Governance News

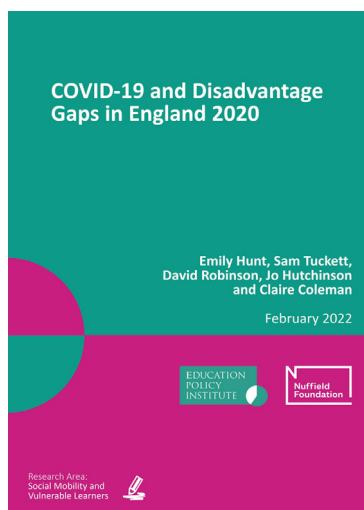## A Termly Newsletter for Liverpool Governors and Trustees

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COVID-19 and Disadvantage Gaps
In England 2020

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COVID-19 and Disadvantage Gaps in England 2020

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EDUCATION POLICY INSTITUTE

Nuffield Foundation

Research Area:
Social Mobility and
Vulnerable Learners

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has published a major report, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, on the disadvantage gap in education.

"The disadvantage gap" – the gap in grades between disadvantaged students and their peers – is a leading measure of social mobility in England and an indicator of the government's progress in reducing inequalities in education.

The report examines the gap in 2020 at a national level, across different regions and local authorities, among varying levels of disadvantage, and at two stages of education – key stage four and five.

The research offers the first comprehensive picture of the impact of 2020 grades on different students – the year that saw the first switch to teacher assessed grades.

The study finds that:

• The gap in GCSE grades between students in long-term poverty and their better off peers has failed to improve over the last ten years.
• More students have now fallen into longer-term poverty.
• Fears that the switch to teacher assessed grades for GCSEs in 2020 would penalise students from disadvantaged backgrounds are largely unfounded – with no evidence poorer GCSE students lost out under this system.
• But for students in college and sixth form (16-19 education), the gap in grades between poorer students and their better off peers widened in 2020.
• This was driven by A level students gaining a whole grade more from teacher assessments than those who studied qualifications such as BTECs.

Key findings:
The disadvantage gap at GCSE is large, and outcomes for the very poorest students in long-term poverty have failed to improve after a decade.

• The disadvantage gap was on average 1.24 grades in 2020. This compares to 1.26 grades in 2019, and is little changed since 2017, marking a stalling of progress in reducing educational inequalities.

- The disadvantage gap is even wider for students who are in long-term poverty (those who spend at least **80%** of their school lives on free school meals), who trail their better off peers by as many as 1.6 grades on average at GCSE.
- For this group of the very poorest students who are in long-term poverty, the disadvantage gap has now failed to improve since 2011, despite government interventions.
- There are now more students falling into this long-term poverty **80%** FSM group. The proportion of all disadvantaged students that fall into this long-term poverty group increased to **39%** in 2020, up from **35%** in 2017.
- The proportion of students confined to poverty for their entire school lives – those on FSM for **100%** of the time – has also risen, from **19%** of all disadvantaged students in 2017 to **25%** in 2020.

Disadvantage gaps are much larger in certain areas of England, often where many students spend most of their lives confined to poverty.

- There is considerable geographic variation in the disadvantage gap. The five local authorities with the largest grade gaps in 2020 are: Knowsley (poorer students are 1.76 GCSE grades behind); Blackpool (1.69); Salford (1.66); Derby (1.65) and Sheffield (1.61).
- The smallest GCSE grade gaps are in: Kensington and Chelsea (0.10); Westminster (0.29); Newham (0.33); Tower Hamlets (0.34); and Barnet (0.36). Of the 30 areas with the smallest gaps in England, almost all of them are areas in London.
- Areas with the largest disadvantage gaps in the country are more likely to have a large proportion of students in long-term poverty (**80%** FSM). Several areas have over half of their disadvantaged students in this long-term poverty group, including Kirklees (**58%**), Sunderland **(54%)**, Halton (**53%**), Tower Hamlets (**53%**), Middlesbrough (**53%**), Knowsley (**52%**), Kingston-Upon-Hull (**52%**), and Hartlepool (**51%**).
- Poverty therefore plays a decisive role, and large disadvantage gaps do not necessarily represent poor educational provision: after controlling for long-term poverty rates, many of these areas see their disadvantage gaps reduce.
- Likewise, controlling for poverty also exposes many areas with low levels of long-term poverty that have underlying poor educational performance. Newham, North Yorkshire, Slough, Rutland, Windsor, Maidenhead, and Milton Keynes all see higher GCSE disadvantage gaps than would be expected.

Geographic disadvantage gap data breakdowns, including by local authority and parliamentary constituency can be accessed **here**.

Despite disadvantage gaps failing to narrow, in 2020 poorer students did not lose out from teacher assessed grades, contrary to fears at the time.

- There is no evidence of bias against disadvantaged students in teacher assessed grades in 2020, as was feared; these students made equal grade gains.

- There was even some progress in closing the measured grade gap in 2020 for many minority ethnic groups, including Black Caribbean and other black students, who had been losing ground to White British students prior to 2020.
- But other groups, such as students with special educational needs (SEND), did lose out under teacher assessed grades. The gap between SEND students with severe needs and non-SEND students rose from 3.4 grades in 2019 to 3.6 grades in 2020.
- There is a risk that teacher assessed grades have masked underlying learning losses as a result of the pandemic. There is evidence beyond awarded grades that "real" learning losses for disadvantaged students and other groups have been greater than their peers.

But the disadvantage gap for students in 16-19 education did widen, as more poorer students took qualifications with lower grade increase.

- Disadvantaged students in 16-19 education – those attending sixth form and college – were on average the equivalent of 3.1 A level grades behind their more affluent peers across their best three qualifications in 2020, compared to 2.9 grades in 2019.
- Similar to GCSE level, students in 16-19 education in long-term poverty – those who spend at least **80%** of their school lives on FSM – saw much larger gaps, and they have now widened significantly. The 16-19 disadvantage gap for students in this long-term poverty group stood at 4 grades in 2020, compared to 3.7 in 2019.
- Sixth form and college students in some regions saw greater increases than in others. Grades increased the most in London and the East Midlands, but students in the North West, Yorkshire and The Humber and the North East only saw modest rises. These regional differences have significant implications for the government's "levelling up" agenda.
- The widening of the gap at 16-19 is driven by a lower proportion of disadvantaged students taking up A levels, which saw larger grade increases than Applied General Qualifications – which include BTECs.
- All qualifications saw increases in 2020, but A levels increased by one grade more than Applied General grades for otherwise similar students. Applied Generals did not receive a similar boost from the move to teacher assessments as they are partly based on ongoing assessment, practicals and projects – largely completed before the pandemic.
- Because disadvantaged students are more likely to take Applied General qualifications, they may have lost out when competing for university places.

Recommendations for government

1. The government should work with the higher education sector to ensure that students taking alternatives to A levels do not disproportionately lose out when competing for university places. This will be especially critical for disadvantaged students who already face significant hurdles in accessing higher education.

2. Given that grades awarded under teacher assessments may not be a good guide to students' underlying learning, policy must still focus on support and interventions for those groups most affected by learning loss during the pandemic.

3. Education policy should prioritise closing gaps for the lowest attaining and most vulnerable learners and ensure that the story of 2020 grade increases does not distract from tackling the big picture on long-term educational inequalities.

4. If the government is serious about levelling-up, its efforts must include tackling the social determinants of education, such as poverty.

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

Schools
White Paper

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Published in March, **Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child**, the first schools white paper in six years sets out the government's vision for education, which includes two 'ambitions'.

The government had already set a target in its **levelling up white paper** for **90%** of children by 2030 leaving primary school with the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, up from **65%** currently.

The white paper now sets out a new 'ambition' to increase the national GCSE average grade in both English language and in maths from 4.5 in 2019, to 5 by 2030.

These two ambitions will be the **"measure of this white paper's success"**.

The white paper is divided into four chapters:

Chapter 1: An excellent teacher for every child
By 2030, every child will be taught by an excellent teacher trained in the best-evidenced approaches.

To achieve this, the government will expand on existing policies by:
• Delivering 500,000 teacher training and professional development opportunities across Initial Teacher Training (ITT), the Early Career Framework and National Professional Qualifications by 2024.
• Raising teachers starting salaries to £30,000 by 2023 and offering incentives for new teachers in specific subjects who choose to work in disadvantaged schools.
• Retaining the focus on pupil premium as a driver of attainment for disadvantaged pupils.
• Asking Ofsted to inspect all ITT providers by July 2024, and then every three years.

New proposed policies include:
• A new scholarship to attract talented language graduates and training to support more engineers to teach physics.
• A new Leading Literacy National Professional Qualification available from September 2022.
• A new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership.
• Initiatives to attract trainees and recognise high-quality teaching qualifications from all over the world.

Chapter 2: Delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance
By 2030, every child will be taught a broad and ambitious curriculum in a school with high expectations and strong standards of behaviour.

To achieve this, the government will expand on existing policies by:
- Establishing Oak National Academy as an arms-length curriculum body, offering free resources for teachers.
- Working closely with the Education Endowment Foundation and Ofsted, to ensure work is informed by the best available evidence and aligns with best practice.
- Making no changes to the national curriculum, with GCSEs and A-levels remaining in place.
- Introducing Mental Health Support Teams that provide extra capacity for early support and advising school staff.
- Strengthening Relationships, Sex and Health Education, as well as statutory safeguarding guidance.

New proposed policies include:
- All mainstream schools to run a 32.5-hour week minimum by September 2023.
- Revising the behaviour, suspension and permanent exclusion guidance.
- Introducing a National Professional Qualification in Behaviour and Culture for all teachers and leaders.
- Launching a National Behaviour Survey to gather stakeholder views on behaviour and wellbeing in their school.
- Introducing legislation to establish a register for children not in school.
- Legislation to create statutory guidance on attendance that requires every school to publish a clear attendance policy.
- A new literacy and numeracy digital test for a sample of year 9 pupils to estimate performance nationally.
- Legislation to modernise rules on recording attendance which will provide a blueprint for other parts of the system.
- A network of modern foreign language hubs, and effective professional development for language teachers.
- Updating plans to support sport and music education and producing a new cultural education plan.
- A new careers programme for primary schools in areas of disadvantage and improved professional development for teachers and leaders on careers education.

Chapter 3: Targeted support for every child who needs it
By 2030, every child who falls behind in English or maths will get the right support to get back on track.

To achieve this, the government will expand on existing policies by:
- Providing up to six million tutoring courses by 2024 cementing tuition as a permanent feature of the school system.

- Equipping schools to robustly and routinely identify children who need support, including those with SEND.

New proposed policies include:
- A Parent Pledge – that for any child "falling behind" in English and maths, parents should receive timely and evidence-based support, funded largely by pupil premium, making it easier for schools to use this money to support literacy and numeracy where needed.
- New guidance on providing catch-up support and conducting effective assessments for children who have fallen behind.
- Tutoring as a core academic option in the pupil premium menu.
- Reform of the SEND and Children's Social Care systems (see NGA's green paper summary).
- An investment of £2.6 billion in high needs capital investment over the next three years to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or with those requiring alternative provision.
- Equipping the DfE new Regions Group to hold local authorities and academy trusts to account for local delivery for children and young people with SEND.

Chapter 4: A stronger and fairer school system
By 2030, all children will benefit from being taught in a family of schools, with their school in a strong multi academy trust or with plans to join or form one.

To achieve this, the government will expand on existing policies by nurturing a system of strong trusts where all schools will be in or joining a multi academy trust (MAT).

This will include:
- New powers enabling the Secretary of State to bring a local authority's-maintained schools into the academy system where a local authority has requested this as part of their local strategic plan.
- An expectation that most trusts will be on a trajectory to either serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools.
- Local authorities establishing new MATs where too few strong trusts exist. Local authority trusts will be regulated in the same way as any other trust, and the government will ensure that safeguards are in place to effectively manage any potential for conflicts of interest, both for the trust, and the local authority.
- Clearer expectations for trusts over providing high-quality, inclusive education, school improvement, financial management, parental engagement and workforce deployment, training and retention.
- Investing in 55 Education Investment Areas across the country where outcomes are poor in English and maths.
- Transitioning to a direct National Funding Formula, without local amendment.

New proposed policies include:

- A CEO development programme for established leaders.
- £86 million to be committed to trust capacity funding over the next 3 years.
- All trusts having local governance arrangements for their schools to be responsive to stakeholders.
- Good schools requesting that the regulator agrees to the school moving to a stronger trust.
- Local Safeguarding Partnerships to commission safeguarding audits every three years.

A 'strong trust' is defined as:

- *Delivering high quality education*, including for disadvantaged children and children with SEND. Having effective central leadership teams, strong school leadership and teaching, and using evidence-based curriculum design and implementation.
- *School improvement* - working quickly to improve standards within all their schools, particularly transforming previously under performing schools.
- *Strategic governance* - operating an effective and robust governance structure that involves schools and exemplifies ethical standards. Utilising the expertise and skills on its boards to oversee the strategic direction and hold leaders to account. Having a strong local identity, engaging effectively with parents and the wider community.
- *Strong and effective financial management* - prioritising the use of resources, including the estate, to deliver the best educational experience for children.
- *Workforce* - training, recruiting, developing, deploying and retaining great teachers and leaders throughout their careers and prioritising staff wellbeing.

Consultations

To support the proposals of the white paper, the DfE will consult on:

- Moving schools that have received two consecutive below 'good' judgements from Ofsted into strong trusts to tackle under-performance.
- The exceptional circumstances in which a good school could request that the regulator agrees to the school moving to a stronger trust.
- A statutory framework to govern children's movements so that all placement decisions – including alternative provision – are always made in the best interest of the child.
- A new backstop power for local authorities to direct trusts.
- Allowing local authority-maintained specialist providers to move into either specialist-only or mixed trusts, based on individual and local circumstances.
- A new leadership level NPQ for SENCOs, replacing the National Award in SEN Coordination as the mandatory qualification for all new SENCOs.

SEND Review:
Right Support, Right Place, Right Time

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This **government green paper**, published on 29 March 2022, sets out proposals to ensure that every child and young person has their needs identified quickly and met more consistently.

Set across six chapters, proposals include:
- Establishing a single national special educational needs and disability (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) system that sets clear standards for the provision that children and young people should expect to receive.
- Strengthened accountabilities and investment that will help to deliver real change for children, young people and their families.
- Creating a single national system that has high aspirations and ambitions for children and young people with SEND and those in AP, which is financially sustainable.

Chapter 1: The case for change
Acknowledging change to ensure that more children and young people are set up to succeed in a sustainable, less bureaucratic system.

Key findings from the SEND review show that:
- Too many children and young people with SEND are achieving poor outcomes.
- Parents and carers are facing difficulty and delay in accessing support for their child.
- Experiences of the SEND system lack a collaborative approach.
- Despite a more than **40%** increase in high needs funding, local government spending is outstripping funding and the system is financially unsustainable.
- Children and young people with SEND and those in AP have consistently poorer outcomes than their peers.
- There is inconsistency across the SEND system in how and where needs are assessed and met.

Chapter 2: A single national SEND and AP system
An outline of what new national standards would cover, and how they would be delivered locally. There is a need for much greater consistency in how needs are identified and supported.

Therefore, proposals include:
- New national SEND and AP system that will set national standards for how needs are identified and met at every stage of a child's journey.
- Reviewing and updating the SEND Code of Practice to reflect the new national standards to promote nationally consistent systems, processes and provision.
- Establishing new local SEND partnerships, bringing together education (including AP), health and care partners with local government and other partners to produce a local inclusion plan.

- Introducing a standardised and digitised education, health and care plan (EHCP) process and template to minimise bureaucracy and deliver consistency.
- Supporting parents and carers to express an informed preference for a particular setting by providing a tailored list of settings to meet the child or young person's needs.
- Streamlining the redress process, making it easier to resolve disputes earlier, including through mandatory mediation, whilst retaining the tribunal for the most challenging cases.

Chapter 3: Excellent provision from early years to adulthood
Expanding on how provision across the system will be improved.

As a result of the SEND review, the green paper proposes to:
- Increase total investment in schools' budgets by £7 billion by 2024-25, including an additional £1 billion in 2022-23 alone for children and young people with complex needs.
- Consult on the introduction of a new SENCo National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for school SENCos and increase the number of staff with an accredited Level 3 SENCo qualification in early years settings to improve SEND expertise.
- Improve mainstream provision, through excellent teacher training and development and a 'what works' evidence programme to identify and share best practice and early intervention.
- Fund more than 10,000 additional respite placements through an investment of £30 million, alongside £82 million to create a network of family hubs for accessible wraparound support.
- Invest £2.6 billion, over the next three years, to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision.
- Set out a clear timeline that, by 2030, all children will benefit from being taught in a family of schools.
- Invest £18 million over the next three years to build capacity in the Supported Internships Programme to help ensure young people with SEND are prepared for higher education and employment.
- Strengthen the relationship between the SEND governor and the SENCo through the revised SEND Code of practice.

Chapter 4: A reformed and integrated role for alternative provision
How this system will operate specifically for AP settings.

The proposal is to create a national vision for AP enabling local areas to ensure that children and young people with challenging behaviour or with health needs get targeted support in mainstream settings, or access to time-limited or transitional places in alternative provision schools.

The proposals include:
- Requiring the new local SEND partnerships to plan and deliver an alternative provision service focused on early intervention.
- Requiring local authorities to create and distribute an AP-specific budget to ensure a service focused on early intervention.

- Building system capacity for all AP schools to be in a strong multi-academy trust or have plans to join or form one.
- Delivering evidence-led services based on best practice, and open new AP free schools where they are most needed.
- Developing a bespoke performance framework for AP which sets robust standards, reintegration into mainstream education or sustainable post-16 destinations.
- Developing a new performance table for AP schools.
- Delivering greater oversight and transparency of pupil movements including placements into and out of AP.
- Launching a call for evidence, before the summer, on the use of unregistered provision to investigate existing practice.

Chapter 5: System roles, accountabilities and funding reform
Ensuring there are clear roles and responsibilities, alongside funding reform and robust accountability across processes and procedures in the system.

All contributors within the system need to be clear on their responsibilities, have the right incentives and levers to fulfil those responsibilities and be held accountable for their role in delivery.

The green paper proposes to:
- Deliver clarity in roles and responsibilities with every partner across education and equip them with the levers to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Equip the DfE's new Regions Groups to hold local authorities and MATs to account for delivery for children and young people with SEND locally through new funding agreements.
- Provide statutory guidance to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to set out clearly how statutory responsibilities for SEND should be discharged.
- Introduce inclusion dashboards for 0-25 provision, offering a timely, transparent picture of how the system is performing at a local and national level across education, health and care.
- Introduce a new national framework of banding and price tariffs for high needs funding.
- Work with local authorities, providers and stakeholders to establish whether changes to the SEND Inclusion Fund or the current early years funding system more widely are needed.
- Consider whether £6,000 per pupil, per year remains the right threshold beyond which schools can expect to draw down additional high needs funding.
- Issue guidance to local authorities on how they should calculate their notional SEN budgets within their local funding formula.
- Work with Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) on their plan to deliver an updated Local Area SEND Inspection Framework.
- Update Compare School and College Performance (also known as performance tables) to support stakeholders to consider contextual information alongside their results data.

## Chapter 6: Delivering change for children and families
The plans for delivering the proposals set out in the green paper.

Plans will be designed recognising the context of the ongoing response to and recovery from the pandemic, and that different settings and areas of the country are at different stages of readiness.

The proposals are to:
- Invest an additional £300 million through the Safety Valve Programme and £85 million in the Delivering Better Value programme, over the next three years, to support those local authorities with the biggest deficits.
- Task the SEND and AP Directorate within DfE to work with system leaders, health and care and the Department of Health and Social Care to develop the national SEND standards.
- Support delivery through a £70 million SEND and AP change programme to both test and refine key proposals and support local SEND systems to manage local improvement.
- Publish a national SEND and AP delivery plan.
- Establish a new National SEND Delivery Board to bring together relevant government departments with national delivery partners.

The government is consulting on the green paper's proposals. The consultation closes on 01 July 2022 and can be accessed **here**.
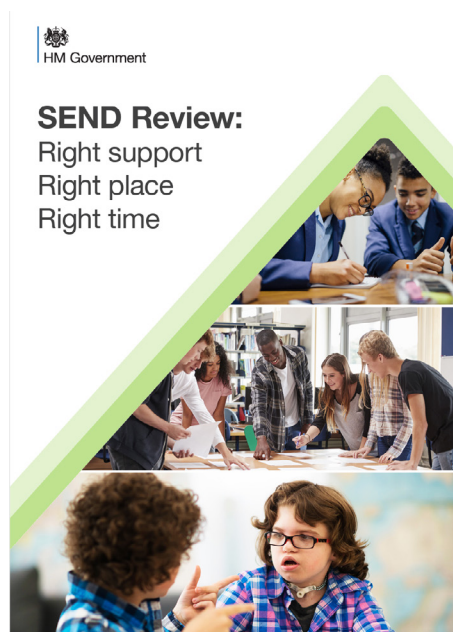
The Cost of the School Day

Child Poverty Action Group and Children North East have collaborated on the *UK Cost of the School Day project*, working with schools and local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to ensure that all children, regardless of financial background, can take part and be happy at school.

Their ensuing report focuses on research conducted in England. It highlights some of the positive work being carried out by schools to ensure that opportunities are affordable and inclusive, while also drawing attention to the multitude of ways that pupils from low-income families face exclusion and stigma. The report demonstrates that the school day is not always equally accessible to all pupils and parts of education are out of reach for some children.

Context

During the late 1990s progress was made through a combination of policies to reduce child poverty and by 2010/11, 1.1 million fewer children were living in poverty than in 1996/97. However, in recent years we have seen child poverty levels rise again, with 4.3 million children in the UK living in poverty prior to the pandemic. A primary cause of this is families facing a number of real-terms cuts to benefits over the last decade and while the £20 a week increase to Universal Credit and working tax credits temporarily restored some of the value, its recent removal has put out-of-work benefits at their lowest level in 30 years. What's more, for too many families, work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty with **75%** of children currently growing up in poverty living in a household with at least one working adult.

The impact of poverty on educational attainment is widely recognised. Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to provide schools with additional funding to reduce and eradicate the attainment gap between children from low-income households and their peers. However, the evidence is clear that children experiencing poverty continue to make less progress than their peers, resulting in stubbornly unequal outcomes. We know that school-related costs and poverty-related stigma in school can further contribute to and compound these inequalities. The report shows that action can be taken to address the cost of the school day, and this has multiple benefits for children and families.

Key findings

Curriculum and Learning

- Families are often expected to own learning resources including stationery, textbooks and IT equipment for use both at home and at school.
- Pupils experiencing poverty in England are financially excluded from full participation in a wide range of school subjects and activities, including PE, music, swimming and art and design.

- Costs associated with resources and equipment can be a factor in pupils' subject choices in secondary school, with food technology and art and design reported as having significant costs.

Stigma
- Day-to-day practices in English schools often unintentionally draw attention to family incomes and make children feel embarrassed and different. These include expensive uniform policies, non-uniform days and requests from schools to bring in material possessions like pencil cases.

School fun
- Many fun and special events at school, which other children look forward to, including trips, fundraising activities, celebrations and community events, are often out of reach for children in poverty. They can also cause great anxiety and financial and social pressures.
- Families are borrowing money to pay for school activities like school trips, not wanting children to lose out on these valuable learning opportunities.

School food
- Many children in low-income households are missing out on the benefits of a school lunch due to the restrictive eligibility criteria for free school meals, the cost of school lunches, and issues with payment procedures including the resolution of lunch money debt.
- Challenges with school food systems and policies mean that not all children get a sufficient and balanced meal during the school day, leaving them feeling hungry and worrying about food.
- Policies and practices relating to food in school often mean that children experiencing poverty don't have the same options as their peers at lunchtime.

Recommendations for Government

As an overarching aim, the report calls on the UK government and Department for Education to recognise the impact that school-related costs have on children's ability to learn, and prioritise funding schools properly so they can offer a truly free and inclusive education, where every pupil can fully participate in school activities and money is never an issue. In the interim, a number of urgent steps to improve schooling for pupils from low-income families are identified.

Removing school costs

1. Provide adequate funding to schools to ensure all curriculum-related costs are removed for pupils. This must include investment that guarantees all children have the resources and tools they need to fully participate in school activities both at home and at school, e.g. revision guides and laptops.
2. Ensure statutory guidance and accountability mechanisms for schools are robust enough to guarantee that no child has to pay to take part in subjects and curriculum-related activities.
3. Provide local authorities with additional funding and a statutory responsibility to help families with school costs through targeted initiatives such as school clothing grants and subsidies for trips. Initiatives like this already exist in all other UK nations.

School food

1. Provide universal free school meals to all school-aged children so that all pupils have equitable access to food while at school. As an urgent first step towards this universal provision, restore the previous free school meals eligibility threshold (in place prior to April 2018) which included all families in receipt of universal credit. This should also be extended to all those on equivalent benefits.
2. Provide further statutory guidance to schools on how school debts should be dealt with, to ensure that children do not miss out on essentials such as access to school lunches, and that an adequate level of support is given to families struggling with these costs.

An inclusive school system

1. Undertake a full review of the cost of participating in state-funded education in England and seek to make changes so that education can be free for all pupils to access. This review to be carried out by the Education Select Committee with consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.
2. Provide a statutory framework, strategy and additional ring-fenced funding so schools in England can provide programmes, activities and services that go beyond the core function of classroom education, such as breakfast and after-school clubs.

Recommendations for Schools

Schools alone cannot solve poverty. However, schools can and do make a huge difference to the lives of individual children. Schools across England have already gone to extraordinary lengths to support children and families facing poverty. Addressing poverty in schools is not easy, but it is vitally important and there are a number of practical, cost-neutral actions that schools can take to lessen the impact of poverty on the school day. Working alongside schools, the report lists a number of useful resources and ideas as a starting point for schools who want to take action on the cost of the school day.

Understanding cost barriers in your school

1. Calculate and review all current costs in your school. Look across the academic year at all aspects of school life and understand what it costs for pupils to fully take part in school and what can be done to reduce costs.
2. Monitor participation in all parts of school life to identify children who may be missing out on opportunities. Use available data to understand patterns in children's uptake of opportunities.
3. Provide meaningful opportunities for all pupils and families to give feedback on their experience of school with a focus on school costs. As a starting point, a template parent survey is available **here**.
4. Develop affordable and inclusive uniform policies, and ensure that pre-loved provision is available to support all families with this school-related cost. More practical ideas on how to achieve this are available from CPAG's **The Right Blazer: School uniform guides**.

The Right Blazer
Tips and advice on uniform for schools in England

Planning the school year with a poverty-sensitive lens

1. Consider how to spread out costs over the course of a school year so that requests for contributions and payments are not concentrated for families. This **Cost of the School Day calendar** is useful in identifying some key dates during the school year that may have associated costs, as well as including suggestions and best practice examples on how to make events and activities more affordable and inclusive.
2. Plan all teaching, events and activities with affordability, accessibility and the needs of children and young people from low-income households in mind. Wherever possible, remove or minimise charging for school-related activities. There are a number of examples of practical actions that schools have taken to address school costs available in these **Cost of the School Day best practice videos**.
3. Ensure that if there are school costs or contributions, families are given adequate notice to pay, and are signposted to any available support.

Raising awareness of poverty in your school

1. Ensure that all staff, including non-teaching staff, are fully aware of the nature, causes, extent and impact of poverty on children both nationally, locally and within the school. The Turning the Page on Poverty toolkit developed by CPAG with Children North East and the National Education Union is a useful starting point for awareness raising with all staff.
2. Explore universal approaches to reduce school costs that will support all families and pupils, including those who are ineligible for free school meals or have no recourse to public funds.
3. Where payments from families are unavoidable, establish discreet systems and processes for the collection and handling of money in school which do not embarrass young people or families.

Talking about poverty

1. Explicitly discuss poverty with children to raise awareness and address poverty-related stigma. Engage children and young people in helping to de-stigmatise poverty in the school. The **Turning the Page on Poverty toolkit** (above) includes a section on '*How to talk about poverty*'.
2. Normalise talking to pupils and families about money whenever school costs are discussed, and ensure that there is regular signposting to places of support.
3. Explore with pupils ways that allow them to tell staff when they are finding costs difficult, discreetly and without embarrassment.

Approaches to school food

1. Identify and address any existing policies or practices that either prevent pupils taking up their free school meal entitlement or further disadvantage them.
2. Ensure that pupils eligible for free school meals have parity of lunchtime experience with their peers. **The Cost of Missing Lunchtime** includes a number of best practice examples for schools to consider.

The Cost of the School Day in England: Pupils' Perspectives full report can be accessed **here**.

Report Into the Future of Qualifications and Assessment

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A report from the learning company Pearson's into the future of qualifications and assessment in England calls for the increased use of valid alternative post-16 qualifications, as well as ways of assessing literacy and numeracy skills that are recognised by Higher Education Institutions and employers and allow people to progress in life.

Currently one in three people fail to make the grade at 16 for English and maths – around 100,000 each year - and around two thirds of that group still don't hit the mark upon resitting. This means young people cannot demonstrate the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to progress with a qualification that they keep failing. Ultimately, this risks losing valuable talent from education and the workforce.

The report is the culmination of a year-long programme of independently commissioned research and consultation, reaching over 6,000 employers, teachers, learners and parents. The findings identify the need for a system-wide approach with a more coherent and broad-based curriculum that is better able to connect with and inspire young people – particularly those aged 14-19 as they plan their next steps.

The report contains seven key recommendations:

1. Make GCSEs work better for all learners
They are versatile and valued qualifications, but we must reform how they are used, when they are taken and how they are recognised.

Objective assessment of students' learning supports motivation and provides an external benchmark in a learner's development. At this age, it also helps those without the social capital outside of the education system to promote their capabilities to progress.

The versatility of GCSE should not be undermined by the design rules that have governed the most recent reforms. At Key Stage 4, accountability measures should follow, not lead, good curriculum and assessment policy. There needs to be a degree of adaptability to allow schools to deliver the curriculum their pupils need.

In the post-16 phase, a GCSE 'one-size-fits-all' approach to maths and English fails too many learners. Learners need to acquire the numeracy and literacy skills required to access higher technical education, and beyond that, into work. Relevant, alternative qualifications need to be available and clearly understood by further and higher education institutions and employers.

Potential next steps
- Adapt the Ebacc and Progress 8 measures to allow schools to provide a more tailored, high-quality curriculum.
- Where valid, different types of assessment should be reintroduced into the qualification design.
- The policy of retaking GCSE Maths and English until 18 requires an urgent rethink. Consider alternatives to GCSE to signal proficiency.

2. Set out a coherent curriculum framework
One linking expected outcomes to the 'learning journey' of students.

A single framework showing a clear curriculum journey through the 14–19 phase of education – making links between the purpose of education, learning at the various stages, and expected outcomes – would be beneficial to all.

At present we have disconnected statements of ambition that fail to draw connections between defining what the education experience should look like and delivering it for learners. Clearer linkage of these purposes to the curriculum could be transformational for learners in understanding how study choices help meet career and life goals.

Potential next steps
- Draw on the best thinking to evolve a coherent framework tool for teachers and learners linking what is learned in school to learning outcomes and assessment.
- Identifying values, skills, and attitudes which already exist across the Programmes of Study and in qualification content.

3. Shift whole-scale curriculum and qualification reform to a model of continuous, evidence-based improvement
Recent reforms have not always made the best use of institutional memory and policy cycles can be too short to establish strong evidence and/or sufficient data to support radical change.

The system needs to remain agile enough to support periodic change when supported by evidence. An interim report showed teachers and employers wanting small improvements to the 14–19 phase, not wholesale (disruptive) change. Where teachers had control over elements of curriculum or assessment, they felt they could make positive impacts on their learners.

Potential next steps
- Reform of qualification and assessment systems should shift to an ongoing cycle of continuous change supported by strong data, impact studies, or evaluation, and at a pace whereby all stakeholders have sufficient time to implement successfully.

4. Create greater diversity and representation in curriculum that reflects young people's lives, to better engage them in learning
The curriculum should reflect the diversity of the world we live in. Even where students may already see themselves reflected, they should see others reflected too.

Teachers told us of lost opportunities to inspire learners and stimulate their ambitions because of a lack of space for creativity in the curriculum content to incorporate diversity of thought, or through young people failing to connect with learning as the content does not reflect or represent their lives. Teachers need more support to make this happen.

Potential next steps
- The recently announced DfE priority to level up standards in schools must give consideration for greater diversity and representation across the curriculum and be done carefully.
- The citizenship curriculum is a good opportunity to allow learners to reflect on these themes, making links between themselves, society and their own aspirations.

5. Assess the right skills in the right way, enabling learners to highlight their strengths and successes

We need to dramatically improve how we are assessing skills. Too many assessments are testing what can easily be assessed rather than what should be assessed, with a greater focus on reliability at the expense of validity.

Rules governing funding or performance measure recognition are heavily prescriptive, leaving little room for innovation. And the drive towards terminal assessment has led to teachers feeling they have a reduced stake in the assessment of their learners.

Research revealed instances where assessments were not testing real skills, rather their comprehension of a skill, with the consequence that students become turned off education.

During the pandemic, where required, many teachers showed ingenuity in creating and adapting effective assessments. There is room for more ambition in the structure of assessments, and teachers are well placed to contribute to this.

Potential next steps
- We should aim to foster a culture of innovation in assessment – including reintroducing different forms of assessment such as internal assessment or coursework into appropriate subjects.
- We should continue to pilot new approaches to assessment giving skilled practitioners the opportunity to help drive forward innovative assessment ideas.
- Allowing a safe space to develop these processes within a regulated framework would help to drive flexibility in assessment.

6. Provide more incentives for employers to engage with educators and strengthen teachers' capacity to bring work themes into the classroom

Careers should inspire young people.

We need to build a culture of employer engagement with education. Teachers must be supported by qualified careers practitioners. There is a willingness of employers to inspire our young people and employees of the future, however employers need more support to learn how their expertise can complement the delivery and assessment of the curriculum.

Teachers told us they often know what a good qualification is for their students, but are unable to always relate to how that links to opening and closing doors in employment. Delivering the most authentic learning experiences requires plentiful opportunities for employer engagement. Teachers raised concerns that the high demand for work placements for new T Levels could reduce employer engagement more broadly in education.

Potential next steps
- Schools and colleges need to be resourced to facilitate high-quality employer experiences for all learners, and regular sector updating for teachers. This would build on the positive impact of the Government's long-term Careers Strategy and introduction of the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Employers need financial incentives to engage with schools and colleges on curriculum matters, particularly where they don't see an immediate benefit to their recruitment pipeline.

7. Accelerate the digital transformation programme, bringing all parts of the system together to realise the opportunities that technology can bring to the education experience

The pandemic has highlighted inequalities in access to digital resources and how this affects outcomes for disadvantaged learners.

We have also seen how AI and digital learning in assessment technologies can be transformative. It is important that technology is used where it adds value to assessments – used correctly it can improve accessibility, reliability and can also address some of the security pressures where assessments are high stakes.

A comprehensive and refreshed national digital strategy across schools and further education that brings together and enhances existing policies and initiatives is required. The challenge is complex, covering home and institutional infrastructure, funding, and having all agencies aligned and able to drive change at scale.

Potential next steps
- This digital strategy should link to assessment developments to ensure they keep pace with how digital is transforming learning. This digital strategy must be delivered or reviewed on a rolling basis to ensure continuity and that no learners are left behind.
- Existing digital initiatives and strategies should be brought together under an umbrella programme to support a more consistent national picture.
- The digital transformation programme should include improving universal access to technologies and connectivity, training in digital skills for teachers, access to online resources and learning platforms, and safeguarding policies.

Qualified to succeed:
Building a 14-19 education system of choice, diversity and opportunity

Pearson's report into the Future of Qualifications & Assessment in England

EXPLORE

The full report Qualified to succeed: Building a 14-19 education system of choice, diversity and opportunity can be viewed or downloaded **here**.

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Ofsted
Parent View

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Ofsted Parent View is an online survey that allows parents/carers to give their views about their child's school. By 'parents', we mean any person with parental responsibility for a child at the school. Parents can complete the survey at any time. It is also the main mechanism for parents to give their views to inspectors at the time of a school inspection.

The survey can be accessed directly from the Ofsted Parent View site or from the homepage of Ofsted's website.

The survey asks parents how strongly they agree or disagree with statements about their child's school, largely based on Ofsted's framework for inspection.

Ofsted Parent View questions

The survey asks parents to respond to 14 statements and questions:
1. My child is happy at this school.
2. My child feels safe at this school.
3. The school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.
4. My child has been bullied and the school dealt with the bullying quickly and effectively.
5. The school makes me aware of what my child will learn during the year.
6. When I have raised concerns with the school they have been dealt with properly.
7. Does your child have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)? (yes/no)
    If yes, the survey asks parents how strongly they agree with this statement:
    'My child has SEND, and the school gives them the support they need to succeed.'
8. The school has high expectations for my child.
9. My child does well at this school.
10. The school lets me know how my child is doing.
11. There is a good range of subjects available to my child at this school.
12. My child can take part in clubs and activities at this school.
13. The school supports my child's wider personal development.
14. I would recommend this school to another parent. (yes or no)

Unless otherwise specified above, all the answer options to the statements are:
•   Strongly agree.
•   Agree.
•   Disagree.
•   Strongly disagree.
•   Don't know.

For statement 4, 'My child has been bullied and the school dealt with the bullying quickly and effectively' parents can also select 'My child has not been bullied'.

For statement 6, 'When I have raised concerns with the school they have been dealt with properly' parents can select 'I have not raised any concerns'.

Schools with boarding and residential provision

There are five more statements for parents with children who board or reside at maintained schools and academies:
1.   My child enjoys boarding/the welfare experience.
2.   My child is warm enough and comfortable in the residential accommodation.
3.   The experience of boarding/welfare helps my child's progress and development.
4.   I can easily contact the staff who care for my child.
5.   Boarding and welfare is well organised and managed effectively.

Free-text response
The survey includes an additional question during inspection. This allows parents to use their own words to express their views about their child school.

The free-text question asks: Do you have any additional comments on any of your answers?

Responses to this question remain confidential and anonymised and are not published.

Engaging with parents
Ofsted Parent View is an online survey. However, not all parents have access to email or a computer. Ofsted can set up guest accounts for schools to use with parents on a computer or tablet device in school. With these guest accounts, parents can use logins created for the school to make it easier for them to give their views.

These are a good way of encouraging parents to complete the survey, particularly at parents' evenings and school events.

Guest accounts can be set up at five days notice via **parentview.queries@ofsted.gov.uk**.

How results are displayed
Once a school has received 10 survey responses, the information will be available to view in Ofsted Parent View for:
• Schools.
• Parents and carers.
• The general public.

Ofsted Parent View displays data about each school in percentages and easy-to-understand graphs. The results for each school in Ofsted Parent View are save at the end of the academic year. This gives headteachers and governors a useful year-on-year picture of parents' views.

Schools can also sign up to the Ofsted Parent View site to receive regular email alerts about published responses.

National data
Ofsted publishes **national response rates for all schools annually**. Ofsted Parent View gives response rates for maintained schools by phase.

The report details:
• Responses to Ofsted Parent View by question and response.
• Average number of submissions per school nationally.
• Total number of submissions received to Ofsted Parent View in the last 12 months.

Using parents' views - During inspections
The Headteacher is asked to notify parents about the inspection and invite them to complete the Ofsted Parent View survey.

Inspectors will review the responses from Ofsted Parent View throughout the inspection to ensure that they take all parents' views received during the inspection into account.

If the response rate for Ofsted Parent View is low, inspectors may take steps during the inspection to gather further parents' views.

Inspectors will consider and weigh parents' views against a range of other first-hand evidence they gather to make their overall judgement about the effectiveness of a school.

Other evidence includes:
• Lesson visits.
• Discussions with pupils, teachers and senior managers.
• Progress and attainment data.
• Other relevant information.

More information about how inspectors make their judgements can be found at:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-inspections-of-maintained-schools.

Outside of inspections
Parents can give their feedback using Ofsted Parent View at any time during the year. If a parent updates their responses more than once in an academic year, only the most recent responses will show.

Security

Ofsted Parent View is set up securely.

Parents must:
- Register with a password.
- Verify their email address.
- Accept the terms of use.

If a school has a concern about responses on Ofsted Parent View, the headteacher should contact **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**.

Use Ofsted Parent View link and images

Schools can add a link to Ofsted Parent View on their own:
- Website.
- School newsletter.
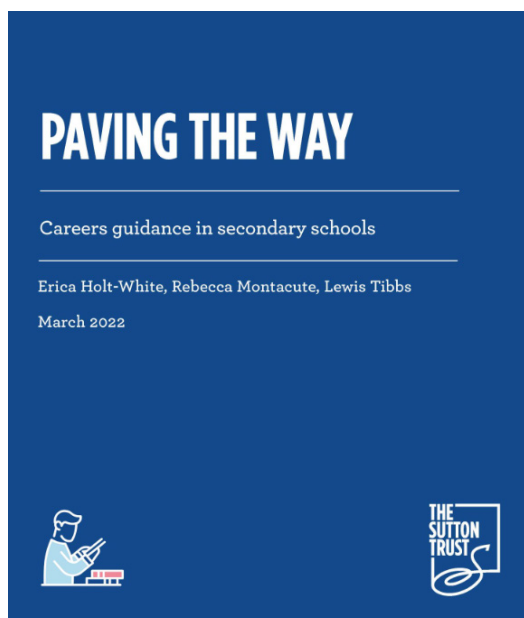- Emails and letters to parents.

Schools receive a higher number of responses from parents when they have actively promoted the survey with parents.

Logos links and posters are available to download from: **https://Parent View.ofsted.gov.uk/link-to-us**.

Careers Guidance in Secondary Schools

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A summary of the March 2022 report Paving the Way by The Sutton Trust.

High quality careers education, information, advice and guidance is vital to ensure young people can access jobs that suit their talents and aspirations. For those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, this advice is particularly important, as they are less likely to have access to support from family and friends, or to have networks which provide an insight into a wide range of career options. Accessing independent and impartial advice on education, training and career paths is therefore a central plank of social mobility, empowering young people to make informed decisions about their future pathways.

Careers guidance is delivered in a variety of forms, from in-class workshops to visits from an employer. That advice, when done well, introduces a variety of potential career paths, and helps to facilitate the transition from secondary education to further education and employment.

Ensuring equal access to careers guidance is particularly vital as we continue to move through the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many young people's opportunities to take part in work experience and other workplace learning were impacted. Recent research from the Institute for Employment Studies has revealed that school-age pupils are concerned about the lack of preparation for the world of work after missing out on work experience opportunities as well as the increased pool of competition for entry level roles.

Against this context particularly, it is essential that from a young age all children and young people can access high quality careers guidance, regardless of background, so that they can make informed decisions about their next steps. This should cover a wide range of pathways and take into account up to date information on changes in the labour market. A system-wide, well-funded, high quality and impartial careers and advice function is a pre-requisite of a fair and effective education system.

The report looks in detail at the advice now available to young people, engagement with related opportunities and any barriers to improving provision in schools and colleges, including polling of both secondary school pupils and teachers.

Key Findings

Overview

When the Sutton Trust last looked at careers provision back in 2014, it found a major decline in the quality and quantity of careers provision happening in schools, with a 'postcode lottery' of provision.

The findings in this new report suggest there have been improvements since then, but there is still too often variability in careers provision, with differences between state and private schools and between state schools with more and less deprived intakes.

Existing careers provision

- A wide range of career related activities are available in schools. The most common activities reported as taking place by senior leaders in English state schools include sessions with a Careers Adviser (**85%**), careers fairs or events (**84%**), and links to possible careers within curriculum lessons (**80%**).
- Classroom teachers in English state schools are less likely than senior leaders to say links to possible careers are being made within curriculum lessons, at **59%** vs. **80%**, perhaps reflecting some ambitions for careers guidance not filtering down into classroom practice.
- Almost all state schools now have a Careers Leader, a role responsible for a school's careers programme, with **95%** of state school senior leaders reporting their school has such a role.
- **73%** of state school headteachers said their school works with the government funded Career and Enterprise Company (CEC). However, just **48%** of headteachers said their school was part of a CEC Careers Hub - designed to bring together schools, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers in a local area.
- The majority (**94%**) of state school senior leaders are aware of the Gatsby benchmarks, the current framework for careers guidance. However, awareness is much lower among classroom teachers in state schools (**40%**), again showing some elements of guidance are not necessarily making it into day-to-day practice.
- Alongside differences in the range of activities available in schools reported by teachers, there are also differences in students' self-reported access. Overall, **36%** of students in the UK said they had not taken part in any careers related activities. State school pupils are more likely to report not having taken part (**38%**) compared to pupils at private schools (**23%**).
- Students' self-reporting of career activities is higher for those in later year groups. For example, while only **7%** of those in years 8-9 report learning about apprenticeships, this was **26%** for year 13s. Similarly, while only **2%** of those in years 8-9 had visited a university, **42%** of year 13s have done so. But even for year 13s, figures for many of these activities remain low, with for example just **17%** having learnt about career opportunities in their local area, and just **30%** having done work experience.
- Nearly half (**46%**) of 17- and 18-year olds (year 13) say they have received a large amount of information on university routes during their education, compared to just **10%** who say the same for apprenticeships.
- Less than a third (**30%**) of students in year 13 have completed work experience.

- Around a third (**36%**) of secondary school students do not feel confident in their next steps in education and training, with only just over half (**56%**) feeling confident. The proportion not feeling confident is lower, but still sizable, for students in year 13 (**22%**).
- More pupils in state secondary schools report not being confident in their next steps in education and training than in private schools (**39%** vs. **29%**). Barriers to good quality provision.
- Over three quarters of state school teachers (**88%**) felt that their teacher training didn't prepare them to deliver careers information and guidance to students.
- Over a third (**37%**) of senior leaders think their school does not have adequate funding and resources to deliver careers advice and guidance.
- Just under a third (**32%**) of teachers in state schools report they don't have enough funding to deliver good quality careers education and guidance, compared to just **6%** saying the same in private schools. Just over half (**51%**) of teachers in state schools think there isn't enough staff time to do so, compared to just **34%** saying the same in private schools.
- Schools in more deprived areas are less likely to have access to a specialist Careers Adviser, with **21%** of teachers in the most deprived areas reporting non-specialists delivered personal guidance, compared to **14%** in more affluent areas.
- **72%** of teachers think the pandemic has negatively impacted their school's ability to deliver careers education and guidance. This figure was **16 percentage points higher** for teachers in state schools, at **75%**, vs. **59%** in private schools.

Teachers' views on improving careers guidance
- Almost half (**47%**) of state school teachers want to see additional funding for careers guidance, more than four times as many as in private schools (**11%**). State schools want to use additional funding to allow a member of staff to fully focus on careers guidance, with teachers also wanting to see better pay and recognition for the Careers Leader role in schools.
- Many senior leaders in English state schools also want to see additional visits from employers (**47%**) and more visits from apprenticeship providers (**39%**).

Recommendations
For government
1. The government should develop a new national strategy on careers education. Provision would benefit from a clear overarching strategy now that the government's 2017 careers strategy has lapsed. The strategy should sit primarily in the Department for Education, but with strong cross-departmental links, to join up what are currently disparate elements in the system. The strategy should look at the very start of a child's education, all the way through to the workplace. It should be formed in partnership with employers, with a view to help prepare young people for future labour market trends, and link clearly into the government's levelling up strategy.

2. At the centre of this strategy should be a core 'careers structure' outlining a minimum underlying structure for careers provision in all schools. There is too much variation in the careers provision available to students. This underlying architecture, with adequate funding behind it, would help tackle this inconsistency, by putting in place the same standard underlying set up in all schools, to aid them to deliver guidance as set out in the Gatsby benchmarks.

This offer should guarantee that all schools:
- Have a Careers Leader with the time, recognition, and resources to properly fulfil their role.
- Are part of a Careers Hub.
- Have access to a professional career adviser for their students (qualified to at least Level 6).

3. Greater time should be earmarked and integrated within the overall curriculum, and within subject curricula, to deliver careers education and guidance, to reflect its centrality to students' future prospects. With competing demands on the school day, setting clearer requirements on the time schools should be spending on careers education, both on overall careers guidance (for example in PSHE lessons or as a scheduled careers week for pupils), and for subject specific careers guidance within lessons, would help give the topic the required priority within schools. This should be accompanied by better training for teachers on careers education within initial teacher training.

4. All pupils should have access to work experience between the ages of 14 and 16. Experience in the workplace can be extremely impactful for students, allowing them to gain important insights into the world of work and develop essential skills, with support given to help them find relevant placements. This should also be accompanied by additional funding for schools, to allow them to pay for the staff time needed to support students to organise good quality placements.

5. Better support and guidance should be made available for schools and colleges on apprenticeships, with better enforcement of statutory requirements. More investment should be made in national information sources and programmes on technical education routes to improve the advice available. Evidence suggests that too many schools are not meeting their statutory requirements under the 'Baker Clause'. Better enforcement should be introduced, for example looking at incentives such as limiting Ofsted grades in schools who do not comply with the clause.

For the Career and Enterprise Company (CEC)
1. All secondary schools should be part of a Careers Hub, with schools serving the most deprived intakes prioritised. Plans for the Careers Hub network to be expanded are to be welcomed, but now is the time to expand the network to reach all schools. Given the disparities in careers provision identified here, it is vital that the most deprived schools are prioritised in this expansion plan. Evaluation of the programme should continue to ensure that expansion is impactful.

2. The CEC should continue to roll out pilot programmes of promising interventions based on evidence, again where possible with a focus on the most deprived schools. We welcome recent pilot programmes, including partnerships with businesses, to help to give young people greater insights into the world of work. Further such work should continue, with programmes likely to benefit the most deprived schools prioritised.

For schools, colleges and their governing boards

1. Additional support for employability and career education should be seen as a key part of catch-up plans for education post pandemic. Many students have missed out on important aspects of career education and guidance during school closures, when core learning had to be prioritised. School catch-up plans should include a strategy on how students will be supported to make up for the opportunities to learn about careers which they have missed during the pandemic. This should be accompanied by additional catch-up funds from government to support schools to do this work.

2. There should be clear responsibility for careers guidance within a school's senior leadership team. How this is done may differ between schools, for example by having a Careers Leader themselves sit within a school's senior leadership team (SLT), or if this role is held by a middle leader, by having a member of SLT who is clearly responsible for the school's strategy on careers. The member of SLT with responsibility for careers should work with the school's Pupil Premium Lead to ensure the school's career strategy takes into account the needs of this group of students.

3. Every school should have at least one governor who oversees careers provision. This governor role should engage with a school's Careers Leader to give strategic oversight of a school's careers programme, as well as potentially helping to link their school up with local employers through any contacts on the governing board. It should also work together with a school's pupil premium governor, again to ensure the school's strategy is successfully catering to this group of students.

The full report can be viewed or downloaded **here**.

What Governing Boards and School Leaders Should Expect From Each Other

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Written and backed by the National Governance Association (NGA), the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Institute of School Business Leaders (ISBL), the guide that sets out what school leaders and those governing should expect from each other in order to maintain effective working relationships has recently been updated.

Getting governance right is important because of the significant impact it has on the quality of educational provision and the opportunity and life chances of children. This joint guidance aims to help governing boards and headteachers to get governance right by working together, being mutually supportive and respecting each other's roles and responsibilities.

1. Respecting the respective roles
A key aspect of an effective working relationship is respecting the difference between strategic governance and operational management.
• The governing board is expected to concentrate on delivering its core strategic functions.
• The headteacher is expected to implement the strategic priorities of the governing board through their day-to-day management of the school.

Those governing are not asked to, and should not try to, involve themselves in day-to-day management, or carry out staff roles on an unpaid basis.

2. Working together to set a strategy
The governing board and headteacher have a shared responsibility for setting a future strategy that reflects the values of their school. In practice, this means:
• Articulating a clear vision of where they want their school(s) to be in three to five years' time, reflecting their values and ethos.
• Using self-evaluation to identify priorities that reflect the current context and challenges.
• Agreeing priorities that will achieve that vision and align with available resources.
• The governing board monitoring progress within an annual cycle, which provides a focus for their meetings.

3. Engaging stakeholders
Meaningful engagement with stakeholders – pupils, parents, staff and the wider community – helps the governing board to make informed decisions and build trust and shared ownership in those decisions.

The governing board and headteacher have a shared commitment to building and maintaining key stakeholder relationships, modelling openness and transparency and developing lines of communication, thus creating the conditions for:

- A diverse governing board.
- Local knowledge to be valued.
- Meaningful engagement and consultation.
- Full participation.
- Informed decision making.

Participating in inspections

The governing board is expected to make itself available and participate in meetings with Ofsted inspectors and inspection feedback meetings.

The headteacher is expected to support the participation of the governing board in inspections by requesting meetings are held at the beginning or end of the school day to maximise attendance.

4. Ensuring your school is a great place to work

Staff are a school's most valuable resource and the largest area of expenditure in the budget. Governing boards have legal responsibilities as the employers of staff, which vary depending on the type of school. Boards in all LA maintained schools must comply with employment and health and safety legislation.

The governing board and headteacher have a shared responsibility for creating the leadership culture and climate necessary for the school to be recognised as a great place to work.

This means:

- Complying with employment and equalities legislation.
- Promoting safeguarding, transparency and equality of opportunity.
- Avoiding discriminatory practice.
- HR policies being applied consistently.
- Ensuring policies and their implementation promote a positive culture.
- Recognising, encouraging and rewarding talent.
- Tackling workload issues.
- Engaging with staff to bring about improvement.

Discharging your duty of care

The governing board is expected to exercise its duty of care towards the headteacher and support their work-life balance. This means monitoring the impact of strategies and initiatives that promote a positive and sustainable workplace and ensure a safe and secure working environment.

Dedicated leadership time

The governing board is expected to grant the headteacher dedicated time for strategic leadership activity, including, where appropriate, time away from their school.

The headteacher's annual appraisal

The governing board and headteacher share the responsibility for ensuring the appraisal process serves not only as a mechanism for accountability but also as an opportunity to provide support and encourage development.

This means ensuring:
- A panel of appraisers who are suitably trained.
- The requirement to appoint an independent external advisor is met.
- The advisor is suitably experienced and trained.
- Objectives are linked to strategic priorities.
- Performance is monitored consistently over a twelve-month period.
- An annual appraisal meeting and six-month review.
- Issues are dealt with on an ongoing basis.
- CPD is encouraged and needs are met.
- Pay progression is dealt with promptly and effectively.

Monitoring staff wellbeing

The governing board is expected to have an overriding concern for the wellbeing of all staff in their school and monitor the impact of strategies and initiatives that promote a positive and sustainable workplace culture.

The headteacher is expected to model a positive and sustainable workplace culture to all staff and seek to reduce unnecessary workload.

5. Making governance effective
Governing principles

The governing board and headteacher are expected to:
- Act in accordance with the seven principles of public life.
- Understand their responsibilities under equality legislation.
- Be guided by the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education.

Getting the right people around the table

The governing board is expected to:
- Determine what size and composition works for them.
- Conduct skills audits to identify skills gaps and development needs to be met, whether through recruitment or training.
- Adopt transparent processes for recruiting and selecting governors, including interviewing prospective candidates.
- Consider targeted recruitment to create a more diverse board.
- Replace board members over time (i.e. after their second term of office), including timely succession planning for the chair.

An effective chair and vice chair

The chair leads the governing board and ensures that it fulfils its functions well. The vice chair can be very important in sharing the leadership of the board, not only making the role of chair more manageable but also acting as a sounding board when there are challenges and opportunities to reflect on.

The chair and vice chair are expected to work together to facilitate the governing board working as a team and supporting all governors to participate actively and equally.

Developing skills and knowledge

The governing board is expected to prioritise and have a system in place for the induction of new governors, including signposting to relevant training as appropriate. The headteacher is expected to be part of the induction process. For example, by attending a welcome meeting and or visit to the school(s).

The governing board is expected to remain proactive in developing its skills and knowledge. This means keeping up to date on its responsibilities and good practice, responding to the results of the skills audit and arranging training as appropriate. The headteacher is expected to encourage and support this. For example, through arranging joint training with the governing board and leadership team where appropriate.

Self-evaluation

The governing board is expected to evaluate its impact on a routine basis as well as the contribution of individual governors. This includes meeting the expectation of carrying out an annual self-assessment of the governing board and commissioning independent external reviews of governance. The headteacher is expected to support this process.

Guidance is available from the DfE on how to arrange an effective external review of governance and questions are available to support the process of self-evaluation.

Conduct

The governing board is expected to adopt a code of conduct, which sets out general standards of behaviour and how governors deal with each other and employees. Both the board and headteacher are expected to model the standards of behaviour set out in the code and demonstrate their commitment to their school's values, ethical governance and leadership. NGA has published a model code of conduct for governing boards to adapt.

Avoiding conflicts of interest

Those governing should do their best to avoid conflicts of interest and related party transactions and must declare any which exist. The National Audit Office and Charity Commission both provide useful advice on avoiding conflict of interest.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, it is not good practice to govern on more than two boards.

6. Ways of working

The chair

The chair of the governing board is expected to:
- Undertake regular and appropriate CPD.
- Seek external support as required.
- Support all governors to participate actively and equally.
- Ensure appropriate succession planning is in place.
- Avoid serving more than six years on the same board.

The chair and headteacher relationship

The chair of the governing board and headteacher have equal responsibility for developing a professional relationship based on trust, mutual respect and a full appreciation of their respective roles and remits.

Working with the governance professional

The governing board and headteacher are expected to recognise the role of governance professionals (sometimes referred to as the clerk) and promote an effective working relationship. This means having due regard for the advice of the governance professional, supporting their CPD and ensuring the salary that they receive is commensurate with the service they deliver.

Working with school business professionals

Business professionals make a significant contribution towards the effective leadership and management of schools.

The governing board is expected to understand the role of the business professional, the professional standards they adhere to and recognise their contribution to financial and governance compliance and risk management. The governing board is encouraged to champion business professionals working at all levels and to promote the benefits of business and governance working seamlessly together.

The headteacher is expected to facilitate collaboration between school business professionals and the governing board, ensuring that they are fully involved in reporting to the governing board on operational management and strategic resource planning.

Meetings

The governing board and headteacher are expected to work together and with their governance professional to ensure that meetings are well planned, take place at appropriate intervals and have manageable agendas, which prevent overlap in the work and responsibilities of senior leaders and committees. When arranging meetings, consideration should also be given to the work-life balance and commitments of the governing board, headteacher and relevant staff, including how appropriate use of online platforms can support increased attendance and accessibility.

Headteacher reporting

The governing board is expected to determine the content of the termly report it receives from the headteacher to gain an overview of progress being made towards strategic priorities. This should be discussed with the headteacher to ensure that the resulting workload is both reasonable and proportionate.

Typically, the report will cover:
• Current context (e.g. pupil numbers).
• Progress against strategic priorities.
• Current high-level risks.
• The curriculum, teaching and learning outcomes.
• Financial performance, compliance and resource management.
• Human resources and the performance management of staff.
• Pupil behaviour, wellbeing, welfare and safeguarding.

Using data

The governing board and headteacher are expected to agree on what data is required by the board and how it is presented in a meaningful way, which allows the board to evaluate progress, identify risk and inform support and challenge, at the same time as avoiding placing an unreasonable burden on the headteacher.

The governing board collectively is expected to gain the knowledge it needs to use data in a meaningful way. For example, by understanding how its school(s) assess attainment and track progress between external assessment points.

Monitoring visits

Governors are expected to visit their school(s) to gain an understanding of how the vision and strategy are being implemented and culture reflected in daily life. The headteacher is expected to encourage such visits and support with the arrangements.

Governors carrying out and supporting monitoring visits are expected to follow agreed protocols, which help ensure the visit is effective, conducted in the right spirit (i.e. not perceived as an inspection) and convenient to all parties.

Delegation

The governing board is responsible for developing a compliant and effective framework (scheme) of delegation, which is clearly documented, including terms of reference for all committees. This should be reviewed at least annually or sooner if any significant changes are needed. The governing board and headteacher should expect to work together on this and seek the advice of the governance professional.

Oversight of policies

The governing board is expected to have in place and follow a schedule for reviewing policies that are required by law. The schedule should include review frequency, approval rules and be aligned with the framework of delegation. The governing board is expected to monitor the impact of policies it is required to approve.

The headteacher and their leadership team are expected to write/draft/adapt policies in line with the schedule and ensure they reflect the values of the school(s), are sufficiently robust, compliant with the law, and consider the views of stakeholders.

The guide is available to download from the NGA website **here** along with a similar guide for MATs and CEOs.

Energy costs and Liverpool schools: what can governors do?

Apart from the horrific news in the Ukraine, which is rightly uppermost in everybody's minds, I suspect the next hottest topic of the moment is the rising cost of energy - due in part, but not wholly, to the war in Ukraine. Whilst I don't want to repeat what can be easily read elsewhere regarding the recent and planned rises in domestic energy costs, I would like to share some insights gained from a recent keynote presentation to LGF by Brendan Purcell, the city's Energy and Carbon Manager.

It came as a surprise to myself and several other experienced governors who attended the presentation that energy costs are charged to schools at variable rates throughout the school day, colour-coded green, amber and red. Even at current prices, per unit rates for electricity across these bands can vary from 16p to more than £1. And with wholesale prices as volatile as they are, many gas and electricity traders are refusing to set contracts for future supply, and so estimates of 200-300% price increases are considered conservative within the industry.

The most expensive time is 4.30-7.30pm, when many lights and appliances are left on in schools after most if not all pupils and the majority of staff have (or should have!) left the site. The one set of anonymized data used in the presentation revealed that one Liverpool school currently uses a large percentage of its data at times when the site is not occupied, i.e. during the evenings and school holidays. Data can only raise questions: it is up to managers (and governors) to provide answers. There may be good reasons why energy usage is high during the evenings, weekends and holidays if the premises are well used at these times; if so, how are such costs to be covered? With few if any exceptions, it surely cannot be right to use funds intended for pupils' education to subsidise other activities.

Now more than ever, it is appropriate for senior leaders and governors – and in particular trustees of academies (in view of their increased powers and therefore responsibilities) – to access and interpret data regarding current and projected energy usage together. The need to manage what is a looming crisis for budgets is both immediate and urgent.

As so often occurs with speakers at our regular LGF meetings, the synergy between speaker and experienced governors enabled us to explore several practical steps that schools can take to manage this risk
- Request detailed data on current and historic data usage. For those schools tied into the Council's SLA for energy, such data is readily available from them, down to usage per half hour of every day.
- Set time aside to interrogate and analyse this data to see where immediate savings can be made.

- Undertake on-site surveys of current energy efficiency and usage, involving pupils and staff in the process to maximise zero-cost efficiencies.
- Put appropriate controls in place locally to manage energy usage.
- Create an energy Action Plan with clear milestones to take control of current and projected energy usage in the short, medium and long term.
- Include in the Plan achievable goals for local generation of power using non-fossil alternatives in the medium and long term. The National Grid is transitioning from reliance on fossil fuels to greener alternatives, moving from barely 50% reliance on renewables currently to 100% - but not until 2050. During this period, users will continue to be reliant on increasingly expensive energy generated from fossil fuels.
- Raise awareness amongst all stakeholders that the energy crisis is not just here for the short-term: the green agenda for our planet and our school are one and the same, and the way this agenda is managed will have a direct impact on school budgets for the medium and long term.
- Become involved in the work of Liverpool Governance Forum to support each other as we seek to face this challenge with solutions that are appropriate to our local school.

Michael Morris
LGF Chair

The presentation referred to above may be found, along with many other useful resources, on the LGF website: **https://livgovforum.org.uk** under '**Other Reports**'

Liverpool Governance Forum Conference
SLEEP AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN EDUCATION

With one of Britain's foremost sleep experts – Neil Stanley

SATURDAY JULY 2ND
09.30 – 12.30
At Partnership for Learning, South Road, L24 9PZ

Free places for governors/trustees of schools who are registered with the LGF.
Good parking & refreshments!

BE ASTOUNDED at just how vital sleep is to the developing brain from birth to maturity. Good sleep patterns have a huge impact on memory retention, readiness to learn and learning generally.

BE SHOCKED by what happens when there is a lack of sleep. It influences, mood, appetite and long term mental abilities.

DISCUSS what a huge responsibility lies in the hands of parents and carers to create good sleep habits for our children and how we as governors/trustees can be part of that.
Knowing is the first step to change.

Don't sleep on it – book your place now.

Please book-in via the LGF e-mail account: **admin@livgovforum.org.uk**

Liverpool Governance Forum ('LGF') was formed in 1996 to represent the views of all governing boards of Liverpool schools and academies. It is the voice of governance on various strategic education committees within Liverpool.

All governors/trustees are welcome to attend LGF's half termly meetings and annual conference to engage with keynote speakers, network, and share best practice. LGF committee members offer on-going support to all involved in school governance.