



MIKE KANE: THE FORMER TEACHER ON LABOUR'S FRONT BENCH



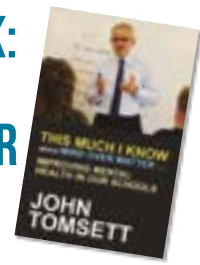
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WEST SUSSEX GOVERNORS PLAN STRIKE ACTION



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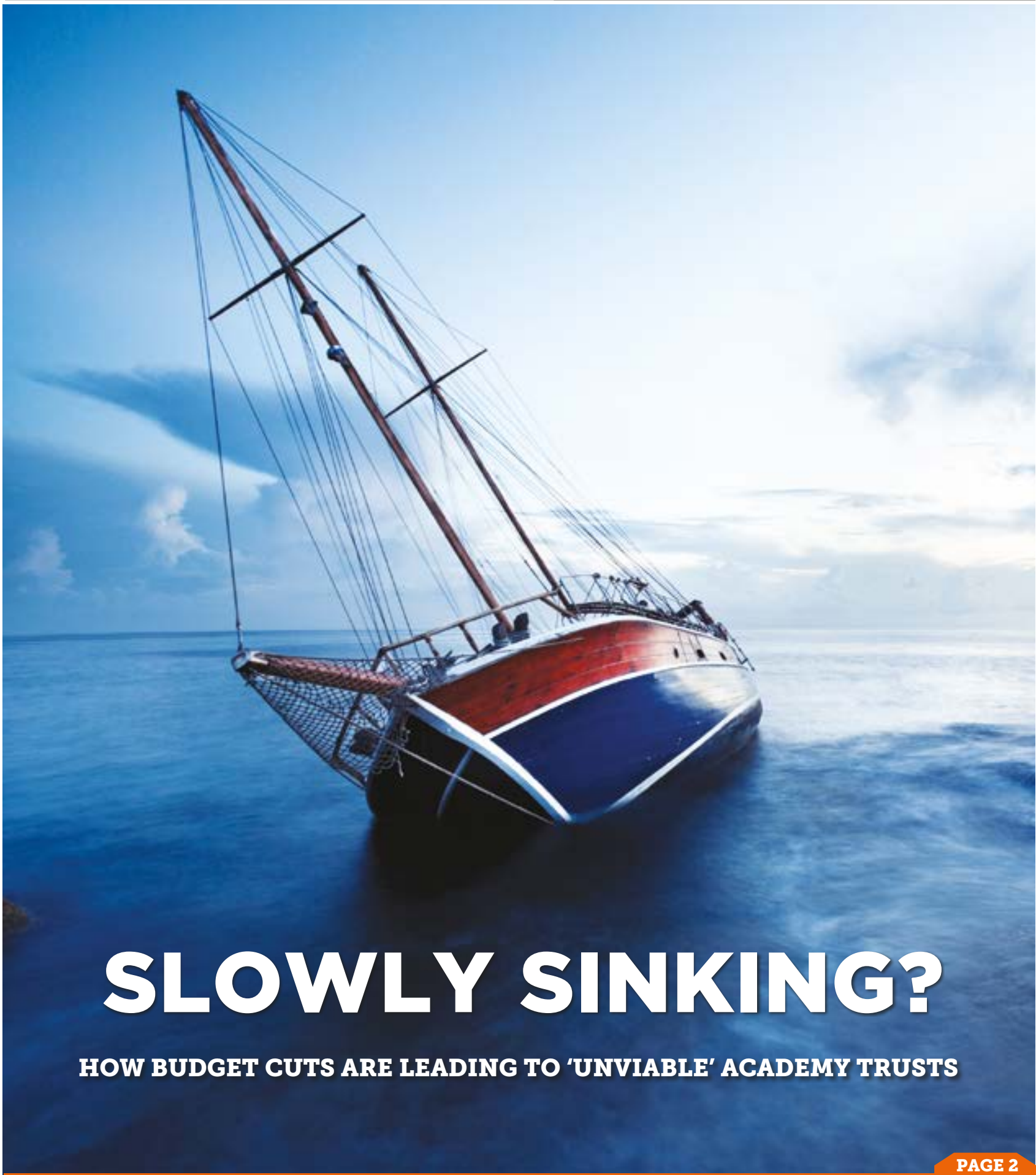
BOOK OF THE WEEK: JOHN TOMSETT'S MIND OVER MATTER



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FRIDAY, FEB 3, 2017 | EDITION 93



SLOWLY SINKING?

HOW BUDGET CUTS ARE LEADING TO 'UNVIABLE' ACADEMY TRUSTS

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NEWS**Auditors sound alarm as academy losses increase****JOHN DICKENS**

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Exclusive

Auditors are increasingly raising the alarm about academy trusts at risk of running out of money, with chains raiding reserves and eyeing expansion to pay off deficits.

A *Schools Week* analysis of annual accounts has revealed a prevailing picture of "unviable trusts".

The Rodillian Trust, which sponsors three schools in West Yorkshire, used more than £350,000 of its reserves to pay off a budget deficit last year.

Recently released accounts for 2015-16 show auditors flagged a "material uncertainty" about its future viability.

A similar judgment was issued to the Barberi Multi-Academy Company, which runs seven schools in Oxfordshire.

Accounts show it already had received a £600,000 funding advance from the government, and said "continued support" was "fundamental to the company's viability".

The government's academies report for 2014-15, published last year, also revealed that the number of "emphasis of matter" opinions by auditors, highlighting financial concerns, rose nearly three-fold to 92 cases.

A major benchmarking report by Kreston Reeves Group auditors, published last week, also found four in ten trusts posted a budget deficit last year.

Robert Hill, an education consultant and former government policy adviser, said: "These figures are disturbing, but it points to what we already know.

"The future for standalone trusts is very uncertain, and they would be wise to think about teaming up with other trusts – not just where it suits for budget, but where there is a good fit in terms of mission and values."



Sir David Carter, the national schools commissioner (pictured above), has spoken publicly about how he envisages a move to "merger MATs", particularly of smaller trusts.

Rodillian hopes to become financially sustainable by expanding to ten secondaries and a sixth form within three years.

Neville Lawson, finance director since June, told *Schools Week* the trust would be selective about which schools it took on, but was committed to transforming pupils' lives.

"We have to give assurances to trustees that it won't adversely impact the long-term viability of the trust – that's key."

Rodillian ran into financial trouble after taking on two failing schools with falling pupil numbers. One, the Featherstone academy, joined from E-ACT in 2014 with a £700,000 deficit.

The trust itself posted a £370,000 budget deficit last year, and is forecasting another

loss for 2016-17. Reserves have fallen from £628,000 to £260,000.

The Barberi group has appointed new finance chiefs, increased the number of finance board meetings and restructured teaching staff after a projected "substantial overspend" for 2014-15.

As well as the funding advance from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), trust accounts say that it is making "considerable progress" in building a sound financial footing, but that it is still reliant on government support.

Barberi has already been issued a financial notice to improve, as has the Bright Futures Educational Trust (BFET), which runs nine schools in the north west. Auditors have also raised "material uncertainties" over its future.

BFET accounts show it has asked the EFA if it can defer paying back pupil funding that it owes and capital payments, and has proposed further restructuring.

New chief executive Dr John Stephens said BFET was now developing a financial strategy alongside the EFA.

But the Kreston Reeves report found some trusts were reluctant to ask the government for financial help in fear of a notice to improve, which would temporarily halt any expansion that could boost income.

The report found a whole senior leadership team at one trust, which was not named, was considering deferring their salaries to avoid the need for a cash advance.

Joe Scaife, chair of the Kreston Academies Group, which audits more than 320 trusts – half of which are single-academy trusts – said the financial situation was "precarious".

He said significant savings had already been used, leaving "limited options to deal with the imminent danger", such as dipping into reserves, or joining another trust.

DfE delays plan to move to new offices**FREDDIE WHITTAKER**

@FCDWHITTAKER

Exclusive

The Department for Education's plan to save £19 million a year by moving offices has been indefinitely postponed, *Schools Week* has learned.

The move was proposed in 2014 when the government announced it would move about 1,600 staff from Sanctuary Buildings to the Old Admiralty Building in Whitehall, overlooking Buckingham Palace, by this summer.

BAM Construct UK was appointed to undertake a £50 million renovation of the building, including a new gym for staff and an art gallery.

Work was due to start in November 2015, but BAM has confirmed that it is not engaged in any activity on the site and the department (DfE) says that it plans to move out of Sanctuary Buildings "in due course", rather than within a specific timeframe.

During the original tender process,



the DfE asked bidders to include "full refurbishment of the gym" and "creation of space for the government art collection".

The Old Admiralty has been empty since the departure of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last year.

Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, said the planned move should be abandoned and the refurbishment money spent on schools.

"The plans for a new gym and art treasures lining the walls will stick in the craw of most teachers who are scrabbling around for basic essentials because of the cuts," she said.

"It's time that Justine Greening abandoned this plan – it has dragged on for so long that the chances of any savings being made are fast fading."

In 2014 the department claimed the move would save the taxpayer £19 million a year and "free up money spent on rent so it can be reinvested back into our budget".

"The cost of the move is being strictly controlled," a spokesperson said. "For example, we will be reusing furniture and sharing catering facilities with other departments."

Sanctuary Buildings is leased from a Luxembourg-registered firm, Bart Investment SARL.

The department's plan to sub-let space in the building will also be postponed.

The last major refurbishment of the Old Admiralty Building cost £63 million before the FCO's arrival in 2001, while the government spent £14.2 million updating Sanctuary Buildings between 2006 and 2009.

NEWS

THE TRUSTS WHO BROKE THE RULES

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Exclusive

Twenty-three academy trusts breached funding rules last year when they made payments of more than £4 million to companies related to members of their staff or trustees.

For the first time, *Schools Week* can reveal who the trusts are and the 26 transactions in which they failed to show they were fully compliant with rules laid down by the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Trusts wanting to purchase services from companies linked to their staff, sponsors or trustees must follow regulations, including that they are provided at no profit and that they disclose the payments in their accounts.

But 23 trusts breached those rules, including Bright Tribe and the Adventure Learning Academy Trust, both set up by the venture capitalist Michael Dwan, and both of which made non-compliant payments of more than £2.3 million to companies connected to him and his family.

Ark Schools, regularly complimented by ministers, also did not meet regulations over payments worth £4,500 to a cleaning firm linked to one of its trustees, Lord Stanley Fink.

There is no suggestion of wrongdoing by the companies that received the payments; it is for trusts to check compliance.

The government said irregular payments were found in less than 1 per cent of trusts, and could be due to procedural failings or insufficient evidence to prove that rules were followed.

But Kevin Courtney, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said there was "no justification" for trust directors or family members to profit from such payments, which should be banned.

"The public cannot be confident that the EFA's systems are robust enough to provide the oversight that is needed to safeguard public money and ensure financial probity."

He also questions the EFA's ability to oversee thousands of trusts and say that more rule-breaking payments may have gone under the radar.

About one third of the estimated 3,000 academy trusts in 2015 had related-party transactions, according to the EFA.

Tip-offs regarding non-compliance can include whistle-blowers and auditors. However, the latter do not always raise concerns.

An EFA review into all related-party

transactions in 2012-13 found 48 cases of potential risk that auditors had missed.

Further analysis by *Schools Week* found that 17 of the 26 related party transactions were to companies owned by trustees.

Eight were for consultancy services, with another three paid to firms linked to the trust's chief executive.

At least three were for payments to companies linked to a trust's sponsor. That includes the high-profile case of Bright Tribe, which was told to provide additional disclosures about its outsourcing payments. The EFA says that it has now satisfied regulations.

The second largest single payment that breached rules, according to the EFA, was £1.2 million from St Peter's Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre in Gloucester, to Town and City Builders. The school did not respond to a request for comment.

Four Ark schools were labelled non-compliant for buying services from Zenith Hygiene Services. Its parent company, Zenith Hygiene Group, is chaired by Ark trustee Fink.

An Ark spokesperson said the schools bought services through their own procurement policies and were unaware of any connection with Fink.

They said that Fink had declared an interest in the firm, as stated by EFA requirements.

The 26 payments were discovered by the EFA after being flagged to its "risk analysis division", which looks over academy trust accounts.

Neil Carmichael, chair of the education committee, said his committee has raised issues around related-party transactions, including whether the government should do more to ensure trusts were making the correct disclosures.

"It's vital there is proper transparency ... to ensure they are properly held to account for public money."

But the Department for Education insisted that payments to related companies could be beneficial in helping schools to meet educational objectives and could offer good value for money.

"All academies operate under a strict system of financial oversight and accountability – more robust than in council-run schools.

"Where issues are identified we can and do take direct action," said a spokesperson.

"Most academy transactions have shown no reason for concern, but where concerns are raised we will investigate."

BRIGHT TRIBE AND ADVENTURE
LEARNING - £2.3 MILLION

The outsourcing payments included £982,000 to Blue Support Services, a facilities management company, and £780,000 to North Consulting, a financial management firm. Both companies list the trust's sponsor Michael Dwan, along with other Dwan family members, as directors.

The EFA investigated after a tip-off, and told the trust to provide "additional disclosures". A Bright Tribe spokesperson said the trust was now "compliant with all regulations".

Both trusts have now moved to a fully in-house model for support services.

INTERSERVE ACADEMIES TRUST
- £145,748

The Interserve Academies Trust was set up by support services firm Interserve to run Crawshaw academy, in Leeds, in 2014.

The trust said payments to its sponsor covered its operational requirements and statutory obligations, listed under its management services agreement.

A trust spokesperson said the actual costs of the services provided was greater than that charged, and said the EFA was aware of this.

ASPIRATIONS ACADEMY TRUST
- £70,282

The payment related to Vanessa Miner, who was appointed on a 15-month contract in May 2014 to develop links with businesses and boost income.

The trust said Miner had significant experience and was recruited without a public appointment process.

She later joined the board. But the EFA said the trust should have publicly advertised the role to meet its procurement rules.

The trust said this was a "minor procedural" breach, but added it would be mindful of EFA guidance in the future.

Miner no longer works for the trust.

THE NON-COMPLIANT: WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY SPENT

TRUST NAME	AMOUNT SPENT	WHICH COMPANY WAS PAID
Bright Tribe Trust	£1,874,000	Blue Support Services, £694,000 North Consulting, £726,000 Northern Partners Technical, £125,000 The Knowledge Network £329,000
St Peter's Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre	£1,181,403	Town and City Builders
Adventure Learning Academy Trust	£445,000	Blue Support Services £288,000 North Consulting £54,000 The Knowledge Network £103,000
Interserve Academies Trust Limited	£145,748	Interserve plc & Interserve Investments Limited
Perry Beeches The Academy Trust	£79,000	Liam Nolan Limited, £74,000 Lampato Limited, £5,000
Aspirations Academies Trust	£70,282	V Miner
Fylde Coast Academy Trust	£52,470	Greeves Capey Consulting Limited
Atlantic Centre of Excellence Multi Academy Trust	£50,352	Sweetenham Bywater Associates LLP
The Eden Academy	£49,963	The Forter Partnership
Olive Academies	£47,600	Olive Education Limited
Guru Nanak Sikh Academy Limited	£90,250	Camertown Timber Merchants Limited, £47,500 Ms J Chadwick, £42,750
Bower Park Academy	£36,500	Computer Talk
Hull Collaborative Academy Trust	£33,703	Hull Centre for Restorative Practice Limited, £32,203 P Carlisle, £1,500
Casterton Business and Enterprise College Academy Trust	£26,433	Textbook Teachers Recruitment and Education Services Ltd
Swale Academies Trust	£26,400	Richard Slee Ltd
The St Aldhelm's Academy	£25,000	Academy Leadership Consultancy Limited
The Slough and East Berkshire C of E Multi Academy Trust	£23,885	Mr F R Evans
Swale Academies Trust	£16,876	Alan Barham Business Support Services Ltd
Holley Park Academy	£13,200	MD Electricals
Silvertrees Academy Trust	£13,117	Datasy IT Consulting
Haltwhistle Community Campus	£7,383	J R Holland Catering Limited
Ark Schools	£4,500	Zenith Hygiene Systems
Children's Academy Trust Ltd	£4,000	Kalulushi Partnership Fund

NEWS

PRIMARY PUPILS KEPT IN THE DARK TO SAVE MONEY

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

A school has told staff to “switch off non-essential” lights – even when pupils are in school – to save money.

A primary school in the north of England wants the lights in corridors and halls to stay off during the school day, according to a member of staff who wished to remain anonymous.

They said staff were “constantly reminded” to keep lights off, which “completely spoiled the bright, welcoming environment a primary school should be”.

Staff were also told not to use the colour photocopier to save on costs, they said. Making visual aids for pupils had become more difficult as a result.

Leaders in the school said the primary was receiving less funding than others because it was in a relatively affluent area.

It is based in an area that *Schools Week* has previously identified as a “loser” under the newly proposed national funding formula. A second consultation is currently underway, with the final formula not yet confirmed.

The source told *Schools Week*: “It’s getting to the point where we can’t afford the bare minimum to function.”

More pupils might be taken in to boost funding, and the number of teaching assistants might also be cut. Thirty or more pupils were currently in each class, said the source.

The account comes as the Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts an 8 per cent real-terms cut in school budgets by 2020.

The National Audit Office (NAO) also reported in December last year that schools would have to cut £3 billion to meet the worst cost pressures “since the mid-1990s”.

The proportion of local authority-maintained secondaries spending more than their annual income increased from just over a third in 2011, to nearly 60 per cent last year.

And among academies, primary schools that overspent rose from nearly a third in 2013 to 44.1 per cent last year. For secondaries that rise was even sharper, from 38.8 per cent to 60.6 per cent.

The headteachers of 250 state schools in West Sussex wrote to the prime minister Theresa May in October last year to say they needed £20 million in emergency funding.

They said the only way to make needed savings was to get rid of jobs and cut the curriculum – with subjects including music and art already considered.

Schools Week has previously reported that some schools have managed to reduce the energy costs of new buildings by choosing architectural methods, such as the “Passivhaus standard” that is said to cut energy bills by £40,000 in the first year.

Gibb: Budgets a challenge, but schools are doing OK

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

The schools minister Nick Gibb told MPs this week that he is “comfortable” with the way schools are dealing with rising cost pressures.

However, plans for “regional procurement hubs” to help schools to reduce spending are also in the pipeline, *Schools Week* has learned.

Headteachers recently revealed how budgets pressures are forcing them to cut back on textbooks and cleaning, and to make teaching and support staff redundant.

Gibb admitted that 8 per cent real terms budget cut predicted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies was a “challenge” for leaders.

However, when asked by Labour MP Cat McKinnell at an education select committee on Tuesday if he was “comfortable” with the way cost pressures were being handled, Gibb said he was.

“It has been a challenge and we are providing advice and support to schools about how to manage a budget in the most efficient way.”

But Natalie Perera, from the Education Policy Institute, warned the committee that cuts could hit 11 per cent by 2021 if additional funding was not reallocated.

Schools will soon be able to access

a “national buying scheme” for non-staff items such as ICT infrastructure, with the government also working on plans to pilot “regional procurement hubs” from September next year.

Jonathan Slater, the Department for Education’s (DfE) permanent secretary, told MPs last week that schools would be encouraged to buy items and services “at a regional level”.

The hubs would offer “expert” guidance through telephone and online services to “reduce spend across all categories”, while helping with contracts on “complex areas, particularly services such as catering, cleaning and premises”.

National buying schemes have been trialed before. In 2008 the then Department for Children, Schools and Families piloted an online procurement portal called OPEN.

Schools in England were expected to use it to order all consumer goods such as books, stationery and other non-staff services.

But the scheme was not followed through when the coalition government was formed in 2010.

Micon Metcalfe, director of finance at Dunraven school, south London, and a specialist leader of education, warned that national buying schemes did not necessarily provide best value.



Nick Gibb



Cat McKinnell

“My only caveat is that if you look at a procurer’s catalogue prices against what you might be getting from your supplier with a discount, it is not necessarily any cheaper, she told *Schools Week*.”

“However, if this new national buying scheme is quick and simple, then schools can use it for consumables and resources such as books, pens and pencils.

“If you are going to get a cost that is guaranteed to be best value then you will go there for toners, cartridges and all that.”

Patrick Hayes, director of the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), questioned whether a “national buying scheme” would offer any greater value than already provided by industry players.

“Certainly it would be of great concern to BESA and its members if the suggested benefits do not materialise. We will be monitoring this closely.”

Procurement bodies for ICT equipment already existed, he said.

ACCOUNTS WATCH

Chief reporter John Dickens continues our new weekly column with some of the most interesting findings from academy trust accounts for the 2015-16 financial year

Through the £200,000 pay wall...

Growing numbers of academy leaders, many of them responsible for only a handful of schools, now earn more than £200,000 a year.

In one case a headteacher at a single academy trust is now paid £220,000, while an associate head at the same trust is on £145,000.

A *Schools Week* investigation also revealed two chief executives running fewer than five schools broke the £200,000 barrier.

The findings, based on academy trust accounts from 2015-16, expose stark variations.

A previous analysis into the pay of the country’s largest 13 academy trusts last year found just three bosses were paid above £200,000 (two of them oversee 50 schools each).

Six academy leaders responsible for more than 30 schools earned less than £200,000.

Malcolm Trobe, interim general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said there was no “rough rule of thumb” on academy chief executive and head pay, and school numbers.

He said remuneration was driven by the often low job security, how challenging the trust’s schools were, and whether leaders would need to oversee expansion.

But he added: “We need to make sure trusts take a realistic view of rewards they are giving to senior leaders. I don’t think we could get a national pay range that represented all the different types of trusts.

“At the same time we don’t want to see a huge gap between the salary level of chief executives and other employees within the institution.”

Colin Hall, head at the **Holland Park School Trust**, which runs a single 1,400-pupil secondary based in west London, was paid £220,000 last year, up from £190,000 the previous year.

Holland Park became an academy in 2013. Before that, according to a London *Evening Standard* report into “superheads” in 2011, Hall reportedly earned £130,000.

David Chappell, associate head and accounting officer at the

trust, is paid £155,000, up from £140,000 in the previous year.

Amanda Phillips CBE, chief executive of the **Paradigm Trust**, which runs five schools in the east of England, saw her pay rise to £213,018, up from £195,384 in 2015.

David Willis, chair of the Paradigm board, said Phillips supervised the principals of four schools and was full-time principal of the fifth, Murrayfield primary academy, which transferred to the trust this month.

He said Phillips was an “experienced leader renowned for her tireless work ... often in the most challenging of circumstances”, and had secured a “glowing reputation” for the trust’s schools.

Andy Goulty, executive head and accounting officer for the **Rodillian Trust**, which sponsors three schools in West Yorkshire, is paid £210,000, up from £190,000. The trust did not respond to a request for comment.

The pay of Sir Nick Weller, chief executive of the **Dixons Academies Trust**, rose by at least £30,000 to a minimum £200,000.

According to Dixons’ accounts, his pay is agreed by the trust’s remuneration committee after “benchmarking against similar-sized multi-academy trusts”.

The trust runs three primary and five secondary schools, according to its accounts.

However, John Tomasevic, who heads the **Torch Academy Gateway Trust**, saw his pay drop by at least £5,000 to between £260,000 to £265,000.

The trust, which runs three secondaries and one primary, refused to comment.

A Department for Education spokesperson said it was for governing bodies to determine the salaries of school leaders, adding it was “vital” the best people led schools.

“That’s why we have given all schools greater flexibility to set staff pay, reward exceptional leaders and attract strong leadership teams to work in the most challenging schools.”

NEWS

Governors plan 'strike' in West Sussex

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER



Emma Knights

Plans for the first "strike" of school governors have prompted a warning about the morale of volunteers who are being forced to make school staff redundant as budgets tighten.

Governors in West Sussex have written to MPs threatening to stop signing off budgets and carrying out supervisory work in protest over a growing school funding crisis.

In their letter, seen by the BBC, governors have expressed "shock and incomprehension" about what funding cuts will mean for their schools.

According to teaching unions, the county faces budget cuts of more than £28 million over the next two years, equivalent to £287 for each pupil.

Although governors are not employees, they can refuse to carry out their duties, which include oversight of recruitment.

The "strike", believed to be the first of its kind in England, has prompted a warning from a senior governance expert who feels that being forced to make tough financial decisions could put off volunteers.

Emma Knights, chief executive of the National Governance Association, said the action in West Sussex was a "good PR tactic" to highlight governors' funding concerns, but warned there were "moral and practical implications" that made longer-term action untenable.

"A school could get by in the short term if governors decided to [strike], but if it got towards the medium term we would be encouraging people to do what they are supposed to do," she said.

Knights said morale in the governance community was "not high at the moment, and hasn't been over the past year or so" – with money the main trigger.

"People volunteer to make a difference to pupils and their communities. They don't expect to be making people redundant. That's a really tough call and, as volunteers, you might ask yourself if this is really what you want to do."

Knights said academy trustees could face dismissal if they failed to carry out their duties, depending on the rules set by individual trusts. In local authority-

maintained schools, it would be up to councils to intervene if the work of governors was not completed.

Last October, the head of every primary, secondary and special school in West Sussex wrote to parents warning that they could be forced to cut school hours and move to a four-day week.

Rising costs and flat funding mean schools are facing real-terms cut in their funding of about 8 per cent over the next few years.

The government is currently consulting on plans for a new national funding formula, which will redistribute existing funding in a bid to address historical regional variations.

Ministers say West Sussex schools will be 3.5 per cent better-off in 2018-19 as a result of the policy. Schools minister Nick Gibb and Justine Greening's parliamentary private secretary, Henry Smith, both represent constituencies in the area.

"We are consulting on how we propose to weight funding and we know that it is important that we get the formulae and system right so that every pound of the investment we make in education has the greatest impact," a spokesperson for the Department for Education said.

"The consultation will run until March 22, and we are keen to hear from as many schools, governors, local authorities and parents as possible."

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'Poor communication' blamed for DfE accounting hiccup

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The Department for Education's top civil servant has admitted that better communication could have solved an administrative error that led to it being the only department hauled in front of MPs over poor accounting.

Jonathan Slater, the DfE's permanent secretary, told the House of Commons public accounts committee on Wednesday that the need for five so-called "excess votes" – permission for spending above approved limits – in the past two financial years could have been avoided.

The DfE is the only Whitehall department under investigation by the public accounts committee for the breaches.

Officials said this was to do with the complexity of academy accounts and that staff had failed to account for the government building schools more cheaply.

Officials admitted last year that the government faced a bill of upwards of £20 million to sort out confusion over academy land after the National Audit Office warned that it could not determine that the DfE's estimates of its value were correct.

Slater said it "should have been possible" for the department to account for reductions in the cost of school building early enough to avoid the excess vote in 2014-15, but said none of the errors made any difference to the amount of money going to schools.

"We're not talking about actual money," he

said.

"It's all to do with the important question of how one accounts for the valuation of the building, which comes down to how much it will cost to rebuild the school if it burns down. It costs less to rebuild schools that burn down than it used to.

"The people who have succeeded to bring down the costs from 2013-14 onwards and the people constructing the accounts should have been talking to each other. If they had, this wouldn't have happened. I'm not seeking to deny it. It wasn't deliberate, it should have been possible."

Slater said problems also stemmed from academy trusts "valuing their assets differently" to the department, and described the "extreme complexity" of having to consolidate thousands of academy trust accounts with departmental spending.

"The fact that I'm the only permanent secretary in front of you during this hearing and I've got to explain five excess votes over two financial years demonstrates the scale of the challenge the department has been finding the task of consolidating the accounts of the best part of 3,000 academy trusts," he said.

He said locking down the valuation of land and buildings had been a "particular challenge", adding: "You can see the department is not yet completely on top of that task and this is one, but not, to be honest, the only sign of that challenge."

Richard Bacon, a Conservative MP

and committee member, questioned why the issues with accounting had not been worked out earlier.

"This is surely something that could have been thought about, worked out, understood and known at the time that the [academies] policy was being designed," he said.

He said the department had created a system that was not "effective and efficient" and produced "mind-blowing complexity", which made it "almost impossible" for Slater to carry out his role as the department's accounting officer.

Slater said planned accounting changes should mean the excess votes "won't happen next year".



Jonathan Slater

NATIONAL FORMULA SHOULD ABSORB PUPIL PREMIUM, SAY FUNDING GURUS

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@FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

Key architects of the government's new national funding formula have suggested the pupil premium could be rolled into core school funding before protection for it runs out in 2020.

The government has pledged to keep the £2.5 billion pupil premium throughout this parliament.

It gives additional funds of between £935 and £1,320 for every pupil eligible for free school meals, with additional grants for care leavers.

But uncertainty over its future has prompted speculation it could be incorporated into the new national funding formula.

Tom Goldman, the Department for Education's director of funding, told MPs on Tuesday that placing pupil premium into the national funding formula was the easiest way to achieve one single deprivation measure by which to allocate funding.

Economist Luke Sibieta, programme director for education at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, also gave evidence to the education select committee and said it would take "a matter of minutes" to make the pupil premium part of the national funding formula, adding he didn't see much value in having "one factor with different values in different formulas".

However, he warned that the accountability arrangements attached to the pupil premium should be retained.

At present, schools must publish their strategy for using the pupil premium on their website and can be audited for its use.

Sibieta said he would want to see this accountability extended to any other form of deprivation funding given to schools.

Education Policy Institute executive director Natalie Perera, a former DfE civil servant who led on the national funding formula development between 2010 and 2014, agreed that it "may be simpler in the long term" to merge the pots, but said it made sense "for now" for the premium to continue to be paid and administered separately.

"While the core school funding block is being reformed, it does make sense to keep the pupil premium separate in terms of the clarity available to schools," she said.

However she admitted that it "may in the long term be simpler" to incorporate the premium into the funding formula.

In 2015, the public accounts committee asked the Department for Education to set out how it would judge the success of the pupil premium.

The government said it did "not accept" the recommendation as the department "does not set national targets", but instead would benchmark the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils on international tests such as TIMSS and PISA.

In the most recent round of international tests, released in December last year, England had one of the largest achievement gaps in the world.

NEWS

TWO-YEAR TEACHERS ARE HELPING TO EASE RECRUITMENT CRISIS

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Investigates

Schools are increasingly opting to employ migrant teachers on strict two year-only visas.

The government's Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published its "review of teachers" report last week calling for computer science, Mandarin and general science teachers to be added to the government's official occupation shortage list – jobs where there are not enough resident workers to fill vacancies. To plug shortfalls, listed professions can be recruited with fewer restrictions from outside the European Economic Area (EEA).

The committee found 887 teachers were recruited to schools in 2015 under tier 2 visas, a school sponsorship scheme traditionally used to employ non-EEA teachers.

But they also found an increasing use of tier 5 visas – a youth mobility scheme that allows graduates from restricted countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia to teach in the UK for a maximum of two years with no possibility of an extension.

Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said the review's finding "speaks volumes" about the "growing" teacher recruitment crisis and warned it would have "huge implications" on a school's ability to perform well.

She told *Schools Week*: "Schools are so desperate for teachers they are prepared to hire them on these short-term visas even though it means there will be rapid turnover of staff.

"We know that successful schools have a relatively stable staffing structure while fragile schools have a much greater turnover.

"This has real problems for pupils in terms of continuity of their teaching, knowing who you are as a teacher and knowing how things are done in the school."

Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 42,000 tier 5 entry-clearance visas were granted in the UK last year. The Home Office does not collect job title information for these migrants so it is not possible to accurately identify how many are teachers.

The MAC report said at least 30 recruitment agencies that placed teachers had data suggesting the numbers of UK migrant teachers under tier 5 "may significantly exceed those being brought in under tier 2".

Bousted said: "Teachers teaching outside their subject area is rising, one in five maths and English lessons are now taught by people with no more than a GCSE or equivalent in the subject.

"This is just yet another symptom of the malaise that is affecting schools where school leaders cannot find enough teachers."

Sponsored school rolls slump after takeovers

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Investigates

More pupils leave schools when they become sponsored academies than when they are under local authority control, a new report has shown.

Researchers at Education Datalab analysed up to three years of data for 149 schools. Among those that became sponsored academies in 2010-11, the rate of pupils leaving – to other schools, alternative provision, exclusions or from the education system entirely – rose from 4.8 per cent before academisation to 5.4 per cent afterwards.

That rise was steeper in 2011-12, with pupils leaving at an average rate of 6.4 per cent after academisation, up from 5.1 per cent. "No such trend was apparent for converter academies," the report says.

Education experts say the findings show the effect of "perverse incentives" placed on schools to prove that academy sponsorship is boosting outcomes.

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said the data pointed to the "pernicious effect of high stakes, short-term, data-driven accountability".

Most pupils who left a secondary school did so in the first three years, the report suggested, while a previous Education Datalab report has shown that pupils who received free school meals were also more likely to move and less likely to achieve five good GCSEs thereafter.

Heath Monk, executive director of the King Edward VI schools foundation in Birmingham, said performance measures such as Progress 8 gave schools "perverse incentives" to "chuck a few kids out".

"Whereas with a five A-C measure, there's a limited amount of damage [one pupil] can do to

a school's performance, if you have a pupil who starts bombing at secondary the impact on your Progress 8 will be huge."

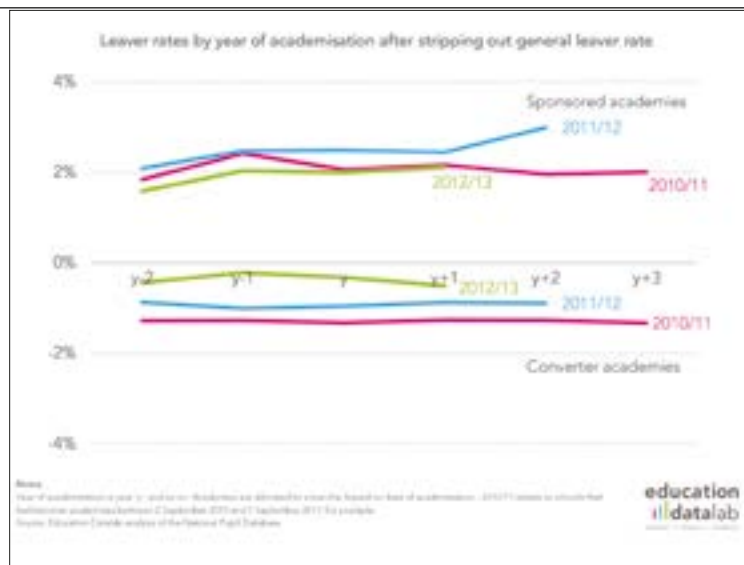
He said the findings were another example of sponsored academies using methods to increase their grades to "prove that sponsorship has made a difference".

"The pressure is greater than for a standalone academy or local authority school."

Education Datalab recalculated the GCSE results of sponsored academies so that all former pupils were included in the results, rather than just those still in year 11.

When only those on roll by year 11 were included, sponsored academies had a 46.3 per cent pass rate for five GCSEs at A* to C.

This dropped by 2.1 percentage points when pupils who left the school were



included – a significantly higher change than for converter academies, which only saw a 1.5 percentage point difference.

The recalculated results reduced the pass rate of Harris Academy Greenwich in London by 15 per cent for the cohort taking exams in 2011.

In the past four years, 217 pupils have left the school before the January of their final year.

A spokesperson for the Harris Federation said the high mobility of pupils in London explained the churn, with parents dismayed when schools received an initial "special measures" judgment before the trust took over.

They said low-ability pupils at Harris had an above-average Progress 8 measure of +0.77.

Feeder primaries at head of queue for academy places

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Multi-academy leaders are more frequently naming primary schools within their trust as feeder schools for their secondaries, despite little evidence of any strong "links".

In its annual report, the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) said pupils attending a primary school in a multi-academy trust were given priority at that trust's secondary schools, sometimes at the expense of local children who "live closer".

Many children travelled to other secondary schools further away because they had not attended a feeder primary for a nearby academy, the OSA warned.

Rob McDonough (pictured), principal of West Bridgford school in Nottinghamshire, who sits on the Department for Education's (DfE) working group on admissions, said the use of selected feeders could "destabilise long-standing local arrangements" between schools.

"Rather than the traditional local secondary, these children have to be bussed off somewhere else. All of a sudden a secondary school that has always been full, with a lot of pupils from certain primary schools, has spare places, maybe even staff they don't need, and so on."

The warning comes as a *Schools Week* analysis found that 17 per cent of



admissions objections over the past three years have involved feeder schools.

Of the 507 complaints between January 2014 and January this year, 85 included direct complaints about feeder schools (16.76 per cent). Several more mentioned feeder schools as part of a larger context.

In September 2015, Magna academy in Poole was found to have broken the admissions code by using feeder primaries that were "further away than local schools", making it "less likely that local children who live nearer will be allocated a place".

Last year a complaint was also brought against Rivers academy in west London, part of the Aspirations Academies Trust, for choosing feeder schools "based on those schools being members of the MAT", rather than ones with curricular links or "geographical proximity".

But the OSA only partially upheld the complaint, saying it was "not unreasonable" for a MAT to want to continue "all-through education" for its pupils.

Stephen Kenning, chief executive of Aspirations, said feeder primaries were fairer on parents who could choose a school for their child at age three "and not have to worry again".

He said every secondary school in the trust had only two feeders, limiting the impact on children from other schools. If they had five or six feeder schools, he would "reconsider" the policy.

"It means we have all those behaviour practices in place, our teachers work across the schools, and our curriculum is planned out. It also means we only have to get some year 7 up to speed with the trust's ethos when they arrive."

The OSA also found some religious schools were using feeder schools to unfairly select on faith; some secondary schools failed to name their feeders publicly; and one school "generally" allocated places to feeder schools. A secondary can only use the feeder criteria if it is oversubscribed.

The report concluded that the Department for Education should seek to "maximise the benefits of feeder schools in terms of continuity of education" but also ensure "that the selection of feeder schools does not cause unfairness to other local children".

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NEWS

MANCHESTER FREE SCHOOLS TO MOVE TO NEW TRUSTS

Two free schools in Greater Manchester will be rebrokered after one was placed into special measures and the second given a financial notice.

The Collective Spirit free school in Oldham, which opened in September 2013, received an Ofsted judgement of "inadequate" in all categories in May last year.

The Manchester Creative Studio in Oldham, which was opened in September 2014 by the same trust, received a financial notice to improve in June 2016 after misjudging its pupil numbers.

Both schools are led by Collective Spirit Multi-Academy Trust chief executive Raja Miah, a former charity head who was awarded an MBE in 2004 for his social integration work.

An identical statement published on both the schools' websites says they will be handed to new trusts once "suitable partners can be identified".

But MPs want the schools to shut.

Jim McMahon, local Labour MP, said the free schools had been "forced" on the local community. "I am calling on the government to do the right thing and close the schools."

An investigation by the *Guardian* last year found that a firm owned by Miah had been paid almost £700,000 over two years for providing services such as "extended curriculum" provision, transport and marketing to the schools.

The EFA found that all rules regarding the transaction had been properly adhered to.

Progress 8 'punishes' schools with low-achieving pupils

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

School leaders want MPs to fight the government's "grossly unfair and discriminatory" Progress 8 measure that will award three times more points to pupils moving between top grades than those at the bottom of the scale.

But sources close to the government insist the method is designed to protect rather than punish schools with lower-attaining pupils, and that the unequal weighting is in place as part of transitional arrangements.

Progress 8 was created as the headline indicator of school performance in 2016, and used to determine if a school was above a floor standard or was "coasting".

For pupils sitting exams in 2016, the measure was calculated using a one point per grade rise – for example an A was worth 7 and a B worth 6; a G grade worth 1 and an F worth 2.

But from next year pupils jumping from a grade B to an A will be awarded 1.5 points extra, while the difference between a G grade and F will get just 0.5. All other grades will be separated by a score of 1.

Frank Norris, director of the Co-operative Academies Trust, believes the changes will encourage schools to concentrate on high-achievers.

He asked all staff in his eight primary and secondary academies in Leeds, Manchester



Frank Norris

and Stoke-on-Trent to write to their local MPs to fight the measure.

"The proposed changes are based on the flawed thinking that it is much harder for a student to move from a grade B to an A rather than from grade G to F," he said. "They are probably discriminatory because they imply it is less important and worthwhile for lower-attaining students to achieve as well as they can."

Patsy Kane, head of Levenshulme high school in Manchester, added: "If we take this model, and apply the principles to a full cohort, it is straightforward to see that a school with a more able intake will be at an advantage in terms of the

points that can be accrued."

But Tim Leunig, a chief analyst at the Department for Education (DfE), defended the move last year at a conference held by the National Association of Secondary Moderns.

He said the unequal weighting was necessary to protect schools with more pupils at the lower end of the attainment range. Given that grade boundaries here are often separated by only a few marks, pupils can easily slip downwards, which could cost the school a whole progress point.

Limiting the points between the two grades meant schools gained less for moving pupils upwards, but were also punished less if pupils slipped down.

Likewise, grammar schools would be punished more severely if a projected A-grade pupil got a B.

"Given the bit that matters is whether or not your Progress 8 is more than -0.5, we have reduced how far those with more pupils at the lower end will drop if grades are missed," he added.

The difference in weighting will only be in place while the schools system moves from a graded to a fully numerical exams system in 2019, with grades 1-9 replacing G-A*.

Dr Rebecca Allen, director of Education Datalab, said the temporary unequal weighting was necessary, but the new measures would be "a challenge" for schools with more challenging intakes.

DfE gets low mark for punctuality

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

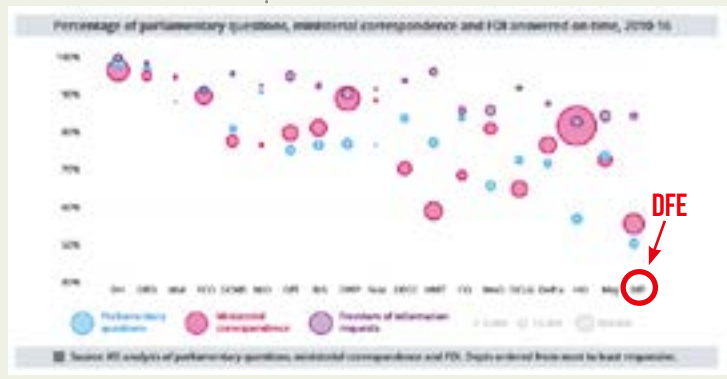
The Department for Education (DfE) is bottom of the class for punctuality in responding to ministerial correspondence and parliamentary questions.

It also had one of the worst records (third from bottom) across central government for responding to information requests from the public using the Freedom of Information Act, the Institute for Government (IfG) found when it analysed government data from 2010 to 2016.

Bronwen Maddox, director at the think tank, said it was "essential for accountability" that data was accessible and that its study aimed to help government departments better understand how they operate.

Schools Week reported earlier this month how the DfE was in danger of falling below the floor standard for meeting its legal duty to respond in a timely manner to FOI requests.

The new report found government departments were more commonly withholding information – rising from 25 per cent of requests from the public denied in 2010 to 40 per cent last year.



But a DfE spokesperson said its FOI response rate in the same time period had improved 8 per cent, while volume of requests during the same period increased nearly 130 per cent.

On spending transparency, the department fared better, coming fourth best for publishing spreadsheets describing its monthly expenditure.

The department also came out top for the percentage of civil servants who were satisfied with their pay (45 per cent) and was one of only five departments whose budgets increased between 2011-12 and 2015-16.

But the institute found the government was "still trying to do too much" – highlighting the growing number of "major projects".

The DfE had the fifth lowest number of "priorities" (such as manifesto commitments) in its single departmental plans with 45, compared with nearly 100 at the Department for Transport, and more than 70 at the Treasury.

Union activist joins Gove think tank

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

A former union activist and founder of the grassroots Labour Teachers website has been appointed as head of education at right-leaning think tank Policy Exchange.

John Blake will leave his role as history consultant and leading practitioner at the Harris Federation to become head of education and social reform at Policy Exchange, replacing Jonathan Simons who has joined the Varkey Foundation.

Blake will head a new team that includes Mark Lehain, principal of Bedford free school, and Tom Richmond, a sixth-form teacher and former government adviser, as senior policy fellows.

The latter two will continue teaching, which Blake has said will ensure that the think tank can "keep an eye on the lived reality of schools", as well as policy debate.

They will be joined by Rebecca Lowe Coulson, who is part of *ConservativeHome's* editorial team.

The think tank was co-founded by former education secretary Michael Gove in 2002.

Blake founded and co-edited the Labour Teachers networking website from 2011 to 2014.

With Lehain he is now a member of the education reform group, Parents and Teachers Excellence, which aims to promote a knowledge-based curriculum, more assessment and effective discipline policies.



John Blake

The group is founded on the education principles favoured by Gove.

It was set up by Dame Rachel de Souza, chief executive of the Inspiration Trust, and Jon Moynihan, a Conservative party donor who was a key figure in the official campaign to leave the EU.

A spokesperson for the think tank said early priorities would include "exploring the role of an effective, knowledge-rich curriculum and well-constructed assessment in improving pupils' education and reducing teacher workload."

"Underpinning the unit's work is a conviction that whilst much has been done to deliver a world-class education system, too many children, especially outside London, do not yet have access to the best, and the way forward will require a grasp of the 'lived reality' of our schools, which the unit is well-served to provide."

Simons tweeted he "couldn't be more pleased" with the new team.

NEWS

How does your school budget compare?

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

The Education Policy Institute last week released a report on the running costs of academies compared with local authority schools. We reviewed the key findings.

Schools in multi-academy trusts (MATs) spend less on "back office" costs and more on primary teachers, compared with standalone academies and local authority schools, according to a new report from the Education Policy Institute (EPI).

Primary schools in trusts spend £23 more on teaching staff per pupil than local authority schools; meanwhile secondary schools in MATs spend £49 less per pupil on running costs – such as maintenance, water, energy, IT and catering expenses – compared to maintained ones.

Yet savings are "not necessarily translating into increased expenditure on teaching staff", said the report, commissioned by IT provider the Stone Group. At secondary level, MATs spent a similar amount on teachers to local authorities.

Costs are also not reduced for individual schools as a MAT grows, the report claimed.

There are 6,334 open academies, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools in England.

Local authority-maintained schools remain the largest proportion of schools, followed by those in MATs. There are more pupils in single-trust academies, than in MAT academies – even though there are slightly more MAT academies than single-trust academies.

Two-thirds of all academies operate in a multi-academy trust.

1 Schools save on running costs when they are in a multi-academy trust, especially secondary schools

Primaries in MATs saved £6 per pupil on running expenses when they were in a multi-academy trust, compared with local authority schools.

But they saved more when they belonged to a single academy trust, at £1,183 per pupil compared with £1,255 in a MAT – a saving of £72.

The difference between MATs and local authority schools was more pronounced at secondary level, with a £49 saving on running expenses for those in MATs compared with a local authority school.

Being in a single-academy trust seemed to make little difference to savings at secondary level.

2 Primary schools in MATs spend more on teachers than LA schools – but it's about the same at secondary school

Figure 1.2: Per Pupil Spending on Running Expenses by School Status, 2014/15 (Primary Schools, £)⁷

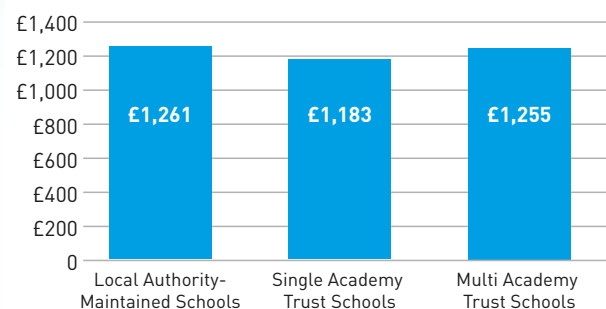
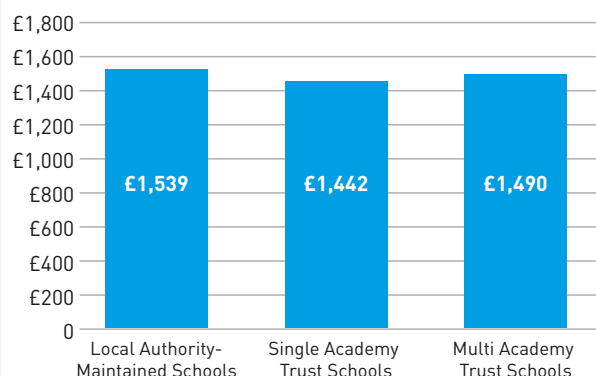


Figure 1.3: Per Pupil Spending on Running Expenses by School Status, 2014/15 (Secondary Schools, £)⁸



Primary schools in MATs spend £23 more on teaching staff than local authority schools, at £2,202 for each pupil compared with £2,179.

They both spent slightly more than schools in single-academy trusts, £2,155 for each pupil on average.

At secondary level, schools within a MAT spent £3,262 per pupil on teaching staff – £3 less than the £3,265 of LA schools.

Secondary schools in single academy trusts spent £55 less than LA schools, at £3,210.

3 Secondary schools in MATs do not redirect their back office savings into staff

Figure 1.4: Per Pupil Spending on Total Teaching Staff by School Status, 2014/15 (Primary Schools, £)⁹

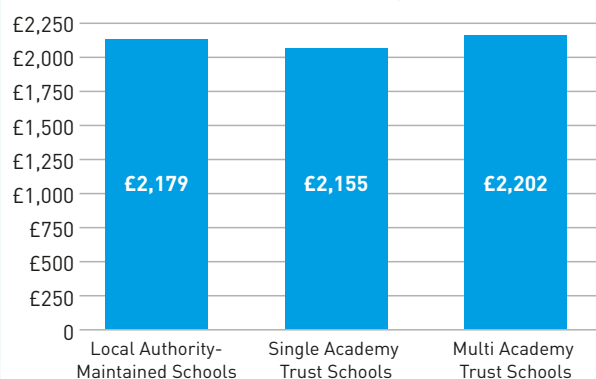
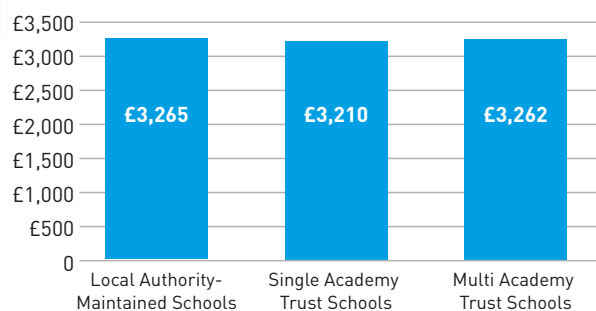


Figure 1.5: Per Pupil Spending on Total Teaching Staff by School Status, 2014/15 (Secondary Schools, £)¹⁰



Even though secondary schools in MATs are making a £49 saving on running expenses, they are spending the same as (or £3 less on average) LA schools on teaching staff.

The report said the finding showed savings by secondary schools in MATs was "not necessarily translating into

increased expenditure on teaching staff".

4 MATs that grow do not save significantly more on back office costs – and do not spend more on teachers

MATs formed of 10 academies do not spend significantly less on back office functions than MATs comprised of two, the report found.

And MATs larger than 10 academies even spent "slightly less on teaching staff" overall than their smaller counterparts.

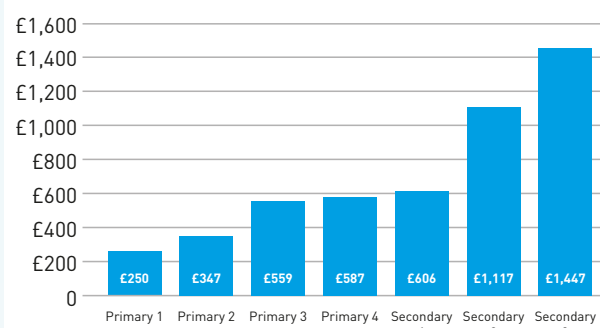
Larger MATs are "not yielding back office savings that are then redirected into teaching," said the report.

5 MATs that are geographically spread out spend more on back office costs

The more a MAT's schools are spread out, the more it spends on back office costs. Lord Nash, under-secretary of state for schools, has previously said he would like all academies within a trust to be with "an hour's drive" from one another.

6 Some MATs use technology more cost-effectively than others

Figure 4.4: Per pupil spending on back office in a MAT with two isolated academies



"We find that the use of technology can greatly help to bring about further efficiency savings, helping trusts to overcome barriers such as geography," said the report.

Some MATs used Skype and video conferencing to reduce travel, and used technology to standardise human resources and teaching materials.

7 Time a school has belonged to a MAT does not appear to improve staff costs

The report said it would seem "unlikely" that efficiency savings and economies of scale would be made when a school first joined a MAT. "Rather, they would build up over time."

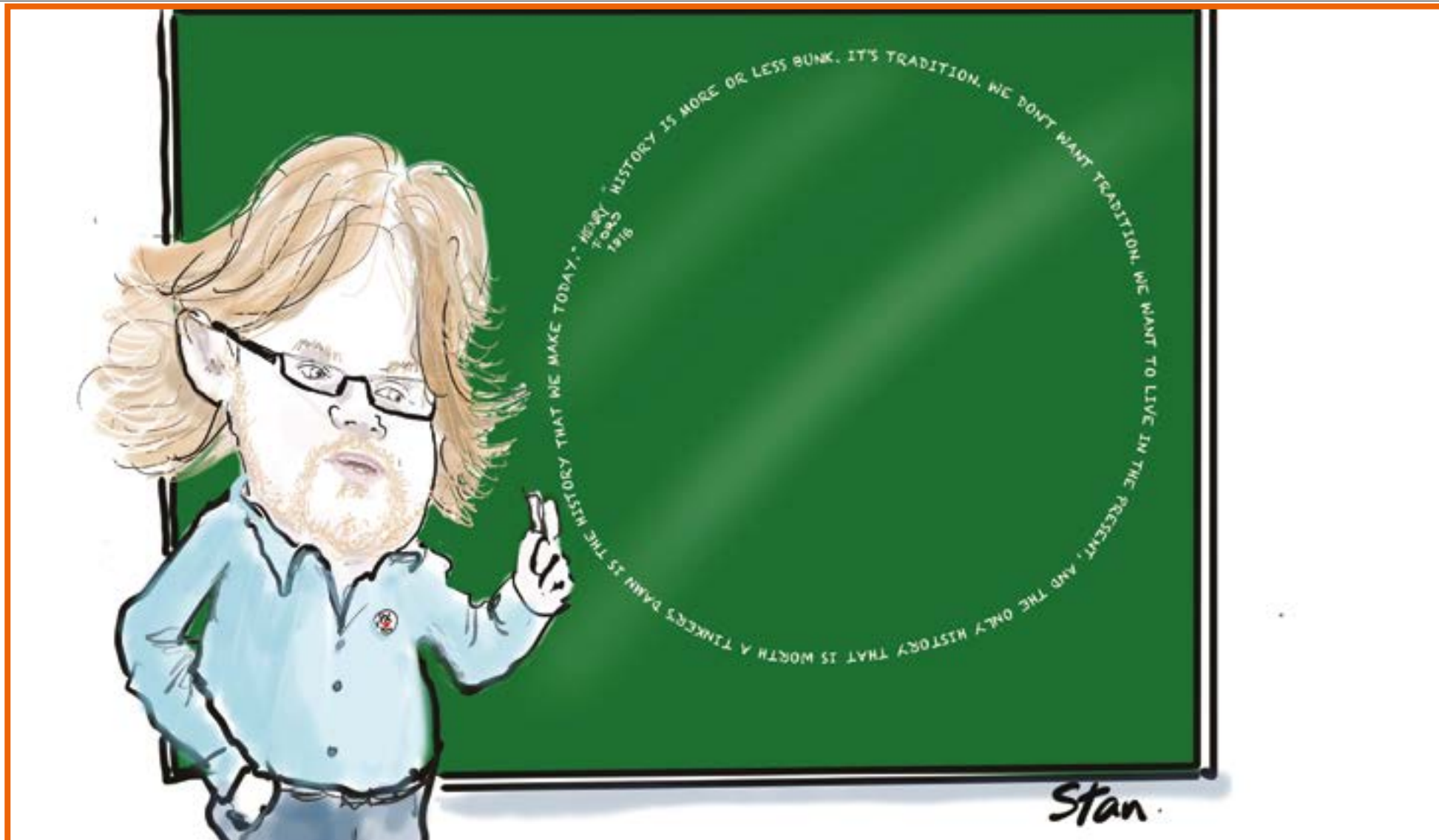
Expenditure on teachers did not seem particularly affected by how long an academy had been in a MAT, the report found.

But large variations in back office costs between schools on joining a MAT did seem to even out over time.

"This might indicate that some process of standardisation and assimilation of back office spending occurs the longer an academy has been part of a MAT."

Source: *The Economic Benefits of Joining or Establishing a Multi-Academy Trust*, produced by EPI

NEWS



EDITOR'S COMMENT

@miss_mccinerney | laura.mccinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk

Beware the Red rebel who now has great influence

My memory of early evening, Friday November 14, 2003, is hazy.

My brain seems to think it was raining, and a Met Office report concurs. "Bands of heavy rain and showers were carried on gale-force south-westerly winds."

I'm pretty sure that a meeting I attended in the late afternoon took place after dark. A quick google confirms the sun went down that day at 4.13pm.

My only other memory of that meeting is of a red-haired, indignant young man arguing ferociously that SATs were a terrible, terrible thing. They were so bad, in fact, they "destroyed teaching", and he sided with trade unionists wanting to scrap them.

With the help of Josh O'Connor, democratic support officer at the Oxford University Student Union, I was able to confirm this too. There, in the minutes of the union's council meeting from that dark, wet, blustery day, is the proof that John Blake – this week anointed as the new head of education at right-leaning think tank Policy Exchange – really, really hated testing once upon a time.

Not so these days. Blake is now a member of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, the campaign group made from a gaggle of politicians' favoured educators, with the aim of pushing rigorous testing and curriculum as the

cure for education's ills, as opposed to academies and free schools. (Although it is notable that most of them seem to really like academies. And free schools.)

Blake's Damascene conversion, from the hippy left to test-loving right, is not unusual. Voters commonly become more Conservative as they age (Blake is 35) and he's not the first to flip-flop publicly. Chris Woodhead, the first head of Ofsted back in 1994, espoused the same sorts of ideas as early Blake when he was a teacher, but by the end of his career was scornful of people who thought tests were damaging children.

So history tells us converts are often the most forthright. (Blake will approve this example, he was a history teacher until very recently.) And Policy Exchange have been an incredibly influential force on government policy over the past six years. With a man on a mission at the helm, this may continue.

Policy Exchange's power can be seen in the impressive number of policies foreshadowed in their reports: reducing the frequency of Ofsted inspections, sharpening up accountability, removing vocational qualifications from league tables in favour of a focus on so-called academic GCSEs. For years, if Policy Exchange wrote it, someone in government was probably seriously

considering it.

This wealth of power also made it a target for critics who argued its access to politicians was undeserved and unions particularly cat-called the fact no one knew who the group was speaking up for. (Funders of the organisation are not routinely disclosed.)

While much of the organisation's successes were down to its charismatic former head of education, Jonathan Simons, whose oratory skills are a force to be reckoned with, an unshakeable criticism was that he had never taught.

Blake has taught. In some pretty challenging secondary schools, too. He will also be supported by two sidekicks, Mark Lehain and Tom Richmond, who will continue working part-time in schools, helping keep their education experience relevant.

Teaching is not a synonym for being correct, though. And neither is being left or right-leaning.

One of Simons' skills was that he listened to a broad range of evidence and came up with workable practical solutions to problems. Reducing the number of Ofsted inspections undertaken in a year in favour of a risk-based approach was neither a Conservative nor a

Labour idea. It was common sense.

Likewise, if Blake, having now taught and looked carefully at the evidence has concluded that, despite his younger self's views, tests are the best way to drive improvement, then his success will simply depend on how well he can come up with a plan for achieving its implementation. Not a "right-wing" plan, or a "left-wing" one. Simply one that works. If he does, history again suggests the government is likely to implement it.

Which only leaves one issue to wrap up. Why was I in the meeting with Blake on that Friday in 2003? The minutes are devoid of any mention of me. As is the case in this editorial, my opinions on primary testing are silent. But I shall look forward to watching what the red-haired, still indignant not-quite-so-young Blake does next.





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For an informal discussion about this post please contact **Jenny Williams** Group Deputy CEO/Managing Director, ASDAN: **0117 954 3980**

Closing date: Friday 24th February (**interviews** will be held in Bristol on Thursday 9th March)

To apply for this position, please email a cover letter outlining your suitability for the post (you may also attach a CV if you wish) and a completed application form to personnel@asdان.org.uk. Within your application please outline your relevant skills and experience, referring to the person specification as appropriate, and provide a clear outline of your suitability for the role.

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Location: Birmingham

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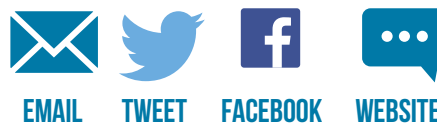
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Schools in, BBC out: apprenticeship targets for trainees confirmed

Ian Taylor, Bristol

We had an IT technician apprentice. It worked for both the school and the individual. He had four days a week in school and one day in the local FE college. Schools should be considering succession management in all areas. They should be taking the lead on developing the skills of the next generation and not just acting as exam factories. It used to be what schools were for!

Peter Cobrin, Kent

There is a grain of sense here, albeit an accidental one. Schools struggle with issues of IT support but teach IT. They teach food technology, but are undermanned in the kitchens. They teach business studies, but bursars struggle. Get the drift? This approach isn't new – we were discussing it in Kent several years ago.

It's here, the first schools commissioner league tables

Sarah Thurlby, address supplied

Love it. If schools are to be held account for their performance publicly then it's only

fair that the RSCs face the same level of scrutiny. Does Janet Renou now have to become rated inadequate and rebrokered to a local authority?

Schools are to blame for the skills deficit, says minister

Simon Johnson, address supplied

Surely, from this point of view a measure of a school should not include EBacc subjects? If your advice enables a child to follow a technical or vocational skills route, then the EBacc is not applicable if they decide to study a range of subjects that doesn't include a language or a humanities-based subject. Until we stop measuring institutions on irrelevant figures such as EBacc, then no progress will be made with the above issue.

Black girls take the lead in STEM subjects

@MrCochain

Nice in-depth study. Any suggestions on how to increase the intake of black male students in STEM A-levels?

REPLY OF THE WEEK RECEIVES A SCHOOLS WEEK MUG!



Schools are to blame for the skills deficit, says minister

DAVID MARRIOTT, WILTSHIRE

I seem to remember that a national body called Connexions used to manage careers advice but Michael Gove dismantled it, giving the money directly to schools. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't long before Ofsted pointed out that careers advice in something like 85 per cent of secondary schools was inadequate. Skills minister Robert Halfon is trying to clear up the mess left by Gove, last seen in a farcical thumbs-up situation with that enemy of education and civilisation Donald Chump. Wouldn't it be great if ministers were really held accountable for the damage they do?

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SCHOOLS WEEK

PROFILE

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Mike Kane, shadow schools minister

It's Holocaust Memorial Day and parliament's Central Lobby is bustling with school groups and easily recognised faces.

Mike Kane, MP for Wythenshawe and Sale East, greets us himself – he has no staff in London – and seems cheerful and relaxed as he guides us past the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi to the roof terrace of the Commons for photographs.

"I brought a group of children from a school in my constituency up here and got a slap on the wrist," he admits, grinning.

"Apparently I shouldn't have done it because of all sorts of concerns – security, maybe a bit of health and safety. There were about 50-60 odd children, up five or six flights of stairs.

"I was approached by security, and I explained to them that these were children from one of the poorest catchment areas in my constituency, and therefore the country, and this was probably their first time outside the area where they lived. I don't think any report was made."

Kane, a former primary teacher, entered parliament almost three years ago in a by-election. He was appointed shadow schools minister in October, and he has his work cut out for him.

Labour's critics – who often accuse the party of failing to set out how it would govern differently – may be surprised that Kane brims with policy ideas and, despite his party's dismal polling, talks like a politician preparing for government.

He wants his party to focus on making schools more democratic and accountable to parents – "to coin a phrase, we need to give them back some control" – and says he will also seek to boost the prestige of the teaching profession and to improve standards.

"We can't have 24,000 schools run from the Department for Education," he says.

"The schools commissioner regions are too large. Wilshaw [Sir Michael, the former Ofsted chief inspector] said that politicians should be involved in raising standards in schools. But how can they do that? They have no formal powers.

"The new mayors of Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside, Birmingham, will have no input at all. If the regional schools commissioners came under their remit, then mayors would be directly accountable for helping to raise standards. I see that as a way forward."

I suspect Kane's desire to make the most of his position has a lot to do with his background.

Born to Irish immigrant parents and raised in a council flat in what would eventually become his constituency, Kane seems comfortable and at ease in Westminster – although he admits that the novelty of wandering the corridors of power has not worn off.

He attended local Catholic state primary and secondary schools before following his father on to building sites until his mid-20s.

Then a night course at Manchester College got him the additional A-level he needed to study social science politics at Manchester Metropolitan University. As a graduate, he worked for Manchester City Football Club.

"It was the lowest paid high status job I ever had because I could get tickets for games.

"It was the '99 play-off under Joe Royle, which is legendary in our club. Now I've got a really well paid job, but I'll let the readers decide what the status of it is."

His career in football lasted a year, and then, attracted to teaching by the encouragement of a friend and his love of music – Kane plays the flute and bagpipes – he signed up to do a PGCE.

"THEY ARE TRYING TO DOWNGRADE WHAT BEING A TEACHER IS"

Although he was involved in politics for many years before and during his eight-year teaching career at Springfield primary, he never imagined he would become his home town's MP.

But the sudden death of Paul Goggins in January 2014 prompted a by-election and, in the face of rising support for Ukip, local party officials wanted a known quantity. Kane was selected in the first ballot and was elected with a large majority. Re-elected comfortably in 2015, the front bench beckoned as Labour attempted to recover from one of its many internal crises.

A self-confessed Blairite who backed David Miliband's leadership bid in 2010, nominated Liz Kendall in 2015 and voted for Owen Smith when he challenged Jeremy Corbyn last year, Kane was "delighted" when asked to serve in the shadow education team in October.

"As I'd been a primary teacher I thought it was a portfolio I could hit the ground running with, and I think we have," says Kane, who praises shadow education secretary Angela Rayner for her work in pointing out the "inadequacies" in government policy.

Despite his education experience, Kane faces an uphill battle in his relatively new role.

At a time when so much of the public's focus is pulled by Labour's internal struggle, he has to convince people that the party has something more substantial to say than "no more grammars".

This is certainly not politics as usual. During our interview, I tell him that Jo Stevens, the secretary of state for Wales, has just resigned to defy the whip and vote against triggering Britain's exit from the EU.

"We are where we are," he sighs when I ask about Labour's chances in a general election, "We're clearly not doing well enough in the polls, but have we seen a country in so much flux before?"

But he still believes Labour can win "if we can get our communications right and our policies right, and show the vision and guts and gravitas that we are supposed to do as an opposition".

As well as a shake-up of the schools commissioners set-up, Kane wants the teaching profession to be world-class again. He believes there are "too many tracks", and is no fan of plans for an apprenticeship route to qualified teacher status.

"It's not a craft, it's not an apprenticeship," he says. "They are trying to downgrade what being a teacher is.

"We need to go back to having world-class people applying and being trained academically. Teachers need to be given a degree of independence as well, an autonomy to carry out what they are trained to do."

Kane's third priority is standards. He wants "continual and not piecemeal" monitoring of schools and wants the watchdog to work more closely with the Education Funding Agency to spot financial issues.

While the debate over selection appears to have united Labour in recent months, Kane does not believe any more

MIKE

grammars will open in this parliament, and he is anxious to move on and make the most of a job which, given the state of Labour politics, might not be his for long.

"I feel like I'm making a difference. My motto when I walked into the classroom and when I trained people aspiring to public service, or councillors, was: the primary purpose of leadership is to create more leaders.

"So every day – particularly when I get down here on a Monday from my constituency – I do feel a sense of awe and wonder that I'm walking through these doors.

"You can achieve more in a day here as an MP than some people can in a lifetime. That's a lot of pressure."



KANE



Labour leader Ed Miliband (right) welcomes the newly elected Kane (left) to Parliament in 2014



Kane last year with a pupil from Crossacres primary in his constituency

IT'S A PERSONAL THING

Your favourite book

There are two. *War of the Worlds* by HG Wells and *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell.

Your favourite teacher

Primary school was definitely Mike Murray. He turned me on to mathematics in a way I hadn't been before.

Your favourite education secretary?

David Blunkett. He went through the system. He went to night school. He got the idea of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps with some support from the state – and he rebuilt schools that were falling down.

When I started training, just as Labour came to power, a lot of my practice was holding a bucket under the rainwater coming in through the roof. By the end of that government ... we'd rebuilt the school.

Your favourite subject to teach?

Creative writing. On Mondays we did a whole-class piece in which we did introduction, build-up, character development... and I'd have 30 children with their hands up, trying to contribute to the collective story. That was something we did astonishingly well as a school.

OPINIONS

As secular campaigners intensify their vocal opposition to faith schools, Andrew Cole charts the battle his Catholic free school faced to open in west London

Ever since Theresa May announced plans to scrap the 50 per cent admissions cap for new faith free schools, secular campaigners have been unable to hide their disdain. Piece after piece of questionable research has been produced railing against the removal of the cap, a policy that many believe failed in its key objective of creating diversity.

Parents are the principal educators of their children and they make careful decisions about the sort of education they want for them. Within reason, the state is right to try to provide different sorts of schools to match different parents' needs, especially in a multicultural, multi-faith society such as ours.

Anti-faith school campaigners appear to confuse conformity with equality and ignore the opinions of the hundreds of thousands of parents who have children at, or want to send their children to, schools with a religious character. Specifically, in the Catholic context, secular campaigners fail to understand the obligation Catholic parents are under to give their children a Catholic education, a requirement set out in canon law.

None of the major secularist or humanist campaign organisations run schools, yet they believe they have a right to dictate how schools should be managed. On the other



ANDREW COLE
Chair of governors, St Richard Reynolds Catholic college, Richmond upon Thames,

Education is more important than ideological battles

hand, the mainstream Christian churches have been running schools successfully for centuries, and are the largest provider of education in England and Wales.

For those involved in Catholic schools, educating young people has always been more important than fighting ideological battles over faith-based education. And it is precisely because we have this focus on education and the formation of the whole person, that our schools are so successful.

When the Diocese of Westminster was approached in 2011 by Richmond council to consider opening a new school to meet demand from Catholic parents and others, our natural response was "yes, let's get this done". What followed was an anti-Catholic school campaign. Supported by The British Humanist Association (BHA), the Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign (RISC) was formed with the aim of blocking our school.

The usual arguments were put forward; Catholic schools are exclusive, discriminatory, and promote segregation; arguments that the most basic examination would show to be unfounded. Catholic schools are the most disproportionately ethnically diverse in the country, educate more pupils from the poorest backgrounds than the national average and, according to Ofsted, are much more likely to make a good or outstanding contribution to their local communities.

In fact, according to the last Catholic schools' census almost a third of pupils in Catholic schools are not Catholic and, of this group, more than a fifth are of no faith at all.

What's more, the Catholic church saves the taxpayer millions of pounds each year through the maintenance and improvement of buildings and provision of land. And, in

the case of St Richard Reynolds, virtually all building costs are met by the church, parents and charities who believe in faith-based education.

Anti-faith school campaigners confuse conformity with equality

Despite this, countless hours of teachers' and governors' time was taken up dealing with the various objections thrown at us; it even resulted in the legality of the school being challenged in a November 2012 judicial review in the High Court brought by the BHA and RISC, and a complaint to the Democratic Monitoring Office about my right to attend a council scrutiny meeting.

All this effort was time taken away from what we were passionate about – opening a good school. However, the campaign did strengthen our resolve to succeed and drew together those who believe that church schools have an important place in the educational landscape.

Thankfully the High Court found in our favour and St Richard Reynolds opened in 2013 – and we have recently been judged by Ofsted as an outstanding school in every category. When I look back on the battle we had and I see the school as it is today, I know it was worth the fight.

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There are three types of governance, says Andrew Clapham. So where do the governors in West Sussex who are threatening strike action fit in?

A school governor has an important job that takes skill and commitment – and is time-consuming and unpaid.

Major concerns regarding school governance have been raised recently, such as in the Trojan Horse affair where the power of governors was considered to have been too influential.

Overwhelmingly, however, effective school governors are seen as a forum of checks and balances. And schools with good governance are more likely to be a good school, full stop.

Despite, in the most part, the well-earned tag as the “voice of reason”, governors in West Sussex are threatening strike action.

I have been examining governance, and particularly innovative governance, in schools and FE colleges and have found that the notion of governors striking could be seen as an “innovative” approach toward a particularly threatening situation.

I have found three types of governance.

Rear view governance is reactive rather than proactive. It is only concerned with what is approaching from behind in relation to policy and fails to set a future direction.

Setting the direction governance is the opposite. It sets the direction, examines and pre-empts policy challenges by putting in place structures that support the school to do well in the present climate and to



ANDREW CLAPHAM

Principal lecturer in education,
Nottingham Trent University

Innovative governance is more than worrying about bean bags

thrive in future.

Set the direction and check is the ultimate governance model. Not only does it set its own direction, it checks for compliance to its own and external policy drivers.

So, where do the West Sussex governors fit in this model?

The proposed action is in response to funding cuts, despite the Department for Education claiming schools in England are receiving record funding.

The West Sussex governors are supporting their headteachers who are warning they are facing cutting teaching staff, merging classes or reducing school hours.

However, and what is important here, is that these cuts are yet to be made. The heads and governors are taking action to prevent what they see as potentially catastrophic consequences of reduced funding.

They are proactively attempting to set the direction rather than being rear-view reactive.

As such, it could be argued that the West Sussex governors are being both innovative and setting the direction through their threat

The threatened action is a heartfelt plea

of strike action.

Indeed, it could be argued that these governors not only have the aim of their action impacting upon their own schools. A government climbdown in relation to West Sussex would lead to similar action across

the country – a consequence that cannot be lost on both sides.

Governors taking strike action is unprecedented. As such, it could be argued that it is also an innovative approach toward addressing funding cuts.

Innovative governance was described by one chair of governors as “not just bean bags”.

She recounted a story where she was on a board that proposed following a so-called “American” model of governance. In that model, board meetings were no more than an hour in length and held in an open plan office with bean bags in place of chairs and no tables.

Innovative governance is more than worrying about bean bags and comfort. It is more than rearranging deck chairs.

The West Sussex governors’ action is clearly not rearranging deck chairs and not done from the comfort of a bean bag. It is a heartfelt plea from the “face of reason” that government policy will decimate education in their area.

These governors are using an innovative approach to try to set the direction of their schools.


In the following few days, schools minister Nick Gibb will face questions from MPs on school funding and how such funding is to be redistributed under a new formula. Perhaps some of these questions might be directed from the viewpoint of a West Sussex school governor – the voice of reason forced to take innovative governance to the picket line.



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REVIEWS

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Our blog reviewer of the week is Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate director of knowledge development for Teach First @HFletcherWood

I used to be a Renaissance man... now I'm a teacher

By Cara Bleiman

Cara Bleiman's UCAS reference described her as a "Renaissance man" who found time for schoolwork, to "take part in the debating and newspaper clubs, play in an orchestra, go to museums, read books, get midge-bitten trudging around the Highlands for a Duke of Edinburgh award and have plenty of time left to catch up on *ER* and *Friends*". As a teacher, however, her intellectual life "has taken a real hit. Goodbye to the theatre, evening classes, playing music or even reading a book – teaching takes up all your spare time and even some of that previously ring-fenced time for sleep and basic body admin". Bleiman argues that to achieve high standards and to inspire students, we need to "model self-improvement and the pursuit of knowledge ourselves... if we don't make time for full-time teachers and leaders to do this then we have little hope of nurturing a future generation of 'Renaissance men', let alone women."

Furnishing the abstract with the specific: teaching disciplinary practice

By Michael Fordham

Michael Fordham challenges the way we construct curricula. Curriculum theorists, he argues, examine what is common to scientists, such as forming hypotheses, and convert them into a definition of "the discipline of science" that is taught in schools. Fordham suggests that disagreement over what the discipline is makes this implausible: "astrophysicists, inorganic chemists, molecular biologists, geologists, and so on, all have distinct approaches to

studying the natural world and, although it might be possible to draw out generic commonalities between them, a definition of 'science' based on that generalisation will always fall short". He argues for a rethink: "Rather than distil some general, abstract ideas about 'how the discipline works', we would be better off specifying a range of specific cases of disciplinary practice for children to learn, from which we can as teachers tease out the similarities and differences in approach that characterise our respective disciplines."

Practice with purpose: the emerging science of teacher expertise

Deans for Impact

This paper applies deliberate practice to teacher education. K Anders Ericsson is perhaps most famous via Malcolm Gladwell, who oversimplified his work into the claim that 10,000 hours of practice can lead to mastery. Having tried to set us straight on Gladwell's work in his last book, Ericsson has now worked with Deans for Impact to show how the principles of deliberate practice apply to teacher education. The result is seven priorities, such as work towards well-defined, specific goals, and receive and respond to high-quality feedback. For each priority, they draw out practical implications, such as when feedback should be given and how it might be used. The paper also discusses briefly the challenges teacher education currently faces in not having established, effective techniques, or an order in which to build skills. This paper seems likely to shape much of our thinking about teacher education: it's worth reading now.

Reading none of the books as a route to loving reading – Fred's story

By Alex Ford

Alex Ford describes lunch with Fred, a former teacher now in his eighties. Fred taught a remedial class in a Bradford middle school who wouldn't read books: "they skirted around the books like there was some sort of invisible barrier there". While Ford's "inner historian" watches for "educational prejudices... especially from someone who taught during the progressive, Piaget-inspired 60s and 70s", Fred explains how he locked the school's books away, stopped chasing students to bring in their own, and read them football scores, ghost stories, newspapers and novels – while leading practice in key words and vocabulary each day. Ford wonders "how I might tackle the issue of soft prejudice with our octogenarian companion", explains that students "had to be pushed out of the nest eventually". The rest of the post explains what Fred did, and why Ford left the pub "somewhat humbled, and definitely a little wiser."

BOOK REVIEW

This Much I Know about Mind over Matter... Improving mental health in our schools By John Tomsett
Published by Crown House
Reviewed by Carolyn Roberts,
headteacher, Thomas Tallis secondary school, south London



Seeking a quiet place to write in a conference centre, I find myself surrounded by scantily clad young adults auditioning for a talent agency. All talk excitedly about experience and disaster, hopes dashed and opportunity knocking: shoulders back, dance on.

In this most precarious business the language is resilience, determination, clear-sightedness. Just the company in which to consider schools' new responsibilities for mental health, in a context where national debate about fragile young people and their support services tends to be polarised. Adolescents: flaky or misunderstood? Headteachers: anxious or what?

Mind over Matter, the second of Tomsett's This Much I Know series, is designed to help. He intersperses a trot round the landscape with expert and pundit interviews, personal experiences, honest confusion and shared experiments. Tomsett looks the issue in the eye. He sets out seven factors in the storm around our young: harder exams; the "toxic gift" of teacher anxiety. Parental fears for children's futures. Funding cuts causing "student support mechanisms on the periphery of the budget" to be sacrificed. Inequality and poverty. The mistaken entitlement to happiness. The unspeakable glare of social media.

He interviews the great, the good and the inevitable. Claire Fox of the Institute of Ideas, more interesting here than elsewhere, describes giving schools this responsibility as stealing money from the needy. No one, she observes, is interested in the chronically mentally ill. The cheap school solution is cynical, focusing on soft problems rather than investing to heal real illness.

Natasha Devon, the former children's mental health tsar, describes her identification of the problem, then her commissioning and decommissioning by the Department for Education (DfE). Her aim to develop national consistency in supportive responses for young people comes over as honorable, while at odds with the "grit" agenda.

In refreshingly humble tone, the government's behaviour tsar Tom Bennett, is troubled about teachers' "diagnostic work", blurring lines between mental health, pastoral care and character education. Similarly useful – but woefully under-edited – interviews appear with Norman Lamb MP and academics Ken McLaughlin and Tanya Byron. Access to them all under one cover is a real strength of the book.

It is when Tomsett sets out developments in his own school and city that we see hope for the future. If we could all develop a continuum from brave and well-equipped class teacher to CAMHS consultant psychiatrist, then we could talk about accurately assessing and comprehensively

meeting children's needs.

This is real and costly inclusion, of course, where schools take risks to plan a consistent service from light touch to intensive care, at a time of wounding cuts.

Personal aspects of the book worried me, however. The exposure of Tomsett's mother's struggles was troubling, including her unfathomable visit to his school. I'm annoyed by sporting references and would beg him to leave the golf versus A-levels routine out of a third

book. The chapter on headteacher mental health is true, but we experience it idiosyncratically: I'm unconvinced by dismissals of the need to pay the mortgage. Despite constant reference to his own difficult origins, Tomsett asserts that "middle-class girls suffer most". I'm pretty sure that's untrue. They suffer most who suffer most, where his seven stressors are compounded by poverty, addiction, neglect and violence.

It's a pity the book gives so much space to thinking out loud when its underlying commitment to children's public service could be developed. It never really offers a working critique of our besetting tension between paranoid accountability-driven education and an underdeveloped national understanding of the value of the child.

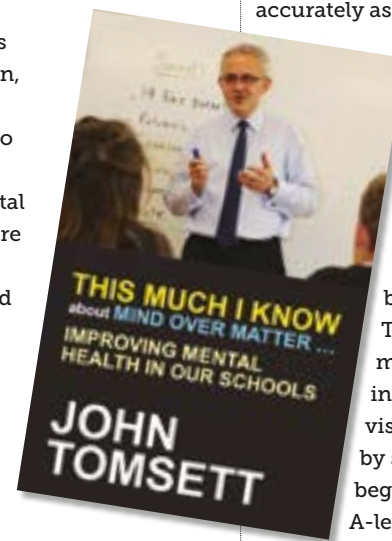
Pastoral care is underthought in most schools, disregarded in current thinking and nationally sacrificed in a pyrrhic victory over the blob. We need a theoretical backbone to help us make judgments. This book doesn't give it, but it's a start. Shoulders back, dance on.

Next week:

Making Good Progress

By Daisy Christodoulou

Reviewed by Christine Counsell



What ever happened to the colleges of education, those specialist teacher-training institutions that were effectively abolished across England and Wales in the 1970s and 80s?

In some ways, the demise of teacher-training colleges was unsurprising. Although some 160-strong by the early-1970s, many were small and isolated and some were rather parochial, inward-looking organisations. Many were also uneconomical and the quality of provision was, frankly, variable.

While there had been numerous attempts to improve the content and status of teacher training, by the late-1960s educational expansion and the changing demands of schooling created pressure for change. The mixture of undergraduate, postgraduate and certificated routes meant programmes lacked consistency and coherence – resulting in a Conservative party pledge in the run-up to the 1970 general election to undertake a comprehensive review.

The way in which that change was carried out, however, was highly controversial, and an important if largely overlooked juncture in the history of English education.

Drawing on the recommendations of the James report, the somewhat ironically entitled 1972 white paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion* suggested five possible futures for colleges of education:

- Continuing as independent teacher-training colleges

THE PAST WILL MAKE YOU SMARTER



THE END OF TEACHER-TRAINING COLLEGES

ROBIN SIMMONS, PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

- A broadening of role and remit to become a more general higher education institution
- Merger with a university, polytechnic or FE college
- Redesignation as a professional development centre for in-service teacher training
- Closure

This all sounds rational but we must not underestimate the turmoil that ensued.

The white paper announced that the number of teacher-training places would



be slashed by a third by 1980, but figures were cut on four further occasions between 1974 and 1977, effectively reducing the total by two-thirds. Consequently, just 20 colleges continued to focus wholly or largely on teacher training. Eventually all were taken over, often by a nearby university, or closed altogether. Meanwhile, 25 colleges of education shut.

Most colleges did manage to find an alternative future. Almost 40 were absorbed

into new polytechnics and 20 merged with FE colleges, creating “mixed economy” FE/HE institutions. Others re-emerged as new colleges of institutes of higher education (CIHEs) offering a range of social sciences and humanities courses, usually up to first-degree level. Eventually, almost 60 CIHEs were created during the 1970s and 1980s, usually from the merger of two or more colleges of education – effectively forming a “third division” of HE below the universities and polytechnics.

The way in which change was conducted, however, was arguably as significant as any outcome of “reform”. It was not an “architectural” planned and collaborative process. Colleges of education were forced into a Darwinian struggle and colleges were effectively required to fight for their futures, or perish.

It is perhaps no coincidence then that the secretary of state responsible for all this was one Margaret Thatcher. Whilst her infatuation with markets and competition would not come until later in the 1970s, arguably the way colleges of education were treated displayed her nascent instincts. She saw education policy as dominated by cosy, closed relations between civil servants, trade unions and various other socialists, and she had a disdain for bureaucratic procedures. Arguably then, the fate of the colleges of education provided at least some insight into what would be the future of education policy more broadly.



A week in Westminster

Your regular guide to what's going on in central government

THURSDAY:

A long-awaited report into the need to hire teachers from abroad surprised many in education, including those who had given evidence to it.

Several groups that sent submissions to the Migration Advisory Committee about teacher supply were shocked when the organisation found “no occupation-wide shortage of teachers”.

Mary Bousted, who leads the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said she was “deeply disappointed” by the finding, while the Association of School and College Leaders’s Malcolm Trobe accused the group of failing to recognise a “full-blown teacher recruitment crisis”.

Both unions were involved in the inquiry. One suspects their evidence did not agree.

FRIDAY:

Ou est le cash? The BBC today reported that £384 million for creating academies has

been clawed back by the Treasury, but the DfE is refusing to say what happened to the rest of the £600 million pot.

When asked to account for the missing £216 million, a spokesperson told *Schools Week* that the government had “protected core schools funding” and that more children were now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. Which is lovely, but not really what we asked.

The missing millions are still at large. If you find them, please send a smoke signal.

MONDAY:

Renowned as a youthful bunch, members of the House of Lords took time out from a debate about defibrillators in schools today to marvel at the sophistication of the contraptions.

The Tory Lord McColl of Dulwich asked academies minister Lord Nash if he was aware the machines were so advanced that “if any operator is about to use one inappropriately, it has been programmed to tell the operator to push off”.

Imagine what will happen when he discovers iPads. (Speaking of which, is there an app for telling ministers to push off yet?)

Meanwhile, Justine Greening was spotted at Arsenal football club, where she was doing something about reading, and literacy, and encouraging children. A riveting press release described how, at the event, she said: “I loved reading as a child, and it is really important that every child can read well”. We can only imagine how exciting the rest of the day was.

TUESDAY:

The government continued dragging its feet on compulsory sex and relationships education. But at least minister Caroline Dinenage has now given us a clue as to why.

Edward Timpson, the minister responsible for all things sex ed, is on paternity leave following the birth of his daughter, Nell.

Unable to resist a bit of puerile humour, Dinenage remarked during a recent

debate that the Timpsons’ new arrival was “evidence, if needed, that he was definitely there for that class on which bit went where”.

Here’s hoping 2017 isn’t the year that Tory MPs making sex jokes becomes a thing. Nobody needs that.

WEDNESDAY:

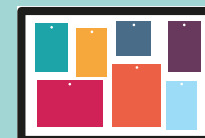
Say what you like about Nick Gibb, the minister for schools puts us all to shame with his energy.

He was on his feet in the House of Commons after midnight to respond to an adjournment debate on school funding, which was pushed back to the early hours because of something to do with Brexit.

WiW greatly admires Gibb’s ability to churn out his favourite lines over and over again – “school funding at a record high of £40 billion”, “there will be winners and losers” – no matter the hour.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEETLIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

School Bulletin *with Sam King*



Primary school listed as top apprenticeship employer

FEATURED

YOUNG NETBALLERS HONE THEIR SKILLS

A Somerset primary school has been named as one of last year's top apprenticeship employers.

Brookside academy was the only school to feature on the top 100 apprenticeship employer list, which is compiled annually by the National Apprenticeship Service.

The school currently employs 13 apprentices in sports tuition, business administration, finance, nursery education and specialist education. They all spend one day a week at Strode college.

Since 2010, the school has employed 29 apprentices, supporting their progression to full-time contracts both within the academy and externally.

Brian Walton, the academy's headteacher, said: "All our apprentices have become significant and fully integrated members of the workforce with the same expectations of professionalism and taking responsibility from the outset – they represent the school from day one. I firmly believe that schools are a great place to start a career through an apprenticeship."

Also on the list, revealed at an awards



Robert Halfon with some of the Top 100 employers

ceremony in London earlier this month, were BAE Systems, the British Army, Virgin Media and the Co-operative Group.

Skills and apprenticeships minister Robert Halfon told the event: "The awards ensure apprenticeships get the prestige they deserve, while shining a light on the fantastic work that both apprentices and their employers do."

Walton was keen to stress how apprenticeships have helped the school to expand its offer to students, such as holiday activities for children with disabilities.

"As a large primary school we can provide a diverse range of experiences for young people who want to get a meaningful and



Apprentices at Brookside

supported start to their career.

We benefit greatly from the positive attitude, skills and willingness to learn they [the apprentices] bring to the school and we've been able to offer more services for families."

Players from the Superleague netball team Loughborough Lightning recently hosted an inter-school tournament for ten primary schools across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

Ella Gibbons from Scotland, Peace Proscavia from Uganda and Vanessa Walker from Jamaica, shared their top netball tips with pupils at the tournament for under-10s held at Trent college.

The athletes also ran a warm-up and training session before the matches, which they then umpired with help from Trent college's under-14 netballers.

The aim of the day was to develop ability in goal shooting, basic footwork and passing the ball.

Parents from some of the participating schools watched their children in action, with Trent college head Bill Penty presenting medals to the winners.

Jacqui Rhodes, the college's primary school liaison coordinator, said: "This was a great opportunity for schools in the local community to compete in a friendly match play tournament with children of a similar talent and age, as well as the chance to meet some great ambassadors for sport and be inspired to become fantastic athletes."



Pupils from Slade primary

Bee gives Birmingham pupils a buzz

Pupils from schools across Birmingham went head to head in an inter-school spelling bee last week.

Rivals from four primaries, Brookvale, Hill West, Mere Green and Slade, and three secondary schools, Arthur Terry, Coleshill and Stockland Green, put their skills to the test in age-related categories.

Brookvale primary emerged victorious, with a year 1 and year 4 pupil both taking home the top titles in their respective categories.

The competing schools are all members of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP), which has five children's centres, four primary schools, three secondary schools

and one teaching school.

The competition was devised by the trust's student leadership team and, following a series of heats, the best spellers went head-to-head in a grand finale last week at Slade primary.

Jaz Khan, a teacher at Slade and the event organiser, said: "Our students were very excited about the competition. We have some highly articulate young people and lots of tricky words, so it was a real challenge.

"Spelling bees are a great way for children to learn new words and have a bit of fun in the process."

Winners were awarded a £10 WH Smith voucher.



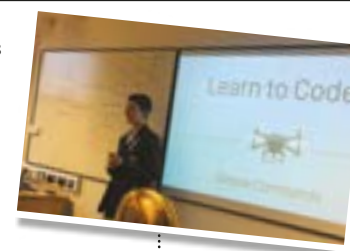
Swedish teachers with students during a workshop
Inset: 14-year-old Oscar Smith leading a session

Swedish teachers join student workshops

More than 300 teachers from Sweden descended on a West Sussex school to exchange top teaching tips and join in student-led workshops.

The event at Bohunt school Worthing – one of three schools in the Bohunt Education Trust – saw 400 students, staff and Swedish guests participate in a range of workshops and share innovative education methods.

Sessions included a coding lesson delivered by three year 9 students, as well as a Post-it note exercise led by 14-year-old Oscar Smith. He asked the Swedish teachers to write down simple commands for



another teacher to follow to find a hidden sweet – mimicking commands in a computer program.

The trust has long been exploring different styles of teaching through collaboration

with teachers in countries such as Sweden and China.

Phil Avery, director of education at the trust, said: "Collaboration and innovation drive everything we do at Bohunt. Our experiences so far have demonstrated the value of working cross-culturally to deliver high quality education and the invaluable opportunity to learn from others."

MOVERS & SHAKERS

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

Faraday preparatory school in east London has appointed **Novak Ivanovic** as its new headteacher.

The independent primary, which was founded in 2009, is in the Trinity Buoy Wharf area, home to London's only lighthouse.

Ivanovic, who has worked in the primary sector since 1997, is currently deputy head of the Silver Birch academy trust group of schools in north London.

Speaking of the new role, he says he is "looking forward to joining Faraday to build on the school's excellent foundations and ethos.

"The traditional curriculum and the friendly, confident pupils at the heart of a creative community at Trinity Buoy Wharf are particularly appealing."

Nicki Ross is the new principal of New College Worcester, an independent boarding and day school based in Worcestershire.

The school educates students aged 11 to 19, who are blind or partially sighted. Founded in 1866, it caters for about 80 students and last year celebrated its 150th anniversary.

Ross will join the college from a small



Novak Ivanovic



Nicki Ross



Sam Grierson

comprehensive in Gloucester where she has worked for 20 years; she joined the school as a PE teacher and is leaving as its head.

In previous roles, her areas of responsibility have focused on teaching and learning, professional development and strategic vision, all skills she hopes will help her in her new role.

"I am delighted to be taking over at New

College Worcester," she said. "The college does such an important job in preparing these young people academically, socially and practically for their futures and it is a privilege to be part of that."

Ross says she is most excited about getting to "know the staff, students and systems of

the college", as well as looking at ways of developing "student progress and other crucial areas that focus on the development of the whole child".

Sam Grierson has been appointed head of sixth form at Newton Abbot college, a Devon-based school for 11 to 19-year-olds.

Grierson joins the school following an extensive career, including roles at the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and as assistant principal at the Cabot Learning Federation.

She became an advanced skills teacher in 2006 when she was head of psychology, PSHE and citizenship at Coventry Blue Coat Church of England school.

She says her decision to apply for Newton Abbot followed her daughter's positive experience there. "The college made her feel so welcome, safe and at home. I was extremely happy with the experience as a parent. It set the model I live passionately by."

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

			6	8		7		
			5	7	1		4	2
	3	1						
6		3				1		
4	1						8	6
		8				4		7
						9	7	
1	8		4	5	7			
		7		6	2			

Difficulty:
EASY

	8							3	
		2			4				1
	9			6		4	8	7	
	7	4	3						
8			7		1				6
				8	6	3			
7	3	9		4				5	
5			3			1			
	1							9	

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Last Week's solutions

9	1	2	6	5	4	8	3	7
7	5	8	1	3	9	2	6	4
6	4	3	2	7	8	1	5	9
4	3	5	8	1	6	9	7	2
1	9	7	4	2	3	6	8	5
8	2	6	5	9	7	3	4	1
3	8	1	7	4	2	5	9	6
2	6	4	9	8	5	7	1	3
5	7	9	3	6	1	4	2	8

Difficulty:
EASY

9	2	4	5	1	7	8	6	3
1	7	3	8	6	9	5	4	2
8	6	5	4	2	3	7	1	9
2	5	1	9	8	4	6	3	7
3	8	9	2	7	6	4	5	1
7	4	6	3	5	1	2	9	8
4	1	7	6	3	2	9	8	5
5	9	2	1	4	8	3	7	6
6	3	8	7	9	5	1	2	4

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference to WIN a *Schools Week* mug



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins a mug. Tweet a picture of your completed spot the difference using @schoolsweek in the tweet.