MPs call for lead autism teacher in every school
Cross-party report highlights importance of specialist training

By Pete Henshaw

Attitudes to STEM

Research shows that pupils’ attitudes to STEM learning and careers change as they move from key stage 2 to 3. We look at why this is and what it means for schools.

Applying to HE

The UCAS personal statement is meant to level the university playing field for students, regardless of their background. We look at new research showing that it may actually be part of the problem.

Governor top tips

A National Leader of Governance gives her top tips for effective governing.

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The 3,000 hidden deaf-blind children

Concern has been raised at evidence of a significant under-identification of deaf-blind children in our schools.

In a recent survey of 56 local authorities, just 549 deaf-blind children were identified, while the Pupil Level Annual School Census records a total of 935 deaf-blind children in England.

However, a report from deaf-blind charity Sense, says that there are an estimated 4,000 such children in England, meaning that as many as 3,000 are missing out on vital support.

To download the report, visit www.sense.org.uk/SecEd: On Your Side | Psycho babbie | Diary of an NQT | Union address | Managing ICT | At the chalkface

Set of three lesson observation DVDs

Created to reflect the requirements of the new Ofsted framework, published in January 2012

Made by Tony Thornley, ex-HMI and ASCL consultant; author of ASCL’s Sef and self-assessment guidance.

For more information or to place an order go to www.ascl.org.uk/lessonobservations

To be used by schools for professional development related to teaching, learning and inspection. Each DVD will last around two hours and contain:

- Two observed lessons
- Examples of inspectors gathering first-hand evidence through observation and discussions.
- Supporting lesson documentation which might normally be provided to a lesson observer.
- Judgements, based on the observed evidence of learning and progress, teaching and behaviour in each lesson.
- Brief feedback from the inspector to the teacher.
Newly qualified struggling to find work in Scotland

By Sam Phipps

Teaching in Scotland is becoming an increasingly attractive profession, unions have warned, after a survey by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) showed that newly qualified teachers had found full-time permanent posts six to eight months after ending their training.

The figure of 24.9 per cent in those kind of positions was a rise on the 20.5 per cent last year. However, more than a third of respondents – 34.2 per cent – were on temporary contracts, up from 25.5 per cent in 2011. New teachers who were already employed for 12 per cent of those who completed the survey, down from 16.2 per cent.

Anthony Flinn, chief executive of the Association of Headteachers and Lecturers, said the figures show an improving picture of the job prospects for our probationer teachers but there are clearly still difficulties. Too many talented and enthusiastic newly qualified teachers to find employment and there appears to be a prevalence of temporary teaching contracts, which cannot be good for the stability of the profession, and the consistency of teaching for our young people. However, it looks like the figures bottomed out in 2009/10 and are now rising, which is a positive sign.

Only 22.7 per cent of new teachers completed the survey - 622 out of a possible 2,745, and don’t from 42 per cent last year – and the GTCS admitted it had no way of knowing the employment status of those who declined.

Larry Flanagan, general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), said the figures showed that there was still a long way to go.

‘The marked growth in the use of temporary contracts by many local authorities is leading to the qualifications of the teaching workforce and removing schools and pupils of the vital stability that is needed to ensure a high-quality learning and teaching experience in all parts of our educational system.’

Scottish education secretary Mike Russell said: ‘The most recent numbers of teachers claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance, from April 2012, were lower than in the same month in 2011. This positive trend has emerged over the past 20 months and I am keen to ensure it continues.’

Inspection results hit by tougher regime

Hundreds of schools have been judged down in Ofsted inspections since the introduction of the new framework in January, official figures show.

The figures confirm that under new chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw’s regime Ofsted is finding it much harder to get the top “outstanding” grade.

According to data from the schools’ watchdog, of the 1,969 inspected in England between January and the end of March this year, seven per cent (146) were judged “outstanding” for overall effectiveness, 50 per cent (997) were judged “good”, 34 per cent (658) were judged “satisfactory” and nine per cent (183) of schools were “inadequate”.

Despite the calmer with the academic year 2010/11 during which 17 per cent of schools were judged outstanding, 46 per cent good, 38 per cent satisfactory and six per cent inadequate.

However, it is difficult to make year-on-year comparisons as it is now much tougher for schools to continue to achieve a good grade.

Russell Holby, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said he had concerns about further changes inspections in due to be implemented in September and expected a system of support to be in place to help those schools found to be in deficit under the new arrangements.

“One of the big concerns has been the inconsistency in the quality and approach of inspection teams which in some cases has led to inaccurate judgements,” he said. “We had seen changes only a few months away, Ofsted must make sure all inspectors are properly trained and understood what is required. This is critical if we want to maintain credibility with the profession.”

College in Northern Ireland are to train fewer secondary school teachers, with one in every five places being cut.

Places on one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses are being drastically reduced in recognition that there are too many qualified graduates competing for limited job openings.

The total number of PGCE places being lost this year is 65. All but seven of these are on post-primary specific courses.

It has been argued that too many teachers are being trained in the North and many struggle to find full-time work.

While there are five separate providers in Northern Ireland, just two institutions have had their 2012 intake cut. Queen’s University will lose 35 post-primary PGCE places while the University of Ulster is facing a reduction of 28 in both post-primary and 21 post-primary.

The North’s education minister John O’Dowd said there were too few pupils and too many schools.

School heralds impact of computer gaming

Pupils who regularly play computer games designed to enhance their learning perform better in their GCSEs, a researcher has said.

At Yealmont School, a top-performing specialist science, mathematics and ICT college in Birmingham, teachers have found that playing computer games based on key subjects and key stage 4 subjects helps children to learn.

Up to 70 per cent of year 11 students at Yealmont who regularly used the educational games either met or exceeded their predicted grades in maths and English last year.

In science the figure was 50 per cent.

The games-based revision and assessment system, developed by a Devon-based software company, is being used by around 900 secondary and primary schools in the UK.

The computer games are divided into a range of categories, including action, sports, design, strategy and music. They are curriculum-related questions across a range of learning areas.

When pupils get questions right, they get a wider range of games while the marks are a useful tool to help teachers track their progress and attainment.

‘Not only do the students love using it, but the staff are able to set framework tasks within a few clicks and have access to some really useful reports which can help to inform their planning,” said David Poole, deputy headteacher at Yealmont, who leads the school’s online learning.

All pupils at the 11 to 16 school have access to the computer games, with 40 per cent played in school hours, and 60 per cent outside school hours. Contrary to popular belief that boys are keener on computer games than girls, the games have proven equally popular with girls.

Yealmont is so impressed with the games’ impact on learning that it has purchased the system for the next five years.

‘Computer games have had a lot of negative press but this is about our students answering questions online and staff getting valuable data about what students needs are, which are they doing well and where they need more help,” Mr Poole said.

‘The students are very enthusiastic about the competition. It’s stealth learning. They are engrossed in answering questions while learning at the same time,”

Playing to learn: Computer games helped Yealmont School students to improve results.
Dyslexic pupils hit by changes to exam support

By Dorothy Lepkowska

A leading dyslexia charity says that thousands of dyslexic students are being disadvantaged because of changes to exam arrangements for GCSEs and A-levels.

In the past few years, high-performing pupils with dyslexia have had some of their special arrangements, such as being given extra time in which to complete examinations, taken away following criticism from others who claim it is unfair on other candidates.

Dyslexia Action is involved in an ongoing discussion with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) to have the access arrangements reinstated, claiming that the conditions pose greater problems for young people than just with reading. These include problems with organisation, mathematics and memory which can result in slow and difficult information processing.

Although dyslexia does not affect intelligence it can put an individual at a serious disadvantage in exams, particularly where tests are timed and memory recall and written response, within a set period of time.

Kevin Gerson, CEO of Dyslexia Action, said: “Dyslexia is a recognised disability under the Equalities Act 2010. Therefore, examination arrangements, such as extra time, are set in place to ensure a level playing field.

“Wrong is to undermine the achievements of a young dyslexic person by saying their extra time gives them an advantage over other students – particularly when the dyslexic student has had to work twice or ten times harder to be able to take the subject being examined, compared to their non-dyslexic peers.”

Mr Gerson said they remained “a lot of confusion” around the access arrangements for examinations.

He continued: “Our main concern is that the JCQ’s regulations will only allow for students who have considerable disability and adjustments will only be made in this way, in a way which would not be equivalent.

“Dyslexia affects different individuals differently and severity can vary greatly. We see therefore that examination arrangements tests could cause considerable threat to those students who are above average in ability but still need exam arrangements where they are not disadvantaged compared to their peers. It is the impact of such a disability on an individual’s capability that needs to be the focus.”

He added that a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by dyslexics left them “under suspicion of cheating”.

Michael Turner, the JCQ’s director, said: “We agree that candidates who meet the criteria for access arrangements should not be at a disadvantage having an unfair advantage.

“Access arrangements include a variety of options including extendedemply, supervised breaks, use of spell-check processors and, in certain cases, extra time, readers and scribes. In developing these arrangements, JCQ engages with a wide range of key stakeholders to ensure the process remains fair to all candidates and is consistently applied.”

To achieve a level playing field, it is essential that extra time is only provided to those who meet strict criteria. As such, it cannot be appropriate to provide support with a high IQ and who have processing speeds well within the national average.

Schools given £17m to build links to developing world

The government is giving £17 million to schools to build connections between UK schools and 29 developing countries around the world in the next three years.

The funding has been given to the Organisation for Charitable Classrooms programme, which is run by the British Council and supported by UK school leaders and educational partnerships with more than 50 countries.

The new money will allow 1,600 schools to benefit from a full programme of support, while as many as 18,000 schools will be able to collaborate with overseas partners online via web-conferencing, discussion forums and mobile phone apps.

Schools will be encouraged to make creative use of technology, including joint assemblies with children in other countries via web-conferencing and the use of social media. The programme will help students and teachers to learn from each other and to develop their partnerships.

International development secretary, Andrew Mitchell, said: “The government will link as many children growing up in the UK with those around the world, allowing them to find out about the world around them, about the facts of poverty that face children their own age in developing countries. I urge all schools to consider how they can use this opportunity to benefit their students.”

Education secretary, Michael Gove, added: “International links between schools can be hugely beneficial to both teachers and pupils. This programme will bridge geographical barriers to spark innovation between classrooms and support cooperation between students.”

Public reveals fears over impact of regional pay

Two thirds of voters believe that a move to regional pay will make it harder for schools in some areas to attract and keep good teachers.

The government wants to move to regional pay - whereby public sector pay is linked to the local private sector rather than a national pay framework.

The move could mean that as many as six million public sector workers see their pay reduced.

The study, carried out by polling company Savanta on behalf of the TUC, also found that 75 per cent of the 1,000 adults polled also want to see an independent economic impact assessment on the possible consequences of regional pay on local communities.

The independent pay review bodies for the various public sector professions, including the School Teachers’ Review Body, have been asked by chancellor George Osborne to look into the idea of regional pay and are due to report later this year.

In his Budget speech earlier this year, Mr Osborne said: “London weighting already exists across the public sector. So we should see what we can do to make our public services responsive and help out private sector to grow and create jobs in all parts of the country.”

If approved, it will be the most significant change to public sector pay. This is the first time since 1971 which has an 18 per cent pay gap between its private and public sector workers.

Elsewhere, the pay gap in Yorkshire and Humberside and Scotland is 13.4 per cent. The East of England stands at 13.7 per cent, Northern Ireland at 12.3 per cent and the North East at 11.7 per cent.

The South East by comparison has just a 0.5 per cent gap and London stands at 4.6 per cent.

The TUC has repeatedly called on ministers to shelve the plans and commenting on the general election result, Shadow Education Secretary, Christine Blower, said: “The government’s programme of cuts and closures – local authorities,headteachers, teacher associations, governor associations and all of the teacher unions – oppose the idea.

“The government would reduce teacher mobility, create shortages in areas of lower pay, lift retirement age, and create needless extra expense and bureaucracy for schools.”

Parents support

Charity SchoolHouse has launched a five-year national campaign aimed at helping schools build partnerships with parents to improve student attendance and achievement.

Commissioned by the Department for Education, the toolkit is aimed at schools that wish to build partnerships with parents and their relationship with families. It is divided into six 90-minute sessions and is the first of five toolkits to be published by SchoolHouse. It will draw on its experience in working with schools, parents, local communities and families. Visit www.schoolhouse.org.uk for more information.

Deaf swimming

A new guide from the National Deaf Children’s Society, entitled Deaf Swimming: A Guide for Teachers, is aimed at helping teachers show swimming coaches and PE teachers how to make their lessons accessible.

The guide, which has been produced in conjunction with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, provides teachers with examples of effective practice to help include deaf children in swimming sessions. Research from the charity, which works with two out of four (53 per cent) deaf children, has highlighted deaf children’s difficulties accessing swimming pools or classes because of attitudes towards their hearing loss.

It says that because of this, many deaf children are “scared to swim” and do not go into the water. The Mencap Deaf Friendly Swimming Project offers a free training course on how to work with deaf children. Visit www.adva.org.uk/help/ deafswim.
More than half of new teachers to be trained on-the-job by 2015

By Pete Henshaw

More than half of all teacher training places will be delivered by schools by the end of this Parliament, the education secretary has said.

Mr戈夫也has also unveiled plans to give trainee teachers financial incentives of up to £5,000 to work in challenging schools. In a speech to delegates at the National College for School Leadership annual conference last week, Mr戈夫 said that more than 15,000 training places could be based in schools by the time of the next General Election.

His plans include a dramatic expansion of Schools Direct, a Department for Education pilot programme which invites Teaching Schools to bid for teaching training places. It is expected that there will be more than 900 training places via Schools Direct in September and Mr戈夫 is now openning the scheme up to all schools.

He said: "Trainee teachers will be able to recruit their own trainees and develop their own training programme in partnership with a university. In return for this, schools will be expected to find a job for the trainee once they finish their training.

"Schools won’t have to be part of a Teaching School alliance to get involved but we envisage that most will because the advantages of training across a group of schools.

He added: "As these programmes grow more and more schools will be able to recruit, train and hire their own teachers; working in partnership with other schools and top quality ITT (initial teacher training) providers to give new teachers the best possible start to their career.

"Currently, around 30,000 teacher training places are allocated to a network of ITT providers for "qualification-based courses". Some of these are university courses.

Mr戈夫 said that existing training routes will continue to be available for training all teachers, including those who are trained at universities, that are as "outstanding" as will be "vitalising" for their level of places for the next two years. However, others would have to compete for places alongside schools through the expanded Schools Direct scheme. The minister also unveiled plans to scrap the Graduate Teacher Programme and introduce an "employment-based" branch of Schools Direct from September 2013.

This will be available to those who have at least three years’ experience in other careers. The government is to fund 5,000 places on this pathway in 2013/14. Mr戈夫 continued: "By the end of this Parliament we will halve all of training places will be delivered by schools, whether through direct provision - Teach First, School Direct, or at our new employment-based route.

"Most of the rest will be doing PGCE courses in existing providers rated outstanding." Mr戈夫 added.

Teachers and heads this week warned that a combination of practical and theoretical training was essential. Chair. However, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "Trainee teachers not only need practical training but the time and space to develop and exchange ideas on best practice in education. It is therefore vitally important that graduates continue to have part of their training in universities and colleges.

Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "Practical, hands-on experience is a hugely important part of teacher preparation, and therefore we welcome the commitment to building on existing best practice in school-based training.

"An understanding of subject knowledge is one of the central component. Teaching is a science as well as an art and there is an important body of knowledge about how to teach and to engage young people which all trainees need to have.

Elsewhere, Mr戈夫 also said that if a Schools Direct trainee spends "the majority of their training in a challenging school" then they will receive an extra 25 per cent in bursary payments. Those starting in September will get up to £5,000 extra.

Wilshaw: ‘Radical solutions’ to help disadvantaged

A review of the issues facing deprived communities is proposing solutions to the problems of education underachievement among disadvantaged children.

Oftsed chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw launched the review, which he said will investigate the barriers to access and success for children from these communities.

He said he would end the report Oftsed has produced after two studies were published in 1995 and 2003 under the title Access and Achievement in Urban Education.

"Part of this national conference of the National College for School Leadership last week, Mr Sir Michael said that the 1993 report had described the "lack of overall performance and the poverty of good-quality provision in 11 to 16 schools and the capacity of those communities. He continued: "What was so depressing was that the report in 2003, pointed a similarly bleak picture of underperformance in these same communities."

He added: "As previous studies identified issues such as high pupil turnover and difficulties in teacher recruitment which were preventing schools from improving, so we have repeated these questions over the last 20 years.

"Now a review panel of leading headteachers and academic leadership is to be set up to answer five questions:

"Why are there children more affected by socio-economic and educational disadvantages?

"What more can be done by parents and education providers to ensure the best possible schools for those that need it most?

"What can we learn from schools which are achieving success with disadvantaged pupils?

"What have we got wrong now over policies and resources that would support effective, co-ordinated and improvement of local education services in areas of the greatest need?"

He added: "What more needs to happen to ensure that disadvantaged young people achieve success in employment and as citizens?" Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "What we need is for "constructive suggestions" to improve practice.

Wilshaw has promised to let the report be published in May 2013. To download the previous two studies from 1995 and 1993, visit www.ofsted.gov.uk/media/access-and-achievement-urban-education

Estyn praises schools for use of national data

Schools are now benchmarking themselves against similar schools and sharing good practice more often, according to Wales’s education inspectorate.

Estyn says schools are increasingly making good use of national data to evaluate their own performance and identify areas for improvement.

Introduced by the Welsh Government in 2009, the All-Wales Core Data Set contains a school’s results against both local and national performance performance; the difference in performance between girls and boys and between those pupils who receive free school meals and those who do not; and comparisons with performance of similar schools on the free school meal benchmarks.

In a new report on schools’ use of the data, Ann Keane, the chief inspector of education and training in Wales, said: "Historically, there has been a lack of consistency in how schools and local authorities across Wales evaluated school performance to identify areas for improvement. Now with the introduction of the All-Wales Core Data Set, every school in Wales is able to identify higher-performing similar schools so that they can get in touch with them and share good practice.

"As a result, we are seeing more schools introduce strategies to tackle underperformance. Where families of schools are identifying and sharing good practice there has also been a positive impact on teachers’ professional learning. All senior leaders in schools should ensure that they are making the best use of data sets and sharing their analysis of form with teachers and governors."

The report contains a number of case studies of good practice, including Newport local authority which has provided extensive support to school leaders and governors to help them make effective use of the data. The authority also provides schools with additional data analytics to complement the core data and helps teachers and staff explain how to explain to students what they are doing and why.

However, the report also found that one-in-five schools in the national data sets were not using them to help themselves improve. Inspectors found that too few schools use data to justify what they do currently, rather than challenge themselves to do better.

Passion is the secret to Oxbridge admissions

Students applying to Oxbridge should develop their intellectual abilities around subjects they are passionate about – even if they are perceived to be common and unoriginal.

The advice comes from an academic who has spent five years training students for the Oxbridge admissions process.

Dr Christine Cremin, who teaches in the Faculty of Medicine at Cambridge University, says that displaying a genuine interest in a subject is better than doing anything for the sake of an admissions form.

For example, she argues that a passion for playing video games can be developed into academic study looking at the socio-cultural behaviour in online groups, while an interest in hobbies like cooking might look at the linguistics and origins of how or why the psychological mechanisms of laughter.

She says that genuine and real-life engagement and curiosity of this kind will impress admissions officers much more than a faked interest in traditional subjects.

Dr Cremin, who is a Cambridge graduate herself, explained: "People excel in what they are passionate about. Don’t do things for the sake of an admissions form, but for your own personal enjoyment."

Pupils of this age are often very poor across all aspects, but if they pretend to be interested in something, they do not learn it.

"The Oxbridge application is about hard work, but also passion and real-life engagement. A real and genuine interest in a subject will impress admissions officers much more than a faked interest in traditional subjects.

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"The Oxbridge application is about hard work, but also passion and real-life engagement. A real and genuine interest in a subject will impress admissions officers much more than a faked interest in traditional subjects.

The academic suggests regular meetings to help the intense pressure that candidates often feel. He outlines an "Oxbridge strategy" for family, friends and teachers, with weekly parents’ student meetings to avoid regular interrogation from parents, and sets of codes of behaviour that guarantee glitzy golfing teachers.

How to Get into Oxbridge (Kogan Page) costs £14.99.

Pupils are so used to accessing information in speedy, bite-sized chunks on the internet that they are missing out on studying more complex issues.

That’s the view of the chief executive of the Girls’ O’Grove Trust (GDT), who has warned that the internet is “unfamiliarising” the nation’s youngsters’ learning. Speaking at the GDT’s annual conference last week, Helen Francis said that learning should sometimes be like “a slow casserole, with knowledge stewing in our minds to form a richer, deeper flavour”. She added: “I’m a firm believer in the importance of our students of switching off the computer, the radio, the Smartphone, the TV, and any other distractions, and reading a whole book – I would say from cover to cover, but I’m not really bothered whether it’s paper or an e-book.

The important thing is that it’s read from start to finish – not the Illus of thought, perhaps with some complex arguments and situations from the principles through to their conclusion. It’s only by learning deeply and around a subject that you can really hope to master it.”

The GDT is a charity that runs a network of 26 schools in England and Wales.

Pupil switch-off plea
£1,000s IN PRIZES TO BE WON

The competition
The NASS arts education prize competition aims to promote and celebrate cultural diversity.

- The competition is open to schools, colleges and communities across the UK.
- Using artwork and creative writing, pupils explore what diversity, equality and identity mean to them and how this is reflected in their lives, families, schools and communities.
- Teachers can incorporate the competition into lessons on various subjects, including history, humanities, literacy, art and citizenship, and school projects.
- The competition is open to all forms of art, including photography, digital artwork and collage.
- The competition is for students in grades 4 to 13, and includes the Anne Frank Poetry Award for poems inspired by the life and writing of Anne Frank.

Awards ceremony and prizes
Prizes will be presented at a special awards ceremony on 9 October 2012 and will include:

- £1,000 for the overall winning school;
- £500 for all winning schools;
- £100 for each winning pupil;
- an overnight accommodation at a hotel and appropriate travel and subsistence expenses for winning pupils, their parents, guardians and a teacher;
- a visit to a top London attraction.

Closing date: 2 July 2012
To obtain an application form and more details, go to:
www.nassw.org.uk/ArtsandMinds
Telephone: 0121 453 6150

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SecEd • June 21 2012
Ousted: We must make sure we have our say

Ousted: We must make sure we have our say

A shameful tale that epitomises the cuts

WHILE it is a minor scene in the wider picture of government cuts and their impact on vital community services, the following story somehow seems to sum up the injustice of our current era of austerity.

At the end of last month, council workers—backed up by police officers—entered a local library at 5am in the morning, emptied it of books and shut it down.

The ominously Orwellian incident threatens to bring an end to a long-standing campaign to save the facility—a campaign led and heavily supported by the local community.

This library was opened by Mark Twain 112 years ago, but this did not prevent it being stripped of books, furniture, murals painted more than 80 years ago, and even an historic plaque marking its opening in 1900 by the American author.

The campaign to save the Kensing Rise library in Brent, north London, has been run by the local community for some time with some notable authors lending their impassioned support (www.savekensalshirlelibrary.org).

The Labour-run administration in Brent had approved its closure in June. This year five other libraries in the borough have already been closed.

The Kensing Rise campaigners lost a challenge in the High Court and Supreme Court earlier this year. Since then they have maintained a watch on the library in a bid to block any closures, but the libraries around remain under threat.

The library building belongs to All Souls College in Oxford, which had gifted it to the people of Brent in 1900 on the condition that it was used as a library. The Guardian reported that in an attempt to stem the campaign, an All Souls’ representative described the closure as “distressing” and said that they had told Brent that they would have been happy for the library to remain open with the help of the local community.

The campaigners still have the hope of engaging with All Souls, but Brent Council must be held to account for the way it has ignored the good will and the wishes of a community under its care. Was this not an ideal moment to prove that the Big Society can work?

SecEd: We must make sure we have our say

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The campaigners still have the hope of engaging with All Souls, but Brent Council must be held to account for the way it has ignored the good will and the wishes of a community under its care. Was this not an ideal moment to prove that the Big Society can work?

SecEd: We must make sure we have our say

SecEd: We must make sure we have our say

WHILE it is a minor scene in the wider picture of government cuts and their impact on vital community services, the following story somehow seems to sum up the injustice of our current era of austerity.

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Young people in care

What can schools do to help children in care and leaving care aspires to further and higher education? Gerri McAndrew explains

Buttle UK, the charity of which I am CEO, held a conference last month to discuss the issues of care-leavers in further and higher education. One young person from care, who sat on the panel, said that a teacher had told her that university was "not for the likes of her." While I am sure this attitude is rare, it is clearly very damaging. The educational outcomes for care-leavers are well reported to be poor. For example, in 2011 only 13 per cent of care-leavers in England achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE equivalent.

While the issues that prevent young people in our care system succeeding are complex, I believe that there is much that can be done to improve their situation. At the core of this belief is the knowledge that young people are capable, equipped with the self-confidence and determination to succeed in studies post-16, despite what may appear to be evidence to the contrary. But perhaps we should start by giving you a little background as to how we, at Buttle UK, got involved in this issue.

Buttle UK makes grants to support individual children and young people. One of our programmes helps vulnerable children to cope with the costs of staying in training or college. Back in 2001 it became clear to us, through the applications we were getting from care-leavers, that the issues they faced were very different from the majority of students. So we began work on a piece of research which looked for the first time at the experiences and challenges faced by this group in getting into, and staying in, higher education.

The research uncovered a systematic underestimation of the ability and potential of care-leavers, overcome only by their resilience and persistence regardless of poverty, ill health and family problems.

So we concluded that it was not the case that care leavers were not capable of getting into further and higher education, but that the wrong things were being done to encourage them to try, or to help them to stay there once they did. When we shared our research with a group of university vice-chancellors, they were shocked and committed there and then to do more. Out of this the Quality Mark for Care Leavers was born.

The aim of the Quality Mark is to provide a framework for validating the quality of support that a further and higher educational institution offers for young people in care and care-leavers, and a basis for the assessment of retention and progression strategies.

Since we launched the Quality Mark in 2006, more than half of the universities in the UK have applied for and succeeded in obtaining the award and the scheme is now being rolled out to the further education sector.

The research uncovered a systematic underestimation of the ability and potential of care-leavers, overcome only by their resilience and persistence regardless of poverty, ill health and family problems.

With much debate about widening access in education in recent years, there is a lot of good work now being done by individual further education colleges and universities. Outreach programmes are supporting care-leavers through their studies. The Quality Mark celebrates this work, but also aims to get more colleges and universities to aspire to offer quality mark.

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Diary of an NQT

Depending on Dunkirk

I have never been much of a gambler. I put on the odd football accumulator, I play a lottery ticket every year, and I like to go to Royal Ascot - but apart from that I have always been on the side of caution and refinement. I didn’t think I would enjoy teaching. I learned that even the brightest schoolchildren can be fickle, that the best teachers can frustrate and dishearten their students. I had an enormous and introspective personality. The end is coming, as I am preparing to leave the University of the third age University. I am about to face Ukraine....

During the school year, the 10th class of our entire GCSE exam, and we believe to the contrary that I will get this far in the exam and that we are prepared to go on top of everything. I have not been on the brink of recovery when I picked them up. They are not in the final stages of recovery, but they are still looking at us. The problem lies more with apathy and disinterest.

Teach it like Tornado!

Testimony

"Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other." Edmund Burke.

For more than six weeks now year 9 has been learning about the Holocaust and, as in the norm for our school, we took a trip to the Imperial War Museum the week before half-term.

It usually rains heavily with the students visiting exhibitions on the First and Second World Wars before contemplating the Holocaust exhibition. I am not sure very much about this lesson and I can assume that many students really enjoy his history interest. I have been working with the exhibition, you will see about very little. However, we have spent a few hours with the Zyklon B gas pellets or the table on which many Nazi experiments were carried out. A few minutes ago, I read that my students were a poem written by a Jewish girl, Marina, who was friends with a Catholic girl, Dona.

The educational beauty and humanity of the poem are transcribed in this essay. A few minutes ago, my students were grandson of my students' attention, alongside the visibly nightmares on show. The message was about the future and looking back on its daydream of friendship and innocence.

However, the real impact came when the day turned into a slide, from one of the museum's educators. It was about the German Government, the 12 years of Nazi persecution before reading from a book about a girl who went on to die in 1986.

At the end of the reading she said to us, "I still can't believe it. I can't believe that it has happened before before reading from a book about a girl who went on to die in 1986."

We have been teaching the "impact" mentioned in schools today. The impact of another type of child is difficult to measure, but are among the most valuable things a student can learn. For example, we have past students coming back to share the memories of the day they met a Holocaust survivor and the most difficult thing that impact has been sizeable.

For my own part, the learning journey continues when I will accompany our year 10 students on a visit to Berlin in two weeks time when we will come face-to-face with a concentration camp, Sachsenhausen, as well as visiting the building in which the Final Solution was agreed.

I will then be travelling to Poland with students and that it will be pure.

There we will be visiting Auschwitz amongst other places.

For my students as well as myself the real impact of education will be felt, and through this experience they will be encouraged to take into the examination room, their expectations will not do play a part in shaping the individuals they become...

We were struck that, despite liking science, less than 17 per cent of year 6 pupils agreed that they would like to become a scientist. By year 8 this has fallen further, to just 14.5 per cent, although other STEM careers are more popular, such as engineering, inventor and medicine.

STEM Professor Louise Archer reports on her investigation into the attitudes of young students towards STEM subjects and careers as they move from primary to secondary – and the implications for key stage 3 teaching

International, there is a widespread belief that more must be done to increase and broaden post-16 participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subject areas. This is not only important for ensuring that societies have a base of scientifically informed citizens but also to deliver an appropriate supply of STEM professionals for society.

ASPIRES is a five-year, longitudinal study exploring science aspirations and engagement ranging from age 10 to 14-year-olds, as previous research indicates that this is a crucial time for the development and consolidation of children's views on science.

ASPIRES is funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of the Targeted Initiative on Science and Mathematics Education (TISEM).

Our study includes an online survey (administered when children are in years 6, 8 and 9) and repeat interviews with a sub-sample of children (aged 11 and 13 from years 6, 8 and 9) and their parents (interviewed twice, when their children are in years 6 and 9).

In Phase One in 2009, the online survey was completed by more than 5,000 year 6 children (10 and 11-year-olds) from 259 primary schools across England. We also conducted 170 interviews with 78 parents and 92 year 6 children, drawn from 11 schools in England.

In Phase Two last year, the survey was completed by 5,034 year 8 students (aged 12 and 13) from 69 secondary schools across England. The second phase of interviews (following up the children now in year 8) is currently being completed and is due next month (July 2012). The key findings so far are:

Most children like science school

We found that in both the first and second surveys, children report enjoying their science lessons. Year 8 students were, on average, more positive about science than their year 6 counterparts (the most popular being design and technology, then English and mathematics).

Similarly high proportions (more than 70 per cent) of pupils in years 6 and 8 agree that they learn interesting things in science. Around 80 per cent of year 8 children also agree that science teachers are interested in science and that their teachers care if pupils understand the lessons and expect them to do well.

A total of 66 per cent of year 8 pupils like their science teacher and 82 per cent believe that if they study hard they will do well in science (with 69 per cent feeling that they do well in the subject). Only 19 per cent said that they find science difficult.

Our provisional findings from the follow-up interviews currently being conducted with year 8 pupils confirms this view – with most students saying that they enjoy science classes in secondary school as much as, or more than, in primary school.

Children have positive views of science

In line with findings from year 6 pupils, year 8 children express largely positive views of science and science careers. For instance, 73 per cent agree that science is generally useful for their futures and 70 per cent feel that science is useful for getting a good future job.

Year 8 children also seem to have positive views of careers in science, with 79 per cent believing that scientists do valuable work and the majority agreeing that scientists are respected by society (62 per cent) and make a lot of money (65 per cent).

Few children envisage a career in science

We were struck that, despite liking science, less than 17 per cent of year 6 pupils agreed that they would like to become a scientist.

By year 8 this has fallen to 14.5 per cent, although other STEM careers are more popular, such as engineering (25 per cent), inventor (26 per cent) and medicine (35 per cent). When asked to rate a sample of future careers, most popular aspirations among year 8 pupils were sports/athlete (39 per cent), television presenter (33 per cent) and business (the most popular, at 60 per cent).

We found that despite liking science, only 41 per cent of year 8 children agreed that they would like to study more science in the future. When asked to identify the most important reasons for choosing subjects to study in the future, more than three-quarters (76 per cent) identified the usefulness of a subject for their future careers as being the first or second most important factor.

A generally held belief that "how well I do in the subject" would be the most important consideration when making subject choices, with less than 15 per cent citing enjoyment of the subject as the key reason. This suggests that children’s interest in science does not translate simply into aspirations to study science further or to pursue careers in science.

Given that perceived usefulness seems to be an important factor in children’s subject choices, it was also notable that in the interviews, year 6 children (and parents) tended to see science qualifications as only leading to a narrow range of careers – notably, scientist, science teacher or doctor.

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Decreasng out-of-school science activity
We found that as they get older, science appears to feature less in pupils’ school lives. For instance, in primary school around one third of children said that they “never” read science-related books or magazines. This rose to nearly half of children (47 per cent) in the year 8 survey.
Over one third of year 8 children say they “never” do any science activities out of school and never look at science-related websites. Around a fifth never visit a zoo, science centre or museum and never watch science-related television programmes. Less than one in 10 year 8 children look at science-related websites once a week. In other words, science seems relatively peripheral to the daily lives of children – and becomes more so with age. As one parent put it: “I suppose in everyday life you don’t really get that much to do with science.”

Families influence children’s aspirations
Although most families still appear to value their children learning science at school (more than 70 per cent of year 6 and the pupils agree and that their parents think it is important for them to learn science at school), year 8 pupils are less likely to agree that their parents think science is interesting (year 6: 59 per cent, year 8: 53 per cent).

Although there was an increase (from 39 per cent in year 6 to 50 per cent in year 8) in the percentage of children reporting that their parents would be happy if they became a scientist, this is still quite low if we consider that almost half of children felt that their parents would be unhappy (or even unhappy) with them pursuing a career in science.

We think that a contributory factor is that many families do not possess much “science capital” (science-related qualifications, knowledge, understanding and contact). Hence, science gets “harder” in secondary schools, families may feel less confident in their scientific knowledge and may be more hesitant with their children in expressing the limits of their interest and/or understanding.

Interviews with year 6 pupils and parents indicated that science capital can be an important facilitator of children’s science aspirations – but it is unevenly spread across society. Families that possess higher amounts of science capital are disproportionately likely to be middle-class and children from these families are more likely to hold science aspirations.

Family influence seems to increase with age, with year 6 children becoming even more likely to take up family views about the types of career that are regarded as “for men”. These aspirations are often classed and gendered.

Science seen as ‘brave’
We found that science careers are strongly associated with brave, with more than 80 per cent of children in both surveys agreeing that scientists are “brave”. We also found in our interview sample that boys and girls who aspire to science careers tended to see themselves (and were by implication) “brave”.
Pupils who liked science but who did not consider it a career “for me” were more likely to self-describe and be described by their parents as “normal” or “bland” students. In other words, most children seem to see careers in science as only for the exceptional few.

Science is (still) seen as ‘masculine’
Although our survey of year 8 pupils found that a higher percentage of girls, than boys, rate science as their favourite subject, this interest is not borne out in science aspirations. Year 6 parents and children tended to perceive science careers as masculine, which we suggest, may explain why comparatively fewer girls expose science aspirations or imagine a future for themselves within science.

### Conclusions
Our findings show that year 8 pupils tend to express positive views of their science lessons and science teachers. They also seem to hold positive views about science careers in general and report parental support for learning science at school. Yet science careers are not popular aspirations and few children see a career in science as being “for me”.

We identified that a contributory factor is the widespread lack of science capital among families, whereby science is not experienced as a normal or high profile aspect of most families’ daily lives. Consequently, in these families, science is not an obvious or “thinkable” career choice.

We also found that popular views of science careers as “masculine” and only for the “clever” play a part shaping the majority of children’s views of science careers as “interesting” but not for me.”
Our work indicates the need to increase children’s and families’ science capital and to raise awareness of the diversity of careers that STEM qualifications can lead to.

This means we need to carefully question what messages children are receiving about science careers and post-16 science qualifications. Are these reinforcing or challenging associations with “cleverness” and masculinity? This would also extend to school STEM clubs’ STEM interventions – and indicates the need for these to be inclusive of gender, social class and ability.

**Locate Archer** is a professor of the sociology of education at King’s College London.

### References
- [www.kcl.ac.uk/sop] (www.kcl.ac.uk/sop)
- [www.tslmascienceandmaths.org](www.tslmascienceandmaths.org)

### Figures 1 and 2: A comparison of survey responses showing the positive attitudes of year 6 and year 8 pupils to science; a chart showing students’ career aspirations at the age of 12 and 13

As two of the parent interviewees explained, science is “always seen as a manly” and as a career, “it’s not very gritty, it’s not very sexy”, it is not glamorous.

We suggest that popular perceptions of science as “masculine” stem unfairly with girls’ notions of “normal” (and desirable) femininity. Consequently, while many girls report liking and being interested in science, it does not feature within their aspirations.

For instance, Danielle described science as one of her favourite subjects at school, but reflected “it’s really interesting, I love it, but don’t only girls do it?”

Of course, some girls in our study do aspire to
As 3D becomes increasingly common, Mark Robinson argues how this popular technology could be used in the classroom to change the face of the learning experience.

Consumer technologies are increasingly entering learning environments and are having a major impact on the way that young people learn. Students are accustomed to using technology in their everyday lives away from the classroom and are drawn into new developments, including 3D through its regular use in movies and video games. By tapping into this natural understanding and interest, 3D usage in secondary education not only emulates experiences in the outside world, but also helps prepare pupils for the workplace and provides a more engaging learning experience.

The challenge for schools is how they can adapt teaching practices and materials to move from paper and 2D to 3D teaching.

3D in the modern workplace

As well as the increasing use of 3D in cinema and media, it is also important to note its place in industry and business. Many sectors are highly reliant on 3D by the nature of the work that they do.

For example, in the automotive industry, 3D models help to pinpoint complications or faults within the structure of a vehicle, allowing advanced testing and enhanced understanding of the systems to inform future innovations.

In medicine, surgeons use 3D visuals of the human body to plan and prepare for operations. In addition, the wider manufacturing, oil and gas exploration and the engineering sectors are increasingly reliant on 3D in exploration, research, and design and testing. It is important that pupils take away skills from the classroom that are transferrable to the workplace. In the classroom we should be preparing students for their role in a global 3D century society and equipping them to contribute to economic growth and innovation.

Clearly, being able to understand and fluently use technology such as 3D is vital and it is important that we prepare pupils for this by using it effectively in the classroom.

There are many projects that promote these benefits. The recent Big Bang Fair in Birmingham illustrated to students that 3D is prevalent in the workplace of the science, technology and innovation sectors. In addition, the Bloodhound project (a STEM education programme built around the car to break the 1,000mph land-speed record) uses 3D to stimulate pupils’ interest in science and engineering, bringing concepts to life and making them much more tangible.

Creating active learning environments

Traditional paper methods are being challenged both in schools and the outside world. 3D inspires and engages pupils and it also creates a much more interactive experience.

It is a misconception that 3D is passive or simply something that you watch. On the contrary, in the secondary classroom it provides numerous opportunities for students to become active participants and to question, challenge and interact.

This is most easy to see in the STEM subjects. For example, a whole cell can be dissected and analysed in much more detail than can be achieved through a 2D diagram and using a 3D version of the human body creates a stronger reality for students.

Other modern advances such as depth sensing cameras, like those found in devices such as the Microsoft Kinect, can sense full body movement in 3D space and are changing how we interact with digital content and 3D worlds.

Companies such as Small Lab Learning are harnessing these new interfaces to “embody” the learning – what better way to understand inertia or “force” than by actually moving around?

Research, such as the 3D in Education White Paper written by Professor Dr. Annie Bardzell, director of the International Research Agency, is reinforcing the view that 3D helps individuals and classes to delve deeper into subjects and gain a more complete understanding of complex concepts or ideas that may seem intangible when presented as flat pictures on paper.

One example is by using 3D visual simulations of life in the trenches during the First World War, which immerse the students in the sound and the lifeblood to help them gain a different perspective in history lessons.

It also has the added benefit of appealing to users of varying abilities, making the class more inclusive and also offering an array of new ways to engage those with certain SEN.

How can schools incorporate 3D?

Despite arguments that demonstrate the impact of 3D and its effectiveness, many schools will question how, or on limited budgets, they can afford to invest in 3D and maximise it to its full potential.

Many schools will be unaware that they already have the infrastructure to support 3D. For example, a lot of hardware in existence in their classrooms, such as the projectors supplied with their interactive whiteboards may have DLP chips (digital light processing) or be marked “3D Ready”, meaning they have been future-proofed and are already prepared for 3D usage.

Users will then just need to ensure they have a PC with a suitable graphics card and acquire the 3D glasses to complete the solution.

Any provider of educational 3D content will be able to advise you on how to maximise the projectors and interactive whiteboards that you already have in your classroom.

3D resources that match curriculum needs are needed to keep content fresh and relevant. There is some content already available free of charge on platforms such as Presentations Planet and teachers can benefit from large online resources such as Google Sketchup and the Google 3D warehouse – when combined with a 3D projector and software this allows users to find or draw objects which are then translated into 3D.

It is also vital that teachers, and ideally students, share resources for 3D to harness its full potential within the classroom.

Although these resources are readily available, the true challenge is for schools to commit to using the content and investing time to develop and tailor resources to fit in with the curriculum and lesson plans. For teachers already interested with 3D, the benefits outweigh the initial workload and lessons are made far more compelling.

The year for 3D?

It is an exciting time for teachers, students and schools experimenting 3D and I believe that this is the year to consider implementing it practically in secondary education.

It is clear that young people are skilled in 3D already and there is enthusiasm for it. It is increasingly becoming not just “nice to have”, but a necessity in industries, so using it in education has a practical objective to benefit students in the future.

Furthermore, many schools already have the basic technological elements to be able to use 3D and all upgrades should now incorporate 3D capabilities. The foundations are laid for the future use of 3D, but in order to fully harness its power, content must now be generated to support its use in classrooms and discover new ways of building it into lesson plans to create a truly engaging learning experience.

Mark Robinson is group head of education product strategy at Presentations.

Further information

To download the 3D in Education White Paper referenced above, visit http://dgl.com/3dresearch
Geoff Coombe discusses the new vision for the teaching of computer science in schools and argues why academic knowledge and practical skills must combine to equip students for the future.

Technology continues to change the way we live, work and interact with each other. Ten years ago, people did not use SmartPhones or tablets, or keep in touch via Facebook and consumers did not buy films in Blu-Ray format.

These technologies and terms are now commonplace and a part of everyday life. SmartPhone penetration is now more than 50 per cent in the UK – and are built on an ever-growing, innovative computing and technology industry.

However, until recently, this was not necessarily reflected in the way ICT and computing is taught in schools. Many teachers and students realised that, in fact, the ICT curriculum was starting to look a little dated. The question was: how should a new curriculum look?

Earlier this year, education secretary Michael Gove drew attention to the issues around the teaching of computing in schools in his speech at the BETT ICT show. He remarked that “schools, teachers and industry leaders have all told us that the current curriculum is too off-putting, too demotivating, too dull.”

He continued: “Submissions to the national curriculum review from organisations including the British Computer Society, Computing at School, e-Skills UK, Naseen and the Royal Society, all called for the current national curriculum for ICT unsatisfactory. They're worried that it doesn’t stretch pupils enough or allow enough opportunities for innovation and experimentation — and they’re telling me the curriculum has to change radically.”

I find myself agreeing with Mr Gove. I believe that the teaching of computer science in schools must reflect the way in which technology is used in the outside world, and above all must “stretch” pupils.

It is now imperative that students are provided with the opportunity to study for computer science qualifications that are rigorous, provide opportunities for student innovation, and prepare students for a future in computing, whether this is through employment in the UK’s diverse technology industry or through further academic study at university.

The study and understanding of programming — rather than simply how to use software — is essential to this vision.

Even if students do not necessarily go on to study or work in computing at a later stage, an understanding of programming and computing principles supports further study and careers in other fields such as sciences, mathematics, the creative industries and the sciences — for example, many scientists use programming to build scientific models and tests.

For this reason, I believe that a computer science syllabus should be designed in such a way that it provides both a solid academic grounding and the practical skills that will support student innovation.

The syllabus should cover key computing concepts and the fundamentals of programming; while at the same time providing students with the skills and facilities to create applications, for example using mobile and web technologies, as well as computer games.

Students must not just emerge from schools with a sound understanding of computer science, they must be able to put their knowledge into practice. We must foster a creativity that goes beyond clip-art and animated presentations; a creativity that will go on to fuel the rapidly expanding technology industry in the UK.

I believe that the key to ensuring the syllabus achieves this balance is by enlisting the help of third parties, in particular the universities at which students will go on to study computer science, and stakeholders from the computing and technology industry.

At AQA, we are working with Microsoft with the aim of ensuring that our GCSE in computer science will equip students with the skills and knowledge expected by employers in this sector. We have aligned its syllabus with the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) developer qualification, part of an industry standard.

According to a recent study by e-Skills, the UK IT industry needs to see 550,000 new entrants to its workforce in the next five years to support the growth of the IT market. Providing proper preparation and practical skills at the heart of the computer science curriculum is essential if we are to meet this demand.

By equipping students with the ability to apply their computing knowledge, I hope we will see not only a surge of interest in the study of computer science, but also a flood of new programming enthusiasts who will, in the future, drive growth and innovation in the UK technology industry — and maintain the UK’s position as a leader in this field.

Geoff Coombe is director of general qualifications development at AQA.

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With fees set to hit £9,000 and no rise in the proportion of state school applicants to the top universities, Dr Steven Jones reports on a proposed remedy that may actually be part of the problem.

When Lord Browne’s 2010 Review of Higher Education acknowledged that for some students, ‘exam grades alone are not the best predictor of potential to succeed at university’, it drew on growing evidence that state-schooled university entrants perform better and are less likely to drop out than their privately educated peers. One response was to increase the focus on non-academic indicators of aptitude, including the UCAS personal statement, that do not signal academic success. However, through more rapid measures of attainment to sort high-potential applicants from similarly well-qualified lower-rankings might present more opportunities for already-admitted students to utilise their class-determined credentials.

Speaking in April 2011, universities minister David Willetts hinted that students would have to be able to do is to look beyond the headline A level grades to what that individual’s potential might be.

Unfortunately, few given examples of the kind of indicators that might be used. Things such as applications to universities, the breadth of subjects they are applying for, and the nature of the essay. However, closer inspection reveals that these ideas are not new.

For example, Dr Jones’s research has been investigating different types of indicators that might be used to predict a student’s potential to benefit from a particular course.

As a result, deeper and more sophisticated analyses of student performance can provide a more comprehensive view of the outcomes that are important to them and of their achievement at school. The more precise the description of the measure of academic ability, theclearer distinction emerged between those from independent schools and grammar schools and those from 6th-form colleges and comprehensive schools. For every one error found in the personal statement, the former, no fewer than four were found in the latter.

For example, the review noted that the percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their academic achievements was lower than the percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their non-academic achievements. The percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their academic achievements was lower than the percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their non-academic achievements. The percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their academic achievements was lower than the percentage of students who were more likely to be successful in their non-academic achievements.

The annual survey of work experience found that the wider range of work and life experience drawn upon by independent and grammar school applicants make them better suited to undergraduate study, one must acknowledge that these opportunities are ultimately the product of advantage. Non-academic indicators of potential, such as the personal statement, are not a proxy for “fairness”, indeed, if greater attention is paid to such indicators, existing inequities in the educational system will only be reinforced at the point of entry university.

There are ways in which the playing field could be levelled. For example, opportunities for state-educated young people to receive high-quality work experience are clearly rarer than in the independent sector. The personal statement itself could also be restructured, perhaps asking applicants to consider the usefulness of one work experience and one extra-curricular activity only.

However, the evidence also points to huge differences in the levels of help, guidance and advice received by applicants of different backgrounds. A better solution, therefore, may be to do away with the personal statement entirely, and rely instead on more appropriately-conceptualised academic achievements/standards.

Dr Steven Jones is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at Manchester University. You can email him at stevejones@manchester.ac.uk.
Twelve governing top tips

Karina Carter, a chair of governors and a National Leader of Governance, offers her 12 tips for governing excellence.

This year has seen the first National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) appointed to support what has been called the biggest brave, bold, and audacious challenge that we have faced trying to support our governing bodies to work collaboratively and transform schools, with each NLG acting as a chair of governors in schools and academies offering the benefit of their experiences to guide our counterparts through our own challenges. This will cover a wide range of circumstances. We could be advising new chains, helping boards to focus on school improvement or supporting them in dealing with the financial and strategic challenges that are becoming a federation or converting to academy status.

We will also provide coaching and support their counterparts in a variety of different ways—for example, in using data effectively to improve school performance or by delivering robust, effective support and challenge for their headteacher.

In my time as a governor, I have learned a number of lessons that can be applied to almost every school across the country.

**Have the courage to change your mind**

My school—Sutton High School in Manchester—was part of the national innovators programme, which was the first three-year course for governors and which was often keen to recruit more into the system, but we were not interested in becoming selective. There was also an opportunity to become an academy, and I believed this was a route that would be right for me. As we proceeded further and further down the line, more and more difficulties became apparent, and it became clear that we had got it wrong. It was a situation in which I needed to swallow my pride and admit, at the 11th hour, that we needed to go back on our original decision.

The governors and school leadership team had also come to this realisation and we were both able to admit the mistake. We were certainly the right move for us. Although we would not rule out seeking academy status in the future, there has been no occasion on which we have been able to see the benefit since.

Gradually, I have replaced these with people with skills that have been useful to the school for example, one of my vice-chairs comes from a university background and is greatly experienced in curriculum issues, while another is responsible for equality and diversity at our local Primary Care Trust, and we have brought on a number of experts from Trafford Council.

Governing bodies need to move away from self-nominating groups and towards skills-based committees where every member brings something to the party.

Don’t ignore what doesn’t appeal

While a governing board is being built, the chairperson will often find themselves involved with issues that are outside their existing experience and expertise. Early on, I would chair finances and personnel committees and then be forced to get up to speed with these areas, even if I had never encountered them in the past. However, these issues cannot be ignored and it can often be enlightening when fresh thinking is applied.

Look outside the school

When I first was appointed as chair of governor, Sutton High School was in special measures, but became “outstanding” within three years. However, the downside of this was that the school was focusing so hard on getting it right that it had become somewhat similar and had lost important links with the community. Having acknowledged this as an issue, the governors have worked hard to develop links with Lancashire Cricket Club, the Manchester United FC Foundation and our local leisure club to improve opportunities for students and to establish the school at the heart of the community.

**Be strategic and hands-on**

It is only possible to be genuinely strategic if you have your head down. Obviously, you must have your eye on the bigger picture, but by being hands-on, you are better placed to forge relationships and get the best out of people. As part of my role, I was involved with the strategic moves behind awarding a new catering contract, but I also run the governor welfare panel, which meets once a term with children who need no further support. The requirement is clear. In manufacturing or sales, where there is a direct link between targets and an individual’s contribution, it may be feasible to reward performance. But when jobs become more complex, it is practically impossible to make objective, verifiable, and consistent judgments.

In teaching, which is a collaborative activity, we need to question how the impact on an individual pupil’s achievements throughout his whole school experience can be accredited to any one teacher. Recent research has upheld those conclusions of a decade ago. Harvard research in 200 New York state schools, reported this year by pay specialists Incomes Data Services, showed that there wasn’t any evidence of performance pay had a positive effect on student performance, attendance or graduation levels.

And in the work Mr Gove published his evidence to the STBRE, an examination of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) scores from over 70 countries, carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), revealed no link between pay and test scores.

Send Mr Gove’s submission to the STBRE to be overwhelmingly effective.

The logic is inescapable. If a visible system of PIR was teaching well, then, in the decades to come, over this issue, it would have been identified and replicated across the sector. And theisbn showed that the STBRE evidence demonstrated that it is more concerned with cutting costs than matching standards.

Build a capable team

Even for an experienced network, this can be a real challenge and will take time. The initial board comprised a group of well-meaning parents who ultimately viewed the position as an extension of the PTA.

**Hold your management accountable**

This must start with knowing your facts and figures—a task that will be difficult in the beginning, but that will make you a stronger chair once you know what you are looking for.

By being fully aware of your structure and targets, you will be able to set challenging and achievable targets for your teams and ensure that you are not letting your students down.

**Demand the best!**

This is at the heart of good governance. Despite all the talk about lifelong learning, children only get one real childhood education—so if you do not get it right in the first place, it will be a lot more difficult for them to catch up when they are older. So as governors, we must see ourselves as responsible as for teachers and management in giving in supporting the students the best possible opportunities not just for the future, but every year.

• Karina Carter is chair of governors at Stretford High School in Manchester and one of the first National Leaders of Governance.

Further information

For more information on the new National Leaders of Governance programme, visit www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/national-leaders-of-governance.htm.

**Union address: ATL**

Performance pay is folly

**Introducing performance-related pay for education staff would be folly, argues Dr Mary Bousted**

Those who cannot learn the lessons from history are doomed to repeat them, and performance-related pay (PRP) is definitely a case in point.

UK governments have been trying to devise ways to pay teachers on the basis of their performance for well over a century, from Robert Lowe’s pay reform by results scheme in 1862 to education secretary Michael Gove’s “reform of the School Teachers’ Review Body (STBRE) this year—despite the fact that there is not a single strand of evidence that PRP works.

In fact, most of the research carried out since PRP’s heyday in the 1980s has shown the opposite: the American education author and lecturer, Alfie Kohn, in his book of that name (2003), points out that the manageability problem in establishing a performance pay system for teachers—output is not readily measurable.

This deduction was echoed by, of all people, management consultant Peter Waterhouse Coopers, whose report for the STBRE in the same year concluded: “Teaching is a professional job and it is exceptionally difficult to introduce individual performance-related pay arrangements where results are generally difficult to measure.”

The implications are clear. In manufacturing or sales, where there is a direct link between targets and an individual’s contribution, it may be feasible to reward performance. But when jobs become more complex, it is practically impossible to make objective, verifiable, and consistent judgments.

With teaching, which is a collaborative activity, we need to question how the impact on an individual pupil’s achievements throughout his whole school experience can be accredited to any one teacher. Recent research has upheld those conclusions of a decade ago. Harvard research in 200 New York state schools, reported this year by pay specialists Incomes Data Services, showed that there wasn’t any evidence of performance pay had a positive effect on student performance, attendance or graduation levels.

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Since Mr Gove appears to have an ideological belief that introducing market forces of competition through performance pay will drive up education standards, then the STBRE evidence would have an impact on those of our pupils’ “outcomes and the use of performance pay.

Send Mr Gove’s submission to the STBRE to be overwhelmingly effective.

The logic is inescapable. If a visible system of PRP was teaching well, then, in the decades to come, over this issue, it would have been identified and replicated across the sector. And the evidence showed that the STBRE evidence demonstrated that it is more concerned with cutting costs than matching standards.

Build a capable team

Even for an experienced network, this can be a real challenge and will take time. The initial board comprised a group of well-meaning parents who ultimately viewed the position as an extension of the PTA.
Is a teenager’s academic success really down to the school and its teachers or are wider factors at play? Psychologist Dr Stephanie Thornton discusses

Moral support: National Children’s Bureau

Learning about HIV

Thousands of children are affected by HIV and schools have a crucial supporting role to play. Dr Hilary Emery explains

TIUBER ARII around 12,000 children and young people in the UK and Ireland who were infected with HIV during birth or infancy, and more young people acquiring HIV through unprotected sex.

A conservative estimate is that 200,000 children and young people are affected by the presence of HIV in their families, many of whom are out of school. The number of people who have passed away in the UK has trebled in the last decade to 9,000, and a quarter of those infected are underaged. This year, the Sex Education Forum – based at the National Children’s Bureau – found that a quarter of young people had not learnt about it at school.

The role of secondary schools in supporting young people who are living with, affected by, or at risk of HIV includes responses to individual cases, the delivery of sex and relationship education (SRE) and the way teachers and pupils talk about HIV.

Due to stigma, many children living with or affected by HIV are unaware that the condition impacting them is HIV, even if they take medication or care for a family member. Many become aware it is HIV around the start of secondary school.

During their school career, they will need to grapple with decisions about telling others. If they are themselves HIV positive, they’ll need to get to grips with having been born with a sexually transmitted infection, the “streakless transmission” of which is criminalised. They will need to understand the implications for their own lives and relationships.

HIV is often a family condition and frequently occurring experiences are silence and secrecy at home, mental health difficulties, caring responsibilities, and bereavement.

HIV-related discrimination against pupils occurs the world over. In 2010, the UK’s Children’s HIV Association struggled to find a school that would hire out its facilities for a summer camp for HIV-positive young people. HIV professionals hear how some teachers reflect the contradiction that exists around HIV, namely that HIV can be seen as both a late 20th century problem that has fallen off the radar and an immediate menace, presented as far more contagious than it actually is.

We’ve heard about families who have had to relocate after their HIV information leaked from the school into the community, and even of one teacher who told a class that if diagnosed with HIV, he would kill himself. The saddest aspect of these stories is that young people, stigmatised by stigma, feel unable to challenge it.

The impact of a positive reaction to the disclosure of HIV by a young person or parent cannot be underestimated. Most people restrict knowledge of their diagnosis beyond a small circle of HIV professionals. So, an empathetic response from teachers shows students and parents that they can trust them with the information.

Young people affected by HIV, effective education and support means recognising that people with HIV are among us, similar to us, and striving to live full and long and ordinary lives. In most cases, schools won’t know if a pupil is affected by HIV. There are no known cases of HIV transmission in a school environment anywhere.

There is no obligation to inform a school, and if a young person is well – as many are – often no reason for the school to know. However, young people should feel able to disclose their diagnosis and access any support they need.

One key way to make schools “HIV-friendly” is to mainstream HIV into school policies around health, sex, and resilience, and confidentiality, mentioning it alongside other characteristics and conditions.

In terms of teaching, HIV offers an important learning opportunity as well as being an essential component of comprehensive SRE. In story features some of the greatest scientific achievements, most inspiring global citizens and most commendable stories of our age. Understanding HIV teachers can all be so much more humane, pragmatic and non-judgemental that are valuable through life for everyone.

Dr Hilary Emery is chief executive of the National Children’s Bureau, which works in partnership with educational charities to improve the lives of children.

Further information

For more information about supporting students with HIV or teaching about HIV, visit the NCHF’s Smoking page on the NCBI website: www.nch.org.uk/hiv

creativity and who offer gloom rather than inspiration. Replacing these with other, more able individuals is very likely to produce a benefit, an improvement in educational achievement.

But even in these cases, will it last? There is a phenomenon, well known to psychologists, called the Hawthorne effect: any change (however irrelevant) produces a surge in performance for a while, because it is a change, and after a while, the cameras move on, everyone returns to what it was before.

The fact is that no-one embarks on a teaching career to be second rate, to “go through the motions”, to not care. No-one accepts all the strains and stresses of headship intend to fail. One can be sure of this, not because one has a strong belief in the goodness of human nature but because teaching is so arduous and so poorly paid, the cynical and exploitative could be so much more readily employed elsewhere.

The odd individual is wrongly placed, and perhaps better placed. But if a whole school culture has “gone west”, one has to ask why that was? Then Greek schools. Even in UK, we have a generation who decide themselves as “lost”.

Today, a huge percentage of recent UK graduates are school (77% of graduates in 2012), and this is almost certain to remain the case. Jobs demand. An estimate of 30 percent meet a job at all. Few have real prospects, and all have huge debts. Many school-leavers find themselves unemployed, however well qualified.

Related: Evidence suggests that education cannot succeed unless the young invest in it. And society at the moment offers them precious little reason to do that.

Let the authorities beat the schools for failure if they want to. But don’t let’s expect that to fix anything. The truth is that the education cannot succeed unless the young invest in it. And society at the moment offers them precious little reason to do that. And the remedy for that is far beyond the school gates.

• Dr Stephanie Thornton is a chartered psychologist and a former lecturer in psychology and child development.

"Let the authorities beat the schools for failure if they want to. But don’t let’s expect that to fix anything. The truth is that the education cannot succeed unless the young invest in it. And society at the moment offers them precious little reason to do that."
Nick Parks, an international ski and mountain guide and former head of outdoor education at Marlborough College, discusses how travel can be used across the curriculum and the work of the Stretching Horizons network.

Later this year, teachers and adventurers, travel, legal and safety aspects will congregate at the annual Stretching Horizons’ conference, to discuss some of the ways schools can enrich their education, mitigate risk and raise funds for educational journeys with a view to changing lives.

Connecting the classroom to the world beyond can have a transformational effect on students. Educational travel is something that many people feel passionate about and in a time of increasing globalisation, world experience can have a valuable and lasting impact on young people.

Whether the journey is a sightseeing break for historical or geographical content, a sports tour to promote international competition and teamwork with overseas schools, or helping communities in developing nations, the experiences often continue to shape students’ world views long after their return home.

The Stretching Horizons overseas educational travel network is designed with a desire to celebrate and encourage educational travel. One of its founders, Adrian Fenners, explained: “Potential is a powerful thing and allowing students to experience life beyond the boundaries of the classroom, the school or the local community is an incredibly useful tool to help them discover their potential.”

“I think that teachers every day who have amazing stories to tell, from the inspirational to the humorous, eye-opening to eye-watering; but all stories seem to have a common thread – travelled teachers pupils more about themselves and about the world around them than would even be possible in the classroom.

“We wanted to bring people together to help teachers create a toolkit for educational travel, from ideas for inspiring journeys for the best educational outcomes through to practical advice regarding logistics, health and safety and funding.”

Running alongside the conference, the Stretching Horizons’ Educational Journey of the Year Award was created to celebrate some of the amazing journeys taken by schools throughout the UK.

The winning school will be awarded with a six-day trip to Morocco for eight teachers, which includes a visit to Marrakesh, a camel safari, a night in the desert, a trip to the UNESCO site of Ali Ben Youssef, and a day in the life of a Berber experience in the Atlas Mountains.

Graham Derrick, a trustee from national charity Young Explorers’ Trust, is one of the judges. “The benefits of educational travel are incredibly far-reaching and are almost impossible to quantify. Any adult who has taken a group of young people on an overseas educational journey takes on an awesome responsibility, not only for the day-to-day welfare of the young members, but, ultimately, for decisions which they might make in years to come. A celebration of these individuals, teachers and students alike, is something I’m incredibly pleased to be a part of.”

One of National Geographic’s Adventurers of the Year, author Alanuar Humphreys, is well-versed in giving talks to teachers and students about his experiences. As a speaker at the conference this year, his aim is to inspire. “I began enjoying learning when I began wandering the world,” he explained. “No longer was I learning stuff simply to regurgitate it in hot exam halls. School on the road is different: the more you know the more you want to know. It is important for pupils to learn about challenge, risk, geography, citizenship, history, cultural awareness, moral and social issues and much more without feeling as though they are learning.”

Another theme integral to Stretching Horizons is enabling teachers to learn from each other and form vital collaborative links, both nationally and internationally. Paul Millen, a teacher at Ashdown Park School in Bexhill, has taken more than 200 students on expeditions during his career, and has been working with the Maji Safi charity and Inspration School since 2000 to help transform education for a community in Kenya.

He continued: “It really is crucial that schools are supported in making sure that the risks are managed and balanced by the benefits of the trip. Well-managed risk is a really positive lesson; exposure to a certain amount of risk will help students to build the skills they need in later life.”

Legal experts can also help schools walk the sometimes tricky line between safety and adventure. “Legislators are the dry-bott-too-necessary-part of any trip,” Mr Penney continued. “Planning is the key; not just insurance but contingency plans, rehearsals for emergency situations and step-by-step guides that are particularly to the region that the group is travelling in and all vital.”

Ultimately, Mr Penney explained, the network, conference and award all exist to help celebrate educational travel and the work of teachers across the country. “Whether trips are geography, history or sports tours, ski trips, French exchanges or adventurous expeditions, student travel and adventure has the ability to open eyes and nurture our understanding of the amazing world in which we live. A celebration of this is long overdue, and is something we are incredibly proud to be a part of.”

As for the work of Ashition Pack “It’s on-going,” Mr Miller explained. “We take groups out each year, and each year we build on what’s gone before. The students have helped to grow Inspration School from 68 students to begin with to more than 300, and by the time the project is finished there will be 400 students. It’s now the third highest performing school in the area.”

The work has also led to Mr Millen’s school being an integral part of the Bristol-Kenya link for the 2013 Olympic Games. “I don’t even think I knew how far-reaching the effects of these trips would be, not just to the students here and in Kenya, but to me and to our local community,” he added.

“For every story I have to tell, there must be hundreds of others and I’m looking forward to teachers gathering together to share them.”

Nick Parks is an international ski and mountain guide, former head of outdoor education at Marhborough College in Wiltshire and one of the founders of the Stretching Horizons network. Visit www.stretchinghorizons.co.uk

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