



HEAD KID

Books by David Baddiel

ANIMALCOLM

BIRTHDAY BOY

HEAD KID

THE PARENT AGENCY

THE PERSON CONTROLLER



HEAD KID

DAVID
BADDIEL

Illustrated by Steven Lenton



HarperCollins *Children's Books*

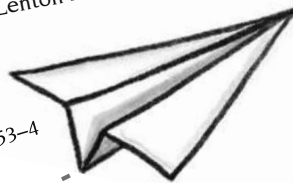
First published in Great Britain by
HarperCollins Children's Books in 2018
HarperCollins Children's Books is a division of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd,
HarperCollins Publishers
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

The HarperCollins website address is
www.harpercollins.co.uk

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HARDBACK ISBN 978-0-00-820052-7

TRADE PAPERBACK ISBN 978-0-00-820053-4



David Baddiel and Steven Lenton assert the moral right to be
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Typeset in ITC Novarese point 12/22
Printed and bound in England by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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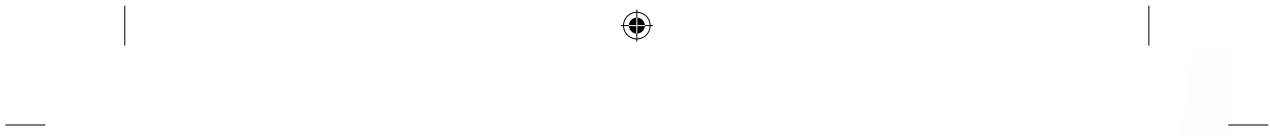


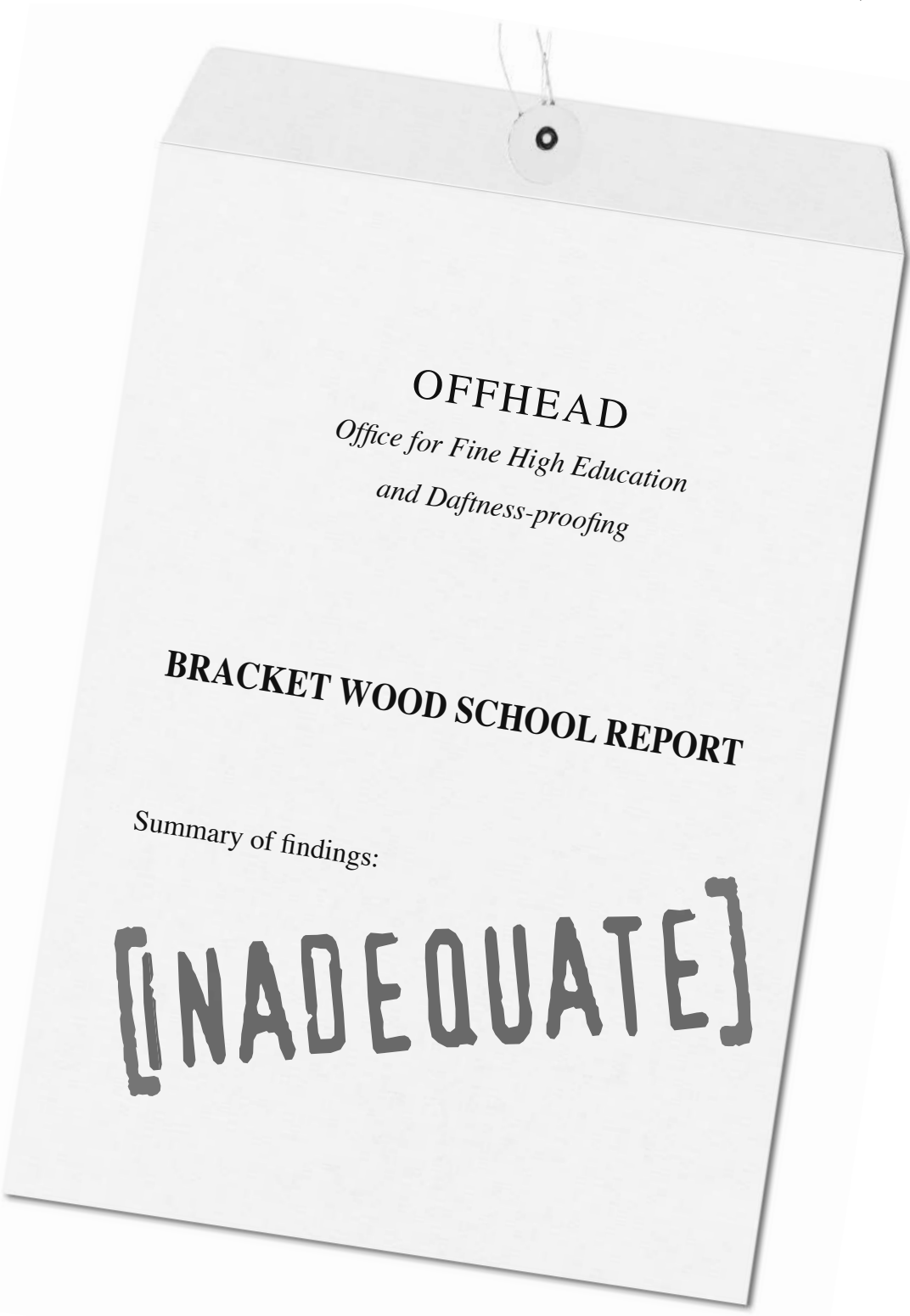
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To Enzo, for the idea





OFFHEAD

*Office for Fine High Education
and Daftness-proofing*

BRACKET WOOD SCHOOL REPORT

Summary of findings:

[INADEQUATE]





Detailed findings:

TEACHING: Poor (especially Mr Barrington).

FACILITIES: Not good.

FOOD: Inedible.

STAFF MORALE: Low.

EXAM SUCCESS: Please don't ask.

TOILETS: Appalling.

RANKING AND RECOMMENDATIONS: See overleaf.





CHAPTER 1



Bracket Wood School had never, since it was opened all the way back in 1983, received an OFFHEAD ranking of Outstanding. Nor had it received one of Good. There was a very brief golden period, in the early 90s, when it received one of Satisfactory. But then that was found to have been a mistake – the inspector had ticked the wrong box, for which he himself got marked down to Not As Good As We Thought – and it went back

to its usual ranking: Inadequate.

It was, in fact, a running joke in the OFFHEAD offices – not a place where you’d have thought there’d be much joking, but at least on the subject of Bracket Wood you’d be wrong – that one day they might have to create a new ranking for this particular school: Rubbish.

This was a problem for Bracket Wood because OFFHEAD, as I’m sure you all know, is a government organisation which checks that schools *aren’t* rubbish. Parents, as you also might know, pay a lot of attention to their reports. Some parents, in fact, spend far too much of their time reading OFFHEAD reports, and discussing them with their friends who are also parents, and worrying all the time about which school to send their children to, based on OFFHEAD reports. Some parents worry about this so much they ruin their child’s childhood. But that’s another story.

This story begins with the staff and governors and parents and even some of the pupils at Bracket Wood in something of a panic. Because OFFHEAD was coming. In a month's time. Which was even more worrying than usual. For two reasons:

1. Bracket Wood Council, Education Department, had announced, on hearing that OFFHEAD was coming again, that if the school got another Inadequate rating it might be time to think about closing the place down, and . . .
2. Ryan Ward.

CHAPTER 2

A Prince Among Pranksters



“Right, Six B!” said Mr Barrington, moving the TV monitor into place on top of his desk. “It’s good news. Today we are going to watch a TV For Schools documentary.”

A groan went up from the class.

“Stop groaning!” said Mr Barrington.

Another groan went up from the class.

“I said, stop groaning. I didn’t say groan again.”

“Is it *A World Without Lead?*” said Barry Bennett.

“No. Although that *was* very good,” said Mr Barrington, putting the DVD into the player. “Especially the bit showing what a problem that would be for cable sheathing.”

“Not that one about dust! Please!” said Sam Green.

“*It Gets Everywhere!* you mean? I’ll have you know that won a DAFTA!”

“Do you mean a BAFTA?”

“No, it’s an award from the Dust And Filth Trackers Association.”

“Please not *A Shepherd’s World* . . .”

“Just be quiet and turn the lights off, Malcolm Bailey – and don’t tell me you didn’t love the twenty minutes in that documentary about how various types of grass taste to a sheep.”

Malcolm shook his head quite certainly – as if he really knew about *that* – and turned off the light. A menu appeared on the screen. It showed a large

metal bucket. And the words: “*How Buckets Are Made*”.

“What’s this one about, sir?” said Morris Fawcett, the head teacher’s son, who frankly had little hope of following in his father’s footsteps academically.

“Well, Morris, I’m glad you asked me that. It’s about how— Hold on, are you being sarcastic?”

“I wish he was,” said his twin sister Isla wearily.

“Hmm,” said Mr Barrington, pressing *Play*. “Just watch. It’s very interesting.”

With that, he went and sat – as he always did after putting boring documentaries on for 6B to watch – on his chair behind the TV, pushed his enormous glasses up on his forehead and fell asleep.

At which point, Ryan Ward, who had been sitting at the back quietly, knew it was time to make his move.

“What are you writing?” whispered Ellie Stone. She was one of six pupils gathered in a circle round

Mr Barrington's right hand. The reason this circle had gathered was that Mr Barrington's right hand was lying loosely by his side. His head was lolling on his chest and he was snoring gently into his moustache. A tiny bit of dribble, originating from the left-hand corner of 6B's teacher's mouth, had made its way down to the top of his chin. And crouching by his right hand was Ryan Ward, brandishing an eyeliner pencil.

"You'll see . . ." said Ryan, whispering back.



“And so the sheet metal is curved round the frame of the bucket . . .” said the television, not whispering.

Very carefully, and making sure he did it gently enough not to wake his teacher, he began to write.

“That’s clever,” said Sam. “You’re doing mirror writing.”

“I am,” said Ryan. He carried on writing with great concentration. Because this was, of course, a prank. And Ryan, the naughtiest boy at Bracket Wood, prided himself on his pranks. He was a philosopher-prince amongst pranksters. Not for him the bucket of water on the top of the door, or the fifty pizzas delivered to your house that you haven’t ordered. He was a prankster whose motto was *Make it new*. Even if he was using an old trick – such as one you might play on a sleeping teacher – Ryan would have to do it in his own way. The devil, some people say, is in the detail, and certainly this particular devil always made sure he got *all* the details right for *all* his tricks.

“It’s important, at this stage, to make sure that the bottom of the bucket does not have a hole in it. Even if later – ha-ha! – you might want to sing a song about that!”

Ryan put the eyeliner pencil down.

“OK,” he said – still whispering – to his little audience. “Now for the kicker.”

He reached into his school bag and brought out a little plastic box. Inside, munching on a piece of lettuce, was an ant. He put his index finger inside the box and let the ant crawl on to it. Then, watched by the entranced circle of schoolmates, he carefully raised that finger towards Mr Barrington’s forehead, to just above his pushed-up glasses. The ant looked up, twitched its tiny antennae and began to make its way down his finger.

“Using this process, a workshop can make up to fifteen buckets a day.”

“Hang on,” said a voice. “Are you doing what I think you’re doing . . . ?”