

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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PROFILE: PAGE 20-22

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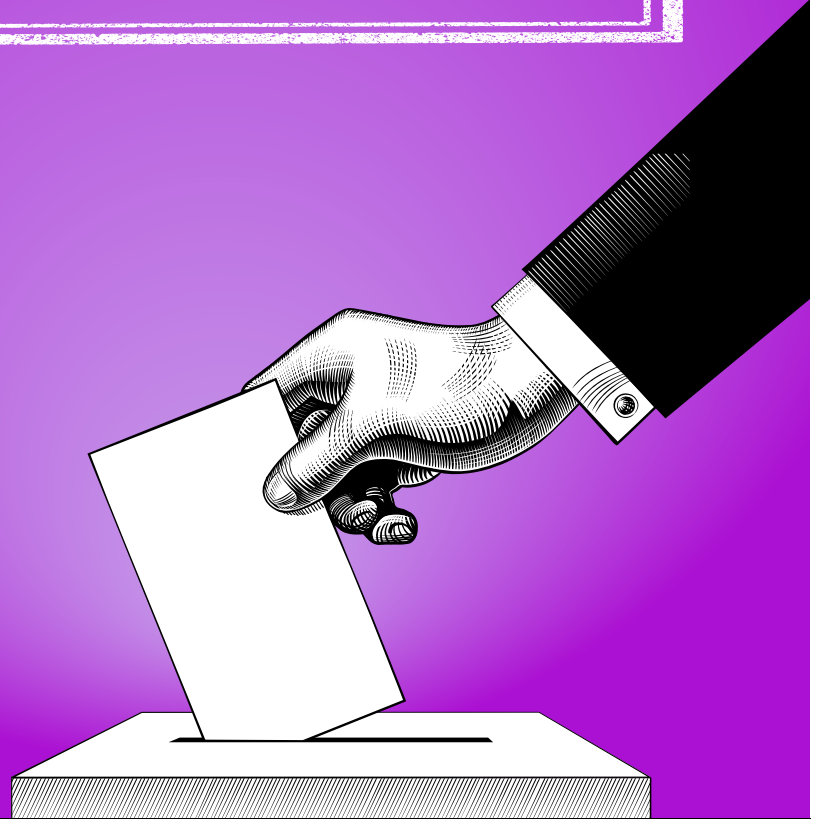
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SCHOOLS WEEK

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education week jobs

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Why we are launching the sector's manifesto

A general election is in the offing, and the sad reality is that in spite of the many crises facing the education system today, education is unlikely to be a top-line battleground for the public's votes.

Schools Week will continue to do its best to put the sector on the agenda. But, as part of our ongoing solutions-focused journalism commitment, it won't do for us to simply draw attention to the problems.

That's why this week we are launching a new feature: 'The sector's manifesto'.

Every fortnight until the election – and more often if required – we will publish policy suggestions from sector leaders on specific areas of need.

Drawing on their experience and expertise, we will have trust bosses, heads, local government leaders, unions and sector leaders tackling the most pressing issues such as accountability, curriculum, disadvantage, recruitment, SEND and artificial intelligence.

We start with a series from leaders in a part of the sector that didn't exist last time Labour was in power: multi-academy trusts.

This week, Leora Cruddas, who leads the representative body for MATs, sets out a vision for system resilience.

Over the coming weeks and months, we'll be hosting leaders of some of the biggest and most influential trusts: Sir Hamid Patel, Lucy Heller, Sir Dan Moynihan, Rebecca Boomer-Clark and Sir Jon Coles.

As the feature develops, we will build up a manifesto for change the sector desperately needs, full of policies that aren't just evidence-based, but expertise-informed.

Whoever wins the general election, they will know exactly where to turn when education inevitably returns to its rightful place – at the heart of our national vision for a brighter future.

Most read online this week:

- 1 [Leaders at Ofsted's first rapid revisit school resign over 'traumatic' inspections](#)
- 2 [Closing academy trust exposes 'vulnerability' of primary schools](#)
- 3 [Small schools dub new workload admin list 'unrealistic'](#)
- 4 [Secret settlement in £370k superhead's legal row with council](#)
- 5 [DfE's workload reduction taskforce: the 'early' recommendations in full](#)

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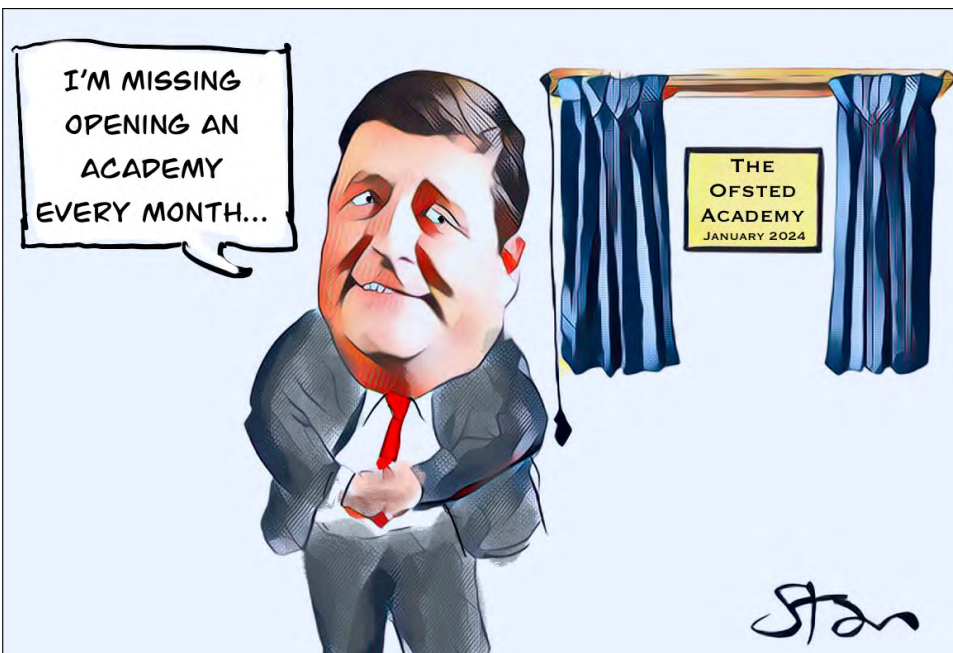


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NEWS: FUNDING

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Rise in council primary schools in deficit

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The proportion of local authority maintained primary schools in deficit has rocketed by 62 per cent in a year and to its highest level since records began.

Spending data published on Thursday by the Department for Education shows the proportion of council primaries in deficit rose from 7.6 per cent in 2021-22 to 12.3 per cent in 2022-23.

The rise follows a drop in the proportion of all types of schools with deficits between 2019-20 and 2021-22, a result of Covid-19.

But the proportion of primaries in deficit is now at its highest level since the current dataset began in 2015.

In some areas of England, the situation is far worse than in others. There were 21 council areas with more than a quarter of primary schools in deficit, most of them in London or the south east.

In the London boroughs of Havering and Westminster, and in Brighton and Hove, more than 40 per cent of primary schools are in deficit.

Schools Week revealed last week how a 15-school academy trust will shut after the government decided to strip it of its only secondary.

The case further revealed the “vulnerability”



of primaries amid the double whammy of rising costs and falling rolls.

Primary pupil numbers are due to fall by 13 per cent by 2032. And 13 per cent of LA-maintained schools were in deficit last year, up from nine per cent in 2021-22.

Jenna Julius, research director at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said “any school running an overall deficit is expected to take steps towards returning to a neutral financial position.”

“These figures highlight that at least 10 per cent of schools are likely to need to make cuts in the coming year to balance their finances.”

The proportion of maintained special schools in deficit rose from 9.8 to 12.9 per cent, but was still below the 13.4 per cent seen in 2019-20.

There was also a smaller rise in secondaries in deficit – from 12.9 to 13.4 per cent – but this is nowhere near the high of 30.2 per cent in 2017-18.

The DfE said schools had saved money during Covid school closures, while losing self-generated income from lettings and catering.

A spokesperson said that expenditure is increasing and self-generated income is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels.

“In addition, expenditure is rising faster than income resulting in more schools having a deficit. Income rose by 3.3 per cent in 2022-23, while expenditure rose by 5.1 per cent.”

This week’s data also shows how schools’ spending on energy bills, supply teachers, learning resources and catering has ballooned.

Maintained schools spent £485.3 million on energy in 2022-23, up 61 per cent on the year before amid soaring bills.

The amount spent on agency supply teachers and learning resources has also rocketed.

Spending on bought-in professional services relating to the curriculum increased 11.3 per cent, while catering supplies and staff rose 6.8 per cent.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

DfE’s school funding stats ‘do not tell the whole story’

New school funding statistics published by the government hide the reality of stretched budgets as they may under-estimate inflation and do not factor in sixth form cuts, experts claim.

The government has published statistics on how school funding for five to 16-year-old pupils has changed over the past 14 years.

It follows an order from the UK Statistics Authority in 2019 that it must publish a “comprehensive set” of official figures on school funding.

The DfE’s new analysis estimated average per-pupil funding will be £7,570 in real-terms in 2024-25, above the level it was in 2010. Ministers had pledged to bring funding back to 2010 levels.

However, the analysis conflicts with that of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which warned last year that schools’ spending power would be four per cent lower by 2024 because of rising costs.

The IfS includes the effects of changing sixth form funding, early years funding and spending by local authorities in its analysis. Meanwhile, the DfE analysis also included funding for teacher pension contributions from 2019.

The government has also been challenged on its use of the GDP deflator inflation measure.

Luke Sibieta, research fellow at the IfS, said: “In normal times and over the long-run, the GDP deflator provides a fair picture of

real-terms changes.

“However, this is not a normal time. A large part of the recent spike in inflation has been caused by a spike in imported energy prices. This is not properly captured in the GDP deflator, but will be affecting schools.

“For this reason, we calculate our own measure of school cost inflation, including staff and non-staff costs.”

Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the union, also said that CPI was a “more realistic measure”, adding the statistics “do not tell the whole story.”

She added: “It’s clear that many schools remain in a very difficult financial position. The chancellor must use the spring budget to invest in education.”

INVESTIGATION: MIS

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Top trust got £1m indemnity to challenge edtech firm

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers handed England's biggest MAT £1 million to fight a legal challenge from a tech firm "with a history of litigiousness" in a bid to protect the wider academy sector, documents obtained by Schools Week reveal.

However United Learning Trust (ULT) went on to lose the High Court case against Bromcom over a £2 million contract to provide its schools with a cloud-based management information system (MIS).

Correspondence obtained by Schools Week shows the 89-school trust wanted to settle the case before trial. This would have been "cheaper than even a completely successful defence," internal documents showed.

The settlement had to be ratified by the government as it would be classed as a "novel or contentious" payment under academy rules.

But the request was "declined due to the potential repercussions to the wider academy sector – the claimant has a history of litigiousness and ESFA [the education and skills funding agency] believed that it was important for a large trust to resist this claim," documents stated.

Bromcom is also suing Academies Enterprise Trust, another large trust, and took high court action against both Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire councils around ten years ago.

Part of the United Learning deal included the ESFA underwriting up to £1 million of legal costs should the trust lose the case.

The new information came to light after Schools Week obtained the business case for the funding, written by ULT chief executive Sir Jon Coles last year and submitted to the Treasury, which approved the deal.

However ULT's total costs for the case – including for a failed appeal and settlement paid to Bromcom – were around £2 million, which meant the trust has also taken a hit of around £1 million.

A spokesperson for the trust said "those are funds that would otherwise have been invested in children's education."

Ali Guryel, Bromcom managing director, said the "litigious" comment was "unfair and defamatory". He said the firm only had two legal cases in five years, despite hundreds of



procurements.

"Bromcom only pursues claims very reluctantly and when it believes them to have merit," he added, saying the judge's ruling shows its concerns were "well-founded".

The trust previously said its procurement, which awarded the contract to Arbor, was done in "good faith" and with "full professional advice."

But the high court judge found a "failure to treat the bidders equally" and "manifest error" because the trust did not take a particular step to "neutralise" the "inherent advantage" of Arbor, which already provided the service to some schools.

The trust was also adjudged to have "acted unlawfully" in its scoring by not providing enough information to Bromcom about why it received particular scores.

However the judge said no rule breaches were "deliberate" or in "bad faith."

But Guryel said by awarding the contract to Arbor, ULT overpaid by nearly £250,000 across five years, which if extrapolated nationally would have cost the sector "tens of millions of pounds more".

The dispute comes amid "seismic" change in the sector. In 2012, 84 per cent of English state schools were using the School Information Management System (SIMS), run by Capita until recent years.

But cloud-based alternatives, emerging as academies took control of their own budgets, has eroded that dominance. SIMS' market share is now just 50 per cent, analysis by the Bring More Data blog shows.

The ULT business case document also sheds more light on how the spat ended up in court.

Coles wrote lawyers advised the trust to share documents with Bromcom after the contract decision to "placate groundless suspicions that they had been treated in an unfair/untransparent way" and in the "spirit of transparency".

But it added: "Regrettably, the information we provided was used not for the purposes we had hoped, but instead to construct a challenge to the procurement."

However Guryel said this was "nonsense" as contracting authorities "need to comply to transparency, fair and equal treatment" in procurements to "protect public money".

Emails between ULT bosses and the ESFA, also obtained through FOI, showed the government did not have its "own view on the strength of the case."

Instead, it had simply considered the trust's "legal advice which our lawyers thought made sense, was credible."

As part of the £1 million indemnity, government asked for a "lessons learnt" review to share with other trusts.

The Department for Education said its lawyers do not "advise academy trusts on what they should do", but its "default approach" is "not to settle" except in "exceptional circumstances".

They added the £1 million payment helped "limit" the financial impact on pupils.

Company accounts show Bromcom's turnover rose by 60 per cent from £9.8 million in 2021 to £15.9 million in 2022, with a net profit of £1.5 million.



Sir Jon Coles

NEWS: OFSTED

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Inspector gadget: Ofsted closes gaming loophole

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EXCLUSIVE



Ofsted has shaken up how and when inspectors access school websites after *Schools Week* exposed a loophole that offered advance notice of visits to those who monitored downloads.

But the watchdog this week refused to give more details, apparently fearing doing so would allow schools to identify other ways to predict inspections.

Last year, website provider Greenhouse School Websites claimed to have “developed an algorithm to accurately tell when Ofsted are looking at your school website.” It signed up thousands of its clients, though some opted out when approached about the scheme.

Further investigation revealed the use of such practices was widespread and an open secret in schools, with discussions on school IT professionals forum Edugeek about setting up an “Ofsted early warning” system dating back as far as 2015.

At the time, inspection teams were understood to look at key information documents from a school’s website between two and 14 days before inspections.

By monitoring who was downloading documents, schools were able to work out if this was an inspector.

The inspection system is built on the principle that schools should only be told about inspections at most the day before they happen.

When pressed about *Schools Week*’s investigations this month, schools minister Damian Hinds revealed Ofsted had “made changes to its processes around how, and when, inspectors access school websites.”

It is understood this means documents are downloaded much closer to “the call” informing schools they are due to get an inspection.

Ofsted is “also continuing to consider proportionate technical options to hide or disguise its access to school websites prior to an inspection,” Hinds added.

Schools Week understands this includes the use of virtual private networks (VPNs).

Hinds also urged schools “not to use this kind of service” and said: “Schools do not need to take any extra steps to prepare for Ofsted inspections.”

Ofsted said the changes were “intended to stop

schools from monitoring website traffic, we won’t be putting specific details about them in the public domain.”

Professor Colin Richards, a former senior inspector, said Ofsted and DfE “have clearly been embarrassed” by the investigation “and are afraid to give anything away – even at the cost of a lack of transparency.”

But Frank Norris, another ex-inspector and senior manager, said he understood why they “don’t want to alert schools to how they might be able to avoid website searches undertaken by inspectors being detected.”

Norris added: “It is, however, a sad reflection of the inspection process that schools feel the need to try and gain an advantage.”

The Department for Education also refused to say whether it had carried out a formal investigation into the practice when alerted to it last year.

Former schools minister Nick Gibb had warned monitoring could “cause unnecessary pressure and add to workload for staff.”

Tom Middlehurst, curriculum, assessment and inspection specialist at the ASCL school leaders’ union, said it was “important that the inspection system is consistent and fair for all schools.”

But he said “it is surely possible to outline this work without creating another loophole.”

James Bowen, assistant general secretary at the NAHT, added the use of alerts was “further evidence that the impact and significance of Ofsted inspections has gotten out of hand.”

EXCLUSIVE

LUCAS CUMISKEY | @LUCAS_CUMISKEY

New Ofsted chief Sir Martyn Oliver eyes up another academy ...

The schools watchdog is to open a new “Ofsted Academy” to bring together all its “specialist inspection and regulation learning under one roof,” *Schools Week* can reveal.

The inspectorate is in the early stages of developing the concept as part of its “ambition to learn from Civil Service organisations that already use this model and to provide the very best training for our inspectors”.

New chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver pledged to open up the “high-quality” training inspectors to the sector as part of a promise the inspectorate will be “of the system, by the system.”

The project was disclosed in a job advert for a head of organisational development to “play a leading role in the establishment” of its academy.

“In future, this could also include all of our

generalist learning as well as the Civil Service professions and elements of recruitment,” the advert said.

In return for a salary of just under £80,000, Ofsted said the successful applicant will “lead the transformation of our learning approach over the next two years.”

It entails setting the “strategic direction of Ofsted’s learning culture” and spearheading organisational development to achieve its “strategic priority to have a skilled workforce.”

The employee will design and deliver “an academy approach, offer and structure that meets the needs of the organisation in the future.”

Ofsted was criticised in 2022 for refusing to publish “aide memoires” – training guides

that summarise inspection criteria – given to inspectors after some were leaked online.

Oliver has since signalled to be more “open and transparent.”

He told *Schools Week* previously: “We need a modern, fit-for-purpose inspectorate ... that actually sees Ofsted being far more a part of the system.”

“It really shouldn’t be a sense of duality or elimination, it should be synthesis. And that’s what I’m trying to create: it’s not us and them, or get rid of one or keep the other. It should be Ofsted is ‘of’ the system, ‘by’ the system and ‘for’ children, parents and students.”

Ofsted refused to comment.

Inspections restarted this week after a pause for inspector mental health training.

Schools hit by RAAC get extra cash for out-of-hours lessons

JACK DYSON

@JACKYDYS

EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have promised schools worst-hit by the crumbly concrete crisis extra cash so their teachers can run out-of-hours catch-up lessons – but who gets the extra funding is unclear.

Leaders of secondaries blighted by RAAC have been urging government to give their pupils grade allowances in this summer's GCSE and A-level exams. The Department for Education dismissed the calls, as it argued assessments "can only show what children know and can do".

But leaders of two trusts that run heavily impacted schools have revealed the government has promised funding to help convince teachers to hold extra classes in the holidays.

Michael McCluskie, the director of education at Coast and Vale Learning Trust, said Scalby School in Yorkshire will receive £35,000 for catch-up sessions.

"It gives us a little bit of leeway in terms of negotiating with people to give up holidays," he said. "On average, [pupils] have maybe lost one lesson per week.

"[But exams] are still a significant worry. The concern is if the results aren't what we expect the children to achieve, parents will make their minds up about sending their children to the school."

McCluskie added that officials only made the secondary aware of the option in December, shortly after its headteacher sent a letter to government demanding a return to pandemic marking.

He thinks additional sessions will be held in the February half-term and Easter for those studying PE, food technology, DT and engineering, as grade predictions "are much lower than expected".

There will also be a "big push" on the core subjects – English, maths and science – "because that's where the school's performance will be judged".

Meanwhile Nick Hurn, who leads Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, said he has formed a tutoring group of staff from across five of his secondaries to provide support to children at St Leonard's



in County Durham.

The sessions took place during the autumn half-term, but not over Christmas as "everyone, staff and students, were worn out by then".

After-school lessons have been held this month, with more catch-up periods planned for the upcoming half-term.

"We've had to re-write the timetable umpteen times and will have to do so again because of the disruption," he said. The government has provided a lot of additional support, but at what cost to the people providing it? It's draining."

A report compiled by Durham University academics last week concluded that the youngsters at St Leonard's are "around a grade lower than expected" in English and maths, having been moved to classes of 120 children.

The study, commissioned by Hurn to further calls for exam help, found timetable changes have "resulted in a 20-minute reduction in the curriculum time for each subject".

The Bishop Wilkinson boss expects the bill for the extra classes – which are being held for the majority of subjects – to be in the tens of thousands.

"We're talking about whole year groups [needing this support] now, so it's the sheer scale of intervention that we're having to do at the moment that's expensive."

School leaders' union ASCL has called for RAAC schools hit by declining rolls to get

financial protection, in its submission to the Treasury ahead of the Spring budget.

Schools Week revealed pupils were turning their back on affected schools last year. ASCL said its members are reporting "reduced admission applications for September. The impact of this will have a long tail and manifest in financial detriment at school level for many years."

Guidance released in September told leaders of RAAC schools that "need additional help with revenue costs" to discuss them with the DfE "in the first instance to agree any further support". Officials expected "all reasonable requests" to be approved.

An update published on the department's education hub blog said officials are "working with schools and colleges to put in place a bespoke plan that supports all pupils based on their circumstances".

For some, "this may include supporting them to provide extra education support for their pupils".

"We've asked, where possible, for [awarding bodies] to agree longer extensions for coursework and non-examined assessments."

When approached for comment about the RAAC catch-up costs, the department did not confirm how much funding has been offered or how many schools have been given cash through this channel.



Nick Hurn

NEWS

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Michaela insists it does meet daily worship laws

LUCAS CUMISKEY

@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

EXCLUSIVE

Michaela Community School has insisted it meets academy funding rules by offering a daily act of worship after comments from its headteacher Katharine Birbalsingh led to claims suggesting otherwise.

Birbalsingh has given several interviews after it emerged her school was facing a high court legal challenge by a Muslim pupil for banning prayers.

When asked by Teachers Talk radio if her school assemblies have “prayers in them of any kind,” she said: “No, we don’t have prayers and our way of celebrating Christmas, for instance, is very secular.

“There’s a Santa, there’s a Christmas tree, but these are all very secular things.

“We would never have a nativity play, for instance, we don’t talk about Jesus; we absolutely embrace the idea of secularism and from the moment we opened in 2014 we’ve never had a prayer room.”

Schools actually have a legal requirement to hold a daily act of worship that is “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character,” but schools can choose to opt out.

Schools Week previously reported Ofsted stopped inspecting collective worship in 2004 after 76 per cent of schools were found to be non-compliant.

In a blog this week, the National Secular Society (NSS) said Michaela is “apparently one of those.”

Michaela’s funding agreement – which academies must follow or face potential government intervention – states they “shall make provision ... for a daily act of collective worship.”

When asked for clarification by Schools Week, a spokesperson for Birbalsingh said: “As per DfE guidance, we have daily assemblies which are principally directed towards furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils.”

In an interview with UnHerd, Birbalsingh said pupils “sing God Save

the King” at her assemblies. They also “sing Jerusalem,” a poem by William Blake that has become a popular hymn.

But the spokesperson did not respond to further requests to clarify if this was part of the daily worship.

The High Court case has led to impassioned views across a host of national media, from those supporting the school and its secularism or condemning it for a lack of religious tolerance.

But Megan Manson, head of campaigns at the NSS, said a point missed by commentators is “our laws make it technically impossible for a state school to be truly secular.”

The “only option” for schools not wanting to hold collective worship is “to ignore the law.” The case “shows the need to end” the legal requirement, she added.



Katharine Birbalsingh

EXCLUSIVE

JACK DYSON | @JACKYDYS

Consider 'sell-on clauses' when flogging land, schools told

Schools should consider trying to secure sell-on agreements with developers when flogging surplus land to fund vital rebuilds, new government guidance has said.

LocatED, the Department for Education’s property company, released a handbook on Wednesday to help local authorities and academy trusts “unlock potential” in their estates.

It comes as documents, seen by *Schools Week*, show dozens of sites reviewed by the government-backed firm for redevelopment were discounted for things such as featuring protected land and flood zones.

Unions said “we’ve surely reached the bottom of the funding barrel when schools are being advised to sell off land in order to pay for capital projects,” after *Schools Week* revealed the guidance was to be published.

But Will Attlee, LocatED’s head of estates, believes the new advice will help leaders “navigate the development process” and generate cash for “new or improved” school

buildings.

“While schools and responsible bodies should always look for alternative funding options prior to disposing, development of this kind can free up resources ... this will help deliver better learning environments for pupils.”

LocatED CEO Lara Newman added that her team has “seen growing demand from education leaders for our help in unlocking potential.”

The guidance sets out four stages to the development process, explaining how to navigate site assessments, stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments and delivery.

It recommended that “consideration should[always] be given to whether overage or clawback provisions should be included as part of the deal structure.”

This ensures “the benefit of any future uplift in value [if, for example, the purchaser sells the site at a profit within a certain time period] is shared.”

It also stressed that the guidance “in no way

advocates for the disposal of school land”.

Responsible bodies, which include councils and academy trusts, are recommended to explore “alternative funding options” before deciding to sell plots.

Other options include lettings and using spare space for “energy generation.”

LocatED revealed last year it had been asked to assess 316 school sites with surplus land. Data obtained through Freedom of Information shows 281 were ruled out for development.

Thirty were special or alternative provision schools, which LocatED “considered would not be appropriate for this kind of scheme.” A further 76 were on designated green belt or metropolitan open land, while 12 were in flood zones.

Others would produce “insufficient” capital receipts “to provide a meaningful investment in the school, once costs [are] taken into consideration.”

LocatED was later commissioned to undertake further analysis of 132 more sites.

CST: Let 'national improver' trusts support struggling schools

Effective academy trusts should be labelled as "national school improvement leaders" and commissioned by government to provide expertise to struggling schools, a new report has said.

The Confederation of School Trusts, which represents academy trusts in England, said regulation system changes should allow for "softer" interventions in such schools.

Its new paper, 'School improvement architecture', also called for a redesign of accountability "triggers", including the scrapping of the government's controversial "double-RI" coasting measure.

In the paper, the CST proposed an "evolution of the existing accountability, regulatory and support architecture in the school system in order to provide a more sophisticated, effective and proportionate approach that will, together, better support sustained school improvement".

They said accountability "can be more intelligent", and regulation should allow for "softer" and existing harder interventions.

They added that school improvement expertise and capacity in trusts "can be better leveraged... More can be done to connect organisations and professionals to each other to facilitate the creation and sharing of professional knowledge".

Here's your trusty Schools Week speed read on the proposals ...

1. Commission trusts to offer 'soft' support...

The CST said organisations "such as effective trusts" should be "strategically commissioned, within a coherent regulatory strategy, to provide expertise and capacity ('softer' support) to schools".

This would be coordinated by regional school improvement commissioning teams, which would be "empowered to commission and fund school improvement support from effective organisations, which in most areas will be school trusts".

It seems to tie into Labour party proposals for teacher "hit squads" – regional school improvement teams that would work with schools to respond to areas of weakness identified in new Ofsted report cards.

2. ...but keep using 'hard' intervention where needed

The report warned that the addition of greater "soft" approaches to improvement "must be in addition to, and not instead of, the rarer but necessary use of harder intervention".

They argued it was a "point of principle that where necessary DfE regional directors must be able to intervene in prescribed ways to protect children's interests, including sponsorship and re-brokering".

3. Redesign accountability triggers

Although CST said Ofsted inspections should "feed into" regulatory insight and decision-making, "it is not clear the current system of grading is the right approach".

Changing this is "in part about redesigning the outcome of inspection", but it is also about ensuring such outcomes "lead to well calibrated regulatory responses".

The report warned the introduction of intervention in schools rated 'requires improvement' twice in a row was "problematic for a number of reasons and should be redesigned or abandoned".

4. Put NLE programme on 'organisational footing'

The paper also said the national leader of education (NLE) programme should be "transposed to an organisational footing".

This means trusts "could be designated" as NLEs, or a "national leader of school improvement".

CST also said "appropriate resourcing should be prioritised by government to support improvement relationships between organisations that are deeper and more sustained than the current arrangements such as the trust and school improvement offer allow".

5. Encourage 'collaborative networks'

The report said expertise should be shared across "all trusts, regionally and nationally, through high quality professional networks".

Trusts should be "encouraged to participate in high quality collaborative networks", with such networks "owned" by the sector.

"While they might interact with and hold



constructive relationships with government and regulators, they should be driven by the sector and for the sector."

They acknowledged such networks "already exist locally and nationally, though it is likely that regional networks in some areas may need to be established and some resource may be necessary to seed this".

6. Work out how to measure trust improvement capacity

Government should also set out a long-term plan to develop and test an approach to evaluating trust improvement capacity.

While trust inspection "could be a longer-term ambition for the system", there are "risks if this goes ahead of the evidence base we hold about how effective trusts operate and improve schools".

Work is also needed to define the "purpose(s)" trust inspection would serve and how it would align with school inspection and regulation.

7. 'Slim and efficient' regional teams

The CST said the system needed "slim and efficient" DfE regional teams with a "clear remit to regulate and commission improvement support".

Given that school improvement and expertise resides in organisations, it is "important to be clear that DfE teams would not themselves be improvers of schools".

The teams should be assembled in a way that ensures "scarce capacity is not drawn out of schools and trusts into bureaucratic structures that don't themselves educate children".

Advertorial

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How to enter

It's easy and free to enter, head to teachingawards.com to tell us about your nominee and their background, and why you

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We want to hear about the positive impact that your colleague has had on learners, colleagues and the wider community. Whether it be through organising extracurricular activities, building relationships with local businesses, improving academic results, or anything else that has made a difference.

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Silver Winners will be announced on National Thank a Teacher Day (19 June 2024), presented with a trophy and invited to a celebratory tea in London.

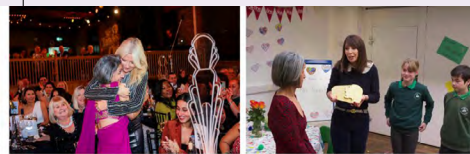
A few Gold Winners will have the chance to be revealed on BBC's The One Show in the week running up to the glittering annual awards ceremony where the remaining Gold Winners will be announced. At the November ceremony the honoured educators will get the true VIP experience with an overnight stay in London, a four-course dinner, and a stunning trophy to serve as a reminder of all their hard work and dedication to their profession.

Each nominee (Silver or Gold Winner or not) receives a certificate in recognition of their hard work from their peers and community

Paddy McCabe, headteacher of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, Gold Winners of The Award for Making a Difference - Primary School of the Year said, "I am delighted for the staff team, our parents and pupils and indeed our community. The application process forced us to step out of the maelstrom of the daily grind and to take stock and to recognise that we do indeed "Make a Difference". The Silver and subsequently the Gold Awards, in many ways, are the icing on the cake, the process was prize enough.

"I was especially proud to receive the award because of the title, 'Making a Difference'. Having been a past pupil I know the impact that the school had on me and continues to have on children in our community to this day."

Help a worthy, hardworking colleague receive the acknowledgment they deserve. Enter an outstanding colleague into the 2024 Pearson National Teaching Awards today.



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Heads seek legal advice over diocese academy plan

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

EXCLUSIVE

A group of Catholic schools have engaged a senior lawyer as they resist their diocese's plans for academy conversion.

Headteachers in the Wirral have sought advice from King's Counsel Fiona Scolding after being told by the Bishop of Shrewsbury they will be moved into the six-school Holy Family Catholic MAT.

Resistance to diocesan plans are rare as the majority of Catholic school boards are foundation governors, appointed by the bishop to represent their interests.

Catholic Education Service guidance states it is "important" that governors "know and implement the bishop's policies on education."

But Elaine McGunigall, headteacher at Our Lady and St Edward's RC Primary, said the group wanted to take control of its destiny.

She said: "We are all minded under Catholic law to have the very best Catholic education for children. That's our duty.

"If schools want to go into it, then that's absolutely fine, but they're being forced."

There are 19 dioceses across the country, each overseen by their own bishop. In recent years,

many of them have started to pursue strategies to move their schools into trusts.

McGunigall said her diocese informed leaders last year that it wanted to academise the rest of its local authority-maintained schools. A roadmap is currently being drawn up.

"Every single school in the diocese will be put in an academy trust. It's not their choice, it's the diocese choosing which trust to go in. This has caused concern," McGunigall said.

"We've asked [if] we could start our own trust and all kinds of things and they've said 'no'."

One of the schools' concerns over the choice of Holy Family trust is over how its central services are funded. Latest accounts for the trust show it collected an 8.3 per cent slice in the 2022-23, up from 6.8 per cent in the previous year.

McGunigall added that the schools have commissioned academy specialists to carry out due diligence on the trust.

They have also instructed King's Counsel Fiona Scolding to get a better understanding of their legal position and ways forward, with "written advice" provided.

"We want to come to a position where we can have an open dialogue where we come to an



Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust

understanding of what's right for our schools, not dictated to and forced to," McGunigall added.

Scolding said she could not comment.

The schools – as many as 14 – have banded together to split the legal and due diligence costs equally.

Responding to the concerns, a Diocese of Shrewsbury spokesperson said the decision for any Catholic school to academise "comes only after full and thorough consultation with school leaders, teachers and parents, and is a decision taken by the school governing body, of which the bishop appoints a majority."

They have also commissioned an "independent review of governance" of Holy Family.

The diocese said "it is good practice to conduct periodic" checks of these arrangements "to ensure that they remain effective and robust".

Andy Moor, Holy Family's CEO, also added academy decisions are made "after an extensive and in-depth consultation" with leaders, teachers and parents.

"This is a lengthy process and is a decision made by the school governing body. We are excited about the growth of the trust and look forward to working with all schools as they join us."

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Dyson's controversial £6m donation to local primary school approved

The education secretary has approved a controversial £6 million donation from Sir James Dyson to a school in Wiltshire, despite warnings it could have a "severe impact" on the viability of neighbouring settings.

Gillian Keegan has green-lit the donation from the Dyson Foundation to Malmesbury Primary School. The money will fund a "first-class science, technology, engineering, art and maths (STEAM) centre."

"I welcome this generous donation from the Dyson Foundation which will support cutting edge education for local pupils, helping to develop the scientists and engineers of the future," she said.

The decision was referred to ministers by the Department for Education's regional director.

Dyson, known for high-end vacuum cleaners and other appliances, is headquartered in the

Wiltshire town.

However, the proposed donation has prompted fears about the impact on other schools at a time when primary rolls are falling.

Laura Mayes, Wiltshire's cabinet member for children's services, told local media there were "already sufficient places in the three local schools to cater for expected demand."

She had "expressed concern" over the potential 210 additional places having a "severe impact on neighbouring schools, reducing their pupil numbers and putting their future sustainability at risk."

The Times reported last October that education officials had initially blocked the billionaire's donation, with Dyson writing in the newspaper that it was "a tragic example of how politicians' actions fail to match their rhetoric."

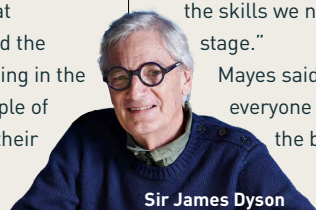
According to the latest government records, Malmesbury Primary School has a capacity of 525, with 481 pupils on roll.

The DfE said the expansion would see "purpose-built rooms equipped for design, technology, art, science, and mathematics, as well as additional classrooms."

If planning permission is approved by Wiltshire Council, the new centre is expected to open to pupils in September 2027.

Keegan said the centre "will provide world-class facilities for pupils in Malmesbury and the surrounding areas to inspire them and develop the skills we need to compete on the world stage."

Mayes said the council will "work with everyone involved to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for pupils."



Sir James Dyson

Ministers 'monitoring' councils falling behind on SEND bailout rules

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Cash-strapped councils falling behind on their SEND deficit bailout plans – just months after they were signed off – have now been placed under “enhanced” monitoring by ministers, Schools Week can reveal.

Cambridgeshire and Norfolk signed government “safety valve” agreements in March, where they got £119 million combined in bailouts to help balance their high needs deficits over five and seven years respectively.

But by September, both were already off track, which means they must submit revised plans and join the “enhanced monitoring and support (EMS)” scheme.

News of a higher tier of intervention in the scheme compounds concerns by campaigners that the bailouts, which come with strict cost-cutting demands and which are not enough to balance budgets.

Maxine Webb, an independent councillor in Norfolk, said: “Those of us who warned about the SEND system hinging on the safety valve scheme will rightly be massively worried about the intervention happening so early on in the programme, and its implications.”

Cambridgeshire warned last month it was more than £6 million off-track “as a result of the continuing increase in demand” for services. Norfolk risks wiping its deficit a year later than planned.

The Department for Education said this week the enhanced monitoring scheme includes “additional financial and technical support”.

But it would not confirm how many councils were on EMS, or when it began. But most of the 34 local authorities on the safety valve scheme are on track to reduce their deficits, the spokesperson added.

In a letter to conservative-run Norfolk Council, the DfE said the enhanced monitoring programme was designed “to allow a local authority time to produce an updated or revised dedicated schools grant management plan to get the agreement back on track.”

It comes with “support and challenge” from SEND and financial advisors, but there is “no scope” to negotiate funding attached to the agreement.

SEND specialist Matt Keer said: “When it comes

As you are aware, the DfE enters into Safety Valve agreements with local authorities under the expectation that the commitments set out in their agreement will be met, and in turn provides the authority with additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) payments to help eliminate the accumulated historic deficit. In all Safety Valve agreements, there is an expectation that (taking account of the funding from DfE) the deficit will have been eradicated by the end of the agreement period.

Norfolk’s recent monitoring report stated that the local authority is off track with the delivery of its Safety Valve agreement and is:

- Forecasting a cumulative deficit of £11.8m in 2028-29
- Expected to balance the overall deficit in 8 years, as opposed to the agreed position of 7 years

The EMS programme within Safety Valve is designed to allow a local authority time to produce an updated or revised DSG management plan to get the agreement back on track, with support and challenge from Safety Valve SEND and financial advisors. There is no scope to renegotiate the funding attached to your Safety Valve agreement as part of this process.

- Show that Norfolk will return to an in-year balance as quickly as possible, and that any deficit growth in the meantime is reduced as far as possible;
- Be stretching but deliverable for Norfolk, as tested by our expert ex-local authority CFO advisors and DfE SEND advisors;
- Eradicate the DSG deficit by the end of the agreement period (including DfE funding as set out in the original agreement).

Council meeting minutes reveal new ‘safety valve’ intervention

to financial accountability, these LAs are getting intensely and repeatedly scrutinised.

“But there’s little evidence of the same intense attention being paid to the most important thing: whether these LAs are meeting their statutory duties, and enabling their schools to ensure good outcomes for children and young people with SEND.”

School forum documents for Norfolk state an “unexpected increase” in special school referrals has strained its deficit-reduction plan. Two new free special schools won’t open until 2026.

It is undertaking a “stock-take” and “comprehensive programme refresh which will identify new initiatives and mitigations” to bring the plan back on track,” documents added.

A council spokesperson said: “The fact that the trajectory is having to be refreshed is precisely because we are committed to continuing to meet needs and have, therefore, spent more money in 2023 than originally projected.”

They have “confidence that our revised plan will lead to EMS ending” on March 31.

But Webb added it is likely children and families would “bear the brunt” of any further “mitigations.”

Cambridgeshire, run by a liberal democrat, labour and independent joint administration, warned a delay in DfE-delivered free special school projects is also “significant.” A spokesperson said: “The pressure of demand and inflation means there is a current gap in our position.”

It plans to “reset” its model to balance the budget

by 2026-27.

A council spokesperson said they are likely to be “rephrasing transformation activities and getting support from DfE experts in early years and special schools. These discussions will also include the timing of opening of DfE delivered free schools.”

Council documents from June revealed Dorset was in discussion with DfE about its safety valve agreement and “collaborating” as part of the EMS programme.

Meanwhile, South Gloucestershire said they were behind target and DfE “will want to impose a plan on us going forward.”

Schools Week previously reported how safety valve councils have warned that inflation, staffing shortages and construction delays risk undermining the programme.

Meanwhile, the row over Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole’s safety valve negotiations continued this week. More than 2,000 residents have signed a petition calling for a full council vote on any deal.

A packed children’s committee meeting heard from officer Nicola Webb that the 15-year proposal the council has submitted to government, in exchange for a bailout, “doesn’t tackle the deficit currently projected.”

Graham Farrant, BCP chief executive, added they “will not support a proposal that takes the service below the statutory requirements”.

The council will receive feedback on its plan by March.

Councils forced to update key records after audit finds legal breach

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

A dozen councils have been forced to update records from key meetings with headteachers after a *Schools Week* audit found they were breaking their legal duty to keep them up-to-date.

The law requires local authorities to have a schools forum, made up of leaders, governors and trade unions, which is consulted on key funding decisions.

Councils are also required to "promptly publish all papers considered by the forum and the minutes of their meetings on their website."

But *Schools Week* found 12 councils whose records were either non-existent or not up-to-date. This equates to around eight per cent of all councils with education responsibilities.

During our audit, we found Middlesbrough Council had not published documents since October 2022, while Hartlepool's latest records were from December 2022.

A Middlesbrough Council spokesman said the minutes from all schools management forum meetings "have been agreed by its members, but had not been published on the council's website. They are now up to date."

Hartlepool thanked *Schools Week* "for alerting us to the error" and said all papers should be published "shortly."

The statement went on: "It appears from our investigation that during a transition between staff, the importance of the agendas being uploaded onto the website may have been missed. The situation has been rectified and measures put in place to ensure it is not repeated."

Sunderland Council has a separate website for education, called 'Leading Education Together,' which includes links to schools forum papers going back to last May. But documents from before that date appeared not to be published during our audit. The council said it was in the process of updating the records, and any missing information was an "administrative oversight". Schools forums make decisions



such as whether money can be moved from the core schools budget to the high needs block and on central spending on things like admissions and place planning.

Their documents offer an insight into councils' funding situations, all the more critical at a time of financial pressures.

For example, *Schools Week* last year revealed how cash-strapped Norfolk council had plans to "turn the tap off" for education, health and care plan referrals for vulnerable youngsters. The plans emerged through school forum papers.

And last week we learned that Bracknell Forest Council wanted to take the construction of a new special free school into its own hands to gain more "certainty" that it opens on time.

Education campaigner Andy Jolley said school forum meetings "have become a key source of information during the current financial crisis."

"Councils have a duty to be open and accountable over their decision making. Public access to what's said in these meetings is essential as the consequences are considerable."

Oxfordshire, Reading and Redcar and Cleveland councils had not updated documents since January 2023, while records since last February were outstanding on Peterborough's and Plymouth's websites.

Oxfordshire said it "became aware during a refresh of our website that the schools

forum documents weren't showing. This was addressed as a priority and the most recent documents are now visible online."

Reading, Plymouth and Redcar and Cleveland blamed "errors" and said they had since been updated.

Liverpool Council also had not updated records since last January. A spokesperson said: "We will ensure that the agendas and minutes are published on our website as soon as possible."

Solihull's documents only went up to May last year.

A spokesperson acknowledged minutes had "not been published as they should be. Work is now underway to remedy this issue and they will be available shortly."

Sefton Council previously required anyone wanting to view minutes to request them via an online form. But the law is clear they must be published online.

"This has now been rectified and a plan put in place to ensure these minutes are regularly uploaded."

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said it carried out "regular compliance checks to ensure local authorities are adhering to schools' forums regulations and good practice, including publishing schools' forums papers and meeting minutes."

"In the instance where regulations are not being met, we work alongside local authorities to support them in meeting their schools' forums statutory responsibility."

Fund schools to trial if AI works, experts say

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Schools should be given funding to establish how effective artificial intelligence (AI) might be in boosting pupils' learning, government experts have said in a new report.

A long-term strategy on the use of generative AI – such as ChatGPT – in schools is also needed, the government's open innovation team added.

The Department for Education had asked experts to explore the opportunities and risks for AI in education, including proposals on what needs to change.

Writing for *Schools Week*, academies minister Baroness Barran said: "The challenge is to make sure the enormous potential of AI can be put to work in schools, while keeping children safe."

In November, 42 per cent of primary and secondary teachers had used generative AI in their role – a rise from 17 per cent in April.

The DfE has also updated its school technology standards on how devices should be accessible for pupils.

Key takeaways from DfE report:

1. 'Flipped learning' could increase

Experts warn a long-term generative AI strategy is needed to set "the direction" of travel, including how technological advancements could change education models and implications for learning and teaching.

For example, "flipped learning" may become more pronounced, experts said. This is where students engage with learning materials outside of the classroom and come to school with basic knowledge to participate in more "interactive activities."

This strategy should be "future-proofed to keep pace with technological advancement."

And forums made up of students, experts and practitioners should be set up.

2. Give schools funding to evaluate ed tech impact

Experts said there is a "growing need" for a larger evidence base to help educators make informed decisions about the effectiveness of AI tools.

Key evidence gaps include its impact on pupils'



outcomes, especially for disadvantaged and children with SEND.

Ministers should set "metrics that matter," such as student outcomes over engagement, and ensure tools are pedagogically grounded and routinely evaluated.

It will require incentives and resources as schools are "unlikely to do this themselves" and the ed tech sector has a "vested interest" in showing effectiveness.

They suggest making funding available to schools to evaluate, as well as building on existing schemes such as the Oak National Academy curriculum quango.

3. Research funding needed to help teachers detect AI

As AI-enabled academic malpractice rises and becomes more sophisticated, it will become harder for teachers to identify its use.

Experts say research funding is needed to support the development of tools reliability detecting AI-generated work as well as other initiatives that could help.

This includes watermarking, which embeds a recognisable unique signal into AI creations.

Safety, privacy and data protection accreditations could also help reassure users.

4. Consider how to prevent 'digital divide'

The curriculum should be updated to reflect how students use AI or to integrate AI tools as an explicitly part of learning and assessment.

It should also be changed to meet employer

needs. But this will require collaboration between employers, government, awarding bodies and educators.

Experts warn generative AI could exacerbate "the digital divide" in education and there is already an emerging disparity between state and independent schools.

Government should consider how to support access by all teachers and students. Evidence informed guidance and advice should be easily accessible through trusted platforms.

5. 'Be transparent on impact evidence', Keegan tells edtech firms

Experts warn more research is needed to better understand the intellectual property of AI, including the infringement of IP rights due to the data input into generative AI models.

Traditional educational publishers could also be left behind as teachers and students turn to generative AI to produce educational resources.

"Support for educational publishers may be needed to ensure we have a sustainable publishing sector underpinning the education system," it adds.

Speaking on Wednesday at the BETT show, education secretary Gillian Keegan said: "We should have the same expectations for robust evidence in edtech as we do elsewhere in education.

"Ed tech business should be leading the way – being transparent with buyers and promoting products based on great evidence of what works."

What schools need to know from updated tech guidelines

Last week, the DfE said schools should assign a senior leadership team member to be responsible for digital technology.

They should then create a minimum two-year strategy including what devices might need to be refreshed or replaced. Laptops should be safe and secure and energy efficient.

In another update, schools were told devices and software should support the use of accessibility features.

Websites should be accessible and digital accessibility should be included in a school's policy.

Heads reveal why they have set up 'Caversham Covenant' support scheme

LUCAS CUMISKEY
@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

Headteachers say a new support network will ensure "colleagues disappearing after adverse Ofsted inspections" is a thing of the past.

Called the 'Caversham Covenant' in memory of Ruth Perry, former headteacher at Caverham primary school, senior teachers in Southampton will "help each other through the strains of inspections."

Leaders of schools in the Ofsted "window" will get a "buddy" so they "know there is someone they can talk to before, during and after inspection."

Support will also include a directory of staff with Ofsted experience that can be called on over concerns about the conduct of inspections.

There will also be an "understanding that for negative Ofsted inspections, the default solution is to support the head and current leadership team to address the issues causing concern."

Those signing up to the pledge include Southampton City Council and academy trust leaders in the area, both of which have the authority to sack their headteachers.

Ofsted has itself introduced reforms after the death of Perry. A coroner ruled an Ofsted inspection contributed to her death.

John Draper, headteacher at Swaythling Primary School, said: "We were all shocked and saddened by the death of Ruth Perry.

"It's tempting to feel helpless, but we wondered if there was some way we could do something ourselves to make sure we support each other better than we do at the moment.

"Lots of us have seen colleagues disappear after adverse inspections, leaving their jobs very shortly afterwards.

"It's easy to talk about how we all support each other but it felt important to make explicit what that support looks like."

The covenant is described as a "public declaration of how all parties can all work



together to support each other."

Southampton council met school leaders from local maintained schools, trusts and unions at an event on Monday to sign the agreement.

Peter Howard, headteacher at Fairisle Junior School, said while headship "is the best job in the world, it can be a pretty lonely place" as "the buck stops [with us]."

Howard said he'd had "mixed" experiences of Ofsted over the years, but added: "There have been occasions where the headteacher has changed very quickly, either in the middle of or immediately following an inspection outcome."

But the school leaders have now said "that should never happen again," he said.

He hopes the initiative will help "make headship a job that up and coming school leaders want to do. There is no point in headship being so difficult that nobody wants to do it."

Ofsted inspections restarted on Monday after they were paused so new mental health awareness training could be rolled out.

Howard said it can feel like a "millstone around your neck" when headteachers know it is "an inspection window."

David Parkin, headteacher at Moorlands Primary School, called the scheme "a positive step towards ensuring any inspection or quality assurance process is done in a

collaborative and solution-focused way, rather than focusing on the negatives.

"It will enable us to support one another," he added. "It's a shame we feel it's something that needs to be written down."

A Southampton City Council spokesperson said it "fully supports the covenant and the benefits it will deliver to school improvement."

Elizabeth Salisbury, NAHT regional head for South Central, added the "admirable and inspiring move" of leaders will "ease some of the damaging strain" of inspections.

Last week, Ofsted announced it will look at "decoupling" safeguarding from judgments, publishing reports quicker, and appoint a sector expert to lead an independent inquiry into how it responded to the death of Perry.

Those involved in the covenant include:

Aspire Community trust, Bridge Education Trust, Reach Co-operative Trust, Southampton Co-operative Learning Trust, Southampton Local Authority, Southampton Council, school leaders' union NAHT, Southampton NEU, Southampton NASUWT, Primary Heads Conference, and the Southampton secondary heads group.

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Head banned for bullying has high court appeal thrown out

LUCAS CUMISKEY

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A High Court judge has thrown out a headteacher's appeal against a teaching ban for bullying in a case that was said by one union to be a sign of the misconduct regulator "failing."

Mahzia 'Pepe' Hart, former headteacher of Trinity Church School in Radstock, Somerset, appealed a prohibition order banning her from working in the profession for at least two years.

Last year, the general secretary of the NAHT union, Paul Whiteman, said he had "significant concerns" over the case, adding "every week gives us cause for concern that the TRA [Teaching Regulation Agency] is a failing regulator."

But Mr Justice Eyre dismissed Hart's appeal in a judgement published last Friday following a two-day hearing at London's High Court in November.

He said: "When in a position of leadership and power [Hart] was found to have bullied teachers who were pregnant (and as such vulnerable at least to a degree); to have made inappropriate comments to or about staff members; to have mocked staff members; and to have intimidated staff members.

"She was found to have done this repeatedly and over a period of three years."

An independent TRA panel ruled in November 2022 that Hart was guilty of "bullying, intimidating, mocking, mimicking and making



Royal Courts of Justice

inappropriate comments towards staff over a number of years" as part of "a pattern of behaviour that was incompatible with being a teacher".

Hart won several national awards but resigned in 2015 following complaints by a "number of staff members."

But after a five-week TRA hearing, 25 specific allegations against her were found "not proved." Eleven others were also withdrawn by regulators before the verdict.

Her grounds for the High Court appeal related to the procedural fairness of the case, the panel's approach to assessing evidence, and whether the sanction was "necessary and proportionate."

However, Eyre said Hart's "submissions as to the nature and gravity of her actions markedly underplay the seriousness of her conduct."

The TRA panel found Hart had "failed to make any expression of remorse or demonstrate any insight." Eyre found it was "entitled to regard the risk of recurrence as a very powerful factor."

He said the "panel's approach to the fact-finding

exercise was markedly careful and restrained."

Hart said she is "disappointed" by the outcome and "cannot show remorse for things that I have not done."

She said on X: "It would be going against my own principles and morals to not challenge injustice, hence the reason I felt compelled to appeal the TRA decision... I cannot show remorse for things that I have not done."

Alongside the TRA case, Hart has been suing the National Education Union (NEU) and its regional district secretary David Biddleston. She accused him of inciting union members to complain about her, motivated partly by anti-academy sentiment.

Biddleston "denies the alleged conspiracy" and argues he was "acting in his capacity" as an NEU officer.

These proceedings are "ongoing" but "it does not appear that a hearing is imminent," Eyre added.

Hart told Schools Week her ongoing legal battle is "taking its toll on my mental health on a daily basis."

Whiteman said this week that NAHT "never comment on the details of individual cases" but said it "remains concerned about issues with the TRA. We are using every means available to seek improvement."

The regulator was rebranded as the TRA after the spectacular collapse of a high-profile and controversial case of teachers said to be involved in the Trojan Horse scandal.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

'Pressured' school leader avoids teaching ban after falsifying records

A leader who falsified absence records while under "pressure" to improve her school's statistics has avoided a teaching ban.

A Teaching Regulation Agency professional conduct panel found Paula Tucker, while a leader at Weavers Academy in Wellingborough in 2018-19, retrospectively changed thousands of absences to "present."

She used B and D codes to indicate children were in off site education when they were not.

The panel ruled Tucker was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct of a "serious nature... due to the potential safeguarding implications which could have arisen."

Tucker avoided a teaching ban after other

witnesses reported "pressure" from senior leaders and described a "toxic" atmosphere at the school.

Tucker said to the panel that one leader – known only as colleague A – told her to "clean up the data so that attendance would look better". She also said she was "frightened" of her colleague and "felt manipulated."

The panel "considered that the pressure exerted by colleague A could amount to 'extreme duress' ... amounting to significant intimidation [that] placed pressure on Mrs Tucker to change the attendance data."

They also noted the "valuable contribution" Tucker had made to teaching since founding a new independent alternative provision school.

The risk of a repeat was "low."

A spokesperson for the Creative Education Trust, which runs the school, said it had new leadership, adding: "Any pressure to change attendance register codes is completely unacceptable to CET and does not align with our values."

The school was rated 'good' in 2022. The inspection "involved scrutiny of attendance registers."

Tucker was approached for comment.

Children's commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza said last year she was "particularly concerned" schools were misusing the B attendance code to disguise managed moves of pupils.

NEWS

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Out of favour T-levels could lead to higher fees for schools

SHANE CHOWEN

@SHANECHOWEN

EXCLUSIVE

Schools offering T-levels could be charged higher fees if fewer-than-expected pupils sign up for the qualifications.

Documents obtained by Schools Week's sister paper *FE Week* show the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is proposing new contracts for exam boards that provide T-levels that feature a "demand-sensitive" pricing model.

A full invitation to tender will be launched by March for the contract to provide T-levels - a technical alternative to A-levels, in health, healthcare science and science - all held currently by NCFE.

The government predicts 32,400 entrants to the T-level in health over five years, 9,700 entrants to the T-level in healthcare science and 16,900 to the T-level in science.

However, if learner numbers don't reach forecasted levels, providers, including schools, could be left fitting the bill.

The contracts will feature a new "adaptive pricing model," which will allow awarding organisations to make a "one-off adjustment" to the entry fee it charges providers if the projected number of students increases or decreases over the contract term.

This is described as "an adjustment facility for higher learner fees at lower learner numbers."

Just 200 schools offer T-levels

The change comes at a time when the government is seeking to encourage more schools and more pupils to take up the new qualifications. These have faced a barrage of teething problems.

According to government figures, only around 200 schools currently provide T-levels.

Last year, an Ofsted review found "many" students have dropped out of T-levels after being "misled" onto the flagship qualifications, while experienced teachers struggle to teach the "complex" courses.

Students and teachers have also reported feeling "let down" by the early rollout and fear the brand is already damaged as universities refuse to accept the qualifications for entry.

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said the pricing plan was "an ill-conceived proposal that should not be implemented."

Government or exam boards should instead bear the risk, he added, also criticising ministers for announcing their plans to scrap T-levels as part of the proposed Advanced British Standard.

"Colleges and schools should not have to pick up the tab for that, or for making T-level contracts more commercially attractive for awarding organisations."

The latest procurement round comes after the IfATE launched tenders for seven of the qualifications in education and early years, construction and digital in December.

The government has forecast student numbers for the three health and science T-levels will increase by over five times.

Around 1,800 students took the qualifications in 2022. In 2026-27, when the new awarding contracts start, the DfE predicts 10,200 students will sign up, rising to 12,200 by the end of the contract period, 2030-31.

Under T-level contracts, one awarding organisation is responsible for updating content and assessment materials, providing training

to teachers and provider staff, quality control, and assessing and grading students for each qualification.

Contract values still unknown

New contracts will be awarded for five years, with the option for up to three annual extensions, overlapping with the government's reforms to level 3 qualifications and the development of the Advanced British Standard.

Jennifer Coupland, chief executive of IfATE, said they had worked with the sector to make the contracts "even more commercially attractive."

FE Week understands the lower-than-expected student numbers and high development and operating costs have left several awarding organisations barely breaking even on their T-level contracts.

Start dates for teaching of the newly re-licensed T-levels will be staggered.

Students will be taking new generation T-levels in early years, construction and digital from September 2025, while the health and science T-levels won't be ready for teaching until September 2026.

The awarding organisations that currently hold T-level licences can re-tender, though the contracts do make provisions for staff to be transferred under TUPE regulations if a new awarding organisation takes over.

The health and science T-levels suffered from well-publicised issues which led to results being re-graded in their first year.

Various changes have been made to make them fit for purpose.



Jennifer Coupland

ANVIKSHA PATEL | @ANNIESEATING

Boost sixth-form funding by £710 per student, says sector body

The next government should increase funding for sixth-formers by at least £710 per student, sixth form college leaders have demanded.

The uplift would see funding for 16-19-year-olds keep pace with inflation, deliver teacher pay awards, and pay for non-qualification time like employment and mental health support.

Estimates by the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCFA) show a funding rise at this level would cost the government an extra £135 million per year just for students in

sixth-form colleges and 16-19 academies.

It would see average per-student funding for sixth-formers rise from £5,760 to £6,470.

The figures come from research organisation London Economics, which was commissioned by SFCFA to model the costs of per-student funding increases.

Its report, published today, found average real-terms funding for sixth-form colleges has dropped by 15 per cent. In 2023-24, funding was £5,760 per student, lower than the £6,820 per student in 2010-11.

The report estimates an extra £410 per

student is needed so the per-student rate in 2025-26 remains the same in real terms as in 2023-24.

A further £300 per student would be needed to provide the additional hours of student support such as mental health and welfare services plus employability training, tutorial activities.

Bill Watkin, chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, added raising the rate would help ensure "sixth-form students in England receive the education and support they need to prosper."

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

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Movers & Shakers

Your fortnightly guide to who's new and who's leaving



Lucy Livings

Interim regional director for the south west

Start date: Monday
Previous Job: Deputy director, regions group south west

Interesting fact: Lucy has lived and worked in Afghanistan, Zimbabwe and USA, including in roles for the World Bank and Department for International Development.



Lisa Lyons

Director of children's services, Oxfordshire County Council

Start date: This month
Previous Job: Director of children and family services, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Interesting fact: Many years ago, Lisa used to do triathlons, and still likes open water swimming when it's warm enough.

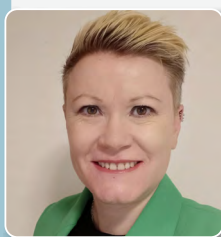


Lara Gratton

Director of HR, Discovery Educational Trust

Start date: November
Previous Job: Executive director, people and development for the SR Group

Interesting fact: Lara is a keen runner, having swapped roads for trails during lockdown. She is also a novice canicrosser with her cocker spaniel, Milo.



Naomi Carter

Service director education, inclusion and access, at Isle of Wight Council's new children's services department.

Start date: February 1
Previous Job: School improvement manager – specialist provision and inclusion at Hampshire County Council

Interesting fact: Naomi makes her own Christmas tree every year out of old items other people have thrown away.



Stephen Holden

Interim director for education and skills, Bury Council

Start date: This month
Previous Job: Executive headteacher, Prestolee Multi Academy Trust

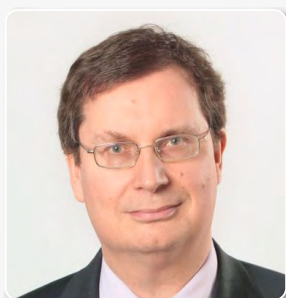
Interesting fact: Stephen enjoys running on the west Pennine moors with one of his dogs, Poppy. He would take Dudley the dachshund, too, but his legs are a little short and he barks at trees.

Former Labour advisor joins Oak academy board

FEATURED

Conor Ryan, a former education adviser to Labour's Sir Tony Blair, is among three new faces to join the new permanent board of Oak National Academy.

He is joined by Hardip Begol, an Ofqual board member, former Department for Education director and ex-chief executive of Woodard Academies Trust, and Annie Gardner, a managing director at technology consulting company Slalom.



Ryan was also an adviser to former education secretary Lord Blunkett and was recently a director at the Office for Students.

The trio join four others who have sat on the interim board, in place since the curriculum quango was set up as an arms-length government body in 2022.

Continuing trustees include Henry de Zoete, the prime minister's artificial intelligence adviser, Sean Harford, Ofsted's former national director of

education and Cassie Buchanan, chief executive of Charter Schools Educational Trust.

The board is led by Sir Ian Bauckham, the new Ofqual chief regulator. Members will serve for an initial three-year term.

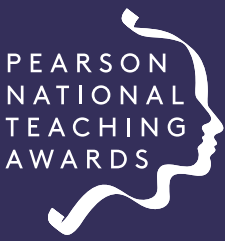
Some of the members were Oak appointees, while others were from DfE. Gillian Keegan, education secretary, signed all appointees off.

Ryan, Harford and Gardner were Oak appointees. All had to apply through the open public appointments process.

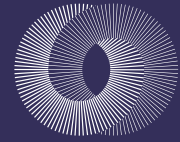


Hardip Begol

Please let us know of any new faces leading your school, trust or education organisation by emailing news@schoolsweek.co.uk



THE 2024 AWARDS ARE OPEN FOR ENTRY



THE TEACHING AWARDS TRUST

These awards are not purely about individuals or groups of teachers. They are, most importantly, about celebrating and recognising whole communities. From the moment we returned, following the awards ceremony, pupils, their families, staff and governors were buzzing with pride and excitement that our community had been in the news and on national television.

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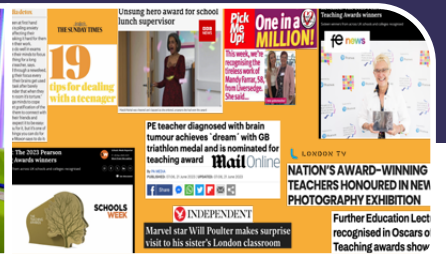
1ST MARCH ENTRY DEADLINE VIA **WWW.TEACHINGAWARDS.COM**



2023 winners



The One Show



2023 press reach over 100m



The Pearson Teaching Awards are an unbelievable recognition and very humbling when you know that so many other schools that are so much more worthy. The ceremony was overwhelming, to be sitting in a room with hundreds of inspiring educators and supporters of education was an honour.



Paddy McCabe

Headteacher, St Oliver Plunkett Primary School



‘Children from challenging homes have superpowers – we need to recognise that’

Nicole McCartney is determined to shift how the sector views troubled pupils, many of whom have built up extraordinary skills to deal with difficult upbringings – just as she did

Nicole McCartney is a rare species: someone with lived experience of being permanently excluded from school who has gone on to reach senior heights in the education world.

As director of education at Creative Education Trust (CET), she tells her heads to see the challenges some pupils face at home as giving them “superpowers”, and to always have “very high expectations” of them.

“Nobody had high expectations of me,” she says.

The one you didn't mess with

Growing up in Michigan, USA, McCartney was every teacher's worst nightmare. But at home she was a devoted carer to her alcoholic parents.

Her mum was bipolar and her dad was away a lot in his job installing cable TV. She recalls a childhood home filled with “music, drinking and people”.

There were happy moments – like her dad

braiding her hair in the mornings before leaving for work. But also “really scary” ones.

Her mum had “terrible depressions” and was “institutionalised from time to time”. Her dad's irregular income spelt “feast or famine”.

She started school assuming that she would be a “big hit” because she could already read. Her mum had passed on her love of books, contrary to the “common misconception” that alcoholics are “just lying on the ground drunk all the time”.

But her parents did not teach her oral hygiene. McCartney's baby teeth had all rotted, so she wore an “original grill”, capped in silver.

Her silver-lined lisp meant she was immediately placed in “remedial” class, along with “two kids that all the other kids made fun of... I immediately came to understand what stigma was.”

But she did not give the other kids a chance to treat her that way and became “the one that you didn't mess with – ever”.

Aged five, she began smoking because “having

parents who sleep well through substance abuse means their cigarettes are laying around”. By eight she was addicted, and drinking too.

Fierce tribes

But McCartney does not want sympathy. Far from it. She believes educators “too often infer to children, even if we don't say it directly – the sympathetic side head-tilt – ‘you poor thing, coming from this family’.

“People are very quick to make judgments that, if a parent lets their kid's teeth rot, it must be that that person has no redeeming qualities. But kids like me come from fierce tribes.”

McCartney's parents “always shared food with others, no matter how little we had. No matter what a small space we had, people were living with us.”

While she has put her wild ways behind her (she enjoys dog walking and canoeing near her home on the Norfolk Broads), McCartney still lives with

Profile: Nicole McCartney

the “ugly little tattoos” she had done as a teen. They include one on her ankle of a caterpillar on a mushroom with a pipe, reflecting her intentions to form a rock band called Alice in One Land. McCartney grimaces.

Thankfully her first education job, as an English teacher, meant she could blame it on her appreciation of Lewis Carroll.

She has also told pupils that the reason for her tattoos is that “nobody had high expectations of me. But I won't let you do that... because I do have high expectations of you.”

When she was 17, McCartney's mother died from self-inflicted injuries. It was in those final moments with her that McCartney, who by this time had friends “in prison” and others “murdered”, decided to turn her life around.

She quit drinking, went to junior college and, at 19, married a “normal guy”, with “dinner at six and a clean home”.

She then applied to study secondary education, English literature and communications at university. She took to it “like a fish to water” and was crowned national debating champion.

“I didn't have the stigma of being the disadvantaged kid. Nobody knew me. I was able to be smart.”

Although her marriage didn't last, her love of education did.

Faking it

After teaching at secondary level in the US, McCartney “fell in love” with Ireland on a creative writing holiday. But the requirement to speak Gaelic in schools meant she turned her attentions to England instead, teaching English and drama at Sir Frank Markham Community School (now Milton Keynes Academy) in 2002.

But she “was finding it hard to watch [the kids acting], because my cringe threshold is very low”, so she ditched the drama and was made head of English.

Her “proudest achievement” came in her first headship role at Ormiston Venture Academy, in Great Yarmouth, in 2010.

The ‘satisfactory’ school, taken over by Ormiston Academy Trust (OAT), had the highest pregnancy



‘When you live in a house of chaos, you have empathy, strong survival and usually leadership skills. We don't recognise that’

rates in Norfolk and the lowest attendance (around 86 per cent). McCartney was its 12th head in 10 years.

Pupils had been banned from local shops and sporting fixtures. Half the staff were unqualified instructors.

The school had become the butt of local jokes. A year before, in a “cruel” April Fool, the local newspaper pretended that the Beckhams were sending their children there.

McCartney promised her pupils upon arrival that it would be ‘outstanding’ within two and a half years. But she drove home that day with “Home Alone hands”, reproaching herself for making such a far-fetched pledge and feeling “terrified” because “in my head, I was faking it”.

Her childhood means she is “not comfortable or confident” in herself, and “probably never will be”. But McCartney believes she knows how to make sure that, unlike her, pupils feel they “have agency when they arrive” at their own life successes.

She was also determined to turn the school around with the same staff who had been “working their tails off” under previous heads, but whose expectations of pupils were “lower than they should have been”.

She banned “mobiles and purple hair”, put in

place “very clear behavioural expectations and a sanctions ladder, and made it clear I'd be sticking to it”.

She held assemblies about the derisory newspaper articles, the shopkeepers' views and the litter, which had been “shoulder-high up against the fences” when she arrived.

She told them: “I'm not having it. So, let's join together and prove to all these people that they're wrong.”

She fed stories to the press about her students wearing the “smartest uniform in Norfolk”. Bad behaviour was dealt with away from view, and praise given “out front”.

Within a year, the proportion of students attaining at least five A* to C grades went up to 94 per cent, having been in the 40s, making it the best performing non-selective school in Norfolk and Suffolk.

In 2013, when the school got ‘outstanding’, it was celebrated by everyone with tears, hugs and ice cream vans on site. “All the kids snuck two extra ice creams. Everybody was green around the gills and it was fantastic.”

Diary rooms

A unique feature to the turnaround was the “Big

Profile: Nicole McCartney

Brother-style diary rooms” she introduced, kitted out with similar décor and screens to the TV shows.

They enabled pupils to feed back on school life.

All CET schools now have one.

McCartney was permanently excluded aged 16.

While it was “absolutely deserved” for her “many crimes”, there were “ways I could have been saved”.

In third grade, a test showed her “inordinately high” IQ, demonstrating that she had “all this potential”. But nobody helped her to use it.

She recalls having a strong interest in “auto shop” [mechanics]. But, as a girl, she was not allowed in those classes. McCartney wrote a “really well thought out” note to her vice-principal aged 13 expressing a desire to do public speaking and auto shop (and calling him a “bunch of names”).

She was “sanctioned”. But he “didn’t pick up” that there were things about school she liked.

That experience is behind her belief that educators “need to find the thing that kids are passionate about – not the things that we have to teach them. What is the activity that will give them entry into believing they can learn the rest?”

The diary rooms allow her to “get qualitative as well as the quantitative” feedback, which is “really important”.

For a year 9 with a “horrific” home situation who was “approaching permanent exclusion”, the diary room allowed him to express an interest in teaching a particular outdoor activity. He thrived in this leadership role, which led on to student council and later university.

She says children from challenging homes have “superpowers” which need to be recognised.

While McCartney was a “terrible kid at school”, at home she was “doing everything to keep my mother OK”. That included checking she had “fallen asleep [safely] on her side” and that cigarettes were put out.

“When you live in a house of chaos, you have highly honed empathy, and very strong survival and usually leadership skills. We don’t as a culture recognise that.”

She does not like the word “disadvantaged”, because it is a “mistake” to speak about such children “as if they come to us with nothing”.

And she thinks there is not enough discussion of



‘Nobody had high expectations of me’

pupils’ lived experiences – finding it “appalling” how the education world is positioned into “camps”.

“If you are taking a position, you are thinking about yourself rather than the children,” she says, pointing to the “hellscape of edu-Twitter”.

She tells the loudest voices in education to “get over themselves”, and focus on what “post-pandemic children are dealing with... It’s not the same ballgame. Let’s make schools a comfortable tribe to be a part of, so they don’t go find another one detrimental to them.

“I would dance with my sworn enemy if I thought they had a better idea how to improve the lives of children.”

Utterly arrogant

After her Ormiston Venture turnaround – it became the first coastal teaching school in the country and McCartney was made a national leader of education – she was promoted to become OAT’s Eastern region director, but started to “believe my own hype”.

She would walk into schools with notes on her achievements “convinced I had the silver bullet ... utterly arrogant”.

She soon discovered that she could not just transplant the same recipe for success and learned to “step back and harness the critical power of a MAT and its school leaders. I cleared the path so everybody else could do what they needed to in their roles.”

She joined CET as its director of education in 2020, overseeing the co-constructing of its curriculum. She brought together heads and curriculum leaders, presenting ideas around the “powerful knowledge” the curriculums should include, and seeking their “red lines”.

CET also now uses standardised assessments and is implementing a Teaching and Learning Framework and working on behaviour and SEND frameworks. McCartney believes doing this collectively means “we’re producing leaders at all levels. As far as I’m concerned, if you have a remit, you are an expert.”

There are moments when McCartney still “feels like I’m in a costume, afraid my mask is going to slip”.

But, if she could speak to her younger rebellious self now, she would tell her that “even though it’s going to be horrible, everything’s going to end up all right – and you will use your superpowers.”

Opinion

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The sector's manifesto



LEORA CRUDDAS

CEO, Confederation of School Trusts

Care, resilience, welfare and trust: Building the schools sector we need

Opening our new feature on the sector's priorities for the next general election, Leora Cruddas outlines the MAT representative body's key demands

Our political leaders and school leaders have a foundational question in common: how do children and young people, and those who educate them in our schools, flourish?

A series of important questions follow: How do we create school environments where human flourishing means both the optimal continuing development of children's potential and living well as a human being? How do we address the negative impacts of the pandemic and the current economic challenges? How do we create school environments that are built on affirmative models of disability for children with SEND? And how do we mobilise education as a force for social justice?

A duty of care

In *A Duty of Care: Britain Before and After Corona*, historian Peter Hennessy says that the concept of a duty of care should again define us as we learn how to live in a post-pandemic world.

"The great question of UK politics," he says, "is whether we can find the pessimism-breaking policies, the

people, the purpose, the language, and the optimism to shift [our current] system and replace it with something much closer to who we are and, above all, who we can be."

I believe education is the building of who we can be. But our school system is fragile. Multiple forces are putting pressure on our children, families and schools, including the negative legacies of Covid, large increases in the number of children experiencing mental ill health, the school workforce recruitment and retention crisis, the decimation of services around schools, and child poverty and destitution.

Building the resilience of our school system

To meet these challenges, we need to build the resilience of our schools system alongside the resilience of our wider public services, our communities and our children and families. What we need is not a big state or a small state according to ideologies, but a strategic state that focuses on its duty to deliver that goal.

CST's election priorities set out the role of the state in doing so. On workforce policy, we are calling for an evidence-led strategy for the whole sector, including the recruitment and retention of teachers and a plan to address shortage subjects.

On funding, we want to see a fair per-pupil settlement that is



“What we need is a strategic state”

sufficient, sustainable and equitable and includes weighting for disadvantage. We also need a capital framework to ensure that we have enough places in schools that are safe and conducive to learning.

On accountability, our priority is for proportionate, intelligent and compassionate frameworks of public answerability, inspection and regulation.

Lastly, with regards to support for children, young people and families, we want to see urgent action on SEND reforms and the critical reform of mental health services and of wider services that address endemic issues such as youth violence.

A cross-government poverty plan

The recent PISA report gave us the stark and terrible finding that one in 10 pupils report not eating at least once a week because there is not enough money to buy food. Meanwhile, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's recent report, *Destitution in the UK in 2023* highlights that there are now more than one million children in the UK living in destitution – that is, living without proper shelter or without

enough food.

In December, UNICEF published its own report, *Child Poverty in the Midst of Wealth*, which shows that child income poverty rates in the UK are the highest among the world's richest countries. We rank bottom of the table for changes in those rates over the past decade.

So we urgently need a cross-government strategy to address this crippling issue, which is in strong part driving poor attendance and widening the attainment gap.

Trust with accountability

Finally, the legitimacy of public institutions is crucial for building peaceful and inclusive societies. Trust is integral to the functioning of society and essential for social and economic progress: in each other, in our public institutions and in our leaders.

Therefore, the next government should move away from the reductionist “new public management” approach to public service reform. Instead, it should reset its relationship with public services and build a new settlement, based on trust with accountability.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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LEUNIGDirector, Public First and chief
economist, OnwardWhy stop at health? Passport
data would be useful too

After Labour's 'big brother' proposal to link health and education data, Tim Leunig suggests we can – and should – go further still

A columnist – and particularly a new columnist – should work hard to avoid annoying their readers. So let me apologise for the next paragraph. It is necessary for what follows, but I realise it is tactless. I am sorry.

I went to the Canaries in early December. In my defence, it was a very belated summer holiday, but I know that telling teachers about cheap holidays in the sun is not kind. You deserve better.

Like many people staying at the resort, we went as a family – the two of us, and our daughter. Most of the children we saw were toddlers. Our daughter is 20 and it was after the university term had ended.

Some families, however, had children who were unambiguously of school age – mostly, but not always, primary school age. They were British.

Now I should not jump to conclusions. Perhaps they lived abroad, in countries with school holidays in early December? Perhaps they are home schoolers and will be doing lessons between

Christmas and New Year, when the rest of us are off? Still, I bet that these are children who had been taken out of regular schools.

I only went on one foreign holiday as a child – the school French exchange. Of course I am old enough that foreign holidays were rarer when I was a kid. But, above all, it is because my mum knew that a good education was more important to me and my future than any holiday ever could be.

Her attitude was normal back then: the idea of taking a kid out of school for a holiday just did not exist. It should not exist now, either.

But it does. Last September my Public First colleagues Sally Burtonshaw and Ed Dorrell published a landmark set of interviews with parents about school attendance. Term-time holidays are seen as acceptable.

One mum even suggested that it was good parenting, saying “people are constantly complaining that there's no family time. People are willing to spend time as a family on a holiday – I don't understand why anyone would make it harder.”

I think this is wrong, but let me pause my moral indignation for a moment. My resort was not crowded with British kids like Butlins at Christmas. We don't really know the numbers. We need



“Border Force should share individual data with the DfE

facts and we should be able to get them from Border Force, the official name for passport control.

The passport records will show that I have spent 51 out of the past 52 weeks in the UK. I clearly live here. They will also show that I spent a week in the Canaries, and they will know which week it is.

They know that, for every British passport-holder, including every child of school age – and, I think, for every non-British passport-holder with a machine-readable passport as well. Border Force can and should report these data to the UK government so that we know the exact scale of the issue.

We should go further. Border Force should share its data at individual level with the Department for Education.

For sure, the National Pupil Database does not have passport numbers, and the passport does not have an education ID. But a name, address and date of birth would be sufficient to ensure a perfect match in almost every case. We could then, in a few years, assess

the effect of taking children out of school.

That test will not be perfect – parents who take their children out of school may on average care less about education, and offer less help with homework. This analysis will be a good starting point: what is the effect of a week in the sun on your child's future?

Knowing how many children are out of school for holidays, and how many days are missed is essential. Linking those data to school outcomes – and ultimately life outcomes – is both important and possible. The government should make it happen.

Let me know your experiences. Are children regularly skipping school to frolic in the sun?
Email news@schoolsweek.co.uk

Tim Leunig will be back in March with the next instalment of his termly policy column

Opinion

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



NADEINE ASBALI

Secondary English teacher,
London

The moral panic over school prayer exposes our double standards

National turmoil over prayer in schools reveals glaring Islamophobia at the heart of some people's concept of Britishness, writes Nadeine Asbali

The issue of prayer in schools has been at the forefront of both the national media and the world of education this week, as we await a high court decision on a prayer ban enforced at Michaela Community School in north-west London.

The controversial case has given rise to a wider conversation about the role of prayer and indeed religion as a whole within schools. From the beginning, though, glaring double standards have been all too clear. For one, the Michaela prayer ban targets "ritualistic prayer" specifically, meaning that it would not impact a Christian student saying a silent prayer.

But most alarming of all is the Islamophobic moral panic that has prevailed, giving way to sensationalist newspaper headlines from the likes of former MP Nadine Dorries calling for an all-out ban on "prayer mats and hijabs" in schools. Other columnists have implored that Michaela head Katharine Birbalsingh must win against "Islamic bullies".

Over the past few days, the torrent of Islamophobic abuse

that Muslim teachers like me have faced for speaking out in defence of prayer at school has been difficult enough to deal with, but perhaps the most frustrating part has been witnessing Islamic prayer portrayed as a sinister, intimidating act that seeks to disturb social cohesion and encroach on the very purpose of education itself. This warps the practice from an independent and entirely innocuous five-minute act of private spiritual devotion into an act of culture war being waged in our places of learning.

In my seven years of teaching, I have prayed almost every single lunchtime and often after school too. From my own classroom to a rather large store cupboard made into a makeshift prayer space thanks to a few rugs and an air freshener; from massive, echoing sports halls designated for prayers on Fridays to empty classrooms voluntarily staffed by Muslim teachers so our students have somewhere safe to pray.

I have worked in schools where I have been the only Muslim, and schools where we have been in our thousands. And, through all of these experiences, one simple truth has prevailed: prayer has never, ever been an issue.

What we have been told lately is that prayer leads to a breakdown of social cohesion, causes intimidation and even segregates students, yet



"In my seven years of teaching, prayer has never been an issue"

all I have seen is the opposite. If students were sacrificing a portion of their lunchtime to practise the clarinet or revise for their French test, we would commend their dedication.

Don't we want to teach students to take personal responsibility and develop a sense of duty, especially given our statutory obligation as educators to foster our pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development?

What is more, children are not like adults. They are curious and open to each other's differences. You will see white British children happily pausing their football match while their mate runs off to pray for five minutes, reminding each other to keep the noise down so they don't disturb their friends' silent devotion.

You will overhear complex conversations about theology and philosophy from the panini-stuffed mouths of 12-year-olds who are intrigued, not offended, by what their classmate believes. You will see a community that is respectful and aware of each other's differences, not rigidly oblivious to them.

This creates a school environment that is all the richer – not to mention young adults who will navigate our multicultural world with empathy, awareness and respect.

Much of the hysteria around praying in school lately has portrayed Muslimness in direct opposition to Britishness. After all, I have not seen any alarmist newspaper headlines about how the hundreds of Church of England schools must stop using prayer and hymns because they get in the way of learning. I will hazard that not many Christian teachers have been told to "go back to the desert" for advocating for their pupils' rights online either.

But, if we tell Muslim children that in the name of Britishness they must shirk the fundamentals of their faith, then what are we teaching both them and their peers about what Britishness looks like? And what message are they getting about who gets to be British and who does not?

Nadeine Asbali is the author of *Veiled Threat: On Being Visibly Muslim in Britain*

Opinion

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



KYLIE RIO-WOOD

Trust leader for speech and language, the Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust

How trusts can take the lead on speech and language provision

Our in-house speech and language service is helping our pupils, our staff, and taking pressure off the system for everyone else, explains Kylie Rio-Wood

Almost two million school children are behind their peers in talking and understanding, the highest number on record, it was revealed this month. Different reasons have been attributed to this jump, from the pandemic to the use of screens. However, the main takeaway is that thousands of children are now waiting over a year for speech and language therapy.

As the trust leader for speech and language at the Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust and the trust's lead speech and language therapist, I believe schools are going to have to invest more in services like speech and language therapy (SALT). These have traditionally been provided or commissioned by local authorities, but now have long waiting lists, and the state of council finances nationwide suggests these will only get longer.

Children who do not receive SALT in a timely manner can see both their wellbeing and outcomes suffer. Their development can stall, leading to poorer mental health and even unemployment in

adulthood. For children who need it, SALT can transform life chances by supporting them to access education properly and to manage socially.

Responding to the headline figures in *The Times*, Jane Harris, Speech and Language UK's chief executive, called on schools to put in place group programmes to help children with communication needs. This is what we have been doing trust-wide.

Our team currently consists of a SALT assistant and three specialist TAs in speech and language. We have conducted speech and language screenings for two years and are working towards every child in every school in our trust being screened for speech and language needs and supported by us if needed.

I started this work by creating an informal assessment which covers areas of speech and language that, from evidence, a four-year-old would be expected to be able to reach. We use this screening tool to assess children who start in reception, and from this we create booster sessions for children who have fallen short in certain areas. The SALT team runs these sessions so that teachers do not have to.

We then use an online assessment programme called Secondary Language Link, which is a unique,



“SALT can transform life chances”

comprehensive package for supporting students with speech, language and communication needs. The package combines a robust, standardised assessment with planned and fully-resourced, targeted small-group interventions and a staff training toolkit. We use this to screen every year 7 in all of our schools, and then run intervention groups as required.

Thanks to both of these screenings, we are also able to identify any children with very significant needs who would meet the NHS SALT threshold. This allows us to refer them to this service sooner rather than later. It also means that we can signpost other NHS services we think may help, such as GPs, audiologists and ear, nose and throat specialists.

Our trust has also invested in an external provider of virtual SALT assessments and therapy for children in other year groups who staff are concerned about and think might benefit from further support. These assessments can then also be used to help support any education,

health and care plan (EHCP) referrals.

Taken together, all of this means that more children than ever are being seen and supported – and much sooner than would otherwise be the case, which benefits everyone. It helps children to catch up with their peers, supports teachers to deliver the best classroom experience for all pupils, and alleviates pressure on public services in the long term.

More multi-academy trusts doing this sort of work internally – or collaborating with each other to share these services – would also reduce demand on local authority services, to the benefit of students in non-academised schools.

But above all, it is clear how much children benefit personally from support with speech, language and communication needs. With almost two million children in need of that support, I hope more trusts will collaborate and consider how they can take a lead on this pressing issue.

Solutions

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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BEN MALLINSON

Principal,
The Ruth Gorse Academy in Leeds

Breaking down barriers for students with SEND

Putting the needs of pupils with SEND at the heart of every decision is key to improving attendance, mental health and outcomes, says Ben Mallinson

Accessing an exceptional education is integral to ensuring that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the best life chances and to lifting the communities we serve.

By instilling an inclusive culture in our schools and breaking down barriers to success like attendance and mental health, we can have a lasting impact on the life outcomes of children with SEND, particularly the most vulnerable.

But what does this look like in practice? The Ruth Gorse Academy was recognised as “secondary provision of the year” in the most recent nasen Awards. This is what we do.

A culture of inclusivity

At the heart of our approach has been the creation of an inclusive culture. This is led by governors and the trust leadership team, and it permeates right through to classroom teachers and our support staff. That SEND is a key priority is a guiding principle for school and trust.

To embed this culture from the top down, every member of staff is encouraged to consider the needs of students with SEND when making any decision, and accessibility and inclusion must underpin all changes to our provision.

Within every subject area, we have a dedicated SEND champion who is responsible for suggesting ideas for increasing inclusivity. In turn, these champions operate as a network who encourage staff to share expertise and work collaboratively across the curriculum.

And culture goes beyond the classroom. All our co-curricular and enrichment activities are also adapted to meet the needs of all students. And, because there are no barriers to participation, inclusivity has trickled down into the attitudes and ethos of staff and students.

Attendance and mental health

Attendance is key to protecting students with SEND from falling through the gaps. At the heart of our attendance policy is knowing that children with SEND achieve most when they are in the classroom every day, but appreciating that health and wellbeing disproportionately affect their attendance. Our response has been to create a system of



“ Every school can and should be fully inclusive

wrap-around care, so that we are able to identify any concerns with students' health as early as possible.

Our dedicated director of health and wellbeing has helped to implement a best-practice approach to health, and we work closely with external agencies to deliver joined-up support. We also fast-track wellbeing support so that students' mental health is prioritised even while further consultations are being undertaken, ensuring that schooling is not lost while a full support plan is implemented.

Furthermore, it is imperative to regularly communicate with and update families to ensure that they feel engaged and invested in their child's education. This includes targeted positive phone calls to update parents and carers on their child's progress.

We have also implemented incentives for attendance to further encourage students to attend school ready to learn. These include the introduction of a token system which can be used towards benefits such as using our adapted rowing machine or claiming a small prize.

Trust the experts

Increased funding and further prioritisation of SEND by the government will be crucial for schools to deliver the highest standard of support. However, it is equally important that the expertise that exists within the system is shared in the most efficient and impactful ways.

Much of that expertise is in specialist provisions, but it is not locked away there – and nor is it exclusively there. Every school can and should be a fully inclusive environment, but this can only happen through commitment and action: developing internal capacity, offering SEND-specific CPD to all staff and developing relationships with external organisations.

Implementing a whole-school approach to SEND has been vital to raising the aspirations of all our students. By breaking down barriers, we have been able to ensure that more of them are in a classroom, engaged and ready to learn.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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

Did you know about the Schools Week Daily Bell?

Schools Week also publishes a daily email delivering the top education stories straight into your inbox at 5.30pm. And it's free!

You can sign up here



THE REVIEW

THE WORKING CLASSROOM

BOOK
TV
FILM
RADIO
EVENT
RESOURCE

Authors: Matt Bromley and Andy Griffith

Publisher: Crown House Publishing

Publication date: 13 November 2023

ISBN: 1785836986

Reviewer: Sam Strickland, Principal, The Duston School

Matt Bromley and Andy Griffith's new book, *The Working Classroom*, serves as a huge, morally-driven call to arms. The whole book focuses on how we can support and change the lives of our most socially disadvantaged children.

If you work in a school in a disadvantaged area, or if you are considering working in such a school, then this really is the book for you. If you are also hard-wired to change children's lives for the better, then look no further.

The book is hugely compelling and engaging. The introduction goes straight for the jugular and actually leaves you feeling angry. Not angry in a "I hate the world" sense but angry in a "this isn't right and we really must do something about it" way. The book really taps into the inner moral purpose of why we do this job and why supporting working-class children is so important.

The Working Classroom is neatly packaged into three sections, each made up of clear chapters that serve to underpin its overall messaging and narrative. The first section focuses on why secondary school currently does not work for working-class children. It is very timely, given the issues many schools are facing over attendance, safeguarding and behaviour.

Its real focus though is on curriculum. Bromley and Griffith identify curriculum design, curriculum assessment and the hidden curriculum as significant issues. Whether you agree or not, their points are clear, and I can guarantee that they will make you think hard about the issue of classism.

The second section is an equally thought-provoking look at what we can do to support

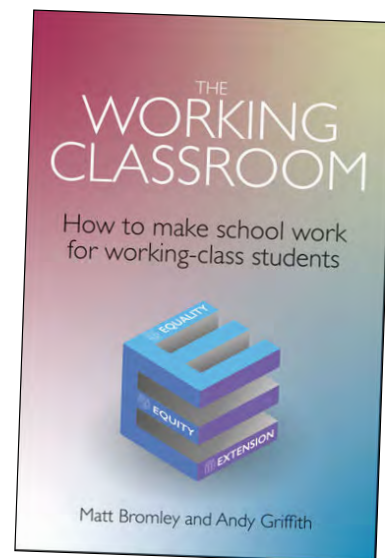
working-class students. There is a real focus on knowledge; be it disciplinary, cultural, personal and social. What I really like here is that Bromley and Griffith hone in on what I call the acquired knowledge effect.

Some children appear, because they always answer questions in class, to be brighter than their peers. However, this is a false proxy for intelligence. What it often signifies is where a child has more acquired knowledge than their counterparts because of the social, cultural and educational investment that their parents have put into them.

There is a distinct difference between a child who has visited lots of museums and cultural sites, been on trips abroad and is well-read versus a child who has not had these opportunities. With that in mind, what are we doing to support the latter? This section does not offer many solutions, but it does get you to do what many educational books often fail to do: think!

The final section offers seven clear chapters that focus on the "how". It invites the reader to really engage with how to tackle the issues identified earlier on and it is where the book really comes into its own. Again, unlike other educational titles, it provides an array of really practical approaches and considerations that you can apply immediately to your educational thinking and approaches.

The whole point behind this section is to help readers really consider how they can develop the potential of the children they teach. There is a real focus on how to arm our students with the knowledge domains that their more fortunate



counterparts possess.

Working full-time in a school myself, the one thing that I am conscious of when reading any educational book is the reality that time is a scarce resource. Bromley and Griffith really respect that and set out to equip their readers with practical strategies and approaches that could otherwise take a lot longer to source and consider.

If you are looking for a book full of waffle, self-indulgence and verbose language, then this is not the book for you. If, like me, you want a book that will really make you pause, think, reflect and arm yourself with practical approaches, then this is money really well spent.

Very few educational books have made me angry at the start and then filled me with energy, drive and enthusiasm. *The Working Classroom* does that incredibly well, and that is a genuine accomplishment.



Rating



Zara Simpson
Deputy head of prep, Streatham and Clapham High School



it's the small habits. How you spend your mornings. How you talk to yourself. What you read. What you watch. Who you share your energy with. Who has access to you. That will change your life.

compassion and integrity. During PHSE lessons, our girls have taken the opportunity to establish personal goals and targets for the remainder of the academic year, serving as motivational reminders to consistently strive for their best.

To an extent, this action was a cushion for Blue Monday last week, known as the most depressing day of the year. While marking the day itself can help to bring mental health issues to light, the better long-term solution is to create positive classroom cultures for pupils and educators alike.

In this blog, deputy CEO Lisa Fathers and leadership consultant Patrick Ottley-O'Connor offer their suggestions, focusing specifically on staff. It starts by looking at goal-setting (so far, so good!), and goes on to give plenty of other ideas for staff at all levels to take control of their own wellbeing through January and beyond.

"Remember who you are outside of school," they urge. Words I will certainly quote to our hard-working staff.

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT

While no blogs or podcasts were published to mark the day, I cannot let this opportunity go by to draw attention to last week's Martin Luther King Jr Day. A national holiday in the United States, we observed it during assembly, reflecting on the civil rights leader's words and sparking powerful conversations with our girls.

"The function of education," he once said, "is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." This resonates deeply with our curriculum and our commitment to teaching.

Our "message of the week" was another King quote: "The time is always right to do what is right."

And we modelled that by launching our annual **Undivided survey** – an important information-gathering exercise that is part of our ongoing work towards our equality

and diversity charter for action. Only by truly listening to our students' views and experiences can we hope to make a real difference to their lives.

SAFER ONLINE


Finally this week, I have been preparing for the fast-approaching Safer Internet Day. And with mental health so high on the agenda for young people, it has never been more important.

Four in 10 teenagers told the Mental Health Foundation that images on social media had caused them to worry about body image, and NHS England reports that girls are less likely than boys to agree with the statement "I feel safe using social media" (only 56 per cent of them do).



That puts a strong onus on us to deliver on our commitment to digital literacy, which we start from age 3. **Computing at School's** new **resources** for primary school teachers will make a valuable addition to our PSHE and English lessons this year. But our focus is not just about knowing risks; it is about empowerment too. From age 3, our pupils – and pupils we invite from other schools – also start lessons in coding taught by specialist teachers, preparing them for an inevitable future of technological advancement.

Of course, we must be models here too, and with Data Protection Day also coming up, **this useful blog** by Dimitri Bongers sets out the key cybersecurity risks faced by schools as well as 13 best practices for better data protection. Like everything else, it starts with culture, and it requires staff training. And like everything else, the time is always right to start getting it right.

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts 

DRIVING THE COACH

As deputy head, I found the latest podcast by Headteacher Update very informative. The focus in this episode is on incorporating instructional coaching into your school's staff CPD strategy to enhance teaching and learning. The discussion delves into practical aspects, detailing the distinct stages of instructional coaching and offering numerous tips and examples.



With expert commentary from head of school Sarah Morris, the Teacher Development Trust's Sharon Ealing and teaching school hub director Kay Shepherd, it touches on the importance of deliberate practice and makes the important point that instructional coaching should be kept separate from line management. Plenty of food for thought for all leaders committed to driving improvement across their settings.

BLUE MONDAY

As a school family, we started the year with a focus on our values of kindness, respect,

The Knowledge

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



Can oracy be reliably assessed?

Amanda Moorghen, Head of learning, impact and policy, Voice 21

Oracy matters. Strong spoken-language skills equip students for success in school and in life. However, there is currently no standardised assessment for oracy.

As a result, it can be difficult to see the big picture: there is no national dataset we can draw on to easily and reliably identify schools or areas with the strongest oracy attainment or progress; or to provide gold-standard evidence for the most effective teaching practices.

Voice 21 has been researching new ways to assess oracy in order to meet this need.

Why isn't there an assessment?

Designing a high-quality oracy assessment is challenging. Similar to the marking of essays against rubrics (and as compared to, say, multiple-choice questions), it can be difficult to ensure that different assessors give the same piece of work the same grade.

Concerns around reliable marking led to the removal of the speaking and listening component from GCSEs. The same concerns persisted in our previous efforts, in conjunction with Oracy Cambridge, to design a traditional oracy assessment.

In addition, in comparison to the well-rehearsed routines of a written exam, there are logistical challenges when it comes to recording students taking part in oracy activities. This makes it challenging to design an assessment that offers a fair representation of the breadth of genres and contexts for talk that are relevant in our education system.

However, with the development of the Oracy Framework, we are much better able to define the different competencies which, together, constitute oracy, laying a solid foundation for the development of an assessment tool.

Developing a reliable assessment

The rise of new software and the increasing familiarity of teachers with the use of tech in the classroom has made it possible to trial a new approach to oracy assessment:



comparative judgment. Traditional "absolute" judgment involves assessors comparing student performances to rubrics or mark sheets. The difficulty of ensuring that these rubrics are interpreted consistently by all the assessors is a substantial source of poor reliability.

In comparative judgment approaches, assessors compare two pieces of work with each other, which can generally be done more reliably than comparing a piece of work to a rubric. Lots of judgments of pairs, by a group of assessors, are then combined algorithmically to create a rank order from the piece of work most likely to "win" a comparison to the least likely. More familiar grades or scores can then be imposed upon this rank in order to meaningfully communicate the results.

Our project, Comparing Talk, has explored the use of RM Compare (an adaptive comparative judgment platform) for the assessment of oracy. We have conducted successful proof-of-concept trials and worked with teachers across England and Wales to develop a suite of appropriate tasks.

Our first large-scale pilot

In Autumn 2023, we worked with 55 schools across England and Wales to assess 463 videos of year 5 students performing an oracy task (giving a summary). This is our first large-scale pilot of a new oracy assessment driven by comparative judgment. It is key to determining whether this

methodology offers a practical alternative to traditional approaches.

Our initial findings are promising. We were able to generate a reliable rank order of oracy performances, with an appropriate amount of agreement between assessors.

Further, we were able to see that students' average scores increased as the number of years that their school had been a Voice 21 Oracy School increased: the average score increases by 50 per cent when we compared first and fourth-year Voice 21 Oracy Schools. This suggests that our assessment tool is able to track the student progress that teachers in our schools report they are seeing.

So, can oracy be assessed?

Yes! Our findings suggest a comparative judgment approach may be just what we need to inform the decisions that school leaders and policy-makers must make for every child to receive a high-quality oracy education.

We are continuing to work on developing our task suite and the age ranges served by our assessment, and collaborating with our tech partners RM to ensure that our assessment tool is both practical and robust for schools and teachers.

Read more about the pilot's findings in Voice 21's *Impact Report* here: <https://bit.ly/3Su40PB>

Week in

Westminster

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

MONDAY

The government was (for once) praised for listening to the sector, having changed its school performance website to "reduce the emphasis on comparison."

Leaders said it was unfair to compare schools' results because the website was instead more likely to only show those hardest hit by Covid.

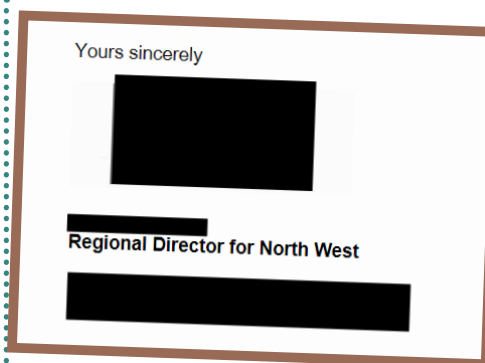
As such, the website became the 'Find School and College Performance,' with coloured bandings to "discourage simplistic conclusions being drawn about a school."

Alas, we noticed today that the website has now been rebranded back to 'Compare the performance of schools and colleges in England'. Hurrah! Because the toll of lost learning from Covid has definitely all been sorted!

We were alerted today to some shady remarks made by education secretary Gillian Keegan during her appearance on 'The Rest is Politics' podcast.

She explained the government had made temporary arrangements for 52 schools with RAAC deemed "critical," before the big kick off over the summer – when the danger of RAAC was escalated and schools with any RAAC at all were told to close.

"[Before September] RAAC had either been called critical or non-critical – all the critical schools, of which there were 52 at the time, all of them were closed straightaway. All of the kids were put face to face via Portakabins or by way of using other space in schools.



"We had done that for 52 without a single media inquiry."

Errm ... sorry Gill, that's just not right.

Our investigations reporter Jess Hill had already written multiple exposes on RAAC by this time (the first of which was published in November 2022, and went on to win a prestigious journalism award).

The DfE was approached for comment every time. In the first, it also responded to our enquiry, saying they were "working proactively to identify and manage reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete across the school estate."

They also provided a comment for another piece in June about four schools that had been told to recently close after RAAC was found.

TUESDAY:

Schools Week readers will be all too aware of sporadic issues with DfE secrecy over stuff they have no right to be secret about.

Back in 2017 (65 education secretaries ago), we even ran the full minutes of a recent DfE meeting which solely stated: "The board held discussions on the work of the department during Parliament." The rest was redacted.

Thankfully, things have improved

since then. But a nice throwback to the good old days in termination warning notice published by government today (which was actually *sent* back in September).

As well as redacting the full name of who the warning was sent to, it astonishingly redacts *the name of the regional director* who sent the letter.

Just for your knowledge, it was sent by the RD for the north west, Vicky Beer.

Also, the batch of warning notices published today included one actually sent in June (seven months ago) and another school that has RAAC!

DfE has said attendance is its top priority in schools – and a picture from a photographer outside parliament posted on X (Twitter) today seems to confirm this.

A red ministerial folder taken into cabinet by the DfE team had several tags sticking out, including one on the attendance campaign, wider themes around absence, children not in school and persistent absence.

WEDNESDAY:

The Hansard minutes from yesterday's Westminster hall debate on attendance revealed something that might not be a priority, though.

RAAC has somewhat slipped away from the national headlights, but schools are still dealing with the hugely disruptive impact.

Labour MP for City of Durham Mary Kelly Foy revealed that schools minister Damian Hinds had cancelled meetings both last week and on Tuesday about the issue.





Executive Principal

Salary £110,000 - £120,000 depending upon experience

We are seeking an **Executive Principal** to join Turner Schools, a growing multi-academy trust which currently comprises six schools, a trust sixth form and 5 specialist resource provisions in the Folkestone and Dover district with future expansion planned for September 24. You will be joining the Trust at an exciting time as we move through a period of growth and development.

The Executive Principal will work across our secondary phase (11-19) in Folkestone and should be able to demonstrate a proven track record of rapid school improvement and improved outcomes for pupils. We are looking for someone who is already an established and successful educational leader, with the drive and ambition to ensure continued success and the vision and skills to deliver change in the years ahead. Due to our planned growth and development, there are excellent progression opportunities within the Trust and for the right candidate, there could be an opportunity to progress to a Director of Secondary Improvement role in the future as the Trust expands.

The role will focus on school improvement initially across our secondary schools and our sixth form in Folkestone and will involve working with our CEO, Principals and other senior and middle leaders to effectively self-evaluate and deliver high-quality education provision through robust and ambitious teaching and improvement work. The successful candidate will have the motivation and desire to develop pupils' achievements within a Trust who are focused and determined to ensure that all pupils make exceptional progress. The right candidate will be an excellent communicator who understands the power of collaboration and shares our vision to transform children's futures, empower families and strengthen communities.

Benefits of Working for Turner Schools:

Our staff tell us that the Trust is a supportive and motivational place to work, with real attention paid to staff wellbeing, workload and professional development. We care about our staff's personal and professional wellbeing and are pleased to offer the following benefits:

- Fully funded access to Benenden Healthcare
- Outstanding professional development through our Turner Institute
- Membership for all ECT, teaching and leadership staff to the Chartered College of Teaching
- Regular wellbeing and social activities
- Counselling and mental wellbeing support
- Access to Mental Health First Aiders
- Electric car scheme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Innovation Awards that encourage staff to put forward innovative ideas to make a difference to children's experiences
- Trust Vision and Values awards to recognise staff contribution
- Free parking on all our sites with access to E chargers

Interview

There is an opportunity to meet the CEO and have a tour of our schools w/c January 29th and 5th February. Please email HR@turnerschools.com to arrange a visit.

If you are shortlisted, the CEO will also wish to arrange to visit you in your home school if appropriate on the w/c 26th February.

The closing date for applications is 5pm on 18th February 2024 and shortlisting will take place w/c 19th February 2024.

Interviews will take place on the 4th and 5th March 2024.



Director of People

Salary: £71,050 - £81,154 | (Trust Director Grade 2: Points 54 to 58)
Contract: Full-time (37 hours per week) plus employee pension (LGPS)

Our workforce is fundamental to our success and growth. Attracting and retaining staff who align with our vision and goals for pupils is a top priority for leaders and Trustees.

As we embark on the next phase of our Trust's growth and development, we are seeking a Director of People who can build on our existing strengths and lead us forward. This role will be instrumental in shaping our culture, directly impacting on the life chances of our pupils, working environment and wellbeing of our people.

The successful candidate will have responsibility for the strategic leadership and delivery of the Trust's People Strategy, aligning it with the overall goals of the Trust and solidifying our position as an employer of choice.

We believe that this is an exceptional opportunity, and we hope this information inspires you to consider joining us in shaping our future.

To apply for this position, please complete the Application Form below.

Once completed, application forms can be emailed to:
recruitment@drbignitemat.org

All shortlisted candidates will be subject to online searches.

Closing date: Friday 23rd February 2024

Start date: June 2024 or sooner if available.



Head Teacher

Wreake Valley Academy

Permanent | Full Time (100%)

Leadership L32 – L38, £101,064 to £117,065

27th August 2024



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

An exciting opportunity has arisen for someone to join Bradgate Education Partnership as the Headteacher at Wreake Valley Academy. We are seeking someone who is ambitious, collaborative and ethical, someone who has passion to take the school into the next stages of its development working as part of the team at the Trust. The school provides 11-18 education with Bradgate Sixth Form and the Bradgate Inclusion Centre being important aspects of Wreake Valley Academy.

The role of Headteacher is a rewarding one. The role at Wreake Valley provides opportunity for growth, with our student numbers increasing year on year, leading on the development of the Sixth Form and shaping the staff team for the future.

We offer the following benefits:

- Opportunity to work within a highly skilled and supportive team
- Opportunities for career development with access to professional development, apprenticeships and training schemes
- A commitment to continue with national pay, terms and conditions

- Access to the generous Teachers Pension Scheme
- Employee Support Service (counselling) for employees and close family members (24/7 support)
- Employee Discount and Benefit Scheme
- Cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme
- Highly supportive Executive Leadership Team
- Access to a professional service with the Trust's Central Services for school improvement, HR, finance, estates, governance and IT

If you would like to apply for this role:

If you would like to discuss this post or arrange a visit to the school to meet the Director of Education, prior to applying please contact:

Email: info@bepschools.org

Telephone: 0116 478 3426

Please apply via Eteach here - Headteacher - Wreake Valley Academy (eteach.com)



Head of Humanities

£30,000 - £46,525 per annum
Birmingham, West Midlands

Now is the perfect time to join Greenwood Academy as our Head of Humanities. We are seeking an enthusiastic leader with vision and determination to lead our Humanities department to brilliance. The Humanities team at Greenwood Academy are a team of dedicated and passionate practitioners, committed to providing a high-quality education for students of all abilities and at KS3 and KS4.

Start Date: April 2024 Start

Closing date: Monday 5th February 2024

Interviews are scheduled to take place on the 20th February 2024



Head of Science

Tamworth Enterprise College

Salary : Negotiable + AET Wellbeing Cash Plan + Pension Scheme (TPS) + Additional AET Benefits

Are you a dynamic and highly motivated classroom practitioner, and an excellent Scientist with a proven record of raising attainment?

This role offers an excellent opportunity for a knowledgeable, thoughtful and reflective teacher to lead a successful Science Department. You must be able to demonstrate talent, interpersonal skills and a range of teaching strategies required to motivate pupils and other colleagues in the Department.

Closing Date : 2nd Feb 2024



Senior Leadership opportunity at Ark

Ark is a network of 39 schools, reaching 30,000 students in our primary, secondary and all-throughs in Birmingham, Hastings, London & Portsmouth. Our schools are fully comprehensive and we are proud of our diversity, with over 40% of our students eligible for FSMs. Our 2023 results saw our KS2 students achieve 16 percentage points above the national average and at GCSE, 64% of students achieved grades 9-4 in English and Maths.

As we continue to strengthen the Ark network at every level, we are interested in hearing from strong existing or aspiring Assistant & Vice Principals who want to learn more about our opportunities and organisation.

We understand the importance of developing our leaders and know that our schools are only as good as our staff. Our Assistant and Vice Principals work with some of the best Principals and leaders nationally and have access to exceptional training, including qualifications such as NPQSL & NPQH.

By joining Ark, you can expect:

- Salaries 2.5% higher than main the pay scale & a generous pension scheme
- Double the amount of training time and additional INSET days for bespoke training
- Full access to an Employee Assistance Programme which provides free, confidential counselling, financial and legal advice
- Gym discounts of up to 40% off
- Access to Ark Rewards – a scheme offering savings from over 3,000 major retailers
- Interest-free loans of up to £5,000 for season tickets or to buy a bicycle.

We are committed to building a diverse workforce where everyone can deliver their best work and achieve their full potential. We want our SLTs to reflect the diverse perspectives of our students because we know that in doing so, we will be stronger and more effective.

To learn more about senior leadership opportunities at Ark, please **register your interest**



Ark Alexandra Academy



Join us to make a lasting difference to our coastal community

Looking for teachers and leaders in subject areas including
English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and sociology

Located in the heart of Hastings, Ark Alexandra Academy is a large, two-campus secondary school and sixth form. Our aim is to provide students with academic excellence and life skills. Under bold new leadership already having rapid impact, now is an exciting time for dedicated teachers to join our close-knit team on the next stage of our journey.

Ark Alexandra is part of Ark, one of the country's most successful academy trusts. We are committed to investing in our teachers' professional development through collaboration across our extensive school network. By prioritising staff support and progression, we open doors for impactful careers focused on student growth.

We are currently looking for teachers and leaders in subject areas including English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and sociology.

We offer salaries that are 2.5% higher than main pay scale, twice as many training days, weekly staff training tailored to school needs, coaching for every teacher, protected co-planning time and access to high-quality professional development and qualifications like NPQML and NPQSL. As part of the Ark network, you will also benefit from opportunities to collaborate across our 39 schools and network-wide events with leading minds in education.

Interested in a new challenge? Hastings boasts a thriving cultural scene, an extensive seafront and excellent transport links to London and Brighton. We can offer relocation packages up to £5,000 to support you with the process.

We're looking for great teachers to join us and make a difference where it matters most.

Please click here to view all roles at Ark Alexandra Academy.



Executive Director of People and Culture

Salary from £75,000

Mowbray Education Trust is a successful and growing MAT which is expected to be at least three clusters of schools within Leicestershire. Across the Trust, we have 535 staff in total, 201 of whom are teachers, and over 3300 pupils.

We're seeking to appoint an Executive Lead for People and Culture to lead our recruitment and retention strategy, striving to achieve our ambition of first class in every class. The role is crucial in embedding strategies to support our people to be well and work well. You will be responsible for nurturing a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that all staff have access to appropriate development opportunities of the highest standard. The successful applicant will ensure our Headteachers and Leaders have access to HR support that guides and supports them to deliver first-class education.

Closing date: 5th February 2024, 9:00 am



A creative, aspirational headteacher is required to lead the happy and successful Preston Primary School

Key dates: Closing date Monday 19th February 2024, September start.

Contract: Full time, permanent

Salary: L16-L21 depending on skills, experience and performance.

A brief context of the school

Preston is a popular primary school, with an integrated provision for children with ASC, overlooking the sea in Torbay. Following a routine inspection in July 2023, Ofsted wrote a very positive report, maintaining the Good judgement. The website has further details about everything they do.

Key Requirements & Duties

- To provide high quality strategic leadership in all aspects of leading a school and inspire skilled and committed staff to deliver excellent outcomes for children
- Excellent leadership, people and teaching skills, using your knowledge of evidence-based research and current successful education strategies
- A good knowledge of SEND, commitment to inclusive education for children of all abilities and backgrounds.

www.preston.torbay.sch.uk