

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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# Time for teacher pay body to show its independence

The signs are ominous for teacher pay. Education secretary Gillian Keegan has (again) constrained the teacher pay review body to only recommend rises that school can afford from their current budgets (which she works out would be about two per cent).

Such a rise would have big consequences. First, it's very likely it would lead to further strike action and disruption for thousands of pupils.

Two, it's unlikely to make any difference in reversing the dire outlook for teacher recruitment and retention.

Keegan's demands to the pay review body also came on the same day a government survey showed teachers and leaders are working even longer, despite a bit push to reduce workload (page 4).

The government says public finances are tight. Teachers have also had decent pay

rises for the past two years. Both these things are true.

But Keegan's argument that inflation has now more than halved doesn't add up. Those increased costs are now baked in the system for schools.

As the IFS points out this week (page 11), the government would have to provide an extra £3 billion to cover the increased costs schools have faced since 2010.

The government is just storing up problems for later down the line. As we reveal on page 5, moving £250 million in unspent capital cash means that money has to now be found in later years.

Strangling teacher pay again this year will have the same impact. But perhaps the current government just thinks it's not a problem they'll have to solve?

It's all the more reason for the teacher pay review body to show it really is independent.

## Most read online this week:

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- 2 [Give parents termly window to request childcare, schools told](#)
- 3 [Supply teachers plan Post Office-style legal action to take down umbrella companies](#)
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# Keegan demands 'more sustainable' teacher pay award

**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

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Teacher pay awards should return to a “more sustainable level” than seen in the last two years, the government has told the School Teachers Review Body.

The Department for Education said it believes there is only headroom in budgets for the next financial year for schools to raise overall spending by 1.2 per cent, or £600 million.

Ministers have previously estimated that each one percentage point increase in teacher pay costs about £270 million – meaning the headroom would only allow for a pay rise of around two per cent.

The revelations suggest the government is gearing up for a fresh battle with unions, which have already voiced concerns ministers are seeking to “constrain” the STRB’s recommendations.

In her remit letter to the STRB in December, education secretary Gillian Keegan said the body must consider evidence on the “impact of pay rises on schools’ budgets” when making its recommendations for pay from September 2024.

In its evidence to the STRB, published on Thursday, the DfE went further, pointing out teachers’ average pay had risen by over 12 per cent over the past two years. Starting salaries have increased by 17 per cent over the same period.

The department also pointed to a doubling to £6,000 of levelling up premium payments to teachers of certain subjects, and said those who had also moved up pay bands in the last two years could have seen rises of up to 32 per cent.

They said the rises over the past two years



Gillian Keegan

were “appropriate and the right decision to reward teachers and leaders for their hard work, to support recruitment and retention, and to continue to make teaching an attractive career”.

But the “wider economic context has moderated, with inflation more than halving from its peak in late 2022 and wage growth easing from the high levels seen in the summer of 2023”.

Inflation is forecast to average 2.1 per cent over the 2024-25 academic year, and an increase in unemployment is “expected to ease the level of vacancies across the private and public sector, supporting recruitment and retention”.

“Considering the above, it is the department’s view that the overall reward package for teachers, the recruitment and retention picture, and the more stable economic context support the return of teacher pay awards to a more sustainable level than the previous two historically high pay awards.

“The STRB should be mindful that pay awards achieve a careful balance between recognising

the vital importance of public sector workers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer and not increasing the country’s debt further.”

In previous years, government has set out what percentage pay rise it believes is affordable, but has not done so this year.

ASCL boss Geoff Barton said the STRB “must now assert its independence by recommending a pay award that ensures that children and young people have the teachers they need.”

## ‘Targeted remuneration’ by subject on the table

The DfE has also instructed the STRB to give its views on the “potential benefits, in principle, of targeting remuneration by subject in the future”.

Schools Week revealed in January last year that Keegan was keen on the idea.

As competition in the wider labour market “has made it more challenging to recruit and retain STEM teachers, the department is interested in understanding how it would be possible to go further than the current levers to target teacher reward to ensure a strong teacher supply”.

“This is why it would be beneficial to understand the potential effects of targeted remuneration to meet these challenges.”

The DfE asked the STRB to focus on “exploring the evidence base for targeted remuneration to inform further thinking on how this could help to alleviate subject specific recruitment and retention challenges and bridge the gap between teacher pay and outside graduate earnings”.

“Exploring targeted remuneration is a shift from the department’s current approach, which is why it is important that the STRB thoroughly consider both the merits and challenges, alongside other factors.”

## Heads and teachers work longer despite workload push

School leaders and teachers now work even more hours than last year – despite a push by ministers to reduce workload.

The latest wave of the government’s working lives of teachers and leaders survey shows full-time leaders’ average working week in 2023 was 58.2 hours – over 11 hours a day – up from 57.5 in 2022.

The survey polled more than 10,000

workers, and found full-time teachers’ average hours were 52.4 per week, up from 51.9 in 2022.

Teachers and leaders’ job satisfaction has also plummeted. Only 46 per cent were satisfied “most of the time”, compared to 58 per cent last year.

The proportion of those who found their job did not leave them with enough time for their

personal lives rose from 65 per cent to 73 per cent.

More than 440 participants in the first working lives survey in 2022 had left the sector. The most common reasons for moving jobs were high workload (80 per cent) and stress or wellbeing (74 per cent).

Half of those still in employment had moved into jobs offering a lower salary.



# £250m capital raid to fund teacher pay rise

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education has been accused of “robbing Peter to pay Paul” after it emerged that ministers raided capital coffers for £250 million to cover part of this year’s teacher pay grant.

Last summer, the government announced that it had approved a 6.5 per cent pay rise for all teachers and leaders. Schools were handed a grant of £482.5 million this financial year and are due to receive £827.5 million next year to fund part of the increase.

But no new money was provided by the Treasury, leaving the DfE to find the funds from its existing budgets.

Schools Week can reveal that £250 million for this year’s grant came from the department’s capital budget, most of which is used for school rebuilds and maintenance.

It is understood at least part of the underspend resulted from a slower-than-anticipated start to the school rebuilding programme, whose end date has now been pushed back two years to 2032 after its launch was impacted by Covid.

Of the remaining £232.5 million, some has come from an estimated £240 million underspend on the National Tutoring Programme and some is from a £345 million underspend on the 16 to 19 education budget resulting from lower-than-expected pupil numbers.

However, the DfE repeatedly refused to tell Schools Week how much had been drawn from each pot.

Luke Sibieta, a research fellow at the Institute Fiscal Studies, said: “If there are underspends and delays on capital projects, it can often be tempting to use the money to pay for day-to-day spending. However, this almost always stores up problems for the future.”

He said school rebuilding was a “multi-year programme” and reducing spending to fund teacher pay “implies a scaling back of school rebuilding plans and maintenance budgets now and in the future”.

The £250 million transfer from capital to revenue funding was revealed in supplementary estimates – a document published by the Treasury which details last-minute adjustments to departmental spending plans at the end of the



financial year.

But the documents also reveal hundreds of millions of pounds of transfers between different parts of the DfE’s budget without any explanation. The department refused to explain the transfers when approached by Schools Week.

Instead the department said the estimates “unite a variety of programme lines under each budget – many movements reflect a combination of changes to forecasts driven by take up, delivery, reprioritisations through the year which are not connected to pay”.

The DfE also refused to explain a £7.3 million “movement” of school resource management budgets and a £6.4 million “decrease” to resource management “deployments”.

Neither could it explain £11.5 million in “decreases” to the school water strategy or a “reallocation” of £8 million from the budget for full fibre broadband in schools. A “general surrender” of £30 million back to the Treasury also went unexplained.

The DfE had even refused to provide detailed figures for where the money for the pay grant came from under freedom of information on the basis that the detail would be revealed in the estimates. But no detail was included.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, said the government “must fund competitive pay for teachers and leaders, but that should not be to the detriment of the school infrastructure”.

“We have been raising the alarm for years over the state of disrepair when it comes to the school

estate,” he said.

“That investment really can’t be put off either, lest we hit another emergency like the crumbly concrete crisis. It’s hard to think of a clearer example of robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

A DfE spokesperson insisted that “no capital projects or programmes have been reduced or stopped to fund the teacher pay deal”.

Underspends “across the whole department” helped it to fund the pay grant, including “demand-driven underspends on the National Tutoring Programme and capital underspends driven by challenging construction sector market conditions”.

The spokesperson added: “All capital programmes will be delivered at the same scale and, as we have always made clear, no frontline services in schools or colleges will be affected.”

The 10-year school rebuilding scheme launched in 2020. The DfE previously said it would build 500 schools over the course of “this decade”. It has said in comments that it will finish in 2030.

But, in a letter last May to Jane Balderstone, the senior responsible officer for the programme, DfE permanent secretary Susan Acland-Hood said the scheme was now “scheduled to run until 2032”.

The DfE insisted the programme had “not been pushed back or cut, and neither has any other capital programme”.

The rebuilding scheme was “set up with the aim of entering 50 projects a year – on average – into delivery over 10 years. The department is on track to deliver that”.

# New attendance guidance explained

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The government published new statutory attendance guidance this week, which will come into force in August. Here's what you need to know ...

## 1. £80 fines and 'improvement notices' ...

Absence fines charged to parents will rise from £60 to £80, or £160 if not paid within 21 days. Schools decide whether to issue fines, but councils administer them.

From the autumn, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period. Any second notice will automatically be charged at £160.

New "notices to improve" will also be the "final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued".

## 2. ... and national fine thresholds

From September, schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. They should "not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices".

This includes "any combination of unauthorised absence". For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late.

The period of 10 weeks can also span "different terms or school years".

But councils "retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met". This could include where parents "are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term-time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events".

## 3. Councils can use cash for support

Penalty notices are "not a money-making scheme... local authorities should not have income targets", and revenues "must be ringfenced for attendance".

Councils could previously only use revenues to administer the fines system. Now they can use any surplus on "attendance support". Any remaining surplus at the year-end must be paid back to the secretary of state.

## 4. Mandatory daily data sharing

Schools must share daily attendance data with the government from September. The "easiest way" to do this is by having an electronic management information system which the DfE can access and allows an automated flow of data.

Nearly nine in 10 schools already have this in place.

The "View Your Education Data" dashboard will allow schools to access "near real-time data to understand trends in attendance patterns".

## 5. Don't give pupils leave for protests

It is up to schools whether they grant absences, but the new guidance lists the scenarios this should be restricted to – including study leave or interviews.

It adds: "Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours."

Education secretary Gillian Keegan said last year that "missing school for activism is unacceptable" after child attended pro-Palestine marches.

## 6. Flag long-term sick leave with LAs

Schools will have to give councils the name and address of sick pupils who they believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days.

Schools will also be "expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences".

## 7. Be mindful of mental health

Schools should now be "particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support".

The guidance acknowledges that "many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, [including] friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods".

But "these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly". Doing so "may serve to help with the underlying issue".

## 8. Don't 'retrospectively' remove pupils from registers

Guidance is now more prescriptive about when pupils should and should not be removed from admissions registers.

It states that schools cannot "retrospectively" delete a pupil's name from the register. Where pupils have been located but not returned to class, a "joint decision" is needed between schools and LAs.

Pupils can only be removed if there are "no reasonable grounds" to believe the child will return, even with support or enforcement.

## 9. New restrictions on 'B' codes

Ministers have also shaken up attendance codes, amid concerns they can be misused to send children home. A new code K will apply to education provision arranged by a council, rather than the school.

And there are greater restrictions on using code B for off-site education arranged by schools, requiring the provision to be "of an educational nature", with their attendance approved by the school.

Schools must record the nature of the education provided and "be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil".

The codes C and Y have also been split up so that further information can be recorded.



[READ THE FULL GUIDANCE HERE](#)

# Rise in absence fines as schools and councils get strict

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Councils raised more than £19 million in fines for absence last year as enforcement ramped back up in the wake of Covid and town halls adopted stricter policies to pre-empt government rule changes.

Penalties for unauthorised absence were stopped during periods of partial school closure but they reached record numbers last year as low attendance rates continue to blight education.

Analysis of freedom of information data suggests town halls took in £19 million in 2022-23, almost double the £9.7 million taken the previous year, and up 17.5 per cent on pre-pandemic 2018-19.

In one area, income was 55 times what it was before Covid, while another saw a six-fold increase. Of the 15 areas with the largest increases, 11 have above-average free school meals eligibility.

This week the government announced plans to raise fines by a third and standardise the system for allocating them.

Writing in *Schools Week*, minister Damian Hinds warned of a "postcode lottery, which sees parents in some areas getting fined for [unauthorised absence], while others are not".

Heads decide whether to fine parents, but the penalty notices are administered by local authorities. Councils can currently only spend the money on administering fines and prosecutions, but from September will be able to spend them on attendance "support".

Ministers this week published updated guidance on attendance that will become statutory from September. However, proposed changes have been announced over several years, prompting some town halls to change tack early.

Southend council raised £300 from absence fines in 2018-19. Last year, it raised over £50,000, an increase of 16,580 per cent.

Helen Boyd, cabinet member for children's services, said they supported the government's attendance campaign and were "challenging those parents taking children out of school for term-time holidays, and because of this we are now issuing more fines than we used to".

The council in Plymouth introduced a new code of conduct in 2021 and started issuing notices for all unauthorised absence. Its income rose 462 per cent from £9,000 to £50,580.



"We are committed to working with families and schools to understand the underlying reasons for absences and to offer support when needed, prior to issuing a penalty notice," the council said.

The new statutory guidance from September includes a requirement for schools to consider fines if five days – or 10 half-day "sessions" – are missed to unauthorised absence in any 10-week period.

Bolton council halved its own threshold from 10 to five days shortly before the pandemic. Its income increased by 136 per cent from £138,240 in 2018-19 to £326,115 last year.

Newcastle, which saw fines income increase 174 per cent from £21,243 to £58,191, said it had "invested early in additional capacity to implement the new attendance guidance". This resulted in "closer monitoring of pupil attendance and an additional focus on persistently absent and severely absent children".

Last year, 89.3 per cent of the 398,796 fines issued were for unauthorised holidays.

A report from Public First last year found an "increased willingness among parents to take children on holiday during termtime".

Darlington council, which saw a 127 per cent rise in income, said the cost of holidays had increased, "so we have seen a significant rise in families taking holidays and being willing to accept the fine instead of paying the cost of a holiday during the school holidays".

Barnet saw its income rise by 666 per cent from £5,520 to £42,300. The council said its schools were "rightly using this sanction to ensure good attendance in accordance with DfE guidance".

Some councils received less income last year than in 2018-19, however. Brent saw its revenue fall by 21 per cent as "flexibility" in the wake of Covid continued. But it expects to see increases this year and next.

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## More children 'missing' from education

Almost 120,000 children were "missing" from education at some point last year, an increase of almost a quarter.

Children missing education is an official designation for those who are "not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school".

Data published by the government on Thursday suggests that 117,100 children were considered to be missing education at some point in 2022-23, up from 94,900 the year before.

For 8 per cent of cases, the child was awaiting

the outcome of a school application, and 6 per cent related to "unsuitable" home education.

Home education data published by the government on Thursday also shows more parents citing children's mental health and general dissatisfaction with school as the primary reason for choosing to educate their child at home.

The proportion of cases for which mental health was cited as the primary reason has gradually increased from 9 per cent in autumn 2022 to 13 per cent last autumn. General dissatisfaction increased from 6 to 8 per cent.



## INTERVIEW: PAUL TARN

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Bigger fines won't solve the problem, attendance tsar admits

JACK DYSON

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EXCLUSIVE

Increasing fines for parents whose children skip school will do nothing to cut unauthorised absences, the government's new attendance tsar said, as he outlined his ambitions for the role.

Ministers announced this week that they will increase the penalties for the first time since 2012 to £80, bringing them in line with inflation over the past 12 years.

Education secretary Gillian Keegan said the move – which will come into force in September – was part of her department's "next step to further boost attendance" across England.

**'We need to convince parents'**

But, after being named the government's "national attendance ambassador" yesterday, Rob Tarn predicted that the changes would not stop rule-breaking parents from taking their children on term-time holidays.

"Parents have spent 10, 20, 30 times more on the holiday than that fine's going to be. That's not the point," he told *Schools Week*.

"I presume that the higher the [fine] number gets, the more families will see it as more of a deterrent. You could theoretically go on forever, but you'd be talking about fines very few parents could even afford to pay – and what are you going to do then? Take them to court?"

"For me, it's about how we convince parents that the most important thing they can do is send their child to school every day."

**'Fines consistency helpful'**

As part of the changes, a national "framework" governing absence fines will also be introduced, amid concerns about inconsistencies from area to area.

Tarn, chief executive of the Northern Education Trust, believes this will stop the system being a "postcode lottery".

"That lottery has caused problems," he said. "It's not the amount of money that will make any difference – it's having the consistency everywhere that'll be helpful."

"Historically, you could be in one local authority where there are so many days of



Rob Tarn

unauthorised absence and drive a mile down the road to an area with a different level."

Tarn launched the first "attendance hub" at one of his schools, the North Shore Academy in Stockton-on-Tees, in 2022. As part of a truancy crackdown, the secondary carried out 6,000 home visits in a year, bringing attendance to "almost 94 per cent for a school that was 70 per cent pupil premium".

He said the idea behind the hubs scheme was to point leaders in the direction of others who faced similar challenges and had "managed to crack attendance". There are now 32 hubs supporting 2,000 schools nationwide.

**'Attendance partnerships for all'**

Part of his new job will be to "find the very best examples" that can "become a template for future partnerships", the trust leader said. To help with this, he will visit the schools offering the service to "capture what's working well".

Tarn would eventually "like to see all schools have partnerships for better attendance".

"I'm not sure that will fully happen and I'm not sure if there's a wish for that to happen [in the Department for Education], but I can't see harm being done – it can only do good," he said.

"Historically, schools have come together to share best practice around teaching and learning, behaviour, provision for students with special educational needs – I don't think

we've ever come together just to talk about attendance."

**'Pre-pandemic rates not enough'**

Tarn said he had seen truancy rates improve in schools that have implemented "rigorous" systems and processes to tackle absences and in those that have created "a culture of aspiration" in which children safe.

The most effective primaries, meanwhile, have "built strong relationships with their families to understand their challenges [and] help overcome them". Despite this, he stressed there is "no magic bullet".

"A smaller part" of Tarn's role will be to advise "on policy and the use of data to drive improvements in attendance".

Last academic year, 22.3 per cent of pupils missed more than a day every fortnight, up from between 10 and 13 per cent before Covid.

Recent figures show "some green shoots of recovery, but we'd like it to go quicker", Tarn noted. "What you hear said is that attendance is recovering slowly, but is still not back at pre-pandemic levels. I have a target that's beyond that."

"Before Covid there were schools where attendance was unacceptably low ... [and] returning to pre-pandemic levels in those schools isn't enough because it wasn't enough beforehand. I want to go further."

# Top of the trusts: Training the next generation of CEOs

LUCAS CUMISKEY

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Despite still being a relatively new role in education, academy trust CEOs are now in charge of budgets running into the hundreds of millions and oversee the education of thousands of pupils. So what's being done to develop the next generation? Schools Week investigates ...

## What training is going on?

The 2022 schools white paper promised an academy trust chief executive training programme as part of the “golden thread of professional development”.

Today, the £3.8 million government-funded scheme, run by the National Institute of Education (NioT), kicks off with a 25-strong cohort – whittled down from the 350 who expressed an interest.

The 12-month course, which includes three-month “after-care”, is designed to help leaders run large academy trusts. It includes four two-day conferences, three five-day “immersion experiences” in other trusts and up to 18 hours of self-study.

Between 15 and 25 trust CEOs will act as mentors. Issues they will cover with “fellows” doing the course include the “approach and implications of trust operating models, communications within and beyond the trust, and how to achieve high standards for all pupils and the levers for this”, Melanie Renowden, chief executive of NioT said.

The course's curriculum is based on the government's MAT leadership development CEO content framework, published last year. But it acknowledges that “limited quantitative evidence exists” in relation to the role.

Renowden described it as “comparatively a very new role and evolving quickly – we need to keep learning about what effective CEO leadership looks like”.

The NioT, which was founded by four leading academy trusts, will conduct research into



Melanie Renowden



“how effective different components of the programme are in developing CEOs' knowledge and skills”, Renowden added.

A second cohort of 50 recruits is due to start in September.

While the government intervention will boost the pipeline, other trusts are already building their own CEOs.

The Reach Foundation, which runs Reach Academy Feltham, launched LeadingTrusts in September to train “a bold new generation of trust CEOs”, focused on tackling disadvantage.

Its first cohort of 16 leaders get 10 “visits and interactions” with trust CEOs, four training days, 12 webinars, termly coaching sessions and mentoring.

It costs £5,000 per person and applicants need a sponsor, usually the CEO of their trust.

The trust pays most of the fees and the Reach Foundation helps to cover the rest.

The year-long course is for those who “would like to be a trust CEO in the next three years or so”, James Townsend, executive director at Reach Foundation, said.

The first cohort has been entirely

drawn from the south-west of the country. But they hope to recruit up to 50, split into three regional groups, for this September's cohort.

Meanwhile, Forum Strategy's Being the CEO scheme has been running for five years and is on its ninth cohort, with 12 leaders undergoing the six-month, £8,000 course.

## Who are the next CEOs?

Michael Pain, who leads the Forum programme with former CEO Sir Steve Lancashire, said it was for those either “currently a chief executive or on the cusp of it”.

On the Reach course, most are directors of education, one has a “people leadership” job, another is a head and the rest are deputy CEOs.

Townsend wants “more people on the operational side within their trusts” – for instance chief operating officers – to apply. Serving CEOs have told him that many of the challenges they face relate to leading a large organisation, “not just dealing with educational challenges”.

The NioT-run scheme has a roughly 50-50 split between current chief executives and those in central team roles, such as directors of education and deputy CEOs.

None are serving heads. Renowden said other

Continued on next page



FEATURE: MATS

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programmes may be “better suited” for those looking to make this transition.

**But what appetite is there?**

Teacher Tapp asked 1,691 headteachers and senior leaders if they expected to become a trust CEO within 10 years.

Nearly two-thirds strongly disagreed, while another 19 per cent disagreed. Just 7 per cent overall envisaged that they would lead a trust.

But Townsend said: “If someone is a headteacher with a really big vision for this work, we say it’s possible for them to apply and step into the job.”

The rise to CEO may also be more gradual. Rob Price, who is on the current Reach course, is now director of education at Acorn Education Trust. He was previously a teacher, head of English and a headteacher.

“If you are talented enough, you need a pathway that goes all the way from initial teacher training to the next CEOs,” he said.

But many teachers “can’t see past senior leadership or headships and no one actually thinks about themselves doing that role. We have to open that discussion,” he added.

Another hot topic in developing new CEOs is whether they need a background in education. Schools Week analysis of the 20 biggest trusts in England suggests just two of their CEOs have a non-teaching background.

But two-thirds of trust bosses surveyed by Forum in 2022 thought having a non-teaching background was not necessarily a barrier to becoming a CEO, an increase on previous years.

Pain said the success of some of those from outside has led to the shift in attitude.

Townsend added: “I think a lot of the experience that somebody, say, running a decent-sized charity, a business or an NHS Trust, has could be really valuable.”

United Learning, the largest trust in England with 89 state schools, had a total income of £732 million last year, including the private schools it runs.

This is similar to the income of an extra large acute NHS trust (£500 million to £750 million) and is bigger than 14 of the 24 Russell Group universities’ income.

According to the Companies Market Cap website, United Learning’s revenue would put it in the top 175 publicly traded UK companies.

**NextGen CEOs: the new challenges**

A Confederation of School Trusts survey last



Michael Pain

year found improving the quality of education was CEOs’ top strategic priority for the coming academic year. That is unlikely to change.

In joint second place were both growth and financial sustainability.

More than half of pupils now attend an academy but the political will to push the academisation agenda seems to have stalled, and a big drop in pupil numbers means some schools face closure or mergers.

Townsend anticipates the “growth agenda is going to reduce” as more schools join already established trusts, or trusts themselves merge to consolidate finances.

“It raises a question, what’s the big thing for the new generation?” he added, saying the sector was in a “sort of interregnum”, halfway towards full academisation.

“Managing this transition period requires skilled leaders with a very clear purpose and the ability to flex in terms of how to get towards that,” he said.

Sir Dan Moynihan, CEO of the Harris Federation and a mentor for the NIoT programme, said the most pressing challenge over the next decade would be “shortage of



Lisa Dadds



Sir Dan Moynihan

resources”.

“Having people who understand how to maximise the benefits of working collaboratively with a group of schools and driving school improvement is probably never going to be more important,” he said.

Even if this means trust bosses “sometimes training future leaders for their competitors, it’s the right thing to do”.

Lisa Dadds, director of primary education at the Priory Learning Trust and on the Reach course, added that collaboration skills will be key for the next generation of trust CEOs.

“It’s almost like the next stage of civilisation,” she added.

Townsend said these new CEOs will also “in many cases” take over “trusts already operating at significant scale” and should therefore be “excited” by that.

But Forum’s 2022 survey found less than 40 per cent of respondents said they had a potential succession plan in place. With government-funded support, that will likely change.

A likely barrier for busy school leaders is finding time. Renowden said that participants have “busy, demanding day jobs”, but “they need to be able to prioritise their own development”.

She said it was the equivalent of somebody doing a national professional qualification.

Pain said time was the biggest barrier for CEOs doing his course. But, “once people invest that time, they feel the benefits of it”.

Price said his trust was sponsoring him to do the LeadingTrusts programme in the hope that he can step up when the time comes.

He said: “If I’m the CEO of Acorn, I’ll be taking on 20 schools. You’ve got to hit the ground running.

“Whatever training you can do ... you need to bloody do it. If you don’t, you’re going to sink.”



ANALYSIS: FUNDING

# Trusts reveal hidden costs of fighting poverty

JACK DYSON

@JACKYDYS

EXCLUSIVE

The hidden costs of poverty are leaving academy trusts hundreds of thousands of pounds out of pocket, as schools bid to pull their poorest families out of “crisis”.

The news comes amid calls for the chancellor Jeremy Hunt to hand out more education cash ahead of his spring Budget next week – with cost rises expected to outstrip funding growth.

The government regularly claims that school funding is at “record highs”. But the investigation reveals just a slice of the additional costs schools now face over the cost-of-living-crisis and a wider collapse of support services.

Dixons Academies Trust said it spends £1.5 million a year “subsidising the fight against poverty”, amid concerns that some pupils would not be able to “get to school and be successful” without it.

Meanwhile, Harris Federation CEO Dan Moynihan estimated that £500,000 of his budget was being used to support his most disadvantaged pupils – some of whom live in temporary housing riddled with damp and cockroaches.

But Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said schools “do not have the resources for this to be viable long term”.

“This is largely a result of the growing cost of living and the erosion of other support services, meaning schools are forced to step into the breach.”

Dixons, which runs 17 northern schools, covers “the cost of meals and school trips that families cannot afford” and supplies uniforms and food parcels to those in need. Its staff also support families with cost-of-living difficulties.

Chief executive Luke Sparkes said the £1.5 million annual bill – most of which comes out of its general annual grant (GAG) – leaves him with “less to spend on teachers”. But he added that “some children won’t be able to get to school and be successful” without the expenditure.

Moynihan said an “unseen” part of his six-figure spend goes towards the time spent by SENCOs writing letters to housing departments and filling in benefit applications.

“We’ve got one family who have been put into a room, all five of them, where there are



no washing facilities. There are a number with cockroaches and damp [as well].”

Some children are given food vouchers for breakfast clubs, while dinners are provided for those living in temporary accommodation without cooking facilities.

One of Harris’s 55 schools – where many homeless pupils have been moved two hours away – even opens its heated hall to parents who travelled in with their children to stop them “hanging about in Costa all day”.

Families “in crisis” also receive mental health and welfare support from a team of counsellors. But it is “nowhere near [large] enough”.

The trust spends another £2 million on “alleviating poverty in various forms” from money it raises via sponsorships.

The Consortium Trust, which runs 15 schools in East Anglia, uses about £100,000 of its GAG to support its poorest pupils.

It pays for three pastoral and family support workers (£51,015), subsidising trips (£28,000), uniforms (£3,000) and breakfast and after-school clubs (£18,500).

In London, North Star Community Trust chief Marino Charalambous uses about £200,000 of his annual budget for similar initiatives.

Half of it covers his safeguarding team which, among other things, works to prevent youngsters from getting “caught up in gangs” and child-protection issues. The remainder pays for uniform subsidies, a hardship fund that provides £25 Tesco vouchers to homeless families and the salaries of its community outreach unit, which has grown “year on year” since its launch in 2016.

“It’s those sorts of things that could take two, three days for the local authority and social services to process, so we’re their first point of call,” Charalambous explained.

Barton urged the chancellor to address the issue in what could be his last Budget before the election “by investing in education and other public services, as well as tackling the staggeringly high level of child poverty”.

Moynihan added: “Once upon a time, schools taught kids. Today, we provide a wide range of services that we’re not properly funded for. But unless we provide them, it’s crisis for these families.”

## £3.2bn more needed to cover schools’ extra spend

Schools would need an extra £3.2 billion in additional funding to make up for a rise in costs since 2010, an Institute of Fiscal Studies analysis has found.

The study discovered that schools’ costs would rise by 5 per cent this coming year alone, with per-pupil funding increasing by just 4 per cent, a £700 million gap.

It means the “purchasing power” of



school funding per pupil will be 5 per cent lower overall than in 2010 – requiring £3.2 billion more funding to restore.

The report said the government “regularly claims that school funding and funding per pupil in England are at record highs. Such claims are, to put it mildly, unhelpful to public debate.”

INVESTIGATION: SEND

# Trauma, expense and widespread delay: It's all symptomatic of a SEND system in 'complete crisis'

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
 @SAMANTHAJBOTH **EXCLUSIVE**

The problems suffered by families due to councils' failures to set up EHCPs can be revealed after an analysis of soaring local government ombudsman complaints. Schools Week investigates ...

SEND complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman have nearly tripled over the past five years, from 509 in 2018-19 to 1,435 so far this financial year.

Of the complaints that have been investigated, 94 per cent were upheld – up from 85 per cent five years ago.

The independent ombudsman (LGSCO) investigates complaints from parents about councils' administrative actions and can set recommendations and request that councils pay compensation.

Schools Week analysis of 350 upheld SEND complaints between July and January reveals widespread distress and trauma felt by families over council failures.

In one case, the whole family needed counselling as a "direct result" of the council's delay to assess their daughter for an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

Other pupils have been left without education for up to two years, while parents have spent thousands of pounds on tutoring to prevent their child from falling behind.

In total, councils had to pay more than £716,000 to families over the failures in just six months – meaning they are likely to have paid out millions in recent years.

Sharon Chappell, the assistant ombudsman, told Schools Week that SEND now makes up 40 per cent of cases investigated across their brief, which is much wider and also includes housing and highways.

As a result, they have had to increase thresholds, meaning only the more severe cases are investigated.

"It's all symptomatic of a system that is in complete crisis," Chappell warned.



**'Injustice' of education plan delays**

The delay in issuing EHCPs was the leading issue, with council failures found in two-thirds of the cases we analysed.

National data shows that just 47.7 per cent of plans were issued within the 20-week legal limit last year. At some councils the figure was as low as 3 per cent.

In August, the ombudsman found Bromley council took 13 months to issue a final EHCP which led to the child missing out on education. The child's mother said she was signed off work with stress.

The ombudsman said this was a "significant injustice" and told the council to pay the family £4,000.

In another case, the ombudsman ruled that if Devon council had issued an EHCP for a child with autism on time, rather than six months late, "it

may have helped reintegrate" the pupil back into school earlier.

In a third case, Cambridgeshire apologised and paid out £5,500 after it was nearly 20 months late issuing new plans as part of annual reviews for one child.

Wandsworth council was criticised for not supporting a mother to transfer over an EHCP into a new council area, meaning they had to make a two-hour journey to and from her child's primary school. The failure put the boy at increased risk of seizures because of how tired he was.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of ASCL school leaders' union, said families were left "waiting for far too long" for support and schools "often do not have the funding or staff to be able to fill these gaps in the meantime".

He added: "By the time provision is in place, we have often missed the opportunity to deal with these needs at an early stage."

**'Significant' shortage of psychologists**

A key reason for the delays in nearly 20 cases was down to a shortage of educational psychologists (EP), who must provide input into a child's needs assessment. The LGSCO sounded the alarm over this last month, warning that a national EP shortage was having a "significant impact".

One family in Surrey needed counselling amid a nine-month delay to produce an EP report.

Since July, the ombudsman has upheld 28 complaints against Surrey on the issue – labelling it a "service failure". The council apologised and said it "regrets" delays.

**The councils with the most upheld complaints this year**

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Other
Surrey	84	2	38
Devon	37	2	11
Kent	32	2	58
Essex	30	0	20
Derbyshire	26	1	19
Suffolk	23	2	15
Hertfordshire	20	0	32
Oxfordshire	18	1	21
Leicestershire	14	0	20
Gloucestershire	14	0	13
Dorset	14	2	4

Source: Freedom of Information request based on 2023-24 financial year so far  
 Notes: Other includes invalid or incomplete complaints, advice given, referred back for local resolution and closed after initial enquiries

INVESTIGATION: SEND

It has brought in a temporary policy to allow parents to commission private EP reports. But councils will only reimburse the costs, up to £925, if they “meet the expected requirements” and no further council professional advice is required.

Councils with shortages told the ombudsman that they were commissioning private organisations for EP assessments. Research by the Association of Educational Psychologists estimates that councils expect to spend an estimated £40 million on it this year.

“This is not a solution that is working now or for the long term,” the organisation added. It called for more government funding for training.

**The lost school years**

Nearly three in 10 cases since July involved a child going without education in some form.

Investigators found that a primary school-aged child in Gloucestershire suffered “significant loss” of education provision, with “virtually no teaching in class” for nearly two years.

The child’s mother said she spent £4,000 on alternative provision and a tutor, as well as paying for private assessments. The council had to pay her £8,000 after a ruling in September.

The biggest payout of £14,700 was from North Northamptonshire council after a teenage girl was left without education for two years, causing all family members “distress and frustration”.

Several councils were also criticised for not complying with section 19 of the Education Act which requires them to “make arrangements” for “suitable education” for school-age children who

are ill, have been excluded or “otherwise”. The provision must be full time, unless it is considered not in the child’s best interests.

A 2022 report from the ombudsman reminded councils that it was their duty to make this provision, as opposed to the duty of schools.

But Bromley was criticised for its “flawed” legal understanding of its responsibilities in two separate cases, which were described as a “systemic issue”.

Southwark incorrectly thought that the school was responsible for a child’s education. The council has since apologised and made changes.

Elizabeth Fortin, associate solicitor at Stone King, said more schools were having to notify councils that they had an obligation to intervene and make education arrangements.

This is mainly where schools “simply don’t feel they can keep that pupil or other pupils safe” on site. Reasons include self-harming behaviours or a pupil threatening suicide, she said.

But some councils have been wrongly “pushing back”, claiming it is an informal exclusion, Fortin added.

Chappell said the ombudsman also sees issues with schools misusing “temporary exclusions and part-time timetables”, but they have no power to investigate.

**‘Difficult decisions’**

The ombudsman’s budget has been cut by nearly 40 per cent. This means cases must now meet a higher threshold to warrant investigation, Chappell said.

“It’s not something we necessarily

feel comfortable with, and it doesn’t sit well in terms of our values. But we have to make difficult decisions on the resources we have available... we are sending people away on cases we historically probably would have investigated.”

An LGSCO spokesperson added they are “increasingly focusing on complaints that affect more people... or where there is a long-term impact and the most serious injustice.

“This means what might be called ‘borderline’ cases, with limited injustice, may now not be investigated. But with the greater severity of the failings we are finding with SEND cases, we are still investigating a large proportion of these.”

The government’s SEND and AP improvement plan pledged to “look at what the role of the LGSCO should be in a reformed SEND system”. The ombudsman has called for greater powers to investigate complaints about schools.

Chappell said that councils were “really struggling” amid the surge in requests for EHCPs, appeals and complaints.

A report by the Local Government Information Unit this week found that over half of sampled councils were likely to declare effective bankruptcy within the next five years.

Nearly three-quarters of councils said children’s services and education, including SEND, were the greatest short-term pressure.

The government is reforming some elements of the SEND system, but most changes are unlikely to be rolled out until at least 2026.

“The government – of whichever political complexion that is given the likely proximity of a general election – must step up to the plate with a greater sense of urgency,” Barton said.



Geoff Barton

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Struggling council gets first SEND ‘improvement adviser’

Ministers have appointed what appears to be the first SEND “improvement adviser” at a council in negotiations for a multi-million pound government bailout to stave off bankruptcy.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) was issued with a statutory direction this week after failing to make enough progress since a damning 2021 Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection.

As part of the intervention, John Coughlan has been appointed as “strategic SEND improvement adviser” to report back to ministers on the council’s progress.

Coughlan was appointed as a non-executive commissioner for Birmingham’s failing SEND services in 2021. Hull and Slough councils have also had their own commissioners.

But the improvement adviser appears to be a new position. The Department for Education said it was more of a support role than a commissioner.

BCP is currently in negotiations with the DfE over a safety valve agreement, a scheme set up to provide financial assistance to councils struggling with SEND costs.

The council previously warned that it would effectively have to declare itself bankrupt this year if its dedicated schools grant blackhole –

expected to reach £63.4 million by this month – was not cleared.

Following a parent-led campaign and protest, councillors voted unanimously to hold a full council debate and vote on the agreement. Such decisions are normally made by council officers.

The Ofsted inspection three years ago found that leaders had been “distracted and delayed” from implementing the SEND reforms “by the reorganisation of the council and high staff turnover”.

“Deep cultural issues” locally “continue to hamper leaders’ ability to make progress”, it added.



NEWS IN BRIEF

# Reception baseline digital delay

Moves to have pupils answer some reception baseline assessment (RBA) questions on a touchscreen device have been pushed back a year to September 2025.

The Department for Education said it would “allow us to have more time to develop and test this approach, including by conducting further user research with schools”.

The assessment was introduced in 2021 and has now replaced key stage 1 SATs as the baseline against which pupil progress is tracked.

At present, pupils use “practical resources” such as worksheets and colourful objects to complete the tasks. Teachers record the results digitally on a tablet, laptop or computer.

The change, when it comes into effect, will mean schools need two devices to administer the test. One will be used by staff to administer the assessment and pupils will need to use a “separate touchscreen device to respond to some of the questions”.

However, the assessment will “remain



interactive and retain the use of physical resources for other questions”.

This change “supports accessibility and aligns with developments in classroom practice”, the Standards and Testing Agency said.

Sarah Hannafin, head of policy at the NAHT school leaders’ union, said it was “very frustrating that, having spent time preparing for this change, schools are now being told that it will be delayed”. But she said it was “better to delay than to go ahead without proper development, testing and user research with schools”.

[Full story here](#)



## Trusts back independent regulator

The body representing England’s academy trusts has joined calls for an independent schools regulator and backs a review of accountability measures to focus more on inclusion.

The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) said a regulator with the same legal standing as Ofqual, and accountable to parliament, would “ensure independence, impartiality and transparency”.

Former Department for Education adviser Tom Richmond put forward similar plans last month. Such a regulator could be handed intervention powers, finance and governance oversight, and the ability to close and open schools, he said.

The CST said it could also have regulation and commissioning responsibilities.

A report, published on Wednesday, called on ministers to consult on “report card-style” Ofsted reports and to “consider carefully” the purpose and evidence for trust inspections, which it said were “inevitable”.

It suggested the checks could be carried out in cases where Ofsted has concerns for a particular trust, or as part of a rolling programme of visits to inform regulatory activity.

Adverse inspection results could even “trigger statutory intervention in trusts”, it added.

The CST also called on the government to “review the current approach to performance measures to ensure” they are “aligned to the broader intentions of the accountability framework and do not have unintended consequences or perverse incentives”.

The body argued that care is needed to make sure these metrics “work to support and recognise inclusivity”, with schools empowered “to make decisions that are in the best interests of all pupils”.

# Labour promises misogyny mentors for schools

Labour’s school improvement teams will be tasked with training older schoolboys to coach younger peers to “recognise and stop” misogyny.

House of Commons Library analysis for Labour revealed a 400 per cent rise in mentions of “sexism”, “misogyny”, “sexual harassment”, “sexual abuse” and “safeguarding incident” in Ofsted reports between 2019 and 2022.

However, the inspectorate had increased its focus on harmful sexual behaviour over that period following the Everyone’s Invited scandal.

Bridget Phillipson (pictured), the shadow education secretary, said she wants to “end the scourge of sexual harassment by young men influenced by online misogyny”.

Several of the party’s proposals are already known, such as access to mental health counsellors in every school and creating new annual safeguarding checks by Ofsted.

Labour announced last year that it would create a network of new regional

improvement teams to “end the scandal of ‘stuck’ schools”.

Their roles “will include providing school mentor training for older schoolboys to coach younger boys in recognising and stopping misogyny”.

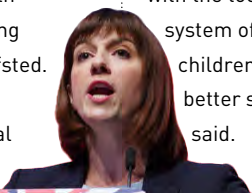
No further details have been provided.

Labour also said it would embed “digital literacy in the curriculum so that young people are given the critical tools to deal with online hate and misinformation”.

Leader Sir Keir Starmer had previously pledged to introduce more digital skills to the curriculum. There are already elements of digital literacy in the national curriculum for computing.

Labour’s approach would “equip schools with the tools they need to rid our education system of these misogynistic views, teach our children right from wrong, and implement better safeguarding measures”, Phillipson said.

[Full story here](#)



NEWS

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# 'Elite' Star and Eton sixth forms reveal 'clearing house' careers role

**SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER**

@SCHOOLSWEEK

The new "elite" sixth forms run by leading academy trust Star and Eton College will fulfil a "clearing house" role to help bright pupils in their areas to stay in education.

The organisations have formed a new "think and do" tank called the Eton Star Partnership to "seek solutions to systemic challenges".

The group's first report found that more than 5,000 youngsters with at least an A in English and maths at GCSE in 2013 did not go on to get a university degree by the age of 25 (9 per cent of the cohort).

While many of these youngsters went on to do the equivalent of what is now a degree apprenticeship, the report said university alternative pathways were too "small scale".

The report said the "system must be able to scale up different and legitimate post-16 options for some, including those who perform academically well at GCSE".

A "better system of 'second chances' will benefit this group, and others too", it said.

Star and Eton has been given government approval to open three selective sixth forms in Dudley, Middlesbrough and Oldham to help get more bright pupils into top universities.

Alongside the schools, the trust will open education research centres (centres for innovation and learning research, or CIRLs). These will "identify talented young students in years 10 and 11 – and even earlier – and work with their schools on an intervention programme to encourage them to stay in structured post-16 environments after GCSE", the report said.

"Such environments will include our college but will not be limited to that; we want to also act as a clearing house for pathways to local degree apprenticeship opportunities and other post-16 and post-18 pathways, working with local colleges, university outreach partnerships, and all others in this space."

Outreach work through the CIRLs will also provide a "clear information and guidance

offer to better inform these cohorts about what their options are".

"Alongside this, we will deliver a programme in 11-16 education not just of academic support, but of character education, leadership and aspirations – such that talented students recognise the options open to them and are less likely to disengage."

More than 100 schools already get support through the Eton X digital platform.

The partnership has pledged to help deliver "intervention structures" and "intensive support" at partner schools after GCSE results are issued to stop bright pupils "drifting into post-16 education without much clear idea".

"That four to six-week period after results is an intense time when decisions can be made and pathways shown, backed by actual, rather than forecast results."



Sir Hamid Patel, CEO of Star Academies trust

The partnership has committed to publish research shedding new insight on key barriers, gather influential leaders to enrich CPD and drive policy, and put its research into practice.



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Goldsmiths

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# Ark trust backs chair over social media activity

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ark Schools has backed its chair Sir Paul Marshall, the Conservative party donor and media mogul, after he was accused of liking and sharing far-right extremist posts and conspiracy theories on social media.

Last week the News Agents podcast and Hope Not Hate, a charity opposing far-right extremism, reported that Marshall had retweeted and liked content "which is on the most extreme end of political opinion about Islam" from a private account on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Marshall liked posts including one which stated that the "native European population is losing patience with fake refugee invaders", the investigation found.

The reports said he also liked another post which stated: "There has never been a country that has remained peaceful with a sizeable Islamic presence. Why do our leaders believe Britain would be an exception to that rule? Once the Muslims get to 15 to 20 per cent of the population, the current cold civil war will turn hot."

## Ark should 'sever ties'

Labour MP Sam Tarry, who has an Ark school in his constituency, called on the trust to "sever their ties straight away". He said it was an "utter disgrace" that Marshall was "still in place".

The MP for Ilford South added: "My constituency is the most diverse in the whole of Britain, with 80 per cent of my constituents coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. This vile racism endorsed by Marshall is a throwback to the 1970s and totally unacceptable."

When approached for comment, a spokesperson for Ark, which has 39 schools, said it was a "diverse organisation which exists to serve communities of all faiths and cultures".

The statement, sent on behalf of the trust's board, added that Marshall had "made clear" in a statement "that he shares those values, as is evidenced by his decades of charitable work, including with Ark".



A spokesperson for hedge fund owner Marshall, who also co-founded GB News, said the sample of posts "does not represent his views".

The spokesperson added: "As most X/ Twitter users know, it can be a fountain of ideas, but some of it is of uncertain quality and all his posts have now been deleted to avoid any further misunderstanding."

The podcast also accused Marshall of re-posting a meme shared by a far-right YouTuber, which stated: "God may or may not be real, but the other side is so passionate, so committed to worshipping Satan, evil, homosexuality and corrupting children that even if God wasn't real, believing in him to fend these demons off is preferable."

The posts were deleted when Marshall was approached by the News Agents.

## Trustees expected to 'uphold reputation'

Marshall co-founded Ark Schools in 2004 and serves on its board and that of its parent charity, Absolute Return For Kids.

He also helped to set up the Education Policy Institute, departing as its chair only last year, and served as a non-executive director of the Department for Education.

There are no national standards for how school governors and trustees should behave and trusts create their own codes

of conduct, which they do not have to be published online. *Schools Week* could not find a copy of Ark's code on the internet.

Emma Knights, co-chief executive of the National Governance Association, said its own model code of conduct for academy trusts "expects trustees to uphold the trust's reputation in private communications, including on social media".

She added: "Therefore our view is the position of a trustee who brings a trust into disrepute through social media posts should absolutely be questioned and when serious terminated."

"It is up to trust boards what their own code contains, but I would very much hope that this situation is covered."

In the case of academy trusts, it is the responsibility of controlling members of the trust to hire and fire trustees. In Ark's case, its sole member is the charity Absolute Return For Kids, of which Marshall is also a trustee.

Marshall was once a prominent Liberal Democrat supporter and close ally of former schools minister David Laws. He split with the party to back Brexit and went on to donate £500,000 to the Conservative Party.

He was knighted for services to education and philanthropy in 2016 and is now reported to be interested in buying the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper.



# Overseas applicants boost flagging teacher recruitment figures

**LUCAS CUMISKEY**  
**@LUCAS\_CUMISKEY**

Teacher recruitment this year is being propped up by a huge increase in applicants from outside the United Kingdom, analysis suggests.

Sam Freedman, a former advisor to the Department for Education, said it shows the teaching profession is “shifting towards becoming increasingly dependent on immigration, just as has happened with healthcare. And, just as with healthcare, it is a function of pay being held down.”

Analysis shows that recruitment figures this year are similar to last year, which was one of the worst on record when just half of the required secondary trainees were recruited.

Overall, the proportion of primary recruits was 11 per cent lower than at the same time last year, while secondary was 13 per cent up.

Jack Worth, education economist at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said the growth has been “dominated by international recruitment” amid “limited growth in interest in teaching from anywhere else



(especially domestically).

Physics recruitment is up by 141 per cent in terms of accepted applications with nearly 300 per cent more applications compared with this time last year, Worth noted in a thread on X, formerly Twitter.

There has been a 57 per cent rise in accepted applicants to initial teacher training from the “rest of the world”, compared with this time last year. Applicants from England are static and those from the rest of the UK are down 16 per cent.

Worth noted that “domestic numbers of placed applicants for physics are up by 40%, but

international placed applicants are up by 330% on last year”.

The government has launched a £10k “relocation package” trial to attract overseas teachers. It has also increased bursaries on offer to trainee teachers, although the total amount spent is still less than before the pandemic.

Incentives were heavily slashed when Covid prompted a spike in interest in teaching, something that turned out to be shortlived.

But Worth said it was “promising to see that some policy measures seem to be feeding through into increased recruitment”.

Schools Week revealed last year that teacher trainers had been told by the DfE’s top civil servant to stop turning away so many applicants amid “significant rejection rates”, even in subjects with shortages.

Susan Acland-Hood, the DfE’s permanent secretary, told providers that a 7 per cent jump in applicants last year had not led to an equivalent rise in offers for courses.

However, the DfE said in December that it was helping schools to “be on the front foot” when dealing with an influx of applications from overseas teachers, which take longer to process and have much higher rejection rates.



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## EXPLAINER: CHILDCARE

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# Schools told how to deal with childcare provision requests

Schools could give parents termly windows to lodge requests for on-site wraparound childcare provision, new government guidance suggests.

The chancellor Jeremy Hunt outlined an “ambition” in 2022 for all primary schools to provide childcare on their site, with £289 million funding to implement the scheme.

Ahead of its nationwide launch in September, the Department for Education published guidance to help schools and academies understand how to respond to requests for more provision.

Here's what you need to know...

## 1. Families have ‘right’ to request childcare

The DfE says parents “have a right” to lodge written requests with schools for wraparound or holiday care for youngsters between the ages of four and 14. Disabled children are eligible up to the age of 18.

Leaders should make families aware of this, setting out “the timetable and process that parents will need to follow”. All requests – including those from prospective mums and dads – should be logged and monitored.

## 2. Schools could have to survey all parents ...

The guidance suggests that schools could have a “termly or annual period during the year” when parents would be able to lodge their submissions.

Once a request for wraparound care on the school site has been received, leaders should engage with the local authority to “make them aware”.

The council will then be expected to work with the parent to consider if suitable provision in the area is already in place.

“If the local authority does not have suitable wraparound provision in the area, and you [the school] do not have an up-to-date assessment of their parents’ wraparound needs within the last year, then you should proceed with a whole school right to request exercise.”

This includes consulting all parents to test demand. Help could be sought from prospective childcare providers.

## 3. ... and consider if childcare is viable

Once parental demand has been established, leaders should work with local authorities to

understand options to increase wraparound care and assess if offering its own provision is a viable option for the school or trust.

Parents should be informed of the outcome “within an appropriate timeframe, but no longer than a term”.

If a school decides not to proceed with wraparound or holiday childcare on its site, it should clearly communicate alternative options to families.

But, if it goes ahead with offering the activities, it will be able to launch its own service, work in partnership with a provider or expand existing childcare.

## 4. Childcare providers able to lodge requests too

Providers make written requests to use school facilities for wraparound or holiday childcare at times when classes are not using them.

Among other things, leaders should ensure the firms have “properly vetted their staff (both paid and volunteer)” beforehand.

The guidance adds: “For requests that you accept, you can consider recovering any administrative costs of processing the application from the provider. This can be part of the wider costs for the provision of services or facilities.”

Applicants should be informed of outcomes within a month. If their bid is rejected, schools will “not need to reconsider requests from the same provider for the same type of provision within 12 months of the last” one, unless demand changes.

## 5. Councils to support schools’ open provision

The advice states that councils have the responsibility to communicate “availability of wraparound childcare to families” and support schools and trusts to offer their own provision.

They should also “encourage providers to expand” their services and urge new ones to establish themselves in their areas.

“Local authorities should facilitate and broker partnerships between schools, trusts, providers and childminders. This includes co-ordinating holiday childcare operating across school sites.”

Councils should also provide schools that do not offer wraparound care onsite with a list of all providers in the area.

## 6. Wraparound childcare funding allocations revealed

The government has also released breakdowns showing the amount of cash each local authority will receive for wraparound care over the next two years.

Birmingham (£7.44m), Norfolk (£7.42m) and Derbyshire (£7.15m) have been allocated the most money. The Isles of Scilly (£31,074.28) and Bracknell Forest (£227,115.95) are set to receive the smallest sums.

Guidance shows the funds were divided up based on “the number of schools with primary-aged pupils that either do not offer full wraparound provision or only have a partial” offer.





MOVERS AND SHAKERS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# Movers & Shakers

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



**Claire Heald**

**CEO at the Cam Academy Trust**

**Start date:** June

**Current/previous job:** Director of Education at Academies Enterprise Trust

**Interesting fact:** Claire is a real sci-fi and fantasy nerd. If you look really carefully, you will see in teeny-tiny print that she is credited for her geekery at the end of The Fellowship of the Ring film as a recognised Lord of the Rings superfan (along with several hundred others)!



**Derek Hills**

**COO at Anthem Schools Trust**

**Start date:** March 11

**Current/previous job:** Director of IT, systems and data at Ark Schools

**Interesting fact:** Derek was once a contestant on the MasterChef. After spending the night sleeping on the floor of a hospital in Tooting (as a visitor not a patient!), the filming took place early the next day. He got knocked out in the first round.



**Catherine Charnock**

**Chief operating officer at Altus Education Partnership**

**Start date:** April

**Current/previous job:** Business director at Manchester Hospital School

**Interesting fact:** Catherine loves to swim – anywhere she can. On an extended stay in Mexico, she swam for the Oaxacan swimming team, coming third (she thinks)!



**Rory Gribbell**

**Director of strategy and engagement, Ofsted**

**Start date:** February

**Current/previous job:** Policy adviser at the Department for Education/seconded to Ofsted

**Interesting fact:** Rory used to play cricket for France, having grown up near Paris. He opened the bowling against cricketing powerhouses including Denmark, Germany, Belgium and Jersey.



**Charles Byrne**

**CEO of the English-Speaking Union**

**Start date:** March

**Current/previous job:** Director general of the Royal British Legion

**Interesting fact:** Charles' ideal weekend is spent with his brothers, camping in their classic VW vans. His love for the van life started at the age of six with a family adventure travelling from London to Athens to hear Easter mass in the cathedral, passing through the snow-covered Alps along the way.

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## ADVERTORIAL

# NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING: A GLIMPSE INTO THE WORLD EDUCATION SUMMIT

The [WES 2024 line-up](#) is mouth-watering. With over 450 sessions led by professors, futurists, and practitioners, featuring the most innovative ideas out there. From Inner Learning, Impact Enhancers (including AI in education) and Culture for Outcomes, to core themes such as Deep Learning, Teaching Excellence and Flourishing Leadership.

The online Summit provides sessions, available on-demand, that can be used by educators and schools as part of their professional learning or school improvement plan. The [easy-to-navigate pathways](#) provided by role and phase allow individuals to select the sessions most relevant to them. For example, they could select 10 sessions focused on leadership and use these to form the focus for the year.

## Introduction:

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, staying abreast of the latest evidence-based trends and innovations is crucial for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders alike. The annual World Education Summit offers a platform for discussions, insights, and collaborations that shape the future of learning. Upon delving into the key speakers, stages, and themes of the upcoming summit, it becomes evident that this March launch event is poised to address pressing challenges and explore groundbreaking solutions.

## Key Speakers:

The roster of speakers for The World Education Summit reads like a who's who in the world of education. Renowned experts, influencers, and policymakers converge to share their perspectives on the current state of education and the path forward. Among the many notable speakers is Doug Lemov,

a renowned educator and instructional guru, whose insights promise to ignite discussions on impactful teaching strategies in education. Other luminaries on the list include Leora Cruddas CBE an educational leader and policy influencer, (alongside other CST speakers) Dame Alison Peacock, a prominent voice for teacher empowerment and Professor Paul Miller, an advocate of anti-racism and social justice in education and leadership.

Speaking on the World Headliners stage are: Professor John Hattie, Dr Andreas Schleicher, Dr Jo Boaler, Dr Jim Knight, Professor Rose Luckin, Hywel Roberts and Dr Debra Kidd amongst many more.

## Special Features:

The Summit features six special segments. 'Living Legends: 3 Pinnacles of Educational Greatness' explores the life's work of our educational greats featuring Professors Viviane Robinson, Michael Fullan, John Hattie, Alma Harris, Linda Darling Hammond, Andy Hargreaves, Sugata Mitra. 'Elephants in the School Room' challenges common educational practices, shedding light on their historical evolution and questioning their value. The Cambridge University Press & Assessment driven segment led by Professor Tim Oates delves into the future of assessment, exploring

learning theories, pedagogical strategies, and addressing gaps in educational outcomes. 'Living Legends: Pioneers of equity and equality' with Diana Osagie shares stories of diversity and inclusion pioneers. Lastly, 'Women in Leadership', hosted by Vivienne Porritt OBE, engages in global conversations with female leaders from the WomenEd movement.

## Stages:

12 dynamic stages act as focal points for in-depth discussions and workshops, ensuring that participants can tailor their experience to align with their specific interests. From the 'Brave Leaders' stage to the 'Passionate Practitioners' stage, the Summit covers a spectrum of topics crucial for shaping education in 2024 and beyond. The popular 'Training Stage' features highly practical sessions to enhance leadership, strengthen teaching strategies, make learning visible and maximise the impact of AI in the classroom.

## Conclusion:

The World Education Summit is now regarded as a phenomenon; it stands as a beacon of innovation and collaboration in the realm of education. By bringing together visionaries, educators, and

policymakers, the Summit creates a space for meaningful dialogue and action. Looking ahead to the much-anticipated 2024 Summit, it is evident that the themes and discussions will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education, ensuring that it remains dynamic, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the ever-changing world.

Co Founders: Stephen Cox and Anne-Marie Duguid

## Programme 2024

With an electrifying lineup, dynamic stages, and impactful themes there are plenty of reasons to mark your calendar for 18-21 March 2024.

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Profile

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

# Always talking up maths, in a country that talks it down

**David Thomas was one of the youngest heads in the country. He's set up a national online academy and led on government schools policy. Now he's on a mission to restore the reputation of maths**

**D**espite having already led a school, helped set up the country's first national online academy during Covid, and led the government's policy response to the pandemic, David Thomas still gets asked for ID in bars.

At 27, he became one of the youngest headteachers in the country when he took the hot seat at Jane Austen, a secondary free school formed three years earlier in a former Norwich shoe factory.

He'd spent the prior three years in management consulting.

There were "less polite words than brave" for his decision to leave the corporate world for headship, he says, but he reassured himself that if

he failed no one would really blame him.

"They would blame the governors for appointing a 27-year-old who looked like a 12-year-old."

### Small moments matter

Given his age, the former Teach First graduate felt he had to work harder to prove himself.

To "show credibility" at the school, he taught the borderline year 11 maths class – a subject he sees as "the great leveller".

"Maths doesn't care where you come from, how many books you have at home or who your parents know. If you work hard and have the intelligence, you can thrive."

Thomas speaks from experience. At primary

school in Bristol, he was one of five children singled out by teachers for extra study at lunchtime so they could sit the scholarship exam at the "fancy" local independent school, Colston's.

It's an opportunity he likely would not have had if it wasn't for the school's intervention. Thomas's dad worked in B&Q after losing his IT job in the dotcom crash. His mum is a former ESOL teacher who helps the elderly.

But Thomas was the only one of the five who had a parent free to get him to the exams – the others ended up not sitting it.

"That makes me think quite a lot of education and justice. Those small moments matter."

He later got to take further maths A Level in a class of one, where he found joy in solving



# Profile: David Thomas

complex equations.

He planned to study maths at university, but made a “snap decision” to take politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford instead, after it was recommended by his career advisor’s computer test.

Despite assuming he’d become an investment banker “like everyone else”, Thomas was “bored out of his mind” during a 10-week internship at Deutsche Bank. So, he joined Teach First and taught at Westminster Academy, a turnaround school in a “giant green cuboid”.

Its maths department was “overstaffed” (“you don’t hear that often”) and he got to spend a third of his timetable team-teaching borderline year 11 classes with a senior leader. “I benefitted an insane amount from that.”

But looking young was sometimes a hindrance. He once dressed in school uniform for a fancy dress day and was refused into a staff breakfast meeting by the lunchtime supervisors.

## Out of my depth

High turnover meant that within four years he was a maths assistant senior leader, but “quite out of my depth”. He was inspired to try a different sector by the school’s city banker-turned-business studies teacher, whose “life experience outside the system made him wiser. He knew when the education sector was being silly.”

After almost three years at McKinsey, armed with “diversity of experience”, he took on the challenge at Jane Austen, part of the Inspiration Trust then run by current children’s commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza.

When Covid hit, his management planning expertise showed. Thomas surveyed families on what IT equipment they had, stocked up on wi-fi dongles and created online lessons a month before lockdown was announced.

While some colleagues thought him ‘a bit mad’, they “learned to tolerate me”.

On the Friday before lockdown, Thomas told his pupils “every generation has its crisis. We’ll worry about this one”.

To staff, he said that if they wanted to “close the gap” between their pupils and those at the fee-



## ‘Every generation has its crisis. We’ll worry about this one’

paying Norwich School up the road, “then this is the moment we’ve been waiting for”.

### No honeymoon

His planned Easter honeymoon to Argentina sabotaged by Covid, Thomas instead contacted “anyone I knew in or around government” offering his services.

Department for Education civil servants took him up – asking for a plan to teach children during lockdown.

“It wasn’t quite what I had in mind!” he admits. He worked with Matt Hood (who now leads Oak National Academy) on reaching “everyone we could to join the effort”.

They had just ten days before term started. But school leaders shared their curriculum resources, IT experts produced a website and “a load of teachers in their bedrooms were filming lessons”. Oak National Academy was born.

“I’m really proud of what we did, but we shouldn’t pretend it was the greatest act of professional publishing in history.” The real pressure came when the website went live, with lessons broadcast into thousands of homes.

“I had some fancy pants title [curriculum director], but I wasn’t the person putting my lesson out to the whole country to judge.”

Some criticised the lessons on social media, which Thomas said was “really unfair. It wasn’t the time, it was very exposing for them.”

By the end of the summer term, Oak’s online classes had been viewed “north of 25 million” times.

### Trust central team concerns

After the Oak adventure, Thomas returned to Inspiration in a new strategy director role before joining Astrea Academy Trust in Cambridgeshire as a regional director.

But he found it “emotionally very difficult”. He used to have “1,100 children and families I knew... down to the shopping centre security guards who told me if they were naughty at the weekend”.

Now it was “5,000 kids, and you don’t know any of their names and families”.

“You think it’s going to be similar [to headship] and it’s not at all. The last thing you should do is walk in and start deciding what to do, because you can’t undermine headteachers. It’s not clear



# Profile: David Thomas

how you add value to them.”

He also had a “huge crisis of how I justify my salary”. While these types of academy trust central team roles are “still quite new”, Thomas doesn’t think the sector has “nailed that model collectively. I don’t think we’ve yet got as much out of those jobs as we could.”

He instead moved into policy: joining the DfE on secondment in 2021 as an adviser to the then education secretary Nadhim Zahawi (later made permanent). Asked during his interview what the sector’s biggest challenge was, Thomas said attendance – and was tasked with solving it.

Zahawi’s business background meant he “didn’t want fluff and flowery documents, he wanted a data dashboard to sort out the actions needed”.

Two years on, persistent absenteeism is just over 20 per cent. While still “very high”, Thomas says it’s “a hell of a lot better than many other countries right now” – pointing out that more than half of all children in New Zealand don’t attend school regularly.

Thomas also worked on DfE’s SEND and alternative provision reforms, culminating in the SEND improvement plan promising new national standards and funding tariffs.

He doesn’t believe the two sectors should be “separated the way we do” and questions why one child with SEND could end up in a social, emotional mental health school while another studies in AP.

“There should be one system for children who need additional support beyond what their school can offer them, including SEND and AP, that is treated with the same levels of funding and respect for professionalism and expertise.”

## Maths pupils ‘hiding their talent’

He left DfE last year to become the first permanent chief executive of The Mathematics Education for Social Mobility and Excellence charity (MESME), since rebranded to Axiom Maths.

The charity was founded by billionaire Alex Gerko, whose algorithmic trading company GTX Markets has given over £20 million to maths projects since 2020.

The key focus is ‘maths circles’ – free state school



## ‘Nadhim Zahawi didn’t want flowery documents. He wanted a data dashboard to sort out the actions needed’

maths clubs to nurture a love of the subject in promising pupils, with the aim of 10,000 new pupils a year joining a nationwide network. The concept, also championed by Dominic Cummings, is popular in Gerko’s native country of Russia.

While many see the biggest barrier as recruiting maths mentors for pupils, Thomas says a bigger issue is “the cultural challenge”.

He’s horrified by recent national newspaper articles on maths, pointing out a recent opinion piece linking the subject to being flogged. Another likened prime minister Rishi Sunak’s maths-to-18 policy to a move from authoritarian China’s playbook. (While he reads newspapers, he points out his Cambridge home with his wife and two-year-old son does not include a television).

“We live in a country where you gain social credit from saying you’re bad at maths. If you talk at a dinner party about [it], your social status increases.”

This stigma is making budding mathematicians “feel like they have to hide their talent to fit in”. Maths circles would provide them “a space to feel valued and cared for”.

Axiom’s research found that half of disadvantaged pupils who are top attainers in maths at the end of Year 6 don’t go on to get a top GCSE grade.

Thomas feels he “could so easily have been one of those children” but was “fortunate” to attend a school “where they did loads to counteract the social pressures that talk down maths”.

Thomas was recently selected to be the Conservative party candidate in Norwich South – a seat the party has not held since the 1980s.

He admits it is an “interesting time [in politics] to be doing that”. Selected on a pledge to “increase social mobility”, he says he wants to “make a bigger difference for the pupils I served” – but is reluctant to say more.

Whether he becomes an MP or not, he does hope to return to headship one day. “I’d be disappointed if I don’t. It’s a wonderful job.”

## Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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LEUNIGDirector, Public First and chief  
economist, OnwardHow to insulate schools  
from booms and busts

**Questioning our assumptions a decade ago could have saved a lot of money and pre-empted the developing crisis of falling rolls, explains Tim Leunig**

Regrets, I've had a few, and not too few to mention either.

One of my biggest regrets is not realising just how short-lived the baby boom would be. I joined the Department for Education in 2012.

Children starting school that year, born roughly in 2008, numbered 785,000 across the UK – 120,000 more than just seven years before – and the number was still rising. By 2010 we had more children being born than in any year since 1972. And it was still rising. Like everyone else, I thought we needed to build, baby build.

And I was wrong, or at best half-right. The number of children born has fallen dramatically since 2012. Not just back to the 665,000 of 2010 either, but to an unprecedented low of 605,000. And the numbers are still falling.

We built loads of extra school places in the early 2010s. Treasury wasn't happy when we told them how much money we needed.

They prevaricated at first. I asked them in a meeting what their ministers' proposed alternative was: educate only some children, or some

at weekends and in the holidays, or perhaps in shifts? They admitted we needed more classrooms, and we worked harmoniously thereafter.

Now we have too many classrooms. Numbers are already falling in primary schools, and they will fall another tenth by 2028. We won't have the money to cut class sizes, so we will have spare classrooms. Secondary school pupil numbers are about to decline and we will have the same issue in due course.

If we'd seen what was coming, I think we would have installed more temporary classroom.

Now if you are my age, a "mobile" brings back some bad memories. We had one in my school, Chatham's St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School, sited on what is now the car park. Single-glazed, the walls and roof had about as much insulation as the windows. Freezing in winter, stifling in summer: it was awful.

That just isn't true today. My daughter was in a newly built demountable classroom for a year when she was in primary school. It was very good, perhaps the best classroom she had at primary school. Certainly the loos were the best in the school.

If we had built a lot of classrooms like these in primary schools, we could have literally moved them to secondary school sites when



“ We were not clairvoyant, and could never hope to be

they were no longer needed in the primary school (which would be exactly the moment they were needed at the secondary). Kids get older quite predictably, one year every year.

I realise that not all classrooms are the same (and they would have needed larger loos). But we could have designed one that would work both for a primary school, and for teaching humanities in secondary schools. They would probably work in further education and on university campuses for many classroom-based subjects too.

Hindsight is easy, so I want to draw a more general lesson. It is no good looking back and asking the question why we didn't spot that a decade-long trend of pupil numbers rising annually by an average of 14,000 would turn into a decade-long trend of even sharper decline. We were not clairvoyant, and we could never hope to be clairvoyant.

What we could have done, however, was to ask ourselves:

“What if we're wrong?” We could have done some scenario planning as to what decisions we were making that we would regret if the world turned out differently.

We would have spotted that we would end up with a surfeit of classrooms in many primary schools, while secondary schools would still be expanding. Then we could have gone on to ask how we could mitigate against that.

Maybe some bright spark – and there are many in the department – would have thought of using portable classrooms. That would have saved us a lot of money.

We should always learn from our mistakes. What I have learned is to imagine the consequences of being wrong. If only I had learned that lesson a decade earlier.

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

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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AMJAD ALI

Teacher, trainer and co-founder of BAMEd Network

## Islamophobia exists – and we must combat it in our schools

**A deeply flawed political discourse is normalising anti-Muslim sentiment with worrying consequences for our students, writes Amjad Ali**

In 2015, I wrote an article about my worries for students after the horrendous terrorist attack on the Bataclan theatre in Paris. Nine years on, I am more worried than ever.

It is a worry that has been a constant in the lives of Muslims since the events of September 11th were etched into our minds, hearts, and souls, not only because of the terrible loss of lives, but also because in its immediate aftermath every Muslim was made to feel branded as a terrorist or sympathiser by virtue of their faith.

Our faith has since become synonymous for many with danger, extremism and violence, the very opposites of our true teachings and history.

Amid heart-wrenching and unprecedented deaths occurring in Palestine at the hands of the Israeli government, and in spite of the United Nations confirming violations of up to 28 of its resolutions in pursuance of this military campaign, our political discourse is more divisive than I have ever experienced.

A simplistic and deeply flawed rhetoric of Muslims vs Jews is

dominating airwaves and spilling into our schools. Meanwhile, the very same students who were positively encouraged to show support in one recent conflict are being suspended for doing the same thing with this one.

In online discussions, educators openly say they do not want to be seen to be ‘taking sides’. This isn’t about sides. This is about humanity.

Where is the humanity in young Muslims hearing politicians use their religion’s name in derogatory fashion? Where is the humanity in generalising and collectivising whole swathes of British people to stoke tension and anger? And where is the humanity in labelling students and their communities as ‘Islamists’, as I have repeatedly seen in online chats and on TV?

Islam is the only religion that has ‘ist’ added to the end of it. In my 2015 article, I equivocated. I wrote the words “whether Islamophobia exists or not”. Today, I am certain it does, whether the general population acknowledges it or not.

This, of course, has a knock-on effect on our students. Put simply, Muslim students’ religion is as much a source of abuse and discrimination for them as is the case for Jewish students. Antisemitism is appallingly rife at present, and as usual it is spiking at the same time as ‘Anti-Muslim hate crimes’, which have



“ ‘Anti-Muslim hate crimes’ have risen by 335 per cent

risen by 335 per cent. We must name and shame this as Islamophobia.

So, I am still worried about pupils. On top of all the things I was worried about nine years ago, I’m now also worried about all those who think that support for the plight of Palestinians equates to anti-Jewishness.

I am worried about the ones who say they ‘hate us’ even more now.

I am worried children will make idle jokes about their Muslims classmates belonging to Hamas. And then in turn, I am worried about Muslim pupils who shout their support for Hamas, either unknowingly or because social media has filled the void left by admonishments to be impartial and worries about ‘taking sides’.

I am particularly worried about the ones who will go to school having heard adults talking about ‘Islamists ruling the country’. I worry they will only feel even more disconnected, excluded and segregated than they

have in recent years.

If you share my worries, then there are things we can do.

We can teach students to talk about events by seeking out information and guidance from a variety of reliable sources. And we can teach pupils about the political spectrum of right and left-wing rhetoric and provide them with keywords to look out for.

Above all, we can and must altogether reject the term ‘Islamist’ and continually remind everyone that Islam and Muslim are not synonymous with terrorism and violence.

I ended my 2015 article with an appeal to our collective motivation to be part of this profession: tackling inequalities and forging communities through greater knowledge and understanding. That sentiment is still just as valid today. Yes, I am more worried than ever, but I have more faith in education than ever too.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**JOSH BLACKBURN**

Chief operating officer, TLC LIVE

## To save tuition, we must let the NTP die

**Calls to extend NTP funding recognise tuition's positive impact, but ignore more effective ways to fund it to achieve more equitable outcomes, writes Josh Blackburn**

Earlier in February, more than 400 schools sent a letter to the prime minister, the chancellor and the education secretary advocating for the extension of National Tutoring Programme (NTP) funding beyond its sunset at the end of this academic year.

Without this support, they argue, the progress achieved in shrinking the Covid attainment gap might unravel. But is more NTP funding really the best way forward?

Throughout its lifespan, the programme's subsidies have dwindled, and schools' satisfaction has followed suit. What started with enthusiasm is now often a question of affordability over quality — a compromise we shouldn't have to make in education.

As the rules around NTP funding have shifted, it's become tough to track the direct impact of these funds on student attainment. Surely the first step before any such extension is agreed should be to examine not just the intent behind such initiatives, but their actual effectiveness on the ground.

When you take a step back, it becomes clear that extending the NTP exactly as it is, isn't the silver bullet we're looking for. Perhaps it's time to consider alternatives that give schools a broader scope to cater to their students' needs without being tied down to one specific programme.

Let's talk about the pupil premium, for example. This funding gives schools the leeway to use resources in a way that makes the most sense for their students. If we channel more funds in this direction, on a per-student basis, we empower schools to support their disadvantaged learners with a level of flexibility that a single programme like the NTP can't offer.

When the pupil premium launched in 2011 it was laser-focused on increasing academic attainment. Over the years it has shifted to a more general purpose of supporting pupils in the school environment. This makes sense given the budget shortfalls schools have faced in the intervening time, but a refocus would make sense.

In fact, there is a good case to be made for it to be split into two pots: one focused on academic progress and another for broader support. Schools were using the pupil premium for tuition long before Covid and the NTP. They will continue to do so, and could perhaps do it more effectively if they are less



“ NTP has done a lot of good – but it's time to retire it

tied up with red tape, especially if the focus shifts back to measuring resulting academic progress.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing: to lift those students who've been knocked down by circumstance, whether that is due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, by economic disadvantages, or by other challenges in accessing quality education.

And while we can all agree that education funding is essential, it might be time for a strategy that trusts schools to make the most of their resources. After all, they know their students best, the challenges they face, and what it takes to overcome them.

The NTP was a welcome post-pandemic initiative. It has done a lot of good in a short period of time and it has also raised the quality standards of tutoring providers overall. But now, in short, it's time to retire it.

Instead, we need to give schools the power to choose — to invest in quality educational support tailored to their students, rather than a

one-size-fits-all solution. It's not just about keeping a programme running; it's about ensuring that every pound spent genuinely contributes to a student's learning journey.

As we move forward, we need policymaking that reflects a deeper trust in our educators. Let's provide them with the means to wield their expertise effectively and make a lasting difference where it truly counts.

By shifting the conversation from whether we extend the programme to how we can best support our educators and students, we open the door to innovative, sustainable solutions that hold the key to educational equity.

Ending the NTP doesn't have to mean tuition once again becomes the preserve of those who can afford it. It can mean putting schools in the driving seat to close educational gaps. Tuition will be an instrumental part of that work, but only if quality — not affordability — is our primary concern.

# Opinion

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

## A growing set of leadership programmes is nurturing leaders who can weave the 'golden thread' of professional development into rich local tapestries

The 'golden thread' of evidence underpinning the DfE's teacher and leadership development programmes is hugely valuable. But for its true value to be realised, it needs to be woven together with other threads – contextual understanding, deep relationships, and clear purpose.

And to achieve that, we need skilled weavers in full control of their materials and with a view of the whole fabric. Without that, the golden thread risks becoming 'educational bling' rather than real gold.

So how do we support school and trust leaders to weave strong, beautiful fabrics? How do we create the conditions where leaders have sufficient understanding and ownership of the evidence to deploy it in ways appropriate to their context? And how do we enhance leaders' sense of possibility so that they can collectively lead change for the benefit of all children?

These questions have been central to the development of a set of leadership programmes, co-ordinated by the Reach Foundation and co-created with 30 partner trusts across England. SW100, West100, Yorks100 (and, from September '24, East100) focus on developing aspiring headteachers regionally. Meanwhile, LeadingTrusts caters for aspiring trust CEOs nationally.

The programmes complement the knowledge gained on NPQs. Each has a distinct local flavour, but all prioritise developing leaders with a commitment to children experiencing disadvantage in their local area. They are designed with three core principles in mind.

### Locally rooted, nationally connected

Each programme starts with understanding local context. Asking how we can develop headteachers to

GAIL BROWN

CEO, Ebor Academy Trust

LORRAINE HEATH

CEO, Blackdown Education Partnership



## Weaving the 'golden thread' is key to its impact

run great schools in the West Country, for example, demands a more nuanced answer than a generic or universal approach to the problem.

A deeper understanding of the assets and challenges in our communities invites us to consider specific problems and to create specific solutions, drawing on contextual knowledge as well as nationally available evidence. Mapping assets in our communities in Yorkshire, for instance, has opened our eyes to new opportunities to support our children.

Starting with a local focus pushes us to understand how to make effective use of evidence in our schools. By making this a collective endeavour, we reduce the burden on individuals to translate evidence into their own context and build shared ownership and understanding of what is effective

locally.

This focus on understanding the local context is combined with a commitment to helping all programme participants to feel 'nationally connected'. Through visits to a wide range of schools and trusts across the country, participants have the chance to gain new perspectives on their own struggles and successes.

These visits are about stimulus, not solutions. Long bus rides home provide plenty of opportunities for long discussions and deep reflection, a chance to plan how beautiful, newly discovered threads might be woven into their local fabrics and help the golden thread shine a little brighter.

### Relationships matter

Second, we invest heavily in relationships between aspiring leaders

in a local area. Residential elements of the programme are held in self-catered houses where participants cook together, learn together, and build the trust required to challenge each other's thinking.

These relationships galvanise leaders around the shared purpose of challenging disadvantage in their region. Several alumni of the programmes who are now headteachers have said they would not have applied for their roles without the support of peers in their local cohorts.

More than that, fostering a collective will to lead local change builds and sustains motivation among participants. There is a shared courage to act and to support each other to make the bold decisions needed to meet the challenges in what is a high-stakes environment.

### Clarity of purpose

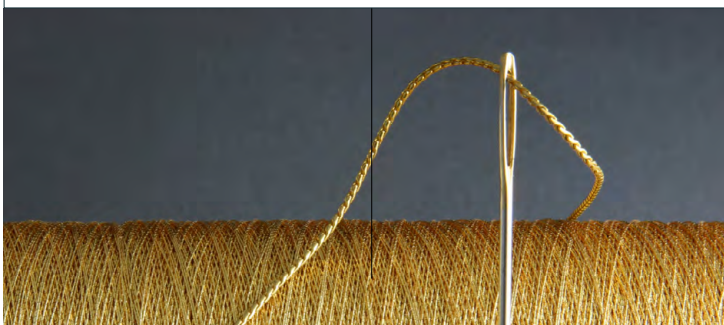
Finally, the '100s' programmes are designed to help participants clarify what really matters to them as leaders before they step into headship or trust leadership. This clarity of purpose is more important than ever in a rapidly changing system with schools often cast as the 'last institutions' in their communities.

This presents a significant opportunity for schools and trusts to re-imagine their roles. But to influence widely and partner successfully so that all children can thrive, leaders need a very clear direction and the agility to navigate untrodden paths.

The golden thread provides some but not all the answers about how to do this. To be impactful, it needs to be woven. This is what the '100s' programmes help leaders do.

This article was co-authored with Tim Coulson, CEO, Unity Schools Partnership, Tim Rutherford, Deputy CEO, Ted Wragg Trust, and James Townsend, Executive Director, Reach Foundation

“The golden thread risks becoming educational bling”



# Solutions

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



## KAYLEIGH FROST

Head of clinical support, Health Assured: Endsleigh, Pupil Assistance Programme

### Solutions: Recognising and mitigating early signs of mental health issues

**Despite variations from child to child, the value of early discovery can't be underestimated**

Childhood and adolescent years can be difficult to navigate and even harder for children and young people coping with mental health issues. And with the continuing, unprecedented pressures they face, there is a growing need for professionals to recognise the early signs and put mitigation strategies in place where possible.

**Early warnings**

Recognising early signs of mental health disorders in children and young people could save a life and make a significant positive difference to their mental wellness. These can vary significantly from child to child, but there are common ones to look out.

These include sudden and significant mood and behaviour changes, unexpected poor academic behaviour and performance (usually indicating they are worrying about something else rather than focusing on their academic studies), changes in social habits (like who they play with in the playground and how, for example, or being less motivated for school and social opportunities), and sleeping problems or difficulty sleeping, which may be evident as

tiredness in class.

These can manifest in many ways, but some early indicators might include sudden irritability, a change in the quality of their schoolwork, becoming withdrawn or appearing sad or worried for a protracted period, changes in their eating habits and, of course, any evidence of self-harming.

**First responders**

Teachers are often the first to witness a problem, because disclosing at school can feel safer than doing so at home. You may not be certain you are interpreting signs correctly, but this is very much a case where it's better to be safe than sorry.

If you are concerned about a child's or young person's mental health, you should always take active steps to alleviate and mitigate their worries.

**Talk now rather than later**

Don't wait for children to speak to you, if you feel as though the child or young person has a problem or needs to talk, initiate the conversation. If you are concerned about their behaviour, sit them down in a calming atmosphere and approach the topic with sensitivity.

**Take them seriously**

It's important to listen and understand the value of what



“ The worst strategy of all is to say nothing

the child or young person has to say. Because they may not know how to articulate the emotions they're feeling, it can be easy to underestimate the weight of their words and brush off what could be a cry for help. This can lead to the child feeling unheard and unsupported.

**Encourage their interests**

Interests can be a necessary outlet for children and young people. Whether that be creative, physical, or practical. If the activity is positive and safe it should be nourished.

Support and actively promote their favourite hobbies and show interest. They will begin to feel comfortable and be more open with you.

**Normalise talking about emotions**

Creating an open and honest environment surrounding emotions, feelings and communication is vital when safeguarding a child's or young person's mental health.

Discussing emotions and feelings regularly creates a positive communication culture and relationship around tough subjects.

Once this is established, children and young people will feel more comfortable and willing to discuss what is troubling them.

Adults often get scared that they're going to say the wrong thing or that they're going to cause offence, but the worst strategy of all is to say nothing.

**A culture of care**

As the saying goes, a problem shared is a problem halved. Remember that any problem shared with you becomes a burden for you too, and you will not be able to sustain supporting a child or young person coping with their mental health issues if you are struggling with your own.

Make time for self-care, and ensure you work with and through the designated professionals in and around your school to share the burden even further. Remember that other saying: It takes a village to raise a child.

As caregivers, we share responsibility for students' mental health. To do that effectively, we need professional development and professional support.



# THE REVIEW

## GEOFF AND MARGARET'S OLD SCHOOL BOOK OF RETIREMENT TALES

BOOK  
TV  
FILM  
RADIO  
EVENT  
RESOURCE

**Authors:** Geoff and Margaret

**Publisher:** Focus Education

**Publication date:** December 2023

**ISBN:** 9781911416784

**Reviewer:** Ed Finch, Teacher and facilitator, Devon

Who remembers the distinctive scent of the banda machine? Purple blotches on the teacher's hands after a lunch break coaxing fuzzy maps from the clackety monster in the corner of the office?

Who remembers getting the wall bars out and playing 'off ground it'? Who remembers Geordie Racer, the highlight of the week, the big telly on wheels?

Who remembers *When A Knight Won His Spurs*, *Autumn Days*, *I Was Cold I Was Naked* *Were You There*?

The teaching profession is just as prone to nostalgia as any other. Perhaps more than most. Dipping into the pages of *Geoff and Margaret's Old School Book of Retirement Tales* tickles that very specific part of the brain that harbours memories of a childhood; teachers fierce and teachers kind, apple crumble and a paper trimmer that could take your arm off if used unsupervised.

No expense has been spared to make this rather lovely book a potent nostalgia trap. Nice paper, beautifully designed, full colour photos and facsimiles of wonderful things – a cross stitched rectangle of binka, a Coomber cassette player, the BBC Music and Movement resource (I still resent a scolding from Mrs Wainwright who said I had been 'leaping' when I should have been 'jumping').

Articles on school trips, mobile classrooms, reading schemes and more open each chapter. Short snippets of reminiscence are drawn from tweets sent into the Retirement Tales twitter account (back before there was any of this 'X' nonsense) and, holding the book together, is the story of Geoff and Margaret and their unlikely

decision to leave their comfortable retirement and head back to the classroom.

Geoff and Margaret became an instant sensation in late 2021 when they answered the call of then education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi to retired teachers to return to active duty to help our beleaguered, Covid-hit schools.

Whether Geoff and Margaret are real people, or were based on real people, or whether (as their Twitter biography claimed) they were purely allegorical was a matter of hot debate.

So far as I am aware, the debate remains unsettled. Either way, they felt very real and kept us entertained through the 'big' lockdown of early 2021 and beyond.

Margaret has the time of her life bringing back time-worn skills of storytelling, handicrafts and fuzzy felt puppetry to classrooms that seem to have lost or left behind some of the basic elements of early childhood education.

Geoff finds himself teaching three year groups at once, organising rounders out on the field with only the site manager for support.

A recurrent character is the 'lovely head'. Among the fun reminders of times gone by and insights into life in schools dealing with a pandemic, we get snippets that seem very, very personal and very, very true.

"The lovely head took me to one side at lunch and ended up telling me all about his money worries. I could see how it was troubling him. I told him it's ok to open up and I listened as intently as I could in a busy dining hall."

Threaded through this book is a vein of anger at the state that our education system has been allowed to fall into – Geoff and Margaret may only have been retired a few years, but



they perceive a profession in a state of desperation and school leaders barely holding the show together.

Certainly, most will buy this book for the nostalgia; it's a perfect book to dip into, but alongside that is a contrast between today's stretched and difficult education world – one which is as hard or harder for the pupils as it is for the staff – and a time when schooling seemed kinder, more human perhaps.

Of course, nostalgia often gives the past a rosy glow. Perhaps schools in the sixties and seventies weren't quite as lovely as Geoff and Margaret remember them.

But there's a call to arms here, a call for an education in which children can be children and teachers can, gloriously, be 'real' teachers. A call for our post-pandemic schools to live up to the promise of a heartfelt education.

★★★★★  
Rating

## THE CONVERSATION

### LISTENING IN ON THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM



**Frances Akinde**  
SEND adviser and neurodiversity champion

It's been another interesting week in education, but I missed most of it due to a blocker I put on my phone. This is an app that limits my time on social media. As a result, I have been much more focused and productive, but I must admit I have had a touch of FOMO now and then.

Delving back in to crowdsource my contribution to this week's column, I was drawn to several discussions that share a central concern about freedom of expression.

### NOT ARTSING ABOUT

I strongly believe that art education deeply enriches students' learning experience and prepares them for life after school by encouraging self-expression, a strong sense of self-identity, confidence, and creativity.

So, it was worrying to hear of an announcement that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport would be conducting a full-scale review into Arts Council England (ACE), which invests public money into arts and culture for the benefit of everyone in Britain. The review will determine whether it should continue to operate in its current form.

Bizarrely, in response, instead of talking about the value of the arts and their role in supporting this, ACE instead issued a statement advising organisations that "overtly political or activist" statements made by individuals linked to them could pose

reputational risks and lead to broken funding agreements.

Artists and cultural figures have criticised this move, calling it akin to censorship. One of the most vocal critics of the review was Bob and Roberta Smith, a pseudonym for the artist Patrick Brill, who posted a series of messages on X challenging the government's motives and defending the role of ACE in supporting artistic freedom and diversity.

He also created a painting titled Hands off our arts council, which he displayed outside the ACE headquarters in London.



**Bob&Roberta Smith**  
@BobandRoberta

Trying to make less art work work to fit in with @aceagrams new restrictions on political activity in the arts



Amid ongoing concerns about impartiality in the classroom, this is a debate that raises important questions about the arts in education. I've had some pretty strong views of my own about that, so I better unblock my phone!

### DIALLING IT IN

As an adult, I have the choice and freedom to do that, but over the past week the issue of phones in schools has reared its head again after the government finally published its mobile phones in schools guidance.

There is a certain irony in watching the proponents of an outright ban take to their phones during school hours to defend their position, but for me the key takeaway – and also deeply ironic in its own way – is the complete distraction this represents from the



**Anne Longfield**  
@annelongfield

There's a long list of priorities for most schools & new guidance on mobile phones isn't at the top for many but it's here anyway. Good to join @branwenjeffreys @adamfleming #BBCNewscast today to talk about it.



sector's many very real concerns.

The response that best encapsulated this position for me came from the former children's commissioner Anne Longfield:

As the world of social media did what it does and argued at length on whether to ban or not to ban, I couldn't help but think that this is not the question.

Individual schools and teachers can see mobile phones as a hindrance or a help and enact policies accordingly. But the fact remains that the technology can be addictive and a complete waste of time (hence my blocker).

Banning its use in schools doesn't make the problem go away. It displaces it, and could in fact make it worse. As educators, we surely have a role to play in teaching young people and families about the benefits and drawbacks of their use, how to access them in age-appropriate ways, and indeed how to make use of restrictive tools like my blocker to limit exposure.

Not that we have a ban or anything like it. Just toothless guidance that provides cover for some heads while shunning the real problem. Worse, its very toothlessness just feeds division and makes consensus less likely.

Our children deserve better. And I imagine we don't have to go far on the internet to find that they're letting us know through their art. Which they're making politically. On their phones.

Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts



# The Knowledge

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



## How are schools managing SEND pressures?

**Rik Chilvers, safeguarding consultant and SEND lead, Judicium Education**

“Budget! Escalating needs!”

This staccato three-word response from one SEND professional well sums up the stress and pressure school leaders feel about this area currently.

The reply came to a question in Judicium’s new survey of SENDCOs and school leaders working in England’s schools about how personally exposed they felt by SEND regulations.

At a time when government statistics show that more than 1.5 million pupils are now classified as having special educational needs, our findings reveal that two-thirds of SENDCOs feel current regulations leave them vulnerable.

It’s clear that SENDCOs and senior leaders need access to more support and advice if they are to be totally confident in their SEND provision in the future. But while feeling exposed is a consistent finding, there are revealing discrepancies too.

While 65 per cent of SENDCOs felt exposed in this way, just under half of senior leaders (47 per cent) reported feeling the same. This suggests a disconnect between SENDCOs and other leaders. Senior leaders in primaries (54 per cent) were more likely to feel exposed compared to their peers in secondaries (40 per cent).

Senior leaders felt exposed because of challenge from parents/carers, constrained resources and the difficulty of balancing SEND priorities with other whole-school strategic work. SENDCOs cited a lack of resourcing within the school for SEND and external agencies being unwilling or unable to provide support.

The survey also revealed that high workload, lack of funds and emotional trauma were the top three factors contributing to the lack of SENDCO retention, with headteachers and senior leaders more optimistic that their SENDCOs will stay in their roles than SENDCOs themselves.

There was consensus across all school types and phases when ranking the top three most challenging SENDCO responsibilities: EHCPs, managing SEND budgets, and the physical health of children with SEND.

And our findings showed that some staff lack



### ‘Almost two-fifths of SENDCOs are not on SLT’

knowledge around SEND, even SENDCOs, with 12 per cent of all senior leaders reporting they were either ‘not very knowledgeable’ or ‘not knowledgeable at all’ when supporting children with SEND.

Just over a third of SENDCOs (34 per cent) said they were ‘quite knowledgeable’ about supporting children with SEND, while 13 per cent reported they were only ‘quite familiar’ with how their school supported children with SEND.

Our survey, carried out towards the end of 2023, questioned more than 600 professionals with responsibility for, or overview of, children with SEND and services linked to SEND. One-third of the respondents were SENDCOs, with headteachers and other senior leaders accounting for two-thirds of responses.

Other key findings included that 81 per cent of SENDCOs reporting they have responsibilities outside of SEND. The main additional responsibility for 77 per cent of SENDCOs is teaching, followed by safeguarding, a huge role carried out by half of SENDCOs.

Almost two-fifths of SENDCOs are not on SLT, which could reduce how effectively they can strategically lead SEND. And the resulting high workload – a combination of SEND responsibilities, additional roles in school and, in some cases, senior leadership tasks

– could negatively impact SENDCO retention and drastically reduce the quality of support provided to SEND children.

We also found that senior leaders and SENDCOs contrast in their understanding of SENDCO responsibilities. Senior leaders put referrals as the number one SENDCO responsibility while SENDCOs choose identifying children with SEND.

Referrals typically take more time and resources to complete compared to identifying children with SEND, and this could make SLTs overestimate the amount of time SENDCOs have. This could show a lack of clarity of who is responsible for certain types of SEND provision and where to focus efforts, leading to confusion between senior leaders, SENDCOs and TAs.

In turn, that could negatively affect SEND children’s outcomes due to inefficient tracking and monitoring of SEND children’s needs.

It’s clear that there are a range of issues facing SENDCOs and senior school leaders – challenges brought into sharp relief by the significant increases in children being classified with SEND and constrained budgets.

The emphatic message from our data is that schools need additional support and training alongside much-needed funding to address those challenges, and address them swiftly.



*Week in*

# Westminster

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

## MONDAY

It came on our radar today that not only have RAAC schools had to deal with huge disruption, they have even had important coursework and books held hostage to the crumbly concrete for months!

The Department for Education had to fund and co-ordinate the retrieval of school items stuck in inaccessible RAAC classrooms at St Leonard's Catholic School, in Durham, back in October.

The items had been stuck since September, a government response to a parliamentary question from Mary Kelly Foy – the local MP – revealed.

However, like the *Mission Impossible* films, it turned out that there needed to be a sequel: the school advised the government in December that more items were missing, and they were recovered days later.

\*\*\*

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council held a press briefing after the impending government intervention over its failing SEND services.

The briefing was recorded – but unfortunately not snipped when the Q&A session ended, so it picked up a few comments officials probably wished it had not.

Cathi Hadley, the council's children's services director, asks Richard Burton, councillor for children services, "did you enjoy that?"

To which Burton laughs and replies: "Did YOU enjoy it?" Hadley: "No" (laughs).

There is a bit of general chit-chat and then Hadley says: "So, we will be on BBC South tomorrow, won't we?"

Burton: "Probably, yes".

Hadley: "Never mind".

Despite getting a notice this week, the council has been keen to stress that it has been making improvements since the plan was reviewed back in July.

Burton acknowledges this by seeming to suggest that, despite journalists saying "this week" and "now", they are actually "looking backwards" because issues have already been addressed, to which Hadley replies: "It's old news."

We're not so sure that schools and local parents – who are still getting a raw deal – will feel that way.

\*\*\*

By most accounts, Sir Martyn Oliver's first big public appearance since taking over at Ofsted went well.

Being interviewed at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference (conflict alert: run by our publisher's EducationScape), Oliver was honest and also spoke passionately about the watchdog's problems that he is trying to resolve.

While that might have been a breath of fresh air, it was also nice to see that the long-held tradition of the chief inspector being closely accompanied at all further education events by Paul Joyce, the deputy director for FE and skills, was continued!

## TUESDAY

A warning for school fundraisers everywhere: beware freebies from MPs!

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt faces a ticking off by the parliamentary watchdog over offering access to the House of Commons for his local primary school's annual fundraiser.

Parents could bid for "traditional English tea" with Hunt and his wife. The prize has

been offered for a few years now.

But it turns out that the kind-hearted gesture seems to break Commons rules, which forbid such arrangements.

A spokesperson for the chancellor told the *I* newspaper this week: "Mr Hunt was simply trying to support his child's primary school for no personal gain. He has referred himself to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and apologised if any inadvertent breach of the rules took place."

\*\*\*\*

Continued calls this week for the government to keep funding the National Tutoring Programme (and, rarely, not just from the tutoring organisations who will no doubt want to keep their new income stream alive).

A letter from MPs to Hunt said that not extending the cash past the end of this academic year (when it is due to end) would have a "significant and highly detrimental impact on the infrastructure that state funding for tutoring in our education system has created".

Showing just how important the issue is, the letter was signed by a grand total of ... five of the 650 MPs!

The calls also look like they will fall on deaf ears. Responding to a parliamentary question about what happens to tutoring post-August, academies minister Baroness Barran said they "anticipate that tutoring will continue to be a staple offer from schools".

They expect leaders will use their "core budgets and pupil premium funding to provide targeted support for those children who will benefit". So that's alright then!

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# Charter.

## Join our team: Director of Secondary Education

This is a terrific role for an ambitious education professional. With three secondaries, two with sixth forms and all improving from strong positions as good or better schools, you will lead and support their talented headteachers and their teams.

The next step in our development is building cohesion around our approach to secondary education, as all our schools are different. Naturally, although our foundations are strong. We also want to improve our outcomes further.

Our new director will be surrounded by a talented central team who achieve results collaboratively and with integrity, based on evidence of what works.

We also expect our new director to be outward facing so we can learn and grow further alongside schools and trusts in our region and beyond.

If you share our mission to deliver better futures for children and young people, particularly those from social and economic disadvantage, please apply through our website: [www.chartertrust.org.uk](http://www.chartertrust.org.uk)

Closing date is 4 March 2024 at 5pm, with interviews planned for week commencing 11th March 2024.

Find out more here:



LOUGHBOROUGH  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Headteacher

Loughborough Primary School in Lambeth is seeking to appoint an exceptional headteacher, with a vision for outstanding learning. We always go 'above and beyond' for the children and our community and are about to embark on the next phase by joining The Charter Schools Educational Trust (from June 2024).

Our school, at its heart, has a strong moral purpose and desire to achieve social justice for all pupils. We have a pre-school provision for 2-year olds and an on-site Nursery. We are moving to one form of entry. Ofsted noted (March 2023), 'the school could be judged outstanding now in a graded inspection.'

#### Our values are:

- Try your best
- Show resilience
- Collaborate
- Respect yourselves and others

Through innovative practice we strive for excellence, enabling pupils to achieve their highest potential. We develop great thinkers who demonstrate curiosity, resilience and embrace challenge, becoming global citizens, fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Our next headteacher will have an ambitious vision, that puts the Brixton community at the heart of everything, someone equipped with the knowledge and experience to foster a culture where our staff and children can continue to thrive. The successful candidate will demonstrate expertise in curriculum and assessment, behaviour management, and organisational leadership. We seek a leader who is not only confident and motivated but also eager to develop our diverse and talented staff through evidence-informed practices and collaboration within the wider Trust. We think this is the perfect first headship or perhaps an opportunity to take on a different context if you are an experienced headteacher.

**The closing date for applications is: Friday 8th March 2024 by 12:00pm**

**Interviews will be held: Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th March 2024**





A member of the  
**Laidlaw**  
SCHOOLS TRUST



# 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](#)



# 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](#)



## 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