

SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update

The future of our region is in school

This week...welcome back!

For what promises to be another hectic academic year that will see a general election and possible change of government, the opening of 67 new academies and many new school builds, the expansion of the diploma offer and the implementation of the outcomes of the primary review and proposals in the education white paper. The eleven year olds starting secondary school today will be the first to stay in compulsory education or training until they are eighteen and primary school pupils across County Durham will be tucking into their first free school lunch as part of the high profile two-year pilot scheme.

We hope you had a fantastic holiday, we would like to wish you all the very best for the new academic year, and we look forward to working with you throughout it.

SCHOOLS NorthEast EPIC Summit 2009

There are just five weeks to go now until the SCHOOLS NorthEast EPIC Summit takes place at Wynyard Hall on 8 October. The full programme is now available, and we are delighted to announce that the Summit will be sponsored by the School Food Trust.

With such a jam packed line-up there's much more to take in than just one person could manage, which is why we're offering a fantastic discount when you book a second place for somebody else from your school.

To see the full programme online and to book your place, visit www.schoolsnortheast.com/summit.

News and events

Sustainable Schools

The government are aiming to make every school sustainable by 2020, and as part of this process the North East Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Schools (NESPSS) are supporting local authorities and other agencies that support schools in sustainability issues. As part of their research, the NESPSS are collecting feedback from schools on their use of the Sustainable Schools S3 Self Evaluation Tool, which can be accessed by clicking [here](#). They are looking for responses to the following questions:

- Have you used the S3 self evaluation tool?
- Did you find it useful?
- Have you included the S3 findings in your school SEF?
- Has Sustainable Schools been identified in your school's inspection? If so, how?

If you feel as though you could help with this research, please email your replies to rich.hurst@durhamlearning.net

Northern Poetry Library poetry readings

The Northern Poetry Library is the biggest collection of modern and contemporary poetry outside London, and it is housed right here in the North East at Morpeth Library. The collection is a superb resource for English students, as King Edward VI High School found out when two groups of their year 12 students visited the collection in July.

A series of poetry readings will be held at Morpeth Library this autumn. For further details contact Pat Hallam on 07743 340110 or email pat.hallam@northumberland.gov.uk.

Jeans for Genes day - Friday 2nd October 2009

Jeans for Genes are a national children's charity who provide funding and support for young people with genetic disorders and their families. On the first Friday of October they hold their annual Jeans for Genes day, where schools allow their pupils and teachers to wear their jeans for the day, taking part in fundraising events for a very good cause.

Their website has all the information you need to find out how you can hold a Jeans for Genes day at your school, as well as a fantastic range of free educational resources for key stages 1 to 4. To sign up for your free fundraising pack and to take advantage of the resources visit www.jeansforgenes.com or telephone (0800) 980 4800.

Roald Dahl Day 2009

Roald Dahl wrote some of the most memorable and inspirational children's books of all time including James and the Giant Peach, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Witches and The BFG.

13 September marks Roald Dahl Day, a day to celebrate his life's work and raise money for the Roald Dahl Foundation. For more information and to download a free Roald Dahl Day Kit with advice on holding an event at your school, visit www.roalddahlday.info.

With reports this week claiming that one in eight children never finish a book in lessons, and that a quarter study only one book a year, it is great to see a day dedicated to children's literature. Seven Stories in Newcastle run daily school visit sessions, and you can get more information by clicking [here](#).

Changes at SCHOOLS NorthEast

Allow me to introduce myself! My name is Anthony Morris, and I'm the new Communications Officer here at SCHOOLS NorthEast, replacing Katie who has moved on to train to be a primary school teacher. Remember SCHOOLS NorthEast is your network and I'd love to hear from you, so if you have anything that you would like to see in the weekly news update, or any suggestions for improvements, don't hesitate to get in touch at info@schoolsnortheast.com.

News round-up

Last week, SCHOOLS NorthEast director Beccy Earnshaw spoke to the Sunday Sun about why the region's young people have been so successful in their exam results this year. To read the article, click [here](#).

It was also fantastic to see eight of our region's Head Teachers named in the Journal's list of the most influential people in the North East for 2009 which is a great improvement on last year where there was only one. The full line-up can be viewed online [here](#).

All primary school pupils in County Durham can now have a free school meal every day under a two-year £40m trial scheme to see if behaviour, health and academic standards improve. The scheme is being run by the School Food Trust, who are sponsoring the SCHOOLS NorthEast EPIC Summit on 8 October. To learn more about the work of the School Food Trust and to see sample menus, visit www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk.

Also, for our in-depth look at A-level results click [here](#), or for GCSE results click [here](#).

Regional News

- [Teacher on song for Euro contest](#)
- [Gateshead College to train electric car mechanics](#)
- [Proof of residence required when applying for school places](#)
- [Improvement in literacy at primary school is welcomed](#)
- [Pass rates soar but standards stay high](#)
- [Record GCSE results... and this girl got 13 A*s](#)
- [North East pupils celebrate record GCSEs](#)
- [Heather's GCSE success from a hospital bed](#)
- [Special surprise for Terry after his GCSEs](#)
- [Exam changes help boys to catch up](#)
- [Free school meals to help fight childhood obesity](#)
- [School zombies scoop dance award](#)
- [St Paulinus school reunion to help Jamie Morgan cancer appeal](#)
- [Battle on to save St Peter's RC school](#)
- [Governors back headteacher in employing Darren Adamson](#)
- [Study casts new doubts on rising maths results](#)

GCSEs

- [Scrap GCSEs, says Labour education guru](#)
- [Schools cleared to offer new GCSE exams in eight subjects](#)
- [State pupils lag far behind private peers in language GCSEs](#)
- [GCSE pupils easily bored by exams](#)
- [Labour blocks harder GCSE exam](#)
- [Teenager gets 100% in 11 GCSEs](#)
- [Gender divide being dismantled](#)
- [Only 20% needed for 'good' GCSE pass](#)
- [Don't trust data on school exam results, warns academic group](#)
- [Professional footballer gets 10 As](#)
- [Maths standards 'no better than mid-70s'](#)
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A-levels

- [Wait for A-level results, teachers tell universities](#)
- [Trade-up warning: A-level winners won't get a better university place](#)
- [Girls' top fee-paying league at A-level as head calls for tougher exams](#)
- [Maths days are numbered: Schools drop traditional A-level subjects](#)
- [Universities demand higher grades amid clearing squeeze](#)
- [A-levels will not be made harder, exam watchdog says](#)
- [Bright pupils 'miss out' on place](#)
- [Re-marks soar as students try to make grade](#)
- [32 applicants chase each university clearing place](#)
- [Many school leavers 'facing dole'](#)

Diplomas

- [New diplomas struggle with three Rs, inquiry finds](#)
- [Are diplomas working, and what can be done to improve them?](#)
- [Teenagers reject diplomas](#)
- [Tutors 'cynical' over diplomas](#)
- [Diploma teaching 'must improve'](#)

- [More diploma courses are launched](#)
- [Two thirds of teenagers studying diplomas fail to get A grade](#)

Rural primaries

- [One rural school closing each month, campaigners warn](#)
- [200 rural schools to close by 2014](#)

Primary tests

- [1 in 4 boys fails writing test for 7-year-old pupils](#)
- [Small dip in primary maths scores](#)
- [Quarter of boys miss writing target at 7](#)

Other primary news

- [The local community school: a paradise that ends at age 11](#)
- [Primary school shunning books](#)
- [Why aren't children taught to touch type?](#)

Academies

- [Academy up-front payment dropped](#)
- [Academies can be the solution for primaries, too](#)
- [Labour to slash spending on its academy programme](#)

School meals

- [Jamie's school dinners for all](#)
- [You've had your chips: fattening food banned from school canteens](#)
- [School ban on fatty food to beat obesity](#)
- [Parents want kitchen classrooms](#)
- [Trial of free school meals starts](#)

School uniforms

- [Call for cheaper school uniforms](#)

Teaching assistants

- [Teaching assistants don't boost pupils' progress, reports find](#)
- [Teaching assistants blamed for poor results](#)
- [Pupils receiving help 'do worse'](#)

Truancy rates

- [School truancy rate rises](#)
- [Schoolchildren skip 3.9m days of spring term](#)
- [Youth drop-out rate hits new high](#)

Teachers

- [Teacher trainees 'lack A-levels'](#)
- [Teachers' workload 'not reduced'](#)
- [Teachers campaign against code of conduct](#)

Swine flu

- [Schools to re-open despite swine flu fears](#)
- [Parents and GPs warned not to mistake meningitis for swine flu](#)

School fees

- [Tory council considered plan to subsidise private school fees](#)
- [Council rules out school fees aid](#)

Education quangos

- [Call for quango cull in education](#)
- [Tories told: scrap education quangos and save £600m](#)

Other education news

- [School building scheme a sham - MPs](#)
- [Teenagers could appeal against school exclusions](#)
- [Tories warned over costs of radical school plans](#)
- [Tory Lord Baker joins government on reviving technical schools](#)
- [Tales from the real school of rock](#)
- [Lib Dems slam Labour education failures](#)
- [Parent debt 'damaging education'](#)
- [Tories plan league tables review](#)
- [Parents 'place value on skills'](#)
- [Poll dismay over Labour education](#)
- [School consultants 'earned £170m'](#)

Head to Head

After finishing last year with a Head to Head from Mike Booth, retiring Head Teacher at Walbottle Campus in Newcastle we decided it was fitting to make this term's first Head to Head subject Walbottle's new Head Teacher, Paul Sampson, who takes the reins this week.

This summer has been very short, busy, but enjoyable. After a nice 'relaxing' (never stopped thinking about school...) holiday in Majorca, I have returned to the reality of moving into my new office and into the new phase 2 of our school build.

I've been preparing for the new term by experiencing a new hobby with my 12-year-old son - fishing! It is amazing how someone who cannot sit still for five minutes can actually sit and fish for the whole day. Although I did find parts of the day boring, I certainly had time to think about all the things that I need to do. A little notebook was most helpful!

The thing that I am looking forward to most about the new term is showing the staff, students, parents and community the new facilities in the school. They are fabulous! We have a 400 seat main hall, a 150 seat lecture theatre, a lovely large gym/dance studio, 2 drama, 2 music and 2 PE classrooms and a wonderful community sports centre entrance to a six court sports hall. They all compliment the already outstanding new build of phase 1.

The thing that worries me most about the new term is not getting everything completed on time. There seems to be so much to do with not enough hours in the day.

Top of my to-do list for this week is to make sure that I have booked a table for my wife and I for our favourite restaurant this weekend!

By the end of this term I hope to be still smiling. I hope to have had the opportunity to visit lots of lessons, meet as many students and parents as possible and to have had a conversation with every member of staff about something other than teaching.

My question to ask next week's Head teacher is can I borrow your watch? Mine seems to be going too fast! What are your tips for productive time management?

Star pupil

Huge congratulations to **all the students in the region who received their GCSE or A-level results this summer**. Once again the North East saw its overall pass rate and the number of students achieving the best possible grades rise to the highest level ever at both exam levels. At A-level, the region has seen the greatest improvement of any region in the percentage of young people receiving A grades, and we are second only to London in the improvement of the overall pass rate since 2002, while at GCSE the number of students achieving the government's benchmark of grades A* to C has risen to 64.3% with the number of students being awarded the top grade rising to 17.8%.

Could try harder...

An Institute of Education report published last week says that pupils who receive support from **Teaching Assistants** do no better than those who are left alone. However the report also says that Teaching Assistants improve classroom discipline and reduce teachers' stress levels. Researchers suggested that the reason for the alarming figures could be that just one in four teachers had been trained to manage Teaching Assistants, and only one in 20 schools set aside time to plan and give feedback to Teaching Assistants. According to government figures published in May there are now 183,200 Teaching Assistants working throughout the UK.

Opportunities and Resources

Survival Rivals

Set up to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, Survival Rivals are offering three completely free Darwin themed experiment kits for pupils aged 11-14, 14-16 and 16-19, allowing them to consider Darwin's ideas and how they have been developed and interpreted, as well as the impact and the relevance evolution has for our lives today.

Since March this year, Survival Rivals have sent over 8,000 kits to schools and colleges in the UK, and you can order yours by visiting www.survivalrivals.org.

Upload your maths resources and win an iPhone

The Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM) and TES Connect are working together to help raise the standards of mathematics teaching through the sharing of free quality maths resources.

That's why they are running a competition on their website to upload your maths resources to win one of 9 Apple iPhones or 18 runner-up prizes. The competition is running until 14 September. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges from the Association of Teachers of Mathematics during the last week of September 2009. The winners within each category will receive an iPhone and two runners up within each category will win a digital camera.

For more information or to enter visit www.tes.co.uk/maths-competition. And remember there are no limit to entries, so the more resources you upload, the more chance you have to win!

Secondary guidance materials for English as an additional language

The Department for Children, Schools and Families have launched a new resource containing continuing professional development (CPD) modules and a guided resource for all education professionals. The programme focus areas are: developing thinking skills, academic language and improving extended writing. Also included are case studies and video clips developed during the secondary EAL programme.

The materials can be accessed online at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/ad4/eal.

Planning for successful transfer and transition

The National Strategies offer resources to help teachers plan for successful transition and continuity of learning for pupils at all ages to ensure good progress.

Highlights include a new early years resource 'Progress Matters' which helps support continuity for children during the Early Years Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1, interactive self evaluation toolkits to guide primary and secondary senior leaders, case studies that outline how schools and local authorities have accelerated progress through effective transfers and transitions and guidance for effective teaching and learning to support transitions from early years through to Key Stage 4.

To access the materials visit www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/transferandtransition. You can also search for user-generated case studies on the WhatWorksWell web area at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/whatworkswell.

Learning Skills Council North East success stories

The LSC North East is always on the lookout for success stories which can be developed into press releases to feature in the local media. If you think your school has a suitable story, you can get in touch with them by calling (0191) 492 6416 or be emailing lisa.douglas@lsc.gov.uk. All they need is a name and your contact details with a couple of lines about your story.

And finally...

In a bizarre move, several schools around the country have been driven to adopting clip-on ties because of a wave of oddly tied ties over recent years. If you find yourself bewildered by the neckwear of some of your pupils, you will be interested to read Finlo Rohrer's feature on the subject on the BBC News Magazine. Just click [here](#).

Have a great first week!