

# Children's Services Weekly

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“All you need is Gove, Gove,  
Gove is all you need..”

A mere 10 weeks after the election, the children's services sector begins to pack its bags for the summer holiday in a distinctly Rumsfeld state mind. Not knowing what we don't know, however, is cold comfort for many professionals in the sector, and some will probably be packing their bags for good.

What we do know, of course, is that, by September, the first Bill will be one of the first Acts to reach the statute book (subject to Parliamentary approval, you understand) and a number of 'outstanding' schools will be wearing their new status on their sweatshirts, if not their sleeves. Sign-writers are ready to black out any reference to the local authority on school nameplates, overpainting the word Academy: printshops throughout the land will be waiting to set the presses rolling on brochures, business cards and admission forms; and the *academistas* will be waiting for the latest designs in school uniform to fill the shelves of the local stockists. At least there is no pretence that this latest change is about standards not structures: the very fabric of the education system is being re-warped and re-wefted on a grand scale.

For those good schools unable to seek academy status automatically, there is the prospect of seeking promotion to the premier league by becoming outstanding. For the schools at the other end of the spectrum, there is a chance that they will be courted by a new academy, with an educational pre-nuptial agreement a condition of a partnership.

With the expected focus on schools from the re-badged DfE, the future of children's services is still fuzzy, with little yet clear about what the sector will look like in a year's time. The Schools System Draft Structural Reform [Plan](#), understandably, makes no reference to children's services and the Children's Plan sits forlornly on the old DCSF website under a banner explaining it is no longer government policy.

The Coalition has stated its commitment to abolishing child poverty, which was placed in primary legislation by the previous administration (the poor are already saving hard to pay the legal fees when they decide to sue the government). Directors of Children's Services have been given the "freedom" to decide on the cuts that will be necessary as a result of the £311m cut in the area-based grant, as people realise that "cutting waste" means cutting jobs. The DfE is still expecting there to be no impact on front-line services, but teenage pregnancy and youth substance misuse is altogether up front. It is a shame that the previous government lacked the courage to transform the School Forum in each authority into a Children's Services Forum - as a vocal minority argued for several years.

There is no doubt that significant cuts would have been required from **any** government following the election on 6 May, but an holistic approach is what is sorely needed, with education and children's services saying "we're in this together".

Perhaps things will look better at the beginning of September, when CSW will be back!

*Chris Waterman,  
Editor*

# Who wants to be a millionaire?

A primary headteacher who earned more than £276,000 last year is at the centre of a row over pay. Mark Elms, who runs a 335-pupil inner-city primary, received £231,400 with a further £45,123 in pension contributions last year. But while many parents and teachers have expressed their shock that Mr Elms is earning more than David Cameron, whose Prime Ministerial salary is £142,500, other parents interviewed by the BBC have defended Mr Elms, claiming that he “deserves every penny”. When Elms took over the school in 2001, it was earmarked for closure. But under his leadership it has earned a rating of outstanding from Ofsted.

Figures from the GMB union revealed that Mr Elms, who runs a school of 400 pupils, was paid a basic salary of £82,714 last year. But he also received in the same year more than £100,000 – £51,957 of which was back-dated pay for 2008/09 – for work on the City Challenge programme introduced by Labour to tackle underachievement in disadvantaged areas. He was also paid £10,000 in overtime for 2009-10, and a further £9,317 for overtime in 2008/09.

Another headteacher revealed as earning over £200,000 was Jacqui Vallin, Head of Southfields Community College in Wandsworth, which has expressed an interest in academy status. She recently received a pay rise of £20,594 to give her a total remuneration package of £226,381. In total, the GMB found that a total of 11 headteachers in London earned more than £150,000. And they say that they are in contact with Barking and Dagenham Council for an explanation as to why they’ve not yet named the three teachers earning over £150,000 as the new rules require.

Meanwhile, Education Secretary Michael Gove has made his feelings clear on the matter. A statement from the Department for Education pointed out that, on 5 July, Mr Gove had written to the School Teachers’ Review Body saying that he wanted no headteacher to earn more than the Prime Minister, following the STRB’s recommendations from last year.

## Comment

NUT General Secretary Christine Blower said: “While the importance of the head teacher’s job cannot be underestimated, it must be remembered that teaching is a collaborative profession and it is not just one person who delivers a good education for pupils. Teachers and support staff work ludicrous numbers of unpaid hours and do not see this reflected in their pay.”

GMB Public Services Officer Ted Purcell said: “It is outrageous that a Head Teacher in a local community school should earn more money than the Prime Minister. A pay rise of over £20,000 for one head in Wandsworth is a downright disgrace and a slap in the face for GMB members now facing a pay freeze. There is a complete lack of accountability when schools are opted out of local authority control.”

ATL General Secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, said that headteachers had an incredibly difficult job and their pay should reflect the size of their role. However, she added: “When a headteacher is doing a ‘second job’, who is actually running their school? Any reward for the second job should go back to their school as recompense for the loss of their services, in order to fund books, equipment for pupils, and salaries for classroom based staff.”

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## **Not building schools for the future ‘will cost billions’**

The Education Secretary has come under heavy fire after it was revealed that the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future scheme could cost local authorities £160 million in paperwork and legal preparation. Under Labour’s scheme, LAs were required to carry out detailed planning projects before programmes were formally approved. A snapshot survey carried out by the LGA found that more than £161,448,000 had been spent across 67 authorities on these projects, most of which have now been cancelled. But these losses are only one of a number across the scheme. Research from TechMarketView found that scrapping the scheme could cost ICT suppliers more than £3.5 billion.

## “Freedom for all schools”, cries ADCS past-President

The former President of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services has said that all schools should be given academy-style freedoms, to prevent the creation of a two-tier education system. Responding to assurances from Education Secretary Michael Gove that local authorities would be given a strategic role in overseeing all schools, Kim Bromley-Derry, said that schools and local authorities needed greater clarity on the Government’s plans. He said: “We would hope to know where the Government thinks this journey will end sooner rather than later. Why can’t the freedoms and flexibilities apply to all schools? I am relatively relaxed about local authorities becoming advocates and champions for children and families and having a more regulatory role. But not if all those other mechanisms are dismantled, because then actually we have no levers.”

His views echoed those of his successor, Marion Davis of Warwickshire, who announced plans along these lines to put to government during last week’s ADCS conference in Manchester, as reported in last week’s issue of *Children’s Services Weekly*.

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## Bill aims to keep both separated parents in child’s life

A Conservative MP has presented a Shared Parenting Bill to the House of Commons, in a bid to make it easier for both parents to stay in a child’s life following a separation or divorce. Brian Binley, Conservative MP for Northampton South, said that the Bill would also provide appropriate safeguards in the minority of cases where shared parenting was not the best solution. He said that there was abundant evidence that a child’s chances in life were greatly improved if both parents continued to be involved significantly in their lives following separation or divorce. And he also said that shared parenting legislation was increasingly common elsewhere in the world. Australia, France, Denmark, Belgium and a number of US states were examples. “A significant proportion of the social problems in today’s society are a result of when a child doesn’t have the love and support of both parents where safe,” he said. “I hope that this bill will go some way to help this, which will only be good for society.”

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## Cafcass plans would scale back use of children’s guardians

Cafcass have proposed that independent children’s guardians should not be allocated to non-urgent family court cases. Under the plans, which are being developed by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service as part of an ongoing review of the family justice system, a “watching brief” system would replace guardians in all but the most pressing cases. This would involve a named practitioner monitoring proceedings by keeping regular contact with the child’s solicitor. Speaking to *CYP Now*, Cafcass Chief Executive Anthony Douglas said that although the proposals entailed a degree of risk, they were needed if courts were to adequately deal with an increased workload. “I do think that in very cashand resource-strapped times it is better to do really important cases well and take more of a back seat in others,” he said. “We don’t need to be involved in every case, nor do lawyers, but we do need to be involved in many cases and lawyers in some.”

# LITERACY

## Today

**The latest issue published this week!**

Dr **Mike Milanovic**, Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL, writes about the changing role of the English language.

**Pat Farrington** argues that more emphasis needs to be placed on meaning when teaching children how to break compound words into their constituent parts.

Dr **Andrew Shenton** looks at measurable outcomes versus the quality of experience when evaluating the school library.

Dr **Christina Clark**, Head of Research at the National Literacy Trust, reports on the findings of a national survey exploring the types of resources young people have at home that support literacy and how home resources relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour.

*Literacy Today* is published by the Education Publishing Company Ltd. See below for contact details.

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## Cancer charity wants free factor 25 for primary kids

The Welsh cancer charity Tenovus and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health have launched a campaign to persuade the Welsh Assembly Government to provide free sunscreen for all children under the age of 11 in the country. Campaigners have launched a petition, arguing that funding sunscreen for around 250,000 under-11s would be considerably cheaper than the estimated £14 million per year that is spent treating the most serious forms of skin cancer. Julie Barratt, director of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health in Wales, said: “This is not a cosmetic measure – it has the potential to be a lifesaver. We appreciate there are difficult financial choices to be made and that there are competing priorities for the health budget. The evidence, however, clearly demonstrates that money spent now in providing free sunscreen to under 11s will be money saved later in treating skin cancer.” The number of cases of malignant melanoma in Wales doubled in the decade between 1996 and 2006.

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## Scottish Executive PE pledge not fit for purpose – or children

The Scottish Labour Party has uncovered evidence that the Scottish Parliament's pledge that all schoolchildren receive two hours of physical education a week is not being met. Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that only 35 per cent of primary schools and 23 per cent of secondaries have reached the target since the Scottish National Party came to power in 2007. Authorities such as Aberdeenshire, Fife and North Lanarkshire do not offer two hours of PE in secondary schools, while others such as East Renfrewshire, Dundee and the Western Isles are hitting the targets. Labour sport spokesman Bill Butler said: "The SNP promised parents that their children would be guaranteed two hours PE each week with a specialist PE teacher and they have, yet again, failed to deliver." But Education Secretary Michael Russell said that the Scottish Government, together with Cosla and local authorities, was "committed" to young people throughout Scotland receiving two hours of quality PE every week.

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## Native speakers 'lack grammar skills in mother tongue'

Researchers from Northumbria University have suggested that many native English speakers have trouble making sense of even basic grammar. They showed 50 adults a series of pictures, with captions such as the "the soldier was hit by the sailor", and found that many of the adults had trouble identifying the meaning of passive sentences. The results, they say, debunk the idea that native speakers have a core ability to understand the simple grammar of their language. The researchers say that one reason for this is that less-educated native English speakers have less experience of grammar. Passive sentences occur more frequently in formal written texts, which higher educated speakers have more experience using. Researcher Ewa Dabrowska said: "These findings could have a number of implications. If a significant proportion of the population does not understand passive sentences, then notices and other forms of written information may have to be rewritten and literacy strategies changed."

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## Half of social worker posts in youth institutions unfilled

New figures from Barnardo's have revealed that half of social worker posts in young offender institutions are lying empty. According to the charity, there were 10.5 social worker vacancies recorded against 21.5 designated posts in March 2010. Social worker posts in YOIs were introduced in 2005 and funded for the first three years by the Youth Justice Board, after which responsibility for providing the posts was handed to local authorities. But Barnardo's claims that a lack of clarity over responsibility for funding is one of the factors contributing to the current shortfall. Barnardo's chief executive and former director general of the Prison Service Martin Narey said: "Most children in YOIs have committed non-violent crimes and are not a danger to others ... I find it astonishing that at a time when the necessity of 'safeguarding' children has permeated every part of the public services we should be allowing these posts to disappear." The LGA said that attracting applicants was a significant barrier to filling vacant posts.

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## All play but no work qualifications, says SkillsActive

New research conducted by sector skills council SkillsActive has revealed that as much as 40 per cent of playworkers do not have any playwork qualifications. Based on the responses of 575 playworkers and 200 playwork employers, as part of a survey to inform the fourth biennial audit of the playwork sector, *Playwork People 4*, the results also showed that nine out of ten of the employers surveyed said that it was skills specific to playwork that they found lacking in potential recruits. Jonathan Parsons, research manager for SkillsActive, said: "We want playwork qualifications in playwork settings. The danger is if you have a setting run by someone qualified in another discipline then they use play as a means to an end rather than embracing the playwork principles." He said that the previous Government's funding for 4,000 playworkers to train to Level 3 qualification was not likely to make a big enough impact on the sector.

## Dr John to write prescription for children's commissioner

The Department for Education has announced that the role of Children's Commissioner for England is to be reviewed. Dr John Dunford, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, will carry out the review of the role, functions and value for money of the Children's Commissioner post, which has been held since last October by Dr Maggie Atkinson. Former Education Secretary Ed Balls had been criticised for appointing Dr Atkinson, a strong supporter of his, after the Education Select Committee declined to support the appointment. However, at the time the publicity generated by the row had the unintended effect of increasing support for the appointment from within the children's services sector. There were suspicions that Dr Atkinson's job would be in jeopardy if Labour lost the election, but Dr Dunford said that he would review the role with an open mind, talking to young people about the best way to represent them.

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## "naff teachers" drive up pupil resilience - official

The outgoing Chairman of Ofsted has suggested that every school needs a "useless teacher". Zenna Atkins was quoted in the *Sunday Times* as saying: "I'd like to keep the number low, but if every primary school has one pretty naff teacher, this helps kids realise that even if you know the quality of authority is not good, you have to learn how to play it." In an interview on the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme, Ms Atkins added: "I think it is inevitable that every school will at some point will have a useless teacher. If you look at any population of a workforce, there are people who are under-performing and that's often a significant percentage – up to 10% of people under-performing." However, NASUWT General Secretary Chris Keates responded to the comments by saying: "Why is it that everyone thinks that teachers are fair game for kicking around and denigrating? On the basis of Ms Atkins' comments there must, therefore, be 10% of Ofsted inspectors who are useless. Let's have a public debate about that."

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## Family friendliness bottomed out under New Labour

The Family and Parenting Institute has criticised the UK for its treatment of families. In its new [Family Friendly Report Card](#) it gives the nation school-style grades on areas of family policy, and exposes the successes and failures of the previous Labour government's attempts to protect family life, while pressing the coalition Government to urgently address key family issues. Overall, it concludes that Britain would gain no more than a C- for family friendliness, with its lowest grade – a grade D – being awarded to the cost of raising a child, elderly care provision and affordable family housing. It says that the estimated cost of raising a child from birth to the age of 21 in Britain is now £200,000, with costs for things such as nursery care still rising. It also says that approximately 60,000 older people pay for a place in a care home every year by selling their own home, with 2.8 million children and 1.8 million pensioners living in poverty.

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# Events and conference round-up

**Aspect Annual Conference** – 16 and 17 July 2010, Leeds

The Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts is holding its annual conference.

Email: [info@aspect.org.uk](mailto:info@aspect.org.uk)

**English as an Additional Language (EAL) Course for Primary Children**

**July 26th – 28th 2010**

**Venue: University of Greenwich, London**

This course is part of the International Primary Curriculum Summer School but is relevant for schools not

implementing the IPC as well as those that are. It is designed to provide specific support to both Beginning and Developing-level practitioners working with EAL learners. It will be a combination of practical, ‘hands on’ ideas and principles to help you work with these young learners and will provide opportunities to explore and discuss the challenges of engaging EAL learners effectively. For more information go to [www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com](http://www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com) or contact Laura Phillips at [laura@greatlearning.com](mailto:laura@greatlearning.com) Tel: (0)20 7531 9696

### **Special Education Needs (SEN) Course for Primary Children**

**July 26th - 28th 2010**

**Venue: University of Greenwich, London**

This course is part of the International Primary Curriculum Summer School but is relevant for schools not implementing the IPC as well as those that are. The course includes developing an understanding of behaviours and barriers to learning, an overview of SEN and approaches in support and intervention, ideas for involving and encouraging parents in supporting their child, and provides opportunities for networking and sharing of best practice with other teachers and SEN leaders for learning. For more information go to [www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com](http://www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com) or contact Laura Phillips at [laura@greatlearning.com](mailto:laura@greatlearning.com) Tel: (0)20 7531 9696

### **Learning in schools – A competency curriculum that delivers and assesses the PLTS (Personal Learning and Thinking skills) – 22 September 2010**

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

**Learning in schools – Learning for the 21st Century – 12 October 2010.** Venue: To be confirmed

### **Learning in schools – Raising the bar – how to achieve ‘outstanding’ teaching and learning in your school – 10 November 2010**

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

### **Learning in schools - Raising the bar – how to achieve ‘outstanding’ teaching and learning in your school – 8 December 2010**

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

For more information and to book a place on a Campaign for Learning event please visit

[www.campaignforlearning.org.uk](http://www.campaignforlearning.org.uk) or contact Katie Bloom Tel: 020 7766 0010

Email: [kbloom@cfllearning.org.uk](mailto:kbloom@cfllearning.org.uk)

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## Document round-up

The Association of School and College Leaders published *Policy Paper 68: Intelligent Accountability in Practice* on 16 July 2010. This report argues in favour of intelligent accountability for colleges. It points out that, while in 2004 the DfES adopted a series of measures under the banner of the New Relationship with Schools, emphasising “each school’s responsibility to manage its own improvement” and “designed to reduce bureaucracy and streamline working arrangements”, there has been no comparable development in the college sector. £4. Email: [info@ascl.org.uk](mailto:info@ascl.org.uk)

The Family and Parenting Institute published *The UK Family Friendly report card 2010* on 11 July 2010. This report warns that the high cost of raising a child could push many households into poverty. [www.familyandparenting.org/Filestore//Documents/Our\\_work/Policy/ReportCard.pdf](http://www.familyandparenting.org/Filestore//Documents/Our_work/Policy/ReportCard.pdf)

Ofsted published *Twelve Outstanding Providers of Work-based Learning* on 14 July 2010. The report showcases twelve outstanding work-based learning providers that excel at providing apprenticeships, NVQs and other vocational qualifications for young people and adults. Ref: HMI 100112.

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Wales Audit Office published *Capital Investment in Schools* on 14 July 2010. This report claims that many school buildings in Wales are still in a poor state following “weaknesses” in the management of the investment programme.

[www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/Capital\\_investment\\_in\\_schools\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/Capital_investment_in_schools_eng.pdf)

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## Media Watch

On Sunday, television producer and screenwriter Phil Redmond wrote an article in the *Guardian* on the findings from the 4Children Knowsley Youth Commission’s report *Working Towards Unlocking the Potential of Young People*. He said that, despite the fact that the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley, where Mr Redmond grew up, was officially classed as the worst council ward in the UK, young people in the area were brimful of hope and aspiration, “but let down by neglectful national politicians”. He wrote: “Knowsley kids are getting a rough deal, really, yet they remain optimistic, enthusiastic, aspirational and, incredibly, the happiest kids in the UK. That is the main finding of the report. They are young, gifted and held back.”

Mr Redmond said that, at the age of 12, the educational attainment of young people in Knowsley sat alongside or above the national average. Yet by 18, educational attainment was below the national average, “meaning that all that individual ability, that potential community resource, is being lost”. He said that part of the problem was “the way we measure ‘success’, through rigid national educational benchmarks”. He said that the Government had to stop setting Knowsley’s young people up to fail by only judging them on a narrow set of indicators.

On Tuesday, the *Telegraph* reported that parents had been told to stop giving their children lunch boxes full of fizzy drinks and crisps, or to pay for them to have healthier school dinners instead. The School Food Trust said parents were hampering efforts to cut obesity in children by sending them to school with junk food that was not available in dinner halls. Rob Rees, chairman of the School Food Trust (SFT), said the best solution would be for parents to pay for their children to eat healthy hot meals in canteens rather than giving them lunch boxes. He also suggested chocolates, crisps and sugary drinks could be banned in packed lunches altogether by tightening the rules on what children can bring into school. Stricter measures on what can be included in school dinners were implemented by the SFT following a campaign by Jamie Oliver five years ago, but Mr Rees said many middle class parents remain unconvinced that packed lunches are less healthy than canteen meals.

Vince Cable’s announcement yesterday that he had asked Lord Browne to add consideration of a graduate tax to his review of university funding made the lead front page story in today’s *Guardian*. Dr Cable was interviewed about the plan on BBC2’s *Newsnight* last night. The increase in university applications made the front page in today’s *Daily Telegraph*.

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## Children’s Services Weekly

**Editor: Chris Waterman**

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# *Children's Services Weekly* on holiday

With many of our readers going away for their summer holiday, *Children's Services Weekly* is also going on holiday. This will be the last issue for a while, as we do not publish during August. *Children's Services Weekly* will return in September. For all our readers we hope you enjoy the summer break.

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