



WEEKLY UPDATE



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Focus on...Climate of fear and warmer words

With last week heralding the start of spring, there was perhaps a warmer current in the air at the ASCL conference at the weekend. Heading into the conference, relations between Head Teachers and the Government could have been described icy.

A survey by ASCL (the union for secondary school leaders) and the TES released on Friday had found that more than 60% of secondary school leaders felt that Government policies were having a detrimental effect on standards of education for young people. Morale amongst School Leaders was reportedly at an all-time low with more than half saying they were considering leaving the profession and three-quarters of Deputy and Assistant Heads saying they were less likely to want to go for headship than they were 12 months ago. Government's education policies and the "barrage of unfounded criticism about standards" were identified as the reasons for the results.

The Union also highlighted the 'football manager syndrome' increasingly evident in education, as the number of ASCL members who lost their jobs in the past year for reasons other than misconduct and ill-health, was 272, up from 163 in 2010, from 150 in 2008 and from 93 in 2007.

So perhaps sensing the need for a thawing of tensions, Education Secretary Michael Gove took to the podium with a more positive tone in his speech. He started by celebrating the success of a list of secondary Head Teachers credited with turning around schools in challenging circumstances (although none of them were further north than Nottingham) and went on to state that: "We have the best generation of young teachers ever in our schools. We have the best generation of heads ever in our schools. And our whole school system is good– with many outstanding features."

Gove then gave his analysis of where the system doesn't work and outlined his five pillars of reform:

1. Funding – to move to a transparent, simplified and more rational system with a set amount for every child, an additional sum for every poor child and special support for schools in exceptional circumstances or children with special needs..

2. Human capital –to recruit more talented people into teaching especially in maths and science, address poor behaviour and discipline in order to keep teachers in the profession, and reform teacher training and support high quality CPD.

3. Curriculum and qualifications - encourage greater creativity led by teachers, move towards fewer high quality qualifications overseen and conferred by 'institutions of academic excellence such as our best universities', promote innovation in new areas such as computer science and ensure a higher level of cultural literacy and greater familiarity for all students from all backgrounds with 'the best that's been thought and written globally'.

4. Accountability: move away from reliance on just one or two benchmarks to a rich and nuanced account of achievement complemented by thoughtful inspection from professionals.

5. Structures: welcome innovation and flexibility through the Academies and Free Schools programme.

In the speech, Gove also conceded that all international comparators must be viewed in context. This followed criticisms that he had a tendency to 'cherry pick' aspects of education in other countries with very different circumstances and cultures to England, and make unhelpful comparisons and ascertains on the relative quality and success of provision.

Finally, Gove made it clear that there would be no let-up in the pace of reform. Despite the concerns of ASCL members that the speed of Government changes were hampering the ability of Head Teachers to implement school improvements, the Education Secretary warned delegates "lest anyone think we should slacken the pace of reform, let me reassure them, we have to accelerate it".

If you were at the conference let us know your thoughts – what was the reaction of Head Teachers and what key messages did you take away from the weekend?

If you didn't make it to Birmingham or want to watch again, then the big name speeches from Gove, Sir Michael Wilshaw, Estelle Morris and others are available to watch live again [here](#) or read Gove's speech [here](#).

Articles

- ['Climate of fear eats the soul'](#) (TES)
- [Head Teachers need not feel threatened](#) (The Independent)
- [We'll speed up the rate of change in schools, says Gove](#) (The Independent)
- [Gove tells Head Teachers school reforms need to be accelerated](#) (BBC Online)
- [Head Teacher sackings reach record high](#) (The Guardian)

Top local news

Teaching Schools Announced

This week the National College for School Leadership announced the latest schools to be awarded 'Teaching School' status. Teaching schools give outstanding schools a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and Head Teachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support.

SCHOOLS NorthEast would like to congratulate the new Teaching Schools;

- Carmel College in Darlington
- The Academy at Shotton Hall in Durham
- Pallister Park Primary School in Middlesbrough
- Prudhoe West First School & Sele First School and Town First School in Northumberland
- Town End Academy in Sunderland

They join the six Teaching Schools designated previously in the region.

The next application round is on the 29 June 2012. For more information [click here](#).

North East children get their first choice secondary school

Children in the North East have the best chance of getting into their first choice secondary school, with 95.1% succeeding. Nationally one in seven pupils in England has not got into their first-choice secondary school, official data shows.

- [Secondary school admissions: One in seven miss first choice](#) (BBC News)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Butcher stole meat to help son through university](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Young musicians recognised for talent](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- [Barnard Castle School event that's had a brilliant run](#) (Journal)
- [Durham children take part in school "Olympics"](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Deafness charity uses bionic ear to warn children of loud music danger](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Hundreds of pupils record songs for the Olympics](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [New telly for students thanks to council cash](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Hundreds of pupils record songs for the Olympics](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Schoolchildren visit Bangladesh](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [School hosts guest teachers from Sri Lanka](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Hartlepool

- [Technology is a breeze](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [College demolition on track](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [A lesson in politics from popular athlete](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Newcastle

- [Pupils upset after bikes stolen from special school](#) (Journal)
- [Stamfordham First School gets "outstanding" Ofsted rating](#) (Journal)
- [Teenagers make all the difference](#) (Morpeth Herald)

North Tyneside

- [Backing for schools side](#) (News Guardian)
- [Students 'shown the red card'](#) (News Guardian)
- [Squadron's air cadets in exam success](#) (News Guardian)

Northumberland

- [School's spring fair](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [School house price premium revealed](#) (News Guardian)
- [Pupils in Strasbourg for Euro debate](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Sessions let youngsters give tri a try](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Cramlington teacher is shaken by quake in Mexico](#) (Journal)
- [Carvoran Roman Museum gets holographic teacher](#) (Journal)
- [Northumberland College to open new Hexham learning centre](#) (Journal)
- [Pupils get a lesson in geology at quarry site](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Northumberland College is set to open a state of the art new facility in Hexham](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School gets set for the Olympic Games](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Youth activities could face shake-up over funding](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Sports funding inspires teens](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [James moves on to international stage](#) (News Guardian)
- [£400k needed for charity's new centre](#) (News Guardian)

South Tyneside

- [Kids look to future at apprentice event](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Primary school's spirit is tree-mendous!](#) (Shields Gazette)

Sunderland

- [Sunderland graduate broadcasting to troops in Afghanistan](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland students vote to join NUS](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland engineering student helps African village](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Special school children in Sunderland celebrate new £325,000 hydrotherapy pool](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland pupils compete for place in Lords cricket final](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Regional

- [North East School Awards stir excitement in region](#) (Journal)

Top national education news

Free Schools may be waste of money

Opening free schools where they are not needed is a "shameful" waste of taxpayers' money, the leader of a Head Teachers' Union has said. In a speech on Saturday, Brian Lightman of the Association of School and College Leaders, also said Free Schools might damage existing schools and in an interview on Radio 4 this weekend he spoke out against the controversial planned Free School in Ingleby Barwick.

- [ASCL says opening free schools may be waste of money](#) (BBC News)

Teachers may vote to boycott new reading test

The Government's new reading test for six year olds could face a boycott from teachers. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) is expected to warn at their annual conference next month that the check is "unnecessary and inappropriate".

The union is due to discuss a motion that opposes the Government's claim that the check on Year One pupils, announced last year, will raise reading standards. The NUT argues that there is no evidence that learning phonics will have a positive impact on children's reading ability.

- [Teacher concern over new reading test](#) (Telegraph)
- [Teachers may boycott reading test](#) (Independent)

Schools forced to act as surrogate parents

Schools have to act as "surrogate" families to counter poor parenting and the effects of the celebrity driven culture, the Chief Inspector of Schools has warned. Sir Michael Wilshaw told the annual conference of the Association of School and College Leavers (ASCL) in Birmingham that teachers are having to instil the traditional values left by the "wider failings" within families and society to help pupils achieve.

However, a recent study will raise questions over the extent to which schools can be expected to make significant improvements to pupils' results without the necessary backing from mothers and fathers. A report by Dr Arnauld Chevalier, from Royal Holloway, University of London shows that a child's family background has a larger bearing on their chances of doing well at the age of 16 or 17 than teachers.

- [Schools 'too often asked to make up for wider failings'](#) (BBC News)
- [Parents 'have bigger impact on exam results than schools'](#) – (Telegraph)
- ['I blame the parents,' says Chief Schools inspector](#) (Independent)
- [Schools forced to act as surrogate parents, Head of Ofsted has warned](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Events

Quick, easy steps to better school lunchtime experiences – 8 May, 14 June & 10 July

By taking small low cost or no cost steps, The Schools Food Trust has seen schools enjoy increases of up to 8 per cent in take up of school meals. Through their Small Step Improvements programme you will work towards being able to deliver tried, tested, low cost improvements that will make a real difference to your schools lunchtime both for pupils and staff, changes that you can implement straight away.

The workshops will take place on the 8 May, 14 June and 10 July, 9am until 2pm at the Central Square Conference Room, Newcastle upon Tyne. For more information or to book a place [click here](#) or contact 0114 2996901.

SCHOOLS NorthEast Patrons Dinner – 1 May

Our third annual Patron's Dinner will be on the evening of Tuesday 1 May 2012 at the Centre for Life, Newcastle Upon Tyne starting at 6:30pm.

This is our annual Black Tie dinner bringing together Head Teachers and other leading figures from education, business and politics in our region. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from a high profile guest speaker and enjoy a formal three course dinner whilst networking with colleagues and celebrating the many successes of North East schools.

The Dinner is free and invite only. All SCHOOL NorthEast Enhanced Members will be invited. If you are an Enhanced Member you should have already received your invite but please email clegg@schoolsnortheast.com if this is not the case or to RSVP.

Resources and Opportunities

Time limited offer of exclusive free Alumni Service for North East schools

SCHOOLS NorthEast would like to offer secondary schools the opportunity to become a pilot school for a free alumni service offered by Future First, a social enterprise supported by the Sutton Trust and recently featured in the Independent.

Future First Networks is a new service designed to help schools build, manage and mobilise alumni communities. Future First have received funding so they can offer this service for free until July 2013* (with no obligation to continue beyond that) for the first 500 schools to sign-up.

We are one of a few networks in the country that has been asked to distribute this offer so if you would like take part and receive this free service, be quick!

For more information and to take part please email r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com.

Time Machine at the Tyneside Cinema

Would your pupils like to take part in 'the ultimate school trip?' If you would like to inject some fun into learning the heritage of the Tyneside Cinema then you should take part in the 'Time Machine.'

Time Machine is a fun learning experience that harnesses the power of film, theatre and cutting-edge online and interactive technologies to enable Key Stage 2 children to engage with English, History and ICT via the fascinating heritage of the Tyneside Cinema. For more information please contact 0845 217 9909 or visit <http://www.tynesidecinema.co.uk>.

Free Building Health Check

d3associates is offering SCHOOLS NorthEast members a limited opportunity for one of their experts to visit your school to carry out a Building Health Check.

d3associates's Building Health Check targets factors which influence the performance and cost of running your school buildings. Through surveys and assessments, they can identify the strengths and weaknesses of all buildings and outline how to resolve potential problems.

To find out more contact Andrew Moore on 01434 610434 andrew@d3-associates.co.uk. Offer ends 30 April.

Local Leaders wanted!

The organisers of the London 2012 Games are looking for the type of people who arrange events in their community or are always the first in their group of friends to take the initiative to organise activities. These people would make ideal Local Leaders. These are people who are excited about the Games and have an idea of how they want to celebrate this once in a generation event. Local Leaders can create their own events or get involved with the some of the ideas communities across the UK have suggested.

More information can be found at www.london2012.com/get-involved/local-leaders: those who sign up receive exclusive offers, ideas and planning packs as we get ever closer to the Games.

Welcome to new Commercial Supporters

SCHOOLS NorthEast has a growing network of Commercial Supporters who help us to be able to continue to work on behalf of North East schools. The network offers opportunities for schools to interact with organisations that provide a range of products and services to education many of whom offer special discounts and unique provisions for SCHOOLS NorthEast member school.

This week we are delighted to welcome iparadigms to the SCHOOLS NorthEast network. Iparadigms is the world's leading provider of web-based solutions for plagiarism prevention. For information about the services they offer please [click here](#).

School to School

In this feature, we ask a local Head give us a brief insight into their school. This week we spoke to Lesley Powell from The Academy at Shotton Hall in Durham. The Academy at Shotton Hall is an outstanding 11-16 school in the Peterlee area of Durham that has just designated as a Teaching School.

Our school is.....passionate about ensuring that every student has the chance to succeed.

Our school motto is...Achievement through Partnership

Our school is good at...making sure that every student feels cared for, listened to and supported.

Our school is working on....developing our role as a newly designated Teaching School and using research to continuously improve the experience of our students.

The biggest challenges for our school are...to ensure we continue to offer our students the very best opportunities in a period of significant change in the educational landscape.

We think other schools would be interested in our...approach to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, our professional development programmes and the way in which we are continuously developing out teaching and learning approach.

We would be interested in hearing from other schools about...innovative ways to use technology. We are particularly interested in the experience of any school using a 'bring your own device' approach.

Question from last week's school is: Can you describe innovative ways to engage parents? It is important when considering parental /carer engagement to remember that one size really doesn't fit all. Therefore ensuring parents have multiple opportunities to engage is essential for a supportive relationship to exist.

Our question to next week's school is....How can schools work more closely together without compromising their autonomy?

In the last 7 days we learnt...

Click the links below to go straight to the story.

- [The Budget does not benefit the young](#)
- [All children should learn a foreign language](#)
- [Academies federation hopes to run further education college for profit](#)
- [Exam boards could be forced to scrap exam seminars for teachers](#)

Have a great week!

The SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update goes out to every Head Teacher in the North East every Tuesday, but if anybody else in your school or LA would like to receive the Update, please send their name and email address to r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com.

Plus if you have any issues you would like to see covered in the Update, or any other comments, I would love to hear from you at the above address.