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Governance Digest

A Termly Newsletter for Liverpool Governors and Trustees

Contents

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Parents' Views on Attendance

A recent report from Public First has sought to understand parents' views on school attendance.

The findings have been described as 'essential but sobering reading'.

The report uncovered a stark shift in parental attitudes towards school attendance due to the pandemic and strike action and a severe breakdown of the traditional home-school partnership.

Many parents, across all social groups, no longer believe that it is essential for the children to attend school every day. Overall absence rates in the UK have reached a record high at **7.5%**, up from **4.7%** in 2018-2019 before the COVID pandemic.

Introduction

Attendance in schools is in crisis, with profound consequences both for our education system and for society more widely. For decades, daily attendance at school - by every pupil, every day, throughout term time - has been part of the social contract between schools and families.

This is no longer the case. The closure of schools during the pandemic, compounded by the subsequent shift in attitudes towards wellbeing and rising mental health problems in young people, as well as the cost-of-living crisis and enduing industrial action, all seem to have contributed to a gulf in expectations between families and the state.

Poor attendance at school has serious implications for children and young people. Lower attendance is correlated with lower attainment outcomes for pupils at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. Data from the 2022-2023 academic year for the end of Key Stage 2 shows that **71%** of pupils who had **99%** attendance or above achieved expected standard in reading, writing and maths, compared to only **50%** of pupils with **90%** attendance. This drops to only **42%** of children achieving the expected standards with **85%** attendance, and the pattern continues; as attendance drops, so does attainment.

Progress at Key Stage 4 is also correlated to attendance.

Pupils who missed less than **1%** of sessions across Year 10 and 11 had an average P8 score of **+0.73**, while those who missed **50%** of sessions or more had an average score of **-2.83**. Moreover, the impact of lower attendance is larger for economically disadvantaged pupils. Regular school attendance is also associated with a wider set of social, health and civic benefits, and school-based interventions are shown to have a significant positive impact on pupils who are struggling; as such, school attendance underpins holistic wellbeing for young people.

The crisis in attendance is increasingly highlighted in the media and is gaining political traction. There is a plethora of quantitative data on attendance, gathered by schools and published by the Department for Education on a weekly, termly and yearly basis that demonstrates the breadth and depth of the issue. However, while this data paints a stark picture, it does not tell us anything about why attendance rates have plummeted following the pandemic.

The report sought to understand the views of the parents and the lived experiences that lie beneath attendance statistics. It takes a qualitative approach, focus-grouping parents from across the socio-economic spectrum in order to understand their views on school attendance. It begins to examine some of the potential ways in which those working both within the education system and more broadly could increase school attendance.

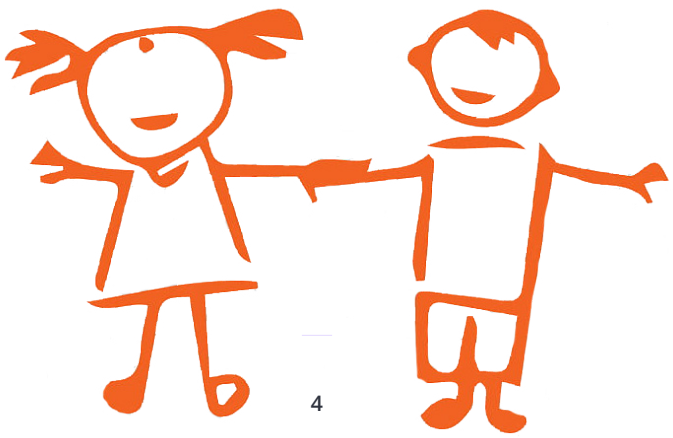
Although some of the parents expressed disappointment at responses to attendance issues, the frustrations were not about individual schools and the report should not be read as such. Many specifically highlighted it was not about particular schools or teachers. For others, it was clear that their frustration with school was - at least in part – due to their inability to access any other support. It is clear from speaking to them that the social contract between schools and parents is profoundly broken and that it will take a colossal, multi-agency effort to rebuild it.

Attendance has always been a symptom rather than a cause, a manifestation of complex issues across the education system and beyond. The report covers many of these issues; from teacher retention and recruitment to healthcare provision, from mental health to poverty, parents have sought to highlight the interconnected nature of the challenges they experience.

As the cost of living continues to bite, sending thousands of families into a cycle of poverty, housing instability and poor mental and physical health, there are fears that we may not have reached the lowest ebb of school attendance.

School attendance looks set to worsen, with terrifying implications for young people and their families.

The report attempts to address the question of why attendance is in crisis by listening to families, parents and carers.



Context

Since the pandemic, attendance in schools has plummeted. Overall absence rates remain stubbornly high at **7.5%**, up from **4.7%** in 2018-2019 (the year before the pandemic) and only down by a tenth of a percentage point from **7.6%** in 2021-2022. **22.3%** of pupils were 'persistently absent' from school in the 2022-2023 academic year, defined as when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to **10%** or more of their possible sessions. The figure has barely changed since 2021-2022, when it sat at **22.5%**, despite a supposed post-pandemic return to normality and increasing political interest in the issue. In comparison, in 2018-2019, the year before the pandemic, persistent absence rates were 1**0.9%**.

The 'attendance gap' continues to widen, with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds significantly more likely to be both absent and persistently absent than their peers. In 2022-2023, **37.9%** of disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent. Disadvantaged pupils are more than twice as likely as their non-disadvantaged peers to be persistently absent, for whom persistent absence rates stood at **16.7%** in 2022-2023. Moreover, whereas persistent absence rates among non-disadvantaged pupils have fallen by **0.8%** (from **17.5%** in 2021-2022), persistent absence from pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds has worsened by **0.5%** from **37.2%** in 2021-2022.

The attendance crisis is being felt more acutely in secondary than primary schools. Absence rates in primary schools were **6%** in primary and **9.3%** in secondary. Persistent absence rates in primary schools for 2022-2023 were **17.2%**, in comparison to **28.3%** in secondary schools. These figures were **8%** and **13.7%** respectively in 2018-2019. Persistent absence is highest in special schools, which have persistent absence rates of **38.7%**, in comparison to **28.8%** before the pandemic.

Finally, attendance varies by region, although attendance rates outside the capital are significantly lower than in London, which has the lowest rates of persistent absence. The attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is significant in every region. The South East has the largest attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils at **6.3%** whereas London has a relatively smaller gap at **3.3%**, although across all regions, attendance remains significantly lower than before the pandemic.

Headline Findings

1. Covid has caused a seismic shift in parental attitudes to school attendance that is going to take a monumental, multi-service effort to change.

There was consensus across the socioeconomic spectrum that Covid-19 had fundamentally altered the relationships between families and school. Lockdowns, while essential during the pandemic for controlling the spread of Covid-19 and saving lives, have left an enduring legacy.

There has been a paradigm shift in the view of parents. Pre Covid, ensuring your child's daily attendance at school was seen as a fundamental element of good parenting. Post Covid, parents no longer felt that to be the case, and instead view attending school as one of several – often competing – options or demands on their child on a daily basis, against a backdrop of a more holistic approach to daily life.

Many of these trade-offs are discussed subsequently in this report including mental health and wellbeing, holidays and wider 'family time', physical health and logistical demands.

A 'Pandora's Box' has been opened and it will be incredibly difficult to close it again.

2. It is no longer the case that every day matters – at least from the perspective of parents.

Parents across the socio-economic spectrum shared the feeling that each individual school day was not valuable. It is no exaggeration to say that there has been a complete change in the way parents understand their relationship with mandatory full-time education. This appeared to be particularly acute for younger pupils and those who are not taking external exams (SATs, GCSEs and A Levels). This sentiment was expressed slightly differently, but was consistent across the different social groups.

Parents agreed that every school day could not possibly be that important, given that so much time had been lost to lockdowns and strikes. Moreover, there was a sense from parents that other elements of their lives were just as, important as attending school, if not more so.
All subsequent findings should be seen through this crucial lens.

3. There has been a fundamental breakdown in the relationship between schools and parents across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Parents spoke openly about the breakdown of relationships between schools and families, although this manifests differently across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Amongst poorer parents (social groups D and E), this was discussed in terms of a lack of care for pupils and families and a mistrust of school. Amongst more affluent parents (social groups A, B and C) this manifest mostly in an ambivalence to school and an underlying resentment regarding an intrusion which ran contrary to parents' expectations around family life.

4. Attendance currently has an Other People's Children challenge.

While almost all parents were unsurprised that attendance rates had dropped since the pandemic, they did not think there was any problem with their own children's absence rates. We term this

Other People's Children challenge. This was driven by two key beliefs:

- Their children's attendance was very good (regardless of whether this would be officially seen in that way) and they 'didn't keep their kids off' to an unreasonable extent.
- When their children did miss school, it was for a very good reason.

Therefore, any problems with the rate of absence and the reasons for absence were driven by 'other people's children', and were not their responsibility.

5. The mental health crisis in young people is a huge, compounding issue around attendance.

Parents, particularly those of secondary children, talked about the big rise in anxiety they saw both in their own children and in their peers. Parents had significant concerns around mental health issues, but also about wider wellbeing. This was reflected in additional mental health days' where children were too tired, stressed or anxious to attend school. These days of absence were not necessarily (although sometimes) accompanied by diagnosis of mental health problems, but were commonly associated with a broader sense of protecting and supporting their children. This was seen most acutely in lower social groups.

Parents felt that the state had a wider role to play, and that a crisis in CAMHS was creating a devastating ripple effect on education. Parents in social group D and E in particular spoke very personally of the challenges their children were facing, including their difficulties in navigating the system. They pinned the blame squarely on schools, but this could well be a reflection of schools as the only service that they could (almost) always access.

6. Term-time holidays are now entirely socially acceptable across all socio-economic groups.

There has been a radical shift in the way term time holidays are viewed, and the scale at which they are being taken.

The taking of term-time holidays was almost universal. A huge proportion of parents across all social groups talked openly about taking their children on holiday during term-time, and those that did not were very sympathetic to it, with several suggesting that they would do the same if the circumstances were right for them.

7. The cost-of-living crisis is driving more families into poverty, and this is an underlying driver of poor attendance in families from lower and no-income groups.

The cost-of-living crisis was touched on by many parents, across all social groups.

For those in poorer social groups, particularly in D and E, poverty underpinned much of the discussion. Wealthier parents spoke less about the direct impact of the cost-of-living crisis on them and their families, but there was widespread awareness that this was causing increasing problems for those families who were already struggling financially. Parents were deeply empathetic towards families who might be struggling with attendance issues as a result.

8. Despite popular political and media perception, the increase in parents working from home is not driving the attendance crisis.

Politicians and the media have made much of the impact of increasing numbers of parents working from home more regularly post-Covid, and the potential negative impact of this on attendance. This hypothesis has not been borne out in our research – parents emphatically did not feel that working from home allowed them to facilitate having their children off school.

9. School level attendance systems feel increasingly draconian to families, and yet they are not sufficiently robust or accurate. This undermines the relationship between school and families.

There was widespread concern from parents across all social groups that communication from schools around attendance was excessive, confusing and not always accurate. Parents wanted a different form of communication from schools, and above all, for it to be accurate. The lack of faith in school level systems undermined school-parent relationships, as parents did not trust that their child's attendance was being tracked accurately.

Inaccuracies in attendance data also have significant implications for data collection across the wider system. If individual and school-level data is not correct, this will distort the national picture and undermine the policy solutions based upon it. Some parents were frustrated about school policies around absence, particularly sickness and how it impacted on their child's attendance.

10. Sanctions are seen as both irrelevant and antagonistic across all parent groups.

Parents were uniformly unsupportive of sanctions, which were seen as both irrelevant to the discussion on attendance, and actively antagonistic.

There was absolutely no shame in 'playing the game' in order to avoid fines, e.g. by misleading school about children being ill when they were actually on holiday.

Suggestions around incentives were often met by a level of gentle mocking, on the basis that since parents already sent their children to school when they felt it was appropriate to do so, incentives were not going to change that.

Recommendations

The breadth and depth of the attendance crisis can seem overwhelming, and this research paints a bleak picture of the current situation. Attendance is a manifestation of many other issues across the education system, as highlighted in this report. Yet we know attendance correlates with both the core purpose of schools - strong attainment outcomes – and the many holistic benefits schools provide.

These recommendations are built on the voices of the parents spoken to. They reflect the wide-ranging nature of the attendance crisis, and the gravity of it. They are system-level recommendations for a systemic problem.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen a seismic shift in attitudes towards attendance. We now need a seismic shift in how we address the challenge.

1. There needs to be a review of how schools and the wider education system communicate with parents and the messaging.

'Every day matters' is seen as hollow, and it is not engaging parents. We do not disagree with the premise that every day matters, but parents no longer believe in this messaging. Doubling down on this seems futile unless we can re-engage parents.

2. Fines are deeply unpopular with parents across the social spectrum. The efficacy and implementation of fines should be reviewed and potentially abolished.

There are no silver bullets or quick fixes that will solve the attendance crisis, and fines in their current form are not the solution. Tackling absence for the long term takes trust between parents and schools. Not only do fines fail to change parent behaviour, they also undermine the relationships between schools and parents, and may well be making the situation worse.

First, review the way in which fines are implemented across England. Standardising practices nationally through statutory guidance would drive a shared, national understanding of attendance challenges. Second, undertake evaluation into the impact of fines on attendance. If fines are shown not to improve attendance, consider abolishing them.

3. Provide intensive, nuanced support to families for whom attendance is a significant issue.

Where attendance is a significant issue, schools need to be empowered to work with the family to address the underlying causes. This is key to long term improvements. Engaging 'parents as partners' is crucial in tackling attendance; how, when and by whom parents are spoken to matters hugely.

4. Better joined up working and signposting to the appropriate agencies would ensure that those best placed to offer support were doing so.

Schools are often blamed by parents for failures in other areas of the system, including CAMHS, the NHS, housing support and the welfare system. Better join up between these different agencies to holistically address the wider challenges that impact attendance would enable schools to focus on providing the educational support they have expertise in.

A clearer understanding of which agencies could and should address wider issues that families are experiencing would also reduce 'school blaming' whereby parents hold schools accountable for all problems in their lives. This would improve school-parent relationships.

5. Improve the accuracy of school-level attendance monitoring systems so that information shared with parents is accurate.

Improving school-level monitoring systems would boost confidence from parents that the information they are being given about their child is accurate. Reducing incorrect information would improve school-parent relationships and allow schools to better target their support.

6. Highlight the importance of coding attendance – it is impossible to design strategies without this.

If national-level attendance data is inaccurate, all policy interventions flowing from it will be predicated on incorrect findings. Working with schools to ensure attendance data is coded and in-putted accurately should be a priority for the Department for Education. The findings of this research underscore the importance of work already underway on attendance tracking.

7. Other strains on education system are manifesting in the attendance crisis – better-funded schools will have better attendance.

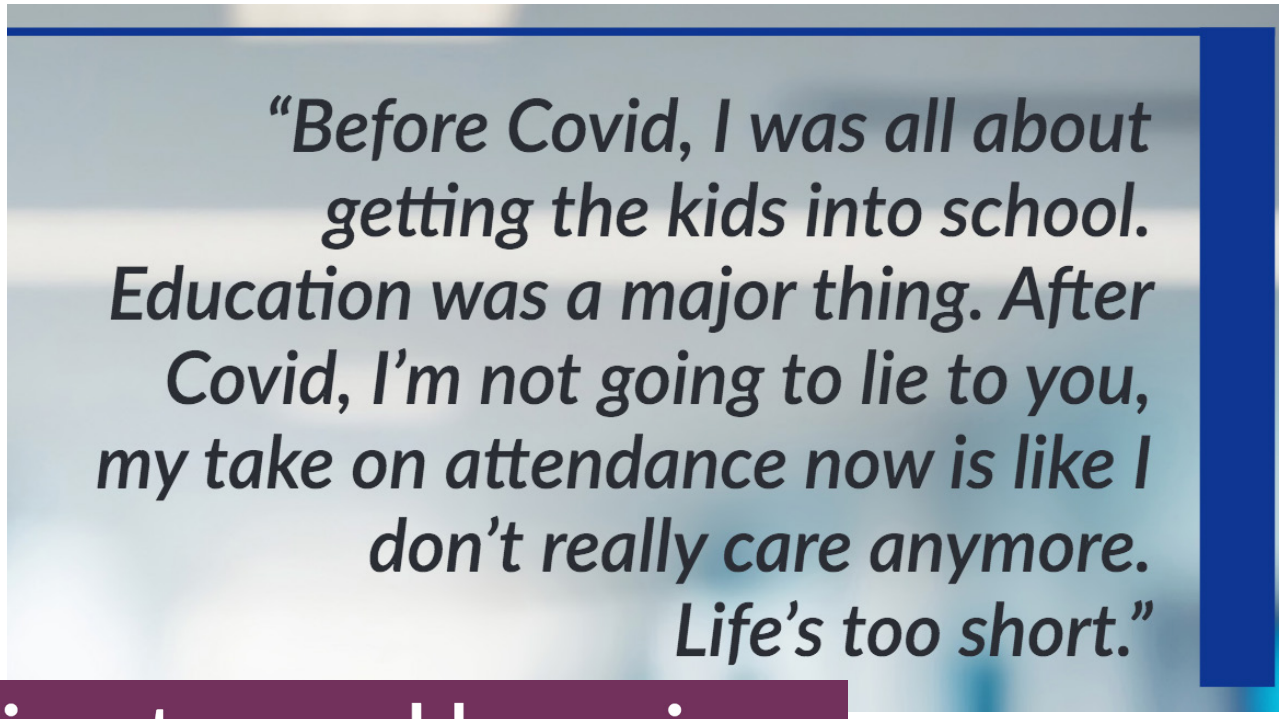
Many of the broader contemporary challenges across the education system can be seen in the attendance crisis. Recent industrial action, teacher retention and recruitment problems, the lack of investment in school infrastructure and the reduced levels of school funding are all putting strain on the system. Attendance is partly a product of these overlapping challenges.
Solving these problems will require significant additional funding across the system, but such funding would impact attendance positively.

8. SEND and CAMHS are significant factors in the attendance crisis, investing in these two areas will significantly improve attendance.

While funding wider systems will have an impact on attendance, SEND and CAMHS are two chronically underfunded areas of the system where demand is growing. Children who are not supported adequately are unable to access the education system. This can be seen in both the national attendance data and this research.

Preventative measures to support better mental health and wellbeing of all pupils would reduce demand for intensive mental health support. Increased funding and lower thresholds for early intervention for mental health support may help to prevent escalation at a later point.

Public First's Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis can be viewed or downloaded **here**.



Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis

September 2023

Dr Sally Burtonshaw
& Ed Dorrell

Parents are increasingly willing to challenge school rules in England, according to the head of Ofsted.

In her final annual report, His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, who stepped down at the end of 2023, says the "unwritten agreement" ensuring families take their children to school and respect the policies, in return for a good education, has been fractured and restoring the contract between parents and schools will take time.

This report reviews education and children's social care over the last academic year but also considers the changes and challenges of the last seven years of Amanda Spielman's tenure as HMCI.

Introduction

While the pandemic caused many problems, exacerbated others and continues to limit progress in various ways, there are still reasons to be optimistic. Recovery is continuing and happening faster than we might have expected. We are seeing real and lasting strength in education: curriculum has improved in nearly all the subjects on which we have reported; the teaching of reading in primary schools is significantly better; well-structured teacher training is yielding results; and some local authorities are making substantial improvements in social care.

This progress should not be underestimated, and the remarkable efforts that have made it possible should be recognised. It's also important that children look forward to the future with confidence. Imbuing children with optimism – that they are prepared for and can rise to the challenges of the future – is a worthwhile end in itself.

But of course, optimism must be tempered by realism. Current realities in education and social care include stubborn gaps in children's learning, recruitment and retention issues, and increasing demands for additional services that are already overstretched. High demand for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and mental health services is particularly straining limited resources.

Reasons for optimism

Nevertheless, thanks to the incredible work of everyone in education and children's social care, we are seeing more reasons to be optimistic.

The effort going into making and teaching better curriculums in schools, colleges and even nurseries is very encouraging. Results are of course extremely important, and it is good that there is now much more attention being paid to how those results are being achieved: are children and learners truly building and sustaining the knowledge and skills that will take them forward in life?

This was a deliberate aim when we developed and introduced the education inspection framework (EIF), which has translated effectively into practice.

Giving proper time and thought to curriculum has also helped in the early years. This has been particularly important to a generation born into a socially distanced world, who have missed out on some socialisation as well as some early education. There is real value in what children learn in nurseries and with childminders about social interaction: how to relate to adults outside their family, play with other children, take turns, behave in a group. All this has underlined the importance of education in the early years.

Reading is another area where there are many positives. In primary schools, the teaching of reading has significantly improved. The quality of the reading curriculum and training for staff are better – though more is needed at secondary level for the weakest readers.

Over the past seven years, there has definitely been a marked increase in interest and policy development around further education. T-levels were one innovation and while **our review** highlighted the teething problems, the ambition to re-shape further education is clearly there. The skills agenda has re-energised the conversation about post-16 education.

The most recent announcement of a new Advanced British Standard curriculum model and qualification shows that policy thinking continues to develop. The announcement also clearly recognised that funding will be needed to bring the amount of teaching our post-16 learners receive up to internationally competitive levels. That would make a real difference and be a welcome development at a time when workforce skills are a national priority.

The social contract

In education in particular, improvements are faster and more sustainable when providers (an ugly word, but otherwise I must laboriously repeat a list each time) work in concert with parents. This year, there is evidence to suggest that the attitudes of some parents are falling out of alignment with those of schools in particular. The social contract between parents and schools has been coming under pressure on a number of fronts.

School absence has been a stubborn problem since the pandemic. As so often, it is the children who most need the full benefit of education who are missing the most. Absence is particularly noticeable in secondary schools, but it is a problem for all year groups, all ages, in all demographics and for children with and without special needs. Across society, there is less respect for the principle of a full-time education.

The correlation between levels of absence and educational attainment is well known. Frequent absence also limits the wider benefits of school. There's a great deal that children learn in schools outside classroom lessons. We are also concerned about the increase in pupils on part-time timetables, which can help children adjust to school in the short-term but need to be part of a plan to begin or return to full-time schooling. Left too long, they can compound problems and result in children coming further adrift.

The remarkable flexibility many schools showed during the pandemic, and the adoption of remote education, may have had unintended consequences. The idea that school can be a pick-and-choose exercise needs to be debunked. The benefits of school go well beyond specific lessons and exam results. Only through full participation can children get all the benefits – of social skills, confidence and resilience as well as academic achievement. School is a package deal that cannot be entirely personalised to every child or parent's preferences.

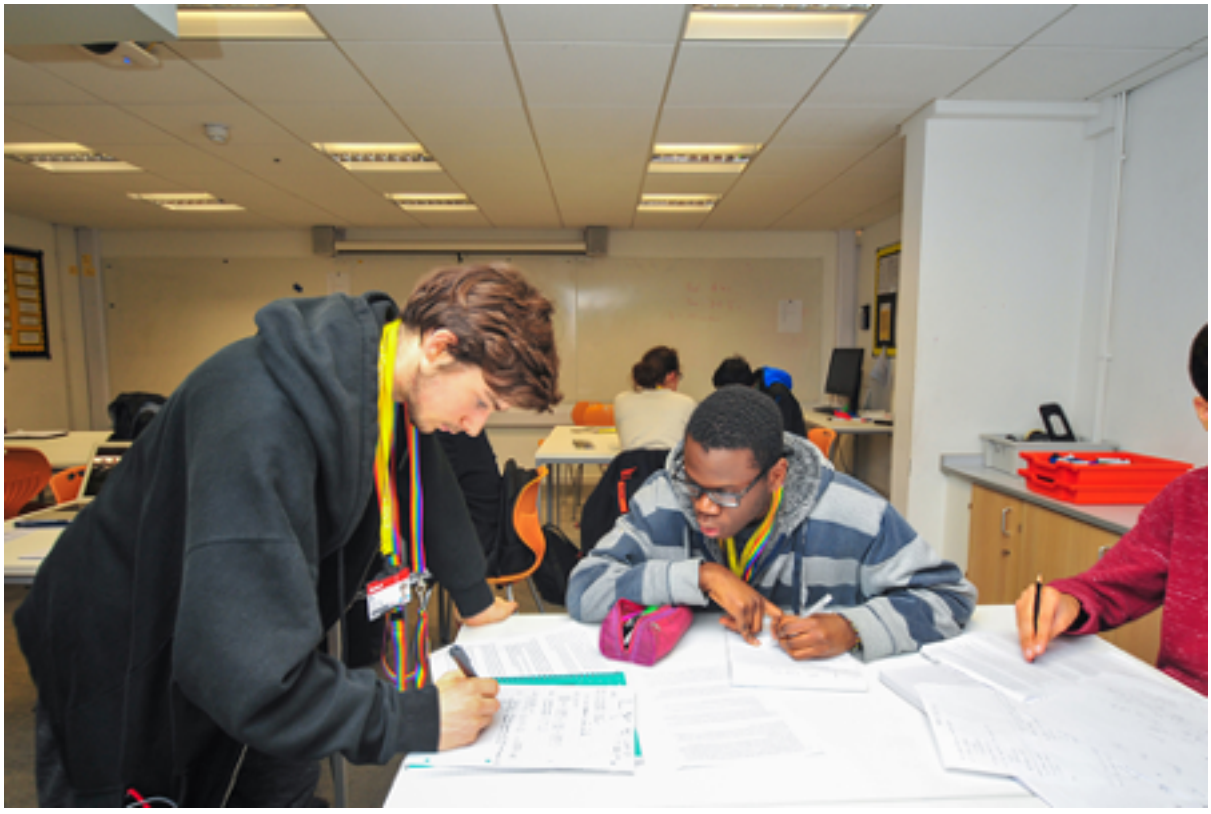
Of course, turning up is only part of the contract. Pupils also need to meet the reasonable expectations of a school and parents need to accept and support the school's policies and culture. Some parents are increasingly willing to challenge, whether by undermining discipline codes or ignoring uniform requirements or other rules.

We have also seen a greater tendency for parents to complain to us. The number of complaints rose in 2022–23, but we aren't seeing an increase in the number that warrant action on our part. We take all complaints seriously, but we must also be proportionate in our response. Most complaints can and should be handled at the school, or local authority or trust, level.

Schools and colleges are in an increasingly tricky position, where a routine decision can lead to prolonged public debate. More school issues – from seemingly straightforward uniform policies to the delicate choices around curriculum for relationships and sex education or the handling of transgender and other identity issues – are left in large part to headteachers, in a historic context that has made headteacher autonomy the general default position. When heads must exercise that autonomy in contentious areas, they can feel isolated and unsupported, and their decisions can be inconsistent.

There needs to be greater central guidance, for several reasons: for more consistent treatment of children and young people in different contexts; to support schools and others under pressure; and to make sure that what is and isn't accepted in schools isn't simply driven by the loudest voices at the expense of quieter ones.

Linked to this is the role schools play in building community cohesion, to use a term that has fallen out of fashion but seems particularly relevant as I write. Schools rightly want to bring context into their curriculum, and to encourage pupils into active civic engagement. But it is important that this does not accidentally bring division and antagonism into classrooms and playgrounds. No child should be afraid to go to school or to express a view in the classroom for fear of what their classmates may say to them or do to them, let alone their teacher. It is worth re-reading the Department for Education's (DfE) impartiality guidance for schools in this context.



Out of sight

At the most serious end of absenteeism are the children who drop completely from sight of the system. There are thousands of these children. This remains one of our biggest concerns and one that I have raised in every one of my annual reports.

This includes children in illegal unregistered schools. It often astonishes people to learn that illegal schools exist. They do – and we have been working to uncover them and prosecute their managers for a number of years. We have frequently found them operating in unsafe premises, led by unsuitable people, and teaching a very limited curriculum without even basic skills. We are still waiting for new legislation that will close loopholes and give us additional powers to close these places down.

As well as illegal schools, there are children in unregistered alternative provision (AP). AP is where children go when they cannot cope in school, or when their behaviour is too disruptive for them to stay in a mainstream school. Currently, not all AP needs to be registered or inspected. This leads to a wide disparity of provision – from excellent, through to places delivering substandard education, with very few safeguards, to some of the most vulnerable children.

Even when AP is registered, the quality of some is concerning. Graded inspection outcomes this year are worse for state-funded AP than for other schools. Tackling substandard unregistered AP and improving registered provision must be priorities.

The continued rise in the numbers of children needing SEND support and education, health and care (EHC) plans is a linked issue. Many local authorities are struggling to meet demands. Many pupils who are awaiting specialist placements are being referred to AP indefinitely or their parents see no option other than home-schooling, which suppresses the real scale of the issue.

Workforce

A consistent issue in recent years is retention and recruitment of staff.

In the early years, providers are being forced to use agency staff and apprentices to maintain the required staff–child ratios. If the staff aren't available, providers are forced to scale down provision, further contributing to a squeeze on places.

In schools, staff shortages are reducing expert teaching, increasing stress, limiting intervention when children struggle, and creating a barrier to teachers accessing training and development. And staff shortages also affect the professions that support children and families – with a knock-on effect for schools and social care providers. These include speech and language specialists, educational psychologists and health visitors.

Easing staffing pressures, improving funding models and providing more clarity and guidance for providers will all help sustain the positive trends that are beginning to emerge. But the national workforce is clearly constrained. Looking in the round at the workforce requirements of all the different public and voluntary services for children, especially those with SEND and those in care, might help to make sure that finite capacity is directed where it will have most value for children.

Conclusion

The evidence of this report shows that we can be optimistic about education and care in England. The pandemic has a long tail; significant challenges remain, but they are not intractable.

And optimism is a positive message to give to children at a time when they are assailed on all sides – sometimes prematurely – by the worries and concerns of the adult world. It is vital that children do not see their future as a tarnished inheritance. Children need optimism. They need space to grow and develop; to enjoy childhood; to relish their education; to build resilience and to become confident that they have a part to play as adults in making good lives and contributing to moving the world forward. This is needed before they are loaded with the heavier burdens of adult life.

For that to happen, we need vibrant, successful and positive education and social care sectors, able to attract new talent and continuously improve. The people working in education and care deserve recognition and support, not a narrative of decline. It's not a fair reflection of their work and it's not fair on the children whose lives they help to shape.

This generation of children has lived through difficult and destabilising times. We must make sure they grow up with the curiosity, confidence and passion to pursue their goals – and the education, skills and security to achieve them.

The full report can be accessed **here**.

> The report finds a broadly positive picture in all the sectors that Ofsted inspects and regulates. However, it draws particular attention to a troubling shift in behaviour, attendance and attitudes towards education since the pandemic.
>
> The report looks back at findings from inspection and regulation over the last academic year, from September 2022 to August 2023. Amanda Spielman – in her last Annual Report as His Majesty's Chief Inspector – also considers the changes and challenges she has seen during her 7-year term.

Beyond Ofsted

Published in November 2023, following an independent inquiry sponsored by the National Education Union (NEU), **Beyond Ofsted: an inquiry into the future of school inspection** provides a robust and carefully considered set of principles on which to build an alternative inspection system.

The report examines evidence from schools across the country and compares the current inspection system with those from other countries, taking lessons from the latter to build a set of recommendations.

Recommendations in summary

- Every school will conduct its own self-evaluation – the school performance review (SPR) – which it will report to stakeholders. The government will work closely with the whole sector to develop guidance on what the SPR should comprise, which might include mandatory and optional elements. Accountability will then be principally to parents and the wider community.
- Schools will work with an external school improvement partner (SIP), delivering on an action plan, informed by the SPR. Schools in a trust might have a SIP appointed from within that trust. Others would use a SIP provided by their local authority (LA). Some funding may be needed to increase LA capacity for this work.
- While they are working on the SPR, schools will engage in an ongoing dialogue with their SIP who will typically be experienced in school leadership and improvement. They would include serving head teachers.
- SIPs will validate the SPRs.
- The purposes of the SPRs are to enhance schools' capacity for self-improvement and to provide information to stakeholders. It would not be the means by which a school would be held accountable by the Department for Education (DfE) or by Ofsted.
- Safeguarding audits will be conducted annually by a separate body, under the oversight of a national safeguarding body. LAs will be able to take over the annual safeguarding visits when deemed ready by the national safeguarding body. The public sector equality duty would apply, for both pupils and school staff.
- The role of inspectors will change so that they focus on the governance of, and capacity for, school improvement and respond to any challenges faced, including the relationship between the school and the SIP. They would not routinely inspect teaching practice and pupil outcomes. For schools in a multi-academy trust (MAT), the inspection would focus on the capacity and approach of the trust to evaluating its schools' SPRs.
- The inspectorate will be reformed so that inspectors develop and maintain appropriate training and expertise in the area of school improvement, to be able to build the capacity of the school leadership team. This must include understanding the context of the school, including relevant expertise for specialist settings such as special schools and alternative provision. It must also include a thorough understanding of good school governance.

- Crucially, the inspectorate will be fully independent of government so that it can hold the Government, its policies, and the effects of these policies, to account through system-wide thematic inspections, including sufficiency of teacher supply.
- Our final recommendation is for an immediate pause of routine inspections to allow time to reset and regain the trust of the profession. Duty of care to the profession in order to develop collaborative learning cultures, which generate excellent professional skills and competencies, should be at the heart of any reform.

These recommendations are designed to restore trust and address the intensification of leader and teacher workload, while reforming a system which is ineffective in its role of school improvement

The inquiry's work

Ofsted is in need of major reform. Our research found that it is currently seen as not fit for purpose, and as having a detrimental impact on schools which some perceive as toxic. We acknowledge the need for quality assurance of schools as any institution in receipt of public money should be subject to accountability. However, we need to build trust back into the system so that it can work. The need for change is compelling and urgent.

The chair, UCL researchers and the advisory board have explored a range of models to inform the inquiry's vision of school inspection. Each model was based on a range of evidence from the survey and focus groups, international comparisons, research literature, comments from the advisory board and other stakeholders. Models proposed included systems where there is no inspection at all to a system similar to what we have now in England but with greater levels of support.

After considering a range of options, a hybrid model was chosen as the most impactful and appropriate given the inquiry's evidence and the unique trajectories of education policy in England. It is a combination of external accountability to parents, self-evaluation and long-term support at school level and inspection of the governance of, and capacity for, school improvement at the school group level.

We believe that it is essential for the health of the system as a whole that we build trust in the profession. This must be part of measures to urgently address the acute problems of recruiting and retaining people in the teaching profession. We need a system based on support which recognises and develops teachers' expertise, rather than one based on fear and compliance. We agree with the consensus that there should no longer be any single-phrase judgements in school inspection system.

Schools still need to be accountable to their local community, and better transparency of outcomes to parents through the proposed school performance review will do that. This should include surveying parents and pupils. We are persuaded by the international comparisons that self-evaluation through a long-term relationship with an adviser is the best approach to school improvement. This is best achieved by using a school improvement partner for external validation of the school performance review.

We are encouraged in this conclusion by our reflections on evidence from similar systems in other countries:

- Denmark, Estonia, Italy and Japan have no regular external school inspection but do require self-evaluation.
- Singapore has inspection as a compulsory part of self-evaluation; no overall grade is given. Depending on the outcomes, support will be given to the school to achieve the changes recommended by the inspection.
- South Korea sees self-evaluation as a key part of inspection, but also inspects schools directly.

This is not a punitive system but is orientated toward supporting schools in identifying issues, ways of addressing their shortcomings and the means of putting these changes into practice.

- Canada varies from province to province. In British Columbia external inspection is used as a verification of self-evaluation and to ensure that the school meets its legal requirements. Lessons may be observed, but the primary purpose is to verify the documents that the school publishes.
- The USA also varies from state to state. New York City uses a quality review to validate the data produced in a report card. Chicago has a report card with no external validation. Inspections are not experienced by the majority of American schools.
- Scotland's new proposals support the drive towards empowerment with a strong focus on self-evaluation and an establishment's capacity to improve.

We thus recommend removing Ofsted from direct contact with schools and reforming it to operate at the level of school group-level governance. Our proposals for inspection and accountability are focused on strong governance which should always secure good compliance with legal requirements and equally ensure that there is internal capacity for school improvement to meet the needs of every child in their care.

How would this work?

School-level quality assurance

This part of the model would involve the following elements:

- Schools conduct an annual self-evaluation of strengths and challenges and plans for improvement called a school performance review (SPR).
- The content of the SPR will be based on a list of contents agreed at national level, but schools can add/adapt according to context. This means that self-evaluation can be consistent but also appropriate and suitable to local context and community.
- The SPR should prioritise pupil and staff mental health and wellbeing, a broad and balanced curriculum, inclusive and supportive practices, and a sense of belonging, i.e. the school's environment where all can flourish personally and academically.
- This process will be supported and validated by a school improvement partner (SIP), who is trained to support school leaders in evaluation and improvement, and is appointed by the school's governing body. They will have an understanding of the school context.
- The validated SPR is published as an action plan. This will include areas of good practice that others can learn from, alongside aspects where they need to learn from others.

- There are no grades on the SPR and it is not used as part of school accountability to the DfE or Ofsted.
- There will be collaboration, peer review and mutual support via networking with local schools in MATs or appropriate clusters.
- Safeguarding is a vital component of accountability and is dealt with separately as detailed below.

School group-level accountability

Many schools are now in MATs. Others are in local authority control, some are in federations and in single academy trusts. These proposals can work effectively across all modes of governance; they can work equally for local authority schools with some resource from the DfE to LAs to rebuild their school improvement capacity. It is vital that capacity is built at local authority level as these have become seriously under-resourced in the last decade.

On this basis, school groups (including LAs and single academy trusts where relevant) would be inspected by Ofsted on a regular cycle of every three to five years.

The focus would be on their leadership and governance and capacity for accurate self-evaluation to address challenges and serve all learners' needs. Features would include:

- Examination of the governance of the delivery of school progress reviews and action plans.
- MATs, federations or school governing boards would need to demonstrate that their quality assurance, resource management, risk management and school improvement capacity were all sufficient, drawing on the information from school action plans and performance reviews.
- Inspections of governance would be published, but with no single-phrase judgement. If inspection found weakness in the quality and capacity for self-evaluation, they could recommend areas for improvement and further support. In the case of MATs and single academy trusts, this would be support to the members and the trust board as appropriate. For LAs, this would be support to the portfolio member of the LA cabinet for education and the director of children's services or their equivalent. If there is significant failure, they could impose an interim executive board to replace the governance body.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding matters, and we want it to be better than it currently is. It should be conducted separately under the governance of a national safeguarding body. It will eventually be the responsibility of LAs but, given that LA safeguarding competence has been allowed to erode due to lack of resourcing over the last decade, the national safeguarding body would have to carry out the routine inspections until LAs are deemed ready. Full and proper attention should be paid to safeguarding and other legal frameworks such as the Equalities Act. Failure to meet safeguarding requirements would require immediate responses from the school leadership, with a follow-up check in place before outcomes are published.

The work of inspectors

Ofsted inspectors' role and expertise will be enhanced in terms of being used constructively for thematic inspections and research reports, as well as their inspection of group-level governance. There is a critical role for them in capacity building in response to the many complex issues facing the education service – especially if they are seen as seen as independent of government.

Hence in this system, as well as inspecting governance, Ofsted would continue to exist, and would conduct research and thematic reviews to inform government policy and Ofsted. The chief inspector would be independent of government. Inspectors would be experienced and trained in the sectors they inspect. The existing right of parents to trigger an inspection would remain.

A pause

Given this fundamental and transformative change, we recommend an immediate pause to routine inspections. Parents and governing bodies will, however, retain the right to call for a school-level inspection if concerns are raised. Schools can request a school-level inspection, with schools currently designated Requires Improvement having priority.

Although these recommendations are based on research in the primary and secondary sector it is hoped that the model is applicable to other sectors and that its context-specific nature and focus on governance will be welcomed. These reforms would perhaps have impacts on Ofsted's other functions relating to early years and initial teacher education, and we would recommend more detailed reviews of their work in these areas too.

BEYOND OFSTED

an inquiry into the future of school inspection

AT A GLANCE

Authors

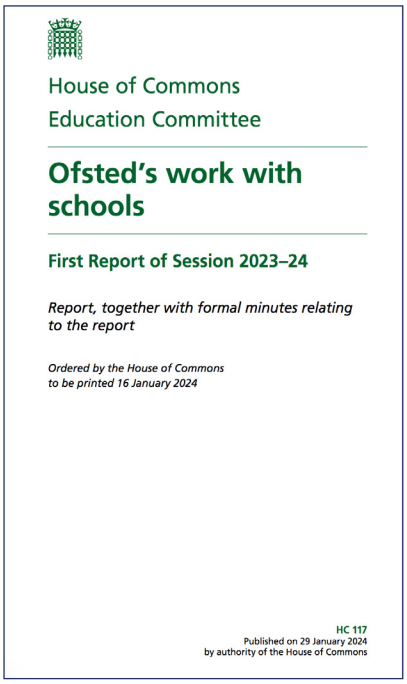
Jane Perryman
Alice Bradbury
Graham Calvert
Katie Kilian (UCL Institute of Education)

BEYOND OFSTED

UCL

Ofsted's Work with Schools

Launched in June 2023 to look at Ofsted's inspection of schools, with the aim of providing recommendations for the incoming His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), Sir Martyn Oliver, to take forward in 2024, the House of Commons Education Committee has **published its first report**.


House of Commons
Education Committee

Ofsted's work with schools

First Report of Session 2023–24

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 16 January 2024

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Summary

Ofsted was established in 1992 as an independent inspectorate of schools and is now responsible for inspecting and regulating a wide range of education and care settings. The inspectorate has been the subject of intensified public scrutiny and debate over the past year, especially following the tragic death of Ruth Perry, headteacher at Caversham Primary School, who took her own life in January 2023 after the school was downgraded from 'outstanding' to 'inadequate'.

This inquiry was not set up to look into the specific circumstances surrounding her case, but aimed to take a broader look at the way in which Ofsted inspects schools, and to develop recommendations for the new His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to take forward this year. However, we have taken careful note of the issues raised in the coroner's report and in the public debate more widely, many of which relate to the issues we have heard about in this inquiry.

The Committee will want regular updates on how Ofsted respond to the seven areas of concern set out in the coroner's report and we expect HMCI to report to this Committee on a six-monthly basis on Ofsted's progress in addressing these significant concerns. We extend our deepest condolences to Ruth Perry's family, friends and colleagues, and thank all of those who engaged with our inquiry at this difficult time.

There is broad agreement on the importance and value of an independent inspectorate in holding schools accountable and assessing their strengths and weaknesses. However, we heard strong concerns among many about the way in which the system is currently working. We heard that Ofsted has lost trust and credibility among many in the teaching profession and that it is perceived to have become defensive and unwilling to respond to criticism. The appointment of the new HMCI provides a crucial opportunity to reset and restore these relations and doing so should be a key priority for Sir Martyn Oliver in his first year in post.

The inspection process

There is a widespread view that school inspections are not currently carried out in sufficient length or depth to cover the full range of areas of a school's work. As a result, there is a risk that inspections are not giving an accurate picture of a school's performance. We accept that the resourcing of inspections is constrained by budget limitations, but think that, in the long term, Ofsted should be funded to carry out more in-depth inspections. In the shorter term, this could be achieved without the need for additional funding by reducing the frequency of inspections for some schools.

The short notice period also appears to be causing operational difficulties for many schools, particularly small schools. While we do not believe that schools should be given several weeks to prepare for inspections, we think there is a case to be made for extending the notice period slightly, to reduce the pressure on school leaders, and let schools know in which term they might anticipate an inspection. Ofsted should also explore ways in which it can improve its engagement with parents, pupils, governors, and trustees before and during the inspection process, to ensure that the voices of all groups are fully heard and taken into account.

We heard some concerning evidence regarding lack of relevant expertise among inspectors, and reports of poor behaviour by some inspectors. There appears to be a particular problem with inspectors lacking relevant experience in primary schools and in specialist education settings. This is exacerbated by high turnover among His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs). A high-quality inspection regime must ensure that inspectors have sufficient expertise in the phase and subject which they are inspecting. At a minimum, Ofsted must ensure that the lead inspector always has expertise in the relevant type of school and, in larger teams, that a majority of members of the team have the relevant expertise.

Following an inspection

The short and formulaic nature of inspection reports is limiting the extent to which they are useful to schools, and there is mixed evidence that parents find the reports useful despite being their intended audience. Alongside increasing the length and depth of inspections, Ofsted should also increase the length and depth of analysis in inspection reports to ensure that they are a useful tool for both schools and parents.

One of the most strongly criticised aspects of inspection is the single-word overall effectiveness judgement. We heard evidence that this does not capture the full detail of a school's work, and that it is a key cause of stress and anxiety for teachers and school leaders. While we recognise that the grades are closely linked to many Department policies and that any changes will require broader reform of the system, the extent of the criticism we have heard suggests that change is needed. Ofsted and the Department should work together to develop an alternative to the current single-word grade, looking at other jurisdictions to explore what has worked well outside the English context.

The intervention measures linked to the single-word grades are putting further stress on schools by creating a 'high-stakes' system of inspections. In particular, there is an overwhelming fear among headteachers of losing their job following a negative inspection outcome, which has been exacerbated by the extension of academy orders to schools with two consecutive judgements of 'requires improvement'. While there must be consequences for schools which are performing badly, the Department should assess whether this extension is proportionate, and publish guidance setting out the criteria by which decisions on academy orders are made. The Department and Ofsted should ensure that there is strong support available to school leaders during and following an inspection, and Ofsted must publish a clear policy, and train inspectors, on their approach to dealing with distress among school leaders during an inspection. There must also be a review of the support available to schools to help them improve following a negative inspection judgement, and proper accountability and scrutiny of the work of Regional Directors.

Ofsted's complaints procedure has come under heavy criticism, with many suggestions that the system amounts to the inspectorate "marking its own homework". Ofsted's proposed changes to the process are welcome, but do not go far enough to alleviate the concerns expressed. Ofsted and the Department should explore the option of setting up an independent body with the powers to investigate inspection judgements, and schools must be allowed to gain access to the evidence base used to reach a judgement when making a complaint.

The scope of inspections

We heard broad support for the 2019 Education Inspection Framework's (EIF) move away from focusing on data, but there appear to be some problems with how the framework has worked in practice. In particular, we heard concerns that it is less suitable for primary schools and small schools, and that it has generated additional workload for schools.

Ofsted should review the implementation of the framework in its planned evaluation this year, and work with the Department to undertake a programme of research to fully understand the causes of inspection-related workload pressure. Ofsted must also ensure that inspectors are taking a school's size and context into account in reports and judgements, to reflect and recognise the challenges faced by schools with high numbers of pupils from disadvantaged groups.

There have been many suggestions that safeguarding should be inspected separately from routine school inspections. Safeguarding is an essential aspect of every school's work, and we think there is a role for Ofsted in ensuring that schools are identifying and acting on serious safeguarding concerns.

However, we agree that there is merit in schools being audited more regularly for compliance with safeguarding procedures and recommend that the Department consult on the best approach to this. We have also heard the concerns about the policy of judging schools 'inadequate' solely on safeguarding issues, following the inquest into the death of Ruth Perry, and suggest that Ofsted should review its policy on this and ensure that schools are only being judged 'inadequate' in cases where they are fundamentally failing to keep children safe.

There have been repeated calls from this Committee and others for Ofsted to be able to inspect multi-academy trusts, which the Department has so far failed to deliver.

Given the significant role that trusts now play in the school system, this must be delivered as a matter of urgency.

The Department must authorise Ofsted to develop a framework for the inspection of trusts and ensure that Ofsted is appropriately resourced to develop their expertise in this area.

Ethnic Diversity in the Teaching Workforce

To build a more inclusive education system, the teaching workforce must be representative of the communities they seek to serve – and yet people of colour are considerably under-represented in the teaching workforce, especially among school leaders.

While this issue is widely recognised, with the Department for Education issuing a statement of intent to increase the diversity of the teaching workforce in 2018, progress to address this under-representation has, to date, been limited.

Mission 44, a charitable foundation working to build a fairer future in which every young person has the power to succeed, commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake an evidence review of existing research on the barriers and enablers to a more ethnically diverse teaching workforce.

The resulting report sets out the evidence to demonstrate what is known about ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce and key areas for action and improvement.

Key points summary

The issue

Despite being over-represented among applicants for initial teacher training (ITT), people of colour are considerably under-represented in teaching. Some **60%** of schools in England had an all-White teaching staff in 2021/22 and this is even more pronounced at senior level (with **86%** of schools in England having an all-White senior leadership team).

Why is there a lack of ethnic diversity in teaching and school leadership?

A key factor in the lack of ethnic diversity in teaching is the low acceptance rates of ethnic minority applicants onto ITT programmes compared with their White peers. While the reasons behind this disparity are not clear, there are two main areas of speculation in the literature: one suggestion is that White candidates have higher qualifications or more relevant experience; another suggestion is that there are some underlying sources of bias in favour of White applicants.

For example, this could emanate from ethnic bias in ITT entry assessments. Negative experiences during ITT could also help to explain why fewer trainee teachers of colour achieve qualified teacher status (QTS).

That said, retention is also significantly lower for teachers of colour than for their White peers. Beyond high workload, often cited reasons for leaving include:

i. Overt and covert racial discrimination from staff, pupils and parents;
ii. Disillusionment with their ability to make a difference for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; and
iii. A lack of opportunities for progression.

Which interventions are effective or promising?

While few interventions to date have been rigorously evaluated to assess effectiveness, there are some promising approaches in the field. The review highlighted the following strategies as potentially helpful.

Recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT)

- Strategies (such as advertising, job experience, events and tasters) to make a career in teaching more attractive to high achieving graduates of colour
- Alternative pathways to enter ITT for people of colour who do not have the currently required qualifications to apply.
- Strategies (such as name-blind applications, contextualised recruitment and conditional offers) to increase ITT acceptance rates for applicants of colour
- Structured support for applicants of colour/from disadvantaged backgrounds to provide help with their applications
- ITT organisational strategies (including course content on racial justice in education, EDI policies, careful selection of school experience venues and teacher educators of colour) to improve qualification rates of trainees of colour.

Retention in teaching

- Whole-school initiatives (such as EDI policies; and training for staff and leadership teams; an understanding of culturally responsive teaching and charter marks)
- Support and challenge for schools to diversify their teaching and leadership teams
- Career advice, development and support for teachers of colour.

Leadership progression and retention

- Training programmes tailored to the needs of aspiring leaders of colour
- Bursaries to enable teachers of colour to undertake leadership development
- Mentoring support from same-race teachers and leaders and access to professional support networks of same-race aspiring/practising leaders
- In-school coaching for newly-appointed headteachers of colour
- Autonomy for headteachers of colour to pursue their moral purpose with support from governing bodies and academy boards.

Conclusions and recommendations

The barriers to achieving ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce coalesce around the unequal treatment of teachers of colour in a system that was not designed with diversity in mind. To capitalise on the fact that people of colour are increasingly encouraged to enter teaching there must be complementary actions to support teachers of colour already in the profession to progress in their careers. Driving long-term, sustainable change will need people at all levels and from all ethnic backgrounds to take positive action on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

This requires us to identify and address all sources of inequality and monitor progress towards tangible goals. To achieve a more diverse teaching workforce in future, we will need to continue to make the case, redouble our efforts, support one another and celebrate our successes along the way.

Based on this review, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

- That attention is focused on making sure schools are providing a positive working environment for teachers and leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This includes training for staff, senior leaders and governors and use of whole-school initiatives such as comprehensive EDI policies and improvement plans. Those responsible for school governance should challenge schools to diversify their teaching and leadership teams.
- Although there are challenges to diversity at all stages of a teaching career, interventions in ITT must be a priority because of the gap in acceptance rates between applicants of colour and their White counterparts. A key priority is to investigate the causes of low acceptance rates for applicants of colour and use relevant strategies to address them. It is also recommended that ITT providers implement organisational strategies to improve ITT completion rates among trainees of colour, including implementing EDI policies themselves and ensuring that all sites selected for school experience demonstrate their commitment to EDI.
- All ITT programmes should include content on anti-racism as part of their curriculum to raise awareness of the issues among all trainees and to support trainee teachers of colour at the beginning of their careers.
- Interventions are needed to increase ethnic diversity in school leadership. Given the low current numbers of leaders of colour and the barriers they face, we should recognise the need to offer training, support networks and mentoring tailored to the needs of aspiring leaders of colour. There is also a case for bursaries and in-school coaching for new leaders of colour.
- Government action is important to help drive change across the system. There should be an actionable plan to increase ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce that is reflected in all policies across all parts of the system, accompanied by improvements in data collection and monitoring.
- The report also offers a series of recommendations for research to investigate the gaps in our knowledge. These include investigating the reasons for the low ITT acceptance rates for applicants of colour; studying the impact of culturally responsive teaching and identifying what would attract teachers and leaders of colour to teach in schools in predominantly White areas.

NGA Report on Governance Workload

Schools in England are governed by approximately 250,000 volunteers. They undertake this civic role in order that children and young people receive the best possible education.

The National Governance Association (NGA) has been monitoring their workload and challenges for many years, but recently there have been indications that the heightened intensity of governance is posing a threat to its sustainability, straining even the most dedicated volunteers and adding to recruitment difficulties. Over a quarter of all governance volunteers and a third of chairs are contemplating resigning, with the time and pressure of the role being the main drivers.

NGA conducted an extensive study during 2023 to gather further evidence to gauge the prevalence of workload pressures on volunteers, identify contributing factors, explore potential areas for responsibility reduction, and propose solutions.

Key findings on the pressure of governance

1. Increasing numbers of exclusions
Exclusion panels demand additional meeting time, huge amounts of preparation, specific training and often have a significant emotional impact and an impact on relationships with leaders.

2. Increasing numbers and complexity of complaints being escalated to the governing board complaints committee stage.

3. The challenges of the wider system increase the challenges for governing boards, including:
- Funding pressures staff recruitment and wellbeing
- Ofsted pressures
- Increasing safeguarding concerns
- Increasing SEND needs
- Maintenance of buildings

4. The widening expectations on schools to support families apply to governing boards too, including:
- Mental health challenges for pupils and families
- Poverty and cost of living increases
- Reduced public and third sector services for families

5. Increasing board vacancies leads to pressures on others

- Despite boards getting smaller, vacancies are at an all-time high, and the sector is seriously struggling to recruit the 20,000 additional volunteers needed, a situation exacerbated by changes in society since the pandemic.
- The expectations make it very difficult to recruit and retain those with many other commitments, in turn acting against some of the attempts to diversify boards, so that the workload burdens are shouldered by a reducing number of hard-pressed volunteers.
- The work of recruiting and inducting new volunteers falls to the same group of experienced volunteers (with the support of their governance professional).

6. The responsibility of chairs feels greater as they take on additional work and look at ways of reducing pressures to retain others, in turn hindering succession planning.

7. Inefficient board practice and dysfunctional dynamics exasperates volunteers and makes poor use of their time; the issues reported included:

- Ineffective clerking and chairing
- Poor reporting and late reporting
- Lack of knowledge or respect for governance from school and trust leaders
- Lack of commitment from other members of the board
- Lack of understanding of the strategic nature of the role
- A board culture where patterns of disengagement, non-attendance, or overly dominant individuals, are not addressed.

8. Training expectations that go beyond induction have become overwhelming for some, with a lack of flexibility in training methods and access issues causing frustration.

9. The sheer amount of time it takes to govern is difficult to reconcile with other commitments

- While for those in employment it is increasingly hard to manage board meeting expectations, including the preparation for them, this point of view also often extends to those who are retired.
- It has proved difficult to pinpoint accurately a time commitment for the role: there are a number of estimates of the time it takes which vary widely. NGA commits to undertake a further piece of work in 2024 to quantify the range of time required depending on the role undertaken and the issues at the school/trust.

All of these pressures contribute to a mental load which is taking its toll on many committed volunteers.

The way forward

The strategies used to deal with complaints that are escalated to governing boards must be reviewed at an organisational and national level.

This will require an increased willingness from leaders to acknowledge when mistakes are made earlier on in the complaints process.

The governance role being universally manageable is dependent on it remaining strategic and well defined, with a culture of trust, respect, collaboration and effective practice.

- Better board practice in itself cannot form the entirety of the answer in alleviating workload pressures, but there are opportunities to implement more efficient ways of working for some boards which are addressed in the full report.
- Governance professionals unquestionably have a crucial role in making this happen.
- Where board culture allows patterns of disengagement, non-attendance, or overly dominant individuals, this can have a multitude of negative repercussions on workload and commitment.
- The training expectation must be focussed on both the board's and individual's knowledge gaps and not delivered in a one-size-fits-all manner.

There must be change in the role of governing boards in exclusions: this is no longer sustainable and a new approach is needed.

- While holding school leaders to account for pupil exclusions is part of the strategic governance role, boards do not otherwise get involved with the details of individual pupils and it is time that exclusions is brought in line with this principle.
- Alternative proposals have been suggested, including the call from human rights charity, JUSTICE, in 2018 for the introduction of a new suitably qualified and experienced independent reviewer to replace volunteer panels.
- NGA will be advocating for this change with our members and the wider sector.

While not yet a majority view, there has been a notable shift in support for remuneration for the role among the governing community.

- Potential benefits of paying those who govern our schools and trusts include easier recruitment, greater board diversity, increased visibility, greater accountability and placing it on a more level footing with other sectors.
- Arguments against payment include an alteration of the nature of the governance role and motivations behind it, increasing conflicts of interest, a departure from the charity sector, and the cost to the public purse.
- There is little existing evidence as to whether the payment for governance duties would be transformative; this should be examined by a government funded research project looking at the business case.
- NGA commits to facilitating a debate in 2024, beginning with NGA members, and reporting to the wider sector

In the meantime, NGA asks all parts of the school sector, but particularly the Department for Education, to appreciate:

1. The education system in England is built on the premise that a vast number of willing volunteers are able to give their time freely to fulfil the governance duties, both defined by statutory requirements and duties dictated by localised context. This is civic duty in action and needs to be celebrated and nurtured. Warm words are insufficient: deeds are required.

2. All government funding towards board development has been terminated for a number of years. The offer of an annual training allowance to each volunteer to spend on relevant, quality provision would underline a Department for Education (DfE) commitment to good governance.

3. The cost of losing, both experienced and new, valued board members is high and becoming higher, and may prove unsustainable unless action is taken to attract more volunteers.

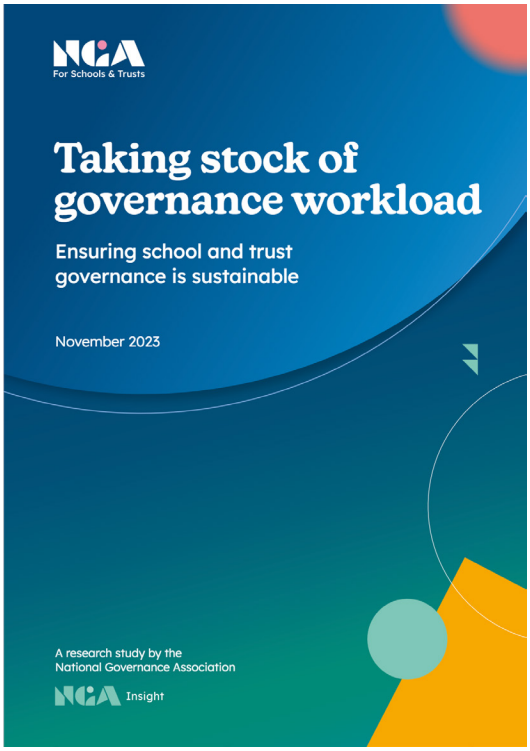
The positive experiences of governing, the joy and satisfaction of being part of a school or trust community, needs to be spread far and wide alongside the personal development opportunity and an honest description of the expectations. NGA will commit to play its part, working with partners, through both the Everyone on Board campaign and our Visible Governance activities, but the need for a significant government push on recruitment has never been more pertinent than it is now. Employers should also be involved to encourage and support their staff to govern.

4. In this project we asked ourselves what could be removed from the governance role, and our extensive work only revealed one duty. The work of finding an alternative to exclusion review panels staffed by volunteers needs to be embraced by the whole sector. The current system is not sustainable.

5. There is a need to be mindful, and become a champion, of reducing governance workload in order to both protect the wellbeing of those who govern and continue the sustainability of the volunteer role. This requires an increase of knowledge on the part of many senior leaders, which should be supported by DfE leadership training.

NGA's Taking stock of governance workload is available to view or download from the NGA website here.

Summary report
Full report



Annual Report on Education Spending in England 2023

For the past six years, the Nuffield Foundation has funded the Institute for Fiscal Studies in a major programme of work, monitoring and analysing funding arrangements and expenditure across all phases of the education system.

In this year's annual report, IFS analysed trends in spending per student across different stages of education over time, with a particular focus on the effects of rising costs and the extent to which spending is targeted on disadvantaged areas.

Total spending

Education spending is the second-largest element of public service spending in the UK behind health, representing £116 billion in 2023–24 in today's prices or about **4.4%** of national income. The total level of UK education spending has risen significantly in real terms over time. Growth was particularly fast from the late 1990s through to the late 2000s, with real-terms growth averaging about **5%** per year between 1998–99 and 2010–11.

Education spending then fell as public spending cuts began to take effect from 2010 onwards. Between 2010–11 and 2019–20, official education spending fell by over **15%** in real terms. Since then, it has begun to increase again, but it remained **12%** below its level in 2010–11 by 2022–23.

Looking over the longer term, it is clear that education spending as a share of national income has not seen a sustained rise since the early 1970s, when it stood at **4.5–5%** of national income. It has instead oscillated between about **4%** and **5.5%** of national income.

It is now at a similar level to that seen in the early 2000s, mid 1990s, mid 1980s and late 1960s.

This is despite large rises in participation in post-compulsory education over time, in both schools and higher education, as well as the creation of an early years sector.

Early Years

1. Total spending on early years education and childcare more than quadrupled between 2001–02 and 2018–19, when it reached £6.6 billion. This was largely driven by increases in spending on the free entitlement, while support through the benefit system has fallen since 2009–10. Total spending has fallen since 2018–19 to £5.6 billion, partly impacted by the pandemic and high inflation. This still represents a major increase in resources at a time when other stages of education have been squeezed.

2. From September 2025, all children in working families will get up to 30 hours of funded childcare a week from 9 months old. These new entitlements will mean that free entitlement spending doubles between this year and 2026–27: the largest and fastest expansion on record.

3. The Budget included new money to raise funding rates for existing entitlements. Even so, we estimate that core resources per hour for 3 - and 4-year-olds in 2024–25 will be **12%** below their level in 2012–13 once providers' costs are taken into account. The government is instead prioritising younger children: for 2-year-olds, the average (cashterms) funding rate will reach £8.28 in that year, more than £1 an hour higher in real terms than its previous peak in 2017–18. More important than the specific rates, however, is having a sound process for setting and revising funding rates going forward.

4. The most deprived fifth of local authorities receive hourly resources that are **12%** higher than areas in the most affluent fifth, after accounting for higher provider costs in London. This results from funding for deprivation, disability and additional language needs in the Early Years National Funding Formula, as well as the Early Years Pupil Premium and the Disability Access Fund.

5. Except for provisions for disabled children, funding uplifts for additional needs fell between 2017–18 and 2023–24. Despite recent increases, the Early Years Pupil Premium is due to be **2%** lower in real terms in 2023–24 than in 2017–18. Core funding for deprived children, which represented an additional **60%** of the core funding rate in 2017–18, is worth just **38%** in 2023–24. This fall reflects the fact that funding for additional needs is constrained to be **10.5%** of total funding, whilst the number of children classified as deprived has increased. Some of the rise in deprivation reflects transitional protection under universal credit. However, a national funding formula where resource per disadvantaged child falls as deprivation rises seems particularly illogical.

Schools

1. School spending per pupil in England fell by **9%** in real terms between 2009–10 and 2019–20. This reflects a **1%** real-terms increase in total spending on schools, which was more than outweighed by an **11%** increase in pupil numbers. The core schools budget is now due to rise from £52.6 billion in 2019–20 to £58.6 billion in 2024–25 (in today's prices). This funding increase will reverse past cuts and we estimate that school spending per pupil in 2024 will return to 2010 levels in real terms based on standard measures of economy-wide inflation (the GDP deflator).

2. The costs faced by schools – such as teacher and support staff salaries – are growing faster than economy-wide inflation. We estimate that schools' costs will rise by **7%** in 2023–24. This reflects the **6.5%** pay offer to teachers and an **8%** salary rise for support staff. In 2024–25, we estimate that schools' costs will grow by **4%**, which is just about matched by **4%** growth in total funding. After accounting for growth in schools' costs, we estimate that the purchasing power of school budgets in 2024 will still be about **4%** lower than in 2010. The recently announced **10%** increase in the National Living Wage could push up school costs further, as local government employers seek to maintain small wage differentials over the National Living Wage.

3. Secondary school spending per pupil in England in 2023–24 is due to be about £6,900, which is **10%** higher than in primary schools (£6,300). This is down from a difference of about **30%** in the 2000s and over **50%** during the early 1990s. This represents a very significant reduction in the secondary: primary funding ratio over time.

4. School spending per pupil is about **21%** higher amongst the most deprived group of schools than for the least deprived group, even after accounting for differences in costs across areas. However, this funding advantage is down from **31%** in 2010 due to larger spending cuts for more deprived schools. Between 2010 and 2021, the most deprived secondary schools saw real-terms cuts of **12%** compared with **5%** for the least deprived ones.

5. A range of factors explain the larger cuts for more deprived schools. First, the Pupil Premium has not kept pace with overall inflation. Second, the introduction of statutory minimum funding levels in 2020 disproportionately benefited less deprived schools, and reduced the share of total funding focused on more deprived schools. Third, funding factors for deprivation in local authority formulae have reduced in real terms over time, mostly reflecting decisions to reduce deprivation funding in the national formula in 2018. Some of this shift was a deliberate decision to focus more on funding for schools with low prior attainment. This will have spread disadvantage funding more widely. However, it will only have partially compensated the most deprived schools for reductions in deprivation funding over time.

6. The pupil population is expected to decline by 600,000 or **8%** between 2024–25 and 2030–31, with a 400,000 reduction in primary school pupil numbers and a 200,000 reduction in secondary school pupil numbers. This would reverse almost all of the increase in the pupil population since 2010–11 and create less demand for school places. However, declining pupil numbers will only reduce spending needs if schools are able to shrink their costs and staff numbers in equal measure.

Further Education and Skills

1. In the 2023–24 academic year, we estimate that spending per student aged 16–18 in further education (FE) colleges will be £7,100, compared with £5,800 in school sixth forms and £5,400 in sixth-form colleges. Higher funding for FE colleges reflects extra funding for costly technical programmes and for students from more deprived areas.

2. Between 2010–11 and 2019–20 financial years, spending per student aged 16–18 fell in real terms by **14%** in colleges and **28%** in school sixth forms. For colleges, this left spending per student at around its level in 2004–05, while spending per student in sixth forms was lower than at any point since at least 2002.

3. In the 2021 Spending Review, the government announced £1.6 billion in extra funding for colleges and sixth forms by 2024–25. Yet even with the additional funding, college spending per student in 2024–25 will still be about **10%** below 2010–11 levels, and school sixth-form spending about **23%** lower than in 2010–11.

4. The government announced extra funding in July and October 2023 to enable colleges to afford higher staff pay rises and to increase funding rates for GCSE retakes. However, none of this was new funding. It all came from existing plans. Student numbers have increased by less than expected and the government could thus increase funding rates by more than planned.

5. The main driver of slower growth in student numbers is a **13%** decline in the number of 18-year-olds in further education between 2019 and 2022. This reflects falling levels of participation in education and training amongst 18-year-olds, which has fallen from **73%** in 2015 to **70%** in 2020 and to **66%** in 2022. There has been a gradual rise in the share of 18-year-olds in employment (up from **14%** in 2014 to **19%** in 2022). The share of 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) was at **16%** in 2022, near equal to the share last seen in the Great Recession of the late 2000s.

6. The distribution of funding across areas is highly shaped by the share of students in (more highly funded) FE colleges, which leads to higher levels of spending per student in more disadvantaged areas and in Northern regions of England, with mostly lower spending levels in London. As a result, spending per student is about **9%** higher in the most deprived areas than in the least in 2023–24, up from about **4–5%** in 2013–14. This increase reflects the smaller cuts for FE colleges and greater funding for students in disadvantaged areas over time.

7. Total spending on adult skills is set to increase by **14%** in real terms between 2019– 20 and 2024–25. However, this only reverses a fraction of past cuts: total adult skills spending in 2024–25 will still be **23%** below 2009–10 levels. Spending on classroom based adult education has fallen especially sharply, driven by falling learner numbers and real-terms cuts in funding rates, and will still be over **40%** below 2009–10 levels in 2024–25 even with the additional funding.

8. Following on from big increases between 2010 and 2015, the total number of adult apprentices (aged 19 or over) has declined by **16%** since 2016–17 and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. However, the number of higher apprentices, including degree apprentices, has trebled in the same period.

Conclusion

This year's annual report analyses trends in spending per student across different stages of education over time, with a particular focus on the effects of rising costs and the extent to which spending is targeted on disadvantaged areas. The report concludes by setting out some of the key themes that have emerged from this analysis.

1. First, rising overall levels of inflation have eroded the real-terms value of government spending plans. In some cases, large salary increases mean costs are growing faster than headline measures of inflation. In the early years, core funding per hour for the free entitlement will be **12%** lower in 2024 than in 2012, once providers' rising costs are taken into account. For schools, the purchasing power of school budgets is set to be **4%** lower than in 2010 when we account for costs facing schools. Higher-than-expected inflation has also reduced the real-terms value of maintenance loans for higher education students. By and large, the government is not planning to compensate education providers for the higher costs brought by inflation: in its Autumn Statement, for example, it chose to prioritise cutting personal and business taxes over increasing funding for public services.

2. Second, the pernicious effects of cash-terms freezes in key features of the education funding system. For example, cash-terms freezes in funding rates for further and adult education during the 2010s led to substantial real-terms declines in spending per student. In higher education, cash-terms freezes in tuition fees across most years is reducing spending per student down to 2011 levels. Cash-terms freezes in the student support system have reduced eligibility for maintenance support. In general, using cash-terms freezes as a default leads to unpredictable declines in the real-terms value of spending and support over time, with changes in individual years varying with inflation. A better default would be to uprate all relevant funding rates and thresholds with a sensible measure of inflation, such as CPI inflation or the GDP deflator.

3. Third, rising levels of the National Living Wage are increasingly creating pressures within the education system. It is directly increasing costs in the early years, where many staff are paid at or close to the National Living Wage. It is indirectly increasing costs in schools as local government employers seek to maintain pay differentials for support staff, and schools compete for staff with supermarkets and other employers. In 2024, the National Living Wage will rise by **10%**, which will add to budgetary pressures in the early years and schools. Within further and higher education, the rate of education participation has fallen for 18-year-olds and higher education student numbers are below previous expectations. This may be because employment or on-the-job training is looking like an increasingly attractive financial option relative to staying in education, where maintenance support levels have fallen. There may be good reasons to increase minimum wages, but there are equally good reasons to make sure students feel able to continue in education.

4. Fourth, higher levels of education spending are explicitly targeted at children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Two measures of deprivation were used to gain a fuller picture: the share of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Resources are about **15–21%** higher in the most deprived decile (relative to the least deprived decile) in the early years and schools when we use eligibility for FSM as our measure of deprivation, and **13%** higher in the second most deprived decile. Differences in resources by decile of FSM are much smaller for 16–18 education, with spending per student only **6%** higher in the most deprived decile. The picture is slightly different when we look at IMD. Resources are still about **16–17%** higher for the most deprived decile in the early years and secondary schools. However, this difference is only about **8%** for primary schools and **9%** for 16–18 education.

Some of these patterns are easy to explain. The early years and school funding systems explicitly use FSM eligibility to allocate funding, whilst IMD is used in the 16–19 education funding formula. We also know that funding for deprivation is lower in the 16–19 education funding formula. However, the differences between using IMD and FSM for the early years and primary schools raise obvious questions about whether FSM eligibility is fully capturing educational disadvantage. Governments across the UK should be reviewing whether FSM eligibility is the best indicator of disadvantage for allocating a high level of disadvantage funding, particularly in light of transitional protections under the transition to universal credit.

It is also important to look beyond the most deprived two deciles. There are very small differences between deciles 1 and 5 for FSM and between deciles 5 and 10 for IMD. In the case of FSM, this may reflect the impact of using a binary measure of disadvantage in areas with high inequality. In the case of IMD, it may create further potential concern as to whether resources really are targeted where they are most needed, which emphasises the importance of reviewing indicators used for allocating funding for deprivation.

Annual report on education spending in England: 2023 by the Institute for Fiscal Studies can be viewed or downloaded **here**.

Careers Guidance

A summary of Ofsted's independent review published in autumn 2023

Introduction and background

Effective careers guidance can make a positive difference to young people's employment outcomes. There is an international consensus that well-targeted careers guidance can help all young people achieve their potential. There are particular benefits for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have access to the same levels of social capital as other pupils.

Internationally, young people are facing a more dynamic and turbulent labour market, and more complex decisions about their futures. Unemployment for 15-24 year-olds is much higher than for those 25 and over. This suggests that young people are not as attractive in the employment market.

Research also shows that children and young people who think about and experience future careers while in school are less likely to be unemployed. These factors bolster the case for ensuring that education providers offer effective careers guidance that can help children and young people understand the options open to them and make decisions that will allow them to maximise their potential.

The education system also has a role in making sure that children and young people have the skills needed for the careers of the future. Although considering future skills needs was outside of the scope of this report, effective careers guidance will help children and young people make informed decisions about their futures.

Main findings

Leaders and staff understand the importance of a quality careers programme.
Schools and FE and skills providers were aware that an effective careers guidance programme can help all pupils and learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, achieve their aspirations.

Overall, the role of careers leader was well embedded. School and FE and skills leaders also recognised the importance of appropriately qualified careers advisers, in addition to a careers leader. Both schools and FE and skills providers found the Gatsby benchmarks useful to help strategically review and develop their careers programme. This reflects a shift in thinking around careers provision when compared with our 2013 report.

However, there are challenges. For example, some reported that they were limited by the time available for careers guidance. They said they were, nevertheless, working hard to provide the best careers guidance possible within these constraints.

Close working between school leaders, careers leaders, teachers and careers specialists is important for effective careers guidance.

We saw collaborative working between senior leaders, the careers leader, a qualified careers adviser and subject teachers. This helped children and young people get the information, advice and guidance on careers that they needed at the right time.

Qualified careers adviser time was sometimes limited. Careers advisers can be internal (for example, a member of school or college staff) or external. Some schools and FE and skills providers worked with their careers adviser to prioritise pupils or learners for one-to-one guidance interviews. For instance, they prioritised those considered vulnerable or at risk of ending up not in education, employment or training (NEET). However, not all schools and FE and skills providers were doing this effectively. It is unclear from the nationally available data how well resourced schools and FE and skills providers are in terms of qualified independent careers advisers.

Most schools and FE and skills providers are linking curriculum learning to careers well.

Most schools and FE and skills providers we visited were linking the curriculum to careers effectively. However, this varied between subjects. Most schools used personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education as dedicated time for direct input on careers guidance. However, in less effective examples, careers was only taught in PSHE, and wider subject staff were not regularly linking curriculum learning to careers.

There were different successful models for linking the curriculum to careers. Some schools and FE and skills providers focused on ensuring that teachers made regular links between their subject and future pathways, and explained the intermediary steps required for certain jobs. Others asked teachers to prioritise linking the curriculum to careers at particular points in the year, such as during a careers week.

Whichever model was used, effective collaboration and communication between the careers leader, tutors, lead for professional development or PHSE and – in some cases – careers advisers was important in ensuring that careers were embedded into the wider curriculum. However, several schools noted concerns about the time and resourcing required to do this.

Leaders sometimes lacked clarity about the specific aims for each year group, particularly in Years 7 and 8. It was often not clear what the thinking behind the careers programme was for these age groups.

Many schools find it difficult to collect and use destinations data.

Providers can use data on destinations to improve their careers provision. However some school leaders said collecting destinations data was difficult and were concerned about the time required. Data protection requirements also made it harder to obtain destinations data. A few leaders wanted additional help with this and thought the system in their local area could be improved.

Schools and FE and skills providers understand the need to promote both technical and academic pathways. However, not all are achieving this.

In general, leaders understood their statutory responsibilities for careers, including those under the provider access legislation. They were making progress towards fully implementing the required changes, which came into force in January 2023. Some schools said that they wanted further information, for example on what constitutes a 'meaningful encounter'. Some FE and skills providers give careers advice in schools: they told us it could sometimes be difficult to access schools. Some also had concerns over the quality of careers guidance that learners had previously received in schools.

Schools and FE and skills providers generally understood and promoted apprenticeships, although some teachers' knowledge was limited. There were more gaps in teachers' understanding about T-levels. Pupils' understanding of technical pathways varied. Additionally, some learners in both school sixth forms and sixth-form colleges told us they did not get enough information about apprenticeships or vocational pathways.

Many schools made sure pupils received unbiased guidance that included both academic and technical pathways. However, this was not always the case. In general, when guidance was biased towards a particular pathway, this was usually not because schools had deliberately chosen to direct pupils to courses that might benefit the school. It more commonly happened due to schools' lack of strategic planning around the careers programme and the needs of individual pupils.

Parents can be an important partner in supporting informed decision-making but are under-used.

Most pupils and learners we spoke to told us that their parents and family were among the main influences on their thinking and decision-making about careers. However, the extent to which schools and FE and skills providers engaged with parents varied.

Schools and FE and skills providers see work experience and other encounters with employers as important. However, pandemic restrictions have had some long-term adverse impact.

All schools and FE and skills providers held careers fairs and talks from employers, universities or other providers. These events were most beneficial when closely linked to the school or FE and skills providers' curriculum: staff prepared their pupils or learners for the event and followed it up in subsequent careers lessons.

Pupils and learners said that attending careers fairs and visiting employers and universities helped them broaden their horizons and rule out certain pathways. Careers hubs were also important in ensuring effective employer engagement and contributed more widely to careers programmes.

The pandemic stimulated some innovative approaches to work experience that pupils and learners were positive about. For instance, some FE and skills providers were using hybrid work experience models that included both in-person and virtual elements. However, pupils and learners found virtual work experience less helpful.

Overall, the negative impact of the pandemic on careers guidance, including work experience, has moderated. However, long-term changes in working practices, such as increased home working, mean that some employers have now stopped offering work experience. Schools and FE and skills providers are finding it difficult to find alternative placements. Some schools have still not restarted work experience after the pandemic.

Recommendations

Schools and FE and skills providers should:

- Ensure that they take advantage of the potential benefits provided by networks like careers hubs, such as support for employer engagement
- Ensure that the careers programme is delivered by staff with the necessary expertise, and with appropriate support from careers specialists
- Continue to develop staff knowledge of technical pathways (including T levels) and promote these equally alongside academic routes, using the DfE's updated statutory guidance [footnote 8]
- Make sure encounters with employers, such as through careers fairs and talks, are delivered in a way that is most beneficial for pupils and learners

The DfE should:

- Consider ways in which it may be possible to improve how post-16 and post-18 destinations data is aggregated back to schools or FE and skills providers, including exploring whether data already held by the DfE could be used for this
- Consider how to increase the attractiveness of the careers adviser role
- Review approaches to disseminating information about T levels to schools and employers
- Make the aims for careers education for pupils in key stage 3 more explicit, including help with key stage 4 options
- Explore ways to improve data collection to get a more accurate picture of the number of careers advisers working in schools and FE and skills providers, and the number of children and young people accessing personal guidance with a suitably qualified adviser

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) should:

- Consider how it can ensure that all schools and FE and skills providers (including those that are already in a careers hub) are aware of and able to fully engage with the support it provides
- Consider how it can further support schools and FE and skills providers to work more closely with each other around careers

Ofsted will:

- Use the findings from the review to shape future inspector training on careers guidance

Ofsted's Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers can be viewed or downloaded here.

Research and analysis

Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers

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LGF AGM
07 November 2023

E-mail: admin@livgovforum.org.uk www.livgovforum.org.uk **Twitter:**@LpoolGovForum

Treasurer's financial report for the academic year 2022/23

The Statement of accounts for the year ending 31st August 2023 had been shared before the meeting. David Blythe advised this would be his ninth and final accounts report in the combined role of Secretary/Treasurer, with LGF reverting back to having two separate posts in the future.

Income for the year was £3,105 with payments received from the Headteacher Association's ALSSH and LPHA. Payment from LASH was only received in late September and their £625 will therefore appear in next year's accounts. Several small payments totalling £105 were also received for non-attendance (without apology) at the May conference.

Expenditure totalled £4,559:40. However, it should be noted that £2,000 was transferred to open a new LGF bank account. Actual expenditure was therefore only £2,559:40 which is in-line with previous years. It was noted LGF had a healthy bank balance of £5,070:62.

It was unanimously agreed that the statement of accounts for 2022/23 should be accepted.

Chair's Report and 2023 Annual Review

Michael Morris thanked David Blythe for all his hard work during the preceding year and commented that it made his role as Chair of LGF much easier.

Paula Anderson was also thanked for her secretarial support.

Michael highlighted that the LGF Conference on Attachment and Trauma held in May had been a success, with 50 governors in attendance.

It was noted that discussion was ongoing regarding the time, venue and topics for future conferences. Michael commented that LGF has had increasing requests for support across the city, especially to sit on individual school panels, helping to raise its profile is positively received. It was noted that to provide this support LGF needs to be strong in numbers and quality.

The 2023 Annual Review had been widely circulated, including to the Headteacher Associations and senior officers across LCC and SIL, and was formally accepted by those present as a comprehensive account of LGF activities.

Election of Officers for 2023/24

Chair: Michael Morris was unanimously elected as Chair.
Vice Chair: Maureen McDaid was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.
Secretary: David Blythe was unanimously elected as Secretary.
Treasurer: David Owens was unanimously elected as Treasurer.

Revised constitution

This revised document had been previously agreed upon by the LGF committee at its September meeting and recommended to be accepted at the AGM. The key changes were made to reflect that some schools had converted to Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

It was, therefore, most important to reflect this to ensure clarity and understanding, and ensure LGF continues to represent the voice of governance at all levels, including local school council's whose powers derive from the scheme of delegation agreed by their Trust Board. It was unanimously agreed that the proposed version should be accepted and the website updated accordingly.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Statement

It was unanimously agreed that the following statement be adopted by the LGF and appear on the front page of the LGF website:

Liverpool Governance Forum is fully committed to equality, inclusion and respect for all. We aim to create a safe and inclusive culture for all individuals, irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, including colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation. We are committed to establishing an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment in any form, and in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Autumn Term 2023 Committee Meetings	
19 September	Venue St Margaret's CofE Academy
07 November	Venue Mosspits Lane Primary
05 December	Venue Hope School. Guest speaker: Lisa Dorrity, SIL Lead on Ethical Leadership

December Guest speaker: Lisa Dorrity, SIL Lead on Ethical Leadership

Lisa introduced **Celebrating Ethical Leadership Across Liverpool**, developed by SIL on behalf of LCC..

Lisa explained had become involved with developing Ethical Leadership in schools across the city as a result of Priority 4 of the Educational Improvement Plan - recruitment and retention of teaching staff.

A working party was set up after Covid, made up of representatives of all educational sectors. Its purpose was to discuss the language and approach used when providing support for staff and headteachers whilst always keeping the needs of pupils and parents paramount.

The working party was conscious that it did not want to add to the workload of school staff in implementing and embedding the principles behind Ethical Leadership. Rather, it wanted a simple Liverpool Pledge that could be applied across the city by using the framework detailed in the document above.

The Framework provides scenarios that may arise in schools and provides a guide on how these and similar scenarios should be approached and dealt with, including the language to be used. It was designed to support Headteachers in dealing with difficult situations that may arise with the benefit of ultimately reducing the stress surrounding difficult decisions.

Phase 2 of the roll-out involved inviting governors to be part of the process, an area previously overlooked, to better allow them to deal with difficult situations/conversations they may have to deal with in their capacity as a school governor.

It was suggested that governors may benefit from some Health and Wellbeing Training undertaken by SIL. This is to be investigated.

An electronic version of the Framework had been sent to all schools and appropriate organisations, with a number of paper copies available also.

A short discussion took place regarding the support governors need to better carry out their role. Dave Cadwallader commented that Lisa's presentation could provide a catalyst to begin thinking of what is currently available for governors to support themselves and each other in undertaking what can be a stressful role and whether that support is equitable across the city. Michele Hayward highlighted the support/services provided by Dave in his SIL capacity which she found invaluable.

Lisa highlighted that SIL is currently producing a series of 'spotlights' on roles that are difficult to recruit, including governors. A link to the series will be circulated asap.
Lisa was thanked for her interesting and informative presentation.

Looking ahead

LGF 2024 Conference

Planning and preparation is underway for our 2024 Conference. As usual, details will be circulated via GovernorHub.

2024 Committee meetings

LGF Committee meetings are scheduled for 10:00am on:

- **Tuesday 30 January** at Kensington Primary School. Speaker: Elaine Rees, CEO LLP.
- **Tuesday 26 March** (venue/speaker tbc)
- **Tuesday 14 May** (venue/speaker tbc)
- **Tuesday 02 July** (venue/speaker tbc)

Our meetings are open to all Liverpool governors. If you would like to attend, please email **admin@livgovforum.org.uk** or check our website **www.livgovforum.org.uk** to confirm the venue.

@SI_Liverpool
@SchoolImprovementLiverpool
si_liverpool
School Improvement Liverpool

0151 233 3901 | sil@si.liverpool.gov.uk | www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk

Toxteth Annexe, Aigburth Road, Liverpool, L17 7BN