

SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update

The future of our region is in school

This week...

Schools got an insight into the potential future of education through a speech given by Michael Gove, setting out the Conservative education policy in detail for the first time.

Speaking at a seminar organised by the Centre for Policy Studies, he singled out five state schools for particular praise, which included Emmanuel College in Gateshead. He also spoke about expanding the Teach First scheme into the North East, saying the programme “had done more to make teaching an elite profession over the last decade than any action by any Government minister”.

Following on from their previous announcement of their intention to imitate the Swedish model of schools, Mr Gove said that the Tories would replicate the system of teacher recruitment in Finland and Singapore.

In the new system, primary school teachers would come from the top third of graduates, rather than the top two thirds at present, and they would allow only one re-sit of compulsory literacy and numeracy tests. Trainee teaching candidates would have to have achieved at least a 2:2 in their degree and a B, rather than a C, in English and Maths GCSE.

Head Teachers would gain new wide ranging freedoms, including the power to reward teachers financially with bonuses.

He also said that schools will be able to permanently exclude pupils, who would then have no right to appeal, and Ofsted would be able to arrive at a school and inspect it without notice. As expected he said that the best schools, and eventually all schools, would be encouraged to become academies.

Critics have already said that academies should not immediately be seen as the answer to the problems facing schools, and questioned who decides who the best graduates are, but we want to know what you think. Send your thoughts to think@schoolsnortheast.com.

And while we're on the subject of politics, congratulations to Newcastle's Oscar Wallis-Clarke who has become the youngest person ever to speak in the House of Commons. The Heaton Manor pupil was among 300 11 to 18-year-olds who took over the chamber on 30 October, the first time anyone other than MPs had sat on the green benches. For more information and to watch a video of the session click [here](#).

News and events

Local Government Summit 2010

If you think your pupils have the potential to influence regional decision makers, the North East Local Government Summit 2010 is offering young people from schools across the region a unique opportunity to showcase their views and opinions to regional and national politicians at the most senior level.

The Summit will outline the North East local government's vision for the future, and address how they can meet the challenges and opportunities facing the public sector at such an important time.

We would love for your school to demonstrate how the young people of the North East view politicians, and how they can do more to reflect their thoughts and opinions, by creating three 5 minute DVDs which will be used to introduce the 'breakout sessions' on the day.

The DVDs will give Summit attendees the chance to see how the young people of the North East view politicians, and how they can do more to reflect their thoughts and opinions. There will also be an opportunity for pupils to share examples of how they have influenced decisions, or how they have made a difference to their lives or communities.

If pupils from your school are interested in taking part in the event and you would like more detailed information contact a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com.

Nissan Schools Engineering Discovery Event

Places are still available for the Nissan Schools Engineering Discovery Event being held from 18 to 22 January 2010.

This year's event is themed around electric vehicles and will be hosted by two of Nissan's own young male and female engineers. The visit will also include a tour of the final assembly production line to see how a car is built.

This event was created with ONE North East to encourage pupils to choose engineering as a potential career. The North East has a shortage of new engineering talent, and Nissan hopes to inspire future engineers of both sexes to remain in the area and put their talents to use in the many local companies who employ engineers.

There are places for 2,500 pupils, with the event being predominantly aimed at the 11-13 year old age group - although older pupils would also be welcome. The event is free and pupils will receive a gift to take home.

There are two 2 hour sessions each day. Morning sessions begin for registration at 9.30am with a 10am start, and the event will finish around lunchtime. Morning sessions begin for registration at 9.30am with a 10am start, and the event will finish at around 3:00pm.

If you would like to take part in this event, please contact Dawn Waugh at dawn.waugh@nissan-nmuk.co.uk or (0191) 415 2764, indicating which day you would prefer, whether a morning or afternoon session would be better for your group, how many pupils you would like to bring and how many teachers will be accompanying them.

Hansard Society launch mock elections website

With next year's General Election looming ever closer, the Hansard Society have launched their brand new 'Y Vote' Mock Elections website, an interactive tool for teachers wishing to run a mock election in their school.

This new website provides a fantastic opportunity for young people to get to grips with the processes of voting, become involved in a national debate on topical issues and develop an understanding of representative democracy in the UK.

The site is available now at www.mockelections.co.uk.

News round-up

Regional news highlight

Last Friday, the new Washington school build was given the royal seal of approval, as Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visited the North East. Pupils from the school's choir performed for the Monarch, before she unveiled a commemorative plaque and signed her name in the visitors' book.

Head Teacher Michael O'Brien, who told us about his special week in Head to Head, said: "We were extremely honoured to have the Queen and his Royal Highness here. The day was remarkable and every member of staff and every pupil had a role to play. Children gave demonstrations in cooking and showed the Queen what they were learning in classes. The Queen said she was very impressed by the school, pupils and staff."

The new Washington building is part of Sunderland City Council's Building Schools for the Future Programme, which was designed to provide 21st Century teaching and learning facilities for pupils and teachers in the city.

Regional news

- [School restarts in wake of tragic Connor Tann's death](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Old school meets new school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Teaching assistant David Johnson cleared of assault](#) (Journal)
- [Parents' last chance to save Gillas Lane Primary School](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Education proposals welcomed](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Queen to visit school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [St Peter's School fight being taken to minister](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Leadgate school pupils create butterfly garden](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Royal approval for new school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Girl, 15, battled for school war memorial](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Gathering celebrates schools shake-up](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Pupils think of others at Christmas](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Darlington - Shuffling towards in iPod](#) (TES)

Conservative education policy

- [Tories set out schools objectives](#) (BBC News)
- [Tories to raise entry requirements for teachers](#) (Independent)
- [Conservatives would give head teachers greater powers, says Michael Gove](#) (Times)
- [Tories pledge to make schools 'engines of social change'](#) (Guardian)

School admissions

- [School place 'thieves' face crackdown](#) (Guardian)
- [School enrolment lies](#) (Guardian)
- ['Schools around me are just rubbish'](#) (Guardian)
- [Review to recommend sanctions for parents who lie to win school places](#) (Guardian)
- [Warning over school admissions 'theft'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Lying parents may get children into better schools, but they teach them to lie too](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School admissions: lotteries given green light](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School admissions: academy rules branded 'daft'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School admissions: the top scams](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [The lottery of primary school admission](#) (Times)
- [Call to punish parents who 'steal' places at best schools](#) (Independent)
- [Parents WILL face court for school place fiddles](#) (Daily Mail)

- [Schoolgate cheats? We all are now](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Spy victim mother accused of being school places cheat takes snooping council to court](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Council spied on family over school catchment area, hearing told](#) (Guardian)
- [Mother challenges council over spying powers](#) (Independent)
- [School place dispute mother sues council over use of terror powers](#) (Times)
- [Scare parents into obeying school admission rules, says head](#) (Independent)
- [No call for admissions sleuth says adjudicator](#) (TES)

International GCSE

- [State schools prevented from sitting IGCSE](#) (Times)
- [Tougher rival to GCSE exam is blocked](#) (Independent)
- [Government bars state schools from offering International GCSE](#) (Guardian)
- [GCSE alternative 'banned' in state schools](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [State school qualification ban](#) (BBC News)
- [DCSF refuses to fund IGCSE core subjects in state schools](#) (TES)

Sex education changes

- [Sex education opt out is reduced](#) (BBC News)
- [Sex education: the new curriculum](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Parents to lose rights over sex education](#) (Independent)
- [School lessons in sex through the years](#) (Times)
- [Mandatory sex lessons for every 15-year-old](#) (Times)
- [Cases for and against mandatory sex lessons](#) (Times)
- [Parents lose right over sex education](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Pupils to be forced to have sex education under the age of consent](#) (Times)
- [Religious groups challenge new rules on pre-consent lessons](#) (Times)

Sats appeals and boycott

- [Schools make 50,000 appeals against Sats results](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Appeals rise over school tests](#) (BBC News)
- [Teachers vote on Sats boycott](#) (Guardian)
- [Teachers threaten Sats boycott](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School heads receive Sats ballot forms](#) (Independent)
- [Teaching unions considering boycott to 'stop Sats in their tracks'](#) (Independent)
- [Union claims Sats boycott boosted by heads' support](#) (TES)

Academy sponsorship

- [Academy sponsor 'blocked' in standards row](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Academies sponsor ULT ordered to halt expansion](#) (Guardian)
- [Academy sponsor told to up game](#) (BBC News)

Primary news

- [Scientists win place for evolution in primary schools](#) (Guardian)
- [Haud mea culpa, somina! \(As they say in primary school\)](#) (Independent)
- [Primary curriculum is 'eyewash' without new targets, says guru](#) (TES)
- [Second expert calls for school starting age to be raised to six](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Cambridge review team, take heart – your ideas may yet triumph](#) (Guardian)

Special school news

- [Profit-making firm to run special school](#) (TES)

University places

- [Record numbers apply early for university](#) (Guardian)
- [Low exam scores 'should be no bar to top universities'](#) (Independent)
- [Teenagers with top grades not guaranteed best university places, says Lord Mandelson](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Nursery school places

- [Cash squeeze threatens free state nursery school places](#) (Guardian)
- [Nursery budget crisis could hit primaries and secondaries](#) (TES)

Physical Education

- [Older teenagers 'stop exercising'](#) (BBC News)
- [School PE lesson that has turned into a Wii class](#) (Daily Mail)

Head Teacher bonus row

- [Call to charge bonus school head](#) (BBC News)
- [Knighted headteacher resigns in wake of £1m bonuses allegation](#) (Guardian)
- [School head in £600,000 bonus scandal quits rather than face hearing](#) (Times)

Exam dumbing down

- ['Fine exam boards' that dumb down](#) (BBC News)
- [Call to fine exam boards which break the rules](#) (Independent)
- ['Sack exam chiefs over dumbed down science' says Royal Society of Chemistry](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Exams bungle deputy given three-year ban](#) (TES)

Other exam news

- ['Teaching to the test' is a rocky road](#) (TES)
- [Top pupils shun physics A-level](#) (TES)
- [Put to the test getting the tests](#) (TES)

'Institutional racism' in education

- ['Endemic racism' dashes job hopes](#) (TES)
- [Institutional racism keeps black teachers out of top posts – report finds](#) (Guardian)
- [Career paths blocked by school 'culture of racism'](#) (TES)

Health and safety

- [No paddling on school trips, children told](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Community cohesion news

- [Designated teacher for gypsies in every secondary](#) (TES)
- [Gypsy liaison officer 'in all schools'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- ['Chocolate on your face' girl, 6, branded a racist](#) (Daily Mail)
- [UK madrassas coach borderline pupils](#) (TES)

Teachers

- [Call to conquer stress](#) (TES)
- [Staffing problems](#) (TES)
- [Axe falls on only undergraduate Steiner course](#) (TES)
- [Pupil abuse allegations: anonymity plea snubbed](#) (TES)

Parents

- [Parents urged to increase schools contact](#) (Independent)

In Parliament – Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning bill

- [Ministers pledge end to meddling as they scramble to get bill passed](#) (TES)

TES Myths – discipline today

- [Myth: 'Behaviour and discipline in schools today are far worse than in the past](#) (TES)
- ['A golden age? Palpable nonsense'](#) (TES)
- [Media-fuelled myths must be laid to rest](#) (TES)

Other education news

- [Religion row head may be stripped of £400k payout](#) (TES)
- [Service children are 'ticking time bomb'](#) (TES)
- [Headteacher suspended for putting pupils in a 'cupboard'](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Now's the time to think about curriculum change](#) (TES)
- [An iPod for each pupil at Essa Academy will help school to stay in touch](#) (Times)
- [Academy is first to sweep board in all Ofsted categories](#) (TES)
- [It's desert island desks](#) (TES)
- [Gifted but in care: a generation of talent that's going to waste](#) (TES)
- [Sure Start for all 'will be a damp squib'](#) (TES)
- [Male literacy: it's a job for the SAS](#) (TES)
- [MPs question quality of Reading Recovery testing](#) (TES)
- [Harry Potter takes on evil of a different order](#) (TES)
- [How to solve the problem of truancy?](#) (Guardian)
- [Children's champion](#) (Guardian)
- [New code for school bus behaviour](#) (BBC News)
- [Italy school crucifixes 'barred'](#) (BBC News)
- [The problem with equal opportunity for all](#) (Guardian)
- [Sister school ticked off by Ofsted](#) (Guardian)
- [Healthy schoolchildren may be inoculated against swine flu](#) (Guardian)

Head to Head

This week we spoke to Michael O'Brien, Head Teacher of Washington School, who tells us about the official opening their new school building on Friday, and the importance of great support from his staff and pupils.

This week was a roller-coaster of a week in that we were still operating with one vital member of our recently 'slimmed-down' SLT missing due to sickness and the re-distribution of the workload made dealing with our official school opening more challenging.

The two best things that happened at school last week were firstly my lower ability English group seemed to be at last making progress towards understanding how to respond to exam questions in a way that made sense and, secondly, our school really pulled together in welcoming Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh to open our new £19 million building. The excitement, pride and determination of our pupils to show the school in a positive light was tangible and every role taken on by staff and pupils was carried out extremely well.

The biggest disappointment at school last week... fortunately we did not have any!

The funniest thing that happened at school last week was the Police explosives sniffer dog left a 'present' for us prior to the arrival of our guests. Thankfully we were able to remove the present well before they arrived!

One thing that would have made my job easier last week was if I had been able to delegate the organisation of the opening earlier in the planning process, but because of the secrecy of the visit I was not able to share the details with anyone else on the staff.

Top of my to-do list for this week is get back into my routine for my own starting and finishing times, which are flexible at the best of times but this past few weeks have impacted upon my quality of life and this is vital if I am to be of any value to my staff and pupils here.

My hero of last week was an assistant head teacher who took on a new and challenging task and turned it around successfully so that I did not have to worry about it.

My villain of last week was the parent who I spent an hour with explaining the need for his son to try his best in his last months of schooling and who saw no relevance whatsoever between 'lessons' and 'real life'. If he had attended parents' evenings in the past we could have discussed this earlier on in his son's career and I would have had a better chance of getting him and his son on-board.

Star pupil... *evolution*

Schools minister Diana Johnson has confirmed that the blueprint for a new primary curriculum, due to be published in the next few weeks, will contain the theory of evolution for the first time following years of lobbying by senior scientists. An open letter was sent to Ed Balls in July, signed by 25 leading figures from science and education, urging the government to rewrite the curriculum before it was finalised. The letter expressed alarm that the concept of natural selection, which it describes as "one of the most important ideas underlying biological science", was being ignored. Johnson said, in a letter to the British Humanist Association, that pupils will start with simple concepts of change, adaptation and natural selection.

Could try harder... *physics*

A study carried out by Cambridge Assessment has reported that fewer of the best GCSE candidates go on to study A-level physics than any other subject. The study found that candidate who achieve an A or A* grade in double-science GCSE are far more likely to go on to take biology or chemistry A-level than study physics. The researchers examined the results of more than 230,000 17-year-olds taking at least one A-level in the academic year 2007/2008, and also found that the percentage of male pupils taking the subject, 15.6%, was much higher than the percentage of female pupils, just 3.6%.

Opportunities and Resources

Global Gateway

Want to broaden your pupils' horizons and bring the curriculum to life? Through international school links you can:

- Introduce your pupils to the wider world;
- Make the curriculum exciting and fun.

It's easy! For free advice, ideas and funding information visit www.globalgateway.org/horizons.

Puberty and sexuality for children with a learning disability

The award winning teaching pack 'Puberty and Sexuality for Children and Young People with a Learning Disability' is now available as a PDF or PowerPoint download.

The pack was created by The Children's Learning Disability Nursing Team in Leeds, and can be accessed at www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/publications.

Edexcel Resources

Edexcel have produced a comprehensive range of interactive and live online training events which can be accessed from any computer, at any location, all over the world.

The training programmes are designed to support schools in the delivery of new and existing qualifications. To download your free copy, go to www.edexcel.com/training or email judy.lai@edexcel.com, quoting 'online'.

They are also offering free resource evaluation packs for Maths, English and ICT teaching in 2010. They have worked with experienced authors and examiners to create brand new resources including student books, teacher support and ActiveTeach software.

For more information and to register for your free evaluation pack visit www.pearsonschools.co.uk/edexcel2010, and select your subject area.

2010 Maths changes

A major change in GCSE Maths is on its way – a new curriculum and qualifications will be introduced for all GCSE Maths students from September 2010, as part of reforms in the Key Stage 4 Programme of Study. To download a free guide to the changes visit www.mathsbigchanges.com, where you can also book your place on a free seminar to find out exactly how the changes will affect you and your school.

Free Jeans for Genes resources

Jeans for Genes have launched a brand new website where you can find great free resources to use in science, citizenship and PSHE for key stages 1 to 4.

Resources include short films and animations, interactive whiteboard activities, discussion ideas and assemblies for all.

For more information and to access the resources visit www.genesareus.org.

Grants and funding opportunities

REEP Poetry Pamphlet awards for schools 2010

The Religious Education and Environment Programme are running a competition for primary and secondary schools to design a poetry pamphlet exploring the importance of rivers with an emphasis on their spiritual and religious meanings. There is a top prize of £1,000 for the winning school and

£500 for runners-up. The closing date for entries is 23 April 2010. For more information and to register your interest click [here](#).

PRS Foundation new music award

A £50,000 prize is available for a groundbreaking idea for a piece of new music. Ideas can be submitted by schools, colleges, individuals, organisations and venues. The deadline for proposals is 8 January 2010, for more information and to enter click [here](#).

Youth Music open programme

Schools can apply for a grant from £5,000 to £30,000 to support high quality music-making activities for children and young people. You can apply in partnership with at least one other school. The next deadline is 10 November, but if you miss this there are further deadlines on 10 February 2010 and 10 May 2010. For more information click [here](#).

And finally...

Tomorrow, one of the best known children's television shows in history celebrates its 40th birthday. Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, Bert, Ernie, Elmo, Cookie Monster and their colourful friends will be joined by US First Lady Michelle Obama to celebrate the 4,178th episode, and the culmination of four decades of Sesame Street. The show was launched in 1969 to help educate American pre-schoolers, and soon found its way over the Atlantic to reach our young people. The Independent's Guy Adams this week analysed what he calls an 'educational institution' and lays out why he believes Sesame Street is as relevant today as it ever was. You can read his article by clicking [here](#).

Have a great week!