

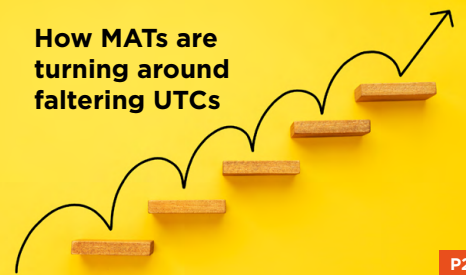
SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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SCHOOLS WEEK

Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
DEPUTY EDITOR

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
CHIEF REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Tom Belger
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM_BELGER
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Amy Walker
SENIOR REPORTER

@AMYRWALKER
AMY.WALKER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jessica Hill
INVESTIGATIONS AND FEATURES REPORTER

@JESSJANEHILL
JESSICA.HILL@LSECT.COM



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

THE TEAM

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

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Decouple calls for Ofsted reform from tragic death

Ofsted is in crisis. Inspections taking place with police at the school gates is not how a well-functioning school inspection system should work.

But that's what happened this week, as a tidal wave of pent-up anger came crashing down on the inspectorate (page 4 and 5).

Just as that takes hold, we've revealed a gaming scandal that means some schools have been getting tip-offs potentially two weeks in advance about impending inspections.

It fundamentally undermines a key cornerstone of Ofsted's system: that schools should only be told about inspections at most the day before they happen.

Not only has it been going on for years, but Ofsted knew – and seems to have done nothing about it.

That schools are going to such lengths shows the high-stakes nature of Ofsted inspections.

No longer are heads merely saying "enough is enough" - now they are taking action to show it.

This week's outpouring of anger from leaders followed a news report last week of the

death of headteacher Ruth Perry. Her family say she killed herself before the publication of an inspection report rating the school 'inadequate'.

In covering the events sparked by Ruth's death, we have sought to follow Samaritan's guidance, which states that such cases are "extremely complex and most of the time there is no single event or factor that leads someone to take their own life".

It will be down to a coroner to establish the details surrounding Ruth's death. This process will hopefully give the sector closure over the circumstances and potential causes of Perry's death. Until then, it's just not possible to draw a definitive conclusion.

We agree with Dame Alison Peacock. Any calls for overall reform should – at least for now – be decoupled from Ruth's case.

Evidence suggests headteachers are now more likely to leave the profession, many of them citing the crushing weight of accountability as a key factor.

Regardless of the recent tragic events, heads say something has to change. And their collective voice should be listened to.

Most read online this week:

- 1 **Head plans to refuse Ofsted inspectors entry following Ruth Perry death**
- 2 **Solutions: How an academy trust slashed its supply costs**
- 3 **Revealed: 'Unethical' Ofsted 'alerts' tip off schools about inspections**
- 4 **The academy trust CEO pay outliers**
- 5 **Snubbed teacher training providers get top Ofsted reports**

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LONG READ: OFSTED

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The week heads told Ofsted 'enough is enough'

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

Headteacher Lisa Telling can remember her daughter asking her to promise she would not hurt herself when they were discussing a recent Ofsted inspection.

"I shouldn't be saying to my daughter, 'if this goes wrong we might have to move house,'" says the executive head of Katesgrove and Southcote Primary Schools in Reading. "We shouldn't have to do that to our families."

Her experience is one of many shared by headteachers who feel crushed by the accountability system.

But widespread discontent this week exploded into an outpouring of anger following reports of the death of Reading headteacher Ruth Perry.

Her family say she took her own life in January before the publication of an inspection report at Caversham Primary School that downgraded her school from 'outstanding' to 'inadequate'. They blame pressure from the Ofsted process for her death.

An inquest has not yet been held.

But leaders, including Telling, have pledged to wear black armbands, to display pictures of Perry and to hold a minute's silence during inspections.

"We want our colleague to be remembered and for us to honour her. We feel quite passionately that her death should not be in vain," says Telling, whose two schools are in the same area.

On Tuesday, Flora Cooper, executive headteacher at John Rankin Infant and Nursery School, also in Berkshire, pledged to refuse entry to an Ofsted inspector.

She told *Schools Week*: "I could lose my job but I feel like if I don't stand up for every child, every member of staff, every school leader, the system will never change." Obstructing an inspection is a criminal offence with a fine of up to £2,500.

After talks with the watchdog and council, the inspection went ahead – but staff staged a protest outside the school and wore black armbands.

Police were present as inspectors arrived.



Flora Cooper, executive headteacher at John Rankin Infant and Nursery School

Schools take action

Leaders in the Reading Primary Heads Association, which Telling is part of, have pledged to remove non-statutory references to the watchdog from their schools' websites, while Claire Lowe, the chief executive of the Inspire Learning Partnership in Hampshire, said in an open letter to Ofsted that leaders would be "discussing some actions" during inspections – including displaying pictures of Perry.

Rebecca Leek, the executive director of Suffolk Primary Headteachers' Association, has suggested its schools say a prayer for "Perry's family and school community" while inspectors are present.

"Every headteacher has a story of something that Ofsted inspectors have said or done, or inconsistencies [in reports]," she says.

"It feels safer now to speak out because other voices are already saying it."

A petition calling for an inquiry into Caversham's Ofsted inspection now has more than 196,000 signatures.

Three unions – the leaders' unions NAHT and ASCL, and the National Education Union – have called for Ofsted to temporarily pause inspections and reiterated calls for wider reforms to the system.



Photo of Ruth Perry attached to John Rankin schools gates

Spielman rebuffs calls for inspections pause

After refusing to comment on the case for most of the week, Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said today it would "not be right to say too much" before the inquest, but added: "The news of Ruth's death was met with great sadness at Ofsted."

She said it was "unquestionably a difficult time to be a headteacher" and knew that inspections could be "challenging". But Ofsted "always aims to carry them out with sensitivity as well as professionalism". She rebuffed calls for a pause. "I don't believe that stopping or preventing



Amanda Spielman

LONG READ: OFSTED

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inspections would be in children's best interests.

"Our aim is to raise standards, so that all children get a great education. It is an aim we share with every teacher in every school."

While the debate about grades was a "legitimate one", any change to the current system "would have to meet the needs both of parents and of the government".

Unions dismissed her comments as "warm words", with Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, saying leaders wanted "tangible actions ... to reduce the intolerable pressure" of inspections.

'Lack of Ofsted response is failure of leadership'

There appears to be a different tone behind the scenes.

Spielman said Ofsted would "be looking at whether there are further ways that we can defuse the anxiety that we know often builds up around inspection", says a leaked message to HMIs seen by *Schools Week*.

It has also emerged that following Perry's death in January, "sensitivities" prompted the watchdog to pause inspections in Reading.

A retired HMI said they had "never heard" of such an action elsewhere.

But a serving inspector, who also wanted to remain anonymous, described Ofsted's prior lack of response as "a failure of leadership".

When the inspectorate published Caversham's report on Tuesday, it took out a line included in the version published on the school's website.

"There has been a change of leadership at the school following the death of the headteacher who was in post at the time of the inspection", it read.

It is understood the line was removed after Ofsted 'reflected on the sensitivities'.

"They've created a vacuum and that has simply meant that the alternative voices – for good or for ill – have filled space," the serving inspector said.



Dame Alison Peacock



Niamh Sweeney with members of the National Education Union (NEU) hand in a petition which has been signed by 45,000 people to the Department for Education

'It feels safer now to speak out'

Detangle reform from 'tragic incident'

Calls for reform on the back of Perry's death have caused some unease. Guidance from The Samaritans says "most of the time there is no single event or factor that leads someone to take their own life" and such cases are "extremely complex".

Dame Alison Peacock, the chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, said: "Anybody who works in a school has been affected by this story, so I think all the responses are understandable.

"But we should try to decouple what's happened in this very tragic incident with overall reform."

Caroline Derbyshire, the chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable, which has renewed calls to pause Ofsted, said: "We all know of other cases in the past – where people have been made desperate by an outcome. This is not an isolated incident.

"It's not a platform upon which people are jumping, it's merely that [the family has] actually come out and said there is a link and that's what's different about it."

Sinéad Mc Brearty, the chief executive of the wellbeing charity Education Support, said Perry's death had "galvanised headteachers. It's very personal for headteachers when one of their tribe has passed away in such tragic circumstances."

The charity's 2022 teacher wellbeing index showed 84 per cent of school leaders said they were stressed.

But it is not just school leaders who are disillusioned. A Teacher Tapp survey this month asked respondents on a scale of 1-9 (1 is the most negative) how they felt about Ofsted.

Sixty-one per cent responded between 1-3. This compared with 38 per cent in March 2018 and June 2019.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said Ofsted had a "crucial role" to play in upholding standards. "It provides independent, up-to-date evaluations on the quality of education, safeguarding, and leadership that parents greatly rely on to give them confidence in choosing the right school for their child."

EXPLAINER: OFSTED

Thinking about an Ofsted boycott? Read on...

Here's what you need to know on the rules and law relating to boycotting Ofsted ...

1 OBSTRUCTING INSPECTIONS IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

Under section 10 of the Education Act 2005, the chief inspector has at "all reasonable times" a right of entry to the premises.

This relates to section 5 (graded) or 8 (ungraded) inspections – the most common. Chief inspectors can delegate their powers and rights to inspectors.

To "intentionally obstruct" this right is an offence that carries a maximum fine of £2,500. It could also go on to criminal records, according to education support service Edapt.

Schools can request inspection deferrals, but they are only granted in exceptional circumstances.

2 WHAT COUNTS AS 'INTENTIONALLY OBSTRUCTING'?

Guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service states that for an inspector to have been obstructed, their "work must have been made more difficult by the defendant".

The obstruction must have been "wilful", with the defendant having acted deliberately, knowing and "intending" their act to obstruct the inspector.

The inspector also must have been engaged in "functions" related to the inspection at the moment of their obstruction.

"This indicates that it is not just physical obstruction that is relevant here, but rather an intentional disruption of the inspection process," said Edapt.

3 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HEADS?

As well as committing a criminal offence, the Edapt guidance says leaders should consider the consequences for their employment.

"It is likely that refusal of this sort could be deemed to be a breach of contract with their employer as it is likely that any contract would have an implied term to support any Ofsted process," the company said in a blog.

As a result, such conduct could be deemed as "gross misconduct" leading to suspension or dismissal.

Where a criminal offence is committed, the threshold for a gross misconduct is more likely to be met.

And leaders are also told to be wary of posting their intentions publicly, including via social media.

"This could lead to an argument being made that this could bring the school or employer into disrepute," said Edapt.

4... AND FOR TEACHERS?

Teachers joined in what looked like silent protest outside John Rankin school in Berkshire this week, while others used social media to back their action.

A survey of more than 9,000 teachers by Teacher Tapp yesterday showed 46 per cent would "strongly support" headteachers boycotting Ofsted and refusing to let inspectors enter schools.

Legally speaking, teachers are not liable for decisions made by their head. But there could be consequences if they support the action.

Teachers could be seen to be following instructions from their managers, but such a protection may not apply where they underline their own intentions through either social media or taking part in a protest.

It is also worth noting that collective action, in the form of a protest or boycott, could be deemed as "action short of a strike".

Where taken without an official ballot, this could be deemed as "unofficial" industrial action, meaning legal protections would not apply.

Those taking part, according to Edapt, could be in breach of employment contracts.

5 SUPPORT COULD ALSO FALL FOUL OF MISCONDUCT RULES

The teachers' standards state teachers "must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities".

Breaches can lead to referral to the Teaching Regulation Authority. The body oversees professional conduct hearings and can ban teachers found guilty of misconduct.

Those not directly involved in any boycott may need to be cautious when expressing their support, according to Edapt. It warned "inappropriate actions could be deemed to bring your employer into disrepute or potentially in breach of the teachers' standards".



INVESTIGATION: OFSTED

Ofsted aware of 'gaming' school inspection alerts, but nothing done

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted stands accused of being "complicit in gaming its own inspection system" after admitting it was aware of schemes that give schools advance notice of visits.

But it refuses to say if it has ever taken any action.

A *Schools Week* investigation has uncovered evidence that schools have been able to predict inspections for at least a decade by monitoring web traffic.

It exposes a loophole in a system that is built on the principle that schools should only be told about inspections at most the day before they happen.

Robin Walker, the former schools minister and chair of the education committee, said such monitoring "risks creating a two-tier system that dodges the need for constructive scrutiny of how schools are run".

Ofsted activity tracked online

We revealed this week how a website company developed an algorithm to track Ofsted activity online, a move described as "highly unethical".

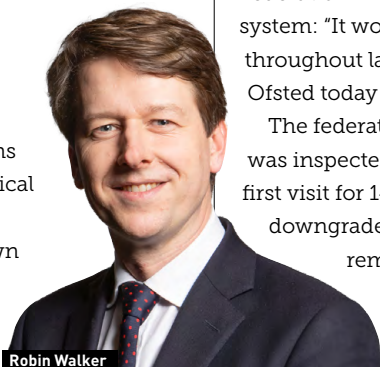
But the use of such practices is widespread and an open secret in schools.

Walker said inspections were "intended to create a level playing field between schools, regardless of their location or type".

"Use of this technology clearly undermines that principle and is therefore not in the interests of children or the schools themselves."

Ofsted this week admitted it was "aware of these types of systems and companies". But it refused to say how long for, or whether it had ever taken any action.

Colin Richards, a former senior inspector, warned that "in saying nothing in public or doing nothing to prevent it in practice means it has been condoning ethical malpractice and has been complicit in gaming its own inspection system – and maybe still is".



Robin Walker



'This feels very much against the spirit of the system'

'It shows high-stakes nature of inspections'

Ofsted staff look up key information documents on school websites up to two weeks before inspections.

Greenhouse School Websites' new algorithm, which alerts leaders to a "pattern of behaviour typically associated with an Ofsted visit", was recently rolled out to more than 2,000 schools.

The company acknowledged schools receiving its alerts would not "necessarily" receive an inspection, adding: "We know that Ofsted undertakes regular desktop research."

However, it also published what it claimed was an email from Prestbury St Mary's Federation in Cheltenham, saying of the system: "It works! I received your texts throughout last week and we have an Ofsted today and tomorrow."

The federation's infant school was inspected in early February, its first visit for 14 years. The school was downgraded from 'outstanding', but remained 'good' in all areas. It declined to comment.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the school leaders' union ASCL, said the "fact that there is perceived to be an appetite for this technology ... is a reflection of the incredibly high-stakes nature of Ofsted inspection".

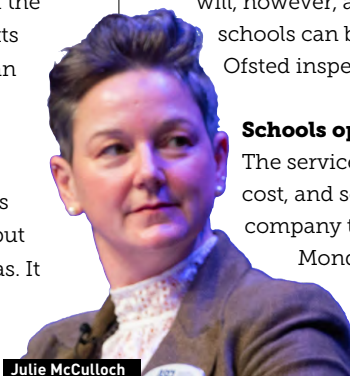
Graham Miles of Greenhouse said schools had asked the company to "help make sense of website analytics to understand whether their website's compliance is being checked or monitored".

The email alert is "intended to be a helpful guide if schools wish to use it", but "of course, the system will also highlight any user that follows these patterns of behaviour", including school staff.

"We know that good school leadership, governance and management practices will, however, always be the only way schools can be prepared for an Ofsted inspection."

Schools opt out of alerts

The service is provided at no extra cost, and schools can opt out. The company told *Schools Week* on Monday that no school had, but several told us they



Julie McCulloch

Continued on next page

INVESTIGATION: OFSTED

had.

Jackie Rose, the interim head of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy in Dewsbury, said she did not realise the schools had opted in. It had now sent an email "to say we do not want to be any part of an early warning system".

"I think this is highly unethical and we would hope that we are always 'Ofsted ready'."

Greenhouse's clients include several prominent academy trusts, including the David Ross Education Trust (DRET), the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (BWMAT) and Chiltern Learning Trust.

DRET said it had "not received any information that has informed Ofsted inspections and has opted out of the service". BWMAT said it was "not aware that we had been opted into this system" and had also withdrawn. Chiltern also said it only found out about the system "recently" and had opted-out.

Mark Lehain, a former DfE special adviser who is now head of education at the Centre for Policy Studies, said there was an "ethical dimension to this – having this kind of possible insight for a fee, when others don't, feels very much against the spirit of the system".

Practice is 'widespread'

But a senior leader school leader said the practice was widespread.

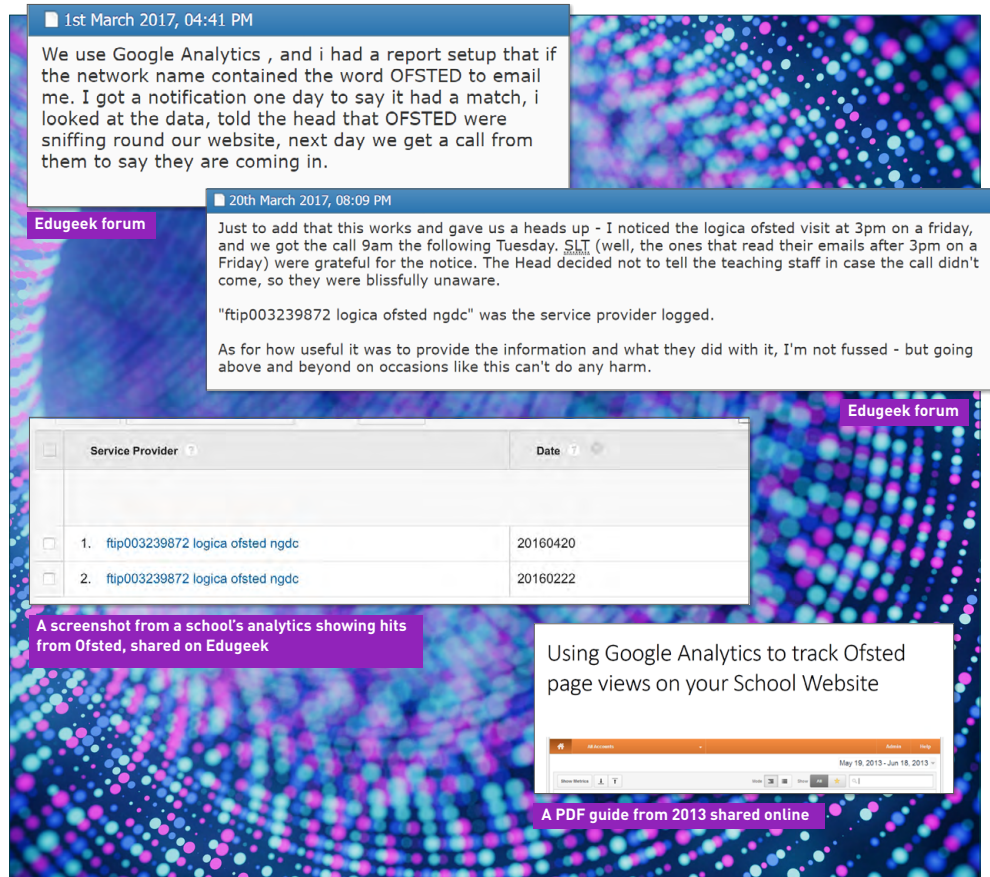
"In all the schools I've worked with, the IT team monitors hits on pages of the school website when the school is in the Ofsted window," they said.

They "didn't see it as unethical at all. Any headteacher would surely use any means at their disposal to prepare for Ofsted as effectively as possible. It's not an exact science, however, and I know of several 'false alarms'."

Multiple sources said Cleverbox offered a similar service. However, the company denied this when approached by *Schools Week*.

Schools "have access to their own Google Analytics dashboard which they could, in principle, use to monitor document downloads", the company said.

Its flagship client is the Harris Federation, one of England's largest academy trusts. Other customers include the Inspiration



Trust and The Kennal Academies Trust (TKAT).

Neither Harris nor Inspiration responded to questions about whether they had used the service.

TKAT said the company "has not offered us, and we have not asked Cleverbox to provide a service that gives alerts about possible Ofsted inspections".

Schools set up their own systems

But leaders don't need to pay a website provider. Discussions on school IT professionals forum Edugeek about setting up an "Ofsted early warning" system date back as far as 2015.

Posts suggest schools could monitor for visits by using Ofsted's internet service provider.

In 2016, a user even shared a PDF guide to "Using Google Analytics to track Ofsted page views on your school website".

By creating a "custom report", the explainer told users they could monitor views by service provider and search for "Ofsted". The school was approached for comment.

In 2017, forum users also reported receiving hits with service providers listed

as "logica ofsted ngdc" and "logica ofsted aviaton hse".

This facility has since been removed from Google Analytics, with schools now focusing on detecting multiple downloads at the same time.

One post advised users to "look for traffic to key pages, eg policies, as these will be checked by Ofsted. They will normally be the lowest traffic pages so easier to spot the sudden increase..."

While some saw an immediate result, others warned of a "red herring" after traffic spikes were not followed by an inspection.

One user said: "I'm not saying it's ironclad proof ... but I am saying it can't hurt to check if you know you are due an inspection. If anything it will make sure you are semi-ready should you get the call."

Greenhouse's new service has also been discussed on the forum this month.

One user said their Ofsted early warning system "was bang on the money", giving two hours' extra notice.

Asked if this was enough, they said "our headteacher and SLT appreciated the heads-up, especially on this day where our head was absent so our deputy was more prepared to take the call."

INVESTIGATION: PLACES

Free schools to open in areas with growing surplus places

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

About three in five planned free schools are planned to open in areas with rising numbers of surplus pupil places, analysis by *Schools Week* has found.

And half of mainstream primary and secondary schools in the “pre-opening” stage are in areas where more than 10 per cent of places will be “spare” next academic year.

Council bosses warn the findings “demonstrate the need for a more coherent system with local authorities at its centre with strategic oversight”.

But school leaders behind free school projects, some of which have been in the pipeline for more than six years, said the figures did not tell the whole story, with housebuilding expected to drive demand in specific neighbourhoods.

‘We’ll cancel free schools when need not there’

Pupil numbers are expected to shrink 12 per cent over the next decade as a population bulge from the 2000s baby boom moves out of the school system.

Primary numbers are already in freefall and set to drop by 760,000 in 10 years. This is already putting pressure on schools, particularly in areas such as London where emigration is making things worse.

Andrew McCully, the Department for Education’s director-general, recently told MPs the department looked at every free school project, “even though an initial commitment may have been given”, to ensure the places were needed.

“We have continued to take free school projects out of the system, to cancel them, when the need is not there.”

Schools Week cross-referenced the free schools “pipeline” with government predictions of spare places in 2021 and 2023.

Of 87 planned mainstream primary and secondary free schools, 54 were in areas where the number of spare places was predicted to rise this year.

Forty-four were in areas where more than 10 per cent of places would be surplus in 2023.



Charlotte Pearce Cornish



‘Place-planning doesn’t always tell full story’

In Hartlepool, about 20 per cent of primary places will be spare in 2023, up from 14.3 per cent in 2021.

Plans for St Joseph’s C of E Primary School were approved in 2016. Its proposed sponsor, the Melrose Learning Trust, hopes to open the school in 2025.

Roger Ward, the trust’s chief executive, warned that “pupil-place planning calculations do not always correlate with the local situation”.

The school will be based in the expanding Wynard Estate, where “thousands of new houses are being built. It’s a rapidly growing estate; hopefully the school will grow alongside it”.

In the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, the estimate of spare places has been revised up from 13.5 per cent in 2021 to 15.9 per cent in 2023.

Greatfields and Mallard primaries, sponsored by Partnership Learning, have been in the pipeline since 2016.

Roger Leighton, the trust’s chief executive, said it recently withdrew a proposed secondary school “when it became clear that there would not be sufficient demand until 2030”.

But because primary provision must be “very localised”, looking at council-level vacancy figures “does not work for primary-place planning”.

The primary schools would be in neighbourhoods with “significant” new housebuilding.

Fords View Primary School was supposed in

open in Dagenham this September. It will now open in 2027, 11 years after it was approved.

TVI Learning, the school’s sponsor, was not the original bidder but took over the project. Paul Jordan, its chief executive, said issues such as Brexit, the 2019 election and the Covid pandemic had contributed to the delay.

‘Need more coherent system’

Premier Advisory holds a government contract to support free school bids. Charlotte Pearce Cornish, its director, said the challenge came when there were delays to opening once the school was approved, “which can mean that local demographics have changed”.

Steve Crocker, the president of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services, said *Schools Week*’s findings were “not surprising, but they demonstrate the need for a more coherent system with local authorities at its centre with strategic oversight”.

“Too often, we see free schools opening up miles from where they are needed, placing further pressure on already stretched transport budgets, or subsequently closing costing millions to the public purse and disrupting education for pupils.”

A Local Government Association spokesperson warned there was a “risk that opening new schools where there are already surplus places could destabilise local education systems”.

The DfE said it “continuously reviews the viability of all schools within the free schools pipeline and they only open when we are confident that they will be good, viable, sustainable and successful”.



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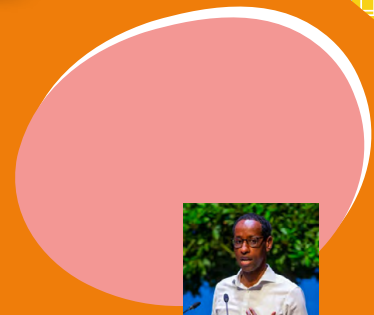


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SPEED READ: RECRUITMENT

Recruitment slides even further, NFER finds

The government's woeful teacher recruitment numbers are getting worse, the annual labour market report from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has found.

1 PRIMARY TEACHER RECRUITMENT PLUMMETS ...

The NFER used Department for Education data on ITT applications up to February 27 this year to predict where things might stand once recruitment closes.

As the department is yet to publish its targets for this year, forecasts are based on last year and "thus subject to some level of uncertainty", the report said.

But the study found just 79 per cent of the primary recruitment target is set to be met – a drop of 14 percentage points since last year when it was missed for the first time since 2019.

The report noted that as primary recruitment have historically tended to be close to target, last year's figure "demonstrates the high degree of recruitment challenge" facing schools.

Jack Worth, the foundation's school workforce lead and co-author of the report, described the figures as "alarming".

2 ... AND BIG SHORTFALL IN SECONDARY SUBJECTS

In 2022-23, only 59 per cent of the overall secondary target was met. The individual target for 13 out of 17 secondary subjects was also missed.

The NFER forecasted that 14 out of 17 subject targets were on course to be missed this year. Of those, nine would be 20 per cent or more below target, including physics, computing, design & technology, business studies and modern foreign languages (MFL).

Only biology, history, classics and physical education were predicted to meet targets.

Niamh Sweeney, the deputy general secretary of the National Education Union, said it showed that the recruitment crisis was "entrenched".

3 RESTORING BURSARIES HAS IMPROVED THINGS

Higher teacher training bursaries for many subjects "appear to be having a somewhat positive effect", the report said.

As of February, the number of placed applicants in subjects in which bursaries were boosted were up 13 per cent on the previous year.

But placed applicants in subjects with no rise were 10 per cent lower.

4 PHYSICS SET FOR BIGGEST SHORTFALL (AGAIN)

According to the study, just 19 per cent of the target for physics teachers would be met this year, which was little changed from 2022-23, when 17 per cent was met.

But the report underlined that targets – based on the teacher workforce model (TWM) – took account of previous under-recruitment.

The target for physics, which often had the lowest recruitment, had doubled since 2020-21.

And while improvements had been made in meeting the maths target, the foundation said this was because it had been reduced – in reality the number of recruits had fallen.

Last year, 90 per cent of the target was met and the NFER predicted the picture to be similar this year.

DfE data shows 12 per cent of maths lessons are currently taught by a teacher without a relevant degree-level qualification.

5 TEACHER VACANCIES DOUBLE SINCE PRE-PANDEMIC

In February 2023, teacher vacancies were 93 per cent higher than at the same point in the year before the pandemic and 37 per cent higher than in 2021-22.

The NFER stressed these were "at least somewhat related to previous trends in leaving rates".

In 2020-21, when leaving rates were low and recruitment was high, teacher vacancies dipped compared with before the pandemic.

"Along with substantially lower recruitment ... higher leaving rates will exacerbate existing teacher shortages, and likely mean that many schools will continue to struggle with recruitment challenges this year," the report said.

6 JOB BENEFITS NOT KEEPING PACE WITH OTHER SECTORS

Raising teacher starting salaries to £30,000 from September could have a "positive effect" on retention, the report said. But it could be "counterbalanced" by experienced teachers leaving as their earnings deteriorated compared with the wider jobs market.

The report recommended the 2023 pay award, which the DfE has proposed should be 3.5 per cent, should exceed the 4.1 per cent forecasted earnings rise in the wider labour market.

A long-term strategy for improving the competitiveness of teacher pay should also be developed.

The foundation said that in 2021-22 teachers worked on average 4.5 hours more per week than similar graduates.

In the same year, nearly half (44 per cent) of similar graduates reported working mainly from home, up from 15 per cent in 2018-19.

"The lack of availability of home working may therefore represent a threat to the relative attractiveness of teaching," it said.

The experts advising ministers on teacher training reforms review

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Academy chief executives, training providers and the boss of Oak National Academy will advise ministers on their review of teacher training reforms.

The Department for Education has appointed an “external steering group” to review the initial teacher training (ITT) and early career frameworks (ECF), launched in 2019.

The group is made up of seven experts (see below) who are “closely familiar” with both reforms, as well as the “underpinning evidence”.

They will help to “shape the work of the review, scrutinising, supporting and challenging our thinking”, the DfE said.

They will also contribute “to specific review activity, including performing an editorial role following the drafting of revised framework content”.

Two of the seven members sat on both advisory bodies to actually draw up the ECF and ITT frameworks, while another two sat on one of those bodies. A fifth, Chris Paterson, was working for the Department for Education overseeing both reforms at the time they were rolled out.

Professor Sam Twiselton, director of Sheffield Institute of Education and a member of the steering group, said the sector had “learned a lot about what is working well and what needs some adjustment. This is a great opportunity to address this”.

Implementation of the early career framework – a two-year induction rolled out nationwide in 2021 – has been a bumpy one, with major workload concerns.

Schools Week revealed how some mentors worked weekends to complete their training. Some schools said the reforms also made them consider hiring fewer early career teachers.

The review could look at any overlap between frameworks and whether ITT core content needed more emphasis on special needs.

The Department for Education’s SEND and AP improvement plan pledged to look at how ITT and ECF could “equip new teachers to be more confident in meeting the needs” of children with special needs.

A separate external reference group will support the review.



The DfE said it would “maintain regular levels of engagement with other stakeholders, including trade unions, to seek their views and input as the review progresses”.

Simon Knight, the joint headteacher at Frank Wise special school in Oxfordshire and a reference group member, said aspiring specialist teachers “find it hard to get their training needs met as well as they could be”.

“I am hopeful that this review will provide a forum for those challenges to be discussed, and

for us to collectively reflect on how we can better ensure that the system serves all those entering the profession successfully, irrespective of which part of it they are working in.”

The DfE has not yet explained how it selected people for each group. Several members on both panels appeared on the department’s original expert advisory groups for the ITT and ECF.

The government is also seeking new research to improve and refresh both the frameworks.

In a call for evidence, published on Wednesday, the DfE said it planned to revise the frameworks so they were “more closely combined”.

Academic researchers, education experts and charities have been invited to submit “recent, relevant and high-quality” research that could inform amendments.

But the government said it did not expect “this will involve a fundamental rewrite”.

The call for evidence closes on April 21, with the DfE saying it will then issue a response with information about the evidence received and how it will be used.

External steering group members

- Reuben Moore, programmes executive director, National Institute of Teaching
- Marie Hamer, executive director, Ambition Institute
- Professor Sam Twiselton, director, Sheffield Institute of Education
- Chris Paterson, director of impact, Education Endowment Foundation
- Richard Gill, chair, Teaching School Hubs Council
- Matt Hood, interim chief executive, Oak National Academy
- Sir Ian Bauckham, chief executive Tenax Schools Trust, chair of Ofqual and Oak

External reference group members

- Simon Knight, joint headteacher, Frank Wise special school, Oxfordshire
- Stuart Lock, chief executive, Advantage Schools
- Sonia Thompson, headteacher, St Matthew’s C of E teaching and research school, Birmingham
- Lesley Powell, chief executive, North East Learning Trust
- Professor Mark Winterbottom, University of Cambridge’s faculty of education
- Claire Harnden, deputy chief executive, South Farnham Educational Trust
- Caroline Creaby, deputy headteacher, Sandringham School, St Albans
- James Noble-Rogers, chief executive, Universities Council for the Education of Teachers
- Emma Hollis, executive director, National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers
- Anna Trethewey, deputy director, Ofsted
- Katie Gillam, principal of Paddington Academy, west London
- Sue Cronin, director of accreditation and quality assurance, Liverpool Hope University

College group offloads MAT amid compliance review

JESSICA HILL

@JESSJANEHILL

EXCLUSIVE

A leading college group is splitting from its academy trust amid a governance and compliance review by government.

Luminate Education Group is set to hand over control of its four-school academy trust, White Rose, based in Leeds, to a larger neighbouring Multi Academy Trust (MAT), Wellspring.

It is understood the move, sanctioned by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, follows multiple internal and external investigations.

The case shines a light on the challenges college groups face in operating MATs.

Schools Week can reveal that a government review of college-led MATs is underway in a drive for more effective sponsorships.

Following plans in 2021 for savings to be made across the college group and MAT by sharing central services, a two-year strategy was agreed which Luminate said would have “extended and deepened” the relationship with its trust.

This involved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which included the ongoing line management of trust chief executive Andrew Whittaker by Luminate’s chief Colin Booth.

Some members of White Rose’s leadership are understood to have been unhappy with the direction of travel agreed.

Whittaker then made a series of strongly denied allegations over a 15-month period against Luminate to external bodies including Ofsted, Leeds City Council and the ESFA. They resulted in several lengthy investigations.

Luminate said the allegations were “thoroughly investigated by various organisations” and found to be “unsubstantiated”.

They claimed the “long and vexatious complaints made by [Whittaker] have caused significant distress and upset”.

The relationship between Luminate and White Rose was formally suspended by the ESFA in January 2022.

Whittaker was unable to respond to this article for legal reasons.

The ESFA carried out a governance and compliance review into White Rose between March and June 2022 and raised its concerns in



a letter.

However, Booth said that the review did not allow Luminate as the sponsor to submit evidence, a complaint that was upheld by the DfE.

Luminate believes therefore that the review is “not complete” and that the letter issued to White Rose “cannot be relied upon at this stage”.

White Rose also launched an investigation into serious concerns about Whittaker’s behaviour, which led to his suspension in September.

White Rose’s trustees and members are understood to be working closely with the Department for Education, the local authority and Luminate to address issues related to the recent turmoil.

When White Rose was created, the college group chief was made both a member and trustee of the MAT, in line with DfE guidelines at the time.

But in March 2022, Booth stepped down as a director of White Rose – he had been expected to continue until September 2023.

The move followed changes to the academy handbook stating the department’s “strong preference” for “a majority of members to be independent of the board of trustees”, and “for no other employees to serve as trustees”.

Luminate is part of a government-led Pathfinder review into the structural challenges for college groups posed by ESFA rules around MATs.

Luminate – and several other college group leaders involved in the review – take particular issue with handbook rules on transactions with

individuals or organisations, including parent college groups, related to trusts.

Luminate claims the rules make close partnership between colleges and schools working “more difficult than it should be” and that the rules are not “an appropriate way to treat two educational charities trying to work together to deliver benefits for students and better value for public money”.

“We think that the rules ... have not yet caught up with the much more positive and supportive views of the minister,” the college group said.

“The ESFA rules add unnecessary bureaucracy and cost to what are positive arrangements that provide real and clear benefits for students.”

An application to transfer White Rose was submitted to the DfE’s regional director, who this month deferred the decision to allow more information to be gathered.

Wellspring, also a college-led MAT, has 29 schools. Its sponsor, Barnsley College, appointed the original members of the MAT’s board and has the right to appoint directors, but the college’s senior leadership team take more of a backseat role.

Luminate said: “It is DfE policy to encourage all single and small MATs to either grow or merge to form larger MATs that then have more and better resources to support their schools and students.”

They are “taking action” to ensure the trust is “part of a larger and strong MAT for the future. The decision was made collaboratively and not based on a specific recommendation outside of DfE policy.”

Trusts queue to open AP free schools

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Leading academy trusts are bidding to open their own alternative provision free schools to reduce exclusions and keep more children in mainstream education.

Delta Academies Trust is vying for four northern free schools to add to its two "good" rated APs, while Unity Schools Partnership in Suffolk wants to open its first AP.

Meanwhile, Dudley Academies Trust and its sponsor Dudley College of Technology want to open a new AP that will offer key stage 4 vocational courses as well as "turnaround" placements to get pupils back into mainstream school.

Ministers will now decide which of the 43 applications will be successful as part of its £2.6 billion capital investment to open up to 60 new special and AP free schools.

All bids have to be "partnerships" and involve at least one council.

The schools form part of the Department for Education's SEND and AP improvement plan to deliver a more inclusive system and prevent exclusions. Ministers say that currently a "high-quality" AP offer "does not exist everywhere".

The 53-school Delta wants to open three AP schools in Barnsley, Calderdale and Kirklees for 8 to 16-year-olds. A fourth in Stockton would cater for 11 to 16-year-olds. The four schools would offer 450 new places.

Its current Doncaster school, St Wilfrid's Academy, is part of the DfE's AP specialist task force programme. It pilots putting expert staff – such as youth and family workers – in schools.

Jo Pittard, AP executive principal at Delta, said Doncaster AP had helped to reduce permanent exclusions and reintegrate children back into mainstream education.

"We believe that, as educationists, we should offer a high-quality educational provision to support children who at some point in their adolescent life are vulnerable and often in



complex circumstances, that are not of their making."

Unity Schools Partnership wants to open AP for 7 to 16-year-olds in Suffolk. The area had a permanent exclusion rate of five in every 10,000 pupils in autumn 2019 – above the national average of four.

Tim Coulsdon, Unity's chief executive and a former regional schools commissioner, said children who attend AP "often have to travel out of their local area".

Dudley Academies Trust and Dudley College want to open a 125-capacity AP – called Horizon – for 4 to 16-year-olds in September 2025.

If successful, 70 places would cater for key stage 4 vocational subjects in engineering, arts, construction, business and ICT and health and sciences. Twenty-five places are already offered on the college's 14 to 16 pathway.

The trust said this "bespoke" curriculum – taught by college staff – would "add considerable value" to local provision and offer pupils the chance to "dip their toe" in potential career paths.

It also would offer key stage 2 and 3 "turnaround placements" of six to 12 weeks, including support from in-house counsellors, to get pupils back into mainstream. Staff would also support teachers in local mainstream schools to keep

"challenging" children in their classrooms.

Jo Higgins, the Dudley trust chief executive, said APs tended to commission places at local colleges, whereas its model meant the college had direct involvement.

"It provides us with the opportunity to develop a blueprint for AP nationally around a powerful engaging curriculum. We believe it could do something really powerful for this borough."

In Worcestershire, Severn Academies Educational Trust wants to open The Phoenix Academy for 11 to 16-year-olds. It will develop "goals" for reintegrating into schools through a "rigorous induction and assessment process".

Adrian McLean, director of inclusion and safeguarding, said it hoped this would "remove the blockage on AP places" where students were referred and placed "indefinitely".

The Department for Education will prioritise applications in areas with no 'good' or 'outstanding' AP schools, or where no AP schools exist.

Applicants must also show the free school would reduce a council's high-needs deficits and "contribute" to the wider aims of the SEND and AP reforms.

Successful bids will be announced in early autumn.



Jo Pittard

See feature, page 19

OPINION: IN PARLIAMENT

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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LORD JOHNSON OF MARYLEBONE

Chair of the House of Lords committee on education for 11 to 16-year-olds

How can we equip young people to thrive in the jobs of tomorrow?

Secondary education needs to change to meet the UK's digital skills gap, says Lord Johnson

Secondary education in England is facing a number of challenges and opportunities. There have been multiple calls for change in recent months, from bodies such as the Times Education Commission, the HMC and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

The newly established House of Lords committee on education for 11 to 16-year-olds will build on the findings of these reports, looking at whether the current secondary curriculum and assessment model effectively prepares young people for work. We are keen to hear from teachers, school leaders and assessment experts to explore what positive changes can be made.

In the coming years, job opportunities will be transformed by emerging technologies and our transition to net zero. Yet even today, according to the government's latest UK digital strategy, only 48 per cent of people leaving full-time education have the advanced digital skills required by employers. Figures suggest that

the UK would have to fill more than 750,000 digital jobs and train about 2.3 million people to address the current digital skills gap.

It seems remarkable in this context that only 1.4 per cent of UK students studied GCSE computer science in 2020. There was also a 40 per cent decline in GCSE entries in creative subjects between 2010-2021, and a 70 per cent decline in entries in design and technology. Subjects such as these are key to helping young people develop the creativity, adaptability and problem-solving skills they will need to thrive.

What's more, startlingly few young people are taking up technical career paths. While the enhanced Baker clause requirements introduced in January will help to increase pupils' awareness of technical and vocational options, further steps must be taken to enhance the status of these routes.

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) model represents what Nick Gibb, the schools minister, calls a "knowledge-rich curriculum". Yet studies suggest that it is part of what is driving the declining number of entries in creative and technical subjects: in 2021 the House of Lords



Few young people are taking up technical careers

youth unemployment committee reported "overwhelming evidence" that the EBacc and accompanying Progress 8 performance measure had "contributed to a significant decline" in their uptake.

The effectiveness of the GCSE model has also been in the spotlight. Recent reports have highlighted the pressure that high-stakes exams at 16 place on young people and teachers, arguing that teaching to the test is removing depth and creativity from learning. There have also been calls to reform Ofsted and the wider school accountability system, to address the criticism that benchmarks such as Progress 8 and school league tables are leading to the "tail wagging the dog".

We want to discover what changes could be made to enable us to teach young people to become confident, creative and technically able contributors to a digital and green world. To explore these questions, the new committee in the Lords will examine the interplay between curriculum, assessment and accountability in the 11-16 phase of

secondary school, looking at what lessons can be learned to shape future reform.

The inquiry will focus on key areas including:

- The range and breadth of subjects in the 11-16 curriculum
- The effectiveness of GCSEs, and potential alternative forms of assessment
- Innovative practice in England, and from the devolved nations and overseas
- How the school accountability system affects the 11-16 curriculum
- The role technology can play in the 11-16 phase

We are keen to listen to and learn from the views and experiences of teachers, school leaders and education providers, and would encourage them to respond to our call for evidence, which is open until Sunday April 30. Further details can be found on the committee's website.

NEWS IN BRIEF

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Guidance due on trans pupils

Long-awaited government guidance on supporting schools with pupils who identify as transgender will be published this spring.

Ministers were warned by Robin Walker, the chair of the education committee chair, there was an "urgent need" for help for teachers and parents.

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, confirmed draft guidance would be published "in the spring" as part of a public consultation. The finalised guidance would be published later this year.

"I appreciate the demand for this guidance is significant. However, this is such a complex and sensitive area, I am sure you will understand that it is incredibly important that



we take the time to get it right."

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, has said it would set out schools' legal duties and aim to provide "clear information to support their consideration of how to respond to transgender issues".

Halt on new school places

Plummeting pupil numbers will wipe out the need for the equivalent of 80 per cent of the new school places created since 2010, analysis of government data suggests.

Statistics published on Thursday reveal 1,161,976 school places have been created since 2010, most of them in primary schools. They were needed to accommodate a baby boom in the 2000s.

But the bulge is starting to move out of the school system, and the latest government pupil number predictions anticipate the population of primary and secondary schools will fall by 935,753 between 2022 and 2032.

There are more than a million unfilled places in primary and secondary schools at present, although the government said this could be evidence of councils planning ahead and new schools filling up from year 7.

The rate of new primary places has also "slowed dramatically" in response to the decline in the birth rate between 2012 and 2020.



PE premium carry-over extended

Primary schools will again be able to carry over unspent PE and sport premium funding this academic year.

During the pandemic the Department for Education allowed schools to roll-over unused grant cash, acknowledging it was difficult for schools "to spend their funding appropriately".



Ministers have confirmed the exception will also apply to the 2022-23 academic year "given the continued effect that managing recovery has had on schools".

But after this academic year, it would resume recovering any underspend at the end of each year.

Before the end of the summer term it said it would launch a new digital reporting tool to "make it easier for schools to meet grant requirements in relation to publishing a report of spend".

The cash is meant to encourage the development of "health, active lifestyles" for young children.

AQA dominance of GCSEs grows for another year

England's largest exam board AQA continues to dominate the GCSE market.

The market share of rival boards OCR and Pearson slumped again last academic year, according to Ofqual's analysis of the qualifications sector.

While the market has remained stable, AQA's share has risen slightly every year since 2017-18, from 61.1 per cent to 62.4 per

cent last year.

AQA, which has the largest market share in eight of the 10 most popular subjects, has hiked prices for this year's GCSEs and A-levels by between 5 and 17 per cent - but still has the lowest prices overall.

OCR's market share has dropped from 7.6 to 6.7 per cent and Pearson from 25.4 to 24.7 per cent.

Welsh exam board WJEC - which some English schools use - has seen a rise from 5.9 to 6.2 per cent over the past four years.

AQA's dominance in the A-level market has risen back to 2017-18 levels, at 46.3 per cent.

Pearson has also risen from 24.7 to 26.5 per cent, while OCR has dropped from 22.7 to 20.7 per cent.

Trust leaders to look at 'what works'

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

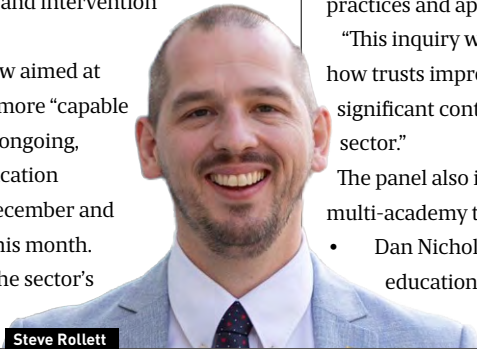
The Confederation of School Trusts has launched a wide-ranging inquiry into “what works” in academy trusts.

Steve Rollett, the confederation’s deputy chief executive, said developing professional capacity for school and trust improvement was “the responsibility of the sector, which should be supported but not prescribed by government”.

It comes only a few months after the government formally dropped plans for new academy standards and intervention powers.

A regulatory review aimed at making the system more “capable of improvement” is ongoing, however, with publication promised first by December and now by the end of this month.

Rollett will chair the sector’s



Steve Rollett

own year-long inquiry (see members below), which will aim to create resources on how to improve trusts.

It will aim to draw on expertise from not only experts but also trusts of “different sizes, geographies and operating models”.

Rollett said: “This inquiry is about understanding what works and why, and how that can be applied so that everyone benefits.

“We don’t believe there is a single model of how to run or improve trusts, but we do think there is more we can collectively know about trust improvement, with insight into concrete practices and approaches.

“This inquiry will not be the last word on how trusts improve but we hope it will make a significant contribution and be of benefit to the sector.”

The panel also includes senior leaders at eight multi-academy trusts:

- Dan Nicholls, executive director of education, Cabot Learning Federation

- Dawn Haywood, chief executive, Windsor Academy Trust
- Jennese Alozie, chief executive, University of Chichester Academy Trust
- Jenny Thompson, executive director, Dixons Academies Trust
- Lekha Sharma, school improvement lead, Avanti Schools Trust
- Rob Tarn, chief executive, Northern Education Trust,
- Warren Carratt, chief executive Nexus Multi-Academy Trust
- Will Smith, chief executive Greenshaw Learning Trust
- Professor Becky Francis, chief executive Education Endowment Foundation
- Ed Vainker, chief executive, Reach Foundation
- Dr Kate Chhatwal, chief executive, Challenge Partners
- Rob Coe, director of research and development, Evidence Based Education
- Tom Rees, executive director, Ambition Institute

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

Professional development ‘fragmented’, report finds

Many primary schools see professional development as “fragmented or incoherent”, with academisation and training reforms leaving “cold spots”.

A University of Nottingham report published on Thursday said government efforts to tackle these issues – through its teaching school hubs, opportunity areas and now education investment areas – had not been “comprehensively evaluated”.

The authors found some schools collaborate locally on continuing professional development and learning (CPDL), and hubs are widely used – but other areas are “balkanised”.

The report, “Local learning landscapes: exploring coherence, equity and quality in teacher professional development in England”, is based on 82 interviews with primary leaders, maths leads and teachers about the use of maths hubs in three areas.

It said the “roll-back” of council-led offers since academisation left England’s system “fragmented”.

“Previously strong local clusters have commonly splintered, as schools join different

MATs,” the report said.

The report also questions whether “greater coherence within MATs will lead to greater incoherence between them”, even if it benefits individual MATs.

While some MATs collaborate or sell courses externally, the system risks “encouraging a model of ‘winners and losers”.

The authors analysed primaries’ engagement with a maths hub in a post-industrial town, a “shire” and a city. They found the CPDL landscape was “fragmented or incoherent” in all three.

The town’s landscape was “balkanised”. “The roll-back of a previously dominant LA, the ending of central government funding for local CPDL offers, the closure of an influential teaching school and the absence of any strong locality-wide partnership arrangement led to a weakly coupled system”.

Schools in non-local MATs were “required to sever existing links with the maths hub”.

Yet in the city, researchers found a strategic “city-wide approach” to professional development, with local trust and council

leaders, the maths hub and teaching school hub working together.

The rural area also showed “a level of cohesion” because of the council’s “continuing presence” and local heads creating a subscription network that connected schools to CPDL providers. But the researchers noted its reliance on a former head chairing the network.

The report backs replicating dozens of existing “locality partnerships” of schools, and a “clear expectation” MATs engage with local hubs and trusts.

It also floats Ofsted inspecting local CPDL, or central and local government publishing local data dashboards.

Co-author Toby Greany added: “We’ve shown coldspots still exist – and that a national approach is problematic if it assumes everywhere’s the same.”

But Steve Rollett, the deputy chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the pre-academy system was “more atomised ... than some choose to remember”.

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Feature
 never give up.
JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



Inside an AP specialist turnaround taskforce

Jessica Hill spends a day with pupils on the turnaround programme of a north London PRU, which is providing short term support for lasting change

Thirteen-year-old Maria* used to turn up at her pupil referral unit in the mornings already drunk on vodka. She had slipped through the cracks in the support system. Her mum had learning difficulties, and her stepdad, who had fathered her sister's baby, was molesting her. Niki Panayiodou, a SENCO at Orchardside School in Enfield, north London, was the first professional

in Maria's life to advocate on her behalf. She compiled evidence to bring Maria's case to the attention of social workers, and to get her an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The day before Panayiodou gave birth, she attended a complex needs panel calling for Maria to be placed in a therapeutic home for sexually abused girls. The insights she gleaned through her experiences with Maria became the guiding

principles of the framework Orchardside uses to uncover "complex and co-occurring needs" in pupils who join its short-stay Turnaround provision. So far, the programme, which launched in 2019, has impacted the lives of 96 children.

What is Turnaround provision?
 Turnaround exists at pupil referral units across the country as a means of short-term provision

Feature

for children from mainstream schools that show behavioural difficulties. What makes Orchardside's six-week programme different, according to Celeste Fay, the school's headteacher, is its emphasis on providing specialist support to help diagnose pupils' unmet learning needs.

Each cohort consists of six to eight year 7 and 8 pupils from 19 schools in the borough. They get access to specialist teachers and a higher level teaching assistant, as well as a speech and language therapists – and Panayiodou as SENCO.

The school, a secondary local authority-maintained PRU, is able to provide this support because it has a multi-agency team, including NHS and social care partners, in its buildings as part of a £30 million Department for Education pilot to tackle youth violence.

One in four pupils who go through Orchardside's Turnaround have EHCPs identified, which are then used by their schools to hire in more support staff.

One local secondary was able to secure an EHCP for each of the 12 pupils it has so far sent to Turnaround, enabling it to employ three additional support staff.

Fay spent 22 years in mainstream before moving to Orchardside and her first headship in 2018. She wanted to "do something different" with the Turnaround facility – not just provide "respite" for mainstream schools.

"I don't like that word respite, it's a partnership placement," she says. "The children come here still part of their own school, they wear their own school uniform and there's lots of contact with the school. But we do lots of baseline and speech and language assessments, so pupils get something different, rather than just having had six weeks off down the road."

Fay believes that getting those assessments, or indeed any time with an educational psychologist, is now "really difficult in mainstream schools". Which is why schools "like using the Turnaround referral route"; every one of Orchardside's Turnaround cohorts has a waiting list.

The PRU charges what Fay describes as a "minimal payment" of less than £1,000 per pupil



Celeste Fay

'I don't like that word respite, it's a partnership placement'

for its Turnaround programme, compared to the £200 a day "most other places" charge.

"I wasn't in the business of running this place for any kind of profit," she says.

The number of permanent exclusions in Enfield has dropped since Orchardside's programme began, and Panayiodou believes fewer exclusions means police savings for the "serious youth violence" that happens more often when pupils are permanently excluded.

Changing the narrative of exclusion

Fay left the mainstream sector after seeing "a lot of permanent exclusions" that "never really ended well for those kids".

She was warned at the time that a move to the PRU spelt "career suicide", but she was convinced her knack for "dealing with naughty children" was better suited to that environment.

She cringes as she recalls how, when she was deputy head of a mainstream school in St John's Wood, she used to threaten unruly pupils with "you'll end up in the pupil referral unit". She now looks back and curses herself: "Why in the name of God were you saying that?" Actually, there's

some great stuff that goes on here."

But she acknowledges schools have "got to use something as a stick" and that "of course, there is a place for exclusion".

Turnaround pupils are placed in a separate part of Orchardside to prevent them "absorbing some of the behaviour of the other" pupils. But seeing those pupils from afar "does act as a bit of a deterrent" for them. (Orchardside has a total roll of 48, according to the government's Get Information About Schools website.)

Teaching at Orchardside

Fay says teaching was at "rock bottom" when she arrived. But she brought in teachers on the Difference Leadership programme, which posts high-flying educators into the senior leadership team of pupil referral units for two-year placements. Three such teachers now lead the school's Turnaround provision, which has helped Fay to "raise the bar" of teaching quality at her school.

"I was able to stand up in front of all the old staff and say, 'this person left their job in a private school to come and work here. Their lessons are great'. It turned the tide quite quickly."

Feature

Fay is “proud” that Orchardside “very, rarely” has to rely on agency staff – which is “not indicative across the sector”.

But she admits the needs of the children being taught there are “far more complex” since the pandemic and cost of living crisis. The morning of Schools Week’s visit, a pupil’s mum came in with her baby asking for food vouchers because she had “nothing in her fridge”.

The school day for Turnaround pupils

Fay describes the Turnaround approach as “very therapeutic”. There is an emphasis on teaching interpersonal skills, which Fay claims “sometimes don’t get taught” in schools. “In a class of 30, that’s going to be really hard. But in a room with six or eight children, it’s actually really easy.”

Like all Orchardside pupils, those attending Turnaround are searched with a metal detector when they arrive. But Fay claims it is “not a hostile environment. It’s ‘right, hand over everything, all your weapons’ – we joke about it, and it just becomes part of what we do.”

Pupils and staff make breakfast together, and one pupil is delegated the task of ordering food for break times. Turnaround’s dedicated nonteaching support assistant Sandra listens in to their phone call and “remind[s] them of their manners”.

Fay believes that “a lot of the pupils’ issues are with not being able to share, or antagonising other kids. So being able to interact over little things like, ‘who’s in charge of the washing up?’ Or ‘who’s making the toast?’ is really useful.”

When Schools Week visits, Sandra is teaching pupils a game to show them how to wait their turn to eat. Although “a lot of them have never washed a plate”, she makes it clear they need to clean up after themselves.

“I want them to gain that life skill also to support their families,” she says. “Some of them have siblings with special needs, or things going on at home. If they learn how to do basic things, that’s providing mum or dad with support”

The programme also includes “school readiness time” to prepare pupils for their return to mainstream.



Hynd, one of Orchardside’s turnaround teachers, with two of its students

‘Pupils get something more than six weeks off down the road’

It takes Turnaround pupils some time to open up; for the first week, “the whole room is silent,” Sandra says.

“When some of them come in, they’re so closed up – like they’ve never had a teacher they’ve responded well to or don’t feel part of a school community. Then they come [here] and they feel so much love. You start seeing progress with some of them who wouldn’t even hug you or let you be anywhere near them. As crazy as it can be, it is so rewarding.”

Attendance is “always between 95 and 100 per cent” with some children not wanting to go back to their schools.

But many pupils also leave Orchardside with a newfound appreciation for their school. “A lot of them go back with a different mindset. They realise their teachers aren’t that bad,” says Sandra.

Fay is opening a year 9 Turnaround provision soon, and eventually would like to open it up to key stage 4 pupils too – although that is “trickier” in terms of providing “continuity with the curriculum offer”.

But the programme does not always result in a happy ending. Orchardside’s feedback from



Niki Panayiodou

schools shows that while 100 per cent were happy with the Turnaround service, 20 per cent felt that “some of the strategies suggested” were not “feasible to implement in mainstream school”.

Fay explains how these suggestions could include advising that a pupil “might need to be withdrawn for a few lessons” to focus on set tasks, but this could be “difficult” for schools without the right learning support in place to facilitate that.

“That’s about the policy within the school, which I don’t have any sway over,” she says. “And sometimes that’s why they’re here – because they don’t fit into that policy.”

**Maria’s name has been changed*

Climate crisis special

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



TIM WARNEFORD

Academy funding consultant,
Warneford Consulting

Net zero won't be met without new rules on capital investment

Financial handcuffs make it impossible for the vast school estate to be upgraded to meet pupil needs and net zero targets, writes Tim Warneford

As the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report issues a "final warning" for drastic action to stop global temperature rises at a catastrophic 1.5C, academy schools find themselves on a burning platform. Rising energy costs and depreciating, poorly maintained and heat-inefficient buildings, plus challenging net zero carbon targets, means they assume responsibility for an estate without the financial wherewithal to maintain it.

Despite accounting for more than 50 per cent of the government's estate portfolio, schools are allocated a mere 15 per cent of the total funding pot to maintain it. The DfE itself admits that the current annual capital investment budget of £2 billion falls woefully short of the £15 billion required to transform our aged school estate into a fit-for-purpose learning environment.

The need to produce streamlined energy carbon reports (SECR) and evidence carbon savings via annual account returns places a further burden on multi-academy trusts. As

with standard capital investment funding, the school estate has also had less funding through the public sector decarbonisation scheme compared with other government estates.

If we value the education of future generations, something must change.

We can accept that government funding is finite and that we have a huge financial gap to fill while still looking for ways to maintain our estate and adapt it for future needs. For example, by relaxing the rules contained within the academies handbook for the purposes of borrowing.

Other public sector asset managers are not subject to the same financial restrictions and can access and assess a variety of financial products to assist with the upkeep of their estates.

The academies handbook, the bible by which all trusts must adhere, currently prohibits borrowing.

Typically, auditors and solicitors have also interpreted operating leases and power purchase agreements as loans, although they differ from an asset or finance lease. The absence of any clear direction on the use of these vehicles naturally deters auditors and trusts from any option that is not officially sanctioned by the DfE.



“ The DfE must remove the handcuffs from academies

That's not to say that some pioneering trusts haven't tried to seek clarity and approval for alternative funding routes. For example, Oasis Community Learning Trust – which includes 52 schools – sought approval for the phased delivery of a major solar PV scheme in 14 of its school buildings, to be funded under a power purchase agreement. In the absence of any clear approval, the trust decided to proceed on the provision that the DfE wouldn't formally object.

The permitted use of similar funding mechanisms could help other academies address their own energy-efficiency challenges.

Many schools that do not have the capital expenditure to self-fund LED lighting could make use of an operating lease to pay for such an upgrade. Likewise, power purchase agreements could support solar PV installations.

The DfE could use a number of quick ways to remove the handcuffs from academies and support them to drive down costs and take strides towards net-zero targets. These include:

- Removing the ambiguity in relation to permitted funding routes and terms and conditions by setting out clear guidance in the academies handbook.
- Producing compliant application templates for funders to adhere to.
- Applying the Public Works Loan Board (PLWB) principle and agreeing capped and fixed interest rates for trusts looking to borrow.
- Devising a credit rating system for trusts (similar to the ones agencies such as Moody's and S&P apply to banks).
- Extending the current assessment criteria for awarding condition improvement fund loans, based on percentage turnover, reserves and in-year surplus.

Without a change, the school estate will continue to fall into ever-deeper disrepair and remain off-course on carbon reduction targets. Empowering academy trusts to lead the sector's transformation through responsible investment could be a game-changer.

Climate crisis special

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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MIKE ION

Director of education, Avanti Schools Trust

Curriculum must face up to the inconvenient truth

This week's "final warning" to avoid catastrophic climate change makes it vital that school and trust leaders stop kicking the can on curriculum reform, says Mike Ion

This week's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes clear that the climate clock is ticking. Sadly, the view of many of the young people I talk to in our multi-academy trust is that the adults are "can-kicking" their way towards oblivion. They cannot understand why they are being taught about the Industrial Revolution, soil erosion or the impact of the silicon chip, but not about climate change. They have a point.

Education ministers of recent years have promised that Britain will lead the way in climate and sustainability education by 2030. Great, but how? The main approach appears to be focused on what might be taught in science, geography and citizenship within the national curriculum and through existing GCSEs such as design and technology, food preparation and nutrition, and economics. Our students think this is way too slow, way too

cumbersome and hugely lacking in ambition. I agree.

Our current approach is far too atomised and piecemeal. Our MAT is therefore reviewing its teaching about the need for bold action to combat climate change, about the science that underpins the current emergency and how local, national and international collaboration are a strength and a virtue.

The long-term consequences of our actions today will have a profound impact on the future of our planet. So, in collaboration with some key climate change campaign groups we will be piloting a new "climate emergency curriculum" in 2023-24 with years 5 and 6.

There are several reasons why we believe we should teach climate change studies as a discrete subject. First, it is crucial for children to understand the science behind climate change. They need to learn about its various causes, including human activities that emit greenhouse gases such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation.

Children must also learn about the impact on the environment, including rising sea levels, extreme weather and loss of biodiversity. By understanding the science, children will be better equipped to understand the importance of



Children must understand the science behind climate change

taking action.

Second, it will help children to develop critical thinking skills. As they learn about the complex and interconnected issues related to climate change, they will need to analyse and evaluate different sources of information, including scientific research, media reports and political perspectives. This will help them to become better-informed citizens and to engage in informed discussions and decision-making as they grow older.

Third, it will help them to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the environment. They will learn about the importance of reducing their carbon footprint, conserving energy and resources, and making sustainable choices in their daily lives. They will also learn about the impact of individual actions on the wider community and the environment, and how they can work together to make a positive change.

Our children are excellent

advocates for change, and by learning about climate change they can become ambassadors for sustainability in their families, their local communities, and beyond.

We are not alone. From July, the US state of Connecticut will become one of the first to mandate climate change studies as part of its science curriculum. Most of its public schools already have some form of climate change studies, but mandating it will effectively protect it from budget cuts and climate-denying political views.

One of the really attractive aspects is its focus on local, hands-on investigations and data connections that reflect local needs and action, helping pupils connect the science to their lives.

Our trust exists to help students make the world a better place. There is no greater help we can provide than working with them to develop the knowledge and skills to save our planet. We won't be waiting on the government to catch up with Connecticut to do so.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Dean Ashton and Owen McColgan explain how their two trusts have proven the naysayers wrong and shown what UTC provision can truly deliver for pupils and communities

In 2017 the DfE was ready to call time on UTC Plymouth. Opened in 2013, the school was in special measures with just 78 students. In 2018, despite many advising us not to, Reach South took on the task of turning around what many saw as a sinking ship.

The trust, however, saw an opportunity to raise aspiration by developing pathways linked directly to higher education, advanced apprenticeships and employment with local STEM-focused employers. It saw a new vision for UTC Plymouth.

A not dissimilar picture was emerging at Waterfront UTC in Kent, now run by The Howard Academy Trust. Graded 'inadequate' across the board, it was seen as a place to go to if you were not academic. Ofsted's report was damning, citing "a culture of low expectations". "Governors have abrogated their responsibility for maintaining a high standard of education," it said.

This lack of academic rigour was pervasive in UTCs. It led Michael Gove to call for them to be scrapped altogether (he has since softened his tone). Five years on and UTC Plymouth is thriving, with 542 students and a waiting list for places in year 7 – something we could only dream of in 2018. Meanwhile, 257 miles away, Waterfront is similarly unrecognisable, with an ambitious curriculum brought to life through close partnerships with employers.

The contexts differ, but the situations the trusts inherited are not dissimilar. Likewise, there is real commonality in the core ingredients that have driven successes.

DEAN ASHTON

CEO, Reach South Academy Trust



OWEN MCCOLGAN

CEO, The Howard Academy Trust



Trusts can turn around the faltering (but unique) UTCs

Reach South's vision is based on a commitment to a STEAM curriculum with learning pathways linked to high-aspiration opportunities at post-16 and post-19. UTC Plymouth continues to specialise in engineering, but has introduced a wider definition

curriculum" for new year 9 pupils to allow them to sample the whole range of subjects before choosing what they wanted to study at GCSE. These focused on vocational specialisms in construction, engineering and design, as well as the more traditional basket

“ A lack of academic rigour was pervasive

to include digital and high-technology engineering, as well as marine and land-based engineering.

Waterfront introduced a "discovery

of subjects.

Recruiting and retaining inspirational leaders and staff who genuinely buy into and are excited by



the UTCs and the trust's values and ethos is key.

UTCs are smaller than most mainstream schools and so the opportunity to get involved in a range of roles and turn your hand to what is needed is inherent to leading them. Staff who not only understand this, but seek this out, are essential.

UTC Plymouth introduced year 7s from September 2020 and hasn't looked back. Asking parents to switch at age 14 from a secondary school they'd already started was too big a leap. Now, with strong links with its nine primary provisions, the trust has developed a STEAM curriculum through the primary, secondary and sixth-form phases of each pupil's learning pathway.

At Waterfront, having opened with year 10s and above, year 9 was introduced to give pupils a chance to explore engineering and construction before choosing their future specialism.

UTCs have historically attracted young people who need more support or who are vulnerable. Adapting so that they can access the curriculum makes it easier for them to rise to the high expectations our trusts have of them – and to flourish.

Exceptional partnerships with employers are also a must. After all, that's the whole point of UTCs. Whether in Plymouth, Medway or elsewhere, giving students real and regular insight into their chosen industries must be woven through everything that a UTC does – culturally and operationally.

With all that in mind, UTCs can finally play the important role they were designed for, ensuring every pupil has the right school place for their needs and aspirations.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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VIV GRANT
Founder, Integrity Coaching

Why I'm asking white teachers to start talking about race

The deep inequalities that keep educators of colour out of leadership will not be tackled until white teachers and leaders face up to race, writes Viv Grant

Martin Luther King famously said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice". When it comes to school leadership teams reflecting the full talent and capabilities of our diverse society, the arc bends slowly.

In 2002, the National College for School Leadership published research by Dr Jan McKenley and Dr Gloria Gordon called Challenge Plus. The study looked at the experiences of educational professionals of colour and the additional barriers they faced.

Things have improved somewhat. Between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of headteachers of colour increased from 5 to 7 per cent in primaries and from 7 to 9 per cent in secondaries. But this is still too few. To create greater levels of equity, we need a more fundamental look at the place of race in our schools, and it needs to start with intensely personal conversations, not just for teachers

of colour but for white educators too.

For too long, teachers of colour have felt compelled to adapt to fit into a workplace dominated by white leaders. When I became one of the youngest headteachers in the country to turn around a failing primary in the late 90s, I became adept at conducting myself in ways that meant I surpassed the prejudices of my predominantly white colleagues. I was acutely aware of black female stereotypes that still exist – how a speech pattern, tone or gesture could be interpreted negatively.

Consequently, I became hyper-vigilant in majority-white settings, with a heightened ability to read disguised expressions of shock and derision when white folk realised I was the headteacher. As much as I loved headship, there was a hidden cost I could only reveal to a few: the pain of contending with the racism that, back then, the system wanted to pretend did not exist. Young black headteachers I speak to today face similar challenges, like being overlooked for promotion and parents not believing they are the headteacher.

Until now, it's been down to leaders of colour to take on the



“ Race is not something that just belongs to people of colour

additional challenge of overcoming these hurdles. We do this by not always bringing our full selves into the workplace, which is exhausting and perpetuates the view that racism is no longer a major issue.

After the death of George Floyd, I made two changes. One was to show more of my true self as a black woman, to talk more about how racism has impacted my life and career. The other was to lean into uncomfortable spaces, particularly white-majority spaces, and encourage more white educators to talk about their experiences of race.

Race is not something that just belongs to people of colour. This must be acknowledged and understood to change the hierarchies of race in our schools. Consider these uncomfortable questions: What did race mean to you growing up? How has that shaped how you engage with race as an educator? What are you

aware of when you talk about race? What do your thoughts and feelings tell you about how you have been socialised to engage/not engage with the subject?

It is natural to feel defensive when encountering these questions. But a lack of diversity in school leadership really matters, not least because it reinforces inequality and inequity in the minds of our children. Currently, staffroom discussions around anti-racism focus on what we are against; we need to move these on to setting out what we are for.

School leadership is and always will be a challenge, but it remains "challenge-plus" for leaders of colour. This truth is as much for white educators to address as it is for teachers of colour. Because the arc of the moral universe will only bend more steeply if we all make it a priority – and that starts with facing up to some difficult conversations.

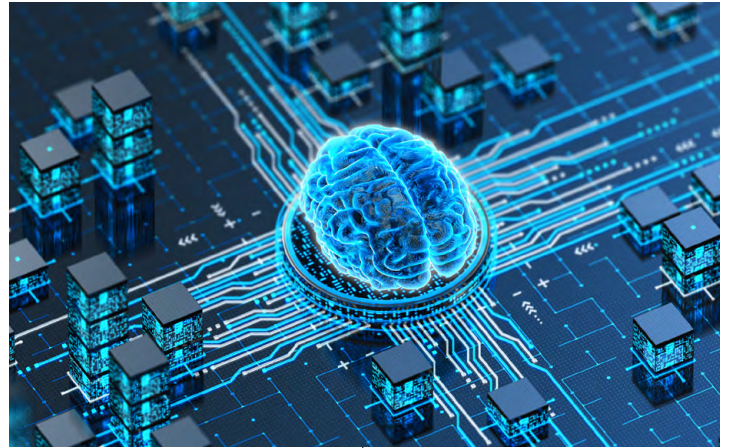
The Solutions Toolkit

Teacher Toolkit founder, Ross McGill hosts a monthly take-over of our new 'Solutions' column



ROSS MCGILL

Former school leader, author and EdD student



How to ensure neuroeducation improves teacher performance

The rapid revolution in neuroeducation risks being lost to mutations and poor implementation unless we shift from "what works" to "why and how", writes Ross McGill

Social media has allowed many teachers to grow professional learning networks that would have been unimaginable 20 years ago. One of the biggest wins is that many have become critical consumers in the relatively young sector of neuroeducation, or cogsci as it is sometimes referred to.

There has been a rapid revolution in this field over the past decade. In effect, it has come to incorporate cognitive neuroscience, which focuses on the relationship between cognition and the functions of the brain, and cognitive psychology, which considers how the mind operates and theorises the underlying mechanisms of learning.

Neuroeducation, then, is an applied science that aims to help teachers tailor their instruction in evidence-based ways to improve pupil outcomes. It includes retrieval practice, spaced and interleaving practice and metacognitive strategies, among other, and taps into the profession's sense of social justice with its promise to help identify and address learning difficulties and

transform potential.

A recent Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) literature review, however, concludes that applying is harder than knowing the principles of cognitive science, and that they "do not determine specific teaching and learning strategies or approaches to implementation".

We should all take this seriously. In essence, teachers themselves need an environment with regular retrieval opportunities to support new habits and practices. The science of implementation suggests this can take anything from two to four years! Rosenshine's 1982 "principles of effective instruction" are a case in point. They've achieved prominence only recently with many schools adopting them as part of their professional development programmes. In more worrying cases, some have turned them into an observation checklist – a way to prove teaching rather than improve it.

Others are digging deeper into metacognitive strategies, including retrieval practice. Mutations aside, it's important to remember that a blended approach is more likely to yield benefits than a fixed methodology. After all, how many online quizzes can you do before you get bored?

The key to successful

“ Do not rely on the knowledge brokers of social media

implementation is to adopt a wide perspective rather than relying on "knowledge brokers" on social media and elsewhere to impart a pre-packaged pedagogical model. The risk isn't just a waste of precious teacher time and effort. The British Psychological Society worries that cognitive science could "damage confidence in educational psychology if it undermines the quality of teacher education and teaching".

Indeed, I recently delivered an "education myths" session and was shocked to find that 65 per cent of teachers in the room still believed in learning styles. We can ill afford to instil new myths that take decades to unpick.

In a seminal paper from 2013, Dunlosky and colleagues concluded that "the benefit of most of the techniques in representative educational settings needs to be more fully explored". A decade later, these words could just as easily have been included in the EEF's literature review.

Take retrieval practice. Almost all the research is conducted in high

school and college settings and in academic subjects. Primary teachers and teachers of mechanics, drama or PE will find it much harder to find and translate research recommendations into their contexts – let alone to know whether it's worth the effort.

Many teachers are critical consumers of neuroeducation. The challenge for them, and more so for those who are not yet engaged, is navigating the plethora of related resources and organisations offering them.

All teachers should learn about neuroeducation from training through career-long professional development. But reflecting on the past decade, I'm reminded of a recent conversation with John Hattie, who said we should move away from the "what works" agenda towards prioritising "why and how".

No matter how much we know individually, it is our collective wisdom that will take our profession forward. And as with all things, a diversity of thought and practices is most likely to deliver the benefits we all want.

THE REVIEW

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAYBOOK

Authors: Michael Feely and Ben Karlin

Publisher: Routledge

Publication date: November 30, 2022

ISBN: 1032187093

Reviewer: Sarah Ashton, English lead, Acorn Education Trust

There was a time in education when teacher training presented pedagogical competence as a rather elusive beast, developed over time through trial and error. A nod to behaviour management ("Don't smile until Christmas") and resourcing (card sorts), and then you were sent off to observe more experienced members of staff. Your mission: to try to figure out for yourself what it was they were doing that made 9F5 work productively, lesson 5 on a Friday, when all they did in your lesson was throw glue sticks.

Times have changed, thankfully, and educational research has provided us with tried-and-tested teaching strategies that can be learned and practised, fast-tracking the slow grind of the trial-and-error approach to working out what's beneficial to pupil learning.

Michael Feely and Ben Karlin's *Teaching and Learning Playbook* is the most recent offering in what is becoming quite a library of volumes attempting to codify a collection of effective pedagogical approaches. It openly acknowledges the influences of the forefathers of the genre – Hattie and Yates, Lemov, Sherrington and Caviglioli – and attempts to combine its practical advice in such a way that it can be used as part of a coaching programme.

The first section unpicks the barriers that stand in the way of teachers getting better: a lack of models of excellence, limited working memory, the curse of knowledge, lack of trust and time, and the lack of deliberate practice.

These are explored in an evidence-based way that feeds directly into the delivery of professional development. For example, the "morning morality effect" suggests time of day for teacher CPD can affect its impact:

after-school training sessions, according to the research, take place at the time when we are likely to be least productive, and less honest and vulnerable about our areas of development.

The next four sections focus on classroom practice: routines; questioning and checking for understanding; modelling, explaining and feedback; resilience, independence and retrieval. Each provides a comprehensive set of "plays" that any teacher could dip into to find excellent practice for common teaching issues.

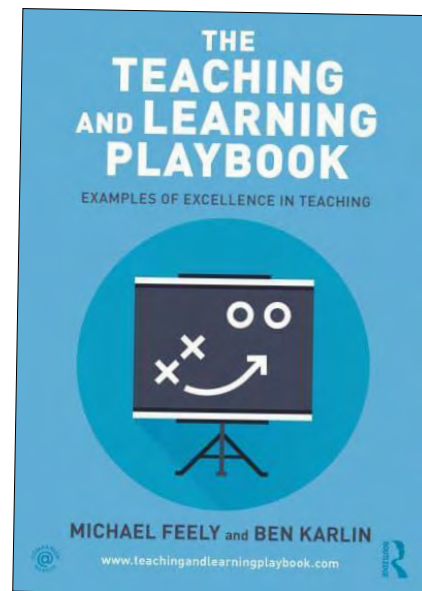
The final two sections ("curriculum" and, rather vaguely, "beyond the subject classroom") seem more relevant for leaders, covering areas such as curriculum planning and running meetings. Teaching reading is covered a little superficially in this final section, which is perhaps not as helpful for primary colleagues.

That aside, the format is incredibly user-friendly: each technique is covered on two pages, offering a brief summary of the method, its importance in the classroom, how it should be performed, and potential mutations to avoid. These steps are clear, concise and, importantly, achievable.

It also is intended to be used alongside videos on the accompanying website www.teachingandlearningplaybook.com, a training tool modelling excellent practice for each strategy in short and explicit clips. Unlike watching a colleague magically transform 9F5 into model pupils, they arrive at the lesson fully tamed. This feels a little far removed from real life, but the focus is on the script for the teacher and the videos helpfully break down the technique into actionable steps.

For colleagues who have been in education

BOOK
TV
FILM
RADIO
EVENT
RESOURCE



long enough to see OHPs evolve into visualisers, the playbook might sound oversimplified or formulaic. But, as the authors explain, the average teacher's learning curve begins to plateau after three years in the classroom, and a codified approach can mitigate unconscious observer bias and help give specific and useful feedback. .

Recent research from the Ambition Institute on modelling evidenced-based practice suggests that adding modelling to professional development helps to bridge the theory-practice gap. *The Teaching and Learning Playbook's* premise of using clear models of excellence to evaluate teaching performance, combined with its video library, make it an invaluable tool for teacher development. Its approach to developing a shared language of excellence and setting high standards for teaching is accessible and actionable – without card sort in sight.

★★★★☆
Rating



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

3 DADS WALKING

Andy Airey, Mike Palmer and Tim Owen came together through the most tragic of circumstances: their daughters, Sophie, Beth and Emily committed suicide. Despite the subsequent suffering and shock, the three have shared their experiences to open debate and to campaign so that other families do not have to face the things they have faced and continue to face.



This blog is about the culmination of their latest walk, which was to petition parliament to debate a motion to make the teaching of suicide awareness compulsory as part of PSHE.

The trio speak eloquently about their reasons for this addition, wanting to change how we often see suicide as a subject that we feel inclined to shy away from.

They say we must acknowledge the challenge of facing up to it and inspire us to grow up and do it. This doesn't mean using the word straight away but raising children who are OK about asking for help

– to actively teach and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

“Better to have a challenging conversation than give the eulogy at your daughter’s funeral,” as Andy Airey so powerfully states.

A CULTURE OF HONESTY

Once upon a time I was a very young headteacher, often leading schools where staff were older than me. I spent a lot of time trying to construct a persona in response to those situations.

In this blog, Dan Edwards, the director of Leading in the Now, discusses the leap of faith needed to become a transparent leader. It’s an honest look at the journey we make as leaders to present outwardly what we perceive makes a “leader” and through it Edwards argues that being authentic is less perilous than the temptation to pretend we are superhuman and have all the answers.

Least among the dangers of that approach is a murky sort of leadership, where the leader isn’t quite sure who they are and neither is their team. Worse by far is a fall from grace. It’s time to take off our capes and be human; anything else is unhealthy and frankly impossible.

HOPE AFTER TRAUMA

Connex Education Academy’s *After the Bell* podcast has been focusing on trauma-informed practice recently, creating a trove of important knowledge on the subject. In the latest episode its guests, deputy headteacher Andy Bridge and headteacher and SENDCo Debbie Davies, discuss the latest research into how adverse childhood experiences affect our brains, even in the womb.



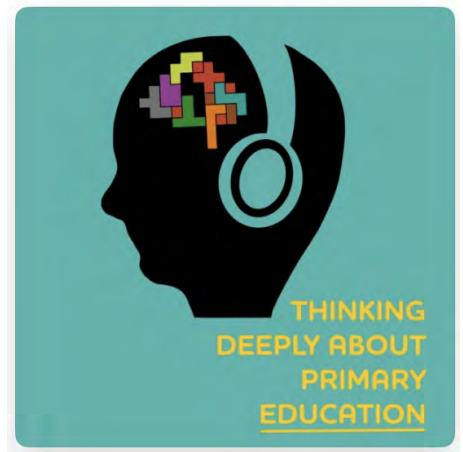
It’s another challenging subject, which is also covered with an abundance of hope.

Hope, because the findings indicate we can affect change.

In short, if the brain responds to adverse childhood experiences, it will respond to the positive ones we create too. Though we can’t take back time or entirely undo harm, this is good news for everybody – especially educators. We owe it to children to help them move forward and thrive despite the challenges they may have faced in the past.


THINKING ABOUT PRIMARY WRITING

The latest episode in Kieran Mackle’s *Thinking deeply about primary education* podcast is a fascinating discussion with guests Neil Almond and Christopher Such. But don’t let the podcast name or its high-calibre guests trick you into thinking this is too high-brow or too much after a hard day’s teaching. It is a highly compelling look at language and learning.



The hour’s discussion covers an enormous amount of content, from ensuring we highlight suffixes and prefixes to the importance of etymology. Better still, the participants’ passion is a touching reminder of how curious children are about language and how much they can retain if we don’t underestimate them.

The example of Wodan’s Day (Wednesday) to demonstrate etymology and “unassisted” to show how learning prefixes can help children unpick new words from their own experience (with a link to an “assist” in football) are perfectly pitched. It doesn’t feel like an hour at all.

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts 

The Knowledge

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



How can local CPD quality be assured in a world of MATs?

Toby Greany, professor of education, University of Nottingham

Equal access to high-quality continuing professional development and learning (CPDL) has long been a policy priority given evidence it can lead to improvements in teaching and, thereby, children's outcomes.

In high-performing school systems globally, arrangements for CPDL are coherent and well-coordinated. In contrast, England's school system is experiencing significant changes – evolving from place-based oversight by 152 local authorities (LAs), to non-place-based oversight by about 1,200 multi-academy trusts (MATs).

The shift in CPDL has been from a patchwork of school-led provision, including by 750 teaching schools, to a nationally defined offer provided by 87 teaching school hubs (TSHs) and augmented by a range of other curriculum hubs, research schools and commercial providers.

In this context, new research undertaken by a team at the University of Nottingham and funded by Wellcome has explored "local learning landscapes" for teacher professional development in England, asking whether and how these can be judged coherent, high-quality and equitable for primary schools. The research focused on formal and informal professional learning in mathematics, using this as a lens on to wider CPDL practices.

We interviewed local system leaders as well as headteachers, maths leads and teachers in a representative sample of schools in three localities:

- City is significantly deprived, though with some more gentrified areas, and has an ethnically diverse population.
- Town is a former industrial centre with a largely white British population. It is an area of significant deprivation, but includes some less deprived areas.
- Shire covers a large geographic area encompassing towns, villages, hamlets and countryside. It includes some deprived



post-industrial small towns as well as more affluent areas.

We found that the "locality" in which interviewees worked was important to their professional identities and practices. Many saw themselves working within multiple "locales" simultaneously, for example their school community, their MAT, and their town.

There was a widespread view that geographically "local" arrangements – including school clusters and partnerships – are becoming fragmented as LAs become less significant and as schools join different MATs.

The research revealed numerous examples of how the government's investment in hubs is helping to ensure that teachers and schools access high-quality CPDL. For example, maths hubs were providing CPDL in all three localities, although engagement varied.

A clear finding was that the CPDL offer in all three localities was experienced as fragmented – or incoherent – by school leaders and teachers.

However, the level and nature of this incoherence differed widely, with two factors appearing particularly significant in shaping local perceptions: the geographic proximity of hub providers and local MAT dynamics.

These dynamics had several aspects:

- the geographic locus of the MATs (ie, local/non-local),

- school performance and levels of concern around MAT takeover,
- MAT ethos (ie, more or less standardised), and
- the extent to which MATs collaborate with each other and with the LA.

Overall, it seems that as MATs become more internally coherent in their approach to teaching and CPDL, coherence between MATs across local areas becomes more challenging.

The research highlighted the importance of maths leads and headteachers being outward-facing and well-networked so they could access and share relevant external knowledge and expertise. However, the extent to which this happened differed widely.

We also identified a small group of local CPDL system leaders – we call them "landscape gardeners" – who were helping to strengthen coherence in some localities. These leaders drew on their professional credibility to shape a distinct "local" identity, foster networks and mobilise knowledge. Concerningly, in one locality the loss of one such leader was seen by many as a key factor in the further fragmentation of the CPDL landscape.

The research leads to several key questions, including who, if anyone, could or should have responsibility for the coherence of CPDL across a locality.

Week in

Westminster

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



MONDAY

The government talks tough on tackling attendance. But it still doesn't have the answers to the basics – such as who are the kids no longer going to school.

Conservative MP Bob Seely asked the Department for Education of any recent estimate of the number of children registered in schools before Covid and no longer registered (other than those passing statutory school age).

Alas, schools ministers Nick Gibb could only say: "The information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost."

TUESDAY

A timeline of academy decision-making transparency in action ...

July 21, 2022: DfE adviser board meets to debate the transfer of Holland Park School in one of the most high-profile academy transfers yet. The single-academy west London trust was proposed to join the country's biggest MAT, United Learning.

August 16, 2022: *Schools Week* submits a freedom of information request on what's happened, including the decision letter from the regional schools' commissioner as there's been no public announcement and no minutes published by the RSC.

August 23, 2022: SW sees a letter to parents confirming the decision.

January, 2023: Holland Park finally joins United after an explosive high court battle.

Last Friday: The DfE responds to the *Schools Week* FOI providing the RSC's decision letter and confirming the commissioner did indeed recommend

Holland Park join United, adding "apologies for the late response to this request".

That's seven months after the FOI, or 149 working days, when replies are generally supposed to be provided in 20.

Meanwhile, the government updated its guidance page on academy admissions to say the responsibility for handling complaints relating to academies passed from the Education Skills Funding Agency to the DfE in July last year.

Who knew? Certainly not us or, we imagine, many parents or schools who are likely to make such complaints.

WEDNESDAY

The National Education Union launched its petition to replace Ofsted a year ago. It handed the petition, signed by 45,000 people, to the Department for Education at its London offices last Thursday. An "operation note" was issued to journalists today.

However, announcing this in the aftermath of the news reports about the death of headteacher Ruth Perry sits a little uncomfortably. Hopefully the union hasn't used the opportunity to maximise coverage of its own reform agenda.

An inquest into Perry's death is still to be held.

The government announced its review of its two flagship teacher training reforms a few weeks back, but wasn't forthcoming on who would advise officials on making sure the initial teacher training (ITT) and early career frameworks (ECF) were up to

scratch.

The ECF, in particular, has caused huge workload problems. The ITT sector is in the middle of a huge shake-up after the government decided it wanted to chop a load of providers. So things aren't going swimmingly.

Fear not, your reliable *Schools Week* obtained the full list of advisers (page 12). And, it turns out, who better to advise officials than all the people who helped design the reforms in the first place?

Two of the seven members sat on both advisory bodies that drew up both frameworks, while another two sat on one of those bodies. A fifth, Chris Paterson, was working for the Department for Education overseeing both reforms.

Nothing like marking your own homework!

THURSDAY

Three years in and the government has decided to put together a proper team to build some evidence about whether the flagship National Tutoring Programme is actually working.

A job advert is out for three data analysts to join two "operational researchers" and "develop the evidence base" for the catch-up scheme.

Only the most basic data was available this time last year, and the government has only this academic year revealed how many poorer pupils have benefited.

But at least government is getting a grip – just 18 months before the programme is due to end!



**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 - Highshore School, SE London

Salary: (Group 5) L27-31: £92,330 - £99,977 (according to experience) including Inner London weighting
Start Date September 2023

On the retirement of our current Headteacher, the Governing Body is seeking to appoint an outstanding leader who shares our vision and values and has the skills to further improve our vibrant special school.

The successful candidate will:

- Have high aspirations for all our pupils and an understanding of how pupils learn in a special school
- Have the vision and commitment to build on the school's successes and further develop pathways for our young people
- Have successful experience in Senior Leadership in a SEND school
- Develop positive relationships and networks within and outside of the school
- Be resilient, have integrity and be a great communicator

Closing date: Monday 10th April 2023 at noon - Please follow the links for further information and to apply

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

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

The Shared Learning Trust

Click here to contact our team

