

SCHOOLS WEEK

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



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apprenticeship boost
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P10-11

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DFE'S £1BN BUDGET BLACKHOLE BITES



- Double teacher pay rise pressures could push savings past £1 billion
- NPQs, top-up courses and governance scheme are all scaled back
- 'We won't shift dial when education seen as drain on Treasury coffers'

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Let's aim funding cut ire at the Treasury

The Department for Education could have a near £1.5 billion budget blackhole – and we've started to see the consequences this week, with funding for professional development and governance schemes go

The DfE believes managing to secure some funding for national professional qualifications – despite it being heavily scaled back – counts as a win. That's just how bleak things are in Sanctuary Buildings.

And expect to see more cuts over the coming weeks. Not only do ministers have to find nearly £850 million to cover last year's teacher pay grant, but they will also have to find more cash to stave off strikes this year.

One expert said ministers would be "crazy" to agree anything less than a three per cent pay rise.

DfE will likely try to claim some of this can be absorbed by the "headroom" in schools, but leaders will vehemently disagree.

The government *should* fully fund next year's pay rise. But the money will have to come from somewhere.

And herein lies the issue. The DfE doesn't have much wiggle room: most of its funding goes straight out the door, be it to schools or

universities.

Given the rebuilding and RAAC commitments, it's unlikely capital can be squeezed again.

That leaves spend on programmes – like NPQs – or admin costs, like its agencies. There are lots of little pots that could be canned, but we're looking at filling a big hole – so something else has to give.

But when you look at those bigger pots, there are no easy decisions. They could slash bursaries (but what about the recruitment crisis?), or MAT capacity funds (but can we just leave failing schools?).

Other big-ticket items include universal infant free school meals or the primary sports premium – it's unlikely either of those will be affected.

But we need to be clear on who is to blame here. The Treasury, gearing up for an election, is constraining public funding in favour of magicking up some tax cuts.

The right solution, as Sam Freedman puts it, is to put an end to "Treasury brain", which he describes as a "short-termist" approach to public funding. If not, we're just kicking the can further down the road.

Most read online this week:

- 1 **DfE slashes secondary teacher recruitment targets**
- 2 **DfE puts 40 staff on Advanced British Standard 'vanity project'**
- 3 **'Missed opportunity' as teaching hubs lose CPD role**
- 4 **Ofsted eyes tweaks to inspector role to boost expertise**
- 5 **Holiday pay guidance reviewed amid fears schools could be left out of pocket**

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ANALYSIS: FUNDING

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Cuts start to bite as DfE faces billion-pound budget blackhole

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education is wielding the axe on schools-related schemes as it faces up to a potential £1.5 billion budget black hole to fund teacher pay rises.

Government funding for national professional qualifications and teacher top-up courses has been scaled back, while a governance recruitment scheme will be axed in September, it was announced this week. It is likely that there will be more cuts to come.

The DfE used one-off capital and tutoring underspends to pay its near £500 million contribution to the 6.5 per cent pay deal reached with unions last summer. The department must now find nearly £850 million savings to fund the impact of that pay rise in the 2024-25 financial year.

On top of this, the DfE is working on a pay deal for 2024-25, which experts say must be at least 3 per cent. But the money must come from within the DfE's own budgets. The Treasury has refused to provide extra cash.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced in the budget that day-to-day departmental spending will rise by just 1 per cent, far below current inflation.

Nick Brook, chief executive of Speakers for Schools and chair of the government's tutoring advisory group, said it was "abundantly clear that the DfE does not have enough money in their budget to maintain a world-class education system.

"Education needs to be seen as a priority for government, not just a problem for the DfE to fix alone.

"Until education is seen as an investment in this country's future, rather than a drain on Treasury coffers, we stand little chance of shifting the dial far, in improving life chances of young people."

Part of the problem is the lack of headroom in the DfE's budget. Although it presides over revenue of £85 billion, £60 billion is taken up by school revenue funding, while £8 billion is spent on colleges and sixth forms, £6 billion is for early years and adult learning and apprenticeships cost £5 billion.

That leaves, at the most, around £6 billion



from which to find savings. Some of this would be politically difficult to cut, such as at least £1 billion in higher education support and funding, universal infant free school meals, teacher bursaries and children's social care support.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), if teachers get a 3 per cent pay rise and reimbursed for rising costs from September 2024, schools would need at least £700 million extra funding over and above existing plans. Taken with the cost of last year's pay award, that leaves a potential £1.5 billion shortfall.

This week, the government has pulled the plug on its Inspiring Governance scheme, which has helped to recruit 8,000 school governors and trustees since it launched in 2016.

The National Governance Association said the move was "nothing short of a disgrace" amid record-high vacancies.

Schools Week also revealed that funding for national professional qualifications and subject knowledge enhancement course has also been scaled back (see page 5).

Luke Sibieta, research fellow at the IFS, said the government's use of capital and tutoring underspends to fund pay was "never really a long-term strategy as the government can't permanently rely on unexpected under-spends".

He said it would be "crazy"

to agree anything less than a 3 per cent pay rise for next year. But finding the cash from day-to-day spending within existing budgets "seems a rather tall order and cutting budgets within a year always risks bad decisions".

The government is also reorganising the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education "in line with wider civil service efficiency savings", it emerged this week, introducing a voluntary exit scheme for staff.

A spokesperson said it had a "duty to deliver value for money for taxpayers, so regularly makes sure we are operating as efficiently as possible". Its work including on T-levels and post-16 qualifications "remains unchanged".

Geoff Barton, outgoing general secretary of the ASCL school leaders' union, said the DfE was "desperately searching down the back of every settee in the department for any money it can claw back to pay for ongoing commitments including the pay awards for teachers".

The cuts "further highlight the reality of the government's underfunding of education over the past 14 years, despite boasts about record spending".

It follows the chancellor's decision not to award further funding for tutoring in this month's budget. State subsidy of tutoring now ends in July and schools have warned that they cannot afford to continue to provide it themselves.



Nick Brook

'Great teachers will be lost' as government cuts NPQ funding

LUCAS CUMISKEY & JACK DYSON

@SCHOOLSWEEK

School leaders have questioned how they will pay for national professional qualifications (NPQs) after the government cut back on its free offer, a decision lambasted as a "disappointing short-term act".

Meanwhile, as part of budget cuts to pay for the teacher salary rise, the number of funded top-up subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) courses has also been slashed.

Both cuts were first revealed by *Schools Week* yesterday.

NPQ could reach 75% fewer teachers

As part of its Covid recovery plan, the Department for Education offered £184 million for schools to do NPQs for free.

The government said it would provide 150,000 qualifications for the sector over three years. It is understood that around 100,000 have been completed – but that cash will end this year.

From this autumn, only teachers and leaders in the top half of schools with the most youngsters on pupil premium will be eligible for funded NPQs.

This will apply across the full suite of qualifications and is also above the pre-Covid threshold of 30 per cent of schools that could access funding.

Meanwhile NPQs for heads, SENCOs and leading primary maths will be available for free to all schools.

However, *Schools Week* understands that the scheme will be capped at just 10,000 places. As funding for just the one cohort has been announced, this equates to a quarter of the number of NPQs started this year – which were run across two cohorts.

If a spring cohort was to be held, it would mean the number of people accessing free NPQs would be halved.

The DfE would not confirm the cap, nor how much less funding is now on offer. NPQ courses cost around £1,000, although leadership ones are more expensive.



'Will exacerbate recruitment crisis'

The news comes days after the National Federation for Educational Research warned that teacher retention looks set to worsen and after three lead NPQ providers were given positive Ofsted reports this week.

Gareth Conyard, joint chief executive at the 'outstanding' Teacher Development Trust, said: "This decision is particularly disappointing and feels like more of a short-term act than a considered, long-term plan."

He added that it was only likely to "exacerbate the recruitment and retention crisis".

Andrew O'Neill, head at All Saints Catholic College in west London, said he would now think twice about putting staff through NPQs if the school has to pay.

"We took advantage when it was free. If we have to go back to paying several thousands of pounds, I would have to really look at that because it becomes about the value of money and time for that member of staff to invest."

Paddy Russell, head at Ladybridge High School in Bolton, said the reduction in funding was "a concern. We would have to find a way to pay that cost if we are not eligible, which would be incredibly frustrating."

Hilary Spencer, chief executive at Ambition Institute, said "investing in teachers' expertise benefits the least advantaged pupils the most. So, where resources are tight, we support the logic of the decision to prioritise schools with the highest numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"However, all schools have

disadvantaged pupils, and many teachers move between schools across their careers. So we would encourage the government to make this cost-effective and well-evidenced professional development available to as many schools as possible."

A DfE spokesperson said: "We are backing our (NPQs) so that more teachers can upskill and provide a world-class education for our children."

Teacher top-up courses cut

SKE courses will now only be available in five subjects with the "greatest sufficiency challenges" from next month.

Courses will be funded for maths, physics, chemistry, computing and modern foreign languages.

Existing commitments for the four axed subjects – primary maths, D&T, English, biology and RE – will be "honoured for those candidates expecting to start" programmes up to and including April 10.

However, providers have been told they are no longer able to recruit for those subjects. If they do, the DfE will not pay for it, according to an email sent to the providers.

SKEs are designed to top up teacher trainees' subject knowledge. They can be taken prior to or alongside initial teacher training and can last anywhere between a fortnight and nine months.

They are described as a "key part of the department's teacher supply strategy and support recruitment to shortage subjects".

James Noble-Rogers, executive director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, said: "Potentially great teachers will probably be lost as a result."

The government bankrolled the programmes as part of a £122 million, four-year scheme in 2021.

Providers, which include universities, schools and trusts, were told to ignore their 2022-23 indicative funding allocations. They will be sent revised allocations for the rest of the academic year by the middle of next month.

The department has not confirmed the size of the reduction in funding.



James Noble-Rogers

Councils have £18m in SEND deficit bailouts withheld

SAMANTHA BOOTH
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Ministers have withheld nearly £18 million from five councils with high needs funding blackholes, with their bailout agreements now officially "suspended".

Cambridgeshire, Dorset, Hillingdon, Norfolk and Bath and North East Somerset's safety valve agreements are "currently subject to review", the Department for Education said on Thursday.

Payments of the grants to help plug SEND deficits have been "suspended, but will be made up if a revised agreement is reached".

In total, £17.7 million of £22.2 million has been withheld from these councils for the 2023-24 financial year. Both Dorset and Hillingdon received nothing.

It means £132 million in bailouts to help bring down budget deficits at the cash-strapped councils is now currently in limbo for 2024-25 and beyond.

Launched in 2021, safety valve bailouts come with strict strings attached, meaning councils have to make sweeping SEND provision cuts to access them.

The DfE has not said why the five bailouts have been put on hold. But this can happen "at any time", including when "insufficient progress" is being made "towards the authority reaching and sustaining an in-year balance".

Schools Week revealed this year how Cambridgeshire and Norfolk were put under "enhanced" monitoring by ministers as their



progress in cutting costs was deemed too slow.

Bath and North East Somerset councillor Paul May, children's services cabinet member, said its "forecast position is not correctly aligned with our plan following an increase in demand. We are working with the DfE on a revised plan".

Once it has been agreed, "withheld payments will be back dated".

Meanwhile, two other councils – Bury and Kirklees – have both had their agreements extended so they are now nine years long.

Ministers have also agreed four new agreements – taking the total of safety valve deals up to 38. That includes a £95 million nine-year package for Devon.

In return, the council must improve "inclusive capacity" in mainstream schools and improve data use to "make informed decisions about how the council spends money" to support children

with SEND.

Wiltshire must "foster a culture of change" to improve "trust and co-production" as well as increase specialist capacity in return for £67 million over six years.

Bristol council is set to receive £53 million over seven years, while Bracknell Forest must review its independent sector placements in return for £16 million.

Cheshire East had been in negotiations but does not feature on the list of agreements. Schools Week has approached the council for more information.

This week it was revealed that ministers have rejected Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's 15-year safety valve plan to get its £64 million deficit under control.

The DfE has been approached for comment on the next steps for the councils under review.

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Pushy parents 'not to blame' as schools lead surge in ECHP bids

Schools are far more likely than parents to have requests for education health and care plans (EHCPs) approved by councils, new research has revealed.

Freedom of information data collected from councils by Special Needs Jungle (SNJ) shows that 20 per cent of school and college applications for education, health and care plans (EHCPs) were rejected, compared with 51 per cent of parental requests.

Researchers claim the findings counter what they say is a growing narrative, including from councils and government, that "sharp-elbowed" parents are driving up demand.

While government data shows that 22 per

cent of needs assessment requests were rejected in 2022, this is the first breakdown on who those requests were from.

SNJ's data, from about three-quarters of councils, also suggests the national rejection rate for EHCPs could reach 29 per cent in 2023.

SNJ's data shows that schools made up two-thirds (63 per cent) of applications in 2023, compared with just 29 per cent of requests directly from parents and carers and about 7 per cent from young people or other organisations.

The Department for Education is due to collect this data itself for the first time from next year.

Matt Keer, SEND specialist at SNJ, said councils "need to explain why they are disproportionately refusing requests from families" and called for more transparency on decision making.

The number of requests for EHCPs soared from 64,555 in 2017 to 114,482 in 2022, government data shows.

Keer added: "It's hard to credibly argue that families are the primary reason why EHCP numbers are increasing when they submit fewer than 30 per cent of requests for an assessment and most of those requests get refused.

"SEND system leaders are fixated on

Continued on next page

Two-thirds of special schools full or over capacity

SAMANTHA BOOTH
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Around two-thirds of special schools are full or over capacity, new government statistics have suggested after a Schools Week investigation revealed a lack of data on the issue.

Department for Education data shows there are approximately 4,000 more pupils on roll in special schools than reported capacity.

It follows Schools Week investigations revealing the DfE did not collect central data on special school capacity – despite soaring numbers of pupils with education, health and care plans.

In 2022, we exposed how 54 per cent of special schools had more pupils on roll than the number commissioned by their council, with heads forced to cram pupils into converted therapy spaces and staffrooms.

Following our investigation, the DfE confirmed it would collect data on special school capacity from summer 2023.

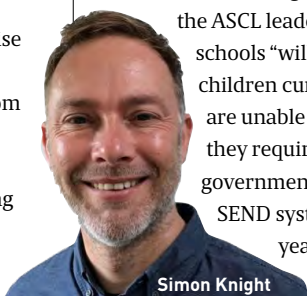
The data stated there were 148,000 special school places reported across 1,077 schools. However, the actual number on roll was 152,000 as of May last year.

“This is due to the number of schools at or over capacity (around two-thirds),” the DfE said.

This compared with 17 per cent of mainstream primaries and 23 per cent of secondaries being full or over capacity.

Simon Knight, co-headteacher at Frank Wise School in Oxfordshire, said his 120-place school has already had 160 consultations from councils for placements since September.

“The failure of effective capacity development in the specialist sector is having a profound impact on children, families and schools,” he said.



Simon Knight

“Insufficient capacity within the system increases pressure on schools to admit pupils beyond planned numbers, pitting the legally protected rights of those already having their needs met within the school against the legally protected rights of those who require their needs met who are not in a school.”

The government is investing £2.6 billion between 2022 and 2025 to increase special school and alternative provision capacity, including expanding existing schools.

However, promised new special free schools – including the 15 announced at the spring budget – take years to open.

Geoff Barton, outgoing general secretary of the ASCL leaders' union, said the new schools “will not meet the needs of children currently in the system who are unable to access the support they require, and neither will the government's planned reforms of the SEND system which are also some years away from delivery and

are underfunded”.

The DfE said the overcapacity special school figures may also “be a result of the way capacity has been measured, which does not take account of type of need”.

It added that, due to the “varied nature” of SEND provision, “there can be high amounts of local variation that national figures do not capture”.

The DfE also said the figures were “official statistics under development” and they expect the

data quality to improve over time.

Warren Carratt, CEO of special school Nexus MAT, said it was “progressive that the department are now starting to collate this data. But it is also an exercise that is chronically overdue and it just isn't good enough that the figures are ‘official statistics under development’ with data quality expected to improve over time.

“While we wait for that, the front line is facing more and more overcrowding of its schools and families are having to wait longer and longer for places.”

Carratt said this could also “shockingly” suggest that special schools are underfunded to the tune of £40 million – as councils do not have to pay top-up funding if a school is full.

This is something the government's SEND safety valve programme “actively encourages” among councils with large deficits, he added.

The DfE was approached for comment.

According to the data, the most over-capacity schools were in Essex and Lancashire.

Continued..

EHCP growth. Some of them see this as blameworthy, and some have taken a clear decision to blame families. But councils clearly know that most requests for assessments come from schools and colleges – not families.”

Margaret Mulholland, SEND and inclusion specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the figures show the “challenges” that schools “are having in

meeting the needs of the growing number of children requiring SEND support”.

She added: “Where there is a lack of access to specialist support, this can lead to a reliance on EHCPs as the route to additional funding.”

Abigail Hawkins, a school SEND consultant, said that when schools apply it is normally because they want to take the lead on it, rather than just doing it on behalf of parents.

If a parent requests help themselves, “it can

mean the school is on the backfoot trying to find evidence to support the request, such as assessment data, meaning the application quality isn't quite as detailed,” she added.

Ginny Bootman, SENCO at Evolve Church Academy Trust, added that working with parents on applications “gives us more clarity and understanding regarding the individual child's needs”.

The DfE was approached for comment.

ANALYSIS: RECRUITMENT

Recruitment and retainment of teachers still in 'critical state'

LUCAS CUMISKEY

@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

The National Foundation for Educational Research's annual labour market report concluded that the recruitment and retention crisis showed "no signs of abating", with teacher supply in a "critical state that risks the quality of education that children receive". Here's what you need to know:

1. Most secondary subjects could miss targets

...

The NFER's recruitment forecast, based on applications made up to February, suggests that the government will miss its secondary target by 40 per cent. Last year, it was missed by 50 per cent.

Ten out of 17 secondary subjects are likely to have shortfalls. Biology, English, religious education, geography, MFL and physics are on "track for slight improvements".

But target reductions in several subjects, including geography, design and technology, English and physics, have "also contributed to this improved outlook".

Recruitment in shortage subjects "improved slightly due to more generous bursaries".

2. ... and primary recruitment set to worsen

Primary recruitment is forecast to be about 17 per cent below target, a "significant deterioration" compared to last year when the target was missed by 4 per cent.

This is "driven in part" by the Department for Education's target having been revised up by 2.4 per cent, despite falling primary pupil numbers nationally.

Jack Worth, school workforce lead at the NFER and co-author of the report, said the trends "affirm that ambitious, radical and cost-effective policy options to address teacher recruitment and retention are urgently needed".

3. Behaviour driving higher workload

"Little progress" had been made on reducing teacher workload. Ministers "may face a challenge" in meeting their pledge to cut five



hours from the working week of school staff. The workload reduction taskforce is due to report this month.

The Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey found that the number considering leaving the profession increased by 44 per cent in 2022-23 – a warning sign that retention could worsen.

Teachers reported that pupil behaviour was "driving higher workload, and behaviour management and pastoral care are key priority areas for workload reduction".

The report called for "more support from outside agencies for specific pupil needs such as SEND support, mental health and safeguarding".

An independent review should be set up to focus on reducing workload related to behaviour management and pastoral care.

4. Sluggish pay making profession 'less competitive'

Last year's 6.5 per cent pay rise "stalled but has not substantially reversed the deterioration in the competitiveness in teacher pay since the pandemic".

Teachers' salaries had grown more slowly than pay in the rest of the labour market since 2010-11. It was "imperative this year's award continues to improve the competitiveness of teacher pay relative to other jobs".

The NFER said the 2024 pay award should exceed the 3.1 per cent rise in earnings expected in the wider labour market and be fully-funded.

Political parties should set out plans to "develop a long-term strategy for pay-setting which reduces the gap in earnings growth with competing occupations".

5. Compensate for lack of remote working

Remote and hybrid working remained "out of reach for most teachers".

Data showed that, "among similar graduates working in non-education occupations, the option to work from home two or three days per week had the equivalent value as a 6.2 per cent salary increase".

Providing compensation via a "frontline workers' pay premium" for teachers was "one option for preventing this inherent inflexibility from undermining the attractiveness of their jobs". This would equate to 1.8 per cent extra pay, on top of the more general rise.

6. Cash boosts prompted foreign teacher boom

In March 2023, ministers introduced international relocation payments, worth £10,000, to attract trainees and qualified languages and physics teachers from abroad to train or work in England.

Non-UK physics and languages trainees are also eligible to receive training bursaries, worth up to £28,000 in 2024-2025.

The NFER said these policy changes helped generate a boom in applications from outside the UK in 2023-24, particularly in physics, where the number of applications was up 253 per cent on the previous year.

But the surge in applications only led to a 41 per cent increase in acceptances, "almost certainly because of a higher than average rejection rate" and there were just 13 per cent more physics enrolments.

MFL had an 87 per cent increase in applicants, but just a 33 per cent increase in registrations.

A DfE spokesperson said the number of teachers had increased since 2010. However, pupil numbers have increased at a higher rate.

"We are taking steps to support their wellbeing and ease workload pressures, which includes plans to support schools to reduce working hours for teachers and leaders by five hours per week," the spokesperson added.

INVESTIGATION: SUPPLY

Supply teachers 'second class citizens' as pay stagnates

LUCAS CUMISKEY

@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

EXCLUSIVE

Supply teachers are stuck on "stagnating" pay rates and "treated like second-class citizens", fuelling a shortage amid booming demand, a union has warned.

Fifty-five per cent of supply teachers surveyed by the NASUWT union said their pay rates had not improved last year. Another 16 per cent of the 697 surveyed said their pay was actually lower.

Just 29 per cent said their pay had increased despite teachers getting a 5 per cent pay rise that year.

Dr Patrick Roach, general secretary of the NASUWT teaching union, said: "Supply teachers are a vital part of the education workforce. Yet they are continually treated like second-class citizens in terms of their pay, working conditions and access to pensions.

"All teachers, regardless of whether they are permanently contracted or working on supply, should be paid to scale at rates commensurate with their experience."

In short supply

The government does not publish figures on the number of supply teachers working in England.

But the Recruitment and Employment Federation (REC) said there is a "shortage" and that "teaching agencies, just like schools, want to see greater investment in bringing people to the profession".

According to REC analysis, there was an increase of 13 per cent for temporary roles in primary and secondary schools between February 2020 and last month. There was a 118 per cent surge in such listings for temporary SEND professionals over the same period.

Kate Shoesmith, REC deputy chief executive, said: "The teacher shortage that is affecting substantive staff also extends to supply teachers, with far fewer available now than pre-pandemic."

Data for Wales shows its total number of supply teachers fell by about 11 per cent from 2018 and 2022.

Niall Bradley, chair of the National Supply Teachers Network, said "anecdotally we think England is the same or worse" than Wales.

"I have got lots of supply teachers telling me agencies they haven't worked for in years are



emailing, calling them up." One had calls from three different agents in the same day, he said.

The latest official data shows that in 2022-23, some £698 million was spent on supply teaching costs in England, a 12.3 per cent increase from 2021-22.

This apparent rise in demand was reflected in the NASUWT's latest survey, which found that "for an increasing proportion of supply teachers, the opportunities for work have increased."

Demand up, but pay stagnating

Two-thirds (66%) of NASUWT survey respondents said they are typically paid no more than £149 a day, less than the equivalent of a teacher on the lowest point of the teacher pay scale, M1.

The latter gets about £153.85 a day, based on a 195-day academic year, NASUWT said.

Over a quarter (28%) said they sourced work outside of teaching during the academic year, while 12 per cent reported having to claim some form of state benefit, such as Universal Credit.

Nearly half said they had experienced financial hardship, while a quarter travelled more than 20 miles for work.

Sharon Calvert, 61, who lives in Knaresborough, in North Yorkshire, is a SEND specialist who has worked as a supply teacher since 2017.

"I know younger teachers who work nights to make ends meet, just so they've got

money coming in," she said. "It's such a precarious situation that people just go and do something else."



Kate Shoesmith

Agencies blamed as profits soar

The National Education Union this week held a rally outside the London office of Teaching Personnel, one of the largest supply agencies, to highlight alleged "gross profiteering and exploitation".

NEU analysis of the eight leading supply agencies' most recent accounts revealed their combined turnover was £436.6 million, up 39 per cent on £314.3 million the year before.

Their combined gross profits surged by 55 per cent to £109 million, up from £70.4 million, the union said.

Roach added that "agencies are charging schools more and, rather than passing on these gains to the supply teachers, they are profiteering ... at the expense of hardworking teachers and the taxpayer".

The union wants political parties to regulate supply teachers' pay and conditions and "provide them with the guaranteed rates of pay and access to the teachers' pension scheme they deserve".

But Shoesmith said schools and local authorities "set the pay rates for supply teachers, based on national budget allocations – not agencies".

"The real driver of slower growth in pay rates for supply staff is the huge pressure that school budgets are under," she added.



Dr Patrick Roach

SOLUTIONS: APPRENTICESHIP

Can the new teaching apprenticeship solve recruitment woes?

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

A new apprenticeship presents a “glorious” opportunity for those without a degree to train to teach, will help bring under-represented groups into the profession and give schools a much-needed option to spend levy funding.

But proponents of the move face an uphill battle to convince sceptics about the quality of the route, as unions warn it must not erode teachers’ pay and conditions.

So, will the proposed non-graduate apprenticeship provide a solution to the sector’s long-standing recruitment issues? *Schools Week* takes a look ...

How will it work?

The government announced last month that a long-awaited apprenticeship route into teaching for non-graduates will launch next year.

The four-year course, which would see apprentices achieve both a degree and qualified teacher status, will be piloted with “up to” 150 trainee maths teachers from September 2025, before a wider rollout.

Apprentices will spend around 40 per cent of their time studying and the rest of the time in the classroom. Ministers particularly want to see teaching assistants trained up via the route.

Robert Halfon, the skills minister, told *Schools Week* that the scheme “will help change the culture in schools around apprenticeships”.

He said those completing the apprenticeship “will achieve the same high-quality, subject-specialist degrees and qualified teacher status as any other initial teacher training route, while having the opportunity to earn while they learn and avoid student debt”.

There will be one apprenticeship standard, but separate courses for different phases and subjects. Each will encompass an apprenticeship and a degree which leads to the award of qualified teacher status.

The maths teacher degree apprenticeship will be the first to launch, but those designing the qualification expect it to eventually be rolled out to primary and the full suite of secondary subjects.

Who’s leading on it?

The route has been developed by a “trailblazer group” of trusts, teacher trainers, universities and sector bodies (see box out).

It is chaired by the South Farnham Educational



Trust, which runs 10 schools in Surrey and Hampshire. The trust co-designed the existing postgraduate teaching apprenticeship, which now accounts for 4 per cent of trainees recruited nationally.

CEO Sir Andrew Carter said would-be teachers now often start as teaching assistants to “gain that experience so that, when they actually convert to the apprenticeship programme, they know they want to do it”.

The Delta Academies Trust is another trailblazer. Trustee Sean Cavan, who worked for decades at the education department of Sheffield Hallam University, said the apprenticeship would provide “another route which is not fundamentally different at all to the current QTS programmes”.

“It’s simply got the means of providing financial support and incentives to employers to get involved,” Cavan said.

How will it be funded?

The cost of apprentice training is funded through the apprenticeship levy. Every organisation with a pay bill of over £3 million pays a 0.5 per cent annual charge. They can then draw down funding to pay for training.

Smaller organisations contribute 5 per cent to the cost of training, and the government pays the rest. They can also be gifted levy funding from larger organisations.

However, employers – in this case schools, councils and trusts – will be responsible for paying apprentices’ salaries.

Those on the current postgraduate route are paid on the unqualified teachers’ pay scale, with some grant funding available in shortage subjects. But the Department for Education has said its approach is under review for the undergraduate route.

Carter predicted the new route would be “hugely attractive”, but he acknowledged that having to pay the salary – which is not the case on fee-funded routes into teaching – was “a downside”.

This means thinking “differently” about trainees.

“They aren’t someone who comes in, who sits on the edge and we may or may not use them later. We have to have a really big investment in them at the beginning when we select them and all the way through because it’s costing us their salary.”

Will it boost recruitment?

For trainees, the scheme is a “glorious” opportunity to get a professional qualification for free, to be paid while learning “and, at the end of it, you’re going to a profession where you’ll be welcomed with open arms”, Carter said.

Schools should also encourage former pupils to take up the route, he added.

“If we had two teachers out of every school in England, we would have a surplus. In a time of recruitment difficulties, we can’t see why anybody would not do it.”

But will it increase the number of teachers?

The postgraduate apprenticeship, a 15-month programme that requires an existing degree, launched in 2018. This year, there were 962 starts on the route, 4 per cent of all postgraduate trainees recruited.

Last year, the pass rate was 85 per cent, compared to a national average for level 6 apprenticeships of 65 per cent.

Trailblazers have also looked to nursing apprenticeships for inspiration. Last year, 1,690 people completed a nursing degree apprenticeship, representing about 0.5 per cent of the total workforce in England.

If similar recruitment was achieved for the teaching apprenticeship, it would equate to 2,341 extra teachers per year (or 7 per cent of the total target for 2024).

Recruitment pool widens

The trailblazers also believe that the new route could make the profession more diverse.

Teach First, one of the trailblazers, is in the

SOLUTIONS: APPRENTICESHIP

process of accrediting to offer the route in “a couple of years’ time”.

The charity’s chief executive Russell Hobby told Schools Week that there were “plenty of teaching assistants” without degrees, as well as others “for whom a university route is not the right decision for them”.

“It’s often a diverse source of talent, it’s often connected to the communities that schools find it hardest to recruit from as well. So, it’s exciting to consider the possibilities there.”

Robyn Johnstone, CEO of e-Qualitas, a teacher training provider, said the postgraduate route had “enabled us to find a different group of people who possibly might not have gone into teaching before, because they’ve generally been TAs in schools”.

“They’ve got a degree, but they’ve been working in school for a long time. They don’t want to leave and go into a PGCE – and have to have to pay for that. They want to work on a salaried route.”

What are the potential pitfalls?

The National Education Union has warned that the route will put “standards at risk, placing underqualified and inexperienced teachers into classrooms”.

The NAHT leaders’ union has also said that it is “very concerned about any proposals that look to truncate degrees and teacher training, as this scheme does”.

But Claire Harnden, South Farnham’s deputy CEO, said the course would be more “condensed” than a traditional programme, while time in the classroom allowed for more “practical application” of training.

And unqualified teachers would not initially be left unsupervised, Claire Donnachie, deputy director of the trust’s teaching schools hub, insisted.

As on other routes, apprentices will work “under the supervision of an experienced member of staff at the level that is appropriate to their stage of development”.

Hobby, himself a former general secretary of the NAHT, said the route must provide “rigorous subject knowledge” as well as a “full honours degree”.

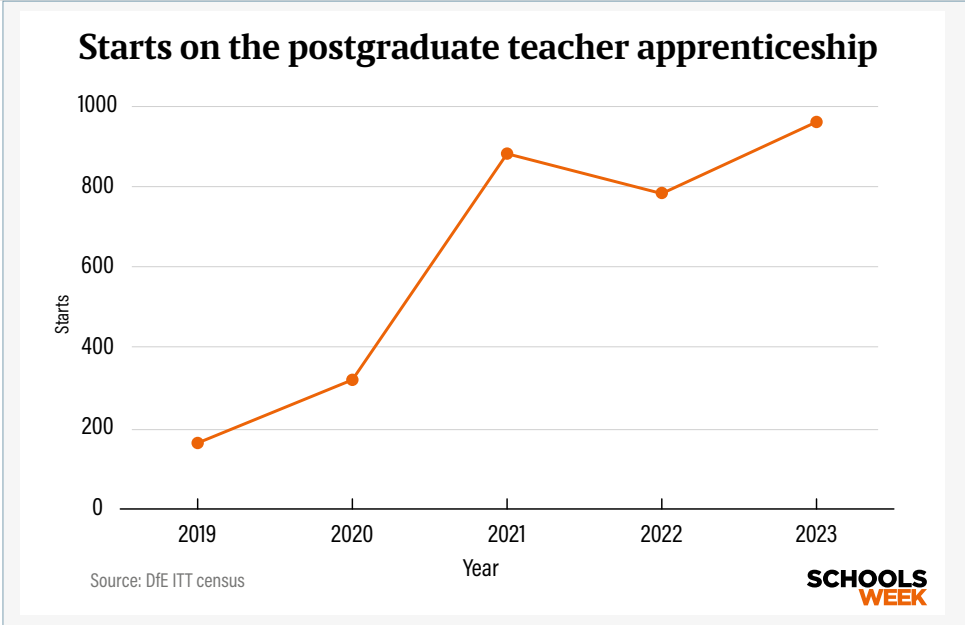
“There’s no reason it shouldn’t provide that,” he added. “Obviously, the government needs to do a stronger job of communicating that fact.”

Hobby said that ministers must also consider more generally the “capacity of primary schools for on-the-job training”, which is “limited by their budgets and infrastructure”.

“We need to think through how that might work for them, because I’d hate to see them excluded from this.”



Claire Harnden



Joe Guy, chief talent officer at the Academies Enterprise Trust, another of the trailblazers, said brilliant teaching was a “craft that is passed down generations”.

“There are challenges – things like getting the balance right between academic study and on-the-job experience and ensuring there is enough mentoring capacity in the system – but these are not insurmountable.”

‘Can’t be cut-price alternative’

With limited information about how apprentices will be paid, even unions supportive of the principle have voiced concerns.

Unison head of education Mike Short said the route was an “opportunity for teaching assistants without degrees to qualify as teachers while avoiding the full financial headache of being a student”.

But he flagged “practical concerns around supervision, release time, cover and pay when school resources are already stretched to the limit”, adding that apprenticeships “can’t be used as a cut-price alternative to current jobs”.

School leadership union ASCL sits on the trailblazers group. Sara Tanton, its deputy director of policy, said it was “vital that the support, training and particularly the subject knowledge provided to apprentices is on a par with other routes into teaching”.

“Given the variety of undergraduate degrees that may have been taken by teachers of a particular subject, this will not be simple to achieve,” she added.

She called for “clarity on the terms and conditions attached to the role. It is our view that these should be incorporated within the school teachers’ pay and conditions document.”

What happens now?

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education launched a consultation on the proposed apprenticeship “standard” – which governs what it covers and things like its entry requirements – this month.

The consultation closes on Monday. The pilot, which will see the DfE fund training for up to 150 maths apprentices, will run from September 2025.

- The teaching apprenticeship ‘trailblazers’**
- South Farnham Educational Trust
 - National Institute of Teaching
 - St John Vianney RC Primary School
 - Delta Academies Trust
 - Meridian Trust
 - Academies Enterprise Trust
 - Enlighten Learning Trust
 - University of Buckingham
 - Rainbow Education MAT
 - Harris Federation
 - Inspiring Future Through Learning
 - Mead Academy Trust
 - Leigh Academies Trust
 - UCET
 - Birmingham City University
 - NASBTT
 - ASCL
 - Essex and Thames Education
 - Keele and North Staffordshire Teacher Education
 - The Tommy Flowers SCITT
 - Nottingham Trent University
 - George Abbot SCITT
 - Teach First
 - ARK

INTERVIEW: UNIONS

Pandemic support was my proudest moment, says Barton

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

"I'm certainly not coming in to man the barricades for strike action," Geoff Barton told me almost exactly seven years ago when I visited his school in Bury St Edmunds.

Ironically, in his final year as general secretary of the Association of Schools and College Leaders, he almost did exactly that. Had it not been halted for a 6.5 per cent pay deal, the school leaders' union's historic ballot would almost certainly have passed tough thresholds for industrial action.

That pay dispute, conducted with what he says was an "extraordinary sense of discipline" by the four unions, is a proud achievement for Barton. It is also something that "probably strengthened the profession. It's certainly strengthened ASCL".

However, he still describes it as a "squalid period", admitting "we didn't get anywhere near the kind of deal which the profession would want".

'I was the storyteller'

It was ASCL's support for members during the "most difficult bit" of the pandemic that was "probably" his proudest moment, he tells me as we sit down at a Westminster hotel ahead of his glitzy send-off on Tuesday in the House of Commons.

As schools faced "often contradictory" guidance, an "extraordinary team effort" from union staff kept members informed via Barton's ubiquitous video briefings.

"I was the mouthpiece. I was the storyteller for all of that, but other people were picking and choosing which bits of the story needed to be told," he says. "I think we'll probably look back and think that was a defining moment for us."

Before he made the surprise decision in 2016 to challenge ASCL council's preferred candidate for general secretary, Barton was looking forward to retiring from a headship and travelling the country as an English and literacy consultant.

It is another irony, then, that he has just been appointed to lead an oracy commission for Voice 21, a charity co-founded by Peter Hyman, a senior aide to Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer.

Labour wants to weave oracy throughout the curriculum, offering what Barton calls an "historical moment for this to cut through in a way that it wouldn't otherwise".

Oracy plans

"I think what I would hope we might be able to do, whether Labour gets in or not, for any incoming



Geoff Barton

administration is say, 'here are a number of quite practical policy proposals. Pick and choose the ones you want to do. We've done the thinking on your behalf'."

The commission will be "short and punchy", reporting by September in time to inform debate at the party conferences.

Barton, a keen DJ who is famous within the sector for presenting friends and colleagues with CD mixtapes, will record "loads and loads of audio" and build a library of interviews for the project.

He also believes the commission's line-up – boasting names such as curriculum guru Christine Counsell and National Theatre boss Rufus Norris – means it will be "independent".

"I didn't want it having the same old faces there, the evangelists. If anything, to make it cut through, we need to have people who will give us some critical challenge to it."

Barton, who insists he is "not retiring... just retiring from things I didn't want to do anymore", is coy about whether he would want to be more involved in Labour's curriculum reforms.

He says there would be "projects which might come up", but "I don't want to be looking back". Invitations to speak about his time at ASCL will be rejected.

He does not want to "line manage anyone ever again", and insists there is "no way as someone who has taught a lesson seven years ago, I'm going to tell anyone how to teach".

"A few people asked me if I want to be a governor or a trustee. Not really. It's not my

skillset. I don't want to be wheeled out as yesterday's man, talking about what education was like. So, we will wait and see."

Williamson dealt tough hand

In his seven years, Barton has worked with eight education secretaries.

He wishes he had spent "longer working with Justine Greening", who he describes as "very smart and very savvy". Damian Hinds continued her work on developing teachers' early careers, before a "hamster wheel of just lots and lots of different people with varying levels of interest".

"People would assume Gavin Williamson was the hardest to work with," Barton says, "but I think he was dealt a very difficult card by Number 10.

"And, at the very least, he was incredibly human and personable – and funny, actually."

There was "something less tribal than, say, with the current secretary of state, who when you Google her, you know that she is essentially driven by the fact that she criticises the unions of Knowsley for the quality of her education".

What is the best advice that he can give Pepe Di'Iasio, his successor?

"You have got members who are doing all kinds of roles in all kinds of institutions, in all parts of the UK, all of whom are paying a subscription where they want you as general secretary to be speaking on behalf of them.

"Therefore, my advice is to listen to the membership. Pepe is incredibly personable... you just see how people gravitate to him. He's going to bring that authenticity."

INVESTIGATION: CEO PAY

Rise in £200k CEOs as pay ‘stagnation’ ends

JACK DYSON

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EXCLUSIVE

Forty-four CEOs have now crossed the £200,000 threshold amid wage rises of up to 50 per cent in five years – as leaders argue that salaries may now match those in private firms. Three more leaders now earn over £300,000.

Schools Week’s annual chief executive pay investigation reveals that trust bosses received, on average, a 5.2 per cent hike in 2022-23, taking them out of a period of wage “stagnation”.

Our analysis has found the best paid are getting better paid, but there is also a £14,000 gender pay gap.

Meanwhile we can reveal the Department for Education will resume its policy of naming and shaming the trusts under government scrutiny over high pay.

National Governance Association deputy CEO Sam Henson warned that trustees “must remain conscious that salaries are paid from public money”.

He added: “Given the charitable nature of an academy trust, we have always said the pay package will rarely be as high as what is given in the corporate for-profit sector. These recent findings show that may no longer be the case.”

The £300k club

We analysed the 2022-23 accounts for about 400 trusts with at least one member of staff earning £100,000 or more. This included those previously ordered by the government to justify executive salaries, and MATs with 10 or more schools.

Harris Federation CEO Sir Dan Moynihan again topped the list. His minimum salary rose for the first time since 2018-19, from £455,000 to £485,000 in the last academic year.

His supporters point to how he has helped raise millions for the chain. The trust has two other unnamed members of staff earning between



£230,000 and £250,000.

Dr Dayo Olukoshi, of Brampton Manor Trust, and Leigh Academies chief Simon Beamish joined Moynihan in the top three.

Olukoshi, who runs two schools in London, has seen his pay packet grow from £234,274 in 2018-19, to at least £310,000 last year.

Meanwhile, Beamish’s remuneration figure is at least £305,000, up by £80,000 in five years.

Sir Kevin Satchwell, leader of the standalone high-performing Thomas Telford School and linked Thomas Telford MAT, also joins the £300,000 club.

Best paid get better paid

In all, 44 chief execs broke the £200,000 barrier, up from the 35 recorded last year.

Audits of the trusts’ accounts show average earnings among their CEOs stood at just over £201,000 in 2018-19. This has since risen 16.5 per cent to almost £235,000.

Four recorded increases of 40 per cent or more over the period. On average, the trusts run by £200,000-plus earners oversaw 26 schools.

Cranford Community College, in Hounslow, was the only single-academy trust in the top 20.

Chief executive Kevin Prunty’s remuneration rose by 50 per cent, from a minimum of £150,000 to £225,000.

Jenny Lewis, chair of the trust’s board, said

Prunty had been contracted to turn around the fortunes of one of its subsidiaries, Cranford Community Trading Company Limited, after it had been rocked by Covid. He received more than £76,000 in wages and backdated pay last year for this.

The firm “runs all commercial events and activities on the academy site” ... [But] the business profit, after costs, has tripled following his appointment [in September 2021], generating an extra £105,000. [This was] a very wise value-for-money decision by the academy trust”

Stepping out of ‘stagnation’

Our audit last year found that wages rose by 2 per cent among the 20 highest paid and were virtually unchanged year-on-year across all the trusts.

The Kreston accountancy group annual report, which studies the accounts of about 300 academy trusts, noted that there “had only been very modest increases or stagnation” in pay in 2021-22.

But of those surveyed this time around, average pay has increased by 5.2 per cent, from £144,000 to £151,700. Teachers last year got a 5 per cent pay rise.

Henson added that the number of bosses breaking the £200,000 barrier needs further examination. “Is this reflective of some trusts getting bigger and merging, or is it the systemic result of a race to the top, where irresponsible benchmarking gives rise to an ever-upward trend?”

“Many boards would rightly argue that one of the best things they can spend money on is the very best leader, but this must be proportionate and respectful of the fact this is public money.”

Of the CEOs from the 20 largest MATs, three were given hikes of 10 per cent or more, our analysis suggests. Four remained in the same banding, while pay fell in only one of the trusts.

Henson said there was a “fine balance that has to take priority – affordability in a sector that is

The £300k club’s new members



Dr Dayo Olukoshi



Simon Beamish



Sir Kevin Satchwell

INVESTIGATION: CEO PAY

facing a crippling financial situation, while still being able to attract and retain the right levels of talent”.

In comparison, housing association CEO pay rose by 5.1 per cent to £164,589, according to Inside Housing.

NHS guidance proposes wages of about £265,000 for those running its largest trusts. However, a recent Health Service Journal investigation revealed that five now earn more than £300,000.

Pay increases of up to 59%

Almost three-quarters of the chains analysed reported rises of some kind. The highest was at 15-school Synergy Multi Academy Trust, where Robert Martlew’s remuneration rose nearly 59 per cent from £85,000 to £135,000.

A MAT spokesperson said its “pay bands and remuneration are in line with Norfolk County Council’s” as well as the schoolteachers’ pay and conditions, national pay awards and the academy trust handbook.

Despite this, the Confederation of School Trusts (CST’s) executive



Sir Jon Coles

salary survey for 2023, published in August, noted that CEOs “saw a smaller increase year-on-year compared with the total for all senior staff, which stood at an increase of 6.3 per cent”.

One trust leader, who did not want to be named, suggested this could be due to the recent proliferation of benchmarking data available and a desire among some to avoid “PR disasters”.

“We doubled in size in a short period. If we did ours linked to growth, it would look crazy,” they added.

Thirty-three trusts also reported reductions in the earnings of their top earners. Three saw wages fall by 30 per cent or more.

Of these, one had a leader leave during the year, while the others welcomed new ones at the start of the academic year.

Helen Stevenson, director of recruitment company Satis Education, said roles previously held by founding chief execs have been “readvertised not quite at the same level”.

£14k CEO gender pay gap

Our figures suggest that Jacqueline Valin, of Southfields Multi Academy Trust in southwest London, received the highest pay packet per pupil

(£153.95/child) last year.

The chain consists of one secondary – which has more than 1,200 youngsters on its books – and a special school for those with multiple health needs.

Unsurprisingly, those with the lowest pay-per-pupil numbers ran the biggest trusts. United Learning Trust CEO Sir Jon Coles, whose organisation was in charge of 83 academies last August, earned £4.20 for every child in his schools.

Both trusts did not want to comment. Just under 35 per cent of the trusts analysed had female chiefs, up from 30 per cent last year. Of the 27 trusts paying £220k or more, just six (22 per cent) are women.

On average, men were remunerated to the tune of £157,000. Women tended to receive about £14,000 less.

Vivienne Porritt, of WomenED, said it “highlights wider inequities between men and women” in the sector.

Trusts should remove “the current salary question from application forms” and ensure their gender pay gap reports form “an action-orientated plan to reduce” wage disparities, she added.

DfE IS still challenging high pay

The government used to write public letters

The highest paid academy bosses 2022-23

TRUST	CEO OR TOP LEADER	2022-23 ACTUAL/ MINIMUM PAY	2021-22 ACTUAL/ MINIMUM PAY	DIFFERENCE	PAY/PUPIL	PUPILS	SCHOOLS
Harris Federation	Sir Dan Moynihan	£485,000	£455,000	£30,000	£11.88	40830	53
Brampton Manor Trust	Dr Dayo Olukoshi	£310,000	£280,000	£30,000	£64.00	4844	2
Leigh Academies Trust	Simon Beamish	£305,000	£280,000	£25,000	£14.71	20729	31
Thomas Telford School + MAT	Sir Kevin Satchwell	£300,000	£290,000	£10,000	£44.88	6685	6
Star Academies	Sir Mufti Hamid Patel	£280,000	£270,000	£10,000	£13.29	21063	31
St Cuthbert’s Roman Catholic Academy Trust ²	Ged Fitzpatrick	£280,000	£287,980	£(7,980)	£49.24	5687	15
United Learning Trust	Sir Jon Coles	£267,246	£254,520	£12,726	£4.20	63692	83
Delta Academies Trust	Paul Tarn	£265,000	£250,000	£15,000	£10.18	26031	53
Partnership Learning	Roger Leighton	£255,000	£250,000	£5,000	£25.00	10199	13
Aspirations Academies Trust	Steve Kenning	£245,000	£230,000	£15,000	£26.16	9365	16
Loxford School Trust Limited	Anita Johnson ³	£245,000	£240,000	£5,000	£32.96	7434	7
Oasis Community Learning	John Murphy ¹	£240,000	£240,000	£-	£7.45	32219	52
The Kemnal Academies Trust ⁴	Dr Karen Roberts	£235,000	£230,000	£5,000	£10.05	23375	45
The Spencer Academies Trust	Paul West	£235,000	£225,000	£10,000	£13.48	17436	26
Northern Education Trust	Rob Tarn	£232,576	£206,867	£25,709	£15.88	14642	22
L.E.A.D. Academy Trust	Diana Owen	£230,000	£220,000	£10,000	£21.55	10671	25
City Learning Trust	Carl Ward	£225,000	£210,000	£15,000	£87.21	2580	4
Cranford Community College	Kevin Prunty	£225,000	£150,000	£75,000	£150.40	1496	1
The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust	Hugh Greenway	£223,000	£214,000	£9,000	£16.64	13398	32

Source: Schools Week analysis of 2022-23 accounts

NOTES:

¹ Has since left

² No accounts could be found for St Cuthbert’s, so we used the trust’s executive pay report

³ Includes majority of earnings from headteacher role

⁴ Includes salary in lieu of pension contributions

INVESTIGATION: CEO PAY

demanding justifications from trusts that paid their leaders more than £150,000. But the clampdown has been in limbo since mid-2020.

However, the Department for Education's latest academy sector accounts noted that it was "challenging" leaders over wages where they "are identified as high compared to similar" trusts.

In response to a freedom of information request, the DfE said officials "recently engaged with a number of trusts on levels of pay" as it bids to "improve the quality, depth and transparency" of such data.

The DfE refused our request for the names of the groups under scrutiny as the "information will be published in the coming months" – suggesting that it will return to its name and shame policy.

Schools Week has revealed how the government will now focus on pay "outliers" – as opposed to just those earning over a certain threshold.

Our figures show that 77 trusts – 19 per cent – paid their leaders 15 per cent or more than expected for trusts with a similar number of pupils.

Olukoshi's remuneration was the biggest outlier. It was more than double (111 per cent) expectations.

Meanwhile, 97 leaders (24 per cent) were receiving at least 15 per cent below what they were due.

Mark Greatrex, whose pay packet for running 11-school Bellevue Place Education



Vivienne Porritt

Leora Cruddas

Trust was 22 per cent under, thinks he is at "the lower end of the scale" because his MAT is primary only.

But he warned that "a lot" of trusts "also appoint for the organisation they're growing into ... before they've got there".

How trusts benchmark pay

CST CEO Leora Cruddas said it was "difficult to fairly compare roles across organisations, particularly as trusts grow.

She added: "There is a clear requirement for trust boards to follow a robust evidence-based process in deciding executive pay, and it is right that there is transparency over how public money is used."

Greatrex said many trusts use CST's surveys and Kreston reports as benchmarking guides. The DfE, meanwhile, does not "hold data on the pay for all executive positions".

Government guidance, updated in November, outlined that trust academic performance, finances, educational challenge and the individual's experience should be considered when setting salaries.

It also suggested contacting "similarly sized trusts in your area" to share

information.

However, the NGA remains "worried that not enough trusts are talking about pay ratios and using this in their considerations, as much as benchmarking against other executives' pay".

Henson said: "The more money that goes into executive pay, the less goes into investment directly into pupils.

"This emphasis on transparency should be a useful starting point for any trust when considering its pay ratio: can the trust justify to the rest of its community that the ratio between the pay of the senior executive leader and other staff is appropriate?"

A department spokesperson said that "salaries should be justifiable and reflect the individual responsibility alongside local retention and recruitment needs".

They added: "We will continue to engage with trusts on pay where it is neither proportionate nor directly linked to improving pupil outcomes."

NERD NOTE

School and pupil numbers were drawn from open academies and school census figures. We measured the differences in CEO pay by comparing minimum remuneration levels of the highest earner listed in 2022-23 trust accounts. When a chief executive changed mid-year, we took the largest banding listed in higher-paid staff tables. In all, four trusts appear not to have released accounts for last year.

Best paid per pupil

TRUST	CEO OR HEAD	PUPILS	SCHOOLS	2022-23 MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY	2021-22 MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY	DIFFERENCE	PAY/PUPIL
Southfields Multi Academy Trust	Jacqueline Valin	1429	2	£220,000	£210,000	£10,000	£153.95
Cranford Community College	Kevin Prunty	1496	1	£225,000	£150,000	£75,000	£150.40
Inspire Multi Academy Trust	Joanne West	1035	5	£150,000	£140,000	£10,000	£144.93
Carshalton Boys Sports College	Simon Barber	1494	1	£195,000	£195,000	£-	£130.52
Sacred Heart Catholic School	Richard Lansiquot	871	1	£110,000	£170,000	£(60,000)	£126.29

NOTE: AP- and special school-only trusts have been excluded from the list



Lowest paid per pupil

TRUST	CEO OR HEAD	PUPILS	SCHOOLS	2022-23 MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY	2021-22 MINIMUM/ACTUAL PAY	DIFFERENCE	PAY/PUPIL
United Learning Trust	Sir Jon Coles	63692	83	£267,246	£254,520	£12,726	£4.20
Outwood Grange Academies Trust	Sir Martyn Oliver ¹	30266	40	£190,000	£180,000	£10,000	£6.28
Ormiston Academies Trust	Nick Hudson ¹	33898	43	£214,974	£212,627	£2,347	£6.34
Academies Enterprise Trust	Rebecca Boomer-Clark	33511	57	£220,000	£200,000	£20,000	£6.57
Ark Schools	Lucy Heller	30059	39	£208,670	£198,734	£9,937	£6.94

NOTE: ¹Has since left AP- and special school-only trusts have been excluded from the list



Mentoring scheme for absent pupils reaches half of target children

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A £2.3 million mentoring scheme to reduce absence reached less than half of the intended children in its first year, and only half of those it did reach saw attendance improve.

Launched in 2022, the Department for Education said its mentoring pilot would support "500 to 1,000 pupils" in its first year across Middlesbrough.

The charity Barnardo's was awarded the contract, which has since been extended to cover five further areas. A £15 million expansion is planned to reach 10,000 pupils.

But an official evaluation of the Watchtower Project's first year, undertaken by York Consulting and published on Thursday, found just 223 pupils received support through the scheme.

Attendance mentors were employed to work with pupils who were identified by schools as persistently or severely absent from school.

Mentors met with pupils "on a weekly basis to provide bespoke support to them and their families over a recommended period of up to 20 weeks".

Only 339 pupils were referred by schools and early help services.

The "most common reason for cases not to progress was because pupils, parents or carers did not engage with the mentor".

Factors that constrained pupil and parent or carer engagement "included the requirement for schools to obtain parental consent prior to making the referral and some families being tired of the number of different services that had previously been involved with them".

"Other challenges included an uneven flow of referrals, delays in the pilot launch, and a slow initial flow of referrals.

"These factors impacted on some mentors' ability to meet pupils weekly and



limited the extent to which the project could impact on attendance in the pilot year."

Half of pupils had improved attendance

The "indicative evidence" suggested that 50 per cent of pupils supported by the pilot achieved "improved attendance". Some of these improvements "may be sustained beyond completion of the mentors' support".

"Of those who saw improvements in attendance, there was an average increase of 11 percentage points during the period over which the intervention was delivered, from 53 per cent at the start of the intervention to 64 per cent during the intervention."

While numbers were "small, slightly higher proportions of severely absent pupils had

improved their attendance by the end of the intervention compared to those that were persistently absent".

Pupils and families "reported a range of other positive outcomes achieved, including

improved mental health, better routines, better attitudes to learning, engagement in positive activities, higher attainment and

financial barriers addressed".

But, for 36 per cent of completed cases, pupils "had experienced a decline in attendance during the intervention".

The report concluded that outcomes from the support "included increased attendance, improved mental health, better routines and attitudes to learning, engagement in positive activities and financial barriers addressed".

It added: "For some pupils, the attendance improvements achieved would likely be sustained after the intervention, Equally, in other cases attendance had declined or the improvements observed were unlikely to be sustained."

Recommendations included for schools and mentors to share their experiences amid the wider rollout. Expectations for mentors and schools should also be set out "more explicitly", including around planning for when pupils lose their support.

The latest attendance data published by the DfE showed that 150,000 pupils missed more school than they attended last year.

Two per cent of pupils were "severely" absent in 2022-23, meaning they missed more than 50 per cent of half-day sessions, up from 1.7 per cent in 2021-22, and far above pre-pandemic rates.

NEWS

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We want to listen to pupils too... Ofsted extends survey consultation

LUCAS CUMISKEY
@LUCAS_CUMISKEY

Ofsted has extended its Big Listen consultation so that children can have their say on how to improve the watchdog.

The online survey, for primary and secondary school pupils aged up to 18, asks what they think inspectors should look at when they visit their school. It also seeks pupils' views on how Ofsted can do its job better.

The inspectorate launched its main 12-week "Big Listen" consultation for school staff, education organisations and parents on March 8. Views from schools, safeguarding, SEND, teacher training, social care and further education settings were sought.

The children's survey includes an introductory video which explains that it is anonymous and asks youngsters not to share personal information such as their name, school or address.

It asks pupils what age bracket they fall into, but there is also an option for an "adult answering on behalf of a school-age child" to complete it.

The survey asks: "What are the most important



things you think Ofsted inspectors should look at when they inspect your school?"

Pupils can pick up to three answers from a list which includes how pupils behave at their school, or how happy they are or safe they feel, how well teachers teach and SEND pupils are supported, and how well pupils do in tests and exams.

There is also a blank text box where youngsters can share other suggested priorities for Ofsted.

It also asks pupils how Ofsted should find out what children think when they visit their schools, and if they or their family have ever been supported by a social worker.

The inspectorate said it was partnering with organisations to hold a series of "Big Listen focus groups with care-experienced children and young people, including those in the youth justice system".

The sessions will take place in May and June and involve children from different age groups and diverse backgrounds.

The children's groups will complement other Ofsted-commissioned research, by independent organisations NatCen and IFF Research, which are supporting the Big Listen through surveys and focus groups with the public, parents and professionals.

The feedback will allow Ofsted to "make sure any future changes to inspection and regulation are focused on how well education and care providers help and support children".

Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's chief inspector, said: "We will always put the interests of children first, so we're very keen to hear what they have to say about our work.

"Our job is to make sure all children are getting the high standards of education and care they deserve, and that disadvantage or vulnerability are never a barrier to new opportunities and better life chances.

"Feedback from children themselves will help us make sure that we are doing that job the best way we can. So, I really hope as many as possible will get involved in the Big Listen and fill out the survey."

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER | @SCHOOLSWEEK

Inspections could be 'compromised' without more cash, Ofsted warns

The reliability of school inspections will be "compromised" if funding is "further constrained", the board of Ofsted has told the government.

Actions taken by the watchdog to absorb rising costs are a "short-term fix" and are likely to "store up cost pressures" for this year and beyond, Ofsted's chair Dame Christine Ryan said during a September board meeting.

The minutes, which were published on Tuesday, added: "Many parts of the DfE regulatory system, including actions following a 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' rating, rely on Ofsted inspection judgments.

"A high level of assurance on the reliability of inspection judgments is therefore needed but will be compromised if inspection itself and the activities that support inspection quality are further constrained."

While the comments were made under the previous Ofsted leadership, the watchdog sounded the alarm over finances again last week.

Funding has 'fallen significantly'

Responding to calls from MPs for longer inspections, Ofsted said its role and responsibilities had "expanded significantly" since 2005.

However, its funding has "fallen significantly" over the same period and is now 29 per cent lower in real terms compared with 2009-10".

The board update added that "unfunded pay guidance" on top of budget reductions meant the inspectorate was "losing its capacity for independent discretionary work, which provides insight on themes of national importance emerging from its inspection and regulatory work".

The minutes added: "The chair described these as systemic issues that need to be considered fully by the DfE, including in its own risk assessments."

The watchdog confirmed this week that MAT summary evaluations are on pause indefinitely, with a decision on their future to be made after the Big Listen consultation. Previously, they had

been paused until the end of this month.

Senior HMI Kirsty Godfrey said this was to "free up as much inspector time as possible to support our school inspection work".

However, she added that the inspectorate remains "committed to being as ambitious as possible to increase accountability and transparency of trusts through our school inspection work".

Ofsted declined to comment on the board update.

A DfE spokesperson said: "We have worked closely with Ofsted to make significant changes to reform inspections and have seen standards rising... we have provided Ofsted with additional funding to speed up inspections since the pandemic to give parents an up-to-date picture about school performance.

"It is for Ofsted to prioritise its resources while ensuring value for money for the taxpayer alongside a fair and proportionate inspection regime."

NEWS

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Unions take aim at Sunak's 'clunky, unimaginative' ABS plan

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Government plans for a new Advanced British Standard qualification will create a "blunt choice" between academic and vocational routes for pupils and add to uncertainty over post-16 options, union leaders have warned.

Prime minister Rishi Sunak announced last year that the ABS will replace A-levels and T-levels in around 10 years' time, though an anticipated Labour general election victory means the policy is unlikely to come to fruition.

The government initially announced that it would create a single qualification for post-16 study. But the consultation, published last December, set out plans for two – the ABS and the ABS (occupational).

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, warned that the "unimaginative qualification repackages A-levels and T-levels together but still forces students down one route or the other".

In the NAHT's full response, head of policy Sarah Hannafin said the proposals hold "tightly to the traditional system in place now – a repackaging of the current A-level and T-level content, blunt choices for 16-year-olds, a focus on knowledge and assessment by examination".

The creation of two routes "undermines" the

parity of esteem between academic and technical education, she added.

Hannafin added that, without "significant investment in the recruitment and retention of education staff, these proposals are unworkable and undeliverable".

Kevin Gilmartin, post-16 specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "This does

not, despite claims to the contrary, appear to represent a significant broadening of their curriculum."

Under the government's plans, pupils would study a set of subject majors and minors, and all would be required to study English and maths to 18. But unions warned against considering 16 to 19 reform in isolation.

Gilmartin said that, by "trying to make a clunky qualification 'wrapper' serve several purposes", the government was "putting the cart before the horse".

The Sixth Form Colleges Association added that the ABS was "widely perceived to be driven by electoral rather than educational considerations and to have been imposed on the Department for



Rishi Sunak

Education by the prime minister".

The plan to replace T-levels, which have only recently been introduced and have been fraught with problems, has prompted widespread concern.

The SFCA said schools and colleges had been pressed to sign up to the "once in a generation" reform of the qualifications system, but "now find T-levels will suffer the same fate as the BTEC qualifications they were supposed to replace".

"Recruitment, morale and planning has suffered as a result," the SFCA added.

Hannafin said she also feared that some young people "will be forced to make a choice which will have a lasting impact on their futures, and yet they may not be ready to make that choice".

JACK DYSON | @JACKYDYS

£25k academy converter grant SAT crackdown

Local-authority maintained schools choosing to convert to academies will no longer be able to access a £25,000 grant unless they join or form a multi-academy trust.

The move comes amid a national push for larger trusts to help protect the most vulnerable schools from financial peril.

Schools that choose to convert to an academy – known as academy converters – have been able to get the grant to help pay for associated costs such as legal advice and re-branding.

However, in an update released this afternoon, officials said: "[The grant] will continue to be paid only to schools approved to join or form a trust as part of a group of three

or more schools."

Despite this, special and AP schools "will continue to be eligible to receive it as part of a single-school conversion process".

The cash is handed to schools shortly after their conversion bids are given the go-ahead by regional directors.

It appears to be the latest move by the DfE to pull the few levers it has to limit the number of single-academy trusts.

Last March, ministers published plans – dubbed "trust development statements" – to expand or launch new MATs in 55 "education investment areas", which have the nation's weakest results.

At the time, the government said the

documents "clearly signpost" the types of "growth project we want to encourage" to improve outcomes in each EIA.

Schools Week analysis of government data this month showed the number of SATs in the EIAs has dropped by 13 per cent over the past year. National drops stood at 8 per cent over the same period – falling from 1,241 in March last year to 1,136 in January.

Those wanting to leave local authority control under the current eligibility criteria for the grant should register their interest by April 26 and apply by June 7.

Regional directors must have approved the switch before the changes come into place on September 1.

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Profile

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL



'A school with challenges gives you more opportunities to make a difference'

Dan Thomas, now chief executive of The Learning Partnership trust, was once prompted by a fortune cookie to 'take the opportunity when it comes'. He has, and provided opportunities to thousands of youngsters ever since

When Dan Thomas, chief executive of the newly formed The Learning Partnership (TLP) trust, suggested posing for our photoshoot next to the grand Bentley car parked outside his office, his deputy chief executive's "face dropped".

While he was joking about the picture (he drives a Skoda), it does touch on a bigger concern: what Thomas sees as a "lack of public understanding" that academy trusts "are there for the kids".

Some parents have told him they "don't want

our child going to a school that's part of a trust... We've got to have stronger arguments of why we MATs exist, and to demonstrate the impact that we can have on our communities."

TLP is a diverse trust. It has 15 schools ranging from those in the most deprived to most affluent communities in Cheshire East, and also include two specialist 14 to 19 university technical colleges. (The Bentley is on display outside one of them – Crewe Engineering & Design University Technical College – where the vehicles' manufacturers are its industry partners)

Curriculum crafting

It seems a natural fit for Thomas, who has worked in a diversity of roles including in both primaries and secondaries, a city technology college, a federation, a faith school and an education membership network.

His motto has always been "why go for an easy life when you can go somewhere and make a difference?" It's why he chose to follow in the footsteps of his mum and become a teacher.

After training as a maths teacher in Bristol, Thomas worked in challenging primaries as part

Profile: Dan Thomas

of the New Labour government's 'Education Action Zone' initiative in 2002.

The scheme encouraged the involvement of private sector investment to help support school turnarounds.

He then joined John Cabot City Technology College where he was mentored by its then principal, ex-national schools' commissioner Sir David Carter.

His focus was on the skills children needed to access key stage two and three curriculums. He ran a 'competency-based curriculum', based on skills such as teamwork and resilience rather than subject knowledge. Although the method is now considered "old fashioned", he learned much from it about how building resilience helps pupils learn better.

After a stint as assistant head across a federation of maintained high schools back in Cheshire, he joined a two-week government-funded global leadership exchange trip.

It involved visiting schools in India, and meeting charity school children rescued from slavery. The experience gave him a "really strong sense of the importance of education as a way out of poverty".

The project was run by SSAT (the Schools, Students and Teachers Network) which then employed Thomas as a regional manager to "mine and share best practice" in the sector.

It was here he learned the value of working as a "system" rather than "a series of islands". This is now the "biggest challenge" he faces within a trust of TLP's size.

"It's about making sure that everyone isn't just fighting their own corner, that we're collectively responsible."

First headship

Buoyed by a fortune cookie telling him to "take the opportunity when it comes", Thomas took up an interim head role at Saint Mary's catholic primary school, in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, in 2012.

Intending to work there for three months, he "loved it" and stayed for a year. "The power of the community around the school was absolutely brilliant".



'We've got to have stronger arguments of why we MATs exist'

Getting the community behind an Englishman who had "turned up out of the blue" was a "massive learning curve" (he learned "very limited" Welsh to speak in assemblies).

He wasn't a practicing Catholic so was unable to stay on permanently. Instead, Thomas applied to lead the then 'outstanding' Shavington primary school in Crewe. But by the time he started in 2013, the school's rating had dropped to 'requires improvement'.

There was also a "massive budget deficit" which Thomas overcame by making 11 redundancies at the single-form entry school in his first term. It was "challenging", but after "lots of structural and curriculum changes" – the school was rated 'good' within 12 months.

MAT launch

A year later, Thomas was asked by Cheshire East Council to support another local primary,

Wheelock, after it found itself headless and the Learning for Life Partnership trust Life Partnership trust was founded.

He says opening a trust back then (in 2015) was "significantly easier" as all you needed was "the right people to make sure the back end legal stuff went through". Nowadays "the role of regional directors means there's higher accountability around decision making, and more scrutiny on the rationale".

While most MATs grow by "looking for similar schools", Thomas's strategy was different. He wanted schools "with challenges" where "we could make a difference".

That included three formerly single-trust primary schools who had been rated 'requires improvement', one of which was Daven school – the most deprived primary in Cheshire East.

Ideally, Thomas "would have wanted more capacity" within his trust to improve these

Profile: Dan Thomas

schools, saying it's "key to admit" that "we didn't have the level of resource" needed to "really service that school as it deserved".

In September last year, Learning for Life Partnership and its five primaries merged with The Learning Alliance, made up of four secondaries, two 14-19 provisions and three primaries, to create TLP.

It was a good match. TLA was motivated by "succession planning" for the retirement of its chief executive Mike Cladingbowl, while Thomas needed "more capacity to impact on the communities we serve".

But just three weeks later, Daven got a second RI judgment and "the scrutiny of a coasting letter".

Thomas says the "significant pressures around the accountability system" are the toughest aspect of his job.

While "there are no excuses" for the inspection's findings, he says "timing is everything". Daven is now a "really good case study" as to why he believes bigger can mean better for trusts, because of the additional support the trust has been able to provide.

Specialist schools

The merger means Thomas now also leads two specialist 14 to 19 provisions – Crewe UTC, and Cheshire Studio School.

Crewe UTC has fewer than half of its original 800-pupil capacity, yet Thomas claims the numbers are "about right". The £11 million building is "too small" to accommodate more, due the space needed for technical equipment.

Thomas admits that the non-standard entry intake has proven "highly problematic," and is something "UTCs nationally have an issue with".

The colleges were intended for age 14 upwards, many now accept pupils from year 7 (like a traditional secondary school). Meanwhile, TCP's Cheshire Studio School shares a site with its Knutsford Academy, enabling the two schools to share English and Maths teachers.

Studio schools were opened between 2011 and 2017 as deliberately small schools specialising in vocational pathways. Like UTCs, they have



'Let's work together to get things as good as they can be'

also had their struggles and only 20 remain with much larger cohorts.

But Thomas advocates the model as "a really good way of engaging children for whom the traditional key stage four pathway doesn't suit".

Wellbeing worries

Elsewhere, pupil wellbeing is a big priority for Thomas, particularly in light of Brianna Ghey's murder last year in nearby Warrington. He believes running a bigger trust enables him to better deploy "full scale safeguarding reviews" and provide more "relational and behaviour support".

But the "coping mechanisms" that traditionally existed for managing high needs pupils within primaries are "now starting to be overwhelmed".

Thomas is opening a social, emotional, or mental health (SEMH) unit at one primary, and "thinking about the potential for [SEMH] alternative provision at secondary".

But he worries that "adaptations" such as providing more support and modifying

curriculums for primary children could make their transition to secondary even harder.

"The reality is, there will never be enough specialist provision. It's no good just having an [SEMH] unit unless you're really thinking about the outcomes and destinations for those pupils."

Eyeing growth

TLP is already the biggest in Cheshire, but Thomas coyly admits that he's keen to grow it further.

As well as more schools, he also wants to lower the age threshold of some primaries to two-years-old so he can offer nursery provision. The trust is taking over a previously privately-run nursery, too.

The timing is apt given the government's funded-childcare push. But Thomas is also incentivised by his conviction that "the longer we have children for, the bigger the impact we can make".

He says the trust's "direction of travel" is to work "outside our boundary" to help other local schools, for example by providing training to their staff, and extending reading projects to feeder primaries.

"Then we have a better chance of raising standards across the schools. It's not about land grabbing. Let's work together to get things as good as they can be."

Opinion

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The sector's manifesto



LUCY HELLER
CEO, Ark Schools

Five policies to improve retention (while we await funding)

A new government won't be able to dodge the issue of pay for long, but there are ways it can make staying in the profession more attractive, writes Lucy Heller

Among the many challenges facing the next government, one of the biggest and most immediate for the sector will be ensuring there are enough good teachers. We need to recruit great people into the profession and we need to ensure they stay.

Money is key. In a tight labour market, we are all competing for talent, and it doesn't help that teachers' pay has fallen relative to other professions. The IFS estimate that experienced teachers have seen a 13-per cent real-terms cut in pay since 2010. Albeit that average earnings only went up by two per cent in that time, that's a 15 per cent gap – and it makes a big difference.

The state of the country's finances makes it unlikely that any of the major parties will go into the election promising to significantly upgrade teacher pay. But if it can't be done in the first term of a new government, it ought to be a priority for the second.

In the short term, a new government could go a long way to improving retention by restoring

morale. Here are five policies to get started.

Improve the mood music

This is important for keeping people in teaching and attracting new recruits. There is still a way to go to repair the relationship between the government and the sector after the strain we saw in last year's strikes.

Schools feel like, and increasingly are, among the most functional services in their communities and the people working in them are struggling to deliver much more than they are funded or resourced to do.

The changing nature of the social contract between home and school and the after-effects of Covid all make a job that has always been difficult feel almost impossible. Showing a sincere understanding of teachers' critical role in our society, economy and culture, doesn't cost a penny.

Teachers are some of the most trusted professionals in the country but there is a sense that they are not valued as much as they should be whether in parts of the media or by government.

Review accountability

This should be done in the round, including uses of assessment data, inspection reports and oversight



“ Schools are at the sharp end of supporting families in crisis

responsibilities of local authorities and DfE regional offices.

Accountability measures have a bigger impact on school and teacher behaviour (and workload) than curriculum and assessment design. They need to be considered collectively, which remarkably has never happened before.

Introduce student loan forgiveness schemes

Why charge tuition fees to trainees when we are so short of them? Yes, there are bursaries for many subjects, but why undermine this offer with the spectre of additional student debt which will most likely eventually be written off anyway? It would not be a significant cost at a national level but is a significant deterrent to recruits, especially those from less well-off backgrounds.

Enlist support from tech innovators

Following our enforced immersion in edtech during the pandemic and with the promise of an AI revolution, we need to work closely with tech companies to make sure we have the tools we need

to maximise pupils' learning and reduce unnecessary workload.

Get public services to work better together

Schools are at the sharp end of supporting children and families in crisis. We see first-hand the lack of a joined-up approach from the other services. In fact, schools are often in the co-ordinating role. Government needs to design in efficient collaboration, and design out perverse incentives.

There is, of course, much that we can do as a sector to improve teacher recruitment and retention – and much that is already being done. When it comes to effective government action, the good news is that it doesn't all come down to money – it's not what motivates people to devote their lives to education.

However, there is no escaping the fact one's salary represents recognition of the value of one's work. We need a government who will go beyond mere words and deliver something concrete, either to make teachers' work more sustainable or to remunerate it better. Ideally both.

Opinion

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JULIE MCCULLOCH

Director of policy, ASCL

Government by expectation is no way to run education

The creep from 'schools must' to 'schools should' is a sign of a government either unable or unwilling to face up to challenges, writes Julie McCulloch

“Shoulda woulda coulda,” sang Beverley Knight, “can’t change your mind”. Someone might want to pass Beverley’s words of wisdom on to the DfE. ‘Should’, it seems, is their favourite word.

It plays a starring role in new draft guidance on children questioning their gender. In this short document, the word ‘should’ appears no fewer than 72 times. Parents ‘should not’ be excluded from decisions relating to requests for a child to socially transition. Primary children ‘should not’ have different pronouns used about them.

Schools and colleges ‘should’ seek to understand the factors that may have influenced a child’s desire to transition. They ‘should not’ allow a child to share a room with a child of the opposite sex.

This is not a comment on the guidance itself; rather a somewhat exasperated observation on what ASCL has taken to calling ‘government by expectation’. This phenomenon took hold during the pandemic and evidently refuses to let go.

The wonderfully named

‘Parliamentary Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments’ highlighted this tendency in a 2021 report on regulations during Covid lockdowns. The committee noted that “a clear distinction [must be] made between non-statutory guidance and requirements imposed by law. Whereas non-statutory guidance may influence, the law requires compliance ... Where control is thought necessary, it must be achieved through legislation and not be brought through the back door.”

In other words, when a government is asking institutions or individuals to take particular actions, it’s essential for it to make clear whether this is something they are legally required to do, or something ministers would quite like them to do (but have no powers to enforce).

In my view, there are two main reasons for this shift towards non-statutory guidance over legislation – the creep of the ‘should’.

The first is our position in the electoral cycle. New legislation takes time and effort to draft and to shepherd through parliament. And it’s not guaranteed to succeed.

Take the 2022 Schools Bill. This was, to be fair to the government, an attempt to bring in new legislation to drive changes they wanted to make. But it was so poorly drafted it



Beverley Knight

“ It’s an attempt to exert control by the back door

ended up having to be withdrawn. This made it much more difficult for ministers to introduce policies which would require changes to the law – hence the temptation to attempt to exert control by ‘the back door’ of non-statutory guidance, as the committee so tartly puts it.

The second reason that ‘government by expectation’ is so attractive to ministers is more pernicious. It enables them to shift the responsibility for difficult or contentious decisions away from themselves and onto those who must implement them.

Want schools to stay open for longer but can’t quite face the work involved in amending the relevant legislation? Simple! Put out some non-statutory guidance saying that you now ‘expect’ schools to have at least a 32.5-hour week. (And for good measure include a confusingly worded threat that Ofsted will be checking.)

Want children who are struggling in English or maths to receive extra support, but not prepared to give schools any more money to provide it? Easy! Just introduce a ‘Parent Pledge’ which promises additional

support, and leave schools to deal with angry parents when they’re not able to access it.

Want schools and colleges to turn back the tide on accommodations they’ve made for trans or gender-questioning pupils, but don’t want to open the can of worms of amending the equality act? No problem. Put out some non-statutory guidance telling schools what you’d like them to do, pepper it with ‘shoulds’ and hope no one remembers Schools Week’s scoop that the government’s own lawyers warned following the guidance would leave schools open to a “high risk of successful legal challenge”. Bingo.

I get it. Governing is hard, and time is running out before the general election. But governing is also – or should be – about making the tough decisions, putting in the legwork to ensure those decisions are legally sound, and taking the rap if that turns out not to be the case.

Amid unsustainable workloads and increased parental complaints, schools desperately need a government that’s willing and able to do that.

Opinion

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SANJEEV BAGA

CEO, Jigsaw Education Group

Effective religious education is the antidote to extremism

Rising social tensions leaking into our schools should be the province of a well-trained workforce of RE teachers, says Sanjeev Baga

Extremism is on the rise in UK schools. Shifting definitions or not, Home Office figures tell a chilling story of the highest number of referrals to its counter-terror scheme coming through from the education sector since it was set up.

But is it any surprise? Children are increasingly exposed to mature topics and situations through social media – and at a younger and younger age. This leaves them vulnerable to themes of religious discrimination, racism, and misogyny among others.

More worryingly, education itself is too often leaving them without the knowledge or the tools to critically engage with this harmful content. Religious education (RE) is the part of the curriculum designed to do this, but Ofsted's 2023 annual report described the state of religious education nationally as of "poor quality" and "not fit for purpose".

Proliferation of extremist viewpoints is often achieved by packaging up ideas and presenting them in ways that appeal to the impressionable and vulnerable.

For young people struggling with a sense of identity, belonging, community or purpose, extremist viewpoints can be particularly appealing, and to withstand them requires resilient critical thinking skills, community and family support, and safe spaces for communication and understanding.

Religious education (RE) – delivered consistently with the time and space given for in-depth exploration of different faiths, ethics, cultures, and creeds – has the potential to be the biggest tool to prevent the spread of extremism in schools.

I know from personal experience that knowledge is the remedy for fear. Teaching students to understand the core fundamentals of each major religion is effective in addressing misconceptions that lead to fear and 'othering' different beliefs and culture.

Given the tense political climate, developing a counter-narrative to the prevailing negative sentiments about certain religious groups is challenging. This will be more difficult given years of parlous recruitment for the subject.

But well-trained and well-supported RE teachers have the tools to be resilient in their approach to challenging discussions. They don't allow lessons to become opportunities for the



“ We need to rethink our view of RE as a passé subject

repetition of negative stereotypes heard elsewhere. They know how to help students understand how these comments make others feel. And they can mediate uncomfortable interactions between peers of different faiths to get past fear and stereotypes by developing knowledge and understanding.

The most effective RE programmes delve deep into complicated topics rather than avoiding or skimming the surface of religious identities. Knowledge is a powerful antidote to extremism, discrimination, and prejudice.

Moreover, great RE teaching is responsive to the needs of children and the school community. Every school is shaped by unique cultural and socio-economic conditions. RE teachers can tailor their lessons to address current affairs in a manner that is culturally respectful to the demographic of the school and equip their students (and their colleagues) with the language and techniques needed to address extremism as and when it occurs.

The consequence of treating

RE as an afterthought over many years is that it now often falls on non-specialists to deliver this vital curriculum. Lack of time and stretched budgets also mean they are at risk of relying on external resources for schemes of work without the appropriate time or tools to contextualise or critically evaluate them.

Of course, robust resources are out there that can support staff to transition into teaching RE. Given the fast-changing nature of events, it's essential in selecting these to ensure they are up-to-date, contemporary in their approach and relevant to the school's needs. But in reality, there can be no shortcut for high-quality training for teachers who are motivated to take on what is a challenging but vibrant subject.

If we are truly to tackle extremism at source, we need to rethink our attitude to RE as a passé subject and we must as a priority develop staff who can not only use resources effectively but deal with difficult issues with confidence. Our young people deserve no less.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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LES
WALTON

Founder and chair, Association of Education Advisers

Can we have a better debate about school improvement?

Instead of arguing about which shade of toast is best and who burned it, can we please talk about the toaster?

Amanda Spielman once suggested school improvement advisers were more to blame for fear of Ofsted than Ofsted itself. It's an argument that was repeated last week by Ofsted in front of the Commons Education Select Committee.

Underlying these comments are two challenges: one is regarding the climate in which improvement and inspection are being delivered and the other is about the quality of the support and advice schools receive.

I won't go into Ofsted's shared responsibility for the climate. Playing the blame game gets us nowhere. We all have a responsibility to ensure our systems are infused with trust, not dominated by fear.

But I can speak to the second challenge.

The Association of Education Advisers (AoEA) has been on an eight-year mission to improve the quality of advice and support that schools receive and also how it is provided. Right from the start, the AoEA took responsibility, including within our accreditation criteria, for the need to 'build trust and drive out fear'.

In the dynamic landscape of education, ensuring consistent,

ethical, and reliable advice and support for schools and colleges is paramount. Recognizing this imperative, education leaders have embarked on a transformative journey, culminating in the establishment of the AoEA's groundbreaking international standard for education advisers.

The inception of this initiative can be traced back to a pivotal moment in 2016 when key stakeholders including the DfE, the schools commissioner, and Ofsted met in Sanctuary Buildings to address sector-wide concerns. These ranged from variability in the quality of advice to the need for advice to be grounded in both managerial principles and philosophical frameworks.

Out of these deliberations emerged a collective commitment to establish a national quality standard. Seasoned education leaders with a wealth of experience were assembled to spearhead this initiative. Over subsequent years, this dedicated development team meticulously designed, trialled and refined the standard, leading to the formal establishment of the AoEA.

Fast forward to 2024, and the momentum behind the AoEA national standard has only intensified. A recent meeting of national and international representative organisations in London showed a groundswell



“ We stand on the precipice of a new era in education

of support for integrating this accredited standard into the education system. Unanimous backing emphasised the credibility and efficacy of our approach.

What sets the AoEA standard apart is its emphasis on sustainability and impact. The extensive experience of the AoEA development team in piloting and implementing various education initiatives has imbued them with a profound understanding of the pitfalls of transient models.

Their commitment to proactive support and development, as opposed to reactive intervention, underscores this ethos. Moreover, the AoEA standard represents a departure from previous systems by prioritising individual expertise and adaptability over rigid formulae.

Unlike past accreditation models that focused narrowly on specific practices, the AoEA standard encourages advisers and school and college leaders to draw from a diverse array of approaches and philosophies. This flexibility enables advisers and school leaders to tailor their support to the unique needs and challenges of each setting.

Central to the success of the AoEA standard is its emphasis on fostering a community of practice among accredited advisers. By harnessing

the collective wisdom and experience of its members, the AoEA ensures best practices are shared, refined and disseminated across the educational landscape.

The extensive repository of case studies we have compiled is testament to the tangible impact of this collaborative approach.

Our work has attracted widespread recognition domestically and internationally. Invitations to present before key government officials across the UK and elsewhere underline the global relevance of this work.

We stand on the precipice of a new era in education. The AoEA international standard holds the promise of redefining school improvement for this new era.

It is right that we should be reviewing inspection for this new phase of educational leadership and management. But reviewing inspection without reviewing improvement practices is like reviewing how we judge toast without any thought to how we make best use of the toaster.

That way lies the blame game and endless disagreements about what good education looks like. Schools, their staff and their pupils deserve better.

Solutions

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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GEMMA BULEY

Interim principal,
Thames Valley School

Seven tips to support students with autism through exam season

Gemma Buley sets out seven tried-and-tested approaches to help autistic learners achieve their potential, and have the best possible experience of exam season

As we approach the summer exam season, schools up and down the country are working hard to prepare their students for assessments. In recent years, attention has thankfully focused on helping young people to get ready emotionally, as well as academically, with schools increasingly placing just as much importance on resilience as revision.

While many students find exams difficult and stressful, this can be exacerbated for autistic young people, who may experience exams differently.

In the lead-up to exams, for example, autistic students may feel anxious because of the greater challenge they experience when facing a new experience. Conversely, they might lack motivation because they don't 'see the point' of an exam when they know they have the knowledge.

When it comes to the exams themselves, a literal understanding might affect how they answer a question or understand what is being asked of them, sensory challenges could make the exam hall distracting or overwhelming.

And more generally, they might have difficulty concentrating and staying focused on revision and while doing assessments. In part, this might be because the thought of what comes after, such as moving to new placements, and leaving their current setting, may deeply worry them.

An increased awareness of these challenges and strategies to overcome them are important on two fronts: ensuring autistic young people achieve their full potential, and that they have the best possible experience of this potentially stressful period.

Here are some of the tried and tested approaches we use at our specialist autistic setting.

Social stories or articles

Practising scenarios alongside narratives and scripts has been shown to help autistic young people in a range of situations. We have used these to explain the purpose of assessments as well as to demystify the exam experience.

Revision clubs

Many of our students find it easier to revise in staff-run sessions with someone they know and trust to help them maintain focus. We also know autistic young people can feel particularly drained by intense periods of revision, so plan in breaks.



“ Autistic young people may experience exams differently

Interpreting past papers

Most students practise with past papers. Autistic students will find it particularly helpful if you can explain what information and knowledge different question phrases are asking them to give. They will also benefit from help in prioritising which questions to give more or less time to.

Managing anxiety and sensory overload

As exams draw nearer, discuss with all those interacting with and caring for your SEND student whether further support is needed to maintain their overall wellbeing. Their existing supports may need dialling up during this period, for example additional therapies or sessions in quiet or sensory rooms, or access to other aides to help with self-regulation.

Planning access arrangements

Your school will no doubt have already submitted a request for any access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for your autistic students. It is important that these are explained to the student and discussed with their parents or carers, so everyone is clear about what to expect and the level of support you have been able

to secure. You should also rehearse these with the adult responsible for delivering them on exam day.

Preparing for exam day

What will happen on exam day represents a lot of new information in itself. This might be overwhelming for your autistic students. We have found visual instructions to be helpful, such as a cartoon sketch setting out all the actions on exam day and a check list of what to bring.

Waiting around for the exam to start can be particularly difficult for autistic students. Supervised support with a pre-planned calming and distracting activity to do can help, especially when there are two exams in one day.

Support after the exam

Remember to tell students that the exams are over, and they won't have the results until the summer. Sharing this on a calendar if needed so that students know the time they must wait.

Many autistic students have the academic ability to perform well in exams and go on to highly ambitious futures. With the right support, they can demonstrate what they're truly capable of. And what's more, they can even enjoy the process.



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THE REVIEW

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT: LESSONS TO LEARN FROM SCHOOLS DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

BOOK
TV
FILM
RADIO
EVENT
RESOURCE

Authors: David James and Jane Lunnon

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Publication date: 29 February 2024

ISBN: 1472988469

Reviewer: Sam Strickland, Principal, The Duston School

At times it is all too easy to think that all schools should be the same, should look the same and should operate in the same way. Arguably, with the explosion of multi-academy trusts there is a growing push to create an M&S approach to education. As part of MAT X, schools A, B and C should all, in theory, look the same.

The reality is that no two schools are the same. Context is king. I have been privileged over the course of my career to work in a variety of school types. I worked in an upper school, serving children in years 9 to 13. I have worked in an all-girls' school and then in one of the first wave of CTC schools, which was an 'Outstanding' flagship school within a trust. I have served as a governor of a primary school.

I have worked in two 11 to 18 comprehensive schools, a free school serving a very challenging community and a giant 2,000-strong all-through school. No two schools are the same. All are different. We can paint the walls blue, standardise the school uniform and have a consistent curricular approach, but there the sameness ends.

This is why *Schools of Thought* is such an engaging read. David James and Jane Lunnon carefully, intelligently, and compellingly present 30 case study schools from across the world. They ask well-crafted questions of each case study to offer a series of thought-provoking insights, not only into the fact schools can do things very differently, but that they are – and very successfully too.

The authors take the time to consider how faith schools operate, outlining their strengths, challenges and importance. Then James and Lunnon explore single-sex schools, an area in

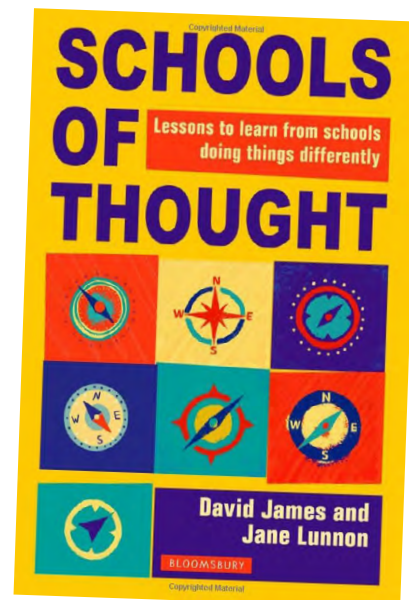
which I have I have extensive senior leadership experience. They consider their importance, their future and how a single gender influences their culture and ethos. I found this particular section particularly interesting, probably due to my own lived experiences.

Throughout, *Schools of Thought* presents a true balance. Whether you believe that the Twitter (now X) progressive versus traditionalist debate carries any credence or not, this book presents case studies of schools on both sides of the educational political spectrum. This includes schools with a focus on direct instruction and sequenced curriculum, as well as those that hone in on creativity and others that really push technology.

In keeping with the biggest challenge that faces our profession, notably recruitment and retention, there is also a focus on schools that place wellbeing at the heart of all that they do. This section of the book was really insightful. As a school leader, I am always thinking about what else can be done to support the wellbeing of my staff and pupils. The more food for thought here, the better.

Every section presents differing viewpoints, entitled 'another view', and time is taken to pull the case studies in each section together to offer critical reflections. What separates this book from so many others is that there is no waffle. James and Lunnon get straight down to business and present each case study precisely for what it is.

Reflections tail each chapter, but these are incredibly measured and skilfully crafted so as not to offer their own opinion and view. Every case study and section of this book is presented



in such a manner that you are left to form your own.

Personally, I feel that visiting other schools presents an incredible professional development opportunity for colleagues. Doing so is both an honour and a privilege. *Schools of Thought* leaves you thinking about other schools that would be worth visiting.

Whether you agree or disagree with the approaches that each of the case studies takes, what no one can refute after reading this is that there is a lot of positive food for thought in engaging specifically with the rich diversity of what education can and does offer.

So, keep an open mind as you turn over the front cover. This is a fantastically well-presented book, offering detailed insights into how alternate schools go about their business. It may not in itself heal the divides that seem to characterise educational discourse, but at the very least *Schools of Thought* will make you think about their value.

★★★★☆
Rating



Zara Simpson

Deputy head of prep, Streatham and Clapham High School

RAMADAN MUBARAK

For me as a school leader, effective equality, diversity and inclusion practices are an essential feature of good education for all children. Coming to school should always be a positive experience for pupils of all backgrounds, cultures and religions; their environment should feel welcoming and supportive.



As we embark upon the month of Ramadan it is essential that pupils taking part feel able to do so with ease.

BBC Teach offers valuable resources and podcasts that educators can incorporate into their lessons. I particularly enjoyed listening to **Bishop Challoner Training School Alliance's teacher tips**, which provide practical strategies and suggestions for creating a positive and accommodating classroom environment.

While there will be varying degrees of support needed for individual pupils, these

should be carefully discussed and planned to make learning at school during this time enriching. RE lessons serve as an ideal time to teach pupils about Ramadan.

Assemblies, displays, parent talks and opportunities for pupils to share their personal experiences with the wider school community are also constructive ways in which to celebrate this month.

THE ROLE OF ROLE MODELS

When we recently asked our pupils what they would like to be when they are adults, most of the girls had their answers already. These covered a wide range of aspirations including, medical, creative and sporting professions. However, some were not so sure.

International Women's Day and Women's



History Month serve as wonderful opportunities to inspire those who already know with the highest ambitions and give who haven't yet made up their minds a window on the breadth of possibilities available to them.

But we never stop looking to trailblazers and role models as we grow up, so for my part I have found listening to **Teachers Talk Radio** particularly inspiring this week. Its podcast episodes dedicated to celebrating women leaders who have made significant contributions to the field of education are truly motivational.

They're also a reminder that, as well as offering a truly inclusive and aspirational curriculum, we also have to model the kind of working environment they should expect to enter once they leave us: one that is fair, equitable and clearly recognises their positive contributions.

Who are the female role models that girls can refer to when looking for motivation towards their career goals? Why is their contribution relevant today? What lessons can be learned from their journeys? Women's History Month is a great time to ask ourselves

these questions – but, as this blog from **Oasis academies** rightly says, we mustn't stop doing so once April rolls round.

AN UNSTEMMABLE TIDE

And on that theme, no sector gets more column inches dedicated each year to its lack of female representation than STEM. So, it was perhaps fortuitous that this year's British Science Week kicked off on International Women's Day. Perfect timing.

In fact, the ten-day celebration's theme for 2024 was time, and while there are plenty of ways to make connections between science and time, the clearest for me is that it is definitely time to end the inequalities that characterise the sector.

So it was heartening to read that British Science Week saw the launch of the #SmashingStereotypes campaign by the British Science Association. In an inspirational blog about the campaign, Orna Herr refers to Teach First research from earlier this year showing a confidence gap between girls and boys in respect of science learning – in spite of girls out-performing boys at GCSE and A Level.

She goes on to showcase a diverse group of female scientists with careers in commerce and academia who endorse the campaign and show what's possible for women in these fields.

For us, the crucial focus is on fostering a love of the sciences. This week, we've done that through workshops and educational visits to bring 'awe and wonder'. But while such experiences can and do foster a thirst for further knowledge, it's on us to bring the curriculum and all its possible career opportunities to life in every lesson and turn girls' potential into an unSTEMmable tide of job applications.



Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts



The Knowledge

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



How do school workforce views differ on pay and conditions?

John Jerrim, Resident data analyst, Schools Week

Schools in England employ almost one million individuals on a full-time equivalent basis. While the recruitment and retention of teachers quite rightly receives a great deal of attention, this group only accounts for half the school workforce.

The remainder encompasses teaching assistants, back-office staff, and those providing pastoral support – all also vital to the efficient operation of a school.

Unfortunately, most research into school working conditions only captures the views of teachers, with other staff somewhat of an afterthought. Yet it would be almost unthinkable to measure working environments in hospitals by only surveying doctors, ignoring nurses, physios, etc.

In a new academic paper, I attempt to address this discrepancy by investigating how school staff working in different roles differ in their views of pay, resources and workload.

The paper is informed by data captured by The Engagement Platform (TEP), which collects termly data from all members of school staff. It focuses on responses to three questions answered by around 6,000 staff in November 2023. Respondents answered these by using 0 to 10 rating scale:

- I believe my total compensation (e.g. including both pay and other benefits) is fair, relative to those with similar responsibilities and experience within this school.
- I have the resources and equipment that I need to do my job effectively.
- I feel happy about my work-life balance.

Table 1 illustrates how school staff in different roles differ in their views of their pay and the resources available to them. Green and red indicate more or less favourable responses.

It shows that staff in different roles have rather different concerns.

Teachers are more likely to believe their pay is fair (average score 7.1) than any other member

Table 1

Views of school staff with respect to their pay and adequacy of resources available

	Pay	Resources
Class Teacher	7.1	7.1
Middle Leader	6.9	7.1
Facilities Staff	6.9	7.7
Office Staff	6.7	8.3
Pastoral Support	6.7	8.0
Teaching Assistant	6.3	7.4

Figures refer to average response provided across the 0-10 scale. Green refers to higher scores and red to lower score

of staff, including middle leaders. Teaching assistants are least likely to feel this is the case (average score of 6.3).

On the other hand, teachers tend to be among the least satisfied in terms of the resources available to them to do their job effectively (average score of 7.1), while office staff (average score of 8.3) and those in pastoral support roles (average of 8.0) view this much more favourably.

Table 1 provides a similar comparison regarding workload. Each data point refers to one school in the sample. Figures along the horizontal axis refer to the average work-life balance score awarded by teachers, while those on the vertical axis are for staff working in other roles. The dashed line illustrates where the responses are equal.

There are two key points to note.

First, the data points for almost every school sit above the dashed line. This means that in almost every school, teachers are less satisfied with their work-life balance than other members of staff.

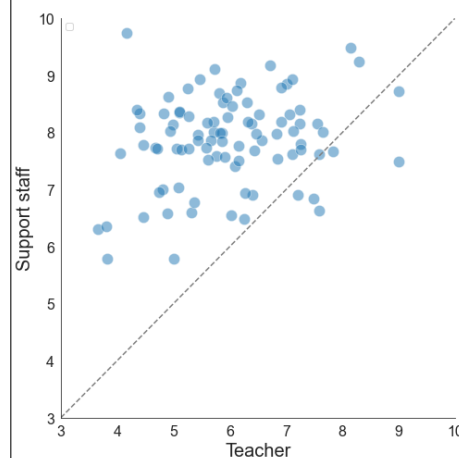
Second, the correlation between the views of teaching and non-teaching staff is relatively weak (0.25). The upshot of this is that in schools where teachers have greatest concerns over work-life balance, other members of staff do not necessarily feel the same way.

For instance, in one school, auxiliary staff report having a fantastic work-life balance (10 out of 10) while teachers take the exact opposite view (averaging 4 out of 10).

Across the sector, there is much discussion of the challenges teachers face, and what more can be done to improve their retention.

Table 2

Satisfaction with workload. Comparisons across teaching and non-teaching staff



Figures refer to average response provided across the 0-10 scale. Green refers to higher scores and red to lower score

While this is no doubt important, we must not allow a lack of research to lull us into forgetting the distinct views and concerns of other members of staff.

This research shows that staff retention is unlikely to have a one-size-fits-all solution. Moreover, it hints at the sorts of policies that could be more successful with certain groups. Getting it right will require schools leaders and policy makers to better monitor and understand the distinct views of this diverse workforce.

To discuss this research and its implications in more detail, join my free webinar hosted by TEP on 1 May. Register [here](#) to take part

Week in

Westminster

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

TUESDAY:

Fizz and frolics at the Westminster shindig to mark the end of Geoff Barton's tenure as leader of the ASCL union.

Maya Angelou was quoted a few times, and we hear there were some amusing anecdotes about Barton's time in office.

Week in Westminster is very keen to observe the rules of Chatham House, so we can't name too many names, but one tale involved Barton and another former school leader being thrown out of a Conservative conference afterparty gig they once snuck into, with the ASCL boss demanding of bouncers "do you know how I am?" (which they didn't).

Meanwhile, eyebrows were raised at the story of an unnamed former secretary of state being more interested in a union leader's pottery that was on display during a Teams call... at the height of Covid.

There was also a stark admission from Labour shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson that she **won't** miss receiving Barton's legendary mix-tape CDs, with calls for her to be "put in detention" by Ofsted chief Sir Martyn Oliver.

Meanwhile, a couple of rooms down in Westminster, schools minister Damian Hinds was keen to play down the impact of his government's flagship tutor scheme.

He told MPs that the National Tutoring Programme was "not necessarily what always comes to mind when the person in the street thinks of tutoring.

"A lot of it is small group work; it is not just one to one. Although very important work has been done by outside tutoring organisations, most of the work on the national tutoring programme has been done by existing staff in schools."

Quite the endorsement, Damo!

Tory MP and former schools minister Jonathan Gullis wasn't happy at all that funding for tutoring will end. He asked Hinds if the department would "somehow monitor how many schools continue to deliver tutoring and the percentage of disadvantaged pupils".

Hinds replied that they would "keep an eye on the matter, but that is not the same as specifying that Mrs Smith the headteacher should do this but not that. We think Mrs Smith should be able to decide."

Ofsted would be taking a keen interest, too, he added.

WEDNESDAY:

Lord Agnew's favourite – but controversial – school funding method just got a bit easier for trusts to implement.

GAG pooling is where trusts put all the cash their schools get into one pot, before deciding based on their own measures how much money they will hand over to the schools.

While most trusts still top-slice (take a percentage of the cash their school gets from government), the practice of pooling is becoming more popular as it allows trusts to smooth out funding across their schools (ie, those with big surpluses can be used to fill the deficits of others).

Agnew liked it because it is more efficient. But it is also controversial – with

heads concerned about a trust basically deciding what funding they are entitled to, instead of the national (and fair) funding formula.

Anyway, history lesson over. An ESFA update today explained that a new GAG pooling clause is now available for funding agreements.

It means trusts can add this to their master funding agreement (their contract with the DfE to run schools), which means they can move to GAG pooling **without** having to move wholesale over to the latest, "model" funding agreements.

This is likely to benefit the earlier academy trusts, who in the Wild West days of the academy movement will have signed up to much more generous and lenient contracts compared with the newer versions, when the DfE got a proper hold on what trusts should and should not be doing.

The government said the move would bring "GAG pooling into line with the other 'academy freedoms'".

THURSDAY:

Big news today about the government's Covid recovery free national professional qualifications ending. Instead, a less generous scheme will run and be rationed to leaders in schools with the most disadvantaged pupils.

So, how did the government communicate this? It updated a webpage with the new information, which neglected to say how much less the funding on offer was, nor did it set out that the offer would be capped for 10,000 NPQs (compared with the previous offer of 150,000 over three years). Top comms!





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Required September 2024

Salary L31-37

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Our Trust was established in 2017 and we rebranded to become Penrose Learning Trust in 2023. The Trust has had recent growth and continually builds on the excellent work of all the schools and their shared belief that the

young people in our care should have access to excellent educational provision. Working within and beyond the Trust, we aim to provide support and drive improvement in all of our schools. Currently comprising four high schools and five primary schools the Trust is growing, through a carefully managed approach.

The central team, based at East Bergholt High School, and is made up of teams in School Improvement, Finance, HR, Estates and IT. These central teams work as a unit to support schools and Headteachers to deliver the best possible education. We pride ourselves on our positive, hardworking ethos and collegiate atmosphere.

Further details about the post and how to apply are available on our Trust website www.penroselearningtrust.uk

Closing date: 9.00am, 22nd April 2024

Interview date: Wednesday 1st May & Thursday 2nd May

Penrose Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful candidates will be required to provide references, undergo employment checks and an enhanced disclosure via the Disclosure and Barring Service.

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Full Time Salary Range: £65,629 - £75,478



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This is a newly created role as part of the executive team which demands a high calibre candidate. You must have a proven track record of excellent leadership which has resulted in high quality outcomes in more than one phase or school. As Deputy Director of Education,

you will need to lead by example, building on your proven track record across a range of schools, both primary and secondary.

This post has been developed to add capacity to an already outstanding executive team in a trust that is ready to grow. As a team aligned to the trust vision, you will be pivotal in enabling us to achieve our mission of life transforming learning.

Experience of leadership (whole school or trust) is essential for this role, and the successful candidate will be able to use their passion for school improvement to build productive and purposeful relationships with headteachers across both phases of education.

Closing Date: 16th April 2024 - midday

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The Charter Schools Educational Trust

Salary: Competitive and negotiable

Contract: Full-time, permanent (DFE flexible working ambassador)

Location: Dulwich, London, with travel across Charter academies

Closing Date: April 15th, 2024, 12:00 pm

Apply: www.tcset.org.uk

Application Details:

Submit by April 15th, 2024. Interviews week of April 22nd. Contact Belinda Barrett, HR Director, for an informal discussion at: bbarrett@tcset.org.uk

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ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER - TEACHING & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Due to the promotion of the current post holder to a Trust wide role, we are looking to appoint to our Senior Leadership Team an experienced and talented leader with a commitment to excellence in the education and empowerment of our highly aspirant students. The start date will be September 2024. This is an excellent opportunity for a dynamic and ambitious colleague to join a successful school at a key point in its development. Reporting to the Deputy Headteacher-Quality of Education, applicants will be an experienced leader already contributing significantly to whole-school developments and improvements.

The successful candidate will:

- Be passionate about high standards and excellence for all students regardless of their background or starting points
- Be passionate about teaching and evidenced informed practice
- Be an enthusiastic and positive team player
- Be an exemplarily practitioner

The role is varied, and includes leadership of teaching and learning, staff professional learning, assessment, monitoring, and the line management of departments.

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The Shared Learning Trust

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Headteacher

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

This is an exciting and unique opportunity for a highly effective and inspiring school leader to move this school forward and improve outcomes for all pupils. The recruitment of dynamic, committed, and inspirational staff is at the heart of our Trust's vision.

At our Trust, we believe that every child is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. All schools support and challenge every child to do what they think they cannot, to persist, to work hard and to be their best. We are looking for a Headteacher who shares our values and has the vision, drive, and resilience to lead The Bromley Pensnett Primary School,

securing rapid improvement whilst also bringing leadership capacity that supports other Trust schools to learn from each other and beyond. We prioritise staff wellbeing and are deeply committed to investing in staff at every level of our organisation through clear professional development pathways and opportunities.

Interested candidates are encouraged to contact James Hill, Executive Director of School Improvement to discuss the opportunity in more detail.
Email jhill@drbignitemat.org

To apply for this role, please download an application form from the Jobs Section on the drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust website:
www.drbignitemat.org.

