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Blair, Schools Prom, George Cunningham, and a wolf.
The same but different

This is our 100th issue. In it John Bangs of the NUT contributes the final article of our series of decade retrospectives. He and our parliamentary editor, Nick Kent, observe the similarity of education policy over the last 20 years and its many contradictions under both Conservative and Labour governments.

Will things change? Now is a good time to ask, for during the course of this year Gordon Brown will replace Tony Blair as Labour leader and Prime Minister. Looking forward, how different will a Brown premiership be from the Blairite version?

There are those who see Gordon Brown as instinctively Old Labour and imagine that, once freed from Blair, he will be more inclined to move away from the market-driven and private-sector-friendly approach that has been the hallmark of the last decade. The left pressure group, Compass, for example, published a report in January calling for more taxation. The report, A New Political Economy, argues for “a more progressive tax system to ensure properly funded public services and to mitigate against (sic) the high levels of inequality that have opened up in recent years”. It looks to Scandinavia as evidence that you can have “higher taxes, better public services and a strong economy”.

It is extremely unlikely that there will be such a radical shift away from the New Labour approach of which Brown was as much an architect as Blair. Personal tax is already at a 20-year high. The Institute of Fiscal Studies, using recent figures from H. M. Revenue and Customs, has calculated that if the Chancellor had raised tax allowances in line with earnings over the last decade then some 220,000 people would have moved into the 40 per cent higher rate tax band while Labour has been in power.

Instead, the actual figure is over a million, with an extra 3.5 million drawn into the tax system for the first time. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, Brown has raised the threshold at which people pay the higher rate of tax by 31 per cent. Even the number of pensioners paying tax has risen by 1.1 million. There is no scope for a dramatic increase in tax revenues without hurting a lot of people. As it is, those paying the higher rates of tax already include some teachers and nurses. It is far more likely that the constraints on public spending over the next few years already announced by the Treasury will be maintained once Brown transfers his office next door.

Nevertheless, there will be some changes. There will be a different emphasis. While Blair’s priority was the standards agenda, Brown, who has made a real effort in tackling poverty, will see the children agenda as central to what he wants to achieve.

“While Blair’s priority was the standards agenda, Brown, who has made a real effort in tackling poverty, will see the children agenda as central to what he wants to achieve.”

Another area that will rise up the political agenda is skills. The Chancellor has long been interested in British industry becoming more competitive by increasing its productivity, which means doing something about skills. He commissioned Lord Sandy Leitch to review the UK’s skills mix. Leitch published his report in December. It made little impact at the time, its publication having been delayed many months by the Treasury until after the publication of the Further Education and Training Bill.

The Leitch report added little that is new. Yet it reinforced the important work on skills and demographics already done by Chris Humphreys of City and Guilds. While Leitch’s message may not have been loudly heard at the time his report was published, it still contains a stark warning. As the report said: “The UK is on track to achieve undistinguished mediocrity” unless it succeeds in upgrading the skills of its workforce over the next decade. Yet his message was one of hope. “Skills is the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation.”

While the Government recognises the importance of upgrading skills, it is not entirely clear which route it will adopt. As Alison Wolf, Professor of Public Sector Management at Kings College London has observed: “Ministers are clearly worried about UK productivity and think that ploughing money into the attainment of centrally-set qualifications and centrally-set participation targets will solve this. All the evidence is that it will not.”

Recognising a problem is not the same thing as coming up with the right solution to it, as the Government’s response to the Tomlinson report showed. Yet Tomlinson is far from dead. Support for it is even stronger than when Sir Mike first published his proposals. For example, at the launch of the OECD’s report, Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2006, last September, Andreas Schleicher, head of its Indicators and Analysis Division and the man responsible for the PISA international research, stressed the economic importance of Tomlinson-style reforms and warned that those countries that did not embrace them would pay a heavy price.

Tony Blair and Ruth Kelly did not embrace the central core of Tomlinson, but Brown and whoever he chooses as his Education Secretary may be more open and less in thrall to those who want to defend A-levels as the Gold Standard. After ten years as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown is no doubt well aware of what happened when Britain remained on the real Gold Standard long after that had served its purpose. That was a costly mistake.

The coming change of leadership in government means that there is all to play for in seeking to influence new directions in policy. The wide range of organisations in the Education Alliance that is organising a major conference at the University of London Institute of Education on 24 March, on the theme of a good local school for every child, have already put forward a powerful case, one to which Gordon Brown may be more receptive than Tony Blair. In a range of inter-linked issues, from greater support for neighbourhood schools, through children’s services, to vocational education and skills, there is the possibility of a change of emphasis that could have far more impact than any of the legacy ideas from Tony Blair.
Some old wine in new bottles

John Bangs
Assistant Secretary, National Union of Teachers

The last ten years are supposed to have seen the most fundamental reform programme since the 1944 Education Act. But, despite the sense that the education service has experienced a blizzard of initiatives in the last decade, there are undercurrents of the education reforms of the late Eighties and mid-Nineties in much of the current education debate.

For example, there is little difference between the 400 Academies proposed by the Prime Minister recently and grant-maintained school status introduced by the Conservative Party; except, ironically, the Conservative Government was less keen in 1996 on the use of outside sponsors. Indeed, to adapt Estelle Morris’ phrase, the starting point for the direction of travel towards school independence goes back a lot farther than the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.

There are other examples. ‘Hard’ federations with single governing bodies for clusters of schools were, in fact, introduced in the 1993 Education Act. It was the Conservative Party in 1996, not Labour, which introduced the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and reading recovery. In 1996, Ron Dearing embarked on a major review of 16-19 qualifications; the recommendations of which were part of the Curriculum 2000 reforms but have now re-emerged in a discussion about how A-levels can be reformed and about the future role of the international baccalaureate.

And, in 1996, we saw the launch of Schools Speak for Themselves. Commissioned by the NUT, Professor John MacBeath’s examination of whether the Scottish model of school self-evaluation could be adopted for England and Wales captured the imagination of David Bell, then CEO of Newcastle. He introduced the self-evaluation model into school inspection when he became HMCI. The nature of self-evaluation and its relationship to the ‘New Relationship with Schools’ agenda is still not issue.

Yet there has been fundamental change. Up until now, excessive Labour Governments have injected around five per cent annual growth into English financial settlements. These additional resources have obviously made a visible difference, particularly to the previously dilapidated school building stock and to schools’ ICT capability. In fact, the impact of this qualitative change informed the Conservative Opposition to such an extent that major reductions in education expenditure are not on their current agenda.

There is another change. Ten years ago, the global pressure to expand the UK’s knowledge and skills base was much less than it is now. Ten years on, China and India have invested massively in their education systems. The growing awareness that the UK might lose its standing in other education systems has led to OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) becoming a key reference point for debate about what works.

Nowhere was this more evident than during the passage of the Education and Inspections Bill. The Government had identified weaknesses in education systems in its White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, which it believed illustrated the benefits of choice and diversity. One such example was the Swedish education system.

The NUT, Sweden and PISA

During the debate on the Bill, the NUT highlighted Sweden’s own National Assessment Agency report, which found that choice and diversity led to social segregation of the population from minority ethnic and socially deprived backgrounds. It countered that OECD’s PISA report had highlighted Finland as the top performer; a performer which had a powerful influence on the debate. One such example was the Swedish education system.

The Wellbeing of the Nation

Ten years ago, achieving a self-regulating and autonomous teaching profession was only a glint in eyes of those arguing for a General Teaching Council. By the next election, issues of autonomy, central control and the nature of a self-confident profession may dominate the educational terrain.

Change and turbulence will continue. It is the job of teacher organisations and the General Teaching Council to support the teaching profession in making itself heard during the next ten years.
Inspection – past, present and future

Chris Waterman
Children’s Services Editor

Chris Waterman looks at how the personality of HMCI has impacted on inspection in the twelve years since the creation of the post and the prospects for a much brighter future for inspection.

Inspection past

Few of us can remember, or choose to, that day in 1994 when the then Prime Minister John Major appointed one Chris Woodhead as Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools.

Few of us can forget, though we might hope to, the “reign of terror” that characterised the early years of the Ofsted inspection regime. In 1997, one of the hoped-for outcomes of the election was the immediate replacement of the Chief Inspector: his retention was one of the more surprising decisions made by the new Prime Minister. Under the new administration, HMCI seemed to have unfeathered powers, subject only to the occasional mild questioning by the Education Select Committee.

There was no shortage of anecdotes about the Chief Inspector re-writing LA inspection reports, but only the very brave and foolhardy dared utter any public criticism of either the style, tone or content of anything that the increasingly quixotic inspector said.

Teachers were seen as failures, schools were roundly criticised and local education authorities lambasted. Described by one MP as a “dose of anthrax” in the education system, the first Chief Inspector had barely a good word for anyone. While there was no evidence of dancing in the streets when he finally resigned in November 2000, his demise was toasted in many staffrooms and celebrated in song at the Local Government Association’s national education conference.

For Mike Tomlinson (now Sir Mike) it was a very easy act to follow on a personal basis, although restoring respect and credibility proved far more difficult.

Inspection present

David Bell, who took over as the second permanent HMCI, arrived with impeccable credentials and an outstanding track record in local government. Between 2002 and 2006, in spite of the obvious difficulties for any chief inspector in gaining popularity among the inspected, Ofsted established itself as a credible brand, with judgements based on evidence, rather than on (often personal) prejudice.

The Children Act 2004 led to schools and local authorities being inspected against the five Every Child Matters outcomes: Ofsted was charged with leading the amalgamation of some, or all, of the ten inspectorates responsible for inspecting local authorities.

Comparing with this task, herding cats must seem pretty simple: while there are still cultural differences, particularly between the educational inspection model and the social services model, the inspectors are just beginning to look joined up.

“Few of us can forget, though we might hope to, the “reign of terror” that characterised the early years of the Ofsted inspection regime.”

David Bell saw through the introduction of joint area reviews (JAR) and the annual performance assessment (APA) of local authorities, in addition to overhauling the school inspection system.

For the Chief Inspector, the move to Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education and Skills in January 2006, with the prospect of setting policy rather than monitoring its delivery, was too tempting to turn down.

Inspection future

The new chief inspector, Christine Gilbert, arrived at Ofsted a matter of weeks ago, with even more impeccable credentials and a track record which included transforming Tower Hamlets into one of the top performing local authorities in England.

Her task is to reduce the burden of inspection (and incidentally, the costs of inspection), while at the same time ensuring that schools and local authorities continue to improve delivery. With such recent experience on the receiving end of multiple inspections, she is already making clear that inspection will be proportionate and measured. She has also wasted no time in saying the good things as well as the tough things, and usually in that order.

As reported in EJ 99, from spring 2007, inspection of CSAs:

- will have an increased focus on children and young people who are not doing well;
- will be “proportionate to risk”;
- will add more value to the local areas inspected, with a closer linkage between the joint area review and the annual performance assessment processes.

David Hawker, chair of ADECS, welcomes the slimming down of the system, because it is very expensive and time-consuming, and doesn’t offer value for money. However he added:

“At the same time, we do have some concerns that, if inspections only concentrate on areas of concern, the published reports are likely to present a rather skewed and negative picture of the effectiveness of local services.”

[How many of us remember the first report that Chris Woodhead delivered on LEAs, having mainly inspected the ones that were causing concern?]

Although the new approach to inspection provides good quality management information, enabling local systems to target improvement, the downside is the way the findings will be interpreted in the media. We have already seen this happen with the new school inspection system, following the publication of Ofsted’s annual report. Local authorities will need to work closely with Ofsted to guard against over-negative interpretations, when the reality in most cases is that local systems are performing increasingly effectively.

The tables following indicate how each of the 102 authorities that underwent an APA was judged to be performing by Ofsted (those LAs undergoing a JAR did not have an APA).
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<th>APA/Proportionate/No APA</th>
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Karaoke

The Government’s announcement in the pre-Christmas ‘silly season’ that millions of adults wouldn’t be able to join in Christmas karaoke sessions because they couldn’t read the words was a fine example of absolute claptrap. This ludicrous suggestion was clearly an invention of civil servants with too little to do in the run up to Christmas. It says something about ministers that they were prepared to endorse such rubbish in the desire to get some cheap publicity.

Supposedly some 17.8 million wouldn’t have been able to tackle the Robbie Williams song Angels because of their poor reading skills. Can you imagine? There you were having a bit of a party over Christmas. Relatives and friends had popped round. Someone suggested a bit of karaoke. Up comes the Robbie Williams song and most of your friends and relatives stare at the screen in silence because they can’t read the words! This, right after the deathly silence when it turned out that most around the table couldn’t read the jokes in the Christmas crackers.

Of course, if this were true, it would be really bad news for those involved in the karaoke industry, particularly as it means that more than half of all adults in this country can’t take part in karaoke sessions if the Robbie Williams song is included. So how have these shocking statistics been arrived at? Has there been a survey with thousands of people asked to take part in karaoke sessions so that they could be assessed by government experts? If so, how did I miss it?

However, looking for research about reading skills and karaoke on the DfES or Skills for Life websites is a fruitless task because no research has actually taken place. So just where did this nonsense come from?

Well, some government official with a vivid imagination was asked to come up with a gimmick that might just get a bit of press and media coverage in the run up to Christmas. The year before it was “millions of adults can’t write Christmas cards”, similarly based on absolutely no evidence. Next year it will be “millions of adults can’t read the cooking instructions”. Or maybe it will be 20 million by then.

So what this too-clever-by-half, under-occupied civil servant did was to take some questionable statistics about the number of adults that have difficulties with reading and writing and use these to suggest that millions wouldn’t be able to do karaoke. These 17.8 million adults are seemingly all of those adults without the equivalent of a GCSE A*-C in English. It beggars belief that you need the ‘gold standard’ GCSE A*-C qualification to do karaoke but that’s what is being claimed. It’s rubbish of course.

This announcement was made in the same week that the National Audit Office reported that the Government’s target of “improving the basic skill levels of 2.25 million adults between the launch of Skills for Life in 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007” as “not fit for purpose”. The NAO also reported that “the data systems as a whole are not fit for the purpose of measuring and reporting performance against the target”. Perhaps officials and ministers could usefully spend their time trying to deal with this rather serious issue rather than coming up with such nonsense.
What of the future if the Basic Skills Agency’s government funding is withdrawn?

George Low

The Government has decided to stop the Basic Skills Agency core grant in 15 months time in the interests of efficiency. The announcement was made in a low key letter to the Press by the Skills Minister, Phil Hope, on 14 November, ten weeks after the agency director Alan Wells resigned suddenly after 30 years.

In his letter the Minister says it would be wrong to assume the Department for Education and Skills was trying to “kill off” the Basic Skills Agency. “Less than a third of its money comes from the DfES and the board of the agency is now reviewing its future role,” he writes. “Last year’s Foster report and the March FE White Paper proposed a review of our non-departmental public bodies and partner agencies with a view to simplifying the way learning and skills are delivered for learners and teachers. As part of this review, we have decided not to renew the BSA’s current grant funding arrangements after its present agreement ends in March 2008. As planned, the DfES will continue funding the agency until the end of March of that year.”

Phil Hope damns the agency with faint praise for its “contribution” to the Skills for Life programme. Making no mention of Mr Wells or the 30-year record of the agency, he says the Government’s programme “has been a huge success … Over 1.4 million learners have now achieved a first nationally recognised qualification in literacy and numeracy and we are very close to achieving our 2007 target for 1.5 million achievements. Our new national employer training programme, the new sector skills councils and the re-shaped learning and skills councils are proving highly successful in delivering our skills-driven policies.”

The Minister’s letter reinforces the outcome of former DfES official David Forrester’s five-year review of the agency’s work, during which he informed them they would lose their strategic role, which would transfer to the DfES, and they would have to bid for all their cash or join another organisation to survive. It also presages the forthcoming Skills Bill in this session of Parliament, which reorganises the local learning and skills councils and transfers the money and decisions to regional councils and the employer-based sector skills councils. In this way, Phil Hope hopes for further successes on the way to “giving people of whatever background opportunities and the chance to get on in their jobs and life”.

The effect of the Government’s decision to “simplify” the delivery of basic skills in this way is likely to be dire for the agency, which was set up by a Labour Government in July 1974 using £1m from a university equipment budget. Although Hope’s contention that less than a third of the BSA budget comes from the DfES, the remaining two-thirds comes from a single contract with the Welsh Assembly that comes to an end in March 2008 as well. The DfES grant pays for two-thirds of the agency’s staff and for all of the core programmes. The contribution to costs from other sources is minimal.

But hope springs eternal in the BSA breasts, as it always has. “We are not dead yet,” says interim director Carol Taylor. “We are working closely with the DfES to look at ways forward, to make sure that the good work the agency has done over many years is retained. Meanwhile, we carry on developing innovative ways to support those working with adults, young people and children who have literacy, language and numeracy needs. Look at our website (www.basic-skills.co.uk) if you don’t believe me!”

Inclusion policy

The majority of state school teachers lack confidence in educating dyslexic pupils, according to the NUT. Fewer than one in 14 said they would be “very confident” in identifying a child with dyslexia, while only nine per cent said they would be “very confident” in teaching such a pupil. The survey blamed lack of resources for adequate training. Teachers from a range of local authorities were surveyed and several warned of increasing disruption in schools brought about by the Government’s policy of “inclusion”. Nearly three-quarters of teachers felt they did not have enough additional trained support in the classroom. On dyslexia, 77 per cent said they would like extra training to cope.

Disability Duty

Only 37 per cent of schools are prepared for scrutiny of their disability equality schemes, according to a survey from the Disability Rights Commission (DEC). The DRC found that, although the Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 5 December, an alarming number of schools admitted to not having a scheme in place in time. The DED requires public authorities to take proactive steps towards promoting disability equality amongst all disability stakeholders, including teaching staff. But 31% of schools polled admitted that they did not have measures in place, while 32% were not sure if they did or not. This suggests that some schools were in fact not aware of the DED itself.

Primary literacy

Up to a third of children leave primary school unable to use capital letters and full stops properly, according to the QCA. An analysis of some of last year’s test papers revealed that 11-year-olds were tripping up on basic grammar, punctuation and spelling despite seven years of daily literacy lessons. Analysis also showed that 20,000 read and write to such a poor standard that they failed their English tests in 2006. Even pupils who reached the expected level often struggled with crucial aspects. National results in the tests showed a surprising stall in English standards, despite Treasury targets for improvements by 2006. Ministers were facing criticism that they had been too slow to focus on traditional “synthetic phonics”.

ISSUE 100
Basic Skills: only two cheers for Leitch

Alan Wells
Director of the Basic Skills Agency
(1978 to 2006)

The release of the Leitch review of skills to coincide with the Chancellor’s statement meant that its recommendations received rather less attention than they deserved. Nor did it help that it was launched at roughly the same time as some other major headline-grabbing reports.

Yet the Leitch report makes some very positive recommendations about basic skills, many of which will help those adults who have the severest difficulties with literacy and numeracy – which is mainly people with a multiplicity of other economic and social problems. The recommendations to improve basic skills screening and opportunities for unemployed adults to improve basic skills make good sense.

Recommendations

Two of the major recommendations in the report are long overdue and need to be acted on if a real impact is to be made in reducing the number of adults who struggle with the basic skills most of us take for granted. For example, the Leitch report recommends that progress of the Government’s Skills for Life strategy should be measured through two-yearly surveys based on a sample of adults in the population rather than through the number of adults gaining qualifications.

This is a timely change, for using qualifications as a proxy is an inadequate method of assessing whether the number of adults with poor basic skills is actually increasing or decreasing. Qualifications are too crude and general a measure and it’s been clear for some time that many of those counted as moving out of the poor basic skills group are young people and adults who just happen to have taken a qualification. Most of them didn’t realise that they had any real difficulties with basic skills and many of them actually didn’t have any problems. They have been merely the cannon fodder for the ‘spinning of success’.

The challenge, however, will be finding an effective way of surveying adults in the population to measure progress. Only a limited number of adults can be assessed through such surveys yet, unless the numbers are quite large, the margin of error might be so significant that little can be deduced from the survey, particularly a survey conducted over a relatively short period such as two years.

Furthermore, there is considerable doubt both in the United Kingdom and in the United States about the validity of this ‘real tasks’ survey approach.

Employer Pledge Scheme

The Leitch report also recommends the introduction of the Employer Pledge Scheme, pioneered in Wales, in England. In Wales the Employer Pledge is specifically about basic skills, whereas Leitch suggests a wider focus. This is no bad thing and will avoid any stigma being attached to the pledge. It’s just a shame that it hasn’t been introduced before. The Employer Pledge was one of the key recommendations in the Moser report, but was rejected by the DfES when the Skills for Life strategy was devised.

So if the Leitch report is so good, why only two cheers? Unfortunately Leitch makes some bold but unsupportable statements that are ultimately not helpful. For instance, the report says that “it is unacceptable in the 21st century in the fifth richest economy in the world that young people should leave school unable to read, write and add up. Yet over one in six young people in England do”’. Few would disagree with this claim if it was really the case. The truth is that one in six young people may leave school with poorer basic skills than we would wish, but it’s certainly not the case that they can’t read, write or add up at all. In my experience, the only young people who really lack all basic skills either have severe special needs or are among the small minority that have never been to school.

Confusion

The Leitch report also confuses Level 2 qualifications (the equivalent of an A*-C GCSE) with competence in basic skills and sometimes uses both terms interchangeably. This confusion has led Leitch to accept the Government’s claim to have reduced the number of adults with poor basic skills. Leitch suggests that “in the UK around 6 million working age people lacked functional literacy skills and nearly eight million lacked functional numeracy skills in 2003. The Government, as part of its basic skills strategy Skills for Life, has delivered over 1.25 million Skills for Life qualifications since 2001, exceeding its 2005 target of one million achievements. By 2006, five million lacked functional literacy and seven million lacked functional numeracy”.

There are two errors in this statement. First, the level of need is described as “in the UK”, yet Skills for Life only operates in England. Secondly, the qualifications delivered relate to a far larger group – all of those 25 million plus adults who don’t have the equivalent of an A*-C GCSE in English and maths. They do not relate to the six million and eight million originally identified. If Leitch suggests that using qualifications to assess improvement is not a reliable approach, it seems strange to accept a claim based on qualifications gained by every adult who didn’t happen to have a GCSE A*-C in English and maths. [A group that includes me].

So two, not three hearty cheers for Leitch.

“So if the Leitch Report is so good, why only two cheers? Unfortunately Leitch makes some bold but unsupportable statements that are ultimately not helpful.”

“We want him to go to a traditional burger and chips school.”
New-style accountability for primary schools

Professor Colin Richards

A n announcement made by the Secretary of State in November – that current targets have become too narrow as measures of success – raises at least the possibility of rethinking the accountability culture that has grown up around New Labour. This is long overdue. New-style accountability in primary education would need to be rendered at national, school and parental levels.

At national level the Government needs to keep standards under review, while devising a non-intrusive system for assessing pupils’ performance in relation to those standards. The current system of national assessment at ages seven and 11 does not provide a valid or reliable assessment of performance year-on-year.

The Government would need to set up an independent national body to review standards and introduce national tests to reflect them. The same set of tests would have to be administered year-on-year to a very small but representative sample of the school population. It would require the tests to be administered confidentially to avoid pressures on schools for test preparation. Data at the national level would be published annually and a picture of changes year-on-year would emerge from an independent source.

Appropriate quality of education

At school level, it would be necessary for the Government to introduce a system which allows individual schools to provide an appropriate quality of education and one which triggers action should that quality not be evident. The current Ofsted inspection model lacks this refinement and needs to be modified in a number of ways to make it fit for purpose. Inspections would be lengthened (compared with the current “light-touch” model) – but not to the same extent as the earlier Ofsted inspection models. This would probably involve lengthening the time between inspections from three to perhaps five years. Such enhanced inspections would focus on the classroom, not on the school’s paperwork, and would inspect the performance of children in work actually observed by inspectors; and the quality of teaching and learning based on far more classroom observation than the current light-touch inspection model allows. As at present, enhanced inspections would also report on the effectiveness of the school’s procedures for self-evaluation and improvement. A summary of these judgements would be reported publicly to parents, along with a summary of the school’s reactions to the inspection judgements. A very adverse report might trigger a full inspection or the bringing forward of the timing of the next enhanced inspection.

Governors and parents would have the right to request an inspection during the five-year period between inspections and this request would be considered by either Ofsted or HMI. Inspection teams would include the individual school’s S.I.P who would advise the inspection team, and could contribute to the team’s judgements and take responsibility with the head and governors of the school for any follow-up measures to be implemented.

Enhanced inspections

The system of enhanced inspections would be administered by a reconstituted Ofsted whose inspectors would be drawn from the current cadre of registered inspectors (along with suitably trained headteachers on secondment), and whose management would be drawn from that same cadre. HMI would revert to a role similar to that of pre-Ofsted days. They would be members of, and act as advisers to, a reconstituted Department of Lifelong Learning, would liaise with local authorities and would also carry out their own programme of survey inspections. In exceptional circumstances they might also inspect individual schools at the request of ministers. They might also consider inspection requests from parents. At the parental level, parents need to be assured that their children are making appropriate progress and, to provide parents with individual progress reports, teachers need to engage in ongoing assessment and to report its results. This would be provided by a combination of assessment for learning and testing.

There would be one or two kinds of testing. One would involve adopting the Scottish model of having a national data-bank of test items linked to progression, particularly in English and mathematics and of teachers drawing, as appropriate, on this bank when seeking to determine or confirm their judgements of individuals’ progress. These judgements would then be reported to parents on an individual basis. They would not be reported on a school-by-school basis (thereby helping to prevent “teaching to the test” or excessive pressure being placed on teachers for results) but they could be reported at an LA level (if thought desirable).

National standardised tests

If the first type of testing is not considered sufficient, a second type would complement it – focusing on parents’ main concerns: their child’s performance in reading, mathematics and basic writing skills. National standardised tests would be devised to provide both summative and (if possible) diagnostic information which would be reported to parents on an individual basis, not on a school-by-school basis. Such national tests would be administered twice in a child’s primary career – one at the end of year 1 (followed where necessary by programmes of “reading recovery” and “number recovery”) and once at the end of year 5 (followed, where necessary, by more remedial or more challenging work to be provided within the same school in year 6). This slimmed-down programme of testing would replace the current end-of-year tests which too often dominate both the teaching and the curriculum – especially, but not only, in years 2 and 6.

Such a three-fold system would remove much (though not all) of the burden currently placed on schools by over-controlling regulatory measures by government. It would provide government, schools and parents with appropriate information about progress and performance and provide an appropriate balance between professional autonomy and public accountability.

Colin Richards is a former senior HMI and professor of education.
Baccalaureate takes precedence this year

Ken Reid
Wales Editor

Perhaps the biggest single change in Welsh Education to make the headlines this year will be the continuation of the revised 14-19 curriculum and the growing influence of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Unlike England, where the Tomlinson Review was surprisingly rejected, Wales has opted to promote its own baccalaureate and new learning pathways for the 14-19 curriculum. ‘Learners’ and their individual needs have been placed at the centre of educational policy. In a recent keynote address, Steve Marshall, head of the Assembly Government’s Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, argued that Wales’s current education system is high quality but low on equity. He believes the best schools are world class. However, pupils from affluent backgrounds do much better than poorer classmates. Data on pupils’ performance in Wales shows a clear link between poverty and under-achievement. Unfortunately, Wales has a higher proportion of its pupils emanating from low social class backgrounds than any other part of the UK. Steve Marshall also believes that funding opportunities should be appropriately targeted to achieve the best possible results. High spending on education is only part of the answer.

Criticism
Despite the full support given to the Welsh Baccalaureate from Jane Davidson, Steve Marshall et al, some critics have already come out of the woodwork. Spokesmen for the private sector and business interests have already been critical of the new qualification. Some protagonists apparently do not like its breadth and vocational nature. Others argue that it would have been simpler to have introduced the highly acclaimed International Baccalaureate (IB) as may happen in England. Perhaps these protagonists may be missing the point. The IB is a high-quality qualification that is well capable of stretching the brightest of pupils. The Welsh Baccalaureate (WB) is intended to meet the needs of the full range of pupils and fits in well with the Assembly’s aim of widening participation and extending opportunities for all. With the Assembly elections looming in the spring, this will not be the last we will hear of these arguments.

Another interesting potential development is whether the future of teachers’ pay will be placed under Assembly control. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has been given new statutory powers on education and some feel therefore, that taking control of teachers’ pay is a logical step. If so, it will be interesting to discover whether Welsh teachers become better paid than their counterparts in England and what this may do to free movement between the two countries.

Chartered status
Another new initiative which is gaining momentum is the proposal to enable experienced classroom teachers and middle managers the opportunity to gain chartered status. The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), led by its chairman, Mal Davies, head of Willows High School, Cardiff, presented its draft standards for chartered status at a recent meeting of the Assembly’s Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee. In a 64-page report, it proposed that two million pounds is set aside to provide training courses and accreditation for those who wish to aspire to chartered status. The course content is likely to be fairly broad. For example, chartered-status teachers will be expected to act as mentors to the new learning coaches who are in the process of being introduced into schools in Wales. They will also be expected to support teenagers as part of the learning pathways reforms for the 14-19 curriculum. The GTCW hopes to create up to one thousand new chartered-status teachers in Wales for both the primary and secondary sector schools by 2012. A pilot scheme programme will commence next year. It is then hoped to roll out the programme across Wales from 2009.

Meanwhile, progress is being made in establishing the three new centres of excellence for teacher education. The three centres are in South East Wales, South West Wales and in North Wales. Much of the current deliberation revolves around how to develop new CPD initiatives in these three centres as well as about how to provide new training for the learning coaches initiative and the full range of paraprofessionals engaged in supporting educational activities such as education welfare officers.

Mentioning education welfare officers gives rise to the fact that the Report for WAG on the role and effectiveness of the Service in Wales has now been published. The research, which was jointly commissioned between NIER Wales and myself, indicates the full range and extent of practice throughout Wales as well as the initial, induction and in-service training needs of the staff concerned in the enterprise.

Behaviour and attendance review
On 17 November last year, Jane Davidson, Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills announced the membership of the Group tasked with undertaking a National Behaviour and Attendance Review in Wales. The remit of the review, including specific areas for investigation, has largely been drawn from views collected at a consultation event held earlier last year, which was used to initiate debate with key stakeholders around the issues of attendance and behaviour in Wales. This includes action to:

- Identify effective practice in promoting positive behaviour and attendance and ways in which this practice could be disseminated and embedded in schools and local authorities across Wales.
- Identify effective use of multi-agency partnerships in tackling issues of poor attendance and behaviour, including consideration of regional models.
- Explore ways in which parents, children and young people and the community as a whole can be more effectively supported and engaged in the promotion of positive behaviour and attendance.

Further information about the review, including group membership can be found on the dedicated website for the review, accessible via www.nbarwales.co.uk
A matter of Trust...

Does the draft Trust School Toolkit offer the answers schools need to decide whether or not to go for trust school status?

On the last day of November the draft Trust Schools Toolkit was published to enable those schools thinking of “acquiring a trust” to see exactly what it entailed.

It is a bit surprising that, although this particular “acquisition” has been consistently promoted as a simple procedure, the draft toolkit comprises no fewer than eight separate booklets.

Although the introductory booklet still carries the “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All” strap line, both the spirit and letter of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 are a far cry from the system of “independent state schools” envisaged in the White Paper.

The draft toolkit is designed, so it says, to help schools:

- identify partners and agree how the trust will be organised;
- work with partners to develop and agree a shared vision and aims;
- engage other stakeholders, including the local authority and parents;
- agree how the trust will help schools and whether to appoint the minority or majority of governors.

The toolkit is vague about how long the process will take, but its 125 pages (itself a long read) seem to undermine the claims made in the White Paper that “acquiring a trust will be a straightforward process” (para 2.13).

Even the guidance is unable say how long it will take to actually do the establishing-a-trust bit, as none of the pathfinders has yet achieved it, apparently, but all trusts must be incorporated organisations with specific charitable aims.

The guidance does state that “completing the five-stage process will normally take between a term and a year” and on page 8 of the introductory booklet there are two model timelines illustrating the one-term model and the one-year model respectively.

The DFES is understandably “keen to ensure that … schools are offered support to acquire trusts if they wish to do so”. For those schools wishing to become “early adopters” and accepted onto the “early adopters’ scheme”, grants of up to £10,000 will be available to assist with the set-up costs.

In addition to the cash, early adopters will also benefit from “a high level of support from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Youth Sport Trust (YST)”.

It is difficult to understand why the Youth Sports Trust is one of the two organisations offering support. More easy to understand is the interest of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, ever eager to do the Government’s bidding – and to expand its empire.

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (soon to become the Specialist Schools, Academies and Trust Schools Trust?) has certainly been an early adopter of the Trust School concept, presumably having done a deal with government to host the dedicated Trust Schools website at http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools/default.aspx

“The toolkit is vague about how long the process will take, but [it seems] to undermine the claims made in the White Paper that ‘acquiring a trust will be a straightforward process’.”

This appears to be the only place on the web where the toolkit can be found, which raises questions about the role of the Trust Schools and Partnerships Division at the DFES. In fact, searching on the DFES website for “Trust Schools Toolkit” yields no results and the top pick for “trust schools” is a Fact v Fiction article in the September issue of the Teachers magazine.

It is also here that potential early adopters can find the guidance and seven page application form for entry onto the programme.

The question remains, however, about the precise nature of the advantage(s) of becoming a trust school. On page 5 of the Toolkit introduction, readers are informed that, on the one hand:

“A Trust school is a local authority maintained school which is supported by a charitable Trust which appoints some of the governors.

… It operates within the same frameworks as other maintained schools: it will teach the national curriculum, follow the School Admissions Code and be inspected by Ofsted. Teaching staff will be employed under the terms of the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document. The local authority will fund the school on the same basis as all other local authority schools and will retain its intervention powers if there are problems at the school.”

But on the other hand:

“Trust schools are foundation schools with foundations and, as such, benefit from the same freedoms as foundation schools. They will set their own admissions arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code, have control over their own land and buildings, and employ their own staff.”

The distinctive feature of Trust schools is that they:

- differ because their charitable Trust establishes a long-term relationship with external partners and involves them in the school’s governance and leadership.”

However, there is nothing to stop external partners establishing a long-term relationship with a school, nor becoming involved in the school’s governance and leadership in any community school. Indeed, many community schools are already doing it.

On the face of it all the fuss and palaver, to say nothing of the expense, of acquiring a trust would appear to yield precious little additional benefit to that already enjoyed by many schools. Unless, of course, there are some future benefits that will accrue which have yet to be declared.

All in all, the draft toolkit is not a bad read, but will struggle to persuade many governing bodies to put their trust in this latest organisational variant, which at best will be a significant distraction from, er, educating the students.
John Dobie
Scotland Editor

At the end of September this year, in Issue 98, notice was given that I would sooner or later be commenting on HMIE’s findings in respect of their first cycle of inspections of Scotland’s 32 education authorities. This first cycle of inspections, known as INEA 1, was conducted by HM Inspectors working in partnership with Audit Scotland. The work programme in the period 2000-2005 covered all 32 education authorities with 18 follow-up inspections. The report, entitled Improving Scottish Education: Effectiveness of Education Authorities was published on 28 November 2006 and is reviewed on page 16. In his commentary on the report, Graham Donaldson, HM Senior Chief Inspector, said that it draws together findings from those inspections along with evidence from school and pre-school inspections over the same period and considers some of the significant issues facing education authorities in Scotland today. He said that it sits alongside Improving Scottish Education, setting out the education authority perspective. It had been written to highlight key strengths and areas for improvement and is designed to promote continuous improvement in Scottish education.

Sound leadership

Donaldson goes on to say that the evidence from inspections shows that education authorities can and often do make a significant contribution to providing high quality education in Scotland. Despite many and varied challenges, schools are generally well run, with education authorities meeting the basic requirements to deliver statutory education. Many authorities are seen as going well beyond that. In the most effective authorities a clear vision and aims for the education service are communicated effectively. Pupils, parents and staff have been engaged in shaping the priorities for education in a way that reflects the distinctive needs of their local area. Sound leadership, coupled with clear governance, provides the right balance of support and challenge for schools and encourages well-judged innovation. Such authorities achieve improvement across establishments and demonstrate tangible benefits to children.

HMSCI goes on to comment that many authorities are seeking ways of working in partnership across a council’s services and with other statutory, voluntary and private services to provide more integrated ways of addressing the needs of children, young people and their families. This work is still at the early stages of development and more needs to be done, nationally and locally, in identifying and sharing good practice and expertise. In particular, we need to ensure lean, well-focused approaches to joint planning which command the confidence of those delivering services and relate directly to positive outcomes for children. Following these generally complimentary remarks, he goes on to more critical comments:

“However, we found wide variations in performance across the 32 education authorities. Some have much to do to match the standards of the best. Achieving the right balance between intelligent challenge and effective support requires continuing vigilance and review. The touchstone must be that the work of senior staff and quality improvement officers leads clearly to improvement for pupils. Few authorities are as yet very good in this key area of their work.

“A clear relationship exists between the quality of leadership and the effectiveness of an authority. The leadership challenges facing authorities are considerable and, in many ways, becoming more demanding. Increasingly, difficulties are emerging in recruiting for, and sustaining, high quality leadership across the 32 councils in Scotland. While this report finds that the size of a council does not necessarily impact directly on its effectiveness, the vulnerability of small councils to changes or loss of staff is evident, particularly at senior levels. Identifying and supporting future leaders will be essential to sustaining and enhancing the value that local authorities can add to the work of schools.

“A debate about the role of local authorities and about the nature of the relationship between national and local government intensified over the period covered by our inspections. Our evidence highlights ways in which different authorities are rising to the challenges posed to them and provides many examples of effective practice. Where education authorities have a clear and compelling understanding of their role, sound leadership, a positive approach to collaborating with others to meet children’s needs, efficient working practices and rigorous self-evaluation, all invariably add real value. The challenge remains to achieve these high standards across Scotland as a whole.”

Hardly had Directorate staff returned to their desks after their annual conference at North Berwick (see Conference Report) and had looked at the mail awaiting them, when their morning papers splashed the story of their “shortcomings”. Not that they would have found the report in their morning mail. Newspapers had seen the findings early whereas a communication failure on the part of HMIE and the Executive had meant that directors and even COSLA had not been in the initial loop! The Herald’s first leader was headed “Letting down schools”. It went on to say:

“Must do better. So finds an extensive report card on the performance of Scotland’s 32 education authorities, published today. According to HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), only a few are very good at demonstrating that the work of senior staff manifests itself in pupils performing better at school. Yet, as the report makes clear, this must be the touchstone by which education authorities are measured. That so few are setting the highest standard is a cause for concern. The report, based on inspections over a five-year period of each authority and a sample of schools for which they are responsible, highlights areas where directorates are falling short. Chief among these is leadership. The report concludes that this is a major or an important weakness in more than a quarter of Scottish authorities.”

The Scotsman did not feature the
report so prominently, confining it to the bottom of an inside page filler of less than 250 words. Nevertheless its headline was “Weak leadership in almost a third of education authorities”. While directors did not escape criticism, the news item said:

“The report also accused some councillors of failing to give officials enough support. Elected members of some councils did not always play a sufficiently active role in supporting and challenging the work of educational services to ensure that education was of high quality.”

However, by the end of the week, a more considered and balanced comment emerged in an article and editorial comment by Neil Munro, editor of the *Times Education Supplement Scotland*. He gave space to the reaction of John Stodter, general secretary of ADES, who drew attention to many positive aspects of the report and in particular pointed to the acknowledgement by HMIE that follow-up reports had led to improvements. He also took issue with the comparisons between authorities in respect of their differing circumstances (e.g. incidence of deprivation) but also because the Inspectorate had changed its standards and processes over time. He said:

“There is no doubt that education authorities which were inspected in the later INEA stages had to pass a stiffer test than those at the beginning. The bar was definitely raised.”

It is also worth pointing out that the Inspectorate in its reports published on individual authorities over the period singularly failed to identify comparator authorities. Significantly in the first published INEA2 report of an authority, this important shortcoming has at last been rectified.

Neil Munro in his leader observed: “The findings bear out what the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland identified last week at its annual conference: they need to put in place effective succession planning. But who will lead education in the future?”

How many future leaders of joint children and families services – or whatever name the merged departments decide – will have worked as teachers? Will it matter? Is a background in teaching necessary? Would an experience in steering a complex ship not be better?

“Most who hail from the chalk-face insist it does matter, because it gives them the ability to sift the options. The fear is that financial and managerial priorities will loom larger than educational ones.”

Finally, it is perhaps worth noting that ADES, in co-operation with the Virtual Staff College Scotland (VSCS), has in addition to its regular staff development seminars, a mentoring project to support newly appointed chief officers and senior managers in Education or Children’s Services during their first year in post. In a future letter from these parts I hope to report on this service and on developments in respect of succession planning.

#### Wales

Professor Ken Reid to chair Welsh Review

Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales, has announced a Review into school attendance and behaviour. The Review Group will be chaired by Professor Ken Reid, deputy principal of Swansea Institute of Higher Education and Wales editor of *Education Journal*. Professor Reid is a leading expert in the field of truancy and disaffection.

Professor Reid said: “The Review Group will be considering a full range of issues including best practice and will be looking forward to establishing if there are further ways in which the Welsh Assembly Government may be able to help schools, teachers, LEAs and all those other caring professionals who are presently engaged in work with disaffected pupils and their parents or carers.”

The remit of the review, including specific areas for investigation, has largely been drawn from views collected at a consultation event held earlier this year, which was used to initiate debate with key stakeholders around the issues of attendance and behaviour in Wales.

This theme of securing the participation of stakeholders at all levels will continue throughout the lifetime of the review, through a dedicated website. This will give anyone who has an opinion on attendance and behaviour issues – or an experience they wish to share – the opportunity to get involved by submitting their views and comments, which will feed into the review as part of the evidence gathering process.

The Review Group held its first meeting in December. It includes representatives of the Welsh inspectorate Estyn, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales and key stakeholder groups including serving practitioners from pupil referral units, primary and secondary schools, behaviour support services, education welfare services and inclusions services within local authorities, voluntary organisations and parenting groups.

The Group’s remit includes the identification of effective practices in promoting positive behaviour and attendance and ways in which this practice could be disseminated and embedded in schools and local authorities across Wales. The Group will also look at the effective use of multi-agency partnerships in tackling issues of poor attendance and behaviour, including consideration of regional models.

The Group will explore ways in which parents, children and young people and the community as a whole can be more effectively supported and engaged in the promotion of positive behaviour and attendance.

The Group will also seek to identify potential applications of the framework powers within the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that would assist in promoting discipline and attendance, including specific consideration of the provision of education for excluded pupils.

The Review will last for approximately 12 months and will lead to a published report. Professor Reid will chair the main Group as well as the six sub-groups, which will be examining specific areas. The Group will commission some research to feed back into the Review. The full report will be published in late 2007 or early 2008.
Children’s Health Round-up

Arabella Hargreaves

Stranger danger and childhood obesity
Fear of strangers is deterring children from walking to school and adding to the development of unhealthy lifestyles, according to researchers from the Department of Public Health at Birmingham University. A survey of schools in Birmingham found that two thirds of children and three quarters of parents expressed anxiety about “stranger danger”. Children who ventured out on foot less than 20 times per week were more likely to worry about strangers when out alone. The research team surveyed six primary schools in Birmingham, where 58 per cent of the participating children said that they had walked fewer than 20 trips in the previous week. Although there was no difference between the sexes, higher numbers of children from ethnic-minority groups were classified as low walkers, as were those whose family owned a car.

Hope for juvenile diabetes sufferers
Research is underway to develop an artificial pancreas for children and adolescents with Type 1 (or juvenile) diabetes. If successful, the mechanism will dramatically improve the quality of life for children with diabetes by making it significantly easier to manage the condition and reduce the risk of hypoglycaemia. Cambridge University has received £500,000 from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) to fund the research which will be led by Dr Roman Kovorka with the Department of Paediatrics. Because of the current cumbersome and imprecise process and day-to-day variability, regulating the blood glucose of children and adolescents can be extremely difficult. Additionally, regulating blood sugar levels can be more complicated in juveniles as they are known to have more severe fluctuations in their insulin need. A more precise regulation of blood glucose could be achieved by the development of an artificial pancreas which combines a glucose sensor with an insulin pump to create a ‘closed-loop’ apparatus. The artificial pancreas measures blood sugar levels on a minute-to-minute basis with a continuous glucose monitor and the signal is transmitted wirelessly to a handheld computer, which calculates the right amount of insulin for a given condition and signals an insulin pump.

Sex ed programme has little impact
A Medical Research Council study examined sex education in 25 secondary schools and found that sex education alone was not enough to cut pregnancy and abortion rates among teenagers in the UK. It found rates among girls taught with an enhanced sex education scheme were the same as among girls given conventional sex education. Investigators from the Medical Research Council evaluated the impact of an enhanced sex education programme, known as SHARE. The main difference from conventional sex education is SHARE’s intensive teacher training and focus on developing skills using role-playing, rather than simply providing information and discussing values. Children are taught how to negotiate sexual encounters, handle condoms and access services. The study, which focused on 25 Scottish secondary schools, found SHARE did have a positive impact on sexual health knowledge and quality of relationships, and was preferred to conventional sex education by both pupils and teachers. But it was found to have no impact on the number of pregnancies or abortions among schoolgirls. Lead researcher Dr Marion Henderson said that economic circumstances still largely determined the likelihood of teenage pregnancy.

Young men behaving badly
A hard-hitting film which includes a dramatic crash scene will be sent free to all secondary schools to highlight the dangers of teenage boys in cars. MissDorothy.com, the charity behind the Home Office-backed film, says that the single biggest killer now of teenage girls in Britain is their boyfriends’ bad driving. The claim is backed by Meredydd Hughes, chief constable of South Yorkshire, who appears in the film. Young men are responsible for nearly a third of serious driving offences, according to Home Office figures. Although only 3 per cent of the driving population are young men aged 17-20, in 2004 33 per cent of the 7,017 convictions for “causing death or bodily harm by dangerous driving” or “dangerous driving”, were committed by them. Women, including young women, are responsible for only one per cent of the serious convictions.

The influence of family life
Findings from a study funded by the US National Institutes of Health revealed that family life had more influence on a child’s development up to the age of four-and-a-half than the child’s experience in child care. For 15 years, researchers from ten sites around the US followed the development of more than 1,000 healthy children who were enrolled in the study at birth. The children averaged 27 hours per week in childcare from birth, and most started out in childcare in the homes of relatives or non-relatives in infancy, making the transition to centre-based care when they were older. The study demonstrated that quality, quantity, and type of care were modestly linked to the development of children up to age four-and-a-half. Those children who received higher quality care were better able to think, respond, and interact with the world around them – and had somewhat better basic skills – than children who received lower quality care. Children who spent 30 or more hours in care each week showed more problem behavior in care and in kindergarten (but not at home) and had more episodes of minor illness than children who spent fewer hours in care each week. Children who attended childcare centres had better language and social skills and better pre-academic skills involving letters and numbers, but showed more problem behavior when they first entered school than children who experienced other types of childcare settings. Children did better when parents were more educated, when families’ incomes were higher, when mothers had fewer or no symptoms of depression, and when families had well-organised routines, books, and play materials, and took part in learning activities. These features were as important to the wellbeing of children who had been in child care as they were for those who had not.
What is happening in Iraq universities today is even worse than what was done in Nazi Germany in the Thirties. Hitler encouraged Jewish academics to get out and seek refuge elsewhere. He did not start slaughtering them until his henchmen had drawn up the Final Solution. In Iraq, academics are being murdered wholesale. Since 2003, the start of that stupid war, 472 academics have been brutally murdered – 300 by assassination and 172 by bombs. Also since 2003, more than 80 per cent of Iraq’s 20 universities, 47 technical colleges and ten private institutions have been burnt, looted or completely destroyed in 417 attacks on educational institutions. And 3,250 professors have fled the country.

If these statistics horrify you, I’m glad. They should. They did me when I attended a packed meeting of CARA, the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, at University College London at the end of November. CARA was founded in 1933 (for obvious reasons) by Sir William Beveridge and other senior academics, including Albert Einstein and John Maynard Keynes. Many German Jews were saved by Britain and helped by the organisation. In return, they gave the country their knowledge. They provided us with 15 knighthoods, 18 Nobel Laureates, 71 Royal Society Fellows and 50 British Academy Fellows. What of the many Iraqi dons and students over here? Unless they apply for asylum the moment they start slaughtering them until his end, they did not expect solutions. Dr John Ashworth (yes, the former V-C of Bangor University and development manager, the College and Ian Shaw, a training and development manager, Leadership examines management techniques that range from the daring of Ramesses II to the achievements of Belisarius, via such notables as Pericles, Hannibal and Cicero. Erudite certainly, but hugely readable. (This book will be reviewed in a future issue of Education Journal.)

John Izbicki

Has anything changed?
This journal, should anyone still have managed to miss the news, is 100 issues old. As one of its regular contributors, I can do no more than congratulate all those who produce it. I sometimes wonder whether, over those ten years, anything really has changed within higher education. Well, the “New” universities were only four years old and were still sneeringly referred to as the “ex-polys”; today the “New” has more or less been dropped. So that’s no bad thing. But the so-called binary divide, which was supposed to disappear along with the metamorphosis of the polys, is back with a vengeance as the Russell Group (20 research-intensive universities ranging from Birmingham to Warwick). It looks down its nose at those who “just teach”. But one event at the time the first issue of Education Journal appeared took no notice of this new division. Leaders of eight universities congregated in the gorgeous gardens of Buckingham Palace and conferred honorary doctorate degrees upon Nelson Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa. First off the mark was the oldest of the universities: Oxford. It was naturally followed by Cambridge, represented by its chancellor, the Duke of Edinburgh. Then came the Universities of London, Bristol, Nottingham, Warwick, De Montfort and Glasgow Caledonian. But what’s this? How did those last two get into Buck House? De Montfort used to be Leiceste Polytechnic and Glasgow Caledonian was once Glasgow Polytechnic. Clearly, in 1996, the others (all members of the Russell Group) were not as prejudiced as they were later to become. No wonder Mandela said that South African universities still had much to learn about the “balance between research and study” and needed to “drink at the well of experience” of British universities.

And finally...
From an Oxford University entrance exam for the Medical School: You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze, and a bottle of Scotch. Remove your appendix. Do not suture until your work has been inspected. You have 15 minutes.
Tom Swifties

“Let’s trap that sick bird,” said Tom illegally.
“We’re philatelists,” they shouted collectively.
“Yes, I’m THAT strongly built,” said Tom soberly.
“I command a private army,” said Tom maliciously.
“Let’s have an orgy all night!” said Tom scintillatingly.
“Eating uranium makes me feel funny,” said Tom radiantly.
“I haven’t had an accident in ten years,” said Tom recklessly.
“I passed my electrocardiogram,” said Tom wholeheartedly.
“I wonder why uranium is fluorescent,” said Mary curiously.
“I couldn’t believe there were exactly 100 people there,” Tom recounted.
“You really ought to study classical rhetoric,” said Tom a quintillion times.
“I tend to use infinitives rather than gerunds,” said Tom knowingly.
“You really ought to study classical rhetoric,” said Tom a quintillion times.
“I had it up to here with Post-Modern Expressionism,” said the goat artfully.
“I tried to stop the horse by pulling the cord on the back,” was Tom’s tale of woe.
“We’re currently thinking about a figure somewhere between 7 and 9,” said Tom considerately.

We nine GODs’…..
Music by John Henry Hopkins

Con brio

GODs
We nine GODs, from D-F-E-S,
‘Travelling hopefully’... we confess!
Quite amorphous, with pro-formas,
Following yonder stars.

Chorus
Ohh, 4-star wonders, shining bright,
Top L-As - a wondrous sight,
Upward moving, still improving,
We’re not sure that Ofsted’s right.

LAs
From A-P-A the message is plain,
Lighter touch, and we will all gain
Read the JAR – we’ve travelled far,
But was it worth the pain?

Chorus
Ohh, 4-star wonders, shining bright,
Top L-As - a wondrous sight,
Upward moving, still improving,
We are sure that Ofsted’s right.

All
Christine Gilbert, H-M-C-I,
Still with a twinkle, in her eye,
New direction, less inspection,
(Must reign in C-S-C-I.)

Chorus
Ohh, 4-star wonders, shining bright,
Top L-As - a wondrous sight,
Upward moving, still improving,
Can we be sure that Ofsted’s right.

GODs
We nine GODs from D-F-E-S,
Reluctantly, applaud your success,
(In our regions, too many legions)
Help us, big cuts, to finesse.

Chorus
Ohh, 4-star wonders, shining bright,
Top L-As - a wondrous sight,
Upward moving, still improving,
Now we’re sure that Ofsted’s right!

1 Government Office DCL
When Ruth Kelly moved from education to local government in the last Cabinet reshuffle, she must have hoped that she had left behind the persistently negative press coverage that her time at the DfES had generated. For the only Secretary of State for Education ever to be unfavourably compared to John Patten, escape from Sanctuary Buildings must have been bliss.

Yet in January Ms Kelly’s past came back to haunt her. “Hypocrisy” was the vast headline on the front page of London’s Evening Standard, and variations of it were to be found in every Fleet Street paper. It was not just the wholly negative tone of the news reports. The editorials were scathing and commentators were equally hostile. Mrs Kelly had switched one of her four children from a maintained school in Tower Hamlets to a private school that specialises in helping children such as her son who warrant dyslexic special needs. If she had not once been Education Secretary then the story would not have been as big. Yet she made things worse by trying to keep her name out of the story aided, according to the Guardian, by Tony Blair’s staff at Downing Street.

Mrs Kelly’s decision was first reported in the Conservative-supporting Mail on Sunday, which did not name her. The following day she was “outed” by the Labour-supporting Daily Mirror and on TV and radio. The Times carried the story of “the Cabinet Minister” who had “slapped the State education system in the face”. The following day the Daily Mail named Kelly, branding her a hypocrite after choosing a £17,000-a-year private school for her nine-year-old son.

The BBC quoted “friends” of Mrs Kelly as suggesting her local authority had been ready to pay for her son’s private education, although she had nobly declined the offer to save the taxpayer money. Tower Hamlets council subsequently made clear that it had not offered to fund private schooling.

Ruth Kelly ran foul of two highly controversial issues. She used the private sector, which is anathema to most Labour MPs. David Cameron offering his support did not help her.

The fact her child has special needs might have been a mitigating factor, except that when she was Education Secretary the Government’s policy of inclusion saw a significant reduction in the number of places at maintained special schools. The hypocrisy of her denying others the option of a special school place while buying one herself made even Labour-supporting papers stick the knife in.

“In January Ms Kelly’s past came back to haunt her.
‘Hypocrisy’ was the vast headline on the front page of London’s Evening Standard, and variations of it were to be found in every Fleet Street paper … The editorialists were scathing and commentators were equally hostile.”

In breaking the Ruth Kelly story the media took on the Government in a perfectly legitimate way, putting a story with legitimate public interest that Downing Street had tried to suppress, into the public domain in an accurate and responsible way.

It was rather a different story before Christmas with another media blitz that was less legitimately critical of government. Media reports of the annual report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools, Christine Gilbert, were universally negative. The BBC led the way on the day of publication. “More schools judged ‘inadequate’” was the headline on the BBC News website, while BBC2’s Newsnight also focused on the poor performance of a small minority of failing schools.

The daily papers the next day were worse. “Ofsted: schools failing 3.3m” announced the Daily Telegraph’s front page. The rest of the press followed suit, although at least no other paper put the story on its front page. This was a rather creative way of reporting the figures, which did not show 3.3 million children being failed. Liz Lightfoot, the paper’s education editor, reported that “more than half of secondary schools in England are failing to provide children with a good standard of education”. In fact the overwhelming majority of children referred to were in schools judged to be satisfactory. Only 3 per cent of schools were judged to be inadequate. While the Chief Inspector made clear she thought that figure too high, it is nowhere near the claim of half the country’s schools failing made by the Telegraph.

The Sun was, if anything, worse. It also grouped the ‘satisfactory’ and ‘inadequate’ categories together, but it thought they accounted for only half the number of children that the Telegraph claimed. “1.6M PUPILS IN DUNCE SCHOOLS: 51% of comps are failing kids” was the headline. The article was written by the paper’s Whitehall editor, David Wooding, who also covers education. He claimed that “a study by watchdogs revealed that 13 per cent of comprehensives are so poor they are ‘inadequate’”. The report revealed nothing of the sort, for the figures were not broken down by type of secondary school. The 13 per cent figures referred to all types of secondary school. There was no reference to comprehensives in the report, yet the Sun chose to use its publication to attack comprehensives. While most secondary schools are comprehensive, 20 per cent of England is still selective. The 13 per cent that were regarded as inadequate included all types of school, including the Government’s flagship academies.

The headline in the Independent was: “More than half of secondary schools are failing pupils”. There was a subtle difference between this inaccurate headline and the first sentence of the report by Richard Garner, the paper’s education editor. He wrote: “More than half the country’s secondary schools are still failing to deliver a good standard of education, inspectors say.” Mr Garner, of course, did not write the headline. His grouping of the ‘satisfactory’ and ‘inadequate’ categories together was typical of virtually all press coverage of this report, which thereby gave an inaccurate picture of both the views of the Chief Inspector and the reality in England’s schools.
ADES Annual Conference 2006

John Dobie
Scotland Editor

his year’s annual conference of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland was held for the first time in East Lothian at the Macdonald Marine Hotel and Spa, North Berwick on 23 and 24 November. Welcoming some 150 delegates to the conference, Councillor John Ross, Convenor of Education and Children’s Services, East Lothian Council, introduced its theme, chosen by the President, Ronnie O’Connor, “Public Service Reform: A New Agenda for Education and Children’s Services”. Mr O’Connor’s message was that the challenges of closer integration of service delivery places a huge burden on ADES members for it comes at a time when many councils face political leadership challenges. ADES members will still have to ensure that children, young people and lifelong learners remain at the heart of the Association’s endeavours.

Turbulent waters

He worried that delegates were about to enter fairly turbulent financial waters. He attributed this to costly equal pay decisions, a very tight grant settlement for local government, and the policy drive for efficient government and the transforming of public services. It was against this background that he spoke of the Association’s Executive continued efforts to develop productive relationships with the Scottish Executive, HMIE, Learning and Teaching Scotland and others involved in delivering educational policy and development in Scotland. As for the debate on structural change, he suggested that ADES should concentrate its attention on developing key principles against which reforms could be measured. These should take account of the impact on pupils, teaching and learning, attainment and achievement. Mr O’Connor continued:

“It might come as a surprise to some quick fix trade unions and the endless flow of so-called management development gurus who seem to dwell in a twilight zone between the public and private sector and who subject us endessly to brain rape, that an education service is not solely concerned with the management of schools.”

Mr O’Connor described the essential functions of educational management as those of leader, banker, broker, monitor, challenger, and supporter. They would not be affected by the size or shape of any authority and had to be retained if a world class education system was to be developed in Scotland. This approach was not dissimilar to the one adopted by the Association in its approach to the last local government reorganisation in 1996.

“Mr O’Connor described the essential functions of educational management as those of leader, banker, broker, monitor, challenger, and supporter.”

The conference programme included a number of speakers who are leaders in their fields. A presentation by Colin Mair, the chief executive of The Improvement Service for Scottish Local Government, advised directors “to get better at ‘working the market’ when it came to negotiating contracts with the private sector.”

Later on Thursday afternoon there was a high powered panel discussion on a vision for the services required for Scotland's children. The panel, ably chaired by Michael O’Neill, Director of Education in North Lanarkshire and a past president of ADES, included the president of COSLA, Councillor Pat Watters, Graham Donaldson, HM Senior Chief Inspector and Liz Lewis, Head of Schools Group in the Scottish Executive Education Group. Councillor Watters was able to draw on his experience as a leading member of the Education Management Side, which negotiated the McCrone agreement on Teachers’ Pay and Conditions and ushered in a period of stability and relative peace in industrial relations with teaching staff. In addition in his own authority of South Lanarkshire he has been responsible for developing the Council’s family-friendly policies, widely regarded as a good example to other employers in the area. Graham Donaldson (HMSCI since 2002) with his knowledge of the emerging children’s services arrangements at local level, was asked by the First Minister in Scotland to lead the establishment of a national system for the inspection of services to children with an initial focus on child protection. Liz Lewis was able to contribute to the panel in her present capacity for advising Executive Ministers on most matters relating to school education in Scotland and previously from heading the Ministerial Support Group, working directly to the Permanent Secretary, which assisted the First Minister in taking forward corporate priorities and planning.

Peter Peacock

The early evening sessions preceding the traditional reception hosted by the Times Educational Supplement Scotland, and the conference dinner, was planned for a speech by the Minister for Education and Young People. Unfortunately, Peter Peacock, MSP, had recently resigned on grounds of ill-health, and his successor, Hugh Henry, had a previous commitment in the West of Scotland that precluded his attendance (see Issue 99, Phoenix column). It was left to Mike Ewart, head of the Education Department, to step into the breach. Before doing so, Ronnie O’Connor paid a fulsome tribute to Peter Peacock as the longest serving Education Minister in recent times, particularly referring to his openness and accessibility to the service, and his willingness to consult with ADES and other interest groups. Mike Ewart, who is leaving his post early in the new year to become the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, then reminisced about “living in interesting times” during his four years “watch”. High and low lights included the McCrone settlement, the Scottish Qualification...
problem, Section 28, and the
development of children’s services. He
paid particular praise to the association
for their help in tackling those
challenges, and described directors and
their staff as “warm and helpful
colleagues”. His encomium included
also all the ministers he had worked
with over his years in the Department,
singing out Jack McConnell who had
stressed the importance of “symbolic
action” in addressing problems.

“Bruce Robertson identified
the challenges and
opportunities to come as a
consequence of elections
nationally and locally with
the introduction of multi-
member wards and single-
transferable voting.”

The main address on the second
day of the conference was given by the
incoming President, Bruce Robertson,
Director of Education, Culture and
Sport of The Highland Council. It is
traditional for the incoming President
to look ahead and identify some of the
issues facing colleagues in the work of
the education service in 2007 and beyond. In a wide ranging, thoughtful
and at times controversial address,
Bruce Robertson identified the
challenges and opportunities to come
as a consequence of elections
duardly nationally and locally with
the introduction of multi-member wards and single-transferable voting. In
addition he highlighted the
forthcoming three-year Spending
Review, the Public Service Reform
Agenda and the on-going development
of ADES. In the face of these challenges
he called for the following internal
measures:
(i) The greatly increased membership
to take an active part in the work of
the Association;
(ii) The further development of CPD
opportunities for members and
support for succession planning,
building on the excellent work of
Virtual Staff College Scotland and
the Association’s VSC Committee
ably led by Alan Blackie and John
Christie and supported by Anton
Florek and his highly efficient and
helpful staff;
(iii) Approval of a new Children’s
Service Committee, the re-
establishment of the Resources
Committee and the refreshment and
reorganisation of the Education
Committee.

On the external front, he urged the
Association to ensure:
(i) That responsibility and
accountability are not overlooked in
arrangements to devolve further
resources to the point of delivery;
(ii) Influence is brought to bear on any
new programme of government
after the May 2007 elections;
(iii) That a long-term Teachers’ Pay
Award is secured in the first year of
the new Scottish Executive to secure
stability of industrial relations;
(iv) In the light of the decision to
postpone the Quinquennial Review
of the GTC Scotland the issues of
self-regulation and teacher
competency must be addressed;
(v) That real community schools on the
line of the New Community Schools
model should become the norm; and
(vi) The need for a long-term, reformed,
well resourced leadership programme
is secured, including measures to
develop effective succession planning
for leadership posts and a review of the
Chartered Teacher arrangements to give
Directors of Education more control
over admissions to the programme.

Annual Business Meeting
Other features of what was judged to be
a successful conference emerged at the
Annual Business Meeting. The
nomination of Christine Pollock
(Depute Director of Education, North
Lanarkshire Council and the Convener
of the Association’s very successful
Personnel Network) as the new
President of ADES was confirmed. The
establishment of a new Children’s
Services Committee to be chaired by
Julia Swan (Director of Education,
Falkirk Council) was also agreed.
Congratulations were also extended to
the work for the Association of the
General Secretary, John Stodter, and to
Anton Florek and his team in re-
establishing the Association’s website
(www.adescotland.org.uk).

Conference round-up

CSN Data Conference
Tuesday 6 February, 2007, at the
Congress Centre, London WC1
The Children’s Services Network
annual conference on data.
Email us at csnevent@csn.info to receive
a booking form

Safe and Sound? Safeguarding Young
People
The Children’s Services Research Group
(formerly LEARG) is running a seminar
for practitioners in children’s services.
The event is designed to demonstrate
local authorities’ imaginative and
successful initiatives to make a real
difference to the lives of vulnerable
children and young people.

Venue: London Diocesan Board for
Schools, Pimlico, London.
Date: Friday, 23 February 2007.
Cost: £75, including lunch.
For further details see forthcoming
conferences on www.nfer.ac.uk/emie.
Alternatively, contact Alison Riley at
EMIE at NFER on 01753 523156 or
a.riley@nfer.ac.uk.

A Good Local School for Every Child
The Education Alliance are organising
their second annual conference on 24
March 2007. Sponsored by the NUT and
the London University Institute of
Education, the Alliance brings together
a wide range of organisations
committed to providing a good local
school for every child. The conference
will take place at the Institute of
Education, 20 Bedford Square, London,
at 10.00 am. Speakers include the writer
and campaigner Melissa Benn, Michael
Davidson of the OECD, Christine
Davies (Director of Children and young
People in Telford and Wrekin),
Professors David Hopkins, Mary James,
Peter Mortimer, Richard Pring
and Patricia Thompson and Steve Sinnott,
General Secretary of the NUT.
Final Act or Fresh Start?
What Government should do to ensure a good local school for every child

Saturday 24 March 2007 • 10.00am – 4.30pm
(Doors open from 9.15am)
Institute of Education, University of London,
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H OAL

The Government’s Education and Inspections Bill is now an Act; but that must not be the end of the story. This major conference organised by an alliance of national organisations involved in education, aims to:

- explore practical ways to ensure a good local school for every child
- give voice to the views of stakeholders, including students, parents, school staff, governors, local authorities and policy-makers
- prioritise key messages for Government
- offer a platform for YOU to share, discuss and give voice to YOUR concerns.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **William Atkinson** Headteacher, Phoenix High School
- **Melissa Benn** Writer, Journalist and Campaigner
- **Michael Davidson** Senior Analyst, OECD, Paris
- **Christine Davies** Director of Children and Young People, Telford and Wrekin Council
- **David Hopkins** HSBC Chair of International Leadership, University of London Institute of Education
- **Mary James** Chair of Education, University of London Institute of Education
- **Rod Morgan** Chair, Youth Justice Board
- **Peter Mortimore** Former Director, University of London Institute of Education
- **Richard Pring** Lead Director of the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training
- **Steve Sinnott** General Secretary, National Union of Teachers
- **Patricia Thomson** Professor of Education, School of Education, University of Nottingham
- **David Wolfe** Barrister and Specialist in Education Law, Matrix
- **Cross party panel including Baroness Perry and invited speakers from the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party**

Attendance will be free. A contribution on the day of £10 towards costs would be welcome. Students and unwaged people are not expected to contribute.

Conference sponsors:
National Union of Teachers • Institute of Education, University of London

Conference supporters:
Advisory Centre for Education • Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools • Campaign for State Education
Children’s Services Network • Comprehensive Future • English Secondary Students’ Association • FORUM
Human Scale Education • National Association for Primary Education • National Association of Headteachers
National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations • National Union of Teachers
Professional Association of Teachers • New Vision Group • UNISON

To register for the conference e-mail Sarah Thompson at the NUT (s.thompson@nut.org.uk)
Further information about the conference is available from sheila.dainton@ntlworld.com

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John Izbicki

Truancy recently hit the headlines again. For some odd reason, the meedja seems to be obsessed with truancy among pupils. It has been a “hot topic” for years. As far back as Mrs Thatcher’s record-breaking sojourn at the Department of Education and Science, as it was then still called, fines were to be imposed upon parents whose children bunked off school regularly. Some mums even appeared before the courts and had to cough up ten quid or more.

Britain’s teenagers have had a truly rotten Press recently. Survey after survey has given them a thorough battering. Not only have they been found to be the worst behaved in Europe; they have also been labelled among the highest consumers of alcohol and far more likely to pick street and pub fights than their counterparts in France, Germany, Holland or Italy. And that’s just the boys. British girls have the highest pregnancy rates of any EU country and those aged 16 – 19 manage to notch the highest rates of gonorrhoea, genital Chlamydia and warts.

Stuffed full of drugs
Not that today’s teenagers are any different from those ten years ago when Education Journal was born. Then there were equally detailed reports of youngsters stuffed full of drugs; thousands were reported as having run away from home; one woman was found virtually decapitated in her shower and sexually assaulted before death. The killer: a teenaged relative.

Clearly, whether ten years ago or now, parents must take a large portion of the blame, instead of bleating that they “can’t do anything with him/her”. So what can be done with them? Should we just stand back and tut-tut our way through a life where we dare not re-educate and certainly not hit a youngster throwing stones through our windows or breaking into our cars.

There are three possible actions that might solve this problem. The first would be to bring back National Service (another recent report claimed that the country is failing to recruit enough servicemen and women). A couple of years under the tough discipline of regular NCOs would sort out a large number of these hooligans.

The second “solution” goes back a good few years when Terence Casey led NAS/UWT. He organised camps in the Lake District and Scotland for groups of some of the worst pupils that could be found. At these camps they were made to climb cliffs and abseil from their peaks, canoe along rapid rivers and perform other, often hair-raising stunts, which would put the fear of God into them. Gradually, they learned to work as a team because there was no alternative. When you are roped together on a cliff face, it’s no good letting go without committing suicide. Each boy depended on another in the team.

Outward bound
There was nothing new about the method. Kurt Hahn had “invented” it when he founded the Round Square Schools, such as Salem, the coeducational school on Lake Constance, Gordonstoun in Scotland and Aberdovey in Wales. These were the very first “Outward Bound” schools, whose policy was to produce “the whole person” with a mixture of academic lessons (mostly in the mornings) and physical exercises (mountaineering, skiing, boating, swimming and so on, mainly in the afternoons). This Outward Bound method is what Terry Casey adopted and adapted to tame the terrorists of our schools and neighbourhoods. In most cases it worked.

Delinquents need not have to undergo violent physical exercise to be cured of their violence. There are less arduous therapies, which brings me to my third “solution”. For this one would need to go to Dulwich in south-east London. There, at the Dulwich Picture Gallery (which, incidentally, happens to be one of the finest art galleries in the country) a remarkable initiative has turned young “serious offenders” into peaceful, law abiding citizens. For the past six years the Gallery’s education department has built up a strong relationship with Orchard Lodge, a secure and open residential centre for boys aged 13 – 17 who are on remand, having committed serious criminal offences, ranging from physical violence to manslaughter. Some are deemed no longer safe to roam the streets and have been detained for their own protection.

Gillian Wolfe who joined the gallery 22 years ago to set up its education department, admits that Remix, the name given to this almost incredible project, presented an “unlikely partnership”. “Many of the boys have never attended school with any consistency and their literacy levels are extremely low.” To everyone’s surprise, Remix worked. Boys who previously had been unable to concentrate on anything for more than a few minutes and who hated working in partnership with others, suddenly found themselves totally involved in art and music. Each term lasts up to ten weeks and each course consists of just four boys working on a one-to-one basis with a co-ordinator, an artist and at least one of the Lodge Centre staff.

Some have experimented with traditional mixed media, others used vinyl records and CDs to help them create pieces of art and collages. One youngster mounted a record onto a horizontal fan, then lowered a paintbrush dipped in paint on to one point of the spinning record, thus creating a colourful circle.

According to the gallery’s brochure, the boys have grown increasingly articulate and manage easily and proudly to discuss their mounted works of art with visitors to the private view. They thoroughly enjoyed the attention they received from “arty people from another world to their own”. Since taking these courses, many of them have sat and passed GCSE art with flying colours. The cost of this amazing project – remarkably little (£6,000 a year) – compared with some other special education courses. The money comes from the gallery’s own fundraising – not from Government or local authorities. Other useful “tranquilisers”, such as those regular class outings to the countryside, are fast disappearing, thanks to the myriad of new regulations that discourage teachers from leading such expeditions.

Art and music therapy, an Outward Bound course and, in extremis, a couple of years of National Service, each or all combined could help rid Britain of the growing number of its young delinquents who are doing the country’s reputation no good whatsoever. The fact that they “proudly” sport the Union Jack on various parts of their bodies makes matter all the worse. Instead of bickering about the problem across the corridors of Parliament, perhaps Mr Blair should send Tessa Jowell, his Secretary for Culture & Sport to have a look at the work of the Dulwich Picture Gallery. It is, after all, in her constituency.
French lessons?

Professor Colin Richards

‘Personalised learning’ is scarcely new, despite the claims of the DfES. In 1580 Michel Eyquem, Seigneur de Montaigne, recommended it to his friend, Diane de Foix, when she was expecting her first child. However, unlike the DfES, he provided convincing examples to illustrate how a young boy was to be brought up and educated. His essays, On schoolmasters’ learning and On educating children offer plenty of food for thought for policymakers, officials and pundits over four hundred years later.

For those who believe in exams, league tables and school profiles as indicators of effectiveness, Montaigne comments:

“It is good to make him himself to his ability. If we get that proposition wrong we spoil everything: knowing how to find it and to remain well-balanced within it is one of the most arduous tasks there is. It is the action of a powerful elevated mind to know how to come down to the level of the child and guide his footsteps.”

For those who deny pupils choice and responsibility:

“Teachers are for ever bawling into our ears as though pouring knowledge down through a funnel: our task is merely to repeat what we have been told. I would want our tutor to put that right; as soon as the mind in his charge allows it, he should make it show its feebly by appreciating and selecting things – and by distinguishing between them; the tutor should sometimes prepare the way for the boy, sometimes let him do it all on his own. I do not want the tutor to be the only one to choose topics or to do all the talking; when the boy’s turn comes let the tutor listen to his pupil talking.”

For those who think education and child-rearing to be unproblematic and straightforward:

“In truth I know nothing about education except this: that the greatest and the most important difficulty known to human learning seems to lie in that area which treats how to bring up children and how to educate them.”

For those who think appointing teachers is mainly about choosing those with good subject knowledge:

“Select...a tutor with a well-formed rather than a well-filled brain. Let both be looked for, but place character and intelligence before knowledge.”

For those who think teaching young children is easy, straightforward and intellectually undemanding:

“It is good to make him [i.e. the pupil] trot in front of his tutor in order to judge his paces and to judge how far down the tutor needs to go to adapt

himself to his ability. If we get that proposition wrong we spoil everything: knowing how to find it and to remain well-balanced within it is one of the most arduous tasks there is. It is the action of a powerful elevated mind to know how to come down to the level of the child and guide his footsteps.”

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For those wedded to whole-class teaching:

“Those… who undertake to act as schoolmaster for several minds diverse in kind and capacity, using the same teaching and the same degree of guidance, not surprisingly can scarcely find in a whole tribe of children more than one or two who bear fruit from their education.”

For those wedded to a restricted view of assessment through external examinations:

“Let the tutor not merely require a verbal account of what the boy has been taught but the meaning and the substance of it … Let him take what the boy has just learned and make him show him dozens of different aspects of it and then apply it to just as many different subjects, in order to find out whether he has really grasped it and made it part of himself.”

For believers in “firm discipline”:

“This education is to be conducted with a severe gentleness, not as it usually is. Instead of children being invited to lessons as guests, all they are shown in truth are cruelty and horror.”

For those wary of inquiry-approaches and out-of-school learning:

“Put in his mind a decent, careful spirit of inquiry about everything: he will go and see anything which is of singular quality: a building, a fountain, a man, the site of an old battle.”

For those with a restricted view of teaching and learning:

“’Knowing’ something does not mean knowing it by heart; that simply means putting it in the larder of our memory. That which we rightly “know” can be deployed without looking back at the model, without turning our eyes back towards the book.”

There is nothing like tempting the boy to want to study and to love it:

“Otherwise you simply produce donkeys laden with books. They are flogged into retaining a pannierful of learning; but if it is to do any good, learning must not only lodge with us; we must marry her.”

For those who believe in the value of conventional secondary schooling:

“Schools are a veritable gaol for captive youth.”

And lastly, for those DfES officials who aren’t sure what personalised learning is, but clothe their lack of knowledge in civil-service prose:

“People whose bodies are too thin pad them out: those whose matter is too slender pad it out too – with words.”

Perhaps we all need lessons from sixteenth-century France?

These extracts are taken from Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Essays, Penguin 2003.

Since coming to power in 1997, the Labour Government has described improving outcomes for children and young people as a priority. But problems remain across a number of areas, and some have persisted over decades. While some progress has been made, 2.6 million children are still living in poverty and, although educational attainment has increased, the attainment gap between pupils from different socio-economic groups still remains. The levels of obesity are still rising and by 2010 one in five children will be obese.

The Review of Children and Young People assesses progress made to improve outcomes and ascertain what further action would need to be taken as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review and beyond. Analysis produced for the Review showed that, while a small number of children remained at risk of poor outcomes throughout their childhood, many developed poor outcomes later. Therefore support needed to be available at all ages of childhood, and universal services such as schools and health services needed to play a key role to monitor and identify children who were at risk or were beginning to develop problems.

The Review examined how well public services currently operated towards providing support prioritised towards prevention. Although Every Child Matters was bringing about significant improvements, the Review identified a number of areas where more could be done:

- the framework in which public services operated could place more emphasis on rewarding or incentivising support which is preventative;
- more could be done to build children’s resilience to poor outcomes in key areas, including enhancing educational attainment and building social and emotional skills;
- more could be done to build the capacity of parents and communities to create a supportive environment in which children and young people could develop.

Youth Matters set out the Government’s priorities to support young people outside school. But the Review identified a number of areas where further progress was needed to achieve more participation from young people in activities that would boost their resilience to poor outcomes, including:

- continued work to reduce barriers that currently stopped some young people participating in any positive activities;
- raising the standards and consistency in the quality of what was available at local level; and
- building on existing good practice, to involve young people in the design and decision-making processes behind their provision.

Although the precise set of indicators for specific poor adult outcomes varies, some indicators are common across a range of poor outcomes. Some of the most important indicators are:

- low income, or coming from a low socio-economic background;
- low attainment;
- poor social and emotional skills;
- poor parenting;
- low birth weight;
- poor health;
- poor parental mental health; and
- living in a deprived neighbourhood.

Supporting vulnerable groups

Some groups of children tended to be particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes. The Review considered the progress made and the remaining challenges for policy in relation to two groups: disabled children and families caught in a cycle of low achievement. Disabled children were diverse in their characteristics and many experienced more than one disability. On average, they experienced poorer outcomes compared to their non-disabled peers, such as fewer qualifications. The Review had found many approaches, both national and local, that were improving the support available for disabled children and their families. For example, the provision of key workers and allowing greater control by disabled children and their families over the purchase of services was helping to create services that responded to need. But this was not a universal experience; good practice needed to be spread and more needed to be done to:

- develop a clearer and more coherent understanding of the disabled child population at local level, combined with a stronger evidence base on interventions to improve outcomes for disabled children – in particular the role of earlier intervention;
- allow disabled children and their families to influence the way services were delivered in their local area; and
- ensure public services cooperate appropriately at local level to deliver effective packages of support.

Families in a cycle of low achievement

Research carried out for the Review identified a small minority of families with multiple problems leading to particularly harmful outcomes for the children in the family, family members and potentially the wider community. It was essential to support them on a sustained basis, if services were ultimately to shift resources and focus to a more preventative approach. It was also important if the Government’s aim was to break the cycle of disadvantage across generations. The Review found that there were often barriers and challenges that prevented effective support for such families. Key challenges identified included:

- improving coordination of public services, particularly links between services for children and for adults, to address the root causes of problems in such families;
- ensuring services were able to engage effectively with the families through building their trust, and ensuring services could balance support and sanctions to gain optimum engagement; and
- providing sufficient support and motivation to front-line professionals to engage in what were often extremely challenging circumstances.

The Review had drawn on a wide range of evidence, including that from many interested organisations and individuals. The Review would continue to build on the analysis set out in the Policy Review of Children and Young People – A discussion paper, and would report in spring 2007 with recommendations to inform and influence the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.
attainment of pupils in secondary schools was proving to be difficult for most authorities, despite efforts to improve attendance, reduce exclusion and provide an extensive range of support. There had been improvement in attainment in seven authorities and in five other authorities, rates of overall improvement compared well with similar authorities and the national profile. But more effort was needed to tackle issues such as raising the attainment of underachieving children, notably those leaving school without any qualifications.

Inclusive approaches
The nature and implementation of inclusive approaches was found to be variable across the country. Although many local authorities had developed and strengthened their approaches to improving diversity, equality and fairness and significant progress had been made towards developing a more inclusive system, this was another area which differed from council to council. One of the greatest tasks facing authorities is meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils, particularly those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those who are looked-after. Many of this group, along with those 16 to 19-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training, do not develop sufficiently the competences and capabilities, or gain the qualifications vital to their future success. Other priorities relating to improving the health and safety of children and young people and helping them to adopt healthy lifestyles, can only be addressed if councils work with other services and agencies. In early years provision, authorities successfully achieved the Government's targets of providing pre-school places for all three- and four year-olds whose parents wished such provision by entering into partnerships with other voluntary and private providers.

There were wide variations in the numbers of pupils excluded from school between 2000 and 2005 within and across authorities. Overall rates in primary schools had increased from 10.4 to 13.4 exclusions per 1000 pupils. Exclusions at secondary schools had initially been reduced from 105 to 98 per 1000 pupils over the period 2000 to 2003, but had increased again to 112 per 1000 pupils in 2005.

A notable feature of developments over the period of the inspections was the emergence of systems within education authorities to provide support and challenge to schools. In the best authorities there were effective systems for monitoring school improvement and the information gathered was used to intervene quickly to provide the necessary support to underperforming schools. Officers were almost always perceived as committed and hardworking, and administrative staff were praised for their helpfulness. In authorities where there were important weaknesses they often related to the ways in which the roles and functions of Quality Improvement Officers were configured, particularly with regard to providing the right balance of support and challenge. A greater consistency in QIO performance was called for, and their capacity to fulfil their roles was questioned.

Vision, values, aims and policies
Although headteachers had a key role in ensuring that the authorities' vision, values and aims and policies were well understood, some did not see themselves as senior members of the authority. As a result they were less effective in promoting the education authorities' key priorities to staff, pupils and parents. The most effective authorities gave high priority to reviewing the performance of heads to hold them accountable for the performance of their schools and ensuring that they had the staff development and support to fulfil their remits. Overall, authorities made good provision for staff development. Very few had significant weaknesses and around 25 per cent had major strengths. Continuing professional development featured as a key strength in almost 60 per cent of reports. Aspects of financial management figured as a key strength in 14 reports and resource management in six. But both aspects required improvement as a main point for action in 22 reports. Authorities varied in the quality of strategic leadership and the impact that it had on children and families. Ten high performing authorities had sustained high-quality leadership over a number of years, two were judged to have major weaknesses and another seven had important weaknesses. The main obstacle to the effectiveness of leadership, particularly in small authorities, was the limitation on officers to carry out their full remits.
Audit Commission
National School Survey Results 2006, December 2006, download free from www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports

Conservative Party

Dept for Culture Media & Sport

Dept for Education and Skills


Local Authority Children’s Services Funding: 2007-08, November 2006, free from http://www.dfes.gov.uk.


Department of Health


HMIE


HM Treasury

Ofsted


Independent Schools Council Inspections 2005/06, HMI 2375, November 2006, free from www.ofsted.gov.uk. This is Ofsted’s seventh report on the work of the Independent Schools Inspectorate.


Public Accounts Committee
Improving Literacy and Numeracy in Schools (Northern Ireland), HC 108, December 2006, download free from http://www.publications.parliament.uk

Scottish Executive


The following is a selection of documents received by EMIE at NFER from local authorities as they appeared in the EMIE publication Synopsis 41. Unless documents are described as available from the originating authority, these can be supplied to readers of Education Journal No 100 at the cost shown for paper copies, which includes p&p, or freely as an email attachment. Please state your preference when ordering.

Contact emie@nfer.ac.uk with the document numbers of the items you require plus the number of the Education Journal edition in which they appear. Cheques should be made payable to NFER and sent to the address below.

EMIE at NFER provides a range of information services, free at the point of use, for those working in or with local authority children’s services and education departments. Go to www.nfer.ac.uk/emie and request a username and password to access the full range of our resources. If you are an independent consultant, or work with another organisation concerned with education or children’s services, then you are eligible for our new subscription service: please request a password as above and take advantage of our free trial period now.

EMIE at NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, SL1 2DQ.

**Quality toolkit: Barnsley 14-16 collaborative provision**

*Barnsley*  **September 2006**

A quality assurance programme for use by the partners involved with the provision of 14-19 education.

The partnerships involve collaboration between schools, colleges, employers and work-based learning providers. The partners have agreed a series of principles for collaborative provision for young people. These principles underpin quality assurance protocols and documentation which cover statutory requirements and clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of all partners. Begins with a statement on the principles for collaborative provision with a draft service level agreement and a checklist of roles and responsibilities. Describes the home school responsibilities and includes handbooks of guidance for staff and for learners. Also includes procedures for monitoring attendance and any causes for concern. Gives guidance on the completion of termly progress reports and on the recognition of success. A section on quality monitoring includes inspection and student evaluation. Other sections are concerned with learning and teaching strategies for 14-19, the law relating to work-based learning, child protection and safeguarding.

74 pages  £8.90 per copy

*Document:  BARY23990*

**Children’s centres: working on the board**

*Brent*  **August 2006**

A guidance leaflet for agencies, organisations and partners invited to join a children’s centre management board.

The purpose of this leaflet is to explain what children’s centres are and to outline what a governing body or management board does. Describes the membership of boards, the different types of member and the structures that feed into the boards. Also describes the workload involved and the support provided. Includes information for employers who have an employee on the board. Concludes with sources of further information and contact details.

8 pages  £1.50 per copy

*Document:  BREN24029*

**Policy and procedures for the review of primary school provision**

*East Riding of Yorkshire*  **July 2006**

The authority’s policy and procedures setting out the criteria to be used in reviewing the provision of primary school places from January 2006. Provides background information, defines terms, sets out statutory obligations and lists links with other policies. Includes sections on surplus places, school management and staffing, overcrowding, catchment areas, transition, premises, finance, rural sustainability, extended services, transport, denominational provision, collaboration and federation. The procedures are concerned with the identification of schools to be reviewed, data collection and analysis, consideration of issues, action plan, the appraisal of options, consultation, cabinet consideration, support for staff and schools during reorganisation and media involvement. All primary phase schools including nursery schools are to be reviewed in cluster groups as part of a rolling programme.

18 pages  £2.20 per copy

*Document:  ERYO23974*

**Prevention and provision for excluded pupils**

*Hertfordshire*  **July 2006**

Report to the Education Panel giving an update on work in progress to strengthen the role of preventative services to support schools in behaviour management and to develop alternative provision for excluded pupils or those at risk of exclusion, through the creation of Key Stage 4 learning centres.

The report describes a model for the alignment of behaviour support teams and education support centres (ESCs) to ensure effective coordination and a single point of access to preventative services. A workshop was held involving primary and secondary headteachers, heads of ESCs and other stakeholders, to consider the issues and to agree a model to be taken to wider stakeholder groups for consultation. The workshop identified a number of elements of the overall service which are not working well and also gaps in current provision. Funding and development is underway for three Key Stage 4 learning centres and details for a further three are provided.

5 pages  £1.50 per copy

*Document:  HERT23986*

**Sutton Children’s Trust**

**Arrangements: framework for joint planning and commissioning services for children and young people**

*Sutton*  **June 2006**

Framework for joint planning and commissioning services for children and young people. This paper describes the arrangements by which agencies will co-ordinate their resource deployment to achieve maximum effect.

It provides definitions of the terms used to describe the commissioning process and the various types and models of commissioning. This is followed by a statement of priorities, aims and principles which leads into a section on the framework. The framework describes the functions and membership of the Sutton Strategic Commissioning Group and shows its governance structure. Includes sections on the role of schools in commissioning and on the commissioning of health services.

10 pages  £1.50 per copy

*Document:  SUTT23978*
The following is a list of papers from recently published academic journals. The following information is given for each journal: the title. On the next line is the publisher | volume/issue number | date of publication | number of issues per year | ISSN | personal subscription rate | institutional subscription rate.

**European Journal of Special Needs Education**

Routledge | 21/1 | February 2006 | 4 | 0885-6257 | £94 | £296

When Lack of Data is Data: do we really know who our looked-after children are? Angela Jacklin.


Seeking Stories: reflections on a narrative approach to researching understandings of inclusion. Hazel Lawson, Maureen Parker and Pat Sikes.


**First Language**

Sage | 26/1 | February 2006 | 4 | 0142-7227 | £34 | £279 Special Issue: Language-specific Influences on Acquisition and Cognition

The Influence of Typology and Modality on the Acquisition of Verb Agreement Morphology in British Sign Language. Gary Morgan, Isabelle Barriére and Benjie Woll.

Does Past Tense Marking Indicate the Acquisition of the Concept of Temporal Displacement in Children’s Cognitive Development? Yasuhiko Shirai and Susanne Miyata.

The Morphosyntax of Mood in Early Grammar with Special Reference to Swahili. Kamil Ud Deen and Nina Hyams.

Static and Dynamic Location in French and in English. Maya Hickmann and Henriette Hendricks.

**Gender and Education**

Routledge | 18/2 | March 2006 | 5 | 0954-0253 | £135 | £778

Reconceptualising the Gendered Body. Carrie Paechter.

Gender and PhD Studies: the perceptions of PhD Students in an American University. Beth Kurtz-Costes, Laura Andrews Helmke and Beril Ulku-Steiner.

Views and Perspectives of Women’s Studies. Jen Marchbank and Gayle Letherby.

Gender Discourse about an Ethnic of Care. Ma del Carmen Rodríguez, J Vicente Pena, Carmen Ma Fernandez, Ma Paulina Vinuela.

Pedagogy and Student Change in the Women’s and Gender Studies Classroom. Jane E Stake.

Single-sex Schooling. Georgina Tsolides and Ian R Dobson.

**Journal of Early Childhood Research**

Sage | 4/1 | February 2006 | 3 | 1476-718X | £34 | £244


Ethnographic Approaches to Child Care Research. Mara Buchbinder, Jeffery Longheuer, Thomas Barrett, Peter Lawson and Jerry Floresch.


Grounds for Values and Attitudes: children’s play and peer cultures in preschool. Annica Lofahl.

**Journal of Research in Reading**

Blackwell | 29/1 | February 2006 | 4 | 0141-0423 | £59 | £319 Special Issue: Reading and Genetics


Genetics and Environmental Influences on Early Literacy. Brian Byrne, Richard K Olson, Stefan Sannesson, Sally Wadsworth, Robin Corley, John C Defries and Erik Willcutt.

Genetic and Environmental Mediation of the Prediction from Preschool Language and Nonverbal Ability to 7-year Reading. Marianna E Hayiou-Thomas, Nicole Harlaar, Philip S Dale and Robert Plomin.

Genetic and Environmental Influences on Reading and Listening Comprehension. Janice M Keenan, Rebecca S Betjemann, Sally J Wadsworth, John C Defries and Richard K Olson.


Reading in Able and Disabled Readers from Around the World: same or different? An illustration from a study of reading-related processes in a Swahili sample of siblings. Elena L Grigorenko, Damaris Ngorooso, Matthew Jukes and Donald Bundy.

The Genetics of Learning to Read. Max Coltheart.

**Oxford Review of Education**

Routledge | 32/1 | February 2006 | 4 | 0305-4985 | £160 | £434


T. H. Green: citizenship, education and the law. Raymond Plant.

Michael Sadler and Comparative Education. David Phillips.


Anthony Crosland: intellectual and politician. Maurice Kogan.

Alan Bullock: historian, social democrat and chairman. Geoffrey Caston.


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Policy and Practice

The latest issue of Educational Studies contains the article ‘Teachers as Mediators between Educational Policy and Practice’, by Kevin Brain, Ivan Reid and Louise Comerford Boyes of Bradford University. As teachers are the medium for causing the result of policy through delivery to pupils, this article draws on a range of research to illustrate how teachers mediate between education policy and practice.

The authors begin by saying that the education reforms of the 1980s and 1990s “effectively centralised schooling and apparently curtailed much of the previous professional freedom of teachers” (p.412). They continue: “Much of the literature reviewing educational policy into practice appears to have less emphasis on actual practice than on the policies and systems, yet it is obvious that policies are mediated by teachers within their schools, indicating a need for an examination of the mediation.” (p.412)

They claim that successive governments appear to have worked on the assumption that change in education can be brought about by teachers’ professional strength to resist, or modify, government orders. “Much of the literature reviewing educational policy into practice appears to have less emphasis on actual practice than on the policies and systems, yet it is obvious that policies are mediated by teachers within their schools, indicating a need for an examination of the mediation.” (p.412)

The authors also adapt Merton’s ‘types of individual adaptation to culture’ to include types of teacher mediation. Conformity is where both policy and practice are accepted, which they suggest is the type of teacher “that central government wishes to inhabit English schools”. Innovation is where policy is accepted but practice rejected, involving ‘professional mediation’ and the innovative teacher or school. Ritualism is where, while policy is rejected, the practice is accepted. Finally, retreatism involves rejection of both policy and practice, while rebellion involves rejection and substitution.

Network Learning Community

The research and evaluation of national and local policy in practice in England includes a case study of a Network Learning Community (NLC). The NLC, co-ordinated by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), was a match-funded, collaborative network of schools, together with one or more partners from LEAs, higher or further education or community groups:

“Despite the fact that the form, content and objectives of teaching were still heavily prescribed by government, teachers were urged to innovate, share best practice and develop a sound evidence base to inform practice by taking responsibility for their own learning…” (p.417)

The NLC resisted what it saw as “unwarranted outside influence”, but the authors write, from the second year onwards a series of NCSL reviews “clearly indicated a growth in the central control of activities, and the space for the NLC to develop its own agenda was increasingly narrowed” (p.417).

The NLC had to complete an audit of activities, and produce a portfolio of evidence demonstrating impact. Failure to comply could have meant loss of funding. In effect, “the NCSL acts as a disciplinary mechanism to ensure that NLCs follow the objectives of government policy and promote the Government’s model of teaching and learning” (p.417).

This and the other case studies exemplify teacher mediation over a range of policy-to-practice situations and illustrate something of the complexity involved in understanding the process. The authors argue, therefore:

“that successful implementation depends on finding an appropriate strategy or model of policy construction that utilises teachers’ professional knowledge, skills and values, rather than one that challenges, or fails to recognise, these.” (P.421)

The authors conclude by expressing their concern that, in the Teacher Training Agency’s standards, there is no reference to the key characteristics of teaching or analysis of the primary tasks of teachers, and no definition of their primary function or reference to the personal qualities or values required for success. They write: “The implication of the standards is that values, attitudes and reflective abilities are not central to ITT, and consequently, to teaching” (P.422). But, they say, interviews with students on primary ITT courses have shown their concern for these matters: “It was just these factors and concerns that had brought them onto their courses and sustained them there” (p.422).

The authors recommend that students be made aware of their role as mediators, and be given the opportunity to learn about alternatives, to question policy and to be properly equipped with the skills of evaluation, so they can use evidence to judge both their own performance and the policies they are required to work under. Without this, they say, “not only will the profession suffer, but also the education policy implementation and, consequently, the children they teach” (p.422).
Making Every Child Matters a reality

Graham Handscomb
Principal Adviser, Essex Children’s Services Authority

The educational landscape has been transformed in recent years by the expectations of the Every Child Matters agenda (DFES, 2004) and all that this entails. The clarion cry is for effective multi-agency working, for local authority services to be joined-up and coherent, and for the boundaries of the school to be opened up – extended in hours and in its presence within the wider community. All this is for the highly laudable aim of doing things better for children, young people and their families. It is not just to ensure that abused children like Victoria Climbie no longer fall through the net, but also that health, social care and education services speak to each other in the interests of all children, with effective provision at every level – universal, vulnerable and acute.

Many will welcome this integrated approach. For hard-pressed teachers and other professionals who have struggled to get in place co-ordinated action from a range of agencies centred around the child, this development has been long time in coming. Nevertheless it brings with it many challenges and there is a real danger of these not being sufficiently recognised or addressed. Foremost among these are the willingness and capacity of schools to embrace Every Child Matters (ECM) development in this new environment. This article will deal with these issues, drawing on extensive work that has been pioneered at school, local authority and national levels.

Collaborating to make a difference

One early lesson learnt is that schools are only likely to make progress on ECM if they work collaboratively. Essex local authority has just completed a two-year research and development project looking at what difference networking can make to progress on ECM development to ensure everyone does their best for children.

This development, called the LEArning Project, involved about 160 Essex schools working collaboratively within 8 clusters (some were primary; others were a mixture of primary, secondary and special). Another dimension involved collaborative inquiry by Essex LA, working with 19 other local authorities participating in this initiative, and with the National College for School Leadership, the DfES Innovation Unit, the Demos Think Tank, the University of Warwick, and Professor Michael Fullan’s team at the University of Ontario.

Taking the twin foci of collaboration and Every Child Matters development was seen as crucial. The growth of networking and networked learning – particularly within the educational world – has been one of the most important developments in recent times (Hargreaves, 2004). Meanwhile ECM and its five outcomes represent a major challenge to schools and other agencies. The Essex project was therefore naturally located in exploring what added-value networking would make in helping schools address this challenge. In other words how can working together, and working with other partners, help schools make greater strides than by going it alone?

Range of Every Child Matters development

Across the eight groups of schools taking part, a range of collaborative activity linked to the Children’s agenda was chosen for their work within the LEArning Project. These included:

- improving partnership with parents;
- creating a coherent environment for multi-agency working and engagement with parents and other groups in the local community (two clusters);
- improving arrangements for transition between stages of education for vulnerable children (two clusters);
- promoting citizenship for young children through the arts;
- getting to grips with personalised learning;
- facing the challenge of improving provision for children with mental health difficulties.

So, the ECM focus varied from cluster to cluster. At the outset it was always thought that the choice of ECM focus would be determined by the priorities of each group of schools. Consequently, for some it was a further development of existing practice and for others the choice was based upon the emerging needs of pupils, families and communities. In some cases clusters benefited from choosing similar areas of activity and so they were, for instance, able to share the definitions they adopted in identifying vulnerable children. This led to helpful network-to-network collaboration.

Asking hard questions

An interesting feature of this exploration of the contribution of collaboration to ECM development was...
What is effective, and what are the barriers to progress on Every Child Matters through aspects of networking involving groups of schools, local authority and other agencies/organisations?

Within this overarching question each of the clusters fashioned its own inquiry and indeed many of the individual schools also produced a specific question for themselves. This layered inquiry approach had the effect of bringing a rigor to the work and a desire to drill down for evidence of impact.

One cluster organised for itself an educational psychologist with research experience to act as a consultant to the cluster who would collect, analyse and interpret data. Comments from another cluster indicated that the inquiry approach provided a strong organising function for its work. The research question delivered a direction for the schools to work on the project and to call in professionals from outside the school. This was reflected across all the clusters and the overall project evaluation report confirms the benefits of coherence and sustainability that the research and development approach provided: The most marked characteristic of the Essex Learning Project has been its pervasive culture of inquiry and this has been a powerful unifying feature and helped to sustain its momentum.

The contribution of networking to ECM development
A good deal of time was spent in making sense of the information gleaned. It then became apparent that there was clear evidence from a number of cluster contexts that the activity of schools networking together and with other agencies, had made a positive difference. It added combined insight, capacity and expertise in tackling ECM development in ways that would have been difficult for schools working individually.

One cluster for instance organised a conference to which representatives from education, health and local statutory organisations, as well as organisations from the voluntary sector, were invited. The outcomes reported significantly increased understanding and greater tolerance between a variety of professionals. Another cluster commented on new optimism that there will be a strengthening of the partnership between the cluster and the Pathfinder Children’s Trust (in our locality) as a result of working together on the project.

Nevertheless the relationship between cluster working and ECM development was not entirely plain sailing. Some of the clusters were longstanding and well established. In one case this helped the cluster to engage readily in joint work on ECM development. However, some established groups did report tension about re-orientating their pattern of collaboration on areas of work like learning and teaching and CPD, to a new focus on ECM and multi-agency working. Conversely one of the clusters was very new and was specifically formed around tackling the ECM agenda and this was reflected in their in-depth focus and range of activity.

Some concern was expressed about the difficulties of dealing with other agencies: We find meetings [with another agency] very frustrating. However, the overwhelming message coming from the clusters engaged in this project was positive, with a strong correlation being made between collaboration and work on ECM. The comment We feel responsible for children in another school who are more in need than any of our pupils serves to illustrate the significant progress that had been made by developing strong networks and the change in attitudes towards cooperation on ECM development.

Every Child Matters outcomes
For some clusters the early learning gains related to improved knowledge and understanding of children’s perceptions. For example gaining insight into children’s attitudes to transition between key stages and between schools, and their perception of what helps to smooth the transition process proved invaluable to schools seeking to improve the effectiveness of the transition process. One group of schools reported: The work we are doing within our cluster on this project has helped identify how vulnerable children fall between the gaps of transition between key stages and to identify named people and the agencies that need to be there for the youngsters.

Other outcomes relate to acquiring and using better quality data across a cluster for the benefit of children. Questionnaires and structured interviews provided invaluable information, for example about current practice and provision for pupils’ care, welfare and their mental health. The project has also enabled one cluster to expose the lack of consistency and coherence with which schools engage with parents.

It is important to acknowledge that in demonstrable and embedded ECM development this is still early days. Nevertheless, there was evidence of emerging new ways of working and a variety of practical arrangements that inspire optimism about collaborative efforts within these clusters.

Participation in the research project itself provided the opportunity for clusters to reflect and take stock and be able to draw some learning from a rapidly changing scene.

Enablers and Barriers
The inquiry into the contribution of collaborators to ECM development probed the positive features and those that were barriers to progress. Foremost among the enablers were existing strong positive relationships and commitment to school improvement and a tradition of having a strong consortium in place. The research mode was also emphasised as a strength, with clusters having capacity and expertise to handle data while also helping to empower its evidenced-based decision making.

Typical barriers were the familiar and inter-related issues of time, money and the size of the cluster. So, for instance, two clusters commented upon the problems associated with keeping a
relatively large group of headteachers fully informed and the larger size of the group has been a barrier to effective working. Clusters also singled out the common barriers of time and data management and the issue of maintaining momentum with the project as it has progressed. Maintaining and sustaining development was seen as a crucial issue. Despite significant changes in school management personnel there has been a belief that this work will continue and is now seen as part of the brief of any new teacher joining a school in the cluster.

It was not surprising that the relationship with other agencies was seen as the most live issue. It was very encouraging to see that by working collaboratively schools focused on positive ways to overcome problems encountered and began to see things from the perspective of others. Most importantly, they saw that the solution had implications for their own action as well as that of agency staff. The following are a variety of reflections from a range of cluster contexts which convey this movement to a more enlightened stance:

We now recognise that the other agencies are over-stretched but there is something that (as schools) we can do to make a difference.

It is good to be focusing on families rather than different agencies doing the same thing in different ways.

The project has helped us to identify how little we know in terms of support for parents. We think that we know about this but the discussions have broadened our views.

We now have faith in the professionals who can make a response for real change in our schools.

Putting what has been learnt to work

So clearly there is much to be gained by schools collaborating with each other and actively working with a range of agencies and professionals. The constraints of time and resources are not to be underestimated. However, this project indicated that in an environment with finite resources clusters enhance their effectiveness by pooling their efforts and expertise, and maximising the use of a range of funding streams (Handscomb, 2006).

Working together pays dividends in a number of ways. It brings to the fore values such as making explicit the need for using pupil and family voice in the design and delivery of services and ensuring local solutions for local needs.

It also emphasises the importance of collaborative and distributed leadership.

The evidence from this inquiry showed powerfully that operating in a collaborative way helped school professionals to get to grips with often quite complex issues, whether they be better approaches to dealing with children's mental health or putting in place structures for inter-agency cooperation in a locality. One illuminating example was the way in which two clusters identified and began to address the important feature of "children's temporary vulnerability." These were children who would not be picked up by the general measures for identifying children at risk but were, for instance, vulnerable for a short period of time when a parent was hospitalised.

The value of projects of this sort lies as much in identifying what further work needs to be done as it does in revealing the positive things that are already taking place. Certainly there were a number of key issues and implications for action, particularly for school cluster and local authority planning. They included:

- some further work on data and impact – in particular analysing the available LA data on school clusters to see if these can give any significant baseline information when assessing progress.
- the LA to consider the need for high quality training and mentoring for headteachers in 'change management', particularly where schools are working in challenging circumstances.
- the LA to consider more flexibility in managing the issue of 'temporary vulnerability'.
- ensuring that information about Children's Services, the range of support available and opportunity to access other agencies are available to all headteachers.
- further devolving of resources which will empower and motivate each local area and their clusters.
- the LA and clusters need to reflect further on whether there is an optimum 'size of cluster' for effective networking and taking forward ECM developments.
- providing pictures of where network-to-network communication has taken place and the benefits arising from it.

In summary, the experience of this two-year inquiry has provided early indications that networking does significantly contribute to progress on Every Child Matters development. It has helped to foster schools working with other agencies, while also signalling that this needs to be deepened. Despite the prevailing emphasis on autonomy and the pressure to raise standards, schools are beginning to work together on the Children's Agenda. A growing culture amongst schools of joint responsibility for all children within a locality is clearly in evidence. Network and cluster working has also positively exposed some inadequate and inconsistent ECM practice and helped to identify remedial strategies.

References


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<td>• Size can become a barrier when the cluster group becomes too large for effective management and communication.</td>
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<td>• Time and data management can be barriers to progress, but working smarter and re-prioritising can help.</td>
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<td>• Networking with other agencies can be a barrier though it has the potential to be a real enabler.</td>
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<td>• Most clusters have become increasingly optimistic that many of the barriers can be overcome by effective partnership working.</td>
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<td>• The project itself has been a powerful enabler and has helped to facilitate sharing of good practice between clusters.</td>
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<td>• Ways of working modelled through this project have the potential for laying the foundation for longer term working in and across a locality.</td>
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ASBOs

Antisocial behaviour orders are often ineffective because teenagers regard them as a “badge of honour”, according to a study. The Policy Research Bureau and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) found that 49 per cent of ASBOs given to under-18s had been breached, with the majority flouting them regularly. Their report concluded: “High levels of breach had led some sentencers to question how much impact ASBOs were having on the behaviour of individual young people.” Parents and carers said the orders were regarded as a “diploma” and boosted a child’s “street cred”. The study found that more than 90 per cent of those given ASBOs were male and the average age of offenders was 16. Almost half of them were living in a single-parent household, with the overwhelming majority headed by the mother. Only 20 per cent lived with both their parents. The report also revealed a “worryingly high” use of ASBOs on young black people.

An ASBO can ban an offender from: continuing the offending behaviour; spending time with a particular group of friends; and visiting certain areas. ASBOs are issued for a minimum of two years, and the aim is to protect the public from the behaviour, rather than to punish the perpetrator. An ASBO is a civil order, not a criminal penalty – this means it won’t appear on an individual’s criminal record. However, breaching one is a criminal offence.

Paul Cavadino, chief executive of NACRO, said: “ASBOs should only be used as a last resort, but some areas are using them as an early option without first trying other approaches. All too often courts making ASBOs impose unrealistic conditions on young people that are almost bound to be broken.”

“Before an application for an ASBO can be made, local authorities and the police should be required to discuss thoroughly with youth offending teams (YOTs) what constructive measures could be tried first.”

Alternatives to ASBOs include parenting orders – court orders compelling a parent to attend parenting classes and fulfil other requirements as determined necessary by the court for improving their child’s behaviour. However, many sentencers believe this places unrealistic expectations on the parent, and so do not consider them a viable alternative to ASBOs.

Headteachers

Headteachers in English secondary schools are working more than four hours a week longer than they were six years ago, despite government promises to ease their burden. While classroom teachers’ workload was falling, headteachers’ had increased dramatically to over 65 hours a week on average, according to research conducted by the Office of Manpower Statistics. Deputy headteachers’ working weeks had also lengthened. They were clocking up 61 hours a week, whereas two years ago their hours had dropped to just over 54 a week. John Dunford, ASCL general secretary, praised school leaders’ devotion, but added: “This is a direct result of the non-stop deluge of government initiatives over the last few years, including the workforce agreement, where the burden of implementation has fallen mainly on heads and deputies.”

Brightest pupils

Private schools often do little better than state schools at A-level, according to new research. David Jesson of York University also found that the brightest pupils did just as well whatever type of school they attended. The research was based on the A-level results for the whole country between 2004 and 2006, and looked specifically at the brightest top 10% of pupils, defined by their performance at GCSE. Professor Jesson then compared results in independent schools, state schools, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges. Among the brightest 5% of children, 75% of those at private school attained three grade As, compared with 74% at sixth-form colleges and 71% at state schools. In the next brightest 5%, 43% of private school pupils gained three grade As, compared with 47% of sixth-form college students and 41% of state school pupils. Although Professor Jesson had not explored the reasons why independent schools seemed to offer very little premium value to the brightest A-level students, he had noted that many left the private sector after their GCSEs to study A-levels at sixth form colleges. He conceded that private schools might still produce better results in subjects most valued by elite universities, such as science, maths and languages.

Nuffield

One of the Government’s initiatives, targets, or short-term measures are managing to address deep-seated problems in the education system, according to the Nuffield Foundation. The third annual report of the Nuffield review of 14 to 19 education and training warned that “policy busyness” by ministers fell short of the radical reform needed to keep young people in education. The study, led by Professor Richard Pring of Oxford University, said that the problem lay in “the persistence of deep-seated problems concerning the structure of the system”. It added: “Policymakers tend to address symptoms of these deep-seated problems rather than tackling their underlying causes. Moreover, in responding to symptomatic problems, government has attempted to implement a whole range of policies at a very fast pace.”

The report called for a “complete overhaul” of assessment at school and college and warned that the introduction of university top-up fees “could militate against increasing and widening participation” in higher education.

Grammar

Teachers’ “shaky grasp of grammar and punctuation” has been exposed in an online survey conducted by the recruitment agency Kelly Services. Two-thirds made a basic apostrophe mistake in a test administered to over 2,000 workers from key professions. Nearly half failed to use the apostrophe correctly in, “The Smiths’ house is a disused windmill.” The survey placed teachers behind employees in the “creative and arts sectors” and said they only managed to match financial workers, who were hardly known for their strong literacy skills. Ofsted reported that teachers who struggled with spelling were behind a litany of mistakes in pupils’ work. The teachers’ literacy weaknesses were thought to stem from the prevalence of “trendy” classroom methods in the 60s and 70s. A spokesman for the NUT pointed out that teachers were far from being bottom of the class in the online test, adding: “It would be nice to eliminate the problem completely, but teachers are human beings and subject to error.”
Drowning in a “legislative torrent”

Nick Kent
Parliamentary Editor

If passing laws raises standards in schools, England ought to have the best schools in the world. Over the last decade ten Acts of Parliament have unleashed a tidal wave of complex, abstruse and all too often pointless legislation affecting schools and colleges. We at Education Journal have been following all of this forest of paper since our inception and trying to make sense of it for our readers. What, if anything, have we learned?

First of all, one cannot help noticing that too often legislation simply reverses something done before. The banning of school federation governing bodies in the 1998 Act was repealed four years later, for example. Schools were encouraged to work in partnership with FE colleges in the early 1980s, banned from doing so in the late 1980s and encouraged once more in the 1990s; a switchback ride worthy of a theme park rather than a sensible education system.

All too often people have forgotten the provisions of one Act when it comes to debating subsequent Bills. Each time the word “aptitude” appears in an Education Bill it sets off a great fuss in Parliament about where this allegedly ridiculous term comes from; in fact it was originally in the Education Act 1944 and has been used repeatedly since. Likewise, no one seemed to remember in the debates on school discipline, during the passage of the Education & Inspections Act 2006, that Section 4 of the Education Act 1997 had already given teachers the power to restrain pupils. It is inconceivable that no one remembered that such an important piece of legislation, which they had spent many hours debating, was already on the statute book.

The sheer volume of legislation has now outstripped the capacity of the education system to absorb it. The former Education Secretary, Estelle Morris, pointed out during the debates on the Education & Inspections Act that most of the powers the Government were giving to schools had already been given to them by the Education Act 2002; it was just that they had rarely, if ever, been used. Head teachers and governors can hardly be expected to grasp the implications of all the legislation that now applies to schools if parliamentarians are unable to do so.

It was hardly surprising that the Church of England was irate about the Government’s recent suggestion during the dying days of the Education & Inspections Bill that all new faith schools should be required to keep a proportion of their places for children of other faiths or no faith. Only a few months earlier the Church had asked the Government to include a provision in the Bill that would allow the Church authorities to deal with the minority of Church of England schools whose admission arrangements effectively exclude non-Christians. The Government had tabled this amendment and it had been accepted only for ministers to then suggest that they wanted to put into law what the Church of England was already doing. One wonders if Alan Johnson knew that his officials had been drafting an amendment on admissions at the request of the Church of England.

Part of the reason for the proliferation of legislation is the revolving door at the Education Department. Ministers come, ministers go, but legislation never goes away. Each new Education Secretary is keen to stamp his or her mark upon the education system and generally seems to believe that the only way to do that is by proposing a suitably lengthy Bill. This approach is rather akin to those teachers who focus on getting their lesson plan right at the expense of ensuring that the children actually learn something.

When you discuss the phenomenon of excessive legislation with politicians, they always agree there are far too many Bills and then go on to tell you all the things they would do if they got the chance to legislate! This is a British cultural problem but one whose impact on education is particularly serious because of the absence of other ways for politicians to influence what happens in schools. Our devolved system of schools has frustrated ministers for years because they do not have the control over them that, for example, Health Ministers have over the NHS. Education Ministers clearly see themselves as signalmen on a railway desperately yanking levers to get the trains to go where they want them to go, sometimes in defiance of the wishes of the local authority train driver. This strategy can work – provided you have decided on the destination of the train before it leaves the station.

Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theorists might argue that the British establishment has had a vision of what it wants for the English school system for most of the last 20 years. The aim was to create a school system without local education authorities, with each school largely autonomous from its neighbours and with much of school policy being dictated from the centre. The advocates of this formula did not spell out their ambition because it would have provoked too much controversy.

Instead, we have seen the step by step introduction of this approach, across both Tory and Labour governments. This is a neat theory and certainly reflects the views of a significant body of opinion on the Right, but politicians are rarely that effective in either hiding conspiracies or implementing them.

The sad truth about the legislative torrent is that it has not resulted from a settled vision of what should be done to ensure a quality education for all. Instead it has been driven by a piecemeal approach in which the concerns of the moment have often pushed aside a longer term assessment of how to raise educational performance. Whether Parliament does any better over the next ten years depends on whether or not politicians realise that stability, consistency and adequate funding are the three things most needed by schools today.
Vocational education and skills academies

Arabella Hargreaves
Editor, Education Parliamentary Monitor Scotland

As soon as the Scottish Parliament returned from the Christmas recess the Conservatives introduced a debate on skills academies. Murdo Fraser (Con, Mid Scotland and Fife) said that for many years the Scottish Tories had championed the principle of extending to those of school age the opportunity for vocational education. They believed that a system that required all children to concentrate fully on academic subjects after the age of 14 was increasingly out of date and that such an approach failed to meet the needs of the economy, given that employers continually complain that school leavers often lacked the skills employers needed. The Executive’s idea of skills academies was welcome, Mr Murdo said, and was one on which he hoped a new consensus would emerge.

Mike Rumbles (LDP, West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) asked how Mr Fraser envisaged skills academies working in places such as rural Aberdeenshire, where there were few academies and people had to travel many miles to attend them. Mr Fraser suggested he should ask his Executive colleagues, who were the ones who had raised the issue – after all, skills academies were a Labour Party proposal.

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, Robert Brown (LDP, Glasgow), claimed that within the UK, Scotland had the highest proportion of young people achieving national vocational qualifications at level 3 or above.

Fiona Hyslop (SNP, Lothians) said that everyone agreed that skills and vocational training for post-14 pupils were essential. The issue was how to make progress on that aim and whether enough had been done to make progress. It was also agreed that the school-college review was important in identifying the links between colleges and schools and that the Skills for Work programme and the qualifications that it provided were welcome. The Education Committee’s inquiry into pupil motivation found that pupils would not be motivated if the skills academies and vocational opportunities were just for those who did not have academic ability. There could be skills bases and skills departments, but they should operate within the mainstream operation of schools.

David McLetchie (Con, Edinburgh Pentlands) wondered what the rationale was behind the figure of 100 skills academies. He also questioned to what extent the so-called academies would be separate entities run independently from the rest of the schools. Would they simply be ramped-up technical departments with a grandiose title? Robin Harper (Green, Lothians) said it was important to consider what art, music, technical subjects, dance, drama, outdoor education and sport could do for young people and recognise fully the huge contribution that those activities, disciplines and skills could make to the fully rounded development and education of young people.

Rosemary Byrne (Sol, South of Scotland) said that Solidarity fully supported comprehensive education, a broad and balanced curriculum and equality of opportunity for all young people. Dumping young people into further education colleges was not the way forward, but she had no problem with partnerships between schools and colleges.

Adoption and Children Bill passed

At the beginning of December the Scottish Parliament passed the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act, a piece of legislation that the Executive admitted was technically complex. A large number of Executive amendments were moved during the Stage 3 debate, most of which were broadly supported by the Opposition.

Iain Smith (LDP, North East Fife) wanted to put on record the concerns that the Education Committee had expressed about the way the Bill appeared before it at various stages. Part of the concern was that too much legislation was being put through the Parliament by the Executive, and that there were not enough drafting resources in the Executive to meet demand. He also asked for assurance that there was nothing in section 1(1), on the duties of each local authority that would prevent local authorities from working together to provide adoption services. The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, Robert Brown (LDP, Glasgow) said he could give that assurance.

Fiona Hyslop (SNP, Lothians) said the redefinition of adoption to include the whole process—pre-adoption, during adoption and post-adoption—rather than simply what happened at the point of adoption had been the result of cross-party pressure from the committee.

New minister’s debut

Hugh Henry (Lab, Paisley South) made his debut as the new Minister for Education and Young People. He said the current law on adoption was almost 30 years old. Since the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978 came into force, much about adoption has changed, as had the circumstances of children who needed to be adopted. Very few healthy babies were given up for adoption. It was much more common for an older child to be removed from his or her parents because they could not provide the safe and secure home that every child deserved. As a result, fewer children were being adopted. In the past 20 years, the number of adoption applications in Scotland had fallen from about 1,000 per year to about 400.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Con, Lothians) said that the Bill represented an important milestone in the clarification and improvement of the procedures that related to children who could not live with their birth parents, and he supported it.

Patrick Harvie (Green, Glasgow) said he hoped all members would support the Bill. Rosemary Byrne (Sol, South of Scotland) said that Solidarity supported the Bill and welcomed the changes that will make a difference to children’s lives. But she regretted that the issue of family group conferencing was not mentioned, and that the debate did not go into the issue of therapeutic services and support for families.
Policy changes for children under seven

Helen Grimmett
Editor, EPM Wales/Cymru

Mrs Jane Davidson (Lab, Pontypridd), the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, made a statement in the Welsh Assembly in early December on the change of policy for children under seven and its financial implications.

She confirmed her intention to introduce a new curriculum for three-to-seven-year-olds from September 2008. Mrs Davidson claimed that “the foundation phase brings with it a new approach and philosophy” and made greater use of play and experiential learning. She reported that draft guidance on the aspect of observation had been well-received, while a foundation phase profile was being developed. Mrs Davidson emphasised the more proactive role of classroom assistants and the need to ensure that all staff were fully trained in the foundation phase philosophy. To this end, she was working with local authorities looking at workforce issues, identifying training needs and putting in place a programme of training during the lead-up to the roll-out of the foundation phase and beyond. Mrs Davidson spoke of the related increasing financial commitment of “£10 million in next year’s draft budget”.

Janet Ryder (PC, North Wales) expressed her support but requested clarification on the role of teachers and classroom assistants, as did William Graham (Con, South Wales East). Mrs Davidson said that the final details were awaited from local authorities but estimates suggested a need for 2,800 additional staff. This figure was based on the adult ratios of 1:8 so “many will be people with other skills who come into the wider foundation phase delivery mechanism”. She gave her assurance that “teachers teach and are responsible for the learning outcomes of their classes” but “can delegate responsibilities for delivery to learning assistants”.

Peter Black (LDP, South Wales West) expressed his support for the initiative but suggested there was a need for a continuous evaluation of the foundation phase. He asked for the total cost over the full roll-out period up to 2011 and requested confirmation that any additional money needed would be made available to local authorities over and above that provided by the revenue support grant. Mrs Davidson replied that, although unable to provide the cost of the roll-out, “the money for the coming year is focused particularly on ensuring that people are appropriately trained”.

Owen John Thomas (PC, South Wales Central) called the initiative “excellent and a major step forward”, although he, too, was concerned over funding, particularly in voluntary settings. He questioned what proportion of the £10 million in funding had been allocated to voluntary organisations including nursery education in nursery groups. Mrs Davidson confirmed that there would be a review of the budgetary arrangements for both the maintained and non-maintained settings.

Alun Cairns (Con, South Wales West) expressed concern over “problems with the quality of teaching” in some nursery groups and asked what policies were proposed to support the standard of Welsh and of the teaching in such groups. Mrs Davidson agreed on the importance of the issue and noted “Estyn will have to agree on the standard before any group starts the foundation phase”.

Report from the Secretary of State for Wales

It is the custom in the Welsh Assembly that, after the State opening of the Westminster parliament, the Secretary of State for Wales comes to the Assembly and reports on the Queen’s Speech, outlining those measures in it that will apply to Wales. Peter Hain, whose duties include those of Secretary of State for Wales as well as for Northern Ireland, took the road to Cardiff before Christmas and told the Assembly that the Government’s legislative programme included over 20 Bills that would directly affect Wales.

The Secretary of State said that in the last session of the Westminster parliament, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the NHS Redress Act 2006 granted framework powers to the Assembly. In this session, two further Bills contain framework powers. These were a Bill to empower and reform local government and a Bill to boost skills in further education and training (the Further Education and Training Bill). From May, the new Order in Council process would come on stream to speed up fresh powers for the Assembly.

In the debate that followed the Secretary of State’s statement, there was no mention of the Further Education and Training Bill. Much of the debate centred on devolving more power to the Assembly and the degree to which the UK government or parliament could intervene. The Secretary of State was pressed to give an example of the circumstances in which Westminster might intervene. The only thing he could come up with was if the Tories won control of the Assembly and then tried to privatise schools. His example was thought unlikely on both counts.

After a short debate on the Secretary of State’s statement, the First Minister proposed a motion to allocate each of the Westminster Bills relevant to Wales for scrutiny by an Assembly Committee, with the Further Education and Training Bill going before the Assembly’s Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee.

The First Minister, Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan (Lab, Cardiff West), made reference to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which had just received Royal Assent, and gave the Assembly new powers to take forward legislation as it followed the framework-powers model outlined earlier by Peter Hain. Mr Morgan said that the legislation announced in the new Queen’s Speech “will continue to offer major opportunities for Wales. For example, the Further Education and Training Bill will contain measure-making powers that will enable the Welsh Assembly Government to own and shape the future of the all-important FE sector in Wales.”
## Dedicated Schools Grant

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the dedicated schools grant for each local education authority in England was for (a) 2005-06 and (b) 2006-07; what the planned grant is for 2007-08 in each case; and what the percentage change from the previous year was in each case. [107344]

**Jim Knight:** The majority of schools funding in 2005-06 was delivered through the wider Local Government Finance Settlement which is not directly comparable with the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations introduced in 2006. The 2005-06 baseline figure is based on local authority spending in 2005-06. The following table shows: the 2005-06 baseline; final 2006-07 DSG allocations; and the percentage increase in 2006-07. The indicative DSG allocations planned for 2007-08, and what these would give as a percentage increase from the previous year. The increase in Dedicated Schools Grant allocations year on year are less than the per pupil increases (5.9 per cent. compared to 6.8 per cent. in 2006-07 and 6.0 per cent. compared to 6.7 per cent. in 2007-08) due to the impact of falling pupil numbers nationally.

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Children's Obesity

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what research he has commissioned into the link between childhood obesity and consumption of fizzy drinks. [110093]

Caroline Flint (Minister, Department of Health): I have been asked to reply.

The (Health) Department, which is co-ordinating action on obesity, has not commissioned nor has specific plans to commission research on the effects of consumption of different food products on weight gain, excess weight and obesity among schoolchildren. The Food Standards Agency is developing a strategy to help consumers achieve energy balance.

5 January 2007

International Baccalaureate

Mr. Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools switched from only offering the GCE/CE A-level syllabus to only the International Baccalaureate in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

[102536]

Jim Knight: According to the Schools' Census, no maintained secondary schools have switched from only offering the GCE/CE A-level syllabus to only the International Baccalaureate in the last three years. However, since 2003, the number of schools with learners studying the International Baccalaureate has increased from 19 to 35 in 2006.

18 December 2006

Citizenship Education

Ben Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if he will encourage local authorities to monitor the number of citizenship specialist teachers.

[103732]

Jim Knight: Ofsted considers the availability of suitably trained teachers as part of its inspection of citizenship teaching in schools. In addition, the QCA has a programme of curriculum monitoring and evaluation, which includes reporting on teacher supply. The Department has regular contact with local authority citizenship coordinators to promote initiatives such as the new continuous professional development certificate for citizenship teachers.

4 December 2006

ISSUE 100  Education 41
**Scottish Parliament**

**Education: National Priorities**

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive, following its commitment in Ambitious, Excellent Schools to ‘publish a performance report on the National Priorities, by 2006, to assess the performance of each local authority since 2003’, when this report will be published and what other methods it has in place to assess local authorities’ performance. (S2W-30182)

Hugh Henry: HM Inspectorate of Education’s recent publications Improving Scottish Education and Improving Scottish Education: Effectiveness of Education Authorities fulfil this Ambitious, Excellent Schools commitment. Copies of both reports are available in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Bib. numbers 38934 and 41128 respectively). Local authority performance in respect of their education functions is subject to regular inspection by HM Inspectorate of Education. Inspection is supplemented by regular dialogue between officials and Directors of Education.

6 December 2006

**School Funding and energy**

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it intends to address the funding shortfall resulting from increased energy costs in schools. (S2W-30170)

Mr Tom McCabe: The Executive is providing local government with record levels of funding and I have no plans to re-open the 2006-07 financial settlement. I will be announcing the provisional 2007-08 local government finance settlement figures to Parliament on 13 December 2006.

Mr Tom McCabe: The Executive is providing local government with record levels of funding and I have no plans to re-open the 2006-07 financial settlement. I will be announcing the provisional 2007-08 local government finance settlement figures to Parliament on 13 December 2006.

20 December 2006

**Welsh Assembly**

**Physical Education**

Laura Anne Jones: How is the Welsh Assembly Government working with schools in order to expand the choice of activities available for pupils within the physical education and sport curriculum? (WAQ48806)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the important role that sport and physical education play in providing opportunities for young people to develop life skills such as teamwork and leadership as well as improving physical fitness. That is why physical education, including indoor and outdoor activities, is an integral part of the national curriculum for all young people at all four key stages.

In meeting the requirements of the national curriculum programme of study for physical education all schools are required to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of activities so that they can develop and use their skills in situations appropriate to their ability. For example in key stage 3, pupils should engage in health-related exercise and games and also have the opportunity to participate in two activities selected from gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. However, within this framework it is for each school to determine the mix of activities offered to pupils in the context of the school’s scheme of work and the facilities available.

I am committed to improving the quality and the range of opportunities provided for pupils. To date a total of £6.9 million has been made available to the Sports Council for Wales to lead on the implementation of the Assembly Government’s PE and school sport action plan for Wales. Led by SCW work is being supported in every local authority area to draw together schools and local partners to improve provision. This includes the sharing of staff expertise, facilities and good practice to enable primary schools, in particular, to offer a wide range of activities. SCW has also provided specialist training and support for practitioners to improve the delivery of activities such as gymnastics and dance.

The aim is to work towards a target of 2 hours curriculum time for PE each week. In addition, it is planned that by 2010 all schools will be involved in PESS partnerships. Data compiled by SCW and Estyn confirm that PESS schools are making good progress. I was also pleased to see that the chief inspector, in her annual report for 2004-05, concluded that 99 per cent of primary school PE classes inspected and 90 per cent of secondary school classes were assessed at grade 3 or better

The PESS initiative complements other initiatives led by SCW to improve opportunities for extra curricula sport. In particular, Dragon Sport targeted at eligible primary schools are involved in Dragon Sport. The recently launched 5x60 programme looks to extend this work into secondary schools. Activities will include a balance of traditional competitive sport, informal recreational activity and coached activities. 28 schools across Wales are currently participating in 5x60 with a further 12 schools planned to come on board in January 2007. The target is that by 2009 all secondary schools in Wales will be part of the programme.

We have also worked closely with the Big Lottery Fund in the delivery of its PE and sport in schools programme. In all £48 million has been made available by the Big Lottery Fund to improve facilities for PE and sports in schools in Wales.

Full details of the requirements for each key stage are set out in ‘Physical Education in the National Curriculum in Wales’ published by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales and the National Assembly. A copy of the guidance can be accessed on www.welsh.gov.uk. As part of the Assembly Government’s review of the school curriculum and assessment arrangements, consultation on revised national curriculum subject orders, including PE, begins on 8 January 2007 and finishes on 30 March.

14 December 2006
Thuggery à la Blair

Segolene Royal, who has just been elected presidential candidate by the French Socialist Party in the run-up to the election next May, gave an interview to the Midi Libre the other day, our Languedoc correspondent writes. In it she was asked what was her most important policy. “Education, Education, Education,” she replied (in French, of course, it sounds even better).

A few minutes later she was asked to explain and amplify her policies a bit more. “I do not wish to be profound at the moment,” she said. “We will pursue only those policies which clearly work, not those which sound nice.” Among the latest ideas are “boot camps” for those who misbehave in school or who are troublesome on the streets. Her dad was a French army officer in Senegal, which may explain her love of strict disciplinarian measures.

It is no secret that Sego is an admirer of Tony Blair and has been to see him to get some private tuition on New Labour policies and their presentation. But so, of course, has her right-wing opponent Nicolas Sarkozy, who has himself got Napoleonic pretensions.

Sarko advocates hosing down the rebellious young “scum” from the squalid urban suburbs and restoring order with battalions of riot police.

It will be an interesting war of words in France next spring. Even the Home Secretary, John Reid, may find he is outgunned by the French. He confided to journalists earlier this month at a charity event. “I come from Glasgow, where if you get three O-levels you are called an intellectual. I went to university and got a doctorate, so they called me a thug.”

A Blair, by the way, is a ‘nose’ in backstreet French. Je ne peux pas le blairer translates as “I can’t stand the guy” or, in Blairspeak, “I’d like to plant a clunking great fist on his nose”. In Reidspeak, it would translate as “Heads and Bonnets!” - putting the nut in followed by the razor blade.

Phenix

Music for Youth started its festivals in 1971. That, frankly, is a remarkable achievement of which its founding father, Larry Westland, can be justifiably proud.

As usual, Phenix, who attended the last night, finds it difficult to pick any one of the dozen or so “turns” for specific praise. The Greater Gwent Youth Brass Band, which opened the concert with Copland’s superb Fanfare for the Common Man and later added Bill Whelan’s Riverdance with full musical choreography, proved that youngsters can still produce great music when taught by as masterly a musical director as Russell Gray. The same can be said for Paul McBride who brought the entire City of Belfast Youth Orchestra across the water and conducted the audience in Elgar’s flag-waving, feet-stomping Pomp and Circumstance March.

We must also mention: the magnificent percussion playing by three young men from the Exeter Phoenix (no relation) Arts Centre of the Japanese Taikomotion; an amazing display by youngsters from Estover Community College, Plymouth, who produced music from “instruments” including a supermarket trolley and a kitchen sink; and the Northamptonshire Massed Choir – all 500 of them representing just about every primary school in the county – along with a superb ballet performed by a group of young dancers aged eight upwards.

But Phenix sees threatening clouds on the musical horizon. Sponsorship is beginning to flag. It would be a disaster if Larry Westland’s tireless work were to be brought to its knees for lack of financial support. The funds stacked up by the National Lottery as well as the Arts Council should come to the immediate aid of this very worthwhile enterprise.

Remembered

Friends of Gordon Cunningham, former education officer of the Association of County Councils and of Cambridgeshire, are holding a meeting in his memory on 30 March. Gordon died in Spain at the end of June last year and a small family funeral was held soon after in England. But many of his friends and family either did not know he had died or were away at the time. So a special memorial meeting is being organised at Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, opposite London’s Euston Station, at 11 for 11.30 am on that day.

His widow Kate, who was an assistant education officer at the ACC and in Surrey, is anxious to contact as many of his old friends and colleagues as possible. “We hope the occasion will provide an opportunity for those who worked with him, and for those who didn’t but enjoyed knowing him, to meet and reminisce. A few of those who knew him best have been asked to say a few words, but there will be plenty of time for spontaneous contributions as well. All are welcome.”

The meeting is expected to last about an hour. All who would like to attend or receive more information should contact: Kathryn Cunningham, Apartado de Correos 151, 03590 ALTEA, Alicante, Spain, or George Low at gwlow@compuserve.com.

Phenix

Lovely Lunca the lupine looker

Meet Lunca, a seven-year-old European grey wolf who lives at the UK Wolf Conservation Trust headquarters in Berkshire. Find out how to invite Lunca and her sisters to your school in the next issue of Education Journal.
Congratulations to education’s leading monthly journal…

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www.teachers.org.uk