

Subject: SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update - Week 3



SCHOOLS NORTH EAST **WEEKLY UPDATE** **VISION for education**

The future of our region is in school

This week's update is sponsored by Vision for Education, a local Education Recruitment Consultancy who supply specialist Teachers and Support Staff to Primary, Secondary and SEN schools on a temporary and long term basis across the region. For more information, please click here or visit www.visionforeducation.co.uk

Our update goes out to every Head Teacher in the North East weekly, but if anybody else in your school or LA would like to receive the Update, please send their name and email address to tor.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com

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- Details on the - 'Leading Learning in a Culture of Change' conference
- Competition to win a new school team kit
- Free Potatoes for schools!
- The publication of the new edition of the GL Assessment Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT).

Focus on ... questioning the new exams

Unless you have been living in a news vacuum you will now know that the Government has announced their plans to scrap GCSEs and replace them with a new qualification called the English Baccalaureate Certificate from 2015. Details of the reforms were covered in our [special update yesterday](#)

The announcement, initially leaked in the Mail on Sunday, has unsurprisingly prompted a huge amount of reaction. Much of the comment has focussed on the lack of prior consultation by Government, with Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg accusing Gove of drawing up the plans in secret "without proper Parliamentary scrutiny or consultation with parents, teachers and pupils".

The Secretary of State stressed that the announcement was just the start of a period of consultation and that it is "entirely our intention to seek to work with everyone who wants to ensure that our examination system can be better" in designing the new qualifications.

The [consultation document](#) on the proposals has been published and covers:

1. The characteristics for selecting new qualifications;
2. how to support schools and colleges as they prepare to deliver the qualifications;
3. the inclusivity of the qualifications, in particular, the arrangements for lower attaining students who are not ready to take the new examinations at the end of KS4;

4. The impact of the reforms on specific pupil groups, including those students with SEN and/or disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

But before you get into the substance of the reforms, the consultation asks for your views on one of the most controversial decisions – what to name the new qualification!!

Respondees are questioned as to whether they want to stick to the name GCSE, change to Gove's option of the English Baccalaureate Certificate, or think of a completely new title.

In line with Gove's persistent focus on international comparators and England's position in league tables, the consultation challenges respondents to consider what the qualities of the new qualifications need to be if they are to provide evidence of England's performance against international standards?

The document reinforces that the Government is keen to avoid confusion between a grade awarded in respect of GCSEs, and one awarded on the basis of the new qualification and asks how to make a 'clear break from the past in how grades are described?'

In his statement to Parliament, Gove set out his view that the GCSE foundation tier papers represented a 'cap on aspirations' and proposed an end to tiering. The consultation asks for opinions as to whether it will be possible to end tiering for the full range of subjects that the new qualifications cover and whether particular approaches to examinations will be required to support the end of tiering in some subjects.

One of the most widely reported changes announced is the end to modular examinations. The consultation paper sets out the Government's intention that the new qualifications should be "assessed 100% by externally marked examinations" and asks whether you agree with that approach. Many educationalists have already raised concerns about the loss of coursework and controlled assessments from the new exams. This consultation asked them to justify why some aspects of the 'core subjects' (English, Mathematics, the sciences, History, Geography or a language) should require internal assessment.

Critics have also expressed fears that Gove's plans focus too tightly on a narrow range of academic subjects. The consultation documents state that despite the concentration on the 'English Baccalaureate' subjects, the Government does not want the new qualifications to prevent "greater breadth of study and a balanced curriculum that includes the time to study other subjects". Respondees are therefore asked as to whether the Government should expect that the English Baccalaureate Certificates should take up the same amount of curriculum time as the current GCSE, or whether a greater time emphasis should be placed on these subjects. The consultation also questions whether the subject suites they set out for the new qualifications are right and whether there is a need for a combined science option and a limit to the number of languages for which EBCs are identified.

In Parliament yesterday, much of the questioning to the Secretary of State from MPs centred on how lower achieving students will be affected by the changes.

The consultation asks directly whether respondents believe if any of the proposals have the potential to have a disproportionate impact, adverse or positive, on specific pupil groups.

The Government has stated that, despite initial speculation regarding a return to an O'level/CSE type arrangement, they now expect that the vast majority of students will be entered for the English Baccalaureate Certificate. However, they do identify that there will be a "very small group of students for whom, for a variety of reasons, entry at 16 may not be in their best interests".

To cater for this group, the Government is proposing that all students who are not entered for the qualification should be provided with a "Statement of Achievement" by their school, which sets out their strengths and weaknesses in each subject and seeks views as to how this would be administered.

Finally, the consultation considers the management of the introduction of the new qualifications, including whether there should be a phased introduction by subject and what needs to be done to prepare schools for the transition to the English Baccalaureate Certificate.

Since the announcement, the media, blogs and twittersphere have been alive with people asking their own questions about the new qualifications...

Are isolated exams the best way of assessing the skills needed in the 21st Century? What will happen to the subjects not included in the English Baccalaureate and how will standards in these subjects be maintained? What would a 'new and different grading structure' look like and how will this impact on comparisons across exams? Will coursework be allowed to remain in subjects such as art, PE and drama that are unsuited to the exam hall? What do these changes mean for the National Curriculum? How will ministers tread the line between accountability and avoiding the damaging effects of the existing system of league tables? How does the new system safeguard against teaching to the test? Is 16 still the relevant age for these exams? And many more...

The consultation closes on 10 December but we would like to know your views now – what are your questions, answers and opinions on the reforms? In the coming weeks SCHOOLS NorthEast will be holding consultation events across the region to gather views and facilitate Heads, employers and other stakeholders to consider the implications of the changes for our region's future. Look out for details and in the meantime we can offer a prize for the best alternative name for the qualification. Email think@schoolsnortheast.com with your suggestions!

Local news by region

At SCHOOLS NorthEast we scour the local press to find out the latest news from our schools, however, some stories inevitably slip past our beady eyes! Please keep us in the loop and share your news stories by emailing editor@schoolsnortheast.com.

Durham

- [SRC Bede Sixth Form teacher scoops £2,000 prize for "best lessons"](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Consett school children's bid to help African football pair](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Durham Council to ban takeaways near schools](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Long-serving teachers chalk up 80 years at same school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Schoolchildren get active at the gym](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Newton Aycliffe school's Sats results scrapped](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [SRC Bede Sixth Form teacher scoops £2,000 prize for "best lessons"](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Consett primary school pupils aim to help Liberia football pair](#) (Journal)

Gateshead

- [Gibside School pupils wishing for Wish success again](#) (Chronicle Live)

Hartlepool

- [College's open evening](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Gift puts spellers on the write lines](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Students saddle up for Africa trip](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Middlesbrough

- [Gillbrook Academy gains status in time for the new term](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [Dame Allan's School pupils get a blessing from the Bishop of Newcastle](#) (The Journal)
- [Olympian Jason Richardson visits Blakelaw school](#) (The Journal)

North Tyneside

- [Making a racket, Cullercoats school celebrate tennis success](#) (News Guardian)

Northumberland

- [Thieves steal AstroTurf pitch from Blyth school](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Council to ask Gove to bend closure rules for Allendale school](#) (The Journal)
- [Petitions launched in Allendale Middle School row](#) (The Journal)
- [New Northumberland schools report reveals funding gap](#) (The Journal)
- [Primary school status is on the cards, according to council report](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Awards prove that Bellingham school is blooming marvellous](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Pupils enjoy free cinema trips to focus on learning](#) (Hexham Courant)
- ['Hatchet men' plot closure of school](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Mini-bus could be solution for pupils](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Festive fun is on the cards as pupils have designs on Christmas](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Prior Park headship is fulfilment of destiny](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Allendale Middle School teachers send support messages to campaigners](#) (Journal)
- [Hunt for Blyth Community College sports pitch thieves](#) (Journal)

South Tyneside

- [Hero's welcome back to school for golden boy Josef](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pupils' joy over move to new £6m school](#) (Shields Gazette)

Stockton

- [Ingleby Barwick free school bosses call for name suggestions](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Sex offenders tried to get Teesside school jobs](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Stockton North MP demands bigger inquiry into GCSE results](#) (Gazette Live)

Sunderland

- [Sunderland headteachers open England's first 'multi-academy' special school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Struggling Sunderland school turned around after poor inspection report](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland's first free school opens](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Regional

- [GCSEs to be scrapped in exams shake-up](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [North East Labour MPs hit out as GCSEs given axe](#) (Journal)

Top national education news

Budget cuts lead to breakfast club closures

Budget cuts are forcing a growing number of breakfast clubs in primary schools to close, despite evidence of increasing demand. According to experts, the cuts may risk leaving many vulnerable children in danger of going to school hungry and unable to concentrate in lessons.

Requests made under freedom of information regulations to 128 local authorities by the Labour MP Sharon Hodgson, Shadow Minister for Children and Families; found 40% reporting a decrease in the number of breakfast clubs.

A DfE spokesman acknowledged the importance of the service: "Breakfast clubs can improve children's attendance, concentration, motivation and promote healthy eating habits." However, he said that it was up to schools to decide how they spent the funds that they were given. The "pupil premium", aimed at the most disadvantaged children, would be doubled, the DfE said, but not until 2014-15.

- [School budget cuts spell hunger for many pupils as breakfast clubs close](#) (Guardian)
- [Why school breakfast clubs are on the education frontline](#) (Guardian)

Aspirations key to success, according to research

Teachers believe that aspiration is one of the keys to success, according to a National Foundation for Educational Research opinion poll, and the profession actually rated poverty as among the least of their pupils' potential problems.

In another study, researchers at London University's Institute of Education asked more than 11,000 seven-year-olds what they wanted to be when they grew up. They found ambitious children from poor homes had fewer behavioural problems than those with lesser dreams.

Both of these results pose interesting questions about how schools should implement a key coalition education policy, the Pupil Premium, which is currently channelling £1.25 billion into schools through an extra £630 attached to every pupil on free school meals. The figure is set to double to £2.5 billion a year by 2015. Professor Steve Higgins, well known as the author of the Sutton Trust's influential Pupil Premium Toolkit, will be speaking at the SCHOOLS NorthEast Summit. He will guide you through the strategies and activities that make the most impact for the least money. [Click here to find out more.](#)

- [Poverty is not such a barrier to learning, say teachers](#) (TES)
- [Young children's ambitions 'hint at emotional strength'](#) (BBC News)

What else we learnt this week...

Click the links below to go straight to the story.

- [Academies are great, but could give more back](#)
- [Student numbers 'plummet by 57,000' as fees soar](#)
- [Top universities still have student places](#)
- [Students win degree places with as little as two E grades at A-level](#)

Resources and Opportunities

Competition to Win a New Team kit

The Education Network is offering schools in the region the chance to win a new football strip. All you need to do is complete and send back a fun wordsearch! [Click here to download](#) the wordsearch and

either fax 0191 2323111, email newcastle@ednetwork.co.uk or post to: The Education Network, Watson House, New Bridge Street West, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 8AQ.

The Education Network will then enter your school into a draw which will take place towards the end of October. Winners will be notified by telephone and the strip will be hand delivered. There are three strips to be won before Christmas 2012!

New Service for Governors

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter the Avec Partnership Ltd, have launched Avec Governance for schools and academies in the North East.

AVEC can work with you to review your current governance practice and help you to develop a programme of activities that will ensure that you more than meet the new Ofsted framework criteria, as well as dealing with the professional, efficient and effective operation of governor meetings. In particular, AVEC specialise in supporting schools that have converted to academy status to meet the new challenges that this brings to governance.

To find out more, please contact David Walker by emailing david.walker@avec-partnership.com or telephone 07825 788315 for an initial discussion.

Free Musical Instruments and Training

The EMI Music Sound Foundation provides up to £2,000 funding for (among other things) musical instruments and training music teachers. The application form requires schools to explain why they need funding and what they intend to use it for. [Click here to find out more.](#)

Potatoes for Schools!

Grow Your Own Potatoes (GYOP) began in 2005 and has become one of the largest school vegetable-growing projects around. Primary schools that register to take part receive a free potato-growing kit, which contains everything you need to grow a successful crop! [Click here to find out more.](#)

New CAT tests from GL Assessment

GL Assessment have this week announced the publication of a new edition of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), the UK's most popular test of reasoning abilities. CAT is used by over 50% of secondary schools to determine a pupil's potential exam results and learning preferences, and the new edition of the test contains a greater emphasis on uncovering spatial learners.

For more information please email Danielle.Morgan@gl-assessment.co.uk or [click here](#). GL Assessment will also be holding a free information session on **10 October** giving an overview of the new test - [click here for more information](#).

Events

SCHOOLS NorthEast Summit – 19 October at St James Park

Now in its fourth year, the SCHOOLS NorthEast Summit is the annual event bringing together the North East's school leaders and leading educationalists and decision makers to discuss the issues, practice, challenges and opportunities that will shape education now and in the coming years.

Delegate places cost just **£80 for Primaries** and **£100 for Secondaries** with discounts for SCHOOLS NorthEast Enhanced Members and group bookings.

To find out who will be speaking and to book your place now [please click here](#) or email summit@schoolsnortheast.com

Procurement – a legal and financial headache or an exciting opportunity for your academy? – 25 September

Are you aware of the contractual obligations you may encounter when buying goods and services for your academy? Have you considered how to ensure you maintain cashflow levels and how to monitor credit limits?

Clive Owen LLP are holding an event in conjunction with the Department for Education and Blackett Hart and Pratt Solicitors that will give you all the information you need to ensure you implement an effective procurement strategy and avoid any headaches.

The event will take place at **Teesside University, Darlington Campus**, between **4.00pm and 6.00pm** and will include a light buffet. To reserve your place contact Clive Owen by **calling 01325 349700** or email info@cliveowen.com.

Woodham Academy Open Morning – 3 October

In need of inspiration? Join Woodham Academy for their Open Morning where they will showcase how within 4 years they created a mutually respectful culture within their school, where students are fully engaged and behaviour contributes well to learning.

The open day is aimed at Head Teachers and senior leaders and will take place on **3 October** at Woodham Academy in Newton Aycliffe between **9.30am and 1.00pm** and will cost £30 per delegate.

For further information and to book a place please email annemtimothy@gmail.com.

Careers Education and Guidance Forum – 9 October

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter, Vision for Education, is hosting a free forum on the new duty on schools to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for their Year 9 to 11 pupils. It will provide an opportunity to discuss the key issues which are affecting you and to explore how other schools are responding. The forum will be led by Sue Barr, Director at Education for Employability, and Marie Brett, Management and Career Guidance Professional currently with Sunderland City Council. All are welcome.

The event will take place at Gateway House, Gateway West, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle, at 4.30pm. For further information or to book a place, call Liam Roberts on 0191 267 4555.

Higher Education Advisers' and Teachers' Conference - 11 October

The Higher Education Advisers' and Teachers' Conference is organised and delivered by Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities, in collaboration with the Raising Aspirations Partnership (RAP).

The conference aims to inform delegates about topical issues relating to Higher Education (HE). The programme has been designed for teachers, advisers, tutors and other professionals involved in the provision of information, advice and guidance to students. Delegates will be able to tailor their own conference programme by selecting from a range of information sessions covering a variety of HE topics.

The conference will take place at Newcastle University on 11 October between 9.15am and 4.30pm. For more information or to book a place, please [click here](#) or call **0191 222 6094**.

Leading Learning in a Culture of Change – 17 October

Leading Learning (Education) and Gateshead Council will be holding their second annual conference next month. With key note from Tim Smit (KBE), co-founder of the Eden Project and other leading educationalist this is a conference designed to inspire, enthuse and challenge school leaders and classroom practitioners alike.

The conference will take place at The Sage Gateshead on 17 October 2012. Suitable for all phases, SCHOOLS NorthEast Enhanced Members are entitled to a £25 discount. Either email gillianmcteer@gateshead.gov.uk or download a booking form from www.leadinglearning.co.uk to secure your place today.

Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) – information session – 19 November

Miles Wallis-Clarke, Head Teacher at Hotspur Primary School Newcastle, invites you to join him for a special information session to find out how your school could benefit from GL Assessment's **Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) programme**.

PASS is an all-age attitudinal survey that provides a robust, standardised measurement of a pupil's attitudes towards themselves as learners plus their attitudes towards school, their teachers and attendance. In a school setting, a pupil's attitudes to learning can influence their whole experience of education and have significant effects on their overall levels of attainment, engagement and well-being. PASS is designed to help teachers in predicting which students are likely to stop attending, find a solution to pupil behaviour issues, and provide insight into any obstacles that are blocking the path for your pupils to maximise their attainment.

To find out more come to the session on **Monday 19 November between 4pm and 5pm at [Hotspur School](#)** Tea and coffee will be provided.

Email Mo.Brown@gl-assessment.co.uk to book your place.

Quote of the week...

"He who opens a school door, closes a prison."
Victor Hugo

Have a great week!

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.