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CES Newsletter: Issue 17

Gordon.ceslondon@gmail.com www.ceslondon.com



[Date]

[Company name]

This newsletter should be of interest to all teachers, Because of the crisis it will be issued on a weekly basis from now on. This will hopefully mean I can pass on whatever useful information I find and, to be honest, because I am time rich, if income poorer. It will of course be shorter than the usual fortnightly edition.

There is a comprehensive list in the newsletter of online teaching resources.

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**The miscellaneous section contains articles on;**

* Tighten advertising regulations to improve young peoples body image

**SNIPPETS**

**SCHOOLS**

**HOME SCHOOLING RESOURCES**

Cross-curricular resources

* Adobe Education Exchange: Free resources, workshops and teaching materials. All ages: [https://edex.adobe.com](https://edex.adobe.com/)
* Atom Learning: Personalised learning in English and maths, using teacher-led content. Key stage 2: <https://atomlearning.co.uk/>
* BBC Bitesize: Over the coming weeks, the BBC will be offering daily content to support families with home learning and issues of wellbeing: [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)
* BrainPOP: Cross-curricular resources using topics and themes. BrainPOP has offered “free, unlimited use of BrainPOP to any school, anywhere, that is closed due to the coronavirus during the period of their closure”. All ages: <https://go.brainpop.com/accessrequest>
* Century Tech: English, maths and science resources for free to all schools and students affected by coronavirus school closures. All ages: [www.century.tech/coronavirus-support/](http://www.century.tech/coronavirus-support/)
* Discovery Education: Videos, interactive activities, or complete, ready-to-use lesson plans in maths, science and social studies. All ages: [www.discoveryeducation.com/virtual-learning](http://www.discoveryeducation.com/virtual-learning)
* Earwig Academic: A package for teachers to support teaching evidence, making assessments, tracking progress and reporting. Parents and pupils can upload work and communicate safely with teachers. During the coronavirus crisis, Earwig Lite is free to “anyone who needs it”. All ages: <https://earwigacademic.com/>
* Highlights Kids: Read, play games and conduct science experiments. Primary age: [www.highlightskids.com](http://www.highlightskids.com/)
* Hungry Little Minds: Government supported. Activities for parents with children aged under five: <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>
* Twinkl: Learning resources, planning and assessment materials. The company has created free home learning and school closure packs. All ages: [www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/covid19-school-closures](http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/covid19-school-closures)
* Seneca Learning: A free online learning platform. Key stages 2, 3 and 4: [www.senecalearning.com](http://www.senecalearning.com/)
* Tassomai: Bite-sized learning, using quizzes and short videos. Key stages 3 and 4. Free access to schools affected by coronavirus closures: [www.tassomai.com](http://www.tassomai.com/)

Other home learning support

* Firefly Learning: Provides access to online learning. Offering free access to its platform until the end of the summer term: [www.fireflylearning.com](http://www.fireflylearning.com/)
* HomeLearningUK: A curated resource for schools, students and parents designed to share ideas, solutions, plans and support: <https://homelearninguk.weebly.com/>
* Kaligo Apps: Handwriting resource, designed to teach students how to write using a stylus and tablet, built on an AI machine learning platform. Ages 3 to 8: [www.kaligo-apps.com](http://www.kaligo-apps.com/)
* Microsoft Family: Family-led learning ideas and activities for children. Ages 3 to 12: <https://education.microsoft.com/en-us/resource/755e5a8b>
* MyTutor: Matches students with tutors online to provide one-to-one tuition: [www.mytutor.co.uk](http://www.mytutor.co.uk/)
* Spaghetti Brain: Offers real-time strategies for children to support homework and understanding: [www.spaghettibrain.co.uk](http://www.spaghettibrain.co.uk/)

English/literacy/reading

* Audible: Free audiobooks. All ages: <https://stories.audible.com/start-listen>
* Bedrock Learning: Resources designed to broaden children’s vocabulary including Tier 2 words, root words and academic verbs. Free access for all schools closed due to coronavirus. Key stages 1 to 4: [www.bedrocklearning.org/coronavirus-support](http://www.bedrocklearning.org/coronavirus-support)
* Chatta: Teaching approach linking images with language for communication development. Early years to key stage 5: <https://chattalearning.com/>
* Englicious: Free English language teaching resources, including exercises, projects and games. All ages: <http://englicious.org/>
* Happy English: English, grammar and phonics. All ages: [https://happyenglishuk.com](https://happyenglishuk.com/)
* Hopscotch Books: SecEd’s sister publishing house is offering free activities and resources for primary-age children (<https://bit.ly/2WKNE3E>) and a free download to help families plan home learning via books (<https://bit.ly/2QCEylO>). More resources will become available in due course: [www.hopscotchbooks.com](http://www.hopscotchbooks.com/)
* Literacy shed: Animations on different topics to inspire children to write. Mainly key stages 1 and 2: [www.literacyshed.com](http://www.literacyshed.com/)
* Litfilmfest: Writing resources. To support schools and families, Litfilmfest is releasing videos every weekday at 10:30am. Key stages 1 to 3: <https://litfilmfest.com/playlists/>
* National Literacy Trust Family Zone: Advice and information for parents teaching from home during school closures. Ages 0 to 12: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/>
* Oaka Books: Resources for pupils who have dyslexia. Key stages 1 to 3: [www.oakabooks.co.uk](http://www.oakabooks.co.uk/)
* Phonics Play: Phonics learning for early years and key stage 1. Free access for children during the coronavirus crisis: [www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/)
* Pobble 365: Provides a photo stimulus for a writing task every day. All ages: [www.pobble365.com](http://www.pobble365.com/)
* Zaprendo: Personalised learning tools and experiences for English and phonics learning. All ages: <https://zaprendo.com/>

STEM

* Kide Science: Scientific thinking through play-based learning. For parents or teachers. Ages 3 to 8: [https://kidescience.com](https://kidescience.com/)
* Knowledgehook: US website offering maths resources to help teacher lesson delivery. During school closures, all teachers get premium access for free: [www.knowledgehook.com](http://www.knowledgehook.com/)
* MangaHigh: Game-based learning in maths and coding. Free access for at least 60 days to schools affected by Covid-19. Ages 7 to 16: [www.mangahigh.com](http://www.mangahigh.com/)
* Mathigon: US website offering interactive maths resources designed to achieve mastery. Key stages 3, 4, 5: <https://mathigon.org/>
* Mathspire: An app to support the teaching and learning of A level maths. It is offering schools free access to independent learning content: <https://mathspire.com/>
* Maths-Whizz: Online maths tuition for five to 13-year olds: [www.whizz.com](http://www.whizz.com/)
* MEL Science: Free science experiments that can be carried out with kitchen ingredients. Key stages 1 to 4. Free home learning webinars for the next three months: <https://melscience.com/GB-en/articles/> & <https://melscience.com/GB-en/academy/>
* MessingAroundWith: Educational apps that encourage children to learn through play and solve problems. Key stages 1 and 2: <https://messingaroundwith.com/>
* NatureBytes: Kits to help anybody develop digital skills and reconnect with nature. All ages: <http://naturebytes.org/about/>
* Numbermix: Maths activities and projects. Ages 3 to 14: [www.numbermix.com](http://www.numbermix.com/)
* Prodigy: Engaging young people in maths through games. Ages 6 to 14: [www.prodigygame.com](http://www.prodigygame.com/)
* Siemens: Student zone includes DIY science experiments and interactive games: <https://new.siemens.com/uk/en/company/education/students.html>
* STEM Learning: In light of the outbreak, STEM Learning is offering remote teaching support, CPD and online access to its STEM Ambassadors. Free access. All ages: [www.stem.org.uk/home-learning](http://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning)

Coding and IT

* Acorn Aspirations: Activities for bridging the digital skills gap. Ages 12 to 18: <http://acornaspirations.com/>
* Blockly Games: Educational games for pupils who have not had prior experience with computer programming: <https://blockly.games/>
* Blue Shift Coding: One-to-one tutoring in coding for 7 to 14-year olds: <https://blueshiftcoding.com/>
* BT Skills for Tomorrow: Tech skills to prepare students for the workplace. Resources for teachers as well: [www.bt.com/skillsfortomorrow/](http://www.bt.com/skillsfortomorrow/)
* Codecademy: Web development and data science skills activities. In light of coronavirus, it is offering 10,000 scholarships to Codecademy Pro for free to high school and college students for the rest of the school year: <https://pro.codecademy.com/learn-from-home/>
* Kano: Coding and design. All ages: <https://kano.me/uk/education>
* Snapplify: Resources to support digital education for students and schools: [www.snapplify.com](http://www.snapplify.com/)
* Swop Bots: Stories and games for schools and families to encourage the next generation of coders. Age 8 and over: <https://swopbots.com/>
* Twin Science: Teaches basic coding and programming. Ages 8 and over: [www.twinscience.com](http://www.twinscience.com/)
* Tynker: Encouraging children to create, code, make websites and design games. Free access to its premium service during the school closures. Ages 5 and over: [www.tynker.com](http://www.tynker.com/)

Creative and arts subjects

* Charanga: A library of songs, topics, instrument courses and creative apps for music education. All ages: [https://charanga.com](https://charanga.com/)
* Chrome Music Lab: Builds on children’s creativity and musical ear: <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/>
* Creative Bug: Offers craft lessons, such as knitting, jewellery-making, drawing and origami: [www.creativebug.com](http://www.creativebug.com/)
* Culture Tree: Cultural and recreational resources to promote and preserve African arts, languages and culture. All ages: [www.culturetree.co.uk](http://www.culturetree.co.uk/)
* Musemio: Offers a cultural curriculum using virtual reality. Ages 8 and over: [www.musemio.com](http://www.musemio.com/)
* Musical Futures: Has published a blog listing 10 useful resources for music education: [www.musicalfutures.org/musical-futures-blog/top-10-resources-music-teachers-planning-students-working-home](http://www.musicalfutures.org/musical-futures-blog/top-10-resources-music-teachers-planning-students-working-home)
* Musitude: Play a musical instrument using a qwerty keyboard: <https://musitude.com/>

Humanities and social sciences

* Big History Project: Explores the past, present and the future through a series of resources: <https://school.bighistoryproject.com/bhplive>
* Duolingo: A free language-learning website offering short daily lessons: [www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com/)
* Preply: Online modern foreign languages tutoring: <https://preply.com/>
* Mr Allsop History: GCSE and A level resources: [www.mrallsophistory.com/revision/](http://www.mrallsophistory.com/revision/)
* World Geography Games: Learning about the world through games. All ages: <https://world-geography-games.com/index.html>

Exercise, mental health and wellbeing

* imoves: Home learning resources to help young people stay focused, active and mentally healthy. Primary-age: <https://imoves.com/the-imovement>
* Ketka: Audio experiences to promote good mental health and wellbeing, social and emotional growth: <https://ketka.co.uk/>
* PE with Joe: Daily exercise classes live on YouTube with a qualified fitness instructor: [www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html](http://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html)
* Young Minds UK: Offers advice, information and blogs on promoting good mental health during times of isolation and lockdown: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Specific coronavirus advice/teaching

* Covid-19 anxiety: SecEd author Dr Pooky Knightsmith offers support for mental health and wellbeing via her YouTube channel, including a recent post on ways to guard good mental health in light of the coronavirus outbreak: <https://bit.ly/2wxCAMO>
* Elsa Support: A coronavirus story for children: [www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children](http://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children)
* Little Puddins: A coronavirus story aimed at students with autism/SEN by Amanda McGuiness: <https://littlepuddins.ie/coronavirus-social-story/>
* Just For Kids: A comic exploring the coronavirus, based on a radio story from NPR education reporter Cory Turner: <https://n.pr/3dssaOW>
* Public Health England: A range of resources to promote good hand and respiratory hygiene. Key stages 1 to 3: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools>

**PROPORTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS FULL OR OVER CAPACITY GROWING**

DfE figures show that 17% of secondary schools were full or over-capacity in 2019, up from 15% in 2017. In contrast, the proportion of full or over-capacity primary schools decreased to 20%, from 21% the year before. In 2018 the DfE forecasted that the number of pupils in English[secondary schools would rise by 418,000 by 2027.](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/secondary-schools-will-have-418000-more-pupils-by-2027/) Overall, between 2018 and 2019, 83,000 schools places were added, 33,000 primary places and 49,000 secondary places.

The DfE report says, “secondary places have increased at a faster rate than actual secondary pupil numbers over recent years, in preparation for this large birth cohort”. It also said that the total number of unfilled places has increased to 1.1m places in 2019, 13% of total places available. In 2019, there were 482,000 unfilled places in primary schools, a 3% increase from 2018. In secondary schools there were 621,000 unfilled places in 2019, a decrease of 3% from 2018, although still significantly higher than the number of unfilled places in 2010, which was 355,000.

**PLEASE GIVE US YOUR SCIENCE EQUIPMENT**

[Schools](https://www.theguardian.com/education/schools) are being asked to donate science goggles and other apparatus to the NHS due to a shortage of PPE for staff.

Unsworth academy in Greater Manchester has donated over 50 pairs of science goggles. The school’s principal, Sue Armstrong, said: “We are delighted to be able to help the NHS at a time when we all need to pull together. Schools across the trust are doing all they can to support national services during these unprecedented times and will continue to strive to meet the needs of our students, families and wider school communities.” Lindsay Skinner, head at St James school in Exeter, said: “I hadn’t imagined that they (school goggles) would be of much use as they are secondary school quality, not medical grade quality. However, Lowri Harris, the lead south-west GP appraiser, was very clear: school-quality PPE is better than no PPE.”

Other sectors are helping, with some vets giving ventilators. Dr Rachel Dean, the director of clinical research and excellence in practice at VetPartners, said: “We are providing ventilators but also monitoring and general anaesthetic equipment. Some of the equipment we have is specifically made for animals. But some of the kit we use was originally manufactured for humans, so it is appropriate to use in a human healthcare setting.”

**WHO IS MEETING THE NEED FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS ?**

Heads have warned that children who need [free school meals](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/free-school-meals) could miss out on food parcels amid lockdown measures and delays to the government’s voucher scheme. They say that some children at home during closures could go hungry and are calling on the government to quickly introduce a national scheme, which will provide schools with supermarket vouchers to children eligible for free school meals urgently. The demand comes after a head, Peter Overton, criticised a free school meals contractor after it charged the school £11 per child for a stringent weekly ration of food which 185 pupils required. He said that it was “shameful” that children who relied on the food as their main meal were offered some biscuits, crisps, yoghurts, bread, butter and cheese. He added that a large number of families struggled to collect the meals despite desperately needing it amid the coronavirus pandemic, saying. “Families are a bus ride away and they don’t want to risk it.” The government has committed to developing a national scheme to provide schools with supermarket and shop vouchers that they can hand out to families with free school meal pupils. But so far, no details have been released so heads have been left to work out how to support around 1.3m children entitled to free school meals amid lockdown measures.

Mr Overton said, Bottom of Form

“A number of parents have contacted us and said they have very little food in the house and they don’t have the income to go and buy some.” Some schools have already begun contacting local supermarkets directly to offer families vouchers, but some heads worry because of the lack of supplies in shops. Ruth Wilkes, head of Castle Newnham school in Bedford, said that the scheme needs to be national to ensure families do not go to the local shop with a voucher to find everything is sold out. On Monday his staff spent three hours dropping off weekly food hampers to homes to ensure children had healthy ingredients to make meals. However, the numbers needing food is set to rise quickly. The education select committee is launching an inquiry that will look at how the outbreak may have longer-term implications for pupils – particularly for the most vulnerable children.

Julie McCulloch, from the ASCL, said: “At the moment schools are operating their own systems to provide free school meals to eligible children whether they are at home or in school. For example, this may involve working with supermarkets to provide vouchers which can be exchanged for meals, or with existing contractors to source food parcels.” On plans to introduce a national voucher system for children on free school meals, she added: “We have made it clear to the government that this needs to be sorted out as soon as possible.”

Children and families minister, Vicky Ford, said: “While schools are closed, they have the flexibility to provide free school meals in the way which works best for them. However, we would always encourage suppliers to work with schools to ensure pupils are provided with healthy and nutritious meals which represent good value for money. We are working urgently to set up a national voucher scheme for pupils entitled to free school meals who are staying at home to protect our NHS and save lives. This is a major undertaking and I thank schools for the work they are doing to help support families while it is being set up. We have already said we will reimburse schools for any additional costs incurred.”

**LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHES IN ENGLAND ARE THE MOST STRESSED**

Lower secondary teachers in England are the most stressed in the developed world, according to an OECD study. 38% report being stressed ‘a lot’ compared to 35% in Portugal (second highest), 11% in France, and 1% in Georgia. It found that stress is a problem for 98% of lower secondary teachers, with 32% saying that they were stressed ‘quite a lot’ while 28% said they were stressed ‘to some extent’. The report focuses on lower secondary teachers and school principals in 48 countries and economies, as well as in 2 sub-national entities (the Flemish Community of Belgium and the French Community of Belgium). It also features results on primary teachers and school principals in 15 countries and economies, and on upper secondary teachers and school principals in 11 countries and economies.

The report states: “More than 30% of teachers report experiencing stress a lot in England, Hungary and Portugal. By contrast, less than 5% of teachers report experiencing stress a lot in their work in Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Vietnam. However, the share of teachers in England experiencing stress a lot is lower in primary education than in lower secondary education (a difference of 7 percentage points).”  The report found that 77% of teachers in England are ‘all in all’ satisfied with their job, however, this is the lowest rate in the OECD, with all the other countries having rates above 80%. Japan (next lowest) has 82% and Italy, Columbia and Argentina (Caba region) are joint-top at 96%.

The report finds that England is one of six countries in which more than half of lower secondary teachers said they “wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession.” Lithuania was 58%, Malta 58%, England 52%, Saudi Arabia 52%, Iceland 51% and South Africa 51%. Teachers in lower secondary in England also show the second-biggest drop in satisfaction with the profession from 2013 to 2018 after the Flemish in Belgium.

**ONLINE LEARNING IN THE US IS BASED ON CLASS AND RACE**

As the US begins to close its schools (belatedly) most are trying to use online learning. However, 22% of US households don’t have home internet, including more than 4m with school-age children. Only 56% of households making less than $20,000 have home broadband, and black and Hispanic households lag behind their white peers, even when controlled for income differences. Even among students who theoretically have access, not all access is equal. 8% of households who have internet rely exclusively on mobile broadband, with low-income people and coloured communities more likely to be mobile-only broadband users. Only about half of school-age children who live in mobile-only households use the internet at home, perhaps because of the difficulty of sharing mobile devices. Mobile services are often limited by data caps, and mobile devices can make certain tasks incredibly challenging.

The US Congress stress that the digital divide is mainly about rural V urban, or people who don’t adopt broadband because they [“just don’t get it”](https://www.benton.org/blog/too-uneducated-understand-importance-home-internet). However, studies show that people don’t have internet because they [can’t afford it](https://www.digitalinclusion.org/measuring-the-gap/), and because [systemic racial discrimination](https://www.freepress.net/our-response/expert-analysis/insights-opinions/racism-strands-people-wrong-side-digital-divide) blocks them from subscribing. There have been some limited attempts to tackle this digital discrimination, with some school districts offering loans of [computers and internet hot spots](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/03/16/schools-internet-inequality-coronavirus/) to students who need them. But many schools don’t have the resources to do so, and others are wrestling with deeper inequities. New York officials called closing schools a [“last resort”](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/07/nyregion/nyc-schools-coronavirus.html) because of the disparate impacts it would have on poor students without internet and other resources. Most at risk are the 114,000 unhoused students in the district who depend on school lunch and breakfast programs for reliable meals and on school nurses for health care.

**TEACHING ENGLISH TO A LARGE CLASS**

Holly King-Mand, from Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, is providing her daily [English Live](https://www.facebook.com/englishwithhollytutoring/) sessions on Facebook and has increased her following from 74 last week to over 20,000. Mrs King-Mand is currently at home with two daughters, aged two and eight months, and hosts a free 30m lesson every weekday, aimed at KS2/3. She covers topics from synonyms and spellings to Shakespeare, provides task sheets and, because the lessons are live, students interact and ask for ‘shout-outs’, which come through on her phone. She decided to leave her middle school job after her recent maternity leave and, until government restrictions had been trying to build up a client base.

Ms King-Mand said, "It's quite overwhelming. I guess I just posted [details] in the right place at the right time. When I realised I wouldn't be able to do face-to-face [lessons] anymore I thought why not use my skills and experience to help families online." She said, "I feel really privileged to be able to help other people. It's been wonderful, it's nice to have something to focus on at the moment. I'm just an exhausted mum who is terrified of what's going on out there and it is blissful distraction to hear how much children are enjoying and benefiting from my lessons. But I'm not getting any washing done and my phone is melting!"

**DO YOU NEED INATE ABILITY TO TEACH?**

Simon Burgess, professor of economics at Bristol , has looked at the findings of studies from around the world on whether good teachers have innate abilities to teach. One of his surprising conclusions is that whether you’ve been a teacher for 3, 13 or 33 years your effectiveness is unlikely to have changed much. He says, “It's really strange. In any other profession, if you're a pilot or a plumber or a barrister or whatever, you would surely imagine you will get better. So, it's kind of surprising that that's not true for teachers.”

Prof Burgess acknowledges that the concept of measuring effectiveness is difficult. He says, “We are taking a very narrow view of what teachers do, but we aim to measure that very precisely. Clearly teachers do lots of things, they provide pastoral care, they take sports, all sorts of things, but presumably the main thing we want teachers to do is to raise pupil achievement. So, we're focusing on that. We have some sense of how well the pupils are doing when they arrive in the class of a teacher, and we have a test score when they leave the class. We measure the progress that they make between those two test scores, and average that for all of the pupils the teacher takes, and that's our measure of how effective a teacher is. Lots of studies have worked through this now, the consensus is that it is reliable. It's not particularly biased. It's noisy for sure, but it's stable enough to be meaningful.”

Prof Burgess says, “Maybe even more surprisingly, the general background qualifications of a teacher, whether they have a degree, which university did they go to, how well did they do in their A-levels, is not correlated with whether they're an effective teacher or not. Whether you have a master's degree in teaching is also not related to whether you're a good teacher, which raises all kinds of questions about what's going on in those courses. Again, this is not one isolated result, this is a result that's been replicated in different countries, many times. All of which makes it extremely hard for schools to recruit the most effective teachers, as you’re more or less taking a random draw from the pool of potential teachers”. It’s only once a member of staff has been in place for a while that you “find out what you’ve got”.

He then looks at how the findings should influence our approach to training and recruitment and says they suggest that our approach is “upside down”. He says that we should offer long probationary periods of a year or two or even three, after which point, successful teachers would be offered something like a tenured job. He admitted that, “If we were to do something like that, teaching would suddenly become quite a risky profession, in the sense that you would stand quite a high chance of not making it. We're going to still want lots of teachers, and we have a teacher shortage at the moment. The implication of that is we’d need to do something to offset that to make it attractive, and the obvious thing is much higher pay for the teachers who make it. It would look very different to what we have now, but the evidence suggests that what we have now is counterproductive in different ways.”

**OFSTED FAVOUR 2 YEAR KS4**

The ASCL has said that there is “significant disquiet” over the perception that Ofsted favour a 2 year KS4 over a 3 year approach. Ofsted denied that it has a “narrow focus” on the length of KS4 during inspections but admitted that the issue “is one that has clearly been challenging on some inspections”. Speaking to the ASCL conference, Geoff Barton said Ofsted’s new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) had “created the perception that it favours a specific curriculum model, a two-year key stage 4, and that those who don’t toe the line are likely to be downgraded. Now, Ofsted denies that, but the perception persists. While to those outside education this might sound like a nerdy, technical argument, we know that this is the sort of thing that makes or breaks careers. School leaders who proudly and successfully run a three-year key stage 4 suddenly feel under threat.” He said that in many challenging schools who run a three-year programme to give pupils the best possible chance of leaving with good GCSEs, heads found Ofsted’s “supposed fixation on this issue incomprehensible”. He called on Ofsted to “grasp this issue, and provide schools with greater clarity, reassurance and consistency”.

Addressing the conference, Ofsted’s director of education, Sean Harford, acknowledged that there had been an “enormous amount of talk” about whether schools would be punished for running a shortened KS3 to allow for a longer KS4. He said, “We really don’t have a narrow focus on whether your school runs a two-year key stage 3, or a three-year key stage 3. In fact, there is a whole spectrum of curriculum models, encompassing many other variations. Plenty of schools with a short key-stage three have achieved good or even outstanding judgements this year. So, we have no unspoken hurdle here that blocks schools from being judged good or better unless they have a three-year key stage 3. We will want to understand how you are providing a broad and balanced curriculum to children in those crucial first three years of secondary school. And we will guard against unnecessary narrowing if it is simply to make way for three years of teaching only to GCSE specifications. We will also want to see how you set every child on the best pathway for them for GCSE and beyond, which won’t always be the one that would notch up the highest Progress 8 score for the school.”

Mr Harford acknowledged that this issue “is one that has clearly been challenging on some inspections” and said that the on-going training for school inspectors is focusing on the KS3 question. He said, “It is something we are looking out for in quality assurance.” An ASCL survey of almost 800 heads found that three-quarters believe Ofsted’s new EIF, which focuses more on the quality and breadth of the curriculum and less on data from exams and tests, is an improvement on previous frameworks. However, despite this view, dissatisfaction with inspection remains high, with 9:10 respondents believing the new EIF fails to fairly and consistently judge the performance of schools.

**UTC BUILDING COSTS ARE EQUIVALENT TO £50K PER PUPIL**

The top DfE official, Jonathan Slater, has been quizzed by the Public Accounts Committee on the £680m UTC building costs. An NAO [report into the UTC programme last October](https://feweek.co.uk/2019/10/30/utc-deficits-more-than-double-over-4-years-national-audit-office-finds/) found that 10 of the 58 UTCs which opened between 2014/15 and 2018/19 had closed. MP Richard Holden said [that the DfE spent](https://feweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/28.10-Investigation-into-UTCs-Final-report-2.pdf) £74m opening new UTCs, which at the time of the report had around 13,500 places occupied. Around 86% of spend was for capital funding, which meant “capital for each of these new schools is over £50,000 per pupil for these new schools”.

The flexible Mr Slater said the costs were actually lower because one of the DfE’s tasks whenever a UTC closes is to “make sure that all of that capital, land, buildings, equipment, is reused.” As 8 of the UTCs were being reused, he said the capital is still being spent on children. He told the PAC that the DfE was using a group of cost-cutters to manage UTC spending “more efficiently”. He said the “School resource management advisers” had been into 33 UTCs and identified £10m worth of savings, £4.3m of which has been achieved. It has been revealed that amongst their proposals are limiting lunch portions and using spare staff to cover lessons, instead of supply teachers.

The PAC also quizzed Mr Slater on the £28m in transitional funding which had been pumped in since 2016 to keep UTCs open. They asked him if he was happy with the funding to keep the schools afloat. He said he was. The NAO also found that the 48 open colleges were operating at 45% capacity by the end of January 2019. Mr Slater said that if you do find a significant number of schools which are not full then “my job is to make sure I am not throwing good money after bad”. He said he was putting money in because he believed the system “can be sustained”. He added, “Ten have closed. We have only agreed to open one UTC since 2015 and it hasn’t opened yet. Three have applied for funding but that doesn’t mean they are going to get it.”

**WE PRODUCE SOME GREAT TEACHERS**

Two maths teachers from England are on the shortlist for this year’s Global Teacher Prize. Nicola Whiston, from Ormiston Horizon Academy, in Stoke-on-Trent, and Jamie Frost, from Tiffin School, a boys’ grammar School, in Kingston, have made a list of 50 teachers, one of whom will win the prize of $1m. Over 12,000 teachers from around 140 countries entered the competition, now in its sixth year, which is organised the Varkey Foundation in partnership with Unesco. The winning ceremony will take place in London at the Natural History Museum in October.

Jamie Frost created a popular website for maths tuition, [DrFrostMaths.com](https://www.drfrostmaths.com/), which provides a free online learning platform, teaching resources, videos and a bank of exam questions to practise. The resources have been downloaded over 6m times, with daily page hits now approaching half a million, with often over 800 users at any given time. Jamie travels internationally to speak about his teaching methods and his resources have been used in schools in Zimbabwe, for disabled students, and even for 18-21-year-olds in an Ohio prison. Nicola Whiston, who was the [Tes Maths Teacher of the Year 2018,](https://www.tes.com/news/nicola-whiston-tes-maths-teacher-year) works in areas of high social deprivation. She uses school Instagram pages and other social media to boost maths interest and, as a result, students' results have improved, as has the bond between teachers and students. She has also set up projects, including a social project for disadvantaged pupils and a project to clean up the community while promoting recycling and greener living. She also works with a bank to run workshops introducing children to real-life finances.

**YOU CAN STILL QUALIFY AS A TEACHER WITHOUT 24 WEEKS OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

Gavin Williamson has confirmed that trainee teachers who miss out on their full complement of school training hours because of school closures will still gain QTS. Mr Williamson added that the government would be "starting to roll out some of the early career framework in a number of regions, which will be starting in the next academic year and right across the country the following year, to make sure new teachers are supported".

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**HIGHER EDUCATION**

**HOW TO ASSESS STUDENTS**

Oxford and Cambridge are to replace this summer’s exams with online assessments. This comes after students from Oxford, Edinburgh, Cambridge and UCL called for a choice of final-year assessments. Cambridge said that students unable to take exams online due to “illness, caring responsibilities or technical difficulties” will be allowed to undertake assessment at a later, as yet undetermined date, when the university is fully operational again. It added that this “will inevitably impact on when they can graduate”. But students will not be allowed to defer their assessments until the next academic year. Prof Martin Williams, pro-VC for education at Oxford, said there would be “no conventional exams” next term. He said the university expected the replacement assessment to include “open-book exams, taken remotely and submitted online”, and invited students to state their preferences in an online consultation. Durham University has announced that [all summer exams will be replaced with online assessments](https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/coronavirus/18MarchExamsSTUDENTSFINAL.pdf). Imperial College put 280 sixth-year medicine undergraduates through [online exams](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/12/uk-universities-switching-to-online-lectures-and-exams) last week, in what they believe is a world first.

An [open letter](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CenS3T54L0S_Y3pmqCpFYyxsuy15RipSbwDf_SpKL_s/edit?fbclid=IwAR3bsSDgabNLc21jba2xKXgGksySuppFGnocMpEcWcQjSxT4WI4Mdhzi6Mg) from more than 1,200 Oxford students, including 30% of this year’s finalists, called on Oxford to allow those due to graduate this summer to restart the final year in September or at Easter 2021. The students proposed that final-year students could receive a degree classification based on previous grades, dissertations and other coursework, or even be awarded an unclassified degree. Around 1,200 students at Edinburgh signed an open letter calling for [final exams and coursework to be made optional](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pBFYVPGmFMA3sz3bhiLdQDlgTGTUUAQFFK5SGd2s6yY/edit?fbclid=IwAR2xGuUmdnwYfDRzFfS3qlCvDHqCX9Pvr45hNX11xIBeTrKisU3852eEuD0), with finalists given the choice to have their degree grade determined on the basis of their assessments to date. The letter also called on the university to consider refunding each student the equivalent of at least four weeks tuition fees, £3,036.37 for international students, due to the disruption caused by the outbreak and strike action by lecturers.

A spokeswoman for Edinburgh University said: “First and second year students will be assessed on the basis of work already submitted as an alternative to exams. Those in third year and beyond will take their exams online. Students should be assured that they will achieve their qualifications on time and will still hold the same value.” A spokeswoman for UCL said it had decided to move all teaching online and to create alternative assessments due to “the significant risks to our students of postponing exams to some undefined point in the future”. She added: “This is extremely complex and will take a few weeks. In the meantime, we have advised students to continue to prepare as per their exam schedule.”

**STRANDED STUDENTS**

Thousands of [students](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/20/what-should-uk-students-do-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak) are stranded in universities as a result of [coronavirus](https://www.theguardian.com/world/coronavirus-outbreak), prompting calls for support from VCs.

Many are [international students](https://www.theguardian.com/education/internationalstudents) who have been unable to get flights home, as well as UK students who have no other home to go to, either because they are care leavers or are estranged from their families. Sunderland, who is shutting down its campus in line with government guidance, have to find a way to look after 800 students who have been unable to leave, including 230 international students, some of whom could not afford flights home. The VC, Sir David Bell, said, “My heart goes to those students, for most of us, yes, this is difficult, but we’ve got family to surround us in one way or another. For our international students it’s really hard to think what they will be feeling. We will be trying to do all we can to support them.” At Edge Hill University around 200 students are being moved into ensuite accommodation with just a couple of students in each flat to help ensure physical distancing. University staff are loading up fridges and freezers with food and providing cleaning materials.

The charity Stand Alone, who support people who are estranged, said: “For many of these students, university or college provides their home, their support network and their stability. We ask you at this difficult moment to make sure they continue to be provided for and can feel safe and supported. It would be a catastrophe if any of our estranged or care experienced students found that they had to leave university as direct or indirect consequences of the current circumstances or were made homeless.” UUK said, “Universities know that some students, international students who do not have a home in the UK, care leavers and others, will not be able to do so and have been planning accordingly to ensure they continue to offer support. Different universities will have different challenges, but a key focus will be on ensuring students have everything they need and have plans in place to ensure that critical services, heating, e.g. water and electricity, are maintained. In some cases, this may mean students being moved from their normal accommodation to places where it is easier for the university to ensure they are looked after.”

**A THIRD OF UNIVERSITY DROPOUTS DO SO FOR MENTAL HEALTH REASONS**

Research carried out by [myunichoices.com](http://www.myunichoices.com/), found that a third of [students](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/students) who dropped out of university did so for [mental health](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/MentalHealth) reasons. Research of 510 adults who did not complete studies also found that 1:5 suffered from [alcohol](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/alcohol) or [drugs](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/drugs) abuse as a result. Overall, 47% dropped out because they chose the wrong course and 45% believe their long-term career was harmed by failing to finish. Dr Charles Johnson, chief psychometrics adviser at MyUniChoices said: “Time at university should count among the best years of any student’s life. So it is heartbreaking to see so many young adults drop out of university because of poor mental health, as much as it is that many are currently thinking about dropping out, or wishing they had done a different course.”

The research also found that half of those who dropped out felt like a failure, and the same number regret leaving. Just over a quarter felt the course advice they received was poor, and the same amount felt pressure from parents to choose a course that would lead directly to a good job. 1:5 also felt under pressure to study a ‘prestigious’ course, and 12% felt the need to avoid choosing a course that was ‘quirky’ or ‘different’. Overall, 44% of students who dropped out said they felt a lack of confidence afterwards. A further 4:10 felt embarrassment and shame, and 58% went on to suffer from depression. Dr Johnson added: “Our experience is that more students can end up happy and secure at university if they focus on their wider interests, are more open-minded about potential courses and ensure that the course they do will really fuel their passions. Every student is different, and it is critical that every individual does what they can to ensure they find the right ‘package’ for them through making informed choices”.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**KPMG HAS BEEN BANNED FROM OFFERING APPRENTICESHIPS**

KPMG, who train nearly 1,000 civil service apprentices, has been banned from the apprenticeships’ market as a result of a damning grade four report by Ofsted. A catalogues of issues, including unbiased careers advice and poor support for high needs learners with dyslexia, were found for the 933 apprentices who work in government departments and study a range of apprenticeship standards like the level 4 policy officer, cyber security technologist and professional accounting/taxation technician.

The report said that “too few complete the programme, and many leave early”. Many feel “demotivated by the lack of support and very slow response to their requests for information and guidance”. Apprentices’ curriculum is “not well structured and does not support them to develop quickly the knowledge and skills they require”, resulting in the “vast majority” being left behind. It said that trainers are “not sure how well apprentices are doing, when they are going to achieve their apprenticeship, and what they need to do to achieve it. Apprentices do not consistently receive the hours away from work that they need to study or attend classes.” It added that careers advice is poor and when it does take place, it focuses on the career route within the civil service and does not guide apprentices to understand other options. It also said that facilitators at KPMG mostly fail to order and organise learning ‘logically’ to make sure apprentices build on their skills incrementally. The report added that while governors know well the areas for improvement, they have “not acted quickly enough to ensure leaders put in place the necessary remedial action so that apprentices make the progress that they should”.

A DfE spokesperson said: “We are aware that KPMG’s apprenticeship provision has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and in line with our usual policy, they will be removed from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

Our priority now is to minimise disruption to apprentices, government departments and employers. We are working closely with employers, to ensure all existing apprentices can continue to access high quality training and complete their apprenticeship.” They added that it will be each government department’s responsibility to decide whether apprentices will complete their apprenticeships at KPMG or move to a different provider. A KPMG spokesperson said: “We take both the quality and experience of the apprentices on this scheme very seriously and have a robust quality improvement plan in place to rapidly address the issues identified in this report.”

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**MISCELLANEOUS**

**TIGHTEN ADVERTISING REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE’S BODY IMAGE**

The Healthy Body Image for Children and Young People Advisory Group has also called for advertising regulations to be tightened to improve [young people's body image](https://www.tes.com/news/hinds-social-media-gives-pupils-warped-body-image), and for more transparency about social media influencers. Its report for the Scottish government calls for stricter regulations on advertising aimed at young people and tighter restrictions on non-medical cosmetic procedures. It also wants improved training and guidance for fitness and beauty staff and a national campaign aimed at promoting good body image to young people. It said that more needs to be done to ensure [social media influencers](https://www.tes.com/news/teachers-are-key-influencers-not-celebs) make clear which of their material is paid for by companies, in compliance with guidance from the Advertising Standards Authority.

Group chair, Julie Cameron, said: "An increasing number of young people are feeling stress, shame and unhappiness about their body image and that this is being influenced by many factors including advertising and social media portraying the idea of stereotypical beauty and how this leads to success and happiness. We believe it is possible to change this conversation and that by working together measures can be put in place to support young people and help them develop good body image, positive mental health and resilience. We hope the Scottish government will take swift and positive action to implement the recommendations and help create the conditions for good body image for our young people, now and in the future."

A poll of 400 participants between the ages of 10-19, commissioned by the [Mental Health Foundation Scotland](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/scotland), found that 20% of young people in Scotland reported having been ashamed of their body. Mental health minister, Clare Haughey, said: "We know from research [published over the last year](https://www.gov.scot/publications/healthy-body-image-for-children-and-young-people-advisory-group-terms-of-reference/) that body image is an issue that matters to young people. This was the main driver for establishing the advisory group last year, we will formally respond to these recommendations in the coming weeks."

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**SNIPPETS**

* Finland has been named the worlds happiest country for 3rd year running
* [Pets at Home](https://www.theguardian.com/business/pets-at-home) is facing a social media backlash after it sent a letter asking for employees to apply for emergency school childcare, arguing that its workers were eligible under the criteria of providing key goods.
* Dr King, a former [Oxford University](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/OxfordUniversity) lecturer who wrote about ‘ethical issues concerning child pornography’, has been jailed for possessing almost 3,000 [indecent images of children.](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/child-sex-abuse-images)
* <https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog> has a good list of online cultural and other resources for use with children (and adults).
* 96% of the students at Mansfield College Oxford are state educated.
* The Royal College of [Art](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/art) is facing a backlash from students and artists over their decision to make degree shows online-only for the first time ever due to the coronavirus pandemic.
* The government has turned down an offer to join an EU scheme to get extra ventilators during the coronavirus outbreak. The project will use the EU's buying power to purchase more stock, but a No 10 spokesman said the UK was "making its own efforts".
* Sales of fiction books rose by a third last week, while children's education went up 234%. Puzzle books, handicrafts and true crime also saw sharp rises.
* Firefly has said that it has struggled with record demand, causing its service to run slowly and suffer periods of being offline. The software is used by about 500 schools in the UK.