

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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Rise of the system leaders. How trusts are taking charge

P25

FEATURE: FROM 'CRUMBLY' CONCRETE TO WEDDING GLAM



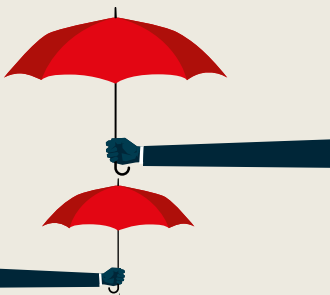
Page 8-9

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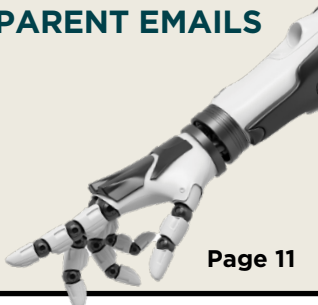
Page 14

WHO'S SAFEGUARDING THE SAFEGUARDERS?

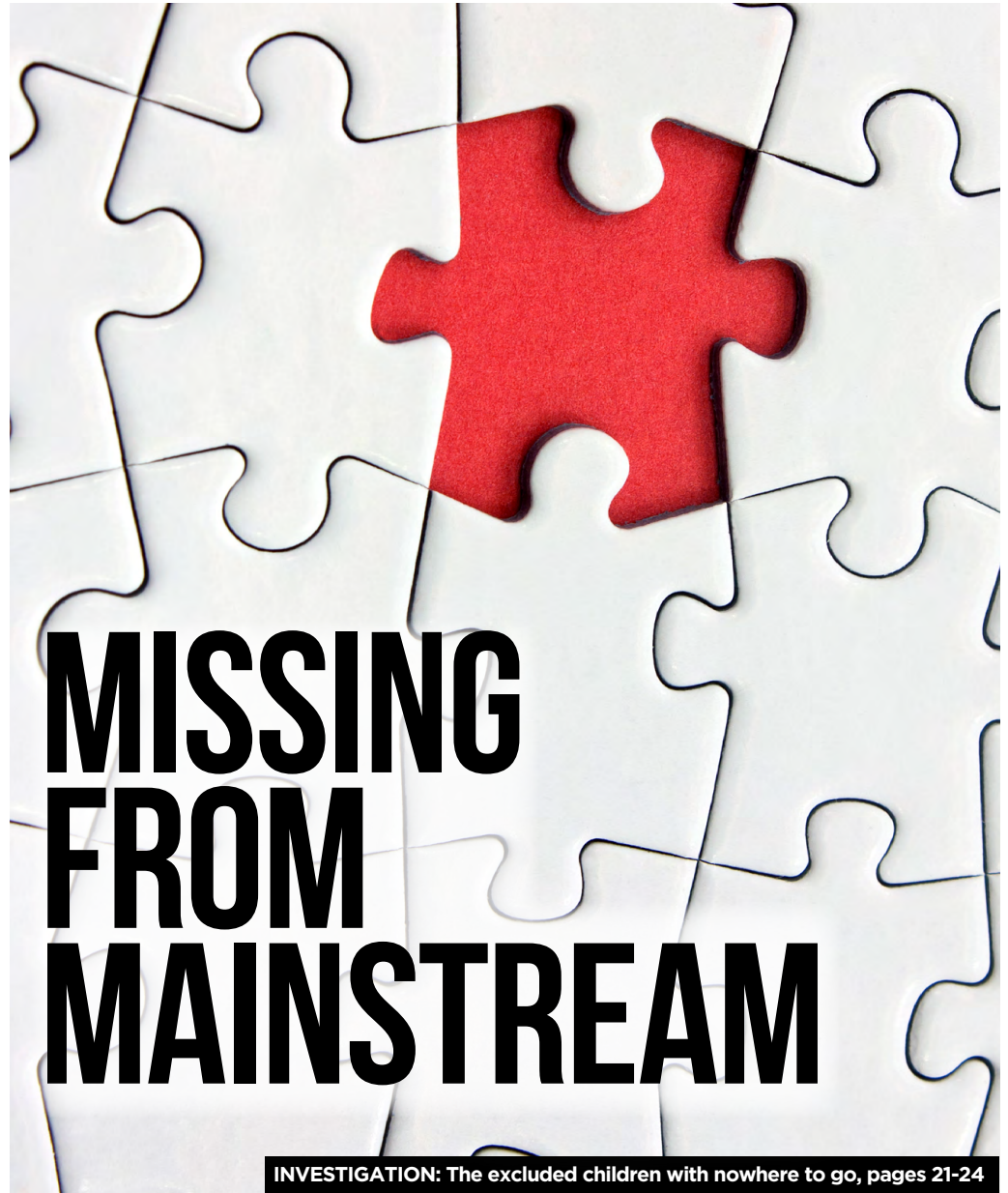


Page 27

SCHOOLS USE AI FOR PUPIL REFERENCES AND PARENT EMAILS



Page 11



## MISSING FROM MAINSTREAM

INVESTIGATION: The excluded children with nowhere to go, pages 21-24

## 30K PRIMARY PUPILS' DATA MAY BE AT RISK AFTER CAPITA CYBER ATTACK

- Outsourcing giant monitoring dark web for information after March data breach
- Incident 'risks distress' with names, IDs and DOBs accessed - but parents not told

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EXCLUSIVE | Page 5

SCHOOLS WEEK

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# Our most vulnerable pupils are slipping through the net

Our “missing from mainstream” investigation this week reveals the depressing consequences of a school system ravaged by austerity tasked with educating a cohort of pupils broken by a pandemic.

We already know the prospects for excluded children are bleak. Just 4 per cent go on to pass their English and maths GCSEs. Half fail to sustain employment, education or training after they turn 16.

We can't ban exclusions. They are an essential tool that headteachers need to keep their pupils safe.

Many mainstream schools can no longer cope with the growing numbers of pupils with additional needs. Needs that, since Covid, are also becoming more severe.

But the safety net to catch these pupils is overflowing. Pupils who should be scooped up and nurtured back into mainstream schools with more

personalised and tailored support are instead falling by the wayside.

Youngsters should not be waiting months for specialist provision that can help them get back on track.

For many, it will be too late.

That some are abandoned without any education during their wait is a national scandal.

And this week it has emerged that the government is targeting cutting education health and care plans. It also wants to shove more vulnerable pupils in Kent into mainstream schools.

While the SEND and AP improvement plan outlined reforms to make mainstream schools more inclusive, these are years away from being implemented.

Ordering schools to do this over a few months – when we know mainstream schools do not have the capacity – simply threatens putting more children at risk.

## Most read online this week:

- 1 [MPs demand answers from DfE after EHCP cuts target revealed](#)
- 2 [6 ways to solve teacher shortages, according to experts](#)
- 3 [Ofsted: School rated 'good' after 'inadequate' rating legal challenge](#)
- 4 [Spielman 'sorry' over Caversham school 'reviewed to death' comment](#)
- 5 [Trust leaders more likely to work part-time for Ofsted](#)

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See story, page 7

# Northern schools lockdown after threatening email

AMY WALKER  
@AMYRWALKER

Schools in three counties went into lockdown this week after receiving emails "threatening violence to children and staff".

West Yorkshire Police said yesterday it had made an arrest in connection with an email sent to a number of schools in Leeds and Bradford.

It added that the contents of the email were being investigated while officers were "providing reassurance and safety advice to affected schools".

It comes just two days after schools in Manchester and Cheshire were locked down over "malicious communications", which are also understood to have threatened harm to pupils and staff.

A number of Leeds schools took extra security measures today after receiving advice from the city council.

Leeds Live reported that the council's email stated: "Please ensure that schools remain vigilant and ensure that your usual robust safeguarding procedures are adhered to, particularly in regards to site security and visitors on site."

Beeston Primary School, Richmond Hill Academy and Ruth Gorse Academy were among the schools that put extra security measures in place.

It is understood the latter two kept children indoors and asked people not to visit unless essential.

In a message to parents on Facebook, Beeston said staff were "being extra vigilant".

*Mirror Online* reported that Sharp Lane Primary had sent an email to parents saying that "children will be kept indoors for the full day".

"All gates remain closed and locked as usual and doors and windows within school remain closed all day," it added.

"We have well-rehearsed procedures for lockdown in place should we need them and a robust CCTV system covering all school grounds, which is being closely



monitored."

Threats made towards 'number of' Leeds schools

Hunslet Carr Primary, also in Leeds, told parents it had not received the threatening email.

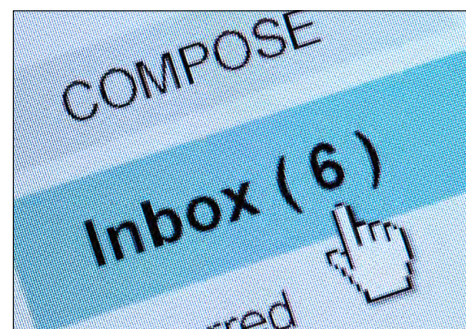
But it added: "Access can only be gained via the intercom system, and we are only letting people we know on to the site.

"Delivery drivers and other people who are new to the school are being asked to wait at the gates, and staff are meeting them there."

Leeds City Council said: "We are aware of an ongoing situation relating to threats made towards a number of schools ... and are working closely with West Yorkshire Police to monitor the situation and provide support to schools."

On Tuesday, Greater Manchester Police and Cheshire Constabulary said they were investigating after an email sent to schools that morning "made threats to pupils and staff".

Lache Primary School in Chester told parents on Facebook that it had locked down "to ensure that everyone is safe" and



could not let parents pick children up early.

Blacon High School in Chester also put additional measures in place, but told parents it was not "in lockdown".

Chief Inspector Chris Boyd from Greater Manchester Police said earlier this week it took reports "of this nature" very seriously. "Whilst we have not advised any schools to close, our officers will nevertheless be stepping up their high-visibility presence around schools [on Tuesday] to provide reassurance to them and the wider public."

At least 10 schools across Manchester received "malicious" threats in July, prompting a number to go into lockdown. There is no suggestion the cases are linked.

# SATs data breach in Capita cyber attack

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Tens of thousands of primary pupils' details may have been stolen in the huge cyber-attack at government outsourcer Capita, Schools Week can reveal.

The dark web is being monitored for the information after the company was targeted in March, with 90 organisations reporting breaches of personal data held by Capita.

Capita runs several services for the Department for Education, including administering primary school SATs for the Standards and Testing Agency (STA).

Documents obtained by Schools Week reveal up to 30,000 pupil personal data records under the STA contract are "believed to have been exfiltrated".

In its report to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the DfE said this included "pupil names, dates of birth, pupil IDs, test types and school reference numbers, in additional (sic) to other non-identifiable management data".

It did not contain "any addresses for the pupils or contact details or names of schools, exam results; or any special category personal data or any financial information.

"Whilst name and date of birth are unlikely to present a high risk, should the information be made public for sale, it is likely to cause distress.

"The added inclusion of a school identifier may



increase the likelihood of identification, but is unlikely to present a greater risk to the data subjects, unless there is a safeguarding issue potentially."

However, in May the DfE said because there "is not a high risk posed, we are currently unlikely to inform the STA data subjects".

Capita estimated the attack could cost up to £20 million.

When asked about the SATs data breach, a spokesperson said it had "found no evidence of any information in circulation, on the dark web or otherwise, resulting from the cyber incident".

Jan Persson, the director of the campaign group DefendDigitalMe, said children's names and dates of birth was "critical identity data. These children and related family members are potentially compromised forever.

"If it's not (yet) been put up for sale, it also begs

the question who or what organisation might want children's identities for what reasons."

It was initially thought that several thousand teacher pension scheme members could also have been impacted.

But the DfE's submission said in May only one member "most likely" had personal information taken.

It said Capita was monitoring the teacher's account for "suspicious activity" and providing them with a 12-month membership of Experian Identity Plus, which alerts members to potential suspicious activity.

In the ICO report, the DfE said breached data figures have "changed several times (both up and down) and is not confirmed". Neither the DfE nor Capita confirmed if the figure had changed as of this week, nor whether it had been communicated to pupils or their families.

The DfE said that almost all STA data was stored on uncompromised servers. A spokesperson said it was in "regular contact" with Capita as "it continues investigations".

Data was taken from less than 0.1 per cent of Capita's server estate, the company said in May.

"Having taken extensive steps to recover and secure our data ... we still have found no evidence of any information in circulation, on the dark web or otherwise, resulting from the cyber incident," it said in a statement this week.

An ICO spokesperson said it was "making enquiries" into the incident.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

## Automated email tells teachers they've failed to make pension payments

An IT bungle left thousands of teachers in Norfolk being told they had not contributed to the teacher pension scheme for more than a year.

Staff in council-run schools received an automated email from the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), managed by the outsourcing company Capita, warning them they had not received information from their employer since March 2022.

"We've assumed you've left teaching," they were told.

One teacher, who wished to remain anonymous, said it caused a "great deal of upset and unnecessary worry". Another said it was "confusing and terrifying".

Two days later, staff received an email from Norfolk County Council stating the email was

wrong.

A council spokesperson apologised for "any distress or concern this may have caused" from the "automated" message, but said "no one will be disadvantaged".

It was "not advised" TPS was sending the email out.

The TPS introduced a "new method of reporting", which alongside Norfolk's switch to a new payroll system, presented "several challenges for us and local authority schools, therefore we moved back to the previous method of reporting".

Norfolk uses the finance and HR system MyOracle, which has been beset with problems. *The Eastern Daily Press* has reported staff have been paid late, incorrectly or not at all.

Schools Week also revealed how schools are still waiting for their budgets after Birmingham council, which last week effectively declared bankruptcy, splurged millions on the platform.

Norfolk confirmed all funds taken from employees for their pensions have "been fully reconciled and paid over ... each month since April 2022".

They are working with the TPS to "ensure reporting of all members' length of service operates smoothly in future and taking further action to avoid any risk of repeat."

The Indian IT company Tata Consultancy Services will take over running the TPS from 2025.

Schools Week revealed in 2020 that teachers' pensions could be tens of thousands of pounds short because of administrative failures.

# Staff 'bullied' after talking to Ofsted inspectors

AMY WALKER  
@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted received "credible intelligence" that staff at a school at the centre of a High Court challenge over its inspection grade had been bullied and suspended after speaking to inspectors, court documents show.

Schools Week reported in July that All Saints Academy Dunstable in Bedfordshire had been granted permission for a judicial review over its 'inadequate' judgment.

The watchdog deemed further evidence was required after a first visit to the school in November last year. The school said inspectors told them it was due to be rated 'good' overall, but Ofsted said the provisional rating was 'requires improvement'.

But the inspectorate then received "credible intelligence from a whistleblower that Ms [Liz] Furber [the school's executive principal] had been bullying staff in relation to the inspection", the documents state.

"The claims included that staff had been suspended until they disclosed what had been said to the inspection team and that certain staff did not feel safe in following the school's policies," Justice Linden said at the court hearing in June.

Ofsted visited again in January and the school was subsequently rated 'inadequate'.

In its bid to gain a judicial review, All Saints argued Ofsted "acted unfairly" in taking the bullying claims into account without first putting them to Furber.

But John Young, an assistant regional director



at Ofsted, said in his witness statement the information "merely reinforced" concerns that had cropped up in the evidence-based review of the school's November inspection.

The intelligence, which the inspectorate was "not in a position to investigate", did not affect either the decision to gather further evidence or the assessment after the second inspection.

Justice Linden said he accepted that Ofsted was entitled to maintain the confidentiality of the information "and that no unfairness resulted to the school as a consequence of it doing so".

A spokesperson for All Saints told Schools Week: "The intelligence was not credible and if the allegation is raised in the proceedings this will be formally denied."

Ofsted declined to comment.

A former employee, who wanted to remain anonymous, told Schools Week they were suspended a day after talking to an inspector during the November inspection.

They said two school employees took up an invitation from an inspector to talk to them during breaktime. They answered "generic" questions and "were only in there for about 10 minutes before we went back to work. Then the next morning ... I was suspended."

According to the staff member, they were told

the suspension was due to information disclosed in feedback from parent surveys.

The school then lodged a secondary allegation that the employee created a toxic environment within their department.

But a letter sent by the ex-staff member to the school stated that "no evidence was ever presented to me to support this accusation".

The staff member claimed: "It was because [I] went over [to speak to the inspector]. It was just too glaringly obvious."

They later left the school.

When the claims were put to the school, it said: "We have made our response and have nothing further to add."

At the time of the report's publication, Furber told parents the school believed there were "significant flaws" in the way the inspection was conducted and the report was "unfair".

In the finalised report, inspectors said "too many pupils" did not feel safe at the school, while a "significant" number were unhappy.

"Many" parents and staff members were said to have "concerns" about provision, while a "large proportion" of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils had low attendance.

While the judge rejected eight other grounds for challenge, he did grant permission for judicial review on the basis that the school was not provided with "sufficient information" to fairly contest inspectors' findings and to "complain" about how the final report was "expressed".

But he had "considerable misgivings and real doubts as to whether the arguments...will succeed".

EXCLUSIVE

AMY WALKER | @AMYRWALKER

## Spielman apologises for 'unfortunate turn of phrase'

Ofsted's chief inspector has apologised after saying the inspection of a school where the head took her own life had been "reviewed to death".

Ruth Perry, the headteacher of Caversham primary school in Berkshire, died in January. Her family said she took her own life before the publication of an 'inadequate' Ofsted judgment.

Spielman is understood to have made the comment while emphasising the importance of inspecting public services during a London region Ofsted inspectors' conference last Friday.

According to three inspectors who were at the event, the HMCI immediately retracted the comment, stating she "shouldn't have" expressed it in those terms.

In a statement to Schools Week, she said: "I used a really unfortunate turn of phrase, for which I instantly apologised and corrected myself. It was clumsy and I'm sorry for any offence caused."

But an inspector who attended the conference said they were "appalled that [she] could speak in such a manner".

Another inspector said the comment was "awful", but that Spielman had "acknowledged

that immediately".

They said it was a common phrase, "but it does feel desperately unfortunate" that it was used.

Meanwhile, a third inspector said they also heard the comment, but believed Spielman had "misspoken". She was "very quick to redraw and apologise."

The comments were made as Spielman thanked inspectors for their support, saying they had been through a difficult period.

She is believed to have noted recent incidents in the NHS that she said reinforced the need for thorough inspection of key services.

# Kent's SEND plans 'put pupils' chances at risk'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Plans by one of England's biggest councils to place four in five vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools by Christmas could put pupil's life chances "at risk", leaders have said.

Ofsted and Care Quality Commission criticised Kent County Council last year for failing to tackle some schools' "lack of willingness to accommodate" children with SEND.

The council has now drawn up an improvement plan after the damning inspection.

One of its targets is for 80 per cent of pupils issued with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) to be in mainstream schools by December this year.

Just half of pupils with an EHCP were in mainstream schools as of June, which is in line with the national average.

The accelerated progress plan (APP) has been agreed by the Department for Education and NHS England.

The DfE is pushing for the education system to be "more inclusive" amid a crisis in special school places and soaring high needs deficits.

Matt Keer, a SEND specialist at the Special Needs Jungle website, said Kent's plan would take years.

"Making it happen over six months – before enough mainstream capacity and provision is in place, when Kent's SEND services are still in disarray – simply puts the life chances of hundreds more pupils at risk."

Kent refused to comment. It would not clarify



whether the target applied to those issued with new EHCPs or all existing plans.

Frazer Westmorland, headteacher at Mundella Primary School in Folkestone, said it felt as if there were a strategy to "place now and deal with the fallout later".

Margaret Mulholland, a SEND specialist at the ASCL school leaders' union, said "arbitrary targets" could act as a barrier to appropriate provision. "Our concern is that they are driven by cost rather than needs of children."

Kent is one of 34 councils receiving multi-million pound bailouts to plug high-needs deficits – with strict conditions attached to rein in spend. The council will get £142 million to eliminate its deficit by 2027-28, the largest package to date.

Last year's local area SEND inspection found Kent had made no progress in addressing any of the nine "significant weaknesses".

The report found the quality of provision had "regressed" since a critical inspection in 2019 and there was "too wide a variation... in

commitment to inclusion in schools".

The "widely held view" among parents and some schools was that certain secondaries were "not inclusive".

A "lack of willingness of some schools to accommodate children with SEND" had continued since the last inspection.

Ministers had issued the council with an improvement notice, which means it must create an APP that the DfE reviews every six months.

Other key performance indicators include 80 per cent of EHCPs being issued within the 20-week legal time frame. In June, this was just 13.2 per cent, according to the document.

Ed Duff, an education lawyer at HCB solicitors, said it was "utterly impossible" to have these targets "and comply with legal duties".

"The system of EHCPs requires provision and placements are matched to need. Restricting access to placements other than mainstream means a restriction on specialist provision. That goes against the core principles of the EHCP systems."

Kent's safety valve agreement, published in March, tells leaders to "implement a countywide approach to 'inclusion education'", which will increase "the proportion of children successfully supported in mainstream education and reducing dependence on specialist provision".

Mike Walters, chair of the Kent Association of Headteachers, said the APP target was "clearly ambitious and may prove challenging to meet".

But he added that to improve provision and outcomes for children with SEND "we need to be very ambitious in the targets we set ourselves".

EXCLUSIVE

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## MPs to challenge ministers over EHCP cuts target

MPs will write to ministers to demand answers over a SEND contract that "appears to contradict evidence" from the children's minister.

The Department for Education has signed a £19.5 million contract with Newton Europe, which includes "targeting at least 20 per cent reduction in new education, health and care plans issued".

The consultancy has developed the government's "delivering better value in SEND" project, which works with 55 councils to bring down their SEND budget deficits.

Within the contract, signed last year, it says

"the intention" of budget management plans will help achieve the "following impacts", including "reduced cost pressure on the high-needs budgets of selected local authorities as a result of reduced growth in the number of EHCPs".

It was "targeting at least a 20 per cent reduction in new EHCPs issued".

The education committee in May challenged the government about SEND cost-cutting measures.

When asked about concerns these would "effectively ration EHCPs", Claire Coutinho, the former children's minister, responded:

"That is absolutely not what we are trying to do."

Alison Ismail, a DfE official, also told MPs it was "not projecting to a particular target as such".

Robin Walker, the committee chair, has now told *Schools Week* he will be "seeking further explanation" from the DfE after the issue was reported in *The Observer* this weekend.

"We are concerned that this appears to contradict evidence given to the committee earlier this year when the minister said no targets had been set for reducing EHCPs."

FEATURE: RAAC

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

# ‘Teaching here feels like being on a school trip’

**JACK DYSON**  
**@JACKDYDS**

Site manager Jason Pheifer was the first to notice the spots of dirt accumulating under St Andrew’s Junior School’s skylights.

When he pulled a panel out from underneath one of the windows, he realised the dark blemishes were instead lumps of crumbly concrete – reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, the RAAC of recent headlines.

The discovery of RAAC in the final week of the summer holiday set in motion a chain of events in which classes moved out of the Essex building into a Georgian country house up the road, better known for hosting weddings.

Now the venue’s orangerie, ballroom, reception and chapel – where couples pay up to £7,500 to tie the knot – have desks and whiteboards every Monday to Thursday.

Becky Black, the school’s head, says the site manager thought the ceiling tiles looked really grubby “so took it upon himself to take them down and start a ceiling project. When I came in, he said ‘you need to see this’.

“He had found blocks of concrete – some of them were the size of a man’s foot. The risk was if you were sitting under the tiles and more of the concrete had fallen on to one of the tiles, then the tiles would have cracked.”

The school was ordered to close on Tuesday, August 29, two days before the government escalated its RAAC policy. DfE officials told Black and two other members of St Andrew’s leadership team that they had a day to take essential items out of the building.

The three moved computers, medical information and staff files into the only structure on the school site that could be used – a temporary classroom that had been “condemned about five months before”. RAAC was in the entire school roof.

Allison Dutaut, the deputy head, estimates that she and the rest of the senior leadership team worked 14-hour days – even on weekends – making arrangements for the term.

“We had to start 100 paces back because we



Pupils get ready for lessons in their new Georgian country house classroom

Picture credit: Rebecca Farnies

## ‘We store all of our teaching resources in a gazebo out the back’



St Andrew’s Junior School pupils walk into their new temporary school building

Picture credit: Rebecca Farnies

didn’t even have a building. All the work and the planning we’d put in for the school year and preparing for the children – the displays were up, the school was looking great and everything was ready – was for nothing.”

Dutaut’s first concern was organising emergency childcare after she was “inundated” with messages and calls from families “concerned about how they were going to cope”. She contacted the local

village hall, a nearby church and nursery to see if they had space.

It wasn’t until last Monday that she received a call from Scouts offering to “cancel all their bookings for the next three weeks to allow us use of their hall free”.

Businessman Ian Twinley rang soon after. He asked Black if she would be interested using his wedding venue, Hatfield Place, free.



FEATURE: RAAC

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The only caveat was the school had to “return the venue to exactly how it was by the end of Thursdays”.

“We store all of our teaching resources and furniture in a gazebo at the back of the building. It’s a massive additional workload for our team,” Dutaut says.

“At 7.30am on Mondays our crack team of parents and staff carry everything into the building and have to plug in projectors, soundbars – they are setting up the classrooms from scratch.”

Most pupils were taught remotely in the first week of term, while the rest went to the Scouts’ hall. The youngsters’ first day at Hatfield House was on Monday.

Each morning they’re taken by bus from St Andrew’s to the manor house, walking through a rose garden to get into their new classrooms. They are taught with the rest of their year group in classes of 60.

“I’m seeing parents and children beaming as if they’re going on a school trip in the morning,” Black says. “Teaching here feels like being on a school trip, though it’s exhausting.”

The youngsters file out into the venue’s 15-acre grounds for their breaks, which Dutaut says poses huge challenges to staff as the fields “keep going to the road at one end and a river at the other”.

“There’s constant counting of heads. Our staffing ratios for breaktimes and lunchtimes are twice as much as usual, which means we had to reduce staff breaks because we have to keep the pupils safe.”

RAAC was first identified in St Andrew’s in a DfE survey three months ago. Following that – and another visit in June – Black was given the OK to keep the building open, as the roof had earlier been reinforced.

Over the summer break contractors were brought in to repair a series of leaks. They arrived thinking they had to patch up seven holes, but left having filled 14.

Black believes the combination of the workmen walking across the roof and heavy rainfall could have caused the concrete to disintegrate.

Fifty-three of the 147 RAAC schools named by the government last week are in Essex. County council bosses have attributed this to the area’s significant growth during the 1960s and 70s, when “new towns boomed”.

Tony Ball, the authority’s cabinet member



St Andrew's Junior School staff outside Hatfield Place, a well-known wedding venue



for education excellence, says the DfE has allowed the council to “pay for temporary classrooms on the guarantee they will pay it back”.

“It was quite a shock seeing the government’s list,” he says. “Of them, we have three schools in particular now that are causing us concerns and need major works.”

However leaders at St Andrew’s expect to continue using Hatfield Place until the October half-term when eight temporary classrooms will have been set up in the school’s playground.

A date for work to begin to start removing the RAAC has not been set, but Black and Dutaut hope they’ll be able to move back into the building by the end of the academic year.

“It feels like we’ve stepped back in time to Covid because we were having to make loads of proactive decisions to make sure our children are safe,” Black says.

“Back then, though, every head was in the same position. Now I think we’re the only school in this position in mid-Essex and we’re having to problem-solve by ourselves.”

# This week's RAAC developments (including an Ofsted switch)

## SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Government officials have come under fire this week for refusing to update figures on the number of schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Here's what you need to know.

### Ofsted won't inspect RAAC schools

Ofsted this term will "avoid inspecting" any school listed by the government as affected by RAAC, unless it has "concerns".

It changed its approach after last week saying it would consider requests from affected schools under its deferral policy "as an exceptional circumstance".

Other schools not on the list but impacted by RAAC, for example hosting pupils from affected schools, can ask for deferrals. Guidance has been updated to "make clear" this will be taken into account.

The measures "will be kept under review".

However, if Ofsted has "concerns about a school then we may continue to carry out an inspection, in line with our current policy, regardless of their situation with RAAC".

### RAAC survey accuracy checks

The government will check whether responses from schools about the prevalence of RAAC in their buildings are accurate as concerns grow that hidden "crumbly" concrete may have been missed.

Since last March, councils and trusts have been asked to fill in a questionnaire on whether their schools buildings have the material, with guidance on what to look out for.

But the government is seeking expert advice over leaders' "grave concerns" that visual inspections may not be enough to find hidden RAAC. A quarter of heads told Teacher Tapp they had no or low confidence in identifying the material in their school.

Jane Cunliffe, the DfE's chief operating officer, told MPs on Monday that a sample of questionnaires would be checked, and surveyors sent out if there were issues.

However, schools with suspected RAAC will be prioritised for surveyor visits, with "several hundred" made each week.



### Reserves check before revenue help

The DfE confirmed last week it would help schools to meet "reasonable" revenue costs, such as renting alternative sites and bussing pupils elsewhere.

Susan Acland-Hood, the department's permanent secretary, said this would include a "stage of checking that the expenditure is properly related to [RAAC], that it's reasonable and so on and that the school doesn't have a very, very high level of reserve.

"But we're setting the most generous bar we can on that."

She said her department would "err on the side of generosity and our assumption is that we will meet all reasonable costs".

### New reporting option considered

The official government list has 147 schools with confirmed RAAC as of August 30 – more than two weeks ago.

Acland-Hood said the DfE was trying to give new information to schools first, to give them time to manage the situation before they were named.

"We want to be really transparent and really clear about this but we also want to manage it really sensibly for the schools."

She would not say how many schools with suspected RAAC were still waiting for a government surveyor check.

MPs were told 600 have been

done so far, and "several hundred" a week are being completed.

Meanwhile, as of Monday, 2 per cent of schools – a "few hundred" – are still to respond to the RAAC questionnaire.

Some schools reported problems with accessing the questionnaire through the online portal last week.

DfE told Schools Week it is "considering additional options for schools to communicate their circumstances" to run alongside the portal.

### Check exams contingency plans

Schools with RAAC have been urged to review their contingency plans for exams for the "unlikely event" that autumn tests are disrupted.

In an update, the Joint Council for Qualifications, which represents exam boards, said it was "aware that some schools and colleges may be affected by the presence of RAAC within their buildings and understand the challenges facing school and college staff, and students.

"In the unlikely event that you may be unable to host autumn series exams, you will need to review the contingency plans for your school or college, with the alternative site guidance notes."

Schools with concerns about "imminent assessments such as GCSE, AS or A-level non-examination assessments" should contact their exam board for support and guidance, it said.



Susan Acland-Hood

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# Sharp rise in teachers using AI to help with school work

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

A third of teachers now use artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT to help with their work, double the number who used it five months ago.

As well as lesson planning, creating resources and writing reports, they are using AI to respond to parent emails, write UCAS references and job adverts.

Polling from Teacher Tapp also shows it has been used to check if pupils have used AI for an assignment, and to show them the limitations of the tools in class.

Chief analyst Professor Becky Allen told ResearchED on Saturday that many respondents talked about “how transformative” large language models (LLMs) of AI had been “in reducing their workloads and helping them make better plans and better resources”.

“I like to think of them as being like the best kids we teach in our class. They get the A\*s, they get over 90 per cent. But they don’t get everything right.

“For some people this is the slam dunk as to why you can’t use large language models: they make errors. And they do. What I would say is that they don’t make errors at random.”

A recent survey of more than 9,000 teachers and leaders found 34 per cent reported using the tools to “help with school work”.

When Teacher Tapp asked the same question in April, just 17 per cent reported doing the same thing.

Teachers and leaders in private schools were more likely (49 per cent) than those in state schools (33 per cent) to use AI. It was also more likely to be deployed in ‘outstanding’ schools.

Two in five teachers in their twenties reported using AI, compared with 26 per cent of those aged 50-plus. Men (44 per cent) were also more likely than women (31 per cent) to use it.

The tools were also far more popular among English and science teachers than maths.

The development of more sophisticated AI has prompted a debate about its potential benefits to education, but also fears about its misuse.

Earlier this year, exam boards warned that chatbots might pose “significant risks” if used during assessments.

But Gillian Keegan, the education secretary,



has said AI could “transform” teachers’ day-to-day work, and pointed to “some interesting experiments around marking”.

Allen said simply asking AI tools to “mark and give feedback and grades” was a “pretty bad thing to do”.

“Give it a detailed prompt about how it should behave, who the pupils are, the text being studied. If it’s English literature, upload the chapter you’re asking questions on so that it’s actually got some text that is the correct thing.

“Give it a rubric that details the specific attributes for which it should be giving marks. Give it some example papers that have been marked already. Give it some feedback after it’s marked some, and

then use that to then revise how it marks in the future.

“Before you say ‘this can’t be done’, try this first and see how far you manage to get.”

Others were more sceptical of LLMs.

In a recent blog post, Daisy Christodoulou, the founder of No More Marking, warned the “error rate and error type of LLMs limits their educational applications”.

Their unreliability also “means they are not well-equipped to assess pupils’ work”.

“What about helping teachers with resource creation and lesson planning? Again, I don’t think LLMs can operate independently.

Teachers will need to check and re-check their outputs.”

She acknowledged AI might save teachers time, “but it is not a magic silver bullet for workload problems”.



Professor Becky Allen

## Marking and feedback trial planned

Ministers have commissioned a project to explore whether generative AI could be used for “marking and feedback”.

But the Department for Education has refused to say more about its plans.

Asked what the government was doing to encourage the use of AI in schools, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said the project would aim to “better understand and test” its possible uses”.

The project, based on responses to a

recent call for evidence, would “explore, for example, whether it can be used for marking and feedback”.

“This project will help us to build a robust evidence base to inform future policy and to further explore the opportunities this technology presents. It will involve AI experts and educators.”

Ministers intend to publish the findings in the spring.

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# Failing construction company leaves DfE £2m out of pocket

AMY WALKER  
@AMYRWALKER

EXCLUSIVE

The government will be at least £2 million out of pocket after a company that later failed built schools that were forced to close because of safety issues.

Caledonian Modular fell into administration in April 2022. It emerged last month that three schools it built had to close because they could not withstand “very high winds or significant snowfall”. Some were forced to delay the start of term until temporary classrooms were found.

Another two part-built schools had to be demolished this spring after “defects” were found.

Documents filed by administrators at Companies House show the Department for Education was owed £2 million when Caledonian Modular collapsed. But there were “insufficient funds” to cover unsecured creditors, which included the DfE.

Administrator Mike Denny, from Alvarez

& Marsal, also warned that the figures only reflected what had been in Caledonian’s books and records “at the time of insolvency”.

“Directors wouldn’t have been aware of any additional costs to the DfE at that time,” he said.

The £2 million may not “have reflected any sort of counter-claims or losses that the other party may have”.

In a parliamentary response this week, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said “appropriate steps” were being taken to enforce the DfE’s contractual rights in relation to “affected” Caledonian Modular schools.

This included the schools that had to close because of “possible safety defects and those that never reached completion”.

“The department is pursuing all avenues for



redress against the parties responsible for those issues.”

The DfE would not comment further on what costs it was trying to recover.

Schools Week reported last week that the department also still had to find construction companies for two special schools originally contracted to Caledonian – Greenwell Academy in Essex and River Tees Academy Grangetown in Middlesbrough.

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# Grammar told to stop demanding tenancy documents

**JACK DYSON**

@JACKDYDS

A grammar school has been told to stop demanding parents show tenancy documents as it could disadvantage low-income families.

Entry requirements for the Royal Grammar School (RGS) in High Wycombe said parents leasing properties in its catchment area had to prove they would stay at the address for the first six months of their child's studies.

They would also "have to provide a tenancy agreement from an approved letting agent".

RGS bosses insisted the requirements would help them to crackdown on "fraudulent applications" and ensure "families continued to have a link to the area" once their child started year 7.

A survey last year by property website Zoopla found a quarter of parents admitted breaking school application rules to get their child a place in their preferred local school.

Eight per cent said they temporarily rented a second home within a catchment area in their effort to secure a place.

But an anonymous objection claiming that "many genuine tenants" would be unable to meet the criteria was lodged with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

"The policy requires a tenancy agreement provided by an approved letting agent. This requirement excludes and disadvantages tenants

who rent directly from a private landlord," it argued.

"The only practical way those who are already renting can comply is to leave their current property and move into one that is rented through an approved letting agent."

The objector also stated that to meet RGS requirements, tenancies "must start before September 2023 and end after March 2025", which "exceeds the length of standard fixed-term tenancies" that were often between six and 12 months.

During his investigation into the complaint, adjudicator Robert Cawley found just two of Buckinghamshire's 12 other grammars had similar entry requirements.

RGS stressed the schools decided "this was the only way to ensure that families continued to have a link to the area once their child had commenced an education" with them.

It had seen "several annual examples" of families living in the catchment area when they applied to the school, "only to find that they live many miles away once their son has started" at the secondary.

"We strive to be a selective school for local boys and we currently struggle to meet the needs of the catchment area."

Buckinghamshire County Council – which

coordinates admissions on RGS's behalf – told Cawley "that the level of checking of addresses is constrained by the sheer volume of the applications" it dealt with.

Meanwhile, the authority said it did not expect proof "the tenant will be living at the address at least six months after the proposed admission". Instead, it asked for "a current energy bill to evidence continued residence... from the point of a place being offered".

Cawley concluded there was "no lawful basis for imposing" the rule, which was "concerned about fraudulent applications".

He also said the requirement for an approved letting agent was "unreasonable", as it did not allow applicants "to provide evidence from a range of sources that they genuinely reside in the catchment area".

"I have also found that the arrangements disadvantage unfairly a particular group, namely lower-income applicants, because they are less likely to be in a position to dictate the type of rental agreements they enter into."

The schools admissions code states that RGS must revise its arrangements in the next two months.

Mark Fenton, CEO of the Grammar School Heads Association, said schools are "quite right to take action on behalf of the vast majority of parents who play fair and whose child's place at their preferred local school is threatened by others who choose flout the rules".



Mark Fenton

JACK DYSON | @JACKDYDS

## Adjudicator backs council's objections to trust's year 7 intake cut

Attempts to slash a school's pupil numbers by more than a quarter have been snubbed in another example of the disconnect in the admissions' system between councils and trusts.

The George Eliot Academy in Nuneaton wanted to reduce its year 7 cohort from 190 to 150 next September, ahead of the opening of a new secondary free school nearby in 2025.

Warwickshire County Council objected, saying the resulting shortfall in places would have to be met by two neighbouring schools with less-than-good Ofsted.

While local authorities can determine reductions in maintained schools, their powers

do not extend to academies.

The Midland Academies Trust, which runs George Eliot, said the council's objection was based on "short-term need".

"We do not feel that compelling George Eliot to retain an educationally and financially unsustainable admission number is in the best interests of its pupils", a spokesperson for trust said.

In evidence submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, the trust also pointed to a government publication that found Warwickshire "one of the least accurate local authorities in terms of accurately predicting pupil numbers". The authority was said to have

a "strong tendency towards over-estimation".

But the adjudicator upheld the council's objection, saying the reduction would have made "more likely the possibility that some children will... have to travel out of the area to secure a school place".

The adjudicator ordered the trust to revise its admission arrangements by October 13.

Sam Freedman, a former adviser to the Department for Education, said he expected more rows between trusts and local authorities as birth rates fell over the next decade.

"Messy" situations would be avoided if regional directors were given "overall responsibility for commissioning".

# Delayed DBS checks leave teachers waiting in the wings

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Delays to criminal record checks have held up the start dates of school staff this term, with some workers waiting months for the all-clear.

The Disclosure and Barring Service aims to complete 80 per cent of enhanced checks – required by all school staff – within 14 days.

Although it met its target for education staff in June and July, figures seen by *Schools Week* show it missed it this August, despite receiving fewer applications.

The delays are at stage four of the process, which requires police forces to search their records.

Matthew Cave, the headteacher of Four Acres Academy in Bristol, is still waiting for DBS checks for three members of support staff who applied on August 21, more than three weeks ago.

He said he had “never had to push a start date back like we are now. I don’t remember ever having a problem”.

“One of them is our new caretaker ... so that’s a real pain. We’re cobbling it together between us. Some of the cleaners have stepped up. I’m doing some of the unlocking and locking.”

Historic data on police performance with DBS checks shows variation between areas. However, the data ceased publication in 2021.

Jon Barr, from the NAHT union’s Bristol branch committee, said colleagues have been contacting him since April reporting “ongoing delays”, despite the Department for Education and Avon and Somerset Police “telling us that the staffing situation was resolved. It’s incredibly frustrating for school leaders.”

Avon and Somerset Police said there had been a “significant increase” in applications since last summer.

This had “a knock-on effect in terms of processing times. For example, last month we received 22 per cent more applications than had been forecast.”

The police said it hoped people would



“understand we received an exceptionally high number of applications and this is an important process that must be carried out thoroughly”.

CRB Direct, an agency that helps people apply for checks, said delays in Bristol “appear to have been caused by a larger number of applications from people looking to move jobs or start a career in roles”.

The force said it had recruited six research officers to help manage the workload, resulting in a “significant reduction in the number of checks waiting to be processed”.

A supply teacher based in Hertfordshire, who did not give her name, said her DBS, which she applied for at the beginning of July “has been stuck at the police search stage since July 6”.

She taught full-time last year, but her move to supply work required a new check.

“It has been more than 60 days now and has been escalated, meaning they get another 14 days. It’s ridiculous... this is the longest I’ve waited.”

She was “unable to work” without the check, replying this month on her final pay check from her full-time job last year.

“I will struggle from the start of October as I’m a single mum. DBS did not care when I told them this.”

Supply agencies have also reported delays. Athona Education told *Schools Week* its checks were now taking six weeks on average, compared to one or two in

early 2023.

Jeanette Holder, its managing director, said it “had a number of placements at the end of last term where the start date was constantly pushed back, but thankfully our candidates haven’t lost any placements as of yet”.

She said the “worst delay” was five months for a DBS check for a headteacher.

Mike Donnelly, from Premier Teachers, said the system had “only just freed up”, and that “around 10 staff had very delayed ones”.

In June and July this year, 81.3 per cent and 82.2 per cent of enhanced DBS checks for the education sector were completed in two weeks, meeting the organisation’s 80 per cent target.

However, despite far fewer applications, only 76.2 per cent in August were completed within two weeks.

The proportion of enhanced checks for all sectors processed within 14 days fell from 87 per cent in 2020-21 to 78.4 per cent in 2022-23.

A DBS spokesperson said it was “meeting targets” while issuing more than 100,000 enhanced checks a month in the education sector.

Some checks would take longer to complete. “However, it is imperative – in the interests of upholding a robust checking process – that the relevant police forces are able to interrogate their own systems to ensure all relevant information is disclosed.”

# BTECs reforms risk 155k students ‘falling through gap’

**BILLY CAMDEN**

@BILLYCAMDEN

At least 155,000 young people will be left without a suitable post-16 course from 2026 because of the government’s plan to axe most BTECs, new analysis suggests.

Experts predict that a sharp drop in the number of applied general qualifications, such as BTECs, coupled with slow growth in the number of students taking their replacement T-levels will lead to one in eight sixth formers “falling through the gap”.

First-of-their-kind projections to measure the scale of the impact of ministers’ controversial level 3 reforms have been released by the Protect Student Choice campaign, in the absence of any official modelling from the government.

In a scathing report, the campaign also lays into ministers for “playing fast and loose” with data by using it in a “partial and misleading” way to justify their plans.

Sector leaders said the findings highlight a “disaster waiting to happen” and urged ministers to “put young people ahead of political game playing” by pausing and reviewing the reforms.

However, skills minister Robert Halfon defended the reforms: “We no longer incentivise courses like self-tanning, balloon artistry and pole fitness instructing – as the last government did.

“We’ve worked hand in glove with hundreds of employers to rebuild the entire skills system. Alternative qualifications including BTECs will continue, however we will be removing those where there is poor uptake, inadequate outcomes, or overlap with our world-class T-levels.”

## ‘Calamitous impact’ of level 3 reforms revealed

The DfE is creating a streamlined system for students finishing their GCSEs which pushes them to study either A-levels, T-levels, or an apprenticeship from 2025.

Alternative applied general qualifications (AGQs), such as Pearson’s popular BTECs, will only get funding from this point if they do not overlap with the other qualifications and pass a strict approvals process.

A freedom of information request by the Sixth Form Colleges Association, which leads the



Protect Student Choice campaign, found there were 281,260 students studying at least one level 3 AGQ in 2022/23, and 15,410 were studying a T Level.

The association’s report warned that AGQ numbers will fall rapidly and significantly: 191,257 students are studying qualifications that the government has already deemed to be ineligible for reapproval and will scrap by 2026. The remaining 90,003 are studying qualifications that the government will consider reapproving.

The SFCA predicts that linear growth – a steady level of increase based on the three years of student numbers available – in T-level learners is the most likely trend, which would lead to 51,482 T-level enrolments by 2026.

Analysis indicates that at least 155,185 students – around 13 per cent of sixth formers in England – are currently enrolled on an AGQ that will be scrapped and will not be able to enrol on a T-level if growth follows the SFCA’s linear projection.

The association said this is “almost certainly” a significant underestimate, as it has assumed that all applied general eligible for reapproval will successfully navigate the reapproval process, which in practice is “extremely unlikely”.

Funding was made available in the 2021 spending review for “up to 100,000 T-level students” by 2024/25.

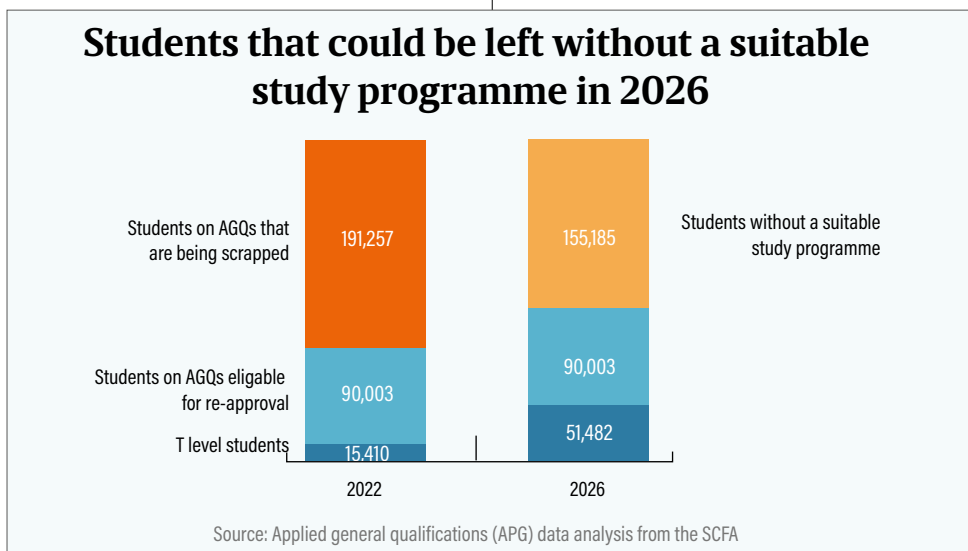
The SFCA said that achieving this number in the next two years would involve near-exponential growth, which is “not consistent with enrolment patterns to date”.

Ministers believe that T-levels will “gain traction” when competing qualifications like BTECs have been removed.

But the SFCA warned scrapping BTECs to drive up T-level numbers is a “high risk strategy that is not supported by evidence”, adding that “many” schools and colleges predict the reforms are more likely to drive up A-level numbers instead.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: “This data-driven report finally reveals the calamitous impact they [the government’s reforms] will have. The government should now pause and review its plans as a matter of extreme urgency. To fail to do so is to wilfully abandon the futures of a whole generation of sixth form students.”

Halfon said: “This September there are 18 high quality T-levels available offered at more than 160 providers across the country. More courses will be coming on board over the next few years, so we expect student numbers to rise as these are rolled out.”



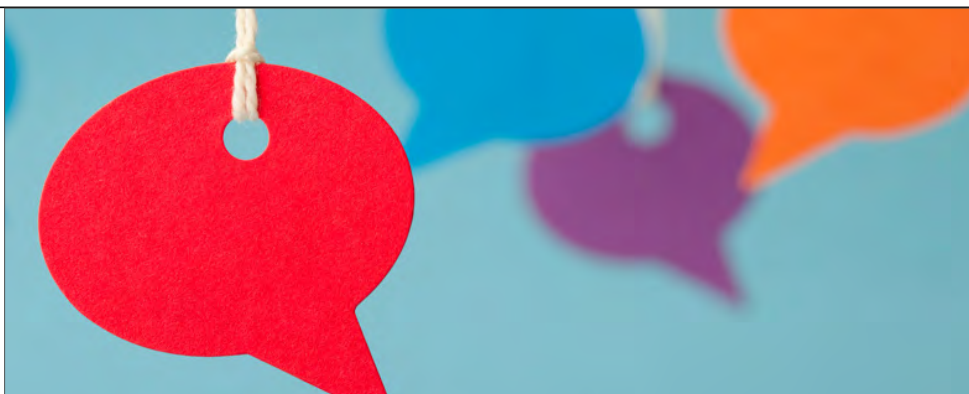
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# Early intervention scheme boosts language skills

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

@FCDWHITTAKER



An early language intervention boosted children's language skills by four months, a study has found.

The evaluation of the three-year Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) scheme, part of the government's catch-up programme, also found poorer pupils averaged seven months' progress.

A national roll-out of the programme, created by the founders of the University of Oxford spin-off OxEd & Assessment, was funded by the Department for Education for £17 million and offered to all schools with a reception class.

More than 10,000 schools registered.

Staff, usually teaching assistants or early years educators, were trained to deliver "individual and small-group sessions to four and five-year-olds to improve their vocabulary, active listening and narrative skills".

An earlier evaluation found a "large proportion" of pupils did not complete the scheme as intended, but that most staff surveyed observed an increase in pupils' confidence in their use of language.

The government announced in the summer that it would continue to fund the scheme for state schools this academic year.

Yesterday the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published an evaluation of the second year of the national rollout by the National Foundation for Educational Research,

based on data from 10,800 children in 350 schools.

It found children who took part made on average four months' additional progress in their language skills, compared with children who didn't receive the intervention.

Further analysis found children eligible for free school meals made on average seven months' additional progress, "suggesting that NELI could help to close the language development gap between socio-economically disadvantaged children and their peers".

The impact was greater for children who received more sessions.

Professor Becky Francis, the EEF's chief executive, said "time and time again, the Nuffield Early Language Intervention has proven its effectiveness in boosting young children's language development.

"It's hard to overestimate how exciting it is to see a programme have a significant positive impact on a national scale."

Disruption by the pandemic meant many schools were "unable to deliver all the sessions", but "even for children who received fewer sessions, there was an average positive impact on their language outcomes".

David Johnston, the children's minister, said it was "fantastic to see that the children involved in the programme are now four months ahead of where they would have been without the programme, with disadvantaged children having benefitted the most.

"The big impact this programme is having is clear, and I am pleased that we will now be funding it for another year."

Professor Charles Hulme, co-author of the NELI programme, said he was "delighted that this roll-out of NELI in schools has been so successful.

"NELI is the best evidenced language intervention in the world and helps to provide a solid foundation for the whole of children's education."

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

## DfE on the lookout for safeguarding tsar

Ministers want to appoint a new tsar to strengthen schools' role in safeguarding and consider whether they should become a "fourth strategic partner".

The new "national child safeguarding facilitator" will focus on education until March 2025. The contract is advertised at £100,000.

A tender document states the postholder will help to roll out the social care reforms, including "strengthening the role of education in early help, child protection and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements".

The tsar would hold discussions between

schools and safeguarding agencies on "how effectively they work together" and "increasing the engagement of education settings".

They would also "support the department to explore whether or how to make education a fourth strategic partner".

The MacAlister review of child social care proposed schools should become "statutory safeguarding partners" alongside councils, health services and police.

It warned that leaving schools out meant the voice of education was "missing".

But in its response the DfE pledged only to consult on how to strengthen schools' role.

*Schools Week* investigations have revealed how schools have become the new frontline as social care resources dwindle.

The new tsar should be able to demonstrate knowledge and experience of safeguarding in the context of the sector and of improvement processes, the DfE said.

The government is also looking for a safeguarding tsar to focus on local authorities and "strengthen multi-agency arrangements".



# 5 solutions from experts for teacher shortage woes

AMY WALKER  
@AMYRWALKER



The government will miss teacher recruitment targets by 48 per cent this year – with some subjects faring worse than others.

Subject association experts have ideas how to fix it and on Tuesday laid out their potential fix-its to education committee MPs. Here's what they had to say.

## 1. More data on teacher retention rates

While recruitment woes were well documented, Professor Paul Glaister, the former chair of the Joint Mathematical Council of the UK, said less was known about the reasons for early departures.

"If [the DfE] ... found out why people didn't stay and had to publish it, then maybe you'd have a better understanding of why we have this crisis," he said.

An independent inquiry into the teacher workforce was also needed "to really understand why we don't retain people who are teaching maths".

Meanwhile, he claimed that there was not a minister "whose number one job is teacher recruitment and retention".

Deborah Weston, a research officer at the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, suggested research into how some schools kept teachers in shortage subjects for longer.

"What are they doing that makes teachers stay?" she said. "These are things that could be learned across the piste if we could identify good practice."

## 2. Schools need capacity for CPD

Weston emphasised that staff without a degree in the subject they were teaching could become "an expert over time" with appropriate training.

But the experts warned that too few non-specialists were able to gain access to ongoing training.

Ryan Ball, the director of education at the Design and Technology Association, trialled a three-day course for non-specialists in the summer holidays "thinking it's not going to be taken up".

But the association had to set up a waiting

list as it could not fit all the applicants into its offices.

"This course cost several hundred pounds. Some teachers paid out of their own pocket because they were anxious and concerned about teaching the subject," he told the committee.

Hari Rentala, the head of learning and skills at the Institute for Physics, told MPs he wanted intensified CPD for non-specialists.

"We need financial incentives for both schools and teachers to make it credible they're going to find the time and pay to take part, because we know the system is stretched," he said.

But citing free training for non-specialist maths teachers through the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM), Glaister said workloads were getting in the way of take-up.

NCETM met just 57 per cent of its target across two academic years for its specialist knowledge for teaching mathematics course.

## 3. Golden handcuffs for teachers

While physics graduates could claim government-funded bursaries worth £27,000 to enter teacher training, Rentala suggested more financial incentives could keep them in the profession.

According to his institute, between 40 and 50 per cent of physics teachers leave within their first five years. He suggested "targeted uplifts" for early careers staff "seems worth exploring".

Glaister told MPs "you might have to pay more for early career payments" to retain maths staff. Currently maths teachers can claim

up to £9,000 in some areas if they stay in the profession for five years.

But he said a golden handcuff – a "financial penalty" for those who left the profession – "might be the answer".

## 4. 'Scale up' schemes to get professionals into sector

Poaching professionals from other industries was also suggested. Rentala said a DfE scheme to recruit engineers into physics teaching was a "positive development".

While "small-scale", it had "real potential". "There are just so many more relevant engineering graduates than there are physics graduates and it's a pool that we should be targeting proactively."

A separate government scheme to lure physics teachers back into the profession with support from an adviser recruited just 23 staff in two years.

## 5. Teacher workloads need to be reduced

Rentala said while financial incentives and competitive offers from other industries were part of the picture in keeping physics teachers, the main issues were "workload and teaching outside of subject area".

The Institute of Physics found that nearly half of new teachers taught less than two-thirds physics because they were drafted in to teach biology and chemistry.

Meanwhile, Weston added that similar proportions of RE teachers were also leaving within the first five years. About half spent most of their time teaching a different subject.

# Revealed: 19 schools named as language hubs

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

@FCDWHITTAKER

Nineteen schools will run the government's new language hubs across England.

Ministers last year announced a £14.9 million expansion of their previous language hubs pilot, which aims to spread best practice in language teaching and boost exam entries.

The scheme will be managed by the National Consortium for Languages Education, a consortium of UCL, the British Council and the Goethe-Institut.

The 19 will work together on the first 15 hubs, four of which are led by two schools. A further 10 lead schools will be selected in a second recruitment round in January, making 25 in total.

Each hub is expected to work with up to seven secondary schools, allowing the scheme to reach a maximum of 175 schools, just 5 per cent of those nationally.

Government data shows entries to German A-level plummeted 17 per cent this year, with Spanish entries down 12.7 per cent and French 12.5 per cent.

At GCSE, German entries fell 6 per cent, while French dropped 0.3 per cent. Spanish entries increased 4.6 per cent.

The language hubs will include a "distinct German promotion project to raise the profile of learning German in schools, including increasing awareness of the benefits of studying it".

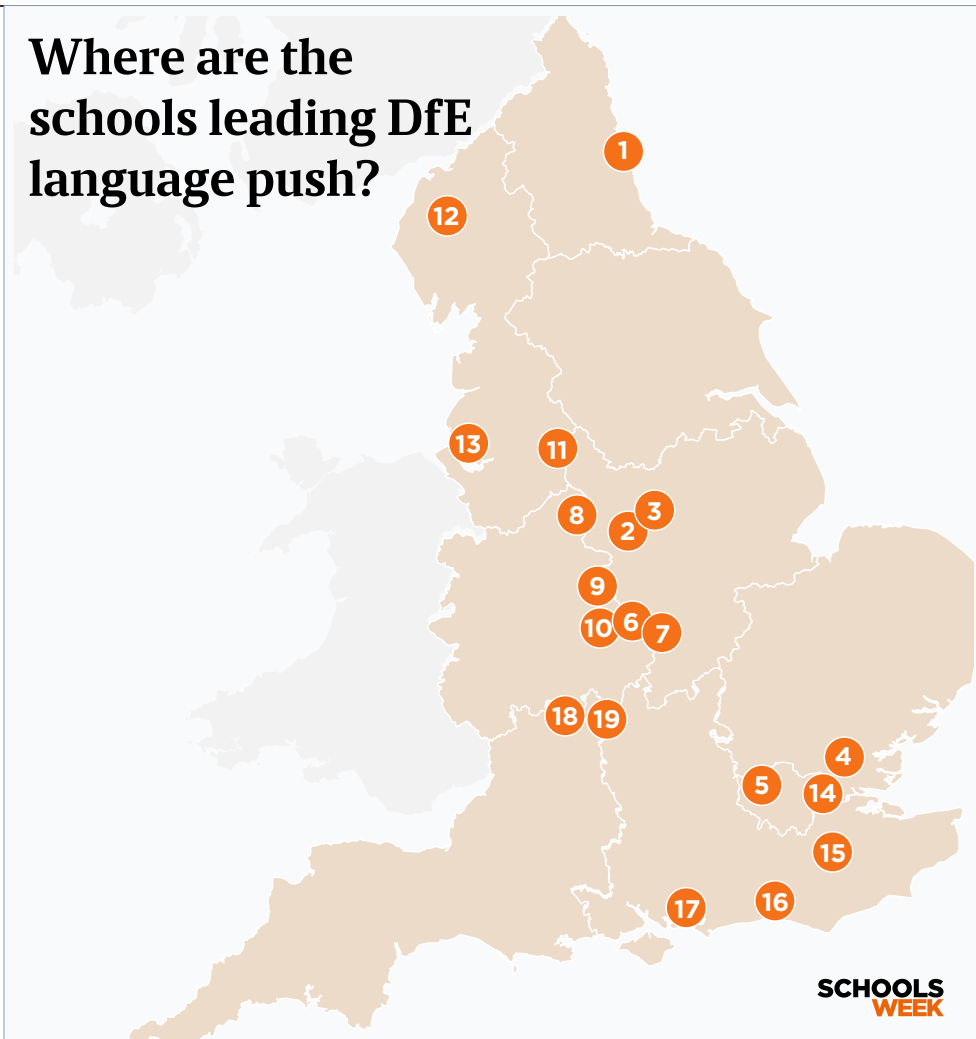
It will be led by the Goethe-Institut, using £400,000 of the hubs' cash.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said: "Young people who are confident in a second language are at a huge advantage in life. On top of the social and cultural advantages it provides, there are many economic benefits.

"That is why I have long called for more pupils to consider studying languages such as German at GCSE. This programme will crucially equip teachers with the necessary training and knowledge to support pupils looking to do so."

The hubs will "engage with schools to improve the languages offer and ensure more effective transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3, whilst making sure that pupils aged 14 to 18 from all backgrounds have the opportunity to study

## Where are the schools leading DfE language push?



Nick Gibb

languages through to key stage 5".

As well as "increasing opportunities among disadvantaged pupils to study languages", the programme will also "increase access to home, heritage and community languages for pupils", the DfE said.

The government runs similar hubs in English, maths, computing and music, as well as for teaching schools and behaviour.

### The 19 language hub lead schools

1. Cardinal Hume Catholic School, North East
2. Littleover Community School, East Midlands
3. The Priory Academy, East Midlands
4. Anglo-European School, East of England
5. Ada Lovelace CofE High School, London
6. Sidney Stringer Academy, West Midlands
7. Lawrence Sheriff School, West Midlands
8. Painsley Catholic College, West Midlands
9. Arthur Terry, West Midlands
10. Tudor Grange Academy, West Midlands
11. Cheadle Hulme High School, North West
12. Keswick School, North West
13. The Blue Coat CE School, North West
14. Dartford Grammar School, South East
15. The Skinners' Kent Academy, South East
16. Hove Park School, South East
17. Admiral Lord Nelson School, South East
18. Pate's Grammar School, South West
19. The Cotswold School Academy, South West

# Disadvantage gap static at key stage 2

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

**@FCDWHITTAKER**

The attainment gap between disadvantaged primary school pupils and their better-off peers has stopped growing, but remains far above pre-pandemic levels.

Updated key stage 2 results data by pupil characteristic published by the DfE on Tuesday shows the “disadvantage gap” narrowed slightly from 3.23 in 2022 to 3.20 this year.

However, some looked-after children are excluded from the data. Once they are added, the department expects the gap to widen again by about 0.02 points.

This is far wider than the gap of 2.91 reported pre-Covid in 2019. Last year’s gap was the widest in 10 years, and reflected disruption to education during the pandemic.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders’ union NAHT, said it was “recognised at the time” that Covid would impact the disadvantage gap, “which is why an ambitious educational recovery plan was proposed, which the government refused to fund”.



As reported last term, the proportion of pupils meeting the government’s “expected standard” in reading, writing and maths SATs remained unchanged this year, after dropping six percentage points in 2022 following Covid.

The data shows a slight improvement in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard, but again, some looked-after children have not been factored-in.

The performance of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities also improved slightly on last year, but still remains below 2019.

## Gender gap narrows

The gender gap has also narrowed. This year, 63 per cent of girls and 56 per cent of boys met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths,

a gap of seven percentage points. The gap was nine percentage points last year.

The government said the “slight narrowing” was down to boys’ results improving and girls’ falling slightly.

Although looking just at pupils reaching the higher standard, the gender gap in reading fell from ten percentage points last year to five this year. Boys’ attainment increased by four percentage points: girls’ attainment fell by two.

Children were more likely to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths if they attended a free school (64 per cent) or converter academy (62 per cent) than if they attended a local authority-maintained school (60 per cent) or sponsored academy (55 per cent).

The proportion meeting the standard ranged from 57 per cent in the south west and east of England to 65 per cent in London.

But data at local authority level shows even greater variation, with London boroughs making up the 10 best-performing areas, and cities and towns outside London and some rural counties faring far worse.

Portsmouth had the lowest results, with

## EPs vote in favour of pay strikes

Educational psychologists have voted in favour of strike action over pay.

Seventy per cent of The Association of Educational Psychologists’ 3,600 members turned out for the ballot. Eighty-six per cent voted in favour of industrial action.

Ballots for strike met the thresholds in 130 out of 157 council areas, while a further six voted for action short of a strike.

Details of action have not yet been confirmed while the union is considers a “revised and improved pay offer”.

Pay for educational psychologists, who play a fundamental role in assessing the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities, is set by councils.



The ballot relates to their 2022 pay offer, which was a rise of £1,925 (3 per cent on average).

Dr Cath Lowther, the union’s general secretary, said rising workloads meant children waiting far too long to be seen by an EP – or worse, don’t get to see one at all”.

## NASUWT workload protests kick off

About half of schools face staff limiting their working time as part of industrial action by the NASUWT teachers’ union from Monday.

Action includes only attending one hour-long meeting a week outside pupil session times and refusing to be directed to undertake extracurricular activities and midday supervision.

Members will also not do work-related tasks in their lunch breaks, on weekends or bank holidays, and will refuse to cover some absences and not cooperate in mock inspections.

The union, which represents 280,000 teachers in the UK, previously voted in favour of the government’s 6.5 per cent teacher pay deal, but warned industrial action would go ahead over workload.

It said this week about 10,000 schools would be affected by the action, which is about half of the 22,000 state schools in England.

The union’s general secretary Patrick Roach, said the action is designed to “help bring downward pressure on workload and working hours”.

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# Investigation

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

## The excluded children with nowhere to go



**Missing from mainstream: Pupils are stuck on waiting lists for specialist support – some left with no education at all – as PRUs struggle with rising exclusions, Jessica Hill reports**

Excluded children in a third of areas are stuck on waiting lists for specialist provision as exclusions appear to be rising faster than councils can keep up with, a Schools Week investigation has found.

Pupil referral units have expanded official capacity to keep up with demand in two in five councils – 25 places on average each, freedom of information request responses from 98 councils show.

But a third of councils still had waiting lists this summer for PRU places, with an average of 20 children on each list, some receiving no education at all or just online tutoring.

Leaders say an increase in exclusions is leaving their PRU overstretched and unable to provide the tailored support needed to meet the needs of their pupils. A sample of council responses appears to back this up.

The 20 councils that provided exclusion data for last year saw rises of 56 per cent following a pandemic lull.

Sarah Johnson, president of PruAp, the body representing that sector, says there needs to be swift action to prevent a crisis.

“While some local authorities have taken steps to increase capacity, the reliance on online provision ... is still a pressing issue.”

### Lack of capacity to meet demand

Leaders say their success in turning excluded children's lives around is down to smaller classes and the ability to provide more tailored support.

National figures show 13,191 pupils in PRUS last year, up 13 per cent from 11,684 in 2021-22. This works out as an average 39 pupils per unit this year, compared with 35 the year before.

However, this is still below pre-pandemic 2019-20, when there were just over 15,000 in PRUs – an average of 44 pupils in each unit.

But some PRUs have converted into alternative provision academies in the past decade, which could impact the figures.

We asked all 153 councils for data relating to PRU capacity last year. Of the two in five who increased provision beyond official capacity numbers, Sandwell had the largest rise of 80 places. Its PRU had 66 pupils at the last census.

Fifty-nine pupils also went to alternative provision outside the local authority area.

The lack of available provision is also evident in schools' use of Code E, indicating when a pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision made for them.

According to data provided by school management information provider Arbor from its 5,471 schools, the use of Code E in

secondaries rose from 11 per cent in 2022 to 15 per cent in 2023, a 33 per cent rise.

Where capacity is not increased, Steve Howell, PruAp's representative for school participation, says others are “just expected to shoehorn kids in or they're putting them on waiting lists for provision, and giving them a limited offer of online tutoring in the meantime”.

### 'They're just sat at home'

Councils have legal duties to arrange suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils within six days of their exclusion. But current pressures hinder this.

Our FOI found 26 councils had 531 pupils in total on waiting lists. However just 77 councils were able to respond, meaning extrapolated nationally the real figure could be double.

There were just under 7,500 pupils in PRUs last year.

Nine in ten (92 per cent) on waiting lists were receiving less than full-time education, while 11 per cent of councils admit that some children (41 in total) have been left with no provision at all.

In almost one in ten areas, children have been offered mainly online tutoring.

Lincolnshire, which no longer has a PRU, went out to the market “multiple times” to find provision



Steve Howell

# Investigation: Exclusions

for its 80 children currently without placements.

But providers were “unable to offer further capacity in or around” the county, says Martin Smith, its assistant director for education.

The council has commissioned online home tutoring for these children as an “interim arrangement”.

The Archway Academy PRU in Redcar and Cleveland reached capacity by February in the 2021-22 school year, with 69 permanent exclusions. It established home tuition with weekly council home visits.

Blackpool’s PRU, Educational Diversity had 140 pupils on roll in May, but places for only 110. And Essex in May required an extra 82 places.

Some children in Essex are understood to have waited for up to a year for educational provision after being excluded, and even now they are only receiving 15 hours a week of home tuition. The council says it currently has 176 children on a waiting list for a PRU place, more than any other area.

Michaela Davies’s two sons, aged 6 and 8, who both have special educational needs, were both permanently excluded on the same day just two weeks before the end of last term from two schools in Warwickshire.

She claims to have been offered no provision of any sort for either of them.

“They’re just sat at home with no education. Where is the support for these children with disabilities?”

### ‘We can’t cope with the demand’

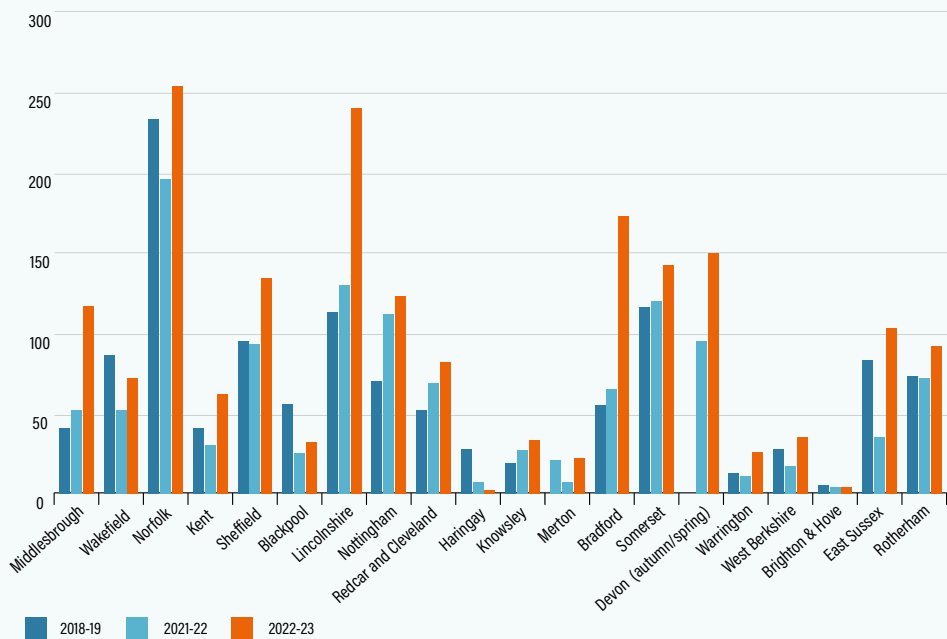
Philomena Cozens, the chief executive of the Keys Co-operative trust of three AP schools in Essex, says one of her schools took in almost 50 per cent more pupils than its official capacity of 115.

While PRUs would normally start a school year with small numbers of short-stay children, she says this year they will be “up to PAN” this month, with others still awaiting placement.

“I’ve never known anything like it. We still do a good job. But we can’t cope with the numbers of referrals.”

In Sheffield, the numbers excluded surpassed the PRU’s commissioned place numbers at Easter

## Council data suggests exclusions are rising again



Source: FOI data from 20 councils of 153 that provided permanent exclusion figures for 2022-23

SCHOOLS WEEK

## ‘Often the child makes a choice to be naughty rather than look stupid’

and the council agreed to increase capacity from 250 to 300.

While PRU numbers are down on pre-pandemic, Howell says it is now high waiting lists and high exclusion numbers. “The exclusions are happening at a faster pace than areas can keep up with.”

The latest DfE exclusions data, lagged to 2021-22, shows while permanent exclusions began rising after a pandemic lull, they are still lower than in 2018-19. But suspensions have rocketed.

Most councils were unable to provide exclusion figures for last year – but there were rises in 19 of the 20 that did.

Overall, the councils recorded a 56 per cent rise in exclusions between 2021-22 and 2022-23. Their overall exclusions figure was 42 per cent higher than in 2018-19.

Furthermore, council reports for Surrey, Lancashire, Essex and Bristol indicate rising permanent exclusions, while sources in Birmingham, Suffolk and Plymouth tell Schools

Week of rising exclusions too.

For the first time, behaviour and exclusions are among the top three challenges cited by secondary school governors in the National Governance Association’s annual survey.

Many local authorities are responding by building new AP provision and specialist resource bases for schools. Some large trusts are opening their own AP.

But a briefing earlier this year by Schools North East warns that new AP being built in the region is expected to “reach capacity quickly” due to “large numbers of students coming out of mainstream”.

Cozens says pupils are also staying in provision longer because they are unable to get back into mainstream schools.

Her year 11 cohort were at the PRU for an average of three academic years – leaving her school without the capacity to offer short-term placements.

# Investigation: Exclusions

## Creaking support services leave schools short

The most common reason (35 per cent) for permanent exclusion in 2021-22 was persistent disruptive behaviour.

A report out this week from the Who's Losing Learning Commission found that last year children with special needs were four times more likely to be suspended and those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) were 3.7 times more likely.

The DfE's SEND and AP improvement plan admits that AP (including PRUs) "is increasingly being used to supplement local SEND systems".

Cozens notes a rise in children with unidentified learning needs being excluded because mainstream schools were unable to get their needs assessed in a "timely fashion".

Almost half of children needing SEND support waited beyond the legal deadline of 20 weeks for an EHCP to be issued last year.

"When that's left too long, very often the child makes a choice to be naughty rather than look stupid," Cozens adds.

Sheffield's school forum raised concerns that its PRU was "receiving children with special needs that shouldn't be" there.

Its will now turn the facility into a "learning centre", rather than "simply looking after" its cohort.

Budget cuts are also hampering tackling behaviour issues, with slashed support services.

The notional SEND support budget of £6,000 per pupil, which has not risen since it was introduced 10 years ago, also "penalises inclusive schools at the expense of those less welcoming to children needing additional support", says John Pearce, the president of the Association of Children's Services.

Exclusions also have cost implications for councils; Lancashire's predicted budget spend on excluded pupils almost tripled from £0.4 million to £1.1 million in 2022-23.

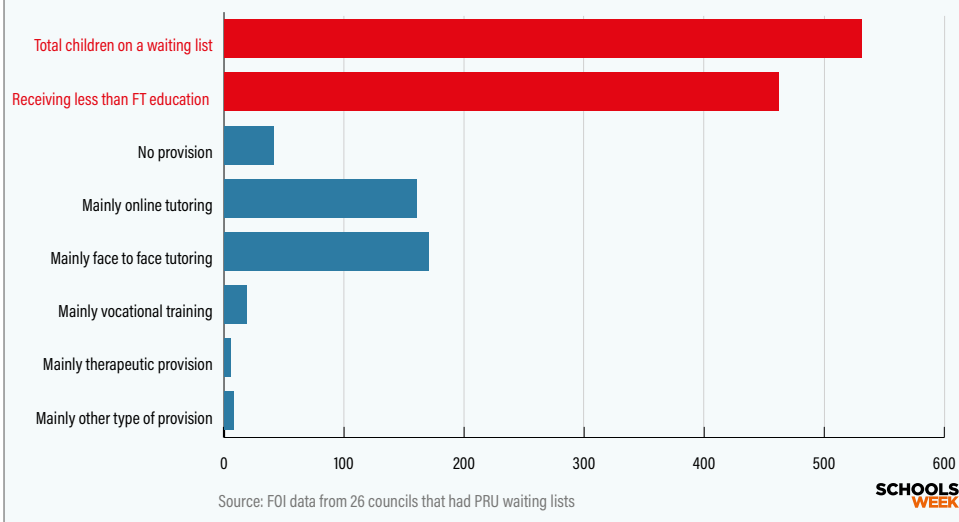
But there are fears that DfE's plans to rein in councils' spending, by reducing EHCPs and accommodating more children in mainstream, will only accelerate the pace of exclusions.

Cash-strapped Kent, where a recent



Sir Martyn Oliver

## Provision for excluded children on PRU waiting lists



Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) investigation uncovered a backlog of 170 unanswered complaints over delayed SEND support, is now attempting closer collaboration between its PRU, inclusion, attendance and SEND services to "examine the correlation between pupils with SEN[D] and suspensions, and to set up robust action plans".

### Concern over illegal exclusions

PRU pupil numbers in 2021-22 (11,684) were almost double that of DfE data for permanent exclusions (6,500). Jenny Graham, director of research at inclusion charity the Difference, says this is a sign that exclusions are taking place via unofficial routes.

Ofsted said in December that part-time timetables are being used "too often" to manage pupils' behaviour, sometimes as an alternative to exclusion.

DfE guidance in February warned schools against this, but Datalab analysis in June found 34,000 pupils could be on part-time timetables.

John Coughlan, the commissioner sent in by ministers to resolve failing SEND services in Birmingham, earlier this year found "unhelpful and even illegal practices" around "exclusions and part-time provision".

In Wakefield, a recent council committee suggested "some schools" used "partial timetables as an alternative to exclusion, which could

lead to misleading statistics".

Analysis of Arbor data showed schools appear to be using the attendance C Code, partly used to indicate part-time timetables, 12 per cent more frequently than they were a year ago.

### Trust-council clashes

The rise again in exclusions and lack of specialist provision is causing system issues, too.

Ofsted has highlighted what it says are high exclusion rates, including at schools belonging to the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, run by the incoming new chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver.

But the DfE's own behaviour tsar, Tom Bennett, says the inspectorate was "flat out wrong" for saying exclusions are "too high" at another turnaround trust, Astrea.

"If we can't exclude when absolutely necessary, then we cannot keep children safe, or teach them in calm, dignified environments," he says.

"Otherwise we force children who have been, for example, sexually abused, to share the school with their attackers, or bullies... Schools that exclude legally should be supported, not censured, for performing their duty to the children and staff in their communities."

Every council has a fair access panel that helps to match pupils with school places outside the usual admissions round.

But local authorities lack powers to compel trusts to accept the panels' decisions, and Pearce

# Investigation: Exclusions

says trusts often arrange exclusions and managed moves outside that process.

That means schools that are “under capacity or [choose to] work with councils get disproportionately impacted”.

But trusts say they have little choice but to exclude to restore classroom discipline. Howell says with needs now “more extreme” he “understands why” all the kids in his PRU, City of Birmingham School, have been excluded.

In Plymouth, MATs have refused to share data around exclusions and have had to be compelled to do so by their regional commissioner.

Tudor Williams, Plymouth’s leader, says: “We called them out on that and they’re starting to give us the data – ironically, so we can kick them up the arse.”

Pearce describes it as “ludicrous that councils can’t access information about children’s education on their patch, when we’ve statutory duties to follow through. If that school is part of a MAT that doesn’t want to play, you’ve got to go through a convoluted process to get them to. You wouldn’t invent a system like that.”

## Exclusions cited in serious case reviews

The prospects for children excluded from school are bleak. Only 4 per cent go on to pass their English and maths GCSEs, and half fail to sustain employment, education or training post-16.

Three serious case reviews in the past two years – held when a child or vulnerable adult dies or is seriously injured in circumstances involving abuse or neglect – cite exclusions as contributing factors.

A 2021 review into “Daniel”, who was shot in a revenge attack and had a leg amputated when 17, stated the “real problems” started four years earlier when anti-social behaviour led his recently academised school in Redcar and Cleveland to permanently exclude him under “new” behaviour management procedures”.

He joined a PRU under investigation over its leadership, a failed managed move to another school and then tuition sessions, which were stopped because he was



Tom Bennett

## ‘Schools that exclude legally should be supported, not censured’

seen as “unlikely to pass his exams”.

Another two case reviews of young male stabbings (one fatal) in 2021 and 2022 also highlight school exclusions. One describes how things “quickly went wrong” for Harry in Wokingham after his permanent exclusion aged 11 left him outside education for a “number of months”. Had a specialist placement been commissioned then, his mum feels his outcomes would have been very different. Instead he “drifted into criminality”, two years later being sentenced for a knife attack.

A group of parents in Brighton and Hove this week told the council how a lack of full-time alternative provision had led to a “disturbing situation” where children were “exposed to child criminal exploitation in the community”.

They said some children have been offered a “part-time package” that is “not sufficient to prevent the risk of negative behaviours in the community and child criminal exploitation. There is little aspiration for our children, and their future feels uncertain.”

## Disagreement on the way forward

Mayor Sadiq Khan’s Violence Reduction Unit in London has drawn up an inclusion charter with councils and schools to bring down exclusion rates. He has recruited Maureen McKenna, who oversaw a reduction in permanent exclusions after a similar scheme in Glasgow.

But Bennett says the decrease in exclusions is down to schools being told to stop using them, rather than reflecting an improvement in pupil behaviour.

The government’s first national behaviour survey in June found 50 minutes a day are already lost to dealing with poor behaviour.

A survey by the NASUWT union of 6,500



Sarah Johnson

members published this week reveals what general secretary Dr Patrick Roach says is an “alarming increase in violent and defiant behaviour”.

Thirty-seven per cent of respondents reported physical abuse from pupils in the past 12 months, including furniture thrown at them, being bitten, spat at, headbutted, punched and kicked.

The Scottish government also this month hosted an emergency summit after reports of rising violence in its schools.

A recent UN report called for a prohibition of exclusions in UK primaries, with former children’s commissioner Anne Longfield saying this should be in place by 2026.

But a 2018 Teacher Tapp survey found 56 per cent of respondents strongly disagree with any ban.

Johnson says PRU heads remain “deeply concerned” about the growing number of children waiting for EHCP assessments or specialised provision, many of whom have “faced repeated exclusions”.

The government’s SEND and AP improvement plan proposed changes included a statutory framework for pupil movements, three-year AP budgets and cutting long-term placements.

But the bulk of the focus is on mainstream schools being more inclusive, which leaders say won’t work without more funding or better support services.

“While the SEND and AP green paper outlined a clear desire for support at the right time and place, it’s disheartening to see that this vision has yet to materialise for many children who find themselves waiting for provision,” Johnson says.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**The collaborative response to the challenges facing trusts and schools gives a glimpse into the future of system leadership, say Alice Gregson and David Horn**

The complexity of the challenges facing schools and school leaders is apparent. Alongside ensuring children and young people – still so impacted by the legacy of the pandemic – are achieving the progress they need and deserve educationally, significant challenges remain such as poor levels of mental health, the growing complexity of special educational needs, low attendance, low aspirations in many communities and continued economic uncertainty. Much of this too often feels too big and too challenging for individual trusts or schools to tackle alone.

But what is also apparent is the determination and sense of collective endeavour among trust and school leaders to meet these challenges. Over the past year we have heard from more trust leaders about the imperative for system leadership where a vacuum exists either nationally, regionally or locally.

Indeed, there are already many examples emerging across the system of trusts responding with creativity and ingenuity to these challenges, almost always in partnership with other stakeholders. In a series of publications, Forum Strategy – with international partners The Brown Collective and several trust chief executives – have begun to capture and unpick what this all means in 2023.

We are not starting from scratch. Much progress has already been made in the internalisation and sophistication of system leadership for school-to-school improvement within trusts, federations and elsewhere. Trust and school leaders and staff now work together regularly across multiple sites and at scale, driving school

**ALICE GREGSON**

CEO, Forum Strategy

**DAVID HORN**

Associate, Forum Strategy



## School leaders are starting to shape the system – as they should

improvement.

However, our work shows that collaborative intent is expanding to identify and achieve better solutions to improve children and young people's lives. This includes trust leaders working together with others across

development and improvement.

Reflecting all these developments, our work has identified three key facets of system leadership: trust-to-trust support and learning, area-wide or locality leadership, and influencing and informing system-level direction

“Everyone has a role to play in system-led improvement”

the wider public and charity sectors, and across communities with wider stakeholders to achieve meaningful impact and change.

Alongside these, the academy trust system itself remains embryonic, and it's also become increasingly clear that trust leaders need to work together across trusts to inform one another's

and policy.

We have also found that the behaviours of effective system leaders at this level is vital. This includes taking the initiative in identifying the big issues facing pupils and communities and galvanising others who can help to make a difference; emphasising the power and potential



of partnerships to bring about change and building impactful relationships beyond organisational and sector boundaries; demonstrating humility, mutual respect, and fostering a culture of collegiality; ensuring momentum and delivery against shared goals; bringing your organisation with you and sustaining success within it; and taking calculated risks to drive progress.

These are not only behaviours for CEOs, though; these are also to be encouraged and modelled by CEOs across the whole workforce. Everyone has a role to play in system-led improvement.

While the DfE sees this notion of wider system leadership as a key component of a trust's work, there is not enough detail in its trust quality descriptors as to what it means in practice. Addressing that gap using the work of our chief executive members would itself be an example of effective system leadership.

Beyond that, we must ensure training is in place to support trust leaders to maximise their wider impact. Our CEOs as system leaders programme aims to achieve just that. More also needs to be done to demonstrate the benefits of wider system leadership to boards of trustees who are key to providing direction and support.

Finally, we need to share and celebrate these emerging, impactful examples of system leadership. They have emerged from the sector itself rather than government policy, and the challenge now is to make them a system habit.

**Forum Strategy's sixth annual National #TrustLeaders CEO Conference takes place on 21 September in Nottingham. Schools Week is media partner to the event**

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**Lib Peck explains how, with the help of Maureen McKenna, her unit plans to improve the lives of the capital's children**

Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, set up London's Violence Reduction Unit to change how we tackle violence. This requires change in how we view and treat young people.

For us, this has meant developing a child-centred approach that puts the rights of children and young people front and centre.

And it means change for education too.

Children are unarguably safer when they're in school, and they can only improve educational outcomes when they're in the classroom, learning. To make that happen for all children, environments must be built around inclusion.

We know there is a strong causal link between all forms of exclusion (including absenteeism, suspensions and managed moves) and violence and exploitation.

A DfE report in March last year clearly stated that it's more common for children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence to have been suspended or permanently excluded. Fewer than one in 200 children are permanently excluded, but almost half of the prison population has been.

It's a correlation not to be ignored. That's why, alongside our investment in nurturing and healthy relationships led by charities NurtureUK and Tender, we're seeking to build positive change and support through the London Inclusion Charter.

Our ambition is for a charter built on partnership and the principles of promoting inclusive practices in school. It's built around the voice of children and young people – a voice often missing in discussions and decisions about their education – and

## LIB PECK

Director,  
London's Violence  
Reduction Unit



## MAUREEN MCKENNA

Education consultant,  
London's Violence  
Reduction Unit



## Promoting inclusion won't mean banning exclusions in London

informed by teachers, headteachers, education specialists, families and local authorities.

Does that mean a zero-tolerance approach to exclusion?

Absolutely and unequivocally not. Teachers and children must be

curriculum.

We aim to shine a light on promising practice in schools across our city, celebrating inclusion and working in partnership to tackle all forms of exclusion. This goes hand-in-hand with increasing young people's

“Zero tolerance to exclusions? Unequivocally not

protected, and if a line has been crossed it's right to exclude.

What the charter seeks to do is galvanise action to support and prioritise inclusive practices in schools, and to tackle stark disproportionalities by focusing on anti-racism and equitable practices in

feelings of safety and belonging so that they can thrive.

Maureen McKenna will work with us, bringing energy, determination and the experience of working with teachers to develop and embed inclusive practices in Glasgow. She presided over a drop in fixed-term



exclusions over 14 years of more than 90 per cent, which coincided with a 50 per cent reduction in violence affecting young people in the city.

London's challenges, governance, population, structures, diverse communities, and much more besides are all different to Glasgow's. But we share a recognition that children can only learn when they're in schools where they feel safe, secure and welcome.

It's often pointed out that exclusion figures in London are low, but this only partially tells the story.

Sitting below that are rising suspensions and increasing rates of absenteeism. In 2021-22, suspensions rose 14 per cent from their pre-pandemic level. Children are presenting with more distressed behaviours post-pandemic and there's likely to be another increase when the 2022-23 figures are published.

Meanwhile, the rate of persistent absenteeism has more than doubled nationally in the five years to 2021. In London, more than 200,000 were consistently missing education (nearly 19 per cent of the total pupil population).

That's why we must work together to support, embed and promote inclusion in London. A key part of that must be with schools, because tackling the challenges facing young people requires support, shared knowledge and investment.

Our work on the charter aims to bring all of these to bear on identifying, recognising and promoting the inclusive practices teachers and school staff are already implementing.

Working in partnership like this can only make our streets and our schools safer so that every pupil can thrive. After the disruptions of the pandemic, we owe that to all our young people.

## Opinion: KCSIE

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

Head of safeguarding, Judicium

## Who safeguards our safeguarders when the role becomes a struggle?

**Increasing demands from above and below are making the safeguarding lead role unsustainable, says Helen King**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) – effectively the go-to for all safeguarding professionals in schools – continues to grow. This year's guidance runs to 178 pages, three times the size it was just eight years ago. Seven pages are dedicated to the responsibilities of designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) alone.

When this acknowledged complexity on paper meets the post-pandemic daily reality in our schools, we should all worry about the sustainability of the DSL role in its current, largely unsupported form.

DSLs tell me that the number of reports coming to them every day has nearly doubled since Covid. These could range from a child not having had breakfast, to one who is self-harming, or a report of harmful sexual behaviour within a year group.

It isn't unusual for DSLs to receive more than 10 reports of safeguarding concerns a day. In a large secondary, that can hit 20.

Some will be low-level, but each needs a response. The DSL must triage each of these, follow up on them and make appropriate decisions.

One DSL I worked with made three social care referrals, dealt with three pupils trying to cope with suicidal ideation and fielded 70 other safeguarding alerts – in one week.

The pressure to make the right decisions is intense. Many worry about not responding appropriately or not getting the child the appropriate level of support. If they do not have resourcing in their area, then many will be pushed to breaking point.

DSLs can't be "rotated in and out of the line" because it takes so long for him or her to get up to speed in the job. And frankly, there aren't that many people who are willing and able to take on the job. If they can't step out to refresh themselves, they need a support network to sustain them in the role.

To better understand the demands facing schools and DSLs, we did a review of 84 safeguarding audits carried out by Judicium in England during the 2022-23 academic year. During those visits,



“ The number of reports every day has nearly doubled

almost 8,000 questions were put to schools to assess how robust their safeguarding systems were.

Most responses showed schools to be in a good state of preparedness, but there were some challenges, mostly related to record-keeping – a key part of the DSL role. Almost three-quarters of schools needed to improve their record-keeping, while 38 per cent were prepared for some of Ofsted's 8am safeguarding-related checks.

The audits also revealed just how conscientious DSLs are and have to be. Several of the strongest performance areas were those in which he or she has a central role, including making sure that staff receive regular safeguarding updates, monitoring the appropriate use of child protection policies, and always being available during school hours.

That might seem reassuring, but the anecdotal evidence of the pressure DSLs face should spur the system into addressing their needs sooner rather than later. These vital staff members need

supervision and support.

This could be additional time or nominated safeguarding support staff, but each DSL's circumstances will face unique demands. The key is to find out what those are and work from there. This is, of course, easier to resource in a larger school or trust or where the local authority offer remains strong.

In the longer term, the government must review the role. Other professions provide supervision for key roles, yet this is not even a recommendation in KCSIE. In addition, greater support could be leveraged by improving the interaction between schools and other local safeguarding partners.

DSLs won't be able to magically sustain themselves in an increasingly high-stakes role without policy-makers and leaders paying attention to their care and support.

We simply can't, as seems to be the case these days, wait until the cracks appear before we act.

# Opinion: KCSIE

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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MARK BENTLEY

Safeguarding and cyber security lead, LGfL – The National Grid for Learning

## Safeguarding and tech teams will need to work ever closer

**New guidance gives designated safeguarding leads responsibility for filtering and monitoring – and makes partnership with the school’s tech team essential, writes Mark Bentley**

Welcome to your new safeguarding role... the tech cupboard is over there!" Not what your average designated safeguarding lead (DSL) – new or experienced – expected to hear on September 1. But recent changes, especially in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023, might leave some wondering if they are looking at somebody else’s job description.

Fear not, that’s not the case, although the overlap is certainly growing in the safeguarding and technology Venn diagram. So, is it good or bad news – and what do we need to be aware of?

Computers are ubiquitous in teachers’ and school leaders’ jobs. Online safety as a key part of safeguarding was also recognised a long time ago. Nevertheless, a divide remains between the IT department and everyone else when it comes to managing technologies in schools.

That’s why we’ve seen a renewed emphasis on “safeguarding-first” technology strategies over the past

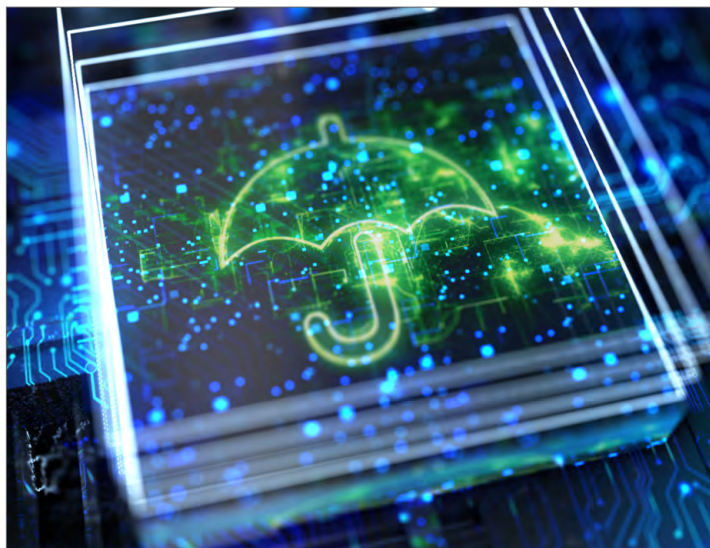
few years, accelerated by a surge in online learning during Covid. KCSIE has been beefed up accordingly, particularly regarding web filtering and monitoring, and this year’s version really ups the ante.

For the first time, the DSL is asked to take lead responsibility for filtering and monitoring – the subject of new DfE standards that are also highlighted in KCSIE. While DSLs may not feel equipped to oversee what is a complex technical product, the vital role of technical teams remains unchanged in configuring systems, managing them from day-to-day and implementing changes required by safeguarding teams.

Closer communication has become a must. Clear roles and responsibilities are a core part of the standards, which also ask for a named governor, clarity on what technical colleagues and third parties need to do, and reminders to all staff that they are the school’s eyes and ears for flagging up gaps or concerns.

Before DSLs get bogged down in the new standards, a few simple questions can help to direct their efforts:

- What is allowed in my school?
- What is blocked in my school? (and then for whom, when and where?)
- Why is it like that?



“DSLs will not need a technology degree

That last question is the most important of all; this rationale must be strategic and driven by safeguarding requirements, closely followed by teaching and learning needs, of course. If senior leaders have no answers to these questions, they know where to start, and the detail of the standards, such as reviews and checks, will help them move closer to their desired outcome.

At every step, though, the question “are we over-blocking?” must always be at the forefront. It can be tempting to make everything much stricter just to be on the safe side, but that could easily lead to over-blocking, which can negatively impact teaching and learning.

There is lots more to consider in the standards, from the difference between filtering and monitoring, why regular checks are not the same as reviews, and how technologies such as decryption can make decision-making more granular. Not to mention the “appropriate filtering and

monitoring” expectations.

We are not entering a new era of DSLs needing a technology degree on top of all the other extra training they do. Indeed, given the significant demands placed on DSLs by an ever-greater list of harms and against a challenging resourcing background, it’s vital that school technology teams continue to play a vital supporting role, which will probably mean further upskilling for them in safeguarding best-practice.

Thankfully, technology will also be key in reducing the burden, whether that’s artificial intelligence sifting masses of data, new functionalities to make it easier to spot abuse and harms, or IT support teams getting the best out of the technology in their schools.

Either way, collaboration between technical and safeguarding teams will probably go to a whole new level over the next couple of years. Leveraging the expertise and dedication on both sides will be a crucial leadership goal.

# Solutions

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DAVID WESTON

Co-CEO, Teacher Development Trust



LAURIE FORCIER

International strategy and partnerships consultant, ISTE



## Three ways to lead your school through the AI revolution

Artificial intelligence can't be ignored, write David Weston and Laurie Forcier. Here's how to start to get to grips with it ...

Regardless of whether school leaders feel excited or troubled about artificial intelligence (or somewhere in between), they hold a critical responsibility to ensure AI is approached thoughtfully and appropriately in our schools. In the wake of repeated calls for guidance, our organisations recently collaborated on a brief guide to help leaders get to grips with it and lead their schools through the current technological revolution.

### What it is and what it isn't

AI is a branch of computer science aimed at creating machines that mimic human intelligence. It's used to perform tasks that usually require human thought, like understanding language, recognising patterns or making decisions. It uses a base of information act combines with algorithms to perform these tasks.

It is an increasingly powerful tool, but it is not magic. Understanding how it works is critical for educators who have the dual responsibility of using AI-enabled tools in teaching and learning, and teaching pupils

about the positive, ethical use and creation of AI in their own lives.

Perhaps more importantly, AI is not human intelligence. It does not possess emotions, consciousness or inherent ethical judgment. It is not "thinking" in the same way a human does, nor assessing right from wrong. In the case of generative AI, we see this most starkly in the technology's widely reported "hallucinations".

### Uncharted waters

School leaders are not alone in finding themselves adrift with AI. But it simply cannot be ignored: many pupils and teachers are already using it.

Having said that, it's important to avoid knee-jerk reactions. For example, anti-cheating tools that supposedly identify AI-created writing have proven notoriously unreliable and discriminatory to non-native English speakers.

Further, a wholesale overhaul of curriculum is inadvisable. Too much is unknown about how AI will impact jobs and skills, and the situation is moving quickly. However, it would be wise to consider how you're embedding digital citizenship and computational thinking within your current curriculum to help pupils navigate present and future



“ It's a powerful tool, but it's not magic

technologies.

In addition, these three key actions will prepare your and your school to learn and develop in the AI era.

### Learn more

One of the most important things is to learn more about it, conceptually and practically. There's a variety of courses, newsletters and discussion communities, including some spearheaded by our organisations. You might set up a learning group, perhaps with your school leadership team or a group of school leaders, including board members or governors.

### Prepare staff

AI is probably sparking excitement, fear and confusion among your staff. Make space for educators to discuss and play out scenarios, perhaps by involving teachers in a series of discussions exploring the pros and cons of its various uses at your school.

For example, you might discuss ways you could teach pupils about using generative AI and other technologies for good. What might

be the limitations and risks they would need to take account of, even when using technology with positive intention? What would be the implications for the ways that your staff would need to learn about the technology themselves?

### Explore together

Alongside a space for discussion, it's useful for staff to have a chance to experience the capabilities and limitations of AI tools. As a school leader, you can encourage staff to gain first-hand experience using the technology. You might ask your research or technology lead to organise a "sandbox" exercise where colleagues can have a go with one or more of the emerging generative AI tools.

Our guidance document, *Understanding AI For School: Tips For School Leaders* includes an illustrative list of generative AI tools, and a more in-depth FAQ about its use in schools.

We hope it'll help the sector feel a little less daunted, and better equipped to chart a course through this new wave of technological disruption.



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## THE REVIEW

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## MAKING ROOM FOR IMPACT

**Authors:** Arran Hamilton, John Hattie and Dylan Wiliam

**Publisher:** Corwin UK

**Publication date:** 26 July 2023

**ISBN:** 1071917072

**Reviewer:** Robbie Burns, Vice principal, Bede Academy



Picture this. It won't be tricky. You're an experienced teacher with no leadership responsibility and you love your job. You've worked in your school for 10 years and seen assistant head after assistant head arrive with their new-fangled initiative and a bright, shiny smile. You are a diligent and hardworking teacher and willing to try new things, so you willingly oblige to the Next Big Thing and implement it in your practice.

The key issue is that the Next Big Thing is propped up next to the Previous Next Big Thing in your cognitive architecture and in your PowerPoints, worksheet design and lesson plans. You have boxes on your curriculum maps for AfL, Check for Understanding and Formative Assessment, and you're not sure which one to call it now – even though you know it's pretty much the same thing.

In fact, when you stop for a minute and think, there are six Next Big Things in your teaching in some shape or form and, despite your best intentions, you are struggling to keep track of the one you should be doing next.

As leaders, we talk about reducing workload and increasing wellbeing for our teachers. The picture above is a major stress, but not in the way we might think. In *Making Room for Impact*, Hamilton, Hattie and Wiliam pull no punches in making the claim that it's not the new initiative that is the problem; it is the ghosts of the old ones and the confusion they cause that keep teachers up at night.

Leaders need to build their knowledge to combat the old new initiatives confusing staff. This book is about just that: taking initiatives down, properly, so that we can all focus on what really matters.

The authors need no introduction. They are big-hitters in educational research and rightly so: their razor-sharp insights about education at a global level rarely fail to resonate in schools and classrooms all over the world, despite the differences in the systems they work in. They all ought to be read widely and often.

Nevertheless, my initial response was that the book's conceit was completely odd. How could busy academics fill more than 300 pages with ideas, models and strategies for de-implementation, let alone implementation? And yet it is a particular strength of this book that it fills a clearly under-explored gap in our knowledge as leaders.

Within the first 100 pages I began to see a genuine problem with my own thinking and the way it might impact the staff and pupils at my school. Rest assured: "de-implementation" and the work of these scholars will become essential reading, knowledge and study. As we grapple with teacher recruitment, retention and wellbeing challenges, I have no doubt *Making Room for Impact* will become a seminal, touchstone text in educational leadership.

The authors rightly argue that because of the lack of good quality thinking in this area in education (in spite of a wealth of it for other

professions), they wanted to provide a Rolls-Royce model for schools. Their hope is that others will follow who will simplify their work on de-implementation and make it more accessible for educators.

The book's practical strategies for thinking, planning and evaluating de-implementation make it worth purchasing. But the model itself is too complicated. School leaders can't afford a Rolls-Royce. And besides, a Rolls-Royce is better enjoyed with a chauffeur.

School leaders – busy implementing policies while de-implementing others and managing a host of demands on their time – need to be able to drive this themselves. For that, they need a reliable, sturdy, simple model.

Even better: they need it to be sustainable. So here's to the eventual Nissan Leaf of de-implementation. In the meantime, we can all ogle with envy at the Rolls in the showroom.

★★★★☆  
Rating



**Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell**  
Deputy head, Robson House, Camden



A late blast of summer weather has ensured that the return to school had no wet play, although someone should perhaps coin the term “sweat play”. Notwithstanding, refreshed by change and rest, staff everywhere (with apologies to those disrupted by RAAC) have approached the new year full of resolution and hope.

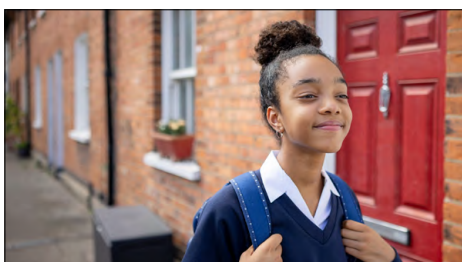
### A CHANGING WORLD

Looking to the future, this week’s OECD report, *Back to school in a changing world*, reminds that whatever and whoever we teach, our work is also shaped by where we teach.

The sense that the world is “speeding up” is perhaps felt more strongly as we return from a break. But beyond our classrooms and schools, change is already influencing practice and comfort.

There are jobs young people can aspire to now that weren’t even dreamed of when I was completing careers’ surveys, but there are also skills shortages. There is a rise in young adults pursuing advanced qualifications, and in those classed as NEET.

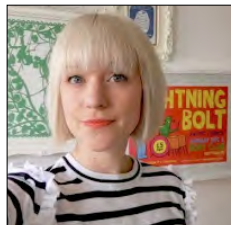
It turns out **shift really does happen** – and that’s without mentioning climate.



### BECOMING THE DEPUTY

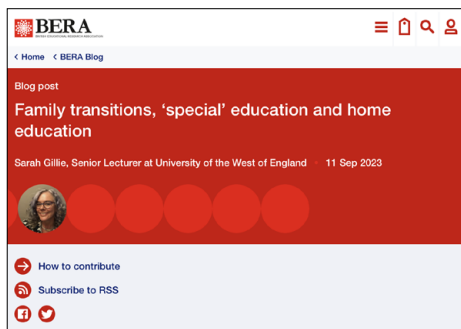
This blog from Mrs Spalding spoke particularly to me as I begin a new chapter as a deputy head. The title includes the phrase “teaching is a people business” – but leading is also exactly that.

It emphasises the strengths that different roles we fill in our lives bring to our leadership, but also the importance of understanding the different roles our colleagues hold. Her focus is on female colleagues, and her emphasis on shared parental leave and other ways to support a group that is the most likely to leave the profession is important. Thinking beyond this, showing we value all our colleagues’ other roles, caring or otherwise, is crucial to treating them as more than mere employees.



Beyond that, it’s a healthy reminder that showing up as your authentic self is powerfully humanising, and that “seeing the good in every person isn’t anywhere near as difficult as you might imagine”.

### RISE OF THE HOME EDUCATORS



On the BERA blog this week, Sarah Gillie focuses on an important distinction for researchers and others between elective home education (EHE – not new) and the rise in school deregistration, “particularly for children with identified or suspected learning needs” (newer).

The blog refers to a conference presentation where such children were described as “refugees from the school system”. This phrase, though emotive, reminds us that not all of us experience the same welcome, inclusion and opportunities.

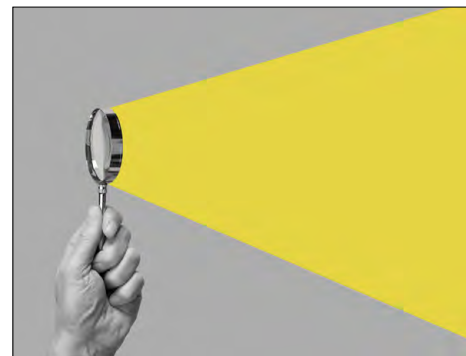
Though she includes positive experiences of EHE, Gillie also describes the marginalisation parents feel and their rejection of the use of the word “elective”. The research underpinning it includes recommendations for how we might improve our interactions with these families. I will be paying close attention to it and hope ministers do too.


### A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

I maintain that a visit from inspectors puts school leaders in the privileged position of being able to share the excellent things that happen in their schools, but we can’t ignore the negative impact inspection can also have. Here, Ofsted’s deputy director for schools and education, Lee Owston, sets out the changes the inspectorate has made and why.

His reference to a separate blog clarifying inspection windows doesn’t bring much comfort given the window is so long, but other changes are more reassuring. The acknowledgement in the section on attendance that “schools cannot be everything to everyone” is encouraging, **especially for headteachers who do not drive**. And the opportunity to make minor (clerical rather than systemic) safeguarding improvements during inspection brings hope that we will not see another situation like the one our late colleague Ruth Perry faced less than a year ago.

**This week’s news about Queen Anne primary school** in Cambridge highlights how big a change in culture that is going to be for Ofsted. But recognition of the impact of Covid on the context schools are operating in gives me hope. (Well, it is still September.)



Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts 



# The Knowledge

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



## How can we secure better music education for all?

**David James, Associate professor and head of law and social sciences, University of Suffolk**

With the government pursuing a radical reorganisation of England's music hubs and schools needing to produce music development plans outlining their offering, there is appetite to bolster the way music is taught in schools. According to our research, the success of schools adapting to these new ambitions will be shaped by what we call the "leadership lottery", the buy-in of parents and the role of potential hidden stigmas. But this policy change also provides a real chance for music education to be given the parity it deserves with other core subjects.

Music hubs play a key role in supporting music-making in English state schools. The reorganisation by the DfE through Arts Council England presented a wish-list of improvements – including greater partnership working, progression opportunities for pupils and requirements for every school in partnership with its music hub to have a music development plan.

Our report focused on the rural county of Suffolk. It used music hub returns to Arts Council England for 2021-22, supplemented with data about school engagement from the cultural charity, Britten Pears Arts, and data from the DfE, Arts Council and the Office for National Statistics. These sat alongside focus groups with young people and many discussions with school leaders, music teachers and other stakeholders.

### Leadership lottery

Teachers and music leads told us that the commitment of a school's leadership was a key factor in its offering. Some leaders in schools with higher levels of deprivation nationally see learning music as key to improving wider school outcomes or other subject areas. Not least, music education has a positive impact on motivation, wellbeing and creativity that can positively impact pupils in other subjects or their broader school career.

### Hidden stigma

Focus groups with pupils found that there can be a stigma around playing a musical instrument,



## 'The commitment of a school's leadership is key'

specifically instruments associated with more classical forms of music. Elsewhere, pupils reported that the quality of their teacher could make or break their decision to pursue music.

Against this backdrop of a stigma, it seems that teachers and providers can benefit from refining the fit between their music education and the young people they teach – broadening musical styles and considering the process of music-making much more widely.

### Parent buy-in

Analysis of our focus groups found that parents who understand the benefits of music education and music-making can increase the engagement and progression of their children in the subject – even if the parents are not musical.

Engaging parents more widely with local music services and highlighting the merits of music education can help widen the reach of music services.

### Recommendations

From our research, both schools and parents have a role to play in ensuring children get the most out of music education.

Schools should consider music-making as

sound-making too, and use of different sounds and technologies can help spark young people's creativity.

Stepping-stone points, such as between primary and secondary school, should also be considered so that children can have a smooth transition to continue their learning.

Elsewhere, schools should develop a self-review document as a starting point for their engagement with music hubs and consider musician-in-residence models to share skills and resources, as well as professional development opportunities – particularly for those for whom it is not their main subject.

More broadly, the music education system must develop a continuity so that it is not so dependent on individual teachers taking the lead in maintaining all provision.

But much more than that, we must promote equality of access so that music participation is viewed in the same way as other core subjects.

Just as we should not be content with a school that has not given a child the opportunity to develop maths and English skills, we should not be satisfied if a school does not offer opportunities for pupils to develop their music skills.

Week in

## Westminster

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

## SATURDAY

Things started to heat up today (quite literally – a sweaty 32degC) at researched in north London.

First, government behaviour tsar Tom Bennett had to “teacher stare” Ofsted boss Amanda Spielman to get her to stop talking at the beginning of his introduction to the event.

He then turned from teacher to interviewer, asking Her Maj which education secretaries have worked most closely with Ofsted.

Spielman has worked with 10 education secretaries during her time at both the watchdog and Ofqual, but said she’s “lost count” of junior ministers (except the schools minister “because it was either Nick Gibb or Nick Gibb”\*)

But, surprising literally everyone on Earth, Spielman said: “The one who’s worked most closely and he’s the only secretary of state who spontaneously suggested coming and actually visiting our offices, going around talking to our staff and taking me on a joint visit... was Gavin Williamson.”

While everyone was picking their jaws off the floor, Spielman had to dash off to receive her honorary degree from the University of Buckingham.

\*sorry about that Jonathan Gullis.

## MONDAY

Humble brag from MP Mark Francois on his fitness regime at The RAAC PAC (see what we did there?) hearing.

While giving DfE officials a good grilling, he said he found out one of his local schools was closed after he “bumped into the headteacher in the gym”.



“Do you think that is an acceptable level of communication from your department?”

It doesn’t end there.

“So why did I only find that out because I happened to bump into this person as I was about to get on the jogging machine?”

A reminder: Francois was widely ridiculed for claiming he will “win” Brexit because he was once in the Territorial Army.

\*\*\*

We expect Ofsted incoming boss Sir Martyn Oliver to remain fairly quiet between now and taking over in January.

But he did make a special appearance at AQA’s 120th birthday party today in London, just after the education select committee endorsed him for the role.

Not that it even matters, by the way. The secretary of state could have appointed him regardless of whether the committee gave its blessing, just as Nicky Morgan did with Spielman.

But the committee also published Oliver’s full CV and his covering letter for the role.

“I start this statement with an admission: This was not a role I have ever proactively considered.” .... Quite the admission.

But he told the AQA birthday audience: “Some of you may have seen the pleasure of watching me on TV being interviewed

and reading my letter application in full newsprint which is quite... I knew it was public, Amanda, I just never realised it is quite that public.”

To which the outgoing top dog replied: “Very public.”

## TUESDAY

The DfE is giving schools a helping hand when letting parents know about the RAAC situation by offering template letters.

But we can’t help but think it reads a little like a press release. “The DfE is offering us access to surveyors who are helping us do these checks quickly,” it reads.

We’re not sure the hundreds of schools waiting for surveys would agree ...

\*\*\*

Jonathan Duff, the regional director for the East of England, has been facing some stick on social media for being photographed in St Albans rather than in Essex, where the RAAC crisis is ongoing.

In reply he said: “I was in Essex last Friday, the day after the RAAC announcement, working with council officers on mitigations for affected schools. I am trying to also keep existing commitments, like the one above, where possible.”

You might say he’s run RAAC-ed (please laugh, we’re trying).

## THURSDAY

We’re only two weeks in to a new school year and we already have some more Department for Education-appointed hubs!

Today we got the names of the new languages hubs, who join the music hubs, attendance hubs, teaching school hubs, English hubs, maths hubs and career hubs, etc, etc....



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Borough Academy



**Haberdashers'**  
Academies Trust  
South



## Principal

Haberdashers' Borough Academy opened in 2019 as a Free School in the heart of London and is firmly grounded in the values of our Trust. It is a school with great potential and deserves a Principal who can support staff and pupils in building on the foundations of its first few years to continue their journey to excellence.

The Haberdashers' reputation is built on a tradition of high standards and academic excellence, and we are proud to continue this legacy by supporting every single student, and staff member, in reaching their full potential. This an exciting opportunity for an experienced leader to bring this vision to life.

The Principal is accountable and responsible for standards within the school and the performance of it. They will lead and inspire excellence in all that the School does and will support staff in enabling every child to be successful at every stage.

Your leadership will be open and engaging, in recognition of the significant contribution it will make to the success of the school.

You will be joining Haberdashers' Academies Trust South, an organisation deeply committed to excellence. Working alongside our other Principals and senior leaders, you will be an integral part of the Trust Executive, which places school improvement at the heart of its work. We will in turn offer you the resources and support you need in order to be successful.

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

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## 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**



## Secondary Curriculum Roles

United Learning is developing a coherent, ambitious and aspirational curriculum to support our growing number of teachers across England. The curriculum and its resources aim to both reduce teachers' workload, and ensure that all our pupils receive an excellent education.

We are therefore adding to our secondary curriculum team, and are recruiting for roles in **Design & Technology**, **French** and **Spanish**. Roles in secondary **Religious Studies** and **Physics** will also be opening soon.

As part of the team, you will refine and further develop an outstanding curriculum for our teachers to deliver. This will include working with the subject team to refine the KS3-4 sequence and schemes of work. Where appropriate, you will work alongside the wider secondary curriculum team to make meaningful links between subjects.

You will also develop the resources that can help teachers explicitly teach this curriculum – including lesson slides, printable resources, quiz questions, and other resources as appropriate. You will work with the subject team to ensure that the curriculum resources support high quality teaching, and you will collaborate with our central team to ensure that all resources are consistent with United Learning's overall approach to curriculum design and are IP compliant.

As required, you will develop and refine a wider range of resources for pupils, such as knowledge organisers or explanatory videos and you will respond to feedback from teachers, the curriculum team, and the Director of Curriculum.

This an exciting opportunity to work alongside the wider curriculum team to help to shape our vision for the curriculum, and to develop resources that will have a very tangible and positive impact for teachers.

For more information about each of the roles, please visit the United Learning vacancies page: <https://www.unitedlearningcareers.org.uk/current-vacancies>



## 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](mailto: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.*

# Executive Headteacher - All Through

Saint George's CofE All-Through School, Gravesend, Kent  
Salary: Highly Competitive to Secure the Right Candidate



## About Saint George's CofE

Saint George's C of E school was founded in 1580 and has a long tradition of working within the Gravesend community.

The motto of **'All Different, All Equal, All Flourishing'** emphasises the school's goal to ensure each student realises their potential and leaves Saint George's as a responsible, confident and articulate young person, fully prepared for adult life. The students' qualities are developed by an excellent education with a broad and balanced curriculum, a rich variety of enrichment opportunities, and experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

### Closing Date:

Monday 18th September

### School Visit Dates:

Thursday 7th September  
Thursday 14th September

### Interview Dates:

Tuesday 26th September  
Wednesday 27th September



**Aletheia**  
Academies Trust

## About the Role

As the new Executive Headteacher at Saint George's C of E All Through School, you will have the opportunity to take this valued and consistently oversubscribed school on its next exciting chapter. The school has successfully undergone a journey of growth, with our Primary Phase opening in 2019. This role comes with huge amounts of potential for the right candidate to further develop the all-through school model and to contribute to the growth of a forward thinking and dynamic Trust.

We require someone who is driven and someone who can recognise and build on current strengths whilst leading a culture of continuous improvement. The challenge will be to ensure consistent alignment between our primary and secondary phase and ensure we maintain our reputation as the number one school of choice for our local community.

The Executive Headteacher - All Through will be responsible for providing proactive leadership and management of Saint George's in line with the vision of the Trust and will manage the day-to-day running of the school.

## 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.



THE CONSORTIUM  
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Shaping Positive Futures

## DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We are seeking to appoint a Deputy Chief Executive Officer, who will drive high standards across all schools, embedding consistent practices through policy and systems, in the best interests of learners. The postholder will:

- Act as Deputy to the CEO and provide strategic and professional leadership within this remit
- Develop and deliver the vision, ethos, strategy and performance
- Support the CEO and Trust Board through the provision of professional advice and guidance to develop and embed the ethos, values and strategic direction
- Uphold the Trust's values, and provide visible leadership across the organisation
- Work collaboratively within the Trust and schools to define and deliver high standards
- Be the lead education professional for the Trust

We are looking for a team player, who puts their heart into their work. We have some core values that run through everything we do, and we would love it if they resonated with you too.

[Click here to find out more](#)



## HEADTEACHER

Teacher Leadership Pay Scale L26 – L32 £81,927 – £94,898

The Trust and local governing body are looking for an exceptional individual with the vision, personality and strategic thinking to lead one of the most highly regarded schools in the area.

Edgar Wood Academy is a secondary school which welcomed the first year 7 students in September 2021 under wave 13 of the free schools' programme. Our brand-new building opened in September 2022. The school has already established a strong reputation in the local community and was significantly over-subscribed for 2023-24.

The school also benefits from a stable and talented staff body who are united in their aim of improving the educational opportunities and life chances of young people in their care.

The successful candidate will benefit from the full support of the Altus Education Partnership team and have the opportunity to work with colleagues from secondary and tertiary colleges and develop the sequencing of the curriculum across the phases.



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