

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Largest trust would shun 'inflammatory' new strike laws



P4

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THE SECTOR'S MANIFESTO

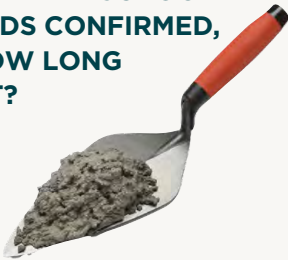


SUPPORTING HEADS: GOVERNMENT MUST BE THE GREAT ENABLER (NOT ENFORCER)



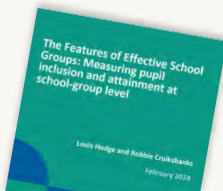
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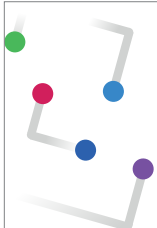
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- Meanwhile, four-week waiting time standard proposals up in the air

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Is our education system at an inclusion turning point?

The tide seems to be turning towards inclusion playing a bigger part in the system that is used to hold schools to account.

Just like progress 8 was a more equitable version of the old five A*s to C measure, adding inclusion into the mix seems like the next important step.

One of the most influential school types improving outcomes for poorer pupils over the past decade or so has been academies.

Many have had a phenomenal role in turning around some of the toughest schools in the country, some of which have achieved 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted ratings for the first time in their history.

That should be applauded. But it doesn't mean we should ignore the valid questions around whether this is sometimes at the expense of inclusion (a practice not solely confined to academies).

The new inclusion tool published by the Education Policy Institute today (pages 5 and 6) offers some helpful insights – not to beat schools over the head with, but to promote a more nuanced understanding of our education system.

But while many in the sector seem united on the inclusion push, the question of how this happens is harder to answer.

A government plan to publish contextual information alongside the usual league table results was unfortunately (but rightly) shelved due to inconsistency in how children with SEND are identified.

The government couldn't come up with a good solution that it was confident would not lead to "perverse incentives".

But perhaps the answer lies in another lever for change: Ofsted.

Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's chief inspector, has already signalled he wants to look more closely at school inclusion in inspections – namely the proportion of pupils with EHCPs a school has.

Labour too has said if it formed a government, it would look to replace Ofsted grades with report cards that reflect "attainment and inclusion" of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders are on their knees supporting youngsters with ever more complex needs due to a breakdown in wider services. It's imperative all schools commit to helping these pupils equally.

Most read online this week:

- 1 [Reports of data breach on Class Charts platform](#)
- 2 [Highest-earning academy chief's annual pay nears £500k](#)
- 3 [Teaching apprenticeship for non-graduates to launch in 2025](#)
- 4 [Schools install toilet sensors that 'actively listen' to pupils](#)
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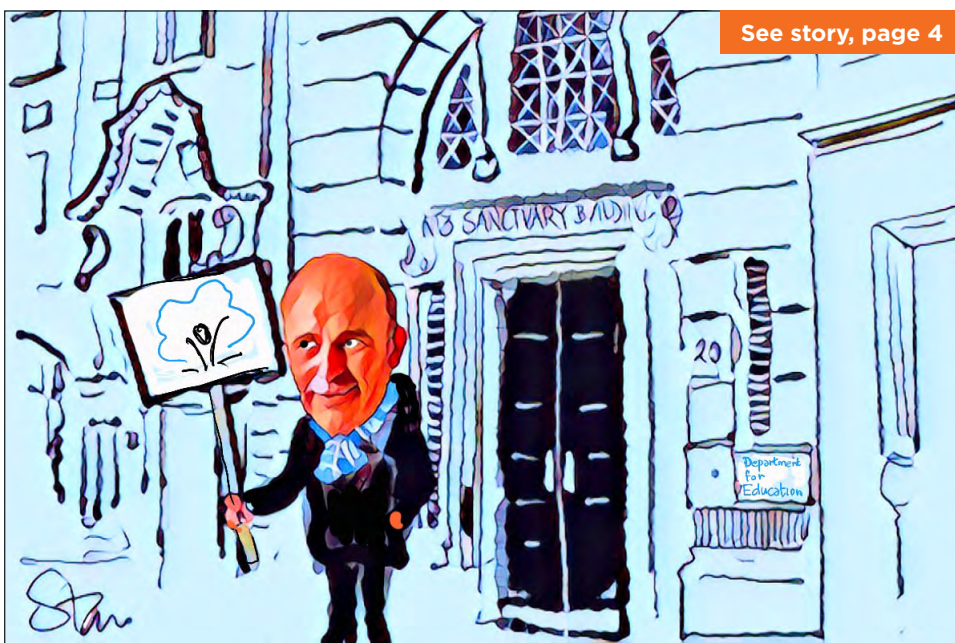


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NEWS

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Keegan reveals RAAC rebuild plans (at last)

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

About half of the schools affected by crumbling concrete will get rebuilds with most of the others receiving a grant to remove RAAC.

However, unions say the work “must not divert cash from elsewhere”.

A total of 234 schools are now confirmed to have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, an increase of three since the last update in December.

The Department for Education said this is the “final list” – making up about 1 per cent of schools in England. All schools suspected of having RAAC have had a survey to confirm its presence, the government said.

However, a “small number” of settings are carrying out “additional checks for further assurance in some spaces”.

Of the 119 RAAC schools being rebuilt, 65 are primary schools and 49 are secondaries, with one all-through school and four others on the list.

Fifty primary schools and 42 secondaries will receive a grant, as will two all-through schools, nine 16-plus institutions and seven “other”.



Five of the remaining settings with RAAC have a “different route to remove” it, including one that doesn’t require the department to provide extra cash.

Of these, two are further education colleges, two are schools and one is alternative provision.

Rebuilds are taking place where work needed to remove RAAC is “more extensive or complex”. Grants will be handed out where “works will typically be smaller in scale”.

Education secretary Gillian Keegan said: “Nothing is more important to me than the safety of every child and member of staff in school.”

She also thanked schools, colleges and local authorities “who have worked tirelessly” on the issue.

Keegan’s comments contrast with those from

academies minister Baroness Barran earlier this week who said some council-maintained primaries “were just left on their own, with a headteacher taking all the pressure”.

The government has added 100 schools to its flagship rebuilding programme, many of them with RAAC, taking the total in line for new estates to 513. Of the 119 RAAC schools facing rebuilds, 13 were already part of the rebuilding programme and 106 were added this month.

The programme was initially supposed to rebuild 500 schools by 2030, but ministers had indicated numbers could rise amid the concrete crisis.

The DfE has not said when each rebuild will be completed. Previous estimates predicted a delivery at a rate “of approximately 50 per year”. However, the scheme is already behind on this.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, demanded “assurances that this ... money will not be diverted from other sources. There must also be clear timelines set out for when this work is going to be completed.”

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, called for a wider school estates plan to tackle “all school building issues before they become the next big crisis. That can’t happen without more money from the Treasury.”

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

United Learning would shun ‘inflammatory’ strike laws

England’s largest academy trust has vowed not to issue work orders to striking staff if “inflammatory” and “self-defeating” new strike laws are implemented in schools.

United Learning, which runs 89 schools and employs more than 7,000 staff in the state sector, said leaders recognised enacting minimum service levels (MSL) would “damage industrial relations and harm their image as an employer throughout the sector”.

This would make it “impossible to retain the goodwill and discretionary effort of staff; harder to retain staff; and the reputational impact would make it harder to attract new staff. In the end, this would have a more negative impact on children and parents than the strikes themselves.”

The trust has published its stinging response to the government’s consultation, which proposed laws allowing schools to keep staff in work to educate certain groups of pupils during

industrial action.

United Learning said the proposal was “wrong in principle and in its details and likely to be self-defeating in practice”.

Employers would not be required to issue work orders, and the trust said it was “inconceivable that any employer will in fact choose to do so”.

The trust pointed to a memorandum the government issued when the legislation was being enacted for the transport sector. In it, the government admitted the “large number of employers in the education sector would also likely make minimum service arrangements difficult and very burdensome to implement”.

United Learning warned that the “impression is of a concept designed for rail strikes being clumsily retrofitted to schools”.

Unions have already savaged the plans for MSLs, with the Association of School and College Leaders warning they would put

leaders in the “impossible position” of being expected to enact legislation that will cause “irreparable harm”.

The Confederation of School Trusts has also warned that its members fear MSLs will “undermine” rights to freedom of association, “particularly for special school and primary staff” and have a “severe and deleterious impact on good industrial relations”.

The news follows more than 10 days of strike action in schools last year in a dispute over teacher pay and working conditions.

United Learning said that, “on the whole”, employers “deplore strikes and think they are harmful to children and to a key public service as well as inconvenient to parents”. But the trust said its own “strong opposition to anything that disrupts children’s education is, however, an inadequate basis for denying others the right to withdraw their labour”.

Inclusion tool to give 'balanced view' of school performance

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Bigger trusts get better exam results for poorer pupils, but are more likely than others to suspend children and have higher unexplained exits.

The Education Policy Institute think tank has today launched a new online tool that allows school groups – councils and academy trusts – to be compared based on how inclusive they are.

Measures include admissions, exclusions and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

Louis Hodge, associate director at EPI, said it wanted to “promote a more balanced picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different school groups” rather than solely focusing on attainment.

A report published alongside the tool found trusts with ten or more schools have on average higher rates of persistent absence, suspension and unexplained exits, than smaller multi-academy trusts (MATs) and councils. However, they admit more disadvantaged pupils and achieve better outcomes for those youngsters.

Researchers said there was “considerably more” variation among school group types – for instance, between different trusts – than between councils and trusts overall.

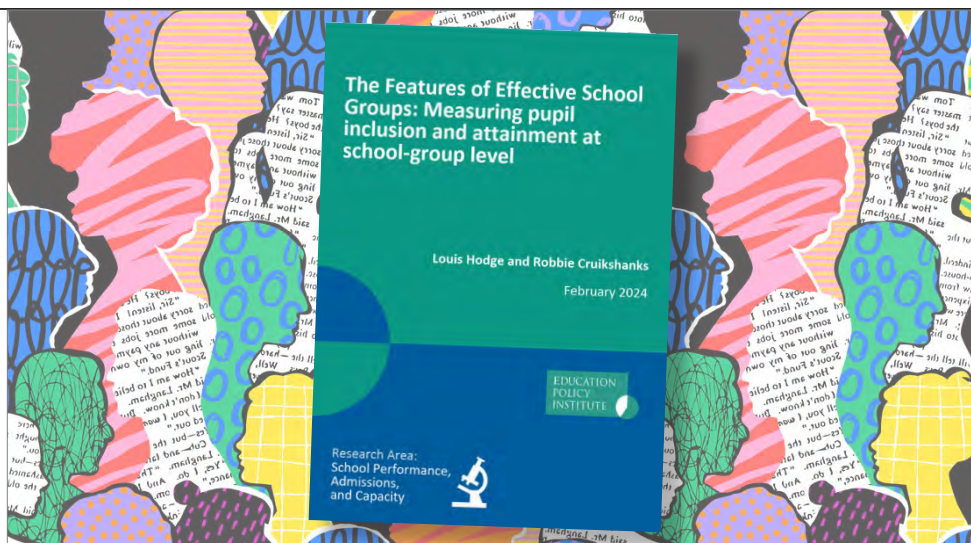
But council schools did have lower suspension rates than the average MAT. However, this is likely down to trusts taking on the most difficult schools.

MATs also deliver higher progress scores for both disadvantaged and low-prior-attaining pupils than councils. However, the best-performing groups tended to receive fewer applications from poorer pupils, suggesting “there are barriers” to admission for those children.

One of the issues with the tool is that the data used is from before Covid-19, spanning 2016–17 to 2018–19.

However, Hodge said it shows pupil demographics “must be reflected in the school accountability system”.

This would ensure schools with more poorer pupils and those with additional needs “are not penalised and that best practice in pupil inclusion is recognised”.



Schools Week revealed last year that plans to add contextual information alongside exam results into league tables had been shelved over concerns about inconsistencies in how children with SEND are identified.

Using EPI's new web tool, we looked at the five largest MATs at the time to see how they performed at secondary level.

United Learning was in the top 10 per cent of all school groups for progress made among poorer pupils at GCSE. But, at the time, it had among the highest levels of unexplained exits and suspensions.

A spokesperson for the trust said they “welcome any additional means of analysing data between schools and trusts”.

Academies Enterprise Trust, the second largest at the time, also had high suspensions and unexplained exits, but scored just four out of ten on the progress of poor pupils (where ten is the best).

A spokesperson said the trust five years ago is “not the AET of today”. They added it was a “fantastic tool from EPI that will offer really powerful insights and we look forward to using it when populated with more current data”.

The Harris Federation appears to have among the most favourable outcomes of the top five, with the best results for poorer pupils and low suspension levels.

Outwood Grange Academies Trust, formerly run by Ofsted chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver, had the highest rates of suspensions of any school group. It was considerably higher than any other apart from Northern Education Trust,

which had the second highest.

An OGAT spokesperson previously said its schools had been “under-performing for years and were some of the most challenging in the system when we took them on. These schools have been transformed by OGAT”.

A NET spokesperson said at the time of the data, ten of its schools had never been judged ‘good’ or better by Ofsted. “Many were schools where behaviour was a significant barrier to learning,” they added. “We do not apologise for having high standards. All our inspected schools are now rated good or outstanding.”

EPI has now called for a review on the accountability and inspection system and admissions to focus more on inclusion measures. It also wants the Department for Education to publish “easily accessible metrics for school groups” so people can see the “relative strengths and weaknesses of schools”.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of Association of School and College Leaders union, added the new platform “is not a tool to beat anyone over the head, but allows for a more nuanced understanding of the education system, and, flowing from that, what steps might better help support children and schools”.

A DfE spokesperson said it shows academies “play a crucial role in improving education standards, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds”.

They “back heads” using suspensions and exclusions to deliver “calm, safe and supportive learning environments”.

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Opinion

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NATALE PERERA

Chief executive,
Education Policy Institute

Schools need more nuanced data to rebuild public trust

EPI's new performance comparing tool isn't built for accountability – but it shows a more balanced approach to data is possible, writes Natalie Perera

This week, the Education Policy Institute published a new, online benchmarking tool that allows users to compare the performance of school groups (local authorities, multi academy trusts, diocese) across a range of attainment, progress, and inclusion measures (such as the extent to which school intakes are representative of their local communities in terms of FSM and SEND and the rates of temporary exclusions and managed moves). In the spring, we will be updating the tool to include financial health and workforce measures.

When we started this work a few years ago, our aim was to move away from the attainment-based comparisons of LAs and MATs that we, along with the Department for Education and the Sutton Trust, had published in the past. All of those studies reached similar conclusions; there was little difference in the performance of MATs and LAs, with more variation within each of those groups than between them.

We wanted to move the debate forward from 'which governance structure is better?' to 'what makes an effective school group and how can we disseminate best practice

across the system?'. Improving our understanding of the features of high-performing school groups is still very much our aim but, as we developed the tool, the policy debate also shifted in a way that made our tool even more important.

The issue of accountability has become increasingly prominent in the education discourse. Back

in 2016, we highlighted the implicit bias in Ofsted judgements against disadvantaged schools. The prevalence of off-rolling and managed moves started to generate noise, causing the sector to question whether we could really trust the headline figures published by Ofsted and the DfE. More recently, the sad

death of headteacher, Ruth Perry and commitments from the Labour Party to introduce a 'scorecard' and to inspect MATs have also led us to think more empirically about how we measure school performance.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that our tool should be used for accountability purposes. But, as well as giving school leaders the opportunity to benchmark themselves against similar groups and to look at their own strengths and weaknesses, the tool should inspire policymakers to think more holistically about how schools are judged.

Neither are we suggesting that our tool is perfect; the data is lagged because it takes a long time for researchers to access it (although the DfE would be able to do this in much closer to real-time). The

authorities with MATs, as both groups tend to operate very differently. But, ultimately, the LA and the MAT are the accountable bodies and have the powers to change school practices and policies if they deem it necessary, so there is a rationale for including both groupings in our tool.

The job of school leaders is increasingly challenging. The past few years have seen rises in child poverty rates, mental ill health and absence rates. These challenges are not the fault of teachers and school leaders, rather the result of a myriad of policy decisions by the government, the Covid pandemic and perhaps wider societal shifts in attitudes. Nevertheless, by not looking at the wider context that school groups are facing, we risk drawing very narrow conclusions in attempting to identify success.

We don't argue that challenging cohorts should be 'an excuse' for poor performance. We know that many schools and groups are delivering very positive outcomes for their pupils despite serving very disadvantaged communities. We want to highlight those groups, understand how they are achieving positive outcomes in challenging circumstances and help to spread that knowledge across the system. Similarly, we should also understand whether some school groups are achieving high academic performance at the cost of low inclusion.

Finding a balanced and fair accountability system is fraught with challenges and perceived trade-offs, but the current system no longer seems fit for purpose. As we head closer towards a general election, all parties should consider how better use of data and more nuanced reporting can help to rebuild the system in a way that also rebuilds parental trust and public confidence.

“The current system no longer seems fit for purpose”

cancellation of exams during the pandemic has also meant that our data isn't as current as we would like it to be. Nevertheless, as long as we can secure the resources needed and the sector find it helpful, we plan to update the tool as we get newer data.

We also know that there are concerns about comparing local



NEWS: MATS

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Turnaround trusts say tide is turning on recruiting converters

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EXCLUSIVE

Trusts launched to improve failing schools say they are now turning the tide on attracting 'good' ones – after the academies minister voiced concerns that conversions can be viewed as “a punishment”.

Baroness Barran said 'converter' schools – those rated 'good' or above who choose to academise – are moving “from one relatively warm and cosy place to another”, instead of into chains with “unbelievably challenging schools”.

Schools Week looked at ten trusts with a reputation for turning around schools. We found that less than one in five of their academies were converters.

Speaking at the Confederation of School Trusts' finance and operation conference on Tuesday, Barran argued that converters have a role in “building capacity” in trusts taking on “unbelievably challenging schools”.

“My worry is that most of the conversion that happens is not into those trusts – it is from one relatively warm and cosy place to another one,” Barran said. “Partly because there's an intervention element to driving trusts, there's a danger that things get seen as a punishment rather than an opportunity. I think it's a real challenge to turn that narrative around.”

During the event, CST CEO Leora Cruddas said there must be “a conversation about speeding up the conversion of good schools into trusts”. She stated that it is important for them to make the switch “because they bring capacity” to multi-academy trusts (MATs). If “left on their own”, she



Baroness Barran

is “a bit worried whether they'll remain good”.

However, Northern Education Trust boss Rob Tarn, one of those in our analysis, said MATs have “got better at showing the benefits of being in a strong family of schools”.

“Back in the day, the phone would only ever ring for a school that was almost unsafe, deeply in special measures and they wanted you to take it on at short notice. There's a bit of a shift now.”

Over the past three years, three schools have entered “try-before-you-buy” agreements with East Midlands Academy Trust. None of them have joined the chain.

Joshua Coleman, who runs EMAT, thinks there is a perception among 'good' local authority-maintained schools that if “there's no reason to move then they're incredibly reluctant”.

Jo Tyler, chief executive of Core Education Trust in Birmingham, said her organisation is seen as one that just “takes on reputationally damaged schools”. This has meant the council's school improvement, which facilitates some conversions, “would never put Core forward”.

Coleman added that some schools fear they would lose “autonomy” by joining his trust as it has centralised school improvement and HR

services, and pools school budgets into a single pot.

“[Some schools] are ideologically opposed to joining a trust ...[and] would see me as a fat cat ... [but] the fact we're past the tipping point of more than half of schools being in an academy trust [means] it's becoming less possible to sustain that argument,” Coleman said.

Schools Week analysis in December showed there were 608 schools using the voluntary converter route to move out of council control. The figure is almost double that recorded at the same time the year before and the highest since 2018.

A spokesperson for E-ACT said its “pipeline of growth now includes strong schools seeking collaborative opportunities just as much as schools that need support”. They added trusts are “no longer a vehicle for solely turning around failing schools”.

Tarn explained that the prospect of having access to 27,000 lesson plans, behaviour systems and a 40-strong team of English, maths and science teachers has helped convince them to make the switch.

Tarn noted that figures showing 67 of his 74 senior leaders “are all internal appointments” also demonstrated to staff there “are opportunities ... to take the next steps in your career with us”.

Five of the past seven academies – including one voluntary converter – to join NET arrived “of their own volition”.

“All those things from workload to ... feeling that people were there to support you, for us at least, have started to tip the scales.”

JACK DYSON | @JACKYDYS

Half of trusts dip into reserves as costs rise

Almost half of multi-academy trusts (MATs) had to dip into their reserves after racking up deficits – as auditors warn trusts are “one bad year away from financial difficulties”.

The Kreston group, a network of accountancy firms, published its latest academies benchmark report on Tuesday, which studies the accounts of just under 300 trusts. It found energy bills have pushed up costs, resulting in more MATs centralising their services and raiding reserves.

Kevin Connor, head of academies at

accountants Bishop Fleming, said it was only unplanned, one-off government grants that had “kept the wolves from the door and ensured many avoided slipping into deficit. Trusts don't know what additional income streams they will receive from one year to the next. This all leads to a sense of impending financial doom in the sector with the result that any decisions around investment are fraught with risk.”

The report revealed 47 per cent (140) of trusts reported in-year deficits in 2022–23.

This is up from 19 per cent in 2021.

The report added that most trusts are “only one bad year away from financial difficulties”.

Most trusts reported rises in supply staff costs, up nearly 10 per cent for large trusts and 20 per cent at smaller ones. Almost a third now pool their income, reserves or both. The figure was 23 per cent in 2022.

Three in five trusts now have centralised functions, such as HR and finance.

School wasn't gaming because it can do 'pretty much anything', court hears

LUCAS CUMISKEY

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EXCLUSIVE

The head of a high-profile school embroiled in a high court battle with Ofsted could impose "pretty much" any disciplinary measure bar "corporal punishment" due to its special legal status, a judge has heard.

Thomas Telford School, in Shropshire, was downgraded to 'good' following an inspection it claims was mired by "a series of errors", Birmingham Administrative Court heard last Friday.

The lead inspector initially suspected the city technical college (CTC) was "acting illegally" and "deliberately gaming" the system over how it recorded absences during a December 2022 inspection.

'Power to do pretty much anything'

"Cooling off periods" for pupils were registered as a leave of absence, as opposed to suspensions.

While this would be breaking the law for most schools, CTCs are not bound by the same statutory guidance on exclusions. This meant when it comes to school discipline, their heads have the "power to do pretty much anything aside from corporal punishment", the school's counsel Russell Holland said.

CTCs were the forerunner of academies in the 1990s, where private companies were encouraged to invest and help set up schools. Just two remain.

"The whole purpose was to allow schools to do things differently," Holland told the court.

The school had decided not to "suspend students in the traditional sense", he added, using the "freedoms it was given for the express purpose of doing something different. And by doing something different it has been highly successful."

At the time of inspection, at least 46 students given a 'cooling off' period were marked in the register as either present, absent using code B (off-site educational activity) or code C (leave of absence granted by the school).

"They were not marked under code E (excluded but no alternative provision made)



and nor was there any way of telling from the register that they had been excluded for poor behaviour," Toby Fisher, representing Ofsted, added in his written case outline.

The register recorded 264 pupils with C codes for 2021-22 and "pupil feedback indicated being 'sent home or 'suspended' was not an infrequent occurrence and complained that the intervention was applied inconsistently and sometimes unfairly", Fisher stated in the case outline.

'Entirely erroneous understanding'

After the discovery, the lead inspector shared his "initial view" with the Ofsted duty desk that "he thought there was a possibility of deliberate 'gaming'", the court heard.

But the school flagged it did not follow the same rules as others. High court judge Stacey described it as an "entirely erroneous understanding" from Ofsted.

The judge added the school's head, Sir Kevin Satchwell, was "led to believe he was going to get an inadequate leadership and management conclusion".

"Can you not understand the consternation and concern that would have caused the school from the lead inspector not understanding basic process about the governance of the school?" the judge added.

Ofsted said the misunderstandings were corrected during the

inspection process and before provisional judgments were reached.

Fisher added: "It was entirely appropriate inspectors indicated that if gaming was established there would be an 'inadequate' judgment."

However, Holland said this meant the "questions and evidence gathering [later in the inspection] was not done with the right questions in mind for behaviour and attitudes".

But Fisher said what "took place after the erroneous application of the exclusion guidance was investigation of issues that needed to be inspected, pursuant to the school's inspection handbook".

Behaviour policy updated

Ofsted said the school's behaviour policy failed to reflect the "range of interventions routinely applied in response to poor behaviour". This included temporary exclusions and education in an inclusion unit at an alternative site, Madeley Academy. At the time of inspection, Ofsted noted four pupils had been referred to Madeley Academy in the last academic year and one in that academic year. One girl was sent there for three weeks.

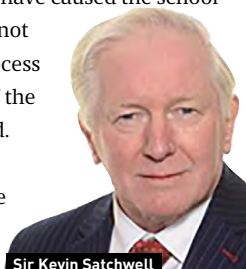
Fisher said the school's behaviour policy has since been updated and now refers to the use of short exclusions and placements. This meant it was "quite clear the school understood the reasons for the judgments that were reached – that's how they've responded so effectively to the recommendations".

The school, last inspected in 2009, was rated 'outstanding' in every area following the 2022 inspection apart from leadership and management, which was rated 'good'.

The report was published in July after the school failed to obtain an injunction banning its publication.

It noted "leaders have not ensured that staff use attendance codes consistently to record when pupils are sent home due to poor behaviour" and said governors lacked "a clear oversight of pupils' behaviour and attendance".

Stacey is due to hand down a reserved judgment at a later date.



Sir Kevin Satchwell

NEWS: OFSTED

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Council will challenge rogue inspectors after head's death

LUCAS CUMISKEY
@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

Reading Borough Council will survey its headteachers annually about their mental health and take responsibility for challenging rogue inspections following the death of Ruth Perry.

The council said "the loss of Ruth must lead to learning and positive changes" in its response to three key concerns raised in a coroner's 'prevention of future deaths' report.

Coroner Heidi Connor last year ruled an Ofsted inspection contributed to the suicide of Perry, who was headteacher at



Ruth Perry

Caversham primary in Reading.

As well as wider concerns over Ofsted and the government, she recommended the council have a "written policy or guidance" to back up its stated "intention to adopt a more robust and proactive approach to dealing with" the inspectorate.

Brighter Futures for Children, the not-for-profit organisation that runs education in Reading, has now said it will adopt the policy. It will include "taking on responsibility for raising challenges to future Ofsted inspections on behalf of local schools" and will be written into a revised 'school effectiveness framework', subject to approval by councillors.

At the inquest, at Berkshire Coroners' Office, Connor said it was "clear" Reading "felt that Ofsted's decision was wrong and unfair" and "knew Ruth was not in a position to raise concerns herself". However, "they did not make a single word of comment on the draft report, despite asking for the opportunity to do so".

The council will commission an independent learning review. Perry's family will help finalise the terms of reference and it will conclude in April.

Ruth Perry's sister Julia Waters said she hoped the review will be "rigorous and the resulting recommendations useful and far-reaching enough to ensure a tragedy like Ruth's cannot happen again". However, she added: "We do not feel the council has yet put forward a convincing set of actions to address the coroner's concerns."

Waters continued: "We are genuinely shocked to learn that the council is only now proposing to bring in many of the policies and actions that most people would expect from a responsible employer. It shows that the council has not been providing the kind of practical or psychological support that headteachers say they need."

On its new survey, Reading said results will "inform updates" to its support package offer.



Reading
Borough Council
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FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Watchdog orders review into claims of evidence wiping

Ofsted chief Sir Martyn Oliver has ordered a "rapid review" of the inspectorate's system for recording inspection evidence after *Schools Week* revealed long-standing issues with data being wiped.

Last week, we revealed how the electronic evidence gathering (EEG) system has for years suffered glitches that force inspectors to re-record their findings, sometimes from memory, after a visit has ended.

Multiple current and former inspectors described situations in which their screen "froze" and evidence "disappeared" in front of their eyes during visits. Others discovered evidence had been wiped upon returning to their hotel room.

Following our story, *the Observer* covered the problems, as well as claims inspectors had been forced to "make up" evidence after the system crashed.

An Ofsted spokesperson told *Schools Week* it had seen "nothing to support the claim that evidence has been 'made up' – something that would never be tolerated".

However, they added: "Sir Martyn is initiating a rapid review to satisfy himself that the EEG and the guidance to inspectors is robust. If schools or inspectors have any concerns, we would want to hear about them directly, so we can respond appropriately."



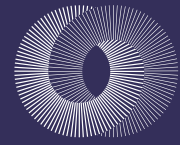
Sir Martyn Oliver

Current and former inspectors told *Schools Week* that Ofsted was repeatedly warned about the problems, but initially refused to accept there was something wrong and "blame turned back on the individual inspectors".

Ofsted told *Schools Week* it was "aware that on some occasions inspectors can have issues with the EEG". These were "more frequent" when the system was first introduced and inspectors have been instructed to "use other means to record their evidence in these circumstances".

The watchdog said it believed there had been only one or two instances of inspectors revisiting a school because technical issues led to an incomplete inspection.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE 2024 AWARDS IS JUST A FEW WEEKS AWAY



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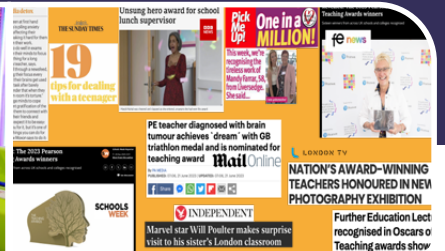
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I go to work and I love my job, I do it every day and I do it the best I can but to be recognised like this is just fantastic. The whole community has come together because I've won, so it's been a really wonderful experience.



Dr Jo Turner, Callington Community College
Gold Winner of Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School

Child mental health support pledge looks in doubt

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

A flagship pledge to get more youngsters access to mental health services is behind schedule and looks set to be missed unless rates are quickly increased.

The NHS's 2019 long-term plan promised that by March 2024, at least an additional 345,000 children and young people up to age 25 could access support through either NHS-funded mental health services or new school mental health support teams.

However, a presentation by NHS bosses, seen by Schools Week, shows only about 234,000 extra children were getting support in October – a gap of 111,000.

This was about a third below target, with just five months to go at the time.

The presentation from NHS bosses stated: "We are behind where we planned to be ... significant challenges remain, so it's job begun, not job done."

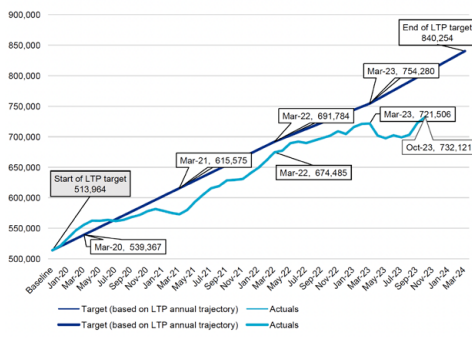
The news comes in the same week that analysis found a 50 per cent rise in the number of children being referred to emergency mental healthcare services in just three years.

Both issues are heaping more pressure on schools, which are increasingly left to pick up the pieces of stretched wider services.

Caroline Barlow, headteacher at Heathfield Community College, said schools "simply don't have resource available to provide what is needed for our young people and yet expectations only seem to increase. From almost all stakeholders we hear 'the school should do more' – the NHS must feel the same."

NHS presentation on target progress for under 18s

CYP Access LTP Trajectories (0-17 data against 0-17 trajectory)



The NHS presentation to the Local Government Association's (LGA) children's and young people's board shows it aimed to provide support for, in total, 1,068,481 under 25s by March. This figure includes the level of youngsters getting support in 2020 – when the policy was implemented – as well as the additional target. By October last year, the total number being supported was 957,251.

The presentation broke down progress towards the target by both under 17-year-olds and from 18 to under-25s.

While the young adults target had been exceeded on occasions in previous years, it has fallen behind schedule. However, the children's target has consistently lagged behind since 2020 (see graph).

The NHS refused to comment this week on whether they had increased support or why it was behind target, but said it is treating "more young people than ever before".

"The health service is expanding mental health services as quickly as possible within the current five-year funding arrangements

to help meet increasing demand, with plans in place to ensure more than one in two pupils and learners in schools and colleges have access to an NHS mental health support team by spring 2025 – significantly ahead of the original target."

Like education, the NHS is dealing with high vacancy rates. Retention rates for the children and young people's mental health workforce also fell to below 80 per cent in 2022, the presentation added.

Schools Week investigations have exposed how suicidal children were being turned away from overstretched child and adolescent mental health services, with schools instead told to "keep them safe".

Only a third of the 135 promised children's mental health policies since 2015 have been implemented, analysis by the Education Policy Institute think tank found. For eight of those, it was unclear if any action had been taken.

Barlow said schools understand the pressure on the NHS, but added that unmet needs "do not disappear and manifests how young people present in schools. A vast amount of resource is needed to create a sense of belonging through trusted adults, or to address the issues of absence through school avoidance due to issues of mental health and anxiety."

Andy Bell, chief executive for the Centre for Mental Health charity, said the NHS has achieved a "great deal" on expanding services, but called on the government to "invest in these essential services" to meet rising demand.

The Department for Health and Social Care was approached for comment.



Caroline Barlow

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Four-week CAMHS wait pledge also up in air

Promises to roll-out a four-week waiting time standard for children seeking mental health help appear to be up in the air after a consultation on plans warned of "unintended consequences".

As pledged in the 2017 mental health green paper, the NHS piloted a four-week waiting time for children to access specialist mental health services.

Following the pilots in 2021, it then proposed the four-week wait would become a new standard that services would be expected to deliver. This would mean youngsters referred to community-based mental health services getting help within four weeks.

NHS data from 2021–22 showed youngsters waited on average nearly six weeks between referral and treatment.

Documents obtained after a freedom of information request by Schools Week show that in February 2022, NHS officials recommended instead to measure services on whether they are meeting the four weeks. They did not want to set a "waiting time standard or trajectory towards it at this time". They said this would instead "signal to systems already under a great deal of pressure our intention to support sustainable improvements in waiting times, rather than making premature decisions that may have unintended consequences".

While respondents welcomed the proposals, "they remain cautious about the risk of introducing perverse incentives and the risk of 'gaming' and internal waits".

The officials also said pilot data showed "very little difference" and "proved inconclusive in terms of establishing a clear correlation between inputs, costs and waits".

An NHS spokesperson said they "remain committed to publishing community mental health waiting time statistics... ahead of further work with government to help establish a formal performance standard".

The Department of Health said it is discussing how to implement the findings of the trial.

Teacher degree apprenticeships: questions and answers on the new career pathway

A new apprenticeship route into teaching for non-graduates will launch in 2025. The Department for Education will begin recruiting for a pilot of 150 maths trainees in the autumn, with training beginning next September. Here's what you need to know...

Why is the government creating this route?

Since the advent of the apprenticeship levy in 2017, schools, trusts and councils have struggled to find ways to spend the money they pay in.

Because teachers make up such a large proportion of schools' workforces, the lack of an undergraduate route leaves leaders with few options. A one-year postgraduate route was created in 2018, but requires an existing degree.

The government is also under pressure to plug worsening gaps in teacher supply. They missed their secondary teacher recruitment target by 50 per cent this year.

The DfE has also said it wants to provide a route for teaching assistants to become teachers. Entry requirements will be GCSEs at grade 4 (or C) or above in English and maths, and also in science for primary.

How long will it last and what will trainees get?

The teacher degree apprenticeship (TDA) will last for four years, with trainees getting a degree at level 6 and qualified teacher status (QTS).

The DfE said QTS would be "awarded against the Teachers' Standards – this is the same for all other routes into teaching". The courses "must adhere to the ITT [initial teacher training] criteria [and] encompass all aspects of the ITT core content framework (CCF)".

Apprentices would spend "around 40 per cent" of their time studying and the rest of the time in the classroom. It is not clear whether they will need to be supervised when teaching classes.

Who will deliver the training?

The DfE has said the apprenticeships will be delivered by organisations with "degree awarding powers", such as universities, but said



other teacher training providers could "partner" on the training.

There will be one apprenticeship standard, but individual courses will be "subject specific", the DfE said. For example, providers will offer a TDA course in secondary maths or chemistry, or primary education.

The department said it was "working with subject experts and the trailblazer group to co-develop how universities and schools offering the TDA can ensure secondary subject specialism is comprehensive and high-quality".

ITT content will be the same as other routes to qualified teacher status.

What will apprentices get paid?

Apprentices are paid on the job, but it is not clear what rate those on the degree apprenticeship route will receive.

The apprentice minimum wage is just £5.28 for those in their first year, but trainees on the current postgraduate route into teaching are paid on the unqualified teacher pay scale, which starts at just over £20,000 a year outside London.

The DfE said details on salary for teacher apprentices "is under review".

Why are unions concerned?

Paul Whiteman, of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the threshold for entry to teacher training "should continue to include

holding a degree". He feared the proposals would "truncate degrees and teacher training".

It is worth pointing out that the apprentices will have a degree by the time they finish their training. It is also already possible to enter undergraduate teacher training routes, such as a bachelor's degree in education, without an existing degree.

The DfE said the structure of the TDA "will ensure trainees have sufficient time to attain their degree while also spending a portion of their time in school".

What happens next (and who pays)?

Ministers will launch recruitment to the pilot scheme in the autumn. This will see the government "working with a small number of schools and teacher training providers to fund up to 150 apprentices to work in secondary schools to teach maths".

Training providers "will bid to partake in the pilot and trainees will be recruited from this autumn and start their training the following year".

The pilot will only include government funding for the training of one cohort.

After that, schools will have to use levy funding. The DfE said providers and schools could also "develop and run" apprenticeship courses with their own funding from September 2025.

NEWS

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Competition watchdog pulled into school info management dispute, again

JACK DYSON

@JACKYDYS

EXCLUSIVE

The competition watchdog has been called on to intervene again as the turf war between England's largest school management information system (MIS) providers takes another twist.

Schools Week understands complaints have been lodged with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) after ESS SIMS announced its customers would be breaching their contracts if they sent copies of their databases to third parties.

But concerned headteachers and the MIS company's leading rivals have argued that the practice has been commonly used to transfer information during provider switches.

Lawyers from Stone King – which has previously taken action against ESS – said they “have been approached by a number of very concerned clients in relation to this issue”.

Tony Pidgeon, a partner at the firm, said: “We believe the stance taken by ESS will have a significant impact throughout the sector on the ability of schools to successfully switch provider and we are in the process of reviewing the matter in detail with those clients.”

In a note to customers in December, ESS said “granting access to a third party to the SIMS or FMS [financial management system] software”, its document stores or a back-up copy of its “databases in whole or in part” is prohibited.

The retention of copies or their use after contract expiry are also “not permitted under the terms of the licence granted to customers”.

“So that you are aware, any third party that encourages customers to act in any of the ways set out above will be inducing them to breach their contract(s) with ESS,” the document added.

“We take these matters very seriously because, after over 30 years of software design and development, the SIMS and FMS databases contain a significant amount of intellectual property that belongs to ESS or is licenced to ESS for use in its products.”

The CMA launched an investigation after ESS announced it was scrapping its normal 12-month rolling contracts in favour of three-



year deals in 2022.

It closed the case when the provider agreed to let eligible schools leave long-term agreements a year early. However, it did not rule on whether the company breached competition law.

Complaints have again been lodged with the CMA following the ESS announcement two months ago. Rival MIS supplier Bromcom has confirmed it is one of the complainants.

The watchdog is set to consider the reports and whether any action is needed, as it continues to monitor ESS's compliance with the commitments.

In a post on the blog EduGeek, one school worker accused ESS of “putting up blocks. Thank God all my schools have already moved.” Another commenter said they their switchover stalled after they were told they “should not share the back-ups as part of any migration”.

ESS has instead instructed schools to “use approved data extraction methods to migrate data from the SIMS/FMS databases”.

But James Weatherill, chief executive of another rival firm Arbor, claimed this leave his employees having “to manually produce dozens of reports which is extremely time consuming and introduces scope for error”.

“For over 10 years schools have been migrating using backups, which in Arbor's view is presently the only complete, efficient, and tested way of migrating data.”

Meanwhile, Bromcom boss Ali Guryel said his firm is “also initiating in the High Court an injunction to halt this anti-competitive

behaviour by ESS”.

“Bromcom's position is that schools should proceed with their migration process. [ESS] has taken steps to create barriers for schools wishing to migrate from SIMS to other MIS providers.”

Both firms have committed to support schools in any legal action as a result of the database back-up issue.

But ParentPay Group CEO Lewis Alcraft stated his competitors “appear to be trying to conceal their improper access and misuse of ESS's intellectual property through a smokescreen of allegations of anti-competitor behaviour”.

“There has always been safe, proper and authorised means for our competitors to migrate data from ESS systems which they appear to have ignored, instead choosing to access our code not just school data.”

Schools Week understands ParentPay has also sent legal letters to Arbor and Bromcom.

The dispute comes amid significant change in the MIS sector, where schools spend an estimated £200 million annually.

In 2012, 84 per cent of English state schools were using the SIMS, which was run by Capita until it was snapped up by ParentPay Group three years ago.

However, cloud-based alternatives that emerged after academies took control of their own budgets have eroded that dominance. This has left SIMS's market share standing at just 50 per cent, analysis by the Bring More Data blog shows.

Academise so LAs can't close you, diocese tells schools

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

EXCLUSIVE

Catholic schools rocked by falling pupil rolls are being urged to academise by their diocese to shield them from local authority closure orders, leaked documents show.

The revelations have prompted renewed pleas for councils or regulators to be handed the power to oversee decisions on the shutting of all schools as the system grapples with how to deal with empty classrooms.

Documents, seen by *Schools Week*, reveal a "key reason" behind the Diocese of Westminster's choice to start moving schools into multi-academy trusts (MAT) in 2017 was to ensure "closure or amalgamation [decisions] would be solely" in its hands.

Since then, London boroughs have slashed admission totals and shut schools as forecasts suggest the number of four-year-olds in some parts of the capital will drop up to 15 per cent by 2027.

Diocese minutes from a meeting last month state "there is a growing urgency" for its schools "to initiate the process of transferring into the academy sector".

"A communication has been issued this week to the chair[s] of governors and headteachers at all the schools which are not currently engaged with the request ... to undertake the due diligence and processes to transfer ... from the VA [voluntary aided] sector into the academy sector," diocesan officers told the gathering.

"Should a school be at risk, the LA can recommend the closure of a maintained VA school without diocesan consent, thus limiting our capacity to have strategic oversight of our provision for Catholic education across the diocese."

The birth-rate slump is expected to cause primary pupil numbers in England to tumble by 760,747 (16.6 per cent) between 2022 and 2032. The number of babies delivered in London has already dropped 17 per cent between 2012 and 2021, equivalent to 23,225 fewer children. Almost 15 per cent of school places in the city are now unfilled.

A letter to headteachers from the diocese



in January revealed it now wants its 204 schools – many of which are in London – to have either converted or be "engaged in the process" before the end of 2024–25. But one headteacher within the diocese accused the body of "scaremongering schools" into trusts. Another said it "risks ghettoising Catholic schools".

Diocesan officers added during the January meeting that joining a MAT "will not by itself resolve all or any" of the issues threatening schools. But it will enable the diocese and the trust to "ensure all opportunities are fully explored" to secure its long-term viability.

"A key reason for the trustees developing their strategy to move diocesan schools from the VA sector into the academy sector was to ensure that the decisions for the provision, be that closure or amalgamation, would be solely within the diocese's authority.

"Therefore, there is a growing urgency for those schools not yet engaged, in particular any that may be highlighted by their LA as at risk, to initiate the process of transferring into the academy sector."

While councils can determine reductions in local authority-maintained schools, their powers do not extend to academies.

Jon Andrews, Education Policy Institute's head of analysis, believes local authorities' ability to manage pupil number fluctuations

is "made more challenging" by the fact they "have no statutory levers to direct academies to adjust admissions" totals.

He noted: "Maintained schools may become more vulnerable to reduced admissions with implications for their funding, amalgamation, or even closure."

Meanwhile, Tom Richmond, a former DfE adviser now working for the EDSK think tank, said the "system is in urgent need of reform" if schools "are considering switching" to avoid closures. "To protect the best interests of pupils and local communities, we cannot continue to allow academies or trusts to make such significant decisions without any external oversight from local authorities or regulators."

London Councils, an organisation representing the capital's boroughs, previously urged the government to give authorities "the power to manage an academy's reduction of PAN [published admission number] or closure, where there is clear evidence of a significant drop in demand".

A spokesperson for the Diocese of Westminster insisted it continues "to work in partnership with the regional director's office and local authorities as part of the planning for the local provision of places for pupils".

NEWS

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Report urges government to expand scope of leaders' NPQs

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE



National professional qualifications for school leaders lack the “full extent of skills and knowledge” needed for the “complexity of increasingly senior roles” a report has warned.

The development programmes for heads (NPQH) and executive leaders (NPQEL) also risk being seen by government as the “complete answer to what leaders need”, rather than the “minimum entitlement” they were designed to be.

Big Education and the Centre for Education and Youth spoke to academics, teacher trainers, policy experts and school leaders.

They concluded that the government should review the programmes to “consider how to expand their scope and remit to more fully meet the needs of emerging and existing leaders”.

In a piece for *Schools Week*, chief executive of Academies Enterprise Trust Becks Boomer-Clark said NPQs are “necessary but they are not sufficient – it does not and should not end there. As well

as further programmes to develop deeper and specialist knowledge, we also need a whole suite of support for leaders on how to implement change effectively in a complex environment.”

The NPQ report recommended ministers team up with the Education Endowment Foundation to pilot “beyond NPQ” or “NPQ+” provision that goes further than the existing programmes. This would place more emphasis on supporting leaders to develop “in relation to their own wellbeing and leading cultures which support this in others, both staff and pupils”.

The current qualifications were launched in 2020 as part of a reformed suite of six NPQs aimed at improving development for mid- and late-career school staff. The government subsequently announced £184

million to offer 150,000 free places by the end of this academic year. But take-up has been slow.

Data shows 65,225 funded participants in the past two academic years, meaning almost 85,000 participants would have to sign-up this year to meet the allocation.

In 2021–22, there were 3,902 funded participants in the NPQH and 1,056 in the NPQEL. Last year, there were 4,357 headteacher participants and 1,342 executive leaders.

This week’s report warned of “insufficient progression” in the core content of the qualifications and “recognition of the changing scope and complexity of increasingly senior roles”.

Researchers added the DfE should review both NPQs to give a “clearer understanding of the role of the leader beyond the implementer of evidence informed interventions”.

They should also introduce “greater differentiation in content from other NPQs to better meet the needs of the most senior leaders”. Ministers should also commission a broader independent review of leadership development more generally.

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Primary head named as first school safeguarding tsar

A primary headteacher of nearly 20 years has become the first schools safeguarding tsar, tasked with helping leaders communicate better with other agencies.

Over the next year, Jon Le Fevre will help the Department for Education to explore whether schools should become a fourth safeguarding partner and help roll out social care reforms. He will gather evidence of where safeguarding communication is working well between schools and others, such as councils and police, and strengthen their voice. One example is where schools sit on local safeguarding boards.

“I’m going to visit as many councils as I can. I think



Jon Le Fevre

the more we have education at these boards, the better the conversation will be and safeguarding improved,” Le Fevre told *Schools Week*.

“I’m in a supportive role – it’s not accountability, it’s not an inspectorate. I’m there to facilitate better working together.”

With 17-years of headship experience, Le Fevre most recently led Pilgrims’ Cross primary school, in Hampshire, where they had “really good arrangements” with social workers and other agencies.

“We have to do what’s best for children but I’m

very conscious of the stresses and pressures within schools at the present time,” he added.

Last year, DfE said it would “explore” legislative changes to include schools as a statutory safeguarding partner, alongside councils, health services and police.

The MacAlister review of child social care warned leaving schools out meant the voice of education was “missing”.

Le Fevre has a £129,000 contract to do the work, which runs until March 2025. He is working alongside two other safeguarding tsars, Deborah McMillan who leads on councils and Lorraine Parker, who focuses on police.

Schools looking to work with Le Fevre can reach him on jon.lefevre@education.gov.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

Watchdogs to analysis SEND pupils' transition to adulthood

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will examine how youngsters with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are being prepared for adulthood in forthcoming thematic visits.

The watchdogs have published guidance ahead of visits to a "small number of areas" to look at "a particular aspect of the SEND system in-depth" between spring and summer 2024.

They will look at all phases of a child with SEND's transition to adulthood – from early years settings through to post-16 education – to get a detailed overview of how preparation for adulthood (PFA) arrangements work.

The visits "will not result in judgments about local areas", but the findings will be published



in a report this autumn, flagging examples of good practice and identifying systemic concerns. Where good practice is identified, this will be "shared with the Department for Education and the Department for Health and

Social Care".

Last year's thematic review was of the alternative provision system in England, which found it was in "desperate need of reform" amid "systemic issues".

Ofsted and the CQC will look at the extent to which schools and early years settings "develop the knowledge, skills, and independence of children and young people with SEND".

The team will usually consist of three inspectors: one from education, another from social care and a CQC inspector. Each visit will typically consist of up to four days of off-site activity and up to four days on-site investigation. Inspectors will notify local leaders of the visits 10 working days in advance.

[Full story here](#)

Electric car charging could be 'available to the public' as grants rise

The government has increased a grant offered to schools to install electric car charging points to £2,500 and said settings could use them to generate revenue.

Under the scheme, schools could previously apply for up to £350 towards the cost of installing charge points.

This week, technology minister Anthony Browne announced the government will now cover up to 75 per cent of the cost of buying and installing the points, up to £2,500 per socket.

Charge points could be used by school staff and visitors, and the government said schools

could also "generate revenue by making their charge points available to the public".

The announcement comes after LocatED, the Department for Education's property company, suggested car charging as a potential use for school land in 2022.

Baroness Barran, the academies minister, said it was an "exciting opportunity for schools".

The government said its schools grant was for state-funded education institutions, "which must have dedicated off-street parking facilities". Applications can be made online.

[Full story here](#)

Union plans indicative ballot over pay and workload

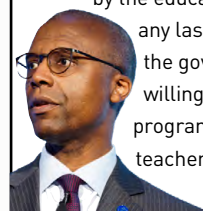
NASUWT has become the second education union to announce plans to run a consultative ballot of members, as leaders gear up for a fresh showdown with the government over pay and workload.

The National Education Union announced last month that it would hold an indicative ballot over potential strike action. Such votes are used by unions to gauge the appetite of their members for industrial action, but a formal ballot must be held to authorise walk-outs.

Now NASUWT has confirmed it too will hold a consultative ballot over the "coming weeks" to "take forward its campaigning, up to and including industrial action, to secure a better deal for teachers on pay, workload, working hours and wellbeing".

In December, education secretary Gillian Keegan told the body tasked with making recommendations on teacher pay to consider evidence on the "impact of pay rises on schools' budgets".

Dr Patrick Roach (pictured), NASUWT's general secretary, said he was "concerned that the limitations imposed on the pay review body by the education secretary have removed any last shred of confidence that the government would be at least willing to consider the need for a programme of pay restoration for teachers".



[Full story here](#)

Mobile toothbrushing teams to aid 165,000 children

The government will dispatch mobile "dental teams" to primary schools in under-served areas to give advice and fluoride varnish treatment to more than 165,000 children.

Ministers claim that by offering "vital prevention measures to reception-age children, we can give them the best chance at reducing dental decay and having a healthy smile for life". They said they wanted to "bring preventative dental services such as fluoride



varnish directly to children". The teams will operate in "areas of the country where oral health and NHS access is worst".

No further details have been provided.

In its "plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry", the government said it also aimed to have "every child see toothbrushing as part of their daily routine by the time they go to primary school" through work in early years settings.

Wraparound childcare: what primary schools need to know

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt outlined an “ambition” last year for primary schools to provide wraparound childcare, with £289 million funding to implement the scheme. Guidance on Thursday outlines how primaries should offer the provision. Here’s what you need to know ...



1. Do all primaries need to do it?

No. While the government “expects” all schools to provide wraparound childcare, this is only non-statutory guidance.

Also, schools that have a “reasonable justification” are not expected to provide it. This includes not having space, insufficient demand or where there is already similar provision in the area.

However all schools are expected to “identify how you can support parents” to access childcare.

Where schools can’t provide provision, they are expected to work “collaboratively” with councils who should provide a list of available childcare locally.

Schools should then communicate this to parents and include it in the published SEND local offer.

According to DfE, 80 per cent of schools already provide some form of wraparound childcare.

2. Childcare shouldn’t interfere with school learning

Using school premises outside of the school day is normally the responsibility of governing bodies or the academy trust, DfE said.

Schools should check if wraparound fits within permitted use, including where children are not pupils at the school. Consent may be needed from the council or religious authority (if it’s a faith school) for letting the space out to providers.

Schools should agree who will lead on wraparound childcare and ensure activities do not interfere with a “high quality and safe teaching environment”.

3. ‘Robust safeguarding’ needed

Schools have responsibility to make sure wraparound provision meets the minimum standards. This includes having robust and

effective safeguarding practices.

Even if another organisation is running the provision on-site, schools are responsible for making sure children are safe. This includes adhering to the keeping children safe in education guidance, as well as following health and safety guidance.

Provision should also be inclusive and accessible for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

4. Charge parents ‘affordable’ fees

Schools will have to charge parents for childcare, but this would be affordable and in-line with guidance on charging for school activities.

When setting fees, schools may want to look at benchmarking prices with other provisions and how to maintain financial viability.

Schools are expected to support the use of government childcare subsidies. This means provision must be registered with Ofsted or subject to inspection.

Food is an optional element of wraparound provision.

5. TAs can staff provision (but not teachers)

Schools can use staff or volunteers to provide the childcare. This can include school staff,

such as teaching assistants, specific childcare staff or staff from private providers, including childminders.

But DfE does not expect teachers to be used. Schools should exercise “financial prudence” when taking on extra staff.

Schools will need to look at staffing ratios, depending on children’s needs and their ages.

6. Ofsted will inspect as part of school visits

A school will not need to register its wraparound childcare with Ofsted for the following reasons, as it falls under the education inspection framework.

- They are offering it directly as part of school activities
- They employ the staff working in the wraparound childcare, and
- There is at least one registered pupil of the school attending

Where the governing body manages the childcare provision, Ofsted will consider this as part of the school inspection. Inspectors may observe pupils at before and after-school clubs if the school leads and managements them.

Inspectors would consider evidence “proportionately and appropriately in the context of the wider evidence base for the inspection”.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Johanna Klinsky

Director of strategic improvement, Academies Enterprise Trust

Start date: Last month
Previous/current job: Director of teacher development, Ark

Interesting fact: Johanna is from the US and her high school was used for a couple of John Hughes movies. She could have been an extra in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, but thought she was "too cool" for the experience.



Jen Barker

National director of learning, Ormiston Academies Trust

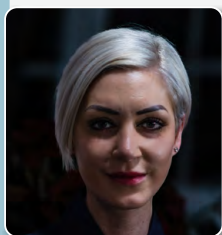
Start date: April
Previous/current job: Senior dean at Ambition Institute

Interesting fact: While on holiday in Amsterdam, Jen poked fun at someone she thought was a fellow tourist for pretending to be a famous footballer - until someone asked for his autograph. It turned out it was Edwin van der Sar, former Manchester United and Netherlands goalkeeper.

Movers & Shakers

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

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



Fay MacRitchie

CEO, Ambitions Academies Trust

Start date: February 19
Previous Job: CEO, MCR Pathways

Interesting fact: Fay coaches female entrepreneurs, supporting business development and providing mentorship to new leaders growing their first UK enterprise. She also supports a Maasai women's beadwork cooperative in Kenya.



Paul Jones

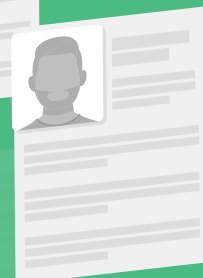
Headteacher, Edgar Wood Academy

Start date: Last month
Previous Job: Head of school, Oasis Academy Leesbrook

Interesting fact: As well as a love for art, the subject he has taught for 20 years, Paul's other passion is music. He plays the guitar with a plectrum given to him by one of his heroes, John Squire, the former Stone Roses' guitarist.

Are you ready to move?

Check out the top roles in Further Education and Skills at educationweekjobs.co.uk



Advertorial

Experience AI: Empowering young people to create with artificial intelligence

In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), the Raspberry Pi Foundation and Google DeepMind have joined forces to create an exciting new educational program called **Experience AI**. The initiative empowers both educators and young people by offering [a comprehensive suite of lessons for teachers](#) and [an exciting AI-themed challenge](#) that makes AI and machine learning accessible to learners aged up to 18.

The eight lessons

What is AI?: Learners delve into the current landscape of artificial intelligence and its role in our world. They explore the differences between rule-based and data-driven programming approaches and consider the societal benefits and challenges associated with AI.

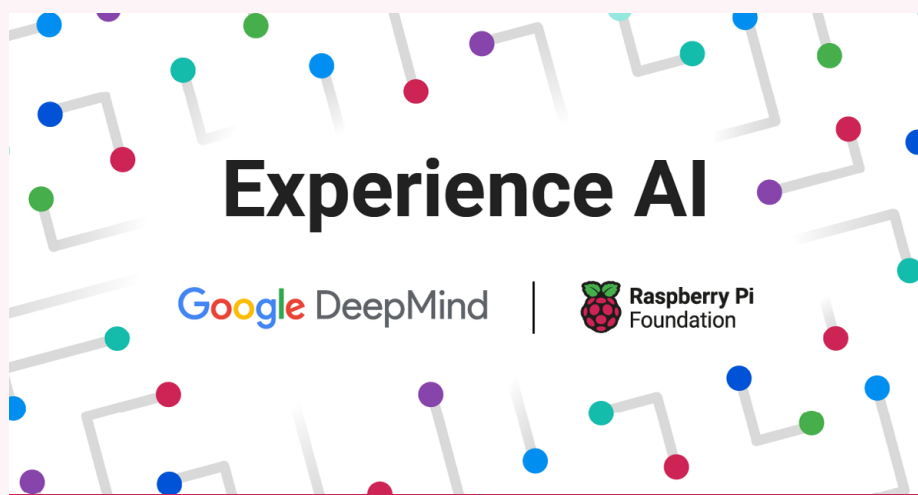
How computers learn: This lesson introduces learners to machine learning, with a focus on the various approaches used to create machine learning models. The concept of classification, a specific application of machine learning, is explored in detail.

Bias in, bias out: Learners create their own machine learning model to classify images, and uncover the impact of limited datasets and bias in machine learning.

Decision trees: An in-depth look at decision trees as a specific machine learning model. Learners experience firsthand the concept of data-driven models and how different training datasets result in diverse ML models.

Solving problems with ML models: Learners are introduced to the AI project lifecycle. They take a human-focused approach to create and train a machine learning model, followed by rigorous testing to determine its accuracy.

Model cards and careers: Learners create model cards to explain their machine learning models. Additionally, students explore a variety of AI-related career paths and gain insights from professionals in AI research, including DeepMind.

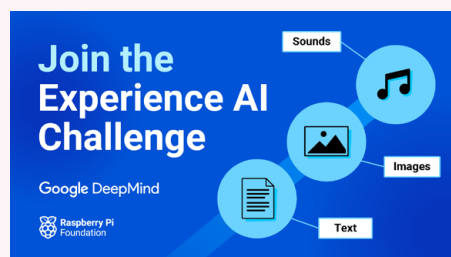


Large language models (LLMs) – PSHE: This lesson is a sequence of activities designed to educate students about the development of large language models (LLMs).

Ecosystems – Biology: Students will explore the impact of environmental changes on the organisms in an ecosystem, in this case the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania.

The Experience AI Challenge

The Experience AI team also runs the **Experience AI Challenge**, a programme where young people are encouraged to design and build their own AI applications.



Key information

- Runs from 08 January to 24 May 2024
- Free to take part
- Designed for beginners, based on the tools Scratch and Machine Learning for Kids
- Official submissions can be made by UK-based young people aged up to 18

- Young people and their mentors outside the UK are welcome to use the challenge resources and make AI projects

With the support of mentors and our free resources, young people are guided in how to train and test machine learning models that classify data such as audio, text, or images. Then they create their own model and use it to make a unique AI project, which they submit to receive feedback from us. Examples of projects they could make include:

- An instrument classifier to identify the type of musical instrument being played in pieces of music
- A sentiment analyzer for book reviews: Classify the text in book reviews as positive, negative, or neutral
- A photo classifier to identify what kind of food is shown in a photograph

Experience AI not only bridges the knowledge gap by offering educators comprehensive resources for teaching AI, but also provides young creators with the tools and guidance they need to become active participants in the world of artificial intelligence. As AI continues to shape our future, Experience AI is empowering the next generation to understand, innovate, and create with this transformative technology.

Feature

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

Hospital schools: on the mental health crisis frontline

The ranks of school refusers now contain many youngsters with complex mental health needs – and nobody seems to know what to do with them

Taxi pull up throughout the day outside the brightly painted Magpie Centre to drop off its growing cohort of school refusers.

The former youth club, which became Leicester's fourth hospital school site 18 months ago, is designed to look as welcoming as possible to entice anxious youngsters back into classrooms.

The average school refuser has been at home for 18 months before they arrive. One pupil has not attended school for three years. Rather than sterile hospital wards, learning takes place in homes and purpose-built 'hospital' alternative provision.

Magpie's therapeutic curriculum includes board games and growing rhubarb. A large social space includes table tennis and foosball. Pupils are taught in classes of up to eight, where teachers usually go by their first names.

Most attend the centre part-time for 12-week 'early intervention' blocks while still enrolled at their mainstream school.

Historically, hospital school pupils typically had physical ailments or long-term illnesses.

But leaders say their cohorts are now increasingly made up of youngsters with complex mental health needs – school refusers who leaders and councils no longer know what to do with.

National data on hospital schools is hard to come by; some come under the alternative provision (AP) bracket while others are designated special schools.

Of the 21 hospital schools responding to a survey last May run by the MAT AP and SEND CEO Network, 18 saw an increase in referrals.

When asked for any changes in the health condition of referrals, half said mental health.

Nationally, one in five 8- to 16-year-olds have a probable mental health disorder, up from one in eight in 2017. And analysis published this week found a fifty per cent rise in the number of children being referred to emergency mental healthcare services in just three years. More than 600 youngsters are now referred every week.

'Every bit of the system is falling apart'

Demand is also being stretched by a severe lack of capacity in specialist schools to meet soaring numbers.

Phil Arrowsmith, headteacher at Wirral Hospital School, believes his service is "being used to prop up the SEND system, which is taking away the ability for us to meet the needs of children in real mental crisis".

However, it is a complex picture. Leicester Hospital School headteacher Stephen Deadman says autism can lead to social anxiety and spirals into "more deep-seated mental health problems".

But hospital schools are increasingly being named on the education, health and care plans for children whose primary needs are SEND rather than mental health related.

Arrowsmith recently had to turn away a teenage boy who had just been moved to safety after threatening to kill himself. He has capacity for 80 pupils but already has 84 on roll despite being only halfway through the school year. The boy was one of seven self-harmers with "deep trauma" who Arrowsmith had to add to his waiting list that week.

"Despite me receiving clear guidance from a KC [senior barrister] that we cannot be named in an EHCP as the sole destination for a child, Wirral LA have continued to do so," he adds.

A Wirral spokesperson said it values its hospital school services. All children with SEND it has placed in them were either after being instructed by a tribunal to do so or following advice from the Department for Education.



Phil Arrowsmith

Feature: Hospital schools

Of the 113 councils that responded to a freedom of information request, 18 (16 per cent) admitted placing children in hospital schools as part of an EHCP process since 2018.

Four councils placed SEND children in hospital schools without giving them the same top-up funding they would normally receive. In five areas, children were placed in hospital schools after SEND tribunal hearings, because parents sought those placements.

But Arrowsmith says in Wirral, this means children with the most severe mental health needs – who require discharging from tier four (acute need) CAMHS units – are then “bed blocking. There’s no education provision for them other than us.

“The risk here is for the entire system – every bit of it is falling apart.” He is afraid a youngster will take their own life this year while awaiting a placement.

The reasons behind demand spike

Referrals at Sutton Tuition and Reintegration Service (STARS) in London have “gone up dramatically” in the past year, with more than 90 per cent linked to mental health needs.

Steve Lowe, head of Oxfordshire Hospital School, received around 120 referrals in 2022-23, roughly 50 per cent more than the previous year.

Of the increasing referrals from home-educated pupils, “many” have been out of education for between 12 months and two years. “The majority”



Leicester Childrens Hospital School headteacher Stephen Deadman and deputy Nikki Cole

‘We’re seeing more and more young people not just stuck in their homes, but stuck in their bedrooms’

have anxiety, “often with comorbidity and very often diagnosed or undiagnosed autism”.

“Every service is compromising what they’re able to provide for those square pegs not fitting into the round holes,” he says.

Tara Bell, head of Wandsworth Hospital School and Home Tuition Service, says SEND children are her “biggest increasing cohort. I could open an AP tomorrow and fill it easily with children struggling to attend school.”



Pupils Olivia and Robin at the Magpie Centre

By November, Manchester Hospital School had seen twice the number of requests from schools for outreach support as the same time last year. The city does not have hospital AP for primary age children, but “if we did, it would be full,” says its head Janet Doherty.

“With the age at which mental health problems are presenting getting younger and younger there’s definitely a need for local authorities to provide that specialist provision at lower years... By the time they get to us, it’s almost too late.”

Back in Leicester, two more modular classrooms are arriving this week with another four on order to cope with record referrals.

Leicester Council has also asked the school to

What is a hospital school?

Hospital schools have been around for over 100 years providing education to children medically unfit to attend school, traditionally from within hospitals themselves.

The National Association for Hospital Education has around 70 members. That includes the 13 hospital schools nationally, which are designated as special schools with hospital bases run by governors. There are also local authority-run medical alternative provision which varies hugely in size and scope.

On top of that, most local authorities also have their own small teams providing services such as home tuition to children medically unfit to attend school.

Feature: Hospital schools



Therapy dog, Cally

open another new provision for those with EHCPs around anxiety “in response to a shortage of special school places”, adds Deadman.

STARS is rolling out a new model to meet demand. It is having “significant difficulties in integrating pupils back into suitable long-term educational placements”, said its headteacher Beverley Williamson.

It will now have morning-only timetables at the centre, with afternoons used to support reintegration back to the referring school.

Two-fifths of the hospital schools and medical AP surveyed by MAT AP & SEND CEOs found that schools were less supportive of reintegration than they had been the previous year, with only one in 18 finding them more supportive.

At the bedroom door

Lowe says the “educational relationship” with his pupils often starts “underneath the duvet with their bedroom door closed, and our teacher sat on the landing passing notes underneath”.

“That then builds for that young person to take the duvet off their head and have the bedroom door open, then eventually come downstairs.”

Nikki Cole, deputy head of the Magpie Centre, adds: “We’re seeing more and more young people not just stuck in their homes, but stuck in their bedrooms. We’re battling to get them into school.”

The crisis appears to be impacting girls more than boys. On my lunchtime visit to Leicester’s



Sarah Fitzpatrick, head of school at Leicester Royal Infirmary Hospital with one of her pupils

‘The school refusers service is being used to prop up the SEND system’

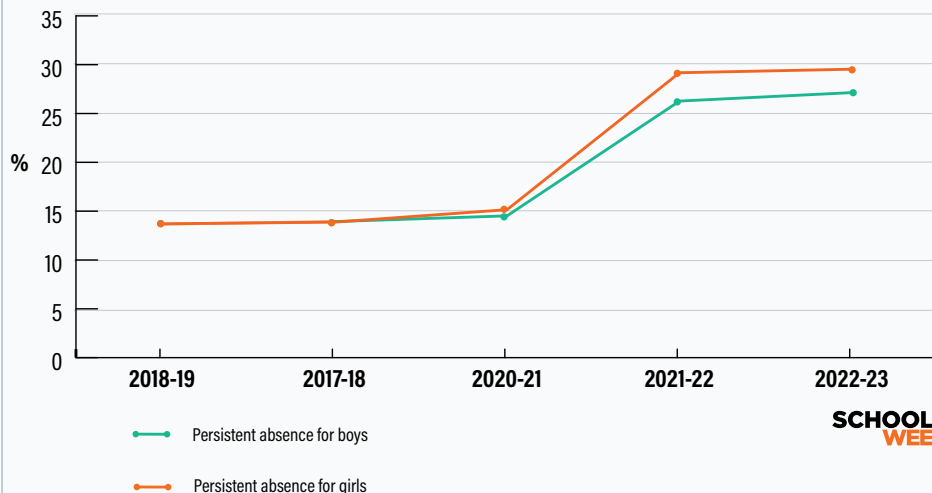
Willow Bank Centre, which caters for year 10 and 11 pupils, there’s not a boy in sight.

Girls sit picking at their cafeteria food, which Deadman explains is free for all students to prevent “barriers to eating, particularly for those with eating disorders”. Another is petting Tally, one

of two resident therapy dogs.

Three-quarters of pupils across Leicester’s hospital AP are girls. Across Wirral’s year 10 and 11s, it’s two-thirds. While the gender imbalance has “been the case for several years, it’s getting worse,” says Arrowsmith.

Gender attendance gap opens as girls stay off school



Source: DfE attendance data, 2018-19 to 2022-23

Note: 2019-20 data not available due to pandemic

Feature: Hospital schools

Some experts put this down to social media. American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, for example, notes that girls' mental health "plunged" in the early 2010s, when both Snapchat and Instagram launched.

Olivia, in year 8, has now been at the Maggie Centre for a year after she stopped attending school 12 months before that. She says "rudeness" in social media group chats made her anxiety worse.

"No one would directly say it to me, but people would message, 'Olivia's never at school, she's always faking ill. It hurts and makes you feel embarrassed to go into lessons."

In the four years up to 2020-21, girls and boys had roughly the same absence rates.

But after Covid, things changed. The percentage of girls missing at least one in ten sessions last year was 26.1 per cent, compared to 24.4 per cent for boys.

Clash with mainstream

Olivia and her mum worked with her mainstream school to get her back attending, but she said the school "just treated me like a normal student ... they weren't really focusing on mental health."

Cath Kitchen, chair of the National Association for Hospital Education, said "rigid rules regarding attendance and attainment" in "many schools" is something they are increasingly concerned about.

She believes this is "driving young people out of school, and parents to opt to electively home educate rather than see their children suffer and feel like failures".

They also claim the current "campaign messages" from DfE around attendance are "not helping". Parent groups have said it is trivialising school attendance anxiety.

Williamson says her service is "really struggling" with reintegration. "Children just don't want to go back" to mainstream schools.

But those who stay at the hospital school then remain "around children with high levels of anxiety and suicide ideation. There doesn't seem to be any middle ground – like a small school, for kids who are a bit fragile".



The classroom at Leicester Royal Infirmary

At Willow Bank, there are no uniforms and rules are gently enforced. English teacher Paul Gibson says teachers there "don't have to be strict, because we don't have the behaviour issues to deal with".

The school has had to accept that some year 11s are "just not going to come out of the home. We just need to put in enough tuition so they can at least get exam results and hopefully in the future, they'll move on."

But there are lots of success stories. Deadman recalls one teenager for whom learning started with the teacher "talking through the bedroom door". With the school's support she overcame her anxiety, got a place in college and won a national filmmaking prize.

On the wards

But there are casualties, too. At Leicester's 75-year-old hospital school, based inside Leicester Royal Infirmary, the atmosphere is subdued during my visit after a learner passed away overnight.

The school has a classroom, although much of the learning takes place out on the wards where masks are always worn. School head Sarah Fitzpatrick admits that makes "phonics quite difficult, trying to sound out the letters" but kids

are "used to that" since Covid.

Senior play specialist Louise Ballard has worked at the hospital for 32 years and has never seen so many young people with mental health problems, and never as "complicated" or "extreme" as they are now.

"They've normally reached absolute crisis point when they come to us, some verging on psychosis.

"It's really difficult to manage in this environment, because it's not the right place for them... We're a bit of a stopgap."

Her office wall is covered in letters and cards from former patients and their families. One sticks in her mind, from a youngster who had been sectioned over self-harming and had been watched by carers at all times to ensure she didn't run away.

She "desperately wanted to get outside", but staff questioned whether she should be allowed to access the hospital's rooftop play area. She promised they could trust her, and they did. The girl wrote to Ballard when she moved on, thanking her for that trust.

"Sometimes it's just about building up that rapport. We're lucky in our roles that we have the time to be able to do that."

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The sector's manifesto



BECKS BOOMER-CLARK
CEO, Academies Enterprise Trust

Three policies to develop vital leadership capacity

Becks Boomer-Clark sets out three policy priorities to develop and support the leaders all other education policies will rely on to deliver

With policymakers sharpening their pencils to refine and finesse manifestos, they would do well to focus on one of the biggest levers we have to transform education: school leaders.

Any new government should position itself as The Great Enabler, not The Great Enforcer. Whoever is presiding over the seventh floor of Sanctuary Buildings in the days after the general election should have the confidence to allow practice to shape policy.

Education leaders are some of the most creative problem-solvers: trust us and innovation will follow.

Whether that's Dixons with their drive on flexible working; United Learning's move to access reserves to fund higher salaries; Ark's extensive curriculum programmes; or the recent work we've done with Ambition Institute on Individual Development Accounts, allocating £100,000 to every leader for their own development and an aspiration of 100 hours of quality CPD every year.

Prioritise professional development

A new team in Sanctuary Buildings must help us reclaim teaching and

school leadership as one of the great professions.

This means committing to a long-term and serious entitlement for development and training, putting education on an equal footing with other professions, such as law or medicine.

In a crisis, communities look to headteachers for leadership. But we need to stop relying simply on our leaders' goodwill and strength of character; we must invest seriously in mentoring, coaching and supervision.

It is madness that the requirements for professional development for accountants are clearer than those for headteachers. We should be precise about the number of hours teachers and leaders must commit to their PD and find ways to incentivise it; our leaders need to be given permission to prioritise themselves.

A new secretary of state should also end the uncertainty that hangs over whether NPQs will continue to be funded or not.

They are having a positive impact across the system, creating a shared knowledge base and language in schools that has accelerated both collaboration and school improvement, but we need more time and funding for them to reach more schools.

Improve implementation

NPQs are necessary but they are not sufficient – it does not and should not end there. As well as further



“ We must rethink our relationship with time

programmes to develop deeper and specialist knowledge, we also need a whole suite of support for leaders on how to implement change effectively in a complex environment.

Our sector has so much exposure to the evidence base of what works. But our understanding of effective implementation, particularly at scale, lags.

Until we crack that, system-wide improvement will evade us. It is not enough to understand the theories of change, we need to invest in leaders' ability to implement them well.

Give us time to think

Finally, we continually rehearse the recruitment and retention crisis but rarely do we land on any serious strategic solutions that will properly shift the dial.

The truth is that we are not competing for talent between schools; we are competing with other sectors and the wider world. School leadership needs to feel “doable” in the context of people's wider lives and the increasingly stark generational shift in how people relate to their work.

We must rethink our relationship

with time. While we almost certainly have a crisis of absenteeism across our pupil population, arguably we also have a crisis of presenteeism across our workforce.

The intersection of time and technology will play a pivotal role, using one to release the other.

A new government should commit to reducing contact time for teachers and leaders to build in time for planning (actual thinking!), professional development and collaboration. Because otherwise, it only happens in the margins of busy working lives.

If policymakers want to look for inspiration, there are many international examples, look to Western Australia where they fund a professional sabbatical in your fifth year of work. What better signal to the profession that it matters and is valued?

Elections swing one way or the other on the pivotal question of change versus more of the same. For all our sakes, whoever wins, let us commit to building a story of hope for education and invest thoughtfully in the people who will make it happen.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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JOHN JERRIM

Professor of education and social statistics, IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society

Looping: The exception to the consistency rule?

A lot is made of keeping students with the same teacher year on year, but the data doesn't bear out the benefits, explains our resident data analyst John Jerrim

In the United States, quite a lot of interest has been shown in so-called "looping" – keeping the same teacher with the same set of pupils for more than one academic year.

Such an approach may – in theory – allow better pupil-staff and pupil-pupil relationships to be formed, help teachers and pupils adjust to each other's styles, and make classroom rules and expectations surrounding behaviour clear from the get-go.

Given these possible benefits, to what extent should schools attempt to keep the same teacher with the same pupils over time?

In a new academic paper, Loic Menzies and I look at some new international evidence on this matter.

The TALIS video study

Along with seven other countries, England participated in the 2018 TALIS video study. In total, the participants consisted of more than 500 mathematics teachers and 15,000 of their pupils, who were on average around 15 years old.

As part of this study, pupils were

asked whether they were currently taught by the same teacher that taught them the previous academic year.

This allowed us to look at whether the classroom climate and pupil outcomes differed across those who kept the same teacher versus those who changed. In our analysis, "looped" classes are defined as those where at least 75 per cent of pupils were taught by the same mathematics teacher for at least two consecutive years.

The table below illustrates how the prevalence of looping compares across the eight countries in our sample. As the data in most were not nationally representative, these figures should be taken with a pinch of salt. And as the data was only collected from secondary

Table 1. The occurrence of looping across countries London area

	Not Looped	Looped
Chile	38	40
Colombia	53	20
England	59	16
Germany	25	23
Japan	27	40
Madrid	42	10
Mexico	68	16
Shanghai	14	64
Total	326	229

schools, we also do not know about the prevalence of looping within primary school settings.



“ There is actually little to be gained from looping

However, it does suggest that looping in England is comparatively rare. Less than one in five of the classes in England were "looped" (16 per cent). This is notably lower than in Chile (50 per cent), Japan (60 per cent) and Shanghai (80 per cent).

Does it make a difference?

The key question, of course, is whether looping makes much of a difference.

Despite the theoretical benefits, our analysis suggests that there is actually little to be gained from looping. While absence rates may be marginally lower, there is no evidence of any improvement in test scores, and possibly even some small declines in students' self-confidence.

Evidence surrounding classroom climate is also somewhat inconclusive. Students and teachers did not consistently report there to be better behaviour and fewer disruptions in looped classrooms. Nor did they report there to be better relationships between pupils (or between pupils and staff).

We have also gone back and looked again at the literature from

other countries, with much of this coming from the United States. Upon further inspection, this evidence also suggested that any positive benefits associated with looping are likely to be very small. The magnitude of the positive effects reported by others – which has focused on test scores and levels of pupil absence – is in fact marginal, at best.

Given these results, what would our advice then be to schools?

Sometimes, researchers can be guilty of providing too much advice, when the reality is the likely impact is minimal. Looping probably falls into this category.

From what we can see, with regards to secondaries at least, the evidence does not seem strong enough to justify schools going out of their way to enact looping as a school policy. Yet neither should they bother to actively avoid it either.

Rather, looping should be encouraged to happen when other aspects of timetabling make it the most pragmatic choice, or when localised professional judgement indicates that it is an appropriate course of action.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UKRUTH
COYLEProfessor of education and social
statistics, IOE, UCL's Faculty of
Education and SocietyOur T Level journey has
been outstanding. Why wait?

Our growing range of T Levels has transformed our curriculum, our facilities, our place in the community, and our learners' life chances, says Ruth Coyle

In 2020 we chose to take a leap of faith and introduce T Levels to our school. The reasoning behind our decision was to improve the social mobility of our students.

Our school of 1,200 pupils is an inner-city comprehensive with nearly 40 per cent having received free school meals, and over 60 per cent English as a second language.

The majority of our students are first-generation university. Our students were successfully graduating from university but then did not have the personal links to be able to secure a high-quality graduate position.

T Levels provide a great opportunity for us to introduce them to employers and for them to gain important, sector-specific skills. After all, the first question asked at interview is often about experience.

Our journey began with the introduction of the Digital and the Education and Childcare T Levels – the first because there is a huge skills shortage in our area and the other because students were having to leave the school to study it.

To build our staff's skills to deliver

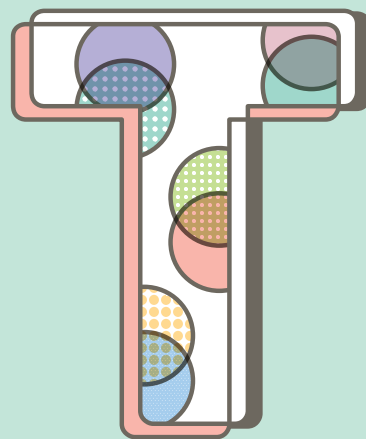
this highly technical course, we made use of the Education and Training Foundation's industry insights offer. We were compensated for releasing our teachers to go on work experience in their area of expertise.

As a Business and Economics teacher, I found my industry insights at Comensura. Meanwhile, ISG prepared me to teach on the Digital and Construction T Level. They helped me and my teams to create the curriculum and write the case studies that support it.

Just a couple of years on, ISG is one of a host of construction companies supporting all our students with workshops for year 8s, apprenticeship talks for year 9s, T Level placements and vital diversity and inclusion work.

As our relationships with the businesses started to develop, they were keen to deliver talks and workshops to the students. Eventually, this turned into industry placements. Building on these, we showcased our collaborative partnerships on LinkedIn and other employers began to engage.

Now, all our Digital students complete their industry placements at Lloyds Banking group or Amazon and progress onto degree apprenticeships in these organisations. Employers are invested in our students and feel part



“ T Levels have given our school unmatched opportunities

of their educational journey.

T Levels have dramatically improved our facilities too. For example, our Education students are taught in a simulated nursery funded by the DfE's special equipment allocation (SEA) fund. Thanks to that, they're able to go out to work in our feeder primary schools, which fits well with our Catholic ethos of serving others.

After our initial success with Digital and Education, we based our next wave of offers on the sectors that were popular with our students and where there were known local skills shortages.

Health Midwifery was an ideal choice, so we invited all the local healthcare professionals for an open morning to see our mock hospital and meet our students. This led to a partnership for industry placements with Guys and St Thomas, which we were able to launch thanks to the DfE's employer support fund.

While many continue with the university route, T Levels have added a route to success for many of

our students in the form of degree apprenticeships. And the growing range of these on offer is pleasantly surprising. We have recently introduced the Legal T Level (for which we now have a mock court room) and our students are already working with Wimbledon magistrate court and the Crown Prosecution Service.

There's plenty of support out there, whether it's to advise on getting started, to develop curriculum and facilities, to prepare students for placements or to monitor them while on placement.

The opportunities these qualifications have given not just our T Level students but our entire school are unmatched, but don't just take my word for it. Last term, Ofsted called their introduction here “a great success” as part of an ‘Outstanding’ report.

Great for the school. Great for local employers. And best of all great for our students. So what's holding you back?

Opinion

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

CELIA WHITTUCK

Senior associate in education law,
IBB Law LLP

Rising suspensions and exclusions call for alternatives

Our research into suspensions and exclusions identified regional disparities and a worrying lack of capacity to meet needs, writes Celia Whittuck

In light of the recent Children's Mental Health Week, education solicitors IBB Law explored government data to obtain a clearer picture of child behaviour, and the main reasons for expulsions and suspensions in schools throughout England.

The relation between children's mental health and their behaviour is known to be closely linked. It is common for stress and worry within children to manifest as behavioural issues which could affect their school performance, or worse, see them reprimanded with a suspension or exclusion.

In the period between 2016 and 2022, a staggering 1,200,186 pupils in England, accounting for two per cent of the total student population, experienced exclusion and/or suspension. But within this national total, it's also possible to spot regional disparities, evolving trends and prevalent reasons behind these exclusions.

Geographical location played a significant role in shaping exclusion and suspension rates across England. The northeast emerged as the region with the highest percentage of exclusions and suspensions,

highlighting a concerning trend. Conversely, outer London stood out as the region with the lowest percentage, showcasing a notable difference in disciplinary actions taken against pupils.

A closer look at the data from the academic year 2021/22 revealed that multiple regions experienced an increase in exclusions and suspensions, signalling a potential escalation in disciplinary issues. All regions in the northern part of the country surpassed the national average for the percentage of exclusions and suspensions, emphasising a pressing concern for policymakers and educators.

The analysis also uncovered the primary reasons behind exclusions, shedding light on the diverse challenges faced by schools.

Notably, the most common cause for exclusions in both special schools and state-funded primary schools was the physical abuse of an adult, indicating the prevalence of behavioural issues among pupils.

A noteworthy finding in state-funded primary schools was that sexual misconduct surpassed bullying as the leading cause for exclusions, with a staggering threefold difference.

The data revealing the causes behind suspensions and expulsions in UK schools underscores the critical need for a balanced and fair approach in addressing disciplinary issues. It is imperative to recognise that behind every statistic is a student's future at



Physical abuse is a significant factor

stake.

When examining all types of schools, it becomes evident that physical abuse involving both adults and students is a significant factor leading to suspensions and exclusions. This raises questions about the existence and adequacy of in-school alternative measures to address challenging behaviour, and whether schools are adequately prepared and resourced to implement such alternatives.

In-school alternative provisions are educational strategies or programmes designed to support students who may struggle in a traditional classroom setting due to various reasons, such as behavioural issues, learning differences or social challenges. This can take the form of a nurture base or learning support centre and can deliver anything from short interventions to a bespoke curriculum.

Such in-school provisions give teachers or other staff a chance to understand a child's behaviour before suspensions or exclusions take place, potentially exacerbating behaviour issues and cutting key classroom time.

We know that there tends to be a connection between unmet special educational needs (SEN) and disruptive behaviour. It is crucial not

to disregard the correlation between suspensions, exclusions, and special educational needs. SEN plays a role in some instances of suspensions and exclusions, yet may go unnoticed by staff in the absence of a thorough investigation and in-school alternative provisions.

While accepting disruptive behaviour is challenging for staff, it is crucial not to overlook the underlying reasons for behavioural issues. Safeguarding becomes a crucial issue within schools for children with special educational needs due to the unique vulnerabilities and challenges they may face.

Educational institutions usually implement specific policies and procedures to address student misconduct, incorporating disciplinary actions, counselling and collaboration with parents or guardians. Nevertheless, we encourage schools to delve into underlying factors, such as the possible oversight of Special Educational Needs (SEN), as a potential contributor to misconduct.

And during a national shortage of places in special and alternative provision schools and pupil referral units, it's all the more important to develop in-house solutions before reaching decisions such as a suspension or exclusion.

Solutions

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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SHAZAD ALI

Lead of alternative provisions,
Co-op Academy Grange

The three phases of a successful internal AP

Amid a growing capacity crisis in AP, Shazad Ali describes the interventions and reintegration work underpinning his school's internal provision

We are facing a national crisis. Rates of suspensions and permanent exclusions have increased drastically. Students who have been permanently excluded have nowhere to go, with alternative provisions and PRU's full to capacity.

Meanwhile, many schools feel helpless: They lack the resources to support their most vulnerable students, but know the dire consequences of a permanent exclusion in these circumstances.

At Coop Academy Grange, students who are at the risk of a permanent exclusion or require additional SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health) support are referred to the internal alternative provisions we have newly established. These two bespoke trauma-informed and nurture-based provisions are called Base & Bridge.

Phase one

The Base provision is an onsite internal alternative provision which is situated on the school grounds. Students who are referred via a referral process made by the pastoral teams, heads of year, attendance and safeguarding teams access the Base provision as 'phase one'

of our alternative provision-based intervention.

Here, students access a bespoke timetable which includes maths, English, science, PSHE and RE. The timetable is also combined with afternoon interventions to support students' SEMH needs. These interventions include boxing, cooking, climbing, forest schools, hair and beauty, motor vehicles, electrics and plumbing, and mindfulness interventions.

The Base provision provides students with respite while it establishes structure and routines in the lives of young people who really need it. On arrival, students get a free breakfast and staff have the opportunity to do wellbeing checks before the day starts.

The Base operates from two modulars and is separated into two nurture classes. It's designed to support 12 to 16 students with five members of staff, including teaching staff, behaviour support workers and alternative curriculum officers. All are equipped with crisis prevention intervention (CPI) training which focuses on de-escalation techniques and trauma-informed practice.

Students who access the Base remain in the bespoke provisions for 12 weeks (one term). If they are successful with phase one of the reintegration model, they will then integrate into the Coop Academy Grange Bridge provision.



“ The key is to ensure we remove barriers to learning

Phase two

The Bridge is the vital second phase of our reintegration model. It follows the same staffing model and the same timetable structure, but it is situated within the mainstream building. Here, students have access to a hub consisting of three classrooms and a breakout area.

The Bridge caters for 20-24 students with seven staff: three alternative provision teaching specialists and four support staff. Students continuing to access their education in the Bridge provision are taught the same schemes of work as the rest of the school. This ensures that when they are ready to fully reintegrate back into mainstream classrooms, there are no gaps in their learning and they are equipped to progress alongside their peers.

Phase three

After a successful 24 weeks in the Base and Bridge provisions, students return to mainstream lessons. The internal AP team provide mainstream teachers with a reintegration document for each student which contains a summary of their time in Base and Bridge as well as detailed advice and

strategies for how best to integrate and support them in their classes.

However, we don't launch students directly into a full timetable of mainstream lessons. Instead, phase three of their reintegration is a phased return with a bespoke timetable. Some of their lessons are in the mainstream school and some at the Bridge. We review and adjust the timetable each week to allow each student to build up their time in mainstream classes according to their individual needs.

The time frame for this phase is six to eight weeks. For any number of reasons, a student's reintegration might suffer a setback or fail. In response, we can extend their time in the right phase to support them. The key is to ensure we remove barriers to learning and equip them with the skills they need to resume their journey.

The Base & Bridge provision was only launched in September, but it has already had a tremendous impact. Fifteen students have already integrated into phase two. Wellbeing is palpably better, the students are making great progress, and not a single suspension has been issued in the provision.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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THE REVIEW

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A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PUPIL WELLBEING

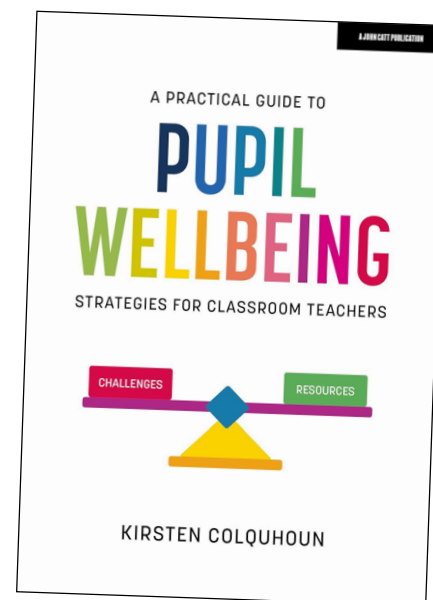
Author: Kirsten Colquhoun

Publisher: John Catt

Publication date: 14 July 2023

ISBN: 1398388874

Reviewer: Sanum J Khan, Assistant headteacher and DEI Lead,
Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School



Improving pupil wellbeing is often seen as a pastoral matter, somehow separate from the job of teaching. In my view, however, our pastoral and academic work are not two distant islands – one populated by teachers and the other by tutors; they are interconnected and indivisible.

In that regard, Kirsten Colquhoun's consistent reiteration throughout this book that it is "for teachers who [...] lead pastorally every period or every day" couldn't be more welcome.

Where better to start *A practical guide to pupil wellbeing* than by defining its terms? Colquhoun recognises that "Wellbeing is seldom defined, but instead observed" and goes on to offer her own: "the sweet spot where the person can cope, respond and continue to progress in their life in spite of challenges posed".

This 'sweet spot' is given a visual representation in the form of scales, with resources on one side of the balance and challenges on the other, and this cover image serves as a helpful anchor when considering the strategies outlined throughout the book.

For example, the chapter on homework had me immediately recall situations in which homework setting felt absolutely right, but the image reminded me to view the issue through the lens of wellbeing and my internal conversation became a very different one.

To be clear, though: If you're looking for a handbook to introduce on INSET day and invite all staff to embed by the end of the term, *A practical guide to pupil wellbeing* isn't that book. Rightly, Colquhoun doesn't set out to offer such a guide and this book is not to be read as a checklist.

But that doesn't mean the title is in any way misleading.

The book is indeed a practical guide, but it is about strategies rather than techniques. For example, Colquhoun adopts the view that being research-informed as opposed to research-led is the healthier way to approach any publication that suggests a particular practice is conducive (or not) to pupil wellbeing. Adaptations are key to making a technique work in your own setting and with the students in your care.

Accordingly, her own suggestions are broad and less prescriptive, but they are mostly manageable and can be implemented with relative ease. For example, she suggests swapping high-stakes assessments for low-stakes to reduce teacher workload as well as improve pupil wellbeing (and thus performance). She also urges us to carefully consider how, when and why we set homework to achieve better learning experiences in the classroom as well as improve pupil wellbeing.

One drawback of the book is that some chapters read as a collection of useful suggestions whereas others are more conceptual or discussion-provoking. The chapter on sleep offers a wide range of evidence to show that sleep deprivation/disruption is a sincere issue for teenagers but is limited in its suggestions of what teachers can do to change poor sleep habits.



Another drawback is that some of the suggestions are valuable only when other parts are already in place. For example, inviting students to give feedback on whether homework deadlines are reasonable holds great value if

students already have a sense of intrinsic motivation and a sense of belonging.

Having said that, this is not a book that should read only in chunks on the hunt for quick wins. Instead, it is the threads that run throughout that will have the greatest impact. The importance of students feeling they belong and are valued. That teachers "should never feel alone in their mission to educate, safeguard and protect wellbeing". And perhaps most importantly, that absence of proof is not proof of absence. As Colquhoun writes: "if pupils have not come to you with these issues (hint, it is not because they don't exist) consider why they don't".

This book won't be the bedrock of our next whole-school development plan or strategic vision. But, it will shape conversations about how we can all prioritise student wellbeing in our own roles; that's a good first step.

★★★★☆
Rating

Robert Gasson
CEO, Wave Multi-Academy Trust

NURSES ON CALL

It's been another interesting week in the world of education, with no shortage of controversial conversations. But aren't they all at the moment?

Still, you only need to cast your mind back a few weeks and you will undoubtedly remember that, shortly before Christmas, the DfE issued its long-promised guidance on gender-questioning children, a document that attracted a large amount of controversy itself.

Amid all the noise, I was pleased this week to discover a new NHS podcast called 'School Nursing Uncovered'. Ostensibly "For school nurses, by school nurses", I found their second episode, Gender identity – what are the facts? an excellent place to listen to a considered, professional and informative discussion that I think could help many of us working in schools.

There is no doubt that we are increasingly



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coming across pupils who are exploring their gender identity and trying to find the best ways to support them. A listen to this conversation between school health professionals certainly helped me reflect positively on my own knowledge and practice.

Their next episodes will focus on mental health, vaping, safeguarding and healthy lifestyles. It could be a treasure trove for better-informed inclusion.

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

On the topic of which, this new blog from Ben Newmark is an enlightening and accessible exploration from first principles. Before even setting out any tenets for inclusive classroom practice, it starts by examining what we even mean by this term. We evidently share a language, but do our ideas about what it means in reality actually equate to the same thing?



Through examples from a couple of different contexts for inclusion, the blog leads to us to a better place to undertake professional conversation on this topic. This can only be a good thing, given the current propensity for different camps to throw bricks at each other over the issue.

And in conjunction with the nurses' podcast, it leaves me wondering whether the phony educational culture wars aren't finally drawing towards a ceasefire.

BLAMELESS BEHAVIOUR

Where better to test that theory than by reading a new blog on behaviour – perhaps the most controversial topic right now? And I'm happy to report that this in-depth take from Nia Sinjorina is equally balanced.

You won't find a mention of 'no excuses' here, nor of schools with 'no-go' areas. What you will find is an honest look at the reality of today's classrooms and some great foundations for building a new social



contract upon.

Mind you, it is a long read, but perhaps that's what's been missing from our zeitgeist

Like Newmark, Sinjorina goes back to first principles with an exploration of the purpose of school. It's a conversation I have with colleagues and peers regularly because it's pertinent each time we work with pupils who have been through nine years of school, and are still functionally illiterate or have significant needs that haven't even been assessed, let alone met.

There's a lot to this blog, but most important for me was Sinjorina's discussion about the 'ownership of a child'. In other words, who is responsible for a child's behaviour. But rather than blame the child, the teacher, the parent (or indeed the village), she offers a well thought-through and balanced paper exploring the current crisis.


She pulls no punches about a system that could be described as "pedagogical abuse", but in the end it is a cogent and passionate argument for a partnership between school, parent and student that "should be the cornerstone of any educational process".

If it offers no immediate solutions, it's at least a very good pointer to the source of our problems.

OLDIE BUT GOLDIE

Finally, without comment and amid more furore about behaviour on what increasingly feels like the irrelevant battlefield of X, Adele Bates shared an old blog on consistency.

It's actually a five-minute video recorded mere days before the second national lockdown came into force in which Bates describes her 99.9 per cent rule. It's a short, informative, and deeply human palate cleanser after a long week. I'll let you discover it for yourself.

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts 

The Knowledge

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



Are the theoretical underpinnings of oracy sound?

Ian Cushing, Senior lecturer in critical applied linguistics, Manchester Metropolitan University

Oracy is a hot topic. It is the core agenda of academic research groups like Oracy Cambridge and educational charities like Voice 21 and the English-Speaking Union. It is prominent within Labour's education manifesto. And it is increasingly framed as a tool to tackle social injustice.

But where did the concept of oracy come from? And on whose language practices is 'high-quality' oracy based? In new research published in the Oxford Review of Education, I set out to find out.

Deficit foundations

Oracy was coined by the academic Andrew Wilkinson in the 1960s. This was a time when deficit thinking was rife in educational research. Concepts such as 'restricted codes', 'verbal deprivation', and 'semilingualism' framed marginalised families as having faults in their language that needed fixing.

The original notion of oracy was at least in part rooted in this deficit thinking. Take, for example, Wilkinson's binary between 'good language homes' and 'working homes'. According to him, working-class parents 'offer very little as language models', 'have not the words in which to explain or persuade' and 'have difficulty in verbalising'.

Of working-class children, he claims they are 'deficient in words' and insists that 'the wrong language experience may result in a culturally induced backwardness'. He described deaf children as 'isolated', 'frustrated', and 'retarded compared with children with normal hearing'.

Wilkinson argued for 'oracy' as a remedial tool to fix and develop these supposed deficiencies. Exposure to the language of the middle-classes, he thought, would lead disadvantaged children to experience success. Sixty years later, oracy has never quite shaken its deficit foundations, nor the logic that language alone is a tool for social equality.

Linguistic deprivation

Even leading oracy academics such as Professor Neil Mercer, whose work on exploratory talk is of huge significance, said this of marginalised



children: "You are the only second chance for some children to have a rich language experience. If these children are not getting it at school, they are not getting it".

With his colleague James Mannion, he reproduces the same class-based binaries that characterised Wilkinson's work, using labels such as 'limited talk repertoire' and 'rich talk experience' to describe working- and middle-class children respectively.

Recent deficit framings about oracy also often co-occur with reference to the 'word gap', a concept which has its own foundations in anti-Black academic research and can legitimise language policing under the purportedly progressive aims of oracy. For example, as Will Millard and Loic Menzies write in a report for Voice 21: "[...] asking pupils to speak in full sentences and avoid using words such as 'like', are important in developing the quality of pupils' oracy".

The same authors co-drafted the recent Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry report, part of which includes marginalised children as producing 'poor oral language' and 'low language levels'.

Evidence to the APPG was wide-ranging, but it drew in part on ideas from Jean Gross who suggested that working-class teaching assistants are to blame for poor spoken

language skills.

I applaud initiatives designed to harness the power of spoken interaction, but this developing sector must engage with and unpick the underlying narrative of linguistic deficit.

Social justice

Oracy is increasingly part of a narrative which assumes that tweaks to marginalised children's language will enable them to experience social justice and equality. This theory of change underpins Keir Starmer's suggestion that 'the inability to speak fluently is one of the biggest barriers to opportunity'.

It underpins the Oracy APPG report, where oracy is seen as the means to 'tackling entrenched social immobility and dismantling barriers for children and young people from less advantaged backgrounds'. It also underpins Voice 21's theory of change.

It fails to account for the richness of working-class language, and it locates language as the reason that social injustice persists, obscuring the broader structures of inequality that shape society. Language plays a key part in social justice efforts, but it is not a silver bullet.

All teachers should endeavour to get children talking in class, but we should all be wary of saying social justice is a matter of modifying how marginalised children talk.

Week in

Westminster

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

MONDAY:

Education secretary Gillian Keegan is, if you didn't already know, a former apprentice – which she makes a point of publicising whenever she gets an opportunity.

We were thoroughly excited (note: this is sarcasm) to see what would happen this week – which is National Apprenticeship Week.

Fresh from launching plans for a new teaching apprenticeship, Keegz took to social media to say it was “good to see #NAW2024 trending number 1 on @X.

“Bit by bit, we're changing our mindset as a country so that everyone can see just how brilliant the apprenticeship route is.”

Something that isn't as brilliant, though, is her own government.

When asked on the media round what Ofsted grade she would give her own administration, she said ‘good’. Asked to justify this, she was reported as saying: “Often, a lot of the things that we've delivered nobody ever talks about ... When you've gone from 68 per cent to 89 per cent ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ schools.

“When you've gone from no apprenticeship system to one that's training 5.7 million people. I think you can look and say there's a lot that has been achieved.”

Not only did she choose only the second-highest Ofsted rating, her evidence to back it up is also pretty flimsy.

One: a key reason for the Ofsted rise is that her government stopped inspecting ‘outstanding’ schools for years.

Two: there was an apprenticeship system in 2009–10. While it might not have been great, there were still nearly 300,000 people being trained.

TUESDAY:

Heads were informed today the job advert for the new Ofqual chief regulator had gone live (we'd imagine there's not much point in applying, as it's odds-on that interim chief Sir Ian Bauckham will get the gig).

Anyway, we thought it was a bit naughty that the advisory panel, who sift out applicants and do interviews before drawing up a shortlist for the minister, doesn't contain anyone representing state schools.

Juliet Chua and Stuart McMinnies are both representatives from the Department for Education, while Frances Wadsworth has a place due to being interim chair of the regulator. The fourth spot goes to Clare Wagner, who is head of history at Moreton Hall School, an independent school costing up to £40k a year (Wagner did run a state school previously from 2021 to 2023 – but still).

WEDNESDAY:

Absolutely horrendous news for journalists, academics and policy nerds all round today when the DfE snuck out it was “retiring” its Get Information about Schools service.

The website is super helpful for looking up lots of basic and important information about every school and trust in the country. But an update today said officials are developing a “new solution”. We're not sure what the problem is, as it seems to work well and has a good reputation.

Anyway, the update asked councils for their thoughts so they can “identify key user needs and requirements for the new solution”.

THURSDAY:

The DfE doesn't get to announce good news that often. But today presented a perfect opportunity – after months of criticism, the department confirmed it would fund rebuilds or provide grants to remove RAAC at the 200-plus schools affected.

Alas, the information was slipped out in an updated RAAC spreadsheet, with no accompanying information or quotes from Our Gill saying what a f*cking good job she's doing.

By the time the government did send out a press release, with some more information and comments from Keegz, it was an hour later.

One criticism that won't go away though is the government's refusal to provide any sort of exams help to pupils being educated in makeshift classrooms, some in huge classes and many without access to specialist equipment.

The front page of the *Northern Echo* on Friday was a picture of pupils from RAAC-hit St Leonard's secondary school, in Durham, under the headline: “They are failing us”.





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Principal

Academy 360 , Sunderland
L24 – L39 £83,081 - £118,732

Academy 360 is Sunderland's first purpose-built all through school, offering transformative education in a community that has experienced long term disadvantage and challenge. The Academy is a proud member of Laidlaw Schools Trust, an inclusive multi academy trust which specialises in raising aspirations in disadvantaged communities in the North East of England. Whilst the Trust shares common values and some aspects of aligned practice/ approach across its academies, each is a distinctive institution serving their unique community.

The Trustees are seeking to appoint an inspirational, values led individual as the new Principal to start September 2024 or earlier if possible. This full-time role is an exciting opportunity to lead this inclusive Academy into the next stage of its development as an inclusive, cross phase provider in Sunderland.

Academy 360 is a coeducational, 4-16 Academy which joined Laidlaw Schools Trust in 2018. The Academy was judged as Good in all areas by Ofsted in 2020. We have increasing applications for the academy in Reception and Year 7 and our Hub or pupils with Special Educational Needs is always very popular.

The successful candidate will possess the vision, knowledge, experience and tenacity to enable the entire Academy community to move forward together. They will be skilled in engaging staff, children, parents and carers in your vision for the academy.

They will be a leader with high expectations, a deep commitment to inclusion and community connection and an in- depth knowledge and understanding of current educational priorities in all key stages.

An innovative leader with the highest standards of professionalism, the successful candidate will have a proven record of effective school leadership experience gained as a Principal or Vice Principal, preferably in more than one school. They will possess the interpersonal skills to inspire and develop individuals and teams, and the ability to raise educational standards in all aspects of school life. Our new Principal will have the ability to work with governors and other stakeholders, undertake strategic planning, resource management and curriculum development.

Benefits of working for Laidlaw Schools Trust

We want to reward our staff through benefits that are mentally, physically and financially rewarding. As a Principal you will benefit from the following:

- Bespoke induction, leadership and professional development overseen by our Directors of Improvement
- Close working with skilled and experienced Principals in both phases from across the Trust
- Close working with our central Secondary School Improvement Team
- Opportunities via the Trust's Digital Strategy and rapidly expanding Inclusion provision
- HSF Healthcare Cash Plan - claim back up to 50% of health expenses
- HSF Assist - free 24/7 GP Advice Line, Virtual Doctor, Counselling, Medical Information and Legal Advice.
- Employee Discount Scheme via Perkbox
- Generous Teachers Pension Scheme
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- Salary sacrifice car lease scheme via NHS Fleet Solutions
- Laidlaw Foundation Funding – Additional funding from the Laidlaw Foundation means that teachers are recognised and financially rewarded for going above and beyond. Every child has access to a digital device so that you can use EdTech to enrich your teaching and reduce your marking time, and you can propose new and innovative teaching and learning ideas and apply to have them funded

Key dates

The closing date for applications is noon Monday 4th March, 2024.

Interviews will be held on Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th March 2024

[Click here for more information](#)



Director of Assessment

Job reference: REQ000505 | Salary: £75,000 - £85,000 dependent on experience
Contractual hours: 37.5 | Basis: Full Time

United Learning is a large, and growing, group of schools aiming to offer a life-changing education to children and young people across England. We are looking for a Director of Assessment to join our central team. This new role will ensure that all functions across the group reflect our common assessment principles, and that our assessment design, associated data infrastructure and assessment tools in the first instance meet the needs of our pupils, parents, school leaders and teachers across all phases. Additionally, the postholder will support our school leaders, Subject Advisers and Curriculum Writers in their approach to designing and responding to assessment information.

More specifically role tasks will include:

- Define, communicate and implement a clear set of Group wide assessments principles.
- Work with senior leaders to understand their assessment requirements and ensure that they are reflected in our group wide assessment principles.
- Work with school improvement teams in interpreting assessment outcomes and providing guidance on how to respond to assessment information.
- Set data infrastructure requirements for our assessment information.
- Keep abreast of innovation in assessment software and tools.
- Support Subject Advisers and Curriculum Writers in creating a range of different assessments.
- Provide ongoing support and training to school and subject leaders.
- Provide guidance and support across the Group on the effectiveness of assessment approaches in place.
- Work with Regional Directors responsible for assessment within their phase.

The role will be a hybrid role, based at our London or Peterborough office as necessary, with travel to schools across the UK as required.

Please apply online by clicking on the following link:

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ENGLISH DEPUTY STRATEGY LEAD - FULL TIME

Location: The Kennal Academies Trust (Kent and Essex area) | Salary: £74,550 plus travel expenses

Are you a strong secondary English practitioner and experienced leader looking for a role where you can have wider impact?

The Kennal Academies Trust is currently looking for a full-time Deputy Strategy Lead for secondary English to join part of our school development team across the Trust. This role will see you working with the Strategy Lead to set whole-trust secondary strategy, coordinate the work of English Lead Practitioners, and provide support in-school to develop English department provision.

Your key responsibilities will be:

- To work alongside the Strategy Lead and other colleagues with the English Team to develop a whole-trust strategy for improving outcomes in English
- To ensure that the quality of teaching in English is strong and results in improved student outcomes
- To work with the Strategy Lead and English Team to coordinate development meetings for English Heads of Faculty across the Trust

- To work with the Strategy Lead and English Team to further develop the TKAT Common English Curriculum to ensure it leads to strong outcomes across the Trust
- To work with the Strategy Lead and English Team to further develop the Trust's assessments for KS3 & 4 English for all secondary schools and ensure assessments are carried out appropriately
- To analyse the data following KS3, 4 & 5 assessments, identifying gaps and reporting the findings to the Senior Director of Education and Directors of Education
- To organise, facilitate and quality assure the moderation of all standardised assessments within English for all secondary schools
- To support Heads of Department with assessment and grading issues as they arise

Closing date: Midday Monday 11th March 2024

Interview date: Monday 18th March 2024

Start date: 1st September 2024

Bexleyheath Academy

Bexleyheath Academy is part of Academies Enterprise Trust, one of five schools in the London region serving over 5000 pupils. We have a well-established reputation and are proud to be a non-selective school in the grammar heartland of Kent. We have excellent attainment and progress outcomes and will stop at nothing to ensure our students have the very best opportunities.

Our core mission has always been to close the educational gap between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Our ambition is one where every student in the academy, no matter their background, has equal access to high quality education, giving them the same opportunities and potential to succeed.

For a full list
of vacancies,
[click here.](#)



**Bexleyheath
Academy**
Find your remarkable

JULY 2021



About the Trust

Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is a national family of schools comprising 57 primary, secondary and special schools in England supporting each other to deliver our mission of providing an **excellent education to every child, in every classroom, every day.**

We employ over 4,000 people across the country, each committed to ensuring that every child receives their entitlement to a high level education. We have a dedicated recruitment team to place teachers and support staff within schools they will thrive in and encourage career development opportunities.

Every decision we make is with students' learning and interests at the forefront of our minds. Our schools dedicate focused time on formal academic learning with plenty of support for students' wellbeing - as well as making sure there is time for some fun, too!

Benefits

- Career development and training
- Great pension
- Healthcare cashback and helpline
- Employee assistance programme
- Free financial advice
- Salary advances
- Affordable loan scheme
- Electric car and bike schemes
- Lifestyle savings
- Discounted gym membership
- Travel and leisure scheme

For a full list of benefits, please visit our [website.](#)

Headteacher

L21 - L27 (£77,195 - £83,081)

Due to the retirement of our longstanding Headteacher, the governors seek to appoint a talented and exceptional individual who can lead our school into the future.

This is the start of a new era for the school, and you will be pivotal in our path to continuous improvement and outcomes, as we continue to drive a strong education for our children.

Blakesley Hall Primary School is a thriving, inclusive primary school in east Birmingham, with two forms of entry in Reception and Key stage 1 and three forms of entry in Key Stage 2.

Our vision is to enable every child to be: Safe, Secure and Successful. We are dedicated to ensuring our children feel fully supported in all that they do and learning radiates well beyond the classroom, with a vast array of extra-curricular activities, trips and educational visits taking place each term.

The incoming Headteacher will benefit from the support of drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust, collaborating closely with our experienced central team and the working relationships with Trust colleagues.

The successful applicant will:

- drive the school vision forwards and ensure all pupils achieve the highest standard of educational outcomes, regardless of circumstance or background
- approach the role with resilience and flexibility, using a creative and solution driven approach to improving our school
- inspire, lead and support a highly committed team of teaching and associate staff
- build positive relationships with the school's pupils, staff, parents, governors and the wider community
- engage all our pupils in a broad, balanced, creative and challenging curriculum so that they are happy and achieve their potential within a caring and inclusive community
- work closely and openly to collaborate with other schools in the Trust

[Click here to apply](#)



Headteacher

£71,729.00 - £83,081.00 Annually (FTE)

**Would you like to lead a school where every child is nurtured and supported to achieve in a creative way?
Are you dynamic and looking to develop your career in a school that supports professional development?**

We believe Tower Hill is that school.

We are a single form entry primary school in the thriving market town of Witney

This is a unique opportunity for an ambitious, creative, determined leader to champion the needs of our school. We do not underestimate the challenge of improving pupil outcomes against a backdrop of significant disadvantage. Our pupils deserve the very best in school leadership and we have reflected our commitment in the higher than usual salary for a school of this size.

Why don't you arrange to come and visit us?



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. Plus a relocation package worth up to £5,000

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



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)

Ark



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**

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