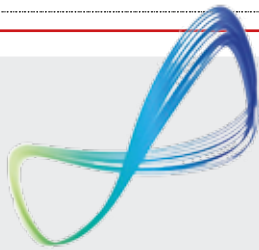


# FE Week

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## FIRST COLLEGE IN 14 MONTHS GETS OFSTED GRADE ONE



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- **Is it a cover-up? Government completely dodge the question**

**Exclusive** ALIX ROBERTSON @ALIXROBERTSON4

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ED Week


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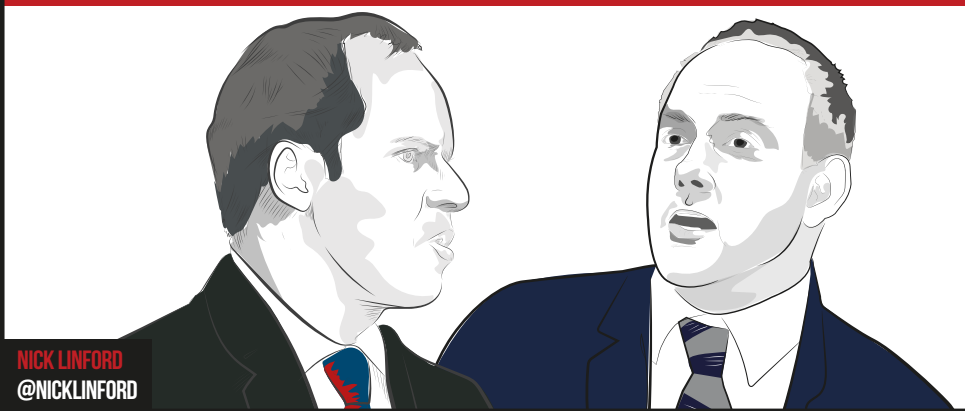


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## EDITOR ASKS

## EDITOR ASKS...



## Halfon sacked but leaving FE with his head held high

Most, if not all of the FE sector was left in shock this week after we exclusively revealed that Robert Halfon had been sacked from his job as apprenticeships and skills minister by Theresa May.

Mr Halfon, who took the role over from Nick Boles 11 months ago, is well known for his passion for FE and skills. I caught up with him two days after his unceremonious dismissal to discuss his time in office.

"I've loved doing the job, it was probably the best job I've ever done in my life," he said.

"FE is an area I'm really passionate about

and I'd like to firstly thank FE Week for giving me a hard time. I mean that in a nice way – as you challenged us every day and, as I've always said to you, it is good to be challenged."

Mr Halfon also thanked all of the hundreds of learners he has met up and down the country "who are doing outstanding apprenticeships".

"They are getting skills, training and good qualifications and jobs at the end of it," he said. "I must have visited around 35 or 40 FE colleges during my time as minister and what I really liked was how much hard and

incredible work goes on.

"The FE and technical education sector is something we should be very proud of in our country."

Mr Halfon's sacking appears to have come as just as much of a surprise to him as it has to the sector.

He told me that the prime minister didn't give him a clear reason for why she got rid of him – and he hasn't gone quietly.

He has already featured on the front page of the Sun and on BBC Newsnight arguing for a major change in direction for the Conservative Party – including a new name (Workers' Party) and a new logo which would feature a ladder.

The ministerial change comes in the middle of a wide and deep FE reform programme.

Mr Halfon worked on the apprenticeship levy, the college area reviews, devolution of the Adult Education Budget and the launch of a Post-16 Skills Plan.

With this in mind, I asked him for his top three highlights from his time as our sector's minister.

Unsurprisingly, he pointed to getting the technical and further education bill through the House of Commons as his number-one achievement.

"The bill protects students at colleges faced with financial difficulties, and created the Institute of Apprenticeships," he told me.

"The Queen signed it literally on the last day of parliament, just before the election, and I think if she hadn't signed it at that

time, we wouldn't have got the bill and who knows what would have happened given the result of the election."

His second highlight was when he got over 150 apprentices to visit the House of Commons.

"It was an extraordinary moment with apprentices from all walks of life, who realised that they could climb that ladder of opportunity to get skills and training for the jobs that they need," he said, his enthusiasm shining through.

"I did a lot of visits as apprenticeships and skills minister going to a lot of colleges but my third was going to Crossrail.

"I went deep underground meeting apprentices from all walks of life and what was even more incredible a lot of female apprentices, and apprentices who had disadvantaged backgrounds, who were now responsible for building it, which was an incredible achievement.

"I'm proud that we have 900,000 apprentices, the highest ever on record, and we are going towards the target of three million apprentices over the parliament."

Lastly Mr Halfon had a word on FE's status in education: "Some people say that the technical and further education sector is the 'Cinderella sector'," he said.

"What I always say to everyone is to never forget that Cinderella married a prince; let's banish the two ugly sisters of snobbery and intolerance and go out there and celebrate and support the incredible work of apprenticeships, further education and professionals who make Britain so great."

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NEWS

# GlaxoSmithKline triumph in Brathay Challenge

PAUL OFFORD  
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A group of nine apprentices from GlaxoSmithKline Ulverston have been named as the apprentice team of the year following the prestigious Brathay Challenge. Eight teams from across England went head-to-head on the banks of Lake Windermere for the national final, beginning on June 12 and ending two days later. The total of eight national finalists were selected from 75 teams that entered. Between them, through the qualifying stages of the competition, they have since January visited more than 550 schools, careers fairs and youth groups spreading the word about apprenticeships. GlaxoSmithKline narrowly beat Nottingham City Homes into second place, while JCB finished third. Teams from Derwent Training Association,

IBM, Redrow Homes, Severn Trent Water and WSP also competed in the final, which among other physical and mental challenges involved orienteering, raft-building and a whaling boat race. Joe Hambley, 21, from the winning GlaxoSmithKline Ulverston team, said: “When they announced that we had won, I was in shock, shaking.” The team had earlier delivered a community project, which was to make a series of four short films to be shown in schools and sports clubs about the dangers of asthma attacks, and how to help people suffering from them. “We picked asthma because a member of our team had a connection with a family that tragically lost an 11-year-old boy called Josh West to an acute asthma attack,” said Joe. “We wanted to tell his story and keep his legacy going. The family was on board, they provided us with interviews. “We felt after that even if we didn’t make

the final that we had achieved something more important than any challenge. We helped a family with their grieving process and might potentially help avoid another death.” They also had to do a presentation explaining what they had got out of the Brathay Challenge, which is supported by the National Apprenticeship Service, and the legacy their work had left for their local communities and employers. Reflecting on the final, Joe added: “Everyone pulled together. There was orienteering, and a whaling boat exercise where we went out onto the lake to collect clues. Lifting the trophy was just fantastic.” Teams taking part in this year’s Brathay Challenge, reached over 70,000 young people to raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships and recruited over 500 new employers interested in offering apprenticeships. They have also delivered 44 community projects to benefit young people.

Sue Husband, director of the National Apprenticeship Service, went along to watch the final. She told FE Week: “I always make sure that this event is in my diary, and go along, to meet the teams really. They are always so impressive and such great ambassadors for apprenticeships. I was taken out in a nice boat to see everyone rowing across the lake in the final. It’s something special.” She added: “Congratulations to GlaxoSmithKline on being crowned the 2017 apprentice team of the year and to all of the teams that have taken part in this year’s challenge”. Godfrey Owen, chief executive of Brathay Trust, said: “All of the apprentices that have taken part this year have gained teambuilding, leadership, logistical and communication skills. It has been a pleasure to host the Brathay Apprentice Challenge and watch these apprentices develop into outstanding employees.”



Apprentice team of the year GlaxoSmithKline Ulverston celebrating their Brathay challenge win

# Cash-strapped UTC looks to join academy trust

**ALIX ROBERTSON**  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

**EXCLUSIVE**

**A**nother university technical college in dire financial straits is planning to pause recruitment at 14 as it looks to join a multi-academy trust to survive.

Sir Charles Kao UTC, a 14-19 institution in Harlow specialising in computing, science and engineering, is “100 pupils short of achieving a break-even position”, according to its income summary for the nine months to May 31, 2017.

Documents leaked to FE Week show this shortfall will force it to merge with the Burnt Mill Academy Trust by September.

The income summary shows that though funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency is “higher than the current pupil numbers justify”, it is still “not sufficient to cover the running costs of the school”.

The documents record just 146 pupils in total on roll at in September 2016, despite a capacity of 500.

Speaking to FE Week, Rod Bristow, president of UK and core markets at Pearson, who chairs the UTC’s finance committee, said the free bus service – cancelled after it cost £46,000 this year alone – had been an “important method of ensuring students, especially those from disadvantaged



backgrounds, are able to travel to the UTC”, but had “become very costly as a result of the significant decline in the number of students using the service”.

He added: “As a result, the UTC is seeking alternative means of subsidising the transport for these students so that they continue to have access to the UTC. The interests of students are paramount.”

However, the UTC’s budget papers for 2017/18 mention an anticipated “loss of some pupils as result of bus service cancellation”.

They add there will be “no year 10s in 2017/18” and “little or no recruitment directly

into year 12”.

However, a report on student numbers said that “an assumption has been made that joining BMAT will increase potential students at year 10 and year 12 from 2017/18 onwards”.

The UTC’s cashflow forecast for the year until August 31 predicts that it will run out of funds during June, while a balance sheet from May 31 indicates that £769,974 is owed to the EFA. An operating deficit of £511,150 is also forecast for the full year.

Mr Bristow told FE Week that “a merger with Burnt Mill Academy Trust is under discussion with the support of the DfE”.

“Discussions on the merger are still ongoing and a formal announcement will be made once a decision has been reached,” he said.

The small cooperative trust, based in the south-east, was established in August 2013 and currently includes five schools in Harlow and Stansted Mountfitchet.

FE Week understands that Sir Charles Kao UTC would have to pay BMAT a service charge of £64,086.

Mr Bristow justified the move by saying: “Joining the MAT would allow the trustees and leadership of the UTC to have an even greater focus on outcomes for the young people of the Harlow region.

“This would include further securing value for money through shared teaching staff and senior leadership, as well as the transfer of back-office functions to the MAT, covered by a service charge.

“If the merger proceeds, it will give Sir Charles Kao UTC a much stronger base from which to grow.

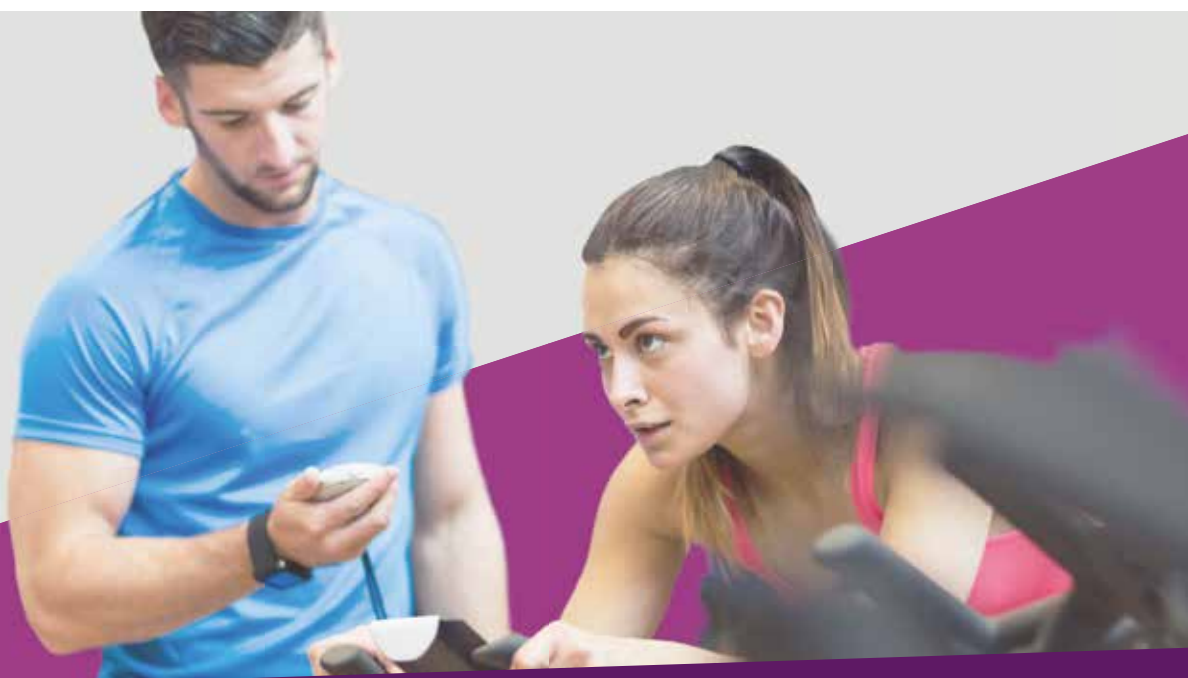
“The students would have the opportunity to continue their technical education as part of a larger organisation.”

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “We are aware of the UTC’s plans to join a strong local multi-academy trust and discussions are ongoing.

“We do not comment on the financial position of individual academies.”

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# Inaugural awards celebrate the best of sixth forms

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDEN

Seven outstanding teams from sixth form colleges across the country have been honoured at a new awards ceremony.

The De Vere Jubilee Conference Centre in Nottingham was the setting for the Sixth Form Colleges Association’s awards dinner and ceremony, and FE Commissioner Richard Atkins was compere.

It was the first time an awards ceremony has been dedicated to the hard work and talent of staff at sixth-form colleges and it aimed to showcase “exceptional practice”.

Bill Watkin, the chief executive of the SFCA, congratulated all of the winners for their “examples of outstanding work”.

“Success doesn’t just happen, it is the result of very hard work and great team work,” he said.

Birkenhead Sixth Form College in the Wirral picked up the top prize for ‘curriculum innovation’.

Mr Watkin said the college’s “innovative” academic mentor programme is a “pioneering development” and led to them winning the award.

“The college works in partnership with local university students who volunteer to tutor its students across a range of subjects,” he explained. “Over 25 mentors now deliver their sessions with a focus on exam technique and revision skills.”

The award for ‘community impact’ went to Scarborough Sixth Form College for its sports leadership programme.

Around 25 to 30 students achieve a sports

leadership award and 10 to 15 go on to achieve a higher sports leaders award, Mr Watkin said, adding that these learners have a “contribution to, and impact on, the community which is outstanding”.

Next up on the podium was Barton Peveril Sixth Form College which won the award for ‘best student support’.

Mr Watkin said there has been a “real drive” at the college regarding mental health.

“The team’s focus is to encourage and promote resilience in each student,” he said.

“Barton Peveril also has student volunteers as mental health mentors. Psychology students who are completing a counselling course as an enrichment alongside their A-levels, peer-mentor those who are struggling with the pressures of academic work.”

Wilberforce College in Hull took the award for ‘best enrichment and employability’.

The college runs a Seeds of Change project developed by the college’s equality and diversity development group and focusing on “health inequality”.

The project aims to involve students and staff from across the college to “identify and challenge” the consequences of choice on health, and to “promote healthy lifestyle choices by developing an entrepreneurial culture”.

Also receiving an award tonight was the College of Richard Collyer in Horsham, for its independent learning bespoke study programme for special educational needs and disability 19- to 25-year-olds.

Students on the programme formed a

company called JubyLee Bakes, using the motto “special bakes made by special people”.

When they moved to the college, they pitched, with tutor support, their idea to Young Start-Up Talent, an entrepreneurial initiative, and in May last year JubyLee Bakes won a prize fund worth £50,000 of business products and services.

Meanwhile, Brighton Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College won the award for ‘best business development’.

The college’s lettings team has “grown the lettings activities and significantly increased income generation opportunities”, Mr Watkin said.

He pointed out that the money raised through these activities is not ring-fenced

and “therefore benefits all areas of the college”.

The college now accommodates a language school every summer, a slimming club and a children’s film school each weekend and has secured a number of regular conferences and community events.

The seventh and final award went to Oldham Sixth Form College, in the ‘governance’ category.

Mr Watkin said there has been an “active strategy” to broaden the diversity of the governing body in terms of age profile, ethnicity and gender at the college.

“This has been successfully achieved and the college is particularly proud of the number of former students and parents of current or former students on the board.”



L-R: Jonathan Prest, principal of Barton Peveril Sixth Form College, Kathryn Podmore, principal of Birkenhead Sixth Form College, William Baldwin, principal of Brighton Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College, Jayne Clarke, principal of Oldham Sixth Form College, Marcus Towse, principal of Scarborough Sixth Form College, David Cooper, principal of Wilberforce Sixth Form College, and Sally Bromley, principal of The College of Richard Collyer

## Medals of honour for FE

The Queen’s birthday honours list is under embargo and will be revealed at 22:30. Please refresh the link to this PDF shortly after.



# Investigation into DfE handling of apprenticeship figures demanded by expert

ALIX ROBERTSON  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

FROM FRONT

EXCLUSIVE

An independent expert in government statistics has called for an investigation after the Department for Education encouraged the use of “misleading” provider apprenticeship achievement rate data, rather than publish the revised figures.

In February the DfE revised its figures for 2015/16, causing a fall of nearly five percentage points in recorded achievement rates, after it admitted closing a series of “loopholes” in the way numbers are reported.

Now, three months on, it has published these revised figures for individual providers – but without the comparable figures for previous years, which are needed to give an indication of providers’ progress.

Jonathan Portes, a professor of economics and public policy at Kings College London, and a frequent commentator on the government’s creative use and presentation of statistics, said the DfE’s failure to be forthcoming with the necessary data was “incomprehensible”.

“These revisions are large and of significant public interest,” he said.

“It is therefore incomprehensible why the DfE – which admits that it has the data – has not published comparable data for 2014-15; even worse, the unrevised data from that year remains on its website, which is clearly misleading.”

Announcing the release, the Education and Skills Funding Agency tweeted “today we published the achievement rates and were asked why last year’s were not published. Different methodology used and to compare would be misleading”. It added that “last year still available”, though didn’t mention that this data uses unrevised figures.

“This is extremely poor statistical practice, and I would encourage the UK Statistics Authority to investigate and ensure that the situation is rectified,” said Mr Portes.

Now that the loophole has been closed, any learners who disappear or do not have a completion status are recorded as a ‘fail’, bringing the overall achievement rate down for a number of providers.

According to FE Week analysis of the NART

data released on June 15, 18 providers saw their achievement rates for apprenticeships drop by 30 percentage points or more between 2014/15 and 2015/16 – with the biggest fall coming in at -71.3 points. Half of these were from providers rated ‘good’ by Ofsted.

The NARTs, which cover apprenticeships, education and training, are published annually, but in recent years releases have been subject to delays.

Achievement rate figures for courses ending no later than July 31 the previous year would typically be published in March, but were delayed this year several times, most recently by the general election purdah period.

And FE Week described in December 2015 how the publication of the achievement rates for 2014/15 had been pushed back, with promises that they would be released “towards

the end of March”.

They were eventually released in May 2016.

FE Week asked the DfE to explain and defend the lack of comparable data in the latest release of apprenticeship achievement rates.

It declined, though its spokesperson did say that “today’s figures prove that apprenticeships are equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life”.

They added: “We want even more people to gain the quality skills that businesses are crying out for. This is part of our ambitious plan to develop home-grown talent, with record investment in apprenticeships through the levy, and the government’s huge investment in technical education.”

For full analysis of the figures, see next week’s edition.

### We asked the DfE to respond to two questions:

1. Please can you explain why the comparable figures for 2014/15 have been excluded?
2. How would the DfE respond to the claim that this is a cover-up – to hide the revised figures that would be embarrassing for many providers?

In response, the DfE statement was as follows: “Today’s figures prove that apprenticeships are equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life. We want even more people to gain the quality skills that businesses are crying out for. This is part of our ambitious plan to develop home-grown talent, with record investment in apprenticeships through the levy, and the government’s huge investment in technical education.”

Read the editorial about this facepalm-inducing response on page 14



# Lincoln College wins £58m Saudi contract extension

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

Lincoln College Group has won a three-year contract worth £58 million to keep running a higher education applied engineering college in Saudi Arabia.

LCG secured the deal over several international college and university groups – and it will continue to run the Applied

Engineering College, formerly known as the Technical Trainers College, on a long-term basis.

A spokesperson has told FE Week: “We took this college on before on a one-year contract, and it was put out to tender for a formal bidding process at the end of that period.

“The contract we subsequently secured has a value over the life of the contract of £58 million.”

The AEC, part of the Saudi Arabian

Colleges of Excellence programme, has educated around 1,400 mechanical and communications technology teachers in Riyadh, at degree level, over the last year.

This complements Lincoln College Group’s existing female college at Qatif, which has 2,000 students.

LCG’s chief executive Gary Headland claimed the new contract was a significant milestone both in the 130-year history of Lincoln College and the wider group.

“I am often asked about why we have chosen to export education to Saudi Arabia and China,” he said.

“In the words of the Department of Industry and Trade, businesses that trade internationally are on average 34 per cent more productive, 75 per cent more innovative, undertake three times as much research and development, and are in general terms more resilient than businesses that do not trade.

“Winning this bid, which represents a huge amount of work from our team, reaffirms the importance of our mission.”

The college group told FE Week in April that it “remains committed to operating in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for at least the next 20 years”, and confirmed that it was involved in the bidding process for the technical trainers’ college contract.

The spokesperson also dismissed a rumour that CoE could close this year, saying the programme was “in no sense in jeopardy”, and was now focused on “the expansion of

existing programmes and the opening of new colleges”.

Colleges of Excellence was founded in 2013 to boost technical and vocational education and training in Saudi Arabia, through partnerships with international providers, including a number of English bodies.

Lincoln College was the only one from England to enter the CoE programme on its own.

It was awarded a huge contract worth £250 million in 2014 to establish three colleges in the Kingdom.

However, it announced in January 2016 that its two colleges in the Al-Aflaj region would be closed by the end of the month, as was reported in FE Week.

A statement on its website said: “Unfortunately, the number of students able to participate in this unique education in Al-Aflaj is not sufficient.”

Lincoln also faced some financial hardship in the process of getting its Saudi project off the ground.

In March last year a spokesperson told FE Week there had been “exceptional costs” related to the “initial mobilisation and recruitment for a male college, which was discontinued by CoE and replaced with the female college in Al-Qatif”.

However, when speaking to FE Week on April 19, the spokesperson said: “Lincoln College International will make a surplus from 2017 onwards.”



LCG CEO Gary Headland with staff and students at a recent TTC graduation ceremony in Riyadh

# C&G Lion Awards winners roar

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
@BILLYCAMDEN

Exceptional FE learners and tutors have been honoured for their outstanding achievements in professional and technical education at this year's City & Guilds Lion Awards.

London's iconic Kensington Roof Gardens featuring real life flamingos was the setting for the ceremony, which recognises individuals who have "overcome significant challenges" to achieve their goals, and lecturers who have "gone the extra mile" to

help their students achieve.

Dubbed the "Oscars of skills education", the Lion Awards marks the culmination of the Medals for Excellence awards programme, which dates back more than 100 years.

BBC breakfast and Celebrity MasterChef presenter Louise Minchin and managing director at City & Guilds Kirstie Donnelly hosted the ceremony.

Ms Donnelly said the "talent and commitment" shown by every one of this year's nominees and winners "reflects exactly what the Lion Awards is all about".

"We at City & Guilds are honoured to have

been a part of their journeys and delighted to have this opportunity to mark their achievements," she added.

This year 85 nominations were submitted across 11 categories.

Sandesh Naik picked up the award for outstanding achiever of the year.

Sandesh, who studied a level two certificate in design and craft (conservation and restoration) at The London School of Picture and Frame Restoration, faced "severe barriers" to pursue his passion for art.

Originally from India, Sandesh was told that art was for "wealthy students who did not need to work".

He independently funded his studies by painting murals for hotels at night, props for carnivals, the gates of temples and any other work he could find.

City & Guilds said: "For him the chance to help preserve some of the most prized art in his homeland was worth every obstacle in his path, including surviving on just two hours sleep a night in order to work on commissions so that he could fund his studies."

Toby Crabtree from North Lancs Training Group, in Accrington, took home the award for apprentice of the year.

Toby, who studied a level three NVQ certificate in management, is classed as a "valued employee" at Mi-Flues, a manufacturer and distributor of flues and chimney installation parts, where he worked his way up to warehouse manager in just eight years.

Amy Vaughan from Plumpton College in Lewes picked up the award for UK learner of

the year (not in employment).

The level three diploma in floristry student was hailed for the distinctions she received in all of her assessments.

City & Guilds added that her "energy, determination and passion for the craft" saw her lead a team to first place in a national competition at Covent Garden Flower market.

The people's choice award winner was level three animal management lecturer Holly Hackney from Chichester College, who was described as "passionate" and "tireless".

Employee learner of the year went to Jill Smith from Coleg Cambria in Wales.

Jill already had her own hair and beauty salon when she came up with the idea of a social enterprise to help young people with additional needs to be able to train and get work experience.

UK tutor of the year was awarded to Lyn Evans, who teaches countryside and environmental conservation management at Bridgend College.

Lyn and his learners manage a 110 acre campus, which has given the students "some invaluable real life experience" and has been "instrumental in the college achieving some prestigious awards including Sustainable College of the Year", City & Guilds said.

UK centre of the year went to Nottingham College for its "deep commitment to standardisation in order to provide its learners with a consistent and high quality learning experience".

Four international awards were also presented, to Sean Nason, Atia Saeed, Joanna McKenna, and Serco.



Louise Minchin, people's choice award winner Amy Vaughan, and Kirstie Donnelly



City & Guilds managing director Kirstie Donnelly (front centre left) celebrating with all of the winners from the City & Guilds Lion awards 2017 at Kensington Roof Gardens

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FEATURE

Revealed: Dudley College is FE's f

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

FROM FRONT

EXCLUSIVE

Dudley College is the first general FE college to receive a grade one rating from Ofsted in 14 months.

The report was full of glowing endorsements, including outstanding ratings for leadership and management, teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, outcomes for learners, 16-to-19 study programmes, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships.

The grade ended an agonising wait for top marks for a general FE college – the previous recipient being Truro and Penwith last April.

It's generally been a bleak picture for the sector, grades-wise: last month FE Week revealed that the number of colleges rated 'outstanding' had fallen to its lowest ever level, after Blackburn received a shock grade three.

The report on Dudley, which was

previously rated 'good' overall in 2013, was published by Ofsted on June 15 – two days after the college shared its contents with us.

Its delighted principal Lowell Williams said: "I hope this will be inspiring for other FE colleges and for Dudley.

"Colleges have struggled to get the top Ofsted grade recently, but we have shown that it's possible.

"We've trained and supported a really talented group of managers and leaders to oversee the finances and the curriculum, and motivate people to want to come with them. That led to this fantastically motivated, magnificent staff who pull together as a team."

He added: "In some parts of the country, Dudley we know is a bit of a joke. People mock the accent. For Dudley to have an outstanding college is something for the community to be really proud of.

"We're situated right in the heart of the town and most of the staff come from here. It means a lot to everyone."

The report said Mr Williams and the governors had "an exceptionally coherent

and ambitious" strategic vision for the future of the college, building on its core mission of skills development in science, technology and engineering.

Teachers and assessors were praised for making "excellent use of their extensive links with employers to plan and deliver interesting and challenging learning activities that prepare learners very effectively for the workplace".

Debbie Goode, the assistant principal for marketing and business development, talked up the sense of unity among the team at the college.

"There was a big staff meeting and all the Ofsted grades for different areas were gradually revealed," she said.

"There was so much joy in the room as it became clear how well everyone had done. The tears and cheers were wonderful."

Learners were also found in the report to "have excellent attitudes, take pride in their work and achieve consistently well".

The report added that "employers are involved very thoroughly in planning on- and off-the-job training for apprentices".

The number of pupils at schools in Dudley and Sandwell who attain five GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics is below the national rate. In fact, Dudley is among the 35 worst local authorities in the country for secondary school attainment.

But the report recognised how "teachers and assessors are determined that learners and apprentices achieve well, despite poor experiences and underachievement of many while at school".

FE Week's analysis last month uncovered a worrying downward Ofsted grading spiral for general FE colleges over the last 10 years.

Just one college had up to that point received an 'outstanding' grade, across the 124 full inspections that the inspectorate had carried out since the latest Common Inspection Framework was introduced in September 2015.



Inside 'outstanding' Dudley College

**FE Week deputy editor Paul Offord visited Dudley College a week before the inspection result was announced, and was seriously impressed. He relates his experience.**

It was easy to see why the Ofsted inspection team gave Dudley College top marks, and I was struck by the palpable sense of enthusiasm and unity among staff and learners when I was shown around.

The college, which enrolls around 12,000 students each year, was impressively maintained. All the corridors and classrooms, including in the older buildings, were freshly painted and full of modern looking-computers and other cutting-edge technology for technical training.

I was particularly impressed with the new Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Technology, also known as Dudley Advance, which opened at a cost of £9 million in 2013.

It's next to what will be the Centre for Advanced Building Technologies when it opens in the autumn, costing £12 million.

Gary Finch, an engineering tutor, said: "I have worked at the college for 30 years and when I first started in our old engineering block it was 'Prisoner Cell Block H'. It has changed so much."

While showing me around Dudley Advance, Shaun Hunt, an assistant principal for curriculum and standards, said: "Everything we do here is developed in partnership with employers, to make sure we are meeting local training needs, and apprenticeships are a big part of that.

"The employers often come in and meet the students, often with a view to taking them on. Almost 30 per cent of our students on full time courses end up on apprenticeships, many in this way."

I was also shown around the Dudley Evolve Centre which cost £20 million and opened five years ago, focusing largely on art and design, and performance-related arts.

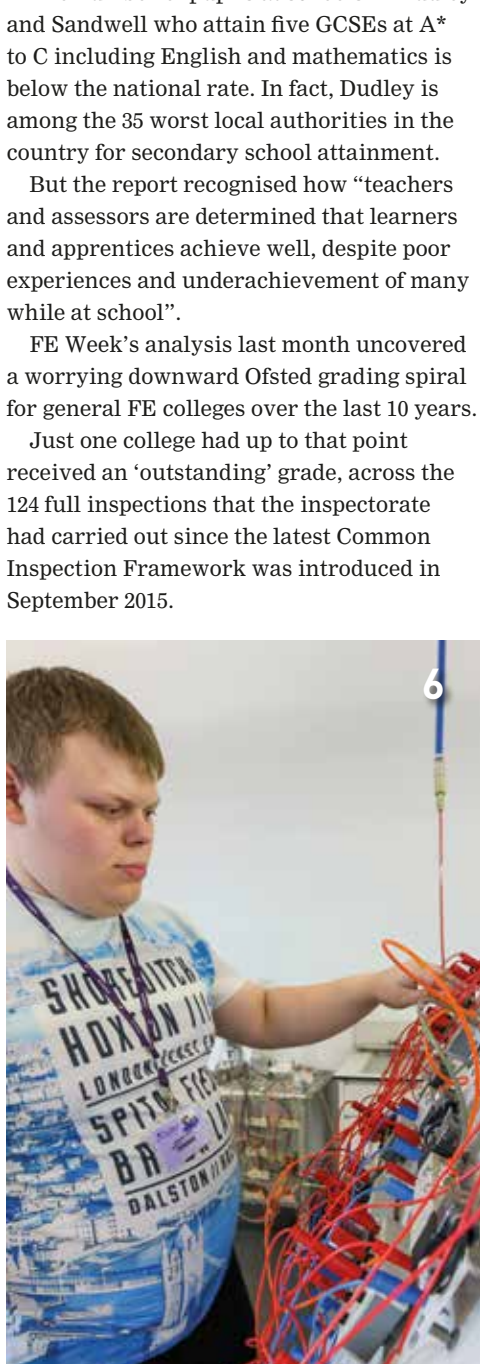
An impressive theatre area was home to a giant state-of-the-art lighting and rigging system, where David Malone, an assistant principal for curriculum and standards, told me: "You don't see facilities that good in most theatres.

"It takes up a lot of space too, and you could have crammed in other classrooms in this area.

"But the point is if you are going to teach technical courses, you have to do it properly and give the students the best possible equipment to learn their skills on."

The focus at Dudley isn't just on technical and creative education either; there's Dudley Sixth, an A-levels centre opened in 2012 at a cost of £10 million, and as another assistant principal of curriculum and standards, Diana Martin, explained, traditional FE provision such as English for speakers of other languages courses are also still important.

"We have always remained committed to supporting our local community," she said. "With ESOL, for example, it's part of our ethos to be at the heart of the community, and help improve cohesion. When other colleges cut their provision in recent years, we grew ours."



Captions: 1. Staff and students celebrate 2. Lowell Williams, aged 17, in the workshop 3. Dudley Advance 4. Diana Martin 5. Dudley Evolve 6. Engineering maintenance apprentice Louis Hale, aged 18 7. Engineering apprentice Hope Watkiss

# first ‘outstanding’ in 14 months



## If you want a grade boost then ask for a full inspection

Ofsted’s original visit to Dudley College had been scheduled as a short inspection – and its principal has recommended that other principals copy him and request a full visit, if they want a chance at getting a better grade.

The original short inspection took place over January 25 and 26, but Lowell Williams explained he reached an agreement that inspectors should return for a further three days in May to see if there was sufficient evidence to upgrade the college’s previous grade two rating.

“It was a discussion during the inspection, because we felt we had something to show them. Ofsted agreed with that so they came back,” he told FE Week.

“I think the short inspection is a very difficult thing for Ofsted to do for a large, complicated college like Dudley. There is so much to see, so many lines of enquiry. For a small team to collect sufficient evidence to make a judgement on whether a college is anything other than good is very difficult.”

The full inspection couldn’t have worked out better for Dudley, and Mr Williams recommends that other colleges follow a similar route.

He said: “My advice to other colleges is ‘how confident are you with your provision?’ If you think it is outstanding, then you should be encouraging Ofsted to convert the short inspection into a full one.”

Mr Williams raised concern that short inspections – introduced in 2015 with the common inspection framework to enable providers with a ‘good’ rating to be checked out more frequently – tend to encourage inspectors to just stick with a previous grade two.

“They come in to assess whether a college is still ‘good’, and it is kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is a tendency that it pigeonholes good colleges.

“There’s a question of how much evidence can they collect in two days.”

He explained the college was not formally rated either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ at the end of the short inspection.

“I don’t think having them back for a full inspection was a gamble. It was in the balance and we then had dialogue as to how they could see enough evidence to make it outstanding,” he said.

It may have worked out perfectly for Dudley, but Mr Williams still raised concern about the CIF.

“I think it has some limitations and problems for big general FE colleges. I don’t think there is sufficient assessment of the skills level that learners develop, or adequate assessment of the college’s impact on its community and the productivity of its businesses.”

The CIF also does not, he claimed, “take into account lots of technical things that you need to run a college well: like how you develop your strategy, how you manage a risk, how you manage your financial strategy”.

Too often, he added, the CIF tries to take measures that are applicable in a school setting and “force them onto a general FE college”.

In reply, an Ofsted spokesperson said: “Only inspectors make decisions on whether or not a short inspection should be converted to become a longer one. They do of course share the findings with senior leaders as they emerge.

“Short inspections have been widely welcomed by school and college leaders since they were introduced in September 2015. They have led to better dialogue between inspectors and school and college leaders, and reduced the inspection burden without losing the rigour that students expect from Ofsted.”



8. Art Technician Jason Parsonage by a swan artwork – created by art student Sarbjit Singh, aged 18 (not pictured) 9. David Malone shows off the stage lighting rig 10. ESOL Learner Momotaz Begum, aged 36 11. Paul Offord with Shaun Hunt

# DfE admits a lack of resource to produce regular loans data

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education has blamed a lack of resources for its failure to publish up-to-date advance learner loans figures – on which reporting is now suspended indefinitely.

In the past, the DfE has published a report with up-to-date numbers of the advanced learner loan applications it has received and those applications ready for payment on gov.uk every three months.

But there have been none since February this year, so when independent education consultant Mike Farmer recently asked why, he was surprised to be told the delay was not due to reporting restrictions resulting from the general election, but to problems with “resourcing”.

In an email sent to him by a member of the department’s FE statistics team and seen by FE Week, he was told that “due to resourcing issues, this release of the advance learner loans applications publication has been suspended until further notice”.

It continued: “We hope to reinstate this as soon as possible. We will endeavour to update the more detailed final-year publication in October.”

Mr Farmer, who has analysed changing trends with applications for FE loans on behalf of FE Week for a while, was surprised that the DfE had admitted to resourcing issues.

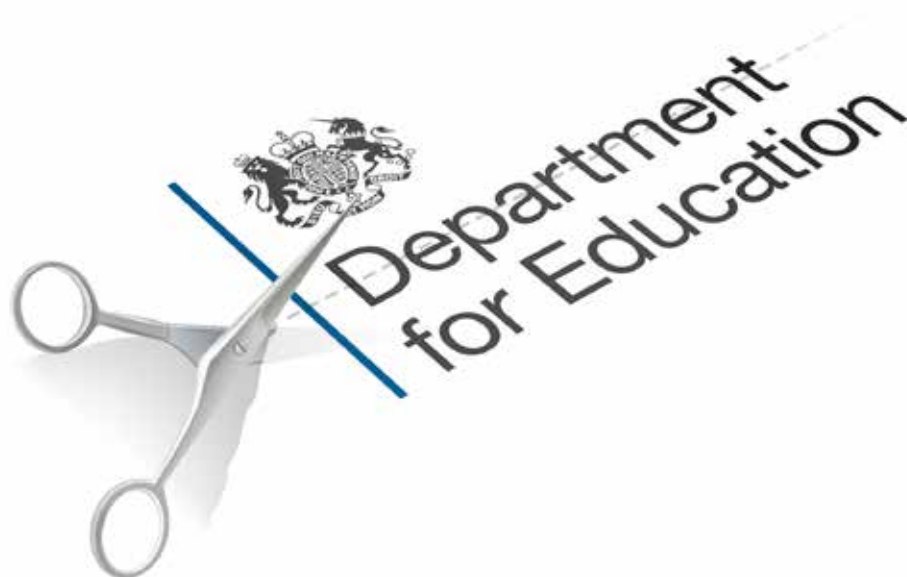
“It certainly gave me a shock, and I would like to know more about what these resourcing issues amount to,” he said.

“Maybe all the spare civil service resources are being thrown at preparing for Brexit negotiations at the moment. It’s important to know the latest progress with these loans.”

The February report on advance learner loans showed that 76,810 applications had been received for 2016/17 up to January.

The Public and Commercial Services Union claimed that this unusual bluntness from a government department was a sure sign that cuts to the DfE and the Education and Skills Funding Agency had gone too far.

“It’s troubling that a major government department says it doesn’t have the resources to do this kind of work and will just add to the sense of a government in disarray,” a



spokesperson told FE Week.

“Ministers need to admit that cuts have gone too far and crucial work is falling through the gaps.”

The headcount at the DfE, according to the latest figures published in March, was 3,377, up from 2,387 in April 2016 – though this is after it took over the FE and skills brief from the former Department for Business Innovation and Skills last summer.

The SFA and EFA merged in March this year, and further staff cost-cutting is expected as a result of forthcoming “efficiency” savings.

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, told FE Week that the delay to the reporting of advance learner loans data was “disappointing”.

He added: “The ending of subcontracting under loans-funded learning is a good example of why we need to keep track of the data. Without timely information we cannot have a well-informed debate around the future of this provision.”

FE Week reported in February last year that the SFA had ruled that provision paid for by advanced learner loans would have to be delivered directly by lead providers from the start of 2017/18.

The SFA said at the time that it would “cease to allow subcontracting within the advanced learner loans programme from the start of the 2017 to 2018 funding year”.

A spokesperson for the DfE would say only that there was no delay expected for “any other publications”.

# Judge and principal blast nepotism scandal

ALIX ROBERTSON  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

A senior manager at the country’s biggest college group was somehow permitted to interview and appoint her own husband to another top post, in a situation that a judge described as being “quite extraordinary”.

Deni Chambers, the director of creative and digital industries at NCG, formed a panel with just one other colleague to award her partner Simon Chambers the job of head of art and design at Newcastle College last year.

At an employment tribunal in North Shields in February, judge A M Buchanan said: “I find it quite extraordinary that an organisation of the size of the respondent dealing with a redundancy process should ever contemplate allowing a spouse to sit on an appointment panel where her spouse was an applicant whether the spouse was the only candidate for the post or not.”

Even Joe Docherty, NCG’s own chief executive, blasted his own organisation for the appointment, saying: “As soon as I was made aware of this situation actions were taken to ensure it cannot happen again.”

The judge said that it had been “equally extraordinary” that Ms Chambers and her colleague, the group’s HR chief Lynne Griffin, had tried “to argue that there

was nothing wrong in that process”, demonstrating “at best remarkable naivety”.

Mr Docherty told FE Week that “the idea of a candidate for a job anywhere in NCG being interviewed by their spouse is totally unacceptable to me” and that the state of affairs “goes against all our values, especially our drive to increase openness, honesty and accountability in our everyday actions”.

The tribunal – which was first reported on in Private Eye magazine – was brought about by Pitra McNeill, a former operations manager at Newcastle College, who had worked there for just over three years.

Ms McNeill was told that her post would be discontinued in July 2014, and was then appointed as section manager for adult and community learning, despite neither applying nor interviewing for the role.

Although she “carried out her duties efficiently”, a restructure of the college took place in 2016 and Ms McNeill was forced to reapply for employment, putting in applications for six different positions.

According to the tribunal’s decision, she had concerns that “the interviewing and appointment process within the college was not open and transparent but enabled interviewers to appoint favoured candidates and in some cases their family and friends”.

After a complex process of applications and interviews, during which she raised her

concerns via a “confidential whistleblowing request” with HR, Ms McNeill was told she was to leave the organisation last July and receive a redundancy payment.

She appealed this decision by letter, referring to the appointment of Mr Chambers by his wife, and stating that NCG, which encompasses five colleges and two national training providers, had not made “a reasonable attempt at finding suitable alternative work” for her.

She was interviewed again, but she remained unsuccessful and turned to the employment tribunal.

The judge concluded that “no reasonable employer of the size and administrative

resources of the respondent [NCG] would have acted as the respondent did in respect of the search for alternative employment”, adding that the group had “failed to make every effort to find such employment and breached its own policy”.

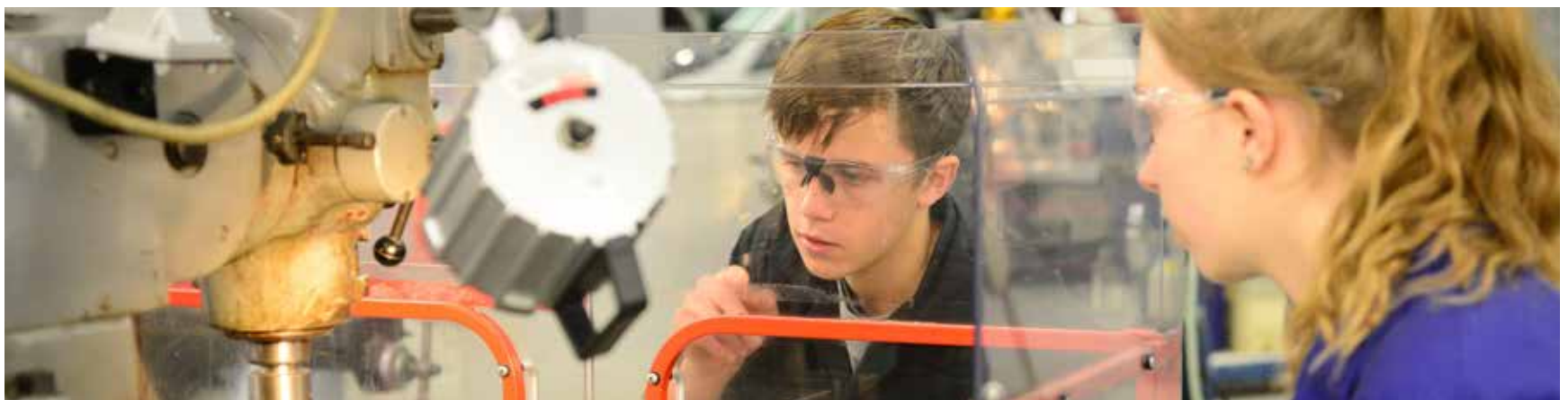
He decided that although Ms McNeill had not been dismissed specifically due to her whistleblowing on the dodgy appointment, “the claim of ordinary unfair dismissal is well founded and the claimant is entitled to a remedy”.

FE Week understands that further college redundancies were discussed with staff on our press day, but NCG would neither confirm this nor deny it.

“The idea is totally unacceptable to me”

Joe Docherty, NCG Chief executive





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EDITORIAL

The DfE-bot in overdrive

Forgive the facepalm, but after a drubbing in the general election for being evasive, I had hoped our questions to the government would be given the professional courtesy of attempting an answer.

Sadly the signs look appalling, after we received possibly the best example this week of a robot spewing out unrelated and misleading sound bites.

We reported on the DfE failing to publish comparable data, as they usually would, for apprenticeship achievement rates.

We asked them why they had not published it and how they would counter claims of a cover-up.

And remember, following a revision to remove loop-holes, it is a near five per cent fall in the headline rate, with one third of apprentices last year failing to achieve.

The DfE answer to our question was “Today’s figures prove that apprenticeships are equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life.”

So, no attempt to answer our specific questions and instead a comment that would leave you believing, incorrectly, that these latest figures show an improvement in outcomes.

The worst possible response. One that avoids the question completely and instead requests we publish a statement that implies the opposite of reality.

I was stunned, and uncharacteristically lost for words.

Nick Linford, Editor  
news@afeweek.co.uk

MINISTERIAL  
CHANGE TWEETS:

John Field

@John\_\_Field

Robert Halfon was one of the few ministers in the last govt who met & listened to the sector; gagged during election and now sacked

Jason Cowley

@JasonCowleyNS

Robert Halfon represents my old home town. He's one of the most compassionate and dedicated MPs. Absurd sacking...

Isabel Hardman

@IsabelHardman

Interesting May has moved Anne Milton to Education. She was hugely effective & respected whip, combining brutal no nonsense with compassion

Julian Leybourne

@julianleybourne

Congratulations @AnneMilton excited for workforce development delivered by people who understand workforce skills #apprenticeships #skills

Sandra Berry

@ep\_bee

Heartbreaking news on Robert Halfon - a brilliant and sincere man, an asset to the party. Why has he lost his job? Someone tell me please!



# Meet your new minister: Anne Milton MP

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDEN

A former Conservative whip this week became the new minister for apprenticeships and skills following the shock sacking of Robert Halfon.

Anne Milton, the MP for Guildford, was given the promotion by Theresa May after a short reshuffle at the Department for Education.

The apprenticeships and skills minister post was vacated on June 12 after the prime minister stunned the sector and relieved Mr Halfon his duties less than a year after the MP for Harlow was appointed to the role.

This is the first time Ms Milton, a former nurse for the NHS who specialised in palliative care for 25 years, has held a frontline ministerial role since she became an MP in 2005.

Dr Sue Pember, a former top skills civil servant, said that Ms Milton’s previous experience of government and as a party whip would put her in “a good position” to pick up the skills brief “at this crucial time”.

Ms Milton served as a shadow minister for culture and tourism in 2006, but swiftly

became a shadow health minister in 2007 under the then-Conservative party leader David Cameron.

Between May 2010 and September 2012, she was parliamentary undersecretary for the Department of Health.

She was also appointed to the Privy Council, the body which advises the Queen on carrying out her duties, in March 2015.

And between May 2015 and June 2017, she was deputy chief whip in the House of Commons, reportedly one of the most effective and respected whips in her party.

Her election campaign leaflet this year championed the need for young voters to turn out, saying: “It’s always a huge pleasure to visit schools, colleges and the university to make sure young people understand more about politics and why it’s so important for them to be involved.”

Other leaders in the FE sector, whom FE Week understands she has already started to meet, welcomed her appointment to the skills brief.

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said he was “delighted” to have a new skills minister who has “taken a close interest in the future for young people in her

own constituency”.

He told FE Week: “The minister will appreciate from a local perspective how vital it is that the reforms work well for smaller businesses as well as Guildford’s large employers that wish to offer young people apprenticeships, and so we will be asking her to make the non-levy funding allocations her highest immediate priority.”

Stephen Evans, the chief executive at Learning and Work Institute said that as Britain “prepares for life outside the European Union”, the new minister has an “incredibly important job to do in building the high-quality, responsive and accessible skills system our economy is going to need, providing lifelong learning and apprenticeship opportunities for the current and future workforce”.

David Hughes, the chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said the implementation of the apprenticeship reforms and the introduction of T-levels will be “high on the minister’s agenda” in the coming months”.

He added that his association had a “strong and productive relationship” with her predecessor Robert Halfon, and he is “looking forward to this continuing”.

COMMENTS

Who is Anne Milton? 11 facts about the new skills minister

Dear Anne, Many congratulations on your appointment. I wonder if I might just take a moment of your time to ask if you wouldn't mind asking your advisors about the policy of FE students on study programmes being mandated to resit their GCSE in English and / or maths if they didn't achieve a grade C / grade 4? The thing is, it's not the right thing for the students, the employers think it's a daft idea, and actually, Ofsted have come out in favour of scrapping it too. It causes quite a lot of consternation, and we honestly thought that the DfE were going to have a rethink about it, in time for the next academic intake – but then, well, the election was announced. If you'd like some guidance, I've got a really straight-forward strategy, ready to go, and Government wouldn't look like it was back-tracking – more of an evolution really. Happy to give you some guidance!

Lindsey Johnson, vice principal, West Suffolk College

Halfon loses apprenticeships and skills ministerial role in reshuffle

Three ministers in 12 months. Now that's what I call Stability and Strength!.

I am very disappointed by this move. Mr Halfon has worked tirelessly to promote Apprenticeships and I am concerned for where this will now leave us in taking apprenticeships forward. I hope the new Minister carries on the good work and does not rip up everything that has already been done.

Not a moment too soon as he leaves devastation in his wake. The apprenticeship debacle is still unfolding and the 3m target is doomed strangled by unbelievable bureaucracy and let's hope some senior ESFA officials follow suit as they should hang their heads in shame so it needs a clear out. Alas many decent private providers and some colleges won't be able to survive as employers are befuddled by this sheer incompetence and let's get some clarity and simplification pdq if it's not too late already.

Matt Garvey

Jeremy Rabinovitch

Norman

# Group Director – Finance & Operations



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**Closing Date:** 29th June 2017



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For more information go to: <http://kidderminsterleadership.fea.co.uk>

**Closing date:** 12 noon Monday 3rd July 2017

**Interviews:** 11th and 12th July 2017





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Image by Angela Ithyle

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**Closing date: 30th June 2017**  
**Interviews: 24/25th July 2017**

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**Closing date: Midnight on Wednesday, 21st June 2017.**

**Interview date: Tuesday, 4th & Wednesday, 5th July 2017.**



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Should you require any further information regarding these vacancies please contact Mat Harte (Curriculum Team Leader – English) – [mharte@kirkleescollege.ac.uk](mailto:mharte@kirkleescollege.ac.uk) or Matthew Knight (Curriculum Team Leader – maths) – [mknigh@kirkleescollege.ac.uk](mailto:mknigh@kirkleescollege.ac.uk).

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## EXPERTS



### FE INSIDER

Shane Chowen, head of policy and public affairs, the Learning and Work Institute

## FE's seat at the Brexit table

We still don't know what Brexit will look like, but as FE has so much skin in the game, it deserves a say in talks

This week marks one year since the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, a toxic time in our political and democratic history. Perhaps the divisions are still too raw to reflect properly on those months of bitter editorials, divisive tactics and empty slogans. It's not been the year of healing we needed, so it's no wonder that current chatter about another general election – should the Conservative minority government arrangements fail – is ironically uniting the country in a sense of collective despair.

As with the endless occasions I've signed an email on my iPhone with 'Shame', pundits and public alike can no longer rely on predictive politics.

While there is something quietly satisfying about the voices of the unheard changing an outcome predicted by 'experts' – and young people in particular if early analysis of turnout is to be believed – the involvement of more and different groups of people in the political process can, and should, result in a noticeable change of discourse.

“  
**With the right case and the right ideas, FE can be a formidable voice**

It was fantastic to see so many colleges doing their bit, but let's not pretend that the only reason young people turned out and voted was the promise of free tuition fees, as if they haven't noticed the impacts of austerity on their local youth services, their schools and their colleges, or the broken housing market, the impact of benefit cuts on their families and an overstretched NHS. Let's resist the commentators belittling and patronising the youth vote as reacting to promises of sweets and freebies, and instead do a better job at analysing policy impacts on future generations.

The new government, however it's

formed and however long it lasts, can start to do that in the way in conducts itself as it starts Brexit negotiations with the European Union this week, and in planning for Britain's role as an independent nation trading with the world. Further education, as a sector, has interests here and should be mounting its case for a seat at the table. With the right case and the right ideas, FE can be a formidable voice and must have the confidence to speak up alongside powerful business and university lobbies.

Here are three interlinked areas where I believe there can be better policy in which FE isn't a passive player.

Firstly, domestic skills policy. Even if we hadn't had a referendum and weren't leaving the EU, the UK has major and sometimes debilitating skills challenges which aren't going away; the need for accessible training opportunities to gain and progress in work or to change jobs in every corner of the country, to stay in good work longer as our population ages, and to adapt to rising changes in the way we work as more people become self-employed or are in insecure work – all of this matters just as much as it did before.

Results of a survey shortly after the election from the Institute for Directors showed that education, skills and training should be the second highest priority policy area for the new Government, after developing a trade agreement with the EU.

Secondly, FE's future relationship with the EU: what sort of relationship do we want? I've heard anecdotally from many sector leaders about the various opportunities and challenges different forms of Brexit could present for the sector but I've seen comparatively little, relative to universities for example, of proactive ideas from people at Number 10 and the Department for Exiting the European Union to properly represent what the sector wants.

Finally, for now, is the sector's longer-term role and responsibilities in Britain's international trade. There's much talk of trade deals at the moment, both within the EU, the Commonwealth and the rest of the world. Trade deals are not just about tariffs and goods; they are also about services, like education and training, and movement of people, including international students. We all want FE, as well as our universities, to be prime reasons why counties and businesses globally invest in Britain, and now is the time to demand a seat at the table.



### CLARE HOWARD

CEO, Natspec

## SEND reform is still a pressing concern

With Edward Timpson a shock casualty of the election, we can't let his SEND overhaul drop off the agenda, says Clare Howard

Edward Timpson, the minister overseeing a complete overhaul of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system, lost his seat at the election. Widely respected for his dedication and passion, he will a hard act to follow.

“  
**There is a long way to go before the system is truly person-centred**

It remains to be seen how a new minister will affect the future policy, but what lessons can those working to implement the SEND reforms learn from the election itself?

### 1. Negative campaigning doesn't work

Those that ran the Remain campaign during the EU referendum admitted their biggest mistake was to focus on the negative consequences of Brexit. But Theresa May's general election campaign made the same mistake, and voters – especially the young – ignored the screaming headlines.

Those of us implementing reforms must take heed. Dame Christine Lenahan and the team working on the review of independent specialist schools and colleges have already indicated there is too much criticism and negativity from all sides, and more should be done to focus on common ground, to produce the outcomes we are all working towards.

### 2. Leaders need to be inclusive, approachable and visible

One of the many talking points of the campaign was Ms May's leadership style: the repetition of "I" rather than "we", the no-show in the debate, the closed inner circle, and the lack of consultation with cabinet ministers on key policy lines. Contrast Jeremy Corbyn's open rallies and straight-talking leadership style, which caused even his fiercest critics inside the Labour Party, who believed him to be unelectable, to eat humble pie by the end of the campaign.

With a disparate and uncoordinated SEND

system involving 150 LAs handling high-needs budgets, mainstream and specialist FE providers barely coping with increased administrative costs and reduced budgets, increasingly frustrated parent and community groups, and around 25,000 FE students in the middle of it all, the question is: do we have the leaders across the system with the skills to bring people together, inspire and motivate?

### 3. Confidence can become a weakness

There's a fine line between confidence and arrogance. Ms May displayed both during the course of the campaign, and the electorate refused to be told what to do.

Let's make sure we do not fall into the trap of repeating mantras and soundbites from the SEND code of practice, without clear action. The latest SEND data shows that there is a long way to go before the system is truly person-centred, transparent, easy to navigate, and efficient.

### 4. Beware assumption and echo chambers

With social media now the main source of information for many, we are all guilty of confirmation bias: surrounding ourselves with views, memes, articles and videos we agree with, and ignoring contrary evidence.

There are too many assumptions and false perceptions driving SEND policy, particularly relating to post-19 provision, and these need to be challenged.

### 5. Don't mess with the young, the old or the vulnerable

Whether the issue was school budgets, student fees, FE and skills, the dementia tax or the future of the NHS, the Conservatives underestimated the capacity of people to register a protest. For SEND policy and funding, now could be the time to work out a new approach to joining up health, education and social care budgets so that post-16 and post-19 students can receive integrated programmes that result in savings in the longer term.

### 6. Protect core values

Any reflections on the campaign cannot ignore the atrocities in Manchester and London. The response of everyone involved demonstrated courage, unity, and determination not to allow these events to interrupt the democratic process.

The young people we work with demonstrate a similar unbreakable spirit, and whoever takes over from Edward Timpson must show courage of convictions, work hard to protect the principles of the Act, and finally achieve the vision that he set out.

## EXPERTS

The highest standards can be found at large, specialist sixth-form centres, claims Bill Watkin

This year has been an important one for specialist sixth form colleges: the first new A-levels and BTECs are in place, area reviews are at an end, the first academy conversions, and a growing sector as new sixth form specialists have opened. Next year promises to bring just as many challenges, and opportunities.

In its election manifesto, the Conservative Party adopted the second recommendation in our election manifesto and committed to a major review of funding across tertiary education. This acknowledgement, that funding for post-16 students is inadequate, is a welcome development. The danger is that a future government, focused on its industrial strategy and the skills agenda, will concentrate on technical education and apprenticeships, and will overlook the academic and applied pathways that lead to universities and beyond. If we are to remain globally competitive, and if the industrial strategy is to work, we will also need students with A-levels and degrees. This, then, is the top priority for sixth-form education: sufficient funding levels for the sector.

At the start of the new year, as the impact of the first wave of reformed GCSEs, A-levels and BTECs is felt, schools and colleges will try to make sense of students' grades in new linear qualifications while busily preparing for the second wave of subjects coming on



**BILL  
WATKIN**

Chief executive, Sixth Form  
Colleges Association

## Small sixth forms are no longer viable

stream in September 2018. Working out what entry-level requirements make sense, how to set targets and show in-year progress are what's preoccupying teachers. With this in mind, sixth-form colleges will come together to develop a national framework that can be adopted, or adapted, across the country.

The population bulge has not yet reached the 16-to-19 age group and competition to attract new students is as strong as ever. Colleges must balance the need to maintain high standards with the need to recruit viable numbers – not easy when there is uncertainty about what the new GCSE grades tell us about students' ability and their suitability for advanced study. The lack of strategic planning is leading to a glut of sixth-form provision in some areas and a shortage in others. The

government's decision to involve 16-to-19 specialists in headteacher board discussions is a welcome development and should go a long way to ensuring a more joined-up approach.

Teacher recruitment is increasingly a worry, and colleges are exploring the part they can play in attracting new recruits to the profession. There is the possibility of a gap year placement scheme to give young people an opportunity to experience working life in a college environment, and colleges can help to develop and lead the apprenticeship pathway into teaching.

As we move from a Local Authority model to a network of multi-academy trusts, and as the self-improving system gains traction, system leadership is becoming an increasingly important consideration for

sixth-form colleges, the majority of which are strong, secure, well-run and successful organisations that have a great deal to offer. Several are already involved in academy sponsorship, others are drawing up plans to form or join MATs, or open satellite 16-to-19 free schools, and more and more are in teaching school alliances. The government wants a maths specialist school in every major city and sixth-form colleges are well-placed to support this policy and make it happen.

“**Colleges must balance high standards with viable numbers**”

Small sixth forms are no longer viable, and we need more school places for 11-16 year-olds. Now is the time to reduce the number of unsustainable school sixth forms and expand the number of large specialist sixth-form centres, with their broad curriculum, their specialist expertise, their rich programme of extra-curricular activities, their trained mental health, careers guidance, UCAS and pastoral support experts.

It looks like being another busy and exciting year ahead.

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For the first time the conference will have a theme – which is the apprenticeship levy reforms.

Taking place a few days before the ILR R11 data return, in particular this conference will help MIS staff learn from R10 (the first data return under the levy funding system).

The FE Data Conference typically brings together more than 300 ILR funding and data specialists to discuss funding, data quality, and the use of data to run efficient organisations and raise education standards. Data quality is becoming increasingly important for colleges, training providers, commissioning agencies, auditors and Ofsted. This means data needs to be accurate, complete, timely, valid, credible, reliable, consistent and relevant. These high profile conferences provide a vital opportunity to hear good practice and updates from the experts, as well as share experiences and meet other colleagues working with data in colleges and training providers.

Note: this conference will be of benefit to all apprenticeships providers returning a single ILR.

Register now at no risk (full refund for cancellations 7 days or more before the event) as this event has been fully booked in the past.

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# CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

## David Hughes reaches his peak



Peak performance: Oscar and David

The CEO of the Association of Colleges, David Hughes, has hiked and cycled the three peaks of Scotland, England and Wales to raise money for his son to help communities in Tanzania.

Over seven days, Mr Hughes and his son Oscar tackled Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon, hiking a total of 23 miles and cycling a further 609.

The trip raised the £1,500 needed for Oscar to undertake a National Citizen Service programme hosted by the humanitarian charity Raleigh International.

The programme will involve working with a team in Tanzania to support enterprise,

health, and sanitation community projects in a remote village.

“We wanted to raise money, but lots of people run marathons and cycle. We wanted to do something a bit more interesting,” said Mr Hughes senior.

“I did wonder on the third morning whether my aching legs would prevent me from completing it, but they ached less and less each day after that.

“I would definitely do another challenge like this if my son or one of my other children were up for it,” he added. “It’s all-consuming, so it helps you switch off from work and really relax.”



Camilla gets hands on

## Stick insect has a royal encounter

A stick insect from Chichester College met the Duchess of Cornwall at the recent South of England Show.

The annual event, which celebrates British agriculture and the countryside, was hosted by the Duchess this year, while the college had its own stall to showcase the work of staff and students to visitors.

The stick insect, brought along by animal care students for guests to interact with, attracted the Duchess as she went around the site meeting stallholders.

As well as handling the insect, the

Duchess also received a handmade copper rose as a gift from the college’s forge, which had been made by two blacksmithing students that morning.

College principal Shelagh Legrave OBE said: “Her Royal Highness was very interested in all that we have to offer at Brinsbury [part of Chichester College], particularly the ducks and insects. It was a lovely surprise for us to meet the Duchess and a pleasure to speak to her.”

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the show, which is held in West Sussex.



Playtime is over: The students on tour

## Getting their game-faces on

A team of students from Cambridge Regional College unveiled their own games at the biggest video game show in the calendar in Los Angeles this week.

A total of 38 students on the college’s BTEC level three games development course exhibited at the E3 expo, alongside all the biggest names in the gaming industry.

The students promoted seven puzzle, adventure and racing games for console, iOS and Android – made as part of their course – under the college’s student-run gaming company Rizing Games.

“We are the only college worldwide to run

a commercial educational development and publishing studio like this, and we are the first college to do console releases, supported by PlayStation First,” said course leader Michael Warburton.

“We have built up worldwide awareness through exhibiting at E3 and mixing with some of the biggest companies in the industry. It is fantastic for the students, who put a lot of work into marketing their games as well as creating them.”

It is now the fourth year students have exhibited at the expo, with this year’s cohort the largest number to attend.

## Dementia sufferers get pampered

Derby College has organised a free coffee and pampering event for people living with dementia, and for their carers.

Hosted at the college’s Engine Shed restaurant, guests were served tea and cakes made by catering and hospitality students.

Attendees also had mini beauty treatments, courtesy of students working in the college’s on-site salon.

The two-hour event was part of the college’s continued work to be recognised as a dementia-friendly institution by the Dementia Action Alliance.

Derby College’s director of funding development, Helen Stevenson, explained:

“As members of the Derbyshire Dementia Action Alliance we have three dementia champions who are trained by the Alzheimer’s Society. They are now sharing this knowledge with staff and students under the Dementia Friends programme.

“The event was an informal way for people living with the disorder and their carers to make new friends and enjoy a relaxed afternoon of refreshments and mini beauty treatments.”

Elaine and Peter, a married couple living with dementia, said they had “a lovely afternoon”, and Peter said he enjoyed his first-ever hand massage.



A helping hand: students and patients

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*FEATURED  
CAMPUS  
ROUND-UP

## National charity pilots new deaf apprenticeship scheme

The National Deaf Children's Society is taking on deaf apprentices for the first time in an effort to open up more apprenticeship opportunities for those with impaired hearing, reports Samantha King

It will be the first time the charity has run an apprenticeship programme of any kind, taking on three level three youth work apprentices and one level two business administration apprentice – and crucially, all applicants are deaf.

The Birmingham apprenticeship was advertised to deaf 18- to 25-year-olds, with an occupational requirement to become a role model to other deaf young people, and has received applicants from as far away as Cardiff.

One of the applicants for the youth work apprenticeship, 18-year-old Francesca Lanfranchi from Nottingham, cited a lack of confidence as one of the biggest barriers to deaf young people seeking employment.

"This apprenticeship programme is definitely a really positive step," she said.

"By sharing positive stories of apprentices taken on through this programme, it will show other deaf young people what can be achieved and hopefully give them the self-belief to take on similar opportunities."

Over the next five years, the NDCS will use its experience with the new crop of apprentices – who will begin with the charity



Candidates for the youth work apprenticeship

in July and August – to develop training resources and guidance for other employers looking to take on a deaf apprentice.

There is also an employer conference in the pipeline for 2018, which will highlight good practice and how to make adjustments in the workplace for deaf employees.

Rachel Perrin, head of youth development and partnerships at NDCS said: "The levy has provided a starting point for this apprenticeship scheme.

"In the last few years our policy and campaigns team have been campaigning for equal access to apprenticeships nationally. Just earlier this year British Sign Language was agreed as an equivalent to level two in

English as a requirement to apprenticeships programmes."

Rathbone Training, a youth charity that assists young people in accessing employment and training, helped with the apprentice recruitment process, and supported the society in making adjustments for candidates' deafness.

A spokesperson for the charity, Rob Tickle, said: "We worked with NDCS to design a recruitment process enabling candidates to deliver a presentation in their preferred method of communication – be it British Sign Language, or spoken and interpreted."

Tutors from Rathbone Training will also be delivering the training to the apprentices

as part of their qualification.

"We think it's important that organisations running apprenticeship programmes recognise the incredible value of a deaf apprentice," Perrin added.

"What better way to advocate for and showcase the fantastic contribution that deaf young people can make, than by setting up our own apprenticeship programme internally.

"These apprentices will showcase to employers up and down the country what a brilliant contribution they can make to an organisation, and break down any misconceptions they might have.

"Deaf young people can do anything other young people can do if given the right support."

The NDCS currently has two resources available on its website for employers and apprenticeship providers wanting to know more about taking on deaf apprentices: 'Breaking the sound barrier' and 'Supporting the Achievement of Deaf Young People on Apprenticeships 2017'.

## Do you want to be in Campus Round-up?

If you have a story you'd like to see featured in campus round-up, get in touch by emailing [samantha.king@feweek.co.uk](mailto:samantha.king@feweek.co.uk)



**Michelle Swithenbank** has been appointed chief executive of the Hull College Group.

Ms Swithenbank has been acting as interim deputy chief executive for the group since February 2017.

She was previously interim vice principal at the Grimsby Institute Group, where she oversaw multiple faculties.

She began her career as a full-time nurse in the NHS and the private sector, and moved into further education following an opportunity to work in curriculum development for overseas nursing programmes.

Ms Swithenbank said she was "very excited" to take the helm at the group during a time of "amazing cultural transformation" in the city of Hull.

"Hull College Group's campuses are well placed in the heart of the communities we serve and house an incredibly diverse range of talented staff and students," she said.

"Working with our partners we aim to deliver first class provision that meets all our stakeholders' expectations, including students, parents and carers, employers and our staff, all the people that matter to us as an organisation."

**Kirsti Lord** has been appointed deputy chief executive for member services at the Association of Colleges.

She will take up the role from her former position as acting principal at City College Coventry, which she has held since April,

## Movers &amp; Shakers



MICHELLE SWITHENBANK



KIRSTI LORD



DAVID MAHER

having been appointed deputy in 2016.

Ms Lord has a background in the arts, and has held roles as a music lecturer at Kidderminster College, performing arts lecturer at Worcester College of Technology

and head of music at Josiah Mason Sixth Form College, which has since merged with Sutton Coldfield College.

Of her new appointment, she said: "I am thrilled to join AoC at such an exciting time

for the organisation. I am looking forward to the new challenge of collaborating with colleagues to ensure high-quality service for members, and supporting colleges to embrace the opportunities emerging within the sector."

David Hughes, the chief executive of the AoC, added: "Kirsti will be a valuable asset to AoC as we move forward. She brings a wealth of knowledge and a deep commitment to the further education sector."

Ms Lord will take up her new post from August 14.

**David Maher** has been appointed the chair of Birmingham Metropolitan College's Digital and Creative Career College board.

Mr Maher, who is currently the major corporate and public sector deputy general manager at BT, will help the college respond to skills challenges facing the sector to help students gain employment.

"I see this as a real opportunity to immerse both students and employers in a programme that has the industry's unique skills and innovative practices at its very core," he said.

"From this, students can set out clear ambitions and career pathways, with employers at the forefront of all knowledge and training received."

On the board he will be joined by representatives from firms across the region's creative and digital sector including Samsung, Birmingham Hippodrome, KPMG, Irwin Mitchell, Project Birmingham and Brewin Dolphin.

# Want to update your skills and knowledge to respond to the changing educational landscape?

Come along to a City & Guilds CPD workshop at the Festival of Skills to hear from our experts on a range of hot topics from funding to FE policy.

Thursday 22 - Friday 23 June

Full workshop programme at [cityandguilds.com/festivalofskills](http://cityandguilds.com/festivalofskills)



## FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

Solutions:  
Next edition

## Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

## Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. **First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.**  
Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk).  
Last Edition's winner: Harry Jerome, Cirencester College