

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

EBacc league table shake-up to boost take-up



P4

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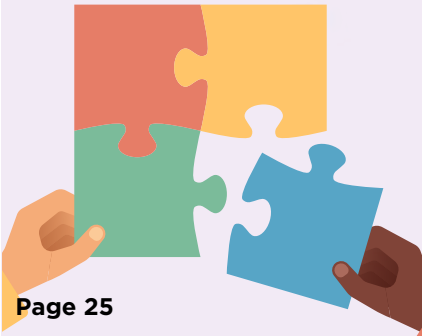
DAWN OF THE MAT-LED SYSTEM

SUCCESSION: DEVELOPING EGO-LIGHT CEOS



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CENTRALISATION IS COLLABORATION, NOT COERCION



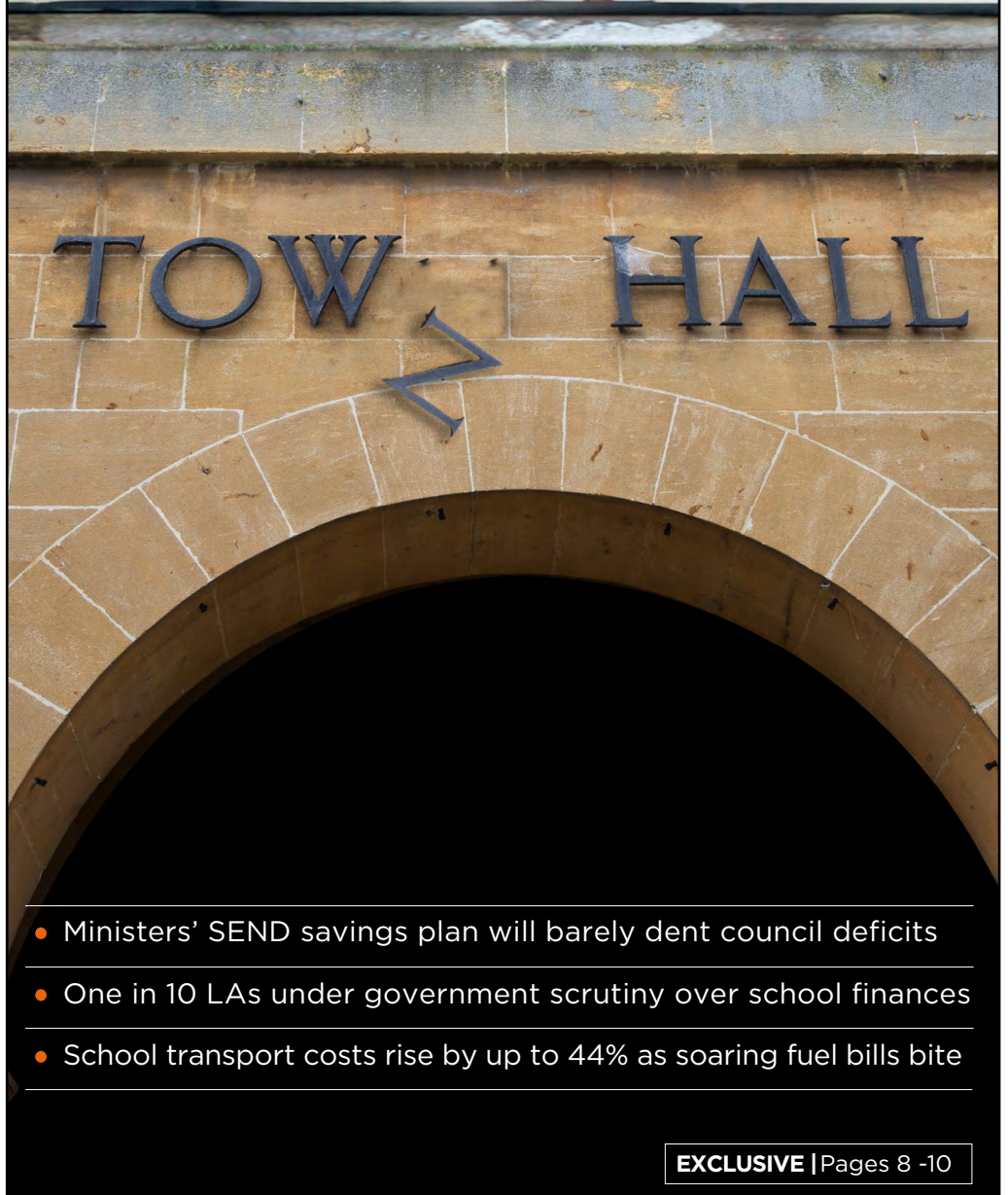
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COUNCIL CASH CRISIS



- Ministers' SEND savings plan will barely dent council deficits
- One in 10 LAs under government scrutiny over school finances
- School transport costs rise by up to 44% as soaring fuel bills bite

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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education week jobs

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Focus on cashless councils, not private schools

Labour's plans to charge private schools VAT and business rates are back in the news, again.

But, while media and politicians obsess about a sector that educates just seven per cent of pupils in this country, much bigger problems are mounting that will demand much more of Labour's attention should it form the next government: there's a council cash crisis.

Government efforts to help councils get spiralling SEND budgets under control are inadequate. The "delivering better value" scheme was supposed to make providing specialist support "sustainable" for councils.

But, it will barely touch the sides of their huge deficits, which the government has conveniently decided can stay off balance sheets until at least 2025. By then, combined deficits will be well on their way to reaching £3 billion (pages 8 and 9).

Meanwhile, one in ten are now being closely monitored by the Education and Skills Funding Agency because of the proportion of their schools that are in

deficit (page 10).

The fact the government is taking such a keen interest in their finances is not just because of Lord Agnew's crusade to bring accountability for maintained schools in line with that of academies. It also clearly stems from deep concern in Whitehall about the perilous state of school funding.

Again, SEND funding shortfalls are one of the driving forces in some of these councils' woes. But in London, falling rolls are also causing a huge issue. Reforms to special funding to help with reductions in pupil numbers will need to be urgently considered.

Data published by the government this week also show how the cost to councils of supporting schools with their SEND cohorts, including administration and transport, are also ballooning.

Councils' finances are a ticking timebomb ripe to go off for the next government. Labour must ensure it is listening to civic leaders, rather than getting swamped down in rows over private schools.

Most read online this week:

- 1 [Incoming Ofsted chief 'misled' MPs over trust exclusion claims](#)
- 2 [How do you solve a problem like teacher workload?](#)
- 3 [Councils DO have targets to ration EHCPs](#)
- 4 [Three more councils slammed over 'systematic SEND failings'](#)
- 5 [6 ways to solve teacher shortages, according to experts](#)

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Ofsted switches back to data 'as a starting point'

AMY WALKER
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Results will once again be the “starting point on inspection”, Ofsted has said after grades returned to pre-pandemic standards.

Primary school accountability guidance for this year notes that the watchdog used 2021-22 outcomes “with caution” solely to “inform discussion” with schools about pupil outcomes.

But 2022-23 data will be used to inform inspection in the “normal way” as a “starting point on inspection”, recently updated guidance states.

Ofsted also confirmed that secondary performance data from this summer will be used in the same way.

Earlier this year, *Schools Week* reported on a broken link between performance and Ofsted grades after 2019 when cancelled exams and teacher grades left inspectors effectively “results blind”.

An analysis found four formerly ‘outstanding’ schools with Progress 8 scores among the highest 100 in the country had been downgraded since 2021.

Meanwhile, eight schools rated ‘good’ were in the bottom 100 schools in the country for their P8 scores.

Inspectors who attended Ofsted’s autumn conferences this month said a training session on “curriculum impact” marked what they thought was a shift on the watchdog’s overall approach to performance data.

One inspector said the undertone of the

session was that if performance data was poor, inspectors would need to make sure evidence showed the school was on the way to improvement for it to achieve a ‘good’ grade.

This went against previous approaches where assessment was seen as less important and was a “definite shift”, they claimed.

Another described the advice given during the session as a “pretty clear implied steer” that a school’s curriculum could not be judged as ‘good’ if outcomes were “not good, even where leaders have a planned and sequenced model in place”.

They added that inspection outcomes would “start to show this trend” during this academic term.

Another said it had become harder for schools to gain ‘good’ overall when data was poor.

In slides from the training sessions seen by *Schools Week*, inspectors were asked to consider what might be “recorded in the evidence base if there is a mismatch between the published data and what inspection evidence shows”.

One of the “takeaway points” was also outlined as “external data is one crucial form of evidence of impact but needs interpreting with care”.

When asked about the inspectors’ claims, Ofsted insisted there had been “no change to the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) or to the way we approach inspection”.

“While we take pupils’ results into account when evaluating the impact of the curriculum, inspectors are trained to base the quality of education judgment on a much wider range of evidence.”

No school was judged on “the data

alone”.

When the EIF was introduced in 2019, Ofsted pitched it as an “evolutionary shift” that would look more closely “at the substance of education” rather than results.

While Sir Martyn Oliver, the incoming chief inspector, was originally critical of the focus, he has since been more positive.

But it is still expected the dial will swing back towards data being more important under Oliver, the Outwood Grange Academies Trust boss who takes over in January.

He told MPs earlier this month it was “difficult to explain” how some schools with the best results in the country were only getting ‘good’, while some with the worst got the same grade.

The school inspection handbook sets out that when evaluating the quality of education, inspectors look at the inspection data summary report (IDSR) – which includes attainment and progress data.

It will be updated to include key stages 1 and 2 data in October, and key stage 4 data from November.

Guidance adds inspectors will “consider any outcomes data, where this is available in nationally published data, but it does not constitute a substitute for inspectors’ first-hand inspection activities”.

Data from 2021-22 will continue to be treated with caution.



Sir Martyn Oliver

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DfE plans EBacc league table shake-up to boost entry rates

The government plans to shake up its EBacc secondary school attainment measure to “incentivise” entry to the full suite of subjects.

In a guidance update issued Thursday, the Department for Education said it would “explore making changes to the headline EBacc attainment measure” – which is an “average point score” for EBacc subjects.

The measure gives schools a score across the five pillars of the EBacc, which are English, maths, science, a language and history or geography.

But the DfE said it wanted to “move to a headline EBacc attainment measure that incentivises full EBacc”.

“We plan to engage with the sector on this during the autumn, with a view to confirming the approach in early 2024. The change would be introduced for 2024/25 measures, to be published in autumn 2025.”

No further details have been provided.

The government wants 90 per cent of year 10 pupils entering the English baccalaureate (EBacc) by 2025. Last year just 38.7 per cent did so.

The DfE also said it planned to change key stage 4 performance measures for the current academic year to make entries to triple science and languages “headline measures”. It means they will be displayed on schools’ main pages in performance tables from next autumn.

This week’s guidance is an “intermediary update” setting out plans for this academic year. The DfE is still yet to fully update its guidance about performance measures for last academic year. It will do so when provisional data is released in October.

Labour tells private schools to absorb VAT

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Private schools should “reflect on where they could be making savings” to allow them to cover Labour’s proposed VAT on their fees, Bridget Phillipson has said.

The shadow education secretary also revealed that Ofsted reform and moves to ensure a “broad and balanced” curriculum would be among her first priorities as education secretary.

Labour this week scrapped plans to remove charitable status from private schools, but will still charge them VAT at 20 per cent and end business rates relief.

Quizzed about her plans on a Mumsnet webinar yesterday, Phillipson said private schools “are not required to pass on VAT to parents and I think could choose to make different choices themselves about how they offer different kinds of provision”.

Although VAT-registered organisations must charge VAT on the goods and services they sell, Labour clarified that Phillipson was suggesting that fees could be reduced so charging VAT did not result in a net increase.

“Everyone in recent years has had to make cutbacks. Many of the people that are taking part in this discussion will be facing difficult choices every day about what they can and can’t afford the middle of a cost of living crisis,” she said.



Eton

“Private schools are no different. And perhaps they should reflect on where they could be making savings too.”

But Julie Robinson, the chief executive of the Independent Schools Council, said VAT was “a tax on parents”.

“While schools will continue to work hard to keep fees affordable ... unfortunately, the result of Labour’s tax on children’s education means that many will be forced to increase fees despite their best efforts.”

Asked about confusion over the policy and yesterday’s change, Phillipson said she had “always been focused on how we end the tax breaks and how we then use that money to deliver high standards in our



Bridget Phillipson

state schools”.

“Ending charitable status was not a necessary part of doing that. We can press ahead with ending the tax breaks relatively quickly, and then put that money into delivering better outcomes for children. So the policy is unchanged in that regard.”

Labour set out a raft of education policies alongside its plans for private schools.

Phillipson indicated this week that plans to reform Ofsted by replacing graded judgments with report cards on schools’ strength and weaknesses and an annual safeguarding audit, and reform to the curriculum would be among her priorities.

There would be “tough choices”, but in education there was “actually quite a lot I believe we could change that isn’t just about spending more money”.

“Whether that’s reform of Ofsted as one example, some of the wider changes around curriculum I want to see in our schools, all children having access to a broad and balanced curriculum that includes music and sport and much more besides.

“So where we’ve got plans to spend money, we’re clear about how we’re going to fund it. But alongside that, I believe there’s a lot of change that we could make very quickly if we won the trust of the British people and formed that next government.”

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FACT CHECK: Could state schools deal with ‘influx’ of private kids?

Falling pupil rolls across England leave “ample space” for any youngsters forced out of private schools by Labour’s plan to charge them VAT and business rates, Bridget Phillipson claimed this week.

But senior Conservative MPs have questioned whether state schools could cope with an exodus of pupils from the private school sector. So who is right?

Critics of the policy have warned it could lead to as many as 90,000 private school pupils joining the state sector. The Institute for Fiscal studies estimates a smaller move of up to 41,000 pupils.

Analysis of pupil number projections by

Schools Week shows the number of pupils in state primary and secondary schools is expected to fall by 46,000 in 2024 alone.

But the dip then plummets by another 90,000 in 2025 and by more than 100,000 every year from 2026 until 2030.

Overall, pupil numbers are due to fall 12 per cent over the next decade meaning there will be 650,000 fewer pupils in state education in 2030 than in 2020.

This is more than the total number of pupils in England’s independent schools, which sits at 592,000 according to Department for Education’s 2022-23 census. The most dramatic falls are in London.

Local authority data shows there are already hundreds of thousands of spare places in England’s schools.

It is estimated that there will be more than 713,000 spare primary places in September next year, and just 20,000 additional places needed to meet demand in the few areas with rising populations for the following year.

At secondary level it is expected there will be more than 313,000 spare places and just 34,000 more needed to meet demand.

Overall, the data backs up Phillipson’s claim that state schools have capacity for an exodus of private school pupils.

INTERVIEW: POLITICS

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I'm on your side, new minister promises parents

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

The new children's minister has pledged to make parents a "key stakeholder" in government decisions, suggesting that his department has sidelined them in the past.

David Johnston has also sought to allay concerns about the merry go-round of ministers overseeing the special educational needs (SEND) reforms, adding that as a former head of the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF), he was not "coming in cold".

Outlining proposed changes in March, Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, admitted that some families felt they had to battle to access specialist education, health or care services.

In his first interview since his appointment, Johnston said the DfE traditionally saw its stakeholders as teachers, headteachers... "broadly speaking, staff".

"One of the things I want to see more of is us treating parents as one of our key stakeholders.

"Not just in this area [of SEND]... but across the board. The department should do much more communication with parents because a huge proportion of what happens to us, our outcomes as adults, is a result of what happens at home, not at school."

He said he would talk to parents regularly "because I think they've got a lot to teach us about what we could do better for their children and to support them in how they support their children".

'Not coming to this area cold'

Johnston replaced Claire Coutinho in August after her promotion to energy secretary, becoming the seventh children's minister since the SEND review was first launched in 2019, and the fifth in the past two years.

One special school leader said it showed "utter ambivalence towards children with SEND. How are things supposed to improve if we continue to have short-term leadership?"

Asked what impression that gave to the sector, Johnston said "where ministers can remain in their positions ... as long as possible that is in general better".

But he said it was not possible to do that with every position. "The changes, if they concern



people... they've not had someone coming to their area cold. I feel that I've been able to hit the ground running."

Johnston was chief executive of the SMF for more than a decade. He also served on the education committee, was a parliamentary private secretary at the DfE and school governor.

"I hope that parents and the sector more broadly will feel that I'm on their side and that the decisions I make are in the best interests of children," he added.

Johnston also pledged not to allow any "slack" on the timetables for the SEND and alternative provision implementation plan, although national rollout could be two years away.

'No artificial targets'

However, he has already had to deal with a stinging letter from the education committee that demanded answers on why his predecessor assured MPs the government had no targets to slash SEND provision.

The Observer revealed earlier this month that a contract to run the "delivering better value (DBV) in SEND" scheme – to help councils with huge high-needs deficits – included "targeting at least 20 per cent reduction in new education, health and care plans [EHCPs] issued".

Johnston said contractor Newton Europe

"didn't recognise this is any of what they are doing... And I think they gave me all the reassurance I needed that there's no such figure."

The DfE described the figure as "indicators" on EHCP numbers that were "not formalised or agreed", pointing out they were not key performance indicators.

Johnston told the education committee on Friday the figure "simply reflects an impact we might expect" if the scheme delivered on its promise for more early intervention.

He said the government guaranteed every parent and family's existing legal right to an EHCP when one was needed.

The scheme has been criticised as a cost-cutting exercise. But Johnston pointed to the 60 per cent increase to the high-needs budget since 2019. "You find me many areas of government expenditure that have been given 60 per cent more money in the course of this parliament – there aren't any, which tells you what a priority this government has in this area."

The MP for Wantage has also asked his team to provide data on the disadvantage gap – the widest on record – as part of every policy submission they make.

"That was the whole theme of my pre-politics career. I think it's so important for government to try and close that gap."

Ministers plan local 'action alliances' to improve absence rates

SAMANTHA BOOTH

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers are set to trial local attendance "action alliances" made up of schools, councils, and doctors as part of their push to improve stubborn absence rates.

The plan is to bring leaders from education, children's social and health services together to come up with regional solutions, mirroring the national attendance action alliance (AAA) which has been meeting for nearly two years.

Gillian Keegan, education secretary, is also meeting with health leaders to discuss better data sharing arrangements between her department and the NHS.

Figures published this week show attendance at the start of this academic year has barely improved on last year. A major report by the education committee, published on Wednesday, also called for mental health absence codes for schools and a review of mental health services for children with some waiting years for help.

Minutes for a meeting of the national action attendance alliance this month revealed the Department for Education is working on "local AAA pilots over the next six months" to "test effective cross workforce local operating models".

DfE told Schools Week "the local alliances are testing whether the national alliance model, i.e. bringing different service leaders together to reduce absence, can work across regions".

They hope to develop this further over the course of the academic year and "establish proof of concept". But they would not say where the pilots are taking place or who is on them.

Experts from schools, councils, doctors' and police bodies sit on the national group, alongside DfE officials and Amanda Spielman, Ofsted chief inspector.

The pilot follows three roundtables held by the children's commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza in Birmingham, London and Hull and North Lincolnshire bringing together leaders from key services.

She told Schools Week it was "was the first time all agencies had come together to discuss attendance, and I was struck by how few of them outside the education sector knew about the attendance crisis or understood the role



Gillian Keegan

they could play in getting children back to school".

Julie McCulloch, policy director at school leaders' union ASCL, said factors leading to low attendance do vary between areas, so "cross-disciplinary working groups could potentially be very helpful in identifying and helping to address them".

The minutes also reveal Keegan will meet health officials to "discuss data sharing arrangements between DfE and the NHS".

De Souza wants to see the NHS number adopted as the "consistent unique identifier" to better track pupils in education and children's services.

In a policy paper in July, DfE said it will map national IT systems, including in education, to gain a "deeper understanding of challenges".

However, planned regional pilots to trial the NHS number as a regional identifier are only for "children's health, social care, safeguarding and promotion of welfare purposes" – suggesting schools are not included.

The DfE would only say it is "exploring the possibility of whether we can improve information sharing between all multi-agency safeguarding partners which includes schools".

Government figures show absence in the second week of term was five per cent, only slightly down on 5.4 per cent at the same point last year.

Meanwhile, the education committee has urged

ministers to bring in an authorised mental health absence code and set clear thresholds for its use.

In their report on absence, MPs said the DfE should also lead a "cross-government assessment of the scale of mental health difficulties amongst pupils, and review the current provision of support available in schools and outside of them". Findings should be reported by next summer.

Former schools minister Robin Walker, who now chairs the education committee, said the increase in children suffering from mental health problems was "deeply troubling and it is evident that our health service can't meet this growing demand, leaving schools to fill the gaps".

Four more attendance hubs were also announced this week, taking the total up to 14. These schools will give tips on how to drive down absence.

McCulloch welcomed the hubs, but said they "do not feel that this comes anywhere close to addressing the scale of the problem".

It comes as the Education Endowment Foundation published research suggesting three quarters of schools in England reported that poor attendance and low-reading levels were the biggest challenges affecting disadvantaged pupils' achievement.



Dame Rachel de Souza

INVESTIGATION: COUNCIL CASH CRISIS

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SEND savings plan barely dents council deficits

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EXCLUSIVE

Cash-strapped councils getting government help to make their SEND services “sustainable” will still be left with huge deficits on their education budgets, even if predicted savings under the scheme bear fruit.

Councils’ figures show that measures proposed under the Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) programme will not dent billions of pounds in cumulative budget deficits over the next five years.

By this time, these deficits are scheduled to have returned to general fund balance sheets, threatening councils’ overall financial solvency.

Matt Keer, a contributor to the *Special Needs Jungle* website, said the programme “won’t please anyone. It can’t solve the frontline SEND provision crisis. It can’t solve central and local government’s financial concerns. And in practice, it’ll just heap more risk downwards, on to schools, and ultimately on to children and young people with SEND.”

Figures from 21 of the 55 councils on the DBV scheme show, without any measures to cut costs, they would be heading for a combined £3.1 billion cumulative deficit on their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets by 2027 to 2028.

Under the councils’ “best-case” forecasts, the DBV savings will cut this figure by a combined £807 million – a reduction of barely a quarter that would still leave deficits totalling £2.3 billion. Our findings are based on council documents and freedom of information



requests.

A report at a Bracknell Forest council meeting in September said the DBV scheme “at inception” was to “set out how the local authority will reach a sustainable financial position”.

But it added: “Findings from all [DBV] tranche one local authorities were consistent in being unable to find the scale of savings required to reach a sustainable financial position.”

The council predicts savings of about £4.3 million, which will still leave it with a £42.1 million cumulative deficit by 2028.

Bracknell is one of four DBV councils who have now been invited to join the separate Safety Valve cost-cutting scheme, which offers large government bailouts in return for meeting tough financial targets. The others are Cheshire East, Wiltshire and the merged Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

By contrast, the government only provides

up to £1 million under the DBV scheme to each council that has signed up.

Consultancy firm Newton Europe has a £19.5 million contract to help DBV councils find better ways to manage their high-needs SEND finances..

In May, Hampshire published a forecast that showed its cumulative DSG deficit will reach £717 million by 2028 without mitigations.

However, in what the council describes as the most likely scenario, DBV savings measures will only reduce this by £157 million – leaving the council’s DSG budget £560 million in the red.

Even under what the council labels an “optimistic” scenario, factoring in the upper bound of potential DBV savings, the cumulative deficit will be £517 million by 2028. If all DBV measures are rolled out and take effect immediately – which the council says “isn’t possible within the funding envelope or current staffing” – the cumulative deficit will be £476 million. In every one of these scenarios, the cumulative deficit will still be increasing in 2027-28, suggesting that even the in-year budgets will be running at a deficit in five years’ time.

Cheshire East is in a similar position. Its unmitigated cumulative DSG deficit of £535.7 million by 2028 falls to £306.9 million when savings plans are factored in. But DBV only contributes £27.4 million of the forecast £228.8 million cumulative savings.

Among Hampshire’s proposed measures are three early intervention pilots “to build SEN support capacity in schools”, increased use of “strengths-based” approaches to “control high-

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Councils also hit by huge rise in SEND pupil transport costs

The cost of administrating support for pupils with SEND and transporting them to and from school has soared this year as rising fuel bills and the cost-of-living crisis cause pressure across the public sector.

Data on planned local authority and school expenditure for the 2023-24 financial year show transport costs were expected to rise by as much as 44 per cent. Meanwhile, SEND administration, assessment, coordination and monitoring costs shot up by 21 per cent

to almost £300 million.

These costs are met by councils, and come on top of high-needs funding that goes to schools, which has also ballooned in recent years in the face of rising demand.

Councils expected to spend £1.2 billion bussing school-aged pupils with SEND to and from school, up 23 per cent on last year, while transport for 16 to 18-year-olds will rise 20 per cent to £130 million. Transporting 19 to 25-year-olds to college was expected to

increase by 44 per cent.

The government pointed to rising numbers of education, health and care plans, adding that rises in fuel prices and the cost of living “may be a contributing factor”.

The Local Government Association said SEND reforms would help, but a government plug for high-needs deficits and improved mainstream school inclusion would be “crucial to their success”.

INVESTIGATION: COUNCIL CASH CRISIS

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needs costs” and greater council engagement in annual reviews of EHCPs “to right size plans and focus on increasing independence”.

A spokesperson for the council said: “While a certainly valuable intervention, the DBV programme is a relatively small part of our much wider response to the complex demands we face and will not in itself eradicate the in-year deficit.”

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) forecasts its cumulative DSG deficit will reach £301 million by 2027-28 if nothing is done to bring costs down. But it believes the DBV scheme will save just £10 million.

It has identified four opportunities for potential savings – increased SEN support to reduce the need for EHCPs, greater use of mainstream school provision, increased SEND spaces and better use of special school spaces, and clearing the backlog of annual reviews to limit the duration of additional provision in some EHCPs.

Richard Burton, BCP’s portfolio holder for children and young people, says the cost of providing support is “simply greater than the funding we receive”.

Many council DBV plans focus on early intervention measures and teaching more SEND children in mainstream schools.

Their forecast savings are often drawn from panels looking at a sample of case reviews of local children with EHCPs and assessing how many could have had their needs better met in improved mainstream settings or with early intervention rendering EHCPs unnecessary.

Councils then calculate the medium-term savings that might be achieved.

For example, West Sussex’s panel concluded that 70 per cent of children and young people in specialist settings could have been better supported in mainstream settings or special support centres, which support children with EHCPs in mainstream schools.

A DBV update published by Bracknell Forest this summer said that “during case reviews, practitioners and professionals identified that in 29 per cent of cases an EHCP being issued was not required to meet the [youngster’s] needs”.

However, these panels are led by practitioners rather than parents

Catriona Moore, policy manager at special needs charity IPSEA, says that putting a child with special educational needs in a mainstream school and “hoping for the best” will not work without the resources the child needs.

SEN support does not work for many children because “it’s currently not on a statutory footing [short of an EHCP], so there’s nothing that is compelling schools to make that provision”.

Keer also says that “at individual pupil level, none of these measures will survive contact with SEND tribunal or the ombudsman unless the provision turns up. And there’s little sign that it will.

“Most of the DBV programme’s recommendations require mainstream and state special schools to deliver much more, and their capacity and resources have never been as threadbare as they are right now.”

A DfE spokesperson says it is wrong to interpret the success or failure of the DBV from initial budget forecasts while the programme is still in its early phases.

The programme is a part of wider reform work set out in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, “which taken together will help local authorities effectively and sustainably manage their high-needs systems – delivering high-quality services for parents and balancing their books.”

The high-needs budget will also rise to £10.5 billion by 2024-25, which is 60 per cent more than in 2019-2020.

Delivering Better Value SEND scheme won’t solve finance woes

Council	Deficit without DBV help	Deficit with DBV help
BCP	£301m by 2028	£278m-£291m by 2028
Bracknell Forest	£46.4m by 2028	£42.1m by 2028
Bristol	£116m-£187m by 2027	£63m-£145.4m by 2027
Cheshire East	£535.7m by 2028	£306.9m by 2028
Cornwall	£131.44m by 2028	£121.8m by 2028
Doncaster	£67m by 2028	£59.7m-£62.7m by 2028
Hampshire	£717m by 2028	£517m-560m by 2028
Hull	£51.8m by 2027	£32.2m-£36.1m by 2027
Newham	£53.3m-£89m by 2028	£40.6m-£80m by 2028
North East Lincolnshire	£57m by 2028	£38m-£45m by 2028
Oldham	£82m-£87.5m by 2028	£68.3m-£77.1m by 2028
Oxfordshire	£167.2m by 2027	£138.4m-£145.8m by 2027
Redcar and Cleveland	£26.2m by 2028	£14.4m by 2028
Rochdale	£61.5m by 2027	£51m by 2027
Rutland	£13.3m by 2028	£10.6m by 2028
Sefton	£107.6m by 2028	£81.8m-£101.4m by 2028
Somerset	£141m-£169m by 2028	£102.9m-£150.7m by 2028
Southampton	£62.7m	£54.9m
Stockport	£80m by 2027	£55m-57.5m by 2027
Tameside	£54.3m by 2028	£39.4m by 2028
Worcestershire	£231.7m by 2028	£181m-£200.1m by 2028

Source: FOI responses and council documents

INVESTIGATION: COUNCIL CASH CRISIS

Revealed: The cash-strapped councils under government monitoring

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER
EXCLUSIVE

More than one in ten councils are having to submit to closer government monitoring of their school finances as falling pupil numbers, spiralling costs and the SEND funding crisis devastate balance sheets.

In 2020, the government announced new measures to tackle financial mismanagement in maintained schools. They included the power to demand "high-level" action plans from councils with a certain proportion of schools in deficit.

Data obtained by *Schools Week* shows 11 councils submitted a plan in the 2021-22 academic year; 15 in 2022-23. This year, 17 councils submitted plans before term even began – most of them in deprived areas.

This year, councils were asked to submit action plans if more than 10 per cent of their schools had a deficit of more than 5 per cent. In 2021-22, the Education and Skills Funding Agency set the deficit threshold at 10 per cent. In 2022-23 it was 7 per cent.

However, plans can be requested at any point during an academic year, so this year's number is likely higher. The data does not include any plans submitted after August 3, the date of our request.

Schools Week also revealed earlier this year how town halls were having to sign off on more "licenced" deficits for their primary schools.

Twelve of the 17 councils submitting action plans this year are in areas with above-average free school meals eligibility. Eight are London boroughs.

Bristol City Council, which has 12 schools with a deficit of more than 5 per cent, is forecasting an overspend on its dedicated schools grant of £18.5 million. The "main driver" is in high-heeds top-up and placements costs.

The council plans to consult on "mitigations" that could save £12.6 million by 2027-28. These include ensuring top-up funding for schools is "robust, appropriate, time-limited and impactful".

A spokesperson said rising costs,



increased demand on SEND services and a growing population were "all factors yet to be addressed by government funding of schools, which is pushing many across the country to return deficit budgets".

In London, however, falling rolls are driving much of the pressure.

Southwark, which has nine schools above the threshold, has already removed 420 surplus reception places since 2017. But a council report said the reduction had "not kept pace with the overall drop in demand".

"This has put extraordinary financial pressure on ... Southwark schools in managing their finances within a continually decreasing funding envelope."

If the council does nothing, it predicts a £10 million deficit in the next two financial years.

It is considering "informal" capping of reception intakes, and closing and amalgamating schools.

The DfE said its monitoring scheme would mean "parents can feel assured that the money their schools spend is focused on making sure children get a great education".

Schools Week reported earlier this year that the wider crackdown, initiated by Lord Agnew, the

former academies minister, had revealed how more than one in three councils reported school funding fraud over two years. Eight councils also stripped schools of budget powers because of financial issues in 2020-21.

But councils want more support. In Islington, 20 schools are in deficit, double last year's number. A council report blamed falling pupil numbers, rising home education and increases in SEND, while per-pupil funding has been "significantly less than the increases in energy costs and likely staff pay awards".

Michelline Ngongo, Islington's executive member for children, said pupil numbers were unlikely to stabilise until 2030, "so we'd urge the Department for Education to come forward with a standalone proposal with increased funds to support inner London schools".

Gateshead council also said academy trusts could "pool budgets and direct resources or reserves to schools that require additional support".

But that option was only available to mainstream schools if they de-delegated revenue funding annually, "which in effect is a top slice. With budgets being so tight, this could lead to more schools not being able to set a balanced budget".


Michelline Ngongo

Advertorial

DFE TRUST QUALITY DESCRIPTIONS: ARE WE IN A POSITION TO DETERMINE WHAT'S HIGH-QUALITY?

Trying to benchmark and measure quality in a trust is undoubtedly a hot topic in the sector. It's been over a year since the DfE's Schools White Paper was released, laying out the Government's vision for the sector.

Since then, we've seen snippets of additional details about how DfE define trust 'quality' (plus the CST's assurance framework, which builds on the DfE's Trust Quality Descriptions), with the most recent guidance offering a transparent starting point and information on how Regional Directors make decisions on commissioning new or growing trusts.

However, it's worth noting that there is a distinct lack of specific criteria on how to deliver, leaving it up to the industry and trusts to create the necessary foundations.

Many leaders have been left scratching their heads, pondering questions such as: how can you measure quality across such a variety of trusts, and how can it be proven?

Thirteen years in the making

There's clearly a push to create recognised standards that can be used to identify high-performing trusts, drive improvement in the sector and support consistent growth without having a detrimental impact on pupils.

One of the purposes of these trust quality descriptions is to provide greater clarity, helping inform trust improvement and capacity-building priorities.

Important stuff, which has prompted some within the space to ask: why has it taken so long to get something in place?

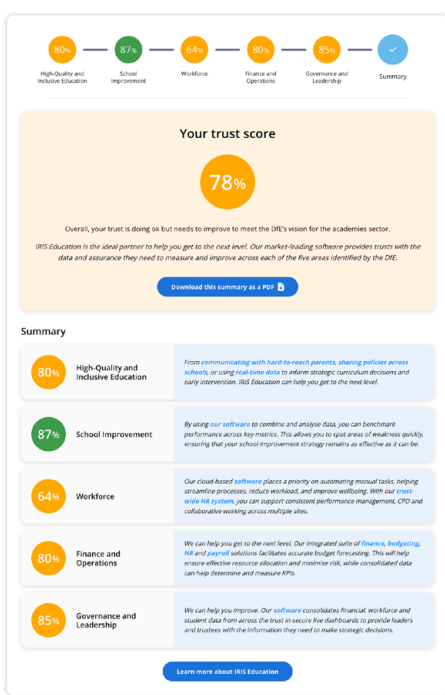
We recently hosted a webinar, covering the wider topic, and our guest, Leora Cruddas, CEO of the CST, explained during the talk: "The trust sector is not that old.

"Although there were academies prior to 2010 under the Labour government, really we saw the current iteration of the rise of school trusts after the Academies Act 2010, and in public policy terms, 13 years is not a very long time.

"So, it may feel surprising that it's taken us 12 or 13 years to ask the question 'what is a strong trust?' But it's important that we do because now more than half of children and young people in England are educated in the trust sector. And we do need to start to codify trust improvement."

Something worth striving for

At the moment, no single metric can be used to define what makes a trust high-quality.



However, the current guidance outlines the quantitative and qualitative evidence across the five key areas (High Quality & Inclusive Education, School Improvement, Workforce, Finance & Operations and Governance & Leadership), providing a handy benchmark for 'what good can look like' in the academies sector – whatever your trust's strategic ambitions.

Providing quantitative evidence in each area can be a challenge for many trusts. Even if the

raw data exists, it's likely siloed and inaccessible, or by the time it is harvested, it is out of date. Moreover, it is found in different systems across finance, HR and student management.

IRIS Central solves this problem by connecting live to your separate systems and bringing key data together in customisable dashboards, alongside external data for benchmarking. Plus, being in one place, you can easily combine the different types of data to demonstrate strength in areas that would otherwise be a headache. It's very difficult to demonstrate the efficient and effective use of resources if you can't, for instance, map curriculum and training spend to teacher performance and student outcomes.

So, if your trust has ambitions to grow, are you confident that you can present the best case to your Regional Director?

You're in luck! We've created a handy quiz to help you get an idea of how closely you align with the DfE guidance, enabling you to easily identify areas of strength and those which need improvement.

Take the quiz here



DfE dismisses teacher grades for RAAC pupils

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

A call from the leader of one of the country's biggest trusts that lockdown-style teacher grades be awarded to pupils in schools affected by crumbling concrete appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

Nick Hurn, the chief executive of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, said he did not want any of the pupils at his four schools impacted by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) to be "disadvantaged through this unprecedented situation".

St Leonard's secondary school in Durham has been most heavily affected with some year groups having to learn remotely four days a week.

Hurn has called for special consideration for pupils in primary and secondary exam years and "centre-assessed grades for the duration of this upheaval" – similar to when exams were cancelled in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

"During Covid there was a clear plan in place to support pupils during that incredibly disruptive period," he said.

But the Department for Education said "like with many unforeseen circumstances, it is not possible to address the differential impact that RAAC has or will have on students' learning by making changes to exams and assessments for some students/groups of students".

It added that exams must demonstrate what a pupil knows rather than what a he or she might



St Leonard's secondary school protesters

have known "should circumstances have been different".

Exams regulator Ofqual said GCSE and A-level pupils were only eligible for special consideration if there was a problem at the time of the exam, not if their learning was disrupted.

Marks could only be adjusted under special consideration rules if there were events outside their control "at the time of the assessment", says guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

They were not eligible if their performance was affected by the "quality of teaching, staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities".

Schools are collecting evidence for teacher grades if exams have to be cancelled in future. But this is not for "localised disruption to teaching and learning".

JCQ previously said schools unable to host autumn series exams "will need to review the

contingency plans" for their sites.

Parents at St Leonard's protested outside the school, which is on the school rebuilding programme, on Wednesday during a visit from Baroness Barran, the academies minister.

Mary Kelly Foy, the City of Durham MP, said Barran gave assurances at the meeting that "the planned rebuild of the school is now being prioritised".

"The minister has stressed that money will not be the barrier to getting pupils back in the classroom. I will hold the minister to that."

The government has pledged to refurbish or rebuild schools that need it.

Bishop Wilkinson trust said it "shared" the "frustrations and disappointment of many parents of children", adding: "We need to get back to having all our school community benefit from our excellent team of staff, teaching face-to-face lessons as soon as practicably possible."

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Councils want to know they'll get their RAAC money back

Councils are pushing ministers for answers on how to recover costs from helping academies deal with RAAC.

The Local Government Association (LGA) said there was "significant uncertainty around the funding of remediation" of such costs and was raising the issue with the DfE.

"It is not yet clear what costs councils will be incurring to remediate RAAC, and the LGA is interested in gaining a robust understanding of what 'typical' cases of RAAC are costing local authorities in order to inform our lobbying work,"

a September report stated.

"For example some councils with schools with RAAC in their areas are reporting they are incurring costs assisting non-maintained schools respond to the DfE advice, and it is not yet clear if they will be able to recover them."

An LGA spokesperson said they have a "duty to support non maintained schools that have been impacted by RAAC such as academies with finding alternative classroom space".

The body also raised the alarm over the department's pipeline of "appropriately qualified

surveyors" for RAAC. The department currently requires surveyors or structural engineers to have one-year of experience on RAAC-related projects to be considered "appropriately qualified", the LGA said.

But RAAC checks have now been expanded to many more sectors, and the LGA has "highlighted concerns that the substantial increase in demand for surveyors will now drastically outstrip the supply, leading to backlogs and hindering the ability for local authorities to take quick and decisive action on RAAC".

Former head of elite grammar guilty of misconduct

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

The headteacher of a Kent grammar school that kicked out lower-performing sixth-formers has been found guilty of misconduct but has avoided a ban from the profession.

A Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) panel ruling published yesterday stated Aydin Onac's actions were at the "less serious end of the possible spectrum".

Onac was the head at St Olave's grammar school in Orpington, which booted out year 12 students who did not achieve high enough grades in their AS levels.

Onac, who had been head since 2010, resigned in 2017 after parents issued judicial review proceedings. The school U-turned on its policy and 16 pupils were reinstated.

An independent inquiry into the policy, which had been in place since 2009, later ruled it unlawful and found it "put the institution above the pupils".

The panel's findings, published more than five years after the former head's resignation, said his conduct did amount to misconduct of a "serious nature that fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession". But it ruled his actions "did not bring the profession into disrepute".

Onac understood the policy "amounted to the unlawful exclusion of pupils", the panel ruled. But he claimed he was not aware that this was unlawful at the time and said it was "common practice" amongst grammar schools. The panel agreed his actions were "not deliberate".

When the school's policy was strengthened in 2013 – requiring pupils to achieve all Bs rather than Cs – Onac said it was considered by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator but "no indication" given that it was unlawful.

An allegation the former head had prioritised academic performance over the best interest of pupils was found not proven.

However, the panel did say his actions "seriously affected the education and wellbeing of pupils".



The panel was provided with witness statements from five former pupils.

One said the weeks after their exclusion were "some of the worst in my life" and they had lost "confidence in their academic ability".

Another said they were "pretty much in tears by the end of the conversation [after being told they must leave the school]".

Onac told the panel earlier this month the progression criteria was "designed to support the wellbeing of pupils" as the school's "learning environment was targeted at A* and A grade pupils; if there was a pupil who was struggling to reach a B grade, that pupil would be under pressure in class, with coursework and homework.

"[He] saw this as a way of encouraging pupils and felt that another school may put these pupils under less pressure."

He also did not consider that allowing pupils to retake year 12 was in their "best interests" because "these pupils would be a year below their peers and it would not be helpful for their self-esteem".

However, he admitted the policy broke Education Act laws and was contrary to Department for Education statutory guidance on exclusions.

The panel did not impose a ban, saying adverse findings would "send an appropriate message".

Onac also had "demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both

personal and professional conduct", and in 2016 was listed in London's *Evening Standard* as among the capital's most influential people.

Andrew Faux, representing Onac, had applied to have the proceedings discontinued given they were "unreasonably delayed" with several hearings "abandoned with no meaningful communication" from the TRA.

Faux said no steps were taken to progress the case from March 2020 until the spring of 2022 when statements for pupils were obtained.

But the panel said this was not considered "sufficiently serious" for discontinuance.

Teacher Regulation Agency annual accounts, published in July, show teachers wait more than two years on average for misconduct cases to conclude.

Schools Week also revealed in 2018 a legal loophole meant rules banning the exclusion of pupils on the basis of academic performance does not apply to 16-19 free schools or sixth-form colleges.

It followed our investigation revealing that Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre (The NCS), a selective 16-19 academy in east London, booted out year 12 pupils.

Its principal at the time, Mouhssin Ismail, has since joined Star Academies trust. Star is setting up three new "elite" sixth forms in the north of England in partnership with Eton College.

NEWS: MOVERS AND SHAKERS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Ofqual's Saxt-off to UCAS

Dr Jo Saxton will stand down from Ofqual at the end of this year to join the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) as chief executive.

She leaves after just over two years as chief regulator, with Ofqual planning to "soon" begin an appointments process for a new boss.

However, the organisation said the "existing senior leadership team and governance of Ofqual will provide continuity of leadership to the organisation" with an "interim chief regulator" put in place first.

Ofqual faces its sixth chief regulator in four years. Sally Collier resigned in 2020 over that year's grading fiasco, and was replaced by Dame Glenys Stacey.

Simon Lebus replaced Stacey before Saxton took over in September of that year. She has since overseen the return of exam grades to pre-pandemic standards, something Saxton said this week was the "right and fair thing to do".



Dr Jo Saxton

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, said she was "hugely grateful to Jo for guiding Ofqual through the challenges that followed the pandemic, ultimately overseeing a smooth return to exams and normal grading".

Sir Ian Bauckham, the watchdog's chair, said the organisation was "enormously grateful to her for her determined and principled leadership".



Pepe Di'lasio

ASCL appoints new leader

School leader Pepe Di'lasio has been confirmed as the next general secretary of the leaders' union ASCL.

The head of Wales High School in Rotherham and former ASCL president was nominated by the union's ruling council earlier this year. No nominations were received from the membership.

Di'lasio takes over from Geoff Barton in April next year. He is standing down after seven years in the post.

Di'lasio said it was a "huge honour. I will speak truth to power, with the courtesy and respect that is a hallmark of ASCL, but with an absolute determination to produce a better settlement for education."

He said schools, colleges and trusts "simply must have the funding and staff they need to produce the successful educational outcomes we want to see for all our children and young people".

Di'lasio has been an executive headteacher of two schools and was assistant director of education in Rotherham.

Barton said he was "absolutely confident that Pepe will take ASCL from strength to strength".

"He is an outstanding leader with a deep belief in the power of education to transform lives, and a total commitment to support and represent our members in their vital work in the nation's schools, colleges and trusts."

Ofsted director Russell retires

Ofsted's national director of education Chris Russell will retire at the end of this year after just over two years in the post.

It means that Amanda Spielman, the current chief inspector, and one of her most senior officials will depart the inspectorate in December.

Russell has worked at Ofsted since 2006, initially as an inspector and then in various regional director posts before his promotion to national director in September 2021, replacing Sean Harford.

Schools Week understands he had passed retirement age and saw the upcoming change in leadership as a good opportunity to stand down.

Sir Martyn Oliver, currently chief



Chris Russell

executive of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, is due to take over as chief inspector in January.

Russell's departure follows that of strategy director Chris Jones, another of the five officials that sit below the chief inspector in Ofsted's management structure. He joined the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in June.

Ofsted is now advertising for a new national director of education, with a starting salary of £123,500.

The advertisement states the postholder will be "responsible for the improvement and development of Ofsted's inspection methodology for all stages of education".

Applications close on October 9.

ESFA's finance boss joins DfE for third stint

The ESFA is on the hunt for a new director of schools financial support and oversight after the departure of Warwick Sharp.

Sharp, who has worked for the agency since 2020 and been in his current role since last September, will become director of strategy and delivery at the Department for

Education.

A job advert for the £97,000-a-year ESFA role states it is one of the agency's "most senior leadership roles". This is Sharp's third separate stint at the DfE after starting in 2009 as a policy adviser. After leaving for



Warwick Sharp

roles including at Lloyds bank he rejoined the department in 2017 to oversee its schools strategy vision.

The DfE said it was "pleased" to welcome him back, adding that he would bring "delivery and leadership experience" from his time at the funding arm.



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NEWS: POLITICS

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Lib Dems' education plans could cost more than £9bn

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The Liberal Democrats' new schools policies will likely cost in excess of £9 billion, *Schools Week* analysis has found, with no plan announced yet for how they will be funded.

It is 50 per cent more than the £6 billion the party earlier this week estimated its plans would cost.

About a third of the spend is likely to be on repairing school buildings. The party has pledged to bridge the gap between the government's current spending and what's needed. According to the National Audit Office, that's £3 billion a year.

Some proposals have been costed individually, such as £390 million for tutoring, at least £450 million to extend free school meals to all families on universal credit, £620 million for a mental health professional in every school and £1.2 billion to halve the amount schools pay towards SEND support.

Estimates are fairly straightforward for other plans not costed by the party. For example, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said extending free school meals to all primary pupils would cost about £1 billion.

And the Education Policy Institute has estimated funding a continuing professional development offer for all teachers would cost about £210 million.

Some costs are harder to estimate. But if inflation falls to 2 per cent in 2025, the Lib Dems would only need to increase core school funding by about £1.2 billion to fulfil their pledge to match inflation.

A big chunk of the proposed spend would be on extending and increasing free school meals and the pupil premium.

We estimate that would cost almost £1 billion – £260 million to reverse cuts to the pupil premium, £553 million to bring free school meals into line with actual costs and around £122 million to extend the pupil premium to 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mark Lehair, a former government special adviser who is now head of education at the Centre for Policy Studies think tank, said it was "great to see so many ideas coming from the Lib Dems".

But he warned it "isn't enough to just want something to happen – you need to say how it will

be paid for and implemented".

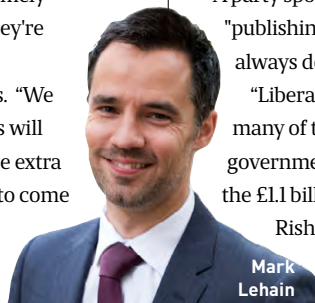
"Some of these policies look extremely expensive, so we need to know if they're getting the money by cutting other education spending or raising taxes. "We also need to know how these things will work. For example, where are all the extra secondary school specialists going to come from? If they have found a secret stash of science teachers, we'd love

to know about it now."

A party spokesperson said the party would be "publishing a fully costed manifesto as we always do when the election comes".

"Liberal Democrats have pointed out many of the shameful handouts that this government has made to its friends, such as the £1.1 billion in tax cuts for big banks that

Rishi Sunak announced as chancellor in 2021."



Mark Lehair

The Lib Dem policy tracker, with estimated costs

Policy	Cost
1 Increase school funding per pupil above inflation every year	£1.2bn
2 Invest in new buildings and clear the backlog of repairs	£3bn
3 Reverse pupil premium and FSM cuts, extend PP to sixth formers	£935m
4 Put a qualified mental health professional in every school	£620m
5 Extend FSM to all primary children and secondary pupils on universal credit	£1.45bn
6 Free small group tutoring for 1.75m children struggling with learning	£390m
7 Extend the pupil premium plus to children in temporary accommodation	£318m
8 Give all teachers continuing professional development	£210m
9 Halve the amount that schools pay towards SEND provision	£1.2bn
10 Address underfunding of children's mental health services and youth services	?
11 Ensure every secondary school child is taught by a specialist teacher	?
12 Reform the STRB and fully fund 'fair' pay rises every year	?
13 Fund teacher training 'properly' so all trainee posts in school are paid	?
14 Broaden the curriculum and update qualifications	?
15 Add arts to the Ebacc and have Ofsted monitor the curriculum	?
16 Replace Ofsted judgments with report cards	?
17 Have inspections look at teacher workload, SEND provision	?
18 Introduce annual safeguarding and financial check-ups	?
19 Ofsted will work with schools 'rather than simply changing governance'	?
20 Expand extra-curricular activities, with entitlement for poorer kids	?
21 A new parental engagement strategy, including a regular survey	?
22 A national body for SEND to fund support for children with high needs	?
23 Require all AP settings to be registered	?
24 Extend the pupil premium plus to those in kinship care	?
25 Guarantee any child taken into care a school place within three weeks	?
Total	£9.3bn

Source: Schools Week analysis using data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Education Policy Institute, National Audit Office, Department for Education and the Liberal Democrats

SCHOOLS WEEK

Ministers extend mental health support as waiting list swells

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers look set to extend a mental health support package for headteachers as hundreds wait for help amid soaring demand.

Education Support offers six free professional supervision sessions for staff in assistant headteacher roles and above as part of a £1 million Department for Education scheme.

But the waiting list reached 200 earlier this year, with the department now looking to extend the “tailored wellbeing support” when Education Support’s contract ends in March.

In an early contract notice, the department said it was “assessing the next phase of this provision, which builds on the evidence from the current contract”.

Funding of £1.5 million will be provided initially, with the potential for it to double where “annual budgets and demand allow”.

Faye McGuinness, the director of programmes at Education Support, said she did not think “demand is going anywhere” as heads started to understand the benefits of professional supervision.

The practice is routine in the health and social care sector, where staff reflecting on work is seen to have knock-on positive impacts on mental wellbeing. But its use is not widespread in schools.

The charity’s annual 2022 Teacher Wellbeing Index showed that more than a third of senior



leaders were thinking about leaving education, with heads at a high risk of suffering from depression.

McGuinness said: “I know of at least a handful of school leaders who have stayed in their roles because of help provided by the service.”

The charity was first contracted for just over a year in November 2021. This was extended to 2024 after it found heads did not have the capacity at the time to take part. Eligibility was also widened to assistant heads and college senior leaders.

The DfE also provided a further £380,000

in June for the charity to double the number expected to benefit over the next year from 500 to 1,000.

Between November 2022 and July this year, Education Support had 610 applications – a 134 per cent increase on the 260 in the same period in 2021-22.

The charity managed to reduce the waitlist from 200 to under 50 over the summer, but this had again risen to 165 by the start of term. It has hired more supervisors, leaving leaders waiting between four to six weeks.

As of this month, 920 headteachers, 450 deputy heads and 267 assistant heads had applied.

“What we’ve had to do over the period of this programme is to really educate people on what professional supervision is,” McGuinness said.

“Leaders are finding and allocating time because they are understanding it can have huge benefits to their work and to them personally.”

So far, 522 school leaders have been provided supervision. The charity said it expected to support about 1,600 school and college leaders by March next year.

The original tender said 2,000 school leaders should be reached. But Education Support said it had been funded to provide “up to” that number. It was not a target.

An evaluation on the programme by York Consulting is due in the coming months.

The procurement for the next contract is expected to start in November and awarded by April.

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

Covid spike closes year groups at Rutland college

A secondary school has been forced to close to three year groups following a “rapid spike” in Covid cases.

Ben Solly, the principal of Uppingham Community College in Rutland, said 17 teachers were absent on Wednesday.

As a result, pupils in years 8, 9 and 10 were asked to learn from home between Wednesday and today, completing work set by teachers.

“We have covered all lessons so far, using our staff who are in school with some external supply teachers we have been able to secure,” Solly wrote to parents on

Tuesday.

“However, we have reached a point where it is becoming unsafe to have all year groups in school.”

It comes as unions warn of the impact of rising Covid cases.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the leaders’ union ASCL, said it was “concerned” about suspected and confirmed cases in schools, the impact in terms of pupil absence and the “potential for more serious disruption if classes cannot be covered”.

Some schools have reported high staff absences with some workers listed as “very

poorly”. Pupil absences have also risen.

Data from management information provider Arbor, taken from more than 5,000 schools, shows the average proportion of pupils off last week at 2.36 per cent.

The equivalent figure for the first week of term was 0.96 per cent, while it stood at 2.52 per cent in the final week of the last academic term.

Schools marking pupils as off with a recorded case of Covid grew to 0.05 per cent last week. It was 0.01 per cent in the first week of term and 0 per cent in the final week of last term.

NEWS

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SEND apprenticeship pilot attracts just three recruits

AMY WALKER

@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

Just three people have signed up for a new SEND-specific course piloted by the government's flagship teacher training provider.

The National Institute of Teaching (NIoT) announced a trial for the primary postgraduate teacher apprenticeship (PGTA) in May.

It was set to take in 14 participants across 14 London schools this autumn, but has recruited only three.

NIoT, which said it had accepted deferrals for next year from 15 candidates, said it believed timing had been a major stumbling block.

The pilot was approved this spring, several months into the 2023-24 initial teacher training (ITT)



Melanie Renowden



recruitment cycle.

"We were overwhelmed with interest in the programme, and we already have many expressions of interest for 2024-25," said Melanie Renowden, the institute's chief executive

"We've learned some lessons from our recruitment processes this year, and

coupled with the insights we'll get from the pilot, we're excited to see what 2024 has to bring."

The provider initially said the scheme, which is supported by the Eden Academy Trust, would be rolled out nationally next September if it was successful.

It confirmed this week it would be rolled out further next year, despite this year's shortfall in recruits.

The apprenticeship scheme was set up in response to understaffing in SEND.

A previous *Schools Week* investigation found that six in every 1,000 teacher posts within the specialist sector in 2021 was vacant, compared with three in every 1,000 across state schools.

Latest school workforce census data shows this increased in 2022, when nine in every 1,000 teacher posts in special schools were vacant.

The equivalent figure for all state schools was five vacancies per 1,000 posts.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

£5.8m for research on trauma-informed training

The government and a youth charity will spend £5.8 million on four projects to examine whether trauma-informed practice keeps children safe from violence and leads to lower exclusions.

Trauma-informed practice bases interventions on an understanding that exposure to trauma can impact pupils' development.

The approach has become more popular in schools in recent years, with its proponents arguing it changed their school culture for the better.

But it has also been criticised – notably by government behaviour tsar Tom Bennett – who recently said it had "become a hundred different things, justifying a hundred different approaches".

The Home Office and Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), providing £4 million and £1.8 million respectively, said there was "currently very little robust



Jon Yates

evidence of the effectiveness of trauma-informed training and support".

Chris Philp, the policing minister, said the research "will be vital to gaining a better understanding of the root causes of youth violence".

Jon Yates, a former DfE special adviser who now runs the YEF, said the training "could help more children to access the right support early and prevent problems later in life".

The scheme will train teachers and other staff working with children and young people to "recognise the signs and symptoms of childhood trauma".

They will also "gain an understanding of how trauma can influence young people's behaviours and learn how to adapt their support accordingly".

The scheme aims to test whether the training can "effectively reduce the harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences – specifically, preventing

behaviours that are associated with crime and violence, such as offending and behaviours which lead to exclusion from school".

About 200,000 children will be reached by the four projects.

At Knowledge Change Action Ltd and Warren Larkin Associate, secondary school staff and leadership teams will be trained and supported to have a better understanding of trauma and attachment needs. They will also ensure pupils with adverse childhoods "feel safe at school and have positive relationships with at least one identified staff member".

Trauma-Informed Schools UK will support secondary staff to create a trauma-informed, mentally healthy school community that fosters psychological safety. Key staff will be trained to provide targeted interventions for smaller groups of pupils.

The other winners are **Bridgend County Borough Council and National Children's Bureau (NCB) and Leap Confronting Conflict**.

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

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Profile

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



'It's a true job share, not a split'

The National Governance Association has joint chief executives...Schools Week meets the two Emmas

Emma Knights has been championing the work of school governors and trustees as the National Governance Association's resident knight in shining armour for the past 13 years. But now she's handed over the reins (well, one of them) to another Emma.

Emma Balchin, previously the association's director of training and consultancy, stepped in as joint chief executive this month.

It has eased Knights' "fairly all-consuming" workload – at a time when reducing sector workload has become the organisation's top priority.

Knights and Balchin are members of the new DfE workload reduction taskforce, tasked with slashing five hours from the working week of teachers.

At the same time, the NGA's own workload project has revealed that governor recruitment and retention is at an all-time high (77 per cent of boards say it is an issue).

"We've got to get a grip on workload," says Knights. "The terms of [governor] office are four years, and if people are leaving in their first or second year, that's just a waste of everybody's time because of the training – it's quite a lot to induct people."

Balchin adds that most governors and trustees are still positive about their roles – and the numbers saying it's unmanageable is "more or less the same as previous years".

But she says the "pressure on schools to always be on an ever-improving journey" with greater "scrutiny in the system" means the pressure on

governors and trustees is probably greater now than ever.

'Stepped' transition at the top

As Knights has been such a dominant force in steering the NGA for so long, its board wanted a "stepped transition" rather than a "complete change at one go".

Balchin brings a fresh perspective because she's experienced school life from so many angles.

While the role is a "true job share, not split", Balchin has a vested interest in SEND, attendance and behaviour. Her first venture into governance was at a pupil referral unit in "challenging circumstances", and her Postgraduate Certificate in Education was in English and SEND.

In her first career as a secondary English teacher,

Profile: NGA's two Emmas



Balchin supervising a DofE trip



Winning the West Midlands LA Challenge

she never understood or appreciated the role of school governors – that “there are people outside your school organisation there to support you, and actually take your concerns seriously”.

When a pupil opened up to her about his substance abuse, her senior leadership team invited his family in to discuss the issue. But when the pupil claimed he'd only said it to “wind Miss up”, the school took no further action.

“It was easier at the time for schools to sweep it under the carpet, because of community perception and the knock-on effect around pupil numbers. That instance was quite fundamental in making me think ‘somebody needs to do something different.’”

She became Wolverhampton Council's school drugs adviser, which then became part of the joint DfE and Department of Health's national healthy school programme. It included training governors and teachers about drugs issues.

She recalls developing interactive theatre pieces for schools and attempting “damage limitation around the use of drugs dogs in schools with the police”.



Balchin speaking at the summer conference

‘I became a governor to see things from the other side’

She took on a similar regional role for the West Midlands, later returning to the local authority as head of children and young people's performance.

She then became a school governor to “see things from the other side”.

Back then the role was “a bit tokenistic”. Balchin believes thanks to the NGA, there's now more knowledge in the system of how to make a positive impact.

‘Feeds into governors feeling undervalued’

But its role is changing. The association was hired in 2021 to run the National Leaders of Governance (NLG) programme and help boards judged weak by regional directors. But it will be axed next month.

This means the NGA's remit is, for the first time in more than a decade, “all about sales to schools”. Those sales have fortunately been on the up – membership has risen tenfold since it was formed in 2006. Three-quarters of schools and trusts are counted as customers.

But Knights is frustrated over the 18 months of legwork that went into tendering for the NLG

contract, then recruiting staff and developing them before the DfE pulled the plug.

The department spent just over £700,000 on the scheme this year.

Meanwhile, a Freedom of information request from Schools Week shows £1.2 million for governance development and training schemes in 2020-21 has also been cut.

At a time when “school leadership development money is going up and up” (which Knights agrees with), she's frustrated equivalent funding for governance has been “completely cut. It feeds into governors [and trustees] feeling undervalued.”

She is also frustrated over the efforts that went into the now-defunct Schools Bill, although she says proposals for councils to be permitted involvement in running trusts were “a con”.

Councils would only have been allowed to serve as “members”, not trustees, meaning they wouldn't have retained “any influence over the running of the trust at all. It was so cheeky... a facade to make schools feel comfortable that the local authority was still involved, so they would then join MATs”.

The reason the policy “died a death” was

Profile: NGA's two Emmas

"lobbying from other trusts who didn't want the competition", she claimed.

But with local school improvement grants to local authorities now axed, Knights believes some councils will have so few support services for schools left that "the last little lot" of maintained schools will be forced to academise.

The government is also launching a £1.2 million scheme to recruit new trustees – but they are solely to help failing academy trusts.

SATs shake-up call

While "the worst end" of the trust scandals of several years ago have been mitigated, that "doesn't mean it's all rosy in the garden of trust governance", says Knights.

Balchin said there has "rightly been a huge emphasis on improving the governance of MATs as that structure was new to the sector and they are responsible for larger amounts of public money. We do now know what good looks like." But there hasn't been so much of a focus on single academy trusts to "think about their governance" and "some [SATs] are stuck in a time warp. Their chair's been there for years, and there's a cosy arrangement with the head who for example may be getting a very high salary as a 'executive head', even though they've only got one school. Others are absolutely brilliant".

Balchin is aware of some successful trust chiefs who want to "control their boards rather than vice versa", at which point danger bells ring. "These relationships need to be built on trust and respect. NGA works hard with other leadership organisations to produce joint guidance on how to build that culture and ensure the best possible governance."

Her concern is amplified by the DfE decision to stall plans for trust-level inspections.

Five years ago, Knights had assumed more trust chiefs would emerge from outside the sector. "There's more schools could do to learn from the best in other sectors...probably with HR and finance. That would be good."

Financial planning challenges

Governors' ability to set three-year financial plans



Knights speaking at the summer conference

'It's not all rosy in the garden of trust governance'

is made much harder by late decisions about pay rates (the School Teachers' Review Body report was published in March in 2015, but more recently has been late July).

Knights says this is a disaster. "How are you meant to do three years of strategic planning when you can't even know next term's budget?"

The consequence is governors spending time over summer holidays reworking their budgets.

But schools that have to reduce staffing budgets "can't make [people] redundant in that timeframe. You need months."

Last year's energy costs and staff pay rises created the perfect storm – the worst for school budgets in her memory.

But some trusts get help from the DfE – specifically when taking on new schools, although this is normally down to individual negotiations.

Knights says the process is "slightly lacking in transparency" and she questions just how much the DfE is spending to "encourage trusts to take on the most difficult schools".

Official government figures show rebroker fees paid to trusts dropped to £1.3 million last year as most transfers included no inducements, down from a high of £8.4 million in 2016-17. But there

are other avenues for support.

'It can be a lonely job'

Rising permanent exclusions are another concern, creating a "big workload" for governors sitting on the boards that uphold or challenge a head's decision.

"If they rule the other way to the head, it can cause real ructions that make life difficult," Knights says, adding it is "astounding" there is no independent tribunal for issues such as exclusions.

"Parents say 'of course governors uphold the head's decision, because they're in it with them'. And that's true – governors are part of the institution."

Nonetheless, Knights sees many good chairs providing vital support to pressured headteachers and believes the sector "underplays" their role.

It "can be quite a lonely job" as there are some things a head tells their chair that can't be shared.

"Sometimes senior leaders don't realise how much care goes into that. It doesn't get said enough.

"They're not all marvellous. But some are fabulous."

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STEVE TAYLOR

Chair, Queen Street Group

Three priorities to lead the MAT system to success

Steve Taylor sets out the Queen Street Group's top priorities for the year ahead to set the MAT-led system on a stable long-term course

Every year school leaders have to navigate surprise whitewaters. After the unprecedented recent disruptions, the ongoing challenges for schools and trusts affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) are an example of how our sector is starting a new year in yet another unexpected way.

Meanwhile, trusts continue to get to grips with more routine challenges.

QSG is a supportive network for trust leaders as they grapple with unexpected and everyday challenges. Our members support each other to face the future with confidence and hope, and drive improvement for all their pupils.

To that end, we are focused on three key priorities over the coming year that we hope will shape the national conversation about education and model the kinds of solutions that will make the long-trailed idea of a MAT-led system into a positive reality.

The next generation of leaders

Recruitment and retention are difficult for all schools, including

trust leadership. The first wave of leaders are retiring while trusts are growing in number and size.

And it's not just the number of vacancies to fill, but who fills them. The sector is alive to the under-representation of female and more broadly diverse voices in MAT leadership. There is a significant drop-off in representation between head of school (or business department) and executive board levels.

To start the ball rolling on promoting a new generation

of leaders who reflect the communities we serve, our second annual conference in February will focus on how we can create organisational cultures in which all leaders thrive and believe that leadership is for them.

We will bring together education, business and finance leaders from our trusts across nine regions to create a nexus of national and regional relationships to inspire, mentor new talent in a positive, ego-light way.

Promoting inclusive education

The SEND and AP reforms are welcome and timely. However, MAT chief executives are rarely the foremost SEND experts in their trusts.

So over the coming year we will upskill our CEOs in this critical space. We will also create an expert group, with membership drawn from our own strategic SEND leaders. They will set out what is it that the trust CEO needs to

help shape future structures and provision within their own trusts and in the sector more widely.

Our aim is two-fold: to identify the best examples of effective practice and to develop best practice models for trusts to evaluate their SEND and AP work, and to engage with policymakers to ensure these reforms drive forward inclusive practice in all trusts.

Regulation and inspection

There is an opportunity to refresh and reset the relationship between the inspectorate and the sector in such a way that inspections serve children and families well, while being seen as proportionate and consistent.

With a new HMCI taking up post and the DfE embedding the recommendations from last year's regulatory and commissioning review this month, QSG is keen to support strong implementation of new ideas on trust accountability.

We have always provided Ofsted with intelligence about trends and consistency of inspection practice as experienced across our 700 schools. So we will engage fully in the period of listening that has been signposted by the incoming HMCI, and we will continue to contribute to the discussion about how to make trust inspection as purposeful and informative as possible.

By working together, we can ensure that we promote the best within our system irrespective of background, that they are supported to serve their whole communities, and that they are held accountable in a fair, proportionate and consistent way. And if we achieve that, we'll have set the MAT-led system up to chart a confident course through any rapids it will meet in future.

“ We will mentor new talent in an ego-light way ”



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JAMES BROWNING

Chief Operating Officer, AET

The RAAC crisis proves the power of being in a MAT

The strength in depth of AET has allowed it to weather the RAAC crisis better than most, says James Browning

As someone responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of 57 schools, you can never quite relax; there's always a broken boiler or a burst pipe that demands attention. But nothing quite prepared me for the call we received, just after midday on the Wednesday of the June half-term, telling us that Hockley, one of our primary schools in Southend, would not be able to re-open three days later. Or indeed, re-open at all. Ever.

Little did we know that reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was about to become a familiar term for many schools. Until then, it had been floating about as the latest acronym, with estates teams up and down the country completing surveys to check which buildings had it and to what extent.

We knew we would need to act extremely quickly: 337 children were due back the following Monday for the final six weeks of term, jam-packed with sports days, end-of-year goodbyes and all the normal things that make the end of the school year quite exciting

enough.

As a large network, we had a number of other local schools within a two-mile radius. The obvious first option – and the one that came to fruition – was to look at whether we could establish a temporary home for Hockley in one or more of these schools.

But getting our children into school was just the first challenge. We had a building on our hands that effectively had been condemned by the DfE. We had a solution for the rest of the school

year, but what about after that?

Intensive discussions with DfE officials throughout the summer term concluded in an agreement to construct modular buildings ready for use in the autumn term. Hockley children would continue their education in our neighbouring AET schools until then.

At the time, we felt like we were one of the unluckiest schools in the country. But the situation at Hockley prepared us for what was to come, just days before the start of the new school year, when it became all too apparent that we were not alone.

Like 174 other schools, Tendring Technology College, also in Essex, was given very little notice that buildings with confirmed RAAC would have to be immediately decommissioned. For us, this meant a key building, home to three main subjects, was suddenly sealed off.

But our Hockley experience stood us in good stead. In reality,

Tendring was much more straightforward. Through some nifty re-timetabling, the school managed to open with only one day's delay for a few year groups. Since then, it has been running (largely) as normal, albeit with some lessons in different parts of the school.

Being told during half-term that your school cannot reopen after the holidays, or in the dying days of August that buildings need to be mothballed, is the stuff of nightmares. But the experience has been a galvanising and positive one. It has shown just what is possible when brilliant and committed people come together in pursuit of a common goal. That has unquestionably been made easier by being part of a large network of schools with specialist expertise.

To its credit, the DfE opted for the costliest option of a full replacement of the affected roof at Tendring Technology College. This is encouraging, as have been the indications that the wider school building programme will be protected and those that had been prioritised for a rebuild pre-RAAC won't find themselves bumped off the list.

But bigger and more uncomfortable questions remain. RAAC is just one of many ills affecting the schools estate. In AET alone, the capital works needed to prevent serious deterioration of buildings is priced in at six times more than the School Condition Allocation (SCA) income we receive.

RAAC clearly needs to be dealt with, but so does asbestos, cladding, roofing, boilers, cracks... Like everyone else, we wait to see how the DfE and the Treasury square this circle.

“ We were prepared for what was to come



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STEVE BROWNLOW

Chief Operating Officer, Central Region Schools Trust

Done right, centralisation is collaboration - not coercion

Steve Brownlow explores one of the key tensions at the heart of school trusts and how to balance agency with efficiency

A core tension for trusts is to maintain a balance between the needs of individual schools and the streamlining of processes across the organisation (thereby reducing unnecessary duplication). Successful centralisation provides clear benefits for schools, but it is essential to approach this tension strategically.

The mental load placed on principals is immense. Indeed, a third of heads are actively looking to leave the sector, with most citing unmanageable workloads. To stop the brain drain, we must find ways to alleviate the burden.

Centralising operations has allowed our trust to give valuable time back to our principals, cutting out activities that had been blocking them from what drew them into education – teaching and learning.

In this regard, centralisation of shared services can be the ultimate tool to deliver freedom and agency. However, like any change-management, it can stall if lines of communication are not kept open. School leaders and teachers should never be caught by surprise by the

time final changes are announced.

In our efforts to centralise processes, we did a lot of initial research before making any changes. Pivotaly, we gained the perspective of principals and other senior leaders to ensure we could address their core concerns, challenges and inefficiency pinch-

points.

Based on the priorities of our leaders, we chose to start by centralising IT budgets, estates and governance rather than transforming everything at once.

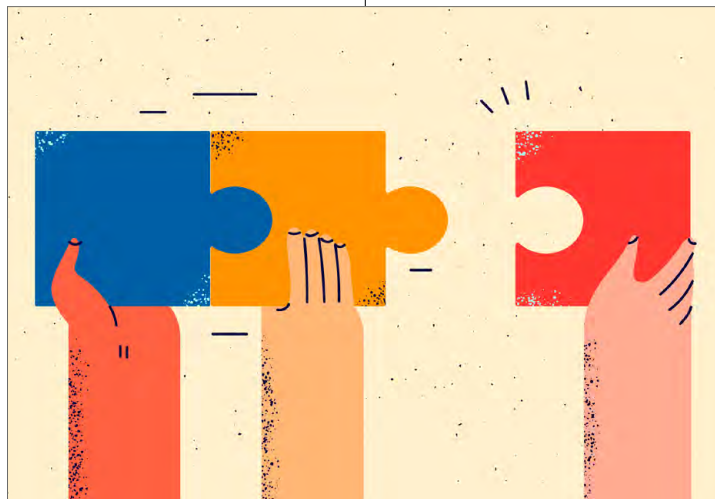
Even this was an onerous task, and taught us the importance of a more interspersed approach.

Our approach has been guided throughout by a cyclical format of consultation, implementation, review and evaluation. This has allowed us to stay flexible; there are no right or wrong answers in the journey to centralisation. Anticipating that there will be feedback, setbacks and road blocks is critical; adapting your approach in response to these is how to plan for success.

Gathering feedback and ensuring your schools' voices are heard is a continuous process. It should not be relegated to a job ticked off the to-do list at the outset, never to be revisited. As well as regular check-ins, we also issued questionnaires

“ Centralisation does not rob leaders of agency

at several points and in different formats – take-home and in-person during trust-wide meetings. Our aim was to give people as many chances as possible to get involved with review and evaluation,



ensuring we remained aware of potential hiccups and could steer further changes in the right direction.

While principals are adaptable and capable individuals, support to learn about the wider responsibilities of headship can often be thin on the ground. Much of the administrative work that preoccupies them and their teams can be redirected through centralisation. Hiring is a salient example: filling vacancies is a challenge, but pooling applicants trust-wide can be an excellent way of developing a talent pipeline. Hiring at trust level helps to ensure great candidates are sourced and shared across the network.

Likewise, we cannot reasonably expect our principals to be experts in IT infrastructure, the intricacies of estate management, procurement, accounting and HR while also being excellent teachers and leaders. One of the primary benefits of being part of a trust is being able to draw support from dedicated experts, giving leaders more freedom to focus on supporting staff and shaping the learning of pupils.

Although it's unsustainable for school leaders to assume all the responsibilities laid on them, trusts cannot simply walk in and take them away – which is why genuine consultation is so important. Communities function at their best when everyone is supported in their role to use their expertise and capabilities to their fullest. That includes deciding what to help them with, how and at what pace.

In this way, centralisation does not rob leaders of agency. Instead, it is a collaboration that means they are supported with the growing list of challenges they face.

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MELANIE HALL-JUDD

Headteacher, Heron Academy (London South East Academies Trust)

Why I've learned not to fear trust takeovers

A MAT helped to rebuild trust and re-imagine success after a poor Ofsted – and was not the unpleasant experience some had feared, says Melanie Hall-Judd

Walking into any school as a new head is not easy, but when you are taking on a school that has been deemed as inadequate in all areas, you face a unique set of challenges.

When I joined Heron Academy in September last year (formerly the Michael Tippett School), the Ofsted report was unequivocal and staff morale was low. The school was also in the process of transferring to a new trust, adding to the uncertainty and apprehension.

I took a deep breath and looked at how the organisation had got to where it was. Supporting 11 to 19-year-olds with PMLD and SLD, this special provision has an important role in the local area. The genuine desire of staff and governors to improve things was clear.

The prospect of a new trust “taking over” just as I was trying to find my feet was initially a concern.

Yet my fears quickly abated. Far from trying to take over, the trust provided invaluable support ahead of the official transfer, with expertise ranging from health and safety to estates and payroll, right through to HR, marketing and IT. I developed great relationships and knew exactly who to turn to whenever issues arose.

Ensuring staff felt supported and secure was key for me, while also being upfront about what needed to change. The trust's deputy chief executive helped with this, spending a day a week with us and giving the trust a human face.

This enabled me to confidently set out my own expectations on day one. I wanted and needed staff to be on board with my vision, taking on the challenge collaboratively. INSET days on safeguarding and curriculum gave me the opportunity to reinforce the message that every decision would always have the pupils' best interests at heart.

Many good things were already happening. So while I was bringing a fresh perspective to the table, I knew it was important to embrace these. Building on some positive



“The trust's approach gave us the autonomy to lead

foundations, we were able to create a rich and exciting programme for pupils. The trust's approach gave us the autonomy to lead on this, accepting that as expert practitioners in PMLD and SLD we were best placed to identify and implement positive changes.

Any initial concerns I may have had about the trust expecting uniformity across its schools in terms of managing pupils' needs and their learning quickly disappeared. From the outset, it showed absolute understanding of how best to teach young people with specific learning needs.

But we had to re-build trust with parents and carers too. I held coffee mornings to listen to their thoughts, concerns and suggestions – and then acted on them. The trust's openness allowed us to be fully open and transparent and build their confidence in the school.

Many other initiatives, big and small, have followed – from

providing branded waterproof fleeces for staff, new signage and improved facilities (including our sensory room) to support from the DfE with long-neglected infrastructure and building issues.

These practical measures have brightened up the school and reflect everyone's commitment to the pupils and the community, and the trust has been central in brokering the support to make them happen.

I am in no doubt that our journey is expedited by belonging to a trust that is committed to transforming communities. It is empowering my team and me through openness, reciprocity and flexibility.

Other trusts may have different approaches, but this is the best way for Heron Academy's pupils and families to get the school they deserve. As for me, I've learned not to fear trust takeovers, but to be on the front foot about deciding what's right for the school.

Solutions

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NICOLA LAW

Director of safeguarding,
Liberty Academy Trust

Lessons in attendance from special schools

In the week that the education committee releases its report on persistent absence, Nicola Law shares insights from a sector long used to managing attendance challenges

More than a quarter of children in secondary schools and almost a fifth of children in primary schools do not turn up for lessons. The children's commissioner has called for a national campaign and the education select committee this week launched its report on persistent absence.

Rightly, concern about persistent absence has hit the mainstream, but attendance has always been a challenge for specialist education. The sector has strategies for meeting that challenge that could also be useful for mainstream schools.

Clarity, consistency and communication

Every school needs a clear, consistent and well-communicated policy that says: we expect children to attend and will address any absence swiftly and robustly.

This changes the expectation of staff, pupils and parents and makes attendance the expected norm – and absence more difficult to excuse.

Monitor data and changes in behaviour

Data alone isn't the answer, nor sufficiently responsive. A child may have tipped into persistent absence by the time a pattern is noticed, and by then the behaviour will be embedded and hard to change.

We don't wait for patterns. We review our attendance tracker weekly and follow up with every child whose attendance has dipped from the previous week. This means we can intervene early and can encourage and affirm any positive change – a crucial part of creating a positive culture of attendance.

Engagement and curiosity

It's important to speak to the pupils and their families to unearth potential issues that may make them vulnerable to absence.

During the pandemic we all got used to making phone calls home and having conversations that were invaluable to understanding pupils and their welfare. Continuing with or leaning back into this mindset is invaluable to supporting pupils with their attendance – and more.

Dedicated staff

Recognising that autistic children and young people have complex educational needs, each of our pupils has a key worker who is their safe and trusted point of contact



“ Don't wait for patterns to emerge

in school. We are also rolling out full-time family liaison officers; non-teaching members of staff able to support meaningful social work with pupils and their families.

This is unlikely to be a solution in mainstream settings, but the key is to drill into the underlying causes of absence and be targeted in addressing any barriers. In our settings this may be as simple, but as important, as the smell of a particular classroom or noise from the corridor. Eradicating these can keep pupils in school. Our experience is that parents' insights and support provide the kind of intelligence that is critical to success in this regard, as does listening to pupils themselves.

Flexible reintegration

Returning to school after a period of absence is not easy. Led by our key workers and family liaison officers, we devise tailored and flexible programmes to support reintegration.

This may mean home-based tutoring that progresses to one-on-one, in-school learning, before part-time sessions. Or it might

mean early-morning or after-school tutoring, when school is quieter and less likely to cause any sensory overload or additional anxiety. We may also capitalise on areas of interest and encourage pupils to return for craft or sport activities first. The key is to be patient and child-centred.

We all know that the safest place for children is school, and that good attendance supports their overall welfare, and social, emotional and academic development. That's what makes the attendance crisis all the more worrying.

While tackling it is by no means easy in the specialist sector, it is a challenge we are set up to respond to as matter of course. These experiences are more common in specialist schools and the approaches we take are more readily resourced, but they may offer practices that could be replicated more widely.

Nothing will ever be as good for attendance as ensuring every child has the right support at the right school for them, but together we can keep more of our children in school, safe and learning.

Solutions

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UKNIC
PONSFORDFounder, Global Equality
Collective

How to talk to young people about body image

Nic Ponsford provides some useful strategies to increase young people's body confidence and empower them to be their authentic selves

Body image is a prominent and complex issue, particularly among young people. Social media, advertising and celebrity culture have magnified unrealistic beauty standards and societal pressures, significantly impacting how individuals perceive their bodies. This has implications for mental health – its integration into the core PSHE curriculum is good news in that regard. But these conversations are not limited to the PSHE classroom, and every adult must be equipped to deal with them frankly and sensitively

Understanding media influence

Media platforms, especially social media, wield significant and constant power in shaping young people's perceptions. They are exposed daily to carefully mediated, constructed and often heavily edited images that perpetuate unattainable beauty ideals.

To counter this, schools must equip pupils with critical media literacy skills so that they can recognise the pervasive presence of digitally altered images and develop a more discerning eye.

Real-life examples, such as Kate Winslet's public stance against photo-shopped images and the impact of social media as portrayed in her award-winning *I Am Ruth* makes for an excellent provocation for these conversations.

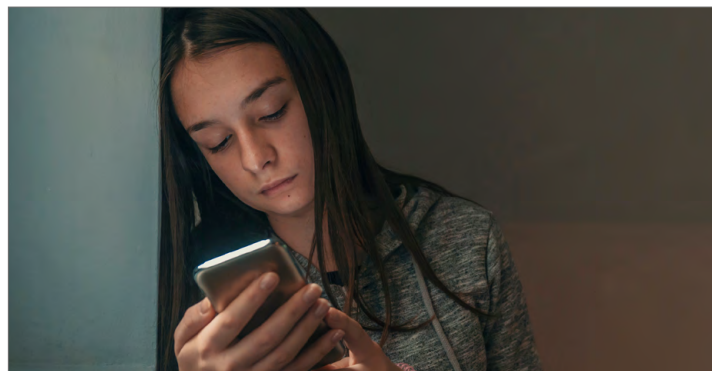
Whatever the stimulus, the aim is to support young people to develop a healthier perspective on their bodies, free from pressure to conform.

Diversity and inclusion

Promoting diversity and inclusion also plays a fundamental role in nurturing a positive body image culture. Each of us has a unique mix of body type, ethnicity, ability and gender identity. It's crucial to recognise and celebrate this, ensuring all pupils feel valued for who they are.

Embracing diversity goes beyond mere tolerance; it involves actively celebrating individuality and appreciating beauty in all its forms. Thinking about how "ideals" in body image are constructed and change over time can help them to better understand this. *Barbie*, the movie, is an example of how a toy has had to be adapted to better reflect diversity and take responsibility for the impact of its culturally defining role model.

It is equally important to break down biological barriers in body



“ Embracing diversity goes beyond tolerance

image discussions. Highlighting research showing no significant biological differences in body image until adolescence can encourage the promotion of co-ed sports and physical activities, fostering inclusivity and dismantling unnecessary barriers – for example organising pupils by height rather than sex/gender, promoting mixed competitions on sports days and mixed teams in lesson times.

Physical health and the role of experts

Addressing body image must also involve discussions on physical and mental health within sports curricula. To educate pupils about body dysmorphia, we need first to illustrate what positive body image looks like. This should be personalised to support SEND pupils with their needs and self-image, and their sense of belonging and self-worth. Role models such as journalist Poorna Bell and Tokito Oda, the Japanese tennis player, are an excellent addition to stereotyped icons and celebrities.

Meanwhile, physical activity itself plays an important part in health and wellbeing and can promote a comprehensive understanding of body image. However, before entering into discussions about body

image or practically incorporating strategies, schools should consider enlisting the support of experts such as nutritionists and mental health professionals to create a safe and supportive environment and mitigate any potential negative effects.

Addressing complexities

Ultimately, promoting positive body image among young people is a multifaceted endeavour that demands a comprehensive approach.

It is vital to engage families. Young people can model and mirror the behaviours and attitudes of the grown-ups around them. Therefore, helping families with physical and mental health when it comes to perceptions of body image can be a solution in itself. Providing helpful resources empowers parents to play a positive role in promoting a healthy self-image.

Addressing body image with young people is a collective effort involving teachers and parents, but also trust leaders, governors and the broader community. Most important, it must be led by young people themselves. Because ultimately, they know best what barriers stand between them and being their authentic, unique selves.

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THE REVIEW

WHAT MAKES TEACHERS UNHAPPY, AND WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Authors: Fran Abrams and Mark Solomons

Publisher: Routledge

Publication date: September 26

ISBN: 1032325909

Reviewer: Ed Finch, teacher and facilitator

Astonishingly, we've reached the point in our profession where "*what makes teachers unhappy*" is the start of an uncontroversial statement rather than a genuine question. I look forward to the imminent publication of "What makes nurses/firefighters/social workers unhappy".

Teachers and teaching assistants are leaving for the supermarket checkout – or considering the move. Given that the root causes of this unprecedented migration are in government, any actions school leaders take to promote "happiness" amount to tinkering around the edges.

Nevertheless, it's right to try and the authors of this book correctly identify some key issues and outline strategies to address them.

Sadly, while the book is titled *What Makes Teachers Unhappy?*, its focus is exclusively on leaders. Perhaps that's right. After all, it's the leaders who get to make the changes. But consider the professionals who have shared their experiences here: five headteachers, an HR expert and a wellbeing lead who used to be a head. No contributions from teaching or support staff. If we want to think about why teachers are unhappy, perhaps we should hear from them rather than repeat a paternalistic approach that is most certainly a big part of the problem.

When we do hear the voices of support workers, in extracts from Unison research, the effect is devastating. "My monthly wage does not pay our rent." "I panic when I have to visit

the dentist or optician." "We never feel valued."

The authors tell us that "one in five support staff has at least one additional job; these include working in bars, nail bars, care homes, call centres, cafes and supermarkets". This is real stuff. Another reference to the Eisenhower matrix, not so much.

Advice is strong and well structured. Mark Solomons, a former Sainsbury's board member and start-up wellbeing expert, and Fran Abrams, an ex-BBC journalist, convincingly show that wellbeing matters – that, quite apart from being important in its own right, it affects pupil outcomes.

They look at the major causes of stress in the workplace as identified by the Health and Safety Executive: the demands put upon staff, the control they have over how they work, the support they receive, the relationships they have with colleagues, the clarity of their roles and change. They acknowledge that yoga days and cakes in the staffroom are a cherry on top when a school's wellbeing culture is in place, but a patronising sideshow when it isn't.

Each section is thoughtful, accessible and makes good, humane points. The authors have a properly jaundiced view of an education system they call "broken" and of an inspectorate that isn't trusted by the profession it scrutinises.

And the solutions they offer are about as strong as they can be in our current system: do a wellbeing survey, stay hydrated, get some exercise, share your vision, have a wellbeing

BOOK

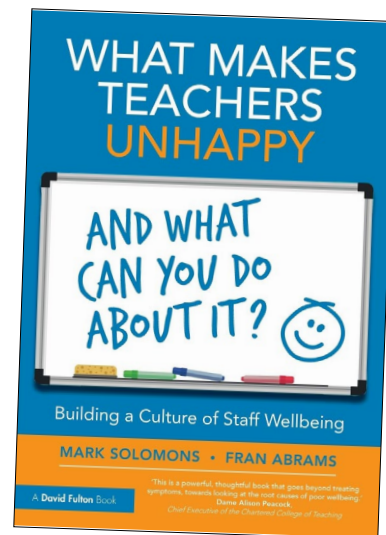
TV

FILM

RADIO

EVENT

RESOURCE



policy, offer a tissue, employ Welbee (Solomon's company, which he mentions a good few times). I doubt there is anything new here for a school leader who has given wellbeing any thought, but there are leaders out there who haven't.

But school leaders respect people who have walked the walk. So while the advice is sound, it doesn't feel earned. Between them, Solomons and Abrams have read every HSE, ACAS, DfE and academic study going, but for me the book lacked the conviction and power of similar books, such as Brian Walton's *Lessons from the Head's Office*, which covers the same ground and makes similar points but from a position of day-to-day lived experience.

Morale in our profession is at an all-time low, and anyone who can help is welcome. In the end, if colleagues are considering departing to take a seat at a supermarket checkout, who better to have on hand to offer advice than a former Sainsbury's board member?



Rating

THE CONVERSATION
LISTENING IN ON
THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM

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

REWILDING EDUCATION

One of our key drivers this year is giving our children more agency. But how can we give them genuine responsibility and true power to help our school onward and upward?

In this podcast, outdoor learning expert, Marina Robb speaks passionately about trust, consent, equality and the power dynamics of the classroom. Likening the role of the teacher as knowledge-giver to philanthropic donors who – wittingly or not – affect a level of censorship among their recipients, she poses a challenge to anyone engaged in “pupil voice” activities.

It is outdoors, Robb advocates, where the dynamics shift. Surrounded by nature and able to follow their natural curiosity, children are better supported to develop a healthy mind and heart. But how much do our schools value the natural world? And how can we expect young people to develop a full sense of self without it?



Given the mental health crisis among our children, I urge you to contend with Robb’s thoughts on re-wilding education.

RATEMYINSPECTOR DOT COM



In this week’s *Rethinking Education* podcast, Dr James Mannion speaks to Dave McPartlin, head of Flakefleet Primary School in Lancashire and a candid commentator after the death of Ruth Perry. He is no less so here.

The podcast will, I’m sure, resonate with headteachers as they begin a new term.

I can certainly feel the dread resurfacing as we enter the Ofsted “window” and I am in awe of his honesty as he opens up about his medication increasing in direct correlation with these periods.

Having had ten inspections so far, I couldn’t agree more with his diagnosis of a broken system lacking in transparency, honesty and fairness. Is it any wonder we struggle to give pupils a voice when we are robbed of ours?

One of his many considered suggestions is for schools to review their inspectors. I wonder how RateMyInspector.com would go down with Ofsted. After all, it wasn’t long ago that the inspectorate suggested a TripAdvisor for schools.

APPS TO COUNT ON

In an informative and useful podcast for parents and teachers, Dr Laura Outhwaite brings her research to bear on a tricky choice for us all. A specialist in the educational value of maths apps and how they impact children’s learning, she is clearly passionate about supporting schools and families to develop children’s love of maths.

She notes that many so-called maths apps contain no maths learning at all. But some do, and the most impactful include a combination of encouraging feedback that explains why an answer is correct or incorrect and levelled play so children start at their own scaffolded level.

Outhwaite also notes that language

comprehension is a key determiner of how successfully children learn maths.

The subject has found itself a powerful advocate. It’s certainly something for us all to work on as we strive to encourage more adult engagement with children’s maths development – with or without apps.

How to find a maths learning app you can count on for your kids

Laura Outhwaite
Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities
Co-Director, Child Development and Learning Difficulties Lab

UCL
IOE – Faculty of Education and Society
Research for the Real World

THE BEAR NECESSITIES

Executive headteacher, Simon Botten managed a little time off this summer – enough to binge-watch the Disney+ series, *The Bear*, but not enough to switch off entirely from school. The result is this blog, drawing leadership lessons from the plot.

The show follows a young chef who leaves a top-class restaurant to take over his dead brother’s seedy sandwich shop. However unlikely that might sound, Botten had to resist the urge to shout “THAT’S JUST LIKE SCHOOL!” at every episode.



One episode is on scrubbing the shop from top to bottom, even though it feels pointless and staff have never seen the like. As Botten points out, it’s about creating an environment we want to be in, because if we don’t we can’t expect children to.

Now about that crumbly concrete...

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts

The Knowledge

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



Lessons from the pandemic about additional needs

Jo Hutchinson, director of SEND and additional needs, Education Policy Institute

The Education Policy Institute is perhaps best known for its annual reporting on disadvantage gaps. Designed to provide a way of comparing the size of the attainment gap for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils over time, the “months of learning” gap was fine-tuned to give the most consistent picture before, during and after major reforms to the national curriculum, assessments and school performance measures introduced by the government from 2014 to 2017.

The Covid pandemic unleashed a very different kind of disruption, with cancelled exams and a forced switch to hybrid remote learning. Schools were asked to ensure that centre-assessed GCSE grades were fair to different groups, resulting in largely similar attainment gaps in 2019 and 2020.

However, two groups saw their attainment gaps widen in 2020: pupils with special needs (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

The increased disadvantage of these groups motivated us to delve deeper into the 2020 GCSE results with a focus on additional needs, and on the intersections between needs and ethnicity, since the pandemic had resulted in racial disparities in health outcomes. We developed new models to capture the relationships between ethnicity, additional needs and GCSE attainment. Last week, we published the final blog in our series from this analysis.

Encouragingly, we found that where pupils with special needs had these identified in the SEND register and attended schools with additional provision such as a SEN unit, the impact on their attainment was mitigated in many cases. For example, for pupils recorded as receiving school support for six or more years, those who attended a school with a SEN unit saw their GCSE gaps reduced by six percentiles for white British pupils, 10 percentiles for black Caribbean pupils and 22 percentiles for Gypsy Roma pupils.

Additional provision also played a protective



‘We dubbed one group the ‘shadow EHCP group’

role in schools with a resourced provision or a high quota of teaching assistants, and for pupils with EHCPs as well as those with long-term school support. There were inconsistencies between ethnic groups, however. Black African pupils benefited less than black Caribbean pupils, and Indian pupils did not benefit while other Asian pupils did.

This theme of not all pupils being included also emerged when we compared all pupils with six or more years of school support with those with EHCPs and found comparably low attainment. The GCSE results of pupils with six-plus years of school support were so similar to those of pupils with statutory protection from an EHCP that we have dubbed this group the “shadow EHCP group”. This is an indication that more pupils might benefit from EHCPs, and seems directly at odds with recent suggestions that targets have been set for reducing the number of EHCPs issued by financially stressed local authorities.

Pupils who speak EAL are an even more neglected subset. While those who attended school throughout their secondary years typically attained well, GCSE attainment for late

arrivals was bleak. In the worst cases – those of white Irish, white and black Caribbean, black Caribbean and Gypsy Roma or Irish traveller pupils, and those who arrived in years 10 or 11 and spoke English as an additional language – attainment was in the bottom quarter, nationally. This is comparable with pupils with EHCPs.

We were not able to find any consistent evidence of mitigation of the disadvantage experienced by late EAL arrivals in schools with more teaching assistants or more teachers of ethnic minority backgrounds. This illustrates clearly inequality thrives and attainment gaps remain unaddressed when needs are not identified and provided for.

There is much to do before we have a SEND system that provides early support and prevents needs from escalating, but there are things that could be learned from SEND policy and applied to EAL, such as the requirement for schools to have a SENCO, the provision of funded specialist training for teachers of children with autism, statutory assessment frameworks and the provision of targeted education funding to age 25.

Week in

Westminster

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

MONDAY

The noise of drilling provided the audio backdrop to our interview at DfE towers with the new children's minister David Johnston today. A nice little insight for ministers into what schools affected by RAAC face for the next few years!

While we're talking about crumbling buildings, no such trouble for the government. Today it boasted about signing off on buying land in Darlington for a new "government hub".

The shiny new-build, ready in 2026, will offer "an effective mix of flexible work spaces to support accessibility, neuro-diversity, collaboration and wellbeing, along with refreshment hubs, home zones and meeting rooms". All right for some!

TUESDAY

What a difference a year makes for Andrea – sorry, Dame Andrea – Jenkyns. Just over 14 months ago, the newly appointed education minister was pictured sticking her middle finger up at protesters camped outside Downing Street, shortly before that other stand-up role model Boris Johnson quit as prime minister.

Despite being criticised by a former government chief whip, and the social mobility chair Katharine Birbalsingh – and reported for breaching ministerial code standards by the Chartered College of Teaching – Jenkyns didn't apologise. (Although she did admit she should have "shown more composure".)

Jenkyns, a Johnson loyalist, was today given the damehood she was awarded in Johnson's resignation list. She said it was



Dame Andrea Jenkyns

an "honour and a privilege to have been invested with my damehood by Princess Royal at Windsor Castle".

According to guidance, damehoods

recognise

a "pre-eminent contribution in any field of activity ... in a capacity which will be recognised by peer groups as inspirational and significant nationally and demonstrates sustained commitment".

For reference, Jenkyns has been an MP since 2015 and has never served in the Cabinet. In fact, she's had just two government roles apart from education – skills minister and assistant government whip for a combined just-over-two-years.

WEDNESDAY

Ministers are quick to take a pop at schools for any sluggish responses, most recently with Gillian Keegan telling leaders to "get off their backsides" to return RAAC surveys.

And they get named and shamed if they

don't return the financial information the government wants. And all their tutoring spend is seized if they don't report how much they've spent on time.

So how does the Department for Education do in providing important information in a timely manner?

While schools minister Nick Gibb says it attaches "great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence from Members of Parliament", the data tells a different story.

Departments are expected to respond to correspondence from MPs within 20 days. The DfE sets itself a target of 18. But so far this year it's missing both – with an average reply of 23 days.

Just 70 per cent of responses are issued within 18 days.

Shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson had to seek guidance from parliament on how to get her opposite number Keegan to respond to urgent questions on RAAC last week, accusing the Conservatives of "evading scrutiny".



THURSDAY

Claire Coutinho's rapid rise from new MP in 2019 to sitting in Cabinet as the new energy secretary in 2023 took us all by surprise. It seems she got a shock too.

"I think I was very in tune with the nation in that yes, I was surprised," Coutinho – a long-time Sunak ally – told *The Spectator*. "But I was also very honoured."

The DfE is on the lookout for a senior communications manager to lead on "strategic communications and sector engagement". The job description says the successful candidate will have to "use a combination of no-cost, low-cost and paid communications to change the attitudes and behaviours of teachers, parents and children and young people". Good luck with that!




The Oval School:
Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion
 Salary: L6 - L10 (£50,838 - £56,150)


We are looking for an Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion who shares our values and has the drive to strategically develop inclusion at The Oval School.

This is an exciting and unique opportunity for a highly effective and inspiring senior leader to move this school forwards and improve outcomes for all pupils.

The information pack below has been developed to provide you with a summary of all of the information you need to learn about the role and our Trust, and we hope it will inspire you to submit an application for this exciting role. Interested candidates are encouraged to contact the Headteacher to discuss the opportunity in more detail.

Closing date: Monday 16th October 2023, 12pm
Interviews: w/c Monday 23rd October 2023





Executive Leader of School Improvement
 (with Secondary expertise)
Salary: STPCD Leadership Scale: Negotiable
Closing date: 9am, 9th October, 2023

Leading Edge is a group of unique schools located in beautiful, coastal and island settings across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Our 2023 Challenge Partner Trust Peer Review recognised that: “The Trust has developed a collegiate and democratic approach to both school improvement and organisational development, and this has, over time, served to create significant agency and buy in across the school teams into the work of “Our” Trust”.

We are at an exciting stage in our development as we seek to recruit to the new role of Executive Leader of School Improvement. We’re looking for an inspirational leader who shares our values and has the passion and skills to ensure the quality of teaching and learning across the Trust is consistent and effective.

To apply visit www.leadingedgeacademies.org



At Nova Education Trust we are committed to our vision, values, ambitions and principles, and we are determined to achieve our mission of creating transformational schools. We are looking for a talented and inspirational leader who is committed to transforming the lives of our learners, with the imagination, passion and experience to support and challenge us to even greater things in the service of our young people.

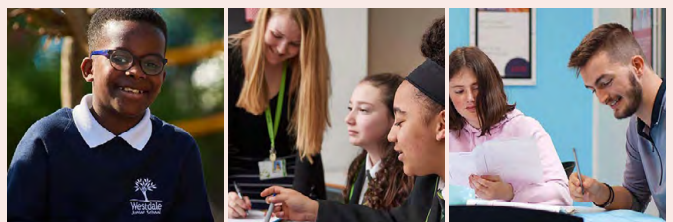
Nova Education Trust’s Director of School Improvement (Primary) will need a proven track record of success in leading others to bring about and sustain transformational improvement in schools. Driving and further developing our ongoing strategy for improvement, the post-holder will strategically lead complex and sustainable change across the Trust’s primary schools. This will involve providing high-level direction, support and guidance, rigorous quality assurance, and high-quality professional development to build a strong primary team that enables our academies to achieve excellence and, as a result, transform the lives of all the children and communities they serve.

The successful candidate will have experience of developing, motivating, and empowering highly effective teams through an

ethos of excellence. A strategic thinker with drive, creativity and high expectations, you will have a clear vision for leading and sustaining school transformation through collaborative working.

They will be an integral part of the Executive Leadership Team, advising and leading on the transformation of Nova’s primary academies. They will have openness, approachability, diplomacy, warmth, and the ability to engage and communicate clearly with all stakeholders with integrity.

We hope you are excited by the prospect of this role, working with committed colleagues across the trust, to lead genuine transformation. If you wish to join a values-driven organisation, then we look forward to hearing from you.



DEPUTY HEADTEACHER



This is a unique and exciting opportunity for an inspirational and aspirational leader to join Blaise High School and further contribute to the life chances of our young people in the school and across the Trust. The school is on a rapid trajectory of improvement that will be sustained over many years and this role is a chance to be part of something very special. Blaise High School has made significant and rapid progress since becoming a part of Greenshaw Learning Trust. This role will support your career development and equip you for a further promotion within the Trust.

The staff at the school share a common purpose; that is the eradication of educational disadvantage in North Bristol. The staff at the school are committed to the school's values of Aspiration, Integrity and Pride.

The school's leadership are not only committed to developing a school grounded in academic success and the development of character but also want to build a school in which workload for teachers is sensible, manageable and well thought out. In our most recent staff survey 96% of staff said that they were proud to work at the school and planned to be here in two years' time. Blaise High School serves a diverse and vibrant community, with high levels of deprivation. It has a Resource Base within the school and this is something we are very proud of. We believe in evidence led approaches to teaching and we teach in a traditional manner built around explicit and direct instruction. The successful applicant for this post will play a key, strategic role, in the development of a strong and long lasting, school culture, taking Blaise High School into the top 1% of all schools in the country for progress made.



SECONDARY ENGLISH STRATEGY LEAD

Location: The Kemnal Academies Trust
(ideally based in Hamps/Sussex)
Salary: £80,000+ travel expenses

Are you a strong secondary English Lead Practitioner and experienced leader looking for a role where you can have wider impact? The Kemnal Academies Trust is currently looking for a full-time Strategy Lead for secondary English to join part of our school development team across the Trust. This role will see you setting whole-trust secondary strategy, coordinating and line managing the work of English Lead Practitioners, and providing support in-school to develop English department provision.

Your key responsibilities will be:

- Setting and leading a trust-wide strategy in English to ensure provision is having a positive impact on student outcomes and the development of staff at all levels.
- Ensuring the Senior Director and Directors of Education have an up-to-date and accurate view of English provision in all trust secondary schools.

- Supporting the quality of leadership, teaching, learning and progress across the Trust so that agreed targeted outcomes are achieved. Experience of senior leadership work, including a secure English background, is essential for this role. Whilst this role is across the whole of the trust, it would be ideally suited to someone based in the Hampshire/Sussex region; however this is not essential as long as travel to these areas is possible.

For full details and JD, please visit the TKAT Vacancies page <https://tkat.livevacancies.co.uk/#/>

Completed applications to be sent to Matt Batchelor, Senior Director of Education matt.batchelor@tkat.org

Closing date: 4th October 2023
Start date: January 2024

TKAT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Offers of employment will be subject to the full Safer Recruitment checks, including an enhanced DBS check.



CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Scholars' Education Trust

Salary: £65,000 circa per annum

Full year, full time, 29 days holiday + BH

We are looking for an exceptional finance manager who has the necessary skills and personal qualities to lead the finance function within this forward looking, successful and growing Trust. The person appointed will be supported by an experienced COO and will oversee a dedicated central finance team. Candidates will need an accountant accreditation. The finance provision within the Trust is based in our central offices on the Samuel Ryder Academy site in St Albans. Travel to schools within the Trust will be required. We are a dynamic cross phase Multi Academy Trust (MAT) based at locations across Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire.

For further details, please visit www.scholarseducationtrust.co.uk or call 01727 734424

Closing date: Monday 02nd September 2023, 9am

Interview date: W/C 02nd October 2023



St Philip's C of E Primary School: Head of School

Salary: L12 to L17 (£61,882 to £69,970)

The Governors of this successful, innercity Manchester school are looking to appoint an exceptional, inspirational, dynamic individual to become our Head of School.

This is an exciting opportunity to play a lead role in developing and shaping our school. Our new Head of School will have a proven track record in developing themselves and others, be able to show high quality experience of leading and working in high performing teams and will be driven to achieving the very best for our children.

We prize staff wellbeing very highly and can offer the successful candidate a supportive environment in which they will have the opportunity to make a difference. Please contact our school to find out more.

Closing Date – Tuesday 17th October

Interviews – Monday 30th October



Teacher SEN

Oakfield Park School is an "Outstanding" LA-maintained school providing high quality education for young people aged 11 to 19 years who have severe/profound and/or multiple learning difficulties. Many of our pupils have additional complex needs including Autistic Spectrum Disorders, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour and physical difficulties. The school is well equipped, providing excellent facilities and resources for all pupils.

We would be interested in hearing from you if you have experience of teaching students with:

- Complex or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, and/or
- Complex sensory needs
- ASD / Challenging behaviours

For further details, please visit:

<https://www.oakfieldpark.wakefield.sch.uk/home/vacancies>

Closing Date: 12 noon Thursday 12th October 2023

Interview Date: Wednesday 20th October 2023



The Oaks Primary School: Headteacher

Salary: L18 - L24 (£71,729 - £83,081)

We are looking for a Headteacher who shares our values and has the vision, drive, and resilience to lead The Oaks Primary School, securing rapid improvement whilst also bringing leadership capacity that supports other Trust schools to learn from each other and beyond.

This is an exciting and unique opportunity for a highly effective and inspiring school leader to move this school forwards and improve outcomes for all pupils.

We prioritise staff wellbeing and are deeply committed to investing in staff at every level of our organisation through clear professional development pathways and opportunities. Interested candidates are encouraged to contact the Executive Director of School Improvement to discuss the opportunity in more detail.

Closing date: Thursday 12th October 2023, 12pm

Interviews: Wednesday 25th October 2023

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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

