

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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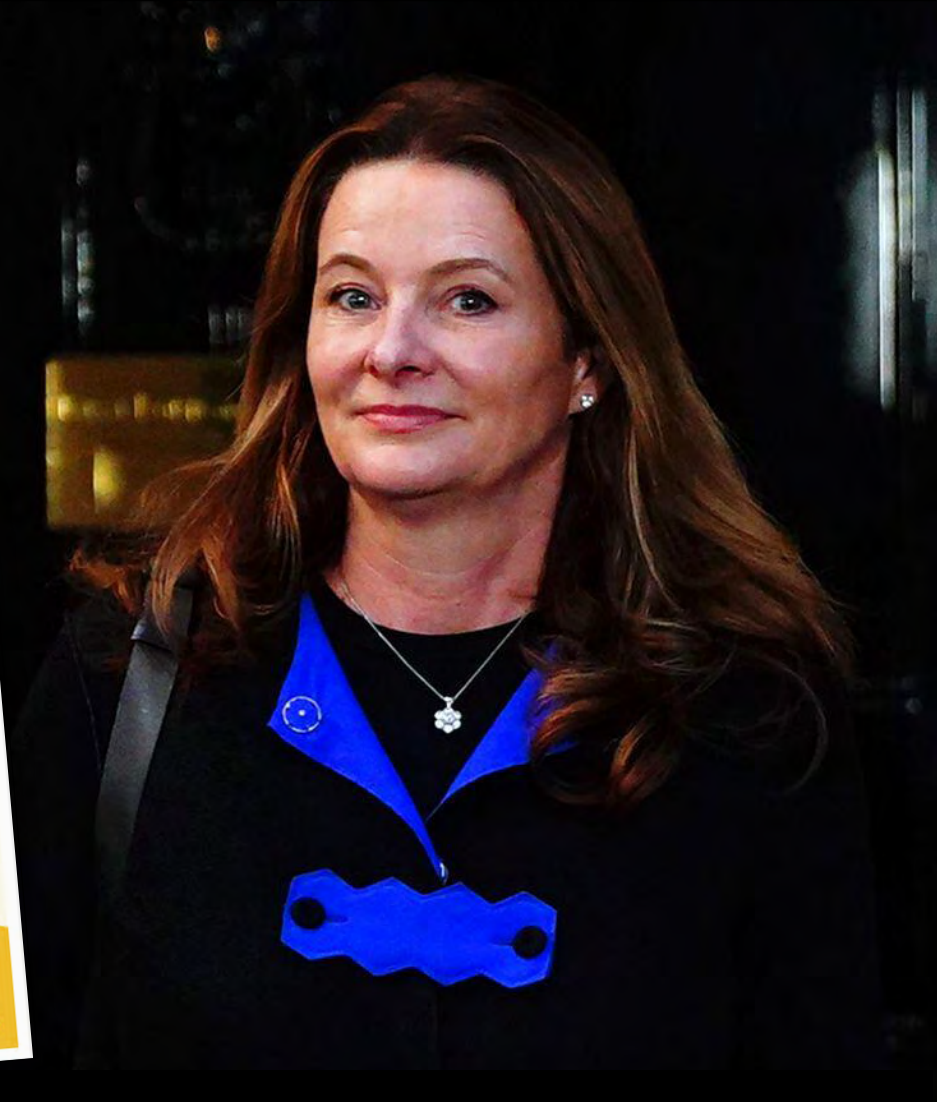
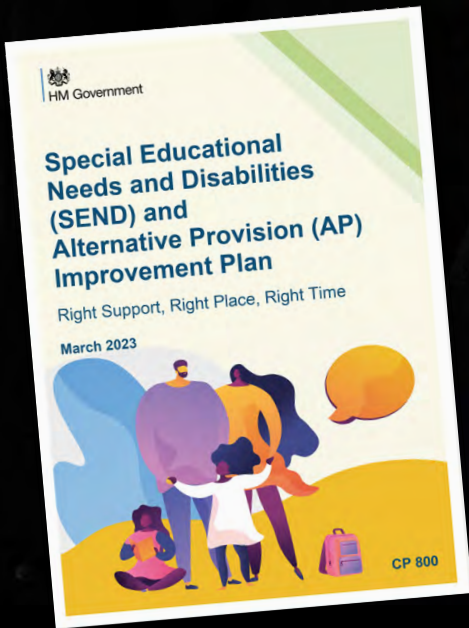


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## 3 years for a SEND plan - and now 3 more to do it

SCHOOLS WEEK

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# Thousands more children will be failed

The SEND review contains sensible proposals. Unfortunately, the government's unforgivable foot-dragging has left it all in a tricky position.

Not implementing the key reforms for potentially another three years, as the government's own children's commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza says, will mean more children fall into the "vicious circle" of "late intervention, low confidence and inefficient resource allocation that drives the challenges plaguing the system".

It is hard to argue against reforms being implemented properly. That was the whole problem with the 2014 SEND reforms, and why we are in this mess.

But, given that it is three years since the review was announced, there is just no more time to waste tweaking things at the edges. Too many children have already been failed.

It is 1,275 days since the SEND Review was launched in September 2019. As campaigner Matt Keer points out, a SEND pupil who started in year 7 when the review was launched will have left school by the time the proposals are actually rolled out.

And what has happened in that time? Councils are buckling under the weight of increased EHCPs, children are waiting longer to get one, more local authorities are failing.

Meanwhile, in Westminster, the political chaos means we have a government so embattled with other issues to solve that it does not have time to get the legislation passed in this parliament.

But that is the fault of politicians – not the thousands of children, parents and school staff who have been let down for years.

Proposing a plan to finalise policies that could start to fix the broken SEND system in \*another three years\* just looks like kicking it into the long grass.

The government would, fairly, point out it has increased high needs funding by 50 per cent since 2019 to help resolve immediate issues. But that is just a sticking plaster, and it hasn't worked.

The root causes need solving first: allowing the "vicious circle" to spin on for another three years means thousands more children will be failed.

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# SEND reforms won't be rolled out until at least 2025

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Flagship policies of a major government review to fix the broken SEND system might not be rolled out nationwide until as late as 2026.

Rachel de Souza, the government's children's commissioner, warned this meant "more years of children being fed" into a "vicious cycle with poor outcomes".

The Department for Education published its delayed special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) improvement plan yesterday (see full list of policies on pages 5 and 6). The review was launched in September 2019, 1,274 days ago.

The green paper, published in March last year, proposed legislation for new national SEND standards and funding tariffs, called for following "too much local discretion".

It also promised digital education, health and care plans (EHCPs), "tailored lists" of schools for parents to choose from and mandatory mediation when parents disputed a council's decision.

But all these policies will now be piloted for two to three years under a £70 million "change programme".

Nine regional expert partnerships made up of three to four local authorities will take part in the trial, reaching about 30 areas at first. This could increase to 50 to 60 during the programme.

The Department for Education will then decide whether to go ahead with the changes nationally.

Finalised plans would be delivered by the end of 2025, meaning a national roll out might not happen until 2026.

It means finishing off many of the reforms has been punted beyond the next election – with no new legislation this parliament.

De Souza said she was "concerned that the plan does not go far enough, swiftly enough".

"The DfE identify in the plan a vicious cycle of late intervention, low confidence and inefficient resource allocation that drives the challenges plaguing the system.

"With much of the plan being



delivered by the end of 2025, we have two more years of children being fed into this cycle with the commensurate poor outcomes that has necessitated this review in the first place."

It is understood the DfE wants to trial changes to avoid repeating mistakes in the implementation of its 2014 SEND reforms.

But with a general election expected in 2024, it means a new government could be responsible for finishing off the reforms.

Labour declined to say whether it would implement the plans.

De Souza said that while it was right to be evidence-led and to provide time for "co-design of major reforms, such as the national standards, with the children they will impact", the needs of children now must also be considered.

Since Gavin Williamson, the then education secretary, launched the review three years ago, the number of EHCPs has risen 33 per cent to 473,255. Only three in five are issued on time.

Parents challenging councils over their failure to provide support linked to EHCPs have to wait up to a year

for a tribunal hearing. When they do reach court, nine in ten cases are found in favour of parents.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, welcomed many of the proposals. "We do need to take the time to get these important reforms right, but we must also better support children and families in need today."

The government said its new national standards would improve inclusivity among mainstream schools, meaning fewer children would need EHCPs.

Claire Coutinho, the children's minister, said the plan "sets out systemic reforms" so that "every child gets the help they need".

But a SEND pupil that started year 7 in 2019 will have left school by the time proposals are rolled out nationally.

Meanwhile, Annamarie Hassall, the chief executive of the National Association for SEND, said it felt "encouraged" by the plan but there would be "many children for whom this transformational change to the system will arrive too late".

However, Brian Lamb, whose 2009 inquiry informed the 2014 reforms, said a trial was "very helpful" to ensure the new standards and systems were "developed with parents could help prevent some of the weaknesses from the 2014 implementation".



Rachel de Souza



Claire Coutinho

# SEND review: What leaders need to know

SAMANTHA BOOTH &amp; FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Ministers finally published their special educational needs and disabilities improvement plan today, three years after the review was first launched.

Here's everything you need to know about the new policies.

## 1 National standards (not until end of 2025 at earliest)

Ministers had proposed legislating for new national SEND standards. But these are now going to be piloted through the change programme before legislation is decided on.

So **from spring**, ministers will talk to parents and “frontline professionals”, among others, on how the standards could look.

By the **end of this year**, “some elements” will be tested with the regional expert partnerships.

Then **by the end of 2025**, “a significant proportion” of the standards will be published, “with a focus on those that are most deliverable in the current system”.

The government only said legislation would be implemented “at the earliest opportunity to facilitate intervention in education settings if standards are not met”.

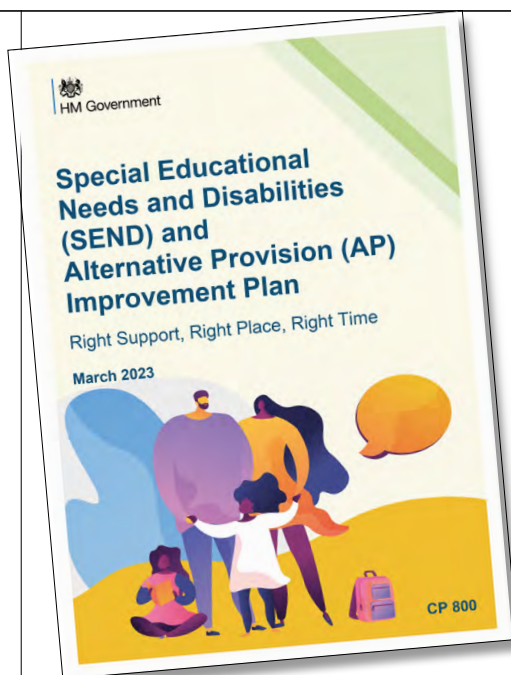
## 2 Accountability to ensure expectations met

Ministers will also look at designing accountability mechanisms “to ensure the government expectations are met, including considering the role of Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission”.

The standards could set out how schools must adapt physical and sensory environments to enable pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers, as well as the council’s role in supporting this.

Clear standards for universal and SEN support provision (those without an education, health and care plan) will enable “better accountability at this stage”.

The DfE will also consult on an amended version of the SEND code of practice.



## 3 EHCPs to become digital

Plans for a standardised EHCP template will go ahead, but guidance won’t be in place **from 2025**. It will “consider the case for mandating its use through legislation”, but will “encourage” councils to adopt the template.

On plans for a digital EHCP, the DfE will **this year** work with councils, suppliers and families to test how “digital solutions might best improve their experiences”.

**In 2024** it will design digital solutions and testing drafts, before beginning “rollout of requirements” **in 2025**.

## 4 Inclusion plans in, but no council admission powers

“Local inclusion plans” (LIPs), created by local SEND and AP partnerships will go ahead. Non-statutory guidance will be published **this autumn** on expectations for the partnerships, alongside a “self-assessment tool”.

**In 2024**, the change programme’s regional taskforce teams will target support to areas most in need. The DfE’s regions groups will work with the local partnerships to develop and agree LIPs **by the end of 2024**.

**From 2025** onwards, primary legislation will be introduced at the “next available opportunity” to put make partnerships statutory.

Controversial “tailored lists” of settings for children will also first be tested in the change programme. The DfE heard “significant concerns” from parents and young people that it could “restrict choice”.

DfE say these lists will only be introduced in an area once the LIP has been “quality assured” and signed off by the region groups as meeting the national standards.

## 5 Mandatory mediation to be scoped out first

Ministers had controversially proposed to make mediation between councils and families mandatory during the EHCP process. Currently thousands of appeals go to the first-tier tribunal with some parents waiting up to a year for help.

**This year** a review will be held into professional standards for mediators and advice.

**Next year**, they will “clearly set out” what processes should be followed locally and say how the mediation process “will be monitored to give families confidence in it”.

## 6 New NPQ for SENCOs

Timings for procuring providers for a new leadership level SENCO National Professional Qualification will be made “**in due course**”.

**This year** the DfE will also “explore opportunities” to build teacher expertise through a review of the initial teacher training core content framework and early career framework.

New SEND practice guides will “equip frontline professionals with the skills and expertise to make best use of provision and to identify needs early, accurately, and consistently”. The first three will be published **by the end of 2025** and focus on advice for mainstream schools, including the effective use of teaching assistants for pupils with SEND. A research project will collect an evidence base of best practice.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the DfE will work together to “take a joint approach to workforce planning”.

A steering group will be created **this year**, and feed into the National SEND and AP Implementation Board. The work will be completed **by 2025**. The AP specialist taskforce pilot has been extended **until March 2025**.

NEED TO KNOW: SEND 

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## 7 New special schools – but long process

Thirty-three free schools have been promised in 30 councils, mainly those with large high-needs deficits. New AP schools applications are currently being assessed and will be announced in autumn.

But as a Schools Week investigation found, it can take years for these schools to open. In September, one of 37 schools had opened in a permanent home two years after they were promised.

## 8 National SEND tariffs to come alongside standards

The review also proposed a national system of funding bands and tariffs to ensure more “consistent” funding.

This will go ahead, with bandings clustering “specific types of education provision” and tariffs setting the rules and prices that commissioners use to pay providers.

There are no specific dates for implementation, just a pledge it will be “alongside our broader changes to the national funding system and the development of national standards”.

## 9 AP funding will be reviewed

The green paper proposed a new funding approach for alternative provision. Local partnerships would identify the budget needed to implement their plans over a minimum period of three years.

The government will go ahead with the new approach “aligned to their focus on preventive work with, and reintegration of pupils into, mainstream schools”.

No dates were included.

## 10 Inclusion dashboard demo next month

The review pledged new “inclusion dashboards” for 0 to 25 provision to offer a “timely, transparent picture” of how the system is performing at local and national level for “strengthened accountability and transparency to parents”.

A prototype will be tested from this April “with a view to making a fully public version available in autumn 2023”.

However, where new mandatory data collections are proposed, they will be assessed to check if they are “genuinely necessary, no-

## National Standards will clarify:



What types of support should be made available, based on evidence of what works



Whose job it is to make different types of provision available



Which budgets should be used to pay for support

duplicative, comparable and coherent with all other data collections”.

The ongoing academies regulation and commissioning review will also set out detailed descriptors for academy trust strength, including measures of inclusion.

## 11 ‘Adjusted’ intervention in failing areas

A new “ladder of intervention” will come into effect this year, with “robust action for all where statutory duties for children and young people with SEND and in alternative provision are not met, to strengthen accountabilities across all parts of the system”.

The DfE will “adjust” its response to poor performance in line with the new Ofsted and Care Quality Commission area SEND inspection framework. This will allow it to “act proactively” where areas fail, including by removing service control and imposing a trust or commissioner on councils.

## 12 New AP performance framework

An expert group will support the development of a “bespoke national alternative provision performance framework” that will set “robust standards focused on aspects such as increased attendance, attainment, re-integration into mainstream education or progression to sustainable post-16 destinations”.

## 13 Fair access panels review

The government will also review processes and develop options for ensuring “transparent and effective movement of pupils without EHCPs, such as those requiring alternative provision, to address behavioural needs”.

This work will include arrangements for fair access panels, and will be in line with the new national standards “around the role of specialist and mainstream schools in making arrangements for alternative provision”.

Where a school place has not been secured through fair access, the government will look at how it can make applying for a direction to admit as “effective as possible”.

## 14 ‘Comparable’ expectations for independent schools

Government will also “re-examine the state’s relationship with independent special schools to ensure we set comparable expectations for all state-funded specialist providers”.

Independent specialist providers “should be part of local authorities’ strategic planning and decisions about changes to the supply of their provision should be made through local inclusion partnerships”.

Schools Week has revealed how rising demand means councils now spending hundreds of millions sending pupils to costly private schools.

## 15 More ‘joined-up’ work with NHS England

Integrated care boards will be required to have a named executive board member lead accountable for SEND, and there will be more “joined-up” responses between the DfE and NHS England to improve outcomes and experiences.

The government also said it would “strengthen redress for individual disagreements by clarifying who is responsible for resolving complaints and undertaking further testing of effective mediation approaches”.

## 16 Implementation board will drive reforms

The green paper proposed a new national SEND and alternative provision implementation board to “hold partners to account for the timely development and improvement of the system”.

This will be made up of parents, sector leaders across education – including schools, early years and post-16, health and care – and local and national government. Its joint chairs will be the children’s minister and mental health minister.

The board will oversee the implementation of the improvement plan, receive “regular input from a wide range of stakeholders” and will publish “updates on progress”.

# Fifth of schools hit by policy protests

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

One in five secondary teachers say pupils in their schools have protested in the past fortnight over issues such as skirt lengths and toilet policies.

*Schools Week* has seen social media videos of youngsters pushing shopping trolleys into closed school doors, children climbing over fences with others staging mass walk-outs.

Police were called to several schools after protests this week and last, with one force issuing a dispersal order.

New TeacherTapp figures, shared exclusively with *Schools Week*, reveal that 20 per cent of teachers reported being aware of protests in their school.

When broken down by type of disruption, 10 per cent said they were about policies relating to using the toilet during lessons, while 7 per cent said they were over skirt lengths.

The trend seems to have been sparked by a protest at Rainford High School in St Helens over rules for girls' skirts to be knee length. One video of the disruption has had more than seven million views.

TeacherTapp found 'requires improvement' schools were three times more likely to have protests than 'outstanding' schools. Schools in the north and east of England were most likely to have disruption, with year 8 and 9 pupils most likely to be involved.

Protests were also twice as likely in the most deprived schools compared with the most affluent.

In a separate survey of 900 teachers in affected schools, 9 per cent said more than 100 students were involved. Fifteen per cent said up to 100 students, 23 per cent had up to 30 and 20 per cent had up to ten students.

The Department for Education said it was "concerned" and would "be in touch" with all schools and councils to ensure they were supported.

A spokesperson said they would "always back headteachers to take the action



Screenshots of school protest videos posted on social media site TikTok

required to maintain calm and supportive classroom environments as they are best placed to work with their teachers, parents, pupils and local communities when developing and implementing policies".

A 14-year-old girl was arrested on suspicion of a public order offence after police were called to Buttershaw Business and Enterprise College Academy in Bradford last Friday, the *Telegraph* and *Argus* reported. Pupils were protesting over behaviour and uniform policies.

Pupils refused to go to lessons at Farnley Academy in Leeds on Friday following the school's decision to close all but one toilet block during lessons.

Chris Stokes, the school's head, said the decision followed "two very serious safeguarding events".

In a letter, Stokes opened up about the "highly abusive, upsetting and frankly abhorrent comments" from adults.

"Freedom of speech does not extend to threats of violence towards members of staff, myself included, nor does it extend to a desire to, in one case, blow up the school with staff within it. All such comments will continue to be reported to the police."

In a video posted on Monday, a person in mufti can be seen pushing a shopping trolley into the doors at Kingswood Academy in Hull, which is run by Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). According to reports, the protest was over

school uniform policies.

Police were called to the school and the nearby Winifred Holtby Academy. A Humberside Police spokesperson said a group of children "were reported to have engaged in antisocial behaviour and a dispersal order was issued". Officers were now reviewing CCTV.

An AET spokesperson said the "vast majority" of students continued with lessons as normal.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the heads' union ASCL, said that some pupils had protested, although no rules had changed in their schools.

If pupils were unhappy, he said, "they should raise this through the normal channels, rather than staging protests that are inevitably disruptive and the last thing that schools need at any time, but particularly when they are facing such a range of pressures as is currently the case."

The union has issued advice about how schools can report TikTok posts that breach community guidelines.

Ofsted said that if a protest happened during inspection, the inspector would make a "judgement call" on whether to continue.

*Schools Week* revealed in November 2021 how teachers were being attacked in "abhorrent" TikTok videos – with the social media giant accused of failing to act in taking down offensive content.

NEWS

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# Leaked texts reveal Williamson's 'contempt for teachers'

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
**@FCDWHITTAKER**

Leaked texts sent by Sir Gavin Williamson during the pandemic reveal the "secret contempt for teachers" and "chaos and duplicity" in the heart of government, leaders have said.

The former education secretary has come under fire for WhatsApp messages that suggest he claimed teachers were looking for an "excuse" not to teach during the early months of Covid.

The *Telegraph* revealed the comments on Thursday after thousands of messages sent and received by Matt Hancock, the former health secretary, were leaked to the newspaper.

During an exchange in May 2020 in which Williamson asked about supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for schools, he described



Sir Gavin Williamson

his request as "a last resort so they can't use it as a reason not to open".

"All of them will, but some will just want to say they can't so they have an excuse to avoid having to teach, what joys!!!"

The comments conflict with the public praise ministers heaped on school staff. In September 2021 Williamson thanked them for their "incredible efforts" during the pandemic.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said: "How can any trust develop when the secret contempt for teachers and the teaching profession is laid bare like this?"

The government repeatedly clashed with schools and unions over safety measures, or the lack thereof, in education.

Williamson faced heavy criticism in particular for his handling of the 2020 exams fiasco.

In October 2021, Hancock contacted Williamson

to praise his "cracking announcement" over delaying exams, which were later cancelled.

"What a bunch of absolute arses the teaching unions are," he added.

Williamson replied: "I know they really really do just hate work".

In relation to the exchange over securing PPE for schools, the former education secretary tweeted on Thursday that his comments were made "about some unions and not teachers".

"I have the utmost respect for teachers who work tirelessly to support students."

School leaders have reacted angrily. Simon Smith tweeted that he had "worked every day, including being open for the school holidays for keyworkers. Isolated myself from family, saw my wife in the garden. Our staff went over and above to support families.

"Williamson was possibly the most incompetent education secretary ever, the fact he seeks to blame others is a sign of his poor leadership."

The messages also show that Williamson and Hancock also battled over school closures. Williamson said he thought "long and deeply" over resigning after the U-turn to close schools in January 2021.

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

## DfE wants university students on board the NTP

The government has urged university students to provide tutoring in schools, saying it will help them to gain "valuable work experience" and "give back to local communities".

The Department for Education has created guidance for universities on how they can recruit students to its flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP), either in voluntary or paid roles.

In an email to schools sent on Wednesday, the department said the push was to help "ensure the longevity of tutoring and maximise the opportunity for schools to spend their government funding".

It could be sold to students as an opportunity "to gain valuable work experience", allow them to promote the university to pupils and "give back to local communities", it said.

Heads have previously warned they are struggling to spend the grant that subsidises the costs of tutoring. At present schools must pay 40 per cent of costs themselves, although

this will rise to 75 per cent in 2023-24.

The NTP has also failed to hit a target on the number of disadvantaged children receiving help.

The idea of using undergraduates has been touted by Lee Elliot Major, social mobility professor at the University of Exeter.

He told *Schools Week* that students working alongside qualified teachers on targeted basic literacy and numeracy help was a "win-win programme - helping pupils to progress, equipping undergraduates with skills and helping some to consider a career in teaching".

His university was trialling the approach, which had "generated a lot of interest from universities around the country", he said. An evaluation report is due this month.

Brunel University London also works with schools on tutoring.

The DfE said university students could offer "specialist subject knowledge and could help

raise aspirations of pupils".

Student tutors could also "double up as ambassadors, promoting the university to pupils".

If a university was an initial teacher training provider, it could also "encourage new entrants, particularly reaching students who previously haven't considered a career in teaching, by exposing them to the school environment".

Universities could also "act on civic and social responsibilities by encouraging students to work with disadvantaged pupils/local communities".

The guidance provides advice on how students could tutor through the three routes of the NTP. Training would be provided.

Universities could also apply to be come tuition partners - the quality assured tutoring agencies in the NTP.

Some tuition partners already uses undergraduates, such as The Tutor Trust.



SEE THE



DIFFERENCE

See The Difference is a project created by a group of young people who are passionate about creating a safer and more comfortable learning environment for students.



Signs to look out for if a young person is being affected by subtle bullying:

- fatigue
- introverted behaviour
- putting head down when others are laughing
- change in behaviour
- not paying attention in class

How would you like a teacher to approach you if you were being bullied in school?

- centred around the person – if they would like someone else there or not
- speaking calmly
- ask if they would like to speak to you or another teacher

What should teachers do if they see subtle bullying?

- address it without saying who is being bullied
- talk to everyone who is involved in the situation
- using a different form of communication e.g. letter box, online support services, support page

What policies should be put in place, in schools against bullying?

- consequences are person specific – based on the background and context of the individual
- relationship building in year groups – team building to help prevent these forms of bullying
- increase student support services and reducing the intimidation surrounding reaching out for support

*I feel like teachers do see a lot of the bullying that does go on but they don't act because they see it as minor. However, those minor forms can build up and really affect the person.*

*Speak to the individuals being teased in private (out of the classroom) and provide support and properly communicate what they can do.*

*Digging into why the situation is happening, even for those subtle forms of bullying – talking to the parents would be useful.*

Email [seethedifferenceproject@gmail.com](mailto:seethedifferenceproject@gmail.com)



## INVESTIGATION: OFSTED

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# Call for transparency around Ofsted reinspections

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

Sector leaders want more transparency from Ofsted around a rare reinspection process that can lead to upgraded judgments.

As confidence in how complaints are handled plunges, a *Schools Week* investigation has found the flagship school of Star Academies Trust, whose chief executive Sir Hamid Patel sits on the Ofsted board, won a reinspection before a proposed 'good' rating was published.

Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School in Blackburn was instead rated 'outstanding' after Ofsted revisited the school three weeks after the first inspection in October last year.

It was one of the 37 schools since September 2019 that were visited again after it was deemed more evidence was required.

In that time, 4,607 graded school inspections were held – meaning fewer than 1 per cent were reinspected.

Ofsted has refused to divulge the names of schools that were reinspected – although reports seem to point them out. Few details are known publicly about why they got a reinspection.

## 'We need transparency'

"If we want authentic accountability, then there needs to be transparency," said Kulvarn Atwal, an executive head who unsuccessfully attempted to overturn a 'requires improvement' judgment at one of his two London primary schools.



"If we had seen the criteria and precedents for Ofsted to return to gather evidence, we would have used this information in our challenge."

Jamie Barry, the head of Yew Tree Primary School in the West Midlands, said he had attempted to challenge an Ofsted judgment in 2018 after an allegedly insecure evidence base, but the complaint was not upheld.

He said the complaints process was "cloak and dagger" and argued the reasons for further visits should be published in final inspection reports.

Pointing to Patel's Ofsted role, he also said the watchdog had to be "absolutely clear about the process".

## Fourth 'outstanding' judgment

It is understood Tauheedul complained to Ofsted during the original inspection over an issue related to curriculum planning.

A further visit was then organised for November 3 during the inspectorate's quality assurance process.

The report, published in December, praised a "culture of scholastic excellence", with pupils "extremely happy".

A Tauheedul school spokesperson said it was "very proud" to have been rated 'outstanding' for the fourth time in a row. It was the top school in the country for Progress results in 2017, 2018 and 2019, and third last year.

Ofsted did not comment on the case. But a spokesperson said all inspections were "subject to a rigorous and stringent quality assurance process. Sometimes during this process it becomes clear that further evidence is required to finalise the inspection."

## How many schools get reinspections?

Ofsted previously refused a freedom of information request from *Schools Week* for the number of reinspections over the past five years.

But its annual reports show 36 reinspections have been held following

## What does the guidance say?

Ofsted guidance published in 2020, and updated the following year, says regional directors or "other relevant decision-makers" decide if inspections are "incomplete" and require a revisit.

Examples include where key judgments are not "substantiated by the evidence gathered", the conduct of inspectors

means evidence "cannot be relied on" or "information applicable" at the time of the inspection has been "received after".

In some circumstances, this could happen where the inspection team was not able to complete the exercise due to reasons "beyond their or the provider's control".

Continued on next page →

INVESTIGATION: OFSTED

complaints since 2018-19.

However not all these are schools. For instance, a further FOI found just two of the 10 "incomplete" inspections listed in Ofsted's 2021-22 report related to schools.

An analysis of reports by SchoolDash found five with mentions of "additional visits" since 2018.

These included Tauheedul, as well as 2021 reports from Ladybridge High School and Bowerham Primary & Nursery School, both also in Lancashire.

Schools Week understands the further visit to Ladybridge was not the result of a complaint. The Bowerham visit, however, did follow a complaint.

Two other schools, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary in Lancashire, and Barndale House in Northumberland, did not respond to a request for comment.

Ofsted said all reports stated if an additional visit was needed, but there was "no standard wording".

It would not provide information on any

change to a provisional grade because disclosure "has the potential to harm both our associated regulatory and audit functions".

Schools Week revealed in 2018 how a report on a school belonging to the Inspiration Trust, founded by the then academies minister Lord Agnew, was softened after a reinspection following a complaint.

The watchdog has admitted its wider inspection complaints policy is not working and will be reviewed, with a report by the influential Confederation of School Trusts (CST) this week saying it was "perceived by many leaders to be ineffective" or "pointless".

Just 17 per cent of the 718 complaints closed in the 2021-22 year had an aspect upheld. Three overall judgments were overturned.

The CST called for improvements, including independent oversight – with the capacity to reopen inspection

judgements in appropriate circumstances (see full story below).

Tom Middlehurst, an inspection specialist at the leaders' union ASCL, said there was a "perceived lack of transparency around the inspection system as a whole ... schools should be able to arrange an additional visit if they feel they were unable to provide the necessary evidence over the initial two days."

Julie Price Grimshaw, a former Ofsted inspector, said the sector would welcome greater transparency and clarity about Ofsted's criteria for either full reinspection or an additional visit.



Hamid Patel

Trust body proposes 7 Ofsted reforms

An influential academy trust membership body is calling for a "comprehensive review" of Ofsted's grading system, including a "fairer" complaints process.

The Confederation of School Trust's proposals come ahead of a new chief inspector next year.

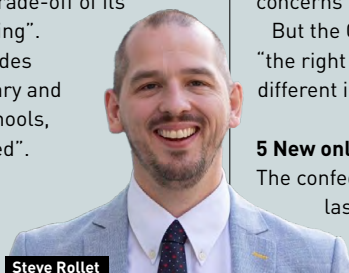
The organisation stresses the paper is a "stimulus for discussion...rather than being firm CST positions".

It follows investigations by Schools Week into the inspection system, including into complaints and the link between school results and their Ofsted grade.

1 Scrap grades for all but "schools causing concern"

The paper argues that as most schools are rated 'good' or better, the government should review "the cost/benefit trade-off of its current approach to grading".

CST suggests using grades "where it is most necessary and most valid". For other schools, "grading could be removed".



Steve Rollet

2 Research reliability now

The CST highlights a recent study questioning the reliability of inspection outcomes, and calls for urgent research that should not be delayed until a new chief inspector's appointment in 2024. It should be used to inform policy.

3 Ensure independent oversight of complaints

Many leaders see Ofsted's complaints process as "ineffective". Improvement could include independent oversight, with the capacity to reopen judgments in appropriate circumstances.

4 Pupil achievement "underplayed"

Ofsted should make clearer how performance data is used in inspections – including through publishing periodic analyses – following concerns it is underplayed.

But the CST adds that the framework has "the right principle" in trying to "offer a different insight".

5 New online portal for school performance

The confederation welcomed a "symbolic shift" last year, when the "find and compare schools" website was rebranded

"find and check".

But it suggests the government and Ofsted should explore a new online portal for school performance, "treating parents, schools and the state as partners in the process".

6. Rethink curriculum publications

CST backs Ofsted's work to "deepen understanding" through literature reviews and subject reports.

But it said the "pace and scope" of publications should take "capacity issues" in schools into consideration.

Ofsted should also publish curriculum aide-memoirs, given the "potential inequity" of inspectors working in schools having access to them.

7. Don't treat trusts as 'external' to schools

A final plea is for Ofsted to address alleged "inconsistencies" in how inspectors engage with trust boards and local governing committees, and the "patchy" involvement of executive leaders, particularly those responsible for school improvement or curriculum.

# Life under Labour: Childcare, yes; exam reform, *no*

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Labour's shadow education team is building closer links with the academies sector and taking soundings from a prominent think tank with strong ties to the Conservatives as it prepares to flesh out its education policies.

Sir Keir Starmer, the party leader, last week pledged to reform the education system if his party wins power, promising "real-world impact" and consultation with experts and frontline staff.

Education was one of five "missions" he outlined in a speech in Manchester, but he is not expected to flesh out any details until later this year, with "measurable ambitions" and "some of the first tangible steps" planned.

He said his shadow cabinet would meet both "frontline practitioners" and experts – "we still believe in them" – to shape each mission.

Those discussions about its future have recently ramped up after it largely discarded its 2019 manifesto. We spoke to sources familiar with the policymaking process about the ideas under discussion and who is helping to form them.

## Childcare will take centre stage

Schools policy is likely to be eclipsed as a priority as the party focuses limited spending power elsewhere.

Childcare is seen as an area in which Labour can make quicker economic wins at a time of financial crisis and as concerns grow about workforce availability.

School reforms, on the other hand, can take decades to make an impact, so a spending bonanza is unlikely unless there is a marked improvement in the country's fortunes.

That said, Labour's childcare reforms will extend into the classroom. The party has already said it will provide schools with resources to provide extra-curricular activities outside traditional hours, and has vowed to introduce free breakfast clubs for all primary pupils.

## No sweeping assessment reform

Despite the appointment of School 21 founder Peter Hyman – a prominent opponent of GCSEs – as an adviser to Starmer, it is understood there is little appetite in the short term for significant assessment reform.

Nor will the party immediately tinker with what



Bridget Phillipson

is actually taught in schools.

Labour has committed to a review of the curriculum, but this is likely to focus on Starmer's pledge to build in digital and life skills, rather than ripping it up and starting from scratch.

However, Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, and her team are understood to be keen to look at how to curb the negative impact of certain accountability levers such as the English Baccalaureate.

The baccalaureate, which measures schools on the proportion of pupils entered for five core academic subject groups, has been blamed for a decline in the take-up of arts subjects.

The government is also still a long way off its target of 90 per cent participation in the English Bacc, with a shortage of language teachers keeping entries in French, German and Spanish lower than desired.

## Next Ofsted chief could have brief tenure

Ofsted is expected to turn its focus to school improvement under a Labour government, with the length and frequency of inspections also up for review.

Labour has also said it will introduce inspections of multi-academy trusts themselves. Currently, groups of schools in the same trust are batch-inspected in so-called summary evaluations, but the back-office function is not assessed.

These potentially big changes, coupled with the

fact the next chief inspector is due to be chosen by the Conservative government in the next few months, present a problem for Labour.

Insiders say it is possible Amanda Spielman's replacement could be asked to stand aside if the party wins the election.

## Academies are here to stay

Labour's stance on academies has softened in recent years, in part due to an acceptance that academisation is now all but impossible to reverse. Four in five secondary schools and two in five primaries are now academies.

Phillipson and Stephen Morgan, the shadow schools minister, have made clear the dual system is here to stay.

Although the party won't force well-performing schools to convert, schools will still be allowed to choose to become academies. Morgan also said the party would protect the right of single-academy trusts to continue to stand alone.

Labour would also retain the power to convert failing council-maintained schools, and would not scrap the free schools programme, as it pledged to under Jeremy Corbyn.

However, the party has said it will try to bring the two sectors closer together.

Morgan told Schools Week last year his party was planning its own schools bill, which would force all schools to follow the national curriculum and give councils powers over admissions to

POLITICS: LABOUR

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academies.

Elements of the government's now abandoned school reforms, such as plans for a home education register and greater powers to curb unregistered schools, will also be resurrected, although shadow ministers intend to take a "different approach".

**Party takes soundings from a wider pool**

Labour's change in direction on academies is well illustrated by its increased engagement with the Confederation of School Trusts (CST).

Phillipson and Morgan were both recent guests at the organisation's annual reception, and Schools Week understands senior figures meet regularly with the CST's leadership.

Steve Rollett, the CST's deputy chief executive, said the organisation was "apolitical and as the sector body for school trusts we work with a range of political parties and organisations, explaining the benefits to children of schools being in a trust".

Labour has also widened the pool of policy wonks and think tanks that it takes advice from.

Unsurprisingly, the front bench still takes soundings from education unions, and Tony Blair's Institute for Global Change and the Institute for Public Policy Research are understood to be



Stephen Morgan

influential.

But perhaps more surprising is the involvement of Public First, a consultancy once synonymous with the Conservatives (its founder, Rachel Wolf, set up the New Schools Network and co-wrote the Tories' 2019 manifesto).

Public First appears to be gearing up for a changing of the guard. It recently recruited a handful of ex-Labour staffers, and it is understood director Ed Dorrell, the former deputy editor of Tes magazine, is leading the organisation's work with the shadow education team.

Phillipson and her colleagues are said to have taken a particular interest in research by the consultancy last year on behalf of Unison and the

heads' union NAHT.

The report recommended a combined focus on life skills and literacy and numeracy, "open, transparent community schools", improved Ofsted engagement with parents and a "pragmatic" approach to school structures.

**Education knights join the roundtable**

Sir Kevan Collins, the government's former catch-up tsar, has advised shadow ministers on pandemic recovery, while Sir David Carter, the former national schools commissioner, is understood to have been involved in discussions about academy trusts.

Sir David Bell, vice-chancellor of Phillipson's local University of Sunderland, is also understood to have been consulted on education issues, as has Jonathan Slater, a former DfE permanent secretary.

Party grandees also remain influential. For example, Lord Blunkett, the former education secretary, led a recent review of skills policy.

A Labour source said: "As would be expected, Bridget speaks to a wide range of stakeholders about the future of the education system.

"But be in no doubt: under a Labour government the only person responsible for setting education policy will be the secretary of state for education."

# Labour's schools policies so far:

1. **End private schools' charitable status to raise £1.7 billion in tax revenues**
2. **'National Excellence Programme' for school improvement focused on pupils who leave without level 3 qualifications**
3. **£347 million teacher recruitment fund to fill 'over 6,500 vacancies and skills gaps', including by improving career pathways and addressing workload issues**
4. **£210 million to give teachers a 'right' to continuing professional development and time out to do it**
5. **£47 million 'excellence in leadership' programme for new heads**
6. **Reform of Ofsted to include a school improvement role, focusing on struggling schools. Review of grades and the frequency and length of inspections**
7. **Ofsted to inspect multi-academy trusts**
8. **'10 by 10' pledge of opportunities like learning a musical instrument or visiting the seaside by the age of 10, with funding to provide these during an extended school day**
9. **Free breakfast clubs for all primary pupils**
10. **Citizenship curriculum reform to include 'practical life skills'**
11. **Two weeks of compulsory work experience for pupils and guaranteed careers advice**
12. **'Mandatory' digital skills across the curriculum, becoming a 'fourth pillar' alongside reading, writing and maths**
13. **Changes to academy rules to make all schools follow the national curriculum**
14. **Powers for councils over admissions to all schools including academies**
15. **Access to in-school counselling staff for all pupils**

## ANALYSIS: MATS

# The return of MAT league tables: what do they tell us?

Multi-academy trust performance data has been published for the first time in three years, despite school leaders warning that Covid has rendered it “inherently flawed”.

The figures cover key stage four results from 2022, when secondary pupils sat external exams for the first time since before the pandemic.

The government recently said that public data was “important” for parents and students, but urged them to use it “cautiously” and ask schools for context given Covid’s uneven impact.

## 1 Scores on the doors

The progress 8 scores of MATs included in the league tables averaged -0.02. This is fractionally above the national average (-0.03), which also includes maintained schools and standalone academies.

The headline MAT figure is unchanged compared with 2019, the last available data.

It is important to point out that only results for trusts which have at least three schools that have been with the trust for at least three years are included.

## 2 Smaller trusts do best ...

Forty-five per cent of MATs with fewer than 10 schools in the data posted progress 8 scores above average – against 35 per cent of trusts with at least 10 schools.

Ministers had wanted trusts to have at least 10 schools – or 7,500 pupils – by 2030 but have abandoned their ambitions.

However, any comparison becomes tricky because larger trusts are more likely to have sponsored academies (those that were taken on following ‘inadequate’ ratings, as opposed to ‘good’ or better schools that chose to convert).

Among bigger trusts, nearly three-quarters of the academies were sponsored, compared to just 40 per cent at smaller trusts.

## 3 ...But the best big MATs win out

While fewer big trusts recorded above average progress scores, those that did so performed significantly better.

Only six of 17 larger MATs in the tables surpassed the national average, but did so by almost a third of a grade (0.31), compared to 0.23 among the smaller MATs. This is also despite them having a larger number of sponsored academies, with some well-known turnaround trusts.

Harris Federation had the highest results among them (0.39), followed by United Learning (0.35), Star Academies (0.33), Delta Academies Trust (0.3), Ark Schools (0.25) and Northern Education Trust (0.09).

Their success meant the average large MAT’s progress 8 score was 0, whereas MATs with fewer than 10 schools recorded -0.03.

## 4 Top trusts full of converter schools

Twyford Church of England Academies Trust topped the tables, with a 0.93 progress 8 score. The Gorse Academies Trust ranked second (0.72) and Girls’ Learning Trust third (0.69).

Eight MATs scored 0.5 or more – deemed “well above average” by the government, up from six in 2019. Five of the eight had no sponsored academies, however.

Fifteen of 193 MATs included saw progress 8 scores below -0.5. Tyne Coast Academy Trust saw the lowest scores, with progress one grade below average.

Annual accounts highlight Covid’s “significant impact” and “extreme deprivation” at one school. Another is a university technical college, which the government includes in the data despite acknowledging that progress 8 is “not the most appropriate” for them.

## 5 New accountability metrics

For the first time, 2022 data includes how MATs fare across attainment 8 and ‘strong passes’ at grade 5 or above in English and maths.

The average MAT saw 47.8 per cent of pupils secure ‘strong passes’, with larger trusts’ scores slightly lower (46.1 per cent) and smaller MATs slightly higher (48.4 per cent). Both were below the all-school average (49.8 per cent).

On attainment 8, MAT scores averaged 48.3, also slightly below the all-school average (48.8).

Girls’ Learning Trust, a three-school London MAT, was the highest-performing MAT on both measures. It has a below-average number of disadvantaged pupils, though they perform significantly above average.

## 6 But experts urge caution

Steve Rollett, deputy chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the figures were “useful”, but do not “fully reflect local circumstances, including the differential impact of Covid”.

He welcomed the DfE data website’s rebrand as a tool to “check”, not “compare”, performance.

Tiffnie Harris, data specialist at ASCL, said the school leaders’ union had repeatedly urged the government not to publish the data to prevent “invidious” comparisons, dubbing it “inherently flawed”.

ASCL wants a longer-term overhaul of “unclear, unfair and narrow” metrics, including wider measures.

## INVESTIGATION: SCHOOL BUILDINGS

# The collapsing schools that forced DfE action

TOM BELGER

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have upgraded the risk of school buildings collapsing after falling ceiling tiles hit staff, walls cracked and buildings required “urgent propping up”.

Schools Week has learned “serious structural issues” reported at five schools in one year triggered the government’s recent warning to upgrade the risk of collapses to “critical – very likely”.

Ministers are under mounting pressure to release more data on building risks, with long-promised publication now two months late.

A freedom of information request has uncovered the five incidents in the year to October 2021 that led to the elevated alert. None had been flagged to senior officials the previous year, and six further incidents were reported last year – although these schools were not named.

## Falling concrete and ‘urgent propping’

The five cases include St Anne’s (Stanley) School in Liverpool, which experts said could not reopen without “urgent propping up”. The DfE funded temporary repairs and a longer-term rebuild.

A Bradford teacher was reportedly admitted to hospital after they were hit by a falling ceiling tile at Fearnville Primary School, forcing temporary closure and repairs. Both schools were approached for comment.

Fortis Academy in Birmingham also temporarily closed after a concrete ceiling panel fell on a desk during holidays. A Shaw Education Trust spokesperson said all panels were replaced within weeks. It later secured funding for works.

Angel Road Junior School in Norwich similarly suffered “falling pieces of ceiling tiles” in a classroom. The Evolution Academy Trust permanently relocated pupils to its nearby infant school, saying it could not guarantee pupil and staff safety.

Council documents reveal three incidents of failing lath-and-plaster ceilings, plus subsidence, penetrating damp, extensive roof repairs and a canteen beyond its life expectancy.

Dr Craig Avieson, the trust chief executive, said issues had been “very challenging”, but reserves and local partnerships helped it “swiftly adjust” and reduce disruption. It has since secured capital funding.



Burnside Academy in Sunderland closed in March last year after routine maintenance sparked “structural movement”, with walls cracking and paving slabs rising up.

Buildings were due to reopen last March, but repairs have taken longer than expected with permission to keep using portable cabins on playing fields extended to this July. DfE documents say “difficult geology...caused issues”.

Planning documents say the school’s initial decision to bus children to other schools was “considered...harmful” to their education.

But temporary facilities posed issues too, including two break-ins in a week last year, briefly forcing closure as stolen cables left buildings without power. The school did not respond to a request for comment.

## Ministers under fire

James Bowen, policy director at the school leaders’ union NAHT, said these cases were “the tip of the iceberg”.

Stephen Morgan, Labour’s shadow schools minister, said the examples showed “our crumbling school buildings are a ticking time bomb”.

Labour MPs recently lodged 110 questions with the DfE seeking constituency-level data on the condition of schools.

Speaking in Parliament on Monday, Sheffield Hallam MP Olivia Blake said cladding “flew off” Dore Primary School last month, leaving constituent parent Carla Ashman with “serious” injuries.



Olivia Blake

Ashman told Schools Week she suffered a black eye and now had trouble reading and had tinnitus, needing three weeks off work. But she said it “could have been a lot worse” and killed a child.

Munira Wilson, the Lib Dem education spokesperson, also highlighted funding cuts, citing Northfield Special School in Oxfordshire, which closed after the council deemed it “unfit for purpose”.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said detailed surveys allowed risks to be identified. The government took “immediate action”, including closing dangerous buildings for remedial works.

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, repeated a pledge to publish condition data, but gave no date after missing a December target.

A DfE spokesperson said condition data informed its school rebuilding programme to transform the 500 most in-need schools.

## Blame game

Not everyone blames cutbacks, however. While criticising “woefully inadequate” government funding, Sheffield education committee co-chairs Mick Rooney and Dawn Dale said falling cladding at Dore “wasn’t caused by a lack of repairs” or its condition, but by “high winds”.

Head Lynnette Glossop said the school took “immediate remedial steps”, and hoped Ashman speaking up would improve repairs funding.

Oxfordshire County Council also previously put Northfield’s dilapidated condition down not to contractor Carillion’s “poor performance”, and has since overseen a £12 million rebuild.

Meanwhile DfE documents say Fearnville’s falling ceiling tile was eventually “found not to be structural”, triggered instead by urgent repairs to defective roofing.

## SPEED READ: ADMISSIONS

## Admission policies shun disadvantaged pupils

Few secondary schools are using powers to prioritise disadvantaged pupils in admissions – despite the financial benefits.

But some settings, particularly free schools, are turning to more “innovative” approaches to make their intakes more inclusive.

New research by the University of Bristol, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, includes the first national analysis of school admissions since widespread academisation.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the ASCL leaders’ union, said the admissions code should be reviewed to “examine the impact of requiring schools to prioritise all children eligible for the pupil premium, or in persistent poverty”.

## 1 Just 170 schools prioritise poorer pupils

Since 2014, schools have been allowed to prioritise disadvantaged pupils for admission.

However, the recent research found just 170, or 5 per cent of the roughly 3,250 secondary schools in England, actually did so.

However, many are also grammar schools, whose admissions hinge on passing the 11-plus. Researchers said this meant only 42 schools nationally “meaningfully” used the criteria.

The report said the finding was “fascinating and puzzling”, given the “progressive” ethos of many schools.

“Neither the additional funding allocated to schools for each eligible student nor any school’s social goal of improving diversity appears to be sufficient for schools to explicitly prioritise the admission of pupils eligible for the pupil premium.”

## 2 Most schools now set own admissions

Councils used to set uniform admission arrangements for most schools. But the introduction of academies has “progressively changed” the system, and 90 per cent of schools now set their own policies.

Decentralisation “naturally produces a great richness and diversity of admissions arrangements”, the report found, noting the “sheer diversity and complexity of the system”.

“This to a degree honours the different missions that schools may follow, but it does create a complex puzzle for parents trying to navigate their way.”

## 3 Siblings and geography most common criteria

According to the report, the most common admissions criteria are prioritising siblings of existing pupils, used by 96 per cent

of schools, and geography, used by 88 per cent.

Professor Simon Burgess, the report’s author, said picking pupils by where they lived “can be exclusionary”, and that prioritising local pupils “can reinforce inequalities”.

But the latter “also has benefits”, such as fostering a “sense of community”.

“There’s a trade-off between value of community and value of inclusion (chance of poorer pupils accessing effective schools). We’re not at the best point on trade-off, favouring only community.”

## 4 Aptitude tests’ “negative” effect on equality

Schools with specialisms, such as music or dance, are allowed to admit up to 10 per cent of pupils according to aptitude.

But the effect of quotas on equality of access for lower social-economic groups is “expected to be negative”.

“High relative attainment in any of the subjects (even sport) will involve expense of resources of time and money for travelling, equipment and training”.

## 5 Few schools turn to innovative approaches ...

Just over 100 schools are using more “innovative” admissions arrangements, including lotteries to randomly allocate available places to some applicants without reference to distance.

Another approach is banding, which uses a test to assure a mixed-ability entry.

The report also found that geographical criteria could be modified to be more inclusive, for instance by reserving places for pupils outside catchment areas.

## 6 ... and free schools lead the way

Early research into the free schools programme suggested their admissions were exclusive.

But this week’s report found the “opposite now seems to be true”, with free schools more likely to design admissions to include disadvantaged pupils.

Free schools were more likely to use the pupil premium criteria and banding approaches, for example, and showed “less reliance on traditional arrangements such as catchment areas”.

The report said this could be due to the “blank slate” offered to new schools, their mission or ethos, or guidance from the DfE that promotes innovative approaches.



NEWS

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# Trust leaders call for delay to 'reckless' FE reforms

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
**@BILLYCAMDEN**

Leaders from influential academy trusts are among hundreds pleading with ministers to delay their "reckless" plan to scrap most BTECs and other applied general qualifications.

In a letter to Gillian Keegan, 360 headteachers and college principals warn they will not have enough time to ensure that "students are on the right courses, or the right staff are in place with the right level of training".

The Department for Education is working to introduce a streamlined system for students finishing their GCSEs that pushes them to study either A-levels, their new technical equivalent T-levels, or an apprenticeship from 2025.

Alternative applied general qualifications (AGQs), such as Pearson's popular BTECs, will only continue to be funded if they do not overlap with T-levels or A-levels and pass a strict new approvals process.

But sister title FE Week revealed last month

that of the 134 AGQs included in the DfE's performance league tables, which were reformed in 2016, more than half have been excluded by government edict.

The qualifications account for almost two-thirds of current sixth-form college students and almost a third of courses available in general FE colleges.

The letter to the education secretary, co-ordinated by the Protect Student Choice campaign and sent on Wednesday, said removing such a significant proportion of qualifications would have a "hugely negative impact on many of our students".

This "would be disastrous for social mobility and economic growth", it said.

Leaders have reiterated the call of several members of the House of Lords for the DfE to remove the 134 reformed AGQs from the scope of the department's defunding review. If not, leaders want the plans delayed a year.

The DfE will publish a list of

new courses to replace the current suite of AGQs in July 2024, for schools and colleges to start delivering in September 2025.

Leaders have told Keegan that this plan is "simply not credible" and should be introduced in 2026. Influential trusts, including Ark, Harris Federation and Co-Op Academies, have signed the letter.

Prospectuses and marketing materials for courses starting in September 2025 will already have been finalised by July 2024, and engagement work with students will be well underway.

Lucy Heller, the chief executive of Ark Schools, said the time frame "does not serve schools and colleges well but, most importantly, it short-changes our young people who have already suffered so much disruption to their education".

The DfE said its reforms would "simplify the system for young people". Scrapped BTECs would only include those with low take up, poor outcomes or T-level overlap, and already included a "transition" year.



Lucy Heller

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**Feature**  
 JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

# ‘We support the strikes ... but the children come first’

How did heads manage the second round of teacher protests this week? Jessica Hill investigates

**H**eadteachers say they’re stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to this week’s strikes, with their consciences torn between supporting children’s right to education and their teachers’ right to protest.

And while parents have mostly so far been behind the protests, there is concern the two consecutive days of strikes planned for later this

month could test their support.

We spoke to leaders about how their schools are managing disruption, and shifting perceptions in their communities.

**Online learning is “no substitute”**

Glyn Potts, head of Newman Roman Catholic College in Oldham, spent strike day on Tuesday – when his school was only open for vulnerable

and looked-after pupils – at Windsor Castle, collecting his MBE for services to education and the Army Cadet Force.

Of his 100 teachers, 63 were striking National Education Union (NEU) members, leaving him with 12 to 15 teachers for his 1,500-pupil school after taking into account maternity and other absences.

He says he felt “disappointed” he was unable to

# Feature

manage the situation better, although he was glad to be collecting his medal on a day his school was closed.

“Online learning is no substitute for [classroom teaching] and not good enough for this community I serve,” he says. “But I’m trying to navigate being responsible to my students alongside not getting myself in hot water with the unions. I want much more, but I can’t have it without those teachers.”

Potts is also angry over the government’s lack of support for teachers.

Colleagues, he says, feel “wholly disempowered by government. They’ve taken away all the tools I might use and all the pride and ambition I have for my students, and replaced it with a cliff edge of accountability and performance measures. You have to wait for whichever paddle is going to hit you next.”

### Twitter backlash

More than half (45) of the teachers at Framwellgate School in Durham, walked out on Tuesday. The school opened for years 11, 12 and 13, with matters made “slightly easier”, says head Andy Byers, by mock exams for year 11. Other years were set work from home by senior leaders.

Byers, who planned to teach himself during the strike, said there was an “onus on senior staff to supervise students. We haven’t tried to overstretch ourselves, we’ve made sure we have enough people to supervise students who are in.”

There has been some backlash on Twitter for leaders “breaking the strike” by covering for teachers. The leaders’ union NAHT and the NEU even sent out a joint letter calling for unity during last month’s strikes.

Byers says he sensed “disappointment” among members of other unions that they were not striking, and four of his staff “changed unions to be part of the action”. The NEU said this week it had 50,000 new members since announcing action.

Many students are also “very supportive” of striking teachers, with some sixth-formers



NEU joint general secretary Kevin Courtney at a strike on Thursday with a teacher dressed as Darth Vader



Glyn Potts with wife Khera at Windsor castle collecting his MBE

## ‘We haven’t tried to overstretch ourselves’

previously providing staff on picket lines with hot drinks.

“But we’re trying not to talk about the politics of it all with them.”

### Head gives “full support” to strikers

Two of 30 the teachers at Yew Tree Primary School in Walsall took action on Tuesday, with head Jamie Barry using agency staff to cover classes.

He says he “debated long and hard whether it was the right thing”. “It’s hard to balance support for my colleagues and the cause, which I don’t disagree with, with the fact my children need to be in school. Every day missed is so much opportunity missed.”

“Schools have become much more for communities since Covid. Now we have food vouchers, food banks and mental health teams working more closely with us.”

Some families are also “really worried about childcare costs” if the school closes. “It’s not as black and white as some would paint on Twitter of ‘we’re striking to cause disruption’”

More than half (16) of Barry’s teaching staff are NEU members. He says he was aware those declaring they

would not strike could “suddenly change their minds and not turn up”. But he told parents he would give full support to staff who changed their minds at the last minute.

He also believes sentiment is shifting, with some asking ‘why strike when you’ve got a secretary of state willing to sit around the table?’”

The NEU last week refused Gillian Keegan’s call to end strike action in exchange for “proper” pay talks.

### “I don’t claim to have done it right”

Most staff at Home Farm Primary School in Colchester chose not to strike on Wednesday, telling head Richard Potter they wanted to wait until later in the year when “other unions would probably strike” to “make a bigger difference”.

“Most staff are younger and worried about the possibility of losing pay, and...loss of planning, preparation and assessment time.”

Potter is publicly supportive of the strike, but has also told staff that children come first.

Where he has enough staff whose contracts stipulate “cover teaching”, he covers strikers – and “will not name nor shame” those who take action. Where he has no cover, he is closing year groups and moving to online.

He is accepting staff children whose own schools closed, so “those children can continue their learning and my staff can continue to earn money”.

“I don’t claim to have done it right. But my staff feel supported and are with me in the actions I’ve taken.”

Potter believes the next



Glyn Potts



Andy Byers

# Feature

two days of strikes could be “more popular”, making it “harder to avoid class or year group closures”.

Alison Kriel, director of education platform Above & Beyond Education, believes heads are generally supportive of strikers because their “biggest fear” is the “domino effect” of staff leaving for better paid private sector roles.

She also believes heads are “reluctant to speak out” over strikes because of “fear of backlash and being singled out. It’s a conservative profession, and heads don’t want to be seen as troublemakers.”

### “Galvanising resolve” of action

Dan Morrow, the chief executive of Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust in Devon, was striking alongside teachers on Thursday. His 19 schools took “risk assessed” actions, ranging from full closures to “almost business as usual”.

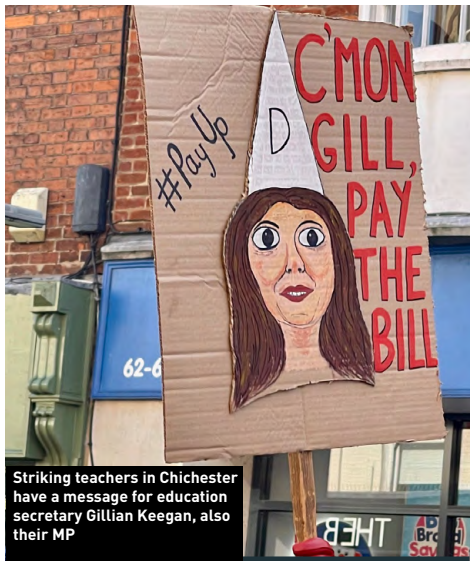
Morrow’s heads, he says, are “mindful not to breach protocols” and avoid asking any colleagues to cover. He senses a “galvanising of resolve across all stakeholders...even given the salary sacrifice of striking”.

“Though it is clear some colleagues are already struggling financially...the NEU has been really proactive in signposting to support available as needed.”

Morrow would like a “full sector response” from heads, but accepts that life is more “nuanced”.

Newcastle University physics PGCE tutor Miles Hudson, who has six trainees on placements, believes strike action gives them a “good learning experience to understand the importance of unions”.

Their £26,000 bursaries mean the pay issue “doesn’t hit home”, but they are finding the course workload tough. “They’re getting the message that workload is as much what these strikes are about as pay.”



Striking teachers in Chichester have a message for education secretary Gillian Keegan, also their MP

## ‘Every day missed is so much opportunity missed’

### No increased demand for agencies

A recent law change allows staffing gaps caused by strikes to be plugged by agency workers, but Niall Bradley, the chair of The National Supply Network, has not picked up any increased demand this week.

Similarly, Athona Recruitment says there was no increased demand with most of the schools it works with closing and setting remote learning.

Some heads, including Byers, chose not use supply because “that’s not in the spirit of supporting” strikers.

Potts tried to get cover but none was available. Barry did use cover, including supply teachers from schools that shut, but says he made it clear they would be covering a striking teacher. “Some people morally would choose not to do that.”

Daniel Dawkins, a director of Aspire People,

noticed more demand for supply during last month’s strike.

Figures obtained by Schools Week show half of northern schools, which went on strike on Tuesday, had to close or restrict attendance.

But secondaries were far more likely (77 per cent) than primaries (47 per cent) to close to some pupils.

Dawkins thinks this is because older children can stay home alone working with laptops given to them during Covid, with less disruption to parents.

But primary closures cause “more anger” from parents scrambling for childcare.

### Most parents support strikes

A new poll by Ipsos Mori shows 60 per cent of parents support teacher strikes, but about two in five are worried about their children catching up on school work and exam results being affected.

Mumsnet, the website for parents, says there has been a “lot less discussion” during this week’s strikes.

But Potts is picking up some “resentment ... commentary about the NEU not joining the table to talk about pay ... is being repeated by parents who don’t understand that teachers are often in different unions and constrained by what they can respond to.

“Parents are saying, ‘why can school x [open] and school y can’t?’. They’re critical of us for having to make a decision they can’t really understand.”

The “visceral” anger between unions and the government has not helped.

Byers received one supportive email from parents and two critical, which he says were “unsigned and fairly abusive”.

He believes, however, that most of his parents are “understanding” because they also work for public sector organisations and are “in the same boat”.

“But they want it to be resolved as quickly as possible so pupils can be back in lessons.”



Alison Kriel

Richard Potter

Dan Morrow

Jamie Barry



The 13th annual

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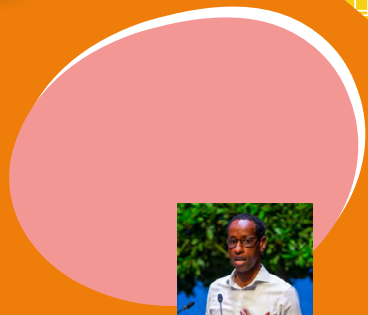
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# Opinion: Recruitment

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## SAM TWISELTON

Director,  
Sheffield Institute of Education

### Teacher apprenticeships are a no-brainer reform

**Degree apprenticeships will protect teaching as a graduate profession and make it accessible to many who might not otherwise be able to train, says Sam Twiselton**

Recent headlines about the Department for Education's proposed new undergraduate teacher apprenticeships have focused on concerns that it could undermine the profession. Those concerns are based on misconceptions: this is a fantastic potential new route to a career in teaching.

The first and most important thing to understand is these would be graduate teachers. They would gain a degree as part of their apprenticeship, which is a great thing – for them and the profession. Rather than being a threat to teaching as a graduate profession it is quite the opposite. It would be equipping great practitioners with a deeper, evidence-based understanding of how to support pupil learning.

The degree apprenticeship will develop their subject knowledge, shine a light on their practice and give them an all-important graduate level understanding of how to keep improving it. We know from our other degree

apprenticeships here at Sheffield Hallam University that this is genuinely high-level, robust and appropriately intellectual as well as a practical way to enter a profession.

Degree apprenticeships already exist in professions from aerospace engineering to nursing, and from digital industries to nuclear. There is no reason teaching should not be on that list.

The proposed route opens up the possibility for many great people already working in schools, but without a degree, to become graduate teachers while in employment. This not only gives them an all-important licence to practise – it also gives them the higher education qualification they deserve. Not only this, but while studying they continue to stay in employment, meaning they are able to constantly apply their learning to their practice. Pupils are the immediate beneficiaries.

We already know from teaching assistants who take foundation degrees and then top up with the final year of a QTS degree that such people make great teachers. They are some of the most committed, able and effective teachers we train. The experience and commitment they bring (usually alongside an unfounded lack of confidence



### “Concerns are based on misconceptions

in their academic ability) makes them a delight to teach. The apprenticeship route would enable many more brilliant candidates to access teaching as they can carry on working. It removes a huge barrier and gives access to people who are already making a brilliant contribution in non-teaching roles and allows them to take it to the next level.

A degree apprenticeship gives so much more time and depth to develop subject knowledge, and theoretical understanding and application. It should be seen as a high-quality route as participants will develop the depth of understanding that is such a challenge on a shorter postgraduate route.

The slightly longer length of study for a degree apprenticeship is a good thing in terms of depth and breadth of study, but there must be balance. It will be important that prior learning can be appropriately accounted for as many likely

candidates will have relevant qualifications and other forms of relevant experience. This should hopefully mean that for many the length of study will not be so long as to seem unattainable, becoming another barrier to prevent great candidates entering the profession.

We need many more great teachers in the coming years and a degree apprenticeship route seems like a no-brainer. It will remove barriers and open a career in teaching to a diverse range of people who might not otherwise have been able to access it.

For many years, we have talked about parity of esteem between academic and vocational education. Now, we have a chance to model what we mean by opening up education itself to diverse forms of entry. This a reform and route we should get behind. After all, ensuring equal opportunities for all is what education is all about.

# Opinion: Recruitment

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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KRISTINA MURKETT

Teacher, Magdalen College School, Oxford

## Teach First must face up to much bigger problems than pay

**Teach First's reputation for churning and burning is well earned and a key reason Kristina Murkett went on to the saner shores of an independent school**

It's no secret that teacher recruitment is an urgent, severe and worsening problem. Last year the government missed its target for new secondary teachers by more than 40 per cent. One third of teachers who qualified in the past decade have left the profession, and a survey by the National Education Union suggests 44 per cent plan to go in the next five years.

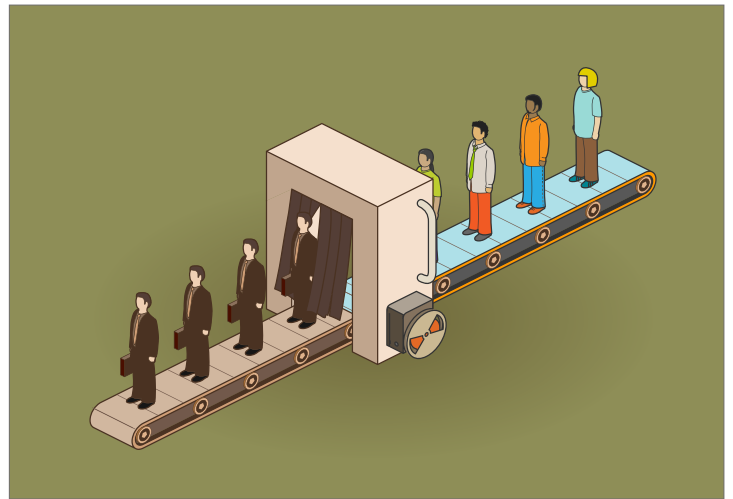
Teach First, one of the largest graduate employers, is also struggling. Last year it recruited the lowest number of trainees in four years, missing its target by one-fifth. Meanwhile, a recent article in *The Times* revealed that the programme is "losing bright graduates to private school pay". Yet demand was higher than ever; the charity received 3,500 requests from schools, a 25 per cent increase on the previous record.

It's easy to blame pay; Teach First chief executive Russell Hobby recently said that "it is hard to

compete" with other graduate employers, "a quarter of whom are now paying over £40,000 a year starting salary". The cost of living crisis has undoubtedly made matters worse; prospective trainees will be attracted to careers with more certain and dramatic salary progression over a job that seemingly only promises real-term pay cuts.

However, fixating on pay oversimplifies matters; my experience is that working conditions, rather than salary, is what gets people through the door and keeps them there. Teach First's salary has never been competitive; when I joined in 2015 I did not do so for the money. My salary was about £22,000 (including an Inner London stipend), which was far less than what my friends were earning. It went up to £28,000 once I became a NQT (the government plans to increase this to £30,000 nationwide this year), and I could have been paid more if I'd taken on extra responsibilities.

In truth though, no amount of money could have persuaded me to stay at my Teach First school after my second year. I was emotionally, physically and mentally exhausted, and while I



**"I sold my soul but I kept my sanity"**

did stay in teaching (unlike most of my contemporaries), I'm one of the ones *The Times* bemoans for moving to the private sector. I didn't do it for the money but for my mental health. I sold my soul, but I kept my sanity.

Teach First therefore has much bigger, more nebulous problems to worry about than money. There are many push factors in the most disadvantaged schools – workload, chronic underfunding, poor behaviour, the ever-looming threat of Ofsted – but there are also important pull factors to other careers. Flexible working is now a huge attraction for many people; for example, many mothers who may have seen the appeal of school holidays may now prefer a career where they can work remotely and set their own hours.

I also wonder how much Gen Z, with their more mindful approach to wellbeing and work/life balance than us people-pleasing

millennials, will be keen to join Teach First's churn-out, burn-out model. I heard plenty of horror stories before I joined and soon realised that simply surviving it was a badge of honour. It wasn't so much a baptism of fire, but a road to hell paved with good intentions. Social media has multiplied this word-of-mouth effect; I know some people who had places but pulled out after hearing about other people's experiences.

Teach First may be calling on the government to offer a £5,000 recruitment bonus for teachers who work in the most deprived areas, but this is misunderstanding the problems with the programme. Instead, why not offer teachers a lighter timetable, or a whole day at home dedicated to planning, marking and learning, or use the money to get experienced teachers back into the state sector? That's where the real value lies.

# Opinion: Recruitment

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## JAMES LIPSCOMBE

Projects and programme development lead, Teacher Booker

### Why I didn't join this week's strike action

**James Lipscombe explains why his walk-out was permanent and why he won't be coming back any time soon**

According to the National Education Union, 300,000 school workers took strike action on February 1. Similar numbers were expected this week. I didn't join them. Not because I agree with the real-terms pay cuts of the past decade, reductions in school funding or a government that places no value in the sector's workforce. I didn't join them because last year, after 12 years in teaching, I joined the tens of thousands who have left the profession.

I loved teaching. I loved the highs and the lows of working with sometimes challenging pupils and innovative and driven colleagues. I loved it until I found myself as acting head of school in the midst of the pandemic. I was working 13-hour days, skipping lunch and going home at night just to open the laptop again.

My girlfriend, a self-acknowledged workaholic earning three times my salary, couldn't believe my lack of work/life balance. I thought I just needed a change of environment,

so I began looking for that next job. I found it, downloaded the application... and began to cry. I was broken. The profession I loved had chewed me up and spat me out.

Yet I love it so much I could be tempted back. But it would take drastic changes. These are my top three.

**A new narrative**

For too long, successive governments have allowed the public to believe our day finishes when pupils go home and that we get 12 weeks' holiday. But evenings, weekends and unpaid annual leave ("holidays") are in part given over to marking, planning, revision and more. This narrative is particularly pernicious because it obstructs a genuine conversation about workload.

**A wake-up call**

Quite simply, if a worker believes that their pay does not reflect their value or the size of their role, they will leave. We can no longer rely on educators following and staying in their "vocation". It might be a calling for some, but teaching has to pay the bills and allow time for family too.



“ The profession I loved chewed me up and spat me out

**A safety net**

There is also a direct correlation between the increase in workload and cuts in core funding for social care, CAMHS and SEN provision. Teachers and support staff are carrying the burden of delivering interventions for increasing numbers of pupils on waiting lists or who no longer meet the threshold. This adds to an untenable workload.

These are obvious, but they're crucial. There needs to be a fully funded increase in salaries, combined with a significant decrease in workload. For all Gillian Keegan's talk of focusing on the latter, the fact is that it will equate to more school funding.

If the Treasury's pockets are shallow, then it needs to look deeper at how its resources are allocated. An estimated £500 million goes on agency fees each year, when a national staff engagement system could be put in place for a fraction of this cost. The NHS has one, why

can't schools?

It's time for the government to show that it values teaching rather than undermines it, and that it understands its workload rather than paying lip service to it. Teachers will be out on the streets today because they are at breaking point.

The whole system needs reviewing, from curriculum to accountability, from assessment to data collection. In every case, the DfE needs to work out how it can get out of the way to let schools do their job. I still have sweats about Friday night emails requiring me to re-read whole policies rather than telling me where a change had been made – symptoms of a deeply broken organisation.

So I didn't join the strike on Wednesday, but I didn't join teachers returning to the classroom on Thursday either. I don't suppose too many like me will – until there's fundamental change.



# Opinion

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## SABAH GILANI

Chief executive, Better Community Business Network

### Mental health: Muslim pupils need our attention

**Acknowledging the mental health crisis impacting Muslim pupils isn't about preferential treatment, but developing bespoke ways to support them, writes Sabah Gilani**

While schools continue to bear the brunt of a mental health epidemic that is affecting children and young people, there is little support and training given to staff to help them.

While no comprehensive data exists, and this is both contributory to and symptomatic of the problem, analysis from Place2Be, a mental health charity working directly with schools, has found that the average primary classroom has four children with a probable mental disorder. According to research by the NHS in 2022, this rises to 18 per cent of children aged 7 to 16.

Figures published by the NSPCC in May 2018, obtained by a freedom of information request, show mental health referrals from schools rose by more than one third from 2015 to 2018, with an average of 183 referrals per school made in 2017-18.

The picture is bleaker still for Muslim school-aged children – and the statistical significance of Muslims amongst this young demographic makes it an issue of

national significance. Muslims, currently the second largest faith group in England and Wales, also have the youngest age profile. According to data from the last census, one in 12 schoolchildren in the UK is of Muslim background. The younger age profile makes early intervention and school-focused strategies of acute relevance to Muslim communities.

Despite the growth in prevalence of British Muslims, half of Muslim households are living in poverty and deprivation and face worse outcomes in health and housing. Forty per cent of England's Muslim population live in the most deprived fifth of local authority districts. And this comes with a mental penalty.

Studies point to higher levels of depression, which are more chronic in nature. Our research reveals that 53.8 per cent of young Muslims surveyed dealt with anxiety, 49.4 per cent suffered from depression and 48.6 per cent from stress. Nearly one in five young Muslims said they had harboured suicidal thoughts "many times", an almost equal number (18 per cent) said they had done so "sometimes", and 24 per cent said they had "occasionally" experienced suicidal thoughts.

As a community that is overwhelmingly from black and



“ Many pupils feel the need to censor their identity

minority ethnic background, Muslims are sometimes more likely to suffer from mental illness such as anxiety disorder and psychosis.

Despite this, Muslim youth are less likely to access CAMHS. Research also shows that in schools, Muslims feel that the stigmatisation of Muslim identity – and Islamophobia – adversely impacts their mental wellbeing.

These factors point to a perfect storm that schools unfortunately have to weather. Muslim Mind Collaborative, a collective of organisations working to better Muslim mental health, is undertaking extensive research and consultation to help schools in their journey to faith and mental health literacy.

We see this as the beginning of the solution, with all the positive, long-term implications that early intervention in mental health holds for the individual, community, and society at large.

While some may ask what “Muslim mental health” is – the

unspoken implication being whether Muslim children should be getting “preferential” treatment – our research shows us that these children do not feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to schools. In many cases, they feel the need to censor their Muslim identity, with all of the consequences this has on their developing sense of self and well-being.

A school environment that understands their cultural and religious heritage from a place of sensitivity and humility and that is not prone to accepting or perpetuating sensationalist media stereotypes is key to allowing them to express themselves in healthy and productive ways, akin with their non-Muslim counterparts.

This means creating a culture in which children and young people are heard, and in which difference is celebrated and understood on its own terms. This way, we can benefit from a flourishing Muslim pupil population, and all the long-term benefits that brings.

# Opinion

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## RACHEL MACFARLANE

Director of education services,  
HFL Education

### Learner profiles are crucial to levelling up our system

**A system geared towards reductive assessments is failing to tackle entrenched inequalities, writes Rachel Macfarlane**

I recently heard David Gallagher, the chief executive of NCFE, compare written exams to penalty shoot-outs. I like the analogy. To suggest that after 14 years of schooling we should assess 16-year-olds' strengths, knowledge and understanding through a series of high-stakes, individual and formal written exams in test conditions is no more satisfactory than deciding the winners of a football tournament on spot kicks.

Penalties are just one of a wide array of skills footballers must demonstrate. Managers look for technique, pace, mental attitude, work ethic, creative flair, the ability to read the game and to play with others to elevate the performance of the team. The same is true of employers. They want the equivalent of skilled defenders, midfielders or attackers – not just penalty takers.

What worries me about metaphor is the assumption that we don't spend our time in school practising metaphorical shoot-outs. In our high-accountability system, classroom activity mirrors

assessment: silent and individual writing exercises, non-contextual factual recall of content, mock exam practice and GCSE questions studied at key stage 3.

Meanwhile opportunities for open-field play are being squeezed. There's less space for student-led, expansive, enquiry-based activity, pair or group collaborative tasks or learning through talk and peer interaction.

Many pupils are failing to get their penalties into the back of the net because the barriers to their learning are not addressed. It's as if their boots are the wrong size, they're battling the flu or shooting from the half-way mark.

We have more children than ever living in real poverty, and increasing numbers are arriving at school with a backpack full of worries and anxieties. They are fearful of stigma and painfully aware of the gaps in their knowledge and skills after three years of Covid disruption and a decade of cuts.

What they need is a school experience that convinces them that they belong. A school that envelops them in a safe, low-threat learning environment; that encourages them to explore concepts and skills with their peers. A school where staff have time to build strong, deep and trusting relationships, to uncover



### “Pupils need more than a reductive set of grades

individual pupils' strengths and to build on them.

Instead, faced with content-heavy lessons and common-to-all assessments in timed conditions and with no learning aids, many are simply sitting it out on the bench.

A learner profile, capturing a pupil's achievements, knowledge and skills in a multi-modal way and over time from reception to 18 is central to creating the safe assessment environment in which all can thrive. It allows learners to demonstrate achievements and skills as part of a team as well as individually, to show progress when they are ready rather than at a set time, to show their knowledge practically or orally as well as in writing. It allows them to reflect on and better understand themselves as learners, to articulate their strengths and achievements, their learning journey and challenges, their aspirations, interests and dispositions. It supports them to translate their skills from school to the outside world.

The inequalities between the

educational experiences and outcomes of learners are stubbornly entrenched, with the data around the life chances of those who “fail” at school – in terms of correlation to low-skilled employment, stunted earnings, poor health and cost to the state – well rehearsed. If we are serious about levelling up, we have to enable pupils to graduate after 14 years of schooling with more than a reductive set of numbers and grades.

A learner profile would equip them with a robust record of their skills, knowledge, capabilities, real-world experiences and achievements including, but not limited to, test and exam success.

Politicians of all persuasions need to build the concept of a learner profile into their party manifesto pledges if they really want to effect social mobility through education. Continuing to decide education's winners and losers on penalties taken on a slanted pitch is not taking our system into the champions' league.

# Solutions

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## RUTH SPARKES

Managing director,  
EMPRA

### How a media storm develops and how to sail through it

All schools must be ready to deal with the media when a crisis strikes. Ruth Sparkes explains how to go about it

Whether it's a natural disaster, public health emergency, corporate misdemeanour or a school scandal, the way the media behaves in a crisis is actually... predictable.

Last week, schools across the country, from Cornwall to Liverpool, made the national press for the wrong reasons. When an issue or crisis occurs, it's vital to communicate effectively to ensure that everyone is informed, safe and reassured. This is particularly true for schools, where parents, staff, and pupils look to the leadership to provide clear guidance and support.

Understanding the predictable patterns of media coverage can help schools develop effective communication plans that meet the needs of their community.

Humans have a need for stories that follow certain narrative patterns. We want to hear tales of courage, survival against the odds, and justice being served. We want to know who is responsible and that steps are being taken to prevent such events from happening again. We interpret

events based on our own experiences, perceptions and once the facts are out there, we love to analyse, speculate, and judge... and we do all these at breakneck speed.

There are four stages of crisis media reporting.

Stage one is "breaking news", where the focus is directly on the incident. This is when schools need to provide accurate and timely information to reassure their community. The key question is: what happened?

Second is the "victims and response" stage, where the attention shifts from the incident to the victims and the way the organisation is responding. New information will keep emerging, but the focus is on the drama of the situation. How many people are involved, hurt, missing or dead? How is the school responding?

The wrongdoer or suspected wrongdoer will also be scrutinised at this stage. This is the time when reputations can be made or broken, with social media playing a significant role.

Stage three is "finger-pointing", where the media and public start looking for someone to blame. Everyone has an opinion about who or what caused the crisis, and what could have been done to prevent it. It's where the story is amplified.



### “ Social media can be a double-edged sword

Lastly, the final stage. The focus begins to subside, but any missteps can easily reignite the crisis. In this digital age, a crisis can remain searchable indefinitely, meaning that a school's reputation can be dented for a very long time.

While it's impossible to predict when a crisis will strike, it's essential to be prepared for when it does. The predictability of these four stages means that schools can prepare.

And, where possible, schools should be ready to make a statement within an hour of the event. The statement should:

- acknowledge the situation,
- express empathy for those affected,
- outline any actions to address the crisis.

Social media can be a double-edged sword. A well-crafted social media response can go a long way towards reassuring the public and mitigating the damage to a school's reputation. But while it can be an

effective tool for communicating quickly and widely, it can also spread misinformation and panic. Schools need to have a clear strategy that includes monitoring and responding to social media activity. They need to provide accurate information and counter any misinformation.

Traditional media outlets also play a significant role. Press releases and interviews with key spokespeople can be effective ways of communicating during a crisis.

Different issues or crises require different strategies; you will need to decide whether a reactive or proactive approach is best. But regardless of the approach, it's important to be transparent and honest. It's better to acknowledge mistakes and take steps to address them rather than to try to cover them up.

The public is more likely to forgive an organisation that takes responsibility for its actions than one that tries to deflect blame.

# THE REVIEW

## SQUARE PEGS. INCLUSIVITY, COMPASSION AND FITTING IN

BOOK  
TV  
FILM  
RADIO  
EVENT  
RESOURCE

**Authors:** Fran Morgan with Ellie Costello (edited by Ian Gilbert)

**Publisher:** Independent Thinking Press

**Publication date:** February 2 2023

**ISBN:** 1781354103

**Reviewer:** Emma Cate Stokes, key stage 1 phase lead, East Sussex

The premise of this book will resonate with teachers. The title and concept speaks deeply to me, and I am clearly not alone: *Square Pegs* has allegedly gone into its second print run.

The book starts with three pages of glowing praise from film-makers, professors of education, a former commissioner of London schools and more, setting a high bar of expectation. This comprehensive guide to inclusion features 38 chapters from 53 contributors with a diverse array of perspectives and experiences.

I can get defensive when faced with a critique of teaching – and this book certainly doesn't shy away from that. However, I made a conscious decision to leave my teacher hat at the door and to give the book a fair shot.

While there were certainly critiques of the system, *Square Pegs* forced me to think deeply about the children of its eponymous title and their schooling experience. The first-hand accounts are truly moving, and it's impossible not to feel compassion for pupils who have faced such challenges.

But while the variety of voices and stories is one of the book's strengths, it is also one of its key limitations. With 53 perspectives, some of which offer contradictory views and others that repeat what has already been covered, the book at times left me feeling muddled, wondering which viewpoint was the most valid or credible, and whether repetition lent certain arguments more weight.

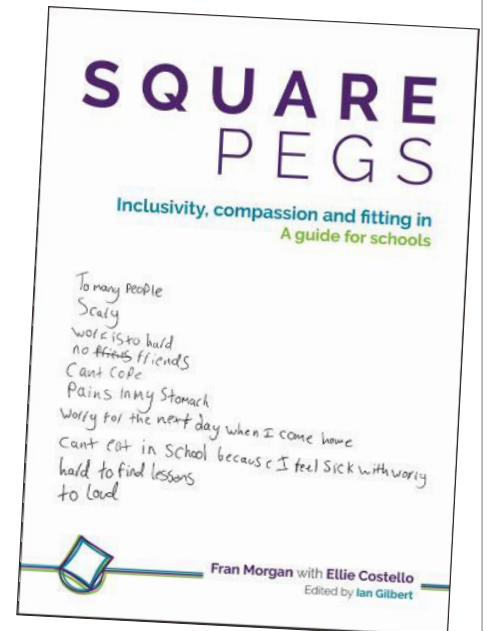
To be generous, this scattergun approach does get you thinking and encourages you to form

your own opinions. But while showcasing so many voices lends some weight, I can't help but feel that it's lost without a clear sense of where and how to apply it. A more coherent and aligned set of views would have allowed for a clearer and more impactful message.

But the diverse voices do offer a glimpse into the many challenges faced by educators and schools when it comes to inclusivity and compassion. Several chapters genuinely touched me and made me reconsider my own views. One in particular, "The Dreams List" by Dave McPartlin, is so powerful that I cried. I dare anyone to read it and not be moved. McPartlin's approach to nurturing his pupils' self-belief and ambition is truly inspiring and it made me reflect on the type of educator I want to be.

Over and above this emotive aspect, which one might expect from a book on compassion, there are also many innovative and outside-the-box ideas for supporting "square peg" pupils. However, the authors don't always take into account ever-shrinking school budgets. One chapter even states explicitly that "it is not about the money". For many schools today, the sad reality is that it very much is.

I would have liked *Square Pegs* to offer more solutions to help schools work within the very real constraints they face. Nevertheless, it still offers valuable insights and inspiration. It shows how important it is to support pupils who are often misunderstood, overlooked and marginalised because they do not fit the mould and demonstrates that providing supportive and



inclusive environments can give them the chance to thrive and be proud of who they are.

Reading this book reinforced how essential it is that we prioritise supporting our "square pegs" and work towards a more inclusive and equitable education system. More than that, it's a valuable resource with a host of insightful and empowering perspectives on these pupils' experiences and challenges.

The editors have done an excellent job of curating experiences, personal stories and expert insights that make their book a must-read for anyone seeking to understand, appreciate and nourish the unique qualities that make each pupil special.

You won't find unifying theme or a single set of solutions here, but that's probably exactly the point.

★★★★☆  
Rating



### UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES (PART ONE)

It's been a tumultuous week following a wave of school protests up and down the country. Parents and pupils are disgruntled by secondaries deciding to lock bathrooms during class time, the launch of gender-neutral uniforms at Warriner School in Bloxham, Oxfordshire, and male teachers measuring the length of girls' skirts at Rainford High School in St Helens, Merseyside.

It's somewhat ironic that education professionals are annoyed at the disruption, considering they have exercised their right to protest in recent months. Indeed, it might even be argued that striking teachers have fuelled this pupil action by modelling it.

That aside, any disruption is serious cause for concern, not least when it pertains to schools trying to improve safeguarding. The schools that banned skirts because girls were wearing them too short was forced to close. Meanwhile anonymous tweeters spoke of toilets being used for planned meet-ups and fights. Katharine Birbalsingh chimed in, flagging hundreds of toilet stories including anal sex between two 11-year-olds.

Vice-principal, Lee Woods, researchED founder, Tom Bennett and principal Sam Strickland all supported the right of schools to create rules to prevent harm. I agree, but

it seems to me a consultative approach in partnership with parents and students is far less likely to exacerbate matters and result in disruption to teaching and learning.

 **Katharine Birbalsingh**  
@Miss\_Snuffy

Skirts and toilets.  
Tip of the iceberg.  
I have hundreds of toilet stories from my career including anal sex btw two 11 year olds.

[Click here for full tweet](#)

### UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES (PART TWO)

In other news, London mayor Sadiq Khan's scheme to give primary school pupils free school meals for the next academic year will bring some respite to struggling families in the capital. However, the scheme will impact access to pupil premium funding as universal free school meals removes any incentive for eligible families to identify themselves. The initiative will leave London's primary schools worse off, failing to target those most in need.

The charity Impetus tweeted that London primaries could lose out on more than £5 million, with another Twitter user airing frustrations for the scheme's lack of focus on the disadvantaged. Another pointed out that the scheme would likely save the government millions.

Governors know full well that school finances are stretched beyond their means and any threat to finances will be at the detriment of those most disadvantaged.

 **MickyB**  
@Micky\_b69

Replying to @simonharris\_mbd

Probably save the government millions as the parents can't be bothered claiming Pupil premium funding for schools once they all have Universal FSM 🙄

[Click here for full tweet](#)

### ATTENDANCE – FROM SOS TO SMS

The education select committee has launched a new inquiry into persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils, driven by new government statistics

that pupil absences remain above pre-Covid levels. At the same time, School-Home Support launched a new campaign calling on Gillian Keegan to commit £90.2 million for family support practitioners in 19 priority education investment areas hardest hit by persistent absence.

Attendance remains high on the list of concerns for governors, in particular because disadvantaged pupils, minority-ethnic pupils, SEND pupils, Covid-19-vulnerable pupils and those in alternative provision feature among the highest. As a governor for an inner-city primary, we are often faced with cultural and socio-economic factors that impact attendance, with the headteacher and SLT regularly transporting persistently absent pupils to school who otherwise would not attend.

It's unclear that text messages, as Lee Elliot Major suggested this week, would do much to help us build stronger family partnerships than that. But we're certainly open to more help.

### SEND HELP

Reports of state-funded schools teaching pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in cupboards is also causing concern. Stephen Deadman, the head of Children's Hospital School Leicester, tweeted that delays and a lack of planning have led to crisis.

At the school where I govern, more than 18 per cent of the cohort require SEN support and rising need is heavily impacting finances. It's hard to disagree with the assessment of journalist, Sam Carlisle, themselves the parent of a child with learning disabilities, that with the number of disabled and neurodivergent children increasing, it's the whole system that needs a rethink.

 **Sam Carlisle**  
@samcarlisle

The numbers of disabled and neurodivergent children is increasing. Each child matters. We need to rethink education. The more I speak to parents, the more I believe we need to rethink education. #SEND  
[bbc.co.uk/news/education](https://bbc.co.uk/news/education)



**BBC NEWS**

bbc.co.uk  
Overcrowded specialist schools: 'We're teaching in cupboards'  
Half of England's special educational needs schools are over-subscribed, BBC research finds.

[Click here for tweet](#)

# The Knowledge

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



## What would it cost to offer universal work experience?

**Dr Elnaz Kashefpakdel, head of policy and research, Speakers for Schools**

Now more than ever young people are making important decisions about their futures early on in life. For instance, choosing what subjects they want to study, which pathways are appropriate – eg apprenticeship or T-levels – what job they want to do and what qualifications they need.

All are too overwhelming to decide without sufficient experience and access to the right information and guidance. Yet access is often dependent on under-resourced schools and colleges – or family privilege.

This has social justice implications as young people with access to labour market information and parental networks are better placed to make more informed choices and find high-quality work experience that ultimately helps them to secure a well-paid job.

We recently published two research reports as a part of our Work Experience For All campaign, which looked at the impact of work experience on young people. The evidence shows over and over again that young people can benefit greatly from participation in work experience: it delivers better employment outcomes and provides opportunities to develop essential skills.

But how can we move past apparently entrenched obstacles to access that leave the poorest out of a fundamental part of their educational journey?

An affordable price tag

Yesterday in Westminster we launched a report we commissioned from the independent think-tank, Social Market Foundation. Its new model for universal work experience shows that it is achievable and affordable.

Indeed, developing and delivering a universal work experience offer would cost a modest £75 million a year to deliver. This covers building a



universal programme from scratch to provide two placements for each pupil, and the cost of coordinating at a national and regional level.

The report breaks down the cost of work experience and argues for a benchmark of £60 per placement. Considering the number of pupils in a typical year group, this takes the cost to £72 million, including a budget for regional delivery partners to connect schools and regional employers, and for schools to pay for staff and admin costs. In addition, the report calls for a centrally managed online platform that enlists nationally available placement opportunities and estimates the cost of running it to be about £3 million annually.

A sage investment

Crucially, we ought to consider the return on investment when presenting these costs, especially under the current economic climate and with schools under so much pressure to balance their books. Analysis of longer and more intense work experience programmes for young unemployed people has found they bring a net benefit of £150 per placement to the Treasury, which offers some encouragement for universal work placements.

To scale the offer properly, we want to start small and take time to build a steady supply of

placements with businesses of all shapes and sizes. The report proposes that disadvantaged areas are given priority, helping the young people who need it most.

A decade ago, work experience for school-age pupils was deemed redundant. But we live in a different world, transformed by digitisation, automation and political change. Our future prosperity depends on every young person having access to high-quality opportunities to discover a changed workplace. The evidence shows what powerful and life-changing impact such opportunities can have on them.

The findings in this report will inform our future conversations with government, educators and employers, as we hope to turn these recommendations into a realistic working model that all political parties can endorse.

Ultimately, at a time when there has never been such universal agreement on the need to improve skills in England, work experience looks like an inexpensive commitment with a return that everyone will benefit from.

**“Learning from experience: How to make high quality work experience for all a reality” can be accessed here: <https://qrco.de/bdjQyH>.**

Week in

# Westminster

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



## MONDAY

The new House of Lords committee on education for 11 to 16-year-olds will consider how to ensure the system is "designed to develop the skills needed to meet future job demands".

This will include how the curriculum can be altered to close the skills gap, with the inquiry hearing evidence from teachers and pupils.

It sounds great, but they might want to ensure the committee can relate, given the average age of peers is a mere 71. WiW looks forward to kids explaining what TikTok is.

\*\*\*

One of the country's largest trusts, United Learning – run by the former DfE civil servant Jon Coles – generally tries to avoid bitter public spats\*.

But it's now at war with nimbies, accusing local residents of hypocrisy over attacking its plans to expand The Royal School, a private school in Surrey.

More than 300 objections were submitted to Waverley Borough Council.

A United spokesperson told the local *Alton Herald* that residents had openly admitted the only traffic growth in the past 20 years had come from them "selling large gardens for 'infill' housing".

"When it is for their own profit, increased traffic seems acceptable," they said. "Where it is to ensure the continued viability and success of a school, however, any change is suddenly impossible."

\*Apart from software firms and the Oak National Academy

## TUESDAY

Schools minister Nick Gibb has a hard-earned reputation as a fuddy duddy who doesn't know the meaning of fun (no talking in corridors, face the front!)

But congratulating Skerne Park Academy in Darlington on its reading lobster scheme (where kids are given cuddly toy lobsters) he quipped: "Anything that promotes a love and habit of reading for pleasure can only be a good thing – and, as I say – the world's your lobster."

Are we witnessing the sea change of Gibb? What next, child-centred learning?

\*\*\*

In a written question on teacher recruitment, children's minister Claire Coutinho pointed out that the number of teachers "remains high".

There were more than 465,500 full-time equivalent teachers working in state-funded schools – 24,000 more than in 2010.

While the number of teachers has increased by 3 per cent, what the government neglects to point out is that the number of pupils over that time has risen by more (3.8 per cent).

## WEDNESDAY

Maybe this is just journalist whinging, but the DfE has this really annoying habit of releasing major new policies to the press the night before the actual details are announced.

What we normally get is a garbled version that is lacking in any detail. At all.

But maybe it's just not the journos who are kept in the dark? The press release for the government's SEND improvement plan included a nice supportive quote from children's commissioner Rachel de Souza.

But within a day, and after the full report was published, she issued her own statement that she was now "concerned the plan does not go far enough swiftly enough"!

It reminds us of when catch-up tsar Sir Kevan Collins was quoted in a DfE press release saying investment on the scheme was good "but more will be needed to meet the scale of the challenge". He resigned later that day.

\*\*\*

Nothing is too much for a marketing campaign nowadays. Jumping in on the back of this week's strikes, zoos were offering free tickets for kids stuck at home.

Children were invited to continue their learning at Twycross Zoo in Leicestershire, or visit the Tiger Trail at Knowsley Safari...

## THURSDAY

*The Telegraph* asked readers whether Sir Gavin Williamson should apologise for saying teachers were looking for an "excuse" not to work during the pandemic. Just 30 per cent said yes, the other 70 per cent said no.

Sources whisper to WiW that Gav's computer mouse has combusted from the number of times it hit refresh on the poll.





*Achieving excellence together*

## SECONDARY PRINCIPAL


L24 - L39 | TO START SEPTEMBER 2023


*Do you want to be part of a growing Multi Academy Trust?  
Are you looking for your next challenge?*

*Great Heights Academy Trust is going through an exciting time of growth and is looking for Principals to help shape the future of our secondary schools.*

We are seeking experienced, ambitious and highly driven secondary leaders to join Great Heights Academy Trust. We are taking a bold and distinctive approach to the appointment of Principals to lead our secondary academies from September 2023. The post holders will be accountable for one allocated secondary school and, in addition, will have opportunities to work as part of our dedicated School Improvement team, and across and beyond the region to shape and deliver exceptional 2-18 inclusive provision for pupils in our growing MAT. We are keen to hear from candidates who are fully committed to making a difference to the life chances of young people and would appreciate the support a MAT provides.

The Great Heights Academy Trust currently comprises six primary schools located in Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds, and one secondary school located in Kirklees. A further secondary school is due to join us on 1st April 2023. The Trust continues to play a pivotal role both across the region and nationally through our Research School, English Hub, SCITT and Trust & School Improvement Offer (TSIO) work.

 The Mirfield Free Grammar, located in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, joined Great Heights Academy Trust on 1st February 2023. The MFG is an 11-18 provider with 1465 pupils on roll, 325 of which are in the sixth form. The school was graded 'good' by Ofsted in February 2020. Following a period of change in leadership, this is a unique opportunity for an ambitious leader to set the vision and strategic direction of the school.

 Colne Valley High School, located in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, is due to join Great Heights Academy Trust on 1st April 2023. The school is an 11-16 provider with 1385 pupils on roll and was graded 'good' by Ofsted in September 2019. This is an exciting opportunity to align the vision and strategic direction moving forward.

**We ask that in your application, you state whether you wish to be considered for either schools or just one particular school.**

**Further information about the role and the MAT can be viewed in the recruitment pack on our website.**

**Visits to the academies and discussions with trust leaders are encouraged. Please contact Great Heights Academy Trust to arrange visits or to discuss further via [mat@greatheightstrust.org.uk](mailto:mat@greatheightstrust.org.uk) or please contact Roz Wood-Ives, Deputy Director of Secondary School Improvement on 01422 761019.**

**Closing Date: 9am Thursday 16th March 2023**

**Interview/Assessment: W/C Monday 20th March 2023**





# HEADTEACHER

Clarendon School  
 Salary Range L28-L32, (L35 on full expansion)  
 Required: September 2023 Full Time, Permanent



An exciting opportunity for new Headteacher to lead us on the next stage in our innovative journey.

Clarendon is a specialist school for children with moderate and complex learning difficulties, part of the Auriga Academy Trust, including the three special schools within Richmond Upon Thames.

Situated across three campuses, all co-located with mainstream schools, in modern, purpose built facilities and expanding further to meet increasing need for places. You will inspire, motivate and lead the school community, provide a coherent vision, strategic and creative leadership, and professional management for all parts of Clarendon School and Gateway Centre, ensuring a high-quality inclusive education for all.

You will be the public face and main advocate of the school, connecting and co-operating with pupils, families and staff from across our community including our co-located and Trust partner schools.

We will give you the support and opportunity to provide successful, leadership for an exceptional happy and growing school community.

**Closing Date: 09:00 Monday 24th April 2023**  
**Interviews: Thursday & Friday 4th & 5th May 2023**

Visits to school are welcome and conversations with current Head/CEO expected. Please contact Ivan Pryce on 020 3146 1441 or email HR@aurigaacademytrust.org.uk to make an appointment

Clarendon School is committed to the safeguarding and welfare of its pupils and expects all staff to share this commitment. All posts are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure Check from the Disclosure and Barring Service

*The Auriga Academy Trust supports an inclusive culture and diversity for our staff and pupils. We are committed to encouraging further growth from diverse groups and we welcome applications from currently underrepresented groups. We currently have an underrepresentation from ethnic minorities at leadership.*

Clarendon School, Egerton Road, Twickenham, TW2 7SL [www.clarendon.richmond.sch.uk](http://www.clarendon.richmond.sch.uk)

## Virtual School Inclusion Support Officer Full time, 1-year fixed term post

£24,054 - £29,439 per annum



**Closing on 21/03/2023**  
**Interview on 30/03/2023**

Brighter Futures for Children is an independent, not-for-profit-company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council.

This is an exciting opportunity to join Reading's Virtual School (VS) for Children Looked After, Children Previously Looked After and Children with a Social Worker.

The Virtual School Inclusion Support Officer will report to the VS Data, Inclusion and Finance Manager and will support the VS Assistant Headteachers for Early Years/Primary and Secondary/Post 16 to promote the educational achievement of children looked after by monitoring attendance, supporting with Personal Education Plans (PEPs), preventing exclusion and promoting inclusive practice with schools and partner agencies in order to improve outcomes for children looked after.

**We offer a competitive salary alongside a range of benefits:**

- LG Pension Scheme
- 25 days incremental holiday plus bank-holidays
- Discounted Child Care
- Car Lease Scheme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Season ticket loans
- A range of local discounts

## Virtual School Education Advisor Children Previously Looked After and Children with a Social Worker

Full time, 1-year fixed term post  
 £29,439 - £34,723 pa



**Closing date: 26/03/2023**  
**Interview date: 4/04/2023**

This is an exciting opportunity to join Reading's Virtual School (VS) for Children Looked After, Children Previously Looked After and Children with a Social Worker. The Virtual School is committed to promoting the educational achievement of Children Looked After and supports young people to achieve their educational potential, to enable them through attaining good qualifications and a positive school experience to have more fulfilling careers, higher incomes, greater self-confidence and ultimately a better quality of life.

You will report to the VS Assistant Headteacher for Children with a Social Worker and will provide support and guidance, which fosters, sustains and develops the aspirations and achievement of Children Previously Looked After and Children with a Social Worker.



# Headteacher – Woodside Primary School

Permanent and Full-Time

No later than a September 2023 Start

Wonderful Opportunity - Competitive Salary

Woodside Primary School is a three-form entry primary school located in Croydon. Part of the Inspire Partnership Academy Trust, we are a family of schools across Croydon, Medway, and Greenwich, who aim to offer a life changing education for all of our children.

The school is a larger than average school with a thriving nursery provision. Additionally, we are a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. We currently hold Silver level accreditation, and are working towards Gold. We support UNICEF's Convention of the Rights of the child and encourage our children to reflect on their own rights, and those of others in both a local and global context.

We are seeking to appoint a visionary headteacher who will be relentless in the pursuit of excellence across the curriculum, leading our wonderful community into an exciting future. This role offers a fantastic career opportunity for the successful candidate to shape the strategic vision and direction not only for Woodside, but also make a difference across our Partnership. Working in

collaboration with other school leaders and sharing best practice lies at the core of our school improvement work, so the successful candidate would benefit from these opportunities.

We can offer the successful candidate high quality professional development and coaching opportunities, including involvement with our Headteacher Network for Excellence Programme. You will receive the very best support from both our central services and education leadership teams. You will also be joining a Partnership of truly collaborative and values led professionals.

**Further information about our Trust is available at:**

**<https://www.inspirepartnership.co.uk>** or to discuss this opportunity, please contact Mrs Melissa Carpenter, Trust Education Leader at **[mcarpenter@inspirepartnership.co.uk](mailto:mcarpenter@inspirepartnership.co.uk)**.

Visits to our school are strongly encouraged. Please contact Abby Wong, Executive Assistant on **07828 293392** or **[awong@inspirepartnership.co.uk](mailto:awong@inspirepartnership.co.uk)**.



Closing date for applications:  
**9am on Monday 20th March 2023**

Interview date:  
**28th or 30th March 2023**

*The Inspire Partnership Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS check. The Inspire Partnership is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from men and women of all ages from any background and from candidates with disabilities.*

# Principal

**Start date:** September 2023, or earlier

**Location:** Croydon, CR0 6NA

**Salary:** Significant & generous salary + potential relocation bonus



## Ark Blake Academy

We are looking for a new Principal to lead Ark Blake Academy at this important stage of its journey. The leader will join our young and growing secondary school, with great potential and a strong foundation to build on.

We opened our doors to the community of East Croydon in September 2020 and are now an over-subscribed secondary school with over 500 students across years 7, 8 & 9. As a new school with great facilities and potential, Ark Blake is fast becoming the school of choice in the local community.

Ark Blake is part of Ark, one of the most successful school networks in the country. You will join a team of ambitious Principals who work collaboratively to share best practice, provide support for one another, and improve what we do as a school and a network.

We welcome applications from experienced and skilled secondary school leaders with a clear vision for what it takes to establish and sustain an excellent school and the commitment and determination to drive that vision forward.

**What we offer:**

- Influence across network-wide issues through our principal meetings and regional collaboration
- Support from an experienced and nurturing Regional Director
- On-hand expertise from our dedicated network operations teams
- Excellent career development opportunities across both the region and wider Ark network
- Access to excellent senior leadership training
- Highly competitive remuneration

To apply, please submit an application via our online recruitment portal by **9am on Friday 10th March**.

We welcome conversations about the role and visits to our school. To schedule an informal and confidential conversation please contact Sián Maddrell, Regional Director: [Sian.Maddrell@arkonline.org](mailto:Sian.Maddrell@arkonline.org).

**Closing date: Friday 10th March, 9am**



## GREENHEART LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

### HEADTEACHER

**Edgar Stammers Primary Academy, Harden Road, Walsall. WS3 1RQ Leadership Pay Range**

We are seeking a strong leader with demonstrative character, commitment, and determination to address the challenges the post can bring. You will have high aspirations for all children, embracing the principles of equality and inclusion for all.

**You will have/be:**

- Proven track record in school leadership
- An experienced Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher with ability to demonstrate impact in the role
- Deep understanding of pedagogy and practices
- Strong vision for education and ambitious for pupils, their families and staff
- An excellent communicator and visible leadership
- Strong belief in GLP values including collaborative, collegiate working
- Passion to make a difference in education and learning our pupils.

If you are interested in this role, please contact Chris Nock ([cnock@edgarstammers.uwmat.co.uk](mailto:cnock@edgarstammers.uwmat.co.uk)) or 01922 471390 to arrange an informal / confidential meeting, or to visit the school on the following days:

27th February 2023 - 2.00pm  
28th February - 2.00pm

For further information and application pack, email: [arussell@greenheartlearning.org](mailto:arussell@greenheartlearning.org).

**Closing date:** 6th March 2023  
**Interviews:** 20th and 21st March 2023  
**Start Date:** September 2023



### Director of Learning and School Improvement and Deputy CEO

Staffordshire University Academies Trust is a National Multi Academy Trust comprised of a family of twenty church and non-church, primary and secondary academies, based in Staffordshire. Our mission is to enable our children, young people and their families to report that Staffordshire is a great place to live, play, learn and achieve in; a place where they feel safe and can lead healthy lives and a place that offers them a successful future.

SUAT has an exciting opportunity to appoint a Director of Learning and School Improvement and Deputy CEO, to contribute to the effective leadership of a successful and supportive Trust. This is a very special role, and we are looking for the right person to join SUAT's Executive Team, sharing a collective responsibility for the strategic direction of the Trust, including planning, decision making, management and leadership.

**To find out more about the role and apply, please visit our vacancies page.**



**Paradigm Trust is looking to appoint the following team members for our new academy, Woodbridge Road Academy, for September 2023 (early start date is possible).**

- **Assistant Principal**
- **SEN Teachers**

As we move into our exciting, purpose built facilities, we are expanding our team significantly and therefore we are recruiting for leadership, teaching and support staff roles. As a new and growing school, we have plenty of opportunities for career development.

Whether your background is primary, secondary or SEND, we would love to hear from you. We are seeking to appoint a range of subject specialists. This is an amazing opportunity to have a real impact on the new academy and its pupils.

We will provide a highly structured and well organised environment in order to allow our pupils to develop both academically and socially. We want our pupils to be equipped to lead lives of happiness, fulfilment and independence. We will work closely with families and external agencies to help us achieve this goal for each young person.

Typically, pupils who attend WRA have complex communication and interaction needs which create significant barriers to learning in a mainstream environment. Many pupils are likely to have Autism Spectrum Condition and others have a profile with a similar presentation.



**The Trust**

This is an exciting time to join Paradigm Trust. We are a not-for-profit, state-funded educational trust consisting of seven schools based in Suffolk and London, including Woodbridge Road Academy, our new school for children with complex social and interaction needs.

Our vision is to develop and sustain great schools where we can make the biggest difference to pupils. We are strongly values-led (integrity, community, excellence) and work hard to be inclusive. We deliver high quality education and play a positive role in local and national education systems.

The Trust is educationally strong - every Trust school that has been inspected has been judged to be good or better. We offer a well-developed and well-resourced, knowledge-based curriculum; have lots of experience of school-to-school support; operate effective teacher training programmes and provide strong operational support services to our schools. Paradigm also benefits from effective governance, backed by secure finances.

If you have a passion to make a difference, we would love to hear from you.

We would love to chat with you about our unique school and the opportunities available, to arrange this please contact [charlotte.miles@paradigmtrust.org](mailto:charlotte.miles@paradigmtrust.org)

As a Trust, we are committed to reducing unnecessary workload and are outcomes-driven; flexible working options can be accommodated.

Relocation packages may be available for the right candidate.

**To further details and to apply for any of our vacancies, please use the following link to the Paradigm Trust website: <https://paradigmtrust.org/careers/current-vacancies/>**





## HEAD TEACHER

**Group L20 - 26 (£70,733 - £81,927)**

Robin Hood Academy is a vibrant and innovative primary school that maintained its 'Good' OFSTED judgement with a strong report in September 2022. Robin Hood Academy has a rich history of constantly seeking to innovate and improve. We are now seeking to appoint our next leader with the drive and determination to build upon the excellent work of our current HT and to plot the school on its future development path. It is the desire to constantly improve, refine our practices and further develop the learning experiences for our children that lie at the heart of the culture and ethos of the school. The Trust wishes to recruit a Headteacher with a passion and drive to create the next exciting chapter in the history of the school and help it on its journey towards providing a truly outstanding learning experience for all of our pupils.

### The successful candidate will:

- Have a proven track record in school leadership and making a difference.
- Have a passion for pedagogy and be as focused on the foundations of learning as on innovation.
- Be an excellent communicator and have outstanding emotional intelligence.
- Have strong team ethic and moral purpose.
- Have a strong vision for education and high aspirations for pupils and staff.
- Be willing to contribute their skillset to the wider Multi Academy Trust and work with our team of Headteachers to improve outcomes for all Trust pupils.
- Have a desire to impact on the wider education system in order to make a true difference.

Robin Hood Academy is part of Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust which also consists of Birches Green Infant, Birches Green Junior, Cedars Academy, Ulverley School and Yenton Primary. The Trust is built on the principles of working collaboratively across each school to create unique learning experiences for children that they wouldn't get in any other organisation. The Trust believes that each school's vision and ethos is unique to their own setting and community. With this in mind, space is provided for leaders to lead their schools whilst also offering the support of a team of highly skilled professionals from the MAT to enable the sharing of best practice. We believe that, with the collaborative leadership across our schools, we can create something truly special. To gain an understanding of the vision for the Trust please visit [www.robinhoodMAT.co.uk](http://www.robinhoodMAT.co.uk) and watch our vision.

For more information about the post we strongly encourage prospective candidates to contact our CEO, Steve Taylor (via our MAT PA, Jo Green [pa@robinhoodmat.co.uk](mailto:pa@robinhoodmat.co.uk)), to arrange an informal and confidential chat with a view to visiting the school for a tour.

**Closing date: 10th March 2023 (No later than 12pm)**

**Interview date: Day 1: 27th March 2023**

**Day 2: 28th March 2023**

**For more information and an application pack please contact Jo Green via [pa@robinhoodmat.co.uk](mailto:pa@robinhoodmat.co.uk)**

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*Robin Hood MAT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expect all staff to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be subject to all necessary pre-employment checks, including: an enhanced DBS; Prohibition check; section 128 check, Childcare Disqualification (where applicable); qualifications (where applicable); medical fitness; identity and right to work. All applicants will be required to provide two suitable references.*



## SECONDARY EXECUTIVE HEAD

At The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) we believe that for all of our staff to be truly fulfilled and successful, they need to be heard, developed and empowered. Therefore we are looking for someone who can demonstrate our values of shared voice, shared belief and shared success to work within our TKAT family.

**We know that people thrive more when they work in supportive teams, so we will be with you every step of the way.**

We are currently looking for a secondary Executive Headteacher to work alongside an existing Headteacher to rapidly improve provision and outcomes at Havant Academy. You won't be alone in this role, but supported by a strong network within our TKAT family, including our Director of Education, a wide range of Trust Subject Lead Practitioners, and a welcoming local network of Headteachers.

We are looking for a candidate who can demonstrate a track record of sustained school improvement whilst operating within the Trust's ethos of working inclusively, respecting and caring for others, and having ambition and aspiration for all. You will be able to demonstrate the ability to develop, motivate and empower teams, work with agility to achieve the best outcomes for students, and employ high levels of emotional intelligence to galvanise school communities to bring about sustainable change.

Experience of successful headship, particularly in challenging situations or areas of deprivation, is essential to this role.

If you would like to know more about this post or to organise an informal discussion, please contact Mike Garlick, Director of Education at [mike.garlick@tkat.org](mailto:mike.garlick@tkat.org)



## SECONDARY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Are you an experienced and successful head looking for a new venture? Are you looking for a supportive Trust who works with integrity and innovation? If so, we'd like to hear from you.

We are currently looking for a secondary Director of Education to join our extensive school development team. Based in our TKAT Coast region, your role will be to support schools to become exceptional, deploy a team of subject and teaching Lead Practitioners, and be part of setting our Secondary Strategy. You will get to work within a supportive team of Directors from across the Trust and benefit from our life-changing leadership development programme.

**We know that people thrive more when they work in supportive teams, so we will be with you every step of the way.**

We are looking for a candidate who can demonstrate a track record of sustained school improvement, is creative in their approach to school development, and enjoys achieving their successes through empowering others.

At The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) we believe that for all of our staff to be truly fulfilled and successful, they need to be heard, developed and empowered. Therefore we are looking for someone who can demonstrate our values of shared voice, shared belief and shared success to work within our #oneTKATfamily.

If you would like to know more about this post or to organise an informal discussion, please contact Matt Batchelor, Senior Director of Education at [matt.batchelor@tkat.org](mailto:matt.batchelor@tkat.org)