

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Revealed:  
The CEO  
pay 'outliers'



P11-13

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FRIDAY, MAR 17, 2023 | EDITION 316

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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# Seize the opportunity to start pay talks, now

Now the final day of planned strike action is over, there is an opportunity for both sides to swallow their pride, get around the table and find a better deal for teachers.

So far, both sides have refused to back down (page 6). Gillian Keegan wants the National Education Union to pause strikes before starting talks. The NEU wants a pay deal before it will pause strikes.

This impasse has already lasted weeks. Millions of school children have had their education disrupted.

Now that no more strikes are lined up, a deal should be possible without either side looking like they have backed down.

NASUWT general secretary Dr Patrick Roach was on the money this week: "There is nothing that should now stand in the way of detailed negotiations and getting a deal onto the table."

For everyone's sake, this should now happen.

Yesterday it emerged that the nursing unions had struck a deal with government that they could take back to their members,

two weeks after they started talks.

NHS staff have been offered a five per cent rise from April, with a one-off payment of at least £1,655 to top up last year's pay award.

There is no reason education unions shouldn't be at the table pushing for something similar – a pay rise this year, and an improved pay rise next.

We know the government has money set aside to resolve the issue. Ministers will find it even harder to resist awarding fair pay rises when they have just given a pension tax cut that affects only the wealthiest (page 5).

And as our annual CEO pay investigation reveals this week (page 11 to 13), not everyone in the sector has reason to be dissatisfied with their pay.

While salaries for senior leaders are starting to level off, the old Wild West days have left an extremely uneven playing field – particularly for women leaders.

The government's new focus on 'outliers' is welcome, but as we show – it's an intervention that will be fraught with difficulties.

## Most read online this week:

- 1 **Strikes: DfE ups the ante with warning teachers could miss a deal**
- 2 **Ofsted wants experienced school leader to take over from Spielman**
- 3 **What would it take to pause next week's teacher strikes?**
- 4 **Oak founders abandon national academy**
- 5 **Advantage chief executive joins behaviour advisory group**

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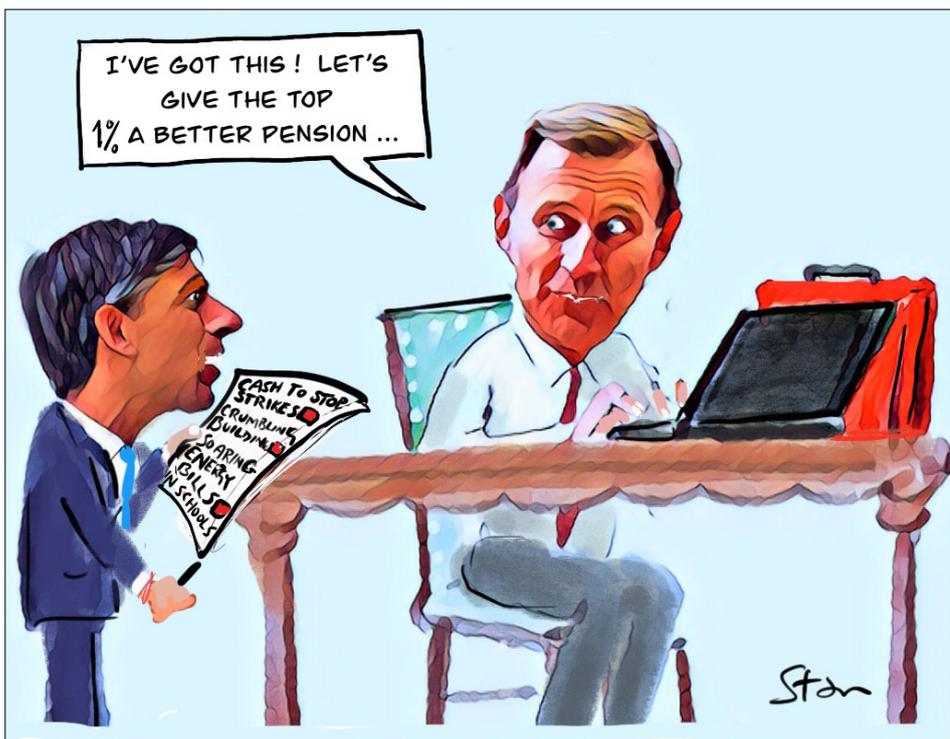


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# Ensure schools are inclusive or lose bailouts, councils told

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

**@SAMANTHAJBOOTH**

Twenty more councils will be forced to make sweeping changes to their special educational needs provision in exchange for government bailouts that now total nearly £1 billion.

The latest announcement means ministers have sealed “safety valve” deals of £989 million with 34 councils to help to plug high-needs funding deficits since 2020-21.

But the handouts – a key policy of the Department for Education’s SEND reforms – come with strict conditions. Town halls have been told to create inclusive cultures – such as an “inclusion charter” – in mainstream schools while reducing spend on expensive independent placements.

Kent, one of the country’s largest councils, is set to receive £142 million to eliminate its deficit by 2027-28, the largest package to date. An initial payment of £56.8 million will be made by April.

Education and health inspectors have previously slammed SEND services in the region for having “too wide a variation ... in commitment to inclusion in schools”.

In return for government cash, Kent must implement a “countywide approach to inclusive education”. This would “build capacity” in mainstream schools and reduce “dependence on specialist provision”.

It must also “implement models of reintegration of children from special/ independent schools to mainstream where needs have been met”.

Norfolk has been told to agree an “inclusion charter” with schools in return for £70 million by 2028-29.

It should help mainstream schools to support “a greater complexity of need” so they are “stepping back from the over-reliance” on the costly independent sector.

Medway must “incentivise inclusion” by providing more funding into the system through top-ups to the SEN notional budget – a set amount each school gets for SEND.

The funding policy should be reviewed so



schools with a higher proportion of children with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) receive additional funding, the agreement says. This is in return for £14 million by 2025-26.

Bolton will receive nearly £7 million by 2026-27 to “enhance and embed an inclusive culture” to reduce exclusions.

Croydon will receive £27 million by 2026-27 if it increases “leadership capacity” in schools to support pupils with SEND and their families.

Blackpool should “encourage more pupils” with EHCPs to remain in the mainstream “through consistency of advice and guidance”. The council will receive £3.89 million by 2026-27.

Meanwhile, Bexley will be handed nearly £30 million by 2028-29. It should “seek to repatriate learners from independent special settings at key points of transition”.

This aims to return at least 16 learners per year to Bexley, saving on average £32,000 in high-needs funding and further savings in travel costs, the agreement says. The council should also offer early intervention to children requiring SEN support to “reduce the need” for EHCPs.

Schools Week has revealed how maintained special schools are “bursting at the seams”, while council costs soar on private placements and transport.

Councils have also warned that inflation, staffing shortages and construction delays risk undermining the safety valve agreements.

A Schools Week investigation also exposed how mainstream schools face a raid on their reserves as a condition of the agreements, which are targeted at councils with the largest deficits in their dedicated schools grant budget. If conditions are not met, the DfE can withhold payments.

Councils have an estimated combined £2.3 billion high-needs deficit, with ten said to be on the brink of bankruptcy until the government stepped in to continue allowing the deficits to sit off their balance sheets until 2026.

More than half of councils overall, including those who have less severe deficits, have now been invited to join the government’s safety valve or Delivering Better Value programme.

In its SEND improvement plan, the DfE said the programme showed “if a local area’s leadership work together, it is possible for even those areas facing the most acute challenges to create innovative and viable plans to reach a sustainable position and maintain a focus on high-quality provision for children and young people with SEND”.

# Primaries told to charge parents to fund 'wraparound' childcare

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt unveiled his spring budget on Wednesday. Here's what schools need to know ...

## Wraparound childcare (but charge parents)

The government wants all primary schools to provide "wraparound childcare" to pupils between 8am and 6pm, but expects leaders to charge parents once start-up funding runs out.

Hunt this week set out an "ambition" that all primary schools will offer "a full wraparound offer", either on their own or in partnership with other schools, by September 2026.

Asked if this would be compulsory, the department said it expected councils "to work with schools to design their provision to ensure it meets demand". A DfE survey found 64 per cent of primary schools already offered provision before and after school.

The government will provide £289 million in "start-up funding" over the next three financial years for schools and councils to "test options".

The Treasury told *Schools Week* that from September 2026, "we expect that most schools will be able to deliver before and after-school provision self-sufficiently". It provided an example of provision "funded by parents".

The DfE said it "anticipated" the two year funding will be tapered so primary schools see payments reduce as they "build demand from parents, aiming to reach a point whereby their wraparound provision is self-financing and sustainable".

But the two-year funding scheme is voluntary, DfE added.

## Top 1 per cent benefit from pension change ...

The £1 million cap on the amount people can put into their pensions without incurring taxes will be scrapped.

The government will also lift the annual limit on tax-free pension contributions from £40,000 to £60,000. The changes are part of a bid to



Jeremy Hunt

encourage higher-paid older workers to remain in work or to return.

Simon Rake, the head of education at the Wesleyan Group, a specialist financial services mutual for teachers, said raising the cap would benefit the most experienced and highly paid staff and those already retired.

While no data is available for how many school staff fit into that category, he estimated that about 1 per cent of the workforce could benefit.

Teachers and leaders who think they will be affected should "absolutely seek some advice and have a look at your lifetime allowance. Now it's gone, the important thing is that you're able to potentially contribute more to your pension."

## ... but no money to sort out strikes

Hunt tried to sound optimistic during his speech, telling MPs that economic measures and an "improved outlook" for public finances meant debt in five years' time was forecast to be "nearly three percentage points lower than it was in the autumn".

"That means more money for our public services and a lower burden on future generations – deeply held values that we put into practice today."

But leaders criticised the government for failing to include any additional investment in

schools.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the ASCL school leaders' union, pointed to the extra "£11 billion for defence and not a penny to address the teacher recruitment and retention crisis affecting our schools and colleges, or resolve the associated industrial action that was taking place as the chancellor was speaking".

Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, said she was "extremely disappointed" Hunt failed to invest further in England's schools.

## No more help with energy bills

Ministers have also been criticised for failing to include new measures to help schools with energy bills after the current aid runs out next month.

The £2,500 energy price guarantee for households, however, will remain in place for an extra three months until July, not rise to £3,000 as originally planned.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said schools continued to face rapidly rising costs.

Cutting support would make it "even harder for school trusts to balance the books.

"This is a missed opportunity to support public sector services to manage energy-related cost pressures."

## NEWS: STRIKES

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## Stalemate grinds on as unions and ministers dig in on pay talks

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Neither the government nor the National Education Union showed signs of backing down on their positions on pay talks this week after teachers walked out for the last days of scheduled strike action.

On the day ministers announced an improved pay offer had been formally made to health unions, the stalemate in education looked set to continue.

The NEU renewed calls for education secretary Gillian Keegan to “come to the table to negotiate” after two days of action across England that led to more than half of schools restricting attendance or closing.

But Keegan has not publicly moved on her demand for the NEU to pledge that no further strikes will be added to the calendar before formal talks can proceed.

According to the union, around 300,000 teachers across England walked out on Wednesday and Thursday.

On both days, 47 per cent of schools in England restricted attendance, while 6 per cent closed altogether.

Overall, a slightly higher proportion of schools closed or restricted attendance for this week’s action (53 per cent) than on the first day of strikes on February 1 (51.7 per cent).

However, on the first day of action last month, a higher proportion closed fully (8.9 per cent).

As in previous action, London faced the greatest disruption, with between 82 and 83 per cent of schools restricting attendance or closed this week, compared to between 38 and 39 per cent in the East Midlands.

Secondary schools were again more likely to be affected. On Thursday, 86 per cent of secondary schools closed or restricted attendance, compared to 47 per cent of primary schools and 69 per cent of special schools. Figures were similar on Wednesday.

However, special schools were more likely to be fully-closed (10 per cent) than secondary or primary schools (6 per cent).



Kevin Courtney

Thursday was the last day of strike action scheduled by the NEU, though its leaders have warned there could be more to come.

NEU joint general secretary Kevin Courtney told a webinar earlier this week that the government had “run out of excuses for not negotiating with us from this Friday” because no further strikes were scheduled.

“They should be meeting [with us]. Let’s see what the colour of their money is,” he said.

It comes after the government escalated its pay dispute with unions ahead of this week’s strikes, warning failure to meet its terms for talks risked teachers getting a worse deal than health workers. General secretaries were called in for one-on-one meetings.

A Department for Education source warned the NEU’s refusals to pause strikes and start pay talks “risk backfiring”.

The government made a formal improved pay offer to health workers on Thursday, including a 2 per cent one-off payment and another lump sum payment for dealing

with the pandemic backlog, along with a 5 per cent rise for next year.

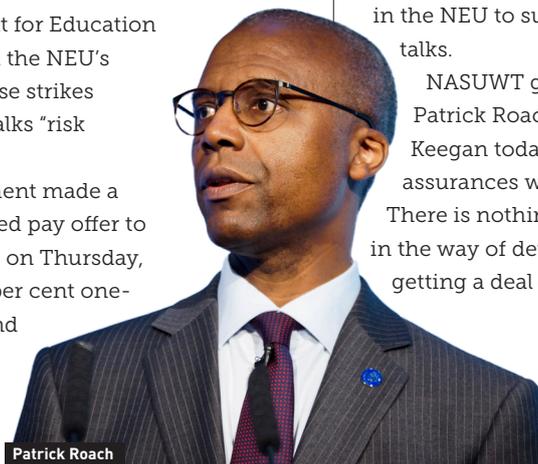
The DfE source said the stalemate in education “means nurses have been in the room negotiating hard for their members, which could result in them getting a better deal than teachers”. *Schools Week* understands that there is just one pot of money put aside to settle all strikes.

Keegan has offered to “consider a settlement” on pay, including discussions about next year’s increase and a “non-consolidated award for 2022-23”.

But Courtney said earlier this week that the government needed to “stop the distractions and get down to talks”.

However the NASUWT teaching union, which is also in dispute with the government, appeared to call on colleagues in the NEU to suspend strikes for formal talks.

NASUWT general secretary Dr Patrick Roach said a meeting with Keegan today had “given us the assurances we have been seeking. There is nothing that should now stand in the way of detailed negotiations and getting a deal onto the table.”



Patrick Roach

NEWS: STRIKES

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# Teacher pay strike savings to fund iPads and energy bills

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Schools and trusts plan to use the money saved from teachers going on strike to buy iPads for staff, fund energy bill rises and plug deficits.

The pay of teachers who take action is usually deducted at a rate of 1/365th of their annual salary for every day they are on strike.

Based on an average teacher salary of £39,000 and the National Education Union's estimate that 300,000 teachers took part in action in February and March, schools may have saved as much as £128 million this year.

For a trust with 100 staff on strike for four days, the estimated saving would be about £42,000. A school with 20 staff out would save more than £8,500.

Richard Sheriff, the chief executive of the Red Kite Learning Trust and a former president of the school leaders' union ASCL, said his 14-school trust expected to save between £50,000 and £60,000, which he might use to buy iPads for staff.

"Our thoughts were, is there any way that we could use it for something that would benefit our staff and their work with young people?"

He said staff development had been "starved of money" in recent years, so Red Kite was considering using the savings to "put it back into our strategic plan to make technology available to every single child across our trust".

But it would buy devices for staff first.

"We know that there's no point in giving children devices to play with unless the staff are skilled and confident in using them. More than that, we want to encourage staff and support them to collaborate on developing the curriculum together."

Other trust leaders spoke of spending the money on teaching and learning, rather than boosting reserves.



Jonny Uttley, the chief executive of The Education Alliance, which runs seven schools, said his trust would "certainly want to focus it on teaching and learning".

A spokesperson for Ark Schools said "any reductions will be reinvested in teaching and learning".

But other trusts said they would use the money to plug holes in their finances.

David Boyle, who leads the Dunraven Educational Trust in London, said the money would go towards "balancing budgets that were thrown significantly off course" by pay rises, a "massive" hike in energy costs and "general cost of living impact".

"Whatever is 'saved' won't fill the financial hole. The smaller the trust, the less the impact. Larger and national trusts and local authorities will see a more significant

figure as a result of the strike ... though they'll have budget holes to fill as well."

Dan Morrow, the chief executive of Dartmoor MAT, said the money would reduce an in-year deficit caused by increases in utility bills.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership, said it made "absolute sense" to invest savings in the school workforce "whether that's an initiative that supports wellbeing, whether it's better kit, whether it's being able to better fund the pay increases".

But he warned there was not "a huge amount of headroom" for "really interesting things, because every penny that schools can find is needed".

"We're not going to be opportunist about this. I think that's what trust leaders are saying. It's not that all of a sudden there's a windfall and we're skipping and dancing about it. The reasons why that windfall is there is because things are broken."



Jonny Uttley



Dan Morrow



Stephen Morales

## SOLUTIONS: SUPPLY

# How an academy trust slashed its supply costs

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

Supply cover is costing hundreds of millions of pounds more a year as staff illness rates soar and teacher shortages worsen.

But the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is bucking the trend. Its supply bill this year is projected to be £180,000, down from £1 million in 2021-22.

The trust, the country's third largest, threw down the challenge to the leaders of its 57 schools to find ways to cut their spend.

Bexleyheath Academy in south-east London spent £421,665 on agency staff in 2018-19.

That's down to £5,621 this year for a fixed-term maternity cover.

The trust's success is built on merging classes, which it says gives pupils a better experience than a class run by a cover teacher.

## 'Pupils get more consistent experience'

Pupils attend "combined cover" classes during short-term teacher absences, which means up to three classes – about 66 pupils – learn in a former school hall in exam-style conditions.

They complete set work from external resources such as Oak or pre-recorded lessons from teachers on Chromebooks, which the trust has supplied to all its pupils.

Members of the senior leadership team (SLT) and a full-time cover supervisor walk between the single tables, offering support if needed.

"The experience pupils get is much more consistent," said Graeme Napier, Bexleyheath's executive principal. "They know what we expect from that session."

When Napier joined as principal in September 2019, the school – then 'inadequate' – had high teacher absence rates, with supply staff deployed often at the last minute.

"I would walk around and look at some of the agency staff... it was just hugely variable," he said.

Pupil behaviour was also variable. "We were spending a huge amount on something we didn't necessarily see the impact of."

Sometimes teachers with a free period would also be asked to cover – which would take away their time to mark work or plan.

"A solution for cover was important but it was also important to address the other factors influencing why staff weren't coming in," Napier said.

Wellbeing measures, such as flexible working



Graeme Napier executive principal of Bexleyheath Academy

periods, allowed teachers to work on or off site.

According to trust data, staff absence at the school has fallen 62 per cent since 2019. It was rated 'good' in 2021 and its Progress 8 score is 0.05, above the national average and considerably better than the -0.67 in 2019.

Napier said the supply model – meaning subject teachers no longer provide cover – has also cut workload.

But there were "teething problems", particularly during Covid when classes or year groups could not work together.

The school also had to invest in its internet infrastructure to enable large numbers of children to log on at the same time.

## 'Quality of teacher makes the difference'

"If you just look at it on paper...you might think 'oh it's [loads of] pupils in one class,'" said Claire Heald, the trust's director of education.

"But when you compare [pupils being] in a bigger classroom with a really strong teacher, really good materials for learning and set up with the tech to support it against a supply teacher... then you can see the reasons we might do it."

She points to research from the Education Endowment Foundation, that suggests smaller class sizes have "minimal impact" on pupil progress.

"What makes the difference is the quality of the teacher."

Three per cent of lessons at the school last week were combined cover, whereas in 2019, up to 30 supply teachers a week were needed.

Heald said the model also led to "really positive standards", with



Year 7 pupils during a combined cover class at Bexleyheath Academy

behavioural incidents falling 97 per cent between 2018-19 and 2020-21 – 21,815 to 755.

Other AET schools have adopted similar models, but Heald said they were told "to think about what works for their contexts" such as how much physical space they had and what is right for their pupils.

During short-term absences, some schools merged two classes of the same key stage subject, or pupils in core subjects were spread out across the classes available.

Supply staff were still brought in for early years and key stage 1, because, Heald said, "it wouldn't be appropriate" to place them in larger groups.

Year 11 and 13 were also prioritised.

The trust also accepted a "fully zero supply model" might not be possible for instances such as the recent spike in winter illnesses.

Napier admitted subjects with a practical element could be more "difficult" to cover, with pupils instead set relevant online tasks.

The model also does not solve longer-term teacher vacancies. AET established its own teacher training provision in September to address this.

The trust also spend £2 million buying 9,000 Chromebook laptops in 2020, in addition to 5,500 that were provided by government – likely unaffordable for many other smaller trusts or single schools.



Claire Heald

# Top Ofsted reports for snubbed training providers

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Two “cold spot” teacher training providers snubbed in the government’s ITT re-accreditation have since earned glowing Ofsted reports.

Leaders at Fylde Coast SCITT in Blackpool are “struggling to explain” to heads why they won’t have its service next year, with inspectors saying it is “well on the way to providing an excellent standard” of training.

The University of Sussex’s school teacher training was also rated as ‘good’, with Ofsted finding trainees “immersed in strongly research-based and ambitious programmes”.

Both providers had “outstanding” leadership and management. But neither was approved in the Department for Education’s controversial re-accreditation last year to implement the initial teacher training reforms from September next year.

In September last year, the department revealed that just 179 providers passed its new quality requirements, well below the 240 providers in England.

Professor Sam Twiselton, a government adviser on the ITT review, said the process had led to “some bad and unintended consequences”, adding: “I would trust Ofsted far more than the accreditation process.”

David Spendlove, professor of education at the Manchester Institute of Education, said it was “completely unacceptable” that providers who “have worked tirelessly for many years to meet the exacting demands of Ofsted” were taken out by a “completely different threat”.

“From start to finish the accreditation process has been a sham and this latest example further confirms the damage that is being done.”

In January, inspectors praised Fylde Coast for having “ambitious” programmes that “go well beyond the requirements” of the DfE’s core content framework.

While the overall mark fell from ‘outstanding’ to ‘good’, leadership and management were still given top marks under the tougher inspection framework introduced in 2021. Trainees – 35 this year – were “enthused by the momentum that leaders have created”, the report read.

Aly Spencer, the head of ITT, said



it was “struggling to explain” to heads and prospective students why there would be no SCITT after next year.

“All we really want to know is why we’re not allowed to carry on when Ofsted has yet again produced a glowing report about our teacher training programmes. Nobody can give us the answer.”

Twiselton said she had advised the DfE to bring in the new criteria and then get “rigorous” Ofsted to inspect.

But instead “it was a desktop process that the DfE had to do – it didn’t speak to anybody, it just looked at some documentation that was sent in”.

She said Ofsted “lived with you” for a week, met trainees in school and in the centre, talked to mentors and picked up “all the stones” and looked underneath them. I would trust Ofsted far more than the accreditation process.”

The University of Sussex’s school teacher provision was rated ‘good’ with secondary leadership and management and early years given the coveted ‘outstanding’ stamp. It has about 300 trainees this year.

Inspectors found the trainees were “furnished with a deeper, more mature understanding of relationships, behaviour and communication”.

Several universities didn’t make it through accreditation, including Durham, a member of the Russell Group.

A Sussex spokesperson

said the decision to remove accreditation from well-respected universities during a national teaching crisis was “a highly questionable move”.

The university would form a partnership until it could re-apply for accreditation in 2025.

Both institutions are in one of the 18 areas eligible for grants to help them support new partnerships – so-called “cold spots” of teacher trainers.

Since re-accreditation began in December 2021, analysis by Schools Week shows Ofsted has inspected 22 providers that later found they would not be accredited from 2024, or who had decided to merge with another organisation.

Of these 14 were rated ‘good’ and two ‘outstanding’. Four were ‘requires improvement’ and two ‘inadequate’.

North West SHARES SCITT in Wigan was rated ‘outstanding’ this month. It did not apply for re-accreditation and is looking to join a local partnership.

Before the successful programmes were announced, PE-specialist North East Partnership SCITT in North Shields was rated as ‘outstanding’ for the fourth time.

A spokesperson said it was “hugely disappointed” to not be re-accredited and it would now join a partnership.

Ofsted said the DfE accreditation and its current inspection cycle were separate entities.

The DfE said it “remains ready” to support unsuccessful providers in developing partnerships.



Professor Sam Twiselton



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# The academy trust CEO pay outliers

**TOM BELGER**  
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Dozens of academy leaders have been identified as pay “outliers”, earning far more than their peers who run similar-sized trusts.

Schools Week’s annual executive pay investigation reveals most trusts under government scrutiny froze or slashed pay last year – but others handed out significant rises.

Some experts and leaders welcome new government scrutiny of pay “outliers”, but warn that metrics must be nuanced and action taken on stark gender pay gaps.

## Outliers paid up to 100% more

Schools Week analysed the 2021-22 accounts for 246 trusts previously ordered by the government to justify having one £150,000 or two £100,000 salaries, and 31 large trusts known to pay £150,000 or more.

The Department for Education stopped sending warning letters in 2020 following data errors, but last month officials signalled a new focus on “outlier levels of leadership pay across similar academy trusts”.

No details have emerged on the definition of “similar”, but some experts say size often provides a good predictor of pay. The DfE says larger trusts generally “equate to bigger responsibilities”.

Our analysis found a moderate correlation between pay and pupil numbers.

Yet 50 trusts – 18 per cent – paid their chief executive 15 per cent above the average for similar-sized trusts.

The 10 biggest outliers on this measure received on average more than 50 per cent – £108,000 – more than expected for trusts their size. They are all also among the highest-paid, earning £195,000 or more.

They include **Sir Kevin Satchwell**, the leader of the standalone high-performing Thomas Telford School and linked Thomas Telford MAT. His



£290,000 minimum earnings – down on last year – are almost twice expected levels, based on pupil numbers.

The trust did not comment.

The Harris Federation’s **Sir Dan Moynihan**, the country’s highest paid leader on £455,000, earned 60 per cent more than the £284,000 wage the model predicts given his 51 schools.

The turnaround trust recently celebrated the highest results of any large MAT in Progress 8 league tables, however, while Moynihan has helped raise millions for its schools.

**Doug Selkirk**, chief executive of the 15-school Central Learning Partnership Trust, was paid £203,000, around a third above the expected salary based on size.

But seven of its 15 academies are special schools. Phil Williams, the trust’s chief financial officer, said per-pupil figures were “skewed” for special and new schools, with size too “narrow a set of parameters”.

He said phase, specialist provision, school challenges and central team size should also be factored in.

Such complex cases and the government’s past blanket approach raise questions about how sympathetic and nuanced its new clampdown will be.

## High expectations

Leora Cruddas, who leads the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) academy body, said boards set pay “very carefully”. But trusts “vary widely in their size, type, and complexity”, making wage variation unsurprising.

Emma Knights, chief executive of the National Governance Association, added the government was undertaking a “very thorough analysis of what an outlier might be”, and welcomed the focus.

She said boards and the sector needed to consider whether hiking chief executive pay as trusts grew was “reasonable given this is public money”. She suggested boards consider pay ratios as a “cap or brake on endless rises with growth”.

But Helen Stevenson, director of the recruitment company Satis Education, said applicants to CEO posts often had higher salary expectations than boards.

“That’s always going to be a challenge until the government tackles outliers. Most boards accept it’s a market-driven sector now, so you have to make yourself appealing.”

## THE ACADEMY CEO PAY OUTLIERS

TRUST	CEO	ACTUAL/ MINIMUM PAY	PUPILS	£ PAY ABOVE EXPECTED FOR TRUST SIZE	% PAY ABOVE EXPECTED FOR TRUST SIZE	PAY PER PUPIL	SCHOOLS
St Cuthbert’s Roman Catholic Academy Trust	Ged Fitzpatrick	£287,980	4,150	£146,047	102%	£69	8
Brampton Manor Trust	Dayo Olukoshi	£280,000	4,874	£135,121	93%	£57	2
Thomas Telford School & MAT	Sir Kevin Satchwell	£290,000	6,533	£138,114	91%	£44	6
Harris Federation	Sir Dan Moynihan	£455,000	38,965	£171,394	62%	£12	51

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## INVESTIGATION: PAY

### Low-paying “outliers” too ...

Yet some high-paying trusts also appear “outliers” for low pay.

Sixty-eight trusts of wide-ranging sizes paid more than 15 per cent less than expected. The £252,000 salary of **Sir Jon Coles** of United Learning is the seventh highest nationally, but 27 per cent below expected for the country’s largest trust.

**Sir Martyn Oliver** of Outwood Grange Academies Trust was similarly below expected, despite earning £180,000.

Both also rank as the two lowest-paid per pupil, with Coles’ wages equating to £4.65 per head and Oliver’s £6. Nine other trusts ranked below £10, whereas 80 trusts ranked more than £50 per pupil.

A spokesperson for the Meridian Trust, where **Mark Woods’** £130,000 salary is £60,000 less than expected for a 28-school trust, said this reflected maintained school pay scales, with an additional 10 points at the top given MAT leadership responsibilities.

Three of the lowest “outliers”



Emma Knights



are Christian trusts. Stevenson said the Catholic sector often offered lower salaries, seeing roles as “mission-led”, but she warned it risked “losing good-quality leaders”.

### ... and more likely to be women

Average salaries of women leaders were about £1,000 higher year-on-year, while men’s were near-flat.

Yet a pay gap of about £14,000 remains, and only 30 per cent of chief executives analysed were women, compared with 76 per cent of teachers.

Nineteen of the 50 “outliers”

for lower pay were women versus 14 of the 50 higher-pay “outliers”.

Only four women made the top 20 best-paid, and three because they were receiving salary in lieu of pension contributions.

Cruddas said the relative lack of female leaders was “disappointing”, while Stevenson urged female job applicants to seek advice on sector salaries “rather than accepting what’s presented”.

Viv Porritt, the leader of the campaign group WomenEd, said the sector had not treated “inequitable pay gaps seriously”.

“The gap between striking teachers and rising salaries for men at the top must be tackled by the sector and by government.”

### Breaking the £200,000 mark

Thirty-five leaders were earning at least £200,000, up from 27 in 2018-19. Ten earned £250,000 or more.

On average, the trusts run by £200,000-plus earners run 27 schools.

However, data for two of last year’s highest-paying trusts was unavailable, including Holland Park School in London – whose £280,000 salary for Colin Hall, its former head, made it the highest-paying standalone academy. The

## THE HIGHEST PAID ACADEMY BOSSES 2021-22

TRUST	CEO OR TOP LEADER	ACTUAL/ MINIMUM PAY 20-21	ACTUAL/ MINIMUM PAY 21-22	DIFFERENCE	PUPILS	PAY/PUPIL	SCHOOLS
Harris Federation	Sir Dan Moynihan	£455,000	£455,000	£-	38965	£12	51
Thomas Telford School & MAT	Sir Kevin Satchwell	£300,000	£290,000	-£10,000	6533	£44	6
St Cuthbert’s RC Academy Trust	Ged Fitzpatrick	£280,000	£287,980	£7,980	4150	£69	8
Leigh Academies Trust	Simon Beamish	£255,000	£280,000	£25,000	19993	£14	31
Star Academies	Sir Hamid Patel	£263,699	£270,291	£6,592	21046	£13	31
Brampton Manor Trust	Dayo Olukoshi	£271,360	£280,000	£8,640	4874	£57	2
The White Horse Federation	Dr Nicholas Capstick <sup>1</sup>	£256,017	£265,000	£8,983	12409	£21	31
United Learning Trust	Sir Jon Coles	£252,000	£252,000	£-	54208	£5	75
Delta Academies Trust	Paul Tarn	£225,001	£250,000	£24,999	24215	£10	52
Partnership Learning	Roger Leighton	£240,000	£250,000	£10,000	9398	£27	13
Loxford School Trust	Anita Johnson <sup>2</sup>	£240,000	£240,000	£-	7161	£34	7
Oasis Community Learning	John Murphy	£230,000	£240,000	£10,000	32310	£7	52
The Kemnal Academies Trust	Dr Karen Roberts <sup>3</sup>	£220,000	£230,000	£10,000	23198	£10	45
Aspirations Academies Trust	Steve Kenning	£250,000	£230,000	-£20,000	8853	£26	16
The Spencer Academies Trust	Paul West	£230,000	£225,000	-£5,000	17015	£13	25
L.E.A.D. Academy Trust	Diana Owen <sup>3</sup>	£195,000	£220,000	£25,000	10539	£21	25
The Gorse Academies Trust	Sir John Townsley	£220,000	£220,000	£-	10460	£21	13
Ark Schools	Lucy Heller <sup>3</sup>	£212,915	£218,607	£5,692	29000	£8	39
Ormiston Academies Trust	Nick Hudson	£212,408	£212,627	£219	30869	£7	43
The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust	Hugh Greenway	£214,104	£214,104	£-	13500	£16	32

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Left after accounts filed

<sup>2</sup> Includes majority of earnings from headteacher role

<sup>3</sup> Includes pay in lieu of pension contributions

Continued on next page

## INVESTIGATION: PAY

school is now part of United Learning following government intervention over high pay and allegations of a “toxic” culture.

A Loxford Schools Trust spokesperson said only £88,178 of **Anita Johnson’s** £240,000 salary was for her role as chief executive, with the rest relating to her headteacher role.

Including only the first element would slash her per-pupil CEO cost from £34 to £12, while using combined figures makes comparison “invalid and inaccurate”, they claimed.

Leigh Academies Trust and Delta Academies Trust chief executives **Simon Beamish** and **Paul Tarn** respectively received the biggest hikes in pay among the top 20, with rises of about £25,000.

A Delta spokesperson called Tarn an “exceptional leader of a very high-performing, non-selective trust”, making his performance and benchmarking-based pay “excellent value”.

Overall, 11 trusts had top earners on minimum pay bands at least 20 per cent higher than the year before.

The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust hiked **Emma Wigmore’s** minimum pay band by £30,000 to £120,000. A spokesperson said its pay committee had reviewed benchmarking data from similar-sized MATs and her performance.

Two in five trusts boosted current or new leaders’ pay overall, with average rises of 8 per cent.

It came in a year when most teacher pay scales were frozen, and long-standing pay restraint has contributed to industrial unrest.

“Parents and the public would not expect pay to continue to increase whilst the pay of classroom teachers continues to



Leora Cruddas

be held down,” said Dr Patrick Roach, the general secretary of teachers’ union NASUWT.

### Analysis shows signs of restraint

While pay rose 2 per cent on average among the top 20, it was virtually unchanged year-on-year among all the trusts analysed. The average pay was £151,000 – still above the £137,000 average in a wider CST trust survey.

Forty-four per cent of trusts froze executive pay and 15.5 per cent cut it, with declines averaging 18 per cent.

DfE analysis also suggests about 40 per cent of teachers received pay rises in the same year – despite frozen pay scales.

Satis said senior salaries overall were “starting to level off”, with boards taking government concern over the £150,000 figure “seriously”.

Nine trusts cut pay by a third or more.

Washwood Heath appointed new chief executive **Peter Weir** on £110,000, where his predecessor once earned £175,000. A spokesperson said it followed a “complete revitalisation” of the trust, with new trustees and leadership.

**Steve Kenning’s** minimum earnings at Aspirations Academy Trust fell from £250,000 to £230,000, while the pay of five of the best-paid 20 was frozen.

The Elliot Foundation’s **Hugh Greenway** said his £214,000 salary was frozen on unions’ recommendation, but as an “interested party” he should not comment further.

Sacred Heart Catholic School’s long-standing head in south London, **Serge Cefai**, ranked most expensive per pupil among majority-mainstream trusts on

£145,000. But a spokesperson said his replacement at the single-academy trust earned less following Cefai’s retirement.

### Pay below other sectors

Cruddas also highlighted recent CST research suggesting average trusts pay leaders less than their charity, public and private sector peers.

Jason Elsom, the chief executive of Parentkind, said running large MATs was “no different”, overseeing large workforces and budgets.

Yet CST research showed trust leaders surveyed handled budgets and staff far smaller than their charity peers.

Inside Housing found housing association CEO pay averaged £193,000 last year, up 1.8 per cent, while the *Health Service Journal* found 19 NHS leaders earned more than £250,000.

Elsom added: “Trustees should recognise parallels should continue when things go wrong. When a commercial entity is financially constrained, or failing to meet its objectives, the fallout impacts the CEO.”

### Additional reporting by Lauren Wright.

#### Nerd note...

Trust information was taken from 2021-22 accounts.

Trust data varies, with actual pay data used where available but minimum pay band data used where not.

Some accounts listed pupil and school numbers from 2022, but others used 2021 data. When neither was available, *Schools Week* used DfE databases.

## BEST PAID PER PUPIL

TRUST	PUPILS	SCHOOLS	CEO OR HEAD	MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY 20-21	MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY 21-22	DIFFERENCE	PAY/PUPIL
Sacred Heart Catholic School	848	1	Serge Cefai <sup>1</sup>	£145,000	£145,000	£-	£171
The Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies	838	4	Peter Box / A Taylor <sup>2</sup>	£120,000	£120,000	£-	£143
Carshalton Boys Sports College	1493	1	Simon Barber	£195,000	£195,000	£-	£131
Inspire Multi Academy Trust	1144	5	Joanne West	£135,000	£140,000	£5,000	£122

## LOWEST PAID PER PUPIL

United Learning Trust	54208	75	Sir Jon Coles	£252,000	£252,000	£-	£4.65
Outwood Grange Academies Trust	30000	38	Sir Martyn Oliver	£180,000	£180,000	£-	£6.00
Academies Enterprise Trust	32641	57	Rebecca Boomer-Clark	£210,000	£200,000	-£10,000	£6.13
Ormiston Academies Trust	30869	43	Nick Hudson	£212,000	£212,627	£627	£6.89

### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Has since left post

<sup>2</sup> Two leaders held posts during the year

Per-pupil table excludes 50%+ special school or AP trusts; outlier table compares earnings with similar-sized trusts also under scrutiny over pay.

NEWS: CURRICULUM

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# Oak quango: The new curriculum partners and advisers

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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Oak National Academy has revealed its new curriculum partners to help create free lessons.

But two subjects have not been awarded after bids did not meet "the high quality bar".

Of the 10 awarded lots – covering six subjects – four were won by schools, including Future Academies and the Twyford Church of England Academies Trust.

The other six went to the Mathematics in Education and Industry charity, the University of York's Department of Education, the Geographical Association and the publishing giant Pearson.

Contracts for primary music and secondary geography were not awarded because, the quango said, "no bid met the high quality bar".

It was now exploring "next steps to develop these", such as rolling them into the next procurement cycle.

The original tenders totalled £8.2 million.

Knowledge Schools Trust, formerly the West London Free School Trust, won the secondary music tender. A spokesperson said: "It's really exciting to be part of a project that has potential to support our colleagues in other schools, both with developing their secondary music curriculum, but also with lesson planning and workload".

A Pearson spokesperson said it wanted "to ensure" its current primary history programme "can benefit future historians" who chose Oak.

### Ofsted leaders sit on subject boards

Meanwhile, the membership of six subject expert groups to provide "valuable independent feedback" and act as a "sounding board through the development work" includes 39 teachers, academics and subject experts ([click here for the full list on our website](#)).

Ofsted subject leaders sit on five of the groups, a move that has prompted criticism, including from the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA). It has launched legal action against Oak over the impact on the education technology sector.

Caroline Wright, BESA's director general, said Ofsted's involvement meant Oak's "byline 'by teachers, for teachers' is a non-sequitur and would better be replaced 'by government, for



government".

But Oak said the Ofsted specialists would only "input their expertise", with curriculum "not approved nor recommended by Ofsted in any way".

"We will be transparent about what we learn in these groups and will share any decisions we make," a spokesperson said. "Oak resources are entirely optional for teachers."

As revealed by Schools Week, at least seven of the 11 leading academy trusts who helped to found the platform during the pandemic did not bid to become curriculum partners.

But staff from three of those seven trusts will be on the new subject groups. Curriculum partners Future Academies – founded by Lord Nash, a former academies minister – and Fox Federation were also original partners.

Some of the new partners will also recruit teachers to help develop lesson resources, Oak said.

### Lessons not available until September 2024

Curriculum sequences and initial resources will be available from autumn this year, with the full curriculum packages for the first six subjects developed by September 2024.

Oak will soon begin to recruit subject leads for its second procurement cycle by autumn 2025. The subjects include modern foreign languages, RE, citizenship/RHSE, computing, art and design, PE, and design and technology.

An organisation specialising in diversity will also be appointed to "deliver breadth and diversity in content, language, texts, media and our teachers".

Matt Hood, Oak's interim chief executive, said the new curriculum partners "means teachers will have access to some of the smartest curriculum thinking and resource design on tap, something they have told us they want".

The government has started recruitment for a permanent chief executive at an advertised salary of £120,000.

The recruitment advisory panel is made up of Sir Ian Bauckham, Oak's interim chair, Jenny Oldroyd, the DfE's curriculum director, and Clare Wagner, head of The Henrietta Barnett School in north London.



Sir Ian Bauckham

## Oak's new curriculum partners

- \* **English primary:** Fox Federation
- \* **English secondary:** Twyford Church of England Academies Trust
- \* **Maths primary and secondary:** Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI)
- \* **Science primary and secondary:** Department of Education, University of York
- \* **History primary:** Pearson Education
- \* **History secondary:** Future Academies
- \* **Geography primary:** Geographical Association
- \* **Music secondary:** Knowledge Schools Trust

NEWS

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# Schools leader wanted as next Ofsted boss

AMY WALKER  
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Ofsted is looking for a leader with "significant experience" at a senior level in schools or trusts to become its next chief inspector. They must also have "a high degree of personal integrity".

An advertisement to find a successor to Amanda Spielman, who leaves this December after seven years, is now live.

A foreword written by Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, says the government wants a chief inspector "with significant experience in the school and trust sector, but who can command respect across all the sectors".

Keegan said it was an "important time" to lead the watchdog, with applicants able to demonstrate the ability to "embed" and "take forward, build on and improve" the new inspection framework.

They must do so while "maintaining and enhancing a strong organisational reputation for valid, reliable, objective and fair judgments".

They must also be able to "adapt to the changing education" landscape with the "increasing importance" of academy trusts and social care reform marking organisational change for the watchdog, Keegan wrote.

Candidates must also show "excellent judgment under pressure and a high degree of personal integrity, including experience of taking difficult,



Gillian Keegan

independent calls in a senior position with high profile".

An advisory assessment panel will recommend candidates to the education secretary, who makes the final decision.

The panel is made up of Dame Christine Ryan, the watchdog's chair, Dr Jo Saxton, Ofqual's chief regulator, a senior Department for Education official and Leora

Cruddas, the chief executive of the academy trust body CST (see story below).

Pay may be a stumbling block, however. Analysis by *Schools Week* found more than 80 academy trusts

leaders last year earned more than the chief inspector's

£165,000.

The watchdog could also face changes should Labour win the next election, scheduled to take place by January 2025 at the latest.

Last week, Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, set out the party's intention to reform the watchdog.

Proposals include replacing its current grading system with a new "report card" for schools.

The job advert says the appointee will need to "respond proactively to the direction of government policy and strategy".

Chief inspectors are appointed for a term of up to five years, but Spielman was given a two-year extension after Covid disrupted the roll-out of her inspection framework. This will make her the longest-serving chief inspector.

Applications close on April 6, with the successful candidate taking office on January 1.

Once the government has chosen its preferred candidate, they will appear before the education select committee, which will decide whether to back her or him.

However, the government can ignore the committee, as then education secretary Nicky Morgan did when appointing Spielman in 2016.

The committee was concerned that Spielman, who had worked in finance before holding a senior position at Ark Schools and later chairing Ofqual, had not been a teacher.



Bridget Phillipson

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Academy body role on recruitment panel criticised

A former Ofsted director has criticised the involvement of an academy trust trade body in the recruitment of the watchdog's next chief inspector.

An advisory panel to shift applications, run interviews and recommend a shortlist to the education secretary includes Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST).

The confederation represents 64 per cent of the academy sector in England.

But Luke Tryl, who ran corporate strategy at Ofsted, said a "big part" of the job was "being

able to stand firm, particularly when the big trusts, which have a lot of political influence and a lot of influence over the sector, are pushing back on things".

"We wouldn't let the water company trade body sit on Ofwat interviews and afraid this leaves me feeling uncomfortable," he tweeted this week.

An advertisement for the chief inspector job states that candidates must have "significant experience" at a senior level in schools or trusts.

Sir David Carter, the former national schools

commissioner, said having someone on the panel who "understands the sector, working with others to advise, is not unhelpful. I would much rather we get people...who are able to assess the merits of the school leadership experience that is relevant to such a crucial role."

The panel also includes Dr Jo Saxton, Ofqual's chief regulator, Dame Christine Ryan, Ofsted's chair, and a senior Department for Education official.

The CST declined to comment.

ON LOCATION: ASCL CONFERENCE



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# Labour's Ofsted plans 'logical evolution'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER & BILLY CAMDEN

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EXCLUSIVE

Labour's plans to ditch Ofsted grades in favour of a school report card could be the "logical evolution" of how school performance is communicated, Amanda Spielman has said.

The chief inspector told *Schools Week* it was "completely rational for a potential alternative government to be thinking about things like this", after shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson set out her reform proposals at the weekend.

Labour has said it will consult on scrapping the current system of four grades, opting instead for a report card that shows what schools do well and what they need to do to improve.

The party has not said what metrics will feature on the card.

Quizzed on the proposals this week, Spielman said it sounded "mainly presentational", putting information in a different way.

"It sounds like a sort of logical evolution of everything that gets drawn together in performance tables at the moment"

Spielman said she "constantly talks" about the purposes of inspection "and that how both the inspection that you design – and how you report it – depends on what those policy purposes are".

"It's completely rational for a potential alternative government to be thinking about things like this. I don't think anybody has the slightest discomfort about that."



Amanda Spielman

But she said "we have overall judgments because of the different purposes that inspection is serving".

"There's been... a strong perception that parents want the simplicity and clarity of an overall judgment in schools, for example, and that governments want handles to justify both incentives...and legitimacy for interventions with poor performers.

"I'm sure that Labour will be thinking about how they would want those to work in a new system. But there are many aspects of inspection that are determined by those policy purposes. So it is rightly for ministers to determine what those policy purposes are."

Spielman leaves the watchdog at the end of this year after seven years at the helm.

Labour's proposed changes will therefore be left to another chief inspector to implement, but Spielman said she was glad to see education issues debated.

"I feel we've had so many years when, between Brexit and Covid and cost of living, there's been little space for people to think and talk about moving education forward."

Labour has long pledged to re-assess how schools are graded with Ofsted expected to turn its focus to school improvement under a Labour government. The length and frequency of inspections is also expected to be up for review.

Announcing the party's proposals at the annual conference of the school leaders' union ASCL in Birmingham at the weekend, Phillipson said Labour would "bring a wind of change ... and drive forward reform of education and of childcare as part of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity".

She said Labour would consult "very quickly" on the changes if it formed the next government.

The party is also proposing annual school safeguarding reviews, which would be carried out by Ofsted. She also pledged to "make sure that inspectors are specialists in the phase that they are inspecting".

"I would expect that more serving school leaders would want to work in a reformed system where they feel they have more confidence and trust that inspections are full and comprehensive."

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## WE MAY HAVE LISTENED TO PUPILS TOO MUCH, SAYS SPIELMAN

Ofsted boss Amanda Spielman has admitted the watchdog's complaints process is not "satisfying" schools.

The chief inspector also told the annual conference of the school leaders' union ASCL that pupil voices may have been given too much "weighting".

*Schools Week* revealed earlier this year that Ofsted had privately told trust leaders its complaints policy was "not working", with a review launched and officials told to make the process more human.

Trust bosses have said that some inspectors

made "over-zealous" judgments based on some pupils' derogatory language or behaviour during inspections.

"We know it's not a satisfying process," Spielman said. "It's not something we're happy with or complacent about.

"We know that for all the immense amount of work put in and the conscientiousness with which we do it, it still doesn't lead to satisfaction at the end of the day."

She said Ofsted was doing "another round of work to try and find a different way of approaching it to address what's nearly always

the root of the problem, which is the grade isn't accepted".

The watchdog would "try and find ways to address that more directly earlier on".

On evidence from pupils, Spielman said it was "not something which of itself should ever lead to a judgment ... I have heard about a couple of cases where the weighting might have been perhaps a bit heavier than it should have been".

"It's something that we've been addressing through inspector training."

ON LOCATION: ASCL CONFERENCE



# Saxton: I'd do coursework under exam conditions

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ofqual's chief regulator has said she would make students do coursework under exam conditions if she were a school leader as fears grow that ChatGPT could be used to cheat.

Dr Jo Saxton told the ASCL conference that the advanced AI chatbot reinforced the importance of exams that "have stood the test of time so well".

She said if she were running a school now she would not ask for coursework or essays to be done at home or in school holidays. "I'd be doing them in invigilated conditions in my centre."

"I think, oddly, that innovation means the examined approach is more important than ever because you've got that integrity of whose work it is."

Ofqual is working with exam boards, the Department for Education and others in the sector "on the need for additional guidance that will apply to GCSE, AS and A-levels",

a spokesperson said this week.

It was to make sure that schools, colleges and pupils understood that "artificial intelligence tools must not be used to cheat, in particular to generate work that pupils then pass off as their own".

Schools are scrapping homework amid cheating worries as top universities ban AI in coursework and exams.

Saxton said Ofqual was looking at the "opportunities" of using AI, but wanted to make sure it did not disadvantage pupils.

GCSE and A-level grades would return to pre-pandemic standards this year, but with a "soft landing" as a form of protection for pupils.

This was part of a step back to normal after record-breaking results when teachers awarded grades during Covid disruption.

Saxton said she had urged government



Dr Jo Saxton and Geoff Barton

officials to be "really, really clear that you explain the context of results in 2023 because they are going to be lower".

"There's no getting away from that. I need everyone to go into that with their eyes open," she said.

"It doesn't mean something's gone wrong... it's part of our national move back towards pre-pandemic normality."

The Ofqual chief also backed calls for a system of post-qualification admissions to university, despite the government having scrapped the move last year.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## CST engaged top lawyer to challenge schools bill

A membership organisation for academy trusts engaged one of the country's most senior lawyers for a potential challenge of the government's ill-fated schools bill.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), told the annual conference of the school leaders' union ASCL that producing the bill before a review of trust regulation was a "huge legislative error".

The bill, published last May, proposed new academy standards and sweeping additional powers over schools. By June it had already been watered-down following widespread criticism and a rebellion of Conservative peers. It had been ditched by December.

The CST was highly critical of the legislation, calling it an "extraordinary over-reach and centralisation of power".

Cruddas, who sits on an expert group advising the government on its ongoing review of school accountability and regulation, told a



Leora Cruddas

fringe event at the conference in Birmingham that after reading the bill for the first time she "had heart failure".

She immediately consulted Roger Inman, the head of education at the law firm Stone King, telling him she was "deeply worried".

"By mid-morning, we'd instructed Queen's Counsel. Now for colleagues in the room who

know CST, you will know that that's probably an unusual thing for us...we'd never done anything like that before.

"We wanted to be on very, very secure legal ground, if we were going to challenge this bill. And, of course, the bill was challenged.

"It was challenged in the Lords very robustly by Lords on both sides of the house and by lots of different national organisations, including ASCL. So I think there was a general consensus that the bill wasn't right."

Cruddas said that the slot in parliamentary time for the bill came "too quickly" after the publication of the schools white paper.

Proposed changes around academy trust standards and intervention were drafted as "widely as possible" to then "narrow down through the process of regulatory review".

"That was, of course, a huge legislative error. And we lost the bill as a consequence of that error."

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**Profile**  
JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

# ‘Schools need to give young people the skills to recognise harmful narratives’

**Matilda Lawrence-Jubb tells Jessica Hill why she set up a company to help take the awkwardness out of sex-ed**

In the new world of Andrew Tate, hardcore pornography and rape culture, sex education is very different to the days when it conjured up images of a hapless teacher trying to put a condom on a banana.

That is why Matilda Lawrence-Jubb decided to name her relationships and sex education (RSE) company Split Banana: for her, modern sex-ed should be about “splitting away” from the ways of the past.

But RSE is now facing another crisis. The government is bringing forward a review of sex education in schools amid a media storm over claims that children are being taught that there are “over 100 genders” and learning about “rough sex” from external educators.

RSE has come a long way in the past 20 years. Schools were only permitted to talk about the existence of gay people in 2003, with the repeal of Margaret Thatcher’s section 28 laws. RSE only

became a compulsory part of the secondary curriculum in 2020.

And, in a bid to stamp out the current wave of Tate-inspired misogyny, demand from schools for RSE experts appears never to have been so high.

**Boys feel like they are under attack**

The empowerment of girls to refuse sex – a big part of relationship teaching in recent times – has led to what Lawrence-Jubb sees as a sense from

## Profile: Matilda Lawrence-Jubb

boys that they are under “attack”. She thinks it is driving them closer to Tate’s ideology.

The “Me Too” and “Everyone’s Invited” anti-rape movements mean “people are talking about sexual assault and gender-based violence more than ever before”.

But she adds that some boys have approached her directly after school sessions on consent to say they felt the discussion “blamed” or “attacked” them as males – even though Lawrence-Jubb did not use male or female pronouns in those sessions.

“The real thing we’re grappling with as an organisation is how you can bring your young men along with what you are saying, and create spaces where they feel listened to.”

Sex education might be a fraught process these days but it was hardly taught at all back when Lawrence-Jubb was a teenager growing up in north London. Her line of work means she lacks any traditional English bashfulness when it comes to discussing sex.

She candidly recalls being “publicly shamed” for having pubic hair by a boyfriend, and experiencing “unwanted touching” during her time at school. “At the time that behaviour was extremely normalised in schools, and a lot of it still is,” she says. Lawrence-Jubb parks some blame on “dodgy rom-com” films like *The Notebook* – in which the romantic hero forces the girl to go on a date with him by threatening to fall from a Ferris wheel – and the dysfunctional love story played out in the popular *Twilight* books and films.

And she believes there is “definitely more stuff” that teachers have to “unlearn” than young people, who are “often a lot more clued up than teachers” in terms of appropriate language to use.

“Around gender and sexuality, teachers feel quite out of their depth. There is this huge fear of getting it wrong,” she says.

### Don’t worry about getting things wrong

Her biggest advice for teachers is not to worry about getting it right all the time. “The first time, you will make mistakes.

“It’s about how you are vulnerable and say, ‘I don’t know the answer to that question, but I’ll get back to you’. And that you have a commitment to



## ‘People are talking about sexual assault and gender-based violence more than ever’

getting clued up on these topics.”

It was as an English Literature student at the University of Sussex that Lawrence-Jubb first became interested in “queer theory and sexuality”. After spending a year teaching young refugees in Athens, she joined a postgraduate course in social innovation, Year Here, in London, which involved spending six months working on a frontline service and finding solutions to problems that arose.

It was there that she met her Split Banana co-founder Anna Alexander – now head of PHSE at a school in east London. At the time, both were placed in schools and “quickly noticed the total lack” of RSE being taught.

After the placements, Lawrence-Jubb and Alexander held workshops for adults on “What I wish I’d known about sex and relationships” to figure out how they could best fill the gaps in young people’s understanding.

With the new RSE guidance for schools then about to come onstream, they felt “schools would need external support” and so formed Split Banana as a social enterprise, teaching RSE workshops with a focus on social and emotional health.

Their workshops for young people, conducted

by a team of eight freelance facilitators, often include art-based activities – but no cringe-inducing banana-on-a-condom demonstrations.

“We realised that, when they are busy making or drawing something, young people are far less embarrassed to speak - they let their guard down a bit,” Lawrence-Jubb explains.

Split Banana operates a sliding payment scale; schools with less than ‘good’ ratings currently get the cheapest rates because “they need a leg up”.

Sometimes a request from a school for a workshop is prompted by a particular incident of inappropriate behaviour, with Tate’s name unsurprisingly being cited by schools with increasing concern. But she is wary of schools “platforming” Tate by focusing on him, which then “encourages young people to share his content”.

She argues that “instead of responding in a reactive way, schools need to go more to the root of the problem and give young people the skills to recognise harmful narratives”.

### Curriculum controversies

Sex education lessons have been splashed across national newspapers in recent weeks. A Daily Telegraph investigation found children as young as 12 were asked how they felt about anal and oral sex.

# Profile: Matilda Lawrence-Jubb

Lawrence-Jubb says a lot of the headlines floating around about gender in RSE “aren’t accurate and have been taken out of context”, but she does not elaborate on which.

She says all Split Banana’s sessions are “age appropriate”. Most schools bring the company in to speak to years 10 and 11 “about specific content teachers feel slightly less comfortable with” – usually around sex and intimacy. There have been a lot of requests lately from schools for pornography workshops and consent and rape culture workshops.

She points out how being transgender is a protected characteristic as part of the Equality Act 2010.

“The RSE curriculum advises to teach about individual rights and ensure all young people feel included and safe, and that’s exactly what we do: affirming and supporting young people of all genders, orientations and experiences to feel safe and happy in themselves and their experiences.”

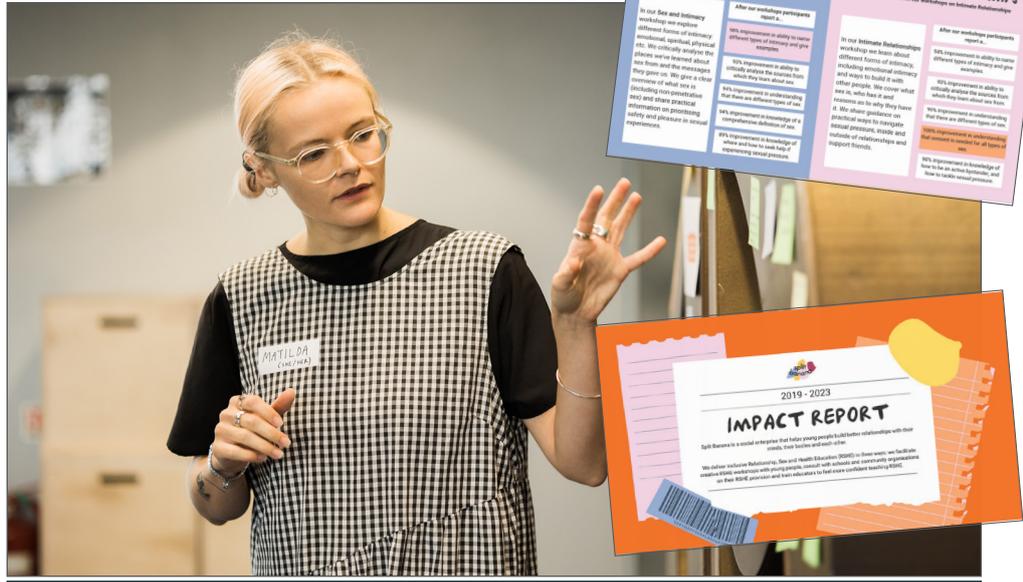
Split Banana runs pleasure and masturbation workshops – but only for years 12 and 13 and they include information on consent, sexual health and prioritising pleasure. “We do not teach in primary schools,” she says. “All of our in-school resources are age-appropriate and based on the statutory government guidelines.”

### Approaching pornography

They also run pornography workshops for those in year 9 and above, citing the average age of pornography exposure as 13. A recent report from the children’s commissioner found four in five youngsters had encountered violent pornography before the age of 18.

“By having an open and honest conversation about pornography, we can support young people to build up their critical lens,” she adds. “This means if/when they come across it, they are equipped to understand how it might affect their expectations of sex and bodies.”

It is normally boys who “dominate the conversations” during workshops, but she does not advocate single-sex groups as the way forward because “then you get different opinions and ideas”.



## ‘Teachers feel out of their depth. There is this huge fear of getting it wrong’

A common format Split Banana uses is to get pupils to read a scenario – for example, a group of boys “virgin shaming” a friend. They then discuss questions and write scripts around that scene to elicit empathy.

Pupils will “make jokes and mutter things under their breath” during these sessions.

The most common misconception Lawrence-Jubb hears from young people is around where the pleasure zones are located. Split Banana instructors show an illustration which likens the penis to the clitoris, comparing the different parts on one to the other – and demonstrating how “nobody’s that different from each other”.

### Still lots of gaps, but positive direction

She believes the current curriculum still contains “lots of gaps”, particularly in “longer term sex education”, which Split Banana is attempting to fill. That includes teaching about the menopause, the contraceptive choices people might make later in life, and more focus on LGBTQIA+ experiences.

They try to do this “throughout the curriculum”, rather than in “one-off lessons” through “orientations people might identify as” and

“visuals like queer parents”.

Lawrence-Jubb is seeing a “pushback” against their work around gender ideology among some parent groups, but thinks it is a “small minority” being “blown up” because “the media absolutely loves the idea there is a division and really tries to hype it up”.

The government is drawing up new guidance for schools on supporting children who identify as transgender. Lawrence-Jubb welcomes the review and hopes ministers are “putting politics to one side and actually listening to the voices of young people, who overwhelmingly report wanting more, and better, RSE”.

She highlights a recent Sex Education Forum poll which showed that over half of youngsters want more information on topics like LGBTQIA+ experiences and pornography. This is “seemingly in direct contrast to what the government want to clamp down on.”

“Most young people I speak to are really happy that they are finally getting this education... We’ve still got a long way to go, but we’re moving in a positive direction.”

# Accountability reform

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DR KATE  
CHHATWAL  
CEO, Challenge Partners.

## Report cards: Labour's big reform requires caution

**Labour's proposal for school accountability reform could be transformational but its implementation will require caution and time, writes Kate Chhatwal**

The success of Labour's proposed report card will depend on who and what it is for, as well as what it covers and how information is assured.

Labour's desire for parents to be "partners in the push for better" implies a dual aim of parental engagement and school improvement. The ambition is right, but – as I discovered when we considered report cards in the 2019 NAHT-led School Improvement Commission – the result could quickly become unwieldy.

We envisaged a report card with no overall grade that would cover a range of national progress outcomes and destinations data as well as school-generated figures and narrative on things that matter but cannot easily be measured.

For parents, we envisaged information on the ethos of the school, curriculum, approach to behaviour and instruction. This would help them decide if the school's values and ambitions aligned with theirs, and could include survey data from pupils, parents and staff.

Asking schools to distil their essence into a consistent format could make it easier for parents to compare than wading through websites and prospectuses.

To support school and system improvement, other information would be important too. Setting out each school's main areas of strength alongside what they are working to address and enhance would serve as a reminder to all that the job of school improvement is never done, helping to drive upwards convergence across the system.

Publishing schools' top two or three fortes and development areas would make it easier for them to identify and connect with each other for expertise and support. At Challenge Partners, we use peer review to systematically identify and accredit excellence, which schools can search in an online directory. Imagine the power of recording the expertise of every school in the country, not just the 560 in our partnership.

One of the challenges with the current inspection system is the long gap between visits, which could lengthen if resources are redirected to annual safeguarding checks. If parents do engage with reports – which Public First research recently cast doubt on – they are often too out-of-date to tell them much about what the school is like now. Report



**“ The result must be a card, not a compendium**

cards could be updated annually with public data and additional information added by schools.

The cards could be strengthened through external scrutiny of qualitative elements. Inspections would provide formal validation – perhaps every three years – and peer challenge could add rigour to schools' self-evaluation each year in between.

A word of caution though: the power of peer review relies on schools feeling able to share what they are finding hard, as well as what they are doing well. The fact that Challenge Partners' quality assurance reviews are confidential and developmental ensures that schools can be open and get the insight they need to improve. Use of peer scrutiny for report cards should not disrupt this principle.

So how do we get there from here? The first task is the wide engagement that Labour proposes, to settle on who and what report cards are for. The result must be a report card, not a compendium. Simplicity – but not the bluntness of a single grade – is key.

The inspection system would then need to align with the card, balancing a universal framework

with an ability to validate – or not – the claims that a school makes about itself. This would require skilled inspectors able to exercise sound professional judgment more consistently than now, but the impact of inevitable variation between inspectors would be diminished if the outcome were more sophisticated than the current single judgment.

Decisions and legislation would then be needed to define the basis for DfE intervention in schools, because a rounded view of school performance should not be a mask for poor performance.

Getting it right would take time and the discipline to resist pressure to include too many measures. The delay would be worthwhile if the result is accepted by parents and schools as a useful tool, and the time is also used to build expertise and capacity for successful implementation.

The most transformational thing that Labour could deliver in office is a tool which drives continuous improvement, so that every school is excellent, and parents have the right information to choose between them.

# Accountability reform

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## MARGARET JAMES

National director, SIAMS

## Why we've ditched the grades from SIAMS inspections

**Margaret James explains the decision to remove grades from the SIAMS inspection framework in a move described as 'radically different; radically the same'**

Nearly 5,000 Church of England schools serve every type of community in every county. They are attended by close to one in four of the country's children, some one million at any one time.

They are not "faith" schools, as they serve children from all and no religious backgrounds. However, they share in a vision to be "deeply Christian, serving the common good". But how can an inspection framework provide parents and carers with information about how effectively a school is meeting this aim?

This question is fundamental to the new Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework. Replacing grades with judgments has understandably grabbed the attention of headline writers, but all of the changes we have brought in have arisen from our vision of what school inspection should look like so that it too serves the common good.

SIAMS inspections are carried out under section 48 of the 2005

Education Act. They involve the inspection of RE, collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in Church of England and Methodist schools and academies in England.

For almost three decades, they have resulted in each school being awarded one of four grades: currently 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement', and 'Ineffective'. From September, this will no longer be the case. Instead, an inspector will make a judgment on whether the school is living up to its Anglican/Methodist foundation through an up-to-date Christian vision that enables all pupils and adults to flourish. SIAMS will not reduce its findings to a grade word or number.

Instead, it will provide a narrative account of the school's strengths and areas for development. This rich data will enable all who have an interest in the school to find out what it is really like to be part of that community and to make decisions accordingly.

Inspectors will do this by gathering evidence to answer inspection questions that focus entirely on the impact of a school's vision-driven, context-specific actions. Inspection criteria have been dispensed with, respectfully allowing school leaders the freedom



“ SIAMS will not reduce its findings to a word or number

to apply their expertise in serving the needs of their communities.

The school will be asked to provide evidence of the impact of their work; and the inspector will use the evidence to make a judgment on whether the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

For example, inspection question 4 asks how the school's Christian vision creates a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well. The new SIAMS framework does not list generic criteria but invites leaders to demonstrate how the vision is being worked out in practice and in context.

Inspectors will ascertain whether everyone is treated with dignity and respect, whether individuals' wellbeing is enhanced by belonging to the school and whether the mental health of pupils and adults is taken into consideration when making decisions. If the school is part of a multi-academy trust, inspectors will assess how the trust ensures people are being treated well.

It will be up to school leaders to explain how they work, make decisions and monitor impact; and it will be up to them to provide

robust evidence to substantiate their claims. The inspection judgment will simply sum this up.

The result will be one of two evidence-based judgments: The school will either be deemed to be living up to its foundation as a Church school, or the inspector will set out the reasons why it may not be fully doing so. These reasons could include RE not being effective, collective worship not enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually or people not being treated well, and they will require urgent attention.

We are describing our new framework as "radically different; radically the same".

It is the same inasmuch as it does not reimagine what it means to be a Church school, imposing no new demands on schools.

However, the collaborative, context-specific manner of inspection heralds a radically new approach, recognising the professionalism and expertise of school leaders and focusing exclusively on the impact of actions rather than on the actions themselves.

# Opinion

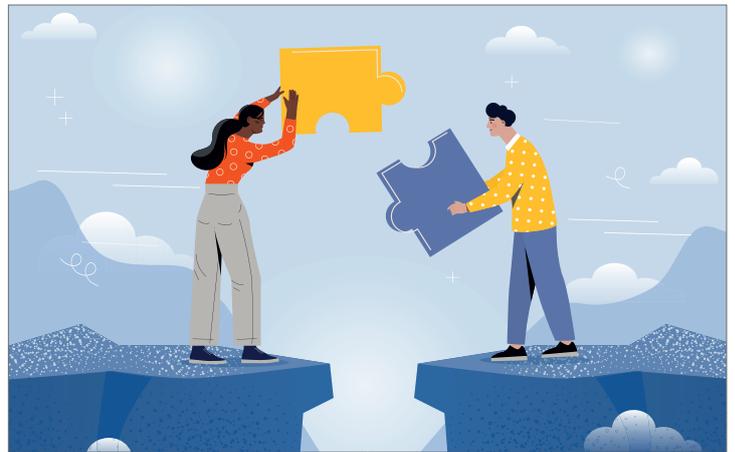
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## BUSHRA NASIR

CEO, Drapers' Multi-Academy Trust

### RE recruitment woe is a societal problem – but not like many think



“ There is a huge gap to fill, and we can't afford to fall back

**Scrapping training bursaries has sent RE recruitment spiralling, says Bushra Nasir, but we mustn't underestimate the potential impact of losing what the subject offers**

Whatever the subject you teach, you can guarantee that students will ask you something you were not expecting. I have long been an advocate for religious education, in large part because it is a subject that gets young people asking some of life's most profound questions.

The recent census suggests that fewer Britons identify with an organised religion. However, this doesn't mean society is becoming more secular. Research among people who tick "no religion" shows they include those who identify as humanists, those who pray and those who believe in God.

Nor do these changes in our relationship with religion mean our interest in the big questions is waning. On the contrary, there is evidence that young people have a strong spiritual capacity when thinking about the meaning of life, the origins of the universe and how we should treat others in a cohesive, diverse society.

RE is therefore more important than ever. At its best, it prepares

young people to tackle these questions. It teaches them that everyone has a worldview - their way of experiencing and understanding the world, including religious and/or non-religious worldviews.

What better way to prepare them to consider these questions than by studying those worldviews that have a profound influence on our society, from Christianity and Islam through to humanism. Teaching their differences and similarities also provides an intellectual basis for understanding the diversity and respect for freedom of religion or belief that we want all schools to promote.

Sadly, RE is struggling to attract a new generation of teachers to deliver this modern, relevant and exciting curriculum. The subject has recruited well with a teacher training bursary. However, since it was axed, applications have fallen short, with some applicants drawn to subjects attracting funding instead. UCAS data shows applicants are down by one-third, compared with a 20 per cent shortfall across all subjects.

This comes at a time when there is already a problem with RE provision in some schools, with up to 500 secondaries not teaching it in year 11. Not only does this risk

doing a disservice to children's entitlement to a broad and balanced education, but it also puts some school leaders in a difficult position, often having to choose between asking non-specialists to teach the subject or cutting time for it entirely.

Yet it remains a statutory requirement for state schools to teach the subject, which is still very popular at GCSE. Nearly 250,000 students take the subject annually.

When I became one of the country's first Muslim headteachers, inter-faith understanding was poor. It is better now, in part thanks to RE teachers up and down the country. This inter-faith understanding rests not on tokenistic lessons about different religions or beliefs, but on giving students a chance to engage academically and critically with their personal worldviews and those of others.

This is the foundation not just for a well-rounded education, but for partaking meaningfully in modern British society where people of many different religions and beliefs are now found.

As an RE champion for Culham St Gabriel's, I have written on the role that individual schools can play in promoting the subject and ensuring sufficient time on the timetable. We are also doing our bit to tackle the recruitment crisis hitting our subject by launching our own recruitment campaign, "Beyond the Ordinary", which appeals to RE's academic rigour, its passionate discussions and its importance to our society's prosperity.

But there is a huge gap to fill, and we can't afford to stall or fall back in our progress towards inter-faith understanding and acceptance. As one student, Shreya, said at a parliamentary roundtable on the subject last year: "RE is the one time in school where you can talk, listen and try to make sense of people, events and beliefs in the world."

Young people deserve to be given a safe space to discuss these matters. In doing this they will be able to better understand each other's visions and values for society. There is no better place for that than in the RE classroom, with a trained and skilled teacher.

Opinion

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ALISON HARDY

Associate professor, Nottingham Institute of Education



D&T reform: A hostile takeover disguised as philanthropy

**Pearson's plans for design and technology reform shows why there is an issue with private companies and curriculum design, says Alison Hardy**

expanding into education to sell their products and to capitalise on the expansion of digital learning.

**A flawed proposal**

Viewed this way, Pearson's foray into D&T reform looks less like a philanthropic gesture and more like a hostile takeover – one that cynically uses sustainability as an emotive justification for its work. After all, few parents or pupils would disagree with its importance, but equally few may realise that it is already part of the subject's GCSE content across all four assessment organisations.

Pearson claims that this new curriculum will educate the "problem-solvers of the future", focusing on circular economy, design thinking, systems thinking, collaboration, creativity and innovation. On the surface, the qualification appears to be supported by a wide range of sector bodies, including the Royal Academy of Engineers, the Design Council and Royal Society of Arts.

A peculiarity is the support of the subject association for art and design, NSEAD, but not the D&T Association, the national lead for design and technology. That may be because the proposal implies that there will be a reduction in making, meaning that resources (money) will be saved and teachers will no longer need to have specialist subject skills, which will

The proportion of pupils studying design and technology (D&T) fell by 50% from 2009 to 2020. Over the same period, the number of secondary teachers of the subject halved, exacerbated by under-recruitment. Now, one of the world's most powerful global education businesses believes it has the solution to the subject's freefall decline.

Claiming to "drive forward a new, future-focused design and technology", Pearson Education has announced plans to launch a new qualification, GCSE Design and Sustainability. The idea has the support of many design organisations and the creative industries community, which has helped to raise the predicament of D&T to a national level.

But this raises an important question: Who should design a school curriculum? Private companies, charities and commercial stakeholders have pledged their support and ambition for Pearson's proposal, but each has a motive that may not be in the best interests of pupils' general education.

For example, both Google and Microsoft have separate interests in

**“ The potential to deskill the expert D&T teacher is evident**

supposedly address the "shrinking teacher workforce".

The potential to deskill the expert D&T teacher is evident, and current D&T curriculum thinking already accommodates alternative approaches to the design and make paradigm.

Pearson says that around half of the 2,200-plus secondary school D&T teachers they consulted say they want change. But is this the equivalent of a Twitter straw poll?

There are 33 000 members of the D&T Association, representing primary, secondary, private and state education. Is Pearson's sample representative? And when does it plan to talk to primary teachers? Half of a selective sample is not exactly a landslide for change.

**The case for reform**

There is clearly an issue with D&T; the decline in GCSE numbers show this, and the reaction on social media from secondary school D&T teachers shows there is a need for discussion around our curriculum.

Pearson has given a focus to this conversation, but its motives are not the same as those of teachers. The company currently has only a small market share of the GCSE D&T

numbers, and reform to increase its market share will not necessarily align with what the experts want.

Indeed, this could end up being a distraction from the very real problems facing D&T. The nature of curriculum content is only a small part of the problem, which has more to do with the perceived value of its curriculum and the inadvertent impact of education policy reforms, including school accountability measures.

D&T is on a concerning downward trajectory. Reversing it should be central to the government's strategy to upskill the workforce, tackle skills shortages and meet its sustainability goals. But curriculum change in general education should be informed by rigorous and valid research, not a private company that is answerable to shareholders.

D&T teachers have been subject to numerous curriculum changes – maybe it is time to let them take the lead on the future direction of their subject, instead of those who are not in the classroom.

*This article was co-authored with Matt McLain, Liverpool John Moores University, and Sarah Davies, Nottingham Trent University*

# Solutions

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## JO MYHILL-JOHNSON

Regional director (secondary), Astrea Academy Trust, Cambridgeshire



## REBEKAH RAMSDEN

Regional director (secondary), Astrea Academy Trust, South Yorkshire

# How trusts can operate at scale over distance

**An increase in multi-academy trusts spanning multiple regions means we need to develop new ways to deliver school improvement, write Astrea's regional directors**

Since 2018, there has been a rise in the number of national multi-academy trusts operating in two or more regions. For these, distance – both physical and cultural – can be one of the biggest challenges, especially when many are focused on continuing to make transformational improvements.

Astrea Academy Trust is in this exact position. The trust has 26 schools in two regions, 21 in South Yorkshire and five in Cambridgeshire. The majority of our secondary students are in Cambridgeshire, and total one-third of all Astrea students.

Overcoming the operational challenges that geography presents is key to being able to implement an overarching and consistent improvement strategy across every school. At Astrea, the following has enabled us to work successfully as one strong team across two regions.

### Recruit to your vision and values

The vision and values of a trust should underline every decision, and this is especially true when schools and colleagues are located miles apart. Therefore, the very basis of

a strong and aligned team which works across regions goes back to recruiting the right people to drive forward your strategic goals.

Leaders who support and complement your fundamental vision and will live out shared values every day are essential to delivering rapid improvements consistently across different areas.

Our team, no matter where we live, no matter which schools we work with, are on the same page on every decision, on every direction we take, because we work to our shared values.

But we acknowledge that there are difficulties in aligning this while changing and improving. Where we don't get it right, we reflect together and keep communicating, deepening our collaboration as we overcome challenges.

### Be clear on what brilliant looks like

Aligning leaders towards the same ambition through promoting standards is key to achieving the academic outcomes that all young people deserve. Especially when we know that schools are more alike than different, no matter where they are.

For every strand of our improvement strategy, trust leaders work together to develop clear frameworks which exemplify to our school leaders what a brilliant education looks like, such as our



“ Schools are more alike than different, no matter where they are

“behaviour and culture framework”, introduced this academic year across all our secondary schools.

These are informed by the best academic and organisational thinking. Promoting standards in this way allows us to collectively live by the same models across both regions, across all aspects of school improvement, as one team. The frameworks are easily digested and give us the ability to advance the expertise of our senior leaders, freeing up their time, talent and energy.

### Focus time together strategically

Time is our biggest resource, and we don't waste it on unnecessary travel. When coming together in person to learn and share best practice, it is best to have a long-term strategy in place to focus that time on high-quality professional development, for example.

This academic year, we have come together to visit a range of high-performing schools outside Astrea as we seek out and learn from the best.

### Share accountability as well as best practice

When working physically apart, it is important for trust leaders to share accountability for the overall success of the schools they support. That is how schools and the trust become one and the same, allowing them to use their collective might to make rapid and sustained improvements.

Ensuring that there are regular opportunities for collaboration on essential streams of work is an effective way to share accountability, while also sharing best practice. Our leaders spanning both regions work together to research and create our frameworks, which form the basis of our standards for every school.

As regional directors we share that accountability for all our secondary schools. We offer hands-on, pragmatic and daily support, linking the two regions and ensuring that the same messages and effective best practices are shared across every school. We are fully aligned and in constant communication with our principals. This is key to ensuring a consistent approach to all schools, no matter which area they serve.

## THE REVIEW

## HE SAID, SHE SAID

**Author:** Magero Otieno Magero**Director:** Esther Baker**Producer:** Synergy Theatre Project**Date:** 14 March 2023 and available online**Reviewer:** Sarah Johnson, President, PRUsAP

Concern about the influence of social media on violence both in and out of school has been a recurring theme for several years but never more so than since the pandemic. So I was interested to see how *He Said, She Said*, written by Magero Otieno Magero and directed by Esther Baker, would balance a short run-time of 40 minutes with the complex issue of how the proliferation of gossip can influence the consumers and creators of social media.

The cast is a small one, as is typical of theatre companies that deal with complex issues with the aim of touring schools. With a cast of four, we explore the devastating aftermath when Denise (Megan Samuel) encourages Kayla (LJ Johnson) to post a photograph of herself and Yusef (Farshid Rokey) to make Dre (Jermaine Freeman) jealous.

Once the picture is posted, as we often warn young people, Kayla is no longer in control of the photograph and rumours abound that Kayla and Yusef are not just primary school friends but in a relationship. It is a story many *Schools Week* readers will probably have dealt with in reality, as those in pastoral or behavioural roles unpick the fallout of such events within their school communities. In this case, however, this one act soon spirals out of control and leads to a harrowing end.

The relationship between Dre and Kayla touches upon serious issues around coercion and control, but as is the nature of a 40-minute production, these are not explored. Instead, the fractions in the relationship hang heavy in the air without resolving. I would hope that a skilled teacher with the opportunity to watch this with

their students would explore this carefully.

The play is punctuated by monologues, allowing the audience to explore more individual characters' reasoning in more depth. The dialogue takes the form of spoken word, which is characterised by rhyme and wordplay.

Spoken word is often used to speak to issues relating to social justice and politics, but it also gives an almost romantic quality to the conversations, which is harshly juxtaposed to the realities of the story.

The stage setting designed by Katy McPhee is simple but effective. A series of social networking icons, distilled in black and white, are both the floor and walls. Some of the icons were familiar to me (Facebook, Pinterest, WhatsApp). Others I did not know at all.

This is a lesson in itself and one not just for the students in our care. It is a stark reminder that, as staff, we may not use the same platforms as the young people in our care, but having an awareness of their use and misuse can be a vital part of our roles.

The ubiquitous nature of social media is reflected in the cast being on stage throughout the performance, symbolising that our children are rarely out of the grip of social media. They (and likely people older than the intended audience) are constantly consuming and using social media in many facets of their lives.

At the end of this performance, and preserved for online viewers, there was a question-and-answer session which made the production even more powerful. The questions from the audience included some you would expect, such as "Who do you think is to blame for the play's outcome?".

BOOK  
TV  
FILM  
RADIO  
EVENT  
RESOURCE



My view was different from that of the actors, and that is where the richness of a pastoral discussion comes in. Differing opinions and how we mediate these in the context of a school setting are what makes this an effective educational experience.

The play has an age advisory of 13-plus, which makes sense given the themes portrayed are upsetting. Synergy Theatre Project's website hosts previous productions too and, based on the quality on show here, I would recommend searching them for other themes you might want to approach with students.

If it is the power of social media you want to tackle, then this is a great place to start. But be prepared to have other challenging conversations too – not least about consent and coercion.



Rating

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

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

Well Schools  
**PODCAST**  
Well School Movement

Youth Sport Trust.  
As the former headteacher of Parklands Primary School in Leeds, Dyson describes how he led the transformation of that school with genuine enthusiasm about its children and community. I was particularly engaged by his description of removing “the padded room” and introducing music to the corridors.

Lots of headteachers have turned schools around, but Dyson is perhaps unique in his singular focus on love and making school a fun place to be. It is certainly a change from all the talk of sacking staff, excluding “troublemakers” and implementing strict rules. Parklands has only permanently excluded one child in nine years, and it regularly takes in children that other schools do not want.

I absolutely love this approach and found it a refreshing and relevant listen at a time when we are in real danger of exclusively adopting a silence-in-the-corridors, zero-tolerance culture to school improvement. Current attendance rates and TikTok protests suggest the model is alienating a large number of children. Perhaps we should look to other types of love than the tough kind.

**SELECTIVE HEARING**

Which brings me to the latest session of the education select committee and its hearing on persistent absence from school. Children’s commissioner Rachel De Souza gave evidence to the inquiry that, while Covid “had an impact” on attendance, of 1.6 million children persistently absent in the autumn and spring terms of 2021-22, 818,000 were not off because of illness.

The committee also heard about the various issues facing schools in improving attendance. These include wealthier

parents who are not put off from booking term-time holidays by fines, the use of B codes to hide poor attendance, and the large and seemingly increasing number of pupils who are going missing from the system.



Sadly, what I hear a lot in my conversations but has not yet been said to the committee is that there is a problem with the school system in its entirety. It seems to come as a genuine surprise to many of its members that such a large number of pupils are continuing to fail, and worse that the failure appears to be growing. It is not just absence rates; increasing numbers of pupils disappearing from the system and record exclusion rates indicate a deep malaise.

A leaf could be taken from the kind of vision set out in the SEND and AP improvement plan in being more ambitious for the system, and Labour at least seems attuned to that. Bridget Phillipson’s proposal to reform the current high-stakes accountability system shows some understanding that, if it was fit for purpose, some of these issues might not be manifesting.

Perhaps I am being radical here, but couldn’t we build an education system around the needs of our pupils? Wouldn’t that be a system built on love?



**AP AND SEND VISION**

The big topic of conversation in my part of the sector this week was the release of the SEND and AP improvement plan. Depending on who I spoke to, the *Right Support, Right Place, Right Time* document was either ambitious and timely or sorely lacking and disappointingly late/never going to happen.

For my part, I think there is much to applaud in the plan, and I am grateful that AP is taking its appropriate place in education policy making. For too long it has been the “Cinderella” service, and its staff and pupils treated accordingly.

But you can make up your own mind about the plan and its implications. I found the summary briefing by Stone King LLP partner and education lead Roger Inman particularly useful. It explores how the plan will affect the key legal entitlements which govern how school and AP institutions operate within the SEND/AP system, and it does so in a politically neutral way. A much-needed contribution in our divided times.

**SCHOOLS BUILT ON LOVE**

Chris Dyson, deputy CEO of the Create Partnership Trust, is brave enough to use the L word in his book title, *A School Built on Love*. He repeats it regularly in his interview with Anthony Judge and Kay Batkin for the Well Schools podcast by the

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts

# The Knowledge

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



## How can peer review best serve school improvement?

**Anna Searle, Education Services  
Director, Education Development Trust**

Schools are more likely to thrive when they work in effective partnership with other schools. The question is not *whether* but *how* staff from different schools can best support each other.

What skills and techniques do they need to enable purposeful school-to-school collaboration? How can teachers and leaders from different schools work together to respond to their most challenging professional problems?

These questions lie at the heart of Education Development Trust's schools partnership programme (SPP) and the approach used is based on the principle that systematic peer review should be part of the answer and has the potential to transform our schools.

### Research-based enquiry

Peer review must be guided by rigorous, research-based enquiry if it is to uncover actionable new learning and ultimately drive impactful school improvement.

Since it was launched in 2014, hundreds of schools in England and Wales have taken part in SPP. In 2018, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) commissioned an independent evaluation of our programme. The EEF published its report earlier this month.

While disruptions associated with Covid meant that the impact assessment was unable to go ahead, the headline findings from the process evaluation were positive.

The trial cohort was substantial – 422 primary schools educating over 100,000 pupils. These were grouped into 89 clusters of an average size of just over five schools. Leaders from each of the clusters attended four days of training, and went on to undertake two structured peer reviews, each taking one or two days.

A large majority of school leaders surveyed felt there had been a positive overall impact on pupils' outcomes at their school. The independent evaluators from IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education



and Society described how participants "learned how to collaborate more rigorously and transparently, offering increasing challenge to each other with time, and enabling more fluid knowledge exchange and shared professional development that benefited their staff and schools".

Their report sheds important light on why the programme was positively received. School collaboration and forms of peer review are not new; what is distinctive about the SPP is the methodology and the clarity about roles.

### Improvement champion

Unique to the SPP is the role of improvement champion. This is someone within each school who takes ownership of school improvement by facilitating transformation through the shared goals that emerge from the process.

That does not mean more work for the headteacher, or even the senior leadership team. The improvement champion can come from the wider school team and in fact the evaluation found that this was perceived to be most impactful, for the individual and the school, if someone from middle management took up the role.

It is a demanding role, but we provide training in how to evaluate, deliver feedback and coach colleagues in their own schools and in others in the group working together. Relevant training and quality training materials matter (Indeed,

our materials were deemed by most participants to be of very high quality), as does agency for change being in the hands of teachers.

### Joint practice development

The SPP is about empowerment. Schools agree on the steps they need to take in partnership. Participants visit each other, support teaching and learning, talk to senior teachers with an emphasis not so much on sharing good practice but on joint practice development.

This aims to foster "culture-based accountability" – the idea that, through trust and interaction, teachers and senior leaders are mutually committed to improvement in their own settings and in other schools.

It was notable that, among the evidence and the testimonials gathered as part of the EEF evaluation, many teachers felt that, through purposeful peer review, they could take ownership of their professional development and learn through a rich dialogue with others. The schools surveyed by EEF routinely reported improvements for the school, the staff and – most importantly of all – the students.

We were really encouraged to see that the schools partnership programme was so well-received during the EEF's trial. Findings from the evaluation and feedback from schools who have taken part in the programme also highlight the key aspects that school leaders felt contribute to a good peer review programme.

Week in

# Westminster

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



## FRIDAY

Ofsted's woeful complaints process is regularly and rightly criticised by school leaders. Grilled about just how woeful it is at ASCL conference today, the watchdog's top dog Amanda Spielman pointed out that it does have independent oversight. However, it's such an integral part of the system ... that she forgot who manages it.

"ICASO, it's the independent complaints and appeals service. Is it run by ACAS or something?" she asked headteacher Pepe Dilasio who was running the Q&A.

Reader: it is run by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution.

To be fair to Her Maj, it's used so infrequently (it can only be accessed once complainants have made it through Ofsted's laborious internal complaints procedure) that she can be forgiven.

And it looks like she was by many. Spielman was treated like a minor celebrity at the conference's gala dinner, where heads queued to have their picture taken with the outgoing chief inspector.

## SATURDAY

One can only wonder what sort of reception the education secretary Gillian Keegan would have received if she had attended, as pretty much every one of her predecessors has for the last 15 years.

She swerved the conference on Friday because she was scared of the backlash over inaction on strikes (erm, we mean because she hoped to be "engaged in intensive talks at that time over the pay



dispute that has led to industrial action").

Predictably, no talks took place – so we ask what was more important for Our Gill?

Turns out the answer is: playing on a VR headset, according to a video she tweeted of her visit to Darlington College on Friday.

Perhaps in that alternate reality, there are no pesky unions to contend with.

## TUESDAY

Skills minister Robert Halfon earned a reputation for being a no-nonsense chair of the education select committee. So you might have expected him to breeze through it when he found himself on the other side of a hearing.

But during a hearing on careers education, Halfon forgot the name of the Careers and Enterprise Company's primary careers programme – and then called the Department for Business and Trade by its old name before admitting

he'd forgotten and correcting himself.

## WEDNESDAY

Jeremy Hunt painstakingly laid out his four Es in today's budget (cue lots of puns about drugs). After waffling on, he finally got to the fourth: education.

With teacher strikes, crumbling buildings and sky-high energy bills on the agenda, Hunt decided to announce a pension tax cut for the top one per cent of earners. Great news that will no doubt resolve all our woes!

Elsewhere, the NEU is literally driving home the point on pay – sending 20 vans advertising its pay campaign to accompany striking members on Whitehall.

PS What is it about this government and Es? The four Es reminded us *Schools Week* Oldies about the famed 3 Es schools bill of 2016 (Educational Excellence Everywhere). Let's hope the 4 Es have a happier ending (the schools bill was scrapped amid uproar over forced academisation).

## THURSDAY

The social media giant TikTok was today banned on government devices over security risks. Given all the ills it's causing in schools, we wonder if they could just extend the ban to kids and save leaders a whole load of grief.



# 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.*

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