

SCHOOLS WEEK

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Full house: NAHT to ballot heads over strikes



Meet the super tutor schools



P6

MAT inspections are inevitable, so let's start planning now



Teacher supply 'spiralling out of control'



Woeful recruitment set to WORSEN, see page 4



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SCHOOLS WEEK

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If you think teacher recruitment is bad now ...

School leaders consistently say that recruitment is one of their biggest concerns.

It has been this way for a while. But it has worsened as a surge in private sector pay and post-pandemic flexible working has left teachers behind.

There are two main routes to getting more teachers in the profession: recruit more, and stop so many leaving.

Unfortunately, the former has nose-dived. Last year's recruitment was woeful – with 40 per cent fewer secondary trainees recruited than required. That will really start to hit schools from this September.

But, remarkably, we're heading for a new low (see page 4). The government is on course to miss its secondary teacher target by 53 per cent this year.

Teaching workforce expert Jack Worth described it well: teacher supply is "spiralling out of control".

Ensuring schools have access to a sufficient supply of teachers is a fundamental role of government.

As Worth says, it needs an urgent policy response to stop schools facing "increasingly intense shortages over the

next few years, which are likely to impact negatively on the quality of education".

But this is not just the only problem needing urgent action. As features reporter Jessica Hill reports (pages 19 to 21), school absence is the sector's new epidemic.

The number of youngsters persistently absent is staggering. And despite huge efforts by schools, they just cannot get those pupils back into regular attendance.

We need a back-to-basics policy focus. It is utterly irrelevant that a youngster will have to study maths up until they turn 18-year-olds if they are regularly skipping classes throughout secondary school, or are being taught by non-specialists.

As Leora Cruddas, head of academy body the Confederation of School Trust, pointed out – the school system is fragile right now. It is not in any way business as normal (as much as ministers would like it to be).

Given time, and breathing space, schools can re-establish pre-pandemic norms. But they need a helping hand.

Less headline-grabbing policies for pet projects and more solutions for serious and stubborn issues is where ministers need to start.

Most read online this week:

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- 2 **Back-to-school influencer ad spend finally revealed after 2.5-year battle**
- 3 **School inspections don't hold MATs 'sufficiently accountable', says Ofsted**
- 4 **Academy trusts drive suspensions in areas DfE wants them to cut rates**
- 5 **Lower-rated schools to get falling roll cash, but not for 18 months**

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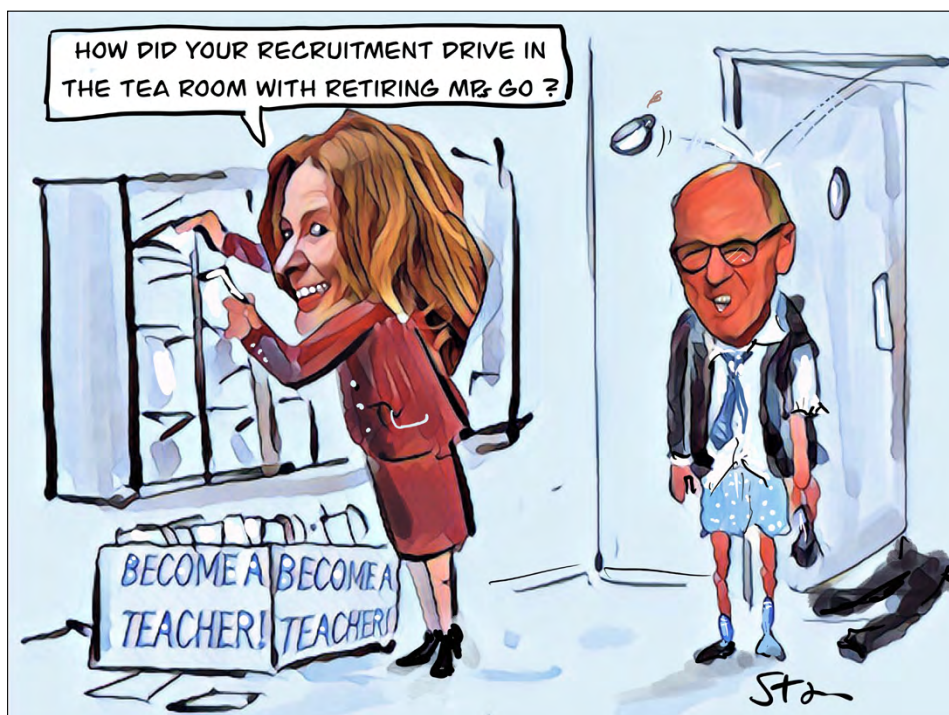


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Teacher recruitment set to WORSEN, new analysis shows

AMY WALKER
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Teacher supply is "spiralling out of control", an expert has said, as new analysis shows ministers are likely to recruit less than half of the secondary school trainees they want next year.

Trainee targets for 2023-24, published by the Department for Education (DfE) on Thursday, show ministers expect to need more recruits in subjects that are already struggling.

The target for secondary recruits has risen by 26 per cent, from 20,945 last year to 26,360 for this September.

The DfE said this was to "counteract" the impacts of previous under-recruitment.

Ministers missed last year's targets in both primary and secondary, meeting just 60 per cent of the latter.

According to the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), recruitment figures for April suggest the government will meet just 47 per cent of its secondary target this year.

Jack Worth, the NFER's school workforce lead, tweeted that this "all adds up to a supply situation that seems to be spiralling out of control".

In a statement, he added: "The DfE now expects to need more trainees than last year in subjects that are already struggling to recruit the required numbers, which will further compound the challenge of ensuring an adequate supply.

"Without an urgent policy response to make

teaching more attractive, schools will face increasingly intense shortages over the next few years, which are likely to impact negatively on the quality of education."

The target for primary trainees has fallen by 22 per cent – from 11,655 last year to 9,180 this year – as plunging pupil numbers start to hit.

The DfE said this was also due to "more favourable primary recruitment and retention forecasts" than last year.

But despite the drop in the target, the NFER predicts the government is still on course to miss the primary goal by 5 per cent.

Targets for most secondary subjects hiked

Targets for most secondary subjects have been substantially hiked this year, including geography (57 per cent), maths (45 per cent) and music (68 per cent).

coming years "because they aren't going to be able to recruit all the teachers that are needed".

They might have to restrict subject choices or staff shortage subjects with non-expert teachers.

Four months are left in the current recruitment cycle. At this stage last year, the government had recruited 38 per cent of its target for secondary teachers. Currently, that stands at 30 per cent.

Projections are based on the number of recruited trainees, as well successful applicants who deferred from last year and those with conditional offers.

DfE admits 'significant challenges'

Howson said without an uptick in applications in the coming months, "this round is beginning to look as if the outcome will be grim for providers trying to fund courses with limited numbers of students, and for schools seeking teachers from September next year".

A spokesperson for the DfE said it recognised significant recruitment challenges, especially in high-demand subjects.

"The teacher training targets reflect the changing workforce needs in the sector." Bursaries and scholarships had been extended to address the issue.

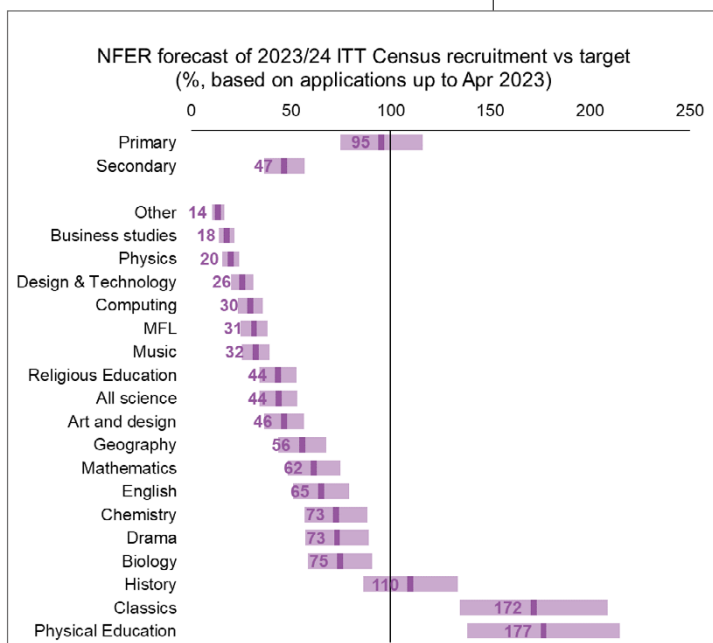
But Geoff Barton, the general secretary of leaders' union ASCL, noted historic real-terms pay cuts, "insufficient" funding levels, workloads and an "anxiety-inducing" accountability system in the sector.

"These factors are driving teachers into other industries and putting off graduates from joining the profession. It is madness to think the recruitment crisis can be solved without meaningful changes being made in these areas."

The only subjects in which targets have been reduced are classics, PE and history, which historically have been over-recruited.

They are also the only subjects the NFER predicts will meet targets for trainees this year with PE and classics likely to recruit 70 per cent more teachers than needed.

John Howson, the director of job site TeachVac, said the figures suggested that schools might need to "balance their curriculum" in



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How to balance school budgets, the DfE way...

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Headteachers fearing “bankruptcy” as spiralling costs outstrip school funding should use government cost-cutters or approach its funding agency or their local council for help, Tom Goldman, the deputy director of the DfE’s funding policy unit, has said.

Goldman led a webinar – attended by 850 people – about the funding cycle and teacher pay on Wednesday. He was joined by Graham Archer, the department’s director of strategic policy.

The government has claimed a 4 per cent pay rise for teachers and leaders next year was possible within existing school budgets following a £2 billion uplift in funding pledged at the autumn statement.

But organisations representing school leaders and academy trusts have warned that the reality will be different for many institutions.

In a sign of the desperation in the sector, one anonymous question, which received more than 50 “upvotes” in the webinar Q&A, asked: “What happens if schools run out of money? Can we actually go bankrupt? I’m afraid most single maintained schools in our area will be in that position.”

Goldman suggested people “do try and make use of the quite extensive school resource management support that the department offers in helping people set their budgets as efficiently as they can and looking for good deals, particularly in non-pay areas”.



DfE accepts schools face ‘real challenges’

School resource management advisers (SRMAs) have been visiting schools since 2018 as part of a cost-cutting drive under then-academies minister Lord Agnew.

However, government research found more than half of schools said cost-cutting advisers did not find them new ways of saving money.

But Goldman added: “We recognise every year there are some schools that face real financial challenges. And further support can be offered to schools who are in that most tricky situation.”

Academies, he said, should go to the DfE’s Education and Skills Funding Agency “if they fear that they are really facing a major financial crunch like this”.

The situation was “kind of the same” for maintained schools, except it was the local authority that could provide additional support in the “most extreme cases”.

On top of the funding allocated at the autumn statement, the government last month also pledged an extra £620 million to take the average pay rise to 4.5 per cent next year.

It also committed a one-off £1,000 payment for all teachers and leaders in this academic year.

‘We don’t know better than heads’

However unions rejected the offer, which has since been withdrawn.

The two civil servants were asked about an NAHT poll in which 92 per cent of its school leader members questioned said their budgets could not afford the pay rise.

“Are you saying that [headteachers] are wrong?” the question asked.

Archer said: “We are not saying, and would not say, that we know better than headteachers what the position is in their individual schools.

“What we are saying is that, on average, using the methodology that we use year on year, our assessment is that there is sufficient in the budget including the [additional grant funding] allocations that have been made today to make a 4 per cent pay rise affordable.”

Schools cannot technically go bankrupt, but council schools must get permission from their local authority to set budget deficits. Academy trusts with deficits are subject to government intervention.

Last year, the government confirmed pay rises in late July – after academies had set their budgets for the upcoming year.

The government actually announced a 5 per cent rise for most teachers, an increase on the proposed 3 per cent – leaving many schools scrambling to re-do budgets over the summer.

Organisations that include the Confederation of School Trusts are now calling for multi-year funding settlements.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Improvements promised for this year’s SATs

Ministers are “confident” changes to SATs, run by the outsourcing company Capita, will deliver an “improved service” after a series of failings during last years’ tests.

Schools Week investigations have revealed problems with the first test series run by the outsourcing giant under its £107 million, seven-year contract to oversee the management of the national tests.

A report by the regulator Ofqual this year revealed that 7,000 key stage 2 pupils received at least one result late, and about 2,000 scripts were lost.

Schools waited on average 53 minutes for their helpline call to be answered and the Primary Assessment Gateway (PAG), the results portal, crashed on results day.

In its lessons learned review published on Thursday, the Standards and Testing Agency and Capita reiterated their “sincere apologies” to schools that experienced difficulties.

They acknowledged delivery issues “caused significant frustration and inconvenience”.

This year’s key stage 2 SATs will begin on May 9 – a day later than usual because of the

coronation.

Improvements include updated guidance on scanning papers to help prevent them going missing, and running “robust performance tests” on the results gateway to cope with the large spike of users in July.

More staff have been recruited to the helpline with call handlers given “bolstered” information on school queries.

Guidance for schools has been updated so there is “less ambiguity” and a new database will help identify “problem areas quickly”.

ANALYSIS: TUTORING

Rural pupils miss out on tutoring scheme

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

Half of the 22 million tutoring hours last year were completed by just 10 per cent of the country's schools – exposing huge variance in take-up with children in rural areas missing out.

National Tutoring Programme (NTP) league tables, published last week, showed schools did not spend a third of last year's tutoring cash – £114 million – which will be clawed back and returned to the Treasury.

Overall, half did not use all their school-led catch-up allocation to organise tutoring themselves.

However, schools had to contribute 25 per cent of tutoring costs, which many said they could not afford. Others said the scheme was too bureaucratic and chose to do their own catch-up.

Meet the super tutors

Analysis by *Schools Week* reveals much greater variance of take-up than first thought. About 12 per cent of schools delivered 11 million hours of tutoring – half of all the tutoring hours last year.

These were more likely to be secondary schools (1,411) than primaries (998), despite five-fold more primaries nationally. Twenty-four were special schools, one a pupil referral unit and 98 all-through schools.

Twenty per cent of the prolific tutoring schools were in London – where tuition has been more widespread for years – compared with 5 per cent in the north east.

Dame Maura Regan, a former trust chief executive who is now a trustee at regional network Schools North East, said tutoring in the region had “varying degrees of success”.

Pockets of the north east had recruitment difficulties and there was no “culture of tutoring” in many parts of the region.

However, the Northern Education Trust delivered 80 per cent more than its allocated school-led tutoring hours, at a cost of over £300,000.

Andrew Jordan, its senior executive principal, said systems already in place allowed it to get tutoring up and running quickly.

Academies did far more tutoring, delivering on average 1,329 hours per school compared with 790 in local authority-maintained schools.



Shire schools fall behind

Looking at all 21,000 eligible schools, the south west on average had the fewest tutoring hours per school – 710 compared with 1,647 in London.

In addition, one in eight schools (2,645) did not use any of the three NTP tutoring routes.

Schools in five “shire” counties – Shropshire, North Yorkshire, South Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Buckinghamshire – were the most likely to shun tutoring.

These areas have below average free school meal rates and tend to be geographically large with sweeping rural areas.

Ben Gadsby, head of policy at Impetus, a charity that helped to establish the NTP, said: “Part of the challenge the NTP is supposed to address is making tutoring work for all 25,000 schools.”

“This analysis suggests it's working less well for smaller schools who have smaller NTP budgets.”

The top 10 largest trusts accounted for about 5 per cent (1.1 million) of all tutoring hours.

Harris Federation delivered 124 per cent of its school-led tutoring allocated hours. Each of its 49 schools identified the most vulnerable students and focused on English, maths and science, a spokesperson said.

It used three tuition partners but also deployed its own staff last year, which was “beneficial for students as staff were familiar with them and knew precisely where the gaps in learning were”.

The 47-school Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust delivered 47 per cent of its school-led tutoring, and did an extra 1,911 hours through tuition partners.

'Disjointed and bureaucratic'

Nick Hurn, the trust's chief executive, said almost half of its funding was reclaimed by the DfE “which isn't ideal as this money could and should have been used for our pupils”.

The programme felt “quite a disjointed and bureaucratic process” with the guidance not “always clear”. Instead it carried out its own “school funded” tutoring schemes.

“We must reflect on this and focus on how we can utilise these opportunities more effectively as a trust ... in spite of the overly bureaucratic nature of these schemes”.

The NTP has been criticised after just over half of pupils tutored last year were eligible for pupil premium.

But the top 10 per cent of schools for tutoring did have above-average rates of pupils on free school meals – 35 per cent compared with 22 per cent nationally.

Unions have warned the league tables “should not be used as a major indicator of a school's appetite to make sure of the tutoring scheme”.

The data also does not include how many hours of tutoring schools may have done with academic mentors.

Ministers have also been warned the tapering of their tutoring funding – which will drop to 25 per cent next year – will mean even fewer schools access the scheme.

The DfE did not respond to a request for comment.

Trust in union row over £1.5m support staff back pay

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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A union has launched a formal grievance against England's largest academy trusts, urging it to pay £1.5 million to "backdate" last year's pay rise for thousands of support staff.

But United Learning, which runs 78 schools across the country, said it is following the law – slamming accusations it is "withholding back pay" from staff including teaching assistants, librarians and school technicians.

The trust employs support staff on two different contracts.

Those who transferred to the trust when their maintained schools became academies have their pay reviewed each April, in line with other local government workers. Their pay rise for 2022-23 therefore came into effect a year ago.

Others who joined after schools transferred or chose to move to new contracts see pay rises implemented in September, like teachers. It meant their pay rose five months later than their colleagues last year.

Unison has announced it had launched a grievance – a formal complaint process requiring action from an employer – on behalf of more than 3,000 staff whose pay year runs from September.

They say United Learning should backdate the pay rise for 2022-23 for those workers. It estimated this would be worth up to £800 per staff member and would cost the trust £1.5 million. Not doing so is "creating a two-tier workforce by implementing different pay award dates", the union claimed.

But United Learning said Unison's claim that it is "withholding" back pay was "totally untrue".

"We are, quite rightly, following the legally agreed negotiation process that we have in place for staff on United Learning contracts. No money is being withheld. No back pay is owed."

They said support staff on United Learning contracts had different terms and conditions to those negotiated through



negotiating body the National Joint Council, and the pay review date was one of a "very large number of other differences".

It means that "every year, not just this year, the pay rise happens in September – as with teachers" and "over the years, the differences between the contracts have included more generous awards and higher pay".

But Unison's head of education, Mike Short, said support staff at the trust "can't afford to lose money they're owed. They've earned it and desperately need to pay their bills".

"It's grossly unfair for staff to do the same job as colleagues but get less pay. The academy trust must right this wrong and make sure all support workers are paid the same."

The union also challenged the trust's assertion that its own contracts were more generous.

United Learning for its part warned that each contract "has its own legally-binding negotiating process".

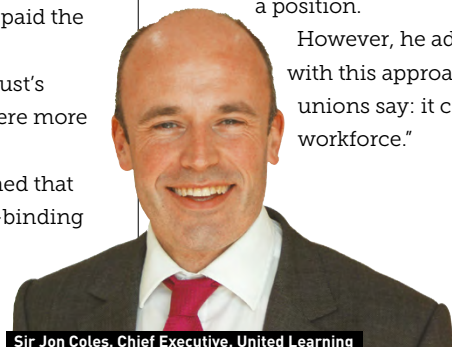
"We are following that process

as we do every year. It is sad that, at a time when schools are already struck by industrial action and the challenges that brings for everyone, including their members, Unison is adding to this by inventing a dispute where none exists."

The dispute raises the prospect of more problems for academy trusts, which are not obliged to recognise support staff pay negotiations for those on new contracts.

Schools Week understands other chains with a similar arrangement to United Learning could also face union action. Joshua Burke, an associate at Forbes Solicitors specialising in employment law, said the trust is within its right to adopt such a position.

However, he added: "The risk with this approach is as the unions say: it creates a two-tier workforce."



Sir Jon Coles, Chief Executive, United Learning

Councils shortlisted to test SEND reforms

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

Twenty councils have been shortlisted to lead a £70 million pilot of special needs reforms across their schools – but one has already declined to take part.

Up to nine “regional expert partnerships” in England will test reforms that include new national SEND standards and “tailored” lists of schools for children with education health and care plans.

The groups are set to launch by the end of this year to trial new policies put forward in the SEND and alternative provision green paper.

Two or three other local authorities based “predominantly on their geographical proximity” to the lead council will join the partnership. This will enable reforms to be tested “in a wide range of local areas with differing performance, capacity and capability”, said Claire Coutinho, the children’s minister.

“Real-time” learning will be fed back to the government to “build a strong evidence base to inform future funding and legislation”, said the Department for Education.

Schools Week understands 20 councils have been shortlisted (see list).

Officials used publicly available data to help identify local authorities with “potential to lead” partnerships, Coutinho said in a parliamentary question this week.

Three areas previously had “significant weaknesses” in SEND services, but sufficient progress was made when they were reinspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

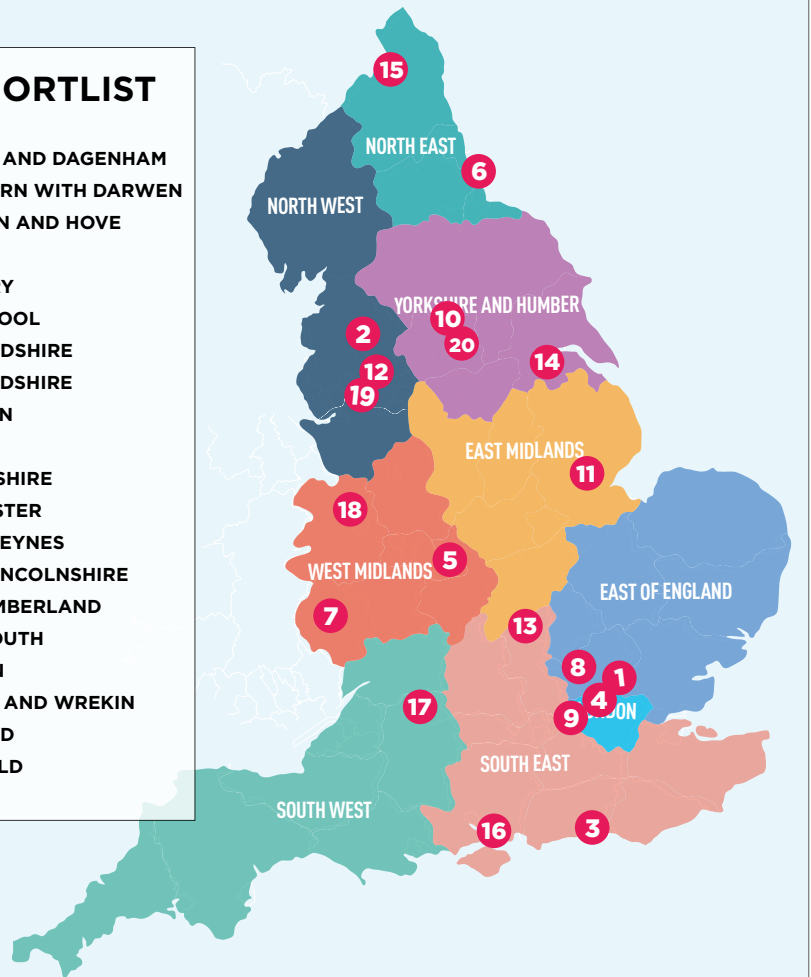
Fifteen of the councils have ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ children’s services, with four ‘requires improvement’ and one ‘inadequate’.

However, Herefordshire – which has the ‘inadequate’ judgment – said while it was “delighted” to be selected, it declined the offer.

A spokesperson said it was “a small authority in terms of staff” so “has made the decision that at this point we need to prioritise our resources for delivery and

THE SHORTLIST

1. BARKING AND DAGENHAM
2. BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN
3. BRIGHTON AND HOVE
4. CAMDEN
5. COVENTRY
6. HARTLEPOOL
7. HEREFORDSHIRE
8. HERTFORDSHIRE
9. ISLINGTON
10. LEEDS
11. LINCOLNSHIRE
12. MANCHESTER
13. MILTON KEYNES
14. NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE
15. NORTHUMBERLAND
16. PORTSMOUTH
17. SWINDON
18. TELFORD AND WREKIN
19. TRAFFORD
20. WAKEFIELD



development work”.

Brighton and Hove said it was considering proposals with NHS colleagues before deciding whether to submit “an expression of interest”.

The DfE said partnerships, “wherever possible”, would be within a single integrated care board to ensure “close collaboration with health partners”.

The shortlist does not include any council that, under the government’s “safety valve” programme, has received multi-million pound bailouts to plug their high-needs deficits. In exchange for the cash, the councils must follow strict conditions to cut SEND spend.

But Coutinho said these councils would not “necessarily” be excluded from “sharing and/or receiving learning” during the pilot.

Meanwhile, six consultants have been given £16,000, one-year contracts to

become “safety valve financial advisers”, according to contract documents published this week.

The DfE said the consultants would advise ministers on the “viability and credibility” of councils’ funding recovery plans to ensure plans were “sustainable” and “effective” for children and to help monitor councils’ progress.

Rachel de Souza, the children’s commissioner, has previously warned ministers their reforms risked “more years of children being fed” into a “vicious cycle” of poor outcomes.

Many of the major reforms will not be rolled out nationwide until as late as 2026. The review was launched in 2019.

Coutinho defended the timescales, saying it was “important” to “take time” to get the reforms right.

Intervention on coasting schools 'all over the place'

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

EXCLUSIVE

One school "coasting" for almost a decade has escaped the government's crackdown on serial underperformers, while others who have only recently fallen into the category face intervention.

Since September, new "coasting" powers allow the government to academise or rebroker schools with two or more consecutive less than 'good' inspections.

But analysis by *Schools Week* found 16 schools have avoided academy orders or termination warning notices, despite not moving out of 'requires improvement' for at least eight years.

But two schools that only became coasting last year were given termination warning notices.

Stephen Morales, the chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leaders, said: "The whole system's full of inconsistencies. Take regional directors, is there a consistent playbook they can refer to? The answer is no – it's all over the place."

'No national criteria for interventions'

In all, 218 coasting letters have been sent. Just 17 led to termination warnings or academy orders, while regional directors decided to monitor or offer support to 33 other schools.

No further action was taken against 155. The remaining 13 are no longer in the scope for intervention, following improved Ofsted.

Wellfield Academy in Lancashire was rated 'inadequate' in June 2012. It was revisited the following November, that time receiving a 'requires improvement'.

The local authority-maintained school has been "coasting" – under the government's criteria – since, despite being inspected three more times.

Meanwhile, Oasis Academy Oldham was given its first 'inadequate' in November 2012, just two years after the school joined the Oasis trust.

Since then, it has been rated 'inadequate' on three occasions.

Regional directors decided not to take further action against Wellfield, while Oasis Academy Oldham is being monitored and given added support.

Eastern MAT was issued termination notices



for Queensway Infants and Nursery school in Norfolk and West Row in Bury St Edmunds in the first warnings to be published last week.

Queensway, which Eastern took on six years ago, was given ratings of 'requires improvement' in 2016 and 2022. West Row received its two less than 'good' scores in 2017 and 2022.

Skerne Park Academy in Darlington was also given a warning notice after back-to-back 'requires improvement' ratings in 2018 and 2022.

Sir David Carter, the former national schools commissioner, said there was "some variance ... which is unhelpful".

"The bandwidth for an RI judgment is quite broad, so it could be the school is making strides to improve and therefore we've got confidence the trust knows what it's got to do.

"What's unhelpful is the DfE doesn't publish the criteria for that – it lets the regional directors make that decision and that's probably the reason why you get these strange anomalies."

Intervention decisions 'opaque'

When plans for the clampdown were unveiled last summer, the government insisted decisions would be made on a "case-by-case" basis.

Officials also said regional directors would "normally" order under-performing maintained schools and standalone academies to join multi-academy trusts.

But Carter said the decision-making process on academy conversions was "quite opaque".

Regional advisory board minutes include details of decisions relating to coasting schools, but only about which trust it should join after warning notices have been issued.

They do not include details about a regional director's decisions on whether to intervene.

But Carter did say a trust leader would have had an annual meeting with their regional director to review results, so if a trust was on the receiving end of an intervention, it would not come as a surprise".

The decision to reprimand West Row and Queensway – both of which have only been run by Eastern for the last of their inspections – has also reignited fears schools are not being allowed a "clean start" under new trusts.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said inspection grades "only tell part of the picture and so it is not entirely surprising there are apparently different decisions about schools that at a glance seem to be in similar situations".

"What is important is there is as much transparency as possible".

When asked about the performance of Oasis Academy Oldham, an Oasis Community Learning Trust spokesperson said the school was "on a positive trajectory. Outcomes, attendance and standards are all moving forward."

A DfE spokesperson said decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, "taking account of all the relevant circumstances", including prioritising support in "areas that need it most".

Wellfield Academy did not respond to a request for comment.

DfE trust quality descriptors criticised

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

Academy trust quality descriptors drawn up by the government lack depth and miss out vital aspects of the work that chains do, a sector body has warned.

Last year's schools white paper proposed a formal definition of trust strength based around five "pillars" (below), which ministers said would help assess their "potential for growth".

The Department for Education has now published more detail on these proposed descriptors, with officials claiming they "represent a clear and ambitious vision for the academies sector".

The government hopes the guidance will help to "inform trusts' improvement and capacity-building priorities".

However, the DfE has "avoided" stating how chains should achieve these goals as it has instead opted to place the onus on the "sector to identify the most effective approaches".

The descriptors also "define the types of quality factors" that regional directors "can consider" when making decisions about moving schools between trusts.

But directors will not make "summative judgments about the quality of individual trusts", the government said.

"Commissioning is about identifying the right trust to manage a school in its context, or the best trust to grow or expand within an area. Not every aspect of the descriptions will, therefore, be relevant to every decision."

But Alice Gregson, the executive director at the academy trust membership organisation Forum Strategy, said while the descriptors covered "many of the right areas, they currently lack depth or a real sense of what quality is beyond the limitations of the very high-level terminology used".

She said they were missing "fundamental aspects" in some "critical areas", such as the work of members and local governing bodies. More clarity and detail was needed about the purpose and use of the descriptors "before comment can really be given on their suitability".

Sam Henson, NGA director of policy and information, also said it was a "massive own goal" to not include any information on local governance.

"To render invisible the commitment and time



given by an estimated 80,000 local governors is unforgivable," he added

The proposals are part of ministers' response to their regulatory and commissioning review, launched last summer to "future proof" the role of academy trusts.

Here's what you need to know...

1. High-quality and inclusive leadership

Nine themes – culture, curriculum, student outcomes, accessible to all, inclusive pastoral support, enrichment, behaviour and attendance, destinations and collaboration – have been listed under the first pillar.

The DfE said trusts should support pupils "to re-join mainstream education when they have spent time in alternative provision".

They would be expected to ensure all their youngsters leave "well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training and prepared to become confident citizens". They also should "work collaboratively" with schools, other chains, councils, dioceses, parents and other civic partners to "act in the wider interests of the local community".

The design and implementation of "ambitious, broad, well-sequenced and knowledge-rich curricula in all of its schools" also needed to be overseen.

2. School improvement

Trusts would be expected to "create a culture of continuous improvement in schools through self-evaluation, challenge, support and appropriate action".

Officials noted that improvement models should also be used to maintain the performance

of institutions "that are already part of the chain, as well as those that join".

Strong trusts would also be expected to have a track record of transforming previously underperforming primaries and secondaries.

3. Workforce

Ministers urged trusts to foster a "supportive working environment by managing workload, prioritising wellbeing and taking action to support all staff".

They want them to retain "great" employees, create "high-performing cultures" and contribute to the "wider system by delivering training and/or placements" for inexperienced teachers.

The promotion of "inclusive working environments that support flexible working and take action to promote equality and diversity" will also be expected.

4. Finance and operations

To set a "stable, accurate and sustainable long-term strong financial strategy", trusts should use "data, intelligence, effective budgeting and risk management".

Organisations would be told to invest in their capital infrastructure and operate a "well-planned reserves policy that provides sufficient contingency for cashflow and any urgent expenditure".

The papers also recommended cultures "recognising the importance of effective and efficient use of resources" for inclusion in the guidance.

5. Governance and leadership

The documents said trust accounting officers, boards and leadership teams "[should] create a culture of ethical leadership, including the seven principles of public life".

Meanwhile, members would be charged with "ensuring the board is made up of trustees with the necessary expertise to fulfill its functions effectively, and that it acts in accordance with the chain's charitable objects".

What's next?

Officials stressed the guidance was in draft form. They would "work with the sector to make any refinements, before finalising them alongside commissioning guidance in June".

NAHT prepares for new ballot on strike action

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The NAHT school leaders' union will re-ballot its members for strike action over pay, school funding, workload and wellbeing.

Leaders of all four teaching and leadership unions will today hold a joint press conference at NAHT's conference in Telford to announce plans to "announce co-ordination of their unions' industrial action going forward".

Unlike the heads' union's previous ballot, which did not meet the legal turnout threshold required, the new vote will seek a mandate for full strikes alone. In the last ballot, heads were asked if they backed strikes and action short of a strike.

In an eve-of-conference interview with Schools Week, general secretary Paul Whiteman said government's continued refusal to hold fresh pay talks shows "contempt" for the profession and reveals that ministers fear unions.

He added he was "very confident we will get over the line" in the union's fresh postal ballot. The last vote was affected by postal strikes, and Whiteman believes members' resolve has hardened after they rejected the government's pay offer.

Ministers said their offer was final, and that rejection would mean reverting to the annual review process, taking a proposed one-off payment for this year off the table.

But Whiteman said there was "no logic to that position, and it just shows once again the contempt that government has for our members".

"To say 'we think you're worth £1,000 now and 4.3 per cent next year', then to say 'we're going to snatch that away as a punishment because you rejected it' means they're not committed to the pay levels they said they think the profession needs."

Whiteman said the union's members had "completely lost confidence" in the School Teachers' Review Body. "The government claims it's independent. It's anything but."

But calls for further talks have so far fallen on deaf ears. Whiteman wrote to Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, two weeks ago to urge her to come back to the table. He has received no reply.

"One of the things that surprises me about



Paul Whiteman

education is the fear that I see in politicians and others to properly engage with trade unions when there are really serious matters at hand. I see no evidence they understand how negotiation and industrial relations work.

"If we do it properly, I'm still convinced we will find a settlement."

A DfE spokesperson said it had "made a fair and reasonable teacher pay offer ... which recognises teachers' hard work and commitment".

A successful NAHT re-ballot raises the prospect of even greater disruption to schools in the autumn following this year's National Education Union action.

NASUWT also recently announced a re-ballot, while ASCL will go to its members for the first time. Leaders of all four unions will hold a joint press conference about co-ordinating action this evening.

Whiteman insisted "no-one has any interest in disrupting the education of young people, but the simple fact is, the things we're in dispute about mean we don't have enough of the right people and we continue to lose people.

"And that all lays at the door of this government and the 13 years of previous administrations that have followed the same route of just letting education wither on the vine."

Also high on the agenda in Telford is Ofsted, and the growing unrest over the impact of the school inspection system in England, prompted by the death earlier this year of headteacher

Ruth Perry.

Her sister Professor Julia Waters, who says Perry took her own life in January before the publication of an inspection report that downgraded Caversham Primary School in Reading from 'outstanding' to 'inadequate', will address the conference tomorrow.

The National Education Union recently passed a motion calling on heads to stop working as Ofsted inspectors. Asked recently if any freelance inspectors had stepped down, Ofsted said numbers were in the "single figures".

Whiteman said he backed heads who decided to walk away from second jobs as inspectors.

"Fair play to those that have looked at themselves and said I can no longer justify this in the circumstances."

Whiteman believes it was a "watershed moment" for the profession, and something "has to change".

Ofsted was "just one of the examples of the pressure that the profession is under", which was why Perry's death had prompted such a "huge reaction".

"It needs to be a moment when everybody wakes up to the to the depth and the seriousness of the mental health problems inspection brings.

"Tragedies focus the mind. You can't always explain why this one, why now, but it has caught everybody's awareness and people are prepared to speak up. If the government and Ofsted don't listen, it will be a tragedy for young people."

IN PARLIAMENT

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Keep BTECs until T-levels prove their worth, say MPs

FREDDIE WHITTAKER & JASON NOBLE
@SCHOOLSWEEK

Ministers must delay their controversial planned bonfire of BTEC qualifications until there is evidence T-levels are a “more effective” replacement, a committee of MPs has warned.

The parliamentary education committee has called for a moratorium on the government’s plan to defund a raft of applied general qualifications (AGQs), warning a “clear track record” of T-level success should be a “prerequisite” to their scrapping.

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

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

But today MPs warned “tried and tested applied” general qualifications should only be withdrawn when there was robust evidence proving T-levels were more effective in preparing students for “progression, meeting industry needs and promoting social mobility”.

The ability of businesses to offer “sufficient, high-quality industry placements”, and a “clear track record” of T-level success, as well as evidenced improvement in equalities outcomes, “should be prerequisites to scrapping further applied general qualifications on the basis of



overlap”.

Robin Walker, a former schools minister who now chairs the committee, said: “We have concerns about the feasibility of scaling up T-levels, and, as it stands, the planned withdrawal of AGQs will constrict student choice and could deepen the skills shortages that these reforms are meant to fix.”

In an interview with Schools Week, Walker also distanced himself from the reforms, which were developed during his time at the Department for Education.

He was “very much focused at the time on writing a white paper for the schools system”.

“It wasn’t something I was intensively involved in in the way that might have otherwise been the case. As schools minister, I would have been

briefed on the outcomes of those discussions rather than engaged in them.”

The DfE’s own equalities impact assessment found students with SEND, from Asian ethnic groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds were “likely to be particularly affected by the reforms” – as were male students.

Much of the concern about the reforms centres around difficulties in getting the T-level programme off the ground.

MPs found “uncertainty” around progression and whether the qualifications could be taken alongside A-levels, unequal regional access to industry placements and a lack of awareness.

They also did not think there was yet “the right balance of rigour and accessibility”.

“Early evidence indicates that schools and colleges are setting high entry requirements, and we heard that, as a result, T-levels could be restricted to a small pool of academically gifted students who have a specific employment goal in mind by age 16.”

Among the other recommendations was a call for an independent expert panel to look at the possibility of adopting a post-16 baccalaureate model in England.

MPs also called for a “wholesale review” of 16 to 19 funding, including more targeted support for disadvantaged students.

The committee warned of the challenges that faced the government’s “ambition” that all pupils study some form of maths to 18, including recruitment and retention of teachers.

The DfE was approached for comment.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

NHS promises to keep funding mental health support teams

The NHS plans to raid its own budgets to keep funding mental health support teams in schools after government funding runs out, a senior health official has said.

The teams help pupils with mild to moderate mental health problems, hitting a target for 35 per cent coverage across the country and reaching 26 per cent of pupils.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) said this week that NHS budgets, which include funding for the teams, have been set up to March 2024. About 500 teams are expected to be operational by then.

But it said that budgets for the 2024-25 financial year were still to be agreed.

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, said earlier this month the Department for Education “will certainly be putting the case forward for continuing the roll-out of this successful programme”.

However, with no decision made, Claire Murdoch, the national lead for mental health at NHS England, said it had “found some money” within the NHS envelope “for a further year”.

But speaking to MPs at the public accounts committee last week, she warned that because

it relied on trained therapists ... “we do need to be really clear what is happening the year after next and the year after that”.

The £215 million mental health support teams were a key pillar of the 2018 green paper on transforming children and young people’s mental health.

Amanda Pritchard, NHS England’s chief executive, said she would be “extremely surprised if there was not an enthusiasm to continue with this programme”.

MPs have previously urged the government to roll out the teams nationwide by 2027-28.

All schools to get 'falling pupil' cash – if rolls predicted to grow again

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers will proceed with plans to allow schools rated 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate' to claim funding to manage "significant declines" in pupil numbers.

But schools will need to show that places will be required within five years to qualify for the extra cash, and the expansion will only apply from September 2024.

It comes as falling pupil numbers are starting to hit primary schools. Schools Week analysis of government data shows plummeting pupil numbers will wipe out the need for the equivalent of 80 per cent of the new school places created since 2010.

A government consultation on moves towards a "direct" national funding formula proposed removing the rule that only 'good' or 'outstanding' schools receive falling roll funding.

In its response, published this week, the department reported "widespread support" and said it would proceed.

Officials "concluded that the use of robust data on falling rolls" through the DfE's school capacity survey (SCAP) would "ensure that this funding is targeted only at schools where places will be needed in future".

The cap will be removed for 2024-25, but councils will only be allowed to "provide funding where SCAP data shows that school places will be required in the subsequent three to five years".

New minimum requirements for growth funding

From 2024-25, the government will introduce minimum requirements on how much growth funding councils should provide when schools agree to host an additional class to meet basic need. These minimum funding rates will be published in July.

Councils will not be required to provide growth funding where expansion results from parental choice or academies admitting more than their published admission number by choice.

However, it will not proceed with proposals to nationally standardise the system, which would have given councils no say at all.

Councils will also be able to use growth and



falling rolls funding to repurpose or reduce school places, for example by creating SEND units in mainstream schools.

And the government will "ensure equivalence" in funding between maintained schools and academies for increased rolls because of popularity.

Other proposals put forward in the consultation have also been approved, although some have been amended. The DfE said last year it expected its reforms to take another five years, meaning full implementation of the "direct" formula from 2027.

'Funding guarantee' and SEND changes

The DfE will proceed with plans for a single "minimum funding guarantee" based on schools' actual funding from the previous year.

This was proposed because the guarantee currently set by councils to protect schools from large year-on-year losses and the amounts issued to councils through the NFF "floor" had "drifted apart".

As part of its SEND reforms, the government had proposed setting an indicative SEND budget for each school.

In its consultation response, the DfE said it would consider the design of such budgets alongside plans for new "national standards" for SEND and alternative provision.

At the moment, councils can transfer funding between their schools and high-needs budgets,

although transfers of more than 0.5 per cent or those without the backing of local schools forums have to be approved by the education secretary.

The DfE will proceed with plans to develop a "menu of options" for how mainstream budgets could be adjusted following transfers to high needs. This would replace councils' freedom to propose how the adjustments are made.

The government "will continue to engage with local authorities and other stakeholders on the precise options to be included in the 'menu'".

'Split sites' funding change from 2024

The consultation also proposed a national formula for funding for schools split across multiple sites, with a basic eligibility criteria that attracts a lump-sum payment, and a distance eligibility criteria for another payment. This will go ahead from 2024.

The government also consulted on a "significant" reduction in funding for "exceptional circumstances" relating to schools' premises, and a switch to a new national application process.

It had proposed raising the threshold from the current 1 per cent of a school's budget up to 2.5 per cent.

The switch to a national system will go ahead, but the threshold will remain at 1 per cent "for now", while the DfE reviews "what safeguards we can put in place to ensure that our approach to funding exceptional circumstances is fair".

DfE gives £17m to trusts to 'try before you buy'

JACK DYSON

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have handed out almost £17 million in little-known grants to entice academy trusts to support schools at risk of "imminent failure", with bigger MATs most likely to benefit.

Figures obtained by Schools Week show 201 of 242 applications (80 per cent) for the "emergency school improvement fund" were approved between April 2018 and April last year.

A total of £16.6 million was released to support maintained schools at risk of "unexpected or imminent failure".

David Bagley, the chief executive of DRB Schools and Academies Services, said the emergency grant acted as an "incentive" for trusts to expand.

"It's like a try before you buy [for the academy trust]. You have to be quite specific when you're claiming from it, but it's there because local authorities can no longer provide that level of support to boost standards and improvement."

But unlike other handouts that can aid takeovers, these payments are not published in the Department for Education's academies sector annual report.

The yearly statements only break down the "support for academy trusts in financial difficulty" scheme, in which £21 million was paid out in 2020-21 alone.

Analysis of the emergency takeover handouts show larger chains usually benefited most – with successful applicants running 10 schools each on average.

Jeff Marshall, of academy advisers J&G Marshall, said the "majority [of trusts] won't even know that this money exists because the DfE doesn't proactively tell anyone it is available. It's a little-known one.

"It doesn't say in the guidance what imminent failure looks like – what is that? It's the bigger trusts that usually access this funding because they already have the relationships with the DfE where they say 'we need £400,000 to take that school on'."

Bagley said he first became aware of the scheme when it "cropped up" on his LinkedIn feed about five weeks ago.

Marshall called for the "playing field to be levelled out".



The DfE said trusts must have support from a local authority or regional director before applying to the emergency fund.

Eligible schools included those rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted or any that had dropped from 'outstanding' to 'requires improvement', "where there is strong evidence immediate support is necessary".

Figures obtained through Freedom of Information requests reveal Outwood Grange was given more than £465,000 to prop up three secondaries that later joined the chain.

It also had the largest single payment in the past two years, receiving almost £270,000 to support Kirkby College in Nottingham last February. The secondary was absorbed by the 40-school chain seven months later.

The trust was also given just under £200,000 to help Haydock High School in St Helens and Hindley High School in Wigan, before they opted to join the group at the beginning of 2022.

A spokesperson said it was asked to take on schools in challenging circumstances. They were all in special measures.

"Quite rightly, the DfE supports some of the legitimate costs involved with such projects," she said.

"But even we have to find significant sums of money to try and turn around the fortunes of these schools."

The DfE also gave £202,000 to Chiltern Way Academy Trust to prop up Northern House School (Wokingham) Special Academy in 2020-21. Northern House later became the chain's

second school.

Meanwhile, Dixons Academies Trust received more than £300,000 from two separate applications to support Broadgreen International School and Fazakerley High, both in Liverpool, in 2021-22.

The chain insisted it was asked to support the maintained secondaries by the regional schools commissioner and the local authority.

"The emergency school improvement money enabled us to support the schools in advance of conversion without diverting or mis-spending funds intended for our existing students in Bradford and Leeds," a spokesperson said.

"It was all spent on the schools while they were still authority maintained with their predecessor headteacher, and the connection could have ended once the project ended."

The DfE insisted the emergency fund, which has been running since 2017-18, was not intended to aid MAT expansion – "it is for them to support academy-maintained schools facing unexpected or imminent failure".

Applications "must demonstrate value for money", while "the day rates for system leaders must be in line with national benchmarks".

A spokesperson added such grants were published as part of monthly transparency reports of spending of more than £25,000. But it was not possible to work out which payments related to this specific scheme as they were recorded only as "current grants – academy trusts".

Lack of trust inspections ‘problematic’, says Ofsted

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

Ofsted’s inspection model does not hold multi-academy trusts (MATs) “sufficiently accountable” or attribute enough credit to their work, a report from the watchdog has found.

The inspectorate can only inspect at school level, despite repeated pressure on the government to extend this to trusts.

New research found the restriction often caused “frustration” for both parties, with trusts’ role in inspections often “unclear”. This is despite MATs having a growing influence on school performance.

Ofsted made no recommendations in the report. The leaders’ union ASCL, however, reiterated its call for the Department for Education to fund pilot trust inspections.

This would “help establish whether a single set of standards can work equally well for trusts of different sizes, and how such inspections might sit alongside or replace school inspections”, said its inspection specialist Tom Middlehurst.

Ofsted took responses from a survey of 105 HMIs who had recently inspected schools within trusts, as well as 11 interviews with trust chief executives or their representatives.

It found the legal requirement to inspect the school and not the trust “problematic”.

The impact of leaders’ decisions was to “some extent” shown in school inspection



judgments, but inspectors said it “was not routinely discussed as part of the inspection process”.

Some trust leaders told Ofsted the extent to which they were involved in inspection activities “depended on the individual inspector” and they wanted a “greater opportunity” to discuss their role.

Inspectors said they could “identify” where strengths or weaknesses in a school were “attributable to the trust”.

But the need to focus reports on individual schools could “make it difficult” to include such issues.

Leaders, meanwhile, wanted reports to “better reflect” where MATs were involved in school improvement, and to be held accountable when schools were not doing so well.

The research found that inspectors

typically talked with trust leaders during inspections for a maximum of 30 minutes.

A lack of time was the “greatest barrier to fully exploring where trusts’ involvement in their schools was relevant to school inspection judgments”.

However, the analysis showed the influence of trusts on the quality of education at their schools was growing.

Trusts who spoke to Ofsted for the research said they were always involved in designing the curriculum to some extent.

Inspectors also said curriculum design was the area in which they “most easily see the influence of the trust on the school”.

A previous investigation published by the watchdog in 2019 listed the trusts it considered had little involvement in overseeing this aspect of schools’ work.

In the terms of reference for its academy regulatory and commissioning review, the government said it would “consider the role of inspection as a regulatory tool”, including “trust inspection, and the potential impact of this on school-level inspection”.

However, the outcome report, published in late March, only referred to the current system of school inspections and MAT summary evaluations, rather than pledging any movement on trust inspection.

Schools Week understands the issue was the victim of a lack of parliamentary time to pass the legislation required before the next election.

The DfE was contacted for comment.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Ofsted critics dominate NEU inspection inquiry

Former schools minister Lord Knight will chair an inquiry into the future of Ofsted set up by the National Education Union.

The inquiry, which is to be called “Beyond Ofsted”, will “develop a set of principles for underpinning a better inspection system and proposals for an alternative approach”.

It will “consider input from a wide range of well-informed voices, in order to set out the framework for an inspection system fit for the increasingly complex needs of schools today”.

A press release called the inquiry

“independent”, but it is being “sponsored” by the union, which has repeatedly called for Ofsted to be abolished, warning of the “immense pressure” it puts on school staff.

Several of the panellists sitting on the inquiry, which is conducting a survey about Ofsted, are critics of the watchdog. The survey has been widely shared on Twitter.

A spokesperson said the panel was selected by the chair, the union and “followed advice and suggestions from panel members themselves”.

Lord Knight, who served as schools

minister in Tony Blair and Gordon Brown’s governments, said: “We currently have ... an approach that stirs up stress amongst school leaders that trickles down to staff and pupils. Too often, it punishes rather than supports.”

Mark Lehair, a former government adviser who is now head of education at the Centre for Policy Studies, said it would be “interesting” to see what an inquiry sponsored by a union that had long questioned Ofsted would come up with.

The report will be published in November.

Opinion: Ofsted

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STEVE ROLLETT

Deputy chief executive,
Confederation of School Trusts

MAT inspections are inevitable so let's start planning now

The roll-out of trust-level inspections will need to be carefully calibrated with the wider system's shift towards more schools being part of MATs, writes Steve Rollett

Amid plentiful commentary of late about inspection reform, one area that has received little attention is the inspection of multi-academy trusts. This is surprising as the DfE's recent regulatory and commissioning review was tasked with considering the role for trust-level inspection, but produced a final report that was pretty much silent on the issue.

While Ofsted can currently carry out Multi-Academy Trust Summary Evaluations (MATSE), these are effectively an aggregation of routine school-level inspections rather than an inspection of the trust as an entity. And they only do around 12 of these each year.

Ofsted's own desire to inspect trusts is clear. Its 2022 annual report stated: "We strongly believe, as we have for some time, that routine inspection of trusts must have a significant role to play in trust regulation."

And just yesterday, the inspectorate published a report on the involvement of trusts in inspection, stating that "trust

leaders and inspectors highlighted that inspection at school level does not hold the trust sufficiently accountable or attribute enough credit to the trust's work".

In a system where most or all schools are part of trusts, routine trust inspection seems logical and inevitable. After all, trusts are legally responsible for what happens in

their schools.

There is also a growing recognition that trusts are not some sort of external school improvement agency or "middle tier" organisation; a trust is its schools, and the schools are the trust.

This is the case legally, but also increasingly in terms of practice. For example, trusts are thinking about a range of issues, from curriculum to training to recruitment as a whole, with decisions and effective approaches being shared across the group. In this scenario, trust-level inspection is potentially better able to assess how schools are being run and to identify strengths and weaknesses, especially in leadership and governance.



However, it is less straightforward in our half-reformed system. A significant barrier at the current time is the potential confusion that could be created by having school-level and trust-level judgements existing side by side. And it would most likely add to the workload

“ Routine trust inspection seems logical and inevitable ”

problems that schools and trusts already face.

In a reformed system, however, we might adopt the approach of the Netherlands, in which the trust equivalent is inspected, with some of its schools sampled as part of the process. This would mean that routine school-level judgements would cease to exist as we have them now. Such an approach could take some of the pressure of inspection off individual headteachers and teachers.

But is this palatable in the English system, particularly for parents and politicians who are used to seeing each school inspected and judged on a routine basis? One suspects this would not be easy to land – not impossible, but not easy.

Apart from shifting expectations, it would require change to primary legislation which currently positions inspection solely at the level of the school. It would also require an inspection workforce with the experience and expertise to investigate and understand how trusts operate. This would take time to grow.

Trust inspections are therefore likely to be a few years away yet, and the first crucial step on the road to introducing them is to calibrate their roll-out with the pace and nature of the move towards a fully reformed system.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, we need to ensure trust-level inspection does not replicate the all-too-familiar problems with school-level inspection. One way to avoid this is to ensure any system of inspection is built on strong evidence about what works in trusts and what parts of this can be inspected with validity and reliability, without driving unintended consequences.

The good news is that there is time for the government, Ofsted and others to invest in a programme of research now. Because what matters most is that, if it gets done, it gets done well.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Murphy stands down as Oasis CEO

John Murphy, the chief executive of Oasis Community Learning, is to step down after nine years at the helm of the 52-school trust.

The trust leader said he had decided it was the right time to pursue projects in leadership, mentoring, and supporting school leaders and trusts.

He will stand down in the autumn term. The trust said it was "starting the process of finding a successor".

"Having dedicated all my professional life to education, as a headteacher in the primary, secondary and special sector, and more recently as CEO, I am confident that the trust is at a point of success and stability that means now is the right time for me to hand over to a new chief executive," Murphy said.

"It has been an honour and my passion to serve communities facing some of the highest levels of disadvantage in the country, ensuring that children and young people are given every opportunity to flourish."

Oasis is the country's joint-fifth-largest trust, educating more than 32,500 pupils in 52 schools



John Murphy

across 21 council areas.

Caroline Taylor, who chairs Oasis's board, thanked Murphy for his "hard work and exceptional leadership ... He has been a hands-on leader and has spent much of his time as CEO on the ground, working in our schools."

Ormiston Academies Trust announced on Friday that Tom Rees, currently a director at the Ambition Institute, will replace long-serving trust chief executive Nick Hudson.

[Full story here](#)

We need to get back to the negotiating table, says Cruddas



Leora Cruddas

Leora Cruddas, the head of the Confederation of School Trusts, has urged the government to return to the negotiating table with unions.

Teachers in the National Education Union walked out again yesterday and will do so again next Tuesday, with more strikes anticipated after the exams season.

Cruddas said employers knew that strike action was not a decision taken lightly.

"The school system is being hit hard by rising inflation, energy costs and the cost-of-living crisis. More children and families are now living in absolute poverty and schools are bearing the strain of much greater need, including mental health needs, in the school population."

She urged the government to reopen negotiations with unions, adding: "We must be wary of a stalemate that could play out over many months, potentially into next academic year."

The government has so far refused to call further talks. Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, insisted last week that they would revert to the School Teachers' Review Body process for pay next year.

Cruddas said the dispute was "challenging to resolve in this fiscal environment with the need for pay increases to be funded seemingly in conflict with assumptions made about budgets and wider national cost pressures".

"But talking is the only way this dispute will be resolved and ensure that children, who are our first priority, can get back to learning."

A DfE spokesperson said it had "made a fair and reasonable teacher pay offer to the unions, which recognises teachers' hard work and commitment".

[Full story here](#)

Funding crisis slashes school trips

The proportion of headteachers reporting cuts to school trips because of funding issues has more than doubled since last year.

A National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) poll for the Sutton Trust also found steep rises in the number of schools cutting back on teaching assistants and IT equipment.

Responses from 1,428 primary and secondary teachers last month show 50 per cent of senior leaders said their school had to cut back on trips and outings during the current academic year.

In last year's Teacher Voices Omnibus Survey, 21 per cent of leaders gave the same answer.

Schools in the most disadvantaged areas were most likely to be impacted, with 68 per cent of leaders in the most deprived schools

reporting cuts to trips, compared with 44 per cent in the least deprived.

The proportion of heads reporting cuts to the number of teaching assistants rose from 42 to 63 per cent, while the proportion saying they had cut back on IT equipment grew from 27 to 42 per cent.

The poll also shows two in five primary and secondary leaders reported using pupil premium to plug gaps in their general budget, an increase from 33 per cent in 2022.

Carl Cullinane, the director of research and policy at the social mobility charity, said the survey painted "a deeply concerning picture of our schools".

Russell Hobby, Teach First's chief executive, said further cuts to "essential" staff and activities could "widen an already gaping inequality gap".

[Full story here](#)



The 13th annual

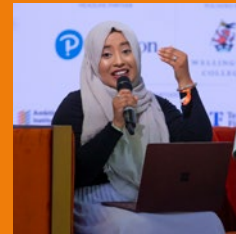
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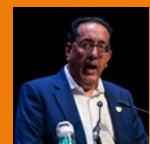


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Feature

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



‘The new epidemic’: Why more pupils are missing school

Absenteeism has become endemic in our schools. The search for solutions is keeping headteachers awake at night but, despite concerted efforts, absence rates are not improving. Jessica Hill investigates ...

School absence hovered around 4.7 per cent in the years before the pandemic struck, rising to 7.5 per cent last year, according to Department for Education data. But persistent absenteeism – where pupils miss 10 per cent or more classes – has more than doubled, rising from 10.9 per cent in 2018-19, to 22.5 per cent last year.

That equates to 1.6 million pupils, and the number is not going down. Attendance data for this academic year up to March 31 shows the rate was 22.6 per cent.

It varies significantly by school. Last year the

persistent absentee rate was 17.7 per cent in primaries, 27.7 per cent in secondaries and 40.4 per cent in special schools.

A snapshot of attendance data in April from Arbor, whose management information systems are used by 5,000 schools, shows the youngest and oldest pupils are worst affected. In reception, more than a quarter missed school regularly. At secondary, almost half of year 13s were persistent absentees, compared with just 19 per cent of year 7s.

Poorer pupils and those with SEND are more likely to miss school. For SEND pupils, according

to Arbor's data, the rate was 40 per cent in secondaries, up from 39 per cent in the DfE's 2021-22 figures.

Special school pupils fared even worse, with almost half persistently absent this year. Arbor's data also found that gifted and talented children were twice as likely to skip school regularly at secondary (16 per cent) than primary.

Analysis last week by SchoolDash found rises in absenteeism in every region and type of school, but London schools, those with larger ethnic-minority populations or better Ofsted ratings tended to have smaller increases.

Feature: Attendance

SCHOOLS WEEK EDITION 301 | FRIDAY, NOV 4, 2022

SOLUTIONS: ATTENDANCE

The knock on the door: a simple solution to poor attendance?

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBBOOTH

Every morning after registers – come rain, sleet or sun – up to six cars with experienced teachers leave North Shore Academy to go door knocking.

The school, in Stockton-on-Tees, was struggling with around 87 per cent attendance in 2017. Too many children were at home every day and leaders were determined to get kids back in the classroom.

In one year, staff did 4,000 home visits to ensure pupils had the support they need. When Ofsted visited in July last year, attendance was 94 per cent. The school – ‘requires improvement’ in 2018 – was rated ‘outstanding’ in every category. Seventy per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

‘It’s the challenge of breaking a culture’

Paige Leahy, attendance officer at the school, said door knocks focus on those with attendance below 97 per cent, or where there’s no reason for being off school.

Schools Week accompanied Leahy on a drive around this week. Before we left the school, the team were rattling through names to check who was in, calling parents. It was like a military operation.

Trust leads attendance push

The practice is now embedded across NET’s 22 schools, serving some of the most deprived areas in the north.

NET uses a trust-wide attendance dashboard which pulls data straight from management information systems overnight. This shows real-time attendance patterns for all key groups of pupils. Principals must send a weekly report to the trust’s senior leaders.

NET has set up its own ‘attendance hub’ backed by government – to show

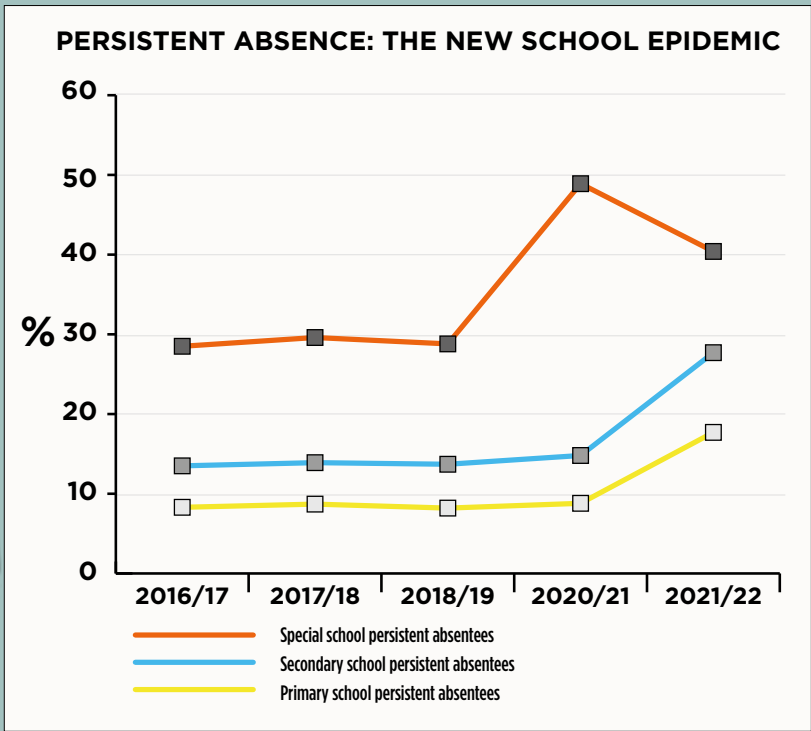
of children being off when they really ought not to be.”

Home visits are arranged into postcode clusters, saving time.

Paige Leahy

Michael Bibben

While the government has hired 13 absence advisers to improve attendance nationally, a Schools Week investigation suggests over 600 attendance staff have been slashed from



Alice Wilcock, head of education at the Centre for Social Justice centre-right think tank, said absence was “the new epidemic for schools”.

Why are children missing school?

DfE data from last year shows illness absence rose from 2.1 per cent in 2020-21 to 4.4 per cent last year. Unauthorised absences rose from 1.3 per cent to 2.1 per cent in the same period.

SchoolDash managing director Timo Hannay believes there are “more relaxed attitudes among parents in allowing children to stay home”, with a “proven capacity of schools to provide online alternatives to in-person teaching”.

Nearly a quarter of children missed at least one Friday during the autumn 2021 term, a study based on three academy trusts by the children’s commissioner found.

Dame Rachel de Souza told MPs in March this was because many parents now worked from home on that day. “We’ve had evidence from kids, ‘well, mum and dad are at home, stay at home’.

We’re seeing slightly



Lee Elliot Major

different attitudes in the post-Covid world.”

Lee Elliott Major, the University of Exeter’s social mobility professor, and Andy Eyles, of University College London, said some pupils were off due to “crippling anxiety and a loss of social and academic confidence”.

But evidence they submitted to MPs stated other families “appear to have lost their belief that attending school regularly is necessary for their children, with some openly questioning whether a return to schooling is needed”.

A Schools Week investigation last month found about 125,000 children across England – 1.4 per cent of all pupils – were home educated at some point in the last academic year, a 60 per cent rise on pre-pandemic numbers.

The strikes and high teacher absence rates are also believed to have had a detrimental impact on the notion of school being mandatory for all. Wilcock said councils had parents “ringing up saying, ‘how dare you try to fine me for taking my child on holiday when teachers are striking’”.

The cost-of-living crisis means some

families cannot afford to supply clean uniform or pay for lunches and bus fares every day. There are also concerns that gaps in NHS provision are exacerbating absenteeism.

An investigation by The House magazine found waiting lists for children to access mental health services had more than doubled in the past five years. Schools in the North East are reporting three-year waiting lists for CAMHS. In Bristol, children must be in “crisis” before referral for an autism diagnosis.

A fine mess to be in

The government has encouraged the use of fines to get children back to school. Councils can fine each parent £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Non-payment after 28 days could lead to three months in prison and a fine of £2,500.

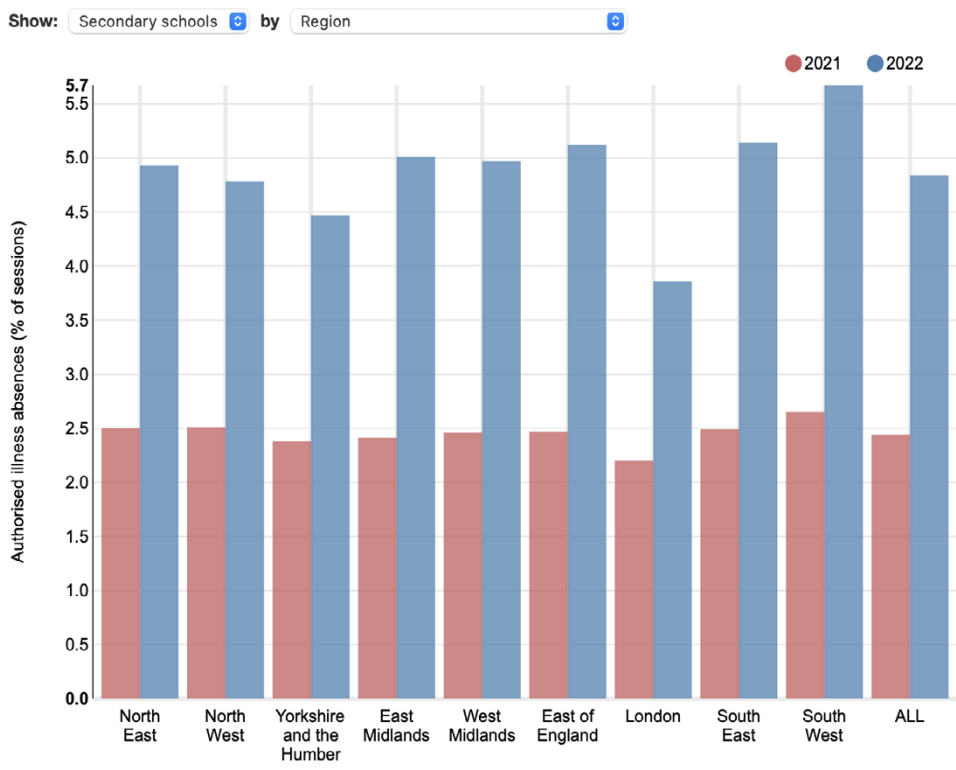
In 2021 former education secretary Nadhim Zahawi ordered councils to tell parents that keeping children off had “repercussions”. But some



Wayne Harris

Feature: Attendance

Figure 5: Authorised illness absences by school type



Source: SchoolDash analysis of Department for Education and SchoolDash Insights data

‘Fines are a stick [schools] have been told to beat parents with’

leaders say fines further damage the increasingly fractured relationship between families and schools.

The total number of penalty notices for unauthorised absences plummeted from 333,388 in 2018-19, to 218,235 in 2021-22 – a drop of 35 per cent. While lockdowns account for much of that, Wilcock believes it also reflects a reluctance from councils and heads to use fines post-Covid.

Michael Gove recently suggested that parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly could have child benefit payments stopped.

Wayne Harris, deputy head at Washwood Heath MAT’s strategic attendance leader, said fines were

a “stick [schools] have been told to beat parents with”.

Publishing school attendance data creates a “pressure cooker environment” which is “not a child-centred approach to supporting families”, he added.

Harris recounts visiting the home – riddled with mould – of two asthmatic children whose parents did not pay their £60 per child fine after taking a “crap” term-time holiday in Cornwall. That had risen to £389 and will go up by another 50 per cent if they do not pay within 14 days.

“Their house is falling to pieces and now they’ve got to find

nearly £800. It’s heartbreaking,” Harris said.

Fines can also have unintended consequences. One head told Schools Week he knew of parents who had pulled their children out for home education because “they don’t want to get fined”.

But Christina Jones, CEO at River Tees MAT which operates five academies for vulnerable children, said having a fine “on the table allows you to have more robust discussions with that family”.

Enforcement is a postcode lottery, though. In 2021-22, six councils issued more than 5,000 penalty notices, while three issued none.

And does the approach even work? Luton issued the most fines of any council last year, when its unauthorised absence rate was 2.1 per cent – 70th highest in England. Latest figures show this has tripled to 6.6 per cent – making it the 17th highest rate in the country.

The government plans to introduce national standards that all councils follow to ensure consistency with fines. But councils can still have parents prosecuted without issuing penalties.

Warrington, which did not issue any penalty notices in 2022, instead set agreed nine-week targets for attendance to improve before resorting to legal action. Since last September 160 parents have been given targets, of whom 19 went on to be found guilty in court.

Attendance pressures

There is also concern that schools are submitting an attendance “Code B” intended for when pupils are present at an approved off-site educational activity, when pupils are really working from home.

One secondary head indicated B codes were being used to boost attendance levels, after the department “cut right down on off-rolling and sending kids off on work experience”.

“If you say, ‘we’ve sent work home’, you can be quite unscrupulous. We are under pressure to get attendance stats up, which creates a culture where some exploit



Michael Gove

Feature: Attendance

the system by doing dubious things.”

There is also concern the government’s expectations are unrealistic, particularly in deprived areas. Glyn Potts, head of Newman College in Oldham, feels he should be “proud” of the school’s 92.8 per cent attendance levels, given its disadvantaged location.

“But the government will say it needs to be 100 per cent. We’re in this vice grip of being held accountable for poor attendance. Doing what we’ve always done will not change some of that ingrained distrust of schools going on out in the community.”

Harris echoes this and fears the top-down focus on data can lead to poor decisions. He recalls two children moved to a hostel after their father almost killed them, and although they were not in school, he wanted them kept on roll “to safeguard them, so we knew where they were”.

But this brought down attendance levels, which was highlighted by Ofsted during an inspection. He asked inspectors: “What do you want me to do – get these children off roll so attendance improves? That’s one element of the pressures we’re facing.”

Tackling the problem

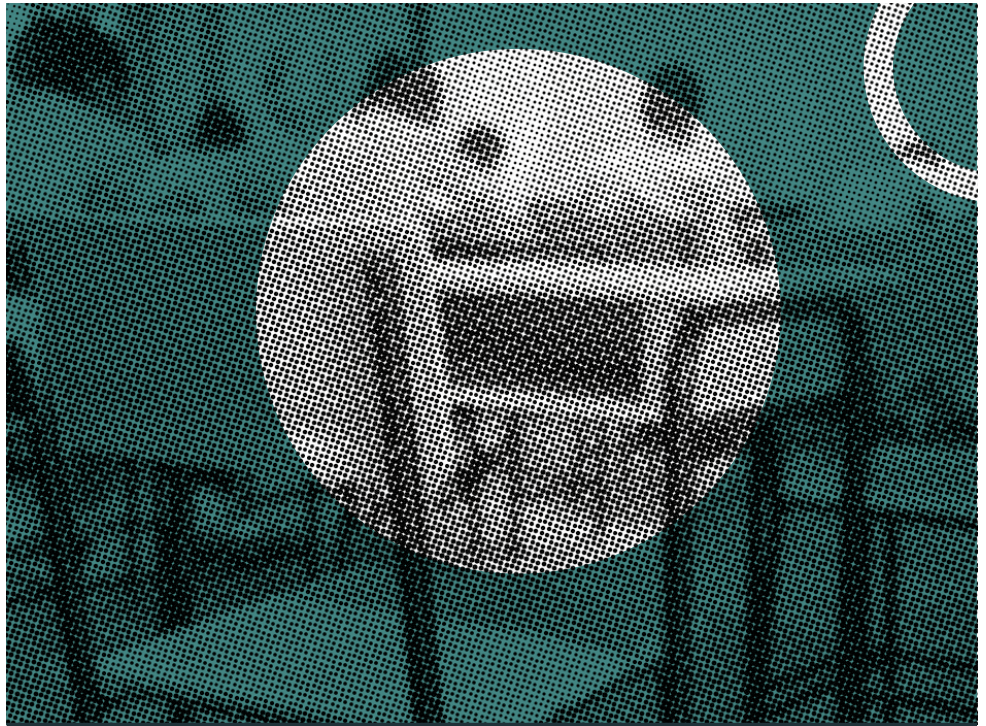
The DfE is setting up attendance hubs for schools to learn from those getting a grip on the problem.

The idea came after Northern Education Trust’s North Shore Academy managed a 94 per cent post-Covid attendance rate, despite being in a deprived area of Stockton-on-Tees.

Michael Robson, the trust’s senior executive principal, said the model involves “boots on the ground”, with up to 5,000 home visits a year providing “support and sometimes challenge – saying to families there is no good reason for absence”.

It also involves a “brand new pastoral structure, with lots of provision taken in-house”. Wellbeing and educational welfare officers are recruited in every school.

The DfE is understood to have 10 more MATs lined up to establish similar hubs. It recommends



‘We’re in this vice grip of being held accountable for poor attendance’

that penalty notices are issued where support is unsuccessful, but there appears to be growing aversion to deploying them.

Ellie Costello, director of SquarePeg, a social enterprise for families with attendance issues, said attendance enforcement can come across as “centred in the old-fashioned rounding them up, handcuffing them and chucking them back through the gate”.

She had heard “awful stories of education welfare officers and even headteachers banging on doors, forcing their way into homes, pulling the duvet off kids and shouting at them”.

She added: “We’ve got high proportions of families accused of fabricating and inducing illness and being threatened with child protection proceedings. It’s really

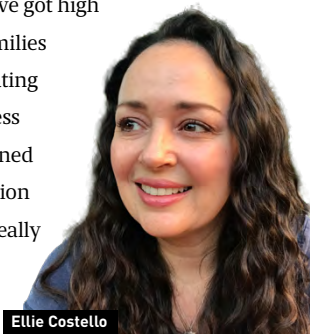
problematic.”

Harris is calling for schools to “work with families not against them”. He has created a child-centred attendance practice framework “built on connectedness and belonging” and a network sharing good practice to which 388 schools have signed up.

But Major and Eyles warn that evidence on how to reduce absenteeism is extremely weak, adding: “It is likely there will be huge variation in the effectiveness of schools’ efforts.”

Meanwhile, Jones has an alternative solution, trying to ensure each pupil has at least one positive relationship in school with a peer, which she believes makes their chances of attending much higher.

“Work around internal emotional-based school avoidance is picking up complex issues around the environment in schools. Most children are not attending because they feel school is not a nice place to be.”



Ellie Costello

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Pooling school budgets at MAT level doesn't completely undo the fairer distribution of the NFF, writes Jon Andrews, but it does reduce transparency

It is now five years since the DfE introduced the national funding formula for schools (NFF). Its aim was to provide a transparent system to fund schools across the country on a consistent basis, dependent largely on the characteristics of their pupils. It also aimed to address historic inequalities whereby funding related not to pupils attending schools today, but those who had attended years before.

This was a significant change, and the system was protected from an overnight move to a hard (or in the current parlance, direct) NFF that would see someone with a spreadsheet in Sanctuary Buildings set a school's exact funding. Instead, the NFF determined the overall level of funding that went to a local area, and the amount allocated to individual schools was determined by a local formula. In other words, the NFF provided a starting point for what a school might receive, but the actual amount could differ.

Academy bosses have long campaigned for a move to a direct NFF, arguing that local authorities should have very little (if any) role in influencing their budgets. Now, the DfE wants to move in that direction. A 2021 consultation resulted in further restrictions on how local formulae are constructed and recommended that overall values should nudge ever closer to what would be allocated if the DfE did so directly.

But there remains some tension between this desire for transparency and consistency in the funding system, and the move for all schools to be in academy trusts. It is ultimately the



JON ANDREWS

Head of Analysis, EPI

Could GAG pooling undermine the national funding formula?

trust and not the individual academy that is accountable for how money is spent, and there is no guarantee that an academy will receive the amount determined by the NFF.

This is most evident where individual academies have no budgets at all. The Academy Trust Handbook allows a trust to amalgamate the general

the needs of all academies, and there must be an appeals process.

GAG pooling is a growing feature of the academy system, with one report finding that nearly a quarter of trusts are now centrally managing funding in this way. But it is not without its critics. It is by definition a redistribution of funding. As such,

“ GAG pooling is arguably a bigger change than the NFF

annual grant from all its schools to meet the running costs of any of its constituent academies, a process commonly known as GAG pooling. What restrictions are in place are fairly limited: the trust must consider

some academies will probably “lose out” if a trust follows this approach. Centralised control may also be a barrier to some schools joining a trust given concerns about a loss of autonomy, and it means



fully sacrificing the delegated responsibility for budgets that has been in place since the late 1980s.

For these reasons, GAG pooling is arguably a bigger change to how schools receive and manage funding than the NFF. But does it go as far as unwinding the progress made under the NFF and take us back to an unfair and opaque system? Well, not quite.

Ultimately, similar pupils in different parts of the country will largely attract the same amount of funding in a way they did not before. The lowest level at which funding is truly consistent is at the trust rather than individual academy level, but it is still a significant step forward from pre-NFF days.

What we lose is the transparency the NFF was supposed to provide. There is no requirement for trusts to publish how they allocate funding to individual academies. Indeed, some would question whether it is even possible for MATs that take a “one trust” view that all pupils and staff are part of one organisation rather than individual schools.

But, if the argument is that academy trusts are ultimately best placed to determine the level of funding that academies or even groups of pupils need, then there is surely great potential in transparency, and great value for the DfE in knowing how and where redistribution occurs.

If the view from the frontline is that the NFF is not getting it quite right, then an element of crowd-sourcing could help to refine and improve it.

The two elements do not have to be in tension. Call it a self-improving school funding system.

Opinion

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SARAH BAKER

CEO, Team Education Trust

In praise of small MATs: Why bigger doesn't mean better

Small MATs offer an agility the system needs and a family feel many schools and communities desire, explains Sarah Baker

There is no set structure that suggests an “ideal” configuration or shape for multi-academy trusts. Indeed, the DfE itself struggles to determine exactly what constitutes a large trust, let alone a strong one. The general trend seems to be towards MAT expansion, but the truth is that bigger does not always mean better.

This is not about mega-trust bashing or setting up a David and Goliath battle for the soul of education; MATs of different sizes should coexist with ease. But appreciating that there is ample space for all sizes of trusts, we should recognise the specific benefits of smaller trusts within the educational ecosystem.

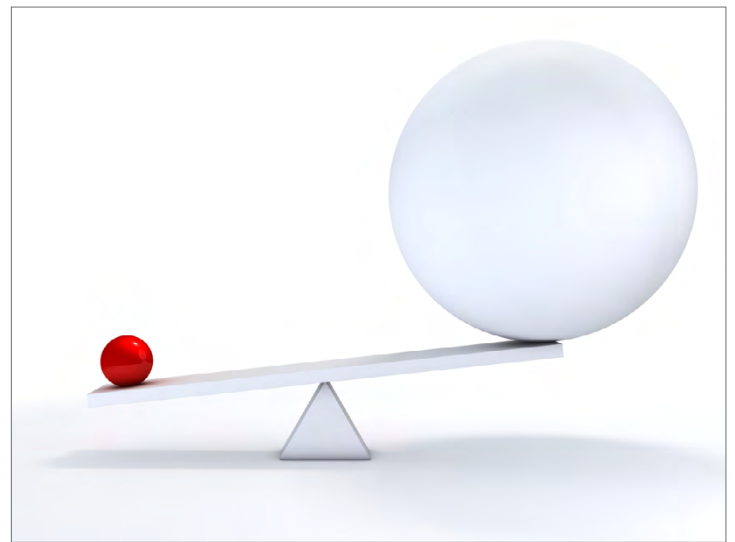
As CEO of one such small-yet-perfectly-formed organisation, I know there is tremendous value arising from smaller trusts with ambition, agility and clarity of purpose, with a shared common vision and a clear culture of inclusion, and with strong systems and processes. But smaller trusts often offer more than these; the organisation has a “feel” that is tangible to its staff and wider

stakeholders, and which can make it more accessible to potential new and partner schools.

Smaller trusts also tend to nurture more collaborative relationships, where knowledge and strengths are shared and specialisms are valued. This can enable children within a community to receive a rich, broad, balanced and varied curriculum to suit their needs. Securing the right trust for the right school can ensure that local context is celebrated in a way larger trusts can struggle to deliver.

This sense of belonging to an extended family, where everyone knows each other and staff regularly see the CEO and central team, is the result of a careful balancing act, which upscaling can put at risk. But this very familiarity can facilitate the emergence of talent, skills development and succession planning from staff with first-hand knowledge of their schools and communities.

In a smaller team, talent has no hiding place. Some people simply do not recognise how great they are and would never have the confidence to apply for promotion or step forward for a new challenge. Being visible as a leader across your schools means you are bound to spot great people doing great things; it is easier to have a personal approach when working on a smaller scale.



“ In a smaller team, talent has no hiding place

Regardless of size, autonomy is a two-way discussion. When schools are working well, trusts can give more autonomy to school leaders who, in turn, will require high standards of the trust’s central team. This virtuous circle of high standards is arguably the defining characteristic of a winning partnership. Smaller trusts empower this on a bigger scale: schools are more likely to have a significant role in the direction the trust takes, and trusts can offer a greater depth of understanding and more bespoke support.

In addition, the systemic benefits of trusts are not limited to larger MATs. Our trust has significant experience of expansion and change leadership. We have created a satellite provision; we trade services in IT, SEND and early help to name but a few; and we have set up service-level agreements to support local provisions – including with a football club. Meanwhile, schools can join us through the usual conversion route, or experience

the trust way of life by working in collaboration with us or having an associate contract with access to our services.

Throughout all of these initiatives and more, our smaller size and flexible, highly-skilled central team mean we are able to offer a creative and agile response to local needs while maintaining the family feel that sustains our schools as community assets.

It is not even necessarily true that larger trusts are better coordinated and can offer more because of their greater purchasing power and economies of scale. Trusts like ours can achieve the same benefits by arranging scaling up deals or collaborating with like-minded maintained schools and other small trusts.

Many schools will find they are well suited to larger trusts, and many will not. Delivering the MAT-led system is as much a local issue as a national one, and valuing small trusts is key to catering for the varying needs of every community.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Amanda Spielman's plans to improve inspection are deaf to the framework's inherent inequity and fall well short of what is needed

My recent article for Schools Week about the impact of Ofsted's inspection framework on first and infant schools resulted in comments from hundreds of teachers and school leaders. Many shared their own unsatisfactory experiences, including in some cases the need to seek emotional support following what they referred to as "brutal" inspections.

Many thought that 'Outstanding' was a complete irrelevance because it was almost entirely unachievable in their schools. With good reason, many more called into question the validity of inspection judgements informed by subject "deep dives" in lower-primary and early years classes.

They reported being left frustrated and demoralised by minor isolated examples being used as reasons for not achieving Ofsted's top grade, and they were unanimous in seeing last-week-of-term inspections as evidence that the inspectorate is out of touch.

Fortunately, and contrary to Ofsted's claims, many also reported that parents were supportive of their schools and dismissive of what they regarded as bland and unhelpful reports.

But, until they saw my analysis, many had thought that they were the ones letting their schools down. In fact, the downgrading of previously exempt schools was systemic, and its disproportionate impact on first and infant schools undeniable. The latter were ten times more likely to be downgraded than secondaries, and this trend continues on routine Section 5 inspections, with fewer than 5 per cent of them judged 'Outstanding'.

Morale in these schools is at an ebb, yet most who contacted me felt there was no point in complaining – that doing so would only make matters



DAVID SCOTT

Retired headteacher of two first schools

Spielman's plans for change offer nothing for first and infant schools

worse. The chief inspector commented recently that Ofsted's complaints procedure is "not satisfying" – an understatement to say the least.

And the result of trivialising the problem is a frankly underwhelming plan to reform the process. Amanda

won't inspire confidence that, when necessary, inspectors will be held to account.

Nor does this deal with systemic issues with the inspection framework. The majority of formerly 'Outstanding' first and infant schools

“The inequity is as evident as Ofsted's silence

Spielman announced last week that the inspectorate wants complainants to "feel that they have had a fair and thorough hearing". But they don't want to feel it; they want to know that they have.

Likewise, the notion that this can be dealt with "during the inspection rather than considered afterwards"

inspected over the past 18 months have been downgraded. The inequity is as evident as Ofsted's silence on the matter. Coming off the back of an exemption policy that left them virtually unmonitored, isolated and vulnerable, it is an insult, added to an injury.

Many will be pleased to see Ofsted



acknowledging the impact of the period of enforced silence between inspection judgement and report publication. But allowing heads to share outcomes with others in confidence again places the burden on them.

Who can they share with? Who can they trust? What if word gets out? It is surely in the inspectorate's power to shorten the wait time, not to mention increasing transparency around the process.

And then there is the matter of internal consistency of reports themselves. How can a school's safeguarding be deemed 'ineffective' in a report which states that "pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming and vibrant school", "respect and celebrate differences", "can discuss what a healthy and unhealthy relationship looks like" and "know how to stay safe, including online" – a school where most "behave sensibly" and "know who to turn to if they have a worry or a problem, [...] confident that they will get the help they need"?

Ofsted, we are told, is "looking at how we can return more quickly to schools who have work to do on safeguarding but are otherwise performing well". Spielman muses that safeguarding is "sometimes mis-characterised as an exercise in paperwork", but that "it is much more than that".

How ironic, when it is precisely the paper trail that results in down-gradings. Once more, Ofsted off-loads its responsibility onto the shoulders of headteachers.

I have spent a lifetime as a primary teacher, headteacher and governor. I still believe that inspection plays an important role when it is fair, accurate and conducted to the highest standard according to a framework that is equitable and fit for purpose.

It is none of these things.

Opinion

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SEAMUS MURPHY

CEO, Turner Schools

Heads' sharp practices to game Ofsted only raise the stakes

Analysing website traffic to predict Ofsted visits is only the latest form of gaming the system. Such practices only increase the stakes for others, writes Seamus Murphy

The loss of Ruth Perry has quite rightly put the whole school inspection regime under intense public scrutiny. If the death of a dedicated professional has been contributed to, to whatever extent, by the pressure of an impending Ofsted verdict, then we should all stop and think about the impact the current system is having. Of course we should.

But if we are going to have that difficult conversation, then we should also be willing to be honest about the way some schools try to outwit the inspectors and artificially enhance their performance.

The truth is that something has gone badly wrong when some parts of the system are deploying increasingly sophisticated methods of digital data analysis to anticipate when the inspection team is going to come knocking.

Some will argue that it is just a smart move in the face of a high-stakes culture that has unhealthily taken root across our sector. In truth, it is a deeply questionable

(even unethical) practice that does a disservice to all the leaders and teachers out there working to secure genuine, long-term and sustainable school improvement.

Hand on heart, as a school leader would you be comfortable with some pupils knowing in advance when a spot test was going to happen while others did not? If we would not tolerate it in our classrooms, why should we accept it from our peers?

In reality, a week's notice for a school that is not there yet is not enough time to deliver real change. Early warnings therefore only really benefit those who want to take short cuts and game the system through sharp practice like sending disruptive pupils or weaker staff off-site for the day or assembling a team of leaders to swarm the school and create the impression of a more improved school than the reality bears out.

We all know it happens, and we all know where it happens.

And all it does is undermine the notion of fair inspection. It is pretty grubby and reflects badly on the whole sector. It also risks chipping away at parental confidence in a school's positive judgement and encouraging a "they are all at it" cynical view among the public, undermining all those who are



“It’s pretty grubby and reflects badly on the sector”

putting in the hard yards.

Having a two-tier system where the technological “haves” gain some sort of advantage over the “have nots” is clearly damaging for everybody’s reputations, and it is hardly in the spirit of ethical school leadership.

And where does it end? Security consultants going through HMIs’ rubbish bins, or staking out home working to try and predict the next inspection?

Fundamentally, leaders should be confident that, should their school be inspected, they are well prepared and able to use the inspection handbook and associated guidance to have a professional conversation about the strengths and areas of improvement of their provision. Preparing staff and schools for an inspection visit, after all, is only a small part of running a strong school or trust.

Of course, we should ask searching questions about how we got here. Unquestionably, the

inspection regime has become incredibly high stakes with too high a price to pay. A verdict of ‘Inadequate’ or ‘Requires improvement’ is so damning that it is driving behaviours that, if we are honest with ourselves, just are not acceptable. So much hinges on a single-word judgement and the time is ripe for a serious review of this and how Ofsted discharges its duties.

But we also need to get our own house in order. We need to call out sharp practice that effectively throws others under the bus to gain advantage. Not only that, but they reinforce the policy makers’ view that we are only worthy of an accountability system founded on distrust, undermining attempts to secure reform and improvement of the current framework.

Ruth Perry’s legacy should be about more than system reform. We all have a part to play in ensuring that our system is fair and sustainable.

Solutions

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



ADILA ROSE

Education project manager,
YHA (England & Wales)

10 ways for schools to save on residential

Adila Rose sets out some practical tips for reducing the cost of residentials so that all learners can access this important cultural capital

Residentials change lives. They provide children with the opportunity to shine outside the classroom. But, as with so many things, the gap between those who can access them and those who cannot is growing wider. Many families are being forced to make the decision whether to heat or eat. In this situation, how can a school then ask parents to pay for a day trip, let alone a residential? Schools also face their own barriers, with travel costs and teacher capacity all taking a toll on the enrichment/trip curriculum. However, there are ways to have an outdoor education experience for less money, if not free. Here is what I wish I had known when I was a teacher organising residential experiences.

1. Onsite residentials

If you have school grounds, use them. Local scout and guide groups may be able to lend camping kit. Learning Away is a great source of practical support for making the best use of school grounds and partnerships with charities.

2. Use local providers

While travel away from home is exciting, many of the benefits of residentials and trips can be achieved close to school gates. This has the added advantage of being able to walk or use local bus routes to the site, reducing costs and being green. The walk to the provider can be incorporated into the experience.

Many YHA hostels have free maps for local walks and hostels can be used as a base for pupils to refill water bottles and eat lunch.

3. Free residential planning visits

Many residential providers offer free teacher familiarisation/

planning visits to test out the site and opportunities available. Using these planning visits can scaffold the trip with pre-stay activities, guidance for the day and post-visit resources to ensure you get the most value from your stay.

4. Develop self-led approaches

A teacher-led approach can help to reduce costs. This can be a daunting prospect, but there are many free online resources to support you. English Heritage, the National Trust and the Youth Hostel Association are all useful places to start.

5. Consider micro-volunteering

Using school grounds and local places for micro-volunteering and challenge activities can be a new way of having a trip with social purpose. Examples include litter picks in the community, creating bug hotels to support wildlife ecosystems, or what about a winter evening star count with CPRE?

6. Access bursaries and funding

Part payment towards a residential or trip can make it a reality. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust offers a free class visit for Years 1-4 to one

of its wetland centres, including free transport. Likewise, many charities such as YHA and private companies like Hyundai also offer bursary schemes, so it is always worth asking. The Plan My School Trip website can help you find free or bursary options for your school.

7. Take part in a pilot

Watch out for opportunities to be part of pilots and programmes run by charities. They often offer free or heavily subsidised trips in return for school input into co-design and evaluation. We do, so register with us to find out when we are looking for test pilots.

8. Buy social

Think about where your money goes. When you buy from a not-for-profit you help to create sustainable programmes of work where every penny is reinvested in access and impact. That is good for you, but also good for all other schools.

9. Travel bursaries

Many national parks and nature spaces can offer a contribution towards travel. This includes, for example, the New Forest National Park Authority and the South Downs National Park.

10. Go out of season

Lastly, don't let the weather put you off; it can sometimes add to the experience! You can save lots of money by choosing to book a winter residential. The provider, or charities like The Outdoor Guide Foundation, can help ensure that pupils have the right outdoor kit.

Access to the outdoors is a fundamental part of our cultural capital. With a little creativity and research, every young person can have access to it irrespective

“ There are ways to have these experiences for less, if not for free ”



THE REVIEW

VISIBLE LEARNING: THE SEQUEL

BOOK

TV

FILM

RADIO

EVENT

RESOURCE

Author: John Hattie**Publisher:** Routledge**Publication date:** 20 March 2023**ISBN:** 1032462035**Reviewer:** Robbie Burns, Assistant vice principal, Bede Academy
(Emmanuel Schools Foundation)

After decades of collaboration with governments, regional departments, school leaders and teachers, John Hattie returns to revisit the foundations of his work. With *Visible Learning: The Sequel*, he offers a new generation of educators far more than an updated compendium of research findings; I have no doubt that this final offering will be seen as prophetic and will be discussed and debated for years to come.

First and foremost, one of the greatest achievements of *Visible Learning: The Sequel* is that it safeguards policy makers and school leaders alike from “the next big thing”. When Hattie published the first instalment of *Visible Learning* in 2009, the teaching profession was not as research literate as it is now. But this transition has come at a price.

One of the problems with our new-found obsession with educational research is that we are too willing to uncritically absorb piecemeal research summaries and bite-sized takeaways of much larger and more complex findings. We are also at the mercy of think-tanks and foundations that do not always provide the nuance their findings merit.

Visible Learning is not a culprit of this facsimile version of research engagement. In fact, because of the vast pool of research that Hattie draws upon, many of the book’s claims about what makes for effective education feel contradictory. But Hattie does not shy away from this. Instead, he embraces it wholeheartedly and shares his puzzlement through honest reflection.

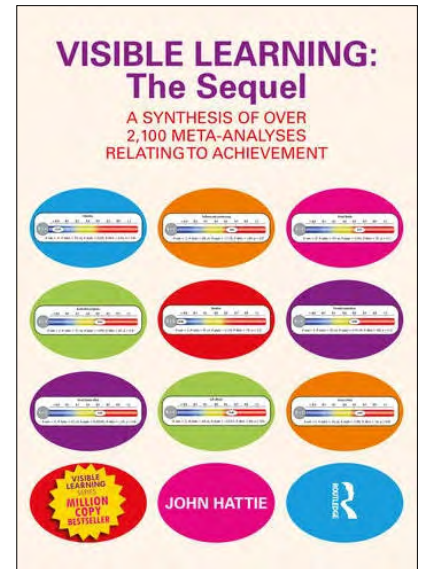
This should be our stance, too: take off our ideological lenses and delve deeper into the paradoxes of what makes learning work. A great example is the book’s section on teaching

strategies, which places meta-analyses for explicit and direct instruction (with effect sizes of 0.56 and 0.63) next to problem-based teaching (with an effect size of 0.61). Rather than seeing them as opposed, Hattie chooses to widen the paradigm to consider how both can be used at the right time and in the right way, according to the types of knowledge being learned and the needs of students.

After 16 years of working on *Visible Learning*, Hattie continues to draw us into genuine conversations about what research really tells us, beckoning us to explore further. With this sequel, he is handing us the baton, asking us to take up the call of putting research at the service of student achievement. And his razor-sharp focus on what will make the most difference to the greatest number, guided by the empirical data, presents a grand narrative that is quite compelling. Until he tries to dabble in the philosophical, leaving a few moments in the book that feel a little odd.

Amazingly, Hattie seems to quote scholars at length whose theoretical positions remain hotly contested while completely leaving out others whose work has been shown by clear empirical evidence to have had a significant impact on student attainment when applied in the classroom.

For example, in his section on “School and Society”, Hattie counts Paolo Freire as one of his key influences, claiming that *Visible Learning: The Sequel* has “remarkable parallels” with Freire’s work. Like Freire, Hattie decries the amount of teacher talk and the narrative structure of much educational activity, but then states in the curriculum section that “the use of intentional or deliberate teaching wins out



repeatedly” when it comes to reading.

Coupled with the effect sizes of direct and explicit instruction already mentioned, it is clear that the teaching methods Hattie and Freire dislike are nevertheless effective, particularly in core subjects. At this point, Hattie could have embraced philosophical dichotomies just as he does empirical contradictions.

He could have included Engelmann, Hirsch or Rosenshine in his grand story, but chose not to. This left me a little perplexed, to say the least.

Don’t let these philosophical shortcomings stop you from buying this book. Hattie ends it with an invitation to continue the conversation in response to the story he has developed, and I for one heartily accept. Meanwhile, its commitment to scientific integrity, particularly with regard to pedagogical models and implementation, makes it a touchstone text for teaching and leadership practice.



Rating



Diana Young
Governor,
Richard
Atkins School

A CULTURE OF FEAR

Tensions were high following Amanda Spielman's appearance on the BBC this Sunday morning for an interview with Laura Kuennsberg. The conversation surrounding Ofsted quickly went viral, with a slew of angry tweets from educators questioning Ofsted's ability to operate effectively following the death of headteacher Ruth Perry, and renewing calls for a pause in inspections.

While Spielman admitted that an Ofsted inspection does create a culture of fear, her claim that only the most senior staff are impacted was utterly ill-judged and misinformed. Teacher Jon Biddle [tweeted](#) that the comment "just demonstrates that she has literally no idea how either schools or inspections operate".



The primary school I govern was recently inspected, and the process impacted every facet of the school, from the senior leadership team to teaching assistants and governors. While the inspection itself went very well and resulted in a positive

outcome, the overall experience was extremely stressful for staff and governors alike, who also required briefings ahead of a meeting with the inspector during the two-day visit.

I decided to become a co-opted governor because schools must be held to account. In my view, there should be a process for understanding which schools need support rather than a system for benchmarking the high-performing ones. As Twitter user and headteacher for ten years The Thinking School [tweeted](#): "We have never felt such financial pressures. The pressure of Ofsted has never been so great. Expectations [...] have never been higher. Teacher wellbeing has never been lower. Something needs to happen. And fast."

However you look at it, the chasm between Spielman's version of events and the sector's response shows the Ofsted inspection process must be reviewed promptly to rebuild trust.

TRANSGENDER GUIDELINES

On another highly contentious topic, [The Times](#) reported this week that schools will have to inform parents if pupils changing gender start to use a new name or wear a new uniform.

From a governance perspective, safeguarding always takes precedence. However, the proposed new guidance leaves teachers in a somewhat precarious position: informing parents could give rise to a safeguarding concern of a different nature, especially for children who might not have had conversations with their parents.

The [Safe Schools Alliance](#) opined that schools should be working in partnership with parents and accused [The Guardian](#) of undermining safeguarding with an article sharing teachers' concerns that the new guidance "could put children at risk".

Meanwhile, another campaign group, [UsForThem](#), welcomed the new guidance outlined by Miriam Cates MP as "sensible", and some teachers voiced their support for it. [Shivan Davis](#) explained the need for it thus: "Teachers are not psychologists. Teachers are not medical experts. Teachers are not social workers." [Joe Lane added](#): "... it's not just the secrecy, it's schools using materials and organisations that actively push the trans agenda, with teachers apparently eagerly (or through fear of being branded transphobic) supporting it."



Shivan Davis
@Shivandavis

The importance of this cannot be overstated. Teachers are not psychologists. Teachers are not medical experts. Teachers are not social workers: "Anything beyond a neutral, supportive approach is beyond teachers' authority and expertise."

SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS

The new guidelines are also rumoured to recommend that single-sex schools should reject transgender pupils. One parent, Celine Guillet, [tweeted](#): "My daughter is in a girls only school and there are several trans kids. Numbers are much higher than before. [...] They're teenagers, they experiment. They're given the space to do so. Staff and peers respect it."



The Other Celine
@celineguillet

Replying to @celineguillet and @LBC
It's funny that the kids are not bothered but people online go mad.

Nevertheless, two recent stories demonstrate the need for guidelines. First, a row erupted last year when the [Girls' Day School Trust \(GDST\)](#), where my children attend, announced its decision not to admit transgender girls, prompting Nadia Whittome MP to accuse the trust of hiding behind the Equality Act and Cheryl Giovannoni, the trust's CEO, to reassure trans pupils already at the school that they could remain for as long as they wished. Separately, a teacher at a private girls' school was reportedly [forced to apologise](#) for calling their pupils girls without consideration for those using alternative pronouns.

Governors have a responsibility to safeguard and to protect the health and wellbeing of all children at their schools. Here's hoping this long-overdue guidance will enable them to do just that.

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts



The Knowledge

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



How can teachers judge the efficacy of edtech?

Professor Natalia Kucirkova, The Open University and University of Stavanger, Co-founder, WiKIT

One of the projected trends for 2023 is evidence-driven educational technologies (edtech): the development and use of these tools based on an independent, scientific evaluation of impact. For almost a decade, teachers had to parse through marketing claims versus evidence of actual impact. As the studies summarised in the Department for Education's 2022 edtech report showed, with poorly designed edtech, well-intentioned teachers might inadvertently promote ineffective practices or even practices with negative impact on children's learning.

Since the 1960s, evidence-based practice in medicine has had a clear mandate: to ensure that only the most stringently evaluated, up-to-date scientific advice informs products and services. Applying the same standards to education has been met with a considerable amount of resistance in educational circles — relived in the form of edtech's evidence debates.

In the US, the top quality criteria — the ESSA efficacy standards — mirror that of medical trials: randomised controlled trials. RCTs are the highest form of evidence because the trials randomly assign participants to an intervention and control group.

While there are good reasons for seeing evidence in terms of RCTs, there are also a number of problems. The 2019 analysis of 141 educational RCTs commissioned by governmental agencies found that 40 per cent of them produced no effect at all, or an effect comparable to natural maturation. Since then, the educational field has made great progress to collectively identify the reasons for RCTs' null findings and improve its implementation protocols.

Nevertheless, the high demand of resources required for RCTs leaves little room for financing and executing other types of studies. Edtech creators and schools need to know not only whether a tool or approach works, but also the



context in which it might work.

Here, observations and usability studies coordinated within edtech testbeds work best. The Swedish EdTest model supports teacher communities to give updates on an edtech's successes, but also sound the alarm when they experience unintended impacts.

Efficacy, testbeds and other evaluation approaches can be combined in a compromise model: the edtech evidence portfolio. An edtech evidence portfolio includes independent, scientific evaluation of efficacy as well as teachers' and students' views.

Edtech is at various levels of funding and possibility to pay for an efficacy or effect evaluation study. However, teachers should not shy away from demanding a variety of evidence of both small and large edtech providers. This includes proof of compliance with national demands for evidence (in some countries, like the USA, these are well-established while in others they are in the process of development) and activities or plans for engaging with research. Various evidence-as-a-service models make it possible for all edtech providers to connect with research and aspire for the most rigorous form of impact assessment.

Edtech companies can engage with university researchers in various ways. London, as a leading edtech hub, offers various programs: UCL

EdTech Labs is an edtech research accelerator programme; Goldstar EdTech Diagnostics provides a certification service and Educate Ventures offers research guidance to EdTech companies.

In addition, kitemarks and awards judged by teachers, combined with internationally recognised seals of approval such as the ISTE Standards, are natural opportunities to leverage an edtech provider's scaling-up journey.

Research-aware edtech providers have a variety of evidence indicators in their evidence portfolio. Different procurement teams are likely to weigh up the individual elements within the portfolio differently — and that is fine. In the end, education is a form of social interaction and diversity is its bloodline.

Everyone agrees that, if an edtech solution is implemented in the classroom as intended, based on tested procedures and recommended guidelines, it is more likely to positively impact students' learning.

But, if edtech evidence is to be more than a trend — if it is to deliver on the vision of a long-term commitment to solving educational inequity — then teachers' voices are crucial to driving that transformation.

That starts by demanding richer evidence from providers, who now exist in a system equipped to provide it and validate it.

Week in

Westminster

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



FRIDAY

Academies supremo Baroness Barran was recently invited by a fellow peer in a recent Lords debate to "take the opportunity" to inform Rishi Sunak "that it is facile" to suggest improving maths without paying teachers enough to join and stay in the workforce.

The minister dryly told her colleague she did not "really have any intention" of schooling the PM on his flagship policy, and pointed to a "pick-up" in the recruitment of maths teachers over the past three years.

Alas, just a few days later, research org the NFER predicted the DfE will miss its maths teacher recruitment target by a whopping 40 per cent in 2023. Oops!

The DfE's Sanctuary Buildings is famed for its light and airy atrium with vegetation so lush it once reportedly had to introduce spiders to tackle the abundance of feasting bugs. But it's clearly not paradise for everyone who works there.

A government survey on workplaces found respondents roughly split on whether it was an "enjoyable environment" to work in and whether they were "proud" to bring visitors in.

More plants maybe?

MONDAY

The Sun reports this week that NAHT president Paul Gosling was one of several "celebs" forced to apologise last year after



Baroness Barran

tweeting false information about the then children's minister Brendan Clarke-Smith.

The offending tweet included an image that claimed the Tory MP had posed with a face mask over his crotch during Covid to mock NHS staff. In fact, the image was from years earlier at a charity waxathon.

The Tory MP revealed on Monday he had donated £5,000 of the settlement money he received to his local air ambulance.

He also confirmed Gosling was among those forced to cough up amid threats of legal action. But when we asked the NAHT if it had found the undisclosed sum on Gosling's behalf, answers came there none...

TUESDAY

The coalition government may seem ancient history to most politicians, given the tumult of the intervening eight years, but Liberal Democrats still cling to the memories of their period of giddy high office.

Schools minister Nick Gibb received a telling-off during a Westminster Hall debate when he remarked that a "Conservative-led" government introduced universal infant free school meals.

While technically true, the statement prompted the ire of Lib Dem education spokesperson Munira Wilson, who pointed out it was originally proposed by the junior coalition partner.

MPs pressed Gibb on soaring food prices, which are causing a nightmare for school kitchens and caterers.

He appeared sympathetic to a point, but stopped short of promising any increase in funding for free school meals. No surprise there.

WEDNESDAY

Education secretary Gillian Keegan astonished school leaders when she jumped on the start of a webinar on school funding and teacher pay this week.

After boasting of her success in securing the extra £2 billion for both the above this year and next in last year's autumn statement, she thanked the profession for its hard work and then vanished, leaving the tough questions to senior civil servants.



Gillian Keegan

To their credit, Tom Goldman and Graham Archer held firm, even opting to take those queries with the highest "upvotes". This approach of speaking directly to leaders is surely to be welcomed.

However, Archer may have bitten off more than he can chew when he invited "views about whether [the webinar was] a useful exercise". RIP his inbox...





Haberdashers' Academies Trust South



Director of HR

We are looking for an experienced HR professional to join our Central Trust team as a member of our Executive. You will work closely with the CEO and Principals in bringing to life our ambitious People Strategy.

As Director of HR, you will oversee HR across the Trust, providing expertise and advice, and leading the HR team. This is a team currently going through an important transformation, as we increase the degree of centralisation for this function. This presents an opportunity for the new Director to embed the structure.

The successful implementation of our People Strategy (which includes our EDI and well-being strategies) will guide our success and integrate closely with our school improvement and business sustainability strategies. We know that to be successful, we need great people. Therefore, it is integral to our core business. Our scale of expertise and leadership gives us the capacity to achieve great things. It is this capacity which will allow us to take on new challenges and allow our staff to become the best version of themselves.

We are a Trust of nine schools, all based in South-East London. Whilst each of our schools maintains its individuality, we share a common mission: to ensure that every single child and young person in our care is successful at school so that they can flourish and be successful in their lives. We are excited by the steps we have taken together and the future ambitions we have set.

We want the best people to join our Haberdashers' community and we are committed to a diverse and inclusive student and staff body. If you are passionate about making a difference and feel that you have the right experience and expertise, we encourage you to apply to join us on our journey.

If you are interested in learning more about the position, please do get in touch with Minerva who are supporting us with the appointment of this role

habstrustsouth@minervasearch.com .

This post will require travel to each of our sites alongside opportunities to work from home and flexibly



Director of Education Required for September 2023 Salary: circa £100,000



Following confirmation of the merger of Trust in Learning (Academies) and Endeavour Academy Trust, the Board is looking to appoint their first Director of Education.

This is a unique opportunity to develop the next five-year Education Strategy for our growing Trust of eight schools. Working with the newly appointed CEO and Executive Team you will help lead our Bristol based Trust into its next stage of development. You will be working closely with the CEO as principal lead on Education for a Trust committed to revolutionising education for our children, many of whom face disadvantages. Our passion is to ensure gaps are eradicated and that we stand on a platform of championing the voice of our children and parents.

Our core value and vision has always been three-fold:

- A non-negotiable commitment to an inclusive approach to education
- A non-negotiable commitment to over-coming any and all disadvantage (in its widest sense)
- A passion for local school identity centred on its community

You will be committed to delivering an Education Strategy that embraces research-based teaching to deliver the multifaceted classroom practice our children need. Passion and commitment to this is essential. You should be able to demonstrate a track record in engaging in this arena and to improving the outcomes to children who face disadvantages. This is an opportunity to stamp your vision for education and help lead an organisation into its next evolution with a team of passionate leaders committed to school improvement and development driven from its chalk face. The Trust places no limits on the aspirations for our students and we all believe strongly in the importance of opening horizons and opportunities for those less well placed to see it for themselves.

You will:

- Be an inspirational leader, strategic thinker and creative problem-solver
- Want to make a difference and help transform opportunities for children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Have experience of consistently delivering high standards of achievement
- Have excellent motivational and communication skills to lead successfully
- Be committed to professional development and improving yourself and others
- Be committed to the principle of comprehensive education

Supporting you:

- Trust in Learning (Academies) is committed to high quality professional development and career opportunities for all staff
- You will work closely with the CEO who will fully support you in this role
- You will work in collaboration with other leaders across the Trust in developing the Trust's vision and values

Trust in Learning (Academies) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. All appointments will be subject to a satisfactory enhanced DBS disclosure.

We would encourage potential applicants to visit the Trust and to arrange a visit please contact Clare Anderson, PA to the CEO on **0117 377 3442** or email **canderson@tila.school**

Key Dates:

9th May 2023 - Deadline for applications

9th May 2023 - Shortlisting

17th and 18th May 2023 - Assessments and Interview

Application packs can be downloaded by clicking [here](#). Please send your completed application by email to **recruitment@tila.school** by midday on Tuesday 9th May 2023.



HAYS Working for your tomorrow

Outwood Academy Ormesby
Middlesbrough

Head of Maths

Salary: £51,470 - £56,796 per year (L7-L11)

Full Time, Permanent

Start date September 2023

The Maths department at Outwood Academy Ormesby consists of a great variety of dedicated teachers with a wealth of experience. There are significant opportunities for your own continuing professional development through the Trust should you wish for either Senior Leadership in school or becoming a Director of Mathematics across a number of academies within the Outwood Family. You will be an excellent teacher with the experience to deliver in KS3 & 4. You will also have the leadership qualities to challenge individuals within your team whilst supporting them to achieve outstanding results.

To find out more, or to apply for this post or have a confidential career conversation, please contact James Hall or Lauren Panter, our Recruitment Partners at Hays on 0191 261 3980 or email outwoodnorth@hays.com.



CREATIVE, INSPIRATIONAL HEADTEACHER REQUIRED

Eden Park Primary is a happy 2-form entry school, in the heart of Brixham, Torbay with 2 onsite nurseries. This is a very successful school, with a strong ethos and where children consistently achieve above average. We are now looking for Eden Park's next Headteacher, to lead the school into the next stage of its development. Please see the school website for further details and the Trust website for more information about this position and Connect.

Connect is fully committed to equal opportunities, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An on-line check of publicly available information will be completed to assess the successful candidate's suitability to work with children.

Closing date Wednesday 10/5/23 (midday).

Interview w/c 15/5/23. 1/9/23 start preferred.

Full time, permanent position: L17-L22 (depending on skills and experience)



PRINCIPAL DESIGNATE

£64,225 - £74,283 p.a.

Start Date: 1st September 2023

North Star was born out of a drive to do something different for those who need more

Formed by the desire to shape futures, North Star emerged

We remain where others may part

Equipping young minds to join with their communities

Forging together the path ahead, traveling alongside

Our team can bring dreams to fruition. Join us and thrive.

This role will play a key part in realising this vision.

North Star Alternative Learning provision is a new school currently being built in the north of Bristol with easy access to the M4 and M5, due to open in October 2023. The successful applicant will project manage the opening of the new school, recruit experienced staff, develop robust systems

and procedures and shape the culture of the new school.

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced senior leader who has a proven track record in:

- working with children with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs
- setting up a new learning provision
- leading and developing staff
- embedding policies, procedures and new ways of working
- providing opportunities for children who are not engaging with learning in mainstream school.
- supporting children with successful re-integration into mainstream school

Both the secondary and primary school have been rated by OFSTED as good. Now the Trust is expanding, we are looking for a dynamic leader who has a clear vision for the future and who has the ability to put that vision into practice.

We can offer you the chance to make a difference to children's lives and provide them with opportunities to grow into responsible adults. You will become part of a close and supportive management team who have a wealth of experience working with children in SEMH.

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

The Shared Learning Trust



[Click here](#) to contact our team

