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SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

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MANIFESTOS: WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT SCHOOLS

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Exam overhauls 'force' Cambridge to plan entry tests

- University consults on bringing back own entrance test after 29 years
- 'What I hear is a lot more work for me. It makes me really frustrated'

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Exclusive

The University of Cambridge is gathering views on plans to bring back entrance tests – 29 years after abandoning them.

If the proposal goes ahead, all school pupils applying to the university would need to sit the test.

Documents presented at a senior tutors' committee (STC) in March, seen by *Schools Week*, state that the university is "being forced" into changing its "well-trying system" of using AS-levels to assess which applicants get invited for interview.

The paper says that GCSEs "will not give us a reliable measure" due to their ongoing reform and

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Debra Kidd: If I were education secretary ...

“ I would consider what teachers need to do their job well

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NEWS**Cambridge rethinks admissions process**

JOHN DICKENS
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CONTINUED
FROM FRONT

that "schools' predictions of grades will be next to useless".

University departments have now been asked for their views on a "main proposal" to reintroduce tests from the 2016-17 admissions round.

When contacted by *Schools Week*, the university sought to distance itself from any suggestion these were firm plans.

Mike Sewell, director of admissions for the Cambridge colleges, said in a statement: "In the light of the recent A-level reforms, the university is in the process of considering all options available so that we may continue meeting our goal of admitting the best and brightest students from all backgrounds."

Other options are believed to include increasing its standard offer grades or upping the significance of interviews.

But he added: "We are clear that the best way of achieving this is for the government to retain public examinations at the end of year 12."

Mr Sewell sent a letter to schools and sixth forms in November "strongly" urging them to continue entering students for AS-level exams. However documents seen by *Schools Week* state that the reformed AS-levels will be "of very limited use" under the current admissions process.

At present, the university uses unified mark scheme (UMS) scores calculated from students' performance in their AS-levels to decide which applicants are invited to interview.

But under coalition reforms planned to "toughen up" the qualifications, AS exams will be optional for cohorts starting this September and scores will no longer contribute to the overall A-level.

The Cambridge proposals says this leaves



Photo: Mario Sánchez Prada - <http://bit.ly/1J4mYL3> via freeforcommercialuse.org



them without an effective mechanism for comparing applicants.

The Labour party has pledged to halt the changes and retain AS-levels.

The university refused to respond when asked by *Schools Week* if it would drop the proposals should Labour get into power.

Oxford University already uses subject-specific aptitude tests. Most of its admission tests are organised by the Admissions Testing Service.

A spokeswoman for the university said it has tests for virtually all its subjects so would not be affected by the A-level reforms

The disclosure has been met with concern by school leaders.

Eddie Playfair (pictured), principal of Newham Sixth Form College, London, said more entrance tests could give bigger college providers, who have more resources, an advantage over school sixth forms.

"There's a danger students in smaller sixth forms don't have the same resources and might lose out. It could be one more barrier in the way."

He also suggested that other universities may face the same problem. "The question now, is who will follow?"

"If this is a trend, then we could end up with all types of different exams with different criteria. It starts to undermine A-levels as a university entrance requirement."

Sarah Elgie, an English teacher at Heathcote School, in Chingford, London, who works with more able students added: "I teach a huge amount of exam prep as it is. When I hear this, what I hear is a lot more work for me.

"It makes me really frustrated, but I understand it and I expect other universities will have to do this if they don't have a common marker."

The proposed test would be free for schools and would be based on the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA), designed and administered by the Admissions Testing Service.

According to its website, it is part of Cambridge English Language Assessment, a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge.

A paper circulating among university departments, and seen by *Schools Week*, reveals trial data suggesting that if TSA had been used in the admission rounds for the past two years then 7 per cent of successful applicants would not have been called for interview.

That equates to about 210 current students, the equivalent of an entire year group in a large state school.

Childcare pledge will 'force providers to close'

The Conservative party's intention to double free childcare for three and four-year-olds will have a negative impact on the capacity, quality and diversity of early years' settings, including those based in schools, says one provider.

Sue Cowley, who runs a voluntary pre-school, believes that David Cameron's pledge of £350m this week to extend free childcare to 30 hours a week for working families will push providers' costs up and force some to close.

The amount early years' providers get in funding for free places has not gone up in seven years, with providers in Ms Cowley's area of Somerset getting "roughly £3.50" an hour per child from local authorities.

"This has just not been thought through," she said. "There is a gap between the amount we get from government and the actual cost to us of providing the places. The main problem is that the overheads have gone up in the past few years."

Pre-schools are currently using funds from parents who pay for provision to offset the

cost of providing "free" places funded at the lower government rate, Ms Crowley says.

"This is a problem for settings and staff because at the moment if we are going to have to offer 30 hours at this [government] funded rate, then it means we will get less money in from unfunded places, so we can't top up our income.

"Businesses are being asked to provide a service at less than it will cost. I think what would happen is that settings like ours will end up closing."

Large chains of providers with more staff and capacity "would be the only way to make this work", she said, but this would not enable a personalised local service.

Last year the government said school-led nurseries were at the heart of its plans, and encouraged schools to consider teaming up with private, voluntary and independent nurseries.

But Ms Cowley said schools were already running into problems with delivering free childcare places for two-year-olds, which had

been extended by the coalition.

An evaluation published in January of early years' provision for this age group, carried out for the Department for Education, found that of 47 projects, 14 would only become sustainable after a few years and nine did not expect to become sustainable.

A spokesperson for the Conservative party told *Schools Week*: "Payments vary between areas and different types of providers. At present the average that central government pays to local authorities per hour is £4.50.

"But we know the amount local authorities take from this varies, which is why we now publish an annual benchmarking tool that lists every council's funding and how much they pass on. This gives greater transparency to parents.

"A Conservative government will start building capacity in the sector from this year, including capital funding for new nursery provision in schools. We will also consult on the right level of hourly funding rates paid to providers in different parts of the country."

NEWS

UTC shuts, just as Cameron promises 'one in every city'

LAURA MCINERNEY AND REBECCA COONEY
@SCHOOLSWEET

When David Cameron launched his party's manifesto at Swindon's University Technical College (UTC) on Tuesday, he claimed that he wanted to see similar institutions opening in "every city". That evening, governors of a flagship UTC announced their decision to close it.

Facing low student numbers, financial challenges and a "disappointing Ofsted", the Black Country UTC, sponsored by the University of Wolverhampton and Walsall College, will close on August 31.

Black Country UTC principal Paul Averis (pictured) said: "This has been a difficult decision for all concerned."

Of the Black Country UTC's 158 learners, 57 were due to complete their studies before closure while the rest would be "supported to move to an alternative provision", a Walsall College spokesperson said.

He added that the UTC would "work closely" with the Department for Education, Walsall College and other local education institutions "to ensure a smooth transition" for learners.

Of the 30 UTCs opened since 2010, Black Country is the second to announce closure. Hackney UTC will also close at the end of the school year.

The colleges, a type of free school with a university sponsor and a "vocational" focus, admit learners from year 10 to 13 and aim to offer a route into employment or higher education within a particular industry.

Fifteen more are due to open in 2016 and a further five in 2017.

However, many have struggled to

recruit learners, with five of the 17 opened in 2013 recording pupil numbers more than 80 per cent below expectation.

Black Country UTC had about one-third of its expected pupil numbers every year since opening in 2012. Figures for this year have not been published.

UTCs have also fared badly in Ofsted inspections with three of the five inspected labelled as "requires improvement" or "inadequate". None has achieved an "outstanding".

In a further blow to UTCs, the Conservative manifesto has pledged that schools "refusing" to offer a specific set of academic subjects – English, maths, science, a language and history or geography – will not be able to achieve the top Ofsted rating.

Schools Week analysis of UTC curriculum as advertised on their websites or prospectuses found that one in three did not appear to offer these subjects. Six did not offer any humanities at GCSE and six did not offer any foreign language study.

The Baker Dearing Educational Trust, which oversees UTCs, said it supported the decision to close Black Country, although it did so with "regret".

On the curriculum changes, a statement from the trust said that it expected some GCSEs to remain optional rather than compulsory at the colleges. It also defended the low student numbers, stating that it expected these to rise.

"The technical education pathway offered by UTCs is wholly new to the English school system and we expect it will take time for UTCs to reach their maximum capacity. Other UTCs in cities such as Liverpool



COMPARING THE UTCs

| SCHOOL | OFFERS ALL EBACC SUBJECTS |
|--|---------------------------|
| 2010 | |
| JCB ACADEMY | Y |
| 2011 | |
| BLACK COUNTRY UTC - DUE TOA CLOSE | Y |
| 2012 | |
| ASTON UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING ACADEMY | Y |
| HACKNEY UTC - DUE TO CLOSE | Y |
| UTC CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE | N |
| 2013 | |
| BRISTOL TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING ACADEMY | Y |
| BUCKINGHAMSHIRE UTC | Y |
| VISIONS LEARNING TRUST, BURNLEY | N |
| DAVENTRY UTC | Y |
| ELSTREE UTC | N |
| LIVERPOOL LIFE SCIENCES UTC | Y |
| PLYMOUTH UTC | N |
| READING UTC | Y |
| ROYAL GREENWICH UTC | Y |
| SHEFFIELD UTC | N |
| SILVERSTONE UTC | N |
| WIGAN UTC | (16-19) |
| 2014 | |
| ELUTEC | N |
| NORFOLK UTC | Y |
| THE GM | N |
| HEATHROW AVIATION ENGINEERING UTC | Y |
| THE LEIGH UTC | Y |
| ENERGY COAST UTC | Y |
| LINCOLN UTC | Y |
| SIR CHARLES KAO UTC | Y |
| TOTTENHAM UTC | N |
| CAMBRIDGE UTC | Y |
| SWINDON UTC | Y |
| WATFORD UTC | Y |
| WMG ACADEMY | Y |

or Sheffield are proving they can attract large numbers of students.

"Most young people don't change school at 14 but, for those that know where their interests lie, a UTC gives them a really good

start with their technical education and a great connection to the world of work. Ninety per cent of UTC students surveyed last year told us they were glad to have made the switch."

Parents question inspectors' special needs training

ANN MCGAURAN
@ANNMCGAURAN

A parent of two deaf children is angry about Ofsted's refusal to tell him if two inspection teams who separately assessed a Berkshire school for deaf children in January and October last year had specialist training.

Mary Hare School in Newbury was deemed to be outstanding by Ofsted in January 2014, but a second inspection nine months later found it required improvement. A monitoring visit in February found that senior leaders and governors were not taking action to tackle areas requiring improvement.

Matt Keer is one of a group of parents who submitted a complaint to Ofsted in January about their concerns that none of the inspectors had "the qualifications, experience and expertise necessary to inspect deaf educational provision properly".

To ascertain the qualifications of inspectors, Mr Keer asked Ofsted for the content and format of special educational needs training undertaken by inspectors.

The education watchdog said that

additional inspectors (AIs) of special schools received an "initial day of enhanced training", reviewed to take into account changes to the SEND code of practice. They also attended an extra training day each year focusing on national developments in SEND.

Mr Keer then asked whether any member of the teams that inspected Mary Hare had "not completed the enhanced training programme for inspecting SEND provision" by the time they carried out the inspections.

Ofsted said that while it did hold the information, it would not release it "as it was the personal information of the HMI and the additional inspectors (AIs)".

Responding, Mr Keer said: "This 'enhanced training programme' is pretty unimpressive. For one thing, it's just two days. What it doesn't do – at all – is give inspectors a grounding in specific types of SEN."

Inspection experience was "not enough", he added. "Ofsted's inspectors need the right qualifications, front-line experience and skills if they are to inspect deaf education provision properly." They should have a specialist teaching for the deaf qualification, he

said.

An Ofsted spokesperson said teams that inspected special schools had "considerable experience of inspecting special education, including provision for sensory impairment".

She added: "While there is no legal requirement that an inspector of schools for the deaf should hold a teacher of the deaf qualification, all inspectors are required to hold qualified teacher status. In addition, inspections of special schools are carried out

by inspectors who have completed enhanced training in the inspection for special education needs and disabilities. We are confident that this provides the appropriate level of expertise in these cases."

Ian Noon, head of policy and research at the National Deaf Children's Society,



Parent, Matt Keer

said it shared the view that inspections of special schools for deaf children should be carried out by experts.

"It is vital that the inspectors should be able to communicate with all pupils. Parents of deaf children need to have confidence in Ofsted inspections... urgent action is needed to address this."

NEWS

It's not what you play, it's how long you do it for. . .

ANN MCGAURAN
@ANNMCGAURAN

Children who play computer games for more than three hours a day are more likely to be hyperactive, not interested in school and get involved in fights, suggests a new study.

University of Oxford researchers looked at the effects of different types of games – and the time spent playing them – on social and academic behaviour.

They found that the time playing games could be linked with problem behaviour, but that there was no link between violent games and real-life aggression or a child's academic performance.

The researchers relied on teachers' assessments of behaviour of 12 and 13-year-olds at a school in the southeast of England. Teachers reported whether the 200 pupils in the study group were helpful, their academic achievements, and whether they were rowdy or likely to get into fights.

These assessments were matched with the responses to a questionnaire that asked each of the pupils how long they played games each day, and the type of games they preferred.

The study found that no game features could be linked with any negative patterns of behaviour, but that children who played video games with a cooperative and competitive element had significantly fewer emotional problems or problems with peers.

Children who chose to play solitary games were found to do well academically and not to get involved in fights.

The paper, *How the Quantity and Quality of Electronic Gaming Relates to Adolescents Academic Engagement and Psychosocial Adjustment*, is published in the journal, *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*.

Lead author Dr Andy Przybylski, from the University of Oxford Internet Institute, said: "We can see links between some types of games and children's behaviour, as well as time spent playing. However, we cannot say that game play causes good or bad behaviour.

"We also know that the risks attached to game-playing are small. A range of other factors in a child's life will influence their behaviour more, as this research suggests that playing electronic games may be a statistically significant but minor factor in how children progress academically or on their emotional wellbeing."

Co-author Allison Mishkin said: "These results highlight that playing video games may just be another style of play that children engage with in the digital age, with the benefits felt from the act of playing rather than the medium itself being the significant factor."

POORLY PERFORMING TRUST MAKES TOP 100 LIST

ANN MCGAURAN
@ANNMCGAURAN

An academy trust under fire from Ofsted for poor performance has emerged as the highest ranked schools group on a list comparing the growth of social enterprises in youth and education.

The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) was ranked as number 16 for growth in the youth and education sector of the RBS SE100, a list designed to benchmark the performance of social enterprises amongst their peers.

Last year Ofsted carried out a focused inspection of six TKAT primary academies, with telephone conversations with the headteachers of a further 12 academies. It concluded that an "overwhelming proportion" of pupils attending one of the academies were not receiving a good education.

Social enterprises wishing to be included in the RBS SE100 growth rankings submit financial information, including year-on-year changes in turnover, profit and loss, and income streams.

Those wishing to take part in a separate "impact index" also complete a questionnaire. Information requested includes whether the enterprise has a way of measuring the relative social value of its activities and the number of women on its boards. The impact index ranks organisations according to an impact measurement score out of 10.

The project manager for RBS SE100, Alyce Biddle, said TKAT had not yet filled out an impact

HOW KEMNAL RANKS ON RBS SE100 INDEX

| RANK | ORGANISATION | REGION |
|------|--|---------------|
| 1 | WORTH-IT PROJECTS | EAST MIDLANDS |
| 2 | THE BIDGLEY POWER FOUNDATION | WEST MIDLANDS |
| 3 | MANCHESTER ACTIVE VOICES YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME | NORTH WEST |
| 4 | PROJECT MOTORHOUSE | SOUTH EAST |
| 5 | CHALLENGER TROOP COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY | SOUTH EAST |
| 6 | THE BRILLIANT CLUB | LONDON |
| 7 | REALITY BYTES UK | LONDON |
| 8 | CARING MINDS | SOUTH WEST |
| 9 | ENABLING ENTERPRISE | LONDON |
| 10 | BEYOND YOUTH | SOUTHEAST |
| ... | | |
| 16 | KEMNAL ACADEMIES TRUST | LONDON |

questionnaire and that the growth index was calculated "purely on an organisation's financial growth and turnover and is just a percentage growth or shrinkage in turnover year on year".

The top youth and education social enterprise for growth was Worth-it Projects, a social enterprise that provides continuous professional development (CPD) and training to professionals who work in schools with students at risk of mental health problems. The enterprise works with schools in the East Midlands and the north of England. It received a ranking of three out of 10 on the impact index.

Its chief executive, Liz Robson, told *Schools Week* she was "really pleased" with the growth ranking. "We pride ourselves on being a social enterprise that helps people learn and develop new skills to improve mental wellbeing. Schools can make a big difference to mental wellbeing if they know how."

She said the Worth-it Projects had secured investment from the Unlimited Awards, a social enterprise that helps other companies grow.

Enabling Enterprise supports schools in delivering a core enterprise curriculum, and works with pupils from age 5 to 18. It came out as number nine on the growth index and received the maximum impact rating of 10 out of 10.

Managing director Tom Ravenscroft (pictured) said that being involved in the index had been a positive exercise.

"It's quite helpful to try to benchmark yourself on how you are doing. It's useful to know if you are reaching scale as soon as you could be.

"We take the impact of our work very seriously. Trying to gauge how we are doing compared to others was another motivation, as it can be hard to work out how you are doing as a smaller social enterprise."

TKAT said it was unable to respond in time for publication on why it had opted to be assessed for the index.

FREE SCHOOL PULLS THE PLUG AS SITE SEARCH FAILS

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

A "chaotic" search for free school sites in a north London borough has ended with a proposed school for 700 pupils folding and another forced to delay opening for a year.

Gateway Academy and Gladstone School were both supposed to open in Brent in September last year, but both have struggled to find suitable sites – a situation that local campaigners and politicians call "chaotic" and a "shambles".

Gateway, which planned to educate 700 11 to 18-year-olds, decided to fold rather than defer for a second year and raise the hopes of parents only "to see the school deferred again".

Gladstone now hopes to welcome its first pupils on a temporary site in September 2016.

Johnny Kyriacou, headteacher-designate

at Gateway, said in a statement: "There are a number of challenges to securing a building in Brent and that includes rising land prices and competition against developers for all available land, which means the Department for Education (DfE) is not able to compete financially. That is not to say it is impossible but it seems very unlikely."

He said significant bids for land from the Education Funding Agency were turned down, including a property developer pulling out at the last minute.

"The trustees felt that to go on for another year and campaign to recruit students without a building would not be in the best interests of the local community," he said.

Paul Phillips was appointed Gladstone's principal-designate in January 2014. The job was advertised with a salary of between £78,000 and £88,000. His LinkedIn profile shows he is also a specialist leader of education at the Academies Enterprise Trust.

Gateway employed Mr Kyriacou and a deputy head.

Attempts by campaigners to find out how much has been spent at both schools – before a pupil has walked through the doors – have proved fruitless.

In response to a Freedom of Information

request on the costs, the DfE said it did not hold the information "prior to deferral". It said that it did publish the amount of money spent by free schools before opening, but only after they had actually opened.

New secondary free schools get a pre-opening grant of £300,000 to cover costs, including staff salaries. When a project is cancelled, the unspent funds are returned to the DfE.

Additional cash can also be given to deferred schools on a case-by-case basis, but the DfE does not publish the information.

One free school that did open in Brent in 2014 was Katharine Birbalsingh's Michaela Community School, originally planned for south London. The school moved into a building in Wembley Park in September after the DfE couldn't find a site in Wandsworth.

Local teaching unions questioned the need for another secondary school when the borough faces a shortage of primary places.

The pressure to find suitable sites in the borough has now stepped up after the DfE's approval last September for One Degree Academy, which aims to provide 420 primary and 300 secondary places. The DfE continues to work with both One Degree and Gladstone on securing sites.



SCHOOLS WEEK

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ELECTION

ELECTION 2015: WHAT THE PARTIES S

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

In the first of a series of spreads on the election campaign, Freddie Whittaker reports from the manifesto launches of Labour, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. See schoolsweek.co.uk for full lists of the parties' education policies, and stay tuned for our general election supplement, out with edition 26 next week

CHILD CARE, CAREERS ADVICE, WORK EXPERIENCE

If childcare dominates the line-up on the political racetrack, it's Labour that fired the starting gun.

From a mere one-sentence mention in its education manifesto last week, Labour this week brought back the issue of wraparound childcare for primary pupils.

The initial proposal to reintroduce what was once called the "extended schools programme" was largely ignored during the education manifesto launch in favour of headlines about Labour's plan to offer face-to-face careers advice to all pupils from age 11.

But the extended schools policy was upgraded in Labour's full manifesto document – and suddenly the world began to notice.

Alan Dyson, professor of education at the Centre for Equity in Education at Manchester Institute of Education, was quick to point out that the new plan, which gives a "legal guarantee" of wraparound school childcare for all primary pupils between 8am and 6pm, fell short of its predecessor, which included secondary pupils.

Professor Dyson reviewed the extended schools scheme in 2010 before its demise and told *Schools Week* that the last Labour government's policy was a "bold attempt to rethink the role schools could play in the lives of children and their families". He said it was "one of the most ambitious attempts anywhere in the world" to do so.

He described the coalition's "failure" to build on Labour's work in this area as a missed opportunity but added: "The childcare proposal in the [new]

Labour manifesto is, as I understand it, much more limited."

The plan would also rely on volunteers and parental payment. Speaking on BBC's *Newsnight*, shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt admitted that volunteers – "all kinds of people" and not just qualified teachers – would be needed. All would be police-checked.

On careers advice, the Labour said it would reintroduce face-to-face advice for every child.

Mr Hunt told the BBC's *Today* programme: "The adviser gets to know you, crucially, rather than having a sort of slightly unfocused conversation with whichever teacher has been allocated careers advice that year. You have a dedicated professional who



knows what they are doing."

Labour initially proposed to divert £50m from the universities access and outreach budget to pay 1,000 trained careers advisers, each working with a cluster of two or three schools.

The policy prompted questions as to whether every pupil in every secondary school in England would be able to benefit from the work of just 1,000 advisers working in such small clusters.

But after being pushed by *Schools Week*, Labour has clarified that the number may exceed 1,000 and that more than three schools could form a cluster.

A spokesperson explained that the party was not yet putting specific numbers to the policy, but confirmed that clusters would use local advisers "at their discretion" and would have to ensure all pupils benefited from face-to-face advice.

The party has also pointed to a 2014 report by the National Careers Council that said giving all schools access to a career development professional, qualified to level 6 or above, in local clusters would cost £43.7m based on 3,280 schools.

Labour also pledged that it would bring back work experience for 14 to 16-year-olds, and that the party would require all pupils to

study English and maths until they were 18. While its planned "Technical Baccalaureate" was known to involve compulsory English and maths, this is the first time the party confirmed that all young people would study the two subjects.

In the full manifesto launch on Monday, leader Ed Miliband mentioned only a few key school policies – such as wraparound childcare.

On funding, he said: "Britain succeeds not when our schools and hospitals are cut back to the bone, but when we invest so they can strive to be the best in the world."

Labour has committed to protect the entire education budget, including early years, schools and the further education sector in "real terms".

Britain only succeeds when working people succeed. This is a plan to reward hard work, share prosperity and build a better Britain.

Britain can be better
The Labour Party Manifesto 2015

AP/Press Association Images



David Cameron

Nick Clegg

UTCs APLENTY, TEST RESITS, EXTRA

Childcare may have been one of the Conservatives' top three manifesto pledges, but it was the party's no-holds barred support for the floundering University Technical Colleges (UTCs) programme that raised the highest eyebrows across education.

The party's support for the colleges is so great that they held their manifesto launch at UTC Swindon. The programme was also mentioned several times by the Prime Minister and education secretary Nicky Morgan, and enjoyed pride of place in the manifesto document itself.

But later that same day, as the Conservatives promised to put a UTC "within reach of every English city", their plan suffered a setback with the announcement that Black Country UTC was due to close due to a fatal combination of low student numbers, financial challenges, staffing capacity and a second consecutive Ofsted inspection blow (see page 3).

Schools Week's sister publication *FE Week* revealed last September that some UTCs were operating at just 10 per cent capacity.

Nevertheless, education secretary Nicky Morgan has remained upbeat about the programme. Speaking to *Schools Week*, she said: "We will see an improvement in recruitment. One of the things with the election is [that] there's always some



uncertainty about whether another party will have the commitment to UTCs that we have, but UTCs are a very important part of our overall education offer.

"State-maintained, academies, free schools, grammar schools, UTCs; they all absolutely play a part in what I think is a very exciting education landscape in this country."

She said the "very popular" UTCs were part of the Conservatives' commitment to vocational education.

"UTCs play a very important part in ... supplying the future engineers that we need in this country. What we want to see, and what we have set out, is a UTC within reach of every city in this country."

The manifesto also confirmed a previous announcement from David Cameron that a future Conservative government would open 500 free schools, and would continue to force the academisation of schools receiving a "requires improvement" Ofsted rating, unless they could show signs of improvement.

Trailerred in the national press over Easter, the party pledged that children not reaching

SAY THEY WILL DO FOR EDUCATION



Ed Miliband

CHILDCARE

specified levels in their "exams" at the end of primary school would be required to resit them at secondary school. The party also said that every pupil must sit all the subjects in the English Baccalaureate at GCSE, including modern foreign languages and a choice between history or geography, alongside the core subjects of English, maths and science.

In contrast to Labour's focus on primary children, the Conservatives focused on considerably boosting the amount of free childcare provision for working parents of three and four-year-olds.

In a briefing with party bosses following the manifesto launch, *Schools Week* was told that the additional 15 hours of free childcare would be available only for working parents in both single and double-parent households. In the latter, both must be working to be eligible.

Parents would be considered to be working if they earned the equivalent of eight hours per week on the minimum wage, currently £32.50.

The £350m cost of the policy, promised to be introduced by 2017, will be paid for by curbing pension relief for higher earners.

It will prick the ears of schools tempted to open early years' provision on their sites - the coalition has offered grants to schools in a bid to encourage more places.



In his speech at the manifesto launch, Mr Cameron said: "A good life should mean that raising your family feels like an incredible and joyful journey, but it shouldn't be a permanent struggle with the bills.

"That's why our second commitment

to working people is

on childcare."

Unsurprisingly, education unions have been highly critical of various elements.

On childcare, Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) general secretary Dr Mary Bousted called for a more efficient use of funds.

She said: "Providing additional school nursery places, led by highly trained, qualified, valued and supported early years' staff would be more valuable to children than simply giving extra hours of free childcare."

The National Union of Teachers criticised the plan for re-testing primary pupils. General secretary Christine Blower said: "The last thing that schools or pupils need is yet more high-stakes testing. Recent research shows that children are becoming conditioned to the idea of school as a place for exams."

MORE FUNDING, FREE MEALS, A 'PROTECTOR OF SCHOOLS'

The Liberal Democrats faced a conundrum: how to distance themselves from the coalition without distancing themselves from the policies that they are proud of.

The answer? Announce more funding.

The Lib Dems have pledged to spend £2.5bn more on education for 2 to 18-year-olds than Labour, and £5bn more than the Conservatives. They claim to have reached that figure by taking into account the 460,000 extra pupils who will enter the education stream between now and 2020, and protecting the budget for all learners.

In an interview with *Schools Week* following the manifesto launch, education minister and Lib Dem policy committee chair David Laws confirmed that increased education spending would be a "red line" for any coalition involvement after May 7.

"I can't contemplate us wanting to go into coalition in the next parliament unless we deliver what's on the front page of this document, and the education funding pledge we are making is precisely one of those.

"We are incredibly passionate about education, not just because of economic growth but because of social justice. We need this extra money to make sure not just that we protect education, but that we can deliver the real improvements in the early years with more one-to-one tuition.

"So the fact we have put it on the front page of the manifesto, this is something we would expect to deliver in coalition in the next parliament."

At the launch, party leader Nick Clegg argued that the Conservatives had agreed to protect the education budget, including an allowance for more learners, but not in real terms - which meant that it would not rise in line with inflation. Labour, he said, would protect it in real terms without allowing for the rise in pupil numbers. Only the Lib Dems would do both.

The policy has the support of the Association of School and College Leaders, whose deputy general secretary Malcolm Trobe said it was "very much welcome.

"This is essential in ensuring that funding keeps pace with the forecast increase in the number of pupils, so that schools are able to meet the extra demands on them.

"We also welcome their commitment to increase spending in early years and in 16-19 education, which is currently very poorly funded."

He said schools and colleges were facing the prospect of meeting rising costs



from budgets which were, in many cases, already severely stretched. "Without such a commitment a situation that is already very tough will become a crisis. Young people deserve the best chance in life we can possibly give them, and investing in their future is also vital to the country."

Other Lib Dem manifesto commitments will be familiar to followers of the 2010 election. Both then, and now, the party committed to creating an "independent educational standards authority" that would oversee curriculum and examinations at arms' length from the government.

Unlike previous manifestos, and in much of the debate at the party's annual conference, there is no commitment automatically to return academies to local authority oversight. However, there is a commitment to abolish Regional School Commissioners - who currently scrutinise academy performance - and instead have the local authority step in where a school faced problems.

Building on the party's flagship policy of free lunches for children aged 7 and under, the manifesto committed the party to funding free meals for all children at primary school.

Aware that his party is unlikely to be the lead in a future government, Mr Clegg offered it as a protector of schools in the face of stronger-willed parties.

"So ask yourself this: Do you want Nigel Farage walking through the door of No 10? Do you want Alex Salmond sat at the Cabinet table? Or do you want the Liberal Democrats?"

"The Liberal Democrats will add a heart to a Conservative government and we will add a brain to a Labour one. We won't allow the Conservatives to cut too much and jeopardise our schools and hospitals."



David Laws

NEWS

IN brief

Academy sponsor has financial notice to improve lifted

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) has lifted a financial notice to improve (FNTi) from academy sponsor The Education Fellowship.

The FNTi was imposed in April 2014 because of significant weaknesses in the trust's financial management and governance.

The trust was told to urgently resolve the breaches and ensure compliance in the areas of trustee appointments and benefits.

Johnson Kane, chief executive of the fellowship, which is responsible for 12 primary and secondary schools, said it was now a changed organisation and had a new set of trustees.

The fellowship receives advice from the John Lewis Partnership and is structured so that all staff and students are "fellows" and are represented at senior councils by elected representatives.

Mr Kane added: "We are all very pleased to have confirmation that the financial notice to improve has been lifted."

TEACHER BANNED FOR CHANGING PUPILS' KEY STAGE 2 PAPERS

A teacher has been banned from teaching indefinitely after changing pupils' key stage 2 papers.

Ian Guffick also asked pupils to change their own exam sheets at Mitton Manor Primary School, in Tewkesbury.

Mr Guffick admitted changing pupils' answers, but said he did it to make them more legible. A report, released today, said he had shown "insight and remorse".

But a National College for Teaching and Leadership panel found his actions to be "dishonest".

A report based on the hearing stated: "While he may have felt under pressure to achieve good results for himself and the school, that can no way excuse his behaviour."

He was banned from classrooms across the country indefinitely for unacceptable professional conduct.

Concerns have been raised by teaching unions that the high-stakes nature of the tests puts pressure on teachers to cheat.

NFER gets the go-ahead for national reference tests

Ofqual has announced that the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) will deliver the new national reference tests for a select group of year 11 groups, beginning in March 2017.

The tests will be taken by students at 33 randomly select schools each year. They will take under an hour to complete.

The results will be analysed only at a national level. Pupils will not receive an individual grade.

Glenys Stacey, chief regulator at Ofqual, said the tests would advance the organisation's ability to detect change changes in pupil performance.

"We will act cautiously as we build our understanding of the information that the tests will provide and how this is used in GCSE awarding."

NFER is a not-for-profit provider of educational research services.

Union criticises four-day consultation on redundancies

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

The National Union of Teachers has criticised a school for its "sham" consultation on making several staff redundant.

Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School in St Albans, Hertfordshire, wrote to staff days before they broke for the Easter holidays informing them of its plan to make compulsory redundancies to help to balance the books.

It is believed 10 posts face the axe by the end of term. Consultation closes on April 24, four days after teachers get back from their break.

Hilary Bucky, regional secretary for the Eastern NUT, told *Schools Week*: "We are aware of the situation and are concerned about the lateness of the announcement and the very short consultation period.

"We will obviously be opposed to any compulsory redundancies.

"The main thing that concerns me is how late they are in starting the consultation. Only lasting three or four working days – it's not much of a consultation. It's a bit of a sham.

"That's what I'll be objecting to. If they want to have a meaningful consultation, they need to allow more time."

Ms Bucky said the proposed staff redundancies would be made by September. It is believed the school has told staff it



Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School Pic: Google

needs to reduce a £500,000 deficit.

"It's hard to understand how you can suddenly at the beginning of April realise you have a deficit of that amount. It doesn't happen overnight," Ms Bucky said. "They could have started discussing this a long time ago."

The school is run by the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust. It did not respond to request for comment from *Schools Week*.

But a statement released on behalf of the school to *The Hertfordshire Advertiser* read: "A redundancy consultation process has started on proposals to align expenditure to income and that process will continue after the Easter holiday. No final decisions have been made."

It is not known if the school had applied for emergency funding before it considered redundancies.

The Department for Education can help to cover deficit funding on a case-by-case basis.

It is only provided in "rare circumstances where schools are facing significant financial pressures" and where a "robust and affordable" recovery plan is in place.

The school was rated as inadequate by Ofsted in November 2013 and was given a "requires improvement" in November last year. A section five inspection last month noted "effective action" was being taken to improve.

In a letter to parents, headteacher Declan Linnane said: "Our plan for moving to good and beyond prioritises the areas which require improvement. Staff and governors share these priorities and remain committed to the hard work necessary to make these a reality for the good of our students."

According to the November 2013 school workforce census, the school has an equivalent of 41.6 full-time teachers and 5.1 teaching assistants. It has a ratio of 16.6 pupils per teacher, above the national average of 15.

Major firms shelve 'approved' A-level lists

ANN MCGAURAN

@ANNMCGAURAN

Fears that some A-level pupils are discriminated against in the workplace because of their subject choices may prove unfounded as employers move towards a more open approach.

Global strategy consultant OC&C previously used a list of approved A-levels as a screening filter for CV scoring that left off less traditional but still popular subjects, such as psychology, sociology and business studies.

The company, which receives 3,000 applications a year for about 30 vacancies, was unhappy with the diversity of its intake, particularly on gender and socioeconomic grounds.

A review of applicants showed that women and students from less wealthy backgrounds were more likely to take non-traditional subjects.

Art and design, general studies, media studies, design and technology, PE, and drama were all excluded from OC&C's original list.

The company has now broadened its list to remove unintentional recruitment biases and is urging other employers to do the same.

It said the list of approved subjects was copied some years earlier from a leading university's list of approved subjects. It closely matches the "facilitating subjects" said by the Russell Group to be the courses



most likely to keep pupils' options open when applying to leading universities, backing maths, further maths, physics, chemistry, history, geography, modern and classical languages, and English literature.

This is also the group of subjects that the Conservative party has pledged to make compulsory for all pupils should it win on May 7.

Pam Tatlow (pictured), chief executive of million+, a university think tank, congratulated OC&C for its initiative "as it will ensure the talents of students from a much wider range of backgrounds and schools are taken into account".

A number of major management

consultancy recruiters also told *Schools Week* they have widened their selection criteria for entry level positions.

A spokesperson for KPMG said it did not use a list of approved A-levels. "KPMG accepts all A-level grades, with the exception of general studies, along with A-level equivalent qualifications including BTECs," she said. This year it had also implemented a "balanced scorecard" that better took in to account a broader number of factors when selecting for first interviews.

A spokesperson for PWC said the company did not have an approved list of A-level subjects. "The vast majority of our graduate opportunities are open to students from any degree discipline."

Deloitte UK also said that it did not have an approved list of subjects.

The change of heart was welcomed by LKMco, a think-and-action tank working to help young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood that has raised the problem of subject choice and university selection discrimination in its reports.

Director Loic Menzies said: "Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to access the same opportunities in life as their more advantaged peers, but too often, schools pick up the sole blame for this while structural barriers are ignored. It's encouraging to see some corporates scrutinising their own practices to start levelling the playing field. I hope all employers, as well as universities follow suit."

SILENT TEARS AS LEONIE REMEMBERS A FALLEN SOLDIER

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

On location

John Dickens joins a group of 52 pupils from Ormiston academies on a visit to the battlefields of the Somme

More than 72,000 names are etched across the giant columns of the Thiepval Memorial in northern France.

Each remembers a Commonwealth soldier who lost his life during the Battle of the Somme.

But Leonie Hunt solemnly gazes at just one as she wipes away a tear: Harold George Moore, a rifleman in the London Regiment. Her granddad's uncle.

Clutching a bundle of papers containing the few details she could find on the internet about Harold, the 14-year-old is now just metres from his final resting place.

As another tear falls, classmate Meshach Shadares puts an arm around her. The pair stand in silence, remembering the war to end all wars that took place 100 years ago on the same ground they now stand on.

There were about 450,000 casualties on The Somme, one of the bloodiest battles on the Western Front during the First World War.

With the warmth of the crisp spring sun filling the air, Leonie gathers her thoughts and leaves a message from her family on a small cross next to Harold's name. "A brave man to a loyal family, rest in peace."

"I'm the only person to visit him from my family," she says. "It's hard to explain how I felt, but it was emotional."

"People must have loved him, as a brother, an uncle. But they did not get the chance to remember him at his memorial, so it would have been quite hard."

The pupils, from Ormiston Rivers Academy, in Essex, were two of 52 from 26 Ormiston academies who spent four days this week visiting museums, battlefield sites, memorials and cemeteries in Belgium and France.

The trip is part of the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme, set up with funding from the Department for Education and Department for Communities and Local Government, to promote a deeper understanding of the Great War.

By March 2019, two pupils and a teacher from 4,000 secondary schools will have visited the front.

But the real work starts when the pupils return home, under the Legacy 110 Project. They are encouraged to share their experiences with at least 110 people – so spreading their personal stories across their communities.

Jugjit Chima, national education coordinator at the Institute of Education, which provides the programme alongside educational tour company Equity, says: "We're here on a mission to take this back. These pupils are two ambassadors, chosen to spread the word."

"Some are writing blogs, speaking on their



Clockwise from above: Sophie Downton and Treeve White from Cowes Enterprise College at the grave of a young soldier they had researched

Daniel Powell from Cliff Park Ormiston Academy and Leonie Hunt from Ormiston Rivers Academy join Lance Corporal Liam Parker in laying a wreath at the Last Post Ceremony in Ypres

Reporter John Dickens at the entrance to the Tyne Cot Cemetery and exploring the trenches at Passchendaele Memorial Museum in Belgium

local radio, doing presentations in other schools. We want to reach five million people."

Leonie and Meshach will share their stories through a drama presentation. Treeve White, from Cowes Enterprise College, in the Isle of Wight, will share his through local media.

The 12-year-old based his project on under-age soldiers in the war, after being inspired by his great-great-granddad's story.

While helping his granddad move house earlier this year, he stumbled across an old box in his attic that contained his relative's war medals.

"I found out he had ran away to join the army when he was just 14," he says. "But he got found out and sent back home."

Treeve also discovered the story of a 14-year-old soldier who died in the war, and another 17-year-old – F C Sedge – who was buried in Tyne Cot Cemetery, which we visited on Monday.

Through online research back in the UK, Treeve finds the teen's burial location. He stands in front of it, remembering. "In memory of your bravery and loyalty to your country," his message reads.

The endless rows of pristine white headstones at Tyne Cot glisten in the early afternoon sun. It is the largest Commonwealth war grave site, with 11,954 soldiers buried here.

Treeve and Leonie later represent the group at a wreath laying at the Last Post Ceremony, in Ypres, Belgium.



The buglers of the Ypres volunteer fire brigade have gathered under the Menin Gate at 8pm every day since 1928 to play the Last Post. Standing in the cobbled road under the huge arch, the evocative notes of the final salute to the fallen reverberate from the walls.

A yellow glow from the inside lighting illuminates the imposing arch. Those under its walls remember in silence.

"For me to represent everybody here is an honourable thing," Leonie says.

The tour also takes in the Langemark Cemetery, a German war grave site, Neuve Chapelle, a memorial for Indian, Pakistan and Bangladeshi soldiers, and Pheasant Wood cemetery, where Australian soldiers are remembered.

Driving through the now picture-pretty, sleepy villages dotted around the rolling hills, it is difficult to comprehend that just 100 years ago it was the centre of a bloody battlefield, a sea of sludge.

The red-brick mud was the only way pilots could tell there once were villages here.

A well-known war memorial inscribing reads: "when you go home tell them of us and say: for your tomorrow we gave our today".

The touching and inspiring stories brought to life on this trip will ensure the legacy lives on.

To find out more, visit www.centenarybattlefieldtours.org

NEWS



MP wants to know who's top of the (rubble) pile

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The government has refused to publish a list of decaying schools that missed out on priority building funds.

Calder Valley MP Craig Whittaker called for the listing to be made public so that the robustness of the schools' property data survey could be scrutinised.

It followed two schools in his area, Calder High and Todmorden High, both missing out on funding under the Priority School Building Programme – despite problems with gas leaks, sewer collapses and asbestos.

Calder High was described in 2009 by former education secretary Michael Gove as “one of the worst schools I have seen in terms of fabric” and Todmorden is costing

£250,000 a year in repairs alone.

But schools minister David Laws said in parliament last month that he had “no plans” to publish the data.

Mr Whittaker, now a Conservative candidate, told *Schools Week*: “It should be made open, honest and transparent. They should be developing these surveys so there is a true ranking and every local authority and school knows exactly where it is on that list.”

The Department for Education has now agreed to send inspectors back to resurvey Todmorden High. Mr Whittaker claimed this could mean the schools were retrospectively added to list of those getting a slice of the multi-billion pound rebuilding pot.

Inspectors were sent to tens of thousands

of schools across the country to collate property data, which was then used to rank schools in terms of the need for investment.

But Mr Laws said publishing the rankings could be misleading without taking into account other information supplied by schools and local authorities.

Mr Whittaker said: “If the survey is not the only basis, in the interests of openness and transparency why will the minister not let everyone know what other things are taken into account?”

Mr Laws said applicants were encouraged to submit additional local information to supplement bids because “every survey has limitations”.

He added the methodology used to prioritise schools had been

published online.

The government faced accusations it had been “abusing its power” after *Schools Week* revealed in February that 70 per cent of schools receiving phase two funding were in government-held constituencies.

Eight schools in Bradford missed out on funding. Ralph Berry, Bradford council's executive member for education, said the refusal to publish rankings did nothing to dispel rumours of a political fix.

“Substantial sums of money have been given out. It doesn't look reasonable or fair on first sight.

“Unless we know how they came to these decisions - which criteria were used and what priority outsourced which - we are never going to know how to go forward.”

EDITOR'S COMMENT

In the next few weeks, the public will turn their attention to what the political parties are offering for the future. The school community will prick its ears with regards to the changes it can expect to endure.

So far, the picture is one of continuity in education with added austerity. Unlike previous years, schools are not being singled out for extra funds. There will be no new premiums or fancy buildings. Protected funding is the best offer.

More pressing than future glittering prizes,

however, are the ongoing implementation issues of exam reform.

Ofqual, the exam regulator, are working hard to achieve a smooth transition to the new 'more rigorous' GCSEs and A levels. But they cannot control the knock-on impacts, one of which is highlighted by Cambridge's active consideration of a universal entrance exam.

It is quite extraordinary that a top university is so concerned about the reliability of GCSEs that its own tests might

be necessary.

There's also a serious question about access. One teacher responsible for sixth formers noted the stark difference between her pupils those from private schools. “I can't see that it will be a step forward for access and diversity,” she wrote.

On the other hand, a senior lecturer at Cambridge said that he felt a common entrance exam would remove some

bias from an admissions process otherwise reliant on personal statements and predicted grades.

Having spent time speaking with many admissions tutors at both Oxford and Cambridge, there is no doubt every admittance decision is sweated and changes will not be entered into lightly. Let's hope a solution to suit everyone can be found.



@miss_mcinerney | laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk

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"If I were education secretary I would..." Daisy Christodoulou

John Brown, London

Absolutely, 100% agree, very achievable too, Statistical First Release is archaic and hard to use, RAISE also out of date and not query-able. Query-able Web portal would be easy and relatively cheap with current tools like sequel server.

100% agree a broad set of measures would dilute gaming.

Governors and those really interested in schools always ask for a broad range of measures.

Unfortunately DfE have mooted cutting data services not expanding them and the new parliament will see cuts. Plus DfE have scrapped all ambitious data projects. There appears no reason small feasibility pilots could not be outsourced.

To me this is silly as a broader data portal would be an easy win and relatively cheap.

Book review: Establishing a new school: and getting it right from the start

Alex Blagona, Ipswich

I thought Toby Young had the copyright on books telling us how to open free schools

Profile: David Blunkett

Alastair Thomson, Northampton

The first New Labour government of 1997-2001 was the high-water mark for lifelong learning. Not everything worked (Ufi was disappointing and ILAs spoilt for example) but there was passion, enthusiasm and a willingness to try new ideas – and this was down to DB and the people he brought in. I must admit to being less impressed with his subsequent stint as Home Secretary but it was a golden time to be working in education. Hope DB returns to parliament in the Lords.

Mike Westerdale, Sheffield

A truly inspirational and humbling man who has been a strong supporter of Parkwood E-ACT Academy in Shirecliffe, Sheffield. Without his support I am certain

the students, staff and parents would not have achieved its current successes. Everyone at Parkwood and E-ACT wish David a very enjoyable retirement from being a Member of Parliament, truly well deserved.

£1.8m to 'eradicate' homophobic bullying

Vincent Usher, Newcastle

I think this is an excellent move towards tackling the bullying, as long as it truly empowers the staff to deal with it.

DfE scores academy chains and local authorities on same measures for first time

Jarlath O'Brien @JarlathOBrien

DfE have, predictably, missed out special schools and academies. Our achievements are unimportant to them.

Riley @lennyvalentino

Would need to know more about finance, number of schools in chain or LA, new builds etc to make it fair.

Reception assessments 'harmful', say unions and academics

Greg Watson @Greg_GL_Assess

Still not a shred of evidence of "harm". Our assessments designed by EY specialists to be fun while giving teachers useful insight

Teachers have too much control, RSC warns school

Jonathan Savage @jppsavage

Many senior leaders in schools have no idea about the impact of individual subject cultures on the associated pedagogy of...Subject teachers. In their opinion, too often, a one sized pedagogy really does fit all. The paucity of thought is shocking.

LeoToAquarius @LeoToAquarius

Excellent expose about interfering in areas that were not criticised by Ofsted, better to prevent progressive teaching in school

DfE scores academy chains for first time

REPLY OF THE WEEK Colin Richards, address supplied

Dear Laura
I found the article "DfE scores academy chains for first time" very interesting and informative but was disappointed that the paper fell into the league-table mentality of citing "top" and "bottom" providers. Isn't this just the kind of mind-set which Schools Week should be opposing?

REPLY OF THE WEEK RECEIVES 'THE COLLECTOR'S MUG!



Contact the team

To provide feedback and suggest stories please email news@schoolsweek.co.uk and tweet using @schoolsweek

To inform the editor of any errors or issues of concern regarding this publication, email laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk with Error/Concern in the subject line.

Please include the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is.

Correction

David Blunkett will be working with the Crick Centre for Public Understanding of Politics - and not 'science' as we originally wrote. ('David Blunkett Profile' - Edition 24, March 27)

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

However big or small, if you have information or a story you think our readers would be interested in, then please get in touch. For press releases make sure you email our news email account, and don't be afraid to give us a call.

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Sir Mark Grundy,
Principal of Shireland Collegiate Academy

I HAVE RARELY, IF EVER, FELT SO EMPOWERED TO IMPROVE MY OWN TEACHING AND TO HELP OTHERS IMPROVE THEIRS. I HAVE JUST SPENT TWO DAYS AT THE SUNDAY TIMES FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION, AND IT WAS SIMPLY AMAZING

BH, Assistant Head
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EXPERTS: 'If I were education secretary...'



ROBERT PLOMIN

MRC research professor and deputy director of the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London

"I would take genetics seriously"

Differences between children's performance at school are not just due to differences in parenting and home life or differences in teachers and school life – to an even greater extent, they are due to DNA differences between children. These differences account for more than

half of the differences in performance from reception through to GCSE.

Children are inherently different in how easily they learn, how they learn, and what they learn. Genetics affects not only their aptitudes but also their appetites (motivation and interests) and their adjustment (mental

health and well-being). The implications of genetics will become urgent for education as the specific genes responsible for genetic influence are identified and result in "DNA chips" that can predict strengths and weaknesses from birth.

No specific policy implications necessarily follow from finding strong genetic influence on children's school performance. Policy involves values as well as facts. The fact of major genetic influence can lead to completely different policies depending on values – from right-wing policies (eg, educate the best, forget the rest) to left-wing policies (eg, do what it takes to have all children reach a minimal level of literacy and numeracy).

However, genetics has an important general implication: any one-size-fits-all educational programme aimed at

the average child is doomed to fail most children. The genetic message is definitely not that there is nothing we can do about children's differences in school performance. The paramount policy implication is that children are inherently different and the educational system needs to recognise and respect those differences, providing opportunities for personalised learning that aim to maximise children's individual strengths and minimise their weaknesses. Computers can help to make this happen, freeing teachers to individualise pupils' experiences even more.

Robert Plomin is co-author of G Is for Genes: What Genetics Can Teach Us About How We Teach Our Children (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)

@RobertPlomin

I would ask to stay in my job for the rest of the government's term and in that time seek to make myself largely redundant. I would start off with a big conversation about the purpose of education, with a view to recognising that it should make the world a better place.

I would consider what teachers need to do their job well; recognising, for example, that marking matters and that it takes time, so is probably best not done at midnight. I would ask that the directed hours of a teacher include the aspects of the job that are required to do it well. Great teachers spend a lot of time planning and a lot of time marking, so let us think about how we could fund timetables to allow more time for both. I would consult great headteachers, such as John Tomsett, about how reducing contact time has impacted pupil progress and staff well-being.

Great teachers are well read and informed, both about their subjects and about child development and pedagogy. I would make schools provide well-resourced CPD tailored



DEBRA KIDD

Author of *Teaching: Notes from the Frontline*

"I would consider what teachers need to do their job well"

to the needs of the learning community and not to the whims and fancies of the Department for Education or Ofsted. By listening to experts – those in classrooms as well as scientists, psychologists and philosophers – I would hope to become better

informed. Then, instead of cherry-picking snippets of research that accorded with my own world view, I would set up a College of Teaching to ensure that the profession itself might promote that which may have most impact.

Most of all, I would recognise that human capacity is multifaceted and that children are capable of developing a whole range of talents. I would not privilege one subject over another. I would recognise that the arts have enhanced human experience and are a vital form of communication. I would give them equal status to other important areas of human knowledge and endeavour, including maths and science. I would look again at whether or not exams are the best ways of assessing our young and explore options based on professional trust.

I would talk to parents about how important it is that they and their children respect the people trying their best to deliver a future of hope and possibility. And then I would sit back and have a cup of tea and let the professionals get on with it.

Teaching: Notes from the Frontline (Independent Thinking Press, 2014)

@debrakidd



ANTHONY GRAYLING

Master of the New College of the Humanities and supernumerary fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford

"I would widen the pathways into teaching"

Secondary education is too exam-focused. There is also too much specialisation too early (after GCSE), too little variety between schools and within curricula, too many reforms with every change of government, too little practical preparation for life after education, and too great a jump between school and university.

If I were secretary of state, I would actively

promote the uptake of the International Baccalaureate as the standard school-leaving qualification. I would widen the pathways into teaching for people who would like to switch from other careers and for people with expertise after retirement, providing them with training on the job. I would relax some of the regulations that inhibit, or make more expensive, school trips. I would

abolish "religious studies" and introduce a comprehensive compulsory course in the history of ideas, of which the mythologies, religions, philosophies and science put one another into context and are seen as successive aspects of humankind's intellectual growth.

I would reintegrate tertiary with secondary education under the Department for Education umbrella, and encourage schools and university to be mutually porous so that there is much interchange between students and staff at both. I would make it possible for people in employment to take sabbaticals to return to education for shorter or longer periods. I would revive the old tradition of extramural education evening classes without funding being contingent on exams and certification.

I would put as much resource as possible into primary education to ensure that the basics of literacy and numeracy are secured, by recognising that different children learn best in different ways and need high levels of individual tailoring to ensure progress. Staff-student ratios would have to be such as to facilitate this.

I would end the closed shop of higher education and, under a stringent quality assessment regime, promote diversity in provision. I would instantly abolish the current absurd restrictions on student visas because education is a UK export success story and fetishisation of anxieties about immigration to include student numbers have inhibited opportunities.

Once these reforms had been put in place I would give the education sector time to catch its breath and settle down without incessant change and re-regulation: which means that I would leave my ministerial desk and go back into education myself as a student to learn something new.

AC Grayling is author of The Challenge of Things: Thinking Through Troubled Times (Bloomsbury, 2015)

@acgrayling

Contributions are taken from "If I were Secretary of State for Education", edited by David James and published by Pearson for The Sunday Times/Wellington College Festival of Education, in association with Summerhouse Education.

Schools Week will publish extracts from other prominent thinkers in the run-up to the general election

EXPERTS



BRUCE LIDDINGTON

Education consultant specialising in academies and free schools

Free schools: what to ask

Labour's views are based on a reality that has long dissolved; free schools are no longer for white middle-class parents in areas where they are not wanted

It's nearing the end of the general election campaign and time to get down to the detail in education policies. But there's one thing we know for certain: the parties differ in their view on free schools.

The Conservatives have said they will continue. Tristram Hunt has damned them and says that Labour will stop them.

Mr Hunt retreads his opposition to free schools having (some) unqualified teachers and alleges, yet again, that free schools are exclusively for white middle-class families in areas where they are not needed – to the

detriment of local schools.

It's a view that is behind the times.

True, in the 2010/11 round of the first free schools, some were opened by white parents wanting to avoid sending their children to mixed, multi-ethnic schools. True also, in those early rounds, that free schools opened in opposition to other local schools where the places were not needed. Indeed, in one northern local authority, the opening of two free schools in a small area killed advanced academy sponsorship plans actively supported by the Department for Education.

But 'twas always thus. New government initiatives, especially those of a new government, always follow a scattergun approach at the start, only to settle down as time passes.

The early free schools did not, nonetheless, throw up hoards of extremist faith schools. Many stuck to the National Pay and Conditions of Teachers – to the extent that Lord Hill, the then schools minister, warned prospective promoters that unless they put forward more innovative proposals, they would not be successful.

The critical difference was that the glass palaces model of Building Schools for the Future was well and truly shattered by the popularity of free schools opening in adventurous, non-standard settings.

The picture, however, has radically changed (and I write as a consultant for two successful 2015 openers). Free schools are no longer encouraged unless they supply a locally identified need for places, particularly at primary level. The support of at least the local if not also the neighbouring local authorities is strongly encouraged (authorities still don't have a veto on free school proposals, though).

The free school route is now the only one open to independent fee-paying schools wanting to come into the state sector. Before they open they are scrutinised at a far higher level than before, particularly around safeguarding and curriculum offer. Such scrutiny is to be welcomed.

The closure of unsuccessful free schools remains controversial. Opponents cite the closure of three free schools as a failure of the policy. Others see it as a market-related,

education-based reality, not uncommon in the US and in parts of Canada that have similar types of schools. The fact remains that some local authorities have kept open historically under-achieving and even failing schools for many years after they would have been better shut. Perhaps here, as elsewhere, free schools are paving the way for a very different future?

What may be worth doing, though, is asking candidates knocking on the door in the next few weeks the following questions about free schools. It should give you an idea of what they are thinking and whether it aligns with your beliefs.

1. Are free schools a good solution to the acknowledged need for significantly more primary places throughout the country?
2. Do high-performing free schools help to drag up standards in neighbouring schools?
3. Is it right to plan a high-performing free school in the knowledge that it may bring about the closure of a long-standing, low-performing neighbouring school?
4. Is a specific acceptance that some free schools will fail to establish themselves and quickly have to close acceptable?
5. Does the introduction of free schools really lead to more choice for parents?
6. What can be done to make free schools genuinely more diverse and different?

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PROFILE



Headship's a weight, but it's also a creative opportunity

PETER CAMPLING

ANN MCGAURAN

@ANNMCGAURAN

Peter Campling, education consultant, playwright and former head

Former secondary head Peter Campling has been watching the first rehearsal for his latest play. It concerns a vexing series of events leading up to an Ofsted inspection at the fictional Ardley Green School.

There will be swearing, he says – and not just by any teachers in the audience.

But there'll be laughs as well as a few expletives when *The Inspector Calls* starts its run later this month (April 28). Chatting to the cast, I'm told the play has a lot of humour.

Schools are funny places, says Campling, who can draw creative inspiration from his years of teaching and leadership roles. He left his headship at Deptford Green School in south London two years ago, and

now works as a freelance coach and consultant.

"Yes, hopefully the play is funny," he says. "We've had a good laugh today. That's one of the things I do miss about schools – the banter, the laughter and the ridiculous situations that crop up."

A description of the play reveals the escalating list of challenges facing head George Smith. "Pressure builds from the start of the school year for George, with poor maths results, disgruntled unions and an impending inspection. George's private life, meanwhile, is becoming increasingly dysfunctional and the problems mount with a budget crisis, an interfering local authority, unwanted competition from the new free school, and scandalous behaviour at the staff party." Then the inspectors call.

Campling says he did not want to write a play that was "a kind of dirge". While he says it has a political side and a plea in the narrative to take stock of what's happening, "it's also capturing the joy and the incredible hard work of people in schools".

Born in Pershore in Worcestershire, he is the son of a clergyman and teacher. He says he's "been in and out of beliefs, but I certainly had a strong upbringing in a very liberal version of Christianity".

He describes getting into the King's School in Worcester as a cathedral choir boy as "an extraordinary experience", singing until he was 13, two or three hours a day with "more at weekends" and on tour. "There was probably more discipline than I've ever had since. But you got on with it, because that was what you had to do."

He had to board, "so I was taken away from home at the age of 9. It's something you probably talk about to your therapist 30 years later, but at the time it's quite good fun."

Known during his schooldays as a bit of a rebel, Campling says he was always in trouble. "There was a particular teacher who saw some good in me, I think, and who got me involved in acting. I absolutely loved it pretty much the first time I stepped on the stage." He was accepted into the National Youth Theatre at 16.

IT'S A PERSONAL THING

Which was most challenging – *Hey Nicaragua!* or getting ready for Ofsted?

Nicaragua got quite hairy at times, but at least it was for a good cause. With the current punitive Ofsted inspections, the stakes are ridiculously high for what is often just a roll of the dice.

Who would be the guest of honour at your dinner party?

Arthur Miller. His plays capture the key issues of our time so poignantly. He also led an extraordinary life and kept to his principles and politics, when many around him did not.

What would be your three “must-have” pieces of music at the dinner party?

Handel's *Gloria* (lost for 300 years until recently re-discovered). I'm quite into Elbow at the moment and maybe some Jack Johnson.

Where would you go for an ideal family trip and why?

Newport in Pembrokeshire. The most beautiful place and loads of fun to be had. I've been having great holidays there since the 1960s and it never changes.

What's the most important piece of advice you'd give your children, Laurie, 11, and Jo, 14?

Try to stay humble when things go well and when they don't, try to stay positive.

His “scenic route” to becoming a teacher included a gap year in India after he left school, an experience that he says was “mind-blowing and changes your perspective on everything”. He came back to take up a teacher training place, but soon realised that it wasn't what he wanted to do.

He switched to a degree in development studies at University of East Anglia, “but I still had a love of theatre”.

After finishing university, he headed to Nicaragua “where there was a war going on”. for a year to work for the rebel Sandinistas, picking coffee and cotton and helping to build a hospital. “It was American imperialism at its worst and a cause célèbre for the left at the time.”

While there he was inspired to start writing a play. He finished *Hey Nicaragua!* on his return, and set up a theatre company with friends from the National Youth Theatre and others. They took the play to the Edinburgh festival, where it got good reviews and hit a “rich seam of interest”.

While having begun his theatre company wanting to act, he ended up wanting to write and direct. He taught English as

a foreign language and did “whatever else you need to do to pay the bills, and I kept going to the grand old age of 29”.

At that point he decided to go to Goldsmiths in London to do a PGCE, “because that was a way I could carry on being a writer. Of course I've hardly written anything since, and that was 22 years ago.”

But there is a link between the play he did write about asylum seekers after securing his first teaching post in a drama department and the work that's now in rehearsal.

His first school, Geoffrey Chaucer – now an academy with a different name – was in south London's Elephant and Castle. “There were a lot of asylum seekers coming in to the school who were not officially recognised. It was certainly a big issue then and some deportation was going on of young people. There are echoes of real life in that story.”

The school was in special measures and had never had a school play that anyone could remember. The keen young drama teacher wrote *Kissing Carlos* and set about “literally dragging the kids in from the playground” to take part.

“One of these guys was called Gbolahan Obisesan and he got the lead. He was brilliant. I persuaded him to take it more seriously and eventually he got into the National Youth Theatre, and then became a professional actor and writer. He's written for the National Theatre and the Young Vic. And he is here now in my cast – here this afternoon. It's a lovely completion of the circle!”

But until now, *Kissing Carlos* was “pretty much it from a writing point of view”, he says. “I had gone into teaching naively thinking that I could be a teacher and a writer.”

Since giving up his headship Campling has been working as a freelance in about 10 schools. “So I'm seeing quite an interesting range of approaches.”

What does he miss about being head of his own school? “The sense of being part of a community. I miss the creative side of headship and the fact that you are responsible for everything. While it's a weight it's also a creative opportunity.

“I miss that sense of building something long term and sustainable. That's why something like a play is very satisfying.”

He worries that now “it's much tougher being in a school that's currently constrained or threatened”.

What he doesn't miss at all are the “pressures increased accountability, which I believe have got to a toxic level”.

For heads, he identifies a football management syndrome, whereby “if they have not got the results they are looking for in a short period of time you get rid of them.

“It's creating a culture of fear that is very damaging and permeates through the system right down to the kids. If your only currency is results you are going to produce a generation that is only good at taking exams. I think we are heading in that direction. You can't blame heads because their jobs are on the line.”

It's the Ofsted framework that becomes the driving force of schools, he adds. “So much of it is based on results and that's what drives you because, ultimately, your jobs and status are on the line. That's completely wrong and tragic.”

The Inspectors Call runs from April 28 to May 16 at *Theatro Technis, Camden Town, London. To book go to theinspectorscall.co.uk*



Clockwise from top: Campling with his children Jo (left) and Laurie; Campling aged 4; on the way back from Nicaragua

Curriculum Vitae

Born April 29, 1963

Education

Abbey Park Primary School, Pershore, Worcestershire
King's School Worcester
Homerton College, University of Cambridge (left BEd course after one year)
University of East Anglia, development studies degree
Institute of Latin American Studies, MA in Latin American politics
PGCE at Goldsmiths, University of London

Career

Writer

Returned from a year in Nicaragua and set up a theatre company and wrote, directed and acted in *Hey Nicaragua!*
Other plays: *The CIA Cabaret*, *Doing Bush*, *Kissing Carlos*, *The Inspectors Call*

Education

1994-98: Drama teacher and head of year, Geoffrey Chaucer school, south London
1998-2000: Head of performance faculty, Durrington High School, Worthing
2000-03: Assistant head, Eastlea Community School, east London
2003-06: Deputy head, Forest Gate Community School, east London
2006-13: Head, Deptford Green School, south-east London
2013-present: Consultant, coach and facilitator Teaching Leaders, Oxfam Education, the Co-operative College

Special achievements:

The success of *Hey Nicaragua!*
Being elected to the Association of School and College Leaders national council and then chair of the public and parliamentary committee and national executive.
The design of a £32 million new school building at Deptford Green, which won the LABC Award for Best Educational Building in the UK in 2013.

REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

To view individual blogs visit
www.schoolsweek.co.uk/reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Emma Hardy, primary school teacher and union activist @emmaannhardy

Mediocre Failures

By @Disidealist

Language matters. Having the ability to communicate well with others is an essential skill and should never be underestimated. You would think that our government would have experts in communication working for them, "spin" specialists who know how changing one word creates an entirely different message. So I am left confused, is this government's communication team incompetent or just cruel? Nicky Morgan plans to make children in year 7 "resit" the SATs tests they have "failed". Initially, my reaction was one of confusion, the SATs are not the 11-plus, and they were never meant to be something you "passed" or "failed". But soon my confusion turned to anger. This passionate blog by Disidealist articulates far more effectively than I ever could the cruelty of labelling children "mediocre failures"; I challenge you to read it and maintain any sense that this government has compassion.

This much I know about...the need to put humanity back into the centre of the ring

By @JohnTomsett

During election season madness, political parties will always try to appear tougher than each other. At times I sense they are competing over who can throw the most testosterone around – which is not a pretty thought. Thank goodness for John Tomsett. The timing and message of this blog are perfect and this quote jumped out: "It seems to me that too many of our state schools have become scared, soulless places. We need to reassert our courageous leadership-wisdom that emphasises love over fear and

puts humanity back into the centre of the ring." This is a timely reminder that without humanity we have nothing.

The McNamara fallacy and the problem with numbers in education

By @C_Hendrick

I loved this blog. Really loved it. The pervading educational narrative appears to be that to criticise league tables and use of data, and to place meaning on the relationship between child and teachers, makes you somehow against "rigorous standards" or a "woolly liberal". Although Carl Hendrick recently confessed to being a "north London geek" he could never be called "woolly".

Together, we should not only dismiss the idea that in education everything can be reduced to numbers but we should also fear it too. "In education, the 'incredible interest' of the few over the many is having a disastrous impact in many areas. One inevitable endpoint of a system that audits itself in terms of numbers and then makes high-stakes decisions based on that narrow measurement is the wilful manipulation of those numbers. A culture that sees pupils as numbers and reduces the complex relational process of teaching to data points on a spreadsheet will ultimately become untethered from the moral and ethical principles that are at the heart of the profession, as the recent Atlanta cheating scandal suggests."

Unity...

By @KitAndrews

When reading this I was reminded of this story: "While wandering a deserted beach at dawn, stagnant in my work, I saw a man in the distance bending and throwing as he walked the endless stretch toward me. As he came near, I could see that he was throwing starfish, abandoned on the sand by the tide, back into the sea. When he was close enough I asked him why he was working so hard at this strange task. He said that the sun would dry the starfish and they would die. I said to him that I thought he was foolish. There were thousands of starfish on miles and miles of beach. One man alone could never make a difference. He smiled as he picked up the next starfish. Hurling it far into the sea he said, 'It makes a difference for this one.' I abandoned my writing and spent the morning throwing starfish." Loren Eiseley

If you need to be reminded that teachers make a difference, that we all have the power to influence our world, then read this blog. Kit Andrews identified a change in attitude in his school and he took action to change it; they are now having a positive impact on the community around him. My advice, read this, follow Kit's example, abandon your writing and start "throwing starfish".

BOOK REVIEW

Finnish Lessons 2.0: what can the world learn from educational change in Finland?

Author: Pasi Sahlberg

Publisher: Teachers' College Press

ISBN-10: 0807755850

ISBN-13: 978-080775585

Reviewer: Gabriel Heller Sahlgren



In the past decade, Finland's high performance in the PISA international league table has led to great educational fame.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, policymakers worldwide have been trying to find out what they can learn from the Nordic country's school system.

The first edition of Sahlberg's book in 2012 provided a description of Finland's educational reforms that, according to him, were key for spurring transformation, while also discussing lessons for other countries. This second edition is almost identical in approach, although the performance data have been updated and it provides a longer discussion of the role of equity. It also claims to answer why the country's performance has recently declined, something that has puzzled many international observers.

The author's message can be summarised as follows: the "Finnish way" has rejected standardisation, accountability, and general market-based principles. It instead emphasises equality, collaboration, strong professional autonomy, and the principle that "less is more" – hence, school days are short, teachers teach comparatively fewer hours, and pupils study less than in other countries.

Written in an accessible conversational style, the book provides a wealth of useful facts and figures about Finland's education system. Unfortunately, it lacks analytical rigour. Readers are presented with fluffy discussions containing grand ideas and empty phrases, but with little substantive evidence to support them. Sahlberg warns us in the introduction that simple correlations do not always mean causation – before basing his arguments, pretty much entirely, on such correlations.

Indeed, the book provides no real evidence at all of the reasons behind Finnish education success, what we can learn from it, or the policies that Sahlberg opposes. As a general rule, in fact, the rigorous international research doesn't support his interpretation. Further, the author ignores that Finland's performance improvements began long before most emphasised policies were implemented, making it impossible that they caused the transformation.

The account is at times misleading. For example, readers are told about Finland's low "between-school" variability [the difference in

performance between schools], but not about its between-class variation [the difference in performance between classes in the same school], which researchers have shown is considerable in the international assessments PIRLS and TIMSS. This is because within-school ability grouping, in contrast to the author's claims, remains widespread in Finland. In many lower-secondary schools, kids sit tests to get accepted to special classes, while indirect selection in primary school is through music and language classes.

What about the book's explanation for Finland's recent slippage? This is even less convincing than its explanation for the country's rise. In Sahlberg's story, the lack of continued education reform is a culprit, an ad-hoc argument that is impossible to verify (or falsify).

Another explanation relates to increased income inequality. However, inequality in Finland increased rapidly during the 1990s, a period of increasing achievement, and remained steady or even declined in the 2000s, a period of educational stagnation and later decline. In this case, not even the correlations provided by the author support his story.

At the end, we are left with an appeal for a new "Big Dream" in education, an example of the clichés throughout the book, and an outline of the ideas on which this should be based. These ideas are not new, but a re-hash of what many educationists have advocated for long, such as more personalisation, less classroom-based teaching, and more emphasis on creativity.

Yet, again, we aren't presented with any evidence. Inconveniently, rigorous research now shows that some of those ideas are perfect recipes for reducing performance; policymakers, Finnish and international, should take great caution since the prescriptions may, in fact, do more harm than good.

Ultimately, therefore, the book fails to provide a plausible case for the trajectory of Finnish educational performance and its lessons. While it's impossible conclusively to prove anything in this respect, it is possible to provide a more cogent story that's backed up by both history and general research. For what it's worth, my own monograph, *Real Finnish Lessons: the true story of an education superpower*, which is available free, attempts to do just that.

Gabriel Heller Sahlgren is research director for the Centre for Market Reform. His book on *Real Finnish Lessons* was published this week.

NEXT WEEK:
The Ins and Outs of Selective Secondary Schools
Reviewed by Oliver Stacey



RESEARCH REVIEW



DAVID LUNDIE

Senior lecturer in education studies,
Liverpool Hope University

Are teachers really 'stormtroopers'?

Teachers often try to avoid the difficult questions in RE. But it is those questions that provide the most "teachable moments"

Recent headlines have suggested that teachers are becoming "frontline stormtroopers" in a war against religious extremism. Delegates at the National Union of Teachers' conference at Easter heard of young people telling their teachers that they don't want to discuss controversial issues, such as the Charlie Hebdo cartoons.

My research, carried out in secondary

schools across the UK in 2008-10, explored the language and practices of religious education classrooms as part of the Does RE Work? project at the University of Glasgow. In this work, it was more often teachers who sought to avoid difficult questions, so sticking to official curriculum content when students attempt to interject their spontaneous questions, meanings and misunderstandings. Yet it was those difficult questions that provided the teachable moments; the opportunities to bridge world-views, to help young people to understand that there are people who see the world otherwise.

The scaling back in 2010 of initiatives on PSHE, citizenship and RE was one of the early savings made by the Department for Education. Initiatives such as REsilience, which sought to engage schools with local religious communities to challenge extremism, and the non-statutory national framework for RE, were taken out of the department and handed over to the RE Council for England and Wales.

Local authorities' annual reports on RE were sent into a void after the abolition of the Qualification and Curriculum Development Authority in 2011, an oversight only corrected in this year.

Not only nature, but also bureaucracy abhors a vacuum, and into these gaps have come the security services. The "prevent"ing of education, where Home Office and police counter-terror officers co-opt the inspection and governance of schools, inevitably has a chilling effect on conversations in the classroom.

For teachable moments to occur in a subject as fraught with highly charged personal attachments as religion, students and teachers must build together an environment of trust. The counter-cultural nature of this environment, even in religious schools, was a key finding in our research. Where trust was missing, either because teachers had attempted to drain religion of its emotional charge, or to impose a flat curriculum, avoiding the difficult questions, religious education was transformed into a kind of "civic religion", teaching a bland set of dispositions and "tolerance" alien from young people's lived experience of religion

and religious diversity in the world outside.

This was evident in one school, which had renamed the subject as "respect study", replacing the object of people's religious commitments, in all their varieties, from the sublime to the shocking, with the simple party line that "you should respect everyone". In that situation, students could

Where trust was missing, RE was transformed into a kind of civic religion

find themselves complicit in misrepresenting their own beliefs.

Getting the environment right for those difficult conversations, not internalising the policeman of the state, cannot be about ignoring these wider currents. The hardening of the security agenda facing our schools has to be acknowledged, and only then can a teacher build the trust to point beyond the limits of what young people think they can comfortably say.

Does Religious Education Work? by James Conroy and David Lundie (Bloomsbury Academic, £24.99)



Two days in Westminster

Your regular guide to what's going on in central government

THURSDAY 26TH MARCH AND FRIDAY 27TH MARCH

Is there an election coming up or something? We hadn't noticed...

Desperate to get as much information out as possible before purdah chopped off their communication lines, on March 26 and 27 we saw the MOST departmental notices we think the Department for Education (DfE)/Ofsted/Ofqual could have released without crashing the internet.

Any guesses as to how many pieces of information they pushed out? Place your bets now....

Still thinking?

It was a grand total of 112 announcements, statistical releases, press releases and publications over the course of the two days.

Perhaps they thought we would all be too busy to read them all. But, fear not! We have had a delightful two weeks sifting through all these webpages – and it has taken us the full two weeks.

Here's a selection of some of the more interesting ones...

On the Friday, the DfE released its latest information about its progress towards getting rid of costly 0845 numbers. Turns out that if the DfE wants you to call for "positive" reasons – such as returning to work, you can call them for as long as you want at no cost.

But, if you want to find out a bit more information about that pesky pension of yours, you will still be charged at the high 0845 rate.

The report states: "The department provides funding to a number of organisations to provide free telephony services supplying information, advice and guidance and intensive support

services relating to issues affecting families and children. In addition the department may also use 'free to call' 080 numbers where there is a desire to positively reach out and attract telephony contact. For example the Return to Teaching Helpline, which provides advice to ex-teachers looking to return to the profession."

For the pension phone line school staff will have to wait until April 2016 before the 0845 numbers cease, but a geographic number will also be provided. Not too sure where we can find this number. Might have to get them a "telephony" call to find out!

A second revelation was the amount of money doled out by the DfE in performance-related pay.

The department's salary bill hit £171,000,000 in 2014 for its "delegated" staff. Of the more than 3,000 workers, almost a quarter (24 per cent) received a "non-consolidated performance-related payment" (NCPRP) at the end of the year, which was at most a payment of £3,200. In total, it dished out an extra £1,361,550 to staff.

Ofsted, meanwhile, has an annual salary bill of £69,563,255 for its 1,246 staff, and 22 per cent received an NCPRP at the end of the year, although with a lesser maximum value of £1,500. However, Ofsted was more generous with its performance payments passed out "in year", giving almost 60 per cent of its staff a bonus of up to £5,000.

Poor Ofqual staff do not appear to have had any bonuses.

Finally, you know how we like to thrill you with little tidbits of DfE information? Well, we have scoured through the department's power usage, detailed by every half hour, by every building, for the whole of February. YES, really.

Shockingly, it looks like most staff rock up at Sanctuary House between the hours of 9-9.30am and leave by 6pm at the latest. Oh and the meter at its Darlington office, Mowden House, has "failed". Good job they moved out at the end of February.

SEE GOVERNMENT – YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM US!

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEEK FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

EVENTS

From workload to high energy drinks

SOPHIE SCOTT

@SOPHIE_SCOTT

Investigates

If you have been hiding under an election-shielding rock for the past couple of weeks, or holidaying on the other side of the world, the teachers' union conferences may have passed you by. Even for those trying to keep track of all the announcements, the deluge of information was hard to manage. So we've done a round-up of what the National Union of Teachers (NUT), NASUWT, and Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) all had to say at their pre-election conferences

Teacher workload topped conference concerns over Easter.

NUT general secretary Christine Blower called the government's response "woefully inadequate", accusing it of "tinkering at the edges" of a significant problem.

"Of great concern to parents should be the fact that recruitment to teaching is falling short of the numbers we need. New graduates do not see working 60 hours per week, with precious little professional autonomy, as an attractive proposition," she said.

In her keynote speech, ATL general secretary Mary Boustead highlighted the "dismal" retention rate of newly-qualified teachers, arguing that 40 per cent left after their first year.

The figures were later disputed by Sam Freedman, ex-policy adviser to the coalition, who noted that the high number included entrants who started teacher training, but never took up a school post.

At the NASUWT, general secretary Chris Keates highlighted the poor management practices that could increase teacher workload without meaning to.

She said teachers were told the colour of pen to mark in, plus how it should be done and how often. This took "no account" of different subjects and individual subject workloads.

The union supported a motion to commission research to investigate and petition the Department for Education to audit and publish the impact of the pupil premium on teacher workload.

The three unions also discussed the mental health of staff and pupils.

ATL focused on children's mental health, with Dr Boustead saying: "Removing the stigma around mental health and increasing support for education staff, social care and specialists would make great strides towards a solution. The introduction of statutory PSHE – something ATL has consistently campaigned for – would enable appropriate training for staff and more time to talk during timetabled hours."

Members carried a motion for the executive committee to lobby the government to invest in "preventative measures such as safe havens for vulnerable children" in schools

and "appropriate" funding levels for dedicated staff.

NASUWT cited studies in which more than two thirds of teachers surveyed said their job had affected their mental health, with a quarter turning to alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine as coping mechanisms.

Ms Keates said that wellbeing had deteriorated during the coalition's tenure, arguing that it had never been a priority – notwithstanding its "workload challenge".

Concerns about accountability loomed large.

Ms Blower said: "Only a root and branch reform of the out-of-control accountability system with Ofsted at its centre will restore trust in teachers and bring working hours down to acceptable levels."

During an address to the NASUWT, shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt said he wanted to put the "trust back in the relationship" between ministers and the workforce.

He promised that a Labour government would make sure that Ofsted adopted a more "constructive, peer-review model of inspection led by outstanding heads and inspiring teachers".

Alongside these common key issues, each union highlighted its own concerns to delegates.

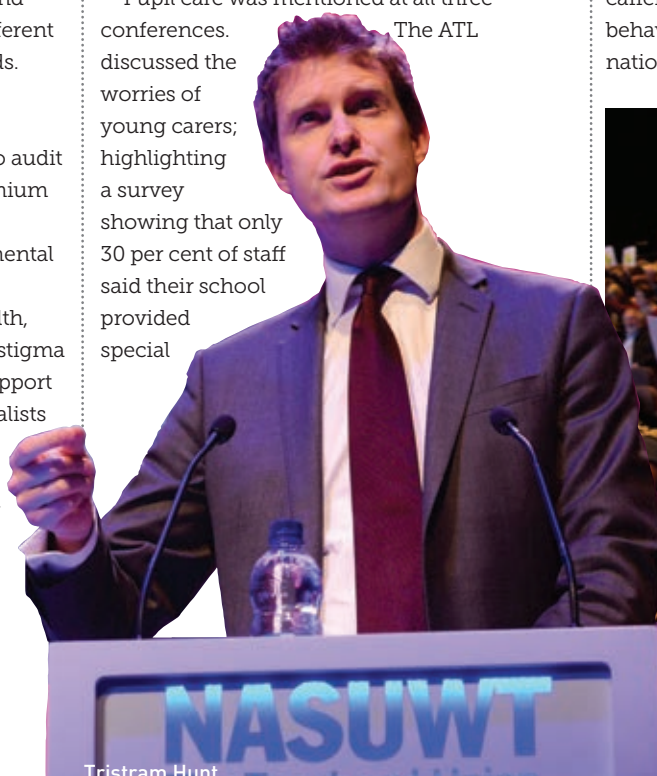
The NASUWT and NUT discussed age discrimination, with NUT delegates hearing that older teachers were seen as "more expensive" than their younger colleagues.

Ms Blower said: "This is a shortsighted view of the value that older teachers bring to schools. Their expertise is essential to effective peer coaching within schools and ensures that vital experience remains within the classroom and the school community, benefitting children directly every day."

However, this was counter-posed with concerns about pay flexibility, which enables younger employees to move up the pay scale faster; the NUT has not welcomed such flexibility.

Pupil care was mentioned at all three conferences.

The ATL discussed the worries of young carers; highlighting a survey showing that only 30 per cent of staff said their school provided special



Tristram Hunt



Above and below: delegates at the NASUWT conference

support for this group of pupils.

Dr Boustead said: "Young carers should feel supported in schools and colleges ... but the reality is that many are bullied, feel isolated, or struggle with their learning because of their caring role."

The media focused on a claim at the NASUWT conference that energy drinks and caffeine were a leading cause of disruptive behaviour. The union is now working with a national drug and alcohol charity to assess the

impact of these drinks on children.

Describing them as "legal highs", Ms Keates said: "Teachers are growing increasingly concerned that some young people are using these drinks to enable them to stay up into the early hours and then replace their lost energy by drinking two or three cans on their way to school."

"Teachers are reporting that this affects concentration in class, and hyperactivity is then followed by the inevitable crash later



s: welcome to the Easter conferences



LEADERS' VIEWS

“It was an excellent conference. It highlighted all the challenges facing the teaching profession, came forward with clear solutions and teachers were united in their determination to ensure that an incoming government delivers the entitlements that children should expect from a publicly funded education service. The conference sent a clear message that in order to achieve this there must be a change of government.”

CHRIS KEATES



“ATL’s conference was highly successful in giving a voice to classroom teachers. ATL’s debates on curriculum, assessment, children and young people’s mental health and many other issues were widely reported and raised the profile of the teaching profession in the run-up to the general election. ATL will take forward member concerns, contained in our manifesto for education.”

MARY BOUSTED



in the school day when the impact of these drinks wears off.”

The British Soft Drinks Association (BSDA) later released a statement that said. “Since 2010, the BSDA has operated a code of practice that high-caffeine soft drinks are not recommended for children, and specifies that this information should be clearly stated on the label of such drinks.”



“The NUT annual conference was, as usual, lively and constructive. It is clear from conference that much needs to be done to improve the education of children and the working lives of teachers. The NUT will seek to engage in discussion with whoever forms the next government to ensure teachers’ concerns are heard and, more importantly, acted upon.”

CHRISTINE BLOWER



School Bulletin



Flash, and you're off against Usain



Kiesha Kilomwene and Brandon Whetton, both aged 16, race against a virtual Usain Bolt in The Accelerator sprint simulator

A virtual Usain Bolt was put through his paces by students from a Wolverhampton school as part of an interactive PE workshop.

Science education specialists Classroom Medics gave some 150 year 7 and 11 pupils from Deansfield Community School a taste of the training regimes of top athletes to show how their body works and its capabilities.

Both groups took on "The Accelerator" sprint simulator that let them race a virtual Usain Bolt. They could see how far behind they'd be in a real race, plus record

their peak sprinting speed.

The simulator, which is in an inflatable, domed tunnel, is made up of a 10-20m strip of LED lights that flash in sequence at the Olympic and world sprint champion's running speed. Pupils simply race after the lights.

James Hearn, head of PE at Deansfield, said: "The Accelerator was a particular highlight, giving the opportunity for students to race against the legend that is Usain Bolt, and his actual split times, in a cool tunnel. It enables them to see for themselves just how good elite athletes are."



Malik Sheryar-Karamat holds his Millennium Point Young Innovator Prize

Robots win the day for Malik

Success in the Millennium Point Young Innovator Prize has given a St Alban's Academy student a place on a sponsored undergraduate degree at Birmingham City University.

Malik Sheryar-Karamat competed against three other finalists who all had to make a presentation focusing on science, technology and engineering with themes including nanotechnology, robotics, sustainability, future energy, feeding the

world and space exploration.

The 18-year-old winner impressed with his presentation "Will robots save or destroy us?". He now has a place on a three-year mechanical engineering degree at Birmingham City's faculty of computing, engineering and the built environment, starting in September.

Malik, who also has a summer placement with Millennium Point, says that he hopes for a career in a science-based subject.

Uganda beckons for 20 teachers this summer

FEATURED

A Cornwall teacher is searching for 20 UK teachers to take to Uganda this summer for three weeks of in-school coaching.

Lizzie Waddling, an expressive arts and English teacher at Falmouth School, will lead the team in delivering teaching ideas and strategies to Ugandan teachers and pupils.

It will deliver in-school coaching alongside a five-day conference.

"With the limited resources available to teachers in Africa, in-service teacher training is very rare and nearly always externally run rather than being integrated into school life," Lizzie says. "The result is didactic low-quality teaching."

She says the skills needed to join her venture are "loads of enthusiasm, problem-solving skills and the ability to inspire, something we know will filter through to others involved".

The project will be run through social enterprise LRTT (Limited Resource Teacher Training) and will cost £1,195 per place. The price includes accommodation, all meals and transport, as well as training and mentoring.

But the money is worth it for "fantastic" career development, especially for newly qualified teachers, Lizzie says.

"It is an absolutely incredible opportunity, especially for new teachers in the early stages of their careers.

"When they return they can say to their



Lizzie teaches a class in India as part of her trip with LRTT last year

Inset: The LRTT conference in India that Lizzie Waddling took part in last summer

school that over the summer they have run continuing professional development sessions, which is something a UK teacher probably wouldn't do until they get to middle management.

"They will come back as much more confident teachers with a much clearer understanding of how to use different things in their teaching, different behaviour management skills and more."

This is Lizzie's second overseas project; last year she travelled to India with LRTT.

"Since our visit, Indian teachers have taken on roles as leaders, lead practitioners



for training and professional development within their schools, so it is great to see that the training links are continuing. Seeing the impact it has on children is incredible."

If you are interested in joining Lizzie visit <http://lrrtt.org/uganda2015/>. The trip starts on July 27 and runs to August 21. Applications will be accepted until July.

Glide and shine for Macmillan



Pupils dressed up in some wacky costumes for last year's Macmillan Dress Up and Dance day

It's time to put on your dancing shoes and drag out your gladrag to show your school's support for cancer research.

Macmillan Cancer Support's "Dress Up and Dance", which returns to schools and nurseries for its third year on June 19, encourages teachers to ask their students to get dressed up and have a dance in exchange for a £2 donation.

Those who sign up will receive a free fundraising pack that contains teaching resources, including online dance routines, cut-out animal masks, educational activity sheets and assembly plans.

Simon Phillips, interim director of fundraising at Macmillan, says: "Dress Up and Dance is not only great fun, but an easy way for teachers and group leaders to get kids exercising and expressing themselves in the name of cancer support. We can't wait to hear what you've all got planned."

To register your school visit <http://eventregister.macmillan.org.uk/dressup>.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Matthew Slater has taken over as the new headteacher of King Solomon High School in Essex.

Formerly head of Drapers' Academy – where his efforts to turn it around to “one of the fastest improving” schools in the country were noted by David Cameron in parliament – Mr Slater says his past experiences in Jewish schools drew him to King Solomon.

“I've got a lot of experience in Jewish education and when I saw the job it felt compelling immediately because I thought that the knowledge gained in my previous roles would be valuable in supporting the school's development,” he says.

He began his career at a North London Jewish School, Hasmonean High School, and then went on to Yavneh College in Borehamwood. As deputy head and governor, he helped the school to become one of the top 10 comprehensives in the UK.

Speaking about his new position, Mr Slater said: “We want to immediately make an impact on GCSE and A-level results; to take them above national

averages and put the school on a trajectory to an outstanding Ofsted.”

Mr Slater has more than 20 years of teaching experience after completing his PGCE at Roehampton University. He has a business degree from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Arwen Makin has joined Voice, the union for education professionals, as the Derby-based union's new solicitor, following David Brierley's retirement.

Ms Makin graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1999, before qualifying as a solicitor in 2002. She most recently worked for Thompsons Solicitors in Nottingham.

“As an employment law solicitor, I have always enjoyed working with trade unions and so my new role is an exciting opportunity to support union members,” she says.

“My mum was a teacher and so I'm delighted to be working with education professionals.”

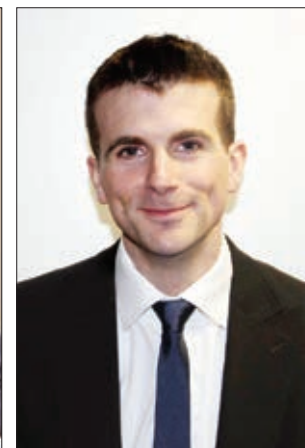
Matt Hood has moved from the senior team at education charity, Achievement for All, to become a director at the School 21 trust.



Matthew Slater



Arwen Makin



Matt Hood

After studying politics, philosophy and economics at York University, Mr Hood started his career as an economics teacher before advising at the Department for Education on school reform, post-16 participation and special educational needs and disability.

He has since worked with education charities including Teach First, where he trained to be a teacher, The National

Orchestra for All and The Brilliant Club.

Speaking about his appointment he says: “This is a really exciting move for me. It feels like we're on the edge of a revolution in teaching practice, and in my role here I'm going to be doing everything I can to get us to that tipping point.”

He is also continuing as an assistant headteacher at Heysham High School in Lancashire.

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your school, local authority or organisation please let us know by emailing news@schoolsweek.co.uk

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The Regional Manager role is a key one in the development of Enabling Enterprise as we work towards our goal of working with 50,000 students across the UK by 2015. You will be building off a new network of 6 schools and 1,300 students in Manchester. Key Responsibilities include programme delivery in schools and at businesses, promoting our programmes, managing the Manchester office, and training and recruiting new team members.

For more information see www.enablingenterprise.org/vacancies.

The position is full time, starting 17th August 2015, with a salary of up to £36,000, review after one year.

Applications should include a CV and Covering Letter and be sent by email to tom@enablingenterprise.org by 9am on 22nd April 2015.

Regional Manager for Manchester | Enabling Enterprise | www.enablingenterprise.org



Devonport High School For Boys

Assistant Headteacher

September 2015
 Scale range L12-16

Devonport High School for Boys is an 11-18 grammar school with 1200 students on roll, including 300 in the sixth form. Our students (including some girls in the sixth form) are from a wide range of backgrounds in Plymouth, West Devon and Cornwall. Plymouth is a vibrant waterfront city, with a thriving university, surrounded by a stunning and inspiring natural environment.

Following the promotion of the current post-holder to Headship at our school, we require an Assistant Headteacher for September 2015.

Innovation and hard work have culminated in outstanding results for DHSB students at KS4 and KS5 this year. We are looking for a colleague to support our progress towards becoming an exceptional school.

The successful candidate will work closely with the Headteacher and join a Leadership Group determined to ensure *Everyone Succeeds* at DHSB. The new Assistant Headteacher will improve the personal development and well-being of our young people and develop creative and innovative opportunities for student leadership across the whole school.

The successful candidate will:

- be an outstanding teacher with proven leadership skills;
- be able to inspire students, staff and the wider community;
- lead with exceptional interpersonal and organisational skills;
- rise to the challenge of a changing educational landscape in the leadership of continuous school improvement.

Please contact the Headteacher Designate, **Dan Roberts**, for an informal discussion about the role or to arrange a visit (headteacher@dhsb.org). Further details and an application are available on our website www.dhsb.org

Closing date: 12.00 noon on 1 May 2015

Interview dates: week beginning 11 May 2015

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

*"Devonport High School for Boys is an outstanding school and has an outstanding capacity for sustained development."
 Ofsted February 2011*



Devonport High School For Boys

Teacher of Physics MPS (with a possible TLR)

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For an application pack please visit www.dhsb.org or contact **Sarah Nicholson**, Head's PA, at sarah.nicholson@dhsb.org.

The closing date is 12.00 noon on Friday 24 April 2015.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

*"Devonport High School for Boys is an outstanding school and has an outstanding capacity for sustained development."
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We are looking for self-starters with an entrepreneurial outlook, comfortable working with students and presenting to school leaders, with a passion for education. We want people who will be dedicated to building and maintaining relationships with our schools, and supporting them to make our programmes transformational for their children. To build credibility, we are looking for evidence of outstanding teaching practice in a primary or secondary school in the UK, and subject specialism is not important.

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The closing date for applications is 5pm, Friday 1st May 2015

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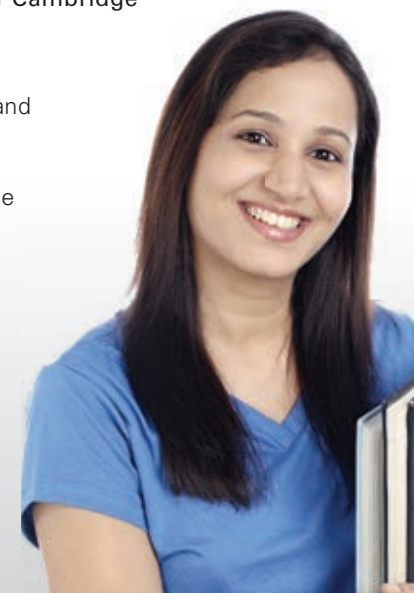
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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 7 | 2 | | 9 | |
| | | | 4 | 6 | | | | |
| | | | | 8 | | 3 | 1 | |
| | 7 | | | | | | 9 | |
| | | | | | | | | 8 |
| 5 | 4 | 2 | | | | | | 6 |
| 8 | | | | | | 3 | 6 | |
| | | 9 | 3 | | | 1 | | 4 |
| 6 | | 5 | | 1 | 4 | | 7 | |

Difficulty:
EASY

Last Week's solutions

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| 3 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 2 |
| 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| 6 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| 4 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| 7 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| 9 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| 2 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 7 |

Difficulty:
EASY

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 8 | 3 | | | |
| | | 3 | | | 9 | | 5 | 2 |
| 8 | | | | | | | 3 | 1 |
| 3 | | 6 | 4 | | 7 | | | |
| 1 | | | | | | 6 | | |
| 9 | | 2 | 6 | | 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | 8 | 5 |
| | | 7 | | | 8 | | 9 | 6 |
| | | | | 2 | 6 | | | |

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 8 |
| 9 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| 4 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| 2 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| 1 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| 6 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 3 |
| 5 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| 3 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 6 |

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference to WIN a collector's ACADEMIES WEEK mug



What's the caption? tweet a caption @schoolsweek



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins a collector's mug. Tweet a picture of your completed spot the difference using @schoolsweek in the tweet.