

SCHOOLS WEEK

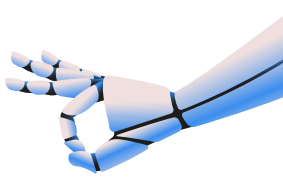
A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.

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FRIDAY, MAR 31, 2023 | EDITION 318



ChatGPT: Worry about the adults, not the kids



P23

Gibb intervenes over Ofsted gaming scandal



P5

Take the high road? Why we should look to Scotland on reform



P25

A large graphic featuring a dense arrangement of analog clocks of various sizes, some overlapping. At the top of the clocks, several small, dark silhouettes of people are shown in various running or walking poses, suggesting a sense of urgency or a race against time. The background is a light, hazy grey.

LEAKED DFE REPORT EXPOSES SCHOOL WORKLOAD CRISIS

EXCLUSIVE Page 4

Home education 60 per cent higher than pre-pandemic

- Analysis estimates 125,000 children are now educated at home
- Numbers are still rising long after lockdowns, compounding concerns
- Heads fear children are missing out, but parents say they had no choice

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Another stalemate on teacher pay looms. It's crucial that both sides keep talking

This week should have been an opportunity for us all to breathe a sigh of relief as the bitter teacher pay dispute finally came to an end.

Instead, we face another stalemate and the likelihood of more industrial action, potentially even from headteachers, which would be unprecedented.

Gillian Keegan has issued unions with an ultimatum: accept her offer or lose out on the £1,000 one-off payment for this year.

We understand the government wants a quick resolution, but we fear her "take it or leave it" approach will backfire. One union has recommended its members reject the deal and two others are refusing to recommend it is accepted.

Unions have been riled by Keegan's condition that the deal was predicated on a neutral or positive recommendation to members.

With both sides now likely to dig their heels in, it is hard to see how this will

result in anything other than more strikes.

That is why it is essential that if the deal is indeed rejected, both sides get immediately back around the negotiating table.

Formal talks have only just started. It seems premature to talk about final offers. The way this next stage is handled will be crucial, and it is incumbent on all sides to keep an open mind and keep talking.

How any pay offer will be funded will be key to this. It is not enough for the government to simply point to predicted inflation in the future. Prices have already risen, and so have schools' costs. These won't just come down wholesale once inflation settles down – it's baked in.

It is good news that the government expects energy bills to leave less of a dent in school finances than expected, but as we heard from heads this week, some schools are still in serious trouble. Any deal must address that, or we risk another funding crisis.

Most read online this week:

- 1 [Ofsted was aware of 'gaming' school inspection alerts](#)
- 2 [Teacher strikes: Unions receive pay offer as DfE talks conclude](#)
- 3 [Keegan: Teachers' work could be 'transformed' by AI/](#)
- 4 [Trusts queue to open alternative provision free schools](#)
- 5 [Plummeting pupil numbers turn tables on place planning](#)

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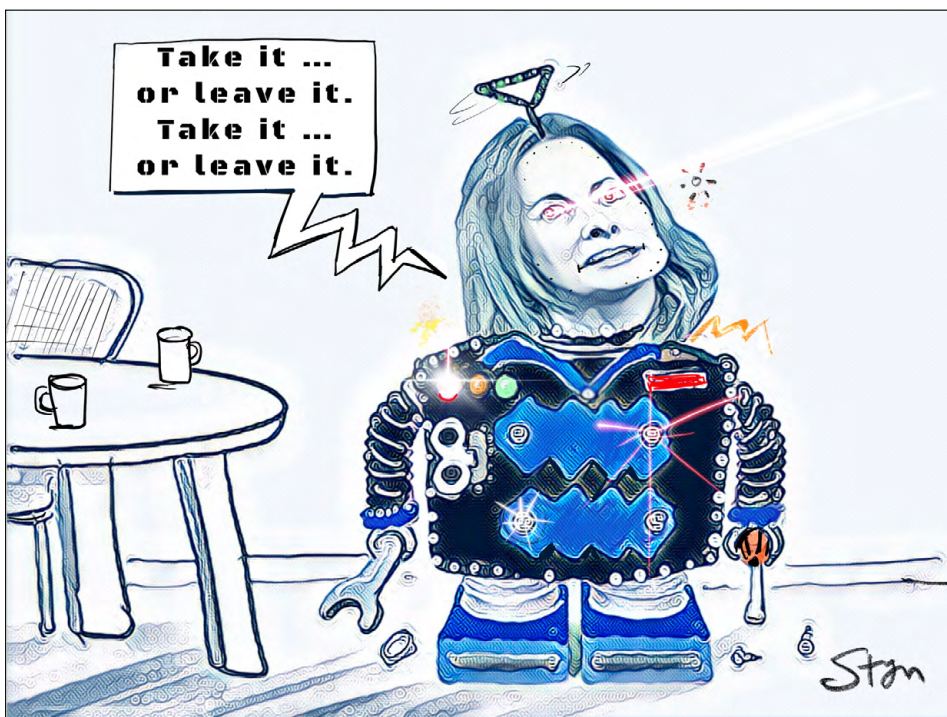


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Crippling workload laid bare in leaked DfE report

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

A leaked government report has laid bare the teacher workload crisis, with two in five school leaders working "unacceptable" 12-hour days.

The long-awaited "working lives of teachers" survey shows that a classroom teachers' working week has reduced by less than an hour in three years. At that rate it would take more than six years to realise education secretary Gillian Keegan's pledge to reduce teacher workload by five hours a week.

The survey, completed last spring by 11,000 school staff, has not yet been made public by the Department for Education.

The findings were not included in the DfE's evidence to the school teachers' review body about next year's pay award, despite having been available to ministers since at least last September.

But a copy obtained by Schools Week reveals previous progress in reducing working hours has unravelled.

Senior leaders' hours dropped from 60.5 in 2016 to 55.1 in 2019 but now stands at 56.8. Two in five leaders work more 60 hours a week.

Nearly one in five teachers worked at least 60 hours a week - most spent less than half of that teaching.

Teachers' average working week has dropped 48 minutes since 2019, with a quarter of teachers considering leaving within a year.

This is despite a 2019 government pledge to "drive down unnecessary workload and pressures" so leaders can ensure "schools are brilliant places to work, freeing teachers to focus on teaching great lessons".

Keegan's pay offer includes a "new taskforce" to reduce workload by five hours a week for teachers and leaders. She suggested artificial intelligence could potentially help with day-to-day tasks.

Paul Whiteman, from the NAHT leadership union, called the findings a "damning indictment of government policies which have neglected schools for over a decade, and with them, the futures of our children".



"They lay bare the unacceptable hours worked by school leaders who have lost nearly a fifth of their real-terms pay since 2010 and overwhelmingly feel that their views are not valued by policy-makers including the government."

In 2019, a reduction in teachers and middle leaders' average working week to 49.5 hours was heralded by the government - a reduction of 4.9 hours from 2016.

Today's report, based on a survey conducted last spring, shows teachers' average working week is 48.7 hours long.

Seventy-two per cent of teachers and leaders said their workload was "unacceptable", while 62 per cent did not have sufficient control over it.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said "nothing in this report will come as a shock to teachers and leaders".

"High workload is endemic, it is driving talented people out of the profession to find better paid work elsewhere, and the government is not doing enough to fix things."

He said it was a "mystery" why the government hadn't released the survey and said the STRB must have all the data before the 2023/24 settlement.

Two-thirds of teachers said they spent over half of their time on tasks other than teaching, rising to 77 per cent among secondary teachers.

General admin was the task most commonly

cited as taking up "too much" time.

Some 78 per cent of teachers and leaders were not satisfied with national changes to teacher pay in the 2021-22 year, when pay was frozen for most staff.

Forty-four per cent of teachers and leaders said they did not receive a pay rise that year.

Fifty-eight per cent said this was because they had reached the top of their scale, while 34 per cent blamed the pay freeze and 12 per cent cited budget pressures.

Some 13 per cent reported being rarely or not at all satisfied with their job but 58 per cent were satisfied "most or all of the time". Eighty-four per cent enjoyed classroom teaching most or all the time.

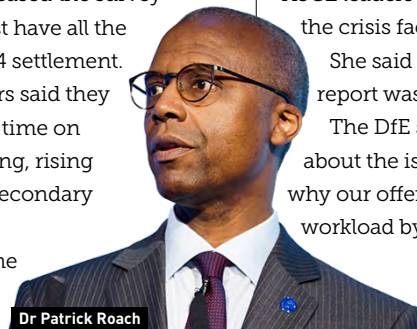
Of those considering leaving the state sector, 92 per cent reported high workload as a factor, 76 per cent blamed government initiatives or policy changes and 69 per cent cited pressure around pupil outcomes or inspection.

Dr Patrick Roach, the NASUWT boss, said the government had promised to publish the report and union members' patience "is being severely tested".

Sara Tanton, deputy policy director at the ASCL leaders' union, said the report "lays bare the crisis facing the teaching profession".

She said the delay in publishing the report was "extremely disappointing".

The DfE said it was "listening to teachers about the issues that affect them which is why our offer also committed to reducing workload by five hours per week".



Dr Patrick Roach

Don't use Ofsted 'trackers', Gibb warns schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have warned schools not to monitor their website traffic to predict Ofsted inspections, with calls for a government inquiry into the "gaming" practice exposed by *Schools Week*.

Munira Wilson, the education spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, has demanded ministers launch an investigation after they dodged her questions about how long the Department for Education has known about the use of "trackers" and whether any action had been taken.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, on Thursday said the DfE and Ofsted were "currently looking at how best to respond to recent reports", and warned monitoring could "cause unnecessary pressure and add to workload for staff".

He urged schools "not to use such services. Schools do not need to take any extra steps to prepare for Ofsted inspections."

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

Gibb confirmed the watchdog was "aware" of schools monitoring their website traffic for possible Ofsted activity, but "without firm evidence".

A *Schools Week* investigation showed schools have been able to predict inspections for at least a decade, exposing 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.

'Damning indictment' of 'high-stakes' Ofsted

Wilson said the DfE "needs to investigate how these trackers are being used", saying their emergence was a "damning



Munira Wilson



indictment of how high-stakes our inspection system has become".

"Inspections are vital to give parents confidence in our schools, but are putting a huge stress on teachers.

"These trackers show the desperate lengths that schools are going to in order to get ahead, whilst Conservative ministers sit on their hands," she said, adding that money should be spent on children's education, not to "game Ofsted".

"We need root-and-branch reform of school inspections so Ofsted can be the critical friend that schools value and parents can trust."

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

But the widespread use of such practices is an open secret in schools. Posts on an online forum for IT professionals about setting up an "Ofsted early warning" system date back as far as 2015.

Systems look for Ofsted 'pattern'

The watchdog's 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 said at the time that its email alert was "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."

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

And Colin Richards, a former senior inspector, warned that "in saying

nothing in public or doing nothing to prevent it in practicemeans [Ofsted] has been condoning ethical malpractice and has been complicit in gaming its own inspection system – and maybe still is".



Nick Gibb

Keegan's 'final' offer: What schools need to know

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

Further teacher strikes are on the cards after unions criticised an "inadequate" pay offer from the government, which they warn is not fully funded.

Gillian Keegan has said her offer of a one-off payment this academic year and a 4.3 per cent rise for most teachers next year is "final".

Unions have put the education secretary's offer to their members, but warned of further strikes and ballots if it is rejected.

Here's what you need to know.

What has been offered?

- A £1,000 one-off payment in 2022-23
- A 4.3 per cent rise for most teachers and 7.1 per cent rise in starting salaries in 2023-24 (averaging 4.5 per cent across the whole workforce)

The DfE also made other promises

- Removal of the statutory requirement to use performance-related pay
- "Greater clarity" on when schools should expect their next inspection
- Reinsertion of tasks teachers should not ordinarily be expected to do
- A workload taskforce aimed at cutting five hours a week
- Alignment of the school teachers' review body process with the school budget cycle
- A review of complaints procedures for parents and Ofsted's complaints process for schools (these have already been pledged)

Is extra funding attached?

The DfE has said the one-off payment would be funded via a grant to schools, as will 0.5 per cent of the average 4.5 per cent pay rise for next year. Additional funding would total £620 million next year and £150 million the following year to cover ongoing costs.

However, the remaining 4 per cent of next year's pay offer will have to come from existing budgets.

The DfE pointed to £2 billion extra funding for this year and next that was allocated in the autumn statement. In February, the government



Gillian Keegan

said schools could afford a 3.5 per cent rise.

But it has now revised down its estimate for the additional cost of energy bills next year, from £1.45 billion to £750 million.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said some of the cash to fund public sector pay deals would come from the Treasury, but it is not clear how much.

What have the unions said?

All four unions – the NEU, NAHT, ASCL and NASUWT – are consulting members.

The NEU, whose members began industrial action in February, has urged members to reject the offer in the "strongest possible way". Leaders warned it was "not fully funded" and "insulting".

If members vote to reject the offer, the union has said it will call two further days of action on April 27 and May 2.

NAHT, the school leaders' union, has also warned that industrial action "will be necessary" if members rejected the offer. It said it did not believe that "sufficient funding is being made available to meet even this inadequate offer".

The NASUWT is "not recommending acceptance" of the offer, saying it "falls short" of what it demanded on pay and other improvements.

ASCL has been more reserved, with general secretary Geoff Barton saying the union would put it to members "in a neutral capacity".

Some schools will struggle more than others

Analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found school funding overall will continue to grow faster than costs, even if the new pay offer is implemented.

However, research fellow Luke Sibieta said costs would rise faster than funding in some schools, such as special institutions that relied on more support staff. This would also be a problem in London, where there were more inexperienced teachers whose pay would rise by more.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the NEU, warned that "using universal totals to speak to individual school leaders about individual affordability, is economic nonsense".

The IFS has said that even with the pay offer, salaries for experienced teachers would be 13 per cent lower than in 2010.

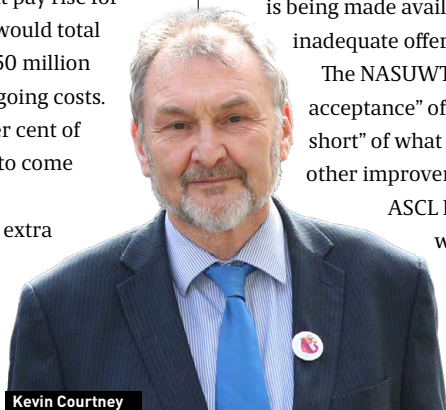
The government said that its offer was above the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) 2.9 per cent forecast for inflation at the end of this calendar year. But unions warned higher prices were already baked in for teachers and schools.

What happens now?

Unions are expected to say next week whether their members accept or reject the offer.

If it is rejected, the government has said it will revert to the school teachers' review body process, pointing out this will only consider pay rises for next year.

"If we don't have this agreement, we've done our best," Keegan told Sky News.



Kevin Courtney

NEWS: STRIKES

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We'll be forced into the red if we fund this pay deal, say heads

DONNA FERGUSON

@SCHOOLSWEEK

The government's "derisory and demoralising" pay offer could make some schools financially unviable if it is not backed up by more funding, say headteachers.

Ministers have said they believe schools can afford to fund most of a proposed pay rise averaging 4.5 per cent – only pledging extra funding for a £1,000 one-off payment this year and 0.5 per cent of the rise for 2023-24.

But headteachers and trust leaders say unfunded pay rises will send schools into the red.

Dan Morrow, the chief executive of Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust in Devon, said all 19 of his schools already faced a deficit, following support staff pay rises and an "absolutely astronomical rise" in energy costs.

"We're already having to put a recruitment freeze in place for any losses in staff and to see quite a significant reduction in our support staff as well.

"This announcement will take broken budgets – and decimate them."

Morrow, a member of the National Education Union (NEU), said he would vote to reject the offer. Going ahead with unfunded rises would "see mass system failure".

"Many schools and trusts will get to the point where they do not have the reserves or budgets to meet the needs of usual educational activities. Schools will go bust."

Michelle Sheehy, the headteacher of Millfield Primary School in Walsall and a member of the NAHT, also plans to reject the "derisory" offer.

"There is absolutely no way this offer will be affordable for my school."

She is already losing five members of staff – 16 per cent of her workforce – in September, but is still projecting a £60,000 deficit in three years.

She will have to make further cuts if the offer is accepted. "I don't know how I'm going to balance the books and still have a functioning school. It's not do-able."



Dan Morrow



In a letter to school leaders, Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, said she "firmly believed" it was a fair offer that addressed the concerns raised by teachers and leaders.

"This offer balances what is possible for schools without increasing the country's debt further or exacerbating inflation – I hope teachers and leaders ... will vote to support it."

But Tony Davies, the head of St Matthew's Primary School in Cambridgeshire and an NEU member, said he would vote to reject the "absolutely disgraceful" offer. He was setting a deficit budget and was already exploring ways of cutting costs.

"On top of that, an unfunded pay rise is unreasonable. We're having to look to the PTA to fundraise for costs that should be covered by our government funding."

Dr Paul Gosling, the head of Exeter Road Community Primary School in Exmouth and president of the NAHT, warned that the pay offer would push schools into a fresh funding crisis.

"We're not sure at the moment whether this is a miscalculation by the government or if it's a deliberate ploy."

He said he was so "fed up" he planned to retire in December. "One of the only things I can do to improve the financial situation of my school is to employ a cheaper school leader."

According to the Institute

for Fiscal Studies, special schools face a bigger headache because they employ more support staff, whose pay is due to rise by more than that of teachers.

At Frank Wise, a special school in Banbury, Oxfordshire, headteacher Simon Knight said there was a "catastrophic failure of fiscal understanding and responsibility towards special schools".

He faced an in-year deficit of more than £300,000 as a result of the government's decisions, adding that a "significant number" of special schools also would be forced into deficit in the next financial year.

"There seems to be no awareness that the staffing costs experienced by the specialist sector are not comparable to those in mainstream."

Dr Paul Heery, the chief executive of the White Hills Park Trust in Nottinghamshire, said he had enough "resilience" in his budgets to cope with the unfunded pay increase.

"But it will have an impact, definitely. Decisions we might have otherwise taken to bring in more staff or refurbish the school now won't happen." Despite this, he has voted to accept the offer. "Continued industrial action is just undermining what we're doing"

He did not think it was a "good offer. But I'm very anxious that we put the disruption of the pandemic behind us – I really feel for those pupils who had to put up with so much."

Supervised coursework to avoid AI cheating is 'unrealistic'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Making pupils do some coursework "under direct supervision" because of fears of cheating with artificial intelligence is "unrealistic", say headteachers.

School leaders also want ministers to take "immediate steps" to combat teacher workload, rather than waiting for AI to help in the future. Experts warn it could even increase the burden.

Exam boards and the government this week published much-awaited guidance for schools on the use of generative AI as fears grow that services such as ChatGPT could prompt cheating.

While most qualifications are exam-based and unaffected by AI, some assessments, such as coursework, allow access to the internet.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), which represents exam boards, said "where appropriate" schools should be "allocating time for sufficient portions of work to be done in class under direct supervision to allow the teacher to authenticate each student's whole work with confidence".

Dr Jo Saxton, the head of Ofqual, said earlier this month that she would make pupils do coursework under exam conditions if she were a school leader.

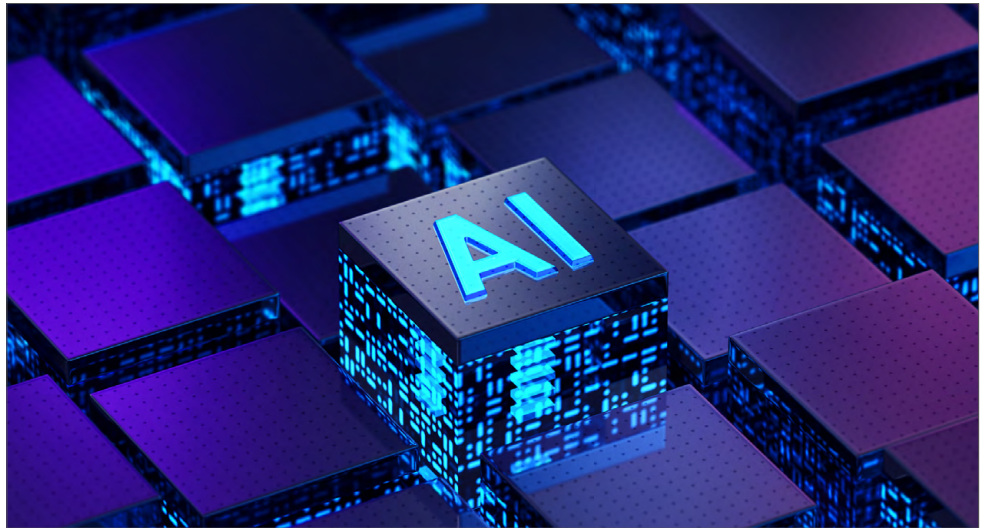
The JCQ said the responsibility for ensuring that pupils did not submit inauthentic work ultimately sat with heads, but teachers and markers should stay vigilant.

Sarah Hannafin, the head of practice and research policy at the school leaders' union NAHT, warned it could put more pressure on time-poor teachers.

"The expectations on schools and colleges to detect any misuse must be proportionate.

"There are some helpful suggestions in the guidance from JCQ. However, finding time within lessons to complete significant proportions of non-exam assessment is unrealistic when there is so much content to cover and such pressure on curriculum time."

The guidance ([see full round-up here](#))



said pupils could use AI tools, but only if they could demonstrate the final submission was their "own independent work and independent thinking". They must appropriately reference where AI had been used. JCQ confirmed the guidance applies for this summer series onwards.

In setting out its stance on the use of generative AI in education, the DfE said schools "may wish to review" their homework policies.

It follows reports of AI forcing schools to abandon homework essays.

Schools should also "review and strengthen" their cyber security as AI could "increase the sophistication and credibility of attacks".

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, believes teachers' day-to-day work could be "transformed" by AI. She said it was not yet at the standard needed, but could "get to a point where the tasks that really drain teachers' time are significantly reduced".

The DfE will now convene experts to work with the sector and "share and identify best practice and opportunities to improve education and reduce workload using generative AI".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said teachers and leaders had excessive workloads "right now, caused chiefly by government policy including long-

term cuts to funding".

"Immediate steps must be taken to address this. It's not enough to wait and hope that technology can mitigate this in the future."

He said that many schools would "have already had discussions about the potential misuse of AI in assessments and will be taking appropriate steps ... including reminding pupils of their responsibilities".

But Nick Taylor, professor of computer science at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, warned "working out how to deal with these systems is going to add to teachers' workloads".

Taylor is one of more than 1,000 signatories – including Twitter owner Elon Musk – calling on labs to pause training on the most advanced AI for six months so it can be properly studied and mitigated.

While ChatGPT can produce convincing answers, it can contain incorrect or biased information as well as creating fake references to sources or fake people.

Rose Luckin, the professor of learned centred design at University College London, warned the education committee that the education sector did not have "the in-depth knowledge about AI to be able to do a really good job.

"The technology's moving at pace, it's increasingly complex. Even the people developing it don't always understand the implications of what it does."



Geoff Barton

INVESTIGATION: HOME EDUCATION

Home education soars in the wake of the pandemic

FREDDIE WHITTAKER,
DONNA FERGUSON & SAMANTHA BOOTH

The number of children educated at home has soared by 60 per cent since the Covid-19 pandemic, a *Schools Week* investigation has revealed, with thousands more pupils removed from school in the past year alone.

Headteachers warned this week that children are missing out on education and even being taken out of school to work, while some risk becoming involved in criminal activity.

MPs have demanded ministers take the issue "more seriously" and prioritise their long-awaited register to pin-point where all children are.

But parents who home-school say they have been forced to take their children out of school because of health concerns, unmet special education needs or in response to pressure from government attendance targets.

1 in 100 pupils home educated

Analysis of data from 94 councils obtained by *Schools Week* estimates that about 125,000 children across England – 1.4 per cent of all pupils – were home-educated at some point in the 2021-22 academic year.

This is up from about 118,000 the year before, a rise of 6 per cent. Over the same period, the pupil population as a whole grew by 1 per cent.

The number of pupils in elective home education was gradually rising before the Covid pandemic, hitting 78,000 in 2018-19, according to figures from the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

Numbers soared by 34 per cent in 2020-21 after the onset of the pandemic and leaders were hoping they would fall as Covid abated. But the latest data shows they have continued to rise.

Freedom of Information requests show that the largest hike has been in North Tyneside where the number of home-educated children rose from 93 to 214 in just one year, a rise



of 130 per cent.

Lisa Cook, the council's assistant director for education and inclusion, said the pandemic created "a move to online and virtual learning that has made home education more accessible for many families".

"As an authority we work with these families to ensure the children are receiving the education their parents want them to have."

Redcar and Cleveland Council said reasons for home education ranged "from parental preference to sometimes quite complex mental health needs of the child".

Its home educated numbers jumped by 76 per cent last year from 181 to 319.

Home education used to get schools to "back off"

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, said reasons for home education were "complex and varied", adding: "They will range from concerns regarding Covid over the past few years, to the strain on the SEND education system, with insufficient funding and capacity to support children's needs."

Andrew O'Neill, the head of All Saints Catholic College in west London, said he had seen a "definite post-pandemic trend" where parents challenged about behaviour or

safeguarding threatened home education as a way to get the school to "back off".

He also said it was "a drain on the time of heads of year and senior leaders, having to enter these conversations and try to convince them not to do it".

A headteacher at a deprived Midlands school, who wished to remain anonymous, said the number of pupils leaving to be home-educated had doubled in the past 12 months. "This year, we probably lost up to 20."

Examples included children refusing to attend school or facing exclusion because of behaviour.

"It can look to Ofsted inspectors like you are off-rolling," she said, adding there was a "strong conversation" about the issue during her last inspection.

But one child taken off-roll was working as "cheap labour" with his dad in the building trade. She feared others were being recruited into criminal activities.

Families feared sending their children back

Kate Brunt, the chief executive of the Rivers CofE Multi-Academy Trust in Birmingham, said leaders held "lots of meetings with parents" before pupils were taken off roll. "We need to understand the reason why they want to leave the school."

Part-time timetables were sometimes offered, and "once the children got over that threshold and got back into a routine, we



Paul Whiteman

Continued on next page

INVESTIGATION: HOME EDUCATION

soon upped it. And they just got it. We've got all of our learners back in full time, who were very anxious."

But as *Schools Week* has previously revealed, vulnerable families with health conditions feared sending their children back into classrooms following lockdowns. Some claim they were "quietly encouraged" or felt they had no option but to remove their child from school to be educated at home – or risk a heavy fine.

A survey of 4,506 respondents by parliament's petitions committee found that nearly all – 97 per cent – said standards of education were a "very" or "moderately" important factor in their decision to home-educate.

Likewise, 89 per cent said their child's mental health was an important factor, while 40 per cent said one or more of the children they educated had SEND, mainly with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Kim Wareham, from Bath, home-educates her 11-year-old daughter, Chloe, who has a genetic learning disability.

When Chloe returned to school in 2021, Kim noticed behavioural problems. "She was coming home, spaced out and really stressed. Her learning took a dive and she wasn't reading anymore."

But after Chloe was admitted to hospital with Covid, Kim decided in January last year to home-school. "Our relationship is so much better now. She's just thriving."

Minelva Cocks, from south London, started home-schooling her two primary-aged children last year. Her son was



working "above his age group", and his school "just couldn't cater to his abilities and needs". She says her daughter suffered from anxiety at school.

DfE remains 'committed' to statutory registers

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, told MPs this week that the increase in the numbers of children home-educated was not "a problem in itself". But councils were worried the increase was "driven by reasons that are not in the best education interests of the child, and that some of these children are not receiving a suitable education".

But in a Westminster Hall debate, Labour MP Marie Rimmer said: "Will the minister please treat this issue more seriously? We are failing in our duty as parliamentarians by not ensuring that children are safe."

The now-scrapped

schools bill included a legal duty for councils to maintain a register of children not in school and a duty on parents to supply information for it.

The bill was scrapped last year, but the DfE said it remained committed to the statutory registers.

Gibb said they would become law "at the earliest opportunity".

Heather Sandy, from the ADfCS, urged the government to "move at pace and ensure we don't lose momentum" on the register.

"We have long raised with the government the need for a register that gives us a full understanding of the number of children being home-educated.

"Whilst a register in and of itself will not keep children safe, it will help to establish exactly how many children are being educated other than at school and assist with the identification of children who are vulnerable to harm."

However, two petitions demanding no new requirements be put on home-educating parents have gathered more than 35,000 signatures.

Data privacy and human rights campaigners have also warned the register could put families off seeking help from local services.

A DfE spokesperson said: "We support the right of parents to educate their children at home. "We cannot overlook the rising numbers of home-educated children and all children should receive a suitable education and be safe, regardless of where they are educated."



Marie Rimmer

CHILDREN HOME EDUCATED AT ANY POINT IN AN ACADEMIC YEAR

COUNCIL	2020-21	2021-22	INCREASE
NORTH TYNESIDE	93	214	130.11%
REDCAR AND CLEVELAND	181	319	76.24%
BRIGHTON AND HOVE	339	559	64.90%
BARKING AND DAGENHAM	322	487	51.24%
BROMLEY	335	453	35.22%
HARTLEPOOL	130	172	32.31%
DERBYSHIRE	1033	1295	25.36%
BOLTON	548	676	23.36%
RICHMOND	148	182	22.97%
WAKEFIELD	638	776	21.63%

CHILDREN HOME EDUCATED AT OCTOBER CENSUS

COUNCIL	2021	2022	INCREASE
TAMESIDE	118	186	57.63%
NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE	190	268	41.05%
BRIGHTON AND HOVE	361	509	41.00%
WIGAN	260	363	39.62%
CALDERDALE	265	362	36.60%
PLYMOUTH	534	713	33.52%
BLACKBURN	152	202	32.89%
NEWCASTLE	197	256	29.95%
REDCAR AND CLEVELAND	172	221	28.49%
TORBAY	245	313	27.76%



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- 📅 Day One
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WAMITHI**

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- 📣 Youth wellbeing



PROF. PAUL A. KIRSCHNER

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United Learning refused appeal over MIS deal

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

England's largest academy trust has been refused permission to appeal in a court battle over a £2 million management information system (MIS) deal.

Earlier this year, Mr Justice Waksman found Bromcom should have been awarded the contract for 57 of United Learning's schools instead of Arbor.

He said there was a "failure to treat the bidders equally" and "manifest error" because it did not take a particular step to "neutralise" Arbor's inherent advantage as incumbent provider" to 15 other United Learning schools.

He said he would be awarding damages – with the sums yet to be determined.

United Learning appealed to the Court of Appeal on six grounds, saying the judge's reasons were "wrong in law" and some were "procedurally unfair".

But Lord Justice Coulson rejected "out of hand" the trust's suggestions that there was "a lack of reasons" for the decisions. Some grounds were an "illegitimate attack" on the judge's factual findings, the ruling said.

"This was a careful and cogent judgment and this repetitive complaint highlights the somewhat mechanistic nature of United Learning's appeal," he said.

The appeal "is really an attempt to argue the defence to the original claim all over again".

Arbor had said there would be no cost for a data warehouse as it was "already set up".

Instead of seeking clarification, United Learning added £4,405 to Bromcom's cost projections, and some of its evaluators marked Bromcom down on the basis it was not covering the costs.

In its appeal, United Learning said procurement law did not, "except in exceptional circumstances, impose a duty on a contracting authority to invite bidders to submit further information to improve their score".

But Lord Justice Coulson said this was "a matter of equal treatment between the



parties" and the judge was "quite entitled to conclude this was a breach of the principle of equal treatment... it is impossible to reach any other conclusion".

The trust was also found to have infringed regulations as its cost scoring factored in a rebate from Arbor on its separate contract.

It appealed saying there was "no issue of 'incumbency' advantage" which Lord Justice Coulson said was "clearly wrong".

He added a "core principle" of procurement law was to ensure "equal treatment" between bidders.

"This principle is of heightened importance where one of the tendering parties is an incumbent provider. A tenderer cannot offer a price advantage in respect of a completely separate contract (potentially subject to a completely separate tender procedure)."

Ali Guryel, the founder of Bromcom, said the court's decision "upholds the principles of equal treatment in procurement law and sets a precedent for fair and transparent procurement processes".

United Learning did not comment this week. Previously, a spokesperson said the

Education and Skills Funding Agency had said it should defend the case, partly given "the potential impact on other schools of repeated litigation".

"It will be of concern to all schools that a good faith procurement carried out with full professional advice can lead to so many wasted hours and thousands of pounds of legal costs, even where a trust does all it can to close the matter reasonably."

An Arbor spokesperson said it "continues to hold itself to the highest ethical standards".

Meanwhile, separate legal action by Bromcom against Academies Enterprise Trust is on hold while they "try to settle the dispute" on MIS procurement, court documents read.

NEWS

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DfE ramps up interventions in trusts

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The government is to ramp up its powers to strip trusts of groups of underperforming academies en-masse.

But a sector leader has warned the Department for Education not to focus on large trusts as a “panacea” to school improvement.

The government’s academies regulatory and commissioning review, published this week, pledged to explore making “greater use” of intervention powers to tackle educational underperformance in academy trusts.

Schools Week reported last year how ministers planned to bolster their powers to tear up funding agreements and move schools into larger trusts after then education secretary Kit Malthouse vowed to be “more assertive”.

Intervention for poor performance is usually focused on individual schools, with termination warnings issued to academies rated ‘inadequate’, and individual settings rebrokered to new sponsors if troubles persist.

But the review found there was a “strong case for the department to be able to intervene at trust level in cases of sustained educational failure”, as it already does for governance or financial issues.

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, told Schools Week the intervention would focus on groups of underperforming schools.

“I think what we’re looking at is where a trust has a group of schools, let’s say in an area, that are significantly underperforming, a similar group of schools.

“Our responsibility to those children is to make sure that they’re run by a trust who can deliver better outcomes for those children.”

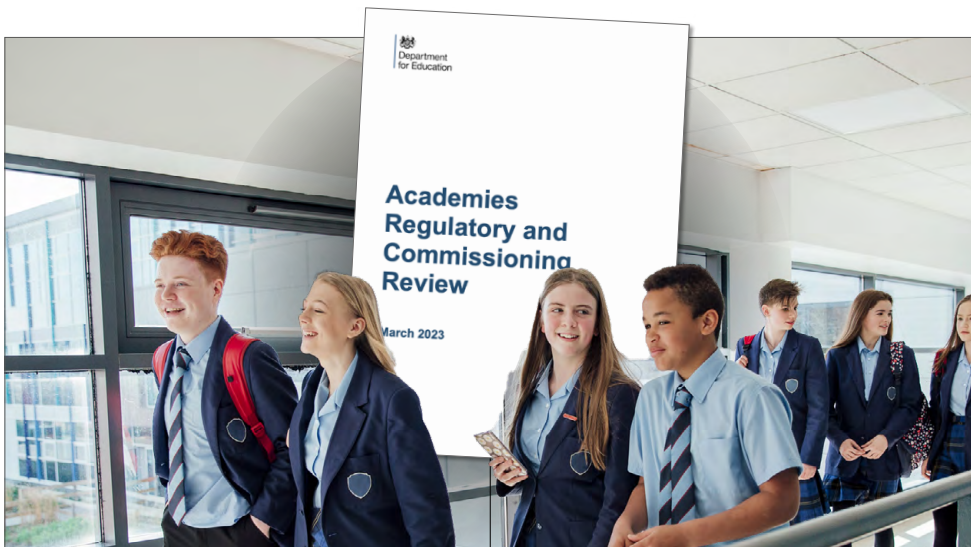
She acknowledged there was a “delicate balance”, because “some schools turn around quicker, some can take longer”.

“So we really are talking about where we see sustained underperformance, and in particular, where we’re seeing a group of schools and where their peers locally are doing much better.

“There will be a handful of cases I think where we can see there’s a better option for those children



Baroness Barran



and we should act on it.”

Alice Gregson, the executive director of Forum Strategy, which provides networks, training and strategy for MAT leaders, said it seemed that the concept of “strong trusts” would be a reference point in “top-down oversight and regional planning”.

“Whilst this may well have its place, it is critical for the sector that this is complemented with developmental and community-focused thinking. Further, we note there’s been a lot reference to ‘large trusts’ and whilst scale is undoubtedly important, history tells us that size alone isn’t a panacea.”

She said factors such as governance, the quality and sustainability of provision, sound financial management and trusts being at the heart of communities also played their part.

“We know many trusts of varying sizes have these, and we mustn’t overlook the potential of many small and medium-sized trusts to make an even bigger difference. Thriving trusts is all about building together.”

This week’s report concludes the review launched last year in the wake of the schools white paper.

Ministers have published new “trust development statements” for each of the 55 education investment areas.

These will “set out an assessment of local need at all phases and types of school, and opportunities for trusts developed with local delivery partners”.

The government has also

pledged to set up a “trust development network” in all nine regions of England to “help facilitate peer-to-peer support”.

The review said it had heard there was a “strong case for the department to be able to intervene at trust level in cases of sustained educational failure”.

“We will therefore explore ways of using our current powers to intervene at trust-level, under the existing legal framework.

“We will do this on a case-by-case basis, where there is clear evidence suggesting trusts are failing to hold executive leaders to account for poor educational performance across the trust and its academies.”

But Barran said the spirit of the report was “all about support for the sector, codifying what really effective practice looks like, sharing it, creating networks of support”.

“There are so many trusts which may be younger, less well-developed but absolutely committed to doing the best they can possibly do. We have that solid starting point. And it’s really only some time down the line, if that doesn’t work, that we would intervene.”

The government would also “continue to work closely with local authorities and dioceses to identify and support vulnerable maintained schools”, the review said.

But “when the majority of schools are in trusts, we may well need to take new powers to ensure we can intervene effectively and proportionately”.

EXPLAINER

DfE review proposes more support for trusts

The government has published the outcome of its academies regulatory and commissioning review. Here's what you need to know...

1 A SINGLE REGULATORY 'INTERFACE'

The DfE said its review had found its current approach to regulation "broadly provides the right safeguards, checks and balances against the most significant harms in the school system".

But it also heard there were "areas of regulation where historic and accumulated requirements are no longer needed".

A new "risk-based, proportionate regulatory approach" will focus on "promoting quality, striking a better balance between the need to protect against harms and the need to enable innovation".

A "single interface" between the DfE and trusts will be created through its regions group, making it "easier for trusts to engage regulators and submit returns".

The DfE will also "fully embed" the recommendations of its review of the Education and Skills Funding Agency by September.

2 A 'SIMPLIFIED' ACADEMY TRUST HANDBOOK

Requirements for trusts will be "streamlined". This spring, the DfE will "work with the sector to review and rationalise the requirements in the handbook, ensuring they are clear, necessary and proportionate to the risks they seek to prevent".

This will "remove outdated requirements and change our approach to financial oversight, so regulation is clearer and more proportionate to the risks it mitigates against".

The revised handbook will take effect from September.

3 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AND 'VIRTUAL ASSISTANT'

The government said it will review how parents' complaints are handled, with the aim of making it "less duplicative" for parents, schools and trusts. The review identified "significant confusion" and said the system's complexity makes it harder for regulators to "identify themes and emerging risks".

The GOV.UK page on complaints will be updated "shortly", making clearer which organisations should be contacted. The DfE is also trialling a new "virtual assistant" for parents.

4 GREATER USE OF INTERVENTION AT TRUST LEVEL

The review heard there was "a strong case" for the DfE to intervene at trust level in cases "of sustained educational failure".

The department will now "explore making greater use of existing powers to address underperformance at trust-level".

This will be done on a "case-by-case" basis where there is "clear

evidence suggesting trusts are failing to hold executive leaders to account for poor educational performance across the trust and its academies".

The DfE will also continue to work with councils and dioceses to support "vulnerable" maintained schools. But when the majority of schools are in trusts, "we may well need to take new powers to ensure we can intervene effectively and proportionally".

5 NEW 'STATEMENTS' TO SET OUT SPONSOR NEED

The DfE has published "trust development statements" for its 55 education investment areas – places ministers deem to be in "the highest need".

The plans outline the "assessment of need" in each area and how they want the "trust landscape to develop in response".

6 'STRONG' MATS WILL HEAD 'DEVELOPMENT NETWORKS'

In early 2024, the DfE will trial "regional trust development networks" that will be led by trusts with a "strong track record of leading improvement".

The government said its aim "will be to facilitate peer-to-peer support for all trusts and help deepen the sector's understanding of how effective approaches in all five of the pillars of trust quality are spread across a trust's schools".

7 'MORE TRANSPARENT' COMMISSIONING

Ministers will introduce three stages of commissioning – the process by which schools are moved around the system – after sector feedback said it needed to be "more strategic and transparent".

Full commissioning guidance, due to be published this June, will consolidate separate documents in one place and clarify the role of government advisory boards.

8 'EXPANDED' DESCRIPTIONS OF TRUST QUALITY

These descriptions will build upon the five "trust strength" pillars from the schools white paper (see graphic), all channelled to trusts' "wider civic purpose". Proposed descriptions for each of these pillars will be published next month.

9 NATIONAL MENTORING FOR CFOS

The government will roll out nationally a new mentoring programme for MAT chief financial officers, which will match them with "expert peers".

One-to-one mentoring will be introduced across the country from this summer.

NEWS

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DfE boosts academy trust expansion cash

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Academy trusts could receive up to £750,000 to take on at least five schools in underperforming areas.

And they will no longer be penalised for “excessive executive pay” when bidding for expansion cash.

The Department for Education has set out the application guidance for the next waves of its “trust capacity fund” (TCaF), worth £86 million over three years.

A new strand from this year will be worth up to £750,000 over two years for trusts that take on at least five schools, one of which must be ‘inadequate’ or ‘requires improvement’ in one of the government’s education investment areas (EIAs).

The cash is also available for those wanting to form a new multi-academy trust with at least five schools in EIAs.

The amount on offer for smaller expansion



projects has also risen. Those taking on at least one school with a less than ‘good’ rating in an EIA will receive up to £500,000 over two years, up from £300,000 in previous waves.

Trusts taking on a struggling school outside an EIA will get up to £250,000, up from £200,000.

The maximum “capacity giver” grant for trusts taking on ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ schools outside an EIA remains at £100,000.

Previously, trusts that received letters from the DfE on “excessive executive pay” could have points deducted from their applications for expansion cash.

But this did not feature in the most recent application guidance. The DfE said it was reviewing its “long-term approach to challenging

comparatively high pay and, in the meantime, we are keeping this guidance under close review”.

A new trust establishment and growth fund has also been launched to help expansion projects in their early stages.

Up to £50,000 is up for grabs if trusts are planning to take on a minimum of three schools in any area.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, welcomed “this new more strategic approach” to capacity funding.

“We are particularly encouraged by strands one and two of TCaF where funding is available over two financial years, with larger grants sizes.”

In total, 103 trusts won funding in window two of last year’s bidding rounds, totalling £15.1 million. It takes the total for last year’s grants to £33.7 million.

Truro and Penwith Academy Trust landed the largest grant at £430,950. Futura Learning Partnership, Wessex Multi-Academy Trust and Wimborne Academy Trust received £300,000 each.



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NEWS

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Van Gogh out of Durand shadow with 'good' Ofsted

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

A London primary school that replaced the scandal-hit Durand Academy has been rated 'good' by Ofsted, just over six years after its predecessor plunged to 'inadequate'.

Van Gogh Primary School in Lambeth, south London, was opened by the Dunraven Educational Trust in 2018 after the government's funding agreement with the Durand Academy Trust was terminated.

Its first Ofsted report described the school as "warm and nurturing where pupils are happy and enjoy their learning". Inspectors added there was "a growing sense of the school being at the heart of the community".

Durand Academy was rated 'inadequate' in 2016, with Ofsted warning of "weak leadership and governance" that did not have "the capacity to challenge deficiencies and drive the necessary improvements".

The government also raised concerns over the school's finances and potential conflicts of interest.



Van Gogh Primary School

Sir Greg Martin, the school's former chair and executive head, was paid more than £400,000 by the trust and through management fees from a company that ran leisure facilities on the site.

When the school closed in 2018, the land and buildings were handed over to Dunraven, but a lengthy legal battle over the leisure centre land, and accommodation on the site continued for years.

Durand Education Trust, a private company linked to the school, lost its last bid for compensation for the facilities last year.

Van Gogh's report, published this week, described the school as 'good' in every aspect. Pupils and families were given regular opportunities to share learning experiences, the inspectors said.

Leaders organised regular coffee mornings, with parents and carers invited to "rock up and read" with children in the early years.

Meanwhile, "the commitment and decision-making" from leaders had resulted in "significant, positive change, including the quality of education on offer".

Nadine Bernard, Van Gogh's headteacher, said it was a "privilege" to lead the school.

"I am so glad the inspection outcome recognised the work we have put in each day to provide this community and its children with the educational experience they deserve."

Dunraven's CEO, David Boyle, said: "We're delighted as a trust to have played a part in returning the school to its community and creating a great educational experience for the children in the process."

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

Durham joins Newcastle in training partnership

A Russell Group university denied accreditation in the government's initial teacher training (ITT) review has partnered with Newcastle University to continue delivering training from next year.

Durham was ranked in the top 100 in the QS World University Rankings for its education school this year. But it failed to regain accreditation to deliver ITT in the government's market review of the sector last year. Newcastle was recredited.

Last year, ministers rejected all appeals from unsuccessful providers, including Durham, which admitted it was "disappointed".

Just 179 providers made it through two reaccreditation rounds last year, well below the 240 providers in England in 2021.

Teacher trainers without accreditation have been encouraged to form partnerships.

Trainees who start at Durham will have their qualified teacher status accredited by

Newcastle. Academic qualifications – PGCEs and bachelor's degrees – will continue to be awarded by Durham.

In its announcement, Durham said the partnership would ensure "the two universities continue to provide high-quality teachers to local schools".

It would also "offer exciting opportunities to build upon and strengthen their contributions to teacher education regionally and nationally".

Current students, as well as those starting in September, will have their qualifications accredited by Durham.

There will be no change for Newcastle's students.

David Spendlove, professor of education at the Manchester Institute of Education, welcomed the news that Durham would be "staying" in ITT.

But he added that reforms had "achieved absolutely zero except to create stress and

confusion for long-established providers".

Last week, the DfE announced more organisations to act as ITT market quality "associates".

Tender documents show the Academies Enterprise Trust, Coventry SCITT and West Essex SCITT have been awarded £75,000 each.

The department previously announced that a pool of up to 15 associates would help to provide "expertise and assurance" that the new ITT market is in line with the core content framework and new quality requirements.

They will also support the "anticipated closure of a number of providers", including the transfer of trainees to other providers.

Teach First, the University of Worcester, Saffron Walden County High School and Wildern Academy Trust were handed contracts to become market quality associates last summer.



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Ban on strip-searches 'appropriate'

Banning police strip-searches of children in schools is "an entirely appropriate" move, says Lord Sharpe, a minister in the Home Office.

Dame Rachel de Souza (pictured), the children's commissioner, recommended schools should be "specifically excluded" as an "appropriate location" for the searches.

They should instead be done at a "nearby police station, medical premises or home address".

De Souza found 14 of the 2,847 strip-searches of children in England and Wales between 2018 and mid-2022 were in schools or police vehicles.

She requested data from



police forces after a 15-year-old black girl – known as Child Q – was strip-searched by Metropolitan Police officers called to a Hackney secondary school in east London last year.

In a debate on the report, Lord Sharpe said he agreed with some of de Souza's conclusions ... "the one about schools is an entirely appropriate conclusion to have reached.

"In my opinion, strip-searches should be conducted only in very safe and secure places."

The Home Office said it was considering all of de Souza's recommendations and would set out plans "in due course".

One in five mentors for new teachers 'unlikely to continue'

Almost one in five teachers who mentored new colleagues last year said they were unlikely to continue doing so, government research has found.

An evaluation of the first year of the government's new early career framework (ECF) found this was largely due to perceived high workloads and the feeling that mentors had limited time.

The ECF was rolled out nationally in 2021, extending the induction period for new teachers from one to two years.

Almost halfway through their induction, one-fifth of new teachers said they were unclear about how many hours a week they needed to spend on the programme.

The framework was created as part of the government's recruitment and retention strategy, but questions remain about its impact.

Four in five new teachers (82 per cent) considered it likely they would still be teaching in five years' time, while half (49 per cent) considered it very likely.

The Department for Education said it had already taken on board the interim findings of the research and was working to make changes to guidance and support.



Income cap bars children from FSM

Seven in ten children whose families claim universal credit are not eligible for free school meals (FSM), new research shows.

A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) this week explored options to expand free meals provision, while a bill to extend eligibility to all primary pupils is before parliament.

In England, pupils whose families claim universal credit are only eligible for free meals if their household's annual post-tax earnings are less than £7,400.

But the IFS found that the income cap meant 1.7 million children – 69 per cent of those from families on universal credit – were not eligible

for free lunches.

"It is shameful that so many children continue to miss out on a scheme with such proven benefits," said Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the school leaders' union ASCL.

Andrew McKendrick, a research economist at IFS, said universalising free school meals might have wider benefits for health and educational outcomes, but would significantly increase existing spending.

But he added that expanding eligibility to include more families on universal credit would "not directly benefit the very poorest children, who are already entitled to free lunches."

Gender pay gap at Ofqual grows

The gender pay gap at exams regulator Ofqual has increased by 2.2 percentage points in favour of men.

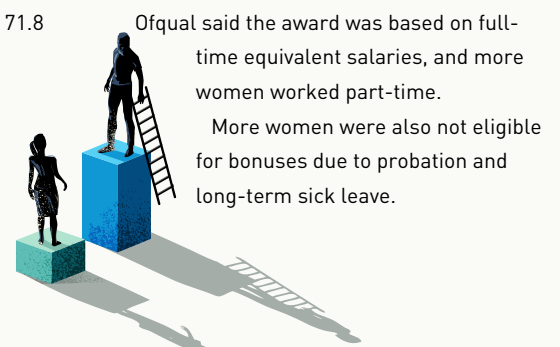
As of March 2022, men at the regulator earned on average 14.3 per cent more than women. This is compared with 12.1 per cent the previous year.

It comes as the proportion of women working within the lower quartile of Ofqual's

workforce rose by 1 percentage point to 71.8 per cent in the same timeframe.

The percentage of women working within the lower middle pay quartile also rose 5.4 percentage points to 64.8 per cent.

While there was no gap in bonuses in 2021, there was an 8.3 per cent gap in favour of men in 2022.



Ofqual said the award was based on full-time equivalent salaries, and more women worked part-time.

More women were also not eligible for bonuses due to probation and long-term sick leave.



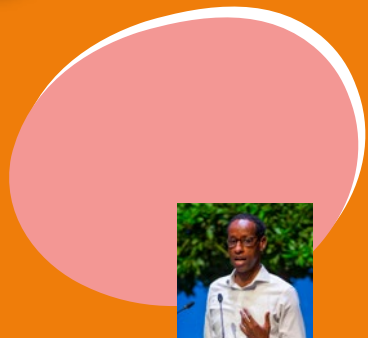
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‘I felt powerless, weak and humiliated’

After the recent outpouring of anger over the death of Ruth Perry, a headteacher who described his Ofsted experience as ‘uncannily similar’ speaks out.

Calvin Henry wipes away tears as he recalls the moment he was told his school had been rated ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted last year. “I stared at him [the lead inspector] with absolute disbelief,” says the head of a north London primary.

After the inspector left his office at St Mary’s Church of England Primary in Haringey, he typed his resignation letter, turned off his phone and

walked out, missing the final feedback meeting.

“I didn’t want to be seen by anybody. I was distraught, wondering ‘what do I do now?’” says Henry, 54. By the time he arrived home five hours later, his partner had started calling local hospitals.

Seven months after the inspection in March 2022 – in which both leadership and management and behaviour and attitude were given the lowest grade – the school was rated ‘good’ in all areas.

But for Henry, who will take early retirement in July, the damage of the initial “wrong” judgment had been done, to his school and his mental health.

After the recent outpouring of anger over the death of Ruth Perry, whose experience with Ofsted he describes as “uncannily similar”, he believes the time is right to speak out. It may cost him his second job – like many leaders he is also a part-time Ofsted inspector.

Profile: Calvin Henry

“I know I will burn my bridges with Ofsted and I regret that wholeheartedly, but the time is ripe for change,” he says.

I know the framework. I know the system

From “humble beginnings” in Hyson Green, a predominantly working-class suburb of Nottingham, Henry went on the London School of Economics.

He has since spent nearly 30 years in education.

“I was successful and I knew the way to succeed in life was through education. I’ve always wanted to ensure children from similar backgrounds have similar opportunities.”

A former primary teacher, he became a head in 2006 and led two other London schools, one of which was twice rated ‘outstanding’.

Following a three-year stint in school improvement for Hackney Council, Henry “missed headship so much” he returned to lead St Mary’s in September 2018.

When an Ofsted inspector notified him of what was supposed to be an ungraded inspection on March 29 last year – just 15 minutes before the team’s arrival – he was certain the school would remain ‘good’.

“I know the framework, I know the system. I can evaluate accurately the strength of my own provision.”

He believes that an isolated incident days beforehand led to the “unfair downgrading”.

The day the inspectors called

Inspectors arrived on a Tuesday morning, met with the school’s safeguarding lead and took note of the incident, which involved a small group of boys using “inappropriate sexualised language” towards a group of girls.

The episode was under internal investigation and an email had been sent to parents.

Henry says he spoke to the children involved separately, supporting the girls and talking to boys about “toxic masculinity and the age of criminal responsibility”.

But Ofsted’s report said leaders “do not fulfil their duties to keep pupils safe, including seeking advice or referring concerns to outside agencies in



‘I can evaluate the strength of my own provision’

a timely way”.

According to Henry, inspectors spoke to some of the children involved, who gave other examples of the “physical aggression” and “use of racist, homophobic” language mentioned in the report.

He contests this portrayal of the school, and says his team was “robustly dealing” with the incident.

“Any headteacher would be hugely upset if their school was described as one where sexist, racist and homophobic language was regularly used by children.

“Being a black, gay man, fully committed to promoting the protected characteristics, a number of which define who I proudly am, this description of my school was particularly devastating, along with the assertion that my school was failing in its duty to keep children safe.”

Suicidal thoughts

Henry describes how he contemplated taking his own life after Ofsted delivered the news. “It crosses your mind...just to do something to end it all.”

He was supported by his partner and a friend when he got home and took the next day off, skipping an Ofsted training conference. Then his chair of governors turned up and told him his resignation wasn’t accepted.

By Friday, Henry was back at work, trying to charge forward with school improvement.

The school made it to stage two of Ofsted’s complaints process, but none of the 16 arguments it put forward were upheld.

In the months before the report was published in September, he went from a position “of strength and confidence to one of feeling powerless, weak and humiliated”.

Ofsted told him he was no longer needed for four inspections lined up in the summer term, and the government began the process of issuing an academy order, causing “another layer of stress”.

He quit as a governor of a local secondary school and a member of another school trust board. “I felt, what have I got to offer?” In his personal life he withdrew completely.

Profile: Calvin Henry

Ofsted returned months later

The thought of how the outcome would be received by the school's community was "building and building" all summer. He called his adviser from the local diocese to report he was "in this really dark place" and didn't know what to do.

A PR company was hired to draft a statement, and a town hall meeting was arranged to address concerns.

Most parents were "amazing," but about a dozen withdrew their children. The report also landed as prospective parents were touring schools ahead of a January 15 deadline to apply for reception places.

"We hardly had anybody visit – I could probably count them on one hand. We knew that was a direct consequence of the report."

Ofsted returned in November, this time with four full-time inspectors. Henry said he felt there was "recognition they got it wrong the first time, which is why they came back sooner".

Their report described a school where "pupils are happy and safe" and the atmosphere is "kind and caring".

Teachers were said to have "gained expertise" to teach the phonics programme "effectively" and teachers identified "with precision" the gaps in pupils' knowledge.

It read like a report on a "completely different school", Henry says. But "nothing of any major significance in terms of practice on a day-to-day basis changed between March and November".

He puts the change in fortunes down to the inspection teams being "very different from each other".

Complaints about inconsistency are common. Research from the University of Southampton and UCL recently found female inspectors are more likely to hand out harsher grades for primary schools than their male counterparts, while freelance inspectors are more likely to offer higher grades than in-house staff.

Mandatory support needed

Ofsted published its second report in December, allowing the school to promote its 'good' outcome to prospective parents.



'There was recognition they got it wrong the first time'

"But by then parents' minds have been made up," Henry says. The school received 78 applications for this September, compared with 107 last year.

Henry is waiting to hear back after applying for the academy order to be revoked.

In recent months, he has received counselling provided by the Diocese of London, which has helped him with his response to the Ofsted experience and the recent death of a colleague.

But he believes "mandatory" support should be in place for heads whose schools are downgraded to 'inadequate'.

"What [Ofsted] don't seem to understand is the impact that single word has on people, on their lives, and how it can shatter and destroy them," he says.

"Because the school's inadequate and the leadership is inadequate, you're therefore inadequate by default."

He now plans to take early retirement in July, followed by a year of travelling. Until recently he also planned to return to Ofsted, which has asked him to take part in inspections again.

"I believed that by working within the system

you could help effect change," he says.

But he is prepared to sacrifice that following the "impetus and momentum for change" coming from the education sector, with any future career now likely to focus on leadership and headteacher wellbeing.

"It's only when you've been through what other leaders have experienced in terms of being judged so unfairly you fully realise how this has a quite significant and adverse impact on people's lives.

"The system does need to change...I certainly don't want to be subject to another inspection."

Ofsted said it did not comment on individual inspections.

SAMARITANS

Samaritans are available 365 days a year. You can reach them on free call number 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org to find your nearest branch.

Education Support runs a confidential helpline for education staff and teachers - call 08000 562 561.

Opinion

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

A much bigger threat lurks behind the hand-wringing over ChatGPT empowering students to cheat – and that’s adults misusing these nascent educational tools, says Cesare Aloisi

There’s nothing adults like more than blaming something on the kids, especially when it comes to technology. “My children are always on their phones. It’s appalling they’re so glued to TikTok. In my day, we used to talk to each other.” You get the picture.

Nowhere has that been more apparent than in the debate over artificial intelligence and ChatGPT. The Twittersphere has been awash with people arguing that children can’t be trusted and should be kept as far away from it as possible. But as my colleague Reza Schwitzer has already pointed out, as long as we have externally marked exams as part of our assessment toolkit, these predictions of impending doom are somewhat unfounded.

I would like to make another observation – that far from the problem being about not trusting children, it’s adult use of AI in education that needs greater scrutiny.

There are many potential uses for tools such as ChatGPT, particularly in assessment. Used well they could revolutionise education, for example by quality assuring marking at scale to make it as fair and equitable as possible, or crunching data and research to provide new insights for policymakers. Some might want to go even further, using AI (as Duolingo already does) to write and mark papers. But this is where some of the problems also start.

These are still experimental systems. Despite the excitement, and the opportunities they offer, they need to be integrated into education



DR CESARE ALOISI

Head of research and development, AQA

Children misusing ChatGPT? It’s the adults you need to watch

incrementally, safely and responsibly. Current AI systems have several limitations, particularly around safety and ethics. The include:

Brittleness and unreliability

They are unable to deal with unusual situations, and sometimes do not work as expected.

Lack of transparency and explicability

Most AI systems are “black boxes”. We don’t really know how they reached certain conclusions and they can’t explain that well. And when they can, such as with ChatGPT, they may be making it up. They can also develop capabilities they were not programmed for.

“ AI is as prejudiced as the real world

Untrustworthiness

Current systems are generally overly confident about what they do and don’t know; they fabricate answers that were meant to be factual.

Bias and toxicity

AI systems are trained on real-world data and, as such, are as biased and prejudiced as the real world, often more so.

All of these point to challenges with integrating AI into education. For example, AI could be OK to mark student work when the responses are short and predictable. However, it cannot exercise academic judgment the way a teacher can, so it could give two similar responses very different marks. Or it might make spectacular errors with unexpected and original answers.

Even though AIs are meant to be objective, they are often more biased than people because they exaggerate human biases and see correlations where people don’t. So an AI might become much better at recognising responses written by boys, people of colour, affluent students – even if all responses are anonymised – and upmark/ downmark them based on those biases and prejudice.

There might be similar problems if AIs were used to assist with writing question papers. They would need a huge amount of quality assurance to ensure the questions they wrote were factually correct, non-toxic, non-biased etc.

All this means that we need to treat AI systems like we treat experimental medications: investing in research and development, but testing them in safe environments before rolling them out at scale.

We also need to learn from other industries that are further ahead than us, such as healthcare, and develop ethical and safe frameworks to ensure developers follow certain rules.

And ultimately, we need to remember that when we ask how best to deal with AI, we aren’t only talking about children. It’s the adults we need to watch.



Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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DR JEFFERY QUAYE

National director of education and standards, Aspirations Academies Trust

A one-size-fits-all approach will not solve persistent absence

A more holistic approach is needed to tackle a crisis of confidence in education, says Jeffery Quaye

The pandemic continues to cast a long shadow across education with schools facing many challenges as they seek a return to normality. Pupil absence is key amongst these.

Recent government statistics show that the pupil absence rate is higher now than in 2018-19 and varies by geography. The same statistics reveal that the persistent absence rate (ie the proportion of pupils missing 10 per cent or more of school sessions) has significantly increased, from 10 per cent in 2018-19 to 22.3 per cent in 2021-22.

The situation is more alarming for pupils in receipt of free school meals. In 2018-19, there was a 3.2 per cent gap in terms of persistent absence between these pupils and their peers. By the end of the past academic year, this had increased to 19.7 per cent. For pupils with special educational needs, the persistent absence gap between them and their peers jumped by 14.1 percentage points to 32 per cent.

Education is grappling with difficult questions, namely how to account for the increase in absence and who to hold responsible for

ensuring pupils attend school regularly.

Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary, has spoken in recent weeks of "restoring an ethic of responsibility", suggesting that parents should face cuts to child benefit if they fail to send their children to school. While many have bridled at his suggestions, it is perhaps an attempt to focus minds on the challenge of persistent absence and the barrier to success it poses, particularly for our most vulnerable children.

High levels of persistent absence are concerning not least because of safeguarding issues: children who aren't in school are at risk from any number of malign influences. Intervention is crucial if we are to turn around this group's life chances.

We know that long-term educational disadvantage is causally linked with persistent absence, and this threatens to perpetuate a cycle of poor academic achievement, low employment prospects and limited life chances.

Aspirations Academies Trust serves many communities for whom our schools are a place of hope. We agree with Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner, when she says that school is "the best place for children



Sanctioning parents is unlikely to yield the desired outcome

to thrive, be safe and happy, and learn". Our focus on attendance is relentless, and the schools in our trust draw on all available best practices to tackle the scourge of persistent absence.

But even in doing what de Souza suggests, by creating a culture that "prioritises and obsesses about attendance", it is evident that some families choose not to engage and, in some cases, simply do not appreciate the value of education.

Educators and stakeholders with an interest in social justice, equity, and a commitment to high-quality education for all, including disadvantaged and SEND pupils, should be exploring means to address this crisis, which is at least in part a crisis of confidence in education.

Pupils need continuous engagement with the curriculum to build knowledge. Failure to attend creates gaps that prevent any meaningful understanding of new concepts, and in some cases means a failure to progress in basic literacy

and numeracy.

School attendance is complicated, impacted by poverty, lack of parental support, mental health and disorganised lifestyles. In this post-pandemic era, there may be other contributory factors around changing attitudes to authority and the state too.

A multi-agency approach is needed, involving government, local authorities, and schools. Sanctioning parents is unlikely to yield the desired outcome; a one-size-fits-all approach is too simplistic.

Until there is a well-defined system that combines academic focus with support for wellbeing at a national level, the ambitious curriculum offered in schools will continue to take a back seat for some pupils and families, resulting in poor educational outcomes and lower employment prospects.

The aim must not be to blame schools or families or politicians, but together to bring these children out of Covid's long shadow.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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CHRIS PYLE
Head, Lancaster Royal Grammar School



Education reform: How Scotland delivers could be a lesson for us all

Those calling for curriculum and assessment reform in England should learn the lessons of Scotland's long road to implementation, says Chris Pyle

A new House of Lords committee is calling for evidence for a review of curriculum and qualifications in England. The committee on education for 11 to 16-year-olds writes that "the secondary education system in England is currently at a crossroads".

Most educators in England are unaware that the Scottish education system is half a step ahead in its plans to reform curriculum and assessment. Its momentum for change holds lessons (good and bad) for any future review here.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence was launched in 2004. Its ambition is impressive, and its explicit aims are to develop successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

An educational vision that puts young people at the centre and values their contributions to society is a positive and worthy aim. However, its implementation has been more problematic. Holyrood commissioned the OECD to carry out an external review in 2021,

and the result was not entirely complimentary. In theory, Scottish pupils benefit from a broad general education from early years until specialisation in their final years. In practice, however, their experience may be fragmented and bitty rather than expansive and interdisciplinary.

Backwash from accountability measures often distort pupils' experience. Many schools narrow the curriculum towards public exams, sometimes to quite a dramatic extent. Children are over-examined. Many sit public exams three years in a row, in a partially overlapping range of external examinations including National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers. Each year is characterised by a "two-term dash" towards the exams.

As the OECD points out, "the examination syllabus becomes the *de facto* curriculum and teachers switch to narrower test preparation methods with secondary years students". A familiar refrain.

In response to the OECD report, the Scottish government announced a wholesale review. Professor Louise Hayward has recently published her interim recommendations, which include rebalancing internal and external assessment and streamlining academic and vocational pathways. The report sees technology as a lever for

“ There is good sense and provocation in the Scottish vision

change: another aim is to use digital technologies to assess and record achievements.

However, the central proposal is for a Scottish Diploma of Achievement. This Baccalaureate-style leaving certificate, which values breadth as well as traditional assessment of subject content, has three strands.

The first is the most conventional. The diploma will assess pupils' progress in subjects or curricular areas. Most pupils will accumulate credits over two years, and sit exams at the end.

The second strand is "Learning in Context". This is envisaged as an interdisciplinary project that combines a range of knowledge and competencies, not dissimilar to our extended project qualification. The Hayward review, however, suggests that this might involve local community projects or – somewhat airily – that pupils might tackle "global issues [such as] climate change, social justice, or migration". No pressure.

The third is perhaps the least defined. In "Personal Pathways", pupils can record "their personal interests, commitments and

activities, the contributions they make to society and their career aspirations". The inspiration of the International Baccalaureate and its compulsory CAS component (creativity, activity, service) seems evident here.

There are plenty of barriers for the implementation of such far-reaching reforms. For those of us in England, including the Lords' committee, there is good sense and helpful provocation in its vision.

It is a reminder that the assessment system is not a given, that we can use it to achieve more than one aim and that our curriculum decisions shape the way that thousands of teenagers spend their time and energy.

And it asks some helpful questions. Should we create a system that encourages contributions to society as well as subject knowledge? Do we want to reduce the intensity of final exams? Should digital technology be seen as a solution in assessment rather than a threat?

Watching the Scottish reforms unfold will be informative for the debates we are likely to have ourselves.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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An impact study shows Wellspring’s mastery approach to phonics is helping to close gaps before they appear, writes Sam Bailey

Getting every child reading is the single most important thing primary schools do – although that’s not always a straightforward job.

When you’re teaching phonics to children from a low-socioeconomic area, a high proportion will have SEND or be otherwise disadvantaged. They typically arrive with language skills well below their peers nationally, and parental engagement and confidence to support learning tend to be low.

We also need to add the impact of the pandemic, in which many of our children missed crucial early experiences and the opportunity to build their stamina to concentrate for long periods. Our response has been to increase our ambitions for our children and to develop sophisticated strategies for enabling them to succeed.

We have been using a mastery approach for years, recently transitioning to a programme called Rocket Phonics. Mastery enables us to keep pupils on track, to quickly identify where they’re getting stuck and decide on the level of intervention needed to bring them back in line with their peers.

Our approach is to ensure children “keep up, not catch up”, with a three-step intervention process for those who struggle.

1. Up-skilled staff

We all know what pupils are learning on a week-by-week and lesson-by-lesson basis, so we can spot issues immediately and intervene “in the moment”. Our most important resource



SAM BAILEY

Executive principal, Wellspring Academy Trust

The role of mastery in levelling the phonics playing field

with phonics is adults. Our staff are skilled in providing additional modelling, scaffolding and individual support, and in creating smaller groups within the classroom. This is crucial in ensuring every minute of learning is maximised.

for all children to practise throughout the day, through short bursts of rehearsing letter-sound correspondence and blending, rhyming and – of course – reading. We also keep a sharp focus on children at risk of underachieving.

“Closing gaps early feeds into each child’s sense of self-efficacy”

2. One step ahead

Our second layer of intervention involves an understanding of the barriers to learning that are typical of a lag in attainment in phonics. We build in extra opportunities

For them, our “one step ahead” interventions mean that, rather than being introduced to new sounds within the whole-class session, they could be introduced to them the previous week, before their peers.



The impact is significant; instead of lagging behind, they are ahead. This changes their perception of themselves as successful learners and feeds into a virtuous cycle of achievement.

3. Self-image matters

Everything else we do will be familiar to all teachers. In the main, this relies on the more conventional “intervention” of working with some children out of the class to give them additional support. Because our staff are all skilled in delivery and fully aware of our curriculum progression, every child gets support with the specific part of the programme they need help with.

Closing gaps early is so important and feeds into each child’s sense of self-efficacy. As we sadly know as teachers, some children learn to feel a sense of inadequacy in comparison with their peers as early as year 2. This is devastating for a seven-year-old; our approach is designed to prevent that from happening.

And it’s working: In a recent impact study on Rocket Phonics, our trust of five primary academies in Yorkshire and the Humber had stronger outcomes for pupils in reception and year 1 than the control schools. More than that, I am confident that our phonics screening test results will be the highest they have ever been across the partnership, and I am even more excited about the impact on reading results in the coming year or two.

That means that the 2,000 children I oversee will be reading and writing confidently, competently and joyfully – a massive step for our disadvantaged communities.

Solutions

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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KATHARINE RODDY

Head of German; diversity, equity and inclusion lead, Bolton School

How to positively engage young men in the fight against misogyny



Engaging young men about gender inequality without alienating them is key to preventing Tate-style misogyny, writes Katharine Roddy

strong and important messages about gender equality, bringing young men along with us without compromising on message.

Teacher confidence is key. So how do we empower our colleagues to steer these potentially challenging conversations, ensuring that they feel confident to respond effectively to pupils' questions and comments? A whole-school approach is vital.

Open up the dialogue

These conversations take time. Teachers are all experts in building trust with their pupils and it is vital that they feel supported by senior leaders to take the time out of their lessons to address these issues and turn them into teachable moments.

Listening and accepting that pupils' feelings are real and valid helps to build trust, as does questioning their comments in a non-judgmental way.

Coach pupils through their thinking

Unpicking pupils' concerns and the language they use has yielded positive results and effected a shift in attitudes. Once again, they need to know that they are not being judged, and they describe feeling supported when teachers repeat this message explicitly.

Providing concrete evidence is also key, but our research has

“ Pupils need to know that they are not being judged

shown that teachers do not need to have all the answers then and there. Pupils report that they respect teachers who go away and do their research, re-approaching the subject once they feel well-prepared and informed.

Consider intersectionality

Discussions about gender equality provide the perfect opportunity to open up the discussion about diversity. Listening to our pupils has been helpful to understand their perceptions of what feminism means for men and boys.

Meeting them at this level has shown us that pupils need the opportunity to explore how gender inequalities affect men as well as women. In turn, this has prompted productive and meaningful discussions on how gender equality benefits everyone, and has shown students that teachers support them.

End with a call to action

It is important to reassure pupils that we know that they did not

invent the culture of gender inequality. However, they did inherit it and, as such, have control of their place within it.

The fight for gender equality will be won far faster with the help of male allies. This is where schools have a real opportunity to lead a call to action and empower young men. It feels crucial to focus on positive progress and to look towards the future, as this allows pupils to regain a sense of control over the situation.

Education professionals can and must advocate for sustainable and meaningful work on gender equality. We need to show that proactively and positively engaging young men on this issue will help to further the equality agenda for women.

Listening to our pupils and showing them that gender equality has benefits for all is the first step towards empowering them to use their agency and privilege to be allies.

THE REVIEW

- BOOK
- TV
- FILM
- RADIO
- EVENT
- RESOURCE

LUNANA. A YAK IN THE CLASSROOM

Director: Pawo Choyning Dorji
Release date: 10 March 2023
Reviewer: Aimee Tinkler, deputy director, Greenwood Academies Teaching Institute and president-elect, Chartered College of Teaching

Lunana is a feel-good movie. Its plot is predictable, its messages are somewhat naïve and its subject matter is treated with a large dollop of sentimentality. The cinematography is unquestionably beautiful, but the narrative is neither ground-breaking nor even particularly original, so it might not land with the more cynical viewer.

But I found it a deeply moving story that portrayed the struggles and rewards of teaching in way that few movies do. Perhaps my enjoyment was in part due to having watched it at the end of a long, hard week, but I found it a beautiful reminder of the impact teachers have on their pupils' lives and a powerful portrayal of the hope and human connection of our profession.

As the report of the death of headteacher Ruth Perry leaves us reflecting on our roles, the system and its impact on the people within it, this heart-warming and visually stunning movie provides a couple of hours of escapism and a timely reiteration of the power of teachers to change lives, even in the most difficult circumstances.



Directed by Bhutanese filmmaker, Pawo Choyning Dorji, it tells the story of Eugen, who is reluctantly engaged in obligatory national service as a teacher. While dreaming of escaping to a new life as a singer in Australia, he is sent to a mountain village in Lunana to teach in the most remote school in the world.

Shot on location in Bhutan, it captures the beauty and serenity of the country's landscapes, giving us a glimpse into the lives of the people who live in this remote region. Many of the actors are locals, which gives the movie a raw, genuine and believable quality that left me wondering if the job was still available and, if so, whether my family would mind relocating.

The most striking aspect for me was not the journey of the young teacher or the enthusiasm of the pupils, but the importance the villagers place on the education of five children. They show huge gratitude towards the teacher who is willing to take on the challenge of running a school with no resources, little space, a precious old yak living at the back of the classroom and not a policy, procedure or school inspector in sight.

Eugen teaches reading and counting from his makeshift blackboard. In return he learns humility and finds contentment in this simple life, which seems apt in a country that measures its success not by GDP but rather by an index of happiness.

The idea of teaching being a wonderful profession because "teachers touch the future" pulled me in hook, line and sinker, but the wider story is also a compelling one. Bhutan has protected itself from the problems associated with mass tourism by charging hundreds of



dollars each day for visitors to be in their country.

The 56 inhabitants of this village live without electricity or communication with the world below, an eight-day trek away. But even they are not immune to the wider issues. Changes in the climate caused by actions in far-off countries are having an impact: the Himalayan glaciers are melting, lakes are drying up and the local snow lion's home is under threat.

Reports suggest that even as the crew were packing up their equipment and solar batteries carried up to the village by mule, other teams were moving in to install the area's first 3G masts. I'm not sure if this is progress or a travesty.

In a week also marked by the IPCC's "final warning" on catastrophic climate change, this film is an additional reminder of what we stand to lose – and education's central role in any conversation about it.

Lunana. A Yak In The Classroom is now in UK cinemas

★★★★☆
Rating



THE CONVERSATION
LISTENING IN ON
THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM



Frances Akinde
SEND adviser and neurodiversity champion

DISAPPEARED COLLEAGUES

There is an underworld in education, let's call them the "disappeared".

These are the educators who suddenly and without warning disappear from their settings, never to be spoken of again.

Typically, a message will go out to staff to say that the person is ill or "off work for personal reasons" and is not to be contacted. A few days, weeks or even months later, there will be an update to say that the member of staff has "decided to move on".

These educators are now speaking out. On Sunday morning I got a text from a friend who is a school leader, signposting an "interesting read by Tom Sherrington".

In his latest blog, entitled [Ofsted has to change. For all our sakes](#), the author of *WalkThrus* and *The Learning Rainforest* discusses his experiences as a school leader.

I know Sherrington from his books and his work around Rosenshine's principles, and have been interviewed by him and Emma Turner for their *Mind the Gap* podcast. But I didn't know his back story as a school leader and why he decided to leave headship. The news of Ruth Perry's death seems to have started an outpouring of truth-telling.



HIDDEN AGENDAS

They are speaking out and resharing their own painful experiences – and we are all better off for hearing them. Like retired head John Cosgrove, who [in this blog](#) describes an Ofsted judgment and a complaints procedure that can at best be described as requiring improvement. Or like this blog, reposted by Ruth Swailes.

OFSTED: Hidden Agendas and No Way to Complain



It could have been me shows the toll our accountability system takes on mental health. Like many others, it is written by a leader who remains "undercover", but to me this is a huge shift.

Most school leaders don't talk about negative experiences. Mostly that's because if things go wrong for whatever reason, they are offered a termination agreement that comes with a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), which bars them from talking about it. In exchange, they leave with an agreed reference. If they do decide to talk, they live in fear that their reputation will be in tatters and that they may never work in education again.

These are dedicated educators who took on the challenge of leading a school because they wanted to make a difference for young people. For whatever reason, their efforts were not enough or their methods not in favour, and they end up facing the end of their careers.

UNEXPLORED PATHS

As a very recent ex-headteacher and now SEND adviser, I agree that there needs to be accountability and a way to maintain high standards, particularly for our most vulnerable students. But what does this look like?

School leaders (current and retired) and even some former inspectors have been offering possible avenues. But as Twitter user Secret Headteacher sets out in this thread, any meaningful transformation will take time.



Secret Headteacher
@secretHT1

I've been thinking a lot about Ofsted.

They create an undeniable and extreme amount of stress. Change is needed. However, other systems/professions have audits/inspections too.

We need to learn from those models to improve our own system and build a sustainable model...

Some have simply decided to no longer be part of a system they see as harmful – such as headteacher Andy Webster who used Twitter to [announce his resignation as an Ofsted inspector](#). As the legendary "Geoff and Margaret" explain using *Schools Week* data, serving heads make up 68 per cent of the inspectorate. "The power to bring real change to Ofsted comes from within the profession."


Calling for an inquiry into Ofsted inspections and a suspension of its visits, [HeadteacherChat](#) repeated the profession's widely held view: "We value professional dialogue and understand the importance of maintaining high standards."

But like Ross McGill, we can all [imagine a better system](#). Meanwhile, we can only wish for the clarity of purpose on show from headteacher, [Flora Barton, reflecting on a school inspection in 2017](#).

"We had decided from the outset that we weren't doing what we did for Ofsted. [...] if we put our children at the heart of every decision that we make, we can never go far wrong."



Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts



The Knowledge

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



Why homogeneous SEND guidance lets schools down

**Dr Lila Kosyvak, associate professor,
School of Education, University of
Birmingham**

Over the past 20 years the term SEND has covered between 10 and 20 per cent of the school population. Currently, it's around 12.6 per cent. But the reasons for these pupils' needs are wide and varied.

There are commonalities that allow for specialist teaching methodologies. An obvious example is the use of sign language and braille with those with significant hearing impairments and visual impairments. But it's much harder when it comes to pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD) and those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD).

You might expect an academic like me to advise turning to research to find out about how those with SLD and PMLD learn. In reality, though, there is remarkably little because of several factors, including the small proportion of children the terms apply to (less than 2 per cent combined), the limited availability of funding, and ethical and practical difficulties with conducting research with this population.

Even more unfortunately, the research that does exist is often badly used and/or abused. In a recently published paper, Peter Imray, Mike Sissons and I show that relevant educational research undertaken so far has a strong tendency towards three problems: conflating the need for common strategies to be universally used in teaching with the "need" for a common curriculum; quoting research that applies to pupils with certain types of SEND as though it applies to all pupils with SEND; and assuming there is an homogeneity of learning disabilities among people with the same diagnostic label (eg autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome).

All these issues come to the fore in the most recent iteration of government policy on literacy in schools, *The reading framework: Teaching the foundations of literacy*, which claims to "concentrate on good practice for those with



moderate to severe SEND and complex needs". This is a very broad category, which includes all those with SLD and PMLD.

The document goes on to say that "consensus is growing among academics and teachers that the best reading instruction for children with SEND is systematic synthetic phonics (SSP)".

The DfE names five pieces of research to support the claim. Two relate to children with autism, and one to Down syndrome (DS). None of these three mentions the level of learning disabilities or difficulties experienced by the children included in the studies, yet a significant percentage of people with autism have no learning difficulties, while most of those with DS have mild to moderate learning difficulties.

Another of the five research documents discusses dyslexia, which has as much to do with SLD and PMLD as chalk to cheese. The last claims that several children with SLD were included in its sample, but a closer look at the IQ measurements it provides shows that many of the participants had moderate rather than severe learning disabilities. Their results on the benefits of phonics-based programmes are therefore less

applicable to students with SLD, and not at all to learners with PMLD.

The DfE paper makes the assumption that one educational strategy (in this case SSP) will work for all learners with SEND without considering that some, particularly those with SLD and PMLD, learn differently.

But some do, and because they learn differently we ought to be open to teaching them differently and teaching them different things. This is the case especially for pupils with SLD and PMLD, who are usually in special schools. However, with a shortage of places in these settings and an increasing demand on mainstream schools to accommodate pupils with a range of special educational needs, teachers from mainstream schools are also likely to be expected to play this role.

We really need to stop treating pupils with SEND as an homogeneous group.

*Lila Kosyvak is a co-editor of *A Different View of Curriculum and Assessment: for those with profound, complex and severe learning disabilities*, available soon from Routledge*

Week in

Westminster

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



MONDAY

Nick Gibb has been in charge of Tory education policy for coming up to 100 years.

Oh, no, sorry, we mean nearly 20 years. But he didn't mind showing his age during a Westminster Hall debate this week.

"I have met home-educators in my constituency and heard about the positive work they do," he said.

"Indeed, I have been to visit their homes and seen that home education happening. I remember one particular constituent being home-educated, and she is now a mother herself – that shows how old I am."

We look forward to hear about the third generation of Bognor Regis home-educators to meet their illustrious MP.

Nadhim Zahawi's former policy adviser Mark Lehain asked Twitter what the extra £2 billion allocated to schools was for "if not for pay rises?"

At the time, the Treasury said the funding equated to an "average cash increase for every pupil of more than £1,000 by 2024-25, compared to 2021-22".

Increased pay rises for this academic year have cost the sector £1.3 billion, while the additional cash will be needed to cover the bulk of any agreed rises for next year. And that's without taking a decade of underfunding, inflation and spiralling energy costs into account.

Lehain's comments were, as ever, in keeping with the government line, with education secretary Gillian Keegan telling Sky News this week the cash was for this

year's pay rises.

But it didn't stop one of Lehain's headteacher followers from asking if the query was "a wind-up".

TUESDAY

No one was as surprised as the education sector when (Sir) Gav Williamson came off surprisingly well when duped by campaign group Led By Donkeys.

As part of the undercover stunt drawing attention to MPs' outside earnings, the former chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng and the former health secretary Matt Hancock agreed to work for £10,000 a day for a fake South Korean company.

(Sir) Gav, the former education secretary, was smarter than that. He refused to be drawn on a fee and when asked if he could set up meetings with government officials, promptly ended the call.

"I, I, I don't think that would be...I'm not sure that would be proper or right actually," he said. "I'm not sure maybe I'm the right person on this."

Luckily he doesn't need a second job anyway – he already has one as a £50,000 a year adviser to a company that runs private schools.

WEDNESDAY

It's been like an intricate game of Where's Wally trying to spot Gillian Keegan over the past few weeks after her snub of ASCL's conference.

However, she decided the right forum to finally confront the masses was the Bett edtech show and a talk about how

wonderful AI is.

But a packed arena promptly emptied after an earlier talk by *Dragon's Den* star Steven Bartlett. Some say it was a deliberate protest over Keegan's pay offer this week.

Ofqual's September board minutes dropped into our inbox this week, just six months after it met.

It revealed the regulator's research report on the "Evaluation of 2020 Centre Assessment Grades" had been shortlisted for the people's choice category of the Office for National Statistics research excellence awards.

Although the research laudably looked at the source data and which pupils were impacted, we couldn't help but find cruel irony that the 2020 exam series the evaluation was based on was UTTER CHAOS.

If it's not too haunting, cast your minds back to the summer of 2020 when the government had to U-turn on its plan to award calculated grades.

Ofqual went to ground, with the phone lines overwhelmed. But at least its research into the fiasco is earning plaudits!

Parents. It's not TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat that you should be worried could distract your kids from revision. Instead Ofqual's minutes reveal it chose to "tone down" proactive external communications last June to "avoid distracting students". Watch out! Ofqual's about!

Vice Principal Behaviour and Attitudes



Our Academy has consistently high expectations for all learners linked to their behaviour and conduct. The successful candidate will be passionate and committed to upholding our visions and values in all that we do.

Under the direction of the Principal, the successful candidate will be an exceptional practitioner, adept at behaviour management. They will have experience of leading whole school change and leading a large team of pastoral staff.

The successful candidate will need to inspire others, be able to support and challenge all stakeholders in equal measure. Team work and a strong focus on the care and the well-being of all learners and staff is essential to us as a leadership team. The candidate would need to fully buy in to this ethos.

We work hard to put out students at the forefront of everything we do, loyally serving the local community, a community disproportionately impacted during the pandemic.

Resilience, tenacity, strategic thinking, compassion and good humour are a pre-requisite for any one wishing to join our team. In return you will have professional development opportunities and a pathway to headship if that where you aspire to be. If you would like to arrange a tour and/or chat, please email alison.wilde@efatrust.org. I would be delighted to meet you.

For more information and to apply, please visit our website <https://www.essaacademy.org/vacancies>

Good luck!

**Martin Knowles
Principal**

Closing date: 24th April 2023
Interviews: 4th/5th May 2023
Start date: September 2023

DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

L28 - 34 (£86,040 - £99,660) | Start Date: September 2023 (earlier by arrangement)
Permanent
Location: Prosper Learning Trust, Drayton Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 3RU



Prosper Learning Trust are looking to significantly strengthen our school improvement capacity with the appointment of a Director of School Improvement.

The ideal candidate will have an exceptional track record of success, specifically in relation to achieving positive outcomes for pupils regardless of background or ability.

Prosper Learning Trust, established in January 2018, is a growing multi academy trust serving children with special education needs and children requiring alternative provision across North East England.

The trust will soon comprise five schools working across three local authorities in the North East. The five schools consist of two specialist ASD provisions, one in Newcastle and one in Sunderland, two alternative provision settings in Newcastle and a new SEMH/ASD school opening in Blyth, Northumberland, in September 2023.

Working across all five schools and reporting directly to the CEO, you will be responsible for devising, leading and evaluating the Trust's model for school improvement. You will support the Trust's Headteachers with the implementation and evaluation of school improvement strategies across all aspects of the

quality of education brief. This will include areas as diverse as quality assurance, self-evaluation, curriculum development, pedagogy, assessment, attendance, behaviour and continuous professional development.

You will also be a key source of support in the preparedness for inspection and will be expected to be cognoscente of all of the latest developments with regard to the Education Inspection framework.

Although this is a specialist Trust and all of our schools provide for children with SEND, many of these areas are generic in nature and therefore, although some knowledge of SEND is desirable, we would welcome applications from colleagues with a mainstream background too.

Closing date: 17/04/2023 (12pm)
Interviews: w/c 24/04/2023

For further information and how to apply, please see our website:
<https://www.prosperlearningtrust.co.uk/123/vacancies/careers/1109/director-of-school-improvement-prosper-learning-trust>



Assistant Headteacher
Full time permanent
Salary: L13-17

High Tunstall College of Science is seeking to appoint an outstanding Assistant Headteacher. This role is pivotal in our development as a College and will be central to the continuing improvement that High Tunstall College of Science has shown.

Faculty Leader for PE
Full Time perm
Salary: MPS/UPS +TLR1C (£10,899)

High Tunstall College of Science is seeking to appoint an outstanding PE Faculty Leader. The successful candidate will be an excellent practitioner that is able to deliver all elements of our diverse and broad Physical Education curriculum, as well as driving our Junior and Advanced Performance Programmes in sport.

#JoinTeamTunstall

High Tunstall College of Science
 Elwick Road, West Park Hartlepool
 TS26 0LQ

✉ htadmin@hightunstall.hartlepool.sch.uk ☎ 01429 261446

Head of School for Woodlands CofE Primary School



Working in partnership with St Oswald's C of E Primary School
Full Time, Permanent, Required September 2023
Salary L14 – L18 (£61,042 - £67,351)

Our amazing children are looking for a new Head of School to lead their school from September 2023.

Could you be their perfect candidate?

The Trustees of BDAT and Governors at Woodlands C of E Primary School wish to appoint an inspirational Head of School for this rewarding leadership role. The school is seeking a strong leader and team player who will build on existing strengths to ensure the school achieves its ambitions for excellence and

success at every level. Woodlands C of E Primary School is a welcoming Church of England Primary School where the appreciation of others is encouraged and attitudes of tolerance, care, concern and self-respect are developed in a happy, safe and secure environment.



Truro and Penwith Academy Trust

Chief Finance and Operating Officer

The Truro and Penwith Academy Trust is a multi academy trust currently operating across Cornwall with ambitions to continue to grow. We are proud to serve circa 8,700 pupils who all attend one of our five secondary schools, 28 primary schools and 1 infants school.

With a turnover in excess of £50m and employing over 1200 colleagues this is a significant role which requires a highly talented leader who will lead trust-wide professional services including finance, IT, payroll, property and estate, health and safety, communications and buildings development.

You will play a leading role in the development of organisational strategies which ultimately lead to improving standards in all areas across the Trust. Externally you will positively represent the Trust in a range of forums and will be a key player in ensuring the continued sustainability and growth of our Trust.

tpacademytrust.org

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



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



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The Shared Learning Trust



Click here to contact our team