

Governors' Agenda

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Assessing Testing

Confession time for me. It is easy to pontificate if one is a consultant as I am. When in charge of an organisation or institution and constantly under the public microscope, it is a different matter. So, what follows may well be in a sermonising vein. But don't pass judgement until you have read what follows.

Competition does not have the kind of benefits the UK government's claims it does. This is not to say that it is unnecessary. However, much credence has been given to its seeming advantages.

We need tests and examinations to determine how well our children are doing and ensure that the young people who qualify to become the future movers and shakers of our society succeed in life. I wouldn't like to be operated on (for the removal of a cancerous tumour) by an unqualified surgeon who hasn't passed a raft of medical examinations.

However, the value we put on tests, examinations and league tables has a detrimental effect on those schools/academies who are struggling to improve the quality of education. To start with, tests and examinations tell us only so much about what is happening in an institution, which has responsibility for imparting to future generations the knowledge and wisdom of the current and previous generations together with helping them develop skills to navigate the chopping waters of the future.

Outstanding schools/academies go even further. They develop children in the fullest sense possible. The legislation prescribes that their responsibilities encompass the spiritual, moral, social and educational development of young people, so that they (these young people) not only succeed in holding down demanding jobs in the years to come but also leading full, fulfilled and happy lives. It is impossible to measure through tests and examinations how well pupils will do well after their leaving the institutions.

The trouble with our system is that we value what is immediately measurable and cannot measure what so often is valuable if not invaluable. What premium do we give, for instance, to young people, who go the second, third and fourth miles to give succour to the disadvantaged and/or disabled, by offering their time during the school/academy holidays doing voluntary work - taking them on excursions organised by charities?

Where we can measure success, it is frequently not absolute terms. We begin comparing pupils' achievements with one another, in rank order, within the institution and among the institutions. We rarely do it in terms of the progress that the pupils make.

In my view, there is merit in persuading every child to compete with her/himself. For instance, the mother who praises her son for securing 80% in a mathematics test and then sits down with him to discuss what caused him to fail to secure the other 20% so that next time he does even better, should be commended. (Of course, the ultra-bright girl who secures 100% should be applauded for that achievement and exhorted to repeat the performance the next time she sits a test.

Competition is a zero-sum game. If I win, you lose and vice versa. Schools and academies have greater worth if they can develop community mindsets where as many young people as possible succeed against absolute standards rather than being first in their classes. Sociologists would dub this “self-actualisation” – the pleasure one derives from solving an intractable problem or getting to the top of Everest. If there is to be competition, every person should compete with her/himself.

Several eons ago, when I was at a school in India, I was fortunate in having an extraordinary mathematics teacher. I grew to love the subject very much, so much so, that he paired me off with a struggling peer to help him become better. I spent many pleasurable hours, working out solutions to intractable riders, not just difficult to him but also to me. I could solve them more easily than he, but by helping him, I developed better and more rooted concepts in mathematics, from which I benefit till today.

Pep Guardiola, the Manchester City football manager, is a striking exemplar of this approach. Matthew Syed, *The Times* journalist, wrote in his paper on 26 November 2018: “Guardiola’s trick has been to measure his players not just on how well they perform, but also on how well they raise the performance of team-mates. Players are incentivised not just to elevate themselves, but to elevate those around them.”

Within our schools and academies, we need to give a bit more thought to that nuanced strategy with a view to helping as many of our young people achieve rather than being at the tops of their classes. Schools and academies may wish to pay less heed to where they stand in the league tables and aim to develop their pupils so that they strive to achieve as well as possible.

Development is accelerated when individuals work in concert rather than compete with one another. Examine a colony of ants to see what I mean. At least that was what Syed suggested his *Times* readers do in his article, *In praise of unsung heroes: game now about Milners not Van Nistelrooys* on 24 September 2019.

In his 95 Premier League goals, Ruud Van Nistelrooys scored 48 at home and 47 away. In 1998/99, prior to Ruud Van Nistelrooys’s arrival, Manchester United won the title, the European Cup and the Football Association (FA) cup, a triple glory. In successive years - 1999/2000 and 2001/02 - the club won the English title. However, following Ruud’s arrival in 2001, Manchester United won only once in the next five seasons. He scored the goals, but his club, Manchester United did not do as well as it did prior to his joining the club.

Success is best facilitated in seeking others’ success, happiness and fulfilment. Pupils grow when they help others to grow. Also, teachers and parents should applaud them when they improve and make steady progress in their learning. Coming at the top of the class is much less important, in the same way that it is much less significant that a school/academy is at the top of a league table.

“Oh dear!” I hear you say, “he is pontificating – again.”

Quality of Education in England - a Curate's Egg: Good in Parts

Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2017-18

On 4 December 2018, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Schools, Amanda Spielman, issued her second annual [report](#) to Parliament, in accord with section 121 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. You may have missed it because of the Brexit kerfuffle.

As always, there was good news and bad news for the nation's schools, academies, Further Education (FE) Colleges and local authorities (LAs).

I Strengths

There was much to celebrate. Inspectors met people working well to deliver for young people. Providers were getting more of the basic right.

- ⇒ The early years sector remained strong, with 95% of providers judged good or outstanding compared with 74% six years ago.
- ⇒ Eighty-six per cent of schools and academies were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspections.
- ⇒ Sixty-nine per cent of all non-association independent schools were currently judged good or outstanding. Although broadly the same as the previous year, this was a decline from August 2015.
- ⇒ Seventy-six per cent of all general further education (FE) colleges were currently judged good or outstanding – a big improvement on 2016/17.
- ⇒ The number of local authorities (LAs) judged good or outstanding for their social care continued to rise. Two-thirds of LAs that were once judged inadequate had improved at re-inspection.

II Areas for Development

As always, everything was not good in the education garden and Mrs Spielman did not shy away from spelling this out. Mrs Spielman described nine areas of concern.

- 1) Coordinated strategies to promote good education and care for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) from the ages of 0 to 25 were wanting and there was poor provision for pupils with special needs post-19. There were increasing numbers of pupils with special needs who were being excluded from schools and academies. This was replicated with pupils who had mental health needs, who were not being sufficiently supported. The quality of

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) was variable. Overall, the gap in performance and outcomes between those with SEND and the rest was widening.

- 2) For the second year in succession, Mrs Spielman expressed concern about the 490 (a small albeit persistent number) 'stuck' schools and academies that require improvement or are inadequate. This had been the case since 2005. Mrs Spielman wants outstanding school and academy leaders to help these institutions which are "holed" up.
- 3) In Further Education, there was a dilution in the quality of apprenticeships. Inspectors were worried about the access of apprenticeships for a third of students who left school/academy without a full level 2 qualification.
- 4) Mrs Spielman wrote that the reduction in LA funding had had a negative impact on the ability of LAs to intervene early enough when young people need the help of Social Services.
- 5) Ofsted continued to have serious concerns for the pupils who were being educated in unregulated settings "which circumnavigate legal loopholes to operate". Children in these settings were being denied the education and opportunities they were entitled to. Some were at risk of radicalisation. The first successful prosecution of an unregistered school led to convictions in October 2018. However, Ofsted wanted legislation strengthened so that these settings could be closed down.
- 6) Too many non-association independent schools – i.e. those that were not affiliated to the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) – had been inadequate for too long and did not have the capacity to improve. Because of timescales for the enforcement of the law on action which could be taken by Ofsted, many pupils were spending significant parts of their education in these independent schools where there was little, or no, learning and they were unsafe, she wrote.
- 7) Mrs Spielman is uneasy about outstanding schools and academies being exempt from inspection (unless someone or a body raised a concern about any of them). However, problems may lie either buried deeply or lurking below the surface. Consequently, the watchdog has gaps in its knowledge about the quality of education and the safeguarding in these institutions.

We also know that while it takes considerable effort and much time to help a school/academy come out of trouble and to rise to and above the standards expected, matters can spiral downwards in a short time when a school/academy is badly led and managed.

Mrs Spielman would dearly love her troops to inspect these schools and academies but wrote that Ofsted would need extra resources for this purpose.

Accordingly, Mrs Spielman is now testing the system and piloting visits to outstanding schools/academies to satisfy herself and Ofsted that these institutions continue to be outstanding.

Acknowledging this concern, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, asked the watchdog on 3 December 2018 to review its risk assessment arrangements and ensure it inspects 10% of 'outstanding' schools and colleges over the coming year. That was the good news. The bad news for Ofsted was that there was going to be no more money and the exemption for the vast majority was to remain in place, according to [Schools Week](#).

- 8) There was a shortage of specialist mental health provision, wrote Mrs Spielman. The provision that existed was not distributed evenly around the country. This put pressure on LAs to find the right places for the most vulnerable youngsters. Ofsted was also worried that – as the regulator – it was not possible for it to check that LAs were giving children homes in safe settings because these settings were unregulated. Vulnerable children could, therefore, be endangered further.
- 9) Ofsted identified 300 (circa) schools and academies where exceptional numbers of pupils were off-rolled in years 10 and 11 for a host of reasons. The most vulnerable children were more likely to be excluded and off-rolled. The new education inspection framework (EIF) would now allow Ofsted to identify and report on those schools and academies and sanction them.

III Concerns

(1) Exploitation

It is common knowledge that children are abused most often within the home. However, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation discovered in a joint inspection exercise many cases of children being abused outside the family home, with many of them being exploited. They are victims of abuse at home because of neglect and then exploited outside the home in other ways.

The good news is that the neglect of younger children is diminishing; the bad news is a rising number of older children being victimised and in need of support. Worse still, they are harming others. Mrs Spielman exhorts us to engage in a cultural shift to "understand and respond to the needs of older children".

This is challenging because it is much more difficult to identify neglect- which is unseen - when compared to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. As the children are older, the basic needs "of parental care and support are not addressed", she wrote. Agencies become aware of this neglect when these children are exploited or engage in offending behaviour (outside the home). Older children, who put on macho fronts (they are mainly boys) are neglected with poor parenting. Schools and academies are expected to find the silver bullet, to solve the increasing incidence of knife crime in the London and Birmingham.

Mike Sheridan, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) [reported on knife crime](#) in London in November 2018. His findings were unsurprising. Schools and academies have a pivotal role to safeguard youngsters. However, they cannot be expected to extend their arrangements beyond the institutions' gates 24/7.

Local authorities, the police, the health service and youth offending services and other agencies need to step up and work together “to disrupt and tackle criminal activity perpetrated by adults who exploit and cause harm to children”. Schools’ and academies’ prime function is to promote and provide excellent education.

Headteachers and the heads of pupil referral units (PRUs) informed Ofsted that they had observed an increasing number of pupils with SEND who were being groomed by gangs. They become perpetrators and victims of knife crime. These children must be safeguarded.

Also, children who have been turfed out and permanently excluded from schools and academies for being perpetrators of violence become victims of gang leaders, as they have time on their hands. The devil always finds mischief for such young people. Parents told inspectors “that gangs are sending children into schools and academies with knives in their bags with the aim of getting them excluded to make them more vulnerable to more persistent grooming”. Mrs Spielman opined that schools, academies, the police, LAs and community partnerships “need to get better at sharing information about gang networks to safeguard these children and other pupils”.

(2) Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Mrs Spielman reported that the support schools/academies are providing pupils with SEND, including autistic children, deaf children and those with Down’s syndrome, is a “national scandal”. She added that these pupils were five times more likely to be excluded from a school/academy than those with no additional needs. Further, 5,800 SEND pupils could well have been “off-rolled” in 2018 just before sitting the GCSEs. It has now become fashionable to encourage if not compel parents/carers to remove children from schools/academies without its being made official – so that they will not have the stigma of formal exclusion, which would also be a mark of failure on the part of the institutions.

Councils spent £100 million battling parents seeking support for their disabled children at tribunals over the last four financial years. The [Special Needs Jungle](#)¹ website calculated the £100 million by using data from the Department for Education and Ministry of Justice for 2014 to 2018. There were 4,725 appeals in 2016-17 alone.

What added to the grief of parents was the financial outlay. Many families had to re-mortgage their homes and/or run up huge debts to secure educational support for their children. The only winners were the solicitors and barristers. Councils lost 90% of the appeals.

(3) Obesity

HMCI was alarmed at the rise of childhood obesity. By the start of the primary phase, 25% of children were overweight or obese. The figure rises to 33.3% by the time children leave primary education.

¹ For support from the Special Needs Jungle, click on specialneedsjungle.co.uk

Society has called on schools and academies to be given more responsibility for dealing with the problem. However, Ofsted [found](#) that interventions made little or no difference. Mrs Spielman argued that obesity is for society to resolve not that of schools and academies.

However, schools and academies can do something through the curriculum. For instance, many primary schools and academies are educating children about healthy eating and living. It was heartening to note that half the parents surveyed by Ofsted said that their children had been taught (in schools and academies) to engage in healthier diets and pupils surveyed said that they were engaging in more sport and exercise because of what they had learnt in their schools and academies. But this was not having the required impact. Many children continue to be overweight or obese. “The answer to the obesity crisis,” wrote Mrs Spielman, “lies in homes, community, health services and schools acting in concert.”

(4) Going “Potty”

Schools and academies are expected to assume a parental duty – training children to use the toilet. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) [informed](#) Ofsted in 2016 that 70% of the teachers they surveyed reported more children arriving in the Reception unable to use the toilet, compared to 2011.

This is alarming, given that a teacher could be responsible for 30 children. It is disruptive to both teacher and the other pupils. Mrs Spielman suggests that “Nurseries and childminders” should identify children who cannot use the toilet at the earliest possible opportunity and work with parents to help them learn”. Nurseries and childminders cannot become permanent surrogate parents.

(5) Physical Development for Pupils in the Early Years

Many educational professionals have become obsessed with health and safety regulations. Statutory regulations are a principal cause. However, as children grow up, they need, according to Mrs Spielman, to develop “muscular strength and dexterity”. Good nurseries realise the importance of this and “encourage children to be busy and active”. In many early years settings, notwithstanding, excessive concerns about risk is putting the kibosh by stifling physical activities.

Getting the balance between securing children’s safety and encouraging them to take risks is daunting. But taking risks is a part of a child’s growth and development. “Without it,” wrote Mrs Spielman, “we stifle children’s natural inquisitiveness and their opportunities to learn and develop and deny them opportunities to build that muscular strength and dexterity.” She urged professionals in nurseries and childcare settings to adopt “a common-sense approach to managing risks”.

(6) Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs)

MATs have been exponentially replacing local authorities. They take responsibility not only for financial management but also what and how is taught and assessed in the academies. Ofsted is unable to inspect MATs directly, which Mrs Spielman regrets. Notwithstanding, within Ofsted’s limited powers, it will be reviewing MATs by introducing summary evaluations of them through inspecting groups of

academies within them. Mrs Spielman feels hamstrung that she and her troops are unable to dig deeper into the efficiency and effectiveness of MATs.

IV The Road Ahead

Autonomy for schools and academies (one side of a coin) must go together with accountability (the other side). Autonomy without accountability results in dictatorships. Accountability without autonomy ends up with schools and academies losing sight of the real purpose of education – i.e. “helping young people learn and grow”. It also drives teachers out of the profession or out of the country. Ms Spielman recognises this. When both are operating optimally, we secure “high quality and sustained improvement”.

Mrs Spielman will be working to establish a new model of inspections from September 2019, when schools and academies will not receive a separate grade for the outcomes of pupils – i.e. their achievements. “The focus will be on the substance of education and a broad curriculum,” she said in a speech she made on 11 October 2018.

“In fact, at the top level, there are three main proposed changes.

- i. The first change is losing outcomes as a standalone judgement.
- ii. The second change is broadening the existing quality of teaching, learning and assessment judgement into a quality of education judgement. This one should include curriculum alongside teaching, learning and assessment, and will also reflect outcomes.
- iii. Then third, we propose splitting the current judgement of personal development, behaviour and welfare into two separate judgements: one for behaviour and attitudes and the other for personal development.”

In addition, Mrs Spielman signalled that Ofsted would, in the year ahead, promote a research programme which will look at

- (1) practices that reduce workload and improve teachers’ wellbeing;
- (2) practices that are being used in education to manage the most challenging pupil behaviour and their consequences;
- (3) the strategies successful faith schools use to square the implementation of equality legislation with their beliefs, ethos and religious practices – doing this, of course, in partnership with the faith inspectorates of religious education;
- (4) children’s physical development in the early years curriculum;
- (5) the 16-to-19 curriculum;
- (6) curriculum knowledge and pedagogy in initial teacher education;

- (7) pinpointing factors which lead to good decisions for children in care or where care is a prospect;
- (8) how environments are created for great social work practices to thrive;
- (9) familial sexual abuse (through joint area inspections with health, the police and other agencies); and
- (10) the provision for special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools and academies.

V Closing Thought

Many had serious reservations about Mr Amanda Spielman when she was selected in June 2016 by the then Secretary of State Nicky Morgan to succeed Sir Michael Wilshaw as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools from 1 January 2017. She had never been a teacher, so, the argument went, "What does she know about teaching". She graduated from Clare College, Cambridge. Her work experience was at

- ⇒ KMG Thomson McLintock from 1982 to 1986;
- ⇒ Klein Benson from 1986 to 1992;
- ⇒ Newstead Capital as Director from 1992 to 1994;
- ⇒ Bridgewater Business Analysis as Director from 1994 to 1995;
- ⇒ Mercer Management Consulting, Boston, as Principal from 1995 to 1997.
- ⇒ Nomura Principal Finance as Principal from 1997 to 2004.

All the above outfits were business organisations. On the way, she secured a master's degree in comparative education from the Institute of Education, University of London (now part of University College, London). From 2005, Mrs Spielman became a part of the founding management team at the [Ark Schools](#), and from 2011 to 2016 she was chair of [Ofqual](#), the examinations regulator.

Mrs Spielman is confounding the jeremiad naysayers. Many applauded her for turning her guns on schools and academies which game the system, albeit their defenders argue that they have been forced into engaging in such dubious practices by the government focusing on outcomes and neglecting processes. She is bringing fresh perspectives to those who have - forever and a day - been in education and helped lift their sights onto newer and, I hope for her sake, more luscious pastures.



Minor inspection changes from September 2018

I The Changes

Minor changes were made to the [Inspection Handbook](#). These changes took effect from September 2018.

(1) Religious Education and Collective Worship

Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005, the governing board of a voluntary (aided or controlled) or foundation school/academy in England ensures that a designated religious body conducts regular inspections of its religious educational provision and the acts of worship. However, Ofsted inspectors are now required to look at the content of religious education (RE) in voluntary controlled (VC) schools/academies (see page 74 in the Annex) because a VC school follows the local authority's agreed RE syllabus. On pages 75 and 76, the Handbook sets out the timings for such inspections.

(2) Myth-busting

Pages 12 to 16 of the handout sets out what inspectors **do not expect to scrutinise or know about** i.e.

- i. the attainment of past pupils,
- ii. how primary schools/academies carry out assessment or record pupils' achievements in subjects,
- iii. the process for the performance management arrangements for staff and anonymised lists of teachers meeting or not meeting the performance thresholds for pay progression,
- iv. whether the school/academy has policies related to staff behaviour, and
- v. retrospective applications for references for staff members appointed prior to and continuously employed since the introduction of the vetting and barring system.

(3) Inspectors' current judgement

The four judgements inspectors make under the current education inspection framework are:

- I. effectiveness of leadership and management;
- II. quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- III. personal development, behaviour and welfare; and
- IV. outcomes for children and learners.

(4) Schools causing concern

Paragraph 112 of the handbook states that maintained schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRU) that are issued with academy orders and allocated to new sponsors (if already academies) or to sponsors for the first time if they are controlled by local authorities, **won't normally receive monitoring visits from inspectors**. However, the affected local authorities, proprietors or trusts will still need to prepare statements of action to include how the schools/academies will transfer to new academies. Paragraph 113 explains this.

II Comments on the September 2018 changes

These changes, as the reader will probably know, are not the end of the matter. Many problems remain, one of the chief being the reliability and validity of Ofsted's judgements. How can Ofsted judge the quality of teaching if inspectors spend no more than 20 minutes on observing each of a very, very few lessons that come under the microscope? And can they really make profound judgements on the quality of education being served up at a school/academy if they spend only one day inspecting?

Governors, headteachers and staff members of schools/academies moan that inspectors come to inspections with their minds already made up based on the documentation they've scanned. All that they do at the schools/academies is make strenuous efforts to confirm their guesswork and hunches. And who can blame them, if they are in schools/academies for only a day?

If, on the other hand, they spend four days inspecting a school/academy as they did in the halcyon days, governors, headteachers and the staff will find the experience very stressful and resent the inspections. Ofsted is damned if it does and damned if it doesn't.

Ms Spielman seems to think that children are being "betrayed" by being made to focus only on academic success; instead she wants to focus on the "quality of education", and she is consulting on it. This is a welcome change of direction from the egregious thrust of the former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, who placed so much stress on exams and tests.

Ofsted researches curriculum focus to plan for future inspections

I The Consultation

From 16 January 2019, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman begins a consultation on the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF). The focus on inspections is to be rebalanced. Previously, outcomes was under the microscope – more so than progress – which had been stressing out

headteachers and school/academy staff alike. The current proposal is on refocusing inspections on the quality of education, including curriculum intent, implementation and impact.

To ensure that inspecting the quality of education is valid and reliable, she commissioned a major, two-year research study into the curriculum. Inspectors visited 40 schools/academies in phase 1, 23 in phase 2 and 64 schools in phase 3². There were also focus groups, reviews of inspection reports and other exercises undertaken.

Mrs Spielman said: “.....at the very heart of education sits the vast accumulated wealth of human knowledge and what we choose to impart to the next generation: the curriculum.

“Without a curriculum, a building full of teachers, leaders and pupils is not a school. Without receiving knowledge, pupils have learned nothing, and no progress has been made – whatever the measures might indicate.” Exams should exist to serve the curriculum rather than the other way around. The dog must wag the tail not the tail the dog. While exams were the best measure of how successfully knowledge was transmitted to young people, any test was just a sample of the knowledge that was gained. The curriculum goes well beyond that.

Knowledge appears to be like the cosmos and seems to have no boundaries in both, time and space. Accordingly, an excellent school/academy makes careful choices between the breadth and depth of the curriculum it adopts and pursues, drawing on appropriate resources and deciding what to teach mindful of the opportunities available for pupils to develop new concepts.

This should be grounded firmly in a consensus of what knowledge and concepts should be handed over to the next generation to help that generation succeed and flourish.

The judgements inspectors currently make when they inspect a school/academy are on the

- ⇒ effectiveness of leadership and management;
- ⇒ quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- ⇒ personal development, behaviour and welfare of the pupils; and
- ⇒ outcomes for children and learners.

In a [press release](#) on 11 October 2018, Mrs Spielman said that the quality of education will take pride of place replacing teaching, learning and assessment, i.e. processes and outcomes.

Accordingly, considerable weight will be given to primary schools/academies for prioritising phonics to enable children to become literate. Inspectors will also applaud schools/academies that encourage older pupils to read widely and deeply. Inspectors will be looking closely at whether secondary schools and academies are offering children a broad range of subjects, encouraging them to take up the core Ebacc GCSE subjects, such as humanities and languages along with the arts and creative subjects.

² The phase 1 report was published on 11 October 2017, the phase 2 one on 18 September 2018 and the phase 3 on 11 December 2018.

Simultaneously, one can expect inspectors to look askance at schools/academies that spend too much time preparing young people for tests and exams at the expense of teaching. They will closely question why choices are narrow when they are and ask for the rationale of less rigorous qualifications when they are offered, particularly because many schools/academies engage in this practice to boost their positions in the examinations league tables.

Three other judgements will be made on

- ⇒ pupils' personal development;
- ⇒ pupils' behaviour and attitudes; and
- ⇒ school's/academy's leadership and management

Mrs Spielman proposes to split the third of the four current inspection judgements, i.e. "personal development, welfare and behaviour", into two distinct areas in recognition of the difference between behaviour and discipline at schools/academies (on the one hand) with youngsters wider personal development to become active, healthy and engaged citizens and fly high in life (on the other).

In addition to the above, she intends to continue with the overall "effectiveness" judgement awarded on a four-point grading scale.

Announcing these changes on 11 October 2018 at the [Schools North-East Conference](#), Mrs Spielman said she would leave plenty of space for diversity, but "discourage things that just aren't good enough".

She is mindful of the excessive workload that has been detrimental to recruiting and retaining good teachers, driving them out of the country or into other professions. She also wishes to make an inspection more of a "conversation about what actually happens in schools (and academies)" and promises to acknowledge and reward those institutions that operate with integrity.

She is a Chief Inspector in a hurry. The effects of educational changes are not immediate to perceive. It takes years to implement and embed properly. At the same time delaying – even by a year – can affect the life-chances of more than eight million children.

Moving the focus from outcomes to the broad and balanced curriculum will recognise and reward the work of schools and academies in highly disadvantaged areas. It may also compel schools and academies to desist from gaming the system, offloading children when they are on the cusps of taking tests and examinations.

She feels confident that the new Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at Key Stage 2 and the revised GCSEs and A-level qualifications are marked improvements on their predecessors and at the right level of rigour. She does not think that there will be a tension between the promotion of these tests and exams on the one hand and a good curriculum on the other. However, this is predicated on the "good curriculum" being the mother of the "good results" – not the other way around. She is sure that this

will be the case, but the jury is out until her proposals translate into action and research tests the impact.

II The Research

Ofsted's three phased research was a bit of an eye-opener. In phase one, the researchers attempted "to understand more about the current state of curricular thinking in schools" and academies. They discovered – no surprise - that teachers were engaging in a narrowed curriculum to improve their schools'/academies' standings in the test/exam league tables, rather than giving more thought to providing a broad and balanced one to develop children's thinking and skills. They concluded that headteachers and their staffs hardly debated or reflected on the curriculum.

Headteachers and teachers discussed the timetables, but there "was an absence of other tangible reference points to get to grips with the complex business of curricular planning". In discussions with the schools/academy leaders, the inspectors-researchers concluded that there was a lack of clarity around the language of the curriculum. The notion of "skills" was used freely in different contexts. Rarely it was clear that they were subject specific (such as reading skills) or included personal skills such as the ability to work in a team, cognitive skills, critical thinking or life-skills such as how to pay bills and apply for jobs. Other examples of woolliness were meanings given to "progression", "enrichment", "questioning" and "repetition".

Several eons ago, teachers were taught the theory that underpinned good curricular planning. That aspect of learning is now conspicuous by its absence. Tests and examination results have driven curricular planning. With the establishment of a slimmed-down national curriculum, a poor situation has become worse.

Primary school leaders told Ofsted that recruiting teachers who could design a curriculum was very difficult. They thought that much of what trainee teachers currently learnt focused on teaching to the English and mathematics tests, with little or no attention to developing rounded curricular knowledge.

A reduction of the local authority support services because of the financial squeeze has exacerbated the decline in expertise on which they can draw.

Mrs Spielman accepted that the inspection process was partly to blame, playing "too great a role in intensifying performance data rather than complementing it". She added that the result of all the changes have been as follows.

- ⇒ First, the primary curriculum is narrowing in some schools because of too great a focus on preparing for key stage 2 tests.
- ⇒ Second, leaders have often misunderstood the purpose of key stage 3 and the new GCSE assessment criteria.

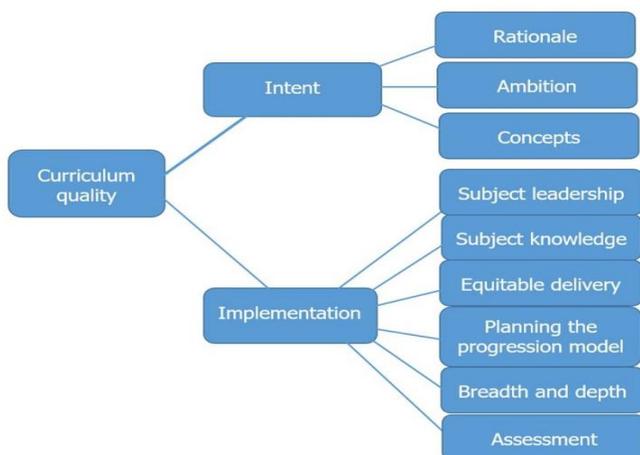
⇒ Third, the intended curriculum for lower-attaining pupils in some secondary schools was often associated with the qualifications that count in league tables but not with other knowledge the pupils should be acquiring.

Phase 2 of the research sought to look at those schools/academies that had invested in curricular design with a view to raising standards via the curriculum. Even though the inspectors-researchers went to a different cadre of schools/academies, they found many common features with those they saw in phase 1 – related to curricular quality, which, if successful would normally focus on

- ⇒ the importance of subjects as individual disciplines;
- ⇒ using the curriculum to address disadvantage and provide equality of opportunity;
- ⇒ regular curriculum review;
- ⇒ using the curriculum as the progression model;
- ⇒ intelligent use of assessment to inform curriculum design;
- ⇒ retrieval of core knowledge baked into the curriculum;
- ⇒ distributed curriculum leadership;

In phase 3, the inspector-researchers sought to ascertain how Ofsted might inspect aspects of curriculum quality, including whether the factors above could apply across a much broader range of schools/academies.

Ofsted concluded from this study that both, intent and implementation, were equally important. Intent was based on a rationale, ambition and concepts of the curriculum for the pupils. Implementation, on the other hand, required expertise in subject leadership, subject knowledge, equitable delivery (of the curriculum) planning for progression, breadth and balance and assessment.



Ofsted’s consultation on the new inspection model it proposes to implement from September 2019, will be informed by pilot inspections, curricular research, research on lesson observations and work scrutiny and a study of the academic literature on educational effectiveness.

Ms Spielman promised that the consultation will be thorough. She acknowledges that it will not be easy, especially in relation to “how we calibrate our judgement profile”. She said that she will “listen to as many of you as possible, to address your concerns and hopefully hear your positivity about this new direction too”. Her intentions are good. The jury is out on the implementation bit.....

An effective clerk's responsibilities to the governing board

I The governing board's tripod

The effectiveness of a governing board is dependent on a range of factors. It is difficult to put these factors in a pecking order of importance. However, every person on the governing board should operate with conscientious and probity by

- (i) discharging her/his responsibilities responsibly and
- (ii) acting in concert with the other governors to make the whole greater than that of the sum of the parts.

Three important people stand out with their noses just ahead of the rest of the members of the governing board. They are the chair, the headteacher and the clerk. The legislation prescribes that every school/academy must have a headteacher and chair on and a clerk serving the governing board. However, the headteacher may opt not to be a governor, though her/his attendance at the meetings is imperative.

- ⇒ The chair holds the reins of operations. S/he invests more time and effort than the rank and file of governors and is the port of call in emergencies.
- ⇒ The headteacher acts as the point of contact between the governing board and the school's community, i.e. the pupils, staff and parents. S/he operates as a conduit for communication or (to mix my metaphors) a gatekeeper – ensuring that governors keep their noses out of issues of management. However, the headteacher in the latter role – the management supremo - could also be obstructive – a definite no-no - and block governors from discharging their responsibilities.
- ⇒ Last, but by no means the least, every governing board has a clerk. In the halcyon days, the clerk operated as a glorified cleric (in a non-religious way). Not so any more.

Much has been written about the role of the chair and the headteacher, vis-à-vis governors' efficiency and effectiveness; much less about the role of the clerk. The National Governors' Association has spearheaded [training](#) for clerks so that they can understand governance, develop knowledge, secure the skills necessary to service the needs of governors and governing boards and act as the governing board's trusted adviser. It is a vital role for governors to discharge their responsibilities responsibly if the governing board is to act efficiently and effectively, adding value to the school/academy.

II The black box of a clerk's role

The clerk is a part of the governing board but apart from it as well. S/he is not entitled to vote but the support that the clerk gives is critical to everything the governing board does. Paragraph 35 of the Governance Handboos states: "High quality professional clerking is crucial to the effective functioning of the board."

In May 2011, Ofsted published a [report](#) on effective clerking following visits inspectors made to 14 schools. They came up with eight activities that they thought were vital.

"The role of the clerk to the governors is pivotal to ensuring that statutory duties are met, meetings are well-organised, and governors receive information in good time," the inspectors wrote.

"A detailed timeline of activities, maintained by the clerk and linked to the school development plan provides a clear structure for the work of governors and ensures that their time is used appropriately."

Later in the report, the inspectors mentioned that the effective clerk

- ⇒ regularly kept governors up to date with any changes in legislation or requirements;
- ⇒ circulated minutes and papers for meetings in good time, so that governors were well prepared for discussions and questions;
- ⇒ acted as a source of advice and support for governors, particularly new ones;
- ⇒ provided a link between the governing board and the local authority governor services;
- ⇒ relayed information from other sources, such as the Department for Education;
- ⇒ ensured that action points from meetings were recorded and followed up;
- ⇒ arranged visits and meetings, and notified governors of relevant school events; and
- ⇒ prepared a timeline of governor activities throughout the year, helping the chair to ensure that this schedule was reflected in the agenda for meetings.

In extremis, a meeting of one of the committees of the governing board may be clerked by a governor (albeit not the headteacher) – through, for instance, taking the minutes, while having the right to participate in the discussions and vote on issues. But meetings of the governing board, per se, and those of the Finance Committee **must** be clerked by someone who is not a governor at the school/academy.

A clerk must carry out a range of administrative tasks for the governing board such as sending out the agendas for its termly meetings and meetings of the committees, keeping a register of attendance, providing advice, and writing the minutes for and taking appropriate action after them. S/he must maintain a list of governors and their attendance record displaying it on the school/academy website.

Good clerks are well-versed in educational law and up-to-date with the changes to legislation. As in all other professional walks of life, training is essential, but so also is networking and subscribing to journals that provide insight into good governance.

Being armed with good and relevant knowledge enables a clerk to brief governors with the information they require to debate and evaluate the pros and cons of various options when making decisions in the best interests of the pupils at the school/academy. In their educational journeys, governors not only need to know what to do, but also what to avoid doing so that they do not tumble into pitfalls. The clerk is pivotal to assist in this process.

III Dealing with conflicts

Governors are busy people. Many hold responsible positions in their professional lives. They 'do' governance in their spare time for a host of reasons, some being altruistic. They bring social, financial, intellectual and community capital and provide unique perspectives from which headteachers benefit. Schools and academies often find views and thoughts of individual governors during and in between meetings beneficial, so long as it remains that. This is because during meetings, it is the corporate governing board that decides on school/academy matters – not individual governors. In between meetings, the headteacher is the lead member of the school/academy community with the day-to-day powers and responsibilities to manage the school/academy.

Sometimes, conflicts arise between governors and the headteacher. This is often because the boundaries between governance and management are blurred. Here is where the clerk can provide invaluable guidance and help to both sides and, in cases, act as a trouble-shooter. But a health warning here. I am aware that one clerk attempted precisely that and was shot down when his contract was not renewed. Notwithstanding, the clerk said that if a situation like that were to arise again, he would operate in the same way.

The bottom line is that children's best interests are of paramount importance. The problem about this is that each member of the governing board may have a different view of what is in the children's best interests – something like Brexit. Discussion, debate and decision-making must flow. Deciding on not deciding can, however, be the order of the day if there are compelling reasons for that. The effective clerk will, in such situations attempt to make disparate perspectives compatible.

Meanwhile, the advice dimension of a clerk's work means that s/he must be available during and outside of working hours – on the phone and by email.

IV Finding a clerk

Where can governing boards find effective clerks?

An accessible pool is the school's/academy's own administrators, including the headteacher's personal assistant or secretary. It is cost-effective and quick. All that is required is a rejigging of the personal assistant's/secretary's/administrator's job description. However, PAs, secretaries and administrators

are busy people who work assiduously and sometimes long hours. Is it right to expect them to give up evenings, albeit they can have time off in lieu, in which case their day jobs are affected adversely?

That apart, PAs and secretaries are viewed by governors as the headteachers' staff. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to give advice which may fly in the face of what the headteachers' stance on various matters may be. Where the secretary/PA may succeed in one role – i.e. as a clerk – s/he could end up getting dismissed for the other, i.e. as the headteacher's secretary/PA. It is dangerous, if not impossible for a man or woman to serve two masters or mistresses. At least this is what the Bible says. It can affect school/academy secretaries who take up the clerking role.

Several local authorities (LAs) have service-level agreements, where a local authority officer acts as the governing board's clerk for a reasonable fee. However, a similar problem could arise similar to that of a school secretary-cum-governors' clerk. The officer – on the contentious issues – must decide who takes precedence when providing advice – the LA or the governing board.

The third source for finding clerks is the pool of educational consultants out in the marketplace. As headteachers retire and local authorities continue to shrink, many ex-headteachers and former officers turn to clerking governing boards. There are also people from industry – e.g. solicitors, human resources managers and semi-retired senior school staff members – who are offering clerking services.

However, there are problems here too. First, a clerk is there to provide advice, but the governing board decides. A retired headteacher who took up clerking governing boards never quite made the transition from running a school to serving the governing board. This headteacher would give "orders" to the governing board, which governors unsurprisingly resented. Second, if a clerk is working at several schools/academies s/he must ensure that – like governors – conflicts of interests are declared. Where this is not being done and governors become aware of it, they must raise their concerns with the chair of the board.

V And finally.....

Governors do governance gratis – voluntarily. Their roles are unpaid. However, clerks are not. Good clerks may be priceless but come with a price tag. School/academy budgets are tight. However, if a governing board is to be serviced at least adequately if not well, it becomes necessary to find the wherewithal to pay a clerk decently. There is no national guidance on what that price should be, however. It is very much left to the market – demand and supply.

A school/academy governing board may well claim that they cannot afford to pay a good clerk they have recruited the contract price requested. However, the question that should be asked is: "Can the governing board afford not to pay her/him that sum?"

Crisis in mental health swells as awareness grows

I National Health Service Survey

On 22 November 2018, the National Health Service (NHS) published the outcomes of a [survey](#) that showed that one in eight - 12.8% - children aged five to 19 had mental health problems in 2017. There was a steady increase in mental ill-health among the five-to-15-year-olds, rising from 9.7% in 1999 to 11.2% in 2017.

Emotional disorders were prominent (8.1% of young people from the ages of 5 to 19) – though there were other disorders such as those linked to behaviour and hyperactivity.

Altogether, 9,117 children and young people were surveyed. One in 18 children (5.5%) from the ages of two to four years had at least one mental disorder. This rose to 16.9% for those from 17 to 19 years old.

Over a third (34.9%) of the 14-to-19-year-old young people who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or with another sexual identity had mental disorders against 13.2% who identified themselves as heterosexual.

About 25% of the 11-to-16-year-olds with mental disorders self-harmed or attempted suicide, compared to 3% of those without them.

If we exclude eating disorders, most mental health conditions were prevalent in children whose families were on low income or receiving benefits. Over a third of children with mental health disorders had special educational needs and 50% with special needs had Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

What are we doing to help these young people? Not much, it seems. The number of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in England increased by 26% during the last five years, according to the Education Policy Institute (EPI). CAMHS rejected 25% of referrals deeming them inappropriate for treatment according to BBC Radio 5 Live, whose researchers compiled the returns under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act.

Altogether, 54 CAMHS outfits out of 60 in England provided returns. In 33 – which provided full data - the referrals for the under 18s rose from 157,000 in 2013/14 to 198,280 in 2017/18. When the figures of another 17 CAMHS – which provided part data - were added, the mental health referrals topped 264,000.

Many [cases](#) were sad if not tragic. George Hodgson (22) experienced problems getting CAMHS to take him seriously and assess him when he struggled several years ago with anxiety and panic attacks. He

decided he could not wait and sought help from the private sector. "I don't know whether I would have coped if private support wasn't there," he said.

Jo Hutchinson, director of social mobility and vulnerable learners at the EPI, said, "While we have seen a reduction in some of the longest waiting times, many children still face a lengthy period before they can receive any specialist treatment and the number of referrals into these stretched services is rising."

According to the EPI report 55,800 (circa) children under-18 did not meet the criteria for specialist treatment after being referred in 2017-18.

The main reasons for excluding them from treatment were as follows.

- 1) Self-harm referrals were accepted only if accompanied by another mental health condition.
- 2) A weight loss of less than 15% from the young person's ideal weight for an eating disorder did not justify treatment (although this is against National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines).
- 3) Young people had not already engaged with early intervention services and waited specified lengths of time.

II Gaps in youth services

Some local authorities - 27 out of the 111- who responded to the FoI request, said they had scrapped services related to the mental health and wellbeing of children over the last eight years. These included community-based early intervention services, family counselling and mental health support for looked-after children, as well as school-based programmes to support children with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "We are transforming mental health services for children and young people with an additional £1.4bn and are on track to ensure that 70,000 more children a year have specialist mental health care by 2020-21.

"We are improving access to mental health services through schools with a brand new dedicated workforce, as well as piloting a four-week waiting time standard in some areas, so we can better understand how to reduce waiting times.

"We are completely committed to achieving parity between physical and mental health as part of our long-term plan for the NHS, backed by an additional £20.5bn of funding per year by 2023-24."

Many, however, are of the view that this is too little too late.

Meanwhile, the NHS survey revealed that teachers were the most frequent professionals contacted by young people in 2017 about mental health. Overall, 48.5% of those with mental health disorders did so. Altogether, 22.6% of those with such disorders accessed education support services. Sadly, 25% of

young people with disorders reported no contact with professionals vis-à-vis their mental health, which is why it is vital for every school/academy to have a mental health lead.

Amid all this, governors need to bear in mind that staff who are consistently trying to mitigate the mental suffering of young people, sometimes succumb to the problem itself. Altogether, [1.3 million days were taken off by teachers in the academic year 2016/17 for reasons linked to mental health and/or stress.](#)

III Initiative at RSA Academies

Many schools and academies rely on their own initiatives and resources. A good example of this are the six academies under the aegis of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). The RSA's programme is based on their research, which shows that it is not just teachers who support young people but also support staff and peers. This calls for a whole school/academy approach toward dealing with mental ill-health.

Between July 2017 and September 2018, the RSA provided a programme of mental health awareness for their six academies and a non-RSA junior school based in the West Midlands, where the institutions serve communities with multiple disadvantages.

Its findings from the project signal that support staff members are assets for the school/academy community when they work in concert with the teachers. With the help of the Anna Freud Centre, the RSA measured the impact of the mental health training in the academies and schools. There was an increase in

- (i) staff confidence in talking about and dealing with mental ill-health;
- (ii) staff mental health awareness and literacy;
- (iii) staff perceptions of the academy/school as a supportive environment; and
- (iv) "supportive behaviours" among staff.

Positive changes were discovered in all four areas among the academy/school leaders, pastoral and teaching staff and the rest of the support staff. Staff members reported a 52% increase in supportive behaviours, encompassing talking and listening to pupils, giving practical support and signposting and making referrals to services. Most staff members signalled that the positive changes were because of the training they received. Altogether, 13% of staff members grew in confidence, awareness and mental health literacy and they perceived their academies/schools establishing supportive environments.

IV The Green Paper

In December 2017, the government Green Paper, [Transforming Young People's Mental Health Provision](#), described a bold and ambitious approach to tackling mental health in schools and academies, which included a commitment to mental health awareness training for teachers matched with £95 million from 2019. Practical advice on promoting the mental health of young people was to

be made [compulsory by 2020](#) with changes to the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum.

The National Children’s Bureau (NCB) has published a package of resources, [A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health](#). In the documentation, the NCB stressed the importance of developing “a supportive school and classroom climate and ethos which builds a sense of connectedness, focus and purpose, the acceptance of emotional vulnerability, warm relationships and the celebration of difference”.

The RSA’s report, [A whole school approach to mental health](#), mirrors NCB’s advice. The RSA avers that establishing senior leads in 20% of schools/academies by 2022 will be insufficient if institutions are to confront five key issues:

- (i) a lack of specialist support services;
- (ii) a more pressured school/academy environment linked to high-stakes examinations;
- (iii) the impact of social media and cyberbullying;
- (iv) violence and risk of violence outside of school/academy, and
- (v) self-harm.

Henry Ford was supposed to have said, “Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice.” He had this saying on his mantelpiece. Perhaps, schools and academies can learn from him. If they are to tackle the malaise of mental ill-health, they must find the wherewithal (according to the RSA) within themselves to

- ⇒ train teaching and support staff alike to develop a whole-school/academy approach to mental health through establishing policies with practices to sit alongside;
- ⇒ develop staff literacy and confidence in tackling mental ill-health; and
- ⇒ ensure that there is good leadership built on collaboration with other schools/academies.

V Sources of Mental Illness

The [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) guidance from the Department for Education identifies risks militating against children’s good mental health from a number of sources, which are set out below.

(a) Within the Child

- Genetic influences
- Low IQ and learning disabilities
- Specific development delay or neuro-diversity
- Communication difficulties
- Difficult temperament

- Physical illness
- Academic failure
- Low self-esteem

(b) In the Family

- Overt parental conflict including domestic violence
- Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted)
- Inconsistent or unclear discipline
- Hostile and rejecting relationships
- Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs
- Physical, sexual, neglect or emotional abuse
- Parental psychiatric illness
- Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder
- Death and loss – including loss of friendship

(c) In the School/Academy

- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships
- Deviant peer influences
- Peer pressure
- Poor pupil-to-teacher relationships

(d) In the Community

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Homelessness
- Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events
- Discrimination
- Other significant life events

Organisations that can help people of all ages deal with mental ill-health are as follows.

- (1) [Mind](#)
- (2) [YoungMinds](#)
- (3) [ChildLine](#)
- (4) [Moodzone](#) – the NHS website which is a pointer to a host of helpful organisations;
- (5) [Place2Be](#), whose foci are the pupils; and, of course,
- (6) [The Samaritans](#), free on 116 123 (UK and Ireland) round-the-clock.

VI National Initiative for all citizens

Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind, the mental health charity, and Lord Stevenson of Coddenham issued a report, [Thriving at Work](#), at the end of October 2017, which had been commissioned by Prime Minister Theresa May. It reveals that Britain faces a bigger challenge on mental health at work than experts thought. Many believe that effectively tackling the scourge of mental illness will secure improvements for human welfare and the economy. About 15% of working people have symptoms of a mental health condition. Annually, 300,000 (circa) with long-term mental health conditions lose their jobs, a much higher rate than those with physical illness. The economic cost of poor mental health, through output forgone, is estimated at between £74 and £99 billion a year. The human cost in misery is incalculable.

The goals, in themselves, are not spectacular. However, if adopted nationally, they will help many who are struggling at work and will signal the nation's desire to help a growing number of vulnerable people whose illnesses are not easily manifest. Broken limbs are visible and attract sympathy. Mental illness isn't. And when victims of mental illness declare their frailties, they are stigmatised, ignored or ridiculed.

People who suffer from mental ill-health find their performance compromised and their productivity declines. Cognitive-behavioural and compassion-focused therapies – among other measures – work very well and are highly cost-effective.

The Stevenson-Farmer report set out the cost of mental illness to the country:

- **300,000** people with a mental health condition lose their job each year
- **15%** of people at work have symptoms of a mental health condition
- **£74-99bn** cost of poor mental health to the economy
- **£33-43bn** direct cost to employers, mostly from “presenteeism”
- **£4.20** average return on each pound invested in improving mental health at work

Source: Stevenson-Farmer report

VII Closing Thought

The last year closed with the world in a state of turmoil. One does not have to become political to recognise the unrest prevalent in Greece, Italy, France, Brazil, Venezuela, the United States of America and, of course, the United Kingdom. Across the Atlantic and on these shores, we have the MeToo campaign to deal with predators. The campaign, according to some, is now in danger of taking a step too far and drawing in victims without justification.

We are fixated with social media. Travel in London by the underground or in a bus and one cannot help noticing people glued to their mobile phones. Social media, like water and fire, is a good servant but bad master (or mistress).

Is spending more time securing our own welfare and promoting our own happiness leading to greater mental health problems? Should we not begin to throw ourselves more into looking after others than caring for ourselves? It could be so much more rewarding.

We live at three levels – the physical, mental and spiritual.

If you have a pound and I have a pound, we each have a pound and together, we have two. If I give you my pound and you give me yours, we still each have one pound and together we have two. That's the physical level.

If you have an idea and I have an idea, we each have one idea and together we have two. If I give you my idea and you give me yours, we each now have two ideas, but together, we have only two. In other words, at a mental level, when we give we increase the knowledge of the other/s but do not lose what we have. However, collectively, we have the same knowledge.

On the other hand, if I am happy and you are miserable, one of the two of us is happy and the other miserable. If I take the trouble to make you happy – in other words – 'give' my happiness to you and you become happy, I end of feeling happier than I was in the first place. By giving I don't lose my happiness. Rather, I am left with more than I had in the first place! That's the spiritual level.

One cure for people suffering from mental health problems is teaching them to climb out of their skin to throw themselves into making the lives of other better and more worthwhile to live. Could we pass on this message to our pupils and students? If we do, this would be one mechanism for dealing with mental ill-health.

Parental responsibility for the children they choose to have

(a) Children don't have parents.....

When my partner and I were on the cusp of having our first child over three decades ago, at the get-together we had with my parents, I told them in as sensitive a way as possible, "Mum and Dad, when the child comes along, we will be putting the child first in all that we do, giving her/him priority and showering the kid with all our love – although, we hope, it won't be indulgent. This will mean, mum and dad, that we will not be able to give you the kind of attention we are doing right now. I will (as also my other half) continue to love and care for you."

I had to get home the message to them diplomatically that parents have children, not the other way around. Children don't have a choice about appearing on this planet. Parents make that possible and parents owe everything to them in relation to tough love. This is not to say, being Jewish, that I was not going to abide by the fifth of the Ten Commandments – *Honour thy father and thy mother*.

The reason for this exchange with my mother and father was because we came from India and were of Jewish heritage where it is custom and practice that parents rear their children so that when the youngsters are adults and the parents are aged, they (the children) can look after and care for them. In other words, parents have children as an investment for their old age. However, it is possible for sons and daughters to honour their fathers and mothers while simultaneously putting their children first.

Many in the West have children, willy-nilly. It's easily done as they fall in and out of love with free and often unprotected sex. And when children arrive, they become others'/society's responsibility. Schools and academies are important segments of that society.

When children fail, it is the schools' (and academies') fault. When they succeed, many parents many parents are inclined to take the credit.

At the other end of the uncaring spectrum, is the inordinate and crazy pressures helicopter parents place on their children to flourish because they live through their children. Their children's successes are theirs (the parents' successes). They cause undue stress and trigger mental ill-health. Failing is not an option for these young people.

Some schools and academies are lucky to have parents who bring a sense of balance in their attitude towards their children's growth and development. We know from good governance that the ingredients of a successful educational approach towards staff members is a combination of support and challenge. It is no different in the interactions between parents and children. Parental love for children must be unconditional. However, it must be tough love. When a daughter scores 70% in a science test, her parents must praise her and follow the praise with the question, "Now, darling, how can we learn from the mistakes you made that caused you to miss out on the 30%."

(b) Schools'/academies' strategies to involve parents

Parents' involvement in their children's education improves opportunities for them to live fulfilled lives as young people and succeed when they become adults. It's a no-brainer.

Parentkind carried out a [survey](#) in 2018. It showed that nearly 88% want to play an active role in their children's education. A second *Parentkind* survey revealed that teachers overwhelmingly thought that parental engagement had a positive impact on children's learning. Only 2% stated that it had no impact at all.

Both, schools/academies and parents, want the latter to be more involved in children's education, care and general development. Given that parents have more time with their children than schools/academies, they will have more opportunities to capitalise on that time. The *Parentkind* survey revealed that

- ⇒ 66% of parents wanted schools/academies to be more accountable to them;
- ⇒ 77% wished to have a say on their children's education at school level; and

⇒ when it came to how much of a say

- (i) 53% believed their schools/academies listened and
- (ii) 55% believed schools/academies acted - based on their views.

Where there is a gap between parents' wishes and school/academy practice there are problems.

The four main areas of school/academy life on which parents would like to be consulted are:

- ⇒ the curriculum (56%);
- ⇒ pupil behaviour (51%)
- ⇒ homework (44%);
- ⇒ budgets/school/academy costs (30%).

Despite this, 71% of parents stated that they were happy about the overall quality of their children's schools/academies, 67% were positive about the school's effectiveness in communicating with them, and 62% in the school's ability to help parents support their children's learning outside of the school/academy. However, only 57% reported that they were satisfied with the opportunities to get involved in their children's schools/academies.

It is much easier to involve parents in their children's education in the early years. However, the interest tails-off as children grow older. The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) described how schools/academies can sustain this involvement.

- (a) Provide a flexible approach to allow parental engagement to fit around parents' schedules. Parents of older children may appreciate short sessions at flexible times. But given how busy headteachers and staff members are, this is easier said than done.
- (b) Establish welcoming protocols and images for parents, especially those whose own experience of school may not have been positive.
- (c) Offer practical support, advice and guidance to parents who are not confident in their ability to support their children's learning, such as simple strategies to help early readers.

There is no question that parental involvement in children's education helps youngsters succeed. What is at issue is the "what and the how" of this engagement.

First schools/academies that don't have explicit plans on how to involve parents and teachers need training to do this effectively. The gap between aspiration and ability exists.

Second, teachers are busy engaged in a multitude of activities dictated to them by the children for whom they have responsibility - balancing this with responding to directions coming from their senior managers, agencies (such as Children's Social Services) and government.

Thirdly, the research is thin on the ground about what are the most effective strategies to involve parents. Will showing parents how to read with their children at home have the same impact as that of parents who automatically read to their children, for instance?

Finally, what complicates matters are the natural abilities of children. Stephen Scott, professor of child health and behaviour at King's College London told *The Times Educational Supplement*, "Expecting strategies that are designed to engage parents in children's learning to transform academic outcomes overlooks the role that natural intellectual ability has to play in achievement. There is quite a heritability for intellectual ability, which still seems to be politically unacceptable [to say] in some circles. It seems to be okay for height and strength and athletic ability and music ability, but for some reason not academics. But when we do twin and adoption studies, it's clear that there is a heritable element to it."

Simply asserting that parental involvement drives pupil achievement may result in disappointing outcomes. "I think it's difficult because schools are expected to cure all of society's ills, but I'm not sure schools should be responsible for stuff they have no control over, which is what's going on at home," he says.

(1) Critically review how the school/academy works with parents

Schools/academies have been held responsible for myriad aspects of young people's lives over which they have little control. The EEF feels that parental involvement is one. However, [there are four things that a school/academy can do](#), according to the EEF.

The report states that a written plan can "....."turn parental engagement from something accidental or peripheral to school improvement into an intentional programme". School/academy leaders must be clear about what they want to achieve vis-à-vis the skills and knowledge they wish the children to garner.

There is merit in talking to parents and ascertaining from them what practices are working well and what aren't and stop doing what is not bearing fruit. The next step would be to discuss with parents what is not being done that could work. Seek the views of as many parents as possible, those who are clued up about engaging with their children as much as those who aren't.

Schools and academies can benefit from taking account of the support and resources that are available and the time implications required of the staff members who will be involved, including the availability of training bearing in mind that teachers are already working long hours.

(2) Provide practical strategies on how parents can work with their children at home

Guide and encourage parents on the different activities they can do at home, state the authors of the report. The strategies will be different for different age groups. Also, it would be useful to promote those strategies where the research has demonstrated that they have been successful in the past.

Shared reading is one activity that works for young children. The report also advises staff to advise parents about the strategies they could use to make that reading effective, such as parents asking children questions about the books they read together and talking about links between the story lines and real life.

With older children, shared reading is no longer suitable. Rather, parents could show an interest in children's learning – something that's more important than direct involvement. This is the case with homework. Children who complete homework do better than those who don't, says the report. In this respect, the report states: "Evidence suggests that schools/academies should encourage parents to know about homework and support their children to do it, rather than get directly involved."

Where parents attempt to help older children do their homework, they may come a cropper, as the homework could be far too challenging for the parents. But setting a framework of where and when homework is to be done helps the teenager to develop a work ethic. Praising and rewarding her/him when it is done, especially if done well, will act as a further spur to learning.

(3) Tailor school/academy communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning

Improving home-school/academy communication could be effective in helping pupils' progress and achievements. The EEF researchers mention that text-messaging programmes promote conversations about home-learning, enabling staff to give tips on and information about the children's learning to their parents. Texting is low-cost and straightforward to introduce. Most people now have mobile phones. While mobiles are often used for the wrong purposes – especially regarding social media – here is an area where they can be incredibly useful.

However, a school/academy needs to consider the frequency, timing and targeting of messages as well as the tone in which they are delivered. Acknowledging children's successes in messages to parents, is encouraged. Praise can be as helpful as expressing regret on poorly done work. Further, communication must be two-ways. For instance, the school/academy could ask parents what they think is helpful to support children's learning. When parents are invited to help develop school/academy practices, they are more likely to be engaged in their children's learning.

(4) Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed

Finally, and by far the most daunting of the recommendations, is that schools/academy may need to give more intensive support to children struggling with early reading, and others from disadvantaged backgrounds or with behavioural issues. The research shows that structured and targeted interventions for parents to improve children's social and emotional conditions do work. But they are time-consuming and costly.

So, how should a school/academy begin the process, bearing in mind that taking the first step could be the most challenging one of all. Assess need and talk to the parents about how the school/academy can help them to help their children. Reflect on these exchanges and develop a package of support for

the parents. Take care about targeting. It must be done sensibly “to avoid stigmatising, blaming and discouraging parents”.

The help schools/academies proffer parents into taking more responsibility for the children is a win-win strategy. It will make parents realise that bringing their children into this world is one of the greatest responsibilities they have. Equally, it can be very rewarding for the parents. The children are the future of parents and schools/academies. If we are to make the world a better and less chaotic place, parents must be assisted to start supporting and aiding their children.

Squeeze on educational finance continues

In biblical times, seven years of plenty were followed by seven years of famine. However, in Britain’s educational scene, the periods of time have been that much longer. In 1997 when Labour was elected with thunderous applause, Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, pledged that his three priorities for the foreseeable future was to be *Education, Education, Education*.

However, the international financial crash in 2008, 11 years later, saw the start of a period of financial famine that has continued ever since – 11 years on. Schools and colleges continue to experience the after-shocks, following the movement of the educational tectonic plates. There are no signs that there will be much let-up.

I The picture in schools and academies

At the Summer 2018 conference of the National Governors’ Association, Education Secretary of State Damian Hinds pledged to make a strong case to Chancellor Phillip Hammond “to ensure that the school system has the resources it needs”. I am not holding my breath and there are many like me.

Altogether, 5,000 school/academy governors and trustees were surveyed by the NGA and *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) in May and June 2018. Only 20% said that their institutions could manage with the resources allocated and just 15% signalled that they had sufficient funds for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Fifty per cent had balanced budgets for 2017/18 and a third had to draw on their reserves. Of those drawing on their reserves, 75% wrote that the reserves would run dry up in two years’ time. Five per cent had been able to budget with the income given by the government via their local authorities with small surpluses accruing.

The biggest casualty of the financial strictures has been support staff. Altogether, 47% of schools and academies in the survey revealed that they had cut the number of support staff members and another 28% anticipated doing so in the next two years. Further, after setting aside less money for the maintenance of premises, the number of teachers has also shrunk resulting in increased class sizes. Schools and academies have had to go cap-in-hand to parents for voluntary contributions and appeal to them to use strenuous efforts to raise money through the parent-staff associations.

Of the respondents

- ⇒ 24% stated that they had increased class sizes;
- ⇒ 22% (i.e. 55% of secondary schools/academies) said they had reduced the number of subjects and qualifications on offer; and
- ⇒ 14% curtailed extra-curricular activities.

The shrinking of local authority services, said the respondents adversely affected the schools/academies. Altogether, 72% said so, an increase of 9% on the returns in 2017.

The word that featured prominently in the NGA/TES survey was “reduced”. Many institutions had reduced the size of their senior leadership teams (SLTs), reduced the number subjects on offer, reduced spending on continuing professional development (CPD), reduced specialist support for pupils lagging behind, reduced extra-curricular activities, reduced pastoral support and reduced opening hours.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) [worked out](#) that the total school/academy spending per pupil fell by 8% between 2009/10 and 2017/18. What was factored into its calculation was a 55% cut in local authority spending on services to schools and a cut of over 20% to sixth-form funding. Funding in primary and secondary schools and academies fell by 4% since 2015.

Jules White, Headteacher of Tanbridge House School in Horsham, West Sussex, chosen by *The Times Educational Supplement* as the person of the year, was incensed when he received the response of the Department for Education to the schools’/academies’ growing funding crisis. He was driving home from school on a Friday evening when he heard a civil servant at the DfE mentioning that there had never been more money spent on education and that there were more teachers than ever. He called this person “clueless”.

He told the TES: “I was thinking, I’ve got a hell of a lot going for me in this school. It’s about as good as it gets in state education – but we’re clinging on. I can’t get maths and English teachers, my class sizes are rising, I’ve got absolutely no money, I’ve not got enough TAs (Teaching Assistants) to cover kids with statements. We are cut to the bone.”

The upshot was that he established the WorthLess campaign. In September 2018, he marshalled 2,000 headteachers and marched them to Downing Street. He also invoiced the Treasury £3.5 billion – the amount his campaigners say they should be receiving extra under a fairer funding system.

II Further Education (FE)

If you think it’s bad in the schools/academies sector, take a peek at Further Education, where it is much worse.

Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) Amanda Spielman in her annual report of 2017/18 said that the overall performance had improved, despite acknowledging that there were huge funding

pressures on the FE and sixth form colleges. Altogether, 76% of FE sixth form colleges were rated “good” – an increase on the 69% the previous year. However, Mrs Spielman wrote: “We are concerned about the financial sustainability of the college sector and the clear impact that real-terms cuts to FE funding can have on provision”. Per-student spending in FE and sixth-form colleges “is now 11 per cent lower than for pupils at secondary school”.

The FE sector is thinking long and hard in these difficult times about whether the apprenticeship scheme is good value for money. The number of young people beginning apprenticeships was way down from before the levy came in. The growth area has been in the higher-level apprenticeship, increasing by 10,000 apprenticeships annually since 2011/12. But many existing graduate schemes have been rebranded as apprenticeships to pull in the desperately needed finances, which make the whole business questionable.

The chief operating officer of the Institute of Apprenticeships (IfA) signalled that the £2.2 billion apprenticeship budget for 2018/19 was likely to be overspent by £500 million. The overspend could rise by 2020/21 if nothing is done. Accordingly, he plans to review the funding bands for over 30 apprenticeships standards to ensure that they provide value for money. This will mean that the scheme is likely to be financially squeezed.

III Government Reaction

Despite the evidence, the Department for Education finds it difficult to accept that there is a funding crisis hitting education. The reaction to the funding crisis of Dominic Herrington, the Interim National Schools Commissioner, who is also the Regional Schools Commissioner for East Midlands and the Humber, (as reported in *The Times Educational Supplement* on 30 November 2018) said: “Crisis? What crisis?” Even ostriches can be heard asking the Herringtons of the country to stop burying their heads in the sand.

Officials are of the view that schools and academies can live within their means if they were more efficient. Well, this is precisely what the institutions are doing through the dedication of school leaders, teachers and support and administrative staff. Audits of the average amount of time teachers work per week often comes to 60 hours or more.

School and academy budgets have been cut, and demand to provide for pupils with special educational needs and those who require mental health support far outstrips supply. The education patient is in critical care and likely to go under if a financial injection is not given.

IV National Governors’ Association (NGA) Campaign

The NGA has launched a campaign to turn the screws on ministers.

⇒ On Thursday, 28 February 2019, the NGA has asked governors to go to parliament with their local MPs and join in the campaign.

- ⇒ On Friday, 1 March 2019, the organisation has requested that each school/academy invite its local MP to pay it a visit or (as there will not be sufficient MPs to go around) visit the constituency office to make the case for more funding for education.
- ⇒ And if school/academy representatives have not done so already, the NGA exhorts them to visit their MPs' constituency office to make their cases heard.

The NGA has requested schools/academies to provide MPs with evidence of need for education funding, how staff are having to bear extra burdens and where pupils, in extremis, are suffering. The point that children and young people can be seriously damaged if no action is taken must be forcibly made.

The NGA has asked for a spending review. As part of this request, it has set out nine "asks" or requests based on the latest research and intelligence collected from governors and trustees. These are as follows.

- (1) The core revenue budget be increased at least £2 billion per year so that the basic rate that schools/academies for each pupil covers the cost of their education.
- (2) The high needs budget for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) be increased by at least £1.5 billion per year.
- (3) The rate for pupils in the 16-to-19-year age-group be increased by at least £4,760 per pupil per year.
- (4) The pupil premium funding be protected in real terms and included in the national funding formula with reporting requirements retained.
- (5) The government review funding for the early years so that all children have access to high quality, teacher-led early education.
- (6) The national funding formula be implemented in full as soon as possible, with funding distributed directly to schools and academies.
- (7) Funding settlements be for a minimum of three years to enable schools and academies to plan their budgets properly and thoughtfully.
- (8) The government makes sufficient capital funding available to return all school and academy buildings to a satisfactory or better condition.
- (9) Local authority funding of services to schools and academies and children be properly underwritten as also children's mental and physical health services, so that pupils come to their institutions safe, well and equipped to learn.

V Parents Campaign

Parents have established a national pressure group – *Fair Funding for All Schools*. The body has been setting up independent parental-led groups attached to schools and academies in their local areas. They are campaigning for education to be better funded.

Fair Funding for Schools considers that it is very important for an independent parent voice to sound their concerns alongside governors and school and academy leaders. Parents who wish to become involved can contact info@fairfundingforallschools.org or visit www.fairfundingforallschools.org. They can also go on Twitter at @fairfundingschools.

Teacher shortages threaten quality education

A school/academy is only as good as the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching, in turn, is predicated on the requirement that each institution has sufficient teachers. At present, the country is haemorrhaging teachers faster than replacing them, which is having a debilitating effect on schools and academies. The main reason for this appears to be the workload that teachers have been having to undertake over the last decade or so. The cost of housing in London and the South-East of the United Kingdom is another factor that is exacerbating the situation for institutions located in these areas.

Thousands of talented teachers have upped sticks and gone abroad to use their talents. They have been lapped up by other countries. Two cases exemplify the experience of many.

Freya Odell, a state secondary teacher qualified 18 years ago. She was director of learning, literacy lead and director of English at her school. She told *The Guardian* (2 October 2018) that she was following in the footsteps of others and moved to St George's British International School in Rome in the Autumn of 2018.

"It wasn't a difficult decision," she said. "My job in England took over my life. Over the past year, I had stopped laughing and smiling. I had lost all sense of who I am. I had to get up at 4.30 a.m. to get everything done, returning home at 7.00 p.m. and working for another hours before bed, as well as at weekends."

While she has taken a pay cut, she teaches for the same amount of time but has a class of 16 pupils (instead of the 34 she had in England) and none of her previous responsibilities. The cost of living is also lower than that in the UK and she is given free lunches. She said she felt confident that she would continue to develop as a teacher while still maintaining a sensible work-life balance.

Binks Neate-Evans was the head of an outstanding infants school in Norfolk. She said she worked 65 to 70 hours a week at her school that has 90% of pupils living in 10% of the poorest postcodes of the

country. Resources, she told *The Guardian*, were limited and the pupils' behaviour challenging because of their experience of childhood trauma. Access to clinical psychologists was one definition of the impossible. She gave the example of a child who needed special help from the mental health services, but this arm of the NHS was also dealing with life-threatening cases.

Neate-Evans, who had 23 years' experience as a teacher and 12 years as headteacher, moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and has been lost to us. She said that her job in Norfolk left her with high-blood pressure. She also suffered from chronic stress and insomnia. She said that teachers were highly valued there. Her earnings are tax-free, her transport to and from work is paid by the school and she has a complimentary two-bedroom flat.

She is unsure about whether she will return to work in Britain, though, of course, there is a cost to be considered in the culture of Saudi Arabia, where women are still treated as second-class citizens, constrained in their movements around the country and have to adopt a life-style that is alien to Westerners.

Meanwhile, we in England, are struggling to find sufficient, qualified teachers. The [Education Policy Institute](#) mentioned that the government has failed to recruit sufficient trainee teachers as well as stem the flow of serving teachers either leaving the country or the profession altogether. Annually, the UK loses 15,000 teachers who join international schools. A little under half of them (47%) are dissatisfied with our education system, which are the [findings of a survey](#) of 1,600 teachers at British international schools carried out by the Council of British International Schools (COBIS). Another third (circa) were thinking about leaving teaching altogether before they took on their international posts.

A combination of factors such as low pay for teachers, increasing accountability, pupil factors (brought on by deprivation), a lack of resources, and, most of all, increasing workload, have brought us to this sad pass.

Mary Bousted, joint secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), said that while teaching timetables in the UK were similar to the OECD average, "...our teachers spend twice as long as other teachers in high-performing OECD countries preparing lessons, assessing and looking at data. It is that, combined with low pay which is driving teachers away. The very measures the government has taken to police standards are decimating the number of teachers in the classroom and lowering educational standards."

The COBIS survey revealed that 80% of British teachers at international schools were happy or very happy with their jobs. This is probably because of a lesser workload and greater trust reposed in them by the educational leaders, parents and the governments which oversee the systems.

[According to the International Schools Council \(ISC\)](#), 145,000 teachers will be recruited by their schools over the next 10 years from the UK. This will be out of the 230,000 more teachers that these schools will need. This is going to exacerbate the teacher shortages we have in the UK.

So what measures can schools and academies take to staunch the outflow? Accountability pressures predicated on test and examination results will continue for some time. There is no point grumbling at the darkness. Rather, governors and headteachers can light little candles by supporting the well-being of staff in their institutions. The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families published a [report](#) in November 2018 setting out ten steps to promote staff well-being. These are succinctly set out on page 5 and are as follows.

- (1) Is there a staff mental health lead or champion who is responsible for coordinating the school's/academy's approach to staff mental well-being and ensuring it remains on the agenda?
- (2) Is there a mental health policy that addresses the needs of the staff? Is it regularly reviewed? How is the policy embedded and regularly communicated so that all staff are aware of it?
- (3) How does the ethos of the school/academy promote openness about mental health well-being and encourage staff to feel comfortable about sharing concerns?
- (4) Are there opportunities for supervision to help staff feel confident that they are making the right decisions when supporting pupils experiencing complex issues (including safeguarding and mental health, for instance)?
- (5) Could supervision be offered outside the line-management of the school/academy for those who do not feel comfortable about approaching their line-managers about concerns about their mental well-being? Do staff know how to access external sources of support?
- (6) Could measures to reduce workload or hours spent working outside of the school/academy work days be trialled for example by reviewing marking policies and email protocols? Does the senior leadership team (SLT) lead by example when it comes to limiting emailing in the evenings and during weekends?
- (7) Is there a comfortable, dedicated physical space within the school/academy where staff members can take time off when needed?
- (8) Are there opportunities for staff to participate in activities with colleagues that are not linked to their work (for example social events, exercise classes or creative groups)?
- (9) Is it feasible to introduce a staff well-being survey to help understanding of the key issues in the school/academy and the impact of any measures the governors and senior leaders are taking to support staff well-being?
- (10) Is the mental well-being of staff an agenda item on staff and governor meetings?

In November 2018, the Teacher Workload Advisory Group published its [report](#) on removing unnecessary tasks associated with the data management in schools and academies. The report set out

recommendations for the government and others on data management. The Department for Education, in turn, responded helpfully to the report, accepting all the recommendations.

Politicians and civil servants have devised a [toolkit](#) to help schools and academies address the problem. In November 2018, the Secretary of State for Education, Ofsted, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), the National Governance Association (NGA) and the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) sent a joint [letter](#) to all schools and academies. In it, they alerted governors, headteachers and staff to the [strategy](#) government is promoting to reduce teacher workload.

Action can be taken on these measures to improve the quality of living for teachers, but only time will tell if that does happen.

Members' role at the top of the Multi-Academy Trust

When the two schools I used to clerk in the recent past decided to convert into academies and join together (in holy matrimony) to become a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), I found the role of the top tier of the structure was "as clear as mud". The [National Governors' Association](#) has now provided excellent clarification setting this out in its paper, *Academy trusts: the role of members*. The full explanation can be accessed only if you become a member of the NGA, something that is becoming a must for a school or academy.

In every MAT, there are three tiers of governance. In the top tier sits the members. Trustees are below that and governors on the third. What separates these tiers and their functions?

The guardians of the MAT are the members. Their role is distinct albeit limited. The Academies Act 2010 paid little attention to this unique group. As a result, it failed to make clear that while three members were the minimum requirement and members could also be trustees, the Department for Education began to pile on problems for a MAT. Changes in articles of association required that 75% of the members needed to approve new articles or any amendments to the old ones. If there are only three members, the MAT will require 100% to vote in favour to meet the minimum 75% requirement. The NGA, in its guidance, consequently, urges that there should be at least five members in the top tier.

Also, it is not advisable for members to serve also as trustees because of a clash of interests. NGA's Head of Information, Sam Henson, in *Governing Matters*, wrote: "Having most or all trustees as members, a scenario NGA often sees, is a classic case of marking your own homework." This leads to a confusion of roles and/or causes the member who is a trustee as well to exercise unfair powers. The model articles of association acknowledge that it is not conducive to duplicate roles. However, it may be advisable for one or two members to be trustees to provide a unique perspective to developing the MAT.

Members hold the trust to account but have limited powers and responsibilities. These are as follows.

They

- a) sign the memorandum and articles of association;
- b) determine the name of the trust;
- c) appoint members and trustees;
- d) appoint and remove the auditors;
- e) receive the annual accounts and report;
- f) ensure the success of the trust;
- g) decide when they should meet; and,
- h) when matters come to an impossible pass, dissolve the trust.

A key responsibility of the members is assessing if the board of trustees is performing efficiently and effectively to ensure that the purpose of the trust is being met and its charitable status fulfilled. They can meet infrequently. Most do so once annually.

Also, several trusts have delegated the function of appointing trustees to the trustees. This is, perhaps, questionable as the body that appoints generally is not the body to which a person is appointed so that there is probity in the system. (However, a governing board appoints its co-optees. This is welcomed as governors on the board know precisely what skills are lacking when they seek out appropriate members for the board and co-opt them to it.)

The trust, which also should be made up of at least three members, though more are desirable if not essential, has three clear functions. It

- a) ensures clarity of vision, establishing the ethos and setting the strategic direction of the MAT;
- b) holds the executive to account for the educational performance of the trust's academies and their pupils and the performance management of the staff; and
- c) oversees the financial performance of the trust, making sure its money is well spent.

The Academies Financial Handbook 2016 states that the board of trustees "should have a finance committee to which the board delegates financial scrutiny and oversight". Where a trust has an income above a certain level, it must also have a separate audit committee.

As part of a) above, the trust has responsibilities for deciding what powers it delegates to its governing boards or committees of the trust.

The trust has the power to establish MAT governing boards or committees to discharge the functions of the individual academies. Trustees are not required to sit on these governing boards or committees and decision-making is limited. It is custom and practice (though not a statutory requirement) for the

trust to appoint the chairs of these governing boards/committees and ensure that two parents are elected to each.

The general functions of a governing board/committee of each academy is as follows.

- a) Build an understanding of how the academy is led and managed.
- b) Monitor whether the academy is
 - ⇒ working within the agreed policies;
 - ⇒ meeting the agreed targets; and
 - ⇒ managing its finances well.
- c) Engage with stakeholders.
- d) Be a point of consultation and representation.
- e) Report to the Trust.

Divisions of powers and responsibilities and establishing a system of checks and balances is critical to good trusteeship and governance in securing the efficient running of MATs. The United States of America would have been sunk with the present Trump executive running the country without the powers of the President being constrained by the Senate and the House of Representatives, a system devised by the founding fathers who anticipated that a time could come when such a system would be needed.

A scheme of accountability should be, according to the NGA, simple but systematic, “ensuring that members, trustees, governing boards/committees, the executive leadership and academy principal are clear about their roles and responsibilities, allowing everyone to get on with the business of improving outcomes for children and young people”.

The NGA has advised over two score of MATs of different sizes and at various stages of developing. It has constructed four models of governance. Sam Henson, the Head of Information at the NGA, said: “A good scheme of delegation ensures executive leadership is clear about which decisions are held by the trustee board and which aren’t. It promotes a culture of transparency and responsibility and helps us to avoid misunderstandings. Governance in groups of schools is complex and so these models demonstrate the underlying principles which determine the lines of accountability, so it is clear where certain decision making should lie.”

Sam Henson stated: “A good scheme of delegation ensures executive leadership is clear about which decisions are held by the trustee board and which aren’t. It promotes a culture of transparency and responsibility and helps to avoid misunderstandings.

If your MAT is in a structurally confused state, there could be merit in consulting the NGA and seeking help.

Glossary

ASCL	Association of School and College Leaders
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CPD	continuing professional development
COBIS	Council of British International Schools
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CST	Confederation of School Trusts
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
EEF	Education Endowment Fund
EHCPs	Education, Health and Care Plans
EIF	Education Inspection Framework
EPI	Education Policy Institute
FE	Further Education
FoI	Freedom of Information
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMC	Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
IfA	Institute for Apprenticeships
IFS	Institute of Fiscal Studies
ISC	International Schools Council
LAs	Local Authorities
MATs	Multi-Academy Trusts
NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NEU	National Education Union
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PA	Personal Assistant
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSHE	Personal Social and Health Education
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TAs	Teaching Assistants