neill, All Saints Catholic College, Kensington**

When he was appointed as head in 2016, the “future of the school was bleak”. In 2022, All Saints is a “completely different environment, both physically and academically”.



Primary headteacher of the year: Helen Stott



Secondary headteacher of the year: Andrew O'Neill



Primary school of the year: Port Ellen Primary School



Secondary school of the year: Limavady High School

A 2021 Ofsted inspection which marked the school as ‘good’ also suggested that there was “enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged to be outstanding”.

## Primary school of the year

**Port Ellen Primary School, Isle of Islay, Scotland**

Port Ellen Primary is a “small school with big ambitions, central to the heart of the community”.

Located on the Isle of Islay, a two-hour ferry journey from the Scottish mainland, the curriculum is “designed around island life and has won a number of awards around STEM and entrepreneurialism”.

## REVEALED: THE 2022 TEACHING AWARDS WINNERS

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### Secondary school of the year

**Limavady High School, Limavady, Northern Ireland**

Limavady High School in Causeway Coast and Glens in Northern Ireland has a “dedicated, dynamic, and hardworking team of teaching and non-teaching staff who are all committed to developing the whole child”.

The ethos of the school is “one of inclusivity and support in a caring environment where each child is valued and the school specialises in pastoral care”.

### Excellence in special needs education

**Andrew Sanders, Moorcroft School, Uxbridge**

Moorcroft is an ‘outstanding’ secondary special school for students aged 11-19 with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

Andrew is described by colleagues as “more than a headteacher: an educator, a facilitator, a community leader and the ‘steady rock’ of the school”.

### Teaching assistant of the year

**Esta Bernardini, Carlton Keighley, Keighley**

Esta joined Carlton Keighley as a dinner lady, then volunteered as an unpaid teaching assistant before applying for a role supporting a visually impaired student.

She has “worked tirelessly to support students with additional learning needs to be successful, and has quietly transformed the culture of special education needs and disabilities (SEND) support there”.

### Unsung hero

**Carolynn Southcombe, Cottingham CofE Primary School, Cottingham**

Carolynn has worked as an administrator at the school for 20 years. She organises student enrichment trips, arranges weekly whole school yoga sessions, and opens these up to students and parents.

She also leads the Magnificent Minds group, working with select children who work as role models to promote wellbeing and healthy living to other students, as well as the ‘Love to Lunch’ group which invites family members into school to eat with the children.

### Early years team of the year

**Redgate Community Primary School, Liverpool**

The early years team at Redgate has grown from one teacher and a teaching assistant working alongside seven reception pupils in 2015, to the 20-strong team it is today, which works across nursery, reception and the complex needs unit,



Excellence in special needs education: Andrew Sanders



Teaching assistant of the year: Esta Bernardini



Unsung hero: Carolynn Southcombe



Early years team of the year: Redgate Community Primary School



Impact through partnership: Royal Opera House; Create and Dance Partnership in Coventry

supporting 84 children.

This growth “has brought new and exciting opportunities for the children and families in the community to learn and develop together within an inclusive, nurturing, child-centred and play-rich environment”.



Lifetime achievement award: Angela Williams



Digital innovator of the year: Kalam Neale

### Impact through partnership

**Royal Opera House: Create and Dance Partnership in Coventry, Earlsdon Primary School, Coventry**

In 2019, the Royal Opera House's Create and Dance team partnered with Coventry Schools, the Local Cultural Education Partnership (CCEP), Coventry City Council and Coventry City of Culture.

The partnership assembled schools across Coventry to address a perceived gap in inclusive dance provision. It continued throughout the pandemic, offering online events, and has since launched a programme for all schools in the area.

### Lifetime achievement award

**Angela Williams, Huddersfield New College, Huddersfield**

During her 15 years as Principal at Huddersfield New College, Angela has helped “well over 18,000 young people to achieve their dreams in an environment that provides equality of opportunity for all”.

She “transformed the post-16 education available to young people in Kirklees and the surrounding areas, and their life chances. Huddersfield New College is now in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the UK”.

### Digital innovator of the year

**Kalam Neale, Barnsley College**

Kalam has “envisioned, created and driven ground-breaking, specialist digital provision with educational development at its heart”.

Barnsley College has become a sector leader in the field “because of his trailblazing work, and his expertise is now in demand in the UK and across the world”.



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# Feature

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



## Can college-run MATs solve the classroom-to-career conundrum?

It is rare for colleges to run schools. Early examples – which usually involved a college in a consortium of local organisations sponsoring a trust – failed. But new analysis shows the college-led trust model is slowly gaining traction. Jessica Hill investigates ...

Department for Education data suggests 41 colleges are the main sponsors of academy trusts – up from 21 in 2018.

However, our analysis shows only 29 appear to have schools under their remit. Nine of the colleges listed by the DfE no longer exist, and three no longer sponsor schools.

But the number of schools sponsored by colleges is up by 174 per cent in the past four years from

57 to 156. The average college now sponsors more than five schools.

It comes after a rocky start. The Salford Academy Trust was set up in 2012 as a partnership between Salford council, the University of Salford and Salford College.

But in 2018 its four schools were transferred to another trust after the regional schools commissioner cast doubt on the “ability and

scale” of the trust to provide the level of support required. All four had all received poor Ofsted ratings.

Other college-led trusts folded because of poor reputations or small size.

Burton and South Derbyshire College’s education trust, set up in 2014, had one school – the Kingfisher Academy in Burton – which it gave up in 2018, a year after Ofsted rated it ‘inadequate’.

## Feature: College MATs



UTC Oxfordshire

And Newbury College Academy Trust is set to merge next year with The Thames Learning Trust after opening its only school, Highwood Copse Primary, in 2021.

### 'The golden thread'

But others are thriving.

Since its launch in 2014, the London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT) has sponsored seven alternative provision and special schools and one mainstream school across Bromley and Bexley in Kent and, most recently, Guildford in Surrey.

All its schools inspected by Ofsted since being taken over are 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Dr Sam Parrett, the trust's chief executive and principal of London and South East Colleges, says it is essential to only take on schools for the "right reasons", with a "golden thread" binding them together.

For LSEAT, this is around SEND provision. The trust's journey started after the 2013 reforms when the college's local authorities of Bromley and Bexley became pilots for education, health and care plans, with the college as the transition to adult phase.

"We started working really closely with all our special schools on 'what does the local offer look like? And what does progression look like?'"

"At that time some of the schools were not performing very well in Ofsted terms. We had a long, hard debate at our governing body and could see that through working with our schools where there were young people experiencing disadvantage ... who went on to do well in the college... we could be much stronger."

Parrett describes the schools she takes on as "swans" – schools without a name.

"In most instances, the local authority and the DfE come to us and say, 'we'd really like you to



Parrett at Aspire with co-heads

## 'Our job is to make schools glide ... whilst you're paddling frantically underneath'

take on this school ... but please change its name because its reputation is so bad that we need it to have a fresh start'.

"Our job is to make them glide and do all the beautiful things that a swan does above the water, whilst you're paddling frantically underneath to keep it going."

### Closer connections to the workplace

Such set-ups allow schools to benefit from a college's closer connections with businesses, including bringing pupils on to campus to see what courses are on offer or to do extracurricular activities.

While it is improving, just 12.8 per cent of schools meet all the eight benchmarks of what is classed as providing good careers education – way off the 100 per cent envisioned by ministers just four years ago.

Dudley Academies Trust, sponsored by Dudley College of Technology, has six schools. Its students are working with college engineers on a project to build a two-seater aircraft that Jo Higgins, the trust's chief executive, says in two years' time will be "flying over Dudley".

"We also have an aircraft hangar there," she says. "It means the sky is the limit for those young people."

For Activate Learning Group, which includes seven colleges, the golden thread is its focus on

technical education – four of its six schools are university technical colleges.

While the trust and the colleges exist within two separate legal entities, they "share a learning philosophy – 'brain motivation, emotion' – right the way across, which really brings us closely together", says Joanne Harper, the chief executive.

While colleges and schools can be divided by a sense of rivalry for 16 to 18-year-olds in their catchment, Harper says the joint organisation means they don't tread on each other's toes.

"We don't duplicate the requirement for 16-18 courses in the area, we're really careful about that."

### Getting the right model

Most college MATs are set up with a separate college corporation and the MAT itself under one governance structure and both working together at committee level.

Parrett describes her group as having "very structured formalised accountability frameworks and schemes of delegation" with schools given some independence because "the headteacher knows their local community better than I do".

The shared education group then provides "infrastructure" to help "grow and support" the schools.

Parrett describes the "earned autonomy model" as: "We monitor you, we risk assess you, and the

# Feature: College MATs

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more successful you are the more autonomous you are. The less successful you are, the more accountable you are for what you're doing.”

Parrett is chief executive of the trust, the colleges and the wider education group.

She says structures where “you haven't got a single line of accountability” can prove problematic and “might not be easy to grow from”.

In other models, the college takes more of a backseat role.

Harper is very clear that her MAT is “sponsored” by the group's seven colleges, which have “elements going into the governance of the MAT – but they don't lead it”.

Wellspring Academy Trust, which has 28 schools, was set up by Barnsley College. The college appointed the original members and has the right to appoint directors – but Yiannis Koursis, its chief executive, although a trustee, is not one of its two company directors.

Smaller college-sponsored MATs often have a single governing board. In 2015 Telford College sponsored TCAT MAT, whose sole school, the Kickstart Academy, operates from college-owned premises. It is overseen by one board with a college appointed vice-chair.

The college is currently working towards transferring the academy to another trust.

## Size matters

With the government's 2030 target for most MATs to be on a trajectory to have at least ten schools or 7,500 pupils, most college-led trusts have an ambition to grow.



## ‘We don't duplicate the requirement for 16-18 courses in the area’

The government is also looking for more good sponsors to run trusts – meaning now could be the time for new colleges to enter the sector.

LSEAT is about to take on its ninth school in January and is in discussion with two other special schools and two mainstream schools.

Parrett believes her trust will likely become larger in financial terms than its colleges within the next two to three years. The trust currently has an income of £30 million.

But she admits that growing a MAT is difficult for a college if it “only wants good and outstanding schools to come to it, because there's a lot of competition”.

“Why would a school join a college-run MAT, when it could join one [run by experts in] primary or secondary schools?”

The answer for some lies in the branding a well-regarded college can provide.

Higgins believes her organisation was “really helped in the early phases” by the college's ‘outstanding’ Ofsted rating, which “enhanced the character of the MAT and boosted its branding”.

The trust has the green light for further growth on transforming struggling schools and is “moving towards the government's target of ten schools”.

Schools Week reported last week a rising number

of MAT mergers, with trusts looking to get bigger and financial challenges forcing smaller ones together.

## Economies of scale

One of the biggest advantages for being part of a college-led trust is cost savings in back office functions, which Parrett says means “more support in the frontline”.

The group pooled its colleges' and schools' central services, with group directors of finance, IT, marketing and estates.

It also means greater purchasing power, with savings from a centralised MIS system coming in at “hundreds of thousands of pounds”.

Furthermore, the colleges' health and safety team now also works across its schools – noteworthy because it is believed to be rare for a trust of that size to benefit from such a service

in-house.

Work is also underway across the schools and colleges on a staff resilience and wellbeing programme. And the group has a framework for training and development of staff from teaching assistants at level two and three apprenticeships through to level seven degree apprenticeships and PhDs for staff.

“We've got all of those wraparound things that cocoon and support a school to develop, that go far further than they would have in isolation,” Parrett says.

“There is a MAT dividend, but that dividend is greater when you pool all of the support services of the college and the school to create that central team.”



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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JUDY THOMAS  
Mother and campaigner

## E-safety: Our daughter's death should change things forever

**An assistant coroner concluded that her school's e-safety failures contributed to Frankie's death, writes Judy Thomas. Could it happen in your school?**

**A**ged 15, our daughter, Frankie took her own life at home in September 2018 after a 'normal' day at school. She had no history of suicide attempts. Andy and I were devastated and at an absolute loss as to why she had done this.

It was only the school's scrutiny of her actions that day that revealed Frankie had been on a school iPad for over 2 hours, unsupervised. She had accessed material about violent rape, self-harm and stories on the site Wattpad that ended in suicide, the last of which she copied later in her bedroom.

A forensic search of her school laptop also revealed Frankie had accessed other sites at school over the year, where she researched horrific material on self-harm and suicide. We, the school and Ofsted were totally unaware this was happening. Months before Frankie's death, an Ofsted report said safeguarding policies were up-to-date. "Pupils are appropriately supervised at all times," it read. Less than a year later, a full inspection

said safeguarding was 'effective'.

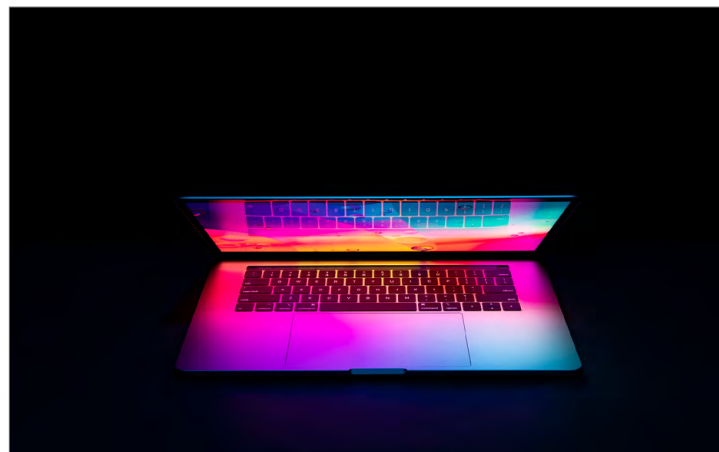
Yet the school's independent technician, employed after that report, revealed at Frankie's inquest that the school had purchased new equipment shortly after her death but that shockingly, a year on, it was still not set up correctly. iPads

**“Schools shouldn't wait; they must act now**

were still unfiltered. He explained all that had to be put right for the e-safety filters and monitoring to function properly, proving just how vital it is for schools to budget not just for online safety tools but for the expertise to run them.

Now, daily alerts flag attempts to access blocked sites to him and several other staff. These are followed by immediate further communication about who is attending to the pupil concerned. The pupil is found (within 7 minutes on average), spoken with, and findings relayed back to the group.

It should be mandatory for schools to ensure that such alerts are regularly produced, received, acted on and records kept – and Ofsted/ISI should check this is happening. Accountability for e-safety should be no less important than fire



safety checks. Frankie's school had assumed their system was working because there were no alerts – an appalling loophole.

The school's technician also regularly tests the system by attempting to access sites that are

importance of supervision.

The assistant coroner also criticised the DfE's lack of guidance regarding blocklists. Wattpad is used in some secondary schools, along with other equally dangerous sites. In my opinion, the DfE's Keeping Children Safe in Education is insufficient. It states that governing bodies of state schools and proprietors of independent ones "should ensure their school or college has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place". No. They "must ensure" that such systems are "in place and working".

None of our requests to meet any of the five education secretaries since the coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths report have ever been granted. However, a meeting with the DfE is now scheduled and our MP, Michael Gove and the Children's Commissioner, Rachel De Souza have committed to accompanying us.

Whatever the outcome of this meeting, schools shouldn't wait; they must act now. Help and advice are available to get started.

To find your lively 15-year-old daughter dead – just like that – changes you forever. And it was preventable. There can be no complacency in stopping this from ever happening again.

# Opinion

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**STEVE  
MASTIN**  
Vice president, Conservative  
Education Society

## Grammar schools: Why I've put my name down to end selection

**Our mixed economy of schools is delivering for all pupils, writes Steve Mastin, and selective education is only holding that back**

Supporters of grammar schools extol their broad and rigorous academic curriculum, their extensive programmes of extra-curricular activities, their warm and strict discipline, their pride in the school and encouragement for pupils to aspire to the top universities and career pathways.

I agree. And I want those things for every child.

Even at their zenith, grammar schools educated just 19 per cent of the pupil population. That the vast majority did not get into them is a necessary characteristic of grammars, and more telling than the characteristics outlined above.

That's why whenever I hear an argument in favour of grammars, I ask the proponent to stop and make the case for secondary moderns first. Because, as Nick Gibb has long argued, schools near a grammar de facto become secondary moderns. They teach the pupils who didn't or couldn't pass the grammar school entrance test.

I recently visited a primary school in north London. Children from very

different homes – 95 per cent of them with EAL – were all learning the same rich knowledge. All Year 4 children were taught about the east African kingdom of Aksum, possibly the first Christian state in the world. So secure were pupils in their knowledge of the Roman

**“ Levelling down for our children is not a serious option**

empire and the Byzantine empire that they could confidently compare and contrast these with Aksum.

Their first introduction to the word 'empire' was in year 3 when they learned about Persia. This understanding was then carefully expanded to cover the Greco-Persian wars and finally Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire. They could confidently identify Egypt in the south-west and the Indus Valley in the east of Alexander's empire.

Why should we become less ambitious for these children when they reach the age of eleven, separating them into those who will continue to have an ambitious curriculum and those who will not?

I taught history for seventeen years in a marvellous state comprehensive school. We educated

children whose parents were self-employed plumbers, hairdressers or carpenters, children whose parents were doctors, lawyers, teachers or fellows at Cambridge colleges, and children who came from homes where no one worked. Like many schools, we also taught children

who came from homes that presented special challenges.

At no point did it occur to me that any child should not have access to a rigorous history curriculum, learning about Norman England, analysing Elizabeth I's connections with the wider world or charting India's road to independence. Why would I have wanted any pupils to have less access to vibrant scholarly debate on Mandela and the anti-apartheid struggle, about Churchill or the Battle of Britain or about the causes of the Holocaust?

It did not occur to me that some children should not have access to our First World War battlefields trip. Or that some children should not learn to play an instrument, or sing the music of Thomas Tallis, or play sport, or take an active part in the Duke of Edinburgh's award or wear

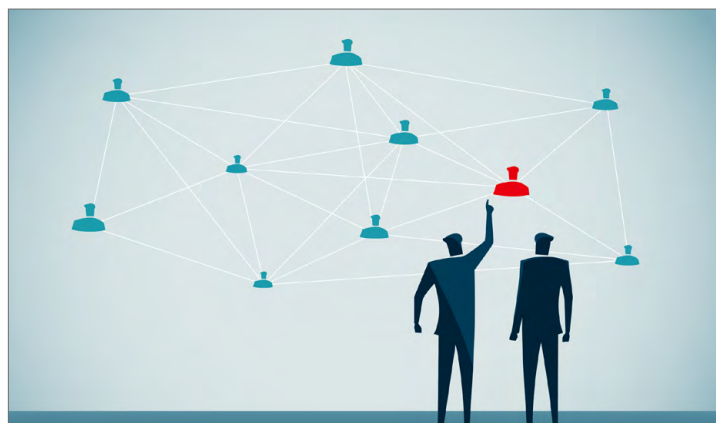
their uniform with pride.

For all these reasons and more, I am opposed to any policy that would see a return to a selective system. For those who say it is all about parental choice, I say this: no parent chooses to send his or her child to a grammar school. The grammar school chooses the children, and the vast majority will be rejected. Levelling down for our children is not a serious option.

We now have a mixed economy of schools. Some are part of a local authority; others are academies; others are non-selective free schools. Remarkable work takes place in all of these schools, teaching all pupils from all backgrounds.

So I have added my name to a new group, Times's Up for the Test (TUFTT), because even to discuss a return to a selective grammar school system is a huge distraction from our proper priority of improving all schools for all children.

Indeed we need to go further. I would like to see an end to selective education where it still takes place in the state sector. With growing, cross-party support, I believe we could soon see an end to the secondary modern and an ambitious, broad education for all our children.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**CIAN KINSELLA**  
Teacher of English and Latin,  
London

## Retention: The two-year ECF is just a longer hazing period

**A protracted induction period does nothing to change a toxic work culture that pervades the profession and harms students as well as staff, writes Cian Kinsella**

I had to write a 500-word essay when I applied to my SCITT, which I submitted at 5am in advance of a 9am deadline – entirely on account of my inability to effectively plan my time. I told my friend who was completing her PGCE at the time about this. Her response was brusque: "Welcome to teaching". This was my first brush with a toxic culture that glorifies struggle, a culture that pervades the profession and harms staff and students alike.

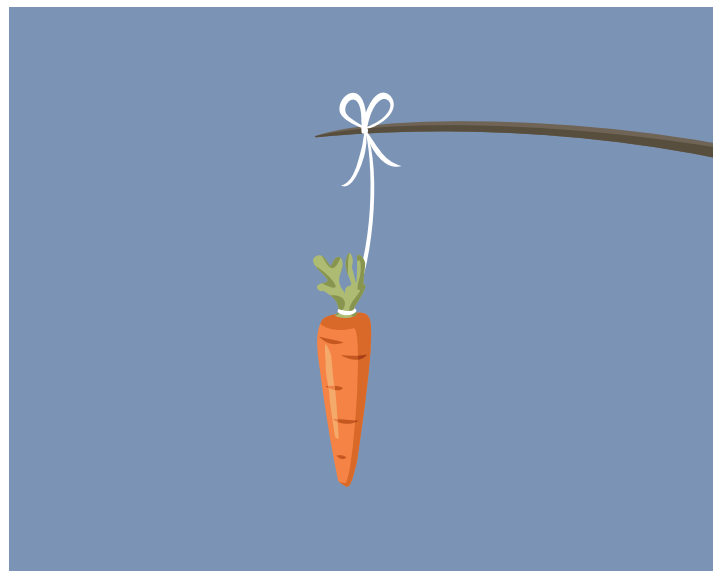
I am fortunate. The school where I trained had a positive environment: supportive SLT, generally well-behaved students and strongly embedded routines. And yet, despite having no history of poor mental health, mine deteriorated to breaking point. I was always exhausted. For several weeks of that first autumn term, I came home and got into bed until I could eventually fall asleep, ruminating over every mistake I thought I'd made that day.

When I told some of my colleagues, their stories were all

the same or worse. I thought I was the problem, but one teacher told me she used to vomit with anxiety every morning before registration. Another was frequently reduced to tears by a mentor who regularly told her she wasn't good enough. Yet they both insisted that things would get better – and they did, for me. Not for many of the others in my cohort.

The longer, two-year ECF was intended to remedy this, but a protracted induction will not ameliorate the underlying stressors of the job. As Becky Allen points out, however, it's cheaper than the real solutions to poor pay, poorer conditions and lack of trust.

What remains as a driver for retention is a heady cocktail of saviour complex, emotional blackmail and an ego-boosting belief that surviving the hazing means you're more competent or industrious than those who opt out along the way. These responses often weave together to present teaching as a vocation. Jesse Jackson once famously implored: "Dream of teachers who teach for life and not for a living." Few would say the same of a digital marketer or shopkeeper. Yet here we are, by way of the PGCE and the DBS update service fee, paying for the privilege of being a teacher.



**“Where are the material incentives for teachers to stay?”**

These toxic beliefs provide comfort to those of us who feel like we've entered a loser's game, but the ramifications are insidious. Low retention is only one of them. One friend informed me that SLT at her state school placed bets on which of their trainees would last the year. Presenteeism is rife, with arriving early and leaving late seen as laudable. Unions are often afraid of running on a workers' rights platform, so appeal to student outcomes instead.

Teach First is a prime example of this culture in action: recruit graduates from top-ranking universities into underperforming state schools to make a difference where it counts most. But what difference can an inexperienced teacher really make in a challenging environment? In your first year, you teach an 80 per cent timetable and can earn as little as £18,419. This is a band-aid on the haemorrhaging of the education sector and its sink-

or-swim ethos. And with summer placements in the private sector, it encourages participants to perceive teaching as a stepping stone towards something "greater".

Career change is nothing to be ashamed of, and teaching is a great base from which to pivot to many professions. But given the ritual early-career hazing and limited prospects, where are the material incentives for teachers to stay?

At a time when Thursday is the new Friday and many professionals fit their jobs around their lives, many teachers have little to no social life and no flexibility. Older teachers are retiring to realise that they have no social net. Many frequently have to evaluate, as one colleague puts it, "whether the juice is still worth the squeeze".

The answer to the retention problem is clear. Instead of admonitions to squeeze harder, we need juicier oranges.

# Opinion

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PHILIP LE  
FEUVRE

Chief Strategy Officer, NCFE

## Why careers advice must change – and how to get started

**Following his appearance at the education select committee's inquiry into careers guidance, Philip Le Feuvre explains what's needed to make the system fit for purpose**

It's important to start with a caveat: I don't believe that any country has cracked careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), at least not completely.

CEIAG can be costly to deliver and lacks a comprehensive evidence base regarding which interventions are effective. Cause and effect can be hard to disaggregate from the multitude of factors that influence outcomes, and often measuring those same outcomes takes time.

However, we've under-invested in CEIAG for a sustained period and we lack a coordinated strategy.

As a result, careers advice in schools is inconsistent, lacks independence and doesn't start early enough. Only 7 to 12 per cent of schools are delivering against all the Gatsby Benchmarks. Meanwhile, performance measures like progress 8 and Ebacc mean the school curriculum imparts bias towards academic subjects, and this is reinforced in schools with sixth forms, who are effectively incentivised to encourage learners to study A levels as they receive funding for those who continue at the school post-16.

Overall, only 40 per cent of schools are complying in full with the Baker Clause. This means the majority are not allowing colleges and training providers access to students to discuss non-academic routes or

**“What's being delivered is not truly independent**

impartially promoting the full range of technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Learners can't make informed decisions if they aren't aware of all the options available to them. Leaving schools to manage information and guidance with little accountability and limited resources means what's being delivered is not truly independent. But while we should be providing all teachers with better basic training around CEIAG, it's not right that we expect them to take on additional responsibility without better support and tools.

We also need to consider the other influencers in learners' lives. I saw this first-hand when I was a primary school teacher in Hackney. When I asked my year 4 class what jobs they were interested in, most of the girls wanted to be beauticians and most of the boys, footballers. There's nothing wrong with these careers, but it struck me that the awareness of what jobs were out there was so



shaped by family environment and media.

### What schools can do

Having said all of that, some shorter-term improvements are possible. The first is for schools to advocate for a careers leader role if they don't have one, and to ensure this role is supported. Good resources are available to help every young person find the right next step.

Schools also need to make stronger and more sustainable relationships with employers. It's important they're co-ordinating regular employer visits in a planned sequence, and with full alignment with the curriculum where possible, especially for local labour markets.

Finally, schools should engage with the Skills Builder Partnership's essential skills framework and resources - designed to enhance students' abilities and, really importantly, equip young people with the skills they need in a career.

### What else needs to happen

In the longer term, these six recommendations would enhance

CEIAG more fundamentally, and focus on supporting schools to deliver it in a way that benefits everyone.

First, we need a national strategy for CEIAG. We've gone too long without one.

Next, that strategy must include centralising CEIAG under a single government body reporting to DfE, and a plan to professionalise the service, making it independent, more cohesive, and sustainable.

In terms of delivery, there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Existing infrastructure and good practice can be leveraged, including examples of best practice and resources to support careers advisers.

And the aim of the strategy must be to make work experience accessible for all. Flexible placements are essential to combating regional and socio-economic disparities.

Only with such a strategy can we hope to truly embed CEIAG through the curriculum, see teachers visiting industries, schools make links with employers and the creation of a national network of careers ambassadors.

I hope some of my former students do go on to become beauticians or footballers. But getting this is vital for all those who won't, before we even consider the benefits for society and the economy.

# Solutions

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KAYE  
PATRICK

Lead practitioner for early  
career development, Ormiston  
Academies Trust

## How taster days are helping us tackle the recruitment crisis

**There's no room for complacency in attracting new talent to our classrooms, writes Kaye Patrick, and our taster days are already having an impact**

In the face of a recruitment and retention crisis, with a fall in initial teacher training (ITT) applications and only a tenuous improvement in early-career retention, schools and trusts need to work creatively to attract applicants and ensure their trainees are well supported.

It's in this context that Ormiston Academies Trust launched its teacher taster days to showcase what the profession really entails to prospective teachers. Our aim is to give aspiring teachers an immersive experience of what it takes to teach in a local school.

### A whole-team effort

As a first step, it's important to ensure the headteachers and subject leaders at each school are on board and understand the benefits of providing this unique experience. The opportunity to showcase their bespoke career opportunities and the impact they are making on their local communities has proved a strong incentive for our academy leads.

As the majority of the experience

is built around participants' chosen subjects, we work closely with subject leaders to identify which lessons are best for visitors. Additionally, subject leaders support us in identifying members of staff who can inspire prospective

**“They're an immersive experience of what it takes to teach**

trainees – including current early-career teachers.

To ensure our academies get the most out of these experiences, we plan each visit around the needs of the department, which includes ensuring the lessons in which participants take part offer a genuine sense of what the job involves and real insight into the breadth of the curriculum.

Our taster days also include “teach meet” lunches with students. We work with our subject leads to identify in advance which pupils are best placed to take part in these, ensuring the day runs smoothly and students feel well prepared to answer participants' questions.

### Getting the ball over the line

We want to ensure this opportunity is open to everyone who is interested in training to be a teacher. This means promoting the taster



days through local media as well as social media and “get into teaching” events, emphasising that anyone can apply regardless of age or

placements and visits for those who are interested but can't attend a taster day.

### Converting the try

Providing support after these taster days is imperative to ensure the initiative is having maximum impact. At the end of each taster day we hold a Q&A session and direct prospective trainees to the Ormiston and Keele SCITT application form.

We also support each participant with bespoke guidance on how best to complete the application, as well as tips for writing their personal statement. This is an opportunity to showcase from the outset how our academies offer holistic development support at each step of our employees' careers, and to paint a picture of where a career in teaching can take them.

Teaching is an incredibly rewarding career and the best pitch for it is to let it sell itself. The recruitment and retention crisis is an opportunity to rethink how we attract applicants to our schools, who they are, where they are from and how we will look after them once they join us. Complacency certainly isn't an option and our taster days show – above all – that we are keen to do that work.

# THE REVIEW

## RECONNECT: BUILDING SCHOOL CULTURE FOR MEANING, PURPOSE, AND BELONGING

**Author:** Doug Lemov

**Publisher:** Jossey-Bass

**Publication date:** 13 October 2022

**ISBN:** 1119739977

**Reviewer:** Kamraan Khan, Teacher of English and head of year 10, John Hampden Grammar School

If you were to speak to any parent whose child is currently at school, whether in the United Kingdom or abroad, they would tell you of the impact that the global pandemic has had on the education of their children. Those in the profession would probably echo these sentiments. What Doug Lemov and his co-authors do in *Reconnect* is to articulate in depth and with great clarity what that looks like in the classroom.

Drawing on experience in schools in England and the US, Lemov and the host of other contributors use real-life examples to illustrate not only the pandemic's impact through lost learning, but also its significant social impact on children and its repercussions for their ongoing education. However, this isn't a fatalistic documentary: the authors suggest ways in which educators, parents and society can attempt to heal the divide.

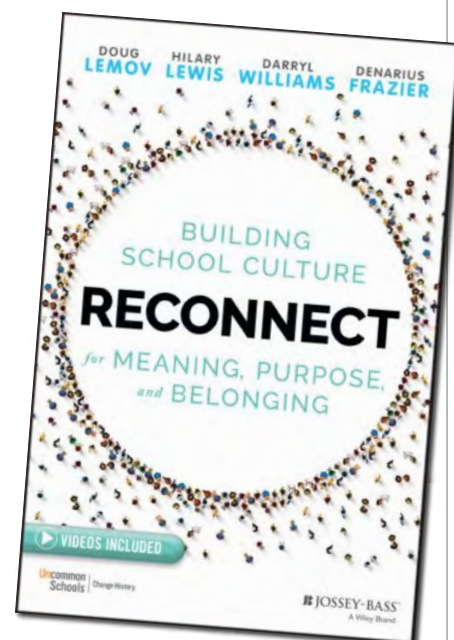
Lemov's attention to detail, particularly on the way we have adapted our behaviour in response to technology, is what makes this book sing. What he refers to as 'the decline of waiting' – the change in human behaviour characterised by the constant presence of technology in our pockets – is just one example of the challenges facing young people and those responsible for educating them. When faced with the prospect of waiting, Lemov tells us that "they simply scroll through their phones instead". If this sounds judgemental, it is not intended as such. It is simply one element of the situation that teachers ought to be aware of when children are entering our classrooms. We are, after all,

bidding for their attention.

What Lemov wants us to know is that classrooms are first and foremost cultures, and that within these, students' interactions must be "deliberately orchestrated to build a sense of connection, belonging, and shared scholarly endeavour". This is the thread that runs through the book and which *Reconnect* returns to repeatedly. When explaining the "habits of attention" and "habits of discussion", he shows how individuals seek affirmation in their responses. Having got too used to counting likes on social media, young people might be hesitant to foray into academic conversations with peers, sharing their thoughts for everyone to trawl through.

Lemov lays out the challenge then passes the baton back to us in the classroom, asking how we will create an environment where students feel safe and can prosper. To do this, he argues, teachers must re-establish their authority in the classroom. Crucially, they must make clear that "authority is not authoritarianism". For the many students whose experiences of boundaries and expectations have been so variable at home for the period of remote learning, Lemov argues that they are "the students who are harmed most" by a failure to establish clear rules. A vacuum of authority leaves young people with no model or mechanism to learn "how to control their impulses, delay gratification, and exert self-discipline," he writes. To establish the learning habits that we want within our classrooms, we must enforce the principles by which we want students to learn.

BOOK  
TV  
FILM  
RADIO  
EVENT  
RESOURCE



Lemov's much-needed book is a useful guide to support new and experienced teachers alike in the face of the pandemic's ravages. But it is also much more than that, drawing our attention to what existed before and has only been exacerbated by the experience of the past few years: an encroachment of technology that is reshaping our lives and our social structures, causing many to experience a sense of detachment.

Lemov's call goes far beyond the classroom: it implores all of us to look up from our screens. The result is a relentlessly optimistic book about what can be achieved if we re-commit ourselves to our profession and reconnect with its principles and ambitions, aware of but not bound by the impact of the years we have all lived through.

★★★★★  
Rating

## THE CONVERSATION LISTENING IN ON THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM



**Sarah Gallagher**

Headteacher, Snape Primary School and PGCE tutor, University of Cambridge

### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T LISTEN TO BEHAVIOUR EXPERTS

It is of growing concern that, at a time when educational professionals (in whatever sector) should be united and supportive of each other, the social media conversation seems dominated by polarised positions – declaring one's 'camp' and unable to give an inch.

In that context, listening to Simon Currigan and Emma Shackleton on the School Behaviour Secrets podcast was refreshing. The latest episode argues that we should avoid taking behaviour advice at face value, not only because interventions are often focused on too few pupils, but because teachers too seldom play a part in developing them.

It's always a privilege to work with great people who bring something to your school, especially with regard to behaviour and strategies to support children. But that advice has to be applied to that setting, that class and those children.

Currigan here discusses an example of working with a particular child with a lot of physical aggression. When the child was observed at play, peers were all quite rough and took part in a lot of play fighting. This observation made clear that individual work might not be the magic wand to addressing the aggression. Instead, efforts were better focused on changing 'the way

the pupils rolled'.

Hence the need to avoid being mesmerised by the allure of a 'one-size-fits-all' expert who promises improvements with a spell and the wave of a wand. Ultimately, this will not be effective if the school and the people in it aren't truly understood. Fixed positions are seldom are.

#### Why You Shouldn't Listen To Behaviour Experts



### TEACHER WELLBEING: HOW CAN SCHOOLS BECOME MORE HUMAN-CENTRIC

A much needed listen, especially at this time of year, is Gemma Drinkall's latest Teachers with Boundaries podcast, centred on how schools can become more human-centric. It almost feels like something we shouldn't need to be reminded of, but in the middle of so many articles and viral social media posts about the teaching recruitment crisis, piled on top of a very real and present leadership crisis, wellbeing remains a critical issue.

Drinkall's podcasts centres begins with, I'm sure, a much recognised retort to partners, friends and family when asked why we're still working at weekends or late into the evening: 'It's just teaching.'

But accepting this ever-present refrain stops us from changing the tune. Drinkall describes how our human instinct is to fear change, even if the status quo isn't necessarily proving good for us. She also makes the point, completely relevant to many (including my school where we are all part time teachers), that schools would be more human-centric if they were to match what modern family life is truly like. Fundamentally, she argues, we should move with the times and embrace flexible working.

There's a useful addendum to the post about not listening to behaviour experts here. Becoming more human-centric must include welcoming experts into our schools, because sometimes only another

pair of eyes can lead you to changing the status quo. It's right that we should expect them to listen to us, but we have to be willing to listen too.



### HOWEVER YOU READ IT: DROP THE OFSTED GRADES

Finally this week, I read with interest Caroline Derbyshire's response to the Ofsted report, A Return to Inspection: the story (so far) of previously exempt outstanding schools. The chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable's take on it doesn't fill me with hope that the grade is anything like a true reflection of a schools' performance.

Derbyshire argues that down-graded schools don't deserve the negative impact that comes from having been left to their own devices for so long, and asked to take a system leadership role in the interim. Now that this role is no longer needed, she argues, neither is the 'Outstanding' tier. The winners will continue to 'dine out' and the rest to nurse their bitterness – and their schools.

This is not only a solid argument that grades are meaningless, it is also a powerful blog about the issue of sustainable leadership. We certainly don't seem to have a human-centric accountability system.



Click the headings to  
access the blogs and  
podcasts



# The Knowledge

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



## What's up with year 3 and what can we do about it?

**Jo Quince, Director of education, Tennyson Learning Community Trust**

I'm not sure whether it was a relief or a disappointment to realise we weren't alone in our concern for our year 3 pupils. The 'Year 3 dip' is not uncommon, but we have found this year particularly tough. Our cohort not only has low levels of attainment, but a significant number of children have low emotional intelligence too.

With this in mind, new RS Assessment research funded by the Nuffield Foundation into the wellbeing of key stage 2 children across 145 schools makes for pertinent reading. The results show that this year group saw the largest reductions in satisfactory responses across every dimension of academic wellbeing – positivity, motivation, resilience and persistence, and self-efficacy (capability at school).

Sadly, while they showed the highest levels of positivity before the pandemic, 8 per cent more children in year 3 reported either some vulnerability or not feeling positive about school in the last academic year. In addition, the proportion of children in year 3 saying that they felt motivated at school dropped by 13 per cent. The number who expressed feelings of self-efficacy dropped by 20 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels, and there was a 15 per cent fall in those who felt resilient.

National lockdowns meant these children did not get the chance to finish reception. Their year 1 teaching was also interrupted in November 2020 and early 2021. This meant that their introduction to formal education was disrupted. They missed important lessons about self-regulation and, partly due to increased isolation from their teachers and peers, how to manage the academic and emotional challenges of school.

For those children who need it, there is absolutely nothing better than being in school every day with a varied and rich environment



and additional support, emotional and/or academic. Instead, these children spent increased time at home with their parents, who were having to juggle the needs of a 5- or 6-year-old with their jobs and possibly other sibling or family needs.

The result is a year group struggling to adapt their behaviour to a classroom setting and they have to work much harder to access their learning.

Tennyson Learning Community is based in an area of high deprivation. That means our children are among the most impacted by the pandemic. But like all primary schools, our aim is for children to leave year 6 ready to face the challenges of secondary school and beyond.

We have a co-ordinated approach to supporting our pupils' mental health and wellbeing; a key element of which is creating regular opportunities to monitor the children's wellbeing and attitudes to learning. The results enable us to identify issues and implement strategies quickly.

One of the approaches we have used is to be more 'behaviour intelligent' and to understand the need to support children emotionally as an

intervention. We recently achieved DfE-backed behaviour hub status and have been recognised as having excellent practice in place.

The majority of this is from our own developed pastoral approach. Children are supported with their mental health and wellbeing as a priority. We have a 'ready to learn' space in school, where children can go to reset. Our pupils practice awareness and know they can tell an adult when they need to take some time out. Each class has a self-regulation space and activity station for pupils so that they learn to self-regulate. We also use learning zones for behaviour, regularly asking children to identify how they are feeling and what learning zone they are in.

More than that, we timetable opportunities for children to learn about how to deal with things such as anxiety, belonging and low self-esteem. This is done through dedicated lesson time and is driven by the outcomes of pupil surveys.

We do all this because we know we can't assume time will heal the gaps in children's development. We now know year 3 have been particularly impacted, and we must be explicit in making that right.

Week in

## Westminster

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

## MONDAY

We know Ofqual has had to deal with its fair share of criticism, given the recent exam debacles.

However, when trawling through details of the 51 complaints the regulator was asked to look into last year we did not expect to see "Love Island".

Turns out Ofqual was asked to investigate concerns over an episode of the super-saucy reality TV show. But the complainant was mugged off, with Ofqual saying this was "outside their remit".

One presumes the complaint was meant for Ofcom, which regulates what goes on telly and the sort.

It is what it is.

\*\*\*

You know things are bad when the government making good on a pledge earlier than it promised hits the headlines.

But schools minister Nick Gibb said the 300 more schools set to get a full rebuild will be announced by the end of the year. So far, just 161 projects have been confirmed and the government said another 300 would be announced by the end of March.

PS: Laughs all round in the Commons as Gibb paid tribute to his predecessor Jonathan Gullis for his ... "passionate" time in office.

Despite being booted out after just 50 days, the former teacher shows no signs of giving up on the sector – challenging his successor to explain whether he will stop catch-up cash being clawed back by Treasury. *Schools Week* understands more than £100 million went unspent.

## TUESDAY

Back to business as usual on government announcements today.

Confirming our scoop from last week,

education secretary Gillian Keegan said the government's response to the SEND reforms would now come next year (after previous promises it would be this year).

Keegan said she and children's minister Claire Coutinho would meet parents, children and voluntary and community groups in the coming weeks.

We can only imagine the same meetings that the three different ministerial teams before her have had with the sector this year.

\*\*\*

Mystery at Ofsted towers after it "recorded an unusually high number of responses that were not fully submitted" in its consultation on new SEND inspections.

It seems that respondents recorded answers and comments to at least some of the questions, but did not press "submit" at the end of the online questionnaire.

And there were more partial answers (558) than full responses (536)! Both sets apparently had almost identical levels of support for each proposal, so responses that were not actually submitted were also included!

"We did not feel that we could overlook such a considerable number of responses," Ofsted said.

## WEDNESDAY

Sixth-form college workers walked out today in the first national teaching strike since 2016.

But action at one college in the north east had to be called off because the National Education Union (NEU) got the paperwork wrong.

The union said it withdrew action at the Prior Pursglove and Stockton sixth-form campuses, run by the Tees Valley Collaborative Trust, "due to an administrative error when notifying the

employer of intention to take strike action".

The college's two sites, 18 miles apart, contributed to the hiccup. Members at the college "will be joining any further industrial action", the NEU said.

## THURSDAY

The row over private schools continued for a third day, with Labour pointing to the private school alumni on Conservative front benches and the Guido blog pointing to the former private school pupils on Labour's front benches.

It followed two *Daily Mail* front pages in the previous days berating the plan by "socialist" Sir Keir Starmer to end tax breaks for private schools.

A persuasive argument to remove their VAT exemption was put forward in an opinion piece in *The Times* back in 2017.

The writer said it "allows the wealthiest in this country, indeed the very wealthiest in the globe, to buy a prestige service that secures their children a permanent positional edge in society at an effective 20 per cent discount.

"How can this be justified? I ask the question in genuine, honest inquiry. If *Times* readers can tell me why we should continue to provide such egregious state support to the already wealthy so that they might buy advantage for their own children, I would be fascinated."

The writer? That well-known radical socialist, Michael Gove.





## Virtual School Assistant Headteacher Secondary/Post 16 Virtual School for Children Looked after

Salary: RG8 (SCP 39-45) £45,495- £51,627

Full-time, Permanent post

Hybrid/Agile working available

Closing date: 11 December 2022  
Interview date: 15 December 2022

This is an exciting opportunity to join Reading's Virtual School for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. The Virtual School is committed to promoting the educational achievement of Children Looked After and supports young people to achieve their educational potential, to enable them through attaining good qualifications and a positive school experience to have more fulfilling careers, higher incomes, greater self-confidence and ultimately a better quality of life. There is absolute commitment from the Virtual School to aim to deliver an outstanding service through strong advocacy and collaborative engagement for Reading's children looked after wherever they are placed.

We are seeking to appoint a highly committed and inspirational Virtual School Assistant Headteacher Secondary/Post 16 with a proven track

record of improving educational outcomes for Children Looked After in the Secondary/Post 16 phase. You will be passionate about tackling inequality and narrowing the achievement gap between children looked after and their peers, ensuring that children have the support and opportunity to grow, flourish and realise their full potential.

As Assistant Headteacher Secondary/Post 16 you will have a breadth of experience and expertise in Secondary and Post 16 education. You will also be highly skilled in providing challenge, advice and support to schools, social care teams and carers, working in partnership to ensure that all children have a timely and high quality electronic Personal Education Plan.

We offer a supportive environment to grow and develop your career with the opportunity to put your ideas across. Innovation and ambition are strongly encouraged, and you'll get a great feel for that working in our friendly and collaborative environment.



## Chief Finance Officer

Bolton Impact Trust (BIT) are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic and dedicated Chief Finance Officer to manage and co-ordinate the financial requirements and processes across the Trust, and its academies. The Trust currently consists of four AP and Special Academies and further growth is likely. You will support the ongoing operational and financial development of our schools. To ensure that your role responds to the Trust's needs and delivers the Trust's visions and aims you will be work closely with the CEO and Central Team Colleagues as part of the Trust's Senior Leadership Team.

### Why you?

- You are an experienced finance professional, able to take lead responsibility for the Trust financial arrangements and requirements.
- You are highly organised and an effective communicator.
- You have commitment to partnership working across our Academies and with external stakeholders.

The successful applicant will be enthusiastic, positive, optimistic, flexible and motivated, with personal drive. You will need the right balance of emotional intelligence, teambuilding and networking skills, with the ability to see what needs to be done and to prioritise work accordingly.

You will have strong analytical skills and a meticulous attention to detail. You will have the ability to build strong working relationships with leadership, administrative staff, teachers and support staff colleagues, as well as leadership skills which ensure the right balance of appropriate workload, support and challenge.

### Why choose us?

- At BIT we value all members of staff. We have a strong focus on staff wellbeing, providing access to wellbeing support services via a dedicated wellbeing charter
- We are a growing Multi Academy Trust (MAT)
- Guidance of a supportive and experienced executive leadership team who invest in the development of their teams and the Trust
- Encouragement of further and continued professional development
- Competitive salary
- Fantastic Local Government Pension Scheme

This role is full time and permanent

**Applications should be submitted by Friday 6th January 2023 at 12pm**

**Interviews will be held in the week commencing 16th January 2023**



## Headteacher at Eastbrook Primary Academy, Brighton L18 – L24 (£67,351 - £78,010)

REACH2 Academy Trust and Eastbrook Primary Academy are seeking an outstanding Headteacher, or an outstanding Deputy Headteacher, who is an innovative, responsible and insightful professional, with the passion, drive, and enthusiasm to build on Eastbrook's considerable strengths. We are seeking an individual to take up position at the start of the summer term 2023. You will be able to lead, motivate, develop, and inspire a school team who are passionately committed to giving pupils a wide range of real-life and enriching experiences, within a culture of highest expectations.

There are over 60 schools within our organisation, grouped into clusters. Being part of that family, you will benefit from the expertise, support and opportunities offered by the largest, primary only, multi-academy trust in the country.

For an informal discussion please contact Mr Justin Burt, Deputy Director of Education using [justin.burt@reach2.org](mailto:justin.burt@reach2.org)

Closing date: **Friday 13th January 2023 at Midday**

Link to advert: <https://www.reach2.org/vacancy/headteacher-2/>



## Deputy CEO To commence Easter 2023



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.bhccet.org.uk](mailto:PA.Hayley.Wooding@hwooding@carmel.bhccet.org.uk)



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**



## 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**

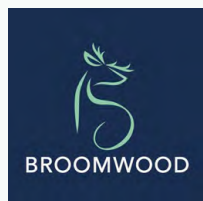
(We reserve the right to close the vacancy if we have sufficient applications)

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)

## 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.



## 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.

# Festive offers

Making recruitment that bit easier  
with up to **20% off** Unlimited  
Listings Annual Packages

UNTIL DECEMBER 21ST 2022

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in association with **SCHOOLS  
WEEK** | **FEWEEK**



**Contact the team**