

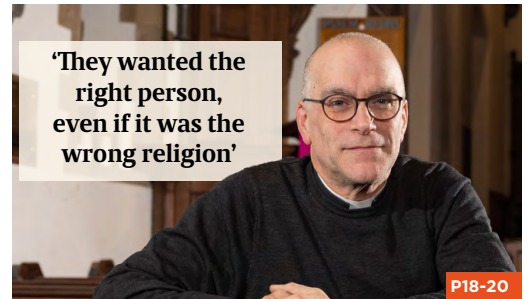
SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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'They wanted the right person, even if it was the wrong religion'



P18-20

MATHS TO 18: DOES IT ALL ADD UP?



Pages 7-8

OPENAI: WHAT WE SHOULD REALLY BE WORRYING ABOUT



Page 21

START OF THE GREAT PRIMARY SCHOOL MERGER?



Page 6

4 TIPS TO BOOST DIVERSITY IN STEM



Page 24



New anti-strike laws proposed: what it means for schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Pages 4-5

SCHOOLS WEEK

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New strike laws reveal sham of ministers' Covid key worker praise

Rishi Sunak wrote on his website in 2020 that, for the past seven months, "we have rightly celebrated the amazing contributions of key workers who have helped to keep our communities going through the most difficult period in this country's recent history".

He said a recent visit to a local school "reminded me how important it is to recognise the work of all those whose efforts made it possible for our health service heroes to do their incredible job of treating patients and saving lives".

Only a few years have passed, and he is now pushing through new laws that, as one newspaper reported after being briefed by government sources, could see key worker staff sacked for daring to go on strike to stand up for their rights.

Ignoring the point that there's no guarantee it will pass in the current political climate, and that Labour would repeal the proposals anyway if it won power, it reveals the sham of the superlatives from government politicians about "hero" school staff (as former prime minister Boris Johnson described them).

Rather than reward key workers with fair pay, the government actually wants to erode their

rights further by making it harder for them to fight for a good deal.

The return to Covid-esque policy announcements, with favoured newspapers reporting jumbled versions of what the government actually later sets out, is also disappointing.

While schools won't initially have to follow new "minimum safety level" staffing arrangements during strikes, the government will still give itself the power to impose them at a later date, should mysterious "voluntary agreements" not be made.

But what is a voluntary agreement? Nobody has been able to tell us yet. While one source suggested this does not mean unions or schools agreeing with government what their own minimum safety levels are, there's been no official explanation.

We understand that updated non-statutory guidance to help school leaders handle strikes is to be published soon. This is a good move - the current guidance is way out of date.

But given the alarmist headlines about sacking staff, government must provide clarity about what this all means for schools, and fast.

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ANALYSIS: STRIKES

Heads slam 'nonsensical' proposed anti-strike laws

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools will not be subject to new "minimum safety level" staffing requirements during strikes but could face them in the future under plans for new legislation set out by the government.

However, *Schools Week* has learned that the Department for Education is currently re-drafting non-statutory guidance on how schools should handle strikes ahead of walkouts that could happen as early as the end of the month.

Ministers will introduce a bill in the "coming weeks" that will give them the power to "ensure that vital public services will have to maintain a basic function and deliver minimum safety levels during industrial action".

The government plans to consult on and set "minimum safety levels" for fire, ambulance and rail services.

Confusion over 'voluntary agreements'

But ministers say they expect to reach "voluntary agreements" with other sectors including education – though they are yet to provide details on what this means in practice.

The government has said it will reserve the right to create minimum requirements for school strikes in the future if voluntary agreements do not come to pass, prompting accusations of "anti-union sabre-rattling".

Schools Week was told that this does not mean employers or unions coming up with their own minimum safety levels, but no further official details have been released.

Unions would be "bound to follow this legislation", with those that fail risking injunctions from employers to prevent strikes, or employers "seeking damages afterwards if they do not comply with their obligations".

Media coverage based on private briefings by the government has also suggested that workers could be sacked for going on strike in violation of the new law, but there is no mention of such a penalty



in the government's announcement.

Heads and trust leaders this week questioned the rationale behind the proposals, and how a "minimum safety level" for education could even be calculated.

Plans are 'nonsensical', say heads

Jon Chaloner, CEO of GLF Schools, said: "By the time a focus group has been appointed, convened and worked on the content of a 'minimum service level' and published it, I would hope that the threat of strike action will have receded."

David Boyle, chief executive of the Dunraven Educational Trust, asked: "Can we expect 'minimum service levels' from the government too? Perhaps starting with a commitment to create and sustain a well-respected and properly funded public service?"

Andrew O'Neill, headteacher at All Saints Catholic College in west London, said he "would be surprised to see a situation where headteachers threaten to sack staff who are on strike given the current climate and the fact that both schools and school teachers' pay has

not been a real priority for the last 10 years."

Sammy Wright, vice principal at Southmoore Academy in Sunderland and a former social mobility commissioner, said schools "cannot afford to have a loss of staff".

He added: "It's nonsensical. I cannot see how the minimum level of service would work. If you mean something where all kids are in school, then you need to have full staffing."

Ballots for strike action by the National Education Union, NASUWT teaching union and NAHT school leaders' union all close next week, with the end of January set as a provisional start date for the NEU's action.

New strike guidance for school leaders

Guidance for schools on strike action has not been updated since 2016, and as a result there are some glaring omissions. For example, the law changed last year allowing employers to use agency workers to replace striking staff, but the guidance still states that this is illegal.

The current guidance does offer a useful idea of how the government currently wants leaders to respond to strikes, however. It states that the DfE expects heads to take "reasonable steps" to keep schools



Jon Chaloner

ANALYSIS: STRIKES

open for "as many pupils as possible".

It suggests pooling resources across schools, employing extra staff such as exam invigilators and organising "alternative activities".

If heads themselves walk out, guidance states that those on strike should delegate their duties to another leader.

If a whole leadership team walks out, governors or academy trusts can ask another staff member – "for example a senior teacher or a retired headteacher employed by the school" – to carry out the head's duties.

The guidance also does not currently take account of recent developments, such as the Oak National Academy and other online resources, or the Covid-era approach of restricting attendance to vulnerable pupils and the children of keyworkers.

It is understood that new guidance for school leaders will be published shortly.

Trusts consider Covid-style protocols for vulnerable

Academy trusts are already drawing up their own contingency plans, some based on pandemic approaches.

Paul Smith, CEO of The White Horse Federation, said that, while his trust "absolutely respects the right of teachers and leaders to strike", it must "balance this with our responsibilities to our whole school community, especially to those who are most vulnerable.

"For this reason, we are looking at introducing Covid-like arrangements so that the most vulnerable students have a safe and warm place they can come to during any industrial action."

Cathie Paine, CEO of REAch2 Academy Trust, said the chain had "already incorporated remote teaching as part of our core offer for children who, for whatever reason, are unable to come into school as this helps ensure continuity with their learning.

"However, there are challenges with this for our youngest children, and we acknowledge that any remote solution would depend on support from pupils' families."

Agencies won't provide strike cover

Despite last year's law change on the use of agency workers the potential for strike



Sir Keir Starmer

action in the coming weeks does not yet seem to have resulted in an uptick in enquiries to supply agencies. Niall Bradley, chair of the National Supply Teachers Network, said his members had not reported enquiries relating to strike action.

"There were a number of comments about people never crossing picket lines, which just echoes the poll we did last summer when 95 per cent of respondents said they wouldn't cover during a strike day."

Marios Georgiou, chair of Step Teachers, said demand was "still high but it could simply be a continuation of the large amount of flu/sickness that we have experienced.

"Irrespective of the path taken by the government, as a former teacher and an advocate for better pay and conditions for teachers and school support staff, I would not be prepared to undermine these efforts. Similarly, I would also expect our agency staff to show solidarity with their colleagues."

Gavin Beart, divisional managing director for education at Reed, said his organisation would "not provide a direct replacement for someone on official strike action".

'We must also protect livelihoods'

The High Court recently granted permission for a legal challenge from unions including NASUWT and the NEU against last year's law change to allow agency

staff to break strikes.

And Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has already said he would repeal the new minimum safety level proposals if he wins the next election.

NAHT general secretary Paul Whiteman, said the proposals "seem misconceived and destined for failure".

ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton said the "threat of imposing minimum service agreements is just anti-union sabre-rattling and hardly conducive to cordial industrial relations". But business secretary Grant Shapps said that as well as protecting the freedom to strike, the government "must also protect life and livelihoods".

Ministers have also said that they want to discuss pay evidence, workload and conditions in the public sector with unions ahead of evidence being submitted to the independent pay review bodies.

The government claims these conversations will help to ensure evidence is "as considered and informed as possible,

including reflecting areas of common ground".

But they also said that inflation-matching pay rises would make "the fight against inflation more challenging" and risk increasing people's mortgages.



Paul Whiteman

NEWS: PUPIL POPULATION

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Falling primary numbers force council to consider mergers

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A London council is considering merging up to 16 of its primary schools as plummeting pupil numbers threaten the viability of education in the capital.

Lambeth predicts it needs to reduce capacity in its primary schools by 575 to combat a "significant strain" on its schools "that could impact the quality of education".

Primary pupil numbers across England are due to fall by 16.6 per cent over the next 10 years – more than 750,000 fewer pupils.

But in London, Brexit, Covid and the soaring cost of housing is driving migration, exacerbating the issue.

Schools receive funding based on the number of pupils they have, not their capacity, so surplus places create a financial strain.

Department for Education data shows that at 29.2 per cent Lambeth will have the highest proportion of spare primary places of any area next year. Eight of the 10 council areas with the largest proportions of spare places are London boroughs.

Presented with options ranging from doing nothing to closing five schools, Lambeth's cabinet voted late last year to consult on reducing the capacity of eight schools, with up to eight "amalgamations".

Ben Kind, Lambeth's cabinet member for children and young people, told *Schools Week* that all councils were facing a "stark" challenge.

"Our starting point is to work with schools and the community to make sure that this happens, avoiding the need for things like school closures in the future."

Lambeth predicts mergers will cost less than closing schools completely because they mean fewer redundancies.

But the approach is not without its pitfalls. Lambeth admits it could increase the number of "split-site" schools in the borough from eight to 16, adding a "financial complexity to those affected".

There are also concerns about whether governors will agree to merge with a school that has a deficit.



Of the eight pairings of potentially amalgamating schools, which have not been named, five would involve at least one school with a deficit.

Of the 16 schools, two have deficits in excess of £600,000, and three others have deficits of more than £200,000.

However, the council believes the cost of mergers should "largely" be met from dedicated schools grant funding.

This funding is lagged so is not immediately cut if there are dips in pupil numbers. There is also extra cash available for schools with split sites.

If Lambeth chooses to close five schools, redundancies and wind-down could cost it about £3.5 million from its general fund.

Several primary academies in Lambeth have also launched consultations on reducing capacity.

Van Gogh Primary School, part of the Dunraven Education Trust, wants to reduce its published admission number from 90 to 60.

David Boyle, Dunraven's chief executive, said funding shortages left schools without much leeway to tackle falling rolls.

"The consequence of the past 10 years of reduced levels of funding means there isn't much left to cut before you get to teachers in classrooms."

Other councils are considering their options, although Lambeth is understood

to be the first to start the ball rolling on potential mergers.

Jasmine Ali, the deputy leader of Southwark council, said: "For many complex reasons, there are not enough children to fill London schools.

"This is causing a funding gap. I know this will worry families when they hear that it is happening, but we are working with each school affected, individually, to find a solution."

Lewisham council said it was "not proposing to close or amalgamate any schools, but we are in discussion with some primary schools about their admission numbers and some changes have already been made".

Some outer London boroughs do not appear to be experiencing the same pressure, however. Kingston said demand for reception places remained "very high". But it still removed two forms of entry in 2022.

A Department for Education spokesperson said it was for local authorities to "balance the supply and demand of school places, and school leaders to decide how to spend their budgets".

"Local authorities have the ability to set aside funding for falling rolls, where local planning data shows that surplus places will be needed within the next three financial years."

ANALYSIS: MATHS

Does Sunak's maths pledge add up?

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Prime minister Rishi Sunak has outlined vague plans for all pupils to study maths until the age of 18. But can he honour an ambitious promise that Labour calls "a reheated pledge"? *Schools Week* takes a closer look...

What's being proposed?

Rishi Sunak's "ambition" is for all school pupils to study "some form of maths" until the age of 18.

He "does not envisage" making maths A-level compulsory, instead "exploring existing routes" – such as core maths and T-levels – or "more innovative" choices.

This would make numeracy a "central objective of our education system", giving people the ability to do their jobs better and "get paid more", he said.

But that was it for details.

The prime minister also only committed to starting work to introduce the policy in this parliament, meaning any reform would not be achieved until 2025 at the earliest. With the Conservatives tanking in the polls, it will likely be down to a new government to decide whether to implement the policy.

How many pupils will it affect?

The government said only about half of 16 to 19-year-olds studied any maths, warning the problem was "particularly acute for disadvantaged pupils".

It's not clear how this has been worked out, and whether it includes other A-level subjects in which maths is a key component.

Ofqual data shows that about 580,000 16-year-olds in England took GCSE maths last year, with just shy of 90,000 entries this summer to A-level maths – the most popular A-level subject. Another 15,000 took further maths and 12,000 sat core maths.

Meanwhile, roughly 145,000 pupils who don't get a grade 4 or above at GCSE continue to study the subject post-16 until they pass.

How could the policy work?

The vagueness of the announcement gives the government huge flexibility on what it could look like in practice.

Jonathan Simons, the head of education



Rishi Sunak

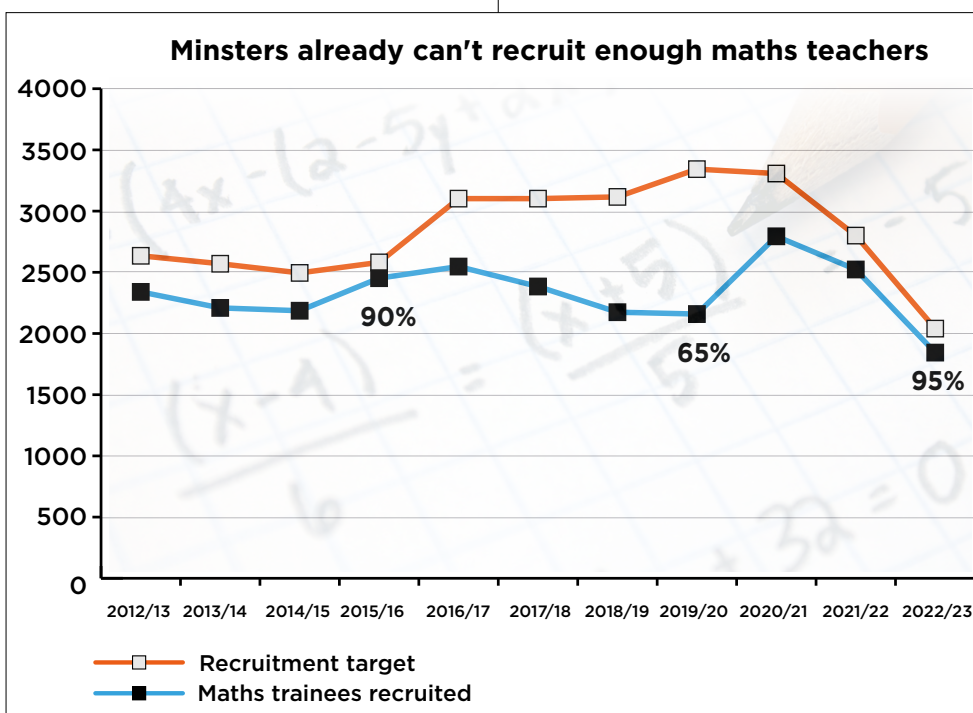
practice at Public First, said: "At one end, this could mean an enrichment club. It could be a qualification like general studies where you have to sit an exam but no one counts it, or it could mean having to pass a qualification that counts in league tables." He suggested 2030 as a feasible date for such reforms.

Sir Adrian Smith, the author of a government-commissioned study in 2017 into the feasibility of maths to 18, said it should be part of a "wider

reform" to post-16. He wants a baccalaureate style system that will give a broader education than A-levels.

During his first leadership bid, Sunak pledged to introduce a "British baccalaureate" that would involve compulsory maths and English to age 18.

In a statement this week, Smith said such "radical" changes would not be easy and would take time. "We need to get started now and build a cross-party approach with support from



ANALYSIS: MATHS

teachers, students, parents and employers.”

Labour did not respond to a request for comment on whether it supported baccalaureate reforms.

What are the barriers to compulsory maths?

We’ve been here before. In 2011, a report for the Conservative party by Carol Vorderman, the mathematician and TV presenter, recommended all pupils should study maths to 18.

Michael Gove, the education secretary, said at the time he would like the “vast majority” of pupils to do so within a decade. But it never came to pass.

Smith’s 2017 report concluded there was a “strong case for higher uptake of 16-18 mathematics” and that the government should “set an ambition for 16-18 mathematics to become universal in 10 years”.

But the lack of maths teachers is a huge problem. The Smith report admitted teacher supply challenges were significant and that it was clear when there would be enough specialist staff for universal maths to become “a realistic proposition”.

The government has missed its recruitment target for maths teachers every year since at least 2012. A National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) study last year found nearly half of secondary schools already used non-specialists for some maths lessons.

In 2020, 8.3 per cent of maths specialists left teaching, the second highest attrition rate of any subject.

Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, said the prime minister needed to show his working. “He cannot deliver this reheated, empty pledge without more maths teachers.”

Jack Worth, the NFER’s school workforce lead, said it was not clear how the government intended to meet current targets, “let alone how the additional teachers required would be attracted into the profession and retained”.

Schools Week understands the issue is being viewed by policymakers as part of a bigger workforce problem that will get wider focus.

Do we already have a suitable qualification?

In 2014, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, announced new core qualifications for pupils with at least a C in GCSE maths to continue to study the subject without taking a full A-level.



Bridget Phillipson

‘He cannot deliver this without more maths teachers’

It focuses on using maths skills in business and personal life – for instance understanding investments and mortgage loans.

Gibb said the ambition was that by 2020, the “great majority of young people will continue to study maths to age 18”. While take-up has risen quickly, just 12,000 pupils sat core maths last year – way below Gibb’s promise.

Core maths is available in just 30 per cent of schools and colleges that offer A-level maths, according to Mathematics Education Innovation, leaving “large numbers of young people” who cannot access it.

Tom Richmond, a policy expert and ex-DfE adviser, said lower levels of per-pupil funding in post-16 meant there was no money left “so schools and colleges often can’t afford the ‘nice to have’ stuff. So what was government expecting to happen?”

Another sticking point is that an A in core maths attracts just 20 UCAS points when applying for university, less than half of an A-level value.

In January last year, the Royal Society and British Academy issued a rallying call to make sure “the potential of core maths is realised”. They demanded additional funding for schools to provide the qualification, with universities encouraged to incentivise take-up. But Catherine Sezen, the education director at the Association of Colleges, said a “thorough” review of maths from age 14

was needed, given the “unhelpful cliff-edge nature” for those “forced to resit their exams”.

Can tech provide a solution?

The government funds the advanced maths support programme to help schools and colleges expand their post-16 maths curriculum, with more than 3,000 schools taking part since its launch in 2018.

The Smith review found there was potential for massive open online courses (MOOCs), but cited an earlier government study that said such courses had “high rates of failure” and were “likely to remain viable options only for motivated pupils”.

Simons said a certified MOOC could be an option. He said it was “entirely possible” that the Oak National Academy quango could commission such courses that students would have to complete before 18.

Exam boards back technology, too. Sharon Hague, the managing director of Pearson’s school qualification division, said that utilising technology to deliver new curriculum content, digital resource innovation, and developing flexible assessment approaches, could support the proposed policy.

But for others, it misses the point. Professor Becky Francis, the chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said a better focus would be supporting “more young people – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve a good grounding in maths by the age of 16”.



“the potential of core maths is realised”. They demanded additional funding for schools to provide the qualification, with universities encouraged to incentivise take-up. But Catherine Sezen, the education director at the Association of Colleges, said a “thorough” review of maths from age 14

NEWS: FREE SCHOOLS

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Revealed: The latest free school hopefuls

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

At least six “elite” sixth forms and a new BRIT School for the north are vying to be among the 15 new free schools in areas in which ministers want to boost standards.

Only one in four of the more than 60 applications for wave 15 of the Department for Education’s free school lottery will be approved.

Among the bids for new elite sixth forms are the three “unashamedly academic” Eton and Star Academies colleges proposed in Dudley, Oldham and Teesside.

The government has committed to opening “a number” of “high-quality, academic-focused” 16 to 19 free schools in education investment areas (EIAs), regions with the lowest pupil outcomes that have been promised extra support.

The move has proven controversial with fears it will lead to “selection for a lucky few”. A study last year found elite sixth forms taught few poorer pupils and recruited heavily from neighbouring areas.

But Eton and Star have pledged to focus on young people from the most deprived communities.

Revealing more details, the organisations told *Schools Week* each college’s curriculum could “evolve to meet contemporary demands of business in the local areas”.

For instance, pathways to degree-level programmes in biomedical science and STEM subjects in Teesside could be introduced to support its chemical engineering industry.

The Cornwall Academy of Excellence, founded by school leaders from the Cornwall School of Mathematics and Science (CSMS), is also making a bid for an “elite” sixth form.

It would have space for 450 students with expected entry requirements of grade 7 at GCSE. Emma Haase, CSMS’s principal, said it would cater for “intellectually curious students” across the county to get more into the top universities.

The Mercian Trust in the West Midlands, which runs nine schools including two



selective secondaries, is also wanting to open a new sixth form to allow more 16 to 19 disadvantaged students to access prestigious universities.

Located in Sandwell, Mercian Sixth would cater for up to 600 students from September 2025 with a focus on STEM.

There is also a bid for iExcel Elite STEM Sixth Form College for Females in Bradford, run by the Feversham Education Trust.

Meanwhile, the famous BRIT School, a 14 to 19 performing and creative arts school in Croydon, south London, hopes to expand to the north of England.

The British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the recorded music industry’s trade association that funds the school, has chosen Bradford for a proposed 16 to 19 college to “level up creative opportunity” across West Yorkshire.

The London school’s alumni include Adele, Amy Winehouse and Rizzle Kicks.

A BPI spokesperson said it had “long been the ambition” to create a specialist creative school outside London and the south east to make the industry “more inclusive and accessible for all, regardless of background”.

Two university technical colleges are also among the applications – one in Southampton proposed by UTC Portsmouth.

The second is an extension of UTC Doncaster, part of the Brighter Futures



Learning Partnership Trust, to provide new pathways into health sciences and green technology careers.

The DfE will now assess the 64 applications before an announcement in spring. Criteria includes a local need for additional school places and the ability to support “rapid improvement” in educational outcomes.

Evaluators will prioritise applications in “priority” investment areas – a subset of 24 regions that make up the 55 EIAs.

About 85 per cent of the applications are in EIAs, including all six elite sixth forms. Just one in three is in a priority area.

These applications are separate to the 60 special and alternative provision free schools the government wants to open from September 2025.

When announcing the plans in June, the then education secretary said the new schools would “continue to make sure that every child, in every corner of the country, gets the support they need to succeed”.



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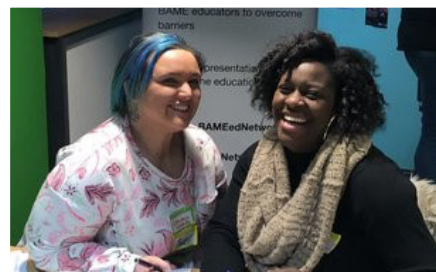
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Staff absences at twice pre-Covid levels as winter illnesses take their toll

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

School staff absences doubled last term when compared with pre-Covid 2019, driven by a surge in flu and other winter illnesses, figures show.

The rise has prompted education unions to call for the government to cover the cost of supply staff and improve ventilation in school buildings.

Data shared by Arbor Education, a management information system used by 3,587 schools across the UK, shows that between the autumn terms in 2019 and 2022, sickness absences rose by 110 per cent.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has warned of "high levels" of flu and Covid that are likely to continue in the coming weeks, alongside high numbers suffering from scarlet fever.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said: "It is very worrying to see a big increase in staff absence due to illness, both in terms of the wellbeing of the staff concerned and the potential for further disruption."

He noted that the Covid workforce fund, which previously provided funding for supply staff and to increase the hours of part-time and support staff, had since been withdrawn.

"The government should at least consider the possibility of reopening this support funding in the light of increasing staff illness particularly as school budgets are so tight," Barton said.

Zen Educate, an online platform which matches supply teachers with schools, said that schools using its services needed an average of 30 per cent more days of cover during the last half term, compared with the same period in 2021.

The government published regular figures for staff absence during the early Covid years, but has since stopped.



Between September and December last year, there were 1.65 absence logs per each Arbor school, compared with 0.79 in the same timeframe in the last pre-pandemic year.

In this same timeframe, an average of 0.28 absence logs were made per school for colds, coughs, flu or other viral infections last year, compared with 0.04 in 2019 – a 500 per cent increase.

A further breakdown shows that between November and December 15 last year, when most schools broke up for the Christmas holiday, absences for winter illness doubled.

It is not possible to extrapolate the Arbor figures to show an actual average for how many staff per school were off as the absence code used is non-mandatory. Instead, the figures illustrate the scale of the recent rise.

The National Education Union (NEU) warned that "over-stretched" schools could "struggle to function" in face of higher staff absences.

Asked if it would take higher than usual rates of winter illness into account during inspections, Ofsted referred schools to a paragraph relating to the pandemic in its inspection

handbook.

It notes that inspectors "will consider the specific context and the steps school leaders have taken to ensure the best possible rates of attendance since the school opened to all pupils".

Kevin Courtney, NEU joint general secretary, said the government needed to "urgently invest in making our crumbling and poorly ventilated schools safe and healthy places to learn".

In November, the DfE announced that it would provide schools with enough carbon dioxide monitors to put one in every classroom.

Its advice is for schools to "take action to improve ventilation", such as by opening windows, when readings are above 1,500 parts per million.

Pupil attendance has also dropped. DfE data shows illness absences rose to 7.5 per cent in the week starting December 5, up from 6.1 per cent the previous week.

Across the autumn term, the illness absence rate was 4.3 per cent.

UKHSA guidance issued this week urged parents to keep their child off school if they are "unwell and have a fever" or for at least 48 hours after symptoms of diarrhoea or vomiting cleared up.

The DfE was contacted for comment.



Geoff Barton

INVESTIGATION: SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Councils dawdle on surveying collapse risk building material

JESSICA HILL & TOM BELGER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

EXCLUSIVE

Schools face a postcode lottery over a little-known building material “liable to collapse”, with some areas facing greater risks and costs as a result of ageing panels and council inaction.

A Schools Week investigation shows at least 41 schools across 15 local authorities have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Another 150 are either suspected to have RAAC or need extensive investigation.

Some areas have as many as 10 confirmed or 25 potentially affected schools, with repair bills running into millions.

The government first sounded the alarm in 2018 after the roof of a Kent primary collapsed with little warning, but experts say the risks have been clear since the 1980s. Weaker than traditional concrete, RAAC has an estimated 30-year “useful life”.

Schools Week freedom of information requests indicate the potential scale of the issue, with 93 of 114 councils who responded at least starting to research potential local exposure. Two-thirds were concerned enough to order extensive follow-up investigations, such as building surveys.

But fewer than half of the authorities have completed such surveys – and fewer still have completed remedial work.

It suggests confirmed cases will keep rising. Available figures are also almost certainly an under-estimate, as not all authorities responded and council data excludes most diocesan schools and academies.

This week the government issued a renewed call for checks for RAAC on every school block built between the 1950s and 1990s. It updated guidance last month after government property officials dubbed the material “liable to collapse”.

Schools dating to the 1950s and 1960s will likely have a “disproportionately high number of toxic or poor-quality materials”, according to school building consultant Tim Warneford.

Essex county council, which includes several postwar new towns, has found 10 affected schools.

Greenwich, North Yorkshire and Gloucestershire are carrying out detailed work on more than 20 schools each.

By contrast 10 authorities said they had



ruled out RAAC so had not investigated, with Portsmouth noting its schools were at least 100 years old.

Some council enquiries also appear more proactive than others.

Essex began investigating in 2006 and has completed six works, although another is ongoing and three pending. Devon investigated in 2018, ruling out suspected RAAC at a college.

But only 32 of 65 councils conducting more extensive probes have finished them so far, with many reporting work was in its early stages or ongoing.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole said schools faced condition checks every five years.

Asked if they had carried out any research, 10 other authorities failed to confirm they had done so, without either ruling out RAAC or explaining why.

Meanwhile the Department for Education has highlighted limited responses to its own poll on RAAC, despite sending it 10 months ago.

“Why has it taken so long for this to rise up the risk register?” Warneford asked. He said the DfE should have included RAAC in its own condition data collection from 2017 to 2019.

The 48 councils providing figures spent £1.4 million – plus further in-house costs – on surveys.

Richmond and Wandsworth in London spent the most, with £195,500 for consultants. Lancashire said research was a “significant undertaking” which could “extend into future years”. North Yorkshire spent £32,000 inspecting 107 blocks, and planned another £38,500 to look further at 26 schools in which RAAC could not be

discounted.

Remediation is costly too, and council approaches similarly vary.

Works are expected to total £9.9

million across nine authorities that gave costs. Kent is spending £6.6 million removing RAAC from two primaries. Essex expects 10 projects to total £1.5 million. Two roof repairs will cost Waltham Forest and Sheffield at least £500,000 each, while Bolton spent the same demolishing part of a primary.

By contrast Blackpool spent £5,620, and was one of several highlighting annual monitoring or minor repairs, rather than immediate major work.

Some councils said repairs were unnecessary. Guidance from the DfE notes some sites pose greater risks. Categories range from “critical” requiring urgent remediation, to rare “low risk” cases requiring two- to five-yearly monitoring.

A Local Government Association spokesperson said “relatively few” schools would contain RAAC, but checks and expert advice were “essential”.

A DfE spokesperson said councils, trusts and governors were responsible for keeping buildings safe, but it was “working proactively to help” identify and manage RAAC.

She also highlighted £1.8 billion condition funding this year. Government will “consider” extra help for significant issues on a case-by-case basis.



Tim Warneford

NEWS

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Careers education rolls out in 2,200 primaries

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Primary teachers in deprived areas of England will receive training to deliver careers education programmes under a £2.6 million scheme.

The Department for Education yesterday expanded on a pledge in its schools white paper to create a new careers programme in primary schools. At present, most advice is focused on the secondary phase.

Ministers say the primary scheme, which will run until 2025, will support more than 600,000 pupils in over 2,200 primary schools – about one in seven nationally. It will be rolled out in the government's 55 “education investment areas”.

The programme will at first be run by four careers hubs – groups of schools that work together – coordinated by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC). It will expand to a further 10 hubs in year two and another nine in the third year.

Teachers in the schools involved will be trained



by Teach First to “develop and deliver careers programmes”. The £2.6 million funding will go to the CEC.

Beefed-up Baker clause becomes law

It comes as a new law requiring secondary schools to provide pupils with more exposure to providers of technical education comes into force.

From this month, secondary schools are required to give all year 8 to 13 pupils “at least six opportunities” to meet a range of providers of technical education.

The DfE consulted on changes to statutory guidance last summer, but has only just published its response and the updated guidance document, despite the law coming into effect four days ago.

The change beefs up the so-called Baker clause, a 2018 amendment by Lord Baker, a former education secretary, which required schools to give training providers access to their pupils.

Secondary schools are already expected to offer their pupils at least one experience of a workplace by age 16 and a further work experience by age 18.

Robert Halfon, the skills minister, said: “To deliver the future workforce that this country needs, it is essential that careers advice and work experience help young people from all backgrounds to climb the ladder of opportunity.”

Changes would “raise ambitions from an early age for thousands of children in primary schools across the country, while providing opportunities to unlock talent, think about skills, engage with employers and discover different workplaces”.

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBBOOTH

Ofqual disbands standards committee

Ofqual is disbanding its committee of experts who advise on exam standards and will instead take a “more flexible approach” on policy advice.

The standards advisory group (SAG), a committee of the Ofqual board, was set up more than a decade ago to help the exams watchdog maintain the standards of qualifications.

Members included independent assessment specialists from leading exam boards and universities, including Dr Mike Cresswell, ex-chief executive of the exam board AQA, and Professor Jo-Anne Baird, director of the University of Oxford's Department of Education.

But Ofqual confirmed this week the committee will be replaced to reflect the watchdog's “broader remit”, such as expansions in vocational and technical qualifications as well as apprenticeships.

It will take a “more flexible approach, drawing on a range of experts for specific programmes of work. This will continue to provide Ofqual with objective external advice as needed.”

This could include working with experts who

already advise the regulator or introducing new ones to ensure “that we can use the right people for the right work” in assessment.

Professor Barnaby Lenon, a former member of the committee, said the move was a “good decision” as long as the experts “are still used to help Ofqual think outside their bubble”.

“Assessment methodology is an arcane but important science. The few experts that exist, often lurking in dusty cupboards on the periphery of exam boards, are really important.

“The best have memories that go back decades and can recall what has worked and what has (often) been a disaster. They often have international experience and can draw on that to provide some perspective on England's systems.”

Another committee member, Dr Tina Isaacs, honorary senior lecturer in educational assessment at the UCL Institute of Education, was also supportive.

“My impression is that it wants to be more nimble and get expert opinions – many of which

I believe will come from former SAG members – in a more proactive way.”

Other recent members include Daisy Christodoulou, director at No More Marking, William Pointer, AQA's head of standards and awarding, and Isabel Sutcliffe, former international standards and quality director at Pearson.

Ofqual has faced much upheaval following criticism over decisions and communication during the Covid exam fiascos.

Dr Jo Saxton is the third chief regulator since Sally Collier resigned in August 2020.

The regulator also confirmed this week that Michael Hanton, its strategy executive director who joined in 2013, has been promoted to deputy chief regulator.

He replaced Julie Swan who left for the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Hanton said he “firmly” believes “in the value of good regulation in securing quality and fairness for all those who take and use qualifications”.

NEWS IN BRIEF: DfE

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DfE schools director general to retire

The government's director general for schools, Andrew McCully, is retiring after three decades at the Department for Education.

He has held the post since 2011, with responsibilities that include academy reforms, teacher recruitment, the curriculum and exams. He was made an OBE in 2000 and received a CBE in 2019.

After 37 years in the civil service, McCully will retire in March to spend more time with his family. He said the department has "always been a place of hugely talented, passionate, professional and caring colleagues. I know that those brilliant colleagues will continue the amazing work they do and go from strength to strength".

Susan Acland-Hood, the DfE's permanent secretary, praised a "brilliant public servant, whose experience, adroitness and integrity are second to none".

McCully had led with "consistency, knowledge and wisdom through a notable period of improvement in school standards," she said.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it

had valued the constructive way in which he engaged with the heads' union. "He exemplifies the best principles of the civil service and we will miss working with him."

A recruitment drive has been launched for his successor. A job application for the £130,000 a year post says they will lead the mission "to raise school standards" and be responsible for ongoing academy reforms. They must be an "inspirational leader" who sets a "clear direction" for the DfE within their "challenging brief".

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by a panel whose members include Sir Hamid Patel, chief executive of Star Academies, and Paul Gray from the Civil Service Commission. Applications close on January 25.



Andrew McCully

More than 500 staff want to leave department



More than 500 Department for Education staff have applied for pay-outs to quit under a "selective voluntary exit scheme" for staff "who don't have the skills the department needs for the future".

The aim is to get staffing numbers "closer" to 2020 levels.

According to official figures, the DfE and its agency the Education and Skills Funding Agency employed about 8,200 people when the scheme was launched in the autumn. In pre-pandemic February 2020, the two organisations had a joint headcount of about 7,400.

If numbers are cut back to this level, this would mean a 10 per cent reduction, although the department insisted it was not a target-driven scheme.

A Freedom of Information request by *Schools Week* has revealed 555 applications were received during a two-week window before Christmas, about 7 per cent of staff.

The department said this was "broadly in line with expectations".

"We are concentrating on having a skilled, effective workforce for the future that allows us to do the best we can for children and learners," it said.

Staff are offered three weeks' salary for each year of service if they leave by May. The applications will be considered using a "robust and fair selection process" in which the DfE will consider the "skills the department needs for the future and the potential to realise efficiencies".

The prime minister has asked every department to look for "the most effective ways to secure value and maximise efficiency within budgets", although he axed plans last year to cut 91,000 civil service jobs over three years.

In October, the DfE's staffing bill was about £40 million.

The FDA senior civil servants' union previously expressed concern that there was "no real waste to be cut and minister priorities need to be delivered" at the DfE.

DfE plans £6.5m upgrade of Sheffield office

The Department for Education will spend £6.5 million refurbishing its office in Sheffield, but insists the work has nothing to do with fears of overcrowding and difficulties during an evacuation last year.

The work on the office in St Paul's Place will "modernise and refresh the office, increase capacity, and address building condition, including assets approaching the end of their useful life", it said.

Capacity has become more of an issue at DfE offices across England since an edict last year ordering civil servants to return to the office for at least 80 per cent of their working week.

Schools Week revealed how the DfE overall had twice as many workers as desks, forcing staff to work in corridors and canteens. As of last year, Sheffield had 790 desks for 1,489 staff.

Complaints about overcrowding at Sheffield came to a head last year when the office was evacuated after the discovery of a suspicious package.

Civil servants claimed at the time that overcrowding had left them struggling to leave the building.

But the DfE told *Schools Week* that refurbishment had been in the planning phase since 2020, whereas the bomb threat occurred in May 2022. The department did not have concerns about overcrowding in "any of our offices", it said.

"The slower than usual evacuation was due to a unique set of circumstances that were not linked to any perceived overcapacity or overcrowding of the office," the department said.

Work on the building will include upgrades to its mechanical, engineering and plumbing systems, which the DfE said were running at capacity and "not efficient".

This would include "increasing toilet provision, improving the heating, cooling and ventilation systems, and moving the building to be in line with net zero carbon guidelines".

NEWS: ACADEMIES

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Transfer of struggling academy shows pattern of delays

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

The transfer of an academy rated “inadequate” three times in a decade has been delayed for three months, with Ofsted warning the limbo has “hampered” improvements.

The delay at Nuneaton Academy, Warwickshire, comes as analysis reveals transfers take twice as long in some regions and that the speed of conversions has slowed since Covid.

The Department for Education also recently updated guidance to encourage “stakeholder engagement” over transfers, a move welcomed by campaigners – although it means transfers could take longer.

Nuneaton opened in 2010 after a merger of under-performing schools. It has been rated ‘inadequate’ three times and ‘requires improvement’ twice since, all under the Midland Academies Trust.

While ‘inadequate’ maintained schools are swiftly ordered to become an academy and join a trust, Nuneaton only received a warning it could be transferred to a new trust last January.

Now a transfer due last weekend to Tudor Grange Academies Trust (TGAT) has been delayed three months.

A TGAT spokesperson said it “became clear” government meetings to finalise details would not happen until at least this month, and revised dates gave certainty without disrupting recruitment and training.

An Ofsted monitoring visit last month found the pending transfer hampered current leaders taking “longer-term strategic decisions”.

But it said trusts were collaborating to ensure “smooth transition”.

A Midland Academies Trust spokesperson said Ofsted also praised recent progress in multiple areas. She called it an over-subscribed “school of choice”, transformed by and benefiting “extensively” from the trust.

The trust previously complained about the ‘inadequate’ rating, claiming Covid’s impact was insufficiently noted. It said Ofsted “upheld some of our objections”.

The inspectorate said it could not comment on complaints.

Schools Week analysis shows the average



academy transfer time lengthened to more than six months in the year to August 2020 compared with the previous year, the most recent data available.

In the DfE’s “north” region, since renamed, transfer times more than doubled from 2.4 to 5.5 months. They increased by more than six weeks in five other regions. Lancashire and West Yorkshire had the longest transfer times at almost eight months.

More recent data is only available for conversions. Analysis shows the average gap nationally between application and opening has jumped from under six months in the early 2010s to 13 months in 2019 and 14 in 2021.

Speeds have improved since Covid restrictions eased, but only to 11 months.

The updated guidance on transfers advises trusts to undertake stakeholder engagement to “explain more about the transfer, listen to questions and address any issues”.

The revisions came conspicuously soon after a High Court battle ended last month over the department’s handling of the transfer of a high-profile London academy.

Campaigners claimed Holland Park School and the DfE did not consult properly. DfE lawyers argued they undertook only limited “stakeholder engagement”, not consultation.

The judge declined to rule on defining



consultation, but accepted engagement was intended to be “narrow” and the DfE’s approach had been “fair”. However, she said the DfE should have provided more information.

David Wolfe KC, who represented parent campaigners, said greater discussion would be “welcome” – but noted the DfE was still only proposing it after it signed off transfers.

The changes could alternatively be seen as an attempt to snuff out further legal challenges by defining stakeholder engagement, delineating it from consultation.

But Wolfe claimed the DfE should assume transfers required full consultation or risk further legal challenges, as the judge had “left open the question”.

Melanie Wolfe, a parent governor and no relation, said consultation still needed “real teeth” and legal requirements, with guidance non-statutory.

Holland Park School’s transfer to United Learning finally took place four months late early this year.

ROUND-UP: HONOURS

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Bauckham knighted in new year's honours

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ian Bauckham, an academy trust boss who advises ministers and chairs Ofqual and the Oak National Academy, has been knighted in the new year's honours list.

He is one of 64 people with links to the English school system recognised for their work in education

Overall there were three knighthoods and damehoods, six CBEs, 20 OBEs, 22 MBEs and 12 BEMs for the sector, as well as one Companion of the Order of the Bath, a special honour for civil servants, which went to **Dominic Herrington**, the former national schools commissioner.

This year, 13 honours went to academy trust chief executives or executive leaders, while 11 went to headteachers, eight to governors or trustees, six to school support staff or volunteers, four to teachers and three to academics.

Those working in the third sector but with links to schools scooped 12 gongs, and civil servants and council employees working on education received seven.

'Pleasure to work alongside talented people'

Bauckham, who already holds a CBE, was nominated for his work across his various roles.

Aside from his day job as chief executive of the Tenax Schools Trust and fairly recent roles helping to lead the exams regulator and Oak, he has also chaired government advisory groups on teacher training, languages teaching and relationships, sex and health education.

He told Schools Week his knighthood came as "a surprise, first of all, followed by a great sense of honour and humility".

Asked where he finds the time for all his roles, he said: "Well, you know, if you want something



Ian Bauckham

done, ask a busy person is the old adage."

"I guess it's just ruthless organisation and commitment. All these things are important and there are, after all, seven days in a week. So it's that and as I say, also, it's having brilliant people to work with who do so much of the thinking and delivery on many of these areas."

Nicola Dandridge, the former chief executive of the Office for Students, has been made a Dame, as has **Sally Dicketts**, the former chief executive of the college group Activate Learning, which had a spin-off academy trust.

EEF boss 'very humbled' by CBE

Professor Becky Francis, the head of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has been made a CBE, with **Rob Tarn**, the chief executive of the Northern Education Trust.

Francis said: "Leadership in this sector has been an honour, as I witness the collective dedication of those working in education to giving young people the best start in life. It's a privilege to play a part in supporting this shared mission."

Tarn said he could not describe how he felt

when he received the letter notifying him of his award, "which I accept with immense gratitude on behalf of our dedicated staff and the 15,000 children and young people the trust now serves".

Also awarded CBEs were **Tessa Griffiths** and **Sarah Maclean**, both former directors of Covid response measures at the Department for Education.

OBE for lawyer who set up prominent sixth form

The list also includes OBEs for **Jeffery Quaye**, the national director of education and standards at Aspirations Academies Trust, **Adam Boddison**, the former chief executive of SEND charity nasen, and **Richard Sheriff**, the chief executive of the Red Kite Learning Trust and a former president of ASCL.

Quaye said he was "deeply honoured and delighted".

Also receiving the OBE is **Daniel Abramson**, head of the King's Maths School in London and **Mouhssin Ismail**, a former principal of Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre (NCS).

NCS made headlines several years ago when it was accused of "effectively excluding" pupils at the end of year 12 because they did not get high enough grades. It was forced to stop the practice after it joined the City of London Academies Trust.

Last year it was in the top 20 schools for Oxbridge place offers.

Ismail, a former City lawyer who now works as a regional director and executive principal at Star Academies, thanked "all my wonderful colleagues who over the years have dedicated themselves to the social mobility cause".

Marie Hamer, head of strategy and impact at the Ambition Institute and **Gill Jones**, a former deputy director of schools at Ofsted were awarded the MBE.



Professor Becky Francis



Jeffery Quaye



Mouhssin Ismail

You can read the full list of England school honours here.





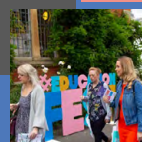
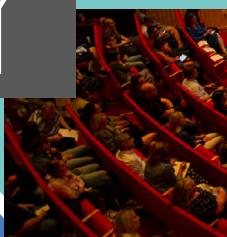
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Profile

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



‘They wanted the right person, even if it was the wrong religion’

Why does an Anglican priest want to open a vocational Jewish sixth-form college? Jessica Hill finds out.

Patrick Moriarty is, he admits, “a bit messianic” in his quest to set up the first faith-based T-levels centre in the country.

His plan is to cater for the Jewish community in Barnet, north London, where until December he spent 13 years as deputy head and head of the country’s first and only cross-denominational Jewish community secondary school (JCoSS).

But what makes Moriarty’s mission somewhat

perplexing is that he is an ordained Anglican priest – and one clearly not afraid to court controversy.

Moriarty fought for JSoCC’s community all the way to Downing St during a Covid spike in December 2020, when he found himself in a stand-off over his decision to shut the school.

With the blessing of governors, he had announced the closure for the last three-and-

a-half days of term, with coaches and catering activities duly cancelled.

When the regional schools commissioner ordered him to stay open, Moriarty “pushed back”, reminding them that as a voluntary aided school they lacked jurisdiction to direct JCoSS.

“That was the uncovering of the steel within me that said ‘no. If you’re going to start making me follow a process, you’re going to have to as well,’”

Profile: Patrick Moriarty



he recalls. "Closing was in the best interests not only of the school but the community we serve. That's a really important part of a school like this, which has a sense of connectedness from one Jewish community to another."

Moriarty's rebellion was escalated to then schools minister Nick Gibb. While this was done with "protocol and courtesy", there is, he says, "sufficient institutional menace [applied] when your school community is under attack."

That week several other London schools also rebelled against government orders to remain open, but JCoSS became "almost the last school standing". Then transport minister Grant Shapps, who had children at JCoSS, and local MP Therese Villiers both indicated some support for its predicament.

Moriarty found himself in an online meeting with Downing St officials, education special advisers, Barnet Council (who were supportive of his stance), school commissioners and the head of the Partnership for Jewish schools (PaJeS).

"Why in the middle of this horrific pandemic could they spare an hour to go for a school trying to do the right thing? Somebody had lost perspective here, and it wasn't me. We had become a totem of the government's determination to see its will done."

In the end, a deal was struck in which "nobody lost face". The school remained open for parents who registered interest, although no one did.

Moriarty made some important self-discoveries throughout the episode. "If you want to really get my goat, attack my values. I had a sense of 'this is my community, don't mess with it'."

It is the same fiery conviction that is now leading him to help the less academic Jewish pupils he feels are being let down by the education system.



'I want to make technical and vocational education sexy'

"I've watched some of the most wonderful, vulnerable members of the school community, often with special educational needs, having to leave at the age of 16 – sometimes for the first time going into education outside the Jewish community – and it's a real shock to their systems," he says. "I know this from some really painful cases. They feel it as a personal rejection by the school and community. They feel that 'just because I don't want to be a doctor, lawyer or accountant, you're turning your back on me'. That never felt right to me.

"There is a sector of people for whom university is not the right thing, so let's provide an attractive alternative... I want to make technical and vocational education sexy, and at the moment it's not."

Moriarty is driven not just by a "mixture of social justice and educational integrity", but also "an eye on what the economy needs". He believes the qualifications have "huge cross-party support, and political capital and financial capital" behind them, and that a Jewish T-levels centre would be "well placed" to forge partnerships with employers.

He says the current value placed on academia was not shared by previous generations of Jewish migrants.

At JCoSS's annual "grandparents' day", older members of what used to be a more "mobile" Jewish community recite stories of how they "left school at 14 to work as taxi drivers or in the rag trade".

"Why are we now saying 'actually, only the professions will do'? That bothers me," Moriarty says.

He doesn't think most Jewish schools individually have the numbers to make post-16 level two courses sustainable. But he claims there are enough such students in Barnet to make his proposed Jewish Vocational Sixth Form College – or JV6 as he calls it – viable.

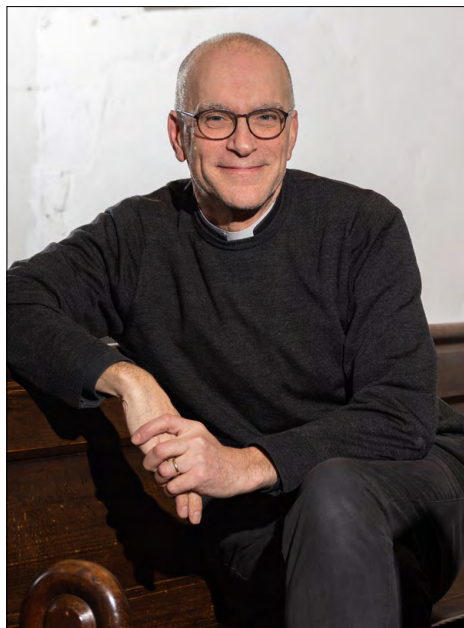
It would specialise in "white collar vocational" subjects such as media, health and social care, digital and business.

Moriarty is now undertaking a feasibility study, after which he will submit a bid to the Department for Education to open a 16 to 19 free school offering T-levels.

The government launched the new qualifications in 2020, with 23 courses set to be rolled out by 2024 – the year Moriarty hopes to launch his venture from JCoSS. Students would then be transferred to new facilities, most likely elsewhere in Barnet, the following year.

Moriarty believes the Jewish community's

Feature: Patrick Moriarty



“cohesion, demography and employment patterns” make it “brilliantly placed to make T-levels work.

“After all, Israel is an absolute powerhouse for technological innovation and Jewish communities have the ability to draw on that.”

Moriarty claims to have the backing of Barnet Council as well as “huge support” from the Jewish community, including £180,000 from two philanthropic trusts.

But big questions remain, including how the Jewish ethos of the centre should be determined. “Some [students] want full-blooded Jewish textual-based education, because they’ve been doing two hours of study of the Talmud every morning and it’s important to them to carry on with it. How do we fit that with people for whom their Jewish identity is important, but they don’t want to study it? And to get all that to cohere in one institution?”

Moriarty had to answer similar quandaries when he joined the “ground-breaking” JCoSS as deputy head in 2010 – the first Jewish school catering for all the main denominations, rather than being led by any one.

It was then just “a website and a building site”, and he and his team were writing “a curriculum from scratch”.

Having spent the previous 12 “incredibly enriching and enlightening” years at Haberdashers’ girls independent school in Elstree as head of sixth form, he vowed to “lift whatever I could of that school’s powerful, enabling ethos and replant it at JCoSS”.

Moriarty at first expected it to be a “different



Ronson Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS)

‘I really like being an insider-outsider in the community’

demographic” to Haberdashers and as a maintained school, “much tighter in its management structures with less freedom”. But he found its aspirational north London families not so different, and the management lines of accountability “just the same thing [as in other schools], labelled in a different way”.

When the headship came up in 2017 at the same time Moriarty was accepted for training as a priest, he asked the governors if they would “not rather have a Jewish headteacher”.

“They told me they were more interested in having the right person for the job, even if it’s the wrong religion, than the wrong person and the right religion. Jewish schools are very pragmatic about these things.”

He says a minority of the heads of Jewish secondary schools are Jewish – although he is the only one also an ordained priest.

This is he claims “not as weird as it might sound” because “the headteacher is the CEO who does admin and general leadership, then there’s a rabbi or team of Jewish educators who do the Jewish bit”.

Moriarty says preparing for his Sunday

morning sermons helped him to be a better head because it forced him to sit and think “very, very hard” for two hours, with his Christian sermons sometimes overlapping with content for his school assemblies.

“With a bit of tweaking, I could sometimes get final assembly, the newsletter to parents and the parish newsletter and sermon all from the same material – if, for instance, it was about the importance of the prophetic voice, treading a path between justice and mercy, or how we respond to consumerism. These are universal moral issues.”

Moriarty also sees priesthood as his ‘vocation’ – which to him means “having a sense of calling, a tug that takes you towards making the world a better place”.

And if the plan doesn’t come off? There is a twinkle in his eyes as he suggests he could set up a Christian T-levels centre instead.

But, as a priest, why not just do that in the first place?

“I want to start with the community that I know and understand... I really like being an insider-outsider in the community. On some psychological level, something in me responds to it”.

His dream is to set up a college that has “the kudos of university”; that, when the community are “sat around the Shabbat table talking about what their children are doing, they can say ‘well, my child is at Jewish vocational college’. I want them to feel proud of that.”

Opinion

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YVONNE WILLIAMS

Chair, post-16 committee, National Association for the Teaching of English

How to guard against AI-generated essays

We should worry less about AI being used to cheat the system and more about a system that can be cheated by AI, writes Yvonne Williams

If we teach students to write like bots, can we be surprised that bots can write like students?

As we start a new year, the media has been crowded with articles about the new powers of artificial intelligence (AI). Some envisage that very soon teachers will be unable to distinguish between authentic and AI-generated essays.

While we have not yet reached that point, there are three reasons why we should take this possibility seriously. First, it is a question of values. Students should understand why this kind of intellectual theft is wrong. Schools should make this plain in their codes of conduct and enact the consequences should students choose to cheat.

Second, it brings us closer to the perennial question of what education is and should be for. The 2015 "reformed qualifications" have brought with them an increasing amount of teaching to the test because the product (the qualification) has become more important than the process (the development of the intellect).

The combination of high-stakes

exams and predictability of question types make our system more vulnerable to students successfully substituting AI for authentic writing. Awarding bodies and Ofqual must share the blame: every new specification comes with more detailed guidance.

“Essays can become the products of an educational assembly line

In the quest for ever-better results, teachers are encouraged to make tasks predictable. Acronym-based planning (AFOREST anyone?), over-emphasis on paragraph structures (PEE, FART, etc.) and WAGOLLS ensure that students' essays become the products of an educational assembly line. And the more predictable the expected outcome, the easier it is for an AI essay-creator to accommodate it.

Third, and arguably most importantly, is that if students are to benefit fully from their education, they need to develop their own style. Making students more self-reliant prepares them to compete in the world of work, where original and workable ideas, inventions, and enquiry are valued.

So how should schools respond?

First and foremost, staff should be

trained and kept updated on what AI products can actually produce, and the distinguishing features of their output.

Some will argue that the most obvious remedy is to take a low-trust, high-control approach whereby all essays become controlled assignments and all

preparation is closely supervised. But low-trust strategies do not teach students to take moral or educational ownership of their work for its own sake. And is a treadmill of in-class assessment the best way to organise a learning journey?

It would be better to make more intensive use of teachers' knowledge of assessment and their students' capabilities. Teachers know only too well the laboured style of sentences and paragraphs "lifted" from study guides. They can detect the more mature style that usually indicates a parent's involvement. And they can spot any deviations from their normal output: handwriting, style, pattern of technical errors and even their willingness to revise a draft. In classroom discussion, students' idiosyncrasies and attitudes emerge that shape their written work.

To steer clear of answers that are easily replicated by AI, we should encourage our classes to experiment with different structures and give them the space to try, fail and rebuild. Using classroom time for students' drafting and revising allows teachers to see what might be expected from each one, then compare it with what is handed in.

Finally, school leaders and awarding bodies must support teachers in holding the line against challenges from more assertive students and parents, otherwise inauthentic work will slip through. Where there is doubt about authenticity, for example, interviews with students about their essays could challenge those whose submissions are out of keeping with what they have produced before and add depth to assessment more generally.

One thing is certain: purchasing the software that creators of AI are developing to detect the inauthentic essays they have programmed their bots to manufacture in the first place is not the solution. Instead, trust, agency, flexibility, integrity and accountability are how we will keep assessment humanly intelligent.

This article is the first of 3-part series on the implications of openAI software for teaching and learning.



Opinion

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THOMAS
MARTELL

Biology teacher and director,
NELT Institute

Cutting meat consumption could save our pupils' lives

Tackling climate change can feel like one job too many but one simple change can have a massive impact, says Thomas Martell

The past few years have been filled with heartening examples of schools' engagement with their wider civic role: the warmth with which they welcomed Ukrainian families, the care for the vulnerable and for all pupils during Covid, and the help they are offering their communities with the rising cost of living.

These and other ongoing pressures stretch schools, so that tackling climate change can easily feel like a request too far. After all, schools can't fix all of society's problems.

But the truth is that by virtue of the size of the education system alone, not to mention its immeasurable influence, schools are needed to drive sustainability. Climate change is an existential threat to humanity, and there is compelling evidence that the wars, diseases and poverty we are already battling will only become worse if we do nothing.

The good news is that we can have a massive impact without time-consuming curriculum reviews and resource-intensive capital investments. Schools can maximise

their impact by focusing on a single key issue: serving less meat (especially red meat).

Overall, food accounts for one-third of global greenhouse emissions and our schools serve millions of meals every day. This means the food we serve is a big part of the problem – but it can also be a big part of the solution.

There is a lot of misinformation about food and the environment, but a key insight is that what we eat matters. Many people think eating locally is key to sustainability, but the overwhelming scientific consensus is that where our food comes from is close to irrelevant. For example, according to the University of Oxford's "Our World in Data" project, supply chain emissions account for only 3kg of the 88kg of CO2 produced to get 1kg of beef on to our plates.

We need to make drastic cuts to our greenhouse gas emissions this decade. Reducing meat consumption is high-impact, low-cost and relatively easy to implement. Perhaps most crucially, the benefits are felt immediately; this will buy more time for other necessary political and technological breakthroughs.

Debate about the environment has an awful tendency of making the



“ Schools do not need to be perfect to help

perfect the enemy of the good. I am vegan and I do not fly, but I still drive a small petrol car. Like me, schools do not need to be perfect to help. We can do an enormous amount of good by reducing red meat consumption.

Many universities and local authorities are already leading the way. For instance, some universities have removed beef and lamb from their menus. The University of Cambridge has done this since 2016 and has reduced its food-related emissions by a third. Many other universities have made similar choices and found that giving more prominence to meat-free options or making them the default option increases uptake.

There are challenges to changing school menus – especially when money is tight – but it is possible. Michaela Community School in north London serves a vegetarian menu to all pupils, except for a fish option on Fridays. Proponents of meat are often quick to point to

health concerns about vegan and vegetarian diets. The NHS guidance is clear that these diets are healthy and that red meat has a range of negative health consequences.

Last year, the children's commissioner published the results of a survey of more than 500,000 pupils that found the environment was an overwhelming priority. Many felt the same as one 12-year-old cited in the report: "If we don't fix climate change, we won't have a future."

An eloquent 15-year-old was quoted as saying: "The effects of it may be irreversible, and it is very daunting for young people to have the responsibility of dealing with [them]."

We cannot wait for these pupils to reach positions of power to address climate change. We must act on their behalf. School leaders are uniquely placed to make significant progress with nothing to hold them back. So let's make 2023 the year schools cut back red meat.

Opinion

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MARK BOYLAN
Professor of education,
Sheffield Hallam University

Maths to 18 for all means rethinking maths altogether

The PM's proposal has rightly been met with cynicism, but it does present an opportunity to rethink our approach to the subject, writes Mark Boylan

This week, the prime minister set out his ambition that all young people should study maths to 18. Rishi Sunak's announcement has generally been poorly received. People have pointed out that this is going to be very hard to achieve, with shortages of maths teachers across all phases.

For post-16 leaders and teachers, there will most likely be a sense of "groundhog day" – another education policy announcement with big implications for schools without funding, a plan or consideration of the implications, let alone meaningful consultation.

It is also another "policy first, evidence later" initiative. In 2014, GCSE maths resits were effectively made compulsory. Like Sunak's new policy, the resit idea was partly informed by comparisons with other countries about the study of maths post-16.

Sunak is right to point out that in many other countries studying maths to 18 is usual. But the way this happens, and the type of mathematics studied, are different to our curriculum.

Like the current proposal,

the GCSE resit policy allowed the government to make claims about commitment to improving outcomes, but it was underfunded. Without adequate resources, individual colleges and organisations such as the Education Training Foundation had to do their best to fill the gap in terms of teacher supply and professional development.

Resits mean students take the same exam on the same material again and again – and that is more than 135,000 students a year taking a qualification they won't pass. It is a waste of their time and of colleges' precious resources.

Compulsory GCSE resits are a policy failure, with barely a quarter achieving the expected standard by 18 – and not much up on the numbers before 2014. This is the result of a badly thought-through policy, made in a rush and with its eye on how it would play to supporters rather than putting young people at the centre.

We are all familiar enough with policies designed this way, and that go on not to flourish. Indeed, this isn't even the only post-16 maths policy to do so.

Take core maths, which offers a level 3 qualification in applications of mathematics. Sadly, core maths numbers have remained small, with research identifying the current



“ It is another ‘policy first, evidence later’ initiative

post-16 funding arrangements as a key barrier to take-up.

So, it is not a surprise that Sunak's announcement was received with scepticism by providers. Some have even argued that it is not a serious proposal anyway, but a cynical political distraction from the funding crisis education is facing and our wider social and economic problems.

They might be right, but it does open up a chance to rethink post-16 level 2 maths teaching. A great starting point for discussion is the Royal Society's work on level 2 qualifications.

More broadly, a policy review we undertook as part of the Royal Society's Mathematical Futures programme, including looking at policy internationally, suggests the need for a more fundamental reform of our mathematics curriculum and qualifications.

So, what should schools do in response to Sunak's proposal?

First, make it clear that it must be fully funded. Doing so will require addressing the inequality in funding for studying level 2 maths between 11- to 16-year-olds and over-16s, incentivising alternative level 3

qualifications like core maths, and significant investment in teacher education and professional development.

Second, ask for a realistic timescale. This announcement looks like a short-term gimmick with the next election in mind. However, it could look different as a 20 or 30-year policy goal.

Third, make the case that the key to increasing participation in maths post-16 is to refresh curriculum content, as Smith proposed five years ago.

Going beyond this, fourth, make the argument that the school maths curriculum also needs reform, rather than expecting post-16 settings to forever put right its failures.

In truth, our maths curriculum is stuck in the 19th century. Sunak says that we are currently letting children down because we are not equipping them with the data skills needed for work.

If we want to really address that, then the age of the pupils studying maths matters much less than ensuring that the subject reflects the age in which we live.

Solutions

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MONIQUE
DARRELL

Science lead and year five teacher,
Goose Green Primary School

Four ways to tackle inequalities in science

Diversity and inclusion are key to increasing success in STEM – and it's never too early to start, says Monique Darrell

Nowhere is the educational challenge of creating equal opportunities for children to fulfil their potential greater than in science. Research tells us that children face barriers in STEM because of their socioeconomic background and gender stereotyping by the age of 7, limiting not just their academic outcomes but also their future career prospects.

That means diversity and inclusion are key challenges when it comes to succeeding in STEM, starting with tackling gender and class-based stereotypes from the start in primary schools. Our diverse school has spent the past year reviewing our science curriculum to identify and overcome barriers to engagement.

Here are some of the lessons we've learned and actions we've taken to make all pupils feel included and celebrated in science.

Biases are barriers

Many of us have internalised biases that lead us to make assumptions, including about what a scientist "looks like". This question often conjures images of an Albert

Einstein-esque figure among children, parents and carers – even teachers can lean into white male scientist tropes that are common in the media.

Recognising and challenging these biases are the first steps to

“Even teachers can lean into white male scientist tropes

overcoming them. By improving awareness of scientists from different genders, backgrounds and abilities and celebrating them in school, we can show that anyone can make a positive difference to science and the world around them.

But bias doesn't stop there. As a teacher, it's also vital to recognise and overcome any unknowing biases that can influence our expectations of a child's passions or abilities. We must set fair and high expectations of all children and encourage them to dream big, innovate and explore their unique areas of interest.

Curriculum content matters

Ensure lessons are filled with a diverse range of scientific role models and real-life-based practical activities. Famed scientists such as Marie Curie and Professor Stephen Hawking are brilliant to mention,

but there are many more lesser-known figures who have made extraordinary contributions to science.

We talk about Chien-Shiung Wu and Mae C. Jemison, who deserve a place in the textbooks. Last term, we

furthered our learning in year 5 by exploring Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock and her work as a space scientist. Widening our scope of reference has sparked pupils' curiosity and helped them to picture themselves in the industry.

We have also incorporated more opportunities for pupils to lead practical investigations that are based in a real-world context and aligned to their personal interests. For example, we used the free CREST Awards "Plant Detectives" activity pack that encourages children to investigate where everyday plants come from and how they thrive. This has tremendously boosted their self-confidence.

Community is power

As science teachers, we can continually challenge misconceptions by reinforcing the message that anyone has the

potential to be a scientist, but it helps to have some back-up from the local community.

By speaking to local businesses, organisations, parents and carers working in STEM, we identified a number who were willing to deliver workshops. This approach resonated with our children, who loved that people like them were making strides in science and were surprised by the opportunities available in their community.

Diversity doesn't sleep

Events such as British science week and Black history month are important springboards, but reinforcing pupils' understanding of the wonderfully diverse world of science is a year-round endeavour. Making use of the British Science Association's CREST grants has helped us to fund practical classroom activities and take pupils on extracurricular trips, but a lot can be achieved on a shoestring.

Every child can experience the joy and excitement of seeing and understanding the world in a scientific way. By challenging stereotypes early on and exposing our pupils to different role models and methods of learning, we can boost engagement and representation in science and show ourselves equal to the educational challenge we face.



Solutions

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MARIA SADLER

Year 6 teacher, MFL coordinator
and wellbeing lead,
St Andrew's Church School

Helping children with EAL to hit the ground running

A symbols-based language system created for children with special needs can help to make EAL and refugee pupils feel part of the school. Maria Sadler explains how

English is not always an easy language to grasp, not least because many words have multiple meanings. Take run. You can run a tap, run a marathon or run a service. In fact, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, there are 645 different meanings for the verb alone.

Imagine then how daunting it is for pupils whose first language is not English to arrive in the UK and start school without knowing which words apply in what circumstances. For 19 per cent of students in our primary schools, including 10,000 Ukrainian children, this is their reality.

Providing the right support from the get-go is essential so children feel included and have the confidence to become independent, valued members of the school. To achieve this, schools need strategies that make the best use of staff time and budgets to create enabling environments, and we've had to be resourceful in finding ways in-house to maximise support for our EAL and Ukrainian pupils.

Creating an environment where it's the norm, rather than the exception, for everyone to see and learn about different languages is the bedrock of our approach. Our corridors and classrooms are emblazoned with dual-language

“We've had to be resourceful in finding ways to maximise support

displays of topics, trips, and projects.

But we recognise that with 21 different languages spoken, targeted support is key. Without a full grasp of English, it is challenging to decipher written and verbal instructions, which impacts on how EAL students engage with tasks.

For refugee children, the frustration of not understanding what is going on in class only adds to the stress they have already faced leaving their homes suddenly because of conflict or persecution.

For the past year, we've been advocates of using a symbols-based language system as a stepping stone to help EAL children develop written and spoken English. The simple icons and images used in symbols to represent vocabulary remove the frustration many feel in their first weeks and months in an



unfamiliar English-language school.

Created originally to support children with special educational needs, symbols have become

essential for building vocabulary and developing literacy across the school. What works for SEN children generally works for all children.

Our timetables include symbols, such as the ones by Widgit, which give EAL and refugee children a visual representation of what's going on throughout the school day, such as when break time, story time and home time are happening.

Symbols help children communicate in other ways too, enabling them to express sadness or fear – or that they need the toilet – by pointing to the relevant display in a classroom.

Our teachers use symbols to give feedback, which can be as simple or as complex as any other language with verbs, adjectives, nouns and all the essentials

required to aid understanding. I have a bright Ukrainian pupil in my class I wanted to give constructive feedback to, but the language barrier made it difficult for him to understand exactly what was required to move his learning forward.

Using symbols helped me to explain in a visual way how to build his understanding of the topics and he can now work independently.

I also pre-teach words and phrases to introduce new topics before a forthcoming lesson using symbols. So, I might show that daffodils are a sign of spring or expose my EAL pupils to relevant language related to a topic in advance. A phrase such as “woolly mammoths roamed” is a lot easier to explain, and be understood, if it's accompanied by related imagery. It means that even if a child can't read or has limited language development, he or she can still contribute by pointing to the symbols and feel valued and engaged.

This reinforcement of vocabulary helps to support the whole class, reduces anxiety and empowers our EAL pupils to work independently, which is integral to learning.

THE REVIEW

HOW TO MOVE & LEARN

Authors: Bryn Llewellyn, Ian Holmes and Richard Allman**Publisher:** Crown House**Publication date:** July 15, 2022**ISBN:** 1785836315**Review:** Frank Norris, education and skills adviser, Northern Powerhouse Partnership

A few years ago I started to notice stories in the press about the benefits of desks designed so that you don't need to sit to use them.

On closer examination it appeared that academic research, including a study from Texas A&M University, found that people who used standing desks in an office were 50 per cent more productive. Participants in the study reported feeling healthier and often in a better mood. I tried it, and despite some initial aches and pains, it seemed to work.

I recalled this experience when I read *How to Move & Learn*. The authors believe that too many children and young people too often are expected to sit and learn, affecting their physical and wider wellbeing. The book draws on engagement with close on 400 schools across the country to integrate movement as a key part of teaching and learning.

The authors explain that physically active learning (PAL) is about learning in lessons other than physical education. They are at pains to explain that it is not just about running or jumping, making it clear that it can be "a child making body shapes behind their desk to represent different multiple-choice answers", a child writing their name in chalk on the playground, or even an activity that encourages them to work as a team in the school grounds searching for clues.

The intention is to gradually increase the range of physical activity that a child undertakes so that it can support their sense of wellbeing, improves their sleep patterns, builds confidence and social skills and enhances coordination.

The frequent references to supporting academic studies are a strong feature and are used well to explain how the evidence suggests greater physical activity improves academic achievement, particularly for the benefit of "all demographic subgroups and in particular boys and low academic-performing girls".

The authors suggest that their approach is not new, and they wonder why it ever went out of fashion. They have, however, given it a modern reboot and provided much guidance and support.

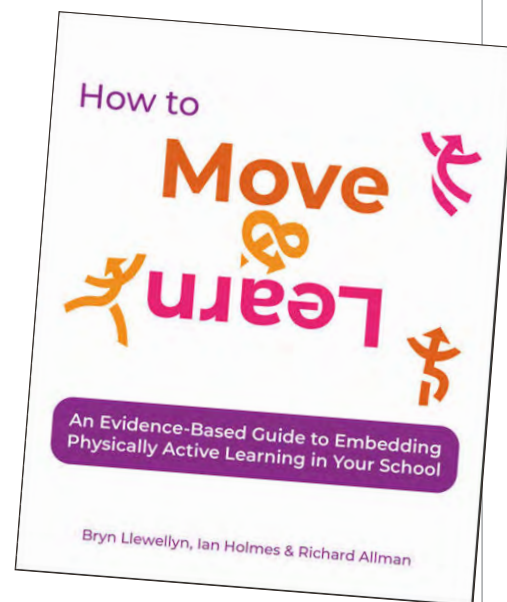
The book promotes "small steps", with changes being introduced by a teacher or a whole staff group with regular reviews along the way.

There is much emphasis on having the right culture and ethos. It provides support in how best to achieve this, so it has value beyond the "move and learn" philosophy and would not be out of place within a leadership course for middle and senior school leaders on improving school culture and ethos.

The helpful "Questions and tasks" provide a framework for considering the changes that need to be made and are clearly apposite for staff discussions before implementation. There is further support in the "small steps, big difference" section that offers practical support and ideas for those requiring a little more help.

The book is interspersed with photographs that make clear the relatively simple adaptations to current pedagogy needed. Here, however, lies the rub. The images include children drawn from early years to older primary

BOOK
TV
FILM
RADIO
EVENT
RESOURCE



school settings, but I am sure the authors have bolder ambitions, believing that the approaches are applicable for older pupils too. Any reprint needs to give this attention.

There is little doubt that the many approaches advocated have been tested and developed while working with teachers and children. This immersion oozes from the pages, giving the reader confidence to give it a go! The changes are not unrealistic and are relatively minor for most teachers, but the impact could be dramatic with better all-round outcomes, including improved motivation for the children.

If adults find that working on their feet in an office beneficial, surely it is time to release children from their desks to encounter the fun and enjoyment of carefully considered and well-crafted physically active learning.

★★★★★
Rating

THE CONVERSATION

LISTENING IN ON THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM

Penny Rabiger

Associate, Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality, Leeds Beckett University)



(W)RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

A lot of hand-wringing and brow-beating always follows the New Year's honours. Who's on them and should gongs be accepted? However, it's a good opportunity this week to remember Martin Matthews, who campaigned for governors to be recognised (while simultaneously advocating for removing the stomach-turning references to empire, and changing the system altogether). In short, it is good to see often barely-acknowledged volunteers from the world of governance recognised again this year.



ANTI-RACIST PERSPECTIVES

Thankfully, commitment to anti-racist thought and action across the education sector remains healthy. One of the UK's apparently most successful schemes supporting Black students to get into the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge has expanded to target children as young as 3, helping teachers to see how bias and teacher attitudes can damage pupils' prospects.



Hot off the press this month will be the latest *Curriculum Journal* from the British Educational Research Association. Some of the articles are already available online as the editors compiled the final edition, which focuses on decolonial and anti-racist perspectives in teacher training and education curricula in England and Wales. With a wide range of views and experiences from the frontlines of schools, colleges and universities, it's well worth delving into these thought-provoking articles.

Another recent publication that might be handy is one that I have personally been involved in, with fellow researcher and Anti-Racist School Award coach, Sharon Porter. You can download this Introduction to Anti-Racism for School Governors and Academy Trustees free. It should provide good grounding in the basics around race, racism and anti-racism in education, and how governors and trustees can start to enact their important role through an anti-racist lens.



WHO IS FUELLING CHILDREN'S ANXIETY?

Recent studies show yet again that some of the mental health challenges we see in schools are fuelled by social media use among our young. Schools already have so much to contend with, and teachers and parents alike are in a quandary about how best to tackle the problem. Whatever the approach, it's important to acknowledge parents' influence over the success and failure of any school-led initiative, and not always for the better. Parental pressure and interventionism, in fact, can themselves be instrumental in children's anxiety.

So to the United States, where new research explores the psychological implications of authoritarian parenting. The results should be a warning against creating cultures of control that reduce an individual's potential to perform and their choices and decisions about their lives.

And yet, YouGov polling suggests that the public thinks schools aren't strict enough (although see what happens when you filter the graph by age, politics, region and gender). Which make the solutions to the mental health crisis seem nothing if not remote, leaving young people stranded between inaction and over-reaction.



NEW YEAR, OLD PAIN

Scottish schools have already seen strike action, with more to come. Meanwhile, much of the late-December conversation among teachers in England has been taken up with whether to follow suit.

Any strike action will be because it is absolutely necessary, as evidenced by a recent article revealing the toll the erosion of services for children and families has had on school leaders.

It would be more effective if the government was to keep its eye on what matters, not least the 234,500 children who have been revealed to have been missing out on free school meals. It's shocking to think that a family has to earn less than £7,400 as an annual household income to be eligible, which coincidentally is more or less the same as an MP's monthly income.

It certainly puts into perspective the huge gaps in wealth and wellbeing in this country.

The Knowledge

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



How can we improve access to quality work experience?

Dr Elnaz Kashef, Head of research and policy, Speakers for Schools and Will Millard, Associate director, SQW

Work experience is a key component of careers education, yet it is often challenging to deliver. Barriers include teachers' limited time and an over-reliance on families' own networks.

Speakers for Schools recently uncovered that pupils in private education are twice as likely to access multiple placements. It also uncovered the positive and material impact work experience can have on pupils' outcomes, including salary potential and essential skills. Despite this, there has been a decline in participation over the past decade.

These findings underpin Speakers for Schools' new campaign to make work experience a universal right for state-educated pupils, and to establish a cross-sector partnership to implement it so that we can break away from models of the past.

Speakers for Schools commissioned research consultancy SQW to produce a rapid review of the international literature looking at work experience in other countries.

The research identifies success factors that help ensure work experience is effective. These include:

Preparation, support, and reflection

Some pupils are unable to make the most of placements, or are put off doing work experience altogether, because they feel unprepared. Schools must help them to learn about the type of organisation and sector they will experience –and help them more generally to understand suitable workplace etiquette and behaviours.

Reflecting on their experience afterwards can help pupils to draw links with longer-term aspirations. In France, for example, work experience is compulsory, and pupils' compile a report detailing the lessons they learned.



Placement choice and design

One way of encouraging pupils is to align work experience with pre-existing interests. But placements can also broaden their horizons by looking beyond their immediate interests. Schools and careers leaders have a role in supporting pupils' to explore their options. Placements need a clear structure, ideally involving different activities, helping pupils to develop new skills and hone existing ones.

Staffing and networks

Having a staff member who leads on the logistics and administration of work experience can increase its status in schools while minimising the burden placed on class teachers. Many countries – ours included – tend to rely on the connections of pupils' parents, but this simply entrenches inequality of opportunity. Therefore, improving links between schools and employers could support better and more equitable access to quality work experience across the board.

The research also highlights many challenges of delivering meaningful placements. These include:

- Pupils' fear of the unknown reduces take-up, often because of a lack of confidence or understanding of its value.
- Schools' concerns over work experience taking up curriculum time and negatively affecting exam grades.

- Employers' feeling that work experience is burdensome and overly bureaucratic.
- Logistical barriers for schools in areas that have poor transport connections or less vibrant local economies.

In British Columbia, Canada, pupils earn credits for completing work experience during their final years at school, with flexibility in the timing and duration of placements.

In other countries, such as Finland, France and Norway, work experience is mandatory and formally embedded in the curriculum.

SQW's review shows we do not need to go back to the traditional models of delivery and definitions. There are alternatives that are innovative, flexible, cost-effective and better suited to employers' needs.

We now need a collective push to ensure every young person can access meaningful and engaging work experience. To achieve this, Speakers for Schools believes we need continued research to understand what works, alongside cross-party political support and buy-in from educators and employers.

Technology and third-party organisations are part of the solution as they have the ability to remove some of the burdens facing schools and businesses.

Other countries' approaches to work experience give us some ideas for how we can ensure that all young people in England are better prepared for the world of work.

Week in

Westminster

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

MONDAY

Gillian Keegan is finally able to tweet again about education after wrestling her account back from hackers.

Followers who checked Twitter on Christmas Day were alarmed to see the education secretary tweeting links to websites advertising cryptocurrencies, with her profile picture changed to one showing Elon Musk *shudder*.

Hacking seems to have become more prevalent, with former DfE adviser and top-tweeter Sam Freedman also falling prey to an attack over Christmas.

Change your passwords folks!

However, one exciting development is Keegan now has a "grey tick" on her account, which means it is "verified" because it is a government or multilateral organisation.

Sadly, her ministerial counterparts still have the old-school blue ticks which, under Musk's takeover, means "this is a legacy verified account. It may or may not be notable."

Burn.

TUESDAY

Rishi Sunak promised maths for all pupils up to 18 today – just over ten years since the last time his government promised the same thing.

In what was billed as his "vision for Britain", the prime minister set out an "ambition" that he might, sometime in the next year or so, start to look at maybe making all kids do "some form of maths" until 18.

But not one iota on how the government will recruit the extra maths teachers needed for the the couple of hundred thousand teens forced to keep studying*.

What this all means is that Sunak is promising something he knows he can't deliver. It will instead be left to (very likely) a Labour government to decide if it wants to take it on (and to come up with a plan about how to do it).

NB The government has failed to recruit enough maths teachers just pupils up to 16 for every one of the past 10 years.

WEDNESDAY

Want to help make the services of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) slicker? Well, it's on the lookout for volunteers to join a new "user research panel".

The ESFA says members' "knowledge, skills and experience will help us to improve our services to meet your needs better".

You'll have to take part in various research opportunities (no more than four times a year), but, be warned: ESFA says there is "a risk that we may invite you to take part in research about topics that you do not want to talk about". All a bit ominous, isn't it?

Don't worry, you can decline to take part in those bits if you want.

So, if after all that it sounds like one for you, follow this link for more information.

The DfE has had enough of featuring in the usual trade and national newspapers.

It's on the lookout for a senior communications manager who is adept at "finding a consumer angle and getting stories in a range of non-news channels such as women's and lifestyle magazines, podcasts and daytime TV consumer programmes to reach our target audiences and support agreed departmental outcomes".

We look forward to seeing permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood being interviewed on *Rogue Traders* and Nick Gibb featuring in *Good Housekeeping*.

THURSDAY

Talking about Sunak coming up with policies that will never happen (see Tuesday), *The Times* reported today the PM is "poised to announce" legislation that will allow employers to sue unions and sack staff that go on strike.

The proposal is apparently for new laws to enforce "minimum service levels" in six sectors, including education.

Strikes will reportedly be deemed illegal if unions refuse to provide workers to meet this minimum level – allowing schools to sue unions and sack any union member told to work!

So, in a couple of years the government has gone from "thanks for all your amazing work during Covid and keeping the country on its feet, let's all have a clap" to "how dare you break the law by complaining about your salary being cut in real-terms – you're sacked".





STEPHENSON (MK) TRUST

Stephenson (MK) Trust currently comprising Stephenson Academy, Bridge Academy and Milton Keynes Primary PRU, has been delivering high quality Special Education and Alternative Provision across Milton Keynes since 2012 and we are proud of our track record of making a real difference to children's lives in our area.

Executive Principal & CEO

Salary: L35 – L43 or equivalent salary range on the Stephenson (MK) Trust Staff Pay Scales

Contract type: Full Time

Contract term: Permanent

Pension Arrangements: TPS or LGPS

Start date: 01 September 2023

Stephenson (MK) Trust is based in Milton Keynes and its academies include an SEMH special school and the Primary and Secondary Alternative Provisions for the city. The Trust was established in 2012 and has an excellent record in the development and improvement of provision and outcomes for vulnerable young people in Milton Keynes.

Due to the retirement of our current Executive Principal & CEO, Dr Neil Barrett, the Trust wishes to appoint a new leader. This is a rare and exciting opportunity for the right person.

The Trust is about so much more than just results. Everything we do is underpinned by our commitment to develop approaches to learning and wider life experiences that promote independence and confidence in its young people who then make a positive contribution to the community.

The Governors wish to appoint an Executive Principal & CEO committed to this ethos and who will lead and develop the school based on this mission.

Applications are invited from senior leaders with outstanding leadership experience.

The successful candidate will have:

- Successful senior leadership and management experience in a school or an academy in a MAT
- The ability to work closely with other schools, the Local Authority and the wider community for the good of young people in the care of the Trust and in schools in Milton Keynes
- The ability to inspire and motivate staff, students, parents and other key groups to achieve the aims of the Trust
- A commitment to the care, success and futures of vulnerable young people

We can offer the successful candidate:

- The leadership of a strong Trust at an exciting stage of its development that will be the responsibility of the person appointed to shape.
- Professional and dedicated staff, Governors and Trustees.
- Excellent opportunities for further professional development.
- Strong support from parents, Governors, Trustees and the wider Milton Keynes community

Visits are encouraged and warmly welcomed. If you think this exciting opportunity is for you, the Trust looks forward to meeting you and receiving your application.

Closing Date for Applications: Friday 20 January 2023 at 12.00pm

Interview Dates: Thursday and Friday 9/10 February 2023

Stephenson (MK) Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.



Providence Place, West Bromwich



Director of Music

Salary: L12 – L16 £58,104 - £64,223

Hours: Full Time - Permanent

Opening September 2023

This is a unique opportunity to be Shireland CBSO Academy's first Director of Music. Play a key role in the senior team of this exciting new academy and work with our partners, including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, to deliver an outstanding experience for our students academically, musically and pastorally.

The Academy

Shireland CBSO Academy is an exciting new school opening to Years 7 and 12 in September 2023 and is the first state school in the country to have a partnership with a professional orchestra. Based in Providence Place, West Bromwich, the Academy will work in partnership with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and serve all of Sandwell and the wider West Midlands. The Academy is for all students who have a passion or talent for music – they do not necessarily need to already play an instrument.

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust is a recognised leader in education and was founded by three-times Ofsted 'Outstanding' Shireland Collegiate Academy. Our students will study a full, broad and balanced curriculum, seen through the lens of music. In Year 7, we will follow the 'Literacy for Life' model developed by our Trust over the last 15 years: Students learn via a thematic approach to their studies, spending 17 hours a week with the same teacher, enabling them to smoothly transition from primary to secondary school.

In Year 12, students will be part of a cohort of 60 young people studying at least one music A level or equivalent qualification. With many schools no longer offering A level music qualifications, and those that do only having a handful of students, the opportunity to join a cohort of this size who have a common interest in music brings exciting possibilities for collaboration.

Director of Music

The successful candidate will be responsible for leading on all aspects of music at the academy, including:

- Curriculum, assessment and qualifications across all Key Stages
- Liaison with the CBSO
- Oversight, management and quality assurance of instrumental and vocal lessons
- Relationships with a range of external partners, such as primary schools and organisations committed to musical education

- Extra-curricular activities
- A programme of performances
- Engagement in music of students of all backgrounds

They must:

- Be passionate about improving the lives of our students
- Role model a commitment to excellence
- Want to collaborate as part of a team
- Believe they have both a pastoral and academic responsibility
- Be flexible and adaptable, rising to the challenge of creating a new Academy
- Have high standards for students and themselves.

In return we will offer:

- Excellent career development opportunities and access to a comprehensive programme of CPD
- An ICT-rich environment which allows staff to be innovative in harnessing technology for learning
- The opportunity to be involved in the opening of a new Academy
- Staff health and wellbeing package

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

For an informal discussion contact our HR Director Melanie Adams on 0121 565 8811. Information and application form available from careers site:

Careers - Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust (shirelandcat.net)

Closing date: Monday 30th January 2023

Interviews: Week commencing 6th February 2023

Come and meet us and find out more about the Trust, the school and the role at our Secondary Teacher Recruitment Event. Wednesday 11 January 2023, 4.30pm – 7.00pm at West Bromwich Collegiate Academy, Kelvin Way, West Bromwich.

To register please email: recruitment@shirelandcat.net



Primrose Hill Primary School

Headteacher

£80,862 - £92,330 per year (L21 TO L27 with the possibility of an additional enhancement dependent on experience)

The Governors wish to appoint a headteacher to share our vision and drive continuous improvement.

Primrose Hill Primary School is a confident two-form entry school situated in a spacious Victorian site alongside the Regent's Canal and close to the cultural hub of Camden Town. We have a thriving nursery and additional Autistic Resourced Provision.

The school is a beacon of inclusivity and diversity. We're proud of how we balance this with academic achievement and creative innovation. We believe passionately that inclusion and equality for all children and adults can be pursued alongside academic, sporting and creative achievement. This belief is at the heart of our culture.

An enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) with barred list check will be required. In line with KCSIE 2022 and safer recruitment practices, an online search will be conducted for all shortlisted candidates. The online search is part of our safeguarding checks and will seek publicly available information on candidates' suitability to work with children. Shortlisted candidates will be provided with further guidance and will be asked to clarify their online presence.

Are you the right person to lead our valued and well-established teaching team?

We encourage you to visit the school on either 5th or 10th January 2023.

To arrange a visit please call Mandy Apicano on **020 7722 8500** or email **mandy.apicano@primrosehill.camden.sch.uk**

Closing Date for Applications:
Midnight Wednesday 11th January

Interview Dates 18th and 19th January



Trust Inclusion Lead

Salary: L16 - L21 (£64,225 - £72,483)

This is an exciting and unique opportunity for a highly effective leader, with passion and expertise in inclusion, SEND and wellbeing strategies and practice.

In this newly developed post, you will take on the role of lead professional and will shape inclusive provision and opportunities for all pupils across our Trust with a focus on the most vulnerable.

The successful candidate will be a key member of the Trust School Improvement Team. You will work closely with the Trust Executive Leadership Team, Headteachers and school colleagues to shape the Trust's inclusion strategy, ensuring consistently high-quality delivery within our schools.

You will be a skilled communicator and strong advocate for the pupils and families we serve. We are determined to maximise the achievement of all pupils, thereby improving their life chances.

Interested candidates are encouraged to contact James Hill, Executive Director of School Improvement to discuss the opportunity in more detail.

Closing date: Friday 27th January 2023, 12pm

Interviews: w/c Monday 5th February 2023



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. We hope it gives you a flavour of the inspiring and exciting opportunity this post offers.

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“

I have always found Schools Week very helpful. They reach a large audience and support with many of our vacancies. I am very satisfied with their service and would recommend them highly.

The Shared Learning Trust

Click here to contact our team

