



Curriculum Conversation

HOW WE CAN LAY FIRMER FOUNDATIONS



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- Ed sec also considering plans for LAs to open new schools again
- New children's bill will 'smooth difference' between school types
- Questions CEO salaries, saying trusts 'need to justify levels of pay'
- Reveals SEND plans to make mainstream schools more inclusive

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SCHOOLS
WEEK

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SEND solutions: let's all be braver

We've written a lot about the issues in the SEND system. We've also tried to write about some of the solutions, but not done as well.

That's because there are few experts and organisations coming up with ideas. And where people do have solutions, they are normally looking at just one part of the system and through their own lens.

A July report from the Isos Partnership is one of the only meaty pieces of work to try and work out a solution. It's a good report, but it was commissioned by a group of councils – who have different problems with the SEND system than, say, schools and parents.

SEND is *the* biggest issue facing education. Why aren't all the policy experts getting stuck in to improving it? They certainly have an abundance of ideas for other issues.

I suspect it's because the area is not just incredibly complex, but also a sensitive one to wade into – with strong feelings on

all sides.

But Labour has put this front and centre of its focus. And it'll need some help to get it right.

This week we got more details on the government's new school improvement plans under its regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams.

The details (see pages 7 to 10) have left many leaders and policy experts scratching their heads, and concerned it's all just a total muddle.

While there is still time to iron out issues, this is not a good sign for other reforms.

On SEND, one positive is the appointment of experts such as Tom Rees and Christine Lenehan to ensure the sector voice is driving changes (page 6).

So, a plea, for all those policy bodies that get funding to improve the system, pivot to fixing SEND.

Our commitment is that we'll do better in covering the solutions, too.

Most read online this week:

- 1** [Educating Greater Manchester head banned from teaching](#)
- 2** [Academy grants and trust capacity funds scrapped](#)
- 3** [Education questions: 'Tough choices' behind academy grant cut](#)
- 4** [Revealed: 36 leaders to form CST policy advisory group](#)
- 5** ['Retiring makes me a rarity – and that shouldn't be the case'](#)

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Interview

Bridget Phillipson

Phillipson 'open' to schools returning to council control

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The education secretary is "open to considering" whether struggling academies can return to local authority oversight and is reviewing the process for opening new schools.

In an interview with Schools Week at the Confederation of School Trusts conference in Birmingham this week, Bridget Phillipson also warned there were "questions about the level of executive pay" in the sector, with all schools and trusts having to "justify" high salaries.

She has said she is focused on "standards, not structures", and vowed to "smooth the differences" between academies and maintained schools.

Academy exit clauses?

Opponents of the academy model want schools struggling in trusts to be able to return to local authority oversight.

Phillipson said it was "something that I'm open to considering", but added: "It's not something where we have any plans to take any action any time soon."

She warned that "a school alone often can't, or even a trust alone, solve all the problems ... many of the challenges that schools face at the moment go beyond the school gate".

"Increasingly, what I hear from school leaders is that it's not just the pressures that they face in terms of whether they can recruit staff or whether they've got the resources that they need to provide a good level of education.

"It's also that they're supporting more children whose families are homeless or who are growing up in poverty. That has a big impact on children's life chances too. So that's where government has to come in, and it's not just about schools or trusts on their own."

Labour has signalled a move away from the previous government's belief that multi-academy trusts should be the main driver of



'There's need to justify levels of CEO pay'

school improvement.

Last week, it cut funding available for schools voluntarily converting into academies and cash for trusts looking to grow and expand.

Phillipson insisted "good trusts will continue to be able to grow...schools will be able to continue to convert".

But she told Schools Week: "Sometimes it's not simply about the structural change that's

required. It can be about governance change. It can be about making sure the right leadership support is put in place."

LAs opening new schools on the table

The upcoming children's wellbeing bill will force academies to follow the national curriculum and cooperate with local authorities on admissions, place planning and special educational needs

Continued on next page

Interview

provision.

Ministers are also reviewing 44 free schools.

Does Phillipson envisage a Labour government allowing councils to open schools again?

"We are reviewing the situation that we've inherited, partly because we want to make sure that there's good value for money, that we're creating places and schools and provision in the areas where it is genuinely needed, or where there is not the right specialism in place."

Phillipson confirmed the government was looking at letting councils open schools again, as first revealed by *Schools Week* in September.

More details on how the government will "smooth the differences between schools" will be set out in the upcoming bill.

The government's efforts to curtail certain academy freedoms have spooked some in the sector, who say it is their autonomy that has allowed them to innovate.

'Academies have nothing to fear'

But Phillipson said: "The best practice that I've seen in academies in terms of the really innovative and pioneering work they've done, especially where it comes to community provision, early years, much more besides, is unconnected to the measures that we are bringing forward.

"I don't think insisting that all schools should

teach the national curriculum should be any bar to any of that kind of pioneering work. I genuinely don't think they have anything to worry about on that front."

But she would not make a commitment to curtail any more such freedoms, saying she was

'I'm not going to tie my hands for years to come'

"not going to tie my hands for years to come into the future".

One product of academy freedoms has been sky-rocketing executive pay. The best-paid, Harris Federation's Sir Dan Moynihan, earns almost £500,000. Four trust chief executives earn more than £300,000, while 44 earn more than £200,000.

Asked if she was comfortable with those levels of pay, Phillipson said the government faced "difficult decisions" over school funding, which "will mean that we have to work with schools

about how we drive further efficiencies".

Trusts must justify top pay

"There are questions about the level of executive pay, and there is work that has begun around making sure that there is consistency across the board.

"In the current climate, which is a tough one – in government, in the country, and in the school sector – I think there will be need to justify levels of pay."

However, pay scales for trust leaders or caps on chief executive pay were "not something we're actively looking at".

Phillipson said her approach to school improvement was "one of collaboration", adding she was "more focused on the best outcomes for our children", rather than school structures.

She warned there had been a "complacency" that "the way to drive standards is through changing the structure of a school".

"Changing the leadership and the structure of a school can be an incredibly important way in which you deliver better outcomes for children. But it's not the only way, and there is still big variation between schools and within trusts."



Listen to the full Bridget Phillipson interview next week as part of our 10 years of *Schools Week* podcast

EXCLUSIVE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

6.5k teachers WILL all be new, but over FIVE years

The 6,500 teachers pledged in the Labour manifesto will all be "new", but their recruitment will be spread across the current five-year parliament, Bridget Phillipson has said.

Speaking at the Confederation of School Trusts annual conference, the education secretary confirmed what *Schools Week* revealed in September – that the flagship manifesto pledge may not be delivered for years.

She said her government would recruit "an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this parliament".

"How can children today feel that sense of belonging if their teachers keep leaving? To achieve and thrive, children need stability, not churn.

"And we've got to keep our amazing teachers

in the classroom. I know that."

Government officials were considering plans to loosen the pledged target so it could be met through improved retention.

But in an interview with *Schools Week*, Phillipson confirmed the 6,500 teachers would be new, and that retention efforts would be separate.

"We'll be saying a bit more very soon, but it's 6,500 new teachers in schools, colleges and the specialist sector, dealing with those shortage subjects that we face – also with a focus on areas where it's the most difficult to recruit teachers.

"So yes, it's the number, but ... it is also making sure that, in addition, we are resolving some of the subject specialisms ... and challenges that schools face where they're serving more disadvantaged communities

and struggle to recruit, say, maths or science specialists."

She added that retention was "crucial, not simply as a numbers game, but also, if you don't make teaching a welcoming and attractive place to go and to stay, then you won't get more people in. And they certainly won't stay."

She challenged the schools sector and unions to "make the case" for teaching as a "positive place that young graduates want to come and stay".

"They have my commitment that I'll work with them on the changes we need to make to keep good, experienced teachers."

Phillipson said one of her "biggest worries is around women in their thirties who leave when they have families and just don't regard remaining as a teacher as compatible with family life".

ON LOCATION: CST CONFERENCE



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School inclusion advisers appointed

New advisers have been appointed to lead the government's push to make mainstream schools more inclusive, as the education secretary suggests the broken SEND system may need more radical reform.

Tom Rees, the chief executive of the Ormiston Academies Trust, will lead an expert group on school inclusion, while Dame Christine Lenehan, the former director of the Council for Disabled Children, has been appointed the "strategic advisor" on SEND.

Bridget Phillipson is also creating a "neurodivergence task and finish group" – to include those with lived experience – to provide an expert view on identifying neurodivergent traits in youngsters.

Membership of the three groups will be announced in due course.

Speaking to *Schools Week*, Phillipson signalled more radical reform may be needed on SEND.

"The challenge in terms of reform is taking a step back from the system that we have right now." She said the government was thinking about a system that puts in place better support for children and families earlier – one that "actually works".

She was also critical of mainstream schools not being inclusive. The current system incentivised some to adopt a "competitive, rather than a collaborative model, and others to avoid more challenging communities".

"But that chase for a narrow shadow of excellence, the kind that only succeeds by pushing problems on to others, that ends now."

The conference also heard concerns that the extra £1 billion in high-needs funding, announced in the budget, will be swallowed up by councils to fill financial blackholes, rather than filter down to special schools.

Phillipson said Labour was "determined to make sure that money goes out the door in terms of provision for children and families".



Tom Rees and Dame Christine Lenehan

Phillipson puts happiness and wellbeing centre stage

Bridget Phillipson made pupil happiness, wellbeing and delivering inclusive schools the key messages of her first big speech to the sector.

Speaking at the conference on Thursday, she pointed to international data showing that a third of 15-year-olds don't feel like they belong in school.

"We've gone backwards, and we've fallen behind, and we've got to put this right.

"That's why thriving and belonging will feature so prominently in our work in the opportunity mission, hand-in-hand with attainment.

"Healthy, happy children coming to school ready to learn – if we get this right, those children will achieve time and again.

"The best schools understand this. They also understand that it's not easy,

it's not soft."

Exam results "open important doors ... and will continue to be the anchor of our education system," but "A*s alone do not set young people up for a healthy and happy life.

"And where previous governments have had tunnel vision, we will widen our ambition.

"If we want to tackle the epidemic of school absence, children need to feel that they belong in school."

She added the "absence epidemic is the canary in the coalmine for belonging in our country".

While parents "have a responsibility to send their children to school ... schools and trusts must create welcoming, engaging and inclusive spaces for pupils."

Academy freedoms? I've never seen teachers so enslaved, says Collins



Sir Kevan Collins and Bridget Phillipson

The government's school standards tsar has said he's "never seen teachers more enslaved", with some "being told what to do" in "every lesson".

Sir Kevan Collins, the former head of the Education Endowment Foundation and a non-executive director at the Department for Education, warned a "narrow compliance culture" had blighted "some classrooms" to the "degree of the slide stack we're going to use in every lesson".

His remarks – which will likely be viewed as an attack against academy trusts with top-down management cultures – come as the new government seeks to curtail the freedoms of the academies sector.

Speaking at the CST conference, Collins said: "There is an irony in the school-led and freedom kind of culture that we've worked on in the past 15 years, but in some classrooms, I've never seen teachers more enslaved.

"I think we've sometimes slipped into a shallow compliance culture, where you see people being told what to do down to the degree of the slide stack we're going to use in every lesson."

Collins argued that in these cultures – which did not prioritise "longer, deeper" processes – people aren't fulfilled and they leave".

"People get really fed up. [They] have to feel they have agency, responsibility and support and training to be the best teacher [they] can be.

"It's not a task that you give to someone in a way where you reduce it and remove all their agency. I don't think that gives us a long-term stability or capacity."

LONG READ: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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RISE and shine on school improvement – or is the future dim?

JACK DYSON

@JACKYDYS

Labour's new improvement drive for struggling schools will be overseen by regional teams. Despite more details this week, there are big concerns and questions about how it will all work ...

Sector leaders have demanded answers over Ofsted's role, accountability and capacity in the government's new improvement drive for specialist teams to broker support for struggling schools.

Department for Education officials set out further details during a webinar this week of how their regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams (formerly known as regional improvement teams) will work.

The teams – made up of civil servants and experienced turnaround leaders – will be rolled out in January, commissioning support from bodies such as trusts, councils or federations.

Ministers have set themselves April 2026 as D-day for providing "targeted" aid to struggling schools.

But the plans have been publicly and privately criticised, with leaders concerned about a blurring of responsibilities and accountability.

Who will make up the teams?

The RISE teams will be made up of civil servants and four to six seconded school leaders for each region.

The teams will "sit within a new framework of support and intervention" for schools.

This will be broken down into "three tiers": universal help, targeted support, and intervention. On a slide shown to leaders on Tuesday, this was rated green, amber and red, respectively.

RISE teams will commission school improvement support, rather than do it themselves, with the tiers based on Ofsted's new report cards, due next September.



But it is not clear exactly who will make the decisions.

The DfE told *Schools Week* that "report cards will identify schools requiring intervention and targeted support" – stating this will be Ofsted's job.

But an Ofsted spokesperson was also clear that the DfE was "responsible for whether and how to support or intervene in schools" – the question was a "matter for them".

When questioned on this on Thursday, Bridget Phillipson said the "conversation is still underway in terms of the shape and nature of report cards with Ofsted".

Unclear support categories

The support categories are also unclear. For instance, schools with "singular or several issues" would require 'targeted support'. This would involve RISE teams commissioning "bespoke" support from an organisation such as a trust, federation or council.

But schools with "minimal issues" and strong leadership would fall into the 'universal support' category – where they would be expected to "self-identify" areas of improvement and encouraged to share good practice with others (see image).

Sir David Carter, the former national schools commissioner, called on ministers

RISE timeline: Will take two years for all schools to get 'targeted' support

- This week:**
RISE adviser job adverts go live
- January, 2025:**
First advisers will be appointed under "test-and-learn approach" with about 30 schools
- April, 2025:**
More advisers appointed, with teams starting the "universal support" offer
- September, 2025:**
New inspection framework and school report cards will start. Local area priorities will be communicated this term
- April, 2026:**
All RISE schools needing "targeted support" will have got this. An early evaluation of the scheme will also have been completed.

Continued on next page

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to clarify "what triggers the support" as there was "potentially going to be a real tension between advisers, regional teams and trust leaders".

"Trusts, which will have set up school improvement teams of their own, are going to end up duplicating that work with someone else".

Lucy Livings, regional director for the south-west, said that as report cards were developed "[we] will also be developing the criteria" for support.

Policy expert Loic Menzies said the plans could mean the inspectorate "would need to provide a separate, more detailed report to the regions' group".

Report cards were "unlikely to provide the right level of detail to inform nuanced and evidence-based decisions about support" if they were "going to be designed with parents in mind and remain simple".

Who will take responsibility?

Several trust chief executives have privately shared concern over the plans.

There is also confusion around where accountability will sit for ensuring the improvement works.

In a briefing to members this week Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), said the new approach "fails to understand or articulate a theory of regulation".

Questioning "where accountability for improvement sits in this approach", she wrote: "Who decides? Who is responsible? Who is accountable to whom and for what? These concerns felt exacerbated by the webinar."

Cruddas said she was told by officials that where a "supporting organisation is being paid to provide support to a school, then that organisation would be responsible for the provision of that support".

It would also be "accountable for the public money it has been given, but accountability for improving the school will remain squarely with the responsible body".

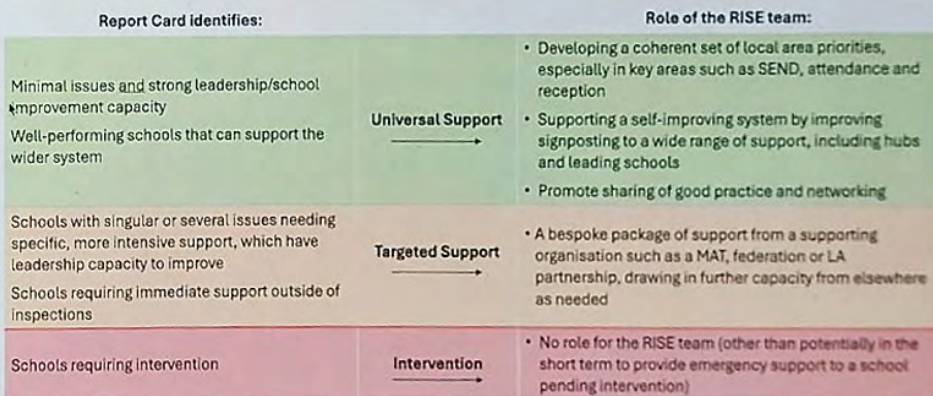
But the CST said the plan also appeared to "elide the governance and legal status of a trust. If enacted without



Leora Cruddas

RISE teams: policy framework

RISE teams will sit within a new framework of support and intervention. Their focus will be strongly informed by the Report Card, after Sept 2025.



A DfE slide setting out the new school support and intervention framework

'Who decides? Who is responsible? Who is accountable to whom'

amendment, this would be very serious". It wants written reassurances on the issues.

When asked more generally if accountability would still lie with responsible bodies, Sir Kevan Collins, the school standards tsar, said: "Well, I think that's correct, but I just get nervous about accountability ... for me, the real question is who's responsible for the effective teaching of these children right now in front of me?"

"I sometimes think that you can outsource responsibility to an accountability framework, and I want people, particularly teachers, to take responsibility for the children right in front of [them] today."

Is there leadership capacity?

The RISE teams will comprise civil servants already in post, with the

DfE expecting to employ up to three full-time equivalent school leaders to each of the nine regional groups for about two days a week. They – or the organisations

they will be seconded from – will be paid £600 a day.

In addition to commissioning support, they will work with civil servants to draw up a "coherent set of local area priorities".

This work will be done alongside local authorities, dioceses and mayoral combined authorities, with priorities set out in the autumn.

But Carter said school leaders likely to make up the new teams were probably "already working at capacity in their schools and trusts. We must not spread the talent pool too thinly."

Paul Rikeard, the chief executive of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust, asked: "Who's going to be seconded two days a week for school improvement from our trust?"

"We don't have capacity for that – those days are well gone because we've had to get rid of excess staffing."

Tom Richmond, a former DfE adviser, also said that "many local authorities have little or no school improvement capacity after 14 years of financial strain, yet they are being asked to take on a formal role".

John Edwards, the regions



Lucy Livings



Tom Richmond

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Ed Dorrell

OPINION

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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CARTERFormer national schools
commissionerHow Labour can get regional
improvement teams right

Regional improvement teams are an understandable effort to spread capacity more equally, but the policy faces pitfalls, explains Sir David Carter

Fragmentation and inequalities are likely to dog our education system for some time. The temptation to create something new to drive more consistent improvement is understandable. However, there are at least three areas that need careful consideration as Labour fleshes out the structure and responsibilities of its new regional improvement (RISE) teams.

First, who decides if a school needs support? Is it Ofsted? Is it the school? Is it the trust that ought to be providing support already? The role of the advisor will be pivotal in terms of negotiating the support that might be needed.

I have no doubt we have enough talented leaders and teachers across the country to take on these advisory roles, but as many of us learned as National Leaders of Education more than 10 years ago, advising and seeing advice acted upon rigorously are not always the same thing.

I also have a nagging concern that the people who will make up these new teams are already working at capacity in their schools and trusts. We must not spread the talent pool

too thinly.

Next, what we have learned is that school improvement support is usually at its most effective when the support taking place does so as close to a classroom as possible.

Where the leaders in a school or trust tasked with raising standards are known and trusted by the staff who need help, then the frequency of interaction and dialogue heightens the likelihood of success.

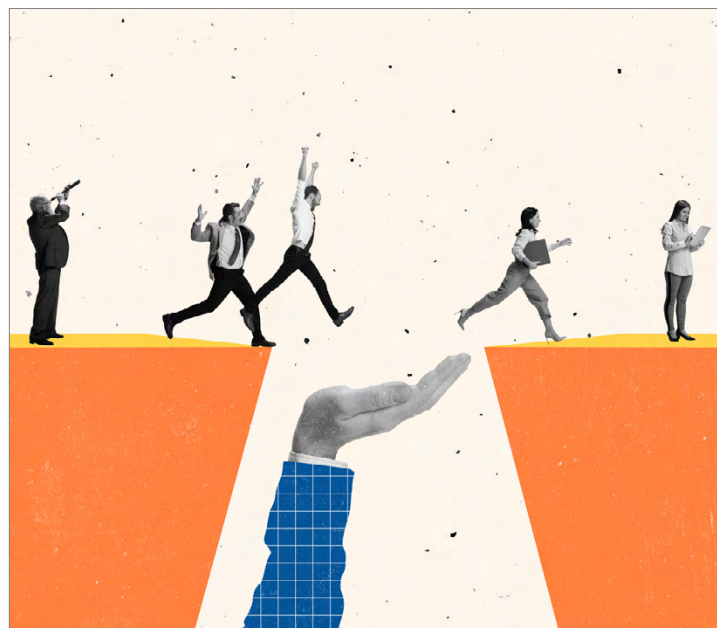
The idea that improvers commissioned by a regional team can replicate this level of interaction is unrealistic. What is it, therefore, that a body appointed to provide support can do that teams in a single school or even a trust might find difficult?

For a start, having an awareness of the practice that has made a tangible difference in one setting is important.

Brokering relationships between schools and trusts where the advisor has a vested interest in making learning better for more children is an important role for a regional team tasked with assessing capacity and areas of strength.

However, this leads to a second point: the complexity of transmitting practice from one setting to another.

Change needs to be owned and understood by the leaders and teachers being supported; this is the best way in my experience to cement change into daily practice. What I see in the most effective



“ Change must be owned by
the teachers being supported

trusts is an awareness that while change might be non-negotiable, the process to adapt and adopt it lies with the leaders and teachers who are responsible for implementing something better.

My third reflection is that school improvement thrives on collaborative pursuit.

The energy that leaders create when they look for different and better ways to educate children is important. It is one of the compelling arguments as to why trusts work. Colleagues who share the same responsibility for cohorts of children in the same communities have a responsibility beyond just collaborating.

A challenging but respectful conversation with an external advisor who has her own credibility is never time wasted, and I am sure will be welcomed, but the relationship with the classrooms in individual schools is the responsibility of the leaders who work there.

The newly conceived regional teams have an opportunity to:

- Look at improvement through a process that starts with identification of need.
- Gather an understanding of what works from across the country and region.
- Expand into the brokerage of support.
- Hold both the support providers and receivers to account for their progress.

This model of identification, evidence, brokerage and review can also be used to better understand the regional challenges that extend beyond individual schools and trusts.

Why do some parts of a region excel at supporting vulnerable learners while others struggle? Where do we have less of a challenge with teacher and leader recruitment, and why?

If the regional teams work together and resist the silo mentality that has brought many education initiatives that originated in the centre to a standstill, then the system will be richer for this shared learning.

ANALYSIS: DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

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Change how disadvantage is measured, say researchers

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

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EXCLUSIVE

The government could better support disadvantaged pupils if its intervention criteria included how heavily populated an area is, instead of the “crude” current measure of regions, researchers have said.

Timo Hannay, the managing director of SchoolDash, said current measures to target support to schools – based on the number of pupil premium children – was a “binary threshold”.

Categorising pupils based on income alone also meant social deprivation was not “fully captured”, as health, crime and the environment also had effects on poverty.

Other support has been based on where schools are located – for instance, the 55 education investment areas.

But Hannay said this did not group together similar schools as it normally applied across a whole council area, missing the “type” of place a school was located.

SchoolDash analysis applied a clustering algorithm to Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data – which is relative poverty in small areas – and higher education participation rates. IMD data is also based on crime, employment, environment and health outcomes.

The analysis, funded by the Gatsby Foundation, found six clusters of schools with similar characteristics.

“The analysis indicates the importance of place, as well as poverty, but not in the sense of the regions that we tend to talk about,” Hannay said.

“Instead, it highlights the differences between



towns and cities on one hand, versus suburbs and rural areas on the other, and the relationships these have with poverty.”

For instance, the analysis found some urban areas performing exceptionally well – despite high income deprivation.

“Affluent urban” areas – richer city areas in London – had large levels of income deprivation, but good outcomes, while “poor urban” areas – particularly in the north and Midlands, but also east London – had adverse socioeconomic indicators and weak education outcomes, but not as bad as would be expected.

But “poor suburban” schools – mostly in the north and Midlands – had mixed IMD indicators, but high deprivation and poor outcomes and had “fallen the furthest behind”.

“From this analysis alone we cannot say exactly why, but perhaps we should be considering the educational impact of

the cultural and social capital often associated with more densely populated places, not just the single dimension of affluence and poverty that currently gets all the attention,” Hannay said.

“We hope the approach can form the basis of a more sophisticated view of disadvantage that recognises that not all poor communities are the same, and that deprivation has many faces. Understanding this is the first step towards better targeted interventions and policies to address these challenges.”

A Schools Week investigation last month, based on SchoolDash data, revealed the uphill battle faced by leaders of disadvantaged schools.

Schools in the poorest areas struggled more to recruit teachers, had higher supply costs and paid more for basic supplies for pupils.

And many gaps had worsened as schools with the poorest pupils were hit hardest by fall-out from the Covid pandemic.



Timo Hannay

A new model to group ‘similar’ schools?

• **Suburban** This represents “middle England” outside the major cities. Socioeconomic and educational indicators are mostly unexceptional.

• **Affluent suburban** Richer suburban and rural neighbourhoods. The incidence of income deprivation is very low, but educational outcomes are not as good as you might expect

• **Affluent urban** Richer city areas, especially in London. Much greater levels of income deprivation, but also higher levels of educational engagement and better outcomes.

• **Poor urban** Especially in the north and the Midlands, but also the east of London and elsewhere. Lots of adverse socioeconomic indicators, coupled with relatively weak educational outcomes – although not as bad as you might think given the levels of poverty.

• **Poor suburban** Again, mainly in the north and Midlands. IMD indicators are mixed, but income deprivation is high and educational outcomes are poor. These are the areas that have fallen furthest behind.

• **Urban** Middling city areas in London, Birmingham and Manchester, among other places. Moderately high levels of income deprivation, but relatively good educational outcomes.



NEWS

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Labour reviewing all of Eton's proposed 'elite' state schools

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

All three of Eton College's proposed flagship "elite" sixth forms, run in partnership with Star Academies to 'level up' left behind areas, are being reviewed by the new Labour government.

Schools Week understands that all three of the "elite" 16 to 19 schools due to open in Dudley, Teeside and Oldham are part of a review of whether 44 planned mainstream free schools offer value for money.

The government has so far refused to confirm which projects are affected.

The three schools, proposed by a partnership between the £52,000-a-year Eton and multi-academy trust Star Academies, were given the green light last summer.

The "high-quality, academic-focused" 16 to 19 free schools were due to open in education investment areas (EIAs) as part of the former government's levelling up white paper.

An Eton Star partnership spokesperson said the "review does not come as a huge



Eton cloisters

surprise given the current fiscal situation, and we intend to fully engage with this process".

It remained "completely committed" to the plans, which would "transform the lives of very many young people across the country".

Department for Education officials will speak to affected trusts and councils as part of the review.

Assessments will be based on whether the proposed schools meet a need for places in the area, if they have "any impact on existing local providers", and whether the schools would provide a "distinctive curriculum".

Arooj Shah, the leader of Oldham council, said the plans would make a difference "to the lives of children and young people in Oldham and we'll continue to make this case to the government".

A Middlesborough Council spokesperson said its officers were continuing to meet with the DfE and Eton Star. Dudley Council did not comment.

Labour councillor Philippa Storey, Middlesborough's education lead, said another sixth form "where we don't necessarily need one" would drain existing services.

But Conservative councillor Mieka Smiles told Teeside Live she was "absolutely dismayed" by the pause, adding: "This pathetic decision by the education secretary is just another example of her war on aspiration."

The review into Eton's proposed schools comes as Labour refuses to back down over plans to introduce VAT on private school fees from January.



Arooj Shah

EXCLUSIVE

SAMANTHA BOOTH | @SAMANTHAJBOTH

Hacked pupil records at Capita rise to more than 50,000

Up to 20,000 more pupils' data may have been stolen in a cyber-attack on the government outsourcer Capita.

Schools Week previously revealed how 30,000 pupil personal data records were thought to have been taken when hackers targeted the company last year.

Ninety organisations had reported breaches of personal data held by Capita, which runs primary school SATs for the Standards and Testing Agency (STA).

However, in a freedom of information response, the Department for Education has revealed that after a full investigation, 50,780 pupil records were "affected".

This included names, dates of birth, unique pupil number, type of test taken and the schools' DfE number.

This new figure "may have included



duplicates", the department said, so it was "unable to accurately determine the unique number of pupils that had their personal data compromised".

The government refused to release the full investigation report as it contained "a list of pupils whose data was compromised in the cyber-attack and the details of the specific personal data stolen for each individual pupil".

The department said in its FOI response that Capita had "undertaken ongoing monitoring and there is no evidence to date that the data stolen ... has been circulated more widely or made available online."

But when asked for comment this week, it refused to confirm if the pupils or schools affected had been informed. Last year, it said because there was "not a high risk posed, we are currently unlikely to inform the STA data subjects".

In its annual report, the STA "assessed the privacy risk to be low, as the exfiltrated information was classed as basic personal identifiers and therefore likely to be of little value to those accessing the data".

The Information Commissioners' Office is continuing its investigation.

The DfE and Capita declined to comment.

NEWS: ACADEMIES

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Funding cut may force trusts to scrap expansion plans

JACK DYSON

@JACKDYDS

EXCLUSIVE

Academy trusts have been left up to £100,000 out of pocket following the government's sudden decision to scrap capacity funding – with fears expansion bids could be stopped in their tracks.

Leaders revealed that the move to scrap the latest round of trust capacity funding (TCaF) has left them having to absorb six-figure costs and wondering “where trusts sit” in the education landscape.

The Department for Education also axed the trust establishment and growth (TEG) fund and academy conversion payments – but said it had no plans to end any other expansion grants.

Consultant Lucia Glynn said: “With the loss of that funding, it's almost as if a rug has been pulled from under everyone because conversations [about growth] that will have been going on for a year, 18 months... may no longer be able to be fulfilled.”

The TCaF provides cash to help MATs develop their capacity and take on underperforming schools, particularly in education investment areas. But many trusts pay for the improvements before receiving the cash.

Weydon Multi-Academy Trust, in the south east, had lodged a £100,000 bid to help it grow from eight to 13 schools by February.

Having already taken on three schools, the trust paid for an HR director, IT switchovers and a full-time executive director of special needs, among other things.

“You've got to build capacity before schools come on board, [and] we were counting on that [TCaF],” said John Winter, its chief executive.

“When you've not got £100,000 coming in that you planned for, that's a significant issue. I don't think there's much of a financial incentive [now to take on converter schools].”

Meanwhile, Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust also forked out £114,000 to employ a director of school improvement.

Paul Rickeard, its chief executive, said the MAT did not build the TCaF funding into its budgeting this year “because we had a hunch that as things got tighter it would be taken away”. It has had to use its reserves to meet the costs.



Rickeard thought the TCaF cuts were “part of a bigger conversation about where academies sit” in Labour's vision for schooling.

In Sheffield, Minerva Learning Trust had applied for £500,000 to help it with a merger. The changes have forced it “to re-evaluate our budget and the nice-to-haves and must-haves from that fund”.

In emails, seen by Schools Week, the DfE said last week there were no plans to introduce future [TCaF] rounds, and that it had decided not to award funding to any bidders in its latest window.

The government also ended TEG and its grant scheme for schools choosing to become an academy.

The Confederation of School Trusts said the decisions would make it “much more difficult” for trusts to support maintained schools that needed help and left smaller schools “very vulnerable”.

The conversion grant – which allows voluntary converters to get “up to £25,000 to spend on the process” of switching to academy status – is due to finish in January. Applications will need to be submitted by December 20.

Glynn stressed the grant “has never covered all of the costs”, but without the money smaller schools and trusts might not be able to join forces.

“There's a risk of [there being] orphan schools. The smaller trusts – with three, four, five schools – or those with

10 to 12 – may not have the resources anymore to take on another school.”

She believed the announcement could prompt schools and trusts “to expedite this growth in order to take advantage of this funding”.

One chief executive – who asked not to be named – said the announcement could leave some schools that had been waiting up to three years to join his trust unable to access the cash.

The money paid for legal advice, IT transfers, HR advice, rebranding costs and any expenses associated with forming a new trust.

When asked on Monday why the grant was scrapped, education secretary Bridget Phillipson said: “We were faced with some very tough choices with a £22 billion hole in the public finances.”

Schools Week asked the DfE whether any of its other funding streams for growing trusts – including the strategic school improvement capital budget, sponsored academies pre-opening grant and emergency school improvement fund – were under threat.

Officials stressed they had no current plans to axe any more.

DfE said they are clear applications to TCAF are not guaranteed to get funding and trusts should not spend money until cash is confirmed.

A spokesperson added: “We value the role academy trusts play in our school system, but have had to take action to put government spending back on to a sustainable footing and fix the foundations to deliver change.”



Lucia Glynn

NEWS: EXAMS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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AQA uses injunction to stifle exam paper cheats

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

England's largest exam board has secured a High Court injunction to try and clamp down on leaks with those in breach facing a fine or prison.

AQA can now use a "newcomer injunction" to pursue contempt of court action against anyone – even anonymous accounts – from obtaining or selling genuine or fake exam papers online.

The board used other court orders this summer to target accounts claiming to have papers, but chose not to go ahead with prosecution as most were current or recent school pupils.

It follows a cyber attack on AQA in 2023 in which a hacker is thought to have posed as a school to obtain exam papers – before selling them online.

Accounts also pop up every year claiming to be selling specific exam papers to help pupils cheat.

This summer AQA used a "quia timet injunction" – a preventive injunction – against multiple people, mainly on the messaging service Telegram, who claimed to have accessed exam papers.

This included an order that required the people behind the accounts to identify themselves or be in contempt of court.



Punishment included up to two years in prison, a fine or the seizure of assets.

The accounts closed when the injunction was served. AQA said it decided not to pursue contempt action as most were current or recent school pupils.

The board said its main goal was to "disrupt and deter attempts to obtain our papers and to protect public confidence in the exam system".

But lawyer Nathan Capone from the firm Fieldfisher, which worked on the case, said it faced a "whack-a-mole" situation where a new social media account would "pop up" requiring a further application to court.

So this year the board secured a "newcomer injunction", which allows it to pursue contempt action against anyone in breach of the order.

Fieldfisher believes it's the first time this kind of injunction has been invoked to protect confidential information and online activity. It is usually used to prevent land trespass by

traveller communities.

The injunction also applies to people claiming to sell exam papers, even if they turn out to be fake.

AQA said it was also able to apply to the High Court for disclosure orders, which require social media platforms to provide the personal details of perpetrators.

A spokesperson said: "AQA has a dedicated team of investigators, many of whom have a background in law enforcement. They monitor social media to identify those who try to undermine confidence in exams.

"With this injunction, AQA is taking proactive enforcement against those who try to undermine confidence in exams and target students. It's aimed, for example, at those who post images of exam papers online, whether they are genuine or fake."

The injunction is in force until January 2026.

Schools Week asked major exam boards OCR and Pearson Edexcel whether they had used these legal routes, but they did not respond.

Exams regulator Ofqual asked boards to introduce new security measures following last summer's cyber attacks at all three boards.

Police investigating the AQA incident took no further action against two people arrested in connection with the alleged breach.

It said earlier this year there were "no further positive lines of enquiry".

SHANE CHOWEN | @SCHOOLSWEEK

Ofqual adds new principles to its rulebook for exam boards

Exam boards could be called out for being "dishonest" or for criticising competitors under new rules proposed by Ofqual.

The qualifications regulator will add new "principle conditions" to its 100-plus page rulebook, subject to a consultation launched today.

Six principles, one of which requires boards to "act with honesty and integrity", will be added to the general conditions of recognition (GCR). The regulator claimed they would help boards make decisions in "new, unexpected or novel situations".

The principles also include ensuring qualifications "are fit for purpose", and "where possible, promote public confidence in qualifications".

Ofqual's GCR, its rulebook for exam boards,

regulates who can run them, how qualifications should be developed and titled – and where the Ofqual logo should go on certificates.

Breaches can result in sanctions that range from mandating certain improvements to financial penalties and removing the power to award qualifications.

Ofqual declined to comment when asked if it was bolstering its rules in the wake of recent fines and regulatory actions taken against awarding organisations such as Pearson and NCFE.

The regulator admitted its expectations had not changed, but stressed the new rules would help boards make decisions by "removing regulatory uncertainty".

Sir Ian Bauckham, Ofqual's chief regulator, said: "These principles will play an important role

in helping Ofqual secure standards and public confidence in qualifications.

"They will provide additional support to help awarding organisations' decision-making and can apply at both strategic and operational levels."

If the principles are agreed, exam boards will be issued statutory guidance that will set out examples of incidents that constitute a breach.

For example, "not taking sufficient care about the accuracy of information" provided to Ofqual and pupils would be considered a breach of "act[ing] with honesty and integrity".

Delayed results, or negative advertising campaigns against competitor qualifications, could see boards in breach the principle to "maintain, and promote public confidence in qualifications".

The consultation closes on February 12.

FEATURE: POLICY

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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New institute hopes to inform and reform policy-making

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

It doesn't get much more rock and roll for education policy nerds than the Centre for Education Systems.

The new institute was set up by leading policy advisers Sam Freedman, Lucy Crehan and Loic Menzies and has an advisory board that includes luminaries such as Dylan Williams, Steve Munby and Anna Vignoles. The University of Cambridge and UCL are listed as academic institution partners.

The body wants to become an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) for making system-level policy.

The EEF has helped lead an evidence-based revolution for decisions made in the classroom; the Centre for Education Systems (CES) wants to do similar for decisions made in the Department for Education's Sanctuary Buildings.

And it wants to do so by providing the authority and non-partisan values associated with bodies such as the Office for Budget Responsibility and the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

"The idea stems from deep frustration that we all have with the quality of policy-making," says Freedman, a former government adviser.

"One of the reasons that we think policy-making is so sketchy, so contradictory, we get so much confusion and churn, is because of a lack of evidence and information about what is effective."

While "big steps" have been made in evidence informing classroom decisions, "we haven't really seen any improvement" in "the way system-level, macro policy is made".

Instead, those decisions "still come primarily from the interest, whims, prejudices of the people who happen to be in power at any given time – and that that is an inevitable function of the lack of information available to them."

And that's where CES comes in.

Funded by a £345,000 two-year grant from the Nuffield Foundation, and incubated by the Education Policy Institute, it will start by overseeing international comparative reviews for curriculum and accountability.

The aim is to deliver a "deep understanding of each policy area; offer alternative approaches to individual policy initiatives; explain how



'Policymaking is so sketchy because of a lack of evidence about what is effective'

policy instruments interact and develop a system architecture to help build system coherence and identify investment priorities", a briefing document said.

"It's easy to make fun of politicians, but they can only work with what they've got available to them – and they do have to do something," added Freedman.

"They can't just say, 'well, there isn't the evidence base to make any decisions, so I'm going to sit here for four or five years and not do anything'."

By codifying what works in different high-performing states, Freedman said he hoped the group could ultimately "build up system maps of every country – helping the whole sector, politicians and policy-makers to have a better and more informed conversation about what system reform and policy looks like".

It also hoped to stop politicians cherry-picking policies from the latest country to score well in PISA without getting under the skin of why they might work.

Becky Francis, who leads the government's curriculum review and is head of the EEF, said there was much to learn from international evidence and experience.

"But to date, that policy-borrowing has often been done in this sort of magpie-like fashion – in isolation

from context, from data trends, or indeed often from interest in how those local policy instruments might interact together."

The CES will dig into whether international successes are down to national policies or other things such as different behaviour or cultures across nations and so end "arbitrary and incoherent policy borrowing".

"Our objective is not to find the "right" answer; but to increase understanding of the options, the intended and unintended consequences of each and the opportunity to evaluate what's possible," said CES policy documents.

Baroness Nicky Morgan, a former Conservative MP, said she found out she had been appointed education secretary with "five seconds notice". Within minutes a reporter asked what her plan was.

"The opportunity for CES to help to bolster the person who's appointed in a [government] reshuffle is absolutely enormous."

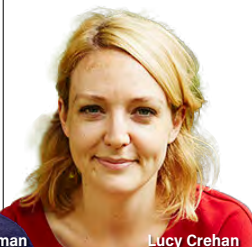
But Baroness Estelle Morris, a former Labour education secretary, warned the body must steer clear from "joining the bandwagon of saying 'the problem with policy-makers is politics'".

"Ideally, what we get is helping us understand the [policy-making] structure – and giving politics a role in that.

"If politics can be seen to be sitting in an evidence base of policy-making – I'm hoping that that might improve the quality of the conversation between teachers and the sector and politicians. And boy do we need that."



Sam Freedman



Lucy Crehan



Loic Menzies

NEWS: OFSTED

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Judging schools on middle-class admissions isn't even possible, says Ofsted

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Ofsted "can't" judge schools on admissions, a senior official at the watchdog has insisted, following "inaccurate" reports that inspectors could mark down institutions that take too many middle-class children.

Matthew Purves, who leads Ofsted Academy, the watchdog's new inspector training and development arm, also said the inspectorate would take inspiration from its work clamping down on off-rolling as it developed plans to assess schools' inclusivity.

Established earlier this year by Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's new boss, the academy brings together the inspectorate's work to attract, retain, train and develop inspectors and administrative staff.

It has also been tasked with making Ofsted more transparent in the wake of the ruling than an inspection contributed to the death of Reading headteacher Ruth Perry.

The inspectorate is also drawing up plans for report cards for next September. Inclusion is set to be a key "criterion", and officials are scrambling to find a definition of inclusive schools ahead of a consultation in January.

The *Sunday Telegraph* reported last weekend that schools "face being marked down for taking on too many middle-class pupils under plans being considered by the education watchdog". But Purves said this was wrong.

"The truth is, our scope is limited. That's not part of Ofsted's remit, and we don't look at that. We can only look at the pupils who are there. So there is a limit on what we can do. That story is just inaccurate."

However, he said inspectors had "for years" been "looking at what schools do for the children who are there".

"Think back to the progress that we collectively made on off-rolling a number of years ago... Ofsted really drove some thinking and some behaviours there."

He said part of the development of the new



framework was "listening to colleagues who know about these things and feeding that into what we do, alongside the years of experience inspectors have of looking at things like off-rolling, inclusion, etc, and bringing those two things together".

Purves was a key author of Ofsted's 2019 education inspection framework, introduced by Oliver's predecessor Amanda Spielman, which switched towards a focus on curriculum.

"If you'd asked us seven years ago, we'd have said we thought we'd done a good job communicating the changes, but it's really hard to reach 22,000 school leaders and many, many more colleagues in other remits," said Purves.

"So we're learning some things... Last time, we consulted really fully on the materials that we were going to inspect with. We're going to run a similarly fulsome consultation early in the new year and put the materials out there for everyone to see."

He said a "long period of training" for inspectors would get them ready between "now and September".

Ofsted Academy will publish more school inspector training materials before Christmas, Purves said, before moving on in the new year to the other sectors it inspected.

Training on the new framework had to be delivered first. "But once we've done that, then we'll put that material out there for

everyone to access."

Purves said the aim was to "eliminate a bit of the mystery about Ofsted ... there are still colleagues who have a consultant sell them something that isn't quite right."

"There will always be people who try to make a profit in the middle and try to sell the consultancy, but we're trying to cut out the middle person."

Following the coroner's ruling on Ruth Perry last December, all inspectors were required to undertake mental health first-aid training. But a lessons-learned review by former chief inspector Dame Christine Gilbert called for more "sophisticated" courses.

One of the training videos uploaded by the Ofsted Academy this week, which was delivered to inspectors in the spring, is titled "Setting off on the right foot".

Purves said this was "all about the inspector-leader relationship, and how that plays into mental health and wellbeing".

He added that the academy had also introduced "routine reflective practice".

"A lot of what inspectors talk about in that space, either unprompted or through some of the examples that we've chosen with them, is about how to support leaders, how to manage a difficult situation in everyone's best interest."

"It is front and centre of inspectors' minds, and we're putting it into those routines of our practice to make sure there's a place for it."



Sir Martyn Oliver

EXPLAINER: FINANCES

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Labour's first budget: after the dust has settled, here's what we know ...

£2.3bn budget boost means return to 2010 levels (but difficult decisions ahead)

The chancellor Rachel Reeves announced the core schools budget would increase by £2.3 billion next year.

However, £1 billion is specifically for high-needs.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has said the increase represents a 1.4 per cent real-terms increase in total spending, or 1.6 per cent in spending per pupil.

Luke Sibieta, an IFS research fellow, said the growth in core school spending would lift spending per pupil, after adjusting for inflation, to about £8,100 – just above its “high point of £8,000 in 2010”.

The Conservatives promised for years that funding rises would restore budgets to 2010 levels in real terms, but inflation and cost rises kept setting the pledge back.

The government has also said the £1.3 billion would “continue to fully fund this summer's 5.5 per cent pay award for teachers, and help cover pay awards in 2025-26”.

This was expected. When the government accepted the pay rise in July it said that it would provide almost £1.2 billion in the current financial year before rolling the funding into the national funding formula from next year.

But the mention of next year's pay rises raises the prospect that the 2025 pay award will not attract full additional funding.

The Department for Education also said that “despite the investment, there will still be difficult decisions to take on how money is spent right across the public sector – including in schools”.

SEND cash: is it for schools or to fill council blackholes?

Education secretary Bridget Phillipson said the extra £1 billion in SEND funding would “go directly to providing provision” and represented a 6 per cent real-terms increase.

But this contradicts the Treasury, which



Rachel Reeves

‘It is very likely funding will be used to reduce in-year deficits’

said in budget documents that it expected £865 million of the pot would go on reducing councils' huge SEND deficits.

Treasury documents stated councils would have “discretion” on how they spent the additional cash, but predicted “it is very likely that they will use the funding to reduce their in-year deficit”.

A damning report by the National Audit Office last month revealed the DfE predicted a cumulative deficit on councils' high-needs funding budgets of about £4.6 billion by March 2026.

The cash was an “important step” to return the system “to financial sustainability”, the Treasury said. It would be “built on” through phase two of the spending review next spring.

National funding formula allocations will be published at the end of this month.

Schools funded ‘at a national level’ for National Insurance rise

The government will raise employers' NI contributions by 1.2 percentage points to 15 per cent from April, an increase the National Foundation for Educational Research has estimated could cost schools hundreds of millions of pounds.

The Treasury has said government departments would get funding to compensate public sector organisations, but the amount will not be confirmed until spring.

When Phillipson was asked whether schools and colleges would be “fully compensated” for the rise, she said they “will be compensated at a national level”.

The wording here is important, because there are often winners and losers when funding is distributed to schools, so there is still no guarantee each school will receive all the funding needed.



Luke Sibieta

EXPLAINER: FINANCES

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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In the past, the share of cash given to schools with smaller teacher-to-pupil ratios – such as special schools and alternative provision – has been way below what they need.

The DfE must save another £1.9 billion

It wasn't all good news. The DfE will have to save £1.9 billion as part of a government cost-cutting drive.

Reeves said all departments will have a 2 per cent productivity, efficiency, and savings target from next year.

The DfE said this week it was “always looking” at how it could use its funding “as efficiently as possible to deliver best value” for children.

It pointed to savings through the review of the free schools programme and scrapping the Conservative's plans for an Advanced British Standard.

It has already wielded the axe to fill a potential £1.5 billion budget black hole to fund teacher pay rises in previous years. Cuts include development courses, teacher “top-up” training and governor recruitment schemes.

Phillipson also urged schools to use their money “more efficiently, wherever possible” as there would be “tough decisions to take on how money is spent” across the public sector.

Breakfast clubs may not be rolled out until April 2026

Labour's free breakfast clubs for primary pupils may not be rolled out nationwide until April 2026 at the earliest.

The £30 million set aside for the clubs will include money for an “early adopter” scheme, with 750 primaries taking part for a year from April 2025.

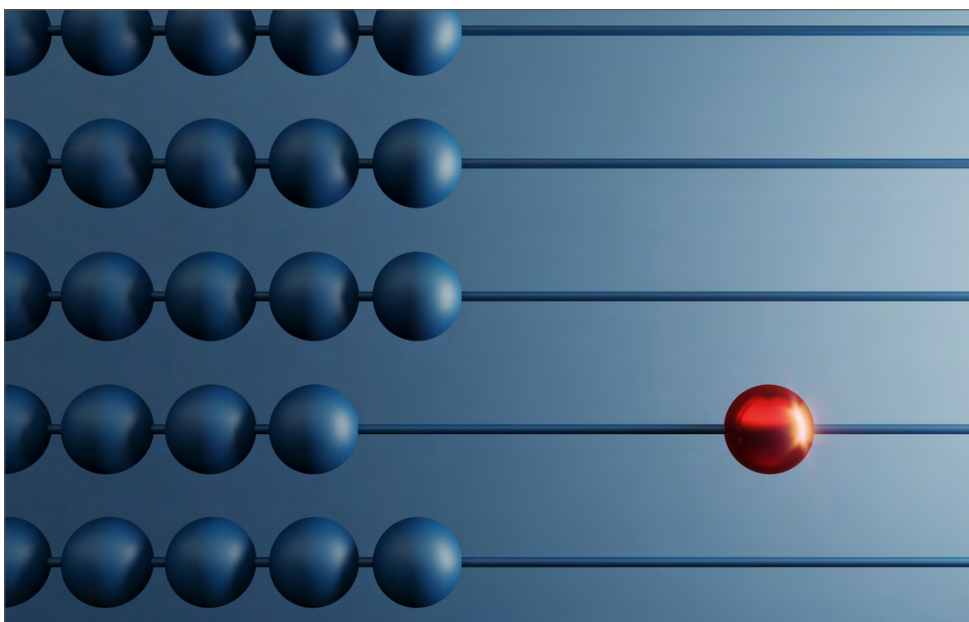
It suggests a national roll out – pledged in the party's manifesto – will come the following year at the earliest.

The DfE said it would share further timings of national rollout in due course.

The new funding also covers the extension of the existing national school breakfast club programme into 2025-26.

The scheme, aimed at schools in the poorest areas, was due to end next July, prompting concerns it would create a “cliff edge” of support for secondary schools – which Labour's scheme does not cover.

Schools in disadvantaged areas are eligible if they have 40 per cent or more pupils in bands



‘There will be tough decisions on how money is spent’

A-F of the income deprivation affecting children index.

The scheme is used by about 2,700 schools.

Extra capital cash only covers existing rebuilds

Reeves announced last week that she would hand the DfE £6.7 million in capital funding next year, a “19 per cent real-terms increase” on this year.

However, documents show this year is a low bar with capital funding falling from £6.2 billion in 2023-24 to £5.5 billion. And high inflation in the construction industry has meant initial estimates have slipped.

The new money includes £1.4 billion to fund the school rebuilding programme in the 2025-26 financial year, up £550 million on the spend this year. But it will not fund any new projects.

The government has not said whether the programme overall would be expanded beyond the roughly 500 projects already announced. Nor has it said what funding would look like in the future.

The capital funding also includes £2.1 billion to “improve the condition of the school estate”, up £300 million compared with this year.

However, officials have said that the new government is reviewing its systems for allocating

maintenance cash – such as the condition improvement fund and school capital allocations.

35,000 more private schools pupils likely to join state sector

The government predicts 35,000 private school pupils will move into state schools as a result of the VAT policy change, costing about £300 million after several years.

VAT will be charged on fees from January and the schools will have to pay business rates from April.

The government said this week it expected about 3,000 pupils to move before the end of the 2024-25 academic year and that 35,000 would move “in the long-term” with revenue costs to peak at £300 million “after several years”.

The policy is expected to earn about £1.8 billion which the government said is “expected to have a very significant positive net impact on the exchequer”.

However, ministers are now facing legal action from the Independent Schools Council, an umbrella body for seven associations representing such schools.

The council said its case would centre around alleged breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Human Rights Act 1998.

NEWS: MISCONDUCT

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Misconduct panel bans Educating Manchester head

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A former head who featured in the television series *Education Greater Manchester* has been banned from teaching over “failing to prevent” off-rolling six years ago.

A teacher misconduct panel said Drew Povey failed to protect pupils from the “risk of potential harm” by amending data to show pupils attended school when they had not, and by failing to properly record pupils leaving during the school day.

He was suspended, and later resigned, from Harrop Fold school in July 2018.

A ruling by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), published today, has now banned Povey from teaching “indefinitely”, ruling that his actions “constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute”.

Povey said while “administrative mistakes” were made “on my watch”, he would “never accept that I was involved in any deliberate plan to off-roll or to change attendance data”.

An investigation found three pupils were removed from the school’s roll ahead of the January school census in 2018 before they were added back a short time later.

It meant their exam results did not count towards the school’s overall performance.

Emails seen by the TRA panel show staff discussing “removing some of our worst-performing year 11s so that they don’t count on results”.

The panel “was satisfied that the removal of these pupils from the roll was likely to have a positive effect, however marginal, on the school’s performance data, including GCSE results and meeting the minimum floor standards for schools”.

The panel “noted that there was no evidence of Povey’s direct involvement in the decision to ‘off-roll’ the pupils concerned. However, in his written statement, he accepted that he had failed to prevent the ‘off-rolling.’”

The panel also found Povey had “caused the amendment of pupil attendance data” on the school’s management information system “to represent that one or more pupils attended school when he knew or ought to have known that in fact they had not”.

A witness reported that SIMS data showed



“around 600 register marks originally made between January 1, 2018, and April 30, 2018, were changed” on May 18 of that year, days before the deadline for schools to submit their summer census data.

The original marks were “predominantly unauthorised absences”, and the panel “considered it implausible that all of the amendments made on one day immediately prior to submission of the May census were genuine corrections”.

During the investigation, witnesses reported having been told to make attendance “look better”, and that Povey had wanted attendance increase from 92 to 94 per cent.

The panel also found Povey “failed to ensure that pupils being sent home was recorded in the appropriate manner”.

The school had a “no exclusions” policy, but Povey accepted “that pupils were sent home during the school day”.

He said the school “made the decision that these pupils were genuinely not mentally well enough to be in school”.

But government guidance states that “informal” or “unofficial” exclusions, such as sending pupils home “to cool off” are “unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents and carers”.

The panel “heard conflicting evidence about the nature and frequency of pupils being sent home. At one extreme, it was said that pupils were regularly sent home, including by being

pushed out of a fire exit without parents being contacted.”

The panel ruled Povey’s conduct “lacked integrity and/or was dishonest”, and that his actions “constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute”.

The panel found Povey had “very limited knowledge of relevant statutory guidance and requirements”, and there was “little evidence that he had taken steps to address this lack of knowledge”.

The ruling pointing out that “extreme caution was required when considering memories of witnesses” as matters were seven years ago, one of the longest TRA cases.

And Andrew Faux, the barrister representing Povey, said: “The panel’s decision was very disappointing and relied to a troubling extent on hearsay evidence. We are considering carefully the right of appeal to the High Court.”

Povey said he was “deeply saddened” by the decision. “My whole career in education was about supporting kids from tough backgrounds and helping them develop their self-belief and resilience – it was never about results or how data looked.”

Povey’s brother, Ross Povey, a former deputy at the school, has been banned from teaching for his role in failing to prevent off-rolling.

Both can apply for their bans to be set aside in two years.

No outcome has been published for fellow ex-deputy head Jennifer Benigno.

NEWS

CST policy advisory group appoints 36 members

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER
@SCHOOLS WEEK

Thirty-six academy trust leaders have been elected to a policy advisory group convened by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST). Schools Week revealed last month that 125 leaders were in the running to join the new “representative forum” that will “support CST in developing policy positions and speaking for the sector to external policy makers, including ministers”.

Writing for Schools Week, Steve Rollett, CST’s deputy chief executive, said the new group would provide “critical, front-line perspectives that will help to shape the policy landscape for school trusts across England”.

He said the group “will not operate in isolation or directly decide policy; rather, it will complement CST’s existing open member meetings, professional communities, and agile working groups”.

Here's the full list of members
Ash Ali, chief executive Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust
Dave Baker, chief executive, The Olympus Academy Trust
Dave Barber, director of education, Ebor Academy Trust
Sarah Bennett, chief executive, Inspiring Futures Through Learning
Dr Jen Blunden OBE, chief executive, Truro and Penwith Academy Trust
David Boyle CBE, chief executive, The Dunraven Educational Trust
Mike Butler, chief executive, The Education Village Academy Trust
Sharon Carlyon, chief operating officer, Inclusive MAT
Zoe Carr OBE, chief executive, WISE Academies
Warren Carratt, chief executive, Nexus MAT
Dr Herminder Channa OBE, regional director, Oasis Community Learning
Dr Tim Coulson, chief executive, Unity Schools Partnership



Steve Rollett

Dr Nicola Crossley, chief executive, Liberty Academy Trust.
Mary Curnock Cook CBE, trustee, River Learning Trust
Nicole Dempsey, director of SEND and safeguarding, Dixons Academies Trust
Caroline Doherty, head of public affairs, Ark Schools
Rowena Hackwood, chief executive, Astrea Academy Trust
Paul Kennedy, chief executive, The Good Shepherd Trust
Simon Knight, joint headteacher, Frank Wise School
Nimish Lad, head of curriculum development, Creative Education Trust
Stuart Lock, chief executive, Advantage Schools
Tom Martell, director of strategic school improvement, Cumbria Education Trust
Stuart McGhee, chief executive, Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Matthew Meckin, chief executive, The Rivers CofE Multi Academy Trust
Rebecca Meredith, chief executive, Transform Trust
Siobhan Meredith, executive director of education, The Ted Wragg MAT
Annette Montague, chief education officer, Greenwood Academies Trust
Simon Oxenham, chief executive, Woodard Academies Trust
Melanie Saunders, head of school performance, Inspiring Futures Through Learning
Matt Snelson, chief executive, The Sir John Brunner Foundation
Dr Paul Van Walwyk, director of education, Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust
Rama Venchard MBE, chair of trustees, London South East Academies Trust
Emily Verow, chief executive, Three Spires Trust
Chris Wheatley, chief executive, Flying High Trust
Shareen Wilkinson, executive director of education, LEO Academy Trust
Professor Andrew Wren, chief executive, South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust

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Trott gets the nod as shadow education secretary

Laura Trott has been appointed shadow education secretary in Kemi Badenoch’s front-bench team.

The appointment was made on Monday, just hours before education secretary Bridget Phillipson and her ministers faced education questions in the Commons.

Trott is the MP for Sevenoaks in Kent and served as pensions minister and then chief secretary to the Treasury in Rishi Sunak’s government.

In 2002 she was one of the first students to attend the Sutton Trust’s UK university summer schools, a programme that aims to give state-school pupils, some of whom may be the first in their family to attend university, a taste of university life. Trott went on to study at the University of Oxford.

Her appointment comes after Badenoch won the Conservative leadership, beating Robert Jenrick with 56.5 per cent of the members’ votes.

Trott replaces Damian Hinds, the former education secretary and schools minister, who had served in the shadow role since the Conservatives lost the election in July.

Neil O’Brien becomes a shadow education minister. James Wild, the existing shadow junior education minister, appeared in parliament on Monday, but it has not been confirmed he will continue the role.

Meanwhile, the 11 MPs who will sit on the new education committee were also confirmed over half term.

It has seven Labour MPs, two Conservatives and two Liberal Democrats and will be chaired by Labour’s Helen Hayes, the former shadow children’s minister.

Details of the committee’s meetings will be announced in due course, but Hayes has said SEND reform, child poverty and the school curriculum are on her agenda

NEWS: PHONICS

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EPI calls for review of phonics screening check

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers should review whether the phonics screening check for year 1 pupils is an “effective” intervention that helps children learn to read, researchers have said.

But a report from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) that suggested there was “no evidence” it led to improved outcomes has been criticised for its interpretation of changes to SATs results.

Introduced in 2012 by the coalition government, the check tests year 1 pupils’ reading. Those that don’t meet the expected standard take the test again in year 2.

The report looked at reading and writing attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2, before and after the annual check was introduced.

It examined the effect for year 1 pupils, rather than the greater emphasis on phonics, and found a “general upward trend” in reading performance at key stage 1, with the proportion meeting the expected standard rising from 85 per cent in 2010, to 88 per cent in 2012.

But this increase “slowed and stalled”, with 90 per cent meeting the standard in 2013, rising to 91 per cent in 2015.

However, teacher and blogger Andrew Old, challenging the findings, said: “One might argue this is not a significant or reliable result, but it is ludicrously biased to describe it as the slowing and stalling of an existing trend.”

At key stage 2, results have “risen and then fallen”, the report found, with 71 per cent meeting the expected standard in reading in 2017, 75 per cent in 2018 and 73 per cent in 2019.

But researchers warned it was “particularly difficult to examine whether the check may have had an impact at key stage 2, because reformed assessments at this stage began in 2016”.

The report also found that children who met the expected standard in the phonics check were “more likely to go on to reach the ‘expected level’ in key stage 2 reading than those who ‘failed’”.

The report also looked at gaps between pupils of different characteristics. It found “no evidence” that any had closed, while gender



gaps “appear to widen slightly”.

The EPI also commissioned Teacher Tapp to ask its respondents about the phonics check.

Thirty-nine per cent said the check should be scrapped, while 24 per cent said it should be kept “but with significant changes”. Fourteen per cent said it should stay as it is.

Twenty-seven per cent of teachers said the check led to “neglect [of] other curriculum areas that are important”, while 15 per cent said it “encourages us to focus on teaching the most important things”.

When asked about the amount of lesson time spent on phonics in the fortnight leading up to the check, 30 to 60 minutes a day was the most common response.

The EPI has called on the Department for Education to “conduct a fresh, transparent, evidence-informed review of whether the phonics screening check is an effective national intervention that helps children learn to read”.

This review “should be undertaken by independent experts with a range of knowledge, including of children’s reading and literacy development, and of practices and pedagogies within primary schools”.

Such a review “might be undertaken alongside and inform, or form part of, the overarching curriculum and assessment review now being led by Professor Becky Francis for the department”.

Dr Tammy Campbell, the EPI’s director of early years, inequalities

and wellbeing, said reading was “so important for learning, enjoyment, and access to ideas and imaginings”.

The curriculum and assessment review provided a “good opportunity to pause – and to reassess policy in this area”, she said.

A second report, also published this week, warned that children’s enjoyment of reading has dropped to the lowest point since records began in 2005.

Analysis of responses from more than 76,000 young people by the National Literacy Trust found 34.6 per cent said that they enjoyed reading in their free time, down 8.8 percentage points on last year. In 2016, the figure was two in three.

Reading frequency is similarly at a historic low, with only 20.5 per cent of eight to 18-year-olds saying they read daily in their free time.

The gender gap has also almost tripled, resulting from a greater drop in the proportion of boys reporting they enjoyed reading. Girls are now 12.3 percentage points more likely to report enjoying reading.

Jonathan Douglas, the trust’s chief executive, said “the futures of a generation are at risk”.

“To truly make reading for pleasure a national priority, we are urging the government to form a reading taskforce and action plan with multi-sector partners.”



Dr Tammy Campbell

NEWS

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Toolkit suggests 'triage system' to assess pupil absence

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Schools looking to boost attendance could ask pupils to suggest extra-curricular activities, tell parents how absence impacts results and harness the "golden hour" to phone "target pupils", a new government toolkit has said.

The 31 government-backed attendance hubs, alongside attendance tsar Rob Tarn, have fed into an "attendance toolkit for schools" published on Thursday.

It lists six key areas to reduce absence: data and targeted support, culture, people, processes and systems, relationships and communications.

Rolled out last year, the hubs are led by senior leaders of schools with effective attendance practices to support those that struggle with the issue.

Attendance figures show the absence rate this year is 5.9 per cent, slightly down on 6.3 per cent at the same point last year.

Tarn, chief executive officer of the Northern Education Trust, said he hoped the kit could "consolidate progress and go further to improve attendance for all pupils".

The toolkit recommends schools encourage "wider engagement with school" through enrichment and extra-curricular activities, as well as academic support such as catch-up sessions and homework clubs.

Schools should also find out from pupils what activities they would like, while gardening clubs and outdoor activities in the spring and summer might help to engage families.

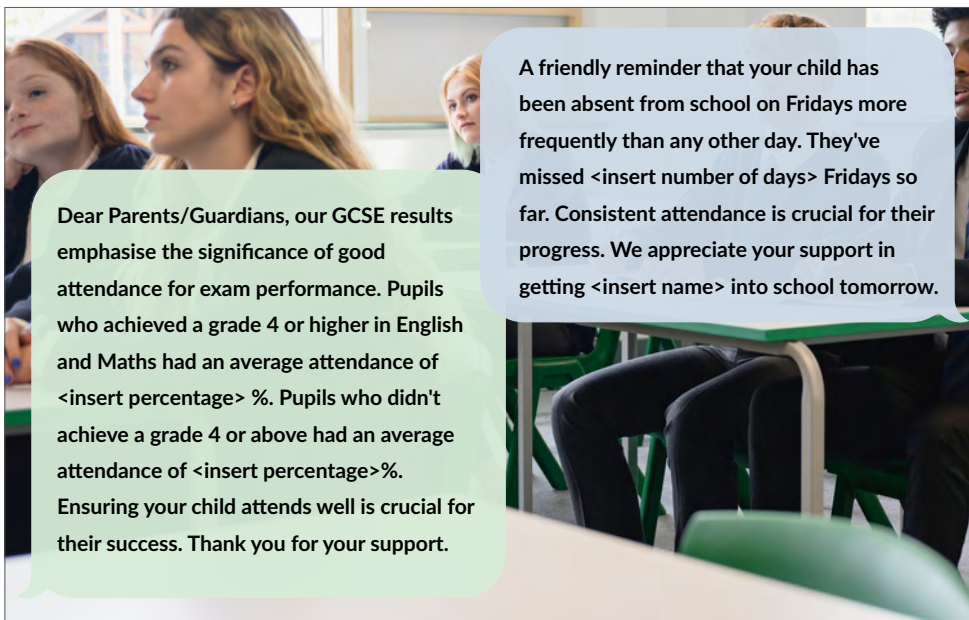
The hubs also emphasised the importance of on good communications, making sure they were "clear, concise, accessible, jargon-free, consider language barriers and meaningful and inclusive of families in all circumstances".

Schools could use social media, letters, videos, newsletters and the school website to communicate "key information".

Examples of texts include telling parents the average attendance of pupils who pass their English and maths GCSEs, as well as telling them how many lessons their child has missed.

Schools could also text parents about the number of Fridays missed so far.

Some schools use home visits and phone calls



at the start of the school day to find out why pupils are absent.

The toolkit coins this as "the golden hour" – the first hour of the school day – and recommends schools "conduct pre-emptive and support telephone calls to encourage school attendance for target pupils".

Ideally, the family should be assigned a member of staff who regularly contacts them, to "maintain consistency and build relationships".

A "triage system" to assess pupil absence could also be used with different responses that range from setting up a return-to-school meeting or making referrals to mental health leads.

Schools should "get to know families" through drop-in sessions, phone calls and targeted questionnaires ahead of term.

The questionnaire could include questions such as "how is your child feeling about returning to school?" and "do you have any updates or concerns you wish to share with your child's teacher?".

Schools could also provide resources such as introductions to charities with access to alarm clocks, uniform, mobile phone SIM cards and sanitary products.

Data was also key, but Tarn said it must be used "cleverly whilst making sure we do not fall into the trap of being information-rich but intervention-poor".

He backed banding as a "powerful" approach in which data was cut up into

severity and year group. This would identify pupils at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent, as well as trends over time.

Granular data should be shared with the relevant staff, governors and parents, but schools should make sure this was easy to understand.

Tarn, whose trust piloted the first attendance hub, said the toolkit was "version one" and hoped schools would help to develop it.

Secondary schools would also be able to access new data reports from the Department for Education about their establishments, comparing their attendance to national averages.

It included figures on absence by year groups and pupil groups, such as those with special educational needs or eligible for free school meals.

The reports will be available on the "view your education data" platform and updated every half term.

Stephen Morgan, the early education minister, who is in charge of attendance, said it was "everyone's responsibility to tackle the national absence epidemic, so every child receives a brilliant education that gives them the best life chances".



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Profile

JESSICA HILL | @JESSJANEHILL

Scarred by Grenfell but finding strength in adversity

Principal Anna Jordan says her pupils draw from values of fearlessness despite the 2017 tragedy overshadowing her school

Kensington Aldridge Academy is overshadowed by the grim spectacle of a tower clad in white plastic sheeting. Upon it, a banner reads: Grenfell, forever in our hearts.

For the school's community, led by its principal, Anna Jordan, the fire that claimed 72 lives, including five of its pupils, will always be in their hearts.

But Jordan is determined it doesn't overshadow pupils' prospects.

She's "nervous" about talking about Grenfell because she's determined the school should not be defined by the tragedy. Since the fire in 2017, Jordan – who has worked for KAA since it was founded 10 years ago – has gone above and beyond to help local families rebuild their lives.

The task is made harder because nobody has been prosecuted over the disaster, and the

government is yet to decide on the tower's future.

The "huge amount of anger and emotion" the community felt was further inflamed by the recent publication of the public inquiry's damning final report, which blamed cladding manufacturers and successive governments for failing to deal with safety concerns.

Jordan says that while young people everywhere are struggling post-Covid with their mental health, "we feel that magnified here" as "people are waiting for answers".

But the principal and her team are fully focused on helping students channel that emotion into a force for good.

Intrepid spirit

A colourful painting of smiling KAA pupils by former pupil Georgina Smith, 19, (who spoke at

the inquiry), takes pride of place in Jordan's office. She praises the former Grenfell resident for being "vocal" and "a great example of the community trying to move forward".

She embodies the spirit of 'Intrepidus', the motto which KAA's first principal David Benson gave the school. He had no idea then how the word would come to perfectly capture the values pupils would need to draw upon. Pupils are commended on the school's noticeboard for "showing intrepidus in everything they do".

Jordan left the Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College in Altrincham, Manchester, where she'd worked for the previous decade, to help Benson set up KAA as a deputy head.

While South Kensington is known for its wealth and glamour, the north of the borough where KAA is located is one of the country's most deprived

Profile: Anna Jordan



postcodes. Half the borough's secondary pupils attend independent schools, and Capita founder Sir Rod Aldridge built KAA here because there was no state school provision.

When the £80 million school was still a building site its leadership team visited other schools across the country for inspiration. The culture they came up with was based around KAA pupils "needing joy in their school day".

Jordan says there are "no silent corridors". Pupils are given free "full-on" breakfasts from 8am. Key stage three pupils get half an hour of daily guided reading to create a "really positive introduction to the school day". And house competitions create "excuses for the relationships to grow between staff and students".

Beyond the curriculum

Jordan is grateful her own happy schooling experience, at Sedgehill School (now academy) in Catford, southeast London, gave her extra-curricular opportunities: exchange trips to France and Russia, a minibus trip to Slovakia and the chance to canoe in the London Youth Games. She and Benson wanted to create similar opportunities at KAA.

At first, extra-curricular activities were made mandatory, with every pupil made to stay at school until 5pm. That rule was later relaxed, but while "big numbers" still do extracurricular activities, Jordan wishes it was more as they "get so much from it".

It's harder to arrange international trips after Brexit and Covid too, with "much greater finance and red tape barriers". But KAA still does its best. Its pupil premium intake (60 per cent of its cohort) is funded for such excursions by its "phenomenal"



'There isn't anything that isn't trauma-informed'

charitable wing, KAA Intrepidus Trust.

Through Aldridge, KAA has forged links with independent schools including Charterhouse and Godolphin, whose curriculum leaders helped design its curriculum. Nearby Latymer Upper School accommodated KAA's sixth formers following the fire, and others help KAA pupils prepare for interviews and with Oxbridge applications.

The school collects food for local families too, but while KAA has "thought about" becoming a community hub for local support services, as some other schools and trusts are doing, Jordan believes now is "not the right time".

School staff are already "caught up in conversations they're not equipped to deal with", she adds. "There isn't anything at our school that isn't trauma-informed."

Grenfell fire

For Jordan, that trauma began when she was woken at 1.30am on June 14 seven years ago by a phone call telling her a blaze had broken out at Grenfell Tower, across the road from her home.

Her initial sense of horror, still "very difficult" to talk about, turned to action as it became apparent the fire had destroyed KAA's playground



and smoke damage had made its building "uninhabitable".

Jordan spent that weekend rewriting the school timetable at her parents' house – her dad is a former social services chairman and her mum is a former secondary headteacher.

Pupils were rehoused in other schools while "the fastest school ever built" was established from Portakabins in nine weeks, just a 15-minute walk away. (KAA still retains the site, which proved "helpful" during Covid.)

At first "maintaining the feel of the school was incredibly difficult", Jordan says. Then, after the permanent school building was repaired, there was lingering "nervousness" about moving back.

"The later it got in the year, the more [the reluctance] was about emotion and trauma."

Profile: Anna Jordan



Over the following months, Jordan “went into overdrive”. All staff and students, for example, went on year-group residential trips that summer.

It wasn’t until October that the emotional toll really hit her, but the move back to the permanent site the following September gave Jordan further insight into how trauma triggers people “in different ways”.

“Particularly affected” pupils found taking exams in the sports hall or dance studio, located nearest to Grenfell, “really difficult”. Windows overlooking the tower are still covered in wrapping to prevent pupils having to see it.

The first fire drill after Grenfell was a “really difficult experience” for Jordan. Several staff still require “advance warning” of tests so they’re “not retraumatised”.

When KAA commemorates Grenfell’s anniversary, Jordan is mindful to prepare new staff for “how they might see students or parents react”, and “so they don’t feel excluded from what the school’s been through... they need to own that in the same way that everybody else does”.

The school has multiple therapists on site “all day every day”. Although the initial trauma support “tailed off” over time, “it’s picked up again” recently, partly due to anger over the inquiry.

Recruitment woes

Jordan’s consideration of her staff’s feelings are reflected in the school’s outstanding 2017 and 2024 Ofsted reports, praising the school’s “exceptionally high” staff morale.

Given this commendation, and the school being a high-profile performing and creative arts specialist academy located near the Royal Academy of Dance and the BBC and ITV headquarters, you might assume that recruiting a drama teacher would be easy.



‘Maintaining the feel of the school was difficult’

Yet KAA is having to try to find someone from overseas after three unsuccessful recruitment rounds.

Five years ago they were “inundated” with 40 applicants for one drama role. Now, “universities aren’t training drama teachers”. “If we’re struggling, then other schools must be on their knees,” says Jordan.

Music is also tricky; “Hardly any” local state schools offer GCSE or A-level music courses anymore.

Jordan also finds herself “butting against a brick wall” when it comes to the funding for performing and creative arts. It would be “disastrous” for KAA to lose this thread, but she’s “wondering how viable it is next year”.

Meanwhile, the local independent schools are investing ever greater amounts of “money and time” into cultural capital initiatives.

“We just can’t compete with that but we want to, because otherwise we’re compounding our pupils’ disadvantage.”

Managing tensions

To counter that disadvantage, KAA has a large pastoral team, with two heads of year for each

year group and regular parent coffee mornings. Despite this, parent complaints have risen since Covid.

Jordan says “it’s a small number of very difficult complaints, and in every situation, it’s because the family are living through really complicated circumstances”.

She adds: “Sometimes, it’s hard to know what to do. I find myself wanting to say, ‘please just trust us that we’re doing the right thing’. But it comes down to a lack of faith in the future and the world around us.”

That’s been worsened by the crisis in the Middle East. KAA has Jewish pupils as well as a large Moroccan Muslim community.

Pupil protests took place shortly after Jordan became principal, and were “probably” her “toughest experience” in leadership.

But Jordan “can’t imagine ever moving on” from KAA. She doubts she “could find a school where the staff are as good or as committed”.

The way that “pupils and staff took care of each other” in the aftermath of Grenfell is what she’s most proud of in her career.

“That legacy of care has remained”, she believes. “But it needs nurturing”.

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Headteacher, Ark Start

Building on firm foundations:
What to do about key stage 1

A stronger steer on the all-important transition from early years to year 1 will help both sectors ensure each child gets the strongest start, writes Molly Devlin

You might be surprised to read an article on the curriculum review by an early years specialist. After all, we are the one phase that is not in the scope of the review. But we are the place where a child's formal learning begins. Everything flows from here, and a careful transition in subsequent years is crucial to maximizing this impact.

The early years are actually the most recent phase to have had a curriculum review, back in 2021. There is always scope for improvement, but a lot of positive changes were made and are still bedding down, so it makes sense not to disrupt this ongoing progress.

However, there is potential for the review to smooth out the rather abrupt transition between reception class and year 1, as well as retain the reception curriculum's focus on the whole child.

Don't ditch benchmarks

Children in early years leading up to reception are tracked carefully in relation to developmental milestones. At the end of the year they are assessed against the early

learning goals. This gives clarity about the particular challenges they face in their development and the next steps to support them.

Depending on how schools transition their pupils into year 1, a child may go from having a tracked developmental delay to becoming simply "below age-related expectations" in literacy, for example.

In the prime areas of learning, a child with a developmental delay in self-regulation may cease to be assessed in that area completely in year 1.

In Ark schools, we recommend staff continue to track children that didn't reach early benchmarks more closely, carefully focusing any action and intervention.

Consider the whole child

One of the particularly strong elements of the reception curriculum is its emphasis on developing executive function, self-regulation and fine and gross motor skills.

These are all important for children's future success at school and in life. They should be a golden thread running through a child's school career, especially when they hit that second phase of increased neuroplasticity in their early teenage years.

All too often, however, we are taking remedial action to address



“ The review can smooth out this rather abrupt transition

behaviours that result from a lack of these core skills.

Given that schools this year are receiving reception pupils who were born during the pandemic and exhibit what appears to be a high level of need, this is definitely something to think about when we imagine this cohort's journey across each stage of education.

Start with the end in mind

But if key stage 1 colleagues could benefit from carrying on some of what we do in reception, there is also a case for some practice going the other way.

Laying the building blocks for composition, transcription and basic maths knowledge in reception and nursery can make a real difference.

But what are the building blocks that children need to become effective subject learners in key stage 1? And what can we teach in terms of specific vocabulary and concepts that will help pupils engage with that subject from day one?

The recently published research report from Ofsted, *Strong foundations in the first years of school* recommends greater prioritisation of the knowledge children will need, activities that help build fluency in core skills and more time for pupils to practice what they are learning.

This can be achieved without a review of the early years framework. All early years practitioners would need from the Francis review is a good steer towards a clear and fulsome definition of 'school-readiness'.

Doing so would not only benefit teachers but parents too. Both groups know that transition from reception to year 1 can be more of a challenge for pupils than that from nursery to reception, particularly after a six-week summer holiday break.

Working out how to bridge this gap more effectively could make a real difference, ensuring every child has a fair chance at a strong start on the more academic part of their early learning journey.

Opinion

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DR PETER GRAY

Co-coordinator, SEN Policy Research Forum

SEND reforms must be based on evidence, not opinion

From funding to policymaking, our current models are not fit to deliver the inclusive education system we need and must be substantially reformed, writes Peter Gray

The coalition government introduced reforms to the SEND system that were well-intentioned. Yet after 10 years the system is being described as broken. The solution is not more top-down decision-making but a fundamentally new approach to developing policy.

As documented in *Schools Week* over years of coverage, mainstream schools are struggling with competing demands to drive up academic standards while meeting a broader range of needs. Local authorities are facing the prospect of bankruptcy with rapidly increasing costs. And parental satisfaction is at an all-time low.

So as the new government contemplates what to do, faced by a Tower of Babel of competing views and priorities, it is clear more money alone won't do the trick.

More money, as announced in last week's Budget, is of course welcome. However, there are risks this will be used simply to pay off existing overspends, with no longer-term impact on children's experience or outcomes.

At best, this is a holding position as ministers get to grips with the sheer

magnitude of issues. Beyond that, our argument at the national SEN Policy Research Forum (SENPRF) is we need a more informed and consensual approach to policy development and review, based on evidence.

Our policy framework, published over the summer, sets out key areas for consideration: values, curriculum, assessment and teaching; funding; support; workforce development and accountability. It highlights current issues and recommends future directions which are based on the best available research.

The government has signalled a move towards greater inclusion in mainstream schools, against a background of increasing levels of displacement of pupils into specialist and alternative provision.

This policy direction has a lot of potential. Research commissioned by SENPRF shows a clear link between increased numbers of placements and growth in costs, and a review of the latest international research on the impact of mainstreaming on pupils with SEND and their peers shows mostly positive effects for both groups, on both academic progress and personal/social development.

However, mainstream staff attitudes, skills and confidence are crucial. Current legislation affords pupils the right of access to a mainstream education, but for this to be a positive option for more children, current policy barriers to



“ More money alone won't do the trick

inclusion need to be addressed, with changes in the key areas SENPRF has highlighted.

In doing so, it's important to consider the risks of introducing approaches that are not supported by evidence.

One of the key elements of the previous government's change programme has been the proposal for national bands and tariffs for high needs funding. This has received further support from the recent Isos report for the Local Government Association, which recommends national descriptions for levels of pupil need.

While this approach purports to deliver a more level playing field, research evidence shows it has considerable drawbacks, as described in a recent SENPRF commentary.

Our finding is that the previous government's strong emphasis on pupil-led funding through the introduction of the 'top-up' system for mainstream and special schools is contributing significantly to current issues.

Schools and parents are forced to emphasise pupil deficits to access higher funding levels. Moreover, the model is creating barriers to

using funding more flexibly and dynamically to meet changing pupil need.

That's why we are arguing for fundamental changes to national education policy to enable more positive school inclusion.

A huge amount of money has been spent over recent years on top-down government interventions and high-cost management consultancy. These have had limited impact.

Additional funding should be directed as early as possible to support innovative local developments which have a reasonable level of traction with parents and schools.

With more coherent evaluation of impact and experience, there are a number of examples of excellent practice in local authorities, trusts and schools that could be shared and extended.

It's not just councils that are bankrupt; we also need to address the top-down model of SEND policymaking itself. To solve the crisis, ministers must focus on harnessing the creative energy of local professionals – working in tandem with parents – who have direct experience of the system in practice.



PROF SAMANTHA
TWISELTON
Emeritus professor, Sheffield
Hallam University

How government can deliver flexible working opportunities

A planned review of NPQs creates an opportunity to use the golden thread of teacher development to mend the hole in our workforce retention

I bang on about the importance of teachers all the time. So much so I am often asked why, if I'm so passionate about this, I 'escaped' the classroom after only five years. It's a fair question, and the answer is simple: I had children and needed to work part-time.

As a primary school teacher I knew part-time posts existed but I had also witnessed what thankless jobs they could be. Marginalised and out of the loop, key decisions happened when these staff weren't there and they were often deployed in last-minute and unpredictable fashion.

All the things I loved about teaching – ongoing relationships with pupils, crafting learning over time, a sense of belonging – were threatened. So, just as my classroom practice was really hitting its stride, I changed my professional identity and started again.

So little has changed

Thirty-five years on, the situation is sadly not so different. As the at-once illuminating and depressing *Missing Mothers* report demonstrates, we are failing to retain many of our best teachers for similar reasons.

This really matters – at individual, school and system level. It's obviously a tragedy for the individuals we lose. And it's also a huge problem for pupils and the quality of education they deserve.

Studies suggest it takes as long as 10 years for teachers to become truly expert. Basically, we are losing teachers just at the point where they are achieving mastery, and replacing them with a conveyor belt of novices.

But there's a third group who suffer from this: the novices themselves. They get a poorer deal in their crucial early careers, which in turn feeds into a doom spiral for retention.

An underestimated solution

Increasingly and rightly, the system has woken up to the importance of supporting teachers as they enter the profession. This is why I was delighted to support the inception and development of the early career framework.

It's now a legal entitlement for every new teacher, and a Gatsby-funded study I led last year sought to discover how it was doing in early stage implementation.

Our standout finding was the make-or-break role of the in-school mentor who supports each and every early career teacher. Support and expertise from experienced teachers and the sustained and



“ Our best mentors are lost to the tyranny of inflexible working

sustaining relationships that arise from mentoring are vital in making new recruits feel valued, and for building their confidence and self-esteem.

A good mentor (or coach, depending on career stage) can make a vast difference to everyone working in schools. And yet, the people who make the best mentors (and gain so much satisfaction from doing it) are those we are losing to the tyranny of inflexible and unaccommodating working conditions.

Win-win situation

Some have woken up to this problem and done great things to address it. In some cases, the problem is also part of the solution.

Some schools and trusts have realised important functions such as mentoring need time and dedication that, if resourced strategically, can also present flexible opportunities.

With careful long-term planning this can be a win-win situation. Experienced teachers who need flexibility can gain it by dedicating

more of their time to mentoring early career teachers and trainees across the school and/or trust.

There is a genuine opportunity at system level here, in two key ways.

First, the government can use the planned review of the national professional qualification frameworks to recognise the support (including exposure to role models and case studies) which leaders at every level need. Seizing this agenda could help us hold onto this precious resource of expert teachers.

Second, the government can harness the gathering momentum to unlock the full potential of mentoring as a huge force for teacher and leader development, progression and retention.

Given Labour's teacher training manifesto commitment, this could be an exciting opportunity to build in flexible working, support teachers who are parents and finally reverse our deeply concerning retention trend.

It might be too late for me, but it might even persuade a few to come back.

Opinion

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



RICHARD TUTT

Director of secondary education,
Astrea Academy Trust

Reading aloud: How we’re tackling the literacy gap

As figures reveal a ‘dispiriting’ drop in reading for pleasure and literacy gaps persist, we are taking a trust-wide approach to reverse these trends, explains Richard Tutt

The National Literacy Trust’s latest report reveals that only 35 per cent of young people aged eight to 18 today read for pleasure. This marks another annual drop, which the report rightly calls “shocking and dispiriting”. So what can we do about it?

Reading the report, I was reminded of a recent interview in which Oxford University English professor Sir Jonathan Bate spoke of students at higher educational institutions not being able to ‘read books’ for lengths of time.

The discussion moved through the reasons, including dopamine hits from social media meaning shorter attention spans and the ‘thinning’ of the GCSE and A-level syllabus with less-dense texts.

As the conversation moved on, there was a suggestion that students who were privately educated would persevere with a challenging book for longer, and that those students who had not been privately educated were equally able to read but had not been exposed to large numbers of challenging books.

This is the gap our trust’s Astrea Reads programme sets out to bridge.

Its very purpose is to give students access to a wide and diverse literary repertoire and to improve reading for all in our schools.

Every student should have the right to read a rich array of literature across the genres, allowing them to discover the joy of reading. Being able to read and understand text is a crucial life skill that every person should have the chance to develop, and they should be able to do it well.

Yet we know that nationally, 25 per cent of 15 year olds have a reading age lower than that expected of a 12 year old. That’s why our method aims to boost levels of literacy in tandem with exploring a rich variety of texts.

Astrea’s reads

Students taking part in Astrea Reads cover six texts a year in addition to those on the curriculum.

We have a wide variety of texts and materials to appeal to students, to encourage them to enjoy reading. These include *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman, *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien, *War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

How it works

The programme begins in year 7, when new students are assessed in the ‘New Group Reading Test’, our evaluation tool to benchmark



“ We aim to expose students to 8,000 to 10,000 words per day

reading progress. We use this information to help us begin to understand how best to support each student.

At the very start of the academic year, our teachers, in a dedicated, daily 25-minute reading session, read aloud to the class, fluently and at pace, in an interesting and exciting way as students follow the text.

Known as ‘immersive’ reading, this method allows all students to listen and read along, with those weaker readers who might be struggling able to follow the flow of text. It also allows teachers to check vocabulary that students need for each session.

Competent and higher-level readers will develop a more rigorous understanding of the text and will also read aloud as the classes progress.

Catering for all levels

Our three strands within Astrea Reads are tailored for all students’ capabilities, including reading aloud, reading interventions

for weaker readers, and Sparx Reader, a reading, comprehension and vocabulary programme to encourage regular reading and improved vocabulary.

We also have special provision for those students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who need extra support with reading and understanding.

In addition, reading is a central part of academic subject lessons in our schools. We aim to expose our students to approximately 8,000 to 10,000 words per day.

Some studies suggest that regular reading can help to enhance academic performance and cognitive development. Our ambition for students at Astrea schools is that they will be able to tackle lengthy novels, persevere with trickier texts and continue to read and enjoy challenging literature.

We want every student to develop a lifelong passion for reading for pleasure, whatever path they take in their lives.

Solutions

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



ASHLEIGH BRIGGS

Campaign coordinator,
Kent-Teach

How to make flexible working work for your school

As the sector moves inexorably towards offering more flexible working opportunities, Ashleigh Briggs highlights tried-and-tested approaches and their benefits

The right to flexible working became a day-one right on April 6 with law changes that affected every establishment – including schools.

The challenges of making flexible working a reality in education are well documented, but this is an opportunity to explore its potential to improve staff wellbeing and resolve recruitment and retention.

Retention in particular is a huge problem. Around 20 per cent of new teachers leave the profession within their first two years, and one-third leave within their first five.

Why? The Department for Education's survey on the working lives of teachers found that 73 per cent say their job does not leave them enough time for their personal life.

Meanwhile, research shows women aged 30 to 39 are the largest group exiting the profession – a clear sign that teaching is not accommodating the needs of parenthood. Shared parental leave provisions could now see this become a problem for fathers too.

Flexible working in schools can be a daunting prospect but it is

important to know that it doesn't have to look the same for all roles. There are many ways individuals can work flexibly that do not require a great deal of change from current practice.

Allowing staff to take PPA off-site, moving staff training online, staggered hours and other strategies are just the gateway to allowing staff more flexibility.

Below are a few suggestions to consider and how they can benefit your school.

Staggered hours

Do you have staff with morning or afternoon commitments? Do your staff travel from greater distances to attend work? Staggered hours could allow these colleagues some extra time in the morning or at the end of the day to accommodate their needs.

If your school has a registration period in the morning, is there room for another member of staff to cover this? Some arrangements are all about timetabling and there are so many resources out there to help schools utilise staff time.

This small token could allow staff to arrive a little later and spend more morning time with their loved ones, to go to a morning exercise class that sets them up for the day, or simply to set their alarm a little later.



“ This is a highly effective retention strategy

Ad hoc / gifted days

Some schools allow staff days off during term time. This could be one a term or a set number over the year (if they choose to take it).

Yes, there are school holidays, but not every event in one's personal life adheres to the academic calendar. Happy and fulfilled staff take less leave overall, so providing these days can in fact reduce staff absence – or at least make it more predictable.

In turn, this allows schools to better plan their resource allocations and shows staff they are valued, boosting wellbeing, job satisfaction and productivity.

Phased retirement

Some experienced staff may be looking to gradually reduce their working hours and responsibilities as they transition towards retirement. This provides opportunities to help other points of transition and develop staff across the school. Not only that, but it retains that teacher along with their wealth of knowledge and

experience.

For example, someone who is looking for phased retirement and a maternity returnee could complement each other well.

Similarly, early-career teachers and phased retirees can complement one another, and not just in terms of timetabling for two staff on reduced teaching hours. Pairing them up can build a mentoring relationship that makes all the difference to each one's sense of professional worth and growth.

It's no big secret. Flexible working is a highly effective retention strategy. It reduces recruitment costs and leads to staff who feel more valued, more satisfied and more resilient.

Ultimately, this can only benefit pupils. Far from a disruption to their learning, it ensures they are taught by effective teams with plenty of expertise.

And if that's not enough, it'll also ensure you stand out as an employer.

THE REVIEW

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SIR TIM BRIGHOUSE

BOOK
TV
FILM
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EVENT
RESOURCE

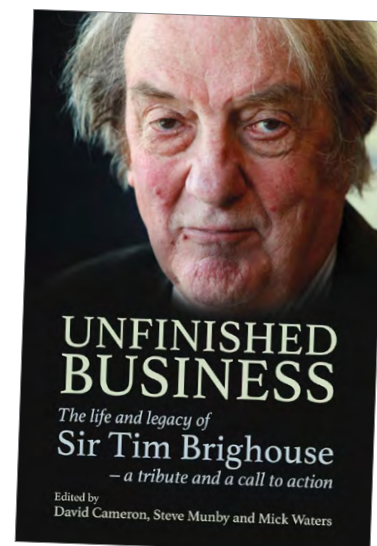
Authors: David Cameron, Steve Munby and Mick Waters

Publisher: Crown House Publishing

ISBN: 9781785837296

Publication date: October 18

Reviewer: Dr Jeffery Quaye, National director of education and standards, Aspirations Academies Trust



Sir Tim Brighouse was a celebrated educationalist whose ideas were far-reaching and will reverberate long after his death. If he is remembered for one thing above all, it was his role as schools commissioner for London from 2002 to 2007, where he led the London Challenge with the primary aim of improving the educational outcomes across the capital.

I worked in London during his tenure, and having been accredited as a chartered London teacher is still something that brings me pride. I'm sure I'm far from alone, and so it's no wonder that his passing has caused so many to want to celebrate his life and achievements, his ethos, values, and significant contribution to our sector.

Unfinished Business aims to capture all of this and serve as a call to action for future and current educators. It is replete with a vast number of contributions from a staggeringly broad range of school leaders, politicians, policymakers and teachers.

Some of the more notable among them include David Blunkett, Estelle Morris, Kenneth Baker, Kevan Collins and Christine Gilbert, but the contents page as a whole is a veritable who's who of the sector today.

Given this breadth of input, the editors have managed, nevertheless, to impose some structure on the contents. The 63 chapters are divided into two parts.

The first, made up of nine chapters, is essentially about tributes to Brighouse, including one from his son, Harry. Part two, 'a call to action' is organised around four themes; 'policy, politics, accountability, and governance',

'inclusion, equity and diversity', and 'curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment'.

It was refreshing to read the tributes that described Brighouse as a unique leader with "natural patience, courtesy and kindness". These attributes are essential for teachers and leaders to navigate the complexities of education.

Brighouse's sense of social justice was infectious, and those who worked with him closely talk about his enthusiasm and passion about educational institutions becoming a welcoming and fair place for all children.

Brighouse, in short, embodied what we all want from school: a positive culture and a place where every child has a sense of belonging. Apart from this ethical drive (and the fact that he was an intellectual powerhouse), Brighouse is also noted for his collaborative approach and capacity to ignite a fire in others.

It is not surprising, then, that the impact of the London Challenge can still be seen in the performance of pupils in London's schools. Nor is the outpouring of tributes since his passing, of which this book is only the tip of the iceberg. Brighouse's humility, even in the face of his successes, was evidently inspirational.

But while I totally agree with Brighouse's vision for a more inclusive, equitable and supportive educational system premised on collaborative partnerships, mutuality and reciprocity, there are some perspectives in some of the chapters that require critical examination.

For example, in chapter 13, the notion of wealth redistribution is cited in reference to Brighouse's final book with Mick Waters, *About*

Our Schools. But will additional taxation of private schools really address all of the challenges our sector faces?

Nevertheless, whether you agree with it or not, the key message from this book is profound. Brighouse's legacy provides no escape from the realities of education today. What comes out clearly though is that ideological certainties won't give rise to the solutions we seek.

Instead, this book invites you to imagine what is possible even in an imperfect education system so that equity and fairness can be realised. And its recurring emphasis on the importance of curriculum, assessment, and pedagogic approaches to meet the needs of all learners puts the onus where it should be: on each of us.

Unfinished Business does what it says on the cover. It is a celebration of Brighouse's life and achievements and a call to action. But it's more than that too. It's a source of visionary ideas to adopt, adapt (and debate) – and that ensures it a legacy of its own.

★★★★☆
Rating

THE CONVERSATION

LISTENING IN ON THE DIGITAL STAFFROOM



Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell

Deputy head, Robson House, Camden

Half term is over, the evenings are drawing in and chocolate reindeers are on sale in supermarkets. Perhaps due to the break, many of my favourite bloggers didn't release anything this week, but that gave me an opportunity to hunt for new voices.

HANDS DOWN

Though this blog is new to me, the 'no hands up' strategies discussed within it are not. This blogger goes by the name 'I Teacher' and, for context, it's a secondary English teacher.



The arguments for having a no-hands-up classroom are clearly explained, and the mental image of hands 'shooting to the sky' are ones which spark memories of my own school days, as well as when I've been on the teacher's side of the desk.

My first reaction is I could never advocate for the total banning of hands up (and I'm not suggesting the author is either) because, at least sometimes, the hand aiming for the sky is communicating an urgent need: to use the bathroom, to get a tissue, to check their

own understanding.

I've used this approach in my own classes at times and seen some of the benefits described. I've also seen the fear of being called on can act as a barrier to focus for some children.

I think, as with many things, 'know your class' is what is needed to ascertain when, how and if this strategy is one which leaves all children emotionally safe.

WORTH SUPPORTING

Shirley Owen's statement in this blog that 'a supportive teacher can be a game changer' is one which left me nodding and smiling. For children with a range of additional needs or none, being and feeling supported makes a huge difference.

Though the article focuses on the impact of feeling supported on student wellbeing and defines this clearly, it also acknowledges that feeling valued encourages children to engage in learning. Noting that teacher support is not limited to care and emotional support, it mentions additional academic support and the crafting of interesting lessons.

What this article leaves me wanting to shout from the rooftops, however, is that when children feel supported emotionally, and know that adults in school demonstrate this caring in practical ways (such as knowing where an additional explanation or opportunities to engage in deeper challenge are needed), they feel like a capable learner.

This can have an impact on a pupil for years to come, within and outside academic pursuits, and potentially on their inclination to support others in their lives as they grow up.

SCREEN SCREAM

This opinion piece shares a view that, initially, I expected to find myself entirely at odds with – namely that educators should embrace screen time, even with our youngest learners.

After reminding us that, throughout history, new innovations have been met with wariness and even fear, Richard Waite goes on to give examples of screen-free technology which can be used to engage and educate.



Richard Waite

I was reminded of my class 5 teacher (in the previous millennium) saying no one would carry a calculator in their pocket. Yet here we are with phones that can access more information than is contained in all the volumes of the biggest encyclopaedia imaginable.

The takeaway for me was 'activity first, technology second', a handy mantra for keeping tools in the service of education, and not the other way round.

GOOD, BAD, BUT NOT UGLY

This time of year, long terms and shortening days can leave us feeling flat. Here, Gary Armida takes on the 'toxic positivity' of platitudes from education-adjacent consultants to acknowledge that, while some days are indeed sunshine and rainbows, teachers have bad days too.

Reflecting on a bad day at the chalkface, Armida goes on to explain that a difficult day isn't an indicator of losing our drive or our 'why'. It's just a normal part of anyone's career. What matters is what we do next.

The takeaway messages – that connection is vital, that professional vulnerability brings humanity and that we must learn from the bad days and not let them stop us in our tracks – are ones I'm choosing to dwell on.



Click the links to access the blogs and podcasts



The Knowledge

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



Is teacher collaboration worth it?

Dr Ourania Maria Ventista, Research statistician, Evidence Based Education and C.J. Rauch, Head of teaching and learning, Evidence Based Education

We have all had experiences of working collaboratively in a learning group. Reflecting on how most of these have gone, we probably have a similar assessment: fine, but not fantastic. Great benefits *can* occur from collaboration. However, we know effective collaboration is far from guaranteed.

In our roles at Evidence Based Education we focus on teachers' professional learning and we are interested in the outcomes of their collaborations. Do teachers seek opportunities to work with their peers and colleagues? And when they do, what does the evidence suggest makes such collaborations effective?

What teachers say

It seems teachers value peer collaboration. Regardless of the value of the experience itself, it appears it is something many simply enjoy.

In a recent study, teachers expressed that one of the key facets of peer collaboration they particularly value is the openness that comes without accountability pressures. The same research showed when teachers cannot satisfy their professional learning needs within the school, they seek collaboration outside their usual community of practice.

This is all great news. After all, humans are social creatures; on the whole we tend to enjoy forging relationships with others with a shared affinity. That means peer collaboration is surely something worth investing in.

But while enjoyment may be a sufficient reason for teachers to work collaboratively, the key to maximising its potential is surely to ensure it delivers other benefits too.

Coe's conditions

Our colleague Professor Rob Coe has written that the evidence for collaboration is somewhat unconvincing. That will come as no surprise to most of us. We have all been in 'collaborative' settings that have been, at best, ineffectual. Some of us will have experienced worse: failed attempts at collaboration that have been demoralising or harmful.

That said, there are evidence-based conditions



'Collaboration is a success on its own merits'

that are important for improvement:

- Groups of teachers need a clear focus for their collaboration. Whether it is sharing ideas or learning more about a teaching strategy, it should have a defined, practical relevance to their work.
- Learners need a supportive learning environment and teachers (as learners) need the exact same culture of support and trust in a group. Key to this is that teachers feel it is safe to share their vulnerabilities – and that they'll be supported in return.
- A collaborative group should have a sense of challenge. They should not feel complacent but be driven to improve and increase student learning.
- A group of teachers needs access to authoritative and evidence-based expertise. This can come from colleagues within the group or be developed through quality professional development.

When teacher collaboration works, it works well. Multiple studies have shown that it can improve teacher effectiveness and students' learning outcomes.

In addition, the nature of working in a group means this can happen efficiently; all at once is quicker than multiple individual coaching sessions.

And, of course, the effects of building social bonds between colleagues is not insignificant. We've already mentioned it's enjoyable, but it also can have wider benefits.

It can strengthen teachers' feelings of affiliation and motivation for a goal. In turn, this can support the crucial goals of improving teacher wellbeing and retention.

These are great outcomes – but they are not guaranteed outcomes!

A means and an end

Great teachers value their professional development and recognise it as an important activity that leads to improved outcomes for their students. Engaging in professional development collaboratively promises additional benefits in terms of individual and team effectiveness, and in terms of outcomes.

A collaboration that does not bring immediate, measurable gains in student learning is not necessarily a failure. When teachers collaborate, there is success on its own merits. It builds a community of professional learners and builds an ethos of getting better together.

But if this collaboration yields even more effective teaching, that makes it all the more powerful. And now we have evidence to help us ensure it does exactly that.

Week in

Westminster

The week that was in the corridors of power

MONDAY

Unions will be dismayed their concerns that Ofsted is moving too fast on its reforms appear to have not landed.

Ofsted is planning to draw up report cards for a formal consultation in January, which some think is just far too quick – considering how complex they will be to create.

But biting back this week, chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver said “some have challenged that timeline, arguing that reform is coming too fast. Respectfully, I don’t agree.”

Well at least it’s respectfully... right?!

*** Uh-oh - we suspect some will be clearing up their message history after news of the tuition fees hike appears in the media before education secretary Bridget Phillipson told Parliament.

Lindsay Hoyle, speaker of the House of Commons, has even called for a full leak inquiry to identify the “guilty party”.

Phillipson expressed her “deep regret” that parts of the statement were leaked. Best send the plumbers in!



We hope you’re sitting comfortably, as it certainly seems ministers are!

In response to a written question, education minister Janet Daby revealed that since the dissolution of the last

parliament, three “low back, fully upholstered meeting chairs” had been purchased – at a cost of £1,627.50.

A smooth £12,886 has been spent on office modifications to “facilities additional flexibility in set up and use of the ministerial rooms” as well.

WEDNESDAY

Days after the government announced it was scrapping academy support grants, it then had the brass neck to ask leaders for their views on their funding service.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency wants to hear whether they deliver “certainty on what we pay you and when” as well as “services that are accessible and easy to use”.

We’re sure academy leaders will have plenty to say on that.

Speaking of the sector giving its views, Sir Keir Starmer held a reception with teachers today. He said engaging with the sector wasn’t just a “kind offer for you to tell us your views”, but that staff were “entitled to tell us your views, you’re entitled to put your fingerprints on what we do, and you’re entitled to be here and part of government in Downing Street”.

You heard him teachers, grab that megaphone and make sure politicians don’t get away with ignoring you.

However, Starmer seems to think the biggest pressure on teachers is “not being treated with respect”.

Suuure we get the sentiment... but what about the long list of arguably worst pressures like not enough teachers to fill a school, no help for the kids with SEND, school roofs literally caving in? Seems a bit like a get out of jail free card to us if he’s not careful.

THURSDAY

Phillipson’s speech at the Confederation of School Trusts’ conference today reminded us that the 6,500 new teachers isn’t just for schools... but it’s for colleges as well.

So we have no idea as it stands how many of this batch of new recruits will be coming into schools. It really is anyone’s guess at this point.

What we do know is that the target will now be met over the course of parliament (the next five years).

Oh dear.

A reminder that last year 13,000 fewer teachers than required were recruited into schools...!

Star Academies chief Sir Mufti Hamid Patel must have been watching Autumnwatch recently, as he went into a lovely ode to bees at the CST conference.

He reflected on an exhibition he had been to about the life of bees – “bees communicate to survive and thrive”... “they have roles and responsibilities to each other”... he continues before asking the question on everyone’s lips “why am I putting bees in the spotlight today?”

“The world of bees provides us with a metaphor. Bees have played such an important role in the development of civilisation because of a few crucial factors – simplicity of purpose, adaptability, communication and collaboration.

“These are key to their survival. I think the same messages hold true for the education sector as for the beehive. We cannot lose sense of our central mission.”

What a buzzy (sorry, not sorry) metaphor!

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Interviews: To be confirmed

Start date: ASAP

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