



14 - 19 Learning and Skills Bulletin

Plans for register of children not in school

The Government has confirmed it will go ahead with the creation of a register for children not in school at the “earliest available legislative opportunity”, alongside plans to give schools greater support on behaviour and rebuild hundreds more school buildings across the country.

In light of the pandemic contributing to a rise in children not being educated in school, the Government pledged to support local authorities to ensure that they knew where every child was being educated, the quality of the education, and support home educating families. The Government also announced greater support for headteachers to create “calm, orderly, safe and supportive environments” for children and young people. A consultation on revised guidance has been opened to give headteachers clearer support on maintaining a “positive culture”, and advice on responding to behaviour incidents online.

The Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, said it was to make sure that every child received the best start in life, which was why he was announcing clearer guidance to help every school boost behaviour and new legislation to create the first local authority register for children not in school. He added that the school rebuilding programme would ensure that pupils could learn in “state of the art facilities”, to give them the best opportunity to thrive.

Mr Zahawi said that the revised behaviour guidance also stressed that heads were best placed to make decisions on whether mobile phones should be in classrooms, having considered the needs of their pupils. He added that there would also be more consistent guidance to support headteachers with decisions about exclusions, to make sure that they were used in a “proportionate and fair way”. The Secretary of State also announced that action to increase attendance was underway via the Department’s alliance of education leaders, including the Children’s Commissioner, to make sure that no child was lost from the system.

Mr Zahawi argued that the new duty on local authorities to maintain a register of children not in school, would help them to spot and support young people in the rare cases they may be receiving an unsuitable education, for example at an unregistered school.

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The Levelling Up White Paper

The Government's *Levelling Up White Paper* was published last Wednesday, a few hours after *Education Journal* went to press. We had a pretty good idea of what would be in it from government sources we contacted ahead of publication, but now we can see what is actually in the document and it is much as we thought.

We devote a lot of space in this issue to reactions from around education. Everyone wants more money. Yet it is clear that the Treasury thinks it has spent more than enough money already, with the vast majority of it, hundreds of billions, going into supporting the economy. Only this week the Treasury was dragging its heels over more funding for the NHS, which is the Government's top priority. Health is an important part of the levelling up agenda, yet even with billions more to spend the NHS backlog will still almost double, from six and a half million cases to over eleven million over the next couple of years, before it begins to fall back.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published an analysis that we covered last week that should be concerning. It is worth repeating the warning they gave, that "making a difference will take persistent focus over a long time, with no pretence that genuine or big change can be achieved quickly."

Another report, published on the same day as the White Paper by the National Audit Office, was also concerning. *Supporting Local Economic Growth* analysed how existing government programmes were being run. We review the report in this issue, even though it is not specifically an education document, because of what it says about the Government's ability to manage programmes that do impact on education. It is not a report that makes for comfortable reading. It found that the Government's policies to stimulate local economic growth are not consistently based on evidence of what interventions are likely to be most effective, increasing the risk that billions of pounds awarded to local bodies will not deliver the intended benefits.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), working with other government departments, has responsibility for "raising productivity and empowering places so that everyone across the country can benefit from levelling up". As at November 2021, central government had committed £11 billion through policies to support the regeneration of towns and communities across the UK between 2020-21 and 2025-26, including £4.8 billion for the Levelling Up Fund, £2.6 billion for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £3.2 billion for the Towns Fund. The NAO found that the DLUHC "has a limited understanding of what has worked well in previous local growth programmes due to a lack of consistent evaluation or monitoring. By failing to conduct evaluations, DLUHC has wasted opportunities to learn lessons to inform future interventions, and it does not know whether previous policies achieved their aims. Instead, it has built its evidence base for what works in local growth by drawing largely on external sources such as academic studies and evaluations conducted on place-based funding from the European Union."

If the Government has proved so inept at organising existing programmes, it is difficult to be confident that it would be noticeably better at spending more money than it is at present planning to, and yet that is what is required to make levelling up more than just a slogan. We give just one example of a response to the White Paper, from ADCS President Charlotte Ramsden. You can find any number of others from the responses to the White Paper below. Ms Ramsden said: "This White Paper is, according to the Secretary of State, about ending 'historic injustice'. However, we are sorely disappointed that the Paper has failed to address one of the biggest historic injustices blighting the lives and life chances of millions of children today – rising child and family poverty. This appears to be a golden opportunity missed."

Yet the White Paper is right that the state can't do everything, and to draw attention to the need to see the private sector flourish. It noted: "A long tail of low-productivity businesses and places explain why UK productivity growth is too low compared to competitors." It will take partnership between private and public sectors to a greater degree than is common now. 'Private good, public bad' has for far too long been the private mantra of the Government. A more positive recognition of the role of local government would be as good a place as any to start, and funding is an important part of that.

Lessons from the first year of T-Levels

The Education and Training Foundation recently participated in a panel event organised by the T-Levels All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which focused on the experiences of providers of T-Levels which had included Further Education colleges, teaching staff, and providers of industry placements. The session explored the lessons learned from the first year of T-Levels, and the plans to create a new range of subjects.

Speakers had included Toby Perkins, MP and Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning, Neil Johnson, Assistant Principal Class Based Learning, Barnsley College, and Paul Bailey, Head of Regional Engagement, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

Toby Perkins, the Shadow Minister for Apprentices and Lifelong Learning, spoke about attitudes towards T-Levels and how vocational qualifications were just as important as A-Levels. He also stressed the importance of placements offering value to employers.

Neil Johnson had pointed out the benefits gained from engaging with partners at Barnsley College and the continued need for T-Levels to be a success. He also discussed some of the highlights and benefits gained from the use of industry placements and training developments with partners including the ETF.

Paul Bailey had reported on the ETF's T-Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer sharing insight and how it had engaged with providers and the crucial role the ETF's Area Relationship and Development Leads (ARDLs) played. He Paul had commented that the ARDLs had been important in facilitating collaboration not just regionally but nationally, including organising site visits and meetings where T-Level providers had been able to share their TLPD journey and seek advice and support.

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MMR vaccination uptake lowest level in a decade

A campaign is warning parents and guardians of the serious risk to children's health from measles, to remind parents to ensure their children were protected by 2 doses of MMR vaccine. The UK Health Security Agency and the NHS are calling on parents and guardians to ensure that their children are up to date with the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, and all other routine childhood immunisations, as the latest data had showed that MMR vaccination uptake had dropped to the lowest level in a decade.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, in March 2020, there had been a significant drop in the numbers getting their children vaccinated against MMR and other childhood vaccines at the right time.

Coverage of the first dose of the MMR vaccine in 2-year-olds had dropped below 90%. Coverage for the 2 doses of MMR vaccine in 5-year-olds in England was currently 85.5%, well below the 95% World Health Organization's target needed to achieve and sustain measles elimination. Therefore, more than 1 in 10 children under the age of 5 are not fully protected from measles and are at risk of catching it.

Skills and the *Levelling Up White Paper*, sector responses

In response to education and skills commitments being made in the upcoming *Levelling Up White Paper*, David Hughes, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges, said that colleges had been looking forward to the, *Levelling Up White Paper*, because of the central role that they played in local communities, the labour market, and enhancing life chances for millions of people.

He pointed out that the initial announcement had only been part of the whole picture, and it had largely set out more detail on the programmes and changes which had been announced in the previous year's Spending Review. Mr Hughes said that, while colleges would look forward to finding out more about the Education Investment Areas, he questioned what evidence there was for the need for new "elite sixth forms" in the education system. He stressed that, more than anything, the AoC wanted to see more emphasis on place-based collaborative approaches to education and skills.

Mr Hughes pointed out that AoC analysis had shown that competition between providers resulted in less choice and less coherence for learners and employers. He added that the AoC had also campaigned for better alignment between employment support and skills, between universities, colleges and schools, and between economic development and infrastructure spend and skills, all of which would need to be spelt out. Mr Hughes concluded that, levelling up would only happen with increased investment from government and business in left behind places, which would require more work between DfE, DWP, BEIS and DLUC to focus on meeting needs, stimulating development and enabling joined-up skills, employment and business support.

“ASCL argued that leaders and teachers knew their pupils and students better than anyone else and they were best placed to handle the behavioural challenges that inevitably came their way.”

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that the Government's proposal to introduce a register of children not in school had been long overdue and something that the education sector would welcome.

Commenting on the proposed new guidance on behaviour. He said that school and college leaders would be "astonished" that the government believed it knew best how to create calm, orderly, safe and supportive environments for children and young people to thrive in, as that was what they and their staff worked incredibly hard every single day to achieve. Mr Barton argued that leaders and teachers knew their pupils and students better than anyone else and they were best placed to handle the behavioural challenges that inevitably came their way. He stressed that what the school and college leaders needed was much greater support over the factors which could lead to challenging behaviour, such as better provision for families in need, more and better targeted funding for children with special educational needs, and increased investment to tackle a spiralling mental health crisis.

Mr Barton said that while ASCL welcomed investment in school rebuilding projects and the invitation for applications from a greater number of schools, it remained concerned that the Government lacked a coherent strategy for dealing with the £11.4 billion backlog of remedial work that had been identified in the school estate according to its own figures. He argued that the Government's methods of delivering capital funding to address such problems were a long way short of what was needed and it relied on a very complex series of funding streams which included schools having to bid for pots of money. Mr Barton added that the system needed to be better resourced and simplified, to ensure that every school building was a suitable learning environment for children and young people.

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers said that the white paper was expected to include news that 55 "cold spots" in England would receive targeted investment, support and action as part

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of a package of measures to boost take-up of high-quality training, which would target 200,000 more people each year by 2030, including 80,000 more completing courses in areas of England with the “lowest skills levels”. The AELP said that while it supported the moves, further detail would be needed on how the plan could be achieved, and how it would relate to the promised level 2 review.

The AELP pointed out that it supported the devolution of skills programmes where evidence pointed towards improved take-up and delivery, but some programmes, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, were best contracted at a national level. It pointed out that a diverse approach to commissioning could mean that providers would bid for multiple different pots of funding in multiple different formats, which would impact on their ability to deliver a fully joined-up skills offer to employers operating at a regional and national level.

The AELP argued that Adult Education Budget commissioning needed to be reformed and it must be fair and open to all providers, including decisions being based on track record and ability to deliver. It pointed out that devolving more of the AEB could mean more money would end up directly with adult learners. The AELP claimed that longer-term AEB funding settlements would give training providers much-needed financial stability, which would allow them to make longer-term commitments and capital investments in infrastructure with confidence and in turn supporting the future skills growth in localities.

“The UCU said that the creation of new elite sixth form colleges looked like it would do the opposite of levelling up, and would instead divide 16-year-olds into winners and losers.”

The AELP pointed out that because Independent Training Providers delivered the majority of the European Social Fund dedicated to skills, the shape of the UKSPF would have a significant impact on providers. It added that while the Chancellor had said in the 2021 spending review that UKSPF would “at least match EU receipts”, there was a lack of clarity on whether that included the UK- government match-funding amount, which doubled the overall funding available. The AELP stressed that the UKSPF should be weighted towards funding skills, and programmes should be funded to support the needs of adult learners with lower levels of qualification, and those who were otherwise disadvantaged.

NEU view

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that the White Paper had failed to provide sensible solutions to the lack of school and college funding, nor the exam factory culture, driven by national policies, which undermined progress on the skills and education agenda in England. She added that the White Paper had also failed to contain recognition of the effect on the profession over the last two years. Dr Bousted argued that the DfE did not appear to be reading its own reports about the impact of COVID-19 on learning, children’s confidence, and on areas of young people’s development such as speech and language and socialisation with peers.

She said that the White Paper should contain a proactive national strategy on student wellbeing and explain how the DfE would prioritise students’ social and emotional learning; otherwise, exclusions would rise, pupil attendance would be lower and there would be more demand for specialist services. Dr Bousted stressed that the DfE must also do much more to understand what supported and retained teachers and boosted effective teaching, which would involve action to address teacher workload and pay. She said that silence on child poverty would frustrate heads and teachers, and the levelling up agenda must include a robust plan, across Government, to eradicate child poverty through national policies.

Dr Bousted warned that, as current funding levels were at the levels of 2010, many schools and colleges were running on empty, primary class sizes were at their highest in the century and secondary class sizes were the highest since records had begun in 1978, as almost a million children were being taught in classes with more than 30 pupils.

The University and College Union general secretary, Jo Grady, said that the creation of new “elite”

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sixth form colleges looked like it would do the opposite of levelling up, and would instead divide 16-year-olds into winners and losers. She argued that, instead of creating shiny new institutions, the Government should be focusing resources on existing colleges so that they could attract and retain the best teachers and close the growing pay gap between further education and schools.

Ms Grady said that any additional funding for skills bootcamps should be directed towards colleges and their staff, as the proposals appeared to be more like “a bung” for employers. She added that the success of any initiative to extend access to prisoners, would rest on the involvement of prison educators who were best placed to determine the needs of the learners they worked with.

Sir Peter Lampl, founder and chairman of the Sutton Trust and chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation, said that education was the building block of everything, and it was right that the Levelling Up White Paper had contained ambitious targets for education in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. He stressed that there were huge inequalities in education which resulted in a waste of talent, but any plan to address the problems would need significant long-term resources to build on the evidence of what worked, which should be in line with the proposals put forward by Kevan Collins.

Sir Peter pointed out that it would also be important to ensure there was a wider plan for disadvantaged children outside the 55 priority areas, especially in light of the massive disruption caused by the pandemic. He added that it would be crucial to keep the focus on recovery and on ensuring that initiatives like the National Tutoring Programme reached the poorest pupils, wherever they were in the country.

NERF

Carole Willis, Chief Executive at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said that while she welcomed the Government’s commitment to providing extra investment to 55 local-authority areas in England with low education outcomes, and a renewed focus on tackling future skills gaps through extra high-quality training, it would need to be of sufficient scale to tackle the challenges facing such areas. Ms Willis pointed out that the NFER had particularly welcomed the development of a Future Skills Unit to look at the data and evidence of where skills gaps existed, and in what industries, as the transformation of employment over the coming decades was predicted to be significant due to new technologies and major demographic and environmental change. She said that in the absence of evidence to inform long-term planning for educational provision to enable young people to develop the right skills, there was a risk of extremely damaging effects of inaction, such as wider under-employment or unemployment and enduring social and economic problems.

Ms Willis said that because the nature of the change in the demand for skills in the labour market was not currently well-understood, the NFER was currently undertaking a research programme, The Skills Imperative 2035: Essential Skills for Tomorrow’s Workforce which aimed to explore what the changes would be, and specifically which key skills would be in greatest demand in future.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chairman of the Local Government Association’s Children and Young People Board, said that education would be hugely important in levelling up the country, and the LGA fully supported the investment targeted at “cold spot” areas, to help provide the schooling that every child deserved. But she pointed out that the pandemic had hit the educational attainment of all pupils hard, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds, and the impact would be felt for years to come. Cllr Bramble stressed that it would therefore be vital to put children at the centre of recovery from COVID-19,

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and councils and schools are able to work with government towards the shared goal of ensuring that pupils made up for lost learning and were able to provide holistic support, including for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

She added that, when considering whether to convert schools with three successive “requires improvement” Ofsted judgements into multi-academy trusts, the Government should utilise the knowledge and expertise of councils in supporting schools to improve, and allow councils to set up their own MATs.

Universities

Professor Steve West CBE, President of Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of UWE Bristol, said that universities were crucial to levelling up, by bringing together student populations, research partners, local businesses and employers to create vibrant communities, jobs and opportunity across the UK.

He stressed that universities were determined to reach out further and wider to students of all ages from low-income households and other under-represented groups so that they could benefit from a university experience. Professor West pointed out that universities were also working closely in partnership with colleges, local government, and LEAs in England to create a diverse range of rewarding learning opportunities that would meet the needs of employers and communities. He stressed the need for the Government to create the right conditions for universities to fully support business growth and skills development for all learners to ensure that graduates wanted to stay, work and contribute in every community.

The National Literacy Trust’s Chief Executive, Jonathan Douglas, said that while he had been pleased to see that the Government had committed to ensuring that 90% of children would leave primary school reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by 2030. But he argued that the scale of the challenge must not be underestimated.

Mr Douglas stressed that investment in schools in the most disadvantaged communities was essential and he welcomed the announcement of Education Investment Areas. He said that the Trust’s national network of 14 Hubs in many such areas had shown the power of place-based working in addressing the literacy challenge in the most disadvantaged communities.

Mr Douglas said that the network had equipped the National Literacy Trust with an understanding of what worked in such communities and it had also showed that teachers could not address the literacy attainment gap alone. He pointed out that, when schools worked with partners, from businesses to community organisations, they could excite and inspire young people, by creating aspiration and an excitement about learning.

Dr Tim Bradshaw, CEO of the Russell Group, said it would be important that investment in regional innovation was backed up with support for the UK’s world-class research base. He added that the Government’s ambitious plans to increase public funding for R&D meant that it was possible to grow investment in all parts of the country. Dr Bradshaw pointed out that, ultimately, research excellence and levelling up went hand in hand. He added that the UK’s leading innovation economies delivered jobs and growth far beyond their regions, while advances driven by research-intensive universities in everything from AI to biomedical science and clean energy technology resulted in benefits for the whole nation.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of NAHT, said that the significant and additional challenges that schools in some parts of the country faces were undeniable, but sadly, the Government’s announcement appeared to fall short of what schools and communities really needed. He argued that what was not needed was not another set of arbitrary targets, but a proper plan to ensure that every child had the very best start to life.

“Paul Whiteman of NAHT said that the significant and additional challenges that schools in some parts of the country faced were undeniable, but sadly, the Government’s announcement had fallen short of what schools and communities really needed.”

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Mr Whiteman added that support should include the Early Years, as well as investment in the crucial support services that should be in place to support the pupils and families that needed them, because while schools were a vital part of the work, they could not do it alone. He argued that, rather than engaging with the underlying issues, the Government appeared to have once again reached for simplistic solutions linked to structures and targets. But Mr Whiteman stressed that pointing at the problem was not the same as solving it, and setting targets for improvement was not the same as having a credible plan to deliver it.

ADCS

ADCS President, Charlotte Ramsden, said that while the Secretary of State had said that the White Paper was, about ending “historic injustice”, the ADCS had been “sorely disappointed” that the Paper had failed to address one of the biggest historic injustices blighting the lives and life chances of millions of children today, which was rising child and family poverty.

She argued that as levelling up must start with investment in children and young people the ADCS had welcomed the White Paper’s focus on improving education and skills, including illiteracy and innumeracy rates amongst children. Ms Ramsden said that ensuring that children attended good schools and had basic life skills was important, but so too was ensuring that all children and their families could afford the basics, such as food, heating and a roof over their heads.

She said that investment in infrastructure, broadband and housing in the areas highlighted in the Paper would help to develop some communities in which children and young people lived and therefore would make a difference to them, levelling up must go beyond that and to truly level up society and achieve a country that worked for all children in a post-COVID world, there would need to be long-term strategies to urgently close the gaps in education, health and poverty.

Fiona Fearon, the National Governance Association’s policy and projects manager, said that many of the proposals in the levelling up agenda that directly impacted children and young people were long overdue. She welcomed the increased focus on creating a level playing field and more opportunities for every child, and she agreed that as the number of home education pupils had increased during the pandemic, the introduction of a register for children not in school was a development that was needed now more than ever. Ms Fearon said that the NGA had also welcomed the development of an effective accountability mechanism for school food, which would include enhanced reporting with the aim of becoming mandatory, the piloting of a quality assurance role for the Food Standards Agency, and specific training for school governors and trustees, which represented a big step forward for the school food system.

Extending the school day in Wales

Following the announcement of plans to trial an extended school day in Wales, Laura Doel, Director of NAHT Cymru, said that while there may be some educational benefits to reforming the school year, schools were yet to be provided with any evidence that supported extending the school day. She argued that all the focus from the Government had been on the school day fitting in with family life and working patterns, but there had been no mention of the education benefit to learners.

Ms Doel said that all the evidence available suggests that there was little or no data that supported keeping learners in school for longer because longer periods in school did not increase a child’s capacity to learn. She insisted that schools were not childcare providers and the profession of dedicated school leaders, teachers and support staff should not be expected to take on additional work and responsibility to do so. Ms Doel added that the profession had been trying to support learners with COVID recovery, focus on curriculum development and ALN reform, prepare for new assessment and Estyn arrangements and deal with the implications of exams and new qualifications.

Assessment and qualifications in England

A report on the future of assessment and qualifications in England, published by the Independent Assessment Commission (IAC), has called for fundamental changes to the current system starting with GCSEs. The report also called for the English qualifications system to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to help address the current and emerging social and economic challenges.

The IAC also argued for a system that would see young people leaving school and college with a broader skill set, to make them more ready for Further Education, Higher Education and the workplace.

To achieve the goal, the report recommends “fundamental changes” to the current system starting with GCSEs, which would improve equity and enable qualifications to meet the needs of every young person, and address the growing mental health crisis in schools. The IAC also called for an end to “cliff edge” exams as the sole mode of assessment and no arbitrary assessment of all young people at the age of 16. Instead, the report argued recommended that assessment should take place between the ages of 14 and 19, and at a time when students were ready to undertake them. Recommendations from the report included:

- Recognising every student’s achievement, by creating a more equitable and reliable assessment system that would optimise the potential and protect the health and well-being of young people.
- Using the broad consensus for change that currently existed to initiate a conversation on education focused on equitable, reliable assessment.
- Designing learning experiences and qualifications that would encourage students to become critical, inquisitive, creative, autonomous and problem-solving learners, to better support progression into employment, further and higher education and inspire life-long and inter-disciplinary learning.
- Identifying reliable, alternative, blended approaches to assessment that rigorously gathered evidence of student achievement and competence. An end to high stakes examinations, and develop alternative approaches developed and trialed with schools.
- Deploying existing and emergent technologies to support high-quality student experiences in assessment and qualifications.
- Plan coherent pathways for all young people between school, college, university and employment that included a coherent 14-19 assessment and qualification experience.
- Assessment should not be based on a fixed age of 16. Students should have opportunities to demonstrate achievements when ready throughout education 14-19
- Designing an integrated qualifications system to offers every student the opportunity to include “academic” and “vocational” elements seamlessly along with accreditation for skill development, extended inter-disciplinary study and community contribution.
- Building a system of accountability that used evidence to inform improvement and end judgmental categorisation of schools.

Commenting on the report of the Independent Assessment Commission, on the future of assessment and qualifications in England, Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, that there was a gathering body of opinion that the exams system needed an overhaul and many people in

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Covid-19 Education Recovery Group - Infographic

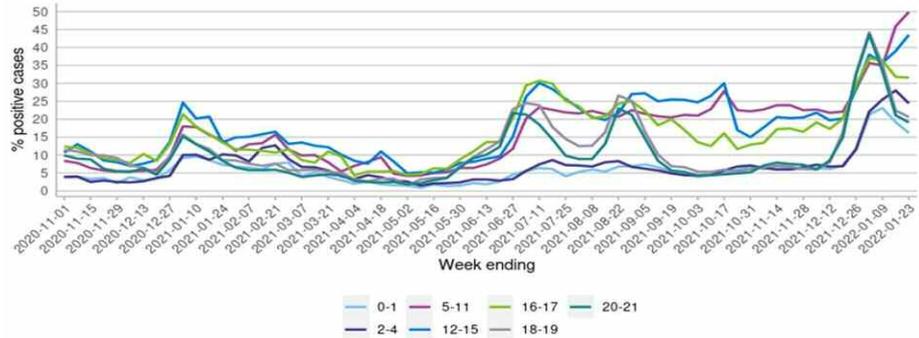
In the week ending 30th January 2022:

- The percentage of PCR tests that were positive was 37.6% in those aged 2-17 years; an increase from 33.5% in week 03 in 2022.
- The identified COVID-19 positive cases reflected a rate of 933.5 cases per 100,000 2-4 year olds, 2,734.4 cases per 100,000 5-11 year olds, 1,474.8 per 100,000 12-15 year olds and 886.2 cases per 100,000 16-17 year olds.

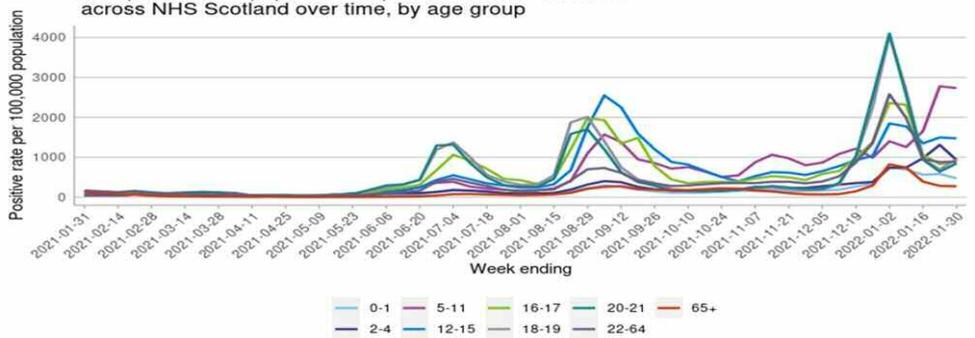
On 02th February :

- Attendance in local authority schools was 88.0% whilst the percentages of openings recorded as pupils not in school (non Covid-19 reasons) was 7.8%, and for not in school (Covid-19 related reasons) was 4.1%.
- 28,847 pupils were not in school either all or part of the day because of Covid-19 related reasons. Of these, 12,652 were not in school because of a Covid-19 related sickness.

Percentage of tests that had a positive result for COVID-19 over time, by age group

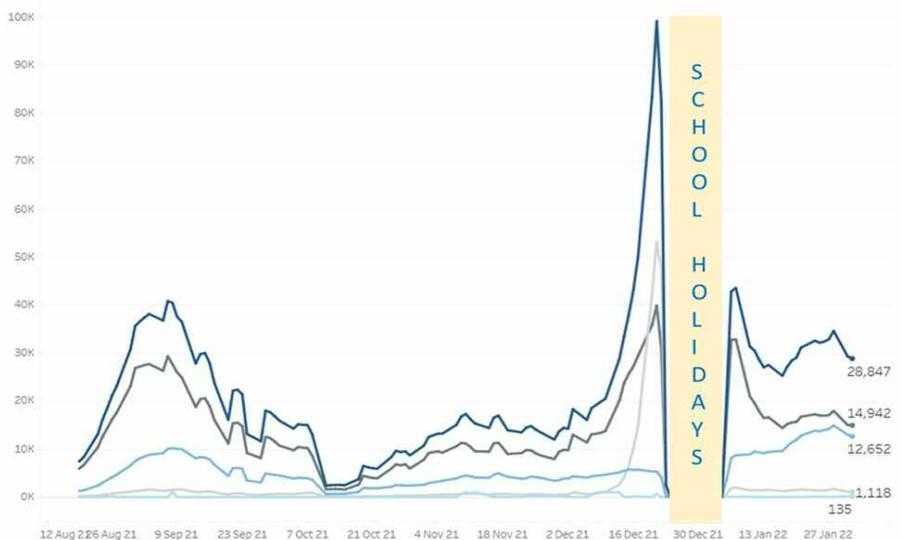


Rate per 100,000 population of positive COVID-19 cases across NHS Scotland over time, by age group



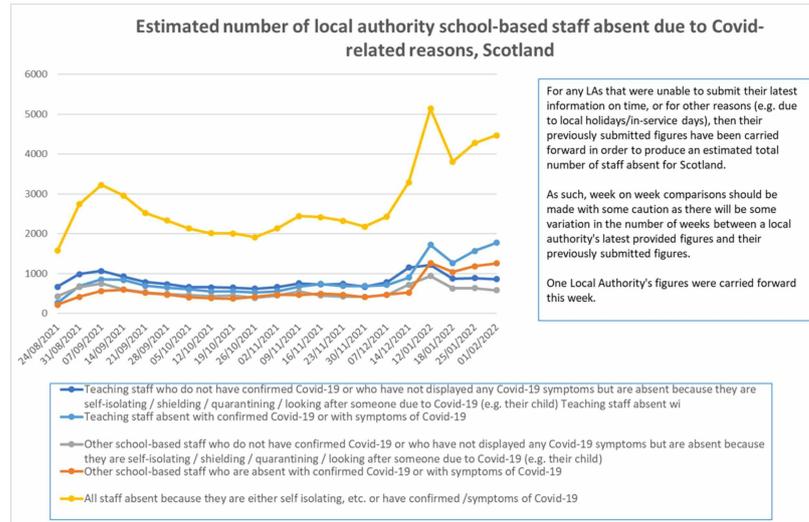
School Attendance and Absence over time

- All
- Number of pupils not in school because of a Covid-19 related sickness
- Number of pupils not in school because the school was closed due to Covid-19
- Number of pupils not in school because their parent(s) chose to keep them away from school as a precautionary measure contrary to public health guidance
- Number of pupils not in school because they were self-isolating in relation to Covid-19



Covid-19 Education Recovery Group - Infographic

- 4,469 staff were absent due to Covid-19 related reasons, of which, 2,633 were teaching staff and 1,836 were other school-based staff.



Scottish COVID-19 Education Recovery Group - COVID situation in Scottish schools

Preparing pupils for careers in tech: £1.3 million for computing in schools

Every primary and secondary school across Scotland will receive support to refresh computing science for pupils. Backed by up to £1.3 million from the Scottish Government, secondary schools can bid for grants of up to £3,000 to purchase additional computing science equipment, devices, software or teaching resources.

Every school will also receive two class sets pocket-sized computers that introduce pupils to how software and hardware work together. In August 2020, Mark Logan's independent Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review recommended increased investment to improve computing science provision in schools.

Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said: "It is essential that we have as many talented young people leaving schools with the skills Scotland's technology sector and wider economy fundamentally depends upon. This investment aims to refresh computing science lessons for learners - equipping them with the skills they need for careers in tech."

Toni Scullion and Brendan McCart, part of the Scottish Teachers Advancing Computing Science (STACS), an organisation based at the University of Glasgow to spread best practice in computing science in schools, which has received a Scottish Government grant of £67,500 to set up and run the STACS programme, said: "We are delighted to be appointed as co-leads of STACS. This is an incredible opportunity for Computing Science and we are looking forward to working with the dedicated teachers across Scotland who are delivering Computing Science in schools. This initiative recognises the importance of Computing Science as a subject in schools and the integral part it plays in Scotland's ambition for a Digital Nation. Computing Science in education has a key role in helping to engage, nurture and inspire the next generation of talent and that journey starts in the classroom."

Mark Logan, chair of the Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review, said: "It's vital to the future supply of talent into Scotland's tech sector that Computing Science at school level is elevated to the same level of importance as other STEM subjects. The additional funding for Computing Science announced by the Scottish Government and the formation of STACS, which makes teachers major participants in advancing the subject in Scotland, are key building blocks on the way to that goal." The Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review contained recommendations on how to develop "a world-class tech sector".

(Continued from page 11.)

education believed that the current system of GCSEs was an anachronism which harked back to an era when large numbers of young people left school at 16 rather than generally going on to further education and training as they did currently.

He argued that the Government had doubled down on the anachronism by making the current iteration of GCSEs rather like old-fashioned O-levels: very academic, with lots of memorisation, and assessed almost solely on a large set of terminal exams. Mr Barton said that it felt like the right time to do things differently and more flexibly, and he added that there was a lot to be said for a different style of qualification, particularly in the gateway subjects of English and maths, which could be turned into a passport qualification taken at different levels and built on over time.

“ASCL said that it felt like the right time to do things differently and more flexibly.”

Mr Barton said that there was also a strong argument for making more use of digital technology in assessment, which could not only move away from the pen and paper era but allow more adaptive assessment based on the individual student. But he warned that it would also be important to be conscious about ensuring that any adaptations to the current exam system were practical and deliverable, and beware entirely trying to re-invent the wheel. He added that it would probably be best if it was a case of evolution rather than revolution.

Schools in three focus areas can sign up for a range of trials and educational programmes

The Education Endowment Foundation is working with the Department for Education in 2021 – 2022 to support more schools to access evidence-informed programmes. Funded through the DfE’s Accelerator Fund, the activity will aim to build on the EEF’s work to ensure that more schools could benefit from the programmes.

Activity is being focused on three regions selected by the DfE: the Regional School Commissioner regions of the North, East Midlands & Humber, and West Midlands. Eight projects are currently recruiting early years, primary, secondary and post-16 settings, including trials of educational approaches showing promise, as well widening access to existing effective programmes so that more schools can access them. Four trials are currently recruiting settings:

- Learning Language and Loving It: Testing the impact of a training programme for Early Years practitioners to promote language and early literacy.
- English Mastery: Testing the impact of a knowledge-rich Key Stage 3 English curriculum.
- Peer Assisted Learning strategies: Testing the impact of a 20-week structured paired reading intervention to improve reading fluency and comprehension for Year 5 pupils.
- The 5Rs approach to GCSE Maths resits: Testing the impact of a programme focusing on key GCSE maths content and revision techniques for pupils resitting their exam.

Sarah Caton

We report with regret the death of Sarah Caton, Chief Officer of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, who died of cancer in December. Colleagues from ADCS and local authorities from all over the country attended her funeral last month, some via Zoom. She had served as an administrator through the changes that have led to the present ADCS.

Sarah Caton had just celebrated her 51st birthday before she died. She had spent a lifetime in education, working for what is now Oxford Brookes University building broader access for students before joining the Society of Education Officers as an administrator at its Manchester base.

She was deputy to the SEO's director, Chris Waterman, when the SEO became ConfEd. Then ConfEd merged with the children's part of the Association of Directors of Social Services to form ADCS, with Sarah Caton at the helm as Chief Officer. Cancer was diagnosed last October, only two months before she died.

Sarah was well known in the local authority world as the organiser of the annual SEO/ConfEd/ADCS conferences, quietly efficient but at the same time always fun to be with. She was also the organiser behind the wide range of other activities that ADCS undertook.

Esther Kavanagh Dixon has been appointed Acting Chief Officer of ADCS.

L&W welcomes new Deputy Chief Executive

Learning and Work Institute has announced the appointment of Naomi Phillips, as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Policy and Research, from the British Red Cross, where she had been the Director of Policy and Advocacy. Stephen Evans, chief executive of Learning and Work Institute, said that Ms Phillips's perspective, experience and expertise would further strengthen the L&W's work on widening access to learning, skills and employment.

Naomi Phillips said that, having been part of the national response to COVID-19 at the British Red Cross, she was looking forward to working on issues that would be central to renewal and recovery, including employment, skills and social inclusion, as part of L&W's senior leadership team. Ms Phillips is already in post.

Institute board members reappointed

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has announced four reappointments to its board. The Institute said that Dame Fiona Kendrick, Dr Kate Barclay, Robin Millar CBE, and Bev Robinson OBE had all played vital roles in steering the Institute from when it had been a start-up. They had originally been appointed in 2017 for a five-year term finishing at the end of March, but the Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, had decided to reappoint them for a further three years until April 2025.

New interim chief executive of OfS

The Secretary of State for Education has confirmed the appointment of Susan Lapworth, as interim chief executive of the Office for Students. Ms Lapworth is currently Director of Regulation at the OfS, and she will take up her new role from 1 May until the end of the year, ahead of a recruitment process for a permanent chief executive conducted by the Department for Education.

Uncertainty (part 1)

By Professor Jan Willem de Graaf

Professor of Brain and Technology, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Deventer, Netherlands

The Dutch COVID press conference was wonderful this week. The Prime Minister and new Health Minister openly expressed their uncertainty about lifting the lockdown. They emphasized that, though the lockdown has had many undesirable consequences in society, it remains uncertain what the virus will do now that we downscale the measures. It has surprised us so many times.

Nobody knows. And those who can't do criticize. Even who can do, the Government/WHO, has made numerous predictions that did not come true. And of course there were always people who called in advance on aspects that later turned out to be more accurate. If there is a lot of shouting, there's always someone right in retrospect. But this too is an illusion of control, a false sense of security.

We live our lives in fundamental uncertainty, even though many things are going as we hope, fear, or expect. The more uncertainty, the more we cling to uncertainty reduction, such as predictive technologies (data science, AI) and futurologists, who promise a technological heaven on earth, even though we now really know that every new technology brings about a world of new uncertainties (or downright problems). Though born out of doubt, good science always raises more questions.

If there's one psychological quantity that we like to deny or even eliminate, while at the same time tacitly playing a major role in virtually all of our individual (and even collective human) actions, it's uncertainty. Doubt lies at the root of Western thought, in the scientific method. René Descartes argued that all knowledge is questionable: I cannot rely on my senses (I may dream and think I perceive reality), nor on my knowledge. However, I can trust that I doubt: I think, therefore I am.

Just like Descartes

When you're uncertain – do I contribute enough, may I even be there – it's sometimes tempting to look at what you do know for sure, just like Descartes did. Surprisingly, our certainty is uncertainty; we can be sure that (almost) nothing is as it seems. But pretending we know for sure is big business. Take, for example, satisfaction surveys that companies 'buy' to show how satisfied customers are with their products, or how satisfied employees are with the company. It simply says that Marketing & Communication departments or agencies have actively succeeded in getting customers or employees to fill in smartly prepared lists at the right times. How satisfied are you with healthcare, for example, if you have just been told that you are terminal? How inappropriate it is to pester people over and over with satisfaction questions, begging for positive reviews. It's inappropriate unless you're really uncertain about your added value, and if you really want to improve. Do you like my lectures? Maybe you don't understand much of it now, but the penny will fall in 1 year, or in 5 years.

Labels, rules & regulations, fact checkers or myth busters, none of these are a way out. The power of vulnerability, uncertainty is a powerful weapon. Conversely, companies are suspicious from the outset, if they widely display their satisfaction with their products or employership, if they know everything for sure. They are of course also uncertain and try to counter that with certainty. I've been paying attention to it recently, and increasingly avoid companies that advertise their customer satisfaction scores or good employer-employee labels.

They are like futurologists who pretend to know for sure which way the future will go, thus deceiving not only themselves but also their customers. Complacency with one's own certainties invariably betrays that there is no room for uncertainties, and that for individual exceptions you can count on nothing but the "standard procedure". Attention and individual customization cannot be bought off with quality marks. Certainties concern everything in general and often nothing or no one in particular. Certainty is not for sale, except the certainty that we have to manage with ... uncertainty.

About our schools: improving on previous best

Part 1

By Professor Sir Tim Brighouse and Professor Mick Waters

In the first of a series of articles written exclusively for Education Journal, two of the country's leading educationalists take a hard look at our education system and identify where it could be doing better.

When we began writing our book *About Our Schools: Improving on Previous Best*, we thought we should clear up any differences of values/beliefs/prejudices – call it what you will. And we decided too to be open about it so that readers could filter for that - or ignore the book altogether.

We found immediately that we agreed that the teacher was the most important figure. Some researchers say that the 'teacher effect' is multiple-times more important than the 'school effect': variation in quality is greater within schools rather than between them. We therefore started with two quotations to make our case. Hain Ginot put the 'teacher effect' graphically 'I have come to the frightening conclusion; I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous.' Robert Fried elaborates when teaching goes well from the pupil's viewpoint 'Of those who inspired us most, we remember what they cared about and that they cared about us and the people we might become. It is this quality of caring – about ideas and values, this fascination for the potential of growth within people, the depth and fervour about doing things well and striving for excellence, that comes closest to what I mean in describing a 'passionate' teacher'.

The imagery of climate and weather permeates the book and our choices of reform in its final chapter because we think that the head of phase/department, the actions of the school's senior leadership team, the culture and practices of the Multi-Academy Trust and/or the Local Authority - all increase or decrease the likelihood of the teacher making good weather. Of course, other factors also affect that likelihood such as the family, the community and what is happening nationally. We look at all these issues and do not shy away from calling out policies which we think get in the way of the teacher having the best chance of unlocking the minds and opening the shut chambers of the hearts of the pupils they help develop.

We knew we agreed about other matters which might lead the reader to discount what we say. So we set out these beliefs as follows:

- Pupils need different approaches and experiences at different times, and teachers are in the best position to judge the approach and, with support from the school, secure those experiences.
- Teachers are at their best when pupils are persuaded to be striving always to see their previous best effort as a marker against which to improve, develop or extend, while giving due consideration to making sure their recent learning is secure.
- We therefore need to make it a top priority to secure and then continuously support high-quality teachers and support staff.
- What works for one teacher may not work in another context, with an equally good teacher, but some practices are better than others and research should provide the evidence.
- The context in which teachers work will vary their approach to teaching.
- The best teachers treat children as they might become rather than as they (sometimes infuriatingly) are.
- Schools should be seen by pupils and their families as inclusive places where they are keen to spend their time.

In our second article next week we shall explain how we collected evidence from interviews with over 100 witnesses and what we made of the 14 Secretaries of State among them.

International Day of Girls and Women in Science: tackling the gender science gap in class

By Jane Dowden

Education Innovations Manager, British Science Association

The global gender disparity within science is by no means a new issue; in two thirds of countries, women account for merely 15 per cent of STEM graduates. This has devastating ramifications for the scientific community and hinders further developments with diversity often key to innovation and advancements. Failure to rectify this inequality will see girls left behind by the “digital revolution”.

The importance of celebrating female role models within STEM-related subjects cannot be underestimated. Even within textbooks, there is a stark lack of recognition of innovations and discoveries driven by women in these fields, an absence which contributes significantly to the false narrative that women do not belong in STEM.

And a false narrative it is; there are plenty of examples of diverse, brilliant female scientists whose work could spark lively discussions and engagement in lessons. Jane Goodall conducted world-renowned research into primates, mathematician Ada Lovelace was the first ever computer programmer and Mae C. Jemison became the first black female astronaut in 1992. However, without the visibility of these pioneers, aspiring female students have little point of reference for scientists who look like them or share similar experiences and interests. This can have an impact on the choices students make, their perception of their own ability in STEM subjects and ultimately their achievement. Teacher bias and the curriculum itself can reinforce this message.

Diversifying the science curriculum with more female role models is crucial to increase engagement, but it is also important that students are learning about the real-life applications of STEM. Research has shown that girls respond particularly well to project-based STEM learning, as it contextualises the science and enables them to tackle real world problems. A study found that when asked if they wanted to be engineers, girls were twice as likely as boys to say no, but were much more likely to express interest in designing a safe water system or saving the rainforest.

Project-based resources such as CREST offer students the chance to study real-life problems across a range of subjects within STEM, and over 50 per cent of CREST Awards are completed by girls. From investigating what makes the crispiest crisps to designing the fastest rollercoaster, students can explore a range of scientific disciplines and discover their unique interests and passions in the process. Providing more opportunities for girls to discover new subject areas and possible career paths in the classroom, could help to close the gender gap in the STEM workforce.

The presence of female science teachers has also long been associated with improved educational experiences and enhanced learning outcomes for girls. In fact, a 2021 UNESCO report found that female science teachers made an even bigger positive difference to the learning outcomes of boys. As positive role models, female teachers can dispel stereotypes and improve girls’ interest and participation in STEM.

As new career paths emerge in science, the exclusion of girls from STEM education will only extend the sector’s gender gap. Tackling the problem now in schools through greater inclusion of female role models within curriculum, contextualised project-based learning and more confident, female teachers, will help to address inequality at its root and reaffirm girls’ place within STEM.

“The importance of celebrating female role models within STEM-related subjects cannot be underestimated. Even within textbooks, there is a stark lack of recognition of innovations and discoveries driven by women in these fields ...”

What teachers need to know about Zahawi's focus on numeracy and technology

By Alex Cull

Director of maths edtech platform Mangahigh

Over the past few months, we have learnt a lot about what the new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi MP, intends to make of his appointment. Perhaps most notably, he has indicated his first White Paper, due to be launched in January, will focus on tackling innumeracy and illiteracy and utilise education technology's artificial intelligence (AI) features as a teaching tool.

Here, we explore what teachers need to know about Zahawi's priorities and what they may mean for the classroom, including how schools can best utilise technology to bolster engagement with maths to ensure the subject is fun, engaging and that teachers can save time.

Research suggests that 57 per cent of England's working age population have low numeracy skills. This is broadly the case for Wales and Scotland, but innumeracy rates increase to 60 per cent in Northern Ireland. Consequently, the UK has fallen behind the OECD's average global numeracy rates and well behind leading countries such as Japan, where only 36 per cent of the adult population have low numeracy skills.

Zahawi is dedicated to tackling innumeracy, which costs the UK £25bn in lost wages, negatively impacts career progression, hampers education and increases the likelihood of debt and inequality.

Zahawi believes the answer lies in boosting numeracy education. Furthermore, he has stated technology can help schools deliver engaging maths lessons irrespective of the pandemic's practical implications for schools. Edtech has galvanised teaching and learning throughout the pandemic so building on this momentum, here are some practical steps which can help boost teaching and learning of this core subject.

“Research suggests that 57 per cent of England's working age population have low numeracy skills. This is broadly the case for Wales and Scotland, but innumeracy rates increase to 60 per cent in Northern Ireland.”

Make maths fun

While it can be challenging to ensure maths classes are fun for students across a range of abilities, they are more likely to invest their time in enjoyable subjects. Curriculum-aligned maths games can help teachers overcome this difficulty. Online games engage students effectively because they help associate maths with fun, making lessons challenging but never overwhelming and harnessing the natural curiosity of students. Additionally, students are familiar with online interfaces and engaging with information virtually. Therefore, online games also help them understand information quickly and easily in a familiar format.

As teachers know, subjects resonate with students most when they're able to make personal connections with the syllabus. Online maths activities can help students make this connection because they use AI to recommend activities unique to each student's abilities and interests. For example, if a student regularly plays games about square numbers, the platform will assume this is because they enjoy that subject. As a result, it will suggest other games which relate square numbers to other mathematics principles and theories, so the student continues to learn while enjoying the topic they know well.

With rising levels of burnout, teachers leaving the profession and cyberbullying, educators need as much time as possible to focus on the classroom and the delivery of their lessons.

Edtech can act as a time saving tool. Teachers can track their students' learning progress through online analytics tools. These help teachers identify where students excel, struggle, and may need extra support. This information is important because it can inform future lesson plans and homework tasks.

We must do more to support young adults who want an apprenticeship, and it starts with schools

By Dr Jo Foster

Director of the Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS)

To become a world leader in science we must shake up apprenticeships. This will depend on an army of skilled workers in STEM fields educated in our schools. We must move the focus away from those who take the academic route through university and look to those who have strong technical and problem-solving skills who are currently losing out through the ‘leaky pipeline’ of STEM talent.

The gap in the STEM workforce is costing the economy approximately 1.5 billion pounds per year. The government’s pledge last year, to invest a further 22 billion in science, will have an effect but will not stop the slide unless they engage with schools.

By engaging with schools and simplifying the apprenticeship system, we can build a pipeline of young scientists from school to world leading companies. Worryingly, there were fewer than 500 science and maths apprenticeships each year from 2012-2019. For comparison, in 2018, more people started apprenticeships as equine grooms than in science and maths.

In a wider sense, students in the UK have less opportunity to take an apprenticeship in comparison to other countries. Students in Australia, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland all have between three to four times more apprentices.

At present schools do not have the support they need to assist students to make the best decision. The evidence shows that young people are making decisions about whether to pursue science before they are 17-18 years old. If schools are unable to support and inform their students on what possibilities are in front of them, they won’t be able to seek them out. For apprenticeships to be seen as an equivalent option to universities, we need to incorporate examples and raise awareness of apprenticeship routes and the possibilities for careers through apprenticeship systemically in all schools from Year 7.

In the vast majority of UK schools, the apprenticeship route is often seen as ‘second-best’, as ‘less than’ a university degree. Most teachers have not been made aware that it is possible to reach master’s level in science through the apprenticeship route, while earning on the job.

The relationship between the school calendar and apprenticeship application must also be reformed. At present, students pondering their futures wait longer to sign up to an apprenticeship compared to a university degree. For any student this is a difficult decision and requires a leap of faith to wait to go down the apprenticeship route. To make it a fairer choice, apprenticeship application deadlines must be brought in line with university applications.

We need to simplify the apprenticeship system; local businesses are confused about how they can take on an apprentice and often do not have the capacity or have the knowledge they need to explore how taking on a young person can assist their business. We need a matchmaking system where students who are interested in apprenticeships can register an interest for those available in their local area before applying. And likewise, local industry can advertise what opportunities are available, but on a timescale that matches university application.

At the Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS), I have seen first-hand that the interest is there for young people to apply for an apprenticeship in STEM. What stops them in their tracks is a system that is overly opaque and bureaucratic - one that is difficult for teachers, students and businesses to navigate. The apprenticeship space must reform to become easier to join, as in my view apprenticeships are essential to offering meaningful careers in STEM. If we can do that, then the UK may yet become a superpower in science.



Dr Jo Foster

Personalised learning: Barriers to implementation and opportunities for reform

By Mehdi Benchaabane

Learning and Innovation Lead, Pre-University Education, Qatar Foundation

Boosted by the proliferation of Ed-Tech solutions, learning management systems and e-learning platforms, as well as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic over the last two years, the education industry has seen an accelerated demand for tailored learning methods. But providing this is easier said than done.

We recently commissioned a report with Economist Impact which revealed that 92% of educators say personalised learning is a priority for their schools. Yet, there is also widespread skepticism and confusion around what it will look like and how it can be implemented when facing various barriers.

Promisingly, the report revealed that school budgets for personalised learning are expected to increase. More challenging perhaps are the practicalities of implementation.

From our experience at Qatar Foundation, working on developing learning and innovation for pre-university education, we do see promise. We see three areas in which challenges can become opportunities for those who are dedicated to finding effective solutions.

The first opportunity is related to staffing models. When faced with large classrooms, teaching through personalised learning can understandably be seen as an unrealistic approach. Yet, there are practical solutions, such as integrating the school within a learning ecosystem. Whether this be through school networks or collaborating with local organisations, school leaders can share resources across schools, engage parents, university students and professionals to support students' growth.

The Economist Impact report found that educators' most common concern by far is that increased personalised learning would reduce interaction between teachers and students, and subsequently reduce social development. Forty-six percent of educators were also concerned about the dangers of students becoming over-reliant on technology. Yet, in a learning ecosystem model, the learning experience provides access to the wider education community, and ultimately serves to encourage social skills.

The report findings suggested that there may be some reluctance from parents and students to embrace personalised learning. Yet, improving how we articulate such benefits may help to address this.

Secondly, we must re-evaluate our assessment tools. Standardised tests are inauthentic and inadequate; one size does not fit all. Personalising learning relies on the ability to generate data that provides genuine insight into each student's progress. Artificial Intelligence holds great potential for improving feedback. Ed-Tech innovators should consider deploying machine learning in analysing qualitative data (in addition to quantitative), and providing students and teachers with performance indicators that combine self-assessment, peer-assessment, teachers' feedback, as well as opportunities for continuous improvement.

Finally, for personalised learning to be successful, we must support students to self-regulate, making choices on how to spend and prioritise their time. The schools that will be successful in personalised education will ensure curricula and teachers encourage self-regulation in the early years, and implement a framework that demands increasing rigour in conceptual and interdisciplinary understanding over the years. A high level of flexibility in the choice of content matter is also essential, and this decision must be guided by the students themselves. All of these changes will help to develop students' agency and autonomy.

Ultimately, self-directed students whose voice and choice have a genuine place in selecting and designing their learning pathways will mark an era where schools truly embrace the fact that, for today's children, learning happens everywhere and at any time.

Use of psychology by teachers can boost maths grades

The use of motivational psychology, personalisation and technology by teachers could improve maths GCSE resit grades, according to a report from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) on the Centres for Excellence in Maths (CfEM) programme. The Changing the experience of Further Education Maths, CfEM interim report highlighted success stories from a range of research projects completed in colleges in England in 2020/21.

The CfEM programme, which is funded by the Department for Education (DfE), is delivered by the ETF and partners. The report features 11 case studies, supported by more than 20 further action research projects which showed what had been tried out and evidence of effectiveness. Themes covered included motivation and engagement, effective use of technology, approaches to mastery and maths and contextualisation. Several CfEMs had also investigated how to use interactive software to engage learners and support their progress. Lecturers at City College Plymouth had reported innovatively and in a less constrained manner when creating and planning maths lessons.

Positive impact

Findings from the report revealed the positive impact mentoring could have on resit GCSE Maths learners, particularly on their attitude and mindset, and learners' motivation had improved over the year due to staff discovering and implementing increasingly effective strategies. The report concluded that teachers understanding and applying motivational psychology was a major challenge which could be solved by high-quality training and prioritised by the FE maths sector.

Cath Gladding, National Research Advisor, Centres for Excellence in Maths, said that the research from the ETF had showed that motivation and engagement among maths students was fundamental to improving grades. She added that the success stories had showed how teachers could utilise psychological techniques, personalisation and technology to help motivate students and deliver better outcomes.

The report will be revised and updated in Autumn 2022 after the completion of a number of research projects that were being held during 2021/22.

“The report revealed the positive impact mentoring could have on resit GCSE Maths learners, particularly on their attitude and mindset, and learners’ motivation had improved over the year due to staff discovering and implementing increasingly effective strategies.”

Stammering may be linked to anxiety in some children and adolescents

Children and adolescents who stammer report elevated symptoms of anxiety compared with non-stammering peers, according to a review of evidence led by UCL researchers. The study, published in the *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, had involved the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, combined and re-analysed findings from 11 previous studies that had compared children and adolescents (two to 18 years) who did and did not stammer, on symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The researchers said that, although there had been substantial variation in reported anxiety symptoms across studies, overall, children and adolescents who stammered had reported higher anxiety symptoms than peers. But there had been too few studies concerning depression to reliably comment on the risk for young people who stammered. Currently, stammering affects around 5 - 8% of school-aged children, and while heightened risk for anxiety in adults who stammered had been well documented, little was known about the onset of anxiety in children.

Lead author, PhD candidate Ria Bernard (UCL Psychology & Language Sciences), said that an important finding from the review had been that children and adolescents who stammered were not a homogeneous group. She said that while it was likely that a multitude of factors were involved in risk and resilience for anxiety in the population, the research had been unable to robustly look at potential moderating factors with the data available and therefore there would need to be further research in the area.

High variability

The high variability in outcome meant that not all young people who stammered experienced anxiety, but the authors suggested that elevated anxiety may reflect other risk factors such as exposure to bullying, access to therapy, or family history of anxiety and depression, which may increase risk or resilience in children and adolescents who stammered. The study results did highlight the need to carefully monitor the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents who stammered.

The charity, Action for Stammering, which funded the research in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council, said that the findings from the review had been important in terms of how best to support children who stammered and their families. The charity also stressed that early identification and access to Speech and Language Therapy services, were vital to improving well-being and ensuring that children received the support that they needed.

“The high variability in outcome meant that not all young people who stammered experienced anxiety, but the authors suggested that elevated anxiety may reflect other risk factors such as exposure to bullying, access to therapy, or family history of anxiety and depression, which may increase risk or resilience in children and adolescents who stammer.”

Many young people returned to insecure jobs following the pandemic

Young people have returned to work rapidly, as unemployment is currently lower than pre-pandemic levels, but one-in-three 18-34-year-olds returned to atypical, often insecure work, and the number of economically inactive young men had increased by almost 50,000 since spring 2021. Research published by the Resolution Foundation, *Leaving lockdown*, included findings from an online YouGov survey of 6,100 adults, which examined the recent experience of young people's employment, their outlook in the post-pandemic labour market and how it might affect their mental health.

The research report pointed out that the huge success of the furlough scheme had kept a lid on youth unemployment, but it could not prevent young people experiencing long periods of worklessness during the pandemic, which had put them at risk of blighted future employment and pay prospects, and ongoing mental health problems.

“While unemployment had not increased during the pandemic, the number of 18-24-year-olds who were economically inactive and not in full-time study had risen, especially among young men, where it had increased by 47,000 compared to spring 2021.”

One-in-three 18-24-year-olds who had been in work in February 2020 experienced at least three months of worklessness, along with almost one-in-five (19 per cent) 25-34-year-olds. By October 2021, three-in-four (76 per cent) young people who had been in work before the pandemic but workless during the winter lockdown had returned to work. As a result, the unemployment rate for 18-24-year-olds in the three months to November had fallen to 9.8 per cent, which was below its pre-pandemic rate of 10.5 per cent.

However, the report pointed out that, despite the welcome rapid return, young people were still facing significant challenges in the workplace. Young “returners”, who had been employed prior to the pandemic, had experienced worklessness in the last lockdown, and had since returned to work, were currently more likely than those who had stayed in work throughout the pandemic to be on a temporary contract, a zero hours contract, doing agency work or working variable hours.

Of those surveyed, 33 per cent of “returners” were currently employed in the atypical work types, compared to just 12 per cent of young people who had been in work during both periods of the pandemic. Younger “returners” to the workplace were also more likely than those who had remained employed during the winter of 2021 to be looking for a new or additional jobs, which suggested some level of dissatisfaction with their current working lives. One-in-four (25 per cent) “returners” had reported looking for a new job, compared to 19 per cent of those who had been in work during both periods.

The research showed that, while unemployment had not increased during the pandemic, the number of 18-24-year-olds who were economically inactive and not in full-time study had risen, especially among young men, where it had increased by 47,000 compared to spring 2021.

The report also showed that recent worklessness and poor-quality work were also associated with poor mental health. In October 2021, among young people who had been in work before the pandemic, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of those who had been workless in the last three months had reported a common mental health disorder, compared to 51 per cent of young people overall. Sixty-eight per cent of young people who had been in work before the pandemic and were looking for a new job, and 70 per cent of those who were looking for an additional job, had also reported a mental health disorder.

The foundation said that the rise in young people who were economically inactive or in insecure work, combined with the large numbers of young people who had suffered extended worklessness in recent years, meant that policymakers must focus on tackling insecure work, and ensure that young people had access to good quality jobs.

School meals and nutritional standards

This policy analysis applies to school meals at publicly funded schools in England. Nutritional standards for school meals were first established in the 1940s but abolished in 1980. Subsequently, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 gave the Education Secretary the power to make regulations setting nutritional standards and other nutritional requirements for school meals.

The 1998 Act also placed a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs), as Children’s Services authorities were then called, and the governing bodies of schools maintained by LEAs, to make sure any free school meals they provide are in line with the standards.

In April 2001, statutory nutritional standards for school lunches were reintroduced by the Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) Regulations 2000 (since superseded). [1] Research carried out in 2004 by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Food Standards Agency showed that while schools and caterers responded positively to the standards, in practice, children and young people continued to make unhealthy choices. Statistics from the *Annual Health Survey for England 2004* showed that the levels of obesity for children had risen over the previous 10 years. Ongoing concerns led to the publication in 2004 of the DfES’s guidance, *Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools*, and the Government’s White Paper, *Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier*.

In March 2005, the then Labour Government announced measures to improve school meals, which were followed in May 2006 by the new nutritional standards for school meals. The Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (England) Regulations 2006 introduced these changes. Over the following years, interim standards for school lunches and other school food (such as in tuck shops and breakfast clubs) were developed and replaced by final standards in September 2009. The School Food Standards were further revised under the Coalition Government, and the revised set came into force in January 2015.

The School Food Plan

In April 2012, then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, asked John Vincent and Henry Dimbleby, the founders of Leon restaurants, to conduct an independent review of school food. In July 2013, Vincent and Dimbleby published the School Food Plan, which gave schools steps to increase the take-up of school meals, improve the quality of school meals, and take other measures such as teaching pupils about cooking and ingredients. [2]

The School Food Plan proposed revised food standards, intended to be easier to implement and enforce. The Plan stated that if the new standards were agreed to be effective from a practical and nutritional standpoint, the Secretary of State had agreed to make them mandatory across all types of school. [3] The Government ran a consultation on revised standards between March and April 2014. [4] In June 2014, the Education Secretary announced a new set of standards for food served in schools, alongside the Government response to the spring consultation. [5] The Secretary of State said the revised standards were “designed to make it easier for school cooks to create imaginative, flexible and nutritious menus,” and that they were mandatory in maintained and free schools, and new academies. [6]

The reformed standards were implemented through the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014. The regulations came into force on 1 January 2015. The Government published advice for schools on the new regulations on 8 January 2015, and the most recent update was published in August 2021. The Department for Education has published a summary of what food should be provided.

A parliamentary question response on 26 April 2021 set out recent developments on the standards. The then Minister Vicky Ford, said that an advisory group including stakeholders in food, nutrition and health had got together in May and November 2019, to discuss updates to the standards. However, the current priority, given the pandemic-related disruption, was to ensure current standards were being followed, rather than updating them.

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Levelling Up White Paper: School food standards and cooking plans

The Government's White Paper, *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, published last Wednesday, stated the Department for Education would, working with the Food Standards Agency, adopt recommendations from the National Food Strategy [7] to "design and test a new approach for local authorities in assuring and supporting compliance with school food standards." Pilot schemes are intended to begin in September 2022. [8]

Also prompted by the recommendations of the National Food Strategy, the White Paper stated that the Government would "invest up to £5m to launch a school cooking revolution, including the development of brand new content for the curriculum and providing bursaries for teacher training and leadership." Further investment of up to £200,000 would be used pilot new training for school governors and academy trusts on a "whole school approach to food." The Paper set out the aim for every child leaving secondary school to know at least six basic recipes that will support healthy living into adulthood. [9]

The White Paper stated that the Government would encourage schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food, and that when schools could do this effectively it would become a mandatory requirement. [10]

Funding for school meals

The Government removed the ring-fence from the funding of school meals after the previous School Lunch Grant ended in April 2011. Since then, schools fund benefit-related Free School Meals through the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is the main block of funding for schools. A separate universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) grant provides funding for the meals provided to all pupils in reception, year 1, and year 2.

Who is eligible?

Local authorities are responsible for providing free school meals and applications must be made through the relevant local body. [11] Parents do not have to pay for school meals if they receive any of the following:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after a person stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Universal Credit – with household income of less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits) from 1 April 2018, with transitional protections for previous claimants.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, eligibility for free school meals has been temporarily extended to include some groups of children who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). [12] Children who themselves get any of the qualifying benefits (instead of through a parent or guardian) can also get free school meals. Children under the compulsory school age who are in full-time education may also be eligible.

Free school meals are available to pupils in school sixth forms (maintained or academies) on the same basis as children of compulsory school age and this requirement was extended to further education institutions in 2014/15. [13]

Changes based on Universal Credit

Before 1 April 2018, all Universal Credit claimants were eligible for free school meals. The following

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protections are in place for claimants since then:

- From April 2018, all existing claimants can continue to receive free school meals while Universal Credit is rolled out. This will apply even if their earnings rise above the new threshold during that time.
- In addition, any child who becomes eligible for free school meals after the threshold has been introduced, will be protected against losing free school meals during the Universal Credit rollout period.
- No further eligibility checks are required for protected families during this period.
- Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, any existing claimants that no longer meet the eligibility criteria at that point (because they are earning above the threshold) will continue to receive protection until the end of their current phase of education (eg, primary, secondary).
- New claimants earning above the threshold after April 2018 are not be eligible for free school meals. [14]

Academies and free schools are required to provide free school meals as part of their funding agreements.

How many pupils are receiving free school meals?

A pupil is recorded in the school census as eligible for free school meals (FSM) if they meet the eligibility criteria and their parents make a claim. As of January 2021, there were 1.74 million pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. [15] This means the proportion eligible is 20.8% of all state funded pupils (an increase from 19.7% in October 2020, 17.3% in January 2020, and 15.4% in January 2019).

Eligibility rates in all state-funded schools (including special schools and alternative provision providers) increased following the 2008 recession then followed a downward trend from 2013. Rates increased again following the Universal Credit (UC) transitional protections from April 2018 and peaked after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

As in previous years, a higher proportion of state-funded primary school pupils (21.6%) were eligible compared with secondary pupils (18.9%). However, the highest rates by far were in non-mainstream settings (more than half of pupils in pupil referral units were eligible). [16]

The increases in eligibility rates since the outbreak of COVID-19 suggests the pandemic has affected the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. Since the first national lockdown on 23 March 2020 around 427,000 pupils became eligible. [17] This is a much larger increase compared to the same period the previous year (March 2019 to January 2020) when around 292,000 children became eligible. However, other factors could also be contributing to the increase, such as the continued effect of the transitional protections during the rollout of Universal Credit.

In January 2021, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in England was 20.8%. However, this average masks considerable regional and local variation. The North East was the region with the highest eligibility rate in absolute terms (6.7 percentage points above the national average) and the South East the region with the lowest rate (4.8 percentage points below the national average).

There is much more variation in eligibility rates between local authorities (in absolute terms) compared to regions. [18] In January 2021, Knowsley was the local authority with the highest eligibility rate (16.2 percentage points above the national average), and Isles of Scilly the lowest rate (18.4 percentage points below the national average).

The proportion of pupils eligible for FSM increased in every local authority between January 2020 and January 2021. Some areas had larger increases than others. In Newham, eligibility increased the most in absolute terms (more than 7 percentage points), while in Isles of Scilly it increased the least (less than 1 percentage point). Many of the biggest increases are in areas with already high eligibility rates.

The variation in the increase in eligibility rates was smaller at the regional level (in absolute terms). However, as with local authorities, regions with the highest rates of eligibility (North East and West Midlands) had the biggest increases while those with the lower rates (South West, South East and East England) increased the least.

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Table 1. Local authorities with the highest and lowest rates of FSM eligibility

January 2021. Percentage of pupils attending state funded schools eligible for free school meals.

<u>Highest</u>			<u>Lowest</u>		
1	Knowsley	37.0%	1	Isles Of Scilly	2.4%
2	Blackpool	36.8%	2	Wokingham	7.8%
3	Islington	36.4%	3	Rutland	8.6%
4	Manchester	35.8%	4	Windsor and Maidenhead	9.7%
5	Tower Hamlets	35.6%	5	Bracknell Forest	9.8%
6	Newcastle upon Tyne	35.0%	6	Buckinghamshire	10.3%
7	Hackney	34.8%	7	Central Bedfordshire	10.5%
8	Camden	34.4%	8	Richmond upon Thames	10.5%
9	Halton	34.2%	9	West Berkshire	10.9%
10	Middlesbrough	34.1%	10	Surrey	10.9%

Ethnicity of pupils eligible for FSM

The Department for Education does not publish the characteristics of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals on a regular basis. The most recent data broken down by ethnicity is as of January 2020. [19] In January 2020, Black pupils were the group which were most overrepresented (in absolute terms) of those eligible (this means that a higher proportion of Black pupils were eligible compared to their proportion of the general pupil population). Black pupils made up 9% of eligible pupils but only 6% of pupils overall. Pupils from Mixed ethnic backgrounds and pupils of ‘any other’ ethnicity were also overrepresented.

White pupils were the most underrepresented group making up 68% of pupils eligible but 73% of pupils overall. Asian and Chinese pupils were also underrepresented.

2018 changes to free school meal eligibility under Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit, introduced in 2013 and being rolled out to replace means-tested social security benefits and tax credits for people of working age.

In April 2018, an earnings threshold was introduced to qualify for free school meals. Households receiving Universal Credit with annual net earnings of over £7,400 no longer qualify for free school meals. The Government estimated that, once benefits income was considered, this threshold equated to an overall household income of between £18,000 and £24,000.

The Department for Education estimated that around 50,000 more pupils would become eligible for free school meals by 2022, if the threshold was household income between £18,000 and £24,000. The Department’s methodology in reaching the 50,000 figure is set out in an appendix to a report of the House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. [20].

During the initial period of roll out for Universal Credit, all recipients qualified for free school meals. The Government, however, did not intend for this to be the final position, and stated that it was considering how to determine free school meal eligibility as the roll out progressed (see, for example, Edward Timpson’s response to a parliamentary question in February 2017). [21]

In November 2017, the Department for Education published a consultation on eligibility for free school meals, as well as eligibility for the Early Years’ Pupil Premium, under Universal Credit. The consultation ran until January 2018. [22] The consultation proposed to introduce the net earnings threshold of over £7,400 in April 2018, and for the threshold to remain constant until the end of the Universal Credit rollout period. The consultation also stated that existing recipients of free school meals would not lose their entitlement following the introduction of new eligibility criteria, alongside other protections. The Government said this protection for existing claimants was because the changes would otherwise mean

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that some currently entitled households would lose out. [23]

The Government published its response to the consultation on 7 February 2018. [24] It intended for the proposals set out in the consultation to become law. [25] The Free School Lunches and Milk, and School and Early Years Finance (Amendments Relating to Universal Credit) (England) Regulations 2018 were laid before Parliament to implement the change, and came into force on 1 April 2018. Transitional arrangements are provided for in The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (Commencement No. 30 and Transitory Provisions) Order 2018. The full consultation response explained that eligibility under the new threshold would be verified using an “equivalent monthly check verified from the household’s most recent Universal Credit assessment periods.” [26] The Government said: “Our threshold is comparable with that introduced by the Scottish government for free school meals eligibility, and we consider it fair and appropriately targeted.” [27]. It added that extra funding would go to schools to support their increased spend on meals, and that after Universal Credit had been fully rolled out, the threshold would be “under review”.

On 5 April 2018, the Institute for Fiscal Studies published an analysis of the changes to eligibility for free school meals (FSMs) under Universal Credit, funded by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner. [28] The 50,000 (around 4%) increase was not a simple expansion. While some pupils became eligible, others would potentially lose eligibility as they, or their families, moved onto Universal Credit.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

A duty to provide free school meals for all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 was put in place through section 106 of the Children and Families Act 2014. This took effect from September 2014 and is applied to maintained schools, academies and free schools. The policy of universal free school meals for infant pupils (UIFSM) was recommended in the School Food Plan and announced by the then Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, in September 2013. [29] The conditions of grants for 2021/22 set out that each meal taken by an eligible pupil attracts £2.34 for the school. The allocation assumes that pupils will take 190 school meals over an academic year, providing £444.60 per eligible pupil to schools.

In January 2018, the Education Policy Institute published an *Evaluation of Universal Infant Free School Meals*. The EPI report published findings on policy implementation and outcomes, as well as cost issues. The EPI found a rapid increase of take-up of free school meals, and parental satisfaction as well as financial benefits for families. The EPI however found significant costs for schools, and potential future concerns about the levels of funding provided. [30]

Free school meals during academic holidays

Pressure began to build up for free school meals to be provided during school holidays. In November 2020, alongside wider support for families during the coronavirus pandemic, the Government announced that the Holiday Activities and Food Programme would be expanded from its previous pilots to cover the whole of England, during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. [31]

As part of the Budget announcements in October 2021, the Government announced over £200 million a year for the continuation of the holiday activities and food programme over the following three years. [32]

School meals during the coronavirus pandemic

Most pupils stayed at home during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020. From 23 March 2020, schools in England remained open where necessary, only for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Under normal circumstances, schools do not provide free school meals to eligible children who are not in school. But during the initial lockdown and phased reopening, the Government expected schools to continue supporting children eligible for benefits-related free school meals who were at home. This could be done through food packages, or a voucher scheme. [33]

Department for Education guidance on Providing free school meals during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was last updated on 28 June 2021. In spring 2021, as during the 2020 period when most children were at home, children eligible for benefits-based free school meals were able to receive either

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vouchers, or food parcels if offered by their school.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced on 31 March 2020 that children in England who were usually eligible for free school meals but were at home, would be eligible for weekly £15 vouchers to spend in supermarkets while schools were closed because of the coronavirus. [34] If a school catering service could not provide meals or food parcels, an alternative should be offered, and the voucher scheme was set up for this purpose. [35]

Funding for free school meals hasn't been ring-fenced since 2011. Funding is available to schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The cost of free school meals during COVID was estimated by the DfE at around £4 million a day.

Breakfast Clubs

In March 2021, the DfE announced that £24 million would be provided for breakfast clubs, through to 2023. The DfE published an evaluation of the impact of breakfast clubs on schools with high deprivation levels in March 2017, prepared by ICF Consulting. The report found it “was successful in terms of the numbers of schools recruited; the high proportion continuing with a breakfast club and the positive impacts which schools perceived for their pupils.” [36] It also raised concerns about some schools' ability to attract children on free school meals to attend, with around a fifth of schools involved finding lower proportions attending than were on the school roll. [37]

In November 2016, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the National Children's Bureau published the results of a study into the impact of breakfast clubs, with largely positive findings. The study found that children in Year 2, where schools had been offered support to open a breakfast club, made the equivalent of two months' additional progress in reading, writing and maths over the course of a year. Pupils in Year 6 had made similar gains in English, with smaller positive effects reported on maths and science attainment.

The report stated that these gains had been achieved at relatively low cost, albeit with fairly low take-up rates. It also noted that attainment levels rose more among children from less disadvantaged (non-free school meal) backgrounds, rather than for those eligible for free meals. [38]

Foot notes

- [1] The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 are the current regulations.
- [2] Department for Education, *The School Food Plan*, 30 July 2013.
- [3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- [4] Department for Education, *Revised standards for food in schools*.
- [5] Department for Education, *Revised standards for food in schools – Government response*, 17 June 2014.
- [6] Department for Education, *New school food standards*, 17 June 2014.
- [7] Henry Dimbleby, *National Food Strategy: An Independent Review for the Government*, July 2021.
- [8] UK Government, *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, CP 604, 2 February 2022, pp. 204-20.
- [9] UK Government, *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p. 205.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] The gov.uk website publishes up-to-date information on eligibility for free school meals.

[12] Department for Education, *Coronavirus: temporary extension of free school meals eligibility to NRPF groups*, 5 October 2021

[13] Department for Education, *16 to 19 funding: free meals in further education funded institutions for 2018 to 2019*, 13 September 2018.

[14] Department for Education, *Eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium under Universal Credit*, February 2018, p. 9.

[15] DfE, *Schools pupils and their characteristics: 2021*, June 2021.

[16] Non-mainstream schools include special schools and alternative provision providers (such as pupil referral units, and hospital schools).

[17] Some of these pupils may have been eligible for FSM previously. However, their most recent eligibility change started since 23 March 2020.

[18] The difference in eligibility rates in absolute terms between Knowsley and Surrey is 26.1 percentage points (37.0%-10.9%).

[19] Department for Education, answer to Parliamentary written question 63494, June 2020.

[20] Appendix 1 to House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee 20th Report of Session 2017-19, 1 March 2018, HL Paper 82.

[21] PQ 63835, 20 February 2017.

[22] Department for Education, *Eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium under Universal Credit*, November 2017, p. 9.

[23] House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, Appendix 1: Free School Lunches and Milk, and School and Early Years Finance (Amendments Relating to Universal Credit) (England) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/148), February 2018.

[24] Department for Education, *Eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium under Universal Credit*, February 2018, p. 11.

[25] Department for Education, *Government responds to consultation on disadvantage support*, 7 February 2018.

[26] Department for Education, *Eligibility for free school meals, the early years pupil premium and the free early education entitlement for two-year-olds under Universal Credit: Government consultation response*, March 2018, p. 8.

[27] As above, pp. 8-9.

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- [28] Institute for Fiscal Studies, *Free school meals under universal credit*, 5 April 2018.
- [29] Department for Education, *Free school lunch for every child in infant school*, 17 September 2013.
- [30] Education Policy Institute, *Evaluation of Universal Infant Free School Meals*, January 2018.
- [31] Department for Work and Pensions, *New winter package to provide further support for children and families*, 8 November 2020.
- [32] Department for Education, *Holiday activities and food programme 2021*, July 2021.
- [33] Department for Education, *Providing free school meals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak*, 28 May 2020.
- [34] *Voucher scheme launches for schools providing free school meals*, Department for Education press release, 31 March 2020.
- [35] Department for Education, *Coronavirus (COVID-19): free school meals guidance for schools*, 31 March 2020.
- [36] Department for Education, *Evaluation of Breakfast Clubs in Schools with High Levels of Deprivation*, March 2017, p. 7.
- [37] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- [38] Institute for Fiscal Studies, *Breakfast clubs work their magic in disadvantaged English schools*, 4 November 2016.

Supporting local economic growth

Supporting Local Economic Growth, National Audit Office, report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 957 of Parliamentary Session 2021/22, published on Wednesday 2 February 2022.

<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Supporting-local-economic-growth.pdf>

Between 2011 and 2020, government committed some £18 billion of domestic funding to policies designed to stimulate local economic growth in England. This includes £12 billion through the Local Growth Fund, and £3.2 billion through the Regional Growth Fund. A further £10.3 billion was directed to the UK through EU structural funding committed between 2014 and 2020. Spending by other government departments and local government, for example on skills, transport and housing, also contributes to total expenditure on local growth.

However, the UK remains less productive than its main competitors and it shows regional disparities in economic performance that are among the largest in the OECD. Inequality within the UK's regions is even greater than it is between them. While the full economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic remains uncertain, emerging evidence suggests that it has compounded longstanding regional disparities.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) has stated that increasing UK productivity to German levels could boost the UK's economy by £180 billion per year and that, within this, halving productivity gaps in areas performing below the UK average could boost gross domestic product (GDP) by £83 billion per year.

The DLUHC, working with other government departments, is responsible for “raising productivity and empowering places so that everyone across the country can benefit from levelling up”. The Cities and Local Growth Unit (CLGU), a large team that the Department runs jointly with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, is responsible for designing and implementing centrally led local growth policies and furthering government's devolution plans. CLGU is leading on a series of UK-wide place-based interventions for which spending was announced at the November 2020 Spending Review to support the regeneration of towns and communities:

- The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund (of which the Department allocated £1.7 billion through 105 awards at the 2021 Spending Review).
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund – £2.6 billion for the three years to 2024-25, increasing to replace the £1.5 billion per year (on average) local growth elements of the European Structural and Investment Funds which will end in 2023 following the UK's exit from the European Union.
- Government has additionally made £220 million available during 2021-22 through a one-year UK Community Renewal Fund to help areas prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The Towns Fund, which includes £2.2 billion for Town Deals and £1 billion for the Future High Streets Fund.
- Freeports – £200 million to help create eight new Freeports in England, with at least one additional Freeport promised for each of the devolved nations.
- Government's commitments through these interventions total £11.0 billion.

The NAO found that the DLUHC has a poor understanding of what has worked well in its previous local growth programmes because it has not consistently evaluated them. It has built its evidence base for what works for local growth by drawing largely on external sources. Some aspects of the Department's approach to supporting local growth are new including the scale of direct involvement with local authorities. The DLUHC has not consistently applied the lessons and key policy principles from its own research or from external scrutiny to the design of new local growth interventions.

The DLUHC is providing additional support to some local bodies that lack the capacity to bid for growth funding but it did not provide this in time to support bids for the first round of the Levelling Up Fund. It has had to increase its headcount and does not yet have the capacity or capability it needs.

Levelling Up White Paper

Levelling Up the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government, CP 604, Wednesday 2 February 2022.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

The Government published its long-awaited White Paper on leveling up last Wednesday. Education is a central part of the plan, with a considerable emphasis on adult skills. The package of measures will include a number of policy developments that the Government hopes will improve education and job prospects for school and college leavers in the more deprived regions of the country.

The White Paper includes:

- A national mission to work towards eradicating illiteracy and innumeracy in primary school leavers by 2030 in England.
- Skills, schools and families at the heart of government plans to improve public services and level up left behind areas.
- 55 communities with weak education outcomes designated 'Education Investment Areas' will receive intensive support with these areas prioritised for new elite sixth forms.
- Ambitious targets to increase the number doing high-quality skills training by hundreds of thousands – with a new unit to identify skills gaps and skills for the future.

The plans in the White Paper identify 55 “cold spots” where school outcomes are the weakest, to target investment, support and action that help children from all backgrounds and areas to succeed at the very highest levels. These include Rochdale, the Isle of Wight, Walsall, parts of Yorkshire and Sunderland.

As 95 per cent of these areas are outside London and the South East, it is the struggling schools of the North, Midlands, East of England and South West that will be receiving much more support over the next decade.

Some of the plans in the White Paper will be enshrined in law, in a Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

The White Paper identifies the problem behind regional inequality. “A long tail of low-productivity businesses and places explain why UK productivity growth is too low compared to competitors.” The Government claimed that it was already doing much to level up, citing among other things investment of £3.8bn in skills planned by 2024-25 and a Lifetime Skills Guarantee in England, enabling 11m adults to gain an A Level or equivalent qualification for free, as well as a new UK-wide adult numeracy programme and skills bootcamps; £1.49bn in City and Growth Deals in every part of Scotland, £791m across Wales and £617m for deals covering the whole of Northern Ireland; eight new freeports; 101 towns across England receiving £2.4bn from the Towns Fund, and the £830m Future High Streets Fund regenerating 72 towns and high streets and helping them recover from the pandemic.

Moving on from these projects, the White Paper claims that the programme outlined within it “has to be broad, deep and long-term. It has to be rooted in evidence demonstrating that a mix of factors is needed to transform places and boost local growth: strong innovation and a climate conducive to private sector investment, better skills, improved transport systems, greater access to culture, stronger pride in place, deeper trust, greater safety and more resilient institutions.”

What the White Paper calls “this contemporary Medici model,” giving the example of the Italian Renaissance as a guide to “our twenty-first century recipe for a new Industrial Revolution, depends on harnessing an array of interventions and catalysing a range of sectors.” Levelling up will require us to:

- a. boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;
- b. spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest;
- c. restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and
- d. empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

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Geographical disparities

The UK has larger geographical differences than most other developed countries on multiple measures, including productivity, pay, educational attainment and health. Urban areas and coastal towns suffer disproportionately from crime, while places with particularly high levels of deprivation, such as former mining communities, outlying urban estates and seaside towns have the highest levels of community need and poor opportunities for the people who grow up there.

The White Paper notes that these disparities are often larger within towns, counties or regions than between them. They are hyper-local and pockets of affluence and deprivation may exist in the same district. Indeed, many of the worst areas of deprivation are found in the UK's most successful cities. While change is possible, in some cases, these differences have persisted for much of the last century. And some of the UK's most successful cities – such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Cardiff – lag behind their international comparators when it comes to productivity and incomes.

The Government has set a series of medium term missions with targets to be achieved by 2030. One of these involves education. This includes increasing literacy and numeracy standards by the end of primary school. Another covers skills. By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training “will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.”

Boosting the private sector

The White Paper has some very ambitious objectives. It states: “Achieving the ambitious medium-term missions will require a new model of economic growth, public and private investment, a business friendly environment, incentives for inward investment and a high skill, high wage labour market.” That means “supporting the private sector – the real engine of wealth creation – to invest more, grow more and take more risks.”

Improving productivity, and spreading prosperity, “crucially depends on enhancing people’s education and skills – giving everyone access to good schools and the opportunity to receive excellent education and training.” The Government promises to “drive further school improvement in England” through 55 new Education Investment Areas (EIAs) in places where educational attainment is currently weakest. The Department for Education (DfE) will support strong multi-academy trusts to expand into these areas.

Not for the first time, the Government promises to “step up efforts to give all students the skills employers need.” Like existing policy, the reforms will aim to put local employers at the heart of skills provision; to strengthen locally accessible institutions, notably the national network of further education colleges; ensure that all individuals have lifetime access to training; and offer new opportunities to access high quality work and progress in the workplace.

The funding of courses and the governance of colleges will be overhauled “in line with employers’ needs.” Local Skills Improvement Plans, together with supporting funding, will be set up across England to set out the key changes needed in a place to make technical skills training more responsive to skills needs. Nine new Institutes of Technology with strong employer links will be established in England, helping to boost higher technical skills in STEM subjects.

The Government says it will introduce the In-Work Progression offer to help people on low incomes address barriers to better employment opportunities. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide £1.3bn over the SR21 (Spending Review 2021) period to provide employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions. The Multiply scheme will target disparities in numeracy levels across the UK, investing £560m in courses for adults.

Through the skills reforms and investment, by 2030, the Government will aim to have “significantly increased” the number of people to have successfully completed high quality skills training in every part of the UK, including 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality skills training annually in England, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.

Policy papers published last week

School Rebuilding Programme

Author: -.

Source: Department for Education.

Document type: Impact assessment.

Published: Thursday 3 February, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: An equality impact assessment of the prioritisation methodology for the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). The SRP will rebuild or significantly refurbish 500 schools over the next 10 years. Schools will be selected on the basis of the condition of their buildings.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-equalities-impact-assessment>

Levelling Up the United Kingdom

Author: -.

Source: H M Government/Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Document type: White Paper.

Published: Wednesday 2 February, 2022.

Reference: CP 604.

Geographical coverage: United Kingdom.

Details: The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how the Government proposes to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. It comprises what the Government calls a “bold” programme of systems change, including 12 UK-wide missions to anchor the agenda to 2030, alongside specific policy interventions that build on the 2021 Spending Review to deliver change now.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

Youth Review: Summary findings and Government response

Author: -.

Source: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Document type: Policy paper.

Published: Tuesday 1 February, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: Throughout 2021, DCMS engaged with over 6,000 young people across the country and over 170 youth sector organisations and academics. The findings and Government response are set out in this document.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response>

Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill

Author: Eren Waitzman.

Source: House of Lords Library.

Document type: In Focus research briefing on a Bill.

Published: Tuesday 2 February, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: This private member’s bill would seek to extend the duty to provide careers guidance in schools in

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England to students in year 7. It would also extend the duty to academies. The House of Lords is scheduled to debate the bill at second reading on 4 March 2022.

Special Educational Needs and Children's Mental Health Services

Author: Aaron Kulakiewicz.

Source: House of Commons Library.

Document type: Research briefing.

Published: Thursday 3 February, 2022.

Reference: CBP-2022-0030.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: A Westminster Hall debate on Special educational needs and children's mental health services is scheduled for 9 February 2022 between 9:30-11:00am. Laura Farris MP will open the debate.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0030/>

Consultations published last week

Revised Behaviour in Schools Guidance and Suspension and Permanent Exclusions Guidance

The Department for Education is seeking views on what should be included in measures to
In response to the Timpson review of school exclusions, the Government committed to working with sector experts to publish clearer, more consistent guidance. The aim of this guidance is to support schools to:

- create positive behaviour cultures
- ensure suspensions and permanent exclusions are conducted in a lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair way.

Department or agency: Department for Education

Reference number: -

Geographical coverage: England

Document type: Consultation document and on-line survey

Published: Thursday 3 February, 2022.

Deadline: 31 March 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revised-behaviour-in-schools-guidance-and-suspension-and-permanent-exclusions-guidance>

Teacher Misconduct: Regulating the teaching profession

This consultation sets out a number of proposals to broaden the scope of the teacher misconduct provisions to include:

- persons who commit misconduct when not employed as a teacher but who have previously carried out teaching work
- a wider range of education settings
- enabling the Secretary of State to consider referrals of serious teacher misconduct regardless of how the matter comes to their attention.

Department or agency: Department for Education

Reference number: -

Geographical coverage: England

Document type: Consultation document and on-line survey

Published: Tuesday 1 February, 2022.

Deadline: 14 March 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/teacher-misconduct-regulating-the-teaching-profession>

Consultation outcomes published last week

Children Not in School: Government Consultation Response

This is the Department for Education's (DfE's) response to the children not in school consultation, which sought proposals on:

- a local authority register of children not attending school
- support for home-educating families

This consultation closed in June 2019. It received almost 5,000 responses, mainly from parents but also from 145 local authorities and a number of children's charities who were strongly supportive of the proposals. It was a follow-up to the consultation and call for evidence on elective home education held by DfE in 2018. The consultation response provides details on DfE's commitment to a form of local authority administered register for children not in school. The consultation response outlines the DfE's intentions to legislate at the earliest opportunity to implement a duty on:

- local authorities to:
- keep a register of all children of compulsory age in their area who are not registered pupils at a state or independent school
- provide support to home educating families
- parents of children to supply information to such a register
- proprietors of defined settings to supply information on relevant children.

Department or agency: Department for Education.

Reference number: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Document type: Consultation outcome document and Annex document.

This outcome published: Thursday 3 February, 2022.

The original consultation ran from 2 April to 24 June 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052272/Children_not_in_school_-_consultation_response_Feb2022.pdf

Prioritising Schools for the School Rebuilding Programme: Government Consultation Response

This is the Department for Education's (DfE's) response to the consultation on how schools should be prioritised for future rounds of the School Rebuilding Programme. The DfE sought views on the objectives of the programme, the process it could use to prioritise schools for a rebuilding project and the data and evidence that could be considered. The DfE also asked questions about how it might deliver the programme and the impact on individuals with protected characteristics. It received 205 responses in total, of which 201 were via the online questionnaire and 4 via email.

92% of respondents replied on behalf of an organisation, with 7% responding as an individual. Of those who replied on behalf of an organisation, 51% represented a responsible body and 39% responded on behalf of a school. 8% responded on behalf of another type of organisation, for example, representative bodies or unions.

Department or agency: Department for Education.

Reference number: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Document type: Consultation outcome document.

This outcome published: Thursday 3 February, 2022.

The original consultation ran from 19 July to 8 October 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105218/SRP_consultation_response_.pdf

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Teacher Misconduct: The Prohibition of Teachers. Government Consultation Response

The consultation comprised of twenty-one questions. Eighteen questions related to changes being proposed within the draft prohibition advice and three invited comments about the prohibition advice more generally. 27 organisations and individuals responded to the consultation; these include responses from panel members, schools (including MATS), local authorities, legal firms acting on behalf of the Teaching Regulation Agency, and national representative organisations.

Throughout the advice the DfE has introduced new text to help clarify the misconduct process and introduced new behaviours around online, safeguarding and exam malpractice. Where the Department has identified requests for further clarification within the consultation responses it has, where possible, added additional information. In response to the general questions, it has amended the text where appropriate to expand on or strengthen the advice given. The DfE will also continue to keep under review the best way to support the panels on safeguarding and child protection matters.

Department or agency: Department for Education.

Reference number: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Document type: Consultation outcome document.

This outcome published: Tuesday 1 February, 2022.

The original consultation ran from 25 August to 19 October 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1051778/Teacher_misconduct_consultation_-_government_response.pdf

Statutory instruments issued last week

The Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2022

Year and number: 2022/86

Enabling power: Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, ss. A1 (4), 262 (3).

Issued: 31.01.2022.

Sifted: -.

Made: 26.01.2022.

Laid: 31.01.2022.

Coming into force: 06.04.2022.

Effect: S.I. 2017/1310 amended.

Geographical coverage: United Kingdom.

Classification: General.

Price of print edition: £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

ISBN: 9780348231656.

Details: These Regulations, which apply in England only, amend the Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017. They permit a person to complete an alternative English apprenticeship by entering into a series of arrangements of at least 3 months duration that total a minimum of 12 months, during which the person is expected to work and receive training within a specified approved standard.

A full impact assessment has not been published for this instrument, as no, or no significant impact on the private or voluntary sectors is foreseen.

This month's oral education and children questions

On the last day of January Ministers at the Department for Education answered questions on safe learning, university courses, student finance and the cost of living, employment, freedom of speech in universities, lifelong learning and skills development, technical qualifications, COVID transmission in schools, the Reading Framework, SEND, staff absences and apprenticeships. (House of Commons, oral questions to the Department for Education, 31 January 2022.)

Education Settings: Safe Learning

Bob Blackman (Con, Harrow East) asked the minister what steps his department was taking to ensure that pupils could learn safely in education settings. The Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker (Con, Worcester) said that, to reduce transmission of COVID-19, regular testing would continue across education and childcare. He added that to improve ventilation, the Government had delivered over 353,000 carbon dioxide monitors and purchased up to 9,000 air cleaning devices.

Mr Blackman argued that forcing young children to wear a face covering for seven hours a day was unfair, particularly for those who were hard of hearing. Mr Walker said that the Government no longer recommended masks, and no child should be denied the opportunity to study for refusing to wear a mask. Catherine West (Lab, Hornsey and Wood Green) said that many schools were concerned about their energy bills. Mr Walker said that the Government had provided a £4 billion increase for schools in the next financial year.

The chairman of the House of Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) pointed out that the Centre for Social Justice report had showed that more than 100,000 “ghost children” were still not returning to school for the most part, almost 800 schools were missing entirely a class-worth of pupils, and more than 13,000 children in year 11, which was a critical exam year, were severely absent from school. He urged the Department to collate data to find out where the children were and what was happening to them. Mr Halfon also asked the Government would implement the CSJ’s recommendation to use the forecast underspend from the national tutoring programme to appoint 2,000 attendance officers to work with families to get children back into school. Mr Walker said that addressing attendance and ensuring that all children had the opportunity to be safely in school was a top priority.

Maria Miller (Con, Basingstoke) asked the minister to urge Ofsted to do further work on how schools were implementing relationship and sex education. Mr Walker said that the Government was supporting teachers to build their confidence in teaching the newly required subject, which was also a priority for Ofsted.

Stuart C. McDonald (SNP, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) asked what protections were in place to ensure that online platforms were a safe learning environment for young people. Mr Walker said that the Government certainly wanted to ensure that children were safe whether they were learning in the classroom or online.

Supporting Young People into High-quality Jobs

Robbie Moore (Con, Keighley) asked the minister, what her department was doing to support young people into high-quality jobs. The Minister for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) said that the department was increasing spending on skills by £3.8 billion over the Parliament, which included growing apprenticeship funding to £2.7 billion by 2024-25. She added that the Government’s skills revolution would ensure that young people had the skills that they would need to access high-quality jobs through skills bootcamps, T-levels, traineeships and apprenticeships.

Toby Perkins (Lab, Chesterfield), the Shadow Minister for Apprentices and Lifelong Learning, asked the minister why there had been no reforms to apprenticeships in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. Michelle Donelan said that there had been 130,000 apprenticeship starts in the first quarter of the

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academic year, which was up by 43% on the same period last year.

Gagan Mohindra (Con, South West Hertfordshire) argued that it was important to remember that a degree was not the only route to a successful career. Michelle Donelan said that because apprenticeships were important, the Government had recently launched a new skills campaign, Get the Jump.

Daniel Zeichner (Lab, Cambridge) argued that many of the routes into quality jobs were in the very universities that the minister had been disparaging through her tax on so-called low-value courses. He added that there needed to be a much better metric than salary outcomes, because someone who was not paid well, did not mean that they were of no value. Michelle Donelan said that the courses had been based it on graduate outcomes.

Lifelong Learning and Skills Development

Jane Stevenson (Con, Wolverhampton North East) asked how the Department was promoting lifelong learning and skills development. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Alex Burghart (Con, Brentwood and Ongar) said that, the previous week, the Government had launched its Skills for Life campaign, which would promote skills offers among adults, including a level 3 offer of apprenticeships and skills bootcamps.

Technical Qualifications: Strengthening their Value

Simon Baynes (Con, Clwyd South) and Karen Buck (Lab, Westminster North) asked what estimate had been made of the number of students studying for BTECs and T-levels in the 2021-22 academic year. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Alex Burghart (Con, Brentwood and Ongar) said that technical education was being reformed to support progression and meet employer needs. He pointed out that initial figures had showed that nearly 5,500 new students had started T-levels in September 2021, which was more than four times the number who had started in 2020. The minister added that while the Government did not routinely publish take-up data on individual qualifications such as Pearson BTECs, in June the number of students who were studying for applied general qualifications at the end of 2021 would be published. Ms Buck said that there had been concern about the limited number of opportunities and qualifications that would be available under T-levels, in comparison with BTECs. Alex Burghart said that world-class gold-standard qualifications would give students meaningful work placements that would enable them to acquire qualifications designed by employers to give them the skills that the economy needed.

COVID-19: Transmission in Schools

Bill Esterson (Lab, Sefton Central) asked the minister what he was doing to help prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools. The Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker (Con, Worcester) said that the Government would continue to support a number of proportionate measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by testing across settings regularly, delivering 353,000 carbon dioxide monitors and up to 9,000 air cleaning units to ensure adequate ventilation, and committing a further £8 million to support the in-school vaccination programme.

Bill Esterson pointed out that the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies had advised the Government to improve ventilation in schools in May 2020. He asked why ministers had ignored the advice about the importance of ventilation in schools for so long. Mr Walker said that there had been a world-leading programme of rolling out CO2 monitors and around 3% of classrooms had needing the extra support that the Secretary of State had confirmed.

Stephen Morgan (Lab, Portsmouth South) said that, while vaccination was key to protecting children's learning in the classroom, 46% of 12 to 15-year-olds had still not had their first dose. Mr Walker said that the Secretary of State had recently accepted £8 million from NHS England to accelerate vaccinations in the school's pillar.

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Future Funding

Christine Jardine (LDP, Edinburgh West) asked the minister what recent discussions she had had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on future funding for education. The Minister for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) said that, at the spending review, the Government had set out spending plans for the Department for Education worth more than £86 billion for 2024-25. She added that the £18.4 billion cash increase over the Parliament, had showed that the Government was serious about skills, schools and families.

Christine Jardine pointed out that £2.7 billion had been spent on personal protective equipment that could not be used, and £4.3 billion of the money that had been stolen during COVID-19 through the furlough scheme and other schemes was being written off by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. She added that there was concern about the difference that that cash could have made in meeting the target of more than £15 billion that the Government's tsar had said recommended for children to catch up. Michelle Donelan said that the Government was investing £4 billion extra on schools the following year and £5 billion for recovery.

John Hayes (Con, South Holland and The Deepings) asked how much local authorities were spending on so-called anti-racist education, based on deceit, which spreads dismay and causes division. Michelle Donelan said it was important to remember that schools were subject to political impartiality, and government guidance would be updated shortly. Carol Monaghan (SNP, Glasgow North West) asked when the Government would make a concrete decision on the UK's full participation in Horizon Europe. Michelle Donelan said that, in the event that the UK was unable to associate with Horizon Europe, the funding that had been put aside would go to the UK Government's research and development programmes, including those that would form partnerships internationally.

Children with SEND: Access to Specialist Support

Vicky Foxcroft (Lab, Lewisham, Deptford) asked what recent assessment had been made of the adequacy of access to specialist support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Will Quince (Con, Colchester) said that the review of the special educational needs and disability system would publish proposals for improvements to the system through a Green Paper for full public consultation in the first three months of the year.

Vicky Foxcroft said that urgent reforms were needed for the 160,000 autistic pupils in schools in England to address the issues that had been exacerbated by the pandemic. Will Quince said that the Government had allocated £42 million in the current financial year to fund projects to support children and young people with SEND, including £600,000 to the Autism Education Trust.

Anthony Mangnall (Con, Totnes) asked what steps had been taken to improve mental health access facilities, including counsellors in all schools. Will Quince said that, backed by £9.5 million, the Government was offering about a third of schools and colleges in England a grant in the current year, to train a senior mental health lead in their setting. He pointed out that the Government's £15 million wellbeing for education recovery and return programmes were in addition to the £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health announced in March 2021 for mental health support teams in schools and colleges. Kim Leadbeater (Lab, Batley and Spen) asked what the Government was doing to support pupils with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and suspected ADHD. Will Quince said that the SEND review focused on ensuring that pupils received the right support, in the right place, at the right time and ultimately had better outcomes.

School Staff Absences

The former Shadow Education Secretary Rebecca Long Bailey (Lab, Salford and Eccles) asked what assessment had been made of the adequacy of Government support to help tackle staff absences in schools. Robin Walker (Con, Worcester) replied that the Department had extended the COVID-19 workforce fund to at least the February half-term, so that schools with high absence and financial pressures could

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continue to access the additional funds. He added that further measures included asking former teachers to come forward if they were available to temporarily fill absences in schools during the spring term.

Rebecca Long Bailey said that on 20 January, more than 415,000 pupils had been off school and 15% of teachers had been absent, but only 9,000 air purifiers had been promised, for approximately 300,000 classrooms. She pointed out that, while the minister had lauded the Government response, Germany had promised to subsidise 80% of the cost of air cleaning equipment in all schools to ensure that education was not disrupted. Mr Walker said that the Government was taking an evidence-based approach. He said that having listened to schools the Government had sent them carbon dioxide monitors so that they could monitor where classrooms needed the extra support. The minister added that about 3% of classrooms had needed the extra support and their devices were being provided entirely funded by the Department.

Apprenticeships: Early Years Workforce

Andrea Leadsom (Con, South Northamptonshire) asked whether the Department planned to develop apprenticeship routes for the early years workforce. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Alex Burghart (Con, Brentwood and Ongar) said that the Department had engaged with early years employers to help them design three high-quality apprenticeships: early years educator; practitioner and lead practitioner. He added that students could also study a T-level, a new gold-standard technical qualification in education and childcare, which provided a route into either work or further study.

Topical Questions

Rachel Hopkins (Lab, Luton South) argued that the most deprived schools had seen the largest cuts over the past decade, as there had been a 14% real-terms fall in per-pupil spending between 2009-10 and 2019-20, compared with a drop of only 9% for the least deprived schools. The Minister for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) insisted that the Government was determined to level up, which was why it had introduced a real-terms 5% increase in school funding and the highest ever level of pupil premium.

The Shadow Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson (Lab, Houghton and Sunderland South) said that, according to the most recent figures, the number of children who were out of school because of COVID-19, had risen by 34%. The Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker (Con, Worcester) said that the Government was focused on making sure that children could safely learn in schools. Bridget Phillipson said that it had been a year since the Prime Minister had appointed Sir Kevan Collins to oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up, who had later resigned in protest because, in his words, the Government's plans risked "failing hundreds of thousands of pupils." Mr Walker said that the Government was investing £5 billion in education recovery.

Carol Monaghan (SNP, Glasgow North West) asked what discussions the minister had had with colleagues in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to increase the financial contribution and to properly support Afghan students. Michelle Donelan said that she welcomed the contribution that universities were also making to Afghan refugees. Vicky Foxcroft (Lab, Lewisham, Deptford) argued that the decision to hastily remove BTEC funding had made a mockery of the Government's claims to be levelling up in education. Alex Burghart said that the Secretary of State had extended the timescale for T-levels on the Second Reading of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.

Holly Lynch (lab, Halifax) said that primary and secondary schools had said that the biggest challenge they faced was COVID-19-related staff absence. She asked how many volunteers had signed up to the teacher volunteer drive, and how teachers could be kept safe. Mr Walker cited figures that had been published at the beginning of January, which had showed that 585 teachers had come forward in answer to the call to arms. He added that full number was expected to be significantly higher.

Levelling Up statement

During his statement on the Government's *Levelling Up White Paper*, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, Michael Gove (Con, Surrey Heath) claimed that in terms of education and skills, the Government would eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy, by investing in the most-underperforming areas of the country. (House of Commons, oral ministerial statement, 2 February 2022.)

He explained that there would be 55 new education investment areas in England, to drive school improvement in the local authorities where attainment was weakest. Mr Gove pointed out that the Government's "sixth mission" was to have new high-quality skills training, targeted at the lowest skilled areas, where 200,000 more people would complete high-quality skills training annually. He said that a new digital UK national academy would be established, to bring higher education to everyone, by ensuring that every school student in the country could access high-quality online teaching, which would mean that geography would no longer be a barrier to opportunity.

Lisa Nandy (Lab, Wigan), the Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, argued that while Mr Gove had been the Education Secretary for four years, only two thirds of children left primary school with the basic skills to get on. Mr Gove insisted that due to his time as Education Secretary there were more, good and outstanding schools, and illiteracy and innumeracy had been tackled. He stressed that higher education was critical to the economic future of the north and the midlands, where there were outstanding universities, and increased research and development spending would be directed towards those excellent institutions. Mr Gove added that whether for life sciences in Newcastle, renewables in Teesside or materials in Manchester, the Government would be working with the universities to revive the north and the midlands.

Catherine McKinnell (Lab, Newcastle upon Tyne North) argued that, even before the pandemic, two in five children and young people in the north-east had been growing up in poverty. She added that it was therefore difficult to understand why the White Paper had not addressed the lack of cross-Government strategy to tackle child poverty. Michael Gove said that there had been a commitment in the White Paper to additional funding for the supporting families programme, previously the troubled families programme, which would help to address many of the drivers of child poverty.

Jesse Norman (Con, Hereford and South Herefordshire) argued that the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering, promised to offer entirely new forms of learning and teaching, lower drop-out rates, lower levels of mental ill health, and much greater inclusiveness for young people in skills-based higher education. He therefore asked the minister whether he would encourage the model, and initiate a review of higher education to regenerate cities and towns across the UK. Mr Gove said that Mr Norman's new model institute was a perfect model of what had been envisaged by the former Member of Parliament for Orpington during his time as the higher education Minister, when he had introduced reform to ensure improved access to higher education, but with a particular focus on skills and jobs. Mr Gove added that he would look forward to working with him and the Education Secretary to spread the model across the UK.

Stephanie Peacock (Lab, Barnsley East) (Lab) claimed that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, based in Wombwell, was the only organisation dedicated to supporting former mining towns in the UK. She argued that it was vital to improve employment support and boost skills for communities, where levelling up was needed most. Michael Gove said that he would be delighted to hear about the work.

Philip Hollobone (Con, Kettering) said that he welcomed the designation of North Northamptonshire as an education investment area, and he asked the Secretary of State to explain to my constituents what it would mean for educational outcomes in Kettering. Michael Gove said that there would be "a relentless focus on standards and discipline", which would mean ensuring systematic synthetic phonics in primary school. He added that children would be fully literate, numerate and capable of going to secondary school by the time they reached the end of key stage 2. Mr Gove pointed out that multi-academy trusts would deliver higher standards where existing schools had failed.

Mohammad Yasin (Lab, Bedford) argued that, as the Conservatives had been in power for 12 years,

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the “vague plans” to raise school standards in a third of local authority areas, including Bedford borough, was an admission of unforgivable failure. He added that, any promised investment would never make up for the cuts that had started when Mr Gove had been Education Secretary, which blighted a generation of children. Michael Gove argued that the conservative government had protected, in real-terms, funding for schools from five to 16; introduced a pupil premium, which meant that £250 million of additional funding had been targeted on the poorest; and in Bedford the Government had opened Bedford Free School, which had brought opportunity to disadvantaged children.

Youth Investment Fund

The former Shadow Education Secretary, Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) pointed out that £500 million had been announced by the Government in 2019 for the Youth Investment Fund, but the first £10 million of capital funding had only recently been opened to bids. She called on the Secretary of State to urge his colleagues to “turbo-charge” the delivery of the funding so that young people would not have to wait until 2025 to enjoy better opportunities and facilities. Michael Gove said that he would look into the “very fair point”.

Bob Seely (Con, Isle of Wight) asked whether the islands forum idea would ensure a voice to islands such as the Isle of Wight to be part of the prosperity agenda in education and high-quality jobs. Michael Gove said “absolutely”.

Robert Largan (Con, High Peak) said that, while he welcomed the news that Derbyshire would be an education investment area, he was worried about the high impact that the Mayor of Greater Manchester’s decisions had on High Peak. Mr Largan asked the Secretary of State, whether there would be more collaborative working, to ensure that levelling up worked for everyone across regional boundaries. Michael Gove ensured Mr Largan, Derbyshire leaders and the Mayor of Greater Manchester, that working together would be in the interests of Mr Largan’s constituents.

Mike Wood (Con, Dudley South) said that, although the west midlands had some world-leading, innovative companies as well as universities and research institutions that were undertaking ground-breaking research, public research and development investment in the west midlands had been low compared with other areas. He added that, even though for every £1 of Government investment, there had been a private sector return of £4, it would be difficult to see how the innovation accelerator would help to close the gap. Michael Gove pointed out that the innovation accelerator would bring together representatives from the private sector, business, and the outstanding universities.

James Wild (Con, North West Norfolk) asked the Secretary of State to confirm that Norfolk’s selection as one of the new education investment areas would mean extra support and dedicated action to give more young people a good start in life. Michael Gove said that, for example, the plan was to ensure that the sort of model used at Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form in Norwich, which provided an excellent opportunity for children who had been denied it in the past, was spread across Norfolk as part of the Government’s EIA initiative.

Education catch-up and mental health

The chairman of the Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) introduced a debate on the effectiveness of the Government’s education catch-up and mental health recovery programmes. (House of Commons, Debate, 3 February 2022.) He referred to the Centre for Social Justice, which had recently published a report, *Lost but Not Forgotten*, which had highlighted the over 100,000 children, and increasing, who had mostly failed to return to school since schools had been reopened in 2021.

He said that across the country, 758 schools were missing almost an entire class-worth of children, and about 500 children were missing in half of all local authorities. Mr Halfon said that although he wanted

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exams to go ahead, 13,000 children in a critical exam year would be most likely to be severely absent. He called on the Department for Education to prioritise gathering live data about who and where the children were, and he urged the Government to use any underspend from the national tutoring programme, as the Centre for Social Justice had recommended, to fund 2,000 attendance advisers to find the children, work with families and get the children back into school.

He said that although he strongly welcomed the catch-up programmes, he was concerned that the £5 billion invested in education recovery, would not reach the most vulnerable children.

Mr Halfon pointed out that the national tutoring programme was falling short of its targets, as while 524,000 children who were supposed to start tutoring in 2022, only 8% had begun. He said that the Education Policy Institute had found a marked disparity in the take-up of the national tutoring programme between the north and the south, and in the north just 50% of schools engaged with the national tutoring programme, whereas in the south upwards of 96% of schools engaged with the programme. Mr Halfon added that headteachers and tutoring groups had described the inaccessibility of the hub, and the lack of quality assurance about the tutors on offer.

He welcomed the pilot scheme in Wales on extending the school day, which would see 14 primary and secondary schools trialling an additional five hours of bespoke activities in art, music, sport and core academic sessions. Mr Halfon pointed out that the Education Policy Institute had found that a longer school day could increase educational attainment by two to three months. He added that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport had found that an extended school day could boost numeracy skills by 29%, and young people who participated in school clubs were 20% less likely to suffer from mental health problems. Turning to children's mental health, he said that burdens were being put on children all the time, and they had been let them down through some of the policies that had been implemented.

Nicholas Brown (Lab, Newcastle upon Tyne East) argued that testing schoolchildren regularly was essential to ensure that the infected are isolated and pupils could carry on learning in person. He said that the Government must increase communication with parents to raise awareness of the latest testing guidance, and to work with schools by providing tests for pupils to take home and to promote uptake. Mr Brown pointed out that for some time the Government had been urged to get proper ventilation systems into schools and colleges, as quality learning required a comfortable environment, and not one in which students and staff must wear coats to keep warm in cold classrooms. He argued that while the vaccine programme was the key tool in preventing further disruption to education, about 2 million 12 to 17-year-olds remained unvaccinated. Mr Brown added that 16 weeks after the vaccine had been approved, about half of 12 to 15-year-olds had still not received their first jab and the programme was way behind schedule.

He cited a recent YoungMinds survey which had showed that two thirds of young people aged 13 to 25 believed that the pandemic would have a negative long-term impact on their mental health. Mr Brown said that a successful school-based counselling pilot, in Newcastle upon Tyne East, had showed encouraging early results, as there had been an improvement in educational attainment for around one in three pupils who had received counselling. He added that he supported demands to make school-based counselling services more consistent across the country and the Labour party's proposals to ensure that every school had specialist mental health support.

The tutoring fund

Mark Fletcher (Con, Bolsover) said that feedback on the tutoring fund, had found that it was very difficult to make it work locally, as there was either a lack of suppliers or some teachers were having to go on training, which would take them out of the classroom. He added that some schools had even been suggested that they may give the funding back.

Flick Drummond (Con, Meon Valley) pointed out that one of her local schools had employed its own psychologist, as well as a mental health co-ordinator, and as a result, the number of students in the school receiving external mental health support had doubled in a year. She said that catching up was one reason why she was calling for an extended school day for everyone, not just to continue maths, English and the

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core subjects but to allow a wide range of extracurricular activities such as music, art, sport and clubs. Ms Drummond added that there were examples across the country where the extended day was working well, and she urged the Government to look at them as pilot schemes.

Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) said that was opportune that the debate had taken place against the backdrop of the Government announcement of new education investment areas. She pointed out that the initiative had the potential to contribute to children and young people's education recovery, provided that it was properly led and designed; provided lessons were learned from previous initiatives, such as the London challenge and the opportunity areas; provided the right targets and success measures were put in place; provided it was adequately resourced; and provided the professional expertise of teachers and leaders was respected and supported. But she warned that an overcentralised, over-prescriptive model would not deliver the hoped-for benefits.

Sarah Olney (LDP, Richmond Park) said that there was a need for more school nurses, and the nurses needed to have training in mental health. She argued that it would be important to open up more access to child and adolescent mental health services, because the waiting lists were a problem. Ms Olney added that there needed to be adolescent mental health services at GPs surgeries, to give parents more options.

A wide range of support

The Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker (Con, Worcester) said that, throughout the pandemic, the Government had introduced a wide range of specialist mental health support for people of all ages who needed it. He added that for children and young people, the Government had ensured that NHS mental health services remained open, to offer digital and remote access as well as face-to-face support where appropriate to maintain care and accept new referrals.

The minister said that, in the longer term, the Government would expand and transforming mental health services through the NHS long-term plan with additional investment of £2.3 billion per year by 2023-24, which would allow at least 345,000 more children and young people to access NHS funded mental health support.

Mr Walker pointed out that nearly £5 billion had been committed to fund a comprehensive recovery package, by following the evidence and providing support to all pupils while prioritising the most disadvantaged and vulnerable and those with least time left. He explained that the approach provided a mix of immediate and longer-term support, and funding the interventions the evidence had showed would be the most effective.

The minister said that universal programmes such as the £650 million catch-up premium in 2020-21, and teacher training opportunities would support all pupils no matter where they lived alongside targeted interventions, focused on those most in need through targeted tutoring programme, summer schools and the recovery premium, which had been extended in the spending review by £1 billion for the next two academic years. He stressed that need to prioritise those with the least time left in education, and from September 2022 funded learning over the next three academic years would also increase by 40 hours a year, to give every 16-to-19 student the equivalent of an extra hour a week. Mr Walker said that, because extensive evidence had showed that tutoring could be one of the most effective tools to support learning and accelerate pupil progress, the Government would invest £1.5 billion in tutoring to provide up to 100 million tutoring hours for children and young people across England by 2024.

He pointed out that, although the Government was making good progress, the programme needed to pick up more steam. The minister said that the Government was therefore closely monitoring the performance of the programme and its delivery organisation, Randstad, with daily and weekly operational reviews and regular meetings at senior level.

Robert Halfon said that as there had been a consensus across the House for the Government to do more on mental health and more on the catch-up programme and to support a longer school day, the minister must sort out Randstad or "boot them out". He added that it was not acceptable that taxpayers' money was being spent on a huge company, which was not providing the catch-up and the tuition that children vitally needed.

The following written questions and their answers were published in *Hansard* last week.

House of Commons

Department for Education

Teachers: Re-employment

Seema Malhotra: [112562] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many former teachers have signed up to return to teaching, by local authority; and how many of those former teachers have been placed in schools.

Robin Walker: The department is extremely grateful to all the teachers who are responding to our call to return temporarily to the classroom to support schools to remain open and deliver face to face education for pupils. The department published the results of a sample survey of supply agencies on 12 January. 47 agencies reported 485 sign ups as a result of the call to arms with Teach First reporting over 100 expressions of interest from their alumni to temporarily return to the classroom.

The department needs to balance the need for data with the burden we place on those collating it. Therefore, we did not request information by upper/lower tier local authority and the employment agencies that are working with us have no reason to sort and organise their candidates in such a way. Where a specific supply teacher is prepared to work will differ from individual to individual for many different reasons. The department remains in close contact with supply agencies to monitor the interest they receive to help schools during this time.

Monday 31 January 2022

Faith Schools: Children in Care

Steve McCabe: [111481] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will amend the School Admissions Code to ensure that faith schools give priority to (a) looked after and (b) previously looked after children when considering applications.

Robin Walker: Schools designated by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, as having a religious character (more commonly known as faith schools) may use faith-based oversubscription criteria and allocate places by reference to faith where the school is oversubscribed. As with all other publicly funded mainstream schools, faith schools must offer every child who applies, whether of the faith, another faith or no faith, a place at the school if there are places available.

The School Admissions Code already requires admission authorities of all mainstream schools to give priority in their oversubscription criteria to looked after children and previously looked after children. Where a faith school adopts faith-based oversubscription criteria, they must, as a minimum, give priority to all looked after children and previously looked after children of the faith, before giving priority to other children of the faith. Where any element of priority is given in relation to children not of the faith, they must first give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children not of the faith above other children not of the faith.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Falkland Islands: Armed Conflict

Andrew Rosindell: [110276] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment on the potential merits of teaching about the Falklands War as part of the national curriculum.

Robin Walker: The history curriculum gives teachers and schools the freedom and flexibility to use specific examples from history to teach pupils about the history of Britain and the wider world, and this can include the Falklands War. Schools and teachers themselves can determine which examples, topics and resources to use to stimulate and challenge pupils and reflect key points in history. Additionally, there is scope within the citizenship curriculum to highlight relevant key historical events.

Through citizenship, which is part of the national curriculum at key stages 3 and 4, pupils learn about the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom and its relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and the wider world. The subject helps to prepare pupils to play a full and active part in society and teaches them how to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh up evidence, to debate, and to make reasoned arguments. As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Pupil Referral Units

Dan Jarvis: [113103] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact of excluding Pupil Referral Unit schools from the Schools Supplementary Grant on children (a) with behavioural difficulties and (b) in care.

Dan Jarvis: [113104] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her department is providing to Pupil Referral Unit schools that are not awarded special needs funding.

Will Quince: Additional funding has been made available to the core schools budget for allocation in the 2022-23 financial year as a result of the 2021 Spending Review. The way that this funding is being allocated reflects differences in how pupil referral units (PRU), special schools and mainstream schools are funded. Mainstream schools are funded through local funding formulae, and the extra funding allocated to the department following the 2021 Spending Review is being allocated in the 2022-23 financial year as a supplementary grant. This is because it was not possible for the department to decide on allocations, and for local authorities to include those within their local formulae, in time.

PRUs, special schools and the equivalent academies, on the other hand, are funded from the high needs block of the dedicated schools' grant (DSG). In December 2021, the department announced additional allocations to local authorities of high needs DSG funding for the 2022-23 financial year, totalling £325 million. The differences in costs and funding for PRUs mean that centrally setting supplementary per-pupil funding rates, as we have done for the supplementary funding for mainstream schools, was not appropriate. Therefore, the department decided that it was better that local authorities decide how to allocate the additional funding to those types of schools, with the same flexibilities as they must deploy the rest of the DSG allocations of high needs funding.

PRUs should, therefore, discuss with their local authority any increases as part of the top-up funding paid from authorities' high needs budgets. Each local authority now knows how much of the additional £325 million high needs funding it will be allocated in the 2022-23 financial year. Nationally, this is an increase of 4% to the high-needs allocations announced in July 2021. Authorities should be able to afford some increase to their top-up funding for PRUs and other schools, where that is required to meet the cost increases they are facing. Funding for PRUs comes from mainstream schools' budgets, for those pupils placed by those schools, as well as from local authorities. There is no distinction in the national funding

system between those pupils in PRUs who have special needs, and those who are there for other reasons.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Pupils: Absenteeism

Bob Seely: [112692] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of recent trends in pupil absences at schools in England.

Robin Walker: The daily education settings survey asks schools and colleges to report data such as on-site attendance and COVID-19 absence. The most recent published data at national level is 20 January 2022 and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/findstatistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Seema Malhotra: [113113] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of school days missed in the 2021-22 academic year by (a) year 6, (b) year 11 and (c) year 13 students. Mr Robin Walker: The requested data is not yet available. The first data relating to the number of school days missed due to absence in the 2021-22 academic year is currently being collected in the termly school census. It will be published in May 2022 and relate to the autumn term only. It will be available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>.

Data on absence in the full academic year 2021-22 is expected to be published in March 2023 in the National Statistics release “Pupil absence in schools in England” and will be available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/findstatistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

The school census collects absence data for pupils of compulsory school age, covering those aged 5 to 15 at the start of the academic year, plus some less detailed information on 4-year-olds. It does not collect data on year 13 students.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Pupils: Coronavirus

Kim Leadbeater: [110645] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what measures he is putting in place to support pupils with long covid who are taking exams in 2021-22.

Robin Walker: Exams are the best and fairest way of judging students’ performance. Exams give students a fair chance to show their knowledge and understanding of a subject. It is the government’s firm intention that exams and assessments should go ahead this year.

The department recognises the disruption many students have experienced and has worked with Ofqual, exam boards, and representatives of the sector to review existing arrangements for exams. This is to ensure they appropriately reflect scenarios arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. Together with Ofqual, the department has confirmed a package of measures, including adaptations to exams and assessments and changes to grading, to ensure fairness and help mitigate the disruption to students’ education. Pupils or students absent from their education for a prolonged period due to long COVID-19 should be supported in the same manner as those absent due to other medium to long-term illnesses or medical conditions. Students with any long-term health conditions, such as long COVID, may be eligible to apply for reasonable adjustments under the existing exam arrangements.

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to an assessment or to the way an assessment is conducted that reduce or remove a disadvantage caused by a student’s disability. An example of this could be supervised rest breaks or extra time for assessments. They are needed because some conditions can

make it harder for students to show what they know and can do in an assessment than it would have been had the student not been disabled. The Joint Council for Qualification (JCQ) has published detailed guidance on reasonable adjustments.

Furthermore, where students miss an assessment in a subject, for example due to illness, but have completed other exams or non-exam assessments in that subject, they may be able to use the existing special consideration process to apply to receive a grade based on the assessments they did complete. The JCQ has also published guidance on when students may be eligible for special consideration and how it works.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Schools: Mental Health Services

Munira Wilson: [113276] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) dedicated and (b) nondedicated Emotional Literacy Support Assistant are employed by (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools across England and Wales.

Munira Wilson: [113277] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his department has made of the (a) cost to the public purse and (b) value of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants.

Will Quince: Information on the number of emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) or the costs to schools is not collected centrally. The department collects information on staff working in state funded schools in England via the annual School Workforce Census but does not directly identify ELSAs. The results are published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/findstatistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

It is important that schools have the freedom to decide what support to offer pupils based on their particular needs, and drawing on an evidence base of effective practice. We are aware that some schools make effective use of ELSAs and report positive impacts as part of their wider provision to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Schools: Platinum Jubilee 2022

Andrew Rosindell: [110274] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his department have made for schools to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Robin Walker: To mark Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the department has commissioned a commemorative book which will be given to all children in state funded primary education across the United Kingdom. The book will celebrate the people and places of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. It will teach children about recent and historical events, inspirational people, landmark innovations and inventions during Her Majesty the Queen's lifetime, and a selection of our best art, design, and culture. The book will also explore the role of the monarch and what the Platinum Jubilee represents, so that children across the country can understand and engage with the celebrations, while broadening their education. Plans for commissioning the book were announced on 26 September 2021 at: www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-achievements-celebrated-in-new-childrens-book-to-mark-the-queens-platinum-jubilee.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

T-levels

Jonathan Gullis: [110616] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has undertaken an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the hours on T Level Transition Programmes to bring them into line with T Level Programmes.

Alex Burghart: T Levels are significantly larger than other 16-19 study programmes. They are 2-year courses that include a substantial technical qualification and mandatory 9-week industry placement and cover significant theoretical and practical content to ensure students are able to successfully progress into work or further technical study. The T Level Transition Programme, in contrast, provides an additional year of support and preparation for those students who need it, before they are ready to enrol on a T Level. The differences in the number of funded hours for these programmes reflects their respective purposes and content. From academic year 2022/23, T Levels and the T Level Transition Programmes will benefit from the additional hours the department will be funding for 16-19 education. For a band 5 'full-time' T Level Transition Programme, this will mean an extra 40 hours, taking funded hours up to a minimum of 580 hours, with proportionate increases for smaller programmes. Students may also be able to receive additional small group tuition via the 16-19 Tuition Fund.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Vocational Education: Qualifications

Kieran Mullan: [111757] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to strengthen the value of technical qualifications.

Alex Burghart: The government is reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to technical options that support progression and meet employer needs. Our reforms will simplify and put employers at the heart of the system, ensuring that all qualifications are fit for purpose, high-quality and lead to good outcomes. We are introducing over 20 T Levels, developed with over 250 leading employers.

We are investing in direct support for employers to increase the number of industry placements available across all T Levels and have also established a T Level employer ambassador network to engage with others in their industries on T Levels and placements. We want all technical qualifications to be high quality and truly necessary, which is why we are reviewing all other technical qualifications at level 3 and below to create a better, more streamlined system. While these reforms are taking place, we have introduced a high value course premium for 16-19-year-olds to encourage the take up of high value subjects.

In December 2021 we announced that the premium will increase by 50% in the 2022-23 financial year to £600 per student per year. For adults we are introducing of Higher Technical Qualifications, approved through a new opt-in national approvals process as meeting employers' skills needs. The first of these newly approved qualifications will be available for teaching from September 2022. This will be supported by the new £18 million Higher Technical Education Provider Growth Fund and the investment of up to £290 million to establish a comprehensive network of Institutes of Technology across England.

Tuesday 1 February 2022

Further Education: Finance

Peter Aldous: [111564] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he will provide in-year funding

for Further Education college courses that help tackle skills gaps in the economy.

Alex Burghart: The lagged funding mechanism for 16-19 education provides institutions with clear allocations, allowing them to make plans with confidence. However, from the 2020/21 academic year we have introduced T Levels which are currently funded in-year and have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry. Further education colleges can also benefit from a High Value Course Premium (HVCP) of £400 per student.

The HVCP was introduced in the 2020/21 academic year to encourage and support delivery of courses that are both associated with higher earnings and strategically important. We have announced this premium will increase by 50% to £600 per student in the 2022/23 academic year, to further strengthen the impact of the premium in encouraging and supporting colleges to deliver these key subjects. In the 2021/22 financial year we made £95 million available for further education providers to deliver the free courses for jobs offer, which gives all adults access to their first level 3 qualifications in sector subject areas with strong wage outcomes and the ability to address key skills needs.

It was confirmed at Budget that funding will be available for the next three years, and from April 2022 eligibility for the level 3 free courses for jobs offer will be expanded to also include any adult in England who is unemployed or earns under the national living wage annually, even if they have a level 3 qualification or higher. We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2021/22). The principal purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority. These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEBfunded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to be responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

ESFA providers' AEB allocations for financial year 2021/22 have stayed the same as in 2020/21, with adjustments for the impact of devolution and to remove allocations that were for one year only. This was the fairest approach, enabling providers to support local economic recovery in 2021/22. In-year performance management processes and rules are in place and these are detailed in the Adult education budget (AEB) funding rules 2021 to 2022, found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2021-to2022>.

For the financial year 2021/22, we are also giving providers the opportunity to earn an additional 3% on top of their ESFA AEB allocation for over-delivery to support growth in adult skills participation.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Further Education: Standards

Kieran Mullan: [111760] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to upgrade further education colleges.

Alex Burghart: We have committed £1.5 billion between 2020 and 2026, through the further education (FE) Capital Transformation Programme, to upgrade FE colleges. This programme seeks to tackle poor condition in the FE college estate so that FE colleges are excellent places for young people and adults to learn.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Home Education

Robert Halfon: [111552] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's response to the Education Committee's Third Report on Strengthening Home Education, published on 26 October 2021, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to create a statutory register including home educated children, based on the Government's response to the Committee's report.

Robin Walker: The department remains committed to a form of local authority register for children not in school and we intend to legislate for it at a suitable opportunity. We will set out further details in the government response to the 'Children Not in School' consultation, which we will publish in coming weeks.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

National Tutoring Programme

Kieran Mullan: [111755] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the National Tutoring Programme.

Robin Walker: The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) aims to deliver up to 2 million courses this year, and up to 90 million tuition hours by the 2024/25 academic year across the programme's three pillars. Details of the NTP's performance so far this year was published on 11 January. This estimated just over 300,000 tuition courses had been started since September. This is almost exactly the number of courses delivered in the whole of the previous academic year. Independent evaluations are being conducted for both year one and year two of the NTP. We expect results from the year one overarching evaluation to be published in summer 2022. This will include insights into how the NTP has been implemented and the extent to which the programme is having an impact on pupil progress. The year two evaluation will again focus on pupil progress and will also look into school and teacher impacts and reasons for non-participation. Interim findings from the year two evaluation will be shared with the department during the evaluation to help inform decision-making. Findings will be published in 2023.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Ofsted: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [112564] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of using expert Ofsted inspectors to teach in schools where cover is unavailable.

Robin Walker: The deployment of Ofsted inspectors is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member for Feltham and Heston directly and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Ofsted's inspection arrangements have rightly been kept under review as the COVID-19 outbreak develops, and adjustments made where appropriate. At the start of January, Ofsted temporarily halted use of part time inspectors who are also front-line leaders so they could focus on their leadership responsibilities. From Monday 31 January, Ofsted are once again inviting those leaders who are able to inspect again to do so as it moves back to its full programme of inspections.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Pupil Exclusions

Anneliese Dodds: [110569] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were permanently excluded from (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special schools in (i) Oxford, (ii) Oxfordshire, (iii) South East England and (iv) England as a proportion of the total number of pupils in each school in the 2020-21 academic year.

Anneliese Dodds: [110570] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils on roll have been suspended from (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special schools in (i) Oxford, (ii) Oxfordshire, (iii) South East England and (iv) England in the 2020-21 academic year.

Anneliese Dodds: [110571] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of average length of time of pupil suspensions in (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools, and (c) special schools in (i) Oxford, (ii) Oxfordshire, (iii) South East England, and (iv) England in (A) 2019-20 and (B) 2020-21.

Robin Walker: Information on the numbers and rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions is available in the national statistics release “Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England.” This can be found at: <https://explore-educationstatistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-inengland>.

The release includes data at national, regional, local authority, local authority district and school level. Data is not yet available for the academic year 2020-21, as this is due to be published in July 2022. Tables relating to 2019-20 giving the number and rate of permanent exclusions and suspensions by school type have been produced using the ‘create tables’ tool at the following links:

- Oxfordshire, South East and England: <https://explore-educationstatistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/ce18be44-a5aa-4e3f-ba27-34e5d9e5a38a>
- Oxford: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/datatables/permalink/48f9a035-9123-477e-8249-aae4b0ca3ed3> The attached table shows the average length of suspensions. Attachments: 1. Exclusions [110569_110570_110571_avarage_length_of_exclusions.pdf]

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Pupils: Coronavirus

Kieran Mullan: [111753] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on increasing COVID-19 vaccination uptake among school pupils.

Robin Walker: Vaccines are the best way we can protect ourselves and keep children and young people in face-to-face education. On 22 December, the government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed.

On 24 January, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced that the department will distribute a total of £8 million in funding to NHS England to support secondary schools with the vitally important in-school vaccination programme for young people. This comes as over 50% of 12 to 15-year-olds, over 1.5 million people, have now had at least one dose of the vaccine.

To accelerate the COVID-19 programme in schools, the NHS has bolstered the in-school offer to make it more efficient and increase the scale and pace of delivery, as well as target communications to parents, young people and the public to improve uptake and increase overall confidence in the programme.

To ensure even more young people can get the vaccine as quickly as possible, the national booking service is open for vaccination bookings for young people. This service is available at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>.

To support schools, and based on feedback we gathered, we have published a new 'how to' guide which is available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cT6adcSVsLer0kvcSul4QcBYdlmdgb5x>. This includes useful information and resources for schools, including a template letter that can be used to communicate with parents. The COVID-19 vaccination guidance and leaflets for parents, children and young people are being translated by Public Health England. The accessible versions include braille and British Sign Language, as well as web and print versions in 27 languages.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Pupils: Disadvantaged

Kieran Mullan: [111756] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to support disadvantaged pupils over this academic year.

Will Quince: In financial year 2022-23, the National Funding Formula (NFF) will allocate £6.7 billion, 17% of all funding allocated by the NFF, through additional needs factors, including deprivation. That includes an increase of £225 million, or 6.7%, in the amount distributed through deprivation factors. In addition, in financial year 2022-23 schools will receive a supplementary grant, which will provide significant further funding for deprivation: £85 for each primary pupil and £124 for each secondary pupil who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (FSM6).

Schools' individual allocations from the supplementary grant will be finalised in the coming months. On top of this core funding, pupil premium funding rates are increasing by 2.7% in financial year 2022-23, to £1,385 for each FSM6 primary pupil and £985 for each FSM6 secondary pupil. This means that the per pupil funding rate will be the highest, in cash terms since the introduction of the pupil premium in 2011. Total pupil premium funding will increase to over £2.6 billion in 2022-23, from £2.5 billion this year. We are also supporting disadvantaged pupils this academic year through our investment in education recovery. Overall direct investment announced for education recovery is almost £5 billion, including an additional £1.8 billion of funding announced in the recent Spending Review to support young people to catch up on education lost. Recovery premium funding will be based on the same disadvantage eligibility criteria as the pupil premium. During the 2021/22 academic year mainstream schools will attract a total of £145 for each eligible pupil.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Schools: Coronavirus

Kieran Mullan: [111754] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide schools and pupils with access to COVID-19 lateral flow tests.

Robin Walker: Educational providers can continue to place orders for test kits via the dedicated online ordering channel and should call 119 if they require further advice or support. Orders placed by 5pm each Tuesday will be delivered the following week. 119 can also be contacted for further advice and support. If an emergency replenishment is required, that will be processed and can take up to 48 hours for schools to receive. Schools will be given an expectation as to when they can receive their delivery. Schools and further education providers use a different supply route to get their lateral flow tests. The department continues to

work with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to ensure education providers are able to receive adequate supplies of test kits.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Schools: Gender Based Violence

Anneliese Dodds: [112688] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's assessment is of the extent and effectiveness of existing programmes aiming to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) within schools and colleges in England, for each category of action (a) interventions that seek to transform gender norms to prevent VAWG, (b) healthy relationships education and bystander skills for both children and adolescents, (c) applied, participatory theatre projects concerning VAWG, (d) interventions designed to promote empowerment through self-defence and coaching for young women and (e) training of education professionals around the identification of potential victims of VAWG and their referral to other agencies.

Robin Walker: Schools and colleges have a critical role to play in protecting children and keeping them safe. The subjects of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) are now a statutory part of the curriculum. They include teaching pupils what healthy relationships look like, and the concepts of, and laws relating to, all forms of abuse. The RSHE statutory guidance also advises schools to be alive to issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes, and to take positive action to tackle these issues. The guidance is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationshipsand-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of their pupils. The department has provided advice on choosing resources and working with external agencies in the non-statutory implementation guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationshipssex-and-health-curriculum>.

Following the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the department is strengthening support for designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) so they can confidently identify and address sexual abuse and harassment. This includes funding What Works for Children's Social Care to trial supervision and training for DSLs in schools with a particular focus on supporting them to respond to sexual abuse issues in schools, working with the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. This also includes incorporating resources on child sexual abuse into the online resource hub for DSLs, which will launch in summer 2022.

Further education providers are expected to provide personal and social development for their learners and will be judged by Ofsted on how they deliver this. Key criteria for the assessment include developing confidence and resilience, understanding how to keep mentally and physically healthy and developing an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships through appropriate relationships and sex education.

The department does not specify how colleges should achieve this. The statutory safeguarding guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' is very clear that all staff in schools and colleges should be aware of indicators of any form of abuse and or neglect, and what they should do if they have any concerns about a child being abused.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Schools: Mental Health Services

Nicholas Brown: [113691] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of schools offered counselling services in (a) Newcastle upon Tyne East constituency, (b) the North East and (c) England in the last 12 months.

Nicholas Brown: [113692] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his department has updated guidance provided to schools on schools-based counselling to reflect the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Will Quince: The department does not collect regular information on the provision of counselling in schools and colleges in England, including the Newcastle upon Tyne East constituency. Our most recent survey of mental health provision in schools and colleges, published in 2017, found that 61% of schools and colleges (56% of primary schools, 84% of secondary schools and 93% of colleges) reported offering access to counselling services for their pupils and students. The full survey can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634726/Supporting_Mental-Health_survey_report.pdf.

Recently, findings from the department's COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey in July 2021, found that 96% of schools were providing support in school for pupils identified as having mental health needs. We recognise that school and college-based counselling is a valuable provision which can play a particularly effective role as part of a whole-school or college approach to wellbeing and mental health, within which support can come from a number of sources.

Our guidance on how to deliver high quality school-based counselling further supports schools who have decided that counselling support is appropriate for their pupils. The guidance outlines a strong expectation that over time, all schools will offer counselling services alongside other interventions. The current guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counselling-in-schools>. As a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have committed to publishing updated guidance in the 2022/23 academic year, to make sure it reflects the current context.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Schools: Safety

Kieran Mullan: [111752] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to ensure that pupils can learn safely in education settings.

Robin Walker: Protecting face-to-face education is our top priority. There is a package of measures and support in place to help reduce transmission and retain face-to-face teaching as much as possible. All education and childcare staff, and students of secondary school age and above should continue to test twice a week at home, 3 to 4 days apart with lateral flow device test kits.

Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged. As of 19 January, over 109.5 million tests (including household bubble and support bubble tests) have been completed in all education providers, including higher education. All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters, where eligible.

On 22 December 2021, the government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that a primary course of vaccination should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed. On 24 January, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced that the government will distribute a total of £8 million in funding to NHS England to support secondary schools with the vitally important in-school vaccination programme for young people.

In addition to over 353,000 CO2 monitors already delivered to education providers, we are also making a total of up to 9,000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-

funded education providers, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. We no longer recommend that face coverings are worn in classrooms, teaching spaces or when moving around the premises outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas. Directors of public health may temporarily, and exceptionally, advise individual providers experiencing outbreaks to use face coverings in either communal areas or classrooms, as part of their responsibilities in outbreak management. The contingency framework provides more information on the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare providers. This framework is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictionsin-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Teachers: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra: [112563] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of teachers self-isolating as a result of COVID-19 in January 2022.

Robin Walker: The department continues to monitor workforce absence very closely. The daily education settings survey asks schools and colleges to report data such as on-site attendance and COVID-19 absence. The most recent published data at national level is for 20 January 2022 and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/findstatistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronaviruscovid-19-outbreak>.

The department estimates that 4.5% of teachers and school leaders were absent from open schools due to COVID-19 related reasons on 20 January, down from 4.9% on 6 January.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Teachers: Pay

Virendra Sharma: [113720] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing teacher pay in the next financial year by more than the rate of inflation.

Robin Walker: The announcement at the Spending Review 2021 confirms that public sector workers will see pay rises as the recovery in the economy and labour market allows a return to a normal pay-setting process. This marks an end to the temporary pay pause in the 2021/22 financial year.

This year's remit to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) reiterates the government's commitment to raising starting salaries to £30,000 and seeks recommendations for pay awards in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. The department's written evidence to the STRB will outline its proposals for pay awards for the next two years, taking account of this commitment and the wider economic context. This is due to be published later this month. The STRB will provide their report in the summer and then the government will publish its response to the report.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Turing Scheme

Damian Collins: [111553] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools in receipt of funding

from the Turing Scheme for the 2021-22 academic year will have flexibility to schedule their projects beyond August 2022 in the context of those projects having been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Alex Burghart: Schools have the flexibility to change both the destination and the timing of their projects within the 2021/22 academic year and should consider running placements later in the current academic year if they find their planned dates are impeded by COVID-19. The funding period for Turing Scheme projects for the 2021/22 academic year ends on 31 August 2022. The Turing Scheme was allocated funding as part of the Spending Review 2020 to be distributed to Turing Scheme beneficiaries for the delivery of mobilities during the 2021/22 academic year.

In line with government spending requirements, any government funding must be used within the period that it has been allocated for. The Turing Scheme has had funding confirmed for the next three years as part of the Spending Review 2021, and providers that could not deliver their mobilities in academic year 2021/22 are encouraged to apply again if they wish to run their activity in academic year 2022/23.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Literacy and Numeracy: Teaching Methods

Rachael Maskell: [114816] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will commission a professionally-led review of the effectiveness of the (a) phonics screening check in year one, (b) the autumn term phonics screening check in year two, (c) key stage 1 SATs in year two, (d) multiplication tables check in year four and (e) key stage 2 SATs in year six.

Robin Walker: In 2017, the government carried out a consultation into primary assessment in England, with the aim of creating a settled policy in this area. The consultation received over 4,000 responses from a diverse range of backgrounds and specialisms, providing a broad and informed range of views that informed policy on the current primary assessment system. We are now reaching the end of the programme of reform to the current primary assessment system that arose as a consequence. As such, the department has no current plans to undertake further major reform.

Thursday 3 February 2022

Schools: Absenteeism

Bob Seely: [114924] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Centre for Social Justice's report entitled *Lost but not forgotten: the reality of severe absence in schools post-lockdown* published in January 2022, what estimate he has made of the number of children who are absent from schools (a) by education authority and (b) who are eligible for schooling on the Isle of Wight as of 31 January 2022.

Robin Walker: Overall absence data is collected in the termly school census collection and figures for January 2022 are not yet available at this time. Full year figures for the 2020/21 academic year will be available from 24 March 2022, including by amount of absence. The department currently publishes on-site attendance and COVID-19-related absence data at a national level on a fortnightly basis and at a local authority level on a half-termly basis. Data covering 31 January 2022 will be published routinely, on this basis.

The latest published local authority level data ends in Week 50 2021. During the 2021 autumn term, at a national level, on average 89.8% of pupils were in attendance onsite and 2.3% were absent for COVID-19-related reasons. Over the same period, on the Isle of Wight, 88.5% of pupils were in attendance on-site

and 2.9% were absent for COVID-19-related reasons. The full most recent national, regional and local authority data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. National level pupil data can be found in Table 1B of the underlying data files, whilst local authority data can be found in Table 1C.

Thursday 3 February 2022

Vocational Education: Qualifications

Shabana Mahmood: [113079] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his department has made of the impact on providers of the Department's proposed timeline of one year for withdrawing funding for Applied General Qualifications.

Shabana Mahmood: [113080] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that education providers are supported in making changes to their curriculum offer that will be necessary following the withdrawal of funding for Applied General Qualifications.

Shabana Mahmood: [113081] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his department has been made of the potential cost to (a) providers and (b) the public purse for the changes to providers' curriculum offer that will be necessary following the withdrawal of funding for Applied General Qualifications.

Shabana Mahmood: [113082] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not impacted adversely by the withdrawal of funding for Applied General Qualifications.

Alex Burghart: The department will continue to fund a range of qualifications similar to current Applied General qualifications that can be taken alongside and as alternatives to A levels where they meet new criteria for quality and necessity. These qualifications will continue to play an important role for students taking mixed programmes with A levels and to support progression to higher education in areas where there are no A levels or T Levels.

Overall, we expect the impacts of our reforms to be positive because students will have access to higher quality qualifications in future, including new T Levels. This will put students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in a stronger position to progress into further study or skilled employment. We are committed to supporting students to progress onto T Levels in future and have launched the T Level Transition Programme for those who are not yet ready to progress to a T Level but have the potential to succeed on it after some further preparation.

We will also be exploring further through the upcoming consultation on study at level 2 and below what additional forms of support students may need to be ready to move onto A levels and other academic qualifications at level 3. The impact assessment published alongside the response to the level 3 review consultation recognises that there will be some cost to providers in implementing changes, but we have not made an estimate of the overall cost to providers of changes stemming from the review.

The updated impact assessment published alongside the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill in October 2021 provided some estimates of costs of providers familiarising themselves with the new qualification categories. However, the most significant costs are likely to come from the implementation of T Levels and we have provided significant support for providers to enable them to switch. This includes over £400 million in capital funding to put in place the industry standard equipment and facilities needed to deliver the first four T Level waves, over £200 million to build capacity for industry placements delivery, and the launch of the T Level Professional Development offer, which has so far ensured that almost 8,500 teachers and leaders have the support they need to deliver T Levels well.

Our reforms to the qualifications landscape are rightly ambitious, but we know that we would be

wrong to push too hard and risk compromising quality. In November, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, adjusted the reform timetable to allow an additional year of T Level implementation before overlapping qualifications are removed. This extra year will allow us to continue to work hard to support the growth of T Levels and gives more notice to providers, awarding organisations, employers, students and parents so that they can prepare for the changes when they come in from August 2024.

Thursday 3 February 2022

Further Education and Schools: Coronavirus

Miriam Cates: [111769] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an (a) estimate the number of COVID-19 lateral flow tests that have been distributed to schools and further education colleges since 1 January 2021 and (b) assessment of the effectiveness of (i) lateral flow testing and (ii) the vaccination of 12 to 15-year-olds in minimising COVID-19-related pupil absences from full-time education.

Robin Walker: The testing programme is well-established in education providers. As of 19 January 2022, over 109.5 million tests (including household bubble and support bubble tests) have been completed in all education providers including higher education (HE). This includes:

- Over 31.1 million tests completed for primary schools and nurseries
- Over 72.4 million tests completed for schools and colleges
- Over 4.1 million tests completed for HE institutions

Lateral flow device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect asymptomatic COVID-19 cases. A recent report has shown that the accuracy of LFD tests was more than 80% effective at detecting any level of COVID-19 infection and likely to be more than 90% effective at detecting the most infectious people at the point of testing. On 26 November 2021, every single nursery, school, college, and HE institution was invited to order supplies of lateral flow tests. They will have received their allocation of the 31 million tests, in advance of their pupils, students and staff returning, through a dedicated supply channel.

Vaccinating children should help to reduce the need for children to have time off school and should reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools. Modelling by the Department of Health and Social Care published in September 2021 suggested that a single dose of the vaccine could reduce absences due to confirmed cases of COVID-19 by 33% among healthy 12 to 15-year-olds. This is assuming a 60% uptake. All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters, where eligible.

Friday 4 February 2022

Pupils: Absenteeism

Bill Esterson: [115889] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has received representations on the impact of marking children as absent for illness during COVID-19 isolation periods where the child is not unwell and is taking part in lessons at home on the attendance records of those children.

Robin Walker: Schools are responsible for recording absence in the register using the most appropriate code in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended. The attendance register is a legal record of why a pupil is not physically in school at any given time. We have advised schools throughout the COVID-19 outbreak that, where a pupil tests positive for COVID-19, they should be recorded as ill (Code I) in the register to reflect the fact that they were absent with an infectious

illness.

Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. Schools may keep a record of and monitor engagement with remote education, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register. Considering the disruption caused by COVID-19, last year we also amended the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, which meant that schools were not required to include attendance data in pupil end of year reports to parents. We are considering the position again for this academic year.

Friday 4 February 2022

Pupils: Dyslexia

Matt Hancock: [113095] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total number of pupils is in (a) state and (b) private schools; and what the total number of positive assessments for dyslexia is in (a) state and (b) private schools.

Will Quince: The total number of children in state schools is 8,342,521, as of January 2021. The total number of children in independent schools is 569,332, as of January 2021. The department does not hold the information requested about the number of children with dyslexia in state schools or independent schools. However, state schools report the number of pupils who have a specific learning difficulty, which usually includes dyslexia, as their primary need as being 156,797, and those for whom it is a secondary need as 27,237 pupils.

Friday 4 February 2022

Schools: Construction

Stephen Morgan: [114916] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Priority School Building programme, if he will publish the (a) nature of the work undertaken in each setting, (b) contractors used to complete that work and (c) total cost to the public purse of those works.

Stephen Morgan: [114917] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many complaints his department has received in relation to work undertaken as part of the Priority School Rebuilding Programme since that programme began.

Robin Walker: The Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) is rebuilding and/or refurbishing school buildings in the very worst condition across the country at 537 schools. A list of these is available at GOV.UK. Contractors for the programme were procured through Department for Education construction frameworks. Information about this is available on GOV.UK. We do not have a central record of any complaints made relating to PSBP. Any complaints and feedback received are treated seriously and acted on accordingly.

Stephen Morgan: [114918] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his department will publish its consultation on prioritised schools for the School Rebuilding Programme.

Robin Walker: The department consulted over the summer and early autumn 2021 on the approach to prioritising schools for remaining places in the programme. On 3 February 2022 we published the response to the consultation. The response can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/prioritising-schools-for-the-schoolrebuilding-programme>.

Responsible bodies can now nominate schools for the next round and guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuildingprogramme>.

We announced the first 100 schools in the programme in 2021, as part of a commitment to 500 projects over the next decade.

Friday 4 February 2022

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Agriculture Further Education

Rachael Maskell: [112616] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional support his department is providing to agricultural colleges to ensure that there is the workforce needed for the future.

Victoria Prentis: The Government wants to ensure that we have a sufficiently and appropriately skilled agricultural workforce able to meet the demands of the industry, and we engage regularly with representatives of the land-based education sector. We are supporting the establishment of The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) to ensure that the future workforce is supported in terms of learning and skills. Part of TIAH's role will be to create clear career development pathways and promote the sector as a progressive, professional, and attractive career choice.

Regarding funding for agricultural courses, we recognise that certain programmes in the land-based sector, when delivered in specialist settings, are particularly costly to deliver. Our funding rates for both young people and adults reflect this. For example, agricultural colleges could receive up to 75% more funding for each young person on an agricultural course, compared with the standard rate for other college courses.

The Chancellor announced on 27 October 2021 that we are investing an extra £1.6 billion for 16-19 education in 2024-25 compared with the 2021-22 financial year. This means an investment of up to £615 million in the 2022-23 financial year and is much needed support for our excellent FE sector. This follows the extra £691 million allocated in the previous two years.

Thursday 3 February 2022

Department of Health and Social Care

Mental Health: Young People

Rupa Huq: [106818] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing mental health research relating to the impact of social media on young people.

Gillian Keegan: [Holding answer 25 January 2022]: The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supports mental health research through various funding streams. In 2020/21, the NIHR spent £109.5 million on mental health research. However, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. The NIHR's funding is available through open competition for mental health research and we encourage researchers to submit applications in this area.

Monday 31 January 2022

Education: Mental Health Services

Louise Haigh: [113778] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2022 to Question 100615 on Education: Mental Health Services, how many FTE staff will be employed in each of the 11 planned mental health support teams.

Gillian Keegan: The information requested is not yet available. However, a mental health support team will typically be made up of eight whole time equivalent (WTE) staff, including four WTE education mental health practitioners, three WTE senior clinicians or higher-level therapists, 0.5 WTE team manager and 0.5 WTE administration support officer.

Louise Haigh: [113779] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2022 to Question 100615 on Education: Mental Health Services, how many school and college children will be covered by the 11 planned mental health support teams.

Gillian Keegan: The exact number of children and young people will be determined by local commissioners in consultation with education setting partners as part of service planning. Each mental health support team is expected to provide sufficient capacity to deliver services to 7,000 to 8,000 pupils, which will usually mean working with an average of 10 to 20 education settings.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Schools: Mental Health Services

Nicholas Brown: [113694] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on average how many schools does a mental health support team provide services to.

Gillian Keegan: On average, each mental health support team will work across 10 to 20 schools and colleges. Provision is agreed locally, with consideration given to health inequalities and disadvantage.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Department for Work and Pensions

Employment: Young People

Julian Knight: [113052] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her department plans to take to support young people aged 16 to 24 in (a) Solihull and (b) England to find employment.

Mims Davies: The Plan for Jobs provides a comprehensive package of support for young people, including the Youth Offer and Kickstart. The Kickstart scheme is dedicated to helping 16 to 24-year-olds at risk of long-term unemployment develop their skills and experience through fully funded six-month jobs. As of the 31st January 2022, over 130,000 Kickstart jobs have been started by young people. The DWP Youth Offer provides intensive work search support to young people aged 16 to 24 on Universal Credit and in the Intensive Work Search group. It includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches for young people with complex needs and additional barriers, and over 150 Youth Hubs across England, Scotland, and Wales. In Solihull, Support for Schools advisers are engaging with secondary schools across Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), including supporting a recent careers fair at Solihull College.

Solihull Youth Hub in Chelmsley Wood is co-located and co-delivered with SMBC to support young people into employment, education, and training opportunities.

We are also working with Solihull Children in Care team to ensure that all 16 to 24-year-olds leaving care are included in the Universal Credit advance claim process and receive Work Coach support. We continue to work with partners to deliver job fairs and Kickstart employer events as part of our commitment to supporting young people into sustainable employment.

Friday 4 February 2022

Kickstart Scheme: Expenditure

Seema Malhotra: [113106] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total cost of the Kickstart Scheme has been for her department as of 27 January 2022.

Mims Davies: The National Audit Office (NAO) report on the Kickstart Scheme was published in November 2021. This report contains details on spend as of the end of September 2021. You can access the NAO report [here](#). Information relating to Kickstart grants will be published by the Cabinet Office on the Government website in due course, as is standard practice for all Government general grants. This can be viewed [here](#). To note, this information is normally published approximately a year after the financial year end and includes grant value and recipients.

Friday 4 February 2022

House of Lords

Schools: Finance

Lord Storey: To ask Her Majesty's Government what will be the percentage reduction of school improvement funding to schools in the financial year 2022–23, compared to the financial year 2021–22. [HL5596]

Baroness Barran: Mainstream school budgets will see an average 5.8% year-on-year per pupil cash increase in financial year 2022-23 in England. This is taking Dedicated Schools Grant allocations together with the schools supplementary grant announced in December 2021. Schools can fund school improvement from this budget.

In addition, in financial year 2021-22, we provided approximately a further £45.3 million to local authorities, through the local authority school improvement monitoring and brokering grant, for their core school improvement functions relating to maintained schools. This is due to taper next year to reflect the reduced numbers of maintained schools.

In financial year January 2022, we announced that we are reducing the rate at which this grant is paid by 50% in 2022-23 as a means of transitioning to full removal of this grant. This will bring the maintained sector better into line with the academy sector, who fund this type of activity from school budgets.

The exact value of this grant in 2022-23 will depend on the numbers of maintained schools in each local authority when the grant is paid in April and September 2022. We also continue to make available substantial support to both academy and maintained schools at low or no cost, including our network of curriculum and behaviour hubs, our world-class teacher development system, and our offer of free support

from a National Leader of Education or strong multi-academy trust for schools that Ofsted judge require improvement.

Wednesday 2 February 2022

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