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The lives of children and young people worldwide are inextricably linked to the quality of education they receive.

At the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), our mission is to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere and to support positive change in education.



Welcome to our 2019/20 impact review

It has been a busy and exciting time of growth for NFER, as we continue to contribute new insights, research and assessments to help improve education outcomes for young people all over the world.

This year, we have worked on 150 projects. Our focus has been on four of our key topics:

- Assessment
- Classroom practice
- Education to employment
- School workforce.

Changes in education

A significant change in the education to employment landscape is the introduction of the new T Level qualifications. Find out how we are bringing people together to discuss the purpose and impact of these new qualifications (page 13), and how we have added to the understanding of university technical colleges (UTCs) in 2019 through a two-year study.

Teacher workforce

NFER is leading the debate on school workforce and we were delighted to be able to contribute to the Department for Education's *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy*, published in January 2019.

Our influence in this area continued with the production of *Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2019*, our first such report (page 14), which generated significant engagement with key stakeholders and the media.

Around the world

Since 2016, NFER has had a renewed focus on its international development work (page 17), and has successfully completed a portfolio of projects around the world.

Thanks to the expertise and dedication of our staff, trustees and partners, NFER continues to be a leading provider of independent education research and insights, with a focus on supporting improvements in policy and practice. I am delighted to share this review with you, and hope you enjoy reading about what we have achieved over the last year in the UK and beyond.

Carole Willis
Chief Executive

92%
of our stakeholders who
had read our reports said
NFER research had an impact
on their organisation*

*NFER Annual Stakeholder Survey 2019



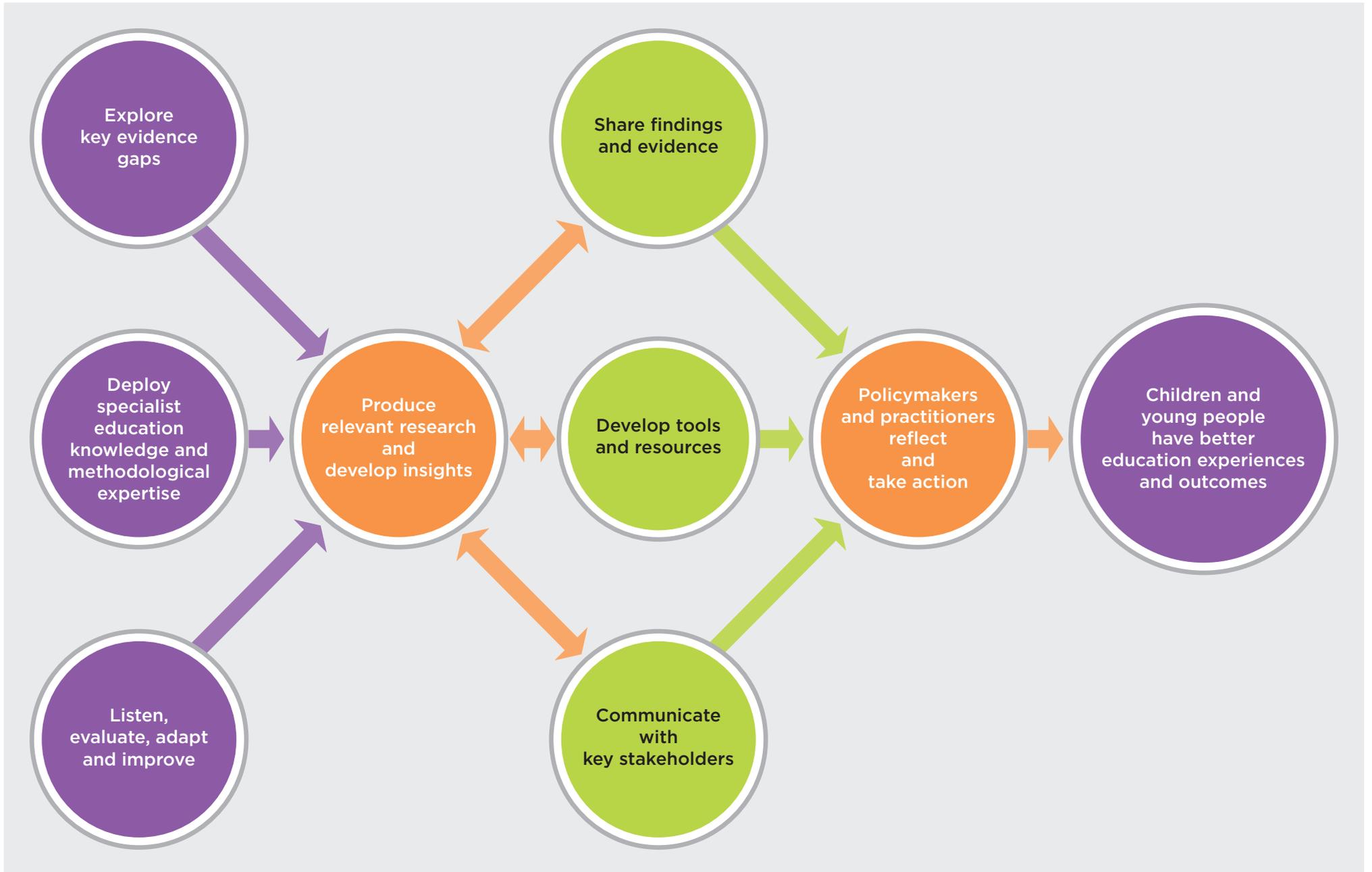
Our impact

At NFER, we use our influence as a leading independent provider of education research and insights to support outcomes for children and young people.

To achieve this, we focus our work where it can make the greatest difference, including on the key issues and challenges faced by schools, such as changes in the accountability system, enhancing classroom practice and strengthening teacher workforce.

We actively use the breadth and depth of our expertise to inform and influence policymakers and educators on the issues and potential solutions – always with the goal of improving education, not just in the UK, but worldwide.

Find out, on the opposite page, how we achieve impact through our work.



Sharing our research

Making sure our research gets into the hands of key decision-makers and influencers is a vital part of what we do. Throughout 2019, we diversified our network, increased the reach of our research and made a greater impact on the education sector.

Influence and engagement

Our staff continue to champion NFER research. Their influence at a range of events has had a significant impact on the education community.

Experts in the spotlight

From giving presentations to chairing conferences, NFER staff have either organised or contributed to over 80 events this year. We hosted a number of roundtables to bring together key influencers and inform their work.

National television

During a lively discussion on ITV's lunchtime chat show, *Loose Women*, Janet Street Porter quoted our *Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2019*. Given that the show has a viewership of more than 900,000, this ensured excellent media coverage for the report and the chance to engage with a diverse audience.

Webinars

We hosted a series of successful webinars during 2019, sharing our research and expertise with audiences around the world, and gaining international insights into our research. One of the most popular, hosted in partnership with the Teacher Development Trust, focused on teacher autonomy for senior leaders. The report was published in January 2020.

Social media

NFER uses social media to actively engage with key influencers, policymakers and MPs, as well as sharing our research with practitioners and others who are passionate about improving education. In 2019, our Twitter following grew by 20 per cent to nearly 23,000.

Festival of Education

NFER experts were key speakers and panellists at the 10th Annual Festival of Education at Wellington College. We also hosted a series of sessions about our current research projects, which were live-streamed on Twitter.



Research Manager Kiran Arora and Products Marketing Manager Heather Giggs at The Education Show in London



More than
850,000
views of our
website



More than
1 million
pupils in England
participated in
our research, assessment
trials and products



More than
75,000
downloads of our
free resources and
classroom materials



More than
22,700
Twitter followers
by the end of 2019:
up by
20%



More than
9,000
schools signed
up to the new
Reception Baseline
Assessment pilot



Nick Gibb 
@NickGibbUK

An interesting analysis by [@TheNFER](#) for [@EducEndowFoundn](#) of the use of research in schools. There is still much more to do to build on the EEF's excellent work in identifying and spreading effective practice, but there is plenty of reason for optimism: <https://t.co/KQVcZMN0VF?amp=1>

4 25 44

20 Aug 2019



Our network

Our mission is to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere and to support positive change across education systems.

To support our work and charitable aims, we are enhancing our relationships with a wide range of influential partners who help us deliver education impact. These include:

- national and international governments
- teacher and school and college leader membership bodies
- school networks
- professional bodies
- subject associations and institutes
- academy chains
- employer representative organisations
- non-governmental organisations
- development agencies
- education publications and media.

“The relevance of NFER’s work makes it one of the most important research organisations working in education.”

Pete Henshaw, Editor of SecEd and Headteacher Update Magazine

“NFER produces research that is genuinely useful for teachers and policymakers alike. We partnered with them on a project on school admissions, which gave us new and important insights into an issue that is fundamental to education equity.”

James Turner, Chief Executive, The Sutton Trust

“The Nuffield Foundation funds only research that is both rigorous and has the potential to have an impact on people’s lives through changes to policy or practice. NFER meets both these criteria, as evidenced by its work on understanding the teaching workforce, the influence of which can be seen in the government’s latest teaching strategy.”

Josh Hillman, Director of Education, The Nuffield Foundation



Research areas 2019/20

“We’ve worked with NFER over the years and know that if it’s developed by NFER, then it’s got credibility behind it. When considering assessments, others in the market didn’t seem as robust.”

Jeff Taylor, Headteacher,
Lander Road Primary School

Assessment

Our assessment research supports national and international education policy and implementation, ensuring that it is based on the latest evidence about what works and why.

With over 70 years’ experience in delivering high-quality and robust assessments, we know how important they are in improving a child’s learning.

This year, we greatly increased our reach and impact by expanding our range of clients, assessment materials and specialist services, while continuing to expand our work in international projects.

We also introduced new diagnostic guidance to our popular NFER assessments range, which directly helps teachers to monitor their pupils’ attainment and adapt their teaching approach.

We had more than 50,000 views of our NFER Assessment Hub pages in 2019.

In 2019, more than 1 million pupils in England participated in our research, assessment trials and products.

In Wales, NFER set up a number of supported marking events for the Numerical Reasoning Tests for Year 2 to Year 9. More than 500 teachers and practitioners from over 180 schools attended these sessions.

Reception Baseline Assessment

In September 2019, we piloted the new Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). The feedback from participating schools was fundamental in further strengthening the reliability, accuracy and validity of the RBA, which is due to be rolled out to all schools in 2020 and will focus on early mathematics, literacy, communication and language.

More than 9,000 schools signed up to participate in the RBA pilot.

National Reference Test

In 2017, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) introduced the National Reference Test (NRT), which is designed to give further evidence in support of establishing grade boundaries for GCSE English and mathematics in England.

For the third year in a row, we successfully delivered the NRT, working with 15,000 young people and giving Ofqual the evidence it needs to improve how it sets grade boundaries.

In 2019, we worked with 15,000 young people to deliver the NRT.

Classroom practice

We support classroom practice through our innovative resources and research. Our work is widely known and used by schools, helping children and young people to receive the best possible education.

Every year, NFER engages with thousands of teachers and school leaders to support improvements in teaching and assessment.

Assessment Hub

Our free Assessment Hub – which was visited over 50,000 times in 2019 – is designed to help teachers and practitioners feel confident in assessment knowledge and practice. The online hub features practical guides, articles, webinars, FAQs and more: www.nfer.ac.uk/assessment-hub

Teacher engagement

We carried out extensive research for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) report, *Teachers' engagement with research: what do we know? A research briefing*. Senior Research Managers Julie Nelson and Matt Walker wrote a blog to help engage a wider audience with the findings. They were also in demand to speak at events and host wider discussions on the topic.

NFER Classroom

Every year, our growing range of standardised assessments for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are used by thousands of schools. In 2019, we added Year 6 assessments to our range, which come with extensive diagnostic guidance to help teachers identify common misconceptions.

All schools using NFER Tests can access a free online analysis tool to provide valuable analyses in a few clicks, saving teachers' time.

There were more than 75,000 downloads of our free resources and classroom materials.

Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)

In September 2019, NFER and the Royal Statistical Society brought together leading figures in education to celebrate the centenary of the first recorded education RCT. Attended by over 100 people, the event offered an excellent opportunity to explore the future of RCTs in education.

The NFER Education Trials Unit works closely with EEF, the Nuffield Foundation and the Department for Education to evaluate different initiatives that use RCTs and inform classroom practice.

We evaluated the Families Connect programme and its impact on children's literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional outcomes. This initiative is run by Save the Children for families in disadvantaged areas. A full report will be published in 2020, in partnership with the Nuffield Foundation.



NFER and the Royal Statistical Society hosted an event to celebrate the centenary of the first recorded education RCT.



Education to employment

We believe in giving young people the best chance in their journey from education to employment.

NFER undertakes extensive research to inform the development of an education system that supports young people every step of the way.

Real-world learning

Senior Research Manager Tami McCrone presented her findings of a report on real-world learning (RWL) at a Department for Education policy seminar. The report, commissioned by the Edge Foundation, researched how two schools in England were taking an innovative approach to RWL.

The findings will inform the Edge Foundation's work on helping schools to share innovative approaches, bring relevance to the classroom and prepare the next generation of skilled professionals and leaders.

University technical colleges (UTCs)

At the beginning of 2019, we published the second phase of *The Evaluation of University Technical Colleges*, a two-year study commissioned by the Edge Foundation and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

The study, which evaluated the approach of UTCs to curriculum design and employer engagement, provided much-needed insights into how the UTC model is working.

NFER expert Jude Hillary was invited to speak on Talkradio about NFER research on UTCs.

T Levels

As schools and colleges across the country are getting ready to roll out T Levels in September 2020, it is now more important than ever that we understand the challenges and opportunities these new qualifications bring.

We have done extensive research on T Levels and their delivery. In June, we published a report that enabled evidence-based discussions within the Department for Education. We then published a further update report in December 2019, which gained international media attention.

This update helped to galvanise vital discussions between key stakeholders, and prompted an invitation to a parliamentary breakfast meeting in the House of Commons, due to be held in 2020.

“ NFER did a fantastic job in bringing together key stakeholders to explore T Level implementation at their roundtable. It was an interesting and valuable discussion around the progress, opportunities and remaining challenges. ”

Suzanne Hall, Head of Product: Technical and Professional, Pearson

Maddie Wheeler, NFER’s Director of Communications, was invited to discuss T Levels on the Matthew Wright show on Talkradio. This helped increase the visibility of our research and bring our insights to a broader audience.

Our T Levels research was cited in detail in a House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, *T Levels: Reforms to Technical Education*, in December 2019.

“The report by the National Foundation for Educational Research says there is still significant work to do to raise awareness and understanding of T-levels, and it urges policymakers to provide information to students at a much younger age, before GCSE choices are made.”

Sally Weale, Education Correspondent, the Guardian, December 2019

Warwick Sharp is Principal Private Secretary to the Education Secretary

Warwick Sharp
@WarwickSharp



Given the scale and pace of change these are encouraging findings @TheNFER



20 Jun 2019

School workforce

NFER is the leading voice in school workforce research. We have built a portfolio of insights and we regularly present our findings to key stakeholders and government departments, to help them make evidence-based decisions.

It is vital that we disseminate our research across the education sector, and our work this year has had a real impact on school workforce policy.

Teacher recruitment and retention

We have consistently called for greater attention to be given to teacher retention, as well as recruitment. Our previous research successfully informed the Department for Education's new Teacher Recruitment and Retention 2019 strategy, which echoes many of our suggested changes.

In February 2019, we responded to the DfE's strategy with our first annual report on the growing challenges in the teacher labour market in England. NFER's Chief Executive, Carole Willis, discussed the report's findings with Ben Bradley MP, a member of the Education Select Committee.

The report also offered groundbreaking evidence that job-related stress is higher among teachers than other professionals.

NFER featured in the Times, the Guardian, the Independent, TES and Schools Week, on Talkradio and LBC, with coverage as far as Colombia. Combined reach: 3 million.

The report was well received by teaching unions, including the National Education Union (NEU) and NAHT, and sparked discussions in the media and among key stakeholders. Influential blogger and chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable, Stephen Tierney, wrote a blog based on our key findings, sharing our research with his combined audience of 56,000 followers.

We also worked with the DfE to produce the *Teacher workload survey 2019*, which monitors teachers' working hours and perceptions of workload. The survey helps to inform policy on workload reduction initiatives.

leora cruddas
@LeoraCruddas



Important research here from
[@TheNFER](#) [@worth_jack](#)
[@jens_brande](#) [@caroline_sharp1](#)

One of a number of significant
workforce reports out recently
including [@Ambition-inst](#) report on
[#PeoplePower](#).

If we are to recruit and retain the
best teachers, we need a mind set
shift.



4

6



14 Jun 2019

Part-time and flexible working

One of the key issues for the education sector is flexible working. In June we published our report, *Part-time Teaching and Flexible Working in Secondary Schools*, which provided unique insights into the benefits of secondary school teachers working part-time and more flexibly, and how some schools have been making this work.

This influential report proved of great interest to policymakers and was cited in a question to the First Minister in the Welsh Assembly. Our Lead Economist Jack Worth was invited to attend a roundtable on flexible working, hosted by the Department for Education to help inform its policy plans.

To ensure wide coverage for the report, Jack and his team shared the findings at the Festival of Education, ResearchEd National Conference, Westminster Education Forum and Bradford Teacher Retention Summit.

We shared our report on flexible working with the BBC, which published an article based on our research. This was shared 200 times on Twitter and more than 2,000 times on Facebook, increasing the reach and engagement on this important issue.

“The Chartered College of Teaching welcomes NFER’s new report, highlighting the demand for flexible working and the importance of proactive leadership in enabling flexible approaches in secondary schools.”

Professor Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive,
Chartered College of Teaching

Lead Economist Jack Worth has been influential in leading debates on strengthening the teacher workforce.





NFER International

As an education research charity, we are aiming to increase our global impact. Since 2016, we have had a renewed focus on our international work, and have successfully completed a portfolio of projects around the world.

Over the past three years, we have been involved in a number of high-impact projects around the world, and have greatly expanded our network of global partners and stakeholders.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

On 3 December 2019, NFER was proud to present the UK results of PISA. Organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), PISA is the largest study of its kind, with around 600,000 15-year-olds from 79 countries taking part.

PISA 2018 was delivered in the UK by NFER on behalf of the Department for Education in England, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. This influential international study provides insights to inform and challenge policy.

NFER led the discussion on what the data reveals about education in the UK and how the results can be used to inform policy and debate, particularly around well-being. On the day of releasing our results, we secured more than 200 pieces of media coverage, which prompted multiple conversations about policy and practice within the education sector.

Teaching and Electronic Assessment Methodologies, Rwanda

In 2019, with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), we assisted the Rwanda Education Board (REB) to improve teaching and learning through the implementation and expansion of e-assessment.

Countries and regions in which we operate include Rwanda, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Pakistan and the Gulf.

BBC 5 Live Radio debate with Angela Donkin (audience: 2 million).

ITV News Wales interview with Jane Nicholas (audience: 1.2 million).

The Welsh Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams AM, cited NFER's findings.

Evaluation of a School Inspections and Improvement programme, Uganda

We are conducting an independent evaluation of a School Inspections and Improvement programme in Eastern Uganda, run by Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS), a non-governmental organisation. Our evaluation will help to better understand how the one-year pilot programme has improved management and leadership in ten government-run secondary schools.

“ NFER’s baseline evaluation provided PEAS with high-quality information that we shared with partners, and gave us additional evidence that our intervention is well designed. NFER has been consistently professional and taken a keen interest in understanding our project as a partner, and they have been open to adapting their evaluation approach to changes in the project delivery plan.”

Libby Hills, Chief Technical Officer, PEAS



Other key areas in 2019/20

Accountability

The Ofsted effect

Early in 2019, Ofsted launched a consultation on the new Education Inspection Framework proposals. We published an official response on curriculum narrowing, which highlighted our findings from a recent Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey and was picked up by numerous media channels, including Schools Week.

Ofsted seminar

In March, Liz Twist was invited to speak at an Ofsted seminar in Hertfordshire. Her presentation, *Tell me what you don't know - mistakes as learning opportunities*, was heard by nearly 100 headteachers and senior leaders, including Daniel Mujs, Director of Research at Ofsted.

NAHT School Improvement Commission

In September 2019, Carole Willis and NFER researchers joined the NAHT School Improvement Commission for a series of five roundtables, to discuss how to help improve schools in England.

NAHT also used NFER research and evidence in its report, published in October: *Principles of Effective School-to-School Peer Review*.

Progress 8

Chief Social Scientist, Angela Donkin, was a key presenter at the third Adapting to Progress and Attainment 8 in School Forum in March. Her presentation helped to raise awareness about more needing to be done in secondary schools to stop a widening inequality gap.

“NFER provides an invaluable independent voice to the education sector. The quality and relevance of its evidence, insights and commentary makes a crucial contribution to improving education.”

Nick Brook, Deputy General Secretary, NAHT

School funding

In April 2019, Anne Main MP cited an article by Chief Social Scientist, Angela Donkin, at the EU Home Affairs Committee. Angela's article, written for TES, focused on schools' need for funding stability.

Angela was also asked to be a panellist on a discussion about school funding at the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham. Attended by over 4,000 people, the show offered a superb opportunity to increase the visibility of our research and strengthen our position as the leading voice in education research.

Social mobility

This year, the Sutton Trust published new research that included work by NFER analysts. The research, which looked at high-performing state schools to establish how socially representative they are, gained national media coverage and was featured on ITV News.

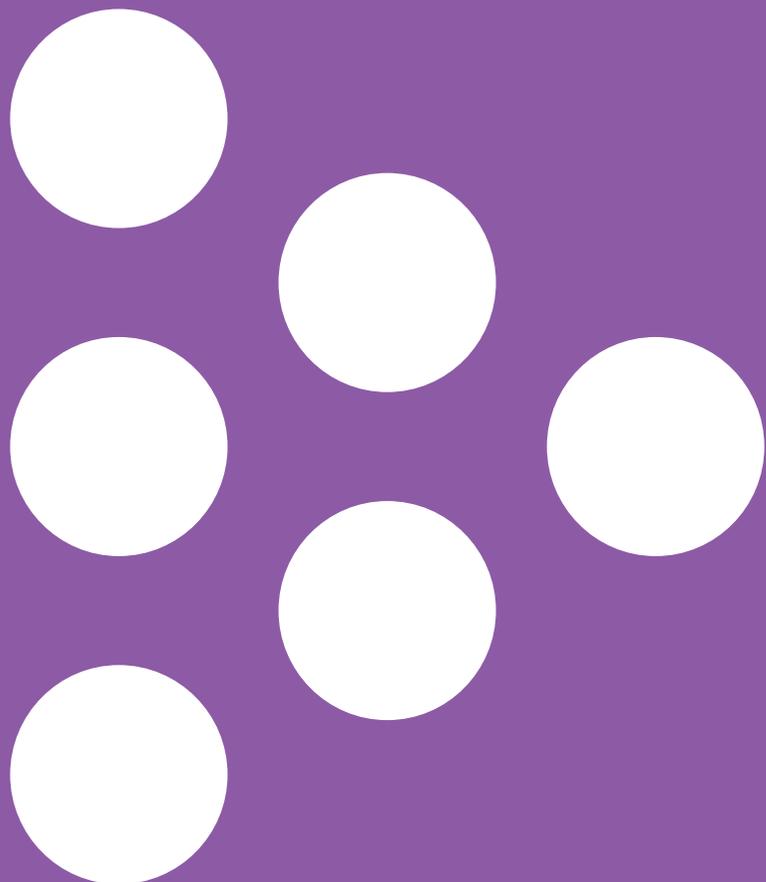
In July, Research Director Caroline Sharp excelled in her role as chair and presenter at the National Pupil Premium Conference. The conference, which was hosted in London by the Royal Society of Physicians, focused on promoting social mobility in primary schools.

Systems and structures

In a heated debate about free schools in the House of Commons, Melanie Onn MP stood up and cited our research. Her quote was drawn from the report NFER produced in partnership with the Sutton Trust about free schools.

In August, Jude Hillary, Head of Policy and Practice: Research Development, was invited to speak on BBC Radio 4's Today programme to discuss the report, *Free for all? Analysing free schools in England*.





Learn more about NFER

If you would like to know more about our research, our resources and our services, or about partnering with us in our work, please get in touch:

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