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Campaign to end 11+ launched

A new campaign to end the 11+ and selection in those parts of England that still have grammar schools and secondary moderns, which still exist in about 20% of the country. Elsewhere in the UK, Scotland and Wales are fully comprehensive while selection remains in much of Northern Ireland.

A coalition of organisations including Comprehensive Future, CASE, the National Education Union and Headteachers' Roundtable, have come together for the Time's Up for the Test campaign which is launched tomorrow at 6.30 pm, meeting at the NEU headquarters at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, in Camden, London.

Leading the line-up of speakers is Professor Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Education and Skills Directorate. Prof. Schleicher is in Singapore tomorrow, so he has recorded a video for the conference. In it he says that it is very difficult to select accurately on the grounds of academic ability, and what selective systems invariably do is in practice select children on the basis of social class. Quoting evidence from the OECD's massive PISA programme, Prof. Schleicher said that this was particularly so in systems like that in England where the selection process takes place when children are very young. The younger tests are taken the less able they are to predict academic ability. There are some selective systems that manage to overcome the pitfalls associated with selection, but they are ones where selection takes place later, such as around 16.

The day after the Times Up for the Test campaign launch, Barness Christine Blower, a Labour life peer who was general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, will have the Second Reading debate on her Private Members' Bill, the School (Reform of Pupil Selection) Bill, in the House of Lords. The Bill would require all secondary schools in England to adopt the "comprehensive principle" and draw up plans to phase out admission tests which seek to measure a pupil's "ability" or attainment.

The Liz Truss government was keen to reintroduce new grammar schools in parts of England where they no longer exist, and the former Parliamentary Under Secretary at the DfE, Jonathan Gullis, was keen on the idea. His ministerial career was over in five weeks, and last week the Government indicated that it was dropping the idea.

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Ending selection in England

Ministers are fond of saying that policy should be evidence based. When it comes to ending selection in England, it is anything but. We have a mountain of evidence, acquired over decades, from home and abroad, that selection at the age of ten into different types of school on the basis of tests is not the best way to organise an education system. We know that this disadvantages most children in such a system. And yet, in some 20% of England, we have persisted with exactly that system that we know harms children and is increasingly not fit for purpose in the 21st century.

For different reasons both the Conservative and Labour parties will not do anything about this. The remaining selective schools are mainly in Conservative areas. Despite selection being originally a Labour policy it now appeals to the right wing of the Tory party and the Conservatives do not want to pick a fight with their own right wing supporters. The Labour Party, which introduced selection after the Second World War, is full of activists who now don't believe in it and want it gone, but for nearly half a century has had leaders (apart from Jeremy Corbyn) who believe that ending selection is a vote loser that will dent the image they wish to present of being a sober moderate party. So nothing is done.

For years there has been a stalemate. The Conservatives have occasionally been tempted to bring selection back, at least in some areas. John Major famously talked about a grammar school in every town, until his Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, in exasperation reminded him that that meant a secondary modern in every ward. Theresa May and Liz Truss toyed with the same idea, but were quickly overwhelmed by their own party's objections. Most Tory MPs know that grammar schools don't give parents choice of school, they give some schools choice of pupil. The only time the vast majority of children in a selective area see a grammar school is when they walk past one on the way to their secondary modern. For Labour, the many members who know something about education are exasperated and embarrassed that their party continues to tolerate a system that they know harms children because of political considerations rather than educational ones.

Well just possibly the stalemate may be about to be broken. Tomorrow a range of educational organisations and people from across all parties will meet in London to launch the Time's Up for the Test campaign. Speakers from the Conservative and Labour parties and a range of organisations outside politics will be speaking. The following day Baroness Christine Blower, a former general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, will lead the Second Reading debate for her Private Members Bill, the School (Reform of Pupil Selection) Bill, in the House of Lords. The Bill would require all secondary schools to become comprehensive.

The evidence to end selection at 10, the age at which the vast majority of children take the entrance test for grammar schools, is overwhelming. On academic and social grounds selection is harmful for most students in a selective system. We have known this for decades. It impacts negatively on so many children. As the Plowden report of 1967 told us, children tend to live up to, or down to, that which is expected of them. Tell a child at ten that they are a failure and they will believe you and act accordingly. Andreas Schleicher, the Director of the OECD's Education and Skills Directorate, will make the same point at the conference tomorrow. The text of his address is published in this issue of *Education Journal*.

The role of the OECD has been crucial in revealing the negative consequences of selection, especially where selection tests are carried out on young children as they are in the UK. The OECD's massive Programme for International Student Assessment project (PISA) has over the last few decades provided an unparalleled research base that tells us what happens in selective systems. We can't pretend that we don't know. Professor Schleicher gives three reasons for wanting to see an end to selection at 10. The first is that academically it does not work. The second is that selection at this age is about social class and not educational attainment. But mainly, as he says, because "the future isn't that much with selection and grouping students, but with personalising education in ways that help every learner reach their full potential." He is right. It is time that time's up for the test. It's long overdue.

Growing digital skills shortages threaten economic growth

A report from the Education Policy Institute, has revealed severe blockages within the digital skills pipeline, while employer demand for those with digital qualifications were substantial. However, EPI warned that the current situation was set to worsen, as 43% fewer pupils were pursuing IT or computing GCSEs than in 2016, and 33% fewer 16–19-year-old students were taking digital qualifications than in 2015.

The report argued that stronger efforts must be made to increase the proportion of female students pursuing digital skills, as girls and young women currently accounted for only 17% of 16–19-year-olds who had been pursuing these qualifications in 2020, which was down from 23% in 2012. EPI said that while students taking the new digital T-levels may secure good levels of digital skills, over a quarter of potential students may not be able to access them, which presented a further risk to the digital skills pipeline.

The report also stressed that colleges' abilities to deliver digital training must be supported by pay incentives for their teachers that were at least on a more equal footing with those for school teachers, given significant barriers when recruiting and retaining digital teaching staff. EPI's report highlighted a growing demand for digital skills within the job market that was not being met. A substantial 29% of vacancies had been reported as a result of skills shortages related to a lack of digital skills, including 17% to a lack of advanced digital skills.

“While students taking the new digital T-levels may secure good levels of digital skills, over a quarter of potential students may not be able to access them

Response to FE and skills statistics

Following the latest figures on learner participation and achievements in England for the 2021 to 2022 academic year, including apprenticeships and adult further education, Emily Jones, deputy director, Learning and Work Institute, said that while it had been good to see that participation in adult further education provision and apprenticeship starts had increased in the academic year 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, it was not the whole picture.

She pointed out that overall participation was still lower than pre-pandemic levels, as there had been an 11% drop in apprenticeship starts and a 25% drop in participation in adult FE provision compared to 2018/19. Ms Jones said that there was also an equalities dimension, as the data had showed that participation in Level 2 skills, including essential skills like English, maths and ESOL, had also fallen by more than a fifth since 2018/19, whereas there had been continued growth in Level 4+ programmes.

She said that the findings had reflected a wider picture where employers across the UK were investing less in training, and those with the lowest qualifications were missing out, which not only restricted individual opportunity and potential, the Government's aim of developing a high skill, high wage economy was also being put at risk.

Ms Jones added that while government investment in the National Skills Fund and apprenticeships was welcome, it did not go far enough to fill the gap, as the Institute's analysis had showed that investment in adult learning and skills was set to be £1 billion lower in 2025 than in 2010.

Call for UCAS personal statements to be replaced by short-response questions

A report from the Higher Education Policy Institute, *Reforming the UCAS personal statement: Making the case for a series of short questions*, revealed that 83% of drafts fail to supply an evidence-based opinion about a relevant academic topic. The analysis of 164 personal statement drafts from 83 applicants from underrepresented backgrounds had also found that many applicants struggled to organise their statement effectively, 35% failed to write with cohesive paragraphs in at least one of their drafts; and some applicants spent 30-to-40 hours crafting their essay.

The report argued that the challenges stemmed from the long-form free-response nature of the personal statement created inequalities, as more advantaged applicants were better supported to meet the challenge. It added that the long-form free-response nature also placed an unnecessary burden on applicants, and it did little to aid decision-making.

HEPI argued that, in its current form, the UCAS personal statement was incompatible with Universities UK and GuildHE's own Fair admissions code of practice, which over 100 higher education providers had signed. The paper proposes that the personal statement should be reformed to a series of short-response questions, to remove any unnecessary burden and increase transparency.

Instead, two short-response questions had been proposed which would focus on an applicant's interest in their course(s); and relevant skills. HEPI claimed that the proposed questions would assess whether applicants met certain baseline competencies to complete a particular course, and they were compatible with the sector's own Fair admissions code of practice.

Commenting on HEPI paper about reforming the UCAS personal statement, Kevin Gilmartin, Post 16 Specialist at the Association of Schools and College Leaders, said that the research from HEPI had indicated that the personal statement in its current form favoured more advantaged students, as they were more likely to receive extensive support from families and other sources.

He said that whilst teachers aimed to support students with personal statements by providing advice and guidance, they could not solve a systemic inequity, and it was the system that needed to change. Mr Gilmartin added that ASCL welcomed the principle of levelling the playing field in terms of university admissions and it looked forward to examining the proposals in more detail.

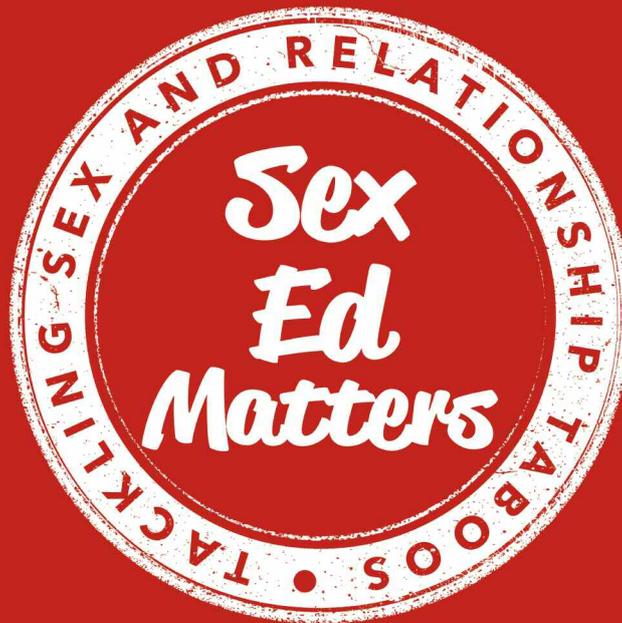
AELP and Ufi launch partnership to improve digital teaching practices

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and Ufi VocTech Trust (Ufi) have announced that they are working more closely together through a new partnership, to develop insight into the skills sector and how technology can be used to enhance high-quality delivery. The partnership will aim to influence the strategy and practice of organisations across the skills sector to produce a long-term shift in the adoption and deployment of high-quality digital teaching and training practices.

The organisations will convene discussions and undertake national research to explore how independent training providers were using or planning to use technology and digital pedagogies in their delivery. They will seek to understand barriers to adoption and how the funding and regulatory landscape can support innovation.

The partnership will also enhance the SectorShare platform (www.sectorshare.org.uk), initially developed by Ufi and AELP to support providers with resources for online delivery during the pandemic, to provide greater support across the sector.

Is it normal for your partner to be controlling?



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Speculation that the UK Government may reduce international student numbers

Following speculation that the UK Government may cut international student numbers, Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said that the move would run directly counter to the Government's strategy to rebuild the economy, given the huge financial contribution they made to every part of the country.

She argued that limiting international students would be an act of economic self-harm that would damage many parts of the country that the Government aimed to make more prosperous. Ms Stern called on the Government to support a long term, stable policy approach to international visas, which would be tough on abuse but supported long-term, managed growth.

New data reveals impact of the cost of living crisis on university students

UK universities have reported that they are stepping up to provide extra support due to the cost of living crisis, following a survey investigating its impact on university students. The survey found that 91% of students were worried about the rising cost of living, and half (49%) had been very worried. More than three-quarters (77%) of students had been concerned that the rising cost of living may affect how well they did in their studies, while around 45% of students had reported that their mental health and well-being had worsened since the start of the autumn term 2022.

The survey carried out by the Office of National Statistics had also found that half (49%) of students believed that they had financial difficulties, and the crisis had also had an adverse effect on their mental wellbeing, as 45% of students had reported that their mental health had worsened in the last few months since the start of the autumn term. In total, 4,000 students had taken part in the survey.

NEU strikes in sixth form colleges

Today the National Education Union teacher members who work in sixth form colleges will be on strike. In total, this affects 77 colleges across England. The strike is in pursuance of a fully funded, above inflation pay rise. The union claims that teachers working in sixth form colleges have suffered a real-terms pay cut of an estimated 20% since 2010.

The ballot closed on 11 November with 88.5% voting YES on a turnout of 63%. This is the first day of strike action. Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary of the NEU, said: "Members take strike action with great reluctance, but the effects of real-terms pay losses are simply too urgent for them to endure the situation any longer. These cuts are driving an exodus from the profession whilst providing little incentive to those seeking a career in teaching. The overwhelming majority of teachers in sixth form colleges will receive a 5% pay rise this year, which simply doesn't deal with the effects of inflation. The Government is failing to act to protect the pay and living standards of our members, and it is in the gift of the education secretary to make that change. The message from members on this strike day is that she must do so urgently. Enough is enough."



**We warmly invite you to the launch of Time's
Up For The Test - a coalition against the 11+**

DECEMBER 1ST 6.30 - 8.00 PM

HAMILTONHOUSE, MABLEDONPLACE, LONDON WC1H 9BD

Speakers include:

Prof. Andreas Schleicher

Director of the Education and Skills Directorate at the OECD

Andy Burnham

Mayor of Greater Manchester

Greg Dyke

Former director-general of the BBC

Jackie Malton

The former DCI who inspired Prime Suspect

Steve Mastin

Conservative Education Society

Dr Tara Porter

Author and clinical psychologist

Raj Unsworth

Headteachers' Roundtable

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Time's Up for the Test

For most people in Britain the transition from primary to secondary school is a natural progression from their local primary to a comprehensive secondary. In cities there is more of a choice of secondary school, and sometimes popular schools are over-subscribed. In many small towns and rural areas, there is only one secondary school and everybody goes there.

Yet in 20% of England the process is quite different. At 11 children are divided into different types of school, theoretically on the basis of ability but in reality, for the vast majority, on the basis of social class. Between 15% and 25% go to grammar school and the rest go to secondary moderns which often pretend they are something else. High schools, non-selective schools, some even pretend that they are comprehensives, although if the grammar school down the road is creaming off say 20% of the brightest children that does not leave you with a genuinely comprehensive intake for the other schools in the area.

As Professor Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Education and Skills Directorate of the OECD, will tell a conference in London tomorrow, the evidence from the OECD's vast PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) research shows that the earlier the test for selection is taken, the less accurate it is. The vast majority of children in England take the 11+ when they are ten. At this age, the assessment test is determined overwhelmingly by social class, an outcome reinforced by the widespread use of private tutors by middle class parents who can afford it. The conference is at the NEU HQ in London.

Most secondary schools went comprehensive in the 1970s, when Margaret Thatcher was Education Secretary. It was Labour's Tony Blair who put a stop to further comprehensive reorganisations, introducing a system of ballots that were virtually impossible to get going (only one ever did, in Ripon) and were rigged against change. From 1997 the number of grammar schools has remained pretty constant, with neither the Conservatives or Labour keen to do anything to change the system to bring it into line with the rest of the country despite the vast amount of evidence that selection does not work and actually harms the education of most children.

A group of education organisations have now had enough of this and have got together to launch the Time's Up for the Test campaign. It will be launched tomorrow, at a meeting in the headquarters of the National Education Union. They have a wide range of speakers including Andreas Schleicher, Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and former Conservative Education Society chairman and former Cambridgeshire head teacher Steve Mastin.

Andy Burnham will say: "Grammar schools are socially divisive without any compensatory gain." Steve Mastin, from the Conservative Education Association, will tell the audience that grammars are "unconservative". He is right. The selective education system was introduced by a Labour government after the Second World War. Professor Schleicher will address the conference by video as he is in Singapore tomorrow. The text of his video address is given below.

Selective education is not the way forward

By Professor Andreas Schleicher

Director of the Education and Skills Directorate of the OECD

We all know that students advance differently in their learning and that one size fits all school systems often don't do justice to many learners. A common answer to that has been to teach students in batches, to group by what we judge to be their academic potential. Academic selection is perhaps less common now than it used to be in the 1970s or 1980s, but it is still a very powerful force in education.

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But as intuitive as it looks to select students into more homogenous groups of learners, that approach is fraught with difficulties too, and interestingly you don't see much academic tracking and selection in many of the world's top performing education systems. And those countries actually have good reason for limiting stratification.

First, it's really difficult to sort students by their academic potential. Now in most cases we end up sorting them by their social background, which defeats the purpose of all of this. You can see in the PISA data that the earlier education systems divide up students the stronger the impact of social background on learning outcomes.

Second, teachers often just are not very good at judging the academic potential of students. In fact, the more selection mechanisms are based on the judgement of teachers, or parents, rather than objective metrics like assessment and tests, the more selection tends to get biased by social background. But even where you do use robust selection mechanisms, like tests, their prognostic validity is often really very limited particularly when you apply them to young age groups. We simply do not know what the future holds for learners, and we simply cannot judge true potential.

The most important aspect

But third, and perhaps that is the most important aspect here, selection mechanisms often set the wrong incentives. We see from PISA that less academically inclusive education systems tend to have a lower share of students with a gross high score. So, what does that mean? Well, you know, of all the judgements people make about themselves, the most influential one is how capable they think they are of completing a task successfully. Research shows the belief that we are responsible for the results of our behaviour influences motivation such as people are more likely to invest their effort if they believe its going to lead to the results that they are trying to achieve. So, if you get routed into a low performing track, or a low performing school, it often becomes a self-performing prophecy. Because then you get surrounded by other low performing students, and you do not any more see what excellence or high performance can really mean for you.



Professor Andreas Schleicher of the OECD

That also helps to explain why selection within schools, particularly when it is subject specific, seems to have far fewer negative consequences than selection into different schools or different school types. Perhaps selection sends the wrong incentive for teachers. It gives them sort of the illusion that they somehow do the right thing but they got the wrong students who belong to somewhere else. And you see that the likelihood that teachers send down students to lower performing tracks tends to be many times greater than the likelihood that they are promoting the best students to a more advanced track.

PISA also shows that in countries with a high degree of stratification students often tend to feel less well supported by their teachers. And as we all know, that perception that you have a teacher who knows who you are and who you want to become, and who accompanies you on that journey is such a powerful predictor for the academic and social development of students.

All that does not mean that you cannot get academic selection right, and there are actually education systems that are quite good at mitigating all the effects that I have just highlighted. But the future isn't that much with selection and grouping students, but with personalising education in ways that help every learner reach their full potential.

The development of selective and comprehensive education

By Demitri Coryton
Editor, *Education Journal*

With the Time's Out for the Test conference in London at the NEU offices in Hamilton House tomorrow and Christine Blower's Private Member's Bill in the Lords getting its Second Reading on Friday, the long dormant issue of selection into different types of school at age 10 has suddenly come back to life. In this policy analysis we look at the origins of comprehensive and selective education, the politics of secondary education and what the substantial amount of research on the subject tells us.

You can go back to the idea of the Common School in the Scotland of the 17th century for the origins of comprehensive education, but in its modern form it is an American idea. The whole of the United States was comprehensive by the 1920s, which gave the USA a great advantage in the expansion of higher education after the Second World War when the country had a pool of people educated up to 18 who could take up places in their greatly expanded higher education system.

It was a different situation in Britain. Before the 1944 Education Act the vast majority of children did not go to secondary school at all. They spent the whole of their education in elementary schools, as primary schools were then called. The Hadow Report of 1926, *The Education of the Adolescent*, one of three reports that Sir William Hadow produced as chairman of the Board of Education's Consultative Committee, concerned itself with what it called post-primary education. [1] This was not secondary education, which the committee was explicitly not tasked with looking at. His report recommended the creation of non-selective senior schools within the elementary school system, for children from 11 to 14 who did not go to secondary school. The debate over selection in the 1930s was over implementing the Hadow Report and whether non-selective senior elementary schools or selective central schools were the way forward. [2] The issue of secondary education was quite serene. It was available almost entirely to only middle class children whose parents could afford the fees that the pre-war grammar schools charged. There were a few scholarship places available free for the bright working class child, but the cost of actually going to a grammar school, rather than out to work, still deterred some who were qualified. Most grammar schools, like most independent schools, were not particularly selective as they provided the only education available for middle class children. If you could afford the fees, your child was in.

The Consultative Committee looked at secondary education in the Spens report of 1938. [3] This and the Norwood report of 1942 [4] developed the idea of the tripartite system. At about the age of ten children would take a test (the 11+, similar to the pre-war Scholarship) which would decide whether they went to a secondary grammar school for an academic education, a secondary technical school or a secondary modern school (which were usually anything but modern). There would be a re-assessment at the age of 13 to allow late developers to transfer to grammar schools and, in theory, those who had got into a grammar school but were not up to it to transfer the other way to secondary technical or modern schools. Transfers to grammar school at 13 hardly ever happened. Transfers the other way never did.

There was very little discussion of comprehensive secondary education prior to the 1944 Act. The Education Act 1944 was the work of the Conservative President of the Board of Education, R A Butler, known universally by his initials as RAB, and his Parliamentary Under Secretary, Labour's James Chuter Ede. Ede played a more significant role than his junior position might at first indicate. He had been a teacher in Epsom, Surrey, before going into politics. He became active in local government, becoming chairman of the

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Education Committee of the Surrey County Council, even though he was Labour and Surrey was one of the strongest Conservative counties in England. (It was also a county with a strong tradition of liberal education policies.) His deep knowledge of education and links with the teacher unions (he had been a member of the NUT) were invaluable to Butler and the two formed a strong war-time partnership. Yet there is not a single mention of selection, comprehensive education or multilateral schools in Ede's war-time diaries. [5]

The most contentious issue in the Education Act 1944 was the role of the churches in education. This was hugely controversial and took up an inordinate amount of time in the couple of years leading up to the Act becoming law. The wartime Coalition set out its plans in the Board of Education's White Paper, *Educational Reconstruction*. [6] It outlined the plans for what became the Education Act 1944 as being the provision of free secondary education for all, the integration of the voluntary (church) schools more fully into the national system and the streamlining of local administration with the abolition of the Part III authorities introduced by Arthur Balfour's Education Act of 1902.

It is often thought that it was the 1944 Act that introduced the tripartite selective system, but that is not so. The 1944 Act made secondary education for all possible. It left it up to each local education authority (LEA) to decide what system of secondary education would suit it best. In the period up to 1945 this was not a contentious issue. There is no mention of comprehensive education in the Conservative Party's education policy report of 1942, which was a fairly bland document. [7] Butler himself favoured some experimentation, supporting those local authorities that wished to introduce comprehensive schools, or multilateral schools as they were more usually then known as. [8] The Conservatives at this time did not take an ideological view of selection, and a number of Conservative LEAs made plans for comprehensive reorganisation in whole or in part, especially in rural areas. Conservative authorities that planned to introduce multilateral (i.e. comprehensive) schools in the late 1940s included Surrey, Westmorland and the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The issue was sharper and more divisive in the Labour Party. Many saw the new grammar schools as more egalitarian, although some on the left favoured the multilaterals. Their American origin made some in the Labour Party suspicious of them. Some also argued that multilaterals would be more expensive, at a time of great austerity, as they would require more new buildings while a selective system could more easily be fitted into the existing school building stock. Some also suggested that to get a decent sixth form at a time when very few progressed that far, multilaterals would have to be very large by British standards, as American high schools usually were. When London County Council announced its plans for multilaterals they included schools of between 1,250 and 2,000 pupils. The average for most authorities that went down this route was 500 to 600 pupils. [9]

In accordance with the 1944 Act, LEAs began filing their development plans with the new Ministry of Education. Joan Thompson of the Fabian Society kept tabs on them. By 1947 she had a sample of 53 LEAs and reported a considerable variety of plans. [10] As well as the three types of school outlined in the tripartite system, councils also went for combinations whether multilateral or bilateral. The bilateral schools had either grammar and technical streams, grammar and modern or technical and modern streams. Among these various alternatives 10% of schools were multilaterals accounting for 26.5% of pupils. Grammar schools accounted for 17% of schools and 12% of pupils. Secondary moderns were the largest category, with 50% of schools and 41% of pupils. [11]

LEAs reacted to the freedom given to them by the 1944 Act to submit plans with a wide range of school types reflecting local need. On the basis of Joan Thompson's survey of 53 LEAs, comprehensive/multilateral schools would have provided for over a quarter of pupils, which would have been a decent foundation for comprehensive education to have built on. But it was not to be. In 1945 the Labour Party won a landslide at the general election. Clement Attlee became Prime Minister and the Labour Cabinet plumped for selective education. Those LEAs, Conservative and Labour, that had planned comprehensive or multilateral schools, and that was a considerable number, were stopped dead in their tracks. Labour insisted that all LEAs adopt a selective system of secondary education, although in practice this tended to be grammar and modern schools rather than the full tripartite provision as secondary

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technical schools were few and far between. The government even wrote to all LEAs helpfully pointing out that the secondary moderns were meant for the working class.

The decision of Attlee's Labour government to insist on only a selective system for secondary schools has had a major and negative effect on both secondary and higher education, and remains a baleful influence on education in the 20% of England which retains selection to the present day. It condemned millions of children to be written off as failures at 10, with life changing consequences, and delayed the expansion of higher education as England in particular did not have the number of school students educated to 18 needed for the expansion of higher education. In 1945 only 2.5% of young people, almost entirely men, went into higher education. That was slightly fewer than before the English Civil War three hundred years earlier. [12] That number increased very slowly in the 1950s and 1960s, until the Robbins report of 1963 led to an expansion of universities, but they were not actually created until the 1970s. This also had a negative impact on Britain's economy. As former universities minister David Willetts has observed: "One reason Britain fell behind key competitors such as the US in the post-war period is that we had fewer highly educated workers than they did." [13]

Labour divided

Attlee's policy did not have universal support within the party. For example, in the 1948 party conference in Scarborough Mrs Edna Harrison of the Derbyshire North East District Labour Party moved a motion that "This conference affirms the principle of the common Secondary School for all, up to the age of 16". But she was followed by a composite motion moved by Mr T P Riley of Walsall which, in its many parts, did not mention selection or the common school at all. Mrs Harrison had her supporters, but we will never know how many they were as when it came to a vote the chairman suggested that the motions that had been proposed should be remitted to the National Executive for further consideration. And so they were, so there was no vote that might have embarrassed the party leadership. [14]

The post-war Labour government put its selective education stamp on education for the next 20 years. It was largely accepted by the Conservative Party, which in its 1950 *Campaign Guide* said that with comprehensive and multilateral schools, while "Conservatives are willing to see a few of these functioning, they consider that they should be in the nature of an experiment as they have not proved altogether satisfactory in other countries. To enable these schools to give adequate sixth form work they must be far too large." [15] Again, the low numbers staying in education until 18 were thought to mean very large comprehensive schools to give a good size sixth form, which for many regardless of party was a major argument against them.

The Conservatives were back in power the following year, but changes to secondary education came very slowly. The priority was building more schools for the post-war baby boom and recruiting enough new teachers to teach in them. Yet there was some movement. In 1954 the Ministry of Education published *Early Leaving. A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* [16] This was the Gurney-Dixon report. It noted that grammar schools were virtually the only way within the state system that pupils could progress to GCE A-levels, never mind universities. The secondary technical schools had very few pupils staying on until they were 18, and the secondary modern schools had none. The tiny number of comprehensive schools were too few to be statistically significant. The report looked at how those who had failed the 11+ but transferred to grammar school at 13 performed compared to those who started grammar school at 11. The report noted that: "There is just as high a proportion of good academic achievement among the transfers as in the whole intake into maintained grammar schools, even though when tested at the age of 11 they were presumably all regarded as below grammar school standard." [17] If it had been within the committee's terms of reference, which it was not, they would also have found that significant numbers of pupils at independent schools whose parents entered them for the 11+ as an insurance policy just in case in future they could not afford the fees at private schools, failed the 11+ but passed the easier Common Entrance at 13 and went on to get GCE O-levels, A-levels and go to university where they got a degree. It was the first evidence that selection tests at age 10 (the age at which the vast majority of children took the rather mis-named 11+) were not accurate predictors of later academic performance.

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It was also in the mid-1950s that the Conservative government abolished the legal limit on secondary modern schools providing O-level courses for their students. This restriction had been brought in by the post-war Labour government and prevented secondary modern students from studying beyond 15. O-levels were meant for 16-year-olds. The reversal of this policy meant that secondary moderns began to provide O-level courses for children who, in theory, should not have been able to do O-levels. It was another crack in the wall of the theory of the tripartite system.

Parental opinion was slowly beginning to change. Some LEAs who had been thwarted in their comprehensive reorganisation plans in the 1940s began to look again at ending selection. The first area to go comprehensive was the Isle of Man in 1938. It was not part of England and was completely independent in its internal affairs. The second place to go comprehensive in all its schools was the island of Anglesey in Wales, in 1953. It did not have any grammar schools, sending those who passed the 11+ to grammar schools in neighbouring authorities. Anglesey County Council just stopped sending children out of county and increased the size and scope of its existing schools.

The major breakthrough in comprehensive education came in 1957, when Conservative controlled Leicestershire County Council reorganised its grammar and secondary modern schools into a two-tier comprehensive system of upper and lower schools with a break at 14. This two-tier system has an echo in the present University Technology Colleges which also have an age range of 14 to 18. But as the UTCs have found out, there are also problems with this age range and the Leicestershire model was not widely followed. Leicestershire County Council at that time did not include the City of Leicester, which was Labour controlled and fiercely defended its grammar schools. The city only went comprehensive when it was merged with the county in the reorganisation that followed the Local Government Act 1972. The Tories controlled the enlarged county and against much protest from Labour in the city the Tories turned it comprehensive.

It was the failure of the secondary moderns that undermined the selective system. Middle class parents who could not afford private school fees were increasingly not prepared to see their children go to secondary moderns. The provision of grammar school places varied widely, within an LEA as well as between them, and this also undermined the selective system. In reality there was no percentage of the population that was of grammar school ability. The number of pupils who went to grammar school varied from 8% to 40%, and depended on the provision of school buildings in a given area rather than pupil ability.

A change of opinion in the 1960s

There was a sea change of opinion in the 1960s. In the early part of the decade the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) began publishing reports highlighting the failures of selective systems. These would become increasingly influential. The National Union of Teachers, most of whose members taught in primary schools where the union had a virtual monopoly, changed from being strongly pro-selection to supporting comprehensives. Within the Labour Party, the pro-comprehensive supporters had at last triumphed and Labour tapped into the growing demand for change with a strongly pro-comprehensive line. It helped Labour return to power in 1964 and win a bigger majority in 1966. The result was Circular 10/65 which required all LEAs to submit plans for comprehensive reorganisation.

This political movement was underpinned by the seminal Plowden report, *Children and Their Primary Schools*, published in 1967. [18] (In Wales there was a parallel report, *Primary Education in Wales*, the Gittens report. [19]) Plowden (and Gittens) came down unequivocally in favour of ending selection. This was not just because grammar schools were not the most effective way of educating children, but because of the harm done to the roughly 80% of children who failed their 11+ (or did not take it) and went to secondary moderns. As Plowden warned, "selection procedures may create the future they predict. The reputation, good or bad, which a pupil earns by his performance at 11 tends to influence what his teachers and parents expect of him in the future and what he feels he can do. Boys and girls tend to live up to, or down to, their reputations." [20]

Plans for reorganisation were nowhere near implemented when Labour lost the 1970 election. One of the first acts of the new Conservative government was to issue Circular 10/70, in June 1970. While this

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repealed the compulsion of Circular 10/65 and its follow-up Circular 10/66, the Tory government did not stop those LEAs that wanted to go comprehensive from doing so. The party's policy was a return to R A Butler's policy of leaving it up to the LEAs. A few Tory authorities took advantage of this change of policy and halted their plans. Those that did include a small number, like Kent, Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire and the City of Plymouth, who were strongly opposed to going comprehensive. Yet most LEAs, including most Conservative ones, continued with their plans even though, in some Conservative areas, there was strong opposition from the right wing of the Tory party.

It is one of the great ironies of the move to comprehensive education that the Education Secretary who closed more grammar schools and approved the opening of more comprehensives than any other was Margaret Thatcher, Tory Education Secretary from 1970 to 1974. It was under Thatcher that England went from having a predominantly selective system of secondary education to a predominantly comprehensive one. As the Conservative *Campaign Guide 1974* proudly boasted, Margaret Thatcher had approved 91% of the comprehensive reorganisation proposals submitted to her. Out of about 3,600 reorganisation proposals put before her under Section 13 of the Education Act 1944 as amended, she turned down only 325. [21] The *Guide* could have added that these 325 were poor proposals that HMI recommended against.

The progress of the comprehensive reforms continued when Labour returned to power after the February 1974 election, under Wilson and later Jim Callaghan. Under the long years of the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, the number of comprehensive reorganisations declined to a trickle, but this was because by then the only selective areas left were where opposition to ending selection was very strong. To the despair of his Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, and her political advisor, Dr Elizabeth Cottrell, John Major at one time talked about bringing back "a grammar school in every town". As Shephard pointed out to him, this also meant a secondary modern in every ward. Nothing came of the proposal.

The election of New Labour and Tony Blair with a large majority in 1997 could have led to the completion of the comprehensive reform in England. (Scotland and Wales were completely comprehensive by the 1970s.) In the 13 years of Labour government not a single grammar school was reorganised. New Labour was strongly opposed to completing the comprehensive reorganisation, but on political rather than educational grounds. This was a choice. It did not have to be this way. In 1997 Labour controlled almost every LEA in the country, with only the shire Tory counties still Conservative. As the Socialist Education Association made clear to Blair at the time, a Labour government could have left it up to the LEAs. Buckinghamshire and Kent would still have held out for selection, but there would have been a further advance for comprehensives. Instead, Blair devised a system of parental ballots in selective areas that were deliberately almost impossible to secure. Only one ballot took place, in Ripon, where the grammar school and the secondary modern were opposite each other. Labour ensured that the system of ballots was rigged to never succeed. For example, the parents of children at the secondary modern did not get a vote, but parents at the grammar school did, as did parents at independent prep schools outside Ripon, most of whom would never use the state education system.

With the Tories back in power in 2010, with the Liberal Democrats in a coalition, the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, was pro comprehensive. However, many in his party were not. During his election campaign for Tory leader before the election he was up against David Davies. At a meeting of Conservative party members in Exeter, Cameron was asked about selection and gave an answer sympathetic to comprehensives. Out of an audience of several hundred, two people applauded.

Cameron won a majority in 2015, but the following year he lost the EU referendum and resigned. A lot of UKIP folk flooded into the Conservative Party while One Nation MPs were expelled. The Conservative Party moved to the right. Theresa May succeeded Cameron and announced plans for new grammar schools. Yet the negative reaction from within her own parliamentary party was so strong that the plans got nowhere. [22] Under the brief leadership of Liz Truss, May's idea was revived. Truss lasted 45 days. With the grown-ups back in charge of the party, that plan was dropped last week. In answer to a written question from Jonathan Gullis, who for a few days had been a minister at the DfE, the new Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, who personally supports grammar schools, replied: "The Department maintains a

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diversity of schools and wants grammar schools to continue to play an important role within the education system. The Department's priority is to concentrate on ensuring that as many children as possible, whatever their ability, have access to an outstanding education, rather than creating more grammar schools." [23]

So, we are back in the position we were in when New Labour came to power in 1997. Should Labour win the next election, its leaders have made it clear to pro-comprehensive campaigners within the party that Sir Keir Starmer is no more likely to end selection in England than Tony Blair was. Equally, the Conservatives have moved away from introducing new grammar schools, but won't do anything to get rid of existing ones. The stalemate looks set to continue.

The evidence

Policy in this areas is determined by politics, not facts or evidence. Labour does not want to risk upsetting its carefully crafted moderate image under Starmer. The Conservatives don't want to take on the right wing of the party in the remaining selective areas. But what is the evidence?

The OECD has been producing reports showing the benefits of comprehensive education since the early 1960s. From 1980 its research Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has repeatedly shown both academic and social benefits from comprehensive systems. The 2012 PISA report stated: "Early student selection has a negative impact on students assigned to lower tracks and exacerbates inequities, without raising average performance." [24]

As Andreas Schleicher, Director of the OECD Education and Skills Directorate, said to *Education Journal* in September this year: "The evidence from PISA shows no positive correlation between early selection and better overall academic outcomes, but it does show a strong correlation between selection and the impact of social background on learning outcomes." [25]

Speaking at the launch of the OECD annual publication, *Education at a Glance*, in 2016, Andreas Schleicher said: "Schools are very, very good in selecting students by their social background but they're not very good in selecting students by their academic potential. And the earlier they select, the worse that relationship is. Academic selection ultimately becomes social selection." [26]

Within the UK, research over decades has consistently shown the advantages of comprehensive education. For example, in the mid 1970s Surrey County Council had a report from its Chief Inspector, Joan Dean, put before the Education Committee, which showed improvements at every level, from screening tests of five year olds to Oxbridge entrance, which followed the phases of primary and secondary reorganisations across the county. (Surrey had undertaken a Plowden reorganisation of primary schools and comprehensive reorganisation of secondary schools in phases across the county, starting in the west and ending up a few years later in the east of the county.)

In 2013 the journal the *Oxford Review of Education* published a paper on selection in Buckinghamshire. It found that any success that grammar school pupils had was at the expense of pupils not in grammar schools. It also found that: "The low prevalence of FSM (free school meals) eligible pupils in the grammar schools casts doubt on their ability to aid social mobility." [27]

Nationally, the Education Policy Institute has published a number of reports on selection. In 2016 it published *Grammar Schools and Social Mobility*, which found that it was more difficult for poor children to access grammar schools, even when prior attainment is taken into account. Pupils eligible for free school meals make up 6.9% of those with high prior attainment near selective schools, but only 2.4% actually attend selective schools. [28]

A POSTbrief note from the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology, *Academic Evidence on Selective Secondary Education*, published in 2016, found that "available evidence from England and international comparisons using PISA data suggests that selective education systems widen educational inequality." [29] This is just a small selection of the available evidence.

Yet as we have noted, the decision on whether to end selection in England will be based on political considerations and not educational evidence. The level of selection has remained static for nearly 50 years. The new campaign to end selection, Time Out for the Test, will only succeed if it galvanises public opinion

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so that politicians in both main parties conclude that there are more votes to be lost by continuing with selection where it still exists than by abolishing it.

Foot notes

- [1] *The Education of the Adolescent*, report of the Board of Education Consultative Committee under the chairmanship of Sir William Hadow, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in 1926.
- [2] See, for example, *Selective Central or Senior Schools*, in *The Year Book of Education 1933*, edited by Lord Eustace Percy MP, former President of the Board of Education, published by Evans Brothers, London, page 190.
- [3] *Report of the Board of Education Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools* under the chairmanship of Will Spens, (the Spens report) published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in 1938.
- [4] *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools*. Report of the Committee of the Secondary Schools Examination Council under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Norwood (the Norwood report), published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in 1942.
- [5] *Labour and the Wartime Coalition. From the Diary of James Chuter Ede, 1941 - 1945*, edited by Kevin Jefferys, published by The Historian's Press, 1987.
- [6] *Educational Reconstruction*, Board of Education White Paper, Cmd. 6458, July 1943.
- [7] *Looking Ahead. Educational Aims, Being the First Interim Report of the Conservative Sub-Committee on Education*, published by the Central Committee on Post-War Reconstruction set up by the Conservative and Unionist Party Organisation, September 1942.
- [8] Conversation between R A Butler and the author, then chairman of the Conservative National Advisory Committee on Education, 1980. There is also a news reel interview with Butler, probably from British Pathé, from the late 1940s saying the same thing. This was confirmed by a conversation with Butler's widow, Lady Molly Butler, then a vice president of the Conservative Education Association, with the author over tea at the Carlton Club a few years later.
- [9] *Secondary Education for All. An Analysis of Local Education Authorities' Development Plans*, Joan Thompson, the Fabian Society Research Series pamphlet No. 118, published by Fabian Publications Ltd with Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947.
- [10] *Ibid.*, and a second report, *Secondary Education Survey. An Analysis of LEA Development Plans for Secondary Education*, Joan Thompson, the Fabian Society Research Series pamphlet No. 148, published by Fabian Publications Ltd with Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1952, analysed the plans of 111 councils.
- [11] See the table on page 8 of the Fabian Society's 1947 report.
- [12] *A University Education*, David Willetts, Oxford University Press, 2017, page 18. See foot note 16 which quotes Stone, *The Educational Revolution in England*, page 69.

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[13] Ibid., page 33.

[14] *Report of the 47th Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Scarborough, 1948*, the Labour Party, 1948. The report on the education debate starts on page 153.

[15] *General Election 1950. The Campaign Guide*, published by Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1949, page 427.

[16] *Early Leaving. A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, Ministry of Education, report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) under the chairmanship of Sir Samuel Gurney-Dixon, 1954.

[17] Ibid., page 13.

[18] *Children and Their Primary Schools, A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, under the chairmanship of Lady Bridget Plowden, (the Plowden report), published in two volumes by the Department of Education and Science through Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967.

[19] *Primary Education in Wales*, a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales) under the chairmanship of Professor Charles Gittens, (the Gittens report) published by the Department of Education and Science through Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967.

[20] *The Plowden Report*, page 154.

[21] *The Campaign Guide 1974*, Conservative Central Office, 1974, page 315.

[22] 'Nicky Morgan hits out at Theresa May as PM faces first Commons revolt over grammar school plans Former Education Secretary becomes latest Tory politician to condemn Ms May's proposal', the *Independent*, 10 September 2016.

[23] Answer to written Parliamentary question, House of Commons Hansard, question 89066, from Jonathan Gullis MP, Wednesday 23 November 2022.

[24] *What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices*, report of PISA 2012, Volume IV, OECD, Paris, 2012. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/Vol4Ch2.pdf>

[25] Email from Andreas Schleicher to Demetri Coryton, editor of *Education Journal*, 30 September 2022.

[26] *Education Journal* No. 279, 20 July 2016.

[27] 'Who benefits from grammar schools? A case study of Buckinghamshire, England' by Richard Harris and Samuel Rose, in the *Oxford Review of Education*, Volume 39, 2013 - Issue 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2013.776955>.

[28] *Grammar Schools and Social Mobility*, Jon Andrews, Jo Hutchinson and Rebecca Johnes, Education Policy Institute, September 2016, page 8.

[29] *Academic Evidence on Selective Secondary Education*, the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology, published on Friday, December 16, 2016.

Disadvantage attainment gap remains wide after pandemic, particularly reading and maths skills

Schools are continuing to face huge challenges supporting socio-economically disadvantaged and low attaining pupils because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to research published by the Education Endowment Foundation, which had tracked the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on younger pupils' reading and maths skills.

The study, by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), followed 6,000 pupils who were in Reception and Year 1 (four- to six-year-olds) in March 2020 until the spring term of 2022, and it investigated how the group of pupils' attainment and social skills had been affected by disruptions to learning.

Many children had caught up, but younger pupils were still struggling with reading. On average, pupils who had been in Year 3 in spring 2022 (seven- and eight-year-olds) had caught up in reading and maths compared with pupils before the pandemic. However, the picture was more mixed for Year 2 pupils (six- and seven-year-olds). While the pupils had also, on average, caught up in maths, they remained behind in their reading by about three months.

“For some groups of pupils, learning recovery was proving more challenging, and the researchers had found an increase in the proportion of very low attaining pupils, particularly for reading.”

For some groups of pupils, learning recovery was proving more challenging, and the researchers had found an increase in the proportion of very low attaining pupils, particularly for reading. For Year 2 pupils, the proportion of very low attainers in reading had more than tripled from 2.6 per cent before the pandemic to 9.1 per cent in spring 2022. For Year 3 pupils, the proportion had more than doubled from 2.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent.

For maths, the proportion of very low attainment in Year 2 had more than doubled from 2.6 per cent before the pandemic to 5.5 per cent in spring 2022. But for Year 3 pupils, the increase had been less pronounced, as it had risen from 2.5 per cent to 3.9 per cent.

The findings meant that in the typical Year 2 classroom, there would be three very low attaining pupils for reading, compared to one before the pandemic, which would create additional challenges for schools and teachers, particularly those in disadvantaged areas with higher proportions of lower attaining pupils. The research had identified a significant challenge, as the attainment gap between socio-economically disadvantaged pupils and their peers had widened since before the pandemic and it had remained at a similar level since spring 2021.

In Year 2, the disadvantage gap in spring 2022 had been around six months' progress for reading, and around five months' progress for maths. For Year 3 pupils, the gap had been wider, at around nine months' progress for reading and around eight months' progress for maths.

The research had also investigated the impact of the pandemic on younger pupils' social skills and wellbeing. Surveys with headteachers found that they were concerned about Year 2 and Year 3 pupils' wellbeing, and many had introduced interventions to help, which had added to teachers' workload. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of schools surveyed had reported that they were redeploying staff to support social

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skills and wellbeing, while a slightly smaller proportion (63 per cent) had said that they were running small-group wellbeing sessions.

The EEF urged the Government to ensure that as more pupils became eligible for pupil premium funding, the amount paid per pupil would be protected, ideally increasing in real terms.

To support reading development in younger pupils, the EEF has a suite of resources to support literacy development in Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. They include a specialised guidance report with eight evidence-informed recommendations to help teachers maximise the impact of their literacy teaching. Relevant strands of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit also provide information on approaches to teaching early reading.

Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation, said that tackling education inequality, and the factors behind it, was the biggest challenge the education system faced, but doing so must be a top priority for the Government.

Dr Ben Styles, Head of Classroom Practice and Workforce at NFER, said that the schools that had already faced huge challenges were facing a large number of very low attaining pupils, particularly in reading, who had suffered most at the hands of the pandemic. He stressed that it was essential for the National Tutoring Programme to be protected from Government cuts and that funds were distributed in a way which would directly support disadvantaged pupils.

Commenting on research published by the Education Endowment Foundation which tracked the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on reading and maths skills, Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that the EEF had confirmed what school staff had been saying with increasing urgency since the start of the pandemic, that the socio-economic attainment gap had not only widened, but it showed no sign of reducing.

He pointed out that schools serving the most disadvantaged pupils had suffered the worst funding cuts since 2015, and the EEF had provided further evidence that the crisis was worsening. Mr Courtney urged the Government to take substantial action to address the situation, as children needed warmth, safe housing, and food. He added that schools needed better funding to support their pupils' learning, particularly for those who needed extra help, which were the essential preconditions for any serious and enduring attempt to close the attainment gap.

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, argued that well before the pandemic hit, the gap in attainment between children from wealthy and poor families had stopped closing. He said that nearly 18 months of progress already separated pupils from the poorest communities from their more affluent peers, and as the research had showed, an already bad situation had been made worse by the impact of COVID. But Mr Brook added that the report was further evidence of the continued need to invest in education and childhood recovery in the long term.

Tiffnie Harris, Primary and Data Specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said that the findings of the report had reflected the severe impact that the pandemic had had on many young children during a crucial stage of their learning and emotional development.

She said that in an ideal world, schools would be able to provide more individualised and specialist support but that would be very difficult to do on existing budgets and staffing levels. Ms Harris added that the National Tutoring Programme was also difficult to access financially because of the need for schools to top-up the money with 40% from their own budgets.

“The NAHT argued that well before the pandemic had hit, the gap in attainment between children from wealthy and poor families had stopped closing.”

Non-specialist teachers may have negative impact on learning

Research has suggested that the use of non-specialist teachers is more prevalent in schools facing teacher supply challenges, and is likely to have a detrimental impact on pupils' education and learning. The data, covering schools in England, had showed that among secondary schools finding teacher recruitment the most difficult, 62 per cent had reported at least "some" maths lessons being taught by non-specialists, 55 per cent for physics and 26 per cent for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). This compares to 28 per cent for maths, 29 per cent for physics and 14 per cent for MFL in the schools that had reported finding teacher recruitment the least difficult.

The study, conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research and funded by the Nuffield Foundation, had examined national and local level trends in teacher recruitment and retention in England. NFER had surveyed nationally representative samples of senior leaders with responsibility for staffing in autumn 2020 (reflecting on the 2019/20 academic year) and autumn 2021 (reflecting on the 2020/21 academic year) to gather information about their experience of teacher recruitment, retention, and what actions, if any, they had taken to manage shortages.

The survey found that many secondary schools had been facing recruitment challenges. School leaders had been asked to rate the extent they had been "unable to assemble a field of quality applicants" (1 being "not at all" and 8 being "to a great extent"). On average, secondary school leaders had said 5 and primary school leaders had said 3.8. Other findings included:

- Quantity and quality of applicants to vacancies were particularly acute challenges for secondary schools, where recruitment of trainees to teacher training programmes had been below the target numbers required for many years.
- Schools that had reported finding teacher recruitment the most difficult were considerably more likely than other schools to report recruiting less-experienced teachers than they would otherwise like, and more likely to employ more unqualified teachers than they normally would. Recruiting inexperienced or unqualified teachers may have negative implications for teaching quality.
- In the autumn 2020 survey, only 13 per cent of primary school leaders and 27 per cent of secondary school leaders had reported that they could have afforded to recruit another teacher, regardless of whether they wanted to or not.

As part of NFER's research into England's growing teacher recruitment and retention challenges, it has created a data dashboard, in partnership with the Nuffield Foundation, which will launch in December. The tool will provide information on the nature of the recruitment and retention challenges, and their implications for pupils and schools in terms of teacher shortages, across different dimensions, including geography, subject and school types.

NFER School Workforce Lead and co-author of the report, Jack Worth, said that the growing recruitment and retention challenges in England were likely to be having negative impacts on pupils' education and learning. He pointed out that under-recruitment to initial teacher training led to school leaders facing teacher recruitment shortages, which they could mitigate to some extent by, for example, deploying non-specialist teachers or asking school leaders to take on more teaching. But Mr Worth warned that such measures made school improvement more difficult right across the system.

He called on the Government to place a renewed focus on improving teacher recruitment and retention, to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers, and in turn, support the improvement of pupil outcomes in schools throughout the education system.

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Josh Hillman, Director of Education at The Nuffield Foundation, said that knowledgeable and inspiring teachers were vital to ensure that every pupil received a high-quality education. He added that it was therefore of great concern that the report's findings had highlighted how recruitment challenges were leading to an increased use of non-specialist teachers, particularly in schools that were struggling to hire teaching staff, and in particular parts of the country.

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that workload pressures and pay levels were the main reasons for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers, which was unsurprising when pay had fallen by 20% in real-terms since 2010, and school budgets had been squeezed by government underfunding, which had left schools trying to do more with less.

He pointed out that although the teacher pay award was significantly below the rate of inflation, no additional government funding had been given to schools this year for them to be able to pay for it, which had put even more pressure on their budgets.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, argued that the Government had failed to recruit and retain sufficient teachers into the profession for many years, and it must act quickly to restore teaching as an attractive graduate profession. He said that pay, professional agency, and workload problems had got to crisis point, and while parents rightly expected their child to be taught by a qualified subject teacher, under constant financial pressure, schools were struggling to match need to specialist staff. Mr Courtney added that for the sake of educational quality and students' life chances, the NEU was demanding a fully-funded, above inflation pay rise for all teachers as a critical first step.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said that the report echoed what the union had heard from its members about the recruitment and retention crisis schools were currently facing, as too many teachers and leaders were leaving the profession due to a combination of crushing workloads, eroded pay, pressures caused by government policies, and a punitive accountability system.

“ The NEU argued that the Government had failed to recruit and retain sufficient teachers into the profession for many years, and it must act quickly to restore teaching as an attractive graduate profession.”

Half of young people experiencing mental health problems

Poor mental health among young people, aged 16 and 17, has increased by more than a quarter since 2017, according to research by UCL and the Sutton Trust, using the COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities (COSMO) study. The COSMO study, led jointly by the UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO), the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, and the Sutton Trust, is the largest study of its kind into the impacts of the pandemic on young people.

It was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19, and the briefing had explored the mental health and wellbeing of a sample of almost 13,000 young people across England who had been in Year 11 in 2021. Most of the cohort had recently begun Year 13.

The research found that almost half (44%) of young people had been above the threshold for "probable mental ill health", using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), indicating high levels of psychological distress, which had increased dramatically from 35% in 2017 and 23% in 2007 from previous cohort studies looking at similar ages), which suggested a decline in the mental health and wellbeing of young people, most likely accelerated by the pandemic.

Higher levels of psychological distress had been reported among those who had suffered long COVID or who had had to shield during the pandemic, as 66% of those with severe long COVID had reported high psychological distress. Those who had experienced major life events during the pandemic had also been more likely to report high psychological distress, including those who had experienced arguments between parents or guardians (69%), were seriously ill (68%) struggled to afford food (67%), and argued more with parents or guardians (67%), which compared to 30% of those who had not had such experiences. The research had also revealed stark differences in mental health by gender identity. Females had reported elevated psychological distress (54%), self-harm (23%) and suicide attempts (11%), compared to males (33% report distress, 11% report self-harm and 5% report attempting suicide). Overall, 8% of participants reported that they had ever attempted to end their life. This figure was comparable with data from 2017 (7%).

Those who identified as non-binary or "in another way" were more likely to report poor mental health than those who identified as male or female. A total of 69% of the group of young people had reported high psychological distress, 61% had self-harmed and 35% had attempted suicide. They had also been far more likely to report having experienced bullying, as over half (54%) had reported having experienced bullying at school, compared to an average of 24%.

The research had also explored the link between the pandemic, wellbeing and young people's motivation and plans for the future. The findings had showed that 68% of those who had reported high psychological distress had been less motivated to study and learn as a result of the pandemic, compared to 37% who had not reported distress. Those reporting poor mental health had also been more likely to say they had fallen behind their classmates (45%, compared to 27% of those without poor mental health) and that their career plans had changed in some way due to the pandemic (71% vs 50%).

The mental health support that young people had reported receiving from state schools had not been highly rated. Around half of pupils from comprehensive or grammar schools had rated their school's mental health support as "not very good" or "not at all good", compared to just under a quarter (23%) of those attending independent schools. The researchers are calling for:

- Improved ring-fenced funding for mental health support in all schools.
- Sustainable and well-funded mental health support for young people, including preventative and early intervention services.

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- Targeted support for non-binary and transgender students.

Dr Jake Anders, Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the UCL Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities (CEPEO), and COSMO's Principal Investigator, said that the level of young people whose responses had suggested concern with their mental health had been shocking, and young people particularly badly affected by the events of the pandemic were among those with the highest levels of distress. But he argued that the levels reached were the continuation of a trend that had been evident over the past decade or so, and he added that while it was likely that the COVID-19 pandemic had sped the trend up, things had been bad before, and huge systematic issues needed to be fixed.

Sir Peter Lampl, Founder and Chairman of the Sutton Trust and Chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation, said that the highly disturbing findings showed that almost half of young people were struggling with mental ill-health. He added that even allowing for some of the factors that affected young people, such as the rise of social media, social isolation and disruption caused by the pandemic, there had been an enormously worrying increase on the 2007 figure of 23%.

Sir Peter pointed out that the research had starkly revealed troubling differences between levels of male mental health and female mental health, and girls were more than twice as likely as males to attempt suicide. He called for improved ring-fenced funding for mental health support in schools; sustainable and well-funded preventative and early intervention services for young people; and local and national strategies to tackle bullying.

Lucy Thorpe, Head of Policy at the Mental Health Foundation, said that society needed to listen carefully to what young women and men were saying and think very seriously about how the distress could be reduced and prevented. She pointed out that the Mental Health Foundation believed that schools had a vital role in creating a culture and community, modelled by school leaders with the genuine involvement of pupils, to promote and protect young people's mental health and wellbeing. Ms Thorpe added that well-evidenced anti-bullying programmes and mental health and emotional literacy, were core elements of schools' personal, social and health education curriculum.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said that while members consistently raised pupil mental health and wellbeing as one of their top priorities, teachers were not mental health specialists and they could not be expected to provide the specialist support that children and young people needed. He stressed that it was crucial that when school staff identified a mental health need with a pupil, they were able to get the specialist help that was required.

Mr Whiteman urged the Government to ensure that every school had fully funded mental health support available for their pupils and it would be essential to increase the capacity of social care, health and other services, to meet the growing demand and to reduce waiting times.

Margaret Mulholland, SEND and Inclusion Specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said that the worrying findings had highlighted the severity of the mental health crisis among children and young people, and a 96% increase in referrals for mental health support must be taken seriously. She stressed that the overwhelming demands for emotional and social support for young people as a result of the pandemic were an enormous pressure on schools, and the consequent impact on motivation to study was a barrier to academic success.

Ms Mulholland pointed out that schools and colleges were increasingly being called upon to provide mental health support for which they were unlikely to have adequate expertise or experience. She argued that while teachers were doing what they could to help, there needed to be strict clinical thresholds that determined when it was appropriate for schools to provide mental health support to pupils, and when cases needed to be referred to other agencies.

Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that school staff were frustrated by the delays which students faced in accessing specialist mental health assessment and support once wellbeing issues had been identified. He pointed out that the delays were leading to time out of school and they placed further stress on pupils, while waiting times were allowing cases to become more severe.

The cost-of-living crisis and independent training providers

By Jane Hickie

Chief Executive, AELP

and a contributor to the Campaign for Learning report *Learning in the Cold: The Cost-of-Living Crisis and Post-16 Education and Skills*.

The cost-of-living crisis cannot be tackled without recognising the double whammy of tight labour market conditions and stagnant economic growth. Poor productivity and low attainment combined with tepid growth means wages have stagnated. There are currently 1.2 million unfilled vacancies with more and more employers struggling to find the right people with the right expertise.

A strong economy relies on a strong skills sector. Tackling the nation's skills gap will be paramount. A renewed focus on lifelong learning is necessary, as well as making sure accessible and affordable training is available for people at all ages and levels. Independent Training Providers (ITPs) are ready to play a central role in any strategy to close the nation's skills gap - but they will need support to see them through a particularly tough set of circumstances.

Support for ITPs as Businesses

Training providers, like other businesses, are dealing with inflation rates not seen for a generation. Being able to cope with those rising costs is a major concern for ITPs and this is compounded by problems in recruiting and retaining staff. Support will be needed to ensure providers can weather the storm and continue to provide a wide range of high quality skills provision.

The global energy crisis is threatening to jeopardise the significant progress the country has made in building a skills system that's fit for the 21st century – at a time we need to be doing even more to fill the skills gap. The decision by the new Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, to stick with reversing the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions towards the Health and Social Care Levy and to continue the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will help ITPs at this time.

However, ITPs will need longer-term assurances that support will be in place while the energy crisis continues to result in rising costs. Failure to do so will mean employer and learner choice is significantly impacted.

Review Funding Rates for Post-16 Provision

Currently, funding rates for many qualifications are not reviewed on a regular basis – again threatening availability and learner choice. For example, funding for delivering English and maths Functional Skills qualifications as part of an apprenticeship has remained the same since 2014. Earlier this summer, research from the Learning and Work Institute set out the impact of this – with high inflation rates threatening to wipe out £850m of skills funding.

This is very much in line with the experiences of many AELP members. The amount providers receive for each qualification must reflect the real cost of delivery and all skills programme funding rates should be reviewed and adjusted at least every two years. Priority should be given to expedite decision making for qualifications in sectors that are under the most immediate pressure. However, this needs government departments and public bodies to have the resources and powers to do this. With the Government seeking to reduce civil service headcount by 91,000, this could lead to decisions on funding bands taking even longer than they do now.

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Help Employers Take on Apprentices

There are also actions government could take to reduce the costs of delivering high quality work-based learning. Bureaucracy is a huge barrier for small and medium-sized businesses taking on apprentices. The Department for Education (DfE) clearly recognise the scale of the problem and have committed to undertaking a simplification project, which is welcome.

The Government could boost the number of employers engaged in skills without committing significant new money, just by making the existing system much more accessible. For example, having an auto enrolment apprenticeship system for employers who could activate their account when needed would save time and money. The apprenticeship funding rules also need addressing too, as they have become overly bureaucratic. Although we clearly need the right measures in place to ensure accountability, providers must be allowed to get on with what they do best – delivering high-quality skills provision.

Comprehensive Support Soon

While these are challenging times for our economy, ITPs are ready to meet the needs of employers and help fill our country's skills gaps. That will increase productivity and boost our economy – something that's desperately needed. However, providers need support to help them through the cost-of-living crisis and will be hoping that support comes soon.

Recommendation 1

The Government must extend the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and make it more generous if gas prices in world markets remain volatile and elevated. If ITPs are to continue to support the growth of the economy by tackling skill shortages, they will need certainty regarding future energy bills.

Recommendation 2

Funding councils in England should be given the resources and powers necessary to allow regular reviews of funding rates.

Recommendation 3

DfE, ESFA and IFATE must simplify further the rules around funding and assessment of workbased learning to reduce the costs of doing business for skills providers.

Five examples of why today's primary school children will make great leaders of the future

By Alexandra Ladbury

Head of School of Park Lane Primary School and Nursery

Today's children have already faced some of the toughest challenges. COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in remote working have triggered a step-change in how offices approach hybrid environments, with many adults now preferring the option to spend some of their hours working from home. However, many of today's children were thrust into online learning without any choice or explanation.

Focusing on a screen, learning about new ways of communicating and keeping up attention spans were all challenges this generation faced far before they ordinarily would. However, the adaptability, resilience and emotional intelligence that stems from learning about the world differently are all qualities that can help shape future leaders among today's primary school children.

Hand-in-hand with the ability to adapt to different environments is the ease with which today's primary school children can adapt to new technologies. According to the *Guardian*, the average six-year-old understands more about digital technology than someone in their forties. This knowledge and ability ingrained from a young age, set this generation of primary school children up as the next generation of digital leaders. Being quick to adapt and appreciate the benefits of new technology is one of the hallmarks of a great leader of the future.

Generation Alpha are arguably the most environmentally aware generation ever. Even young children can find age-appropriate climate change discussions, from their favourite cartoons to mainstream wildlife documentaries. In addition, inspirational young people like Greta Thunberg are modelling dynamic leadership behaviours - teaching today's primary school children how to stand up for what they believe in, and speak up as future leaders. Although young children are increasingly being thrust into a more digital world, essential interpersonal skills are vital for any good leader to develop from a young age too.

Unfortunately, the chance to develop skills like public speaking and to work in a group might have suffered during COVID. Still, as primary school children re-enter a more traditional learning environment, there are opportunities for them to flourish.

The recent leaps and bounds in educational theory and understanding of different learning styles are particularly beneficial. As young people are more exposed to these pedagogical theories in the classroom, it also gives them a better understanding of communicating with different audiences. Understanding that some of their peers benefit more from other communication styles is an essential building block for becoming a great leader. There is a broad range of parenting and teaching styles in today's society. One common factor, many share, is a gradual move away from strict disciplinarian approaches – the idea that children should be seen and not heard. Today's children are taught how to handle emotions better and from a younger age. Sharing feelings is not as alien as it would have been to older generations. For a child in today's classroom, this can be hugely beneficial in regulating their emotions and behaviour – setting them on a clear pathway to being a good leader for the future.

Here, at Park Lane Primary School and Nursery, part of Griffin Schools Trust, we believe that we can create a nurturing and safe environment where pupils are inspired to become confident, creative, ambitious individuals. Their strength and adaptability are features that inspire us, and so we are proud to be able to learn from them. Our Proud Traditions, such as our annual Griffin Science Symposium and Griffin Arts Festival have evolved and adapted as technology has allowed, but we all agree that nothing can replace the feeling of being together and experiencing those precious 'in the moment' opportunities.



Alexandra Ladbury

Too much inward-looking?

By Professor Jan Willem de Graaf

Professor of Brain and Technology, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Deventer, Netherlands

Recently I was at a large meeting at a university where I gave a lecture. The chairman of the day, a professor from that institute itself, repeatedly remarked that they are “too much inward-looking”. All morning I hope for an argument, an explanation, a why or how, but unfortunately in vain. Although, once after repeating this statement again, he says, "That's just my opinion." But an opinion is not even remotely an argument. What remains is vicarious irritation, which is a direct reason for me to really focus on being internally focused in general.

This is not an isolated incident. Also at other universities, including the one where I work, I sometimes hear lecturers say that “we” are too much inward-looking. Without shame. However, the Inner Development Goals emphasize that the major sustainability problems can only be solved if we take a serious look at our own behaviour and beliefs. Instead of looking outside and hoping for new heroes, administrators and especially technologies so that we can continue with our (consumption) behaviour, we should look “inwards”.

Enthusiasm about the theme of inclusion arises during the aforementioned conference. That university has an excellent line of research focused on Inclusion, but one of their own lecturers from the audience immediately says that she knows an inspiring speaker: an external professor! What you get from afar is tasty, force strange eyes. Hmm, as an external speaker I can of course take that as a compliment...

The statement about being too internally focused contains a paradox. Like every university, this institute also recruits the best possible professionals to train young people in the best possible way for a scientific or professional future. Their teachers/researchers are also figureheads who inspire students and the world with state-of-the-art knowledge in their field. So why are these professionals immediately excluded after they are hired and thus belong to 'internal', even if they are recognized experts in inclusion? Why do we almost by definition look for inspiring experts outside our organizations?

The only logically conclusive answer I can think of doesn't make it any better: because they haven't been able to hire or retain recognized expert and inspiring employees. After all, you don't have to focus on something you don't have at home. An empty barrel is dependent on the outside world for content. If that's true, I suddenly understand everything: the chairman, the people I lecture to... If you know that you actually have nothing to offer, you prefer to say that people are too much inward-looking, arguing “that's just my opinion”. Of course you don't want to argue that “we are too internally focused, because we really only have boring and uninspiring third-choice employees in-house”, or “if we really want to learn something, we have to get the knowledge from outside”.

Good news. That's not true. In addition, the chairman of the day said many beautiful things, such as that everything you give attention grows. That also applies to his own university, I think when he says this. I know a number of professors at his institute that I look at with the greatest respect. They really have everything they need to provide the world with wonderful, inspired knowledge and research. Wonderful people!

When I think back to the Inner Development Goals and look for what we can do ourselves to create a more sustainable world, I see a connection. In our country, with the energy crisis, many people are now practically able (internally!) to set the thermostat much lower, to only heat the rooms where they live and to put on a “warm” sweater. Our thermostat is set at 16.5 degrees. If the need is there, we can really change and take a good look at ourselves in the mirror. Or am I too inward-looking now?

“The statement about being too internally focused contains a paradox. Like every university, this institute also recruits the best possible professionals to train young people in the best possible way for a scientific or professional future..”

It's Not OK, OKAY?

By Julia Morris

The All Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession

The 25th of November was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. To mark the event the National Education Union (NEU) launched It's Not OK. The new toolkit aims to educate students and teachers on sexual harassment, in a hope to eliminate the issue from schools. It was created in response to disturbing feedback, over the high levels of sexual harassment in schools. It encourages students to report harassment and informs teachers how to handle the issue appropriately.

The toolkit contains statistics on the issue. Over half of women, featured in a poll conducted by the TUC, experienced sexual harassment at work. Furthermore, research conducted by the NEU showed that 37 per cent of female students at mixed-sex schools experienced sexual harassment at school, and 24 per cent experienced unwanted physical touching at school. It is a serious issue and the toolkit is clearly needed. Not only will it help current and future students, but it will prevent sexual harassment escalating into the workplace.

The toolkit contains a number of effective resources. Firstly, it has multiple posters which schools can print and distribute. These include a chart highlighting whole school approaches to tackling the issue and another stating 'This school pledges to prevent sexism and sexual harassment'. Some also included a QR code to the It's Not OK website, meaning students and teachers can easily access more resources and information.

“The new toolkit aims to educate students and teachers on sexual harassment, in a hope to eliminate the issue from schools.”

Tackling the problem

The toolkit also contains videos on the topic, from professionals who have tackled the problem. By viewing the videos, teachers can take inspiration and apply similar techniques to their own schools. The toolkit also gives advice in a number of pamphlets and articles, including, of course, information on how to tackle sexual harassment. There is also a large volume of clear information on the legalities around the issue. It explicitly states that sexual harassment in the workplace is unlawful. The tool kit also clearly explains your rights and what actions count as sexual harassment. This is a very useful feature. If people have a better understanding of the issue, they are more likely to report it and take further action.

The toolkit also clearly explains what steps schools and teachers need to take to help the issue. This includes staff attending regular sexual harassment awareness training and recording all reports of sexual harassment (unless the victim states otherwise). It goes on to fully explain how instances should be reported. This advice will give schools confidence to tackle sexual harassment, as they now know the appropriate measures to take.

The toolkit has been welcomed by many. Kevin Courtney, Joint general Secretary of the NEU stated: “Hundreds of individual schools are doing a great job addressing sexist attitudes, but it's hard because the curriculum is so packed... It's time to give teachers more support, training and opportunity to focus on the social and emotional aspects of learning, so issues like this can be tackled”. Meanwhile Girlguiding Advocate Katie, 16, states: “A whole school approach that addresses the root causes of sexual harassment-sexism and gender stereotypes- is something we've been calling for and we appeal to school leaders to take this opportunity to set in motion real change.”

- You can find the toolkit here: <https://neu.org.uk/end-sexism-sexual-harassment>

Seed funding awarded for projects led by African researchers

Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been allocated to research projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and South Africa. Research projects will include studying microplastic pollution in the continent's largest lake, climate resilience of water supplies in Ethiopia, and the role of music in politics. These projects are supported by the PARC Partnership Fund and promote more equitable research partnerships between African and global North universities.

Seed funding has been awarded to a series of research projects led by African scholars and in collaboration with University of Bristol researchers. The university's Perivoli Africa Research Centre (PARC) has announced that two hundred thousand pounds have been allocated to five projects following an extensive decision process.

The PARC Partnership Fund (PPF) projects, which range from science to the arts, promote more equitable research partnerships between African and global North (UK) universities and are led by researchers in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and South Africa.

They include vital work such as a study into the waters of Wina Gulf, Lake Victoria – a 56km stretch, ending at Kisumu, Kenya. With the city home to caged fish farming, the work will examine the extent of pollution from additives and plastics like dyes and UV stabilisers, while also looking at the effect of microplastics on microscopic aquatic algae living in the lake, which are essential to reducing carbon emissions.

Professor Isabella Aboderin, Director of PARC, said: "These inaugural PPF projects pilot a transformed mode of partnership working which we hope will maximise the potential for the research to make a real and positive impact in Africa. As a centre, we want to embed a new model of partnership that redresses the power imbalances often found in research carried out between Africa and the global North – and demonstrate what these arrangements should really look like. This funding would not have been possible without the generous philanthropic gifts from Alumni and friends of the university, to whom we pay our thanks."

The funding announcement follows a call that was open to any project aimed at addressing power imbalances from an Africa-centred collaboration. Another of the partnerships will focus on rural Ethiopia, where climate change threatens the drinking supply of millions and less than 10% have access to uncontaminated water. It will determine how the area's multi-village piped water supplies will respond to climate threats – studying various aspects of service delivery like local government support, effective management, and the infrastructure.

Another scheme will look at developing an indigenous model of crisis-sensitive educational leadership in Botswana. During the COVID pandemic, school leaders received limited guidance from Government, with no national research carried out to understand educational priorities and responses. This study will look to address that gap with a new approach by giving these professionals education, training and support.

A medical project focuses on the design of neuropharmaceuticals which can permeate the blood-brain barrier to help combat neurological disorders such as the ever more prominent Alzheimer's Disease (AD) in South Africa. It follows the discovery of a new molecule known as EBPD, able to reduce harmful oxidants and decrease the formation of protein deposits in the brain that lead to the development of AD. This project will focus on developing new systems to enhance the stability and delivery of EBPD into the brain.

PARC was established in 2020 thanks to a £1m gift from the Perivoli Foundation. James Alexandroff, trustee and settlor of the Foundation said: "PARC was set up to change the dialogue between the global North and South, with the aim of African institutions playing a greater role in deciding what's best for the people living in Africa.

Digital skills shortages threaten economic growth

Digital Skills Divided: Technical provision for 16-19-year-olds, by David Robinson and Claire Coleman, published by the Education Policy Institute on Tuesday 29 November 2022.

<https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Digital-Skills-Divided-Technical-Provision-for-16-to-19-Year-Olds-2022.pdf>

A report from The Education Policy Institute highlighted a growing demand for digital skills within the job market that was not being met. A substantial 29% of vacancies had been reported as a result of skills shortages related to a lack of digital skills, including 17% relating to a lack of advanced digital skills.

Digital Skills divided: Technical provision for 16-19-year-olds warned that the unmet demand was likely to worsen over the coming years, as those considering take-up of IT and computing courses at GCSE level had fallen by almost half (43%) since its peak in 2016.

The report concluded that curriculum reforms that had led to the withdrawal of the IT GCSE, in favour of the less popular Computer Science GCSE, explained the drop, and take-up of digital skills at the earlier stage of education strongly predicted take-up in the 16-19 phase. It also pointed out that as there was a worrying and worsening gender divide, focus should be given to increasing the proportion of female students studying digital skills, which had reduced from 23% in 2012 to just 17% in 2020. EPI stressed that the importance of enabling and encouraging more female students to pursue digital qualifications could not be overstated, and if the entry rate for female students had been equal to that of male students, entries into intermediate-level digital qualifications would return to their previous peak.

As with the uptake of digital skills at GCSE, the report revealed that apprenticeship starts within the ICT sector had also fallen dramatically since their 2015/2016 peak, as there had been 50% fewer starts in 2019/2020 and 66% fewer in 2021/2022. The report pointed out that although the rollout of three digital T-levels may provide a quality option for many students, almost a quarter of students taking existing digital skills qualifications would not have the GCSE grades expected to access the new qualifications.

EPI added that if neither apprenticeships or T-levels were positioned to facilitate greater uptake of digital skills amongst learners, many otherwise interested students would be likely to instead pursue lower-level courses or be dissuaded from pursuing digital skills entirely. The report also pointed out that colleges were facing serious issues which impacted their ability to deliver digital skills training. Two thirds of colleges had reported that they found digital teachers difficult to recruit, and recent surveys had indicated that nearly half of digital teachers were expected to leave their roles in the next 12 months.

EPI found that the average salary of an ICT teacher in FE (which included those with many years' service) was £32,400, while an average ICT graduate salary was £34,700, with the potential to earn considerably more in their later career. Evidence had also suggested that colleges were at a disadvantage compared to schools, due to an 11 percent pay gap between the sectors. The report stressed that greater support for college provision of digital skills training would be needed to underpin any drive to increase digital skills within the workforce. The report concluded that without securing a healthy pipeline of digital skills entering the workforce, digital skills shortages would increasingly plague the UK employment market and dampen economic growth.

The report's Key Findings were:

- There was unmet employer demand for digital skills, but increased earnings for those who pursue digital qualifications.
- One in 20 employers had reported a vacancy due to skills shortages, 29% of which were due to a lack of digital skills, including 17% which were due to a lack of advanced digital skills.

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- Digital skills shortages were most commonly found within the information and communication sector (61%), the financial services sector (25%) and the business sector (21%).
- Regions worst impacted by digital skills shortages were the West Midlands (22%), the North East (21%) and London (21%).
- Taking an intermediate-level ICT qualification was associated with increased earnings by an employee's late 20s.
- Falling take-up of digital qualifications, and particularly low uptake levels among female students were worsening.
- A third fewer 16–19-year-old students were pursuing digital technical qualifications since 2015, from 33,000 students to 22,000 students.
- GSCE IT or computing qualifications had declined in popularity by 43% since their peak in 2016; largely due to the withdrawal of the IT GCSE in favour of the computer science GCSE.
- Male 16–19-year-olds were five times more likely to take a digital qualification than their female counterparts. The proportion of female students taking the qualifications had fallen from 23% in 2012 to just 17% in 2020.
- Almost two in five recent students pursuing digital skills had taken qualifications that may be defunded due to their overlap with digital T-levels.
- Colleges' capacity to deliver digital qualifications were at risk, as almost one in five digital teachers were not qualified to teach level 3 qualifications and one-third had no industry experience.
- Two thirds of colleges had reported difficulty in finding digital teachers, and a pre-pandemic survey had found that almost half of digital teachers were likely to leave their roles within the next 12 months.
- Young people with digital qualifications generally earned more than graduates in other subject areas.

The EPI report recommended that:

- The government must update its digital strategy and increase the entry of young women into technical qualifications, for example, through careers advice and guidance or targeted work placements.
- The Government must increase incentives to encourage the greater recruitment of digital skills teachers, starting with extending the levelling up premium payments to teachers in the FE sector.
- The Government must make the FE workforce data available to researchers soon after the first full year of the data collection. Given the apparent level of severe staffing difficulties in the FE sector the data is needed urgently to inform delivery and policy making.
- The Government must ensure that the introduction of T-levels does not decrease the proportion of 16-19-year-olds taking level 3 qualification in digital skills. For example, by continuing the availability of alternative level 3 qualifications at least until enough students are able to access T-levels.

Policy papers published last week

Call to Action to Ensure the Rights and Wellbeing of Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Author: -.

Source: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Document type: Policy paper.

Published: Friday 25 November, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: Global.

Details: Thousands of children born of sexual violence in conflict miss out on education, healthcare, and opportunities to be children due to the circumstances of their birth. In some countries, they cannot be registered at birth, preventing them accessing these services. Many feel alone and unwanted by their families or society.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1120402/call-to-action-to-ensure-rights-of-children-born-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict.pdf

Action Plan: Small and Medium Sized Enterprises 2022-2025

Author: -.

Source: Department for Education.

Document type: Action Plan policy paper.

Published: Thursday 24 November, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: DfE's SME action plan covers:

- How the DfE will procure and support SMEs.
- The progress made so far.
- How we will further improve SME engagement.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1119493/2022-2025_SME_Action_Plan.pdf

University Strikes FAQs

Author: Joe Lewis.

Source: House of Commons Library.

Document type: Research briefing.

Published: Wednesday 23 November, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: United Kingdom.

Details: This briefing explains why some university staff are striking over pensions, pay, and working conditions in November 2022, and what students can do if their studies are disrupted.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9387/>

Social Security Support for Children

Authors: Anastasia Lewis, Steven Kennedy, Francis Hobson, Andrew Mackley, Brigid Francis-Devine and Andy Powell.

Source: House of Commons Library.

Document type: Research briefing debate pack.

Published: Tuesday 22 November, 2022.

(Continued from page 35.)

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Reference: CBP-2022-0208.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: A Westminster Hall debate has been scheduled for Wednesday 23 November on social security support for children. The debate will be opened by Anum Qaisar MP.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0208/>

Independent Review of Children's Social Care

Authors: Anastasia Lewis and David Foster.

Source: House of Commons Library.

Document type: Research briefing.

Published: Tuesday 22 November, 2022.

Reference: CBP-2022-0211.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: A backbench business debate has been scheduled for Thursday 24 November on the independent review of Children's social care.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0211/>

Digital Skills Divided: Technical provision for 16-to-19-year-olds

Authors: David Robinson and Clare Coleman.

Source: Education Policy Institute.

Document type: Research policy report.

Published: Tuesday 29 November, 2022.

Reference: -.

Geographical coverage: England.

Details: A report from the Education Policy Institute highlighted a growing demand for digital skills within the job market that was not being met.

<https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Digital-Skills-Divided-Technical-Provision-for-16-to-19-Year-Olds-2022.pdf>

Written ministerial statements published last week

Statements on education or children. Statements first made in the House of Commons are under headings in green. Those first made in the House of Lords are under headings in red.

House of Commons

None.

House of Lords

None.

Consultations published last week

There were no consultations on education published last week.

Consultation outcomes published last week

There were no consultation outcomes on education published last week.

Statutory instruments issued last week

The Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2022 (correction slip)

Year and number: 2022/1151 Correction slip

Correction slip (to ISBN 9780348240863) dated November 2022.

Price: Free.

The Power to Award Degrees etc. (Hull College Group) Order of Council 2015 (Amendment) Order 2022

Year and number: 2022/1205.

Enabling power: Higher Education and Research Act 2017, s. 45 (1).

Issued: 22.11.2022.

Sifted: -.

Made: 11.11.2022.

Laid: -.

Coming into force: 01.01.2023.

Effect: Power to Award Degrees etc (Hull College Group) Order of Council 2015 varied.

Geographical coverage: England.

Classification: General.

Price of print edition: £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

ISBN: 9780348241402.

Details: This Order varies Hull College Group's existing Degree Awarding Powers authorisation so that it remains valid until 31st March 2026. An impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as it has no impact on businesses and civil society. The instrument has no impact on the public sector.

The European University Institute (EU Exit) Regulations 2022

Year and number: 2022/1231.

Enabling power: European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, s. 8 (1), sch. 7, paras 21 (a) (b), 38 (1) (2) (3).

Issued: 25.11.2022.

Sifted: -.

Made: 24.11.2022.

Laid: -.

Coming into force: 25.11.2022.

Effect: None.

Geographical coverage: United Kingdom. Supersedes draft S.I. (ISBN 9780348239584) published 17.10.2022.

Classification: General.

Price of print edition: £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

ISBN: 9780348241648.

Details: These Regulations are made in exercise of the powers conferred by section 8(1) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (c. 16) to remedy or mitigate deficiencies arising from the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU.

These Regulations are also made in exercise of the powers conferred on the Treasury by section 90(1)(b) of the Finance Act 2019 (c. 1), in so far as they have the effect of imposing or increasing taxation by removing retained EU law relating to income tax.

Regulation 3 makes provision to remedy deficiencies arising as a result of the fact that the UK is no longer a Contracting State to the Convention Setting up a European University Institute by revoking the

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retained EU law which derives from the Convention.

Regulation 4 disapplies that revocation in relation to legal proceedings immunity that applied to acts done in service of the Institute prior to the coming into force of the Regulations.

Regulations 5 and 6 make saving provision in respect of individuals who are serving as staff of the Institute immediately before the coming into force of the Regulations. Regulation 5 provides for continued immunity for those staff from legal proceedings in respect of acts done in service of the Institute during the term of their contract with the EUI. Regulation 6 provides that the income tax privilege relating to salaries, wages and emoluments earned by those staff continues during the term of their contract.

Regulation 7 provides that the term of the contract is that in place immediately before the coming into force of these Regulations, and does not include any changes which take effect after that time.

A copy of the Convention that was in force immediately before exit day from which the rights are retained, is published alongside this SI and copies can be obtained on request from the Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

An impact assessment has not been produced for these Regulations as no, or no significant, impact on the private or voluntary sectors is foreseen.

Young people and skills

Lord Shipley (LDP, Life), chairman of the Youth Unemployment Committee, a select committee of the House of Lords, introduced a debate on the report from the Youth Unemployment Committee, *Skills for Every Young Person* (HL Paper 98), Session 2021-22, published on 26 November 2021. (House of Lords, Grand Committee, Motion to Take Note, 23 November 2022.)

Lord Shipley said that the Committee had heard from employers that when students left school, many did not have the skills they needed to find work, and the school system was characterised by a national curriculum focused on academic subjects and written exams. Lord Shipley added that the current situation was not helping young people to develop or showcase other skills that the country needed, such as teamwork, communication, creativity or problem solving.

While careers guidance had improved, it was still not being taught uniformly and was not being supported by quality work experience provision, which meant that too many young people were not aware of the skills they would need to get into a new, growing sector. Lord Shipley said that therefore, the Committee had recommended that the Government should recalibrate the compulsory components of the national curriculum and performance measures, and focus on skills.

Lord Shipley argued that digital and creative subjects such as design and technology were seen as less important than other subjects in the Government's EBacc measure, while essential skills such as oracy, teamwork, and problem solving were not being tested because of the focus on the academic. Lord Shipley added that he had been very disappointed to read in the press the previous week of suggestions that design and technology may continue to decline because of the poor funding situation of many schools.

He said that while the Committee had been disappointed by the Government's response to its report, in which it had argued that there was no need for curriculum reform, it had welcomed the Government decision to produce better, more accessible information on skills. Lord Shipley pointed out that although the publication of data from the Skills and Productivity Board and the creation of a new Unit for Future Skills had been welcome, the Committee still believed that more should be done to facilitate careers guidance in primary schools; as it was where individual career decisions started to be made. He said that while youth unemployment had fallen from its pandemic peak, it remained higher than in several comparable global economies, and although there had been a fall in the number of young people not in employment, education or training since mid-2020, the recent estimate of over 600,000 young people in the category was far too high at a time when there were 500,000 job vacancies across the United Kingdom.

Lord Shipley claimed that the problem had been exacerbated by past and present Governments under-funding and undervaluing further education in comparison with the university route, as well as there not being enough apprenticeship opportunities for young people who wanted to do them, and the apprenticeship levy not being focused primarily on young people.

He stressed the need for all young people, especially the most disadvantaged, including those with additional needs, those in care and those in custody, to have access to quality careers advice from primary school age onwards and a strong work experience offer.

Lord Shipley said that the Committee had also called for a new education and workplace race equality strategy that to tackle discrimination and unequal opportunities, as young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, still faced barriers. He argued that such a strategy would focus on collecting data and proposing targeted support programmes. Lord Shipley said that while the Government had argued that it did not believe that a race equality strategy was currently necessary, nevertheless, it had committed to monitoring the Committee's recommendations and addressing any concerns.

He said that the Committee had heard a lot of evidence about progression routes to be able those starting a course could move on to do next. Lord Shipley pointed out that the most obvious biggest

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example had been that was Kickstart, where there was no clear progression route following taking part in the course. He said that the Committee had also told that of the need for better promotion of careers and apprenticeships in schools, as well as the need for rigorous enforcement of the Baker clause to ensure parity of esteem for technical and academic routes.

Substantial changes to the curriculum

The former Education Secretary, Lord Baker of Dorking (Con, Life) said that *The Times* Education Commission had also called for substantial changes in the curriculum, and evidence from industrialists, big and small, had been that it was not suited for purpose because too many young people at 18 left with no employability skills at all. He pointed out that experience of collaborative problem-solving did not happen in the present curriculum, and having good communication skills, was not taught in the current system either. Lord Baker said that although the Department for Education did not listen to the evidence at all, Nissan one of the largest car manufacturers in the country, said that design technology should be a compulsory subject, but over the last 12 years, the Department had presided over a decline in design technology of 80%, while, over the past 12 years, it had cut technical education by 20%.

He argued that the Department for Education was preoccupied solely with academic subjects, and the actual curriculum the Government was following was word for word what had been published in 1904 in the Edwardian age. Lord Baker argued that every student should have the right to a computer, but in terms of secondary education, compared with 2016, 40% less computing was being taught.

In his view the problem was that, since 2010, the country had been subjected to the theory of the American educator Hirsch, who had said that giving disadvantaged children academic subjects, would see them flourish and expand. But Lord Baker argued that the experiment had failed, and currently there were as many disadvantaged students, 300,000, as there had been in 2010.

Lord Knight of Weymouth (Lab, Life) said that the Committee's report had focused on the skills gap and the school curriculum. He argued that the danger of the current curriculum was that it was training children to be machines that would be out-competed by better machines.

Lord Addington (LDP, EH) said he had gathered from the report and by talking to other people, was that a key skill was probably not passing that English exam but using a computer efficiently.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab, Life) said that while the Careers and Enterprise Company had done much good work in extending the number of secondary schools delivering the Gatsby benchmarks, careers education and guidance should begin in primary school. He argued that not nearly enough notice had been taken by the DfE of the excellent and pioneering work by a charitable organisation called Primary Futures, which developed with teachers, connected primary schools with diverse workplace volunteers to take part in aspiration activities and talk with children about their jobs.

Lord Watson pointed out that the recent report published by Labour's council of skills advisers, led by Lord Blunkett, had called for a complete shake-up of the careers service, from school through to adult careers guidance, to ensure that a trained careers leader was embedded in every school with responsibility for the career guidance programme, supported by and accountable to the senior leadership team.

He argued that while the demand for apprenticeships from young people was at an all-time high, the current apprenticeship levy system favoured those over 25, by a ratio of two to one. Lord Watson said that as recommended by the committee in its report, the Government should require employers to use the apprenticeship system to focus on young people. He pointed out that the incentives for employers to take on apprentices over the pandemic had proved effective in boosting opportunities for young people because three-quarters of apprentices who had started under the scheme had been aged between 16 and 24. Lord Watson called for the scheme to be reintroduced and financed using some of the levy underspend. He said that since the levy had been introduced in 2017, in excess of £2 billion had been returned to the Treasury. Lord Watson pointed out that a Labour Government would also use some of the unspent levy to fund other types of training, which would also benefit young people by offering modular courses and the development of functional skills to tackle key skills gaps.

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He said that he agreed with the Social Market Foundation's call for all apprenticeship opportunities to be listed on the UCAS system, by establishing and integrating local platforms, to meet the often referenced but rarely implemented parity of esteem between the academic and technical routes open to young people. Lord Watson said that while the lifetime skills guarantee was an important step towards restoring a funded entitlement for level 3 study, as many noble Lords had emphasised during the debates on the skills Bill, there was no recognition of the value of qualifications below level 3 in creating progression pathways for young people, which the Committee had also highlighted in the report. He pointed out that a DfE report published in 2021, had revealed the return on investment of the qualifications and had concluded that the net present value of qualifications below level 2 was higher than for level 3.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education, Baroness Barran (Con, Life) said that she had not recognised some of the descriptions of the curriculum that the Lordships had shared, and she argued that the curriculum currently encompassed knowledge and skills, and the published programmes of study for national curriculum subjects had demonstrate how knowledge and skills were intertwined. She argued that "a very large body of evidence" showed that fluency of knowledge acted as the building block for the development of skills.

The minister pointed out that computing was a statutory subject within the national curriculum across key stages 1 to 4, and there had been a 16% increase in the number of students taking computer science in 2022. She added that the subject had the second-fastest growth rate in STEM subjects after design and technology. Baroness Barran said that all state-maintained schools were required to teach DT to pupils between the ages of five and 14, in key stages 1 to 3, and there was also a statutory entitlement for every pupil in key stage 4 to take DT if they wanted to.

She pointed out that the new Ofsted inspection arrangements had place renewed focus on the broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, and the Department had been working very closely with a number of organisations, including the James Dyson Foundation, the Design and Technology Association and the Royal Academy of Engineering, to make sure that the curriculum was up to date and gave the knowledge and skills that employers wanted.

Turning to careers guidance, the minister said that thanks to the Gatsby benchmarks, evidence suggested that the proportion of post-16 students who were not in employment, education or training had fallen by 20.1% in the most disadvantaged quarter of schools since they had adopted the benchmarks, and 90% of schools and colleges were currently part of a careers hub, which was accelerating the quality of careers provision. She added that there had been rapid improvements in hubs and disadvantaged areas were among the best performers. Baroness Barran said that with the Careers and Enterprise Company, the Department had also provided all primary schools with resources to help pupils explore the work place and, £2.6 million had been allocated over the current spending review period to bring new programmes to support careers education in primary schools in the 55 education investment areas.

She said that the Government absolutely agreed about the importance of work experience, which had been very visible in the whole approach it had taken to T-levels. The minister pointed out that there were currently 400 cornerstone employers who were bringing together business effort and engagement with local schools and colleges and increasing the number of employer encounters for young people. Baroness Barran pointed out that the report had made a number of references to bringing funding for further education more in line with that for higher education, and she said that from 2023-24 higher technical qualification student finance would be brought on a par with degrees. She said that the Government had been delighted that T-levels had got off to a great start, as the first cohort of students completing their courses had an impressive 92% pass rate. The minister pointed out that every T-level included important modules on digital skills, and in terms of the T-level transition programme, the aim was to support young people who may need more help to access the programme and to ensure that that ladder of opportunity led to higher technical qualifications. She noted that the report had made several recommendations for widening the support for apprentices under the age of 25. The minister said that currently, 53% of apprenticeship starts were by young people under that age. The Government wanted to support more young people to realise the benefits of apprenticeships by measures such as a new career starter apprenticeship campaign.

Child hunger in schools

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab, Life) ask the Government what steps it was taking in response to research on increased child hunger in schools, including that published by Chefs in Schools on 18 October, which had found that 83 per cent of primary school teachers had said that children had been coming to school hungry. (House of Lords, Oral Question debate, 22 November 2022.)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education, Baroness Barran (Con, Life) said that under the benefits-related criteria, the Government provided a free healthy meal in term time to around 1.9 million children. She pointed out that eligibility had been extended several times, and to more groups of children than under any other Government over the past half century, including the introduction of universal infant free school meals and further education free meals. The minister added that the Government would continue to keep eligibility under review.

Baroness Lister asked why the Government had rejected the growing calls for free school meals to be extended to the 800,000 children in families on universal credit who did not qualify. She suggested that, as the very least, the Government should inflation-proof the net earnings eligibility limit of £7,400, which had been set in 2018. Baroness Barran reiterated that the number of children receiving free school meals was the highest that it had ever been, and the Government's strategy had been to support the disadvantaged in the cost of living crisis.

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab, Life) argued that children going hungry was something that no Government should accept. Baroness Barran said that the Government had invested £12 billion in direct support to target the most vulnerable families in 2023-24.

Lord Bird (CB, Life) pointed out that in the 1950s and 1960s, children had free school lunches, olive oil capsules and milk. Baroness Barran said that the Government was considering such support, not only in term time but in the holidays through the holiday activities and food programme.

Breakfast clubs

Lord McLoughlin (Con, Life) asked the minister how schools had expanded the breakfast clubs that were available. Baroness Barran said that the Government had invested £24 million over the last two years in supporting school breakfast provision, targeted at the most disadvantaged children.

Lord Newby (LDP, life) argued that unless eligibility was extended to children from families in receipt of universal credit, in many cases, children will be going to school without being hungry. Baroness Barran said that while the Government would keep the policy under review, it would be impossible to take funding for free school meals separately from other elements of support for vulnerable families.

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab, Life) argued that while the food strategy had aimed to spark a school food revolution, it had not happened. Baroness Barran said that the Government was already investing in breakfast clubs and it remained open to new evidence, but the focus was on the most vulnerable.

Lord Laming (CB, Life) said that children who were hungry at school may well have other vulnerabilities, and therefore the one point of contact between the child and the state was their school. He asked the minister to make sure that schools were looking at the whole child and not just thinking about academic subjects. Baroness Barran said that the Government was looking closely, not just in a school setting but, in relation to early years and nursery settings.

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con, Life) claimed that if 50 per cent of all the food served in school meals was locally sourced, it would reduce the cost of production. Baroness Barran said that she would take the suggestion back to the Department.

Lord Storey (LDP, Life) asked the minister to consider extending the coalition's policy of giving free school meals to all key stage 1 children to key stage 2, and at secondary school, key stage 3, to ensure that every pupil whose parents were on universal credit would get a free school meal. Baroness Barran said that the question was whether the Government should fund a number of separate initiatives to support parents or whether it should put money in the hands of parents so that they could make the choices that were right for their families. She added that the Government believed in the latter.

The following written questions and their answers were published in *Hansard* last week.

House of Commons

Department for Education

Classroom Assistants: Pay

Rachael Maskell: [88921] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her department has taken recent steps to help ensure that (a) teaching assistants and (b) support staff in schools are paid at a level which aids the (i) recruitment and (ii) retention of those staff.

Rachael Maskell: [88922] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a national (a) pay scale and (b) process for the negotiation of pay awards for teaching assistants.

Rachael Maskell: [88923] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons her department has not implemented a national pay system for teaching assistants.

Nick Gibb: The Government knows the valuable contribution teaching assistants make to pupils' education, helping to raise attainment and reduce teachers' workload. Schools have the freedom to set pay for teaching assistants and all support staff. All schools have different characteristics and should make decisions that meet their needs. Many mirror local government pay scales, which are agreed between the National Joint Council and trade unions. Support staff in schools that follow these pay scales will receive a pay rise of 10% on average, which will be backdated to April 2022.

The 2022 Autumn Statement underlines the priority the Government attaches to schools, delivering a significant uplift in funding in this Spending Review period. Core schools funding will increase by £2.3 billion in both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. After adjusting the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 budgets down to account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, £2 billion more than published in 2021.

Monday 21 November 2022

Free School Meals: Cost of Living

Navendu Mishra: [86629] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will undertake a review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Nick Gibb: The Department continues to monitor the consequences of the rising cost of living and is working with other Government Departments to provide support.

The Department will continue to keep free school meal (FSM) eligibility under review to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them. In setting a threshold, the Government believes that the current level, which enables children to benefit from FSM, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one.

The latest published statistics show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming FSM. This equates to

22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, 37.5% of school children are now provided with FSM.

Monday 21 November 2022

Schools: Finance

Geraint Davies: [88781] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the National Association of Head Teachers published on 8 November 2022 that over four in ten schools said they would have to reduce spending on additional targeted interventions for pupils requiring additional support.

Nick Gibb: The Department is prioritising further funding for schools. The Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for mainstream and high needs schools, of £2.3 billion in 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting Spending Review 2021 (SR21) budgets down to account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2.0 billion greater than published at SR21. Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year, and this means that next year it will rise by a further £3.5 billion.

With these funding increases combined, it will mean a 15% increase in funding within two years. This significant increase in funding will help schools meet increased pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and also enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments. These increases will deliver significant additional support to pupils and teachers, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to level-up education across the country. The Department recognises that every school's circumstances are different, and where schools are in serious financial difficulty, they are encouraged to contact their local authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

David Morris: [88877] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to provide additional financial support to schools in 2023-24 to help meet demands as a result of (a) pay increases for teaching staff agreed in July 2022, (b) rising inflation and (c) the introduction of a minimum expectation for the length of the school week by September 2023.

Nick Gibb: The Government is prioritising further funding for schools. The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for both mainstream schools and high needs, of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to take account of the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year. It will rise by another £3.5 billion, on top of that, next year. This means a 15% increase in funding in two years. This significant increase in funding will help schools to meet increased pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments, including the minimum 32.5-hour school week.

These increases will deliver significant additional support to pupils and teachers, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to level-up education across the country. The Department knows that every school's circumstances are different. If schools are in serious financial difficulty, the Department encourages them to contact their Local Authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

Rachael Maskell: [88920] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the

impact of inflation on the affordability of (a) the staff payroll and (b) other aspects of school budgets.

Nick Gibb: The Government is prioritising further funding for schools, which will help schools to manage aspects of their budgets, including staff payroll. The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 (SR21) budgets down to take account of the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at SR21. Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year.

The funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement means it will rise by another £3.5 billion next year. This means a 15% increase in funding within two years. This significant increase in funding will help schools to meet increased pay awards for both teaching and nonteaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments. The Department knows that each school's circumstances are different. If schools are in serious financial difficulty, they are encouraged to contact their Local Authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

Monday 21 November 2022

Schools: Governing Bodies

Stephen Morgan: [84985] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support and development opportunities her department has helped to provide to school governors over the last five years.

Nick Gibb: The Department offers an induction programme for new trust board chairs providing them with guidance on working with the Department. In addition, the Department funds the recruitment of school governors to Local Authority maintained schools and local governing bodies of academy trusts, through the Department's contractor 'Inspiring Governance', who also offer induction support to recruits.

Where governing and trust boards require targeted support to help secure effective governance, the Department runs the National Leaders of Governance programme, contracted to the National Governance Association to deliver. In the last five years, the Department has also run other programmes, including development for chairs, development for governance professionals, and the recruitment of academy trustees.

Monday 21 November 2022

Students: Finance

Barry Sheerman: [84811] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her department plans to increase student finance in line with inflation in the 2023-24 academic year.

Robert Halfon: The government is reviewing options for uprating maximum loans and grants for the 2023/24 academic year and an announcement will be made in due course.

Monday 21 November 2022

Teachers

Bridget Phillipson: [86460] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of teachers who qualified in each year from 2010-2020 were still in service in the English state school sector (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, (e) five, (f) six, (g) seven, (h) eight, (i) nine, (j) ten and (k) eleven years after qualifying by (i) region and (ii) local authority.

Bridget Phillipson: [86461] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many full-time equivalent (a) deferred newly qualified and (b) newly qualified entrants there were to the state school sector in England between 2011-12 and 2021-22, by (i) region and (ii) local authority.

Nick Gibb: Information on the retention rates of qualified teachers and the number of newly qualified entrants to state funded schools in England is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics release. The information can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/schoolworkforce-in-england>.

87.5% of teachers who qualified in 2020 were still teaching one year after qualification. In the year to November 2021, the full time equivalent of 43,981 teachers joined the state-funded sector in England, including 3,850 deferred newly qualified teachers and 22,059 newly qualified teachers. The requested figures by region and local authority are in the attached tables. Figures relate to a teacher's original location, which is not necessarily the location they were in when leaving the state funded sector.

If a teacher moves to a state funded school in a different local authority or region, they are counted as still in service. One-year retention rates will be the least affected by movement across boundaries. Retention percentages may go up as well as down because the methodology employed allows for non-continuous service where teachers leave and re-join the state funded sector over time. Attachments: 1. 86460 86461 Table [86460 86461 Table 161122.xlsx]

Monday 21 November 2022

Confucius Institutes: Higher Education

Neil Coyle: [87856] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her department has made of the potential impact of Confucius Institutes on UK universities.

Claire Coutinho: Like all similar bodies, Confucius Institutes should operate transparently and with a full commitment to the department's values of openness and freedom of expression. Universities have a responsibility to ensure that any partnership with a Confucius Institute is managed appropriately and that the right due diligence is in place. We encourage any providers with concerns to contact the department. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will address concerns about the possible influence of overseas money in higher education (HE) in the UK, without reducing the ability of our world-class universities to work with global partners. The Bill will empower the Office for Students (OfS) to require registered HE providers to report certain overseas funding, including of educational partnerships, such as arrangements with Confucius Institutes. The Bill will also allow the OfS to take appropriate action, including issuing penalties, if there is evidence that an HE provider has breached its freedom of speech duties. The department will continue to review its measures as appropriate.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Curriculum: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: [86431] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on including teaching about the British Overseas Territories in the curriculum.

Nick Gibb: There are opportunities within the themes and eras of the history curriculum for schools to include the Overseas Territories at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. At Key Stage 1, pupils should be taught changes within living memory and events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally. At Key Stage 2, the curriculum requires pupils to be taught aspects or themes in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066. At Key Stage 3, the teaching of the British Empire, the end of Empire, and Britain in the twentieth century can include the British Overseas Territories.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Overseas Students: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: [86430] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) grants, (b) bursaries and (c) other assistance her department provides to students residing in the British Overseas Territories for tertiary education in the UK.

Robert Halfon: Students who have settled status on arrival in the UK, who come to the UK from specified British Overseas Territories and who are starting designated full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in the 2022/23 academic year or after are eligible for home fee status and tuition fee loans in England, subject to meeting the residency requirement. This requires that they have been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and/or specified British Overseas Territories throughout the three-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course, with at least part of that period having been spent in the British Overseas Territories.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Pre-school Education: Staff

Sara Britcliffe: [88032] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her department has made of the potential impact of reducing staff-to-child ratios in early years settings on (a) the fees charged by those settings for early years provision and (b) staff retention and recruitment in those settings.

Claire Coutinho: The consultation on 'Childcare: regulatory changes' closed on 16 September. The department will respond in due course.

Alongside the consultation, the department ran a survey of early years providers to establish the likely impact of the changes on providers, should government guidelines be changed. This survey will be published in due course. Responses from the consultation and the survey will help to build the evidence base, including understanding more around the potential impact of any changes to the fees charged by settings and to staff recruitment and retention. The department's priority continues to be to provide safe, high-quality early years provision for young children.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

School Meals: Nutrition

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [89890] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the nutritional guidance for school dinners.

Nick Gibb: The standards for school food are set out in the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014, to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children gain the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The Department believes that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in the UK continue to receive high quality and nutritious food, building healthy eating habits for life.

The Department's current focus is on promoting compliance with the School Food Standards and this will be kept under review. In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined what the Department is doing to strengthen adherence, including piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme, and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Munira Wilson: [86617] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of state-funded schools that have buildings affected by the rusting of steel reinforcements in concrete, so-called concrete cancer; and if she will provide a list of those schools.

Nick Gibb: The Department is currently asking all responsible bodies of state funded schools in England to complete a questionnaire about reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their estates. RAAC is a type of concrete component containing a steel reinforcing bar, although this is a separate issue from 'concrete cancer'. The information collected is actively being used to help the Department target and provide appropriate support to help responsible bodies manage RAAC in their estates.

Between 2017 – 2019, the Condition Data Collection (CDC) programme collected information on the condition of 22,031 government funded schools in England. CDC assessed the condition of the construction types in a school, grading elements such as roofs, windows, and heating systems with a condition grade from A (good/new) to D (poor/life expired). CDC was a visual, non-intrusive data collection and did not collect the level of detail like presence of rust, so would not have necessarily identify issues with the structural frame of a building which will often be hidden.

Bodies responsible for school buildings, such as academy trusts and local authorities, are expected to carry out their own surveys to effectively manage their estates and had the opportunity to submit professional evidence on structural issues as part of nominations to the School Rebuilding Programme. The Department published a summary report of the CDC findings in May 2021 and plans to publish school level data for CDC by the end of the year. The summary report can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/989912/Condition_of_School_Buildings_Survey_CDC1_-_key_findings_report.pdf

Well maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the Department. The Department has allocated over £13 billion for improving the school estate since 2015, including £1.8 billion committed in 2022, and is also rebuilding 500 schools through the School Rebuilding Programme. The Department also provides a range of guidance, tools and support to help schools and responsible bodies effectively manage their school buildings and keep them safe.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Schools: Speech and Language Therapy

Andrew Rosindell: [86414] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to provide further speech and language support in schools.

Nick Gibb: The Government recognises the importance of speech and language in pupils' development. The Department has invested £17 million to deliver the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme, which supports children in reception with their language. Over two thirds of eligible mainstream primary schools are taking part in this programme. This benefits around 90,000 children most in need of language support. The Department has committed £24 million to boost literacy in schools this academic year.

The majority of this funding will be distributed via the English Hubs Programme. Providing support for early language is one of the founding aims of the English Hub Programme and in January 2023, the Hubs will begin delivering a new early language support to schools, which has been designed by Hubs and external experts. In July 2021, the Department published 'The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy', for teachers and school leaders.

The document focuses on the early stages in the teaching of reading, and the contribution of talk and stories, in addition to phonics. It advises that teachers help children articulate their ideas in well-formed sentences, by scaffolding, extending, and developing their ideas. The Department's new National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy and National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership launched in October 2022.

Developing pupils' language capability and wider understanding of language to support their studies, is a key element of both qualifications, including how to identify pupils whose language learning difficulties might impact on their ability to understand the curriculum. The Department also knows that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) frequently require additional support from a broad specialist workforce across education, health and care, including speech and language therapists. The Department is already taking steps to increase the capacity of the specialist workforce, as set out in the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

European University Institute: Finance

Matt Western: [87944] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to ringfence the 5.34 million euros contribution made by the UK to the European University Institute for providing scholarship funding to UK students.

Robert Halfon: There are no plans to apply a ringfence to the UK contribution to the European University Institute within the Department for Education.

Matt Western: [87945] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to redistribute the UK's contribution to the European University Institute of 5.34 million euros within the existing Department for Education's budget.

Robert Halfon: Any plans to redistribute amounts that the UK would no longer be contributing to the European University Institute would be a matter for the Department for Education's internal financial planning processes.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Grammar Schools

Jonathan Gullis: [89066] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 80958 on Grammar Schools, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing legislative restrictions on the establishment of new grammar schools; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Department maintains a diversity of schools and wants grammar schools to continue to play an important role within the education system. The Department's priority is to concentrate on ensuring that as many children as possible, whatever their ability, have access to an outstanding education, rather than creating more grammar schools.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Higher Education: Languages

Matt Western: [87937] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide additional support to higher education institutions to protect their modern foreign language departments from closure.

Robert Halfon: Higher education providers are autonomous bodies, independent of government. It is for the governing body and management of each provider to determine how to ensure that it meets its aims and is financially sustainable. This includes decisions on the provider's curriculum offer.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Higher Education: STEM Subjects

Andrew Rosindell: [87767] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to encourage students to study STEM subjects at university.

Robert Halfon: The department is investing an additional £750 million over the next three years to support high-quality teaching and facilities including in science and engineering. This includes the largest increase in government funding for the higher education sector in over a decade and will support students and teaching. Twelve Institutes of Technology have already been established, with a further nine announced in December 2021.

Institutes of Technology are designed to be prestigious, high-quality education providers created through innovative collaborations between further education colleges, universities, and employers. They provide higher technical education and training in key science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors, such as digital, construction, advanced manufacturing, and engineering.

There are also over 350 apprenticeship standards available in STEM, many of which are at degree level and delivered by universities, such as civil and manufacturing engineering apprenticeships. These offer another way for people to study STEM subjects at university whilst also earning a salary with a STEM employer.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Office for Students: Complaints

Matt Western: [87948] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Office for Students on responding in a timely manner to complaints.

Robert Halfon: The Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education is the independent body set up to review student complaints. The Office for Students (OfS) does not have the power to review student complaints.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Scholarships

Matt Western: [87946] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress she has made on the establishment of the UK national state scholarship announced in February 2022.

Matt Western: [87947] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the UK national state scholarship, announced in February 2022, to be open for applications.

Robert Halfon: The department is grateful to those who responded to the Higher Education Reform consultation and shared their views about a National State Scholarship. We are now considering these responses and will provide further information in due course.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Schools: Food

Rupa Huq: [88964] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Food Strategy Report published in July 2021, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of updating the School Food Standards to remove the mandatory servings of (a) meat including fish and (b) dairy as suggested in that report.

Nick Gibb: The Department believes that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils continue to receive high quality and nutritious food that builds healthy eating habits for life. The Department's current focus is on promoting compliance with the School Food Standards, and it will keep this under review.

In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined what the Department is doing to strengthen adherence. This includes piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, funding of up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their websites setting out their whole school approach to food. The Department will consider the National Food Strategy Report's recommendations in future updates.

Alex Sobel: [89017] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of updating the School Food Standards to remove the mandatory servings of meat, including fish, and dairy.

Nick Gibb: The Department believes that the current school food standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high quality and nutritious food. The framework should build healthy eating habits for life. The Department's focus is on promoting compliance

with the school food standards. The Department is keeping this under review.

In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined several measures the Department is implementing to strengthen adherence. These include piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme, and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Teachers: Vacancies

Conor McGinn: [90830] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) teacher and (b) teaching assistant positions are vacant in (i) St Helens, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) England.

Nick Gibb: Information on the state funded school workforce in England, including the number and rate of teacher vacancies by school each November, is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics release, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-inengland>.

Data for November 2022 will be published in summer 2023. In November 2021, there were three teacher vacancies in St Helens, 29 in Merseyside and 1,564 in England. Information on teaching assistant vacancies is not collected centrally.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Young People: Education

Catherine West: [88979] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the Commission on Young Lives entitled Hidden in Plain Sight published in November 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations in that report.

Claire Coutinho: Departmental officials regularly met with Anne Longfield during the development of the Commission's report, and are considering their findings. The department is clear that safety from abuse, neglect and exploitation is a fundamental right for every child. We have made an additional £4.8 billion available up to 2025 for local authorities, who are responsible for protecting vulnerable children, to deliver key services.

The department is investing more than £1 billion to improve early help services, through a network of Family Hubs, programmes supporting thousands of families to stay together safely, and to provide support with their mental health and healthy food and activities during the school holidays. We are also strengthening the links between social care and education and providing targeted support to keep the children most at risk of exploitation engaged in their education.

To support long term change, the department is rapidly working up an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, including in relation to children who face harm outside the home.

The department is also providing targeted support through Alternative Provision and Support, Attend, Fulfil, Succeed (SAFE) taskforces, to keep vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation, serious violence and crime engaged in their education and on the right track. The Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme (2019-2023) continues to work with local areas to improve responses to safeguarding young people from exploitation and extra familial risk.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Hilary Benn: [89746] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students will be given information on what will be in their (a) GCSE and (b) A-level exams in England in summer 2023.

Nick Gibb: On 29 September, the Department and Ofqual confirmed exams will largely return to well-established, pre-pandemic arrangements in summer 2023. The Department confirmed that advance information will not be provided for any exams taken in summer 2023. The Department has, however, decided that formulae and equation sheets for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined sciences exams should be provided in summer 2023, as was the case for exams in 2022.

Ofqual has also confirmed a return to pre-pandemic grading in 2023. To protect pupils against the disruption of recent years, and in case pupils' performance is slightly lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic, senior examiners will use the grades achieved by previous cohorts of pupils, along with prior attainment data, to inform their decisions on where to set grade boundaries. These decisions reflect that while the 2023 cohort may have experienced some disruption due to the pandemic over the course of their qualifications, it has not been as significant as that experienced by pupils who received qualifications in 2022. Pupils will, for example, have had more time to cover the curriculum, practise assessments and understand education recovery programmes and interventions.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Literacy: Teaching Methods

Feryal Clark: [89914] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that schools are delivering phonics programmes.

Feryal Clark: [89915] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child, published March 2022, what steps her Department is taking to help 90 per cent of children reach the expected standards in literacy and numeracy.

Feryal Clark: [89916] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to ensure children with speech and language challenges benefit from programmes to support literacy and numeracy.

Nick Gibb: The Schools White Paper, published in March 2022, sets out the Department's policies to improve literacy and numeracy. Since its launch in 2018, the English Hubs programme has provided targeted support to several thousands of schools across England. The 34 English Hubs in the programme are primary schools which are outstanding at teaching early reading. Over 1,000 schools which were underperforming in phonics have received intensive support, reaching approximately 50,000 pupils in Reception and Year 1. In addition to this, more than 5,000 schools have been supported through medium level support, which provides schools with targeted support, continuing professional development opportunities, and workshops focused on phonics and the teaching of early reading. The Department is continuing to support and enhance mathematics teaching through the national network of 40 school led Maths Hubs, which are helping local schools improve the quality of their mathematics teaching based on best practice, covering all regions of England. This includes the £100 million Teaching for Mastery programme, which is bringing training on mastery teaching to 11,000 schools across England by 2023.

The Department published a list of approved phonics programmes in 2021 to support schools in choosing a phonics programme. This is together with the provision of £4 million additional funding in the 2021/22 academic year to eligible schools to support them in obtaining validated phonics schemes, whilst committing a further £8.7 million in the 2022/23 academic year to extend this nationwide.

In 2021, the 'Reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy' was published. This defines

best practice for teachers and school leaders, and the introduction of specialist training to drive better literacy through a new National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy and a new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership. Guidance has been published to support teachers in planning and prioritising the mathematics curriculum from Key Stage 1 to 3, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-mathematics-in-primaryschools> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachingmathematics-at-key-stage-3>.

This is alongside the establishment of two new support schemes through the Maths Hubs programme that will reach thousands of schools within their first year alone. The Department will also be funding up to £180 million in the Early Years workforce, including training for Early Years practitioners to support literacy and numeracy teaching. The Department recognises the importance of speech and language in young people's development and has funded £17 million to deliver the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme, which supports children in Reception with their language ability. Over two thirds of eligible mainstream primary schools are taking part in this evidence-based programme, benefitting around 90,000 children who are most in need of language support. Providing support for early language is a founding aim of the English Hub programme. In January 2023, the Hubs will begin delivering a new early language support scheme to schools which has been designed by Hubs and external experts.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Primary Education: Sports

Jonathan Gullis: [89065] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of announcing (a) three or (b) five-year funding settlements for Primary PE and Sport Premium on school planning for improvements to the quality of the PE, sport and physical activity for children; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Department is considering arrangements for the primary PE and Sport premium for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond. The Department understands the importance of providing schools with sufficient notice of future funding and will confirm the position as early as possible.

Thursday 24 November 2022

School Meals: Meat

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [89891] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the National Food Strategy's recommendation to remove the requirement to serve meat three times a week from the School Food Standards.

Nick Gibb: The Department believes that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high-quality and nutritious food, that encourages healthy eating habits for life. The Department's current focus is on promoting compliance with the school food standards and it will keep this under review.

In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the Department is doing to strengthen adherence, including piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, spending up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food. The Department will consider the National Food Strategy's recommendations in future updates.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Munira Wilson: [92364] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the estimated cost to the public purse is of the capital projects announced in each of the three rounds of the school rebuilding programme.

Nick Gibb: The School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) was announced in 2020 and will rebuild or significantly refurbish buildings at 500 schools over the next decade. So far, the Department has confirmed 161 projects for the programme across three rounds, with each round supported by approximately £1 billion in capital funding. Forecasted costs and scope for SRP projects are known once a feasibility study has been completed and following the awarding of contracts. The Department publishes details of all contracts awarded over £10,000, including for SRP, to the 'contracts finder' section of GOV.UK. This service is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/contractsfinder>.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Schools: Staff

Mark Hendrick: [89753] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, what proportion of the additional £2.3 billion in funding for schools will be allocated to the recruitment and retention of specialist teachers and staff.

Nick Gibb: The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for mainstream and high needs schools, of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to take account of the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at the 2021 Spending Review. These increases will deliver significant additional support to pupils and teachers, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to level-up education across the country. This additional funding will be used to support both mainstream schools and Local Authorities' high needs budgets. The Department will set out plans for allocation shortly.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Pre-school Education: Food

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [90866] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the nutritional value of meals provided to children in early years settings.

Claire Coutinho: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age five. The framework can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2>. The framework requires that where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. This is set out at Section 3.38, which also refers to example menus and guidance designed specifically for early years settings. These can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>. The example menus guidance has been promoted to early years settings in various ways, such as via correspondence to the sector and links to the guidance being published on the help for early years providers online platform. The platform can be accessed here: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/>.

Friday 25 November 2022

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Horizon 2020

Owen Thompson: [88946] To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential economic impact of the reduction in funding from Horizon 2020 since the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

George Freeman: [Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Association to Horizon Europe remains the UK's preference and the Government continues to do everything we can to secure this. The Government's priority remains to support the UK's research and development sector through this period. In order to mitigate the impact of the EU's refusal to finalise the UK's , on 21st November we announced an immediate package of investments (totalling up to £484 million).

This immediate investment will help our excellent research sector to shore up their talent pools, invest confidently in infrastructure and protect the UK's reputation as a science superpower This additional package builds on the Horizon Europe guarantee scheme, extended in September, which continues to provide funding for eligible, successful UK winners of Horizon Europe calls to ensure UK researchers and businesses can continue to collaborate internationally.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Ministry of Defence

Team Resolute: Apprentices

John Healey: [89738] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his department has placed contractual obligations on Team Resolute to deliver 200 further education opportunities and apprenticeship programmes as part of the Fleet Solid Support Ships contract.

Alex Chalk: The contract for the Fleet Solid Support ships has not yet been awarded. The ships will primarily be built in the UK to protect the UK's essential security interests. This decision will deliver long-term improvement in UK shipbuilding capacity and capability through investing in shipbuilding infrastructure, productivity, skills, and a more resilient supply chain. The Fleet Solid Support ship contract will create a significant number of new jobs, including around 1,200 high quality manufacturing jobs, and hundreds of graduate placements and apprenticeships.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Department of Health and Social Care

Mental Health: Children

Anthony Mangnall: [87992] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his department has taken to provide support for children's mental health in rural communities.

Maria Caulfield: Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for ensuring appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of local populations. Adjustments are made in the core ICB allocations formula to allow for variation in the costs of providing health care between rural and urban areas. The NHS Long Term

Plan commits to investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24. This increased investment will improve access to mental health services, including in rural communities. By 2023/24, a further 345,000 children and young people will be able to access National Health Service-funded mental health support. In 2021/22, we provided an additional £79 million to allow a further 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services and accelerate the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

These teams are now available for 26% of pupils and will increase to nearly 400 teams for approximately 35% of pupils by April 2023.

Monday 21 November 2022

Health: Children

Alex Sobel: [90880] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address child health inequalities.

Neil O'Brien: In November 2022, NHS England published 'Core20PLUS5 – An approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people'. This defines a target population cohort and identifies five clinical areas requiring accelerated improvement: asthma; diabetes; epilepsy; oral health; and mental health.

There are a range of universal public health interventions and guidance for those aged 0 to 19 years old which provide universal support and identify further needs and safeguarding concerns. We also deliver programmes targeted at particular populations, including Family Nurse Partnership to support vulnerable young mothers, the Healthy Start scheme for low-income families and Mental Health Support Teams in schools.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Liz Twist: [89887] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the data quality for NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services in (a) Tyne and Wear and (b) England.

Maria Caulfield: NHS England has made guidance available for services related to specific care pathways to improve the data submitted to the Mental Health Services Dataset and issued guidance for the recording of outcomes data, access data and for the measurement of waiting times for non-urgent access to community children and young people's mental health services.

NHS England is providing additional support to assist local areas to overcome local data flow challenges and to make data products such as dashboards routinely available for services to review. Existing guidance is being improved to support local National Health Service commissioners supporting voluntary and community sector providers to submit data to the Mental Health Services Dataset and question and answer sessions have been delivered to respond to enquiries and examine barriers to submitting the data.

Friday 25 November 2022

Department for Work and Pensions

Kickstart Scheme

Alison McGovern: [87830] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2022 to Question 15187 on Kickstart Scheme, what the total number of work placements provided by the Kickstart Scheme was as of 15 November 2022.

Guy Opperman: As of 15 November 2022, over 163,000 Kickstart jobs had been started by young people.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

House of Lords

Oak National Academy

Lord Strathcarron: To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) their relationship with Oak National Academy, and (2) the ways in which students are taught about (a) society, and (b) history, through the National Curriculum.

Lord Strathcarron: To ask His Majesty's Government how much money they have spent on Oak National Academy; and what assessment they have made of the effects of that spending on the private academic publishing sector. [HL3327]

Baroness Barran: As set out in Oak National Academy's Framework Agreement, Oak will be operationally independent from the department. The department will not prescribe or approve the content of curriculum packages or educational resources. Oak's resources will be created independently, will be free to access and non-compulsory for schools to use, and evidence based. In creating curriculum packages and educational resources, Oak will ensure alignment with the national curriculum, and have due regard to the department's non-statutory curriculum guidance.

Citizenship forms a core part of the statutory national curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and primary schools can choose to teach citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2, following the non-statutory framework for citizenship. The citizenship curriculum provides a rigorous framework for pupils to explore complex concepts and issues facing society. History is also part of the national curriculum from Key Stages 1 to 3 and is included in the English Baccalaureate suite of GCSE subjects for Key Stage 4.

The department is developing a Model History Curriculum which is a non-statutory guidance document to support the national curriculum and the teaching of a high quality, knowledge rich and diverse history curriculum. The guidance will be published in 2024. The department does not prescribe how these subjects should be taught but we expect schools to develop a curriculum that meets the need of their pupils.

The department made £4.84 million available for Oak both for the summer term of the academic year 2019/20, and then for the 2020/21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. In the 2022/23 financial year, a total of £9.8 million has been budgeted for Oak. Part of this £9.8 million of funding was allocated through the Grant Funding Agreement, which enabled Oak National Academy to maintain its activity prior to becoming an Arm's Length Body (ALB).

The government has set aside up to £43 million over the next three years to support Oak National Academy, a significant proportion of which is expected to be provided directly to schools, publishers, and other organisations for the creation of resources. As an integral part of the process to set up Oak as an ALB,

with close regard to Cabinet Office guidance, the department produced a business case that included an assessment of potential market impact. This business case was published on GOV.UK on 1 November at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oaknational-academy-business-case>. Monitoring market impact will be a priority throughout Oak National Academy's lifetime and will be factored into the body's ongoing evaluation and two-year review.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Oak National Academy: Publishing

Lord Knight of Weymouth: To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Department for Education sought evidence from the education publishing sector about the market impact of Oak National Academy after the full scope and budget was known in September. [HL3422]

Lord Knight of Weymouth: To ask His Majesty's Government whether their assessment of the market impact of Oak National Academy in the educational publishing sector was made prior to that organisation becoming an executive nondepartmental public body sponsored by the Department for Education. [HL3423]

Baroness Barran: The decision to establish Oak National Academy was taken with due regard to a robust assessment of market impact, which was informed by the commercial sector. Monitoring market impact is a priority and will continue throughout Oak National Academy's lifetime. Results will be factored into the body's ongoing evaluation and two-year review. As an integral part of the process to set up Oak National Academy as an arm's length body, the department produced a business case which included an assessment of potential market impact, including in the educational publishing sector. This business case was published on GOV.UK on 1 November 2022: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oaknational-academy-business-case>.

Thursday 24 November 2022

Public Libraries: Finance

Lord Roberts of Llandudno: To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure local libraries are protected from any reductions in spending; and what encouragement they will give to local authorities to protect such libraries. [HL3381]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23 makes available £54.1 billion for local government in England, an increase of up to £3.7 billion on 2021/22. The majority of this funding is not ring-fenced, including funding of library services, in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities and needs. Local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service which meets local needs. It is for each local authority to consider how best to deliver this statutory duty within available resources.

Thursday 24 November 2022

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