

SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update

The future of our region is in school

This week...

...Sees the first two Great North Schools Engagement Events taking place in Sunderland and Newcastle, open to representatives from all primary, secondary, independent and special schools in the North East.

Great North Schools represents a fantastic opportunity for schools to take a lead in responding to the local and unique challenges of the region and to bring significant additional resource to North East schools. However, it will only succeed with your support and involvement. By attending one of the engagement events you will ensure that your ideas, views and expertise shape the content and management of the programme.

We will be holding four events at the following times and venues in January. Please feel free to attend whichever event is most convenient for you:

- 13 January, 8:30am til 12:00pm (followed by networking lunch) – Stadium of Light, Sunderland
- 15 January, 12:00 til 3:30pm (starting with networking lunch) – Kingston Park Stadium, Newcastle upon Tyne
- 21 January, 8:30am til 12:00pm (followed by networking lunch) – Radisson Hotel, Durham
- 22 January, 12:00 til 3:30pm (starting with networking lunch) – The Wynyard Rooms, Tees Valley

Click [here](#) to find out more about the Great North Schools proposal. If you would like any further information about the programme or to register for one of the engagement events, please contact a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com.

News and events

2010 New Year's Honours

We would like to offer our warmest congratulations to, Helen Clegg-Hood Head Teacher of Shiremoor Primary School in North Tyneside, who has been awarded the OBE for her services to education. Helen's school has been Head Teacher at Shiremoor for 20 years, in which time the school has received three outstanding Ofsted reports and was among 20 schools recently named in an Ofsted publication regarding schools excelling against the odds. She was also a founding member of the SCHOOLS NorthEast board. Click [here](#) to read more.

Also honoured were other notable figures from North East education, including Bill McGawley (Executive vice-chairman, TDR Group), Pamela Walker (Chair of governors, Cambo First School, Morpeth), Arlene Bell (Head Teacher, Beechdale Nursery School), Dr Anthony Best (Chief executive, Percy Hedley Foundation), Prof Michael Goodfellow (Chair of governors, Gosforth High School), Dr Richard Spencer (Biology subject leader, SRC Bede Sixth form, Billingham), Steve Mumby (Chief Executive, national College) and Sujinder Singh Sangha (Principal, Stockton Riverside College). For the full list of people honoured from the region click [here](#).

School Food Trust 'Really Good School Dinner'

The School Food Trust is working with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to host the 2010 Really Good School Dinner, a unique campaign where pupils pledge to eat school lunches every day between 25 and 29 January, donating an extra 10p each time.

Each 10p is enough to buy a meal in the WFP's School Meals Programme and helps guarantee an education for some of the poorest children in the world. Participating schools receive an information pack including lesson plans, international recipes, case studies, campaign posters and more.

Click [here](#) for full information on how your school can participate, and to watch the '10p snowball' video featuring celebrities including JLS and The Saturdays.

School Food Trust school improvement programme

The School Food Trust are offering your school the opportunity to take part in a series of three half-day workshops, held on 26 January, 23 February and 20 May 2010, to help to invoke change and make improvements to your school.

The objective of the programme is primarily to increase take up of school meals and the SFT do this by working alongside schools, using a proven improvement methodology so that schools can achieve:

- Quick effective change;
- Low cost change;
- A win-win scenario.

The programme is free and includes full access to a lot of other free resources to help you achieve your own objectives. If you would like your school to take part send your full name, title and direct telephone number to carl.morgan@sft.gsi.gov.uk.

RSPB Big Schools Birdwatch

Your school could get involved in the next Big Schools' Birdwatch, 18 January–1 February 2010, and you'll not only be taking part in the world's biggest birdwatch, but also helping to monitor UK bird numbers.

This simple bird survey is for all ages and abilities. You can do your watch either within your own school grounds or by visiting a local park, but best of all it only takes an hour to complete and is rich in curriculum links.

Click [here](#) to register online and you'll also get free access to the RSPB online community where you can keep up to date by reading the blog and exchange ideas with other teachers on the forum.

Building Schools for the Future meeting of minds conference

Northumbria University's School for the Built Environment are holding a conference bringing together teachers with design and construction professionals to discuss the BSF process. Speakers will cover the procurement, design and post occupation operating modes of BSF, offering an opportunity to debate the issues and tour a recently completed BSF school in Newcastle.

The event will take place at Newcastle Civic Centre on 26 February, with speakers to be confirmed in the next week.

Christmas card recycling

With more than 1 billion Christmas cards sent every year in the UK, encouraging pupils to recycle their Christmas cards is a great way to start off the New Year and get them thinking about recycling.

Every year the Woodland Trust launches an initiative to encourage the recycling of Christmas cards. Click [here](#) for full details on how your whole school can get involved.

The TES website also has an excellent selection of resources you can use to promote recycling Christmas cards in school. Click [here](#) for more information.

News round-up

MPs have this week called on the Government to rewrite its 21st Century Schools agenda to make it less confusing for schools. The agenda, which was introduced last year in the white paper 'Your Child, Your Schools, Your Future', proposes initiatives such as producing report cards for parents on school performance and more self-evaluation by schools.

But in its latest report on school accountability, which you can read by clicking [here](#), the Children, Schools and Families select committee warns that the agenda "signals even greater complexity in an already overly complex system of school accountability and improvement initiatives".

We would love to know what your views are on the 21st Century Schools agenda as we enter the new decade, and whether you agree with the select committee on the need for it to be less complicated. Send your thoughts to think@schoolsnortheast.com.

Regional news

- [Pupils send class help to Romanian children](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Pupils share ideas for future of Ian Ramsey School in Hartburn](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Sunderland school head in shock resignation](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Funding puts Redcar and Cleveland truancy team under review](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Acklam pupils have a say on plans for their school](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Parents unhappy at North East school closures](#) (Journal)
- [Fear of being sued stops schools from opening](#) (Journal)
- [North schools must spend their surplus cash](#) (Journal)
- [Schools' zig-zag danger warning](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Schools warned they may lose unspent £98m](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Ravenworth Junior School pupils take part in arctic tasks](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Head leads effort to open school](#) (Journal)
- [Snow bother as pupils join in the fun](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Northumberland man injured in fall at Bedlington school](#) (Journal)

Political news

- [Balls and Gove face public debate](#) (BBC News)
- [Balls attacked for failing to let MPs interview key appointee](#) (Guardian)
- [In election year, change looms large](#) (TES)

Ofsted criticisms

- [Ofsted 'becoming unwieldy' – MPs](#) (BBC News)
- ['Unwieldy and uncoordinated' Ofsted under fire from MPs](#) (Times)
- [Schools entangled in red tape, say MPs](#) (Guardian)
- [Ofsted 'stigmatising' schools, say MPs](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Ofsted inspector had teaching conduct conviction](#) (TES)
- [Ofsted told to move focus from results to teaching](#) (TES)

Conservative plans teacher scrutiny

- [Conservatives vow to target incompetent teachers](#) (Times)
- [Tories serve notice on poor teachers](#) (Independent)
- [Tories would give heads more power to fire weak teachers](#) (Guardian)
- [Tory pledge to scrutinise teachers](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Heads face uphill battle in bid to oust poor staff](#) (TES)

General news

Excess school funds

- [Schools face millions of pounds in cuts for being prudent](#) (Times)
- ['It makes us look as though we don't manage our money'](#) (Times)
- [Schools 'sitting on £2bn of tax payers' cash'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Fewer schools hold 'excess' funds](#) (BBC News)
- [Third of schools hoarding unspent cash – while number in debt rises](#) (Guardian)

School closures due to snow

- [More than 10,000 schools shut by snow](#) (BBC News)
- [Snow closes thousands of schools](#) (Times)
- [Do schools close too easily?](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Weather forces thousands of school closures](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Schools told 'open if possible'](#) (BBC News)
- [Thousands of schools forced to put the new term on ice](#) (TES)
- [Business leaders criticise school closures](#) (BBC News)
- [School closures: the hard lessons for parents](#) (Independent)
- [Passengers grit their teeth while children enjoy a day off school](#) (Guardian)

Weather exam problems

- [Snow may hit thousands of exams](#) (BBC News)
- [Exam chaos looms as more snow forecast](#) (Times)
- [Hundreds of schools reopen after freeze as exams loom](#) (BBC News)
- [A-level examinations must go on despite the snow, schools are warned](#) (Times)
- [Watchdog defends decision to carry on with exams](#) (Independent)
- [Exam boards under fire as concerns about A-levels and GCSEs increase](#) (Guardian)
- [Worry of exam delay for pupils](#) (Guardian)

Other exam news

- [School pupils 'spend a year taking exams'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Exams 'wastage'](#) (TES)
- [Science GCSE has our future in its hands](#) (TES)
- [Closure threat as 270 schools miss GCSE target](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Schools and technology

- [Why playing in the virtual world has an awful lot to teach children](#) (Guardian)
- [Blitz spirit joins the Facebook age as devastating blaze leaves school in ruins](#) (TES)
- [Off-the-wall ideas for a brave new world of global connections](#) (TES)
- [Schoolchildren told to avoid Wikipedia](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Text-talk-teens lack the right words for work](#) (Times)

Free IT equipment

- [Gordon Brown to promise free laptops and broadband for poor families](#) (Guardian)
- [Free laptops and broadband to help poor families](#) (Daily Telegraph)

New primary language curriculum

- [Mandarin 'should be available' for all English pupils](#) (BBC News)
- [Primary pupils 'should learn Mandarin'](#) (Guardian)
- [Labour to offer Arabic and Mandarin lessons to primary pupils](#) (Times)
- [Mandarin for all pupils, says Ed Balls](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Balls opens door to primary school Mandarin lessons](#) (Independent)

Faith school news

- [Faith schools facing admissions curb](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Quietly does it as Quakers look back to the future](#) (TES)

Independent school news

- [Well-off sponsor poor pupils in private schools](#) (Times)
- [New year... new chance to crack the grammar school problem](#) (BBC News)
- [Boarding schools celebrate end of Ofsted 'swindle'](#) (TES)

Michael Bichard school comments

- [Pupils left bored by 'dour' schools](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Dour schools 'are stifling pupils'](#) (Independent)

Parent effects on speech learning

- ['One in six' children have difficulty learning to talk](#) (BBC News)
- [Parents too busy to help children learn to talk, study suggests](#) (Guardian)
- [Children's speech skills are vital for future happiness and health](#) (Times)
- [Why parents should keep quiet for the bedtime story](#) (Independent)
- [Baby talk is not as easy as it looks for 17 per cent of children](#) (Independent)
- [The three-year-olds who can't speak because their parents allowed them to watch too much TV](#) (Daily Mail)

Other primary news

- [Five-year-olds to be given compulsory lessons on money, savings and debt](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Reading at five 'fails to boost skills'](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Teacher and training news

- [Career changes a new force in teacher training](#) (Guardian)
- [Shortage hits one-to-one tuition](#) (BBC News)
- [Anti-paedophile checks 'flawed', admits boss](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Unions slam move to allow unqualified mentors to supervise masters degree](#) (TES)
- [Retiring headteachers asked to help prevent recruitment crisis](#) (Independent)
- [Lightman to be new general secretary of head's association](#) (TES)
- [Serial fraudster banned from classroom](#) (TES)

Other education news

- [National curriculum being 'dumbed down'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Pupils shun expensive school dinners](#) (Daily Telegraph)

- [Can smacking your children possibly make them brainier?](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [‘The Fonz’ gets behind dyslexia campaign](#) (Guardian)
- [Girls are equal to boys in maths but lack confidence in ability, study shows](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Don’t forget to rebel: advice to teens](#) (TES)
- [‘Cut out the red tape’ says girls’ schools chief](#) (TES)
- [Honour and ‘a privilege’ for Dame Marcia](#) (TES)
- [A for adapt, B for begin now, C for change](#) (TES)
- [‘Evaluation evangelist’ searching for converts](#) (TES)
- [Neighbours from hell make school life devilish](#) (TES)
- [Effect of Reading Recovery is long term, study finds](#) (TES)

Head to Head

This week we spoke to Paul Lawrence, Head Teacher of Morpeth Newminster School and Technology College. He told us about the work he is doing with a colleague from the US, and how he used his school’s text service to keep staff and parents up to date with the problems caused by last week’s big freeze.

This week was frantic because like thousands of other schools we closed for 3 days! The week started well with all staff and students returning after the Christmas holiday and raring to go. On Monday, I had my weekly Skype video link with Dr. Talinson, Principle of Thompson Middle School, Michigan who I met at the SSAT Conference in Birmingham last November. We are forging some innovative learning links with this school in the USA. The arrival of severe snow meant that at 6.30 am on Wednesday I decided to close Newminster after consulting with our Site Manager and the other Federation Head Teachers. Our text service meant that I could inform the school leadership team, staff and parents by 7.30 a.m. though as senior leaders we did also ‘ring round’ staff! I arranged for a friend to hire a mini snow plough at the weekend to help clear the school site. On inspecting the site on Sunday it was clear and safe to use (hurray!) then it thawed!

The two best things that happened at school last week were firstly the appreciation from parents of the text service (I sent out over 2000 texts!), and secondly the time for the school leadership team to update the SEF.

The biggest disappointment at school last week was having to close for 3 days and hearing the Northumberland Tomorrow’s Leaders conference had to be postponed.

The funniest thing that happened at school last week was a query from a neighbour about how long it took me to send 2000 texts! And speaking to one colleague on Wednesday, who I’m sure was still asleep - it was 6:45am!

One thing that would have made my job easier last week was if I had had a crystal ball to see what the weather would be like for the rest of January.

Top of my to-do list for this week is to collate all the bits of the SEF.

My heroes of last week were Vince Atkin, our site manager, Jane Sampson an English teacher who walked into school to man the phones; Sharon Peverley our Home School link worker who sorted the text service database and an (as yet) unidentified 12 year old girl who helped an old lady who had fallen over on an icy path..

My villain of last week was the snow, as it has created a backlog of postponed meetings which need to be squeezed into five weeks.

My question for next week’s head is: How do teaching head’s effectively manage their time, prioritise, and keep up to date, when the pace of change and new initiatives is relentless.

Star pupil... *Computer games?*

After a YouGov poll this week stirred up the familiar worries about the effects of new media on children's communication skills, Tom Chatfield of The Observer questioned whether computer games can in actual fact impart a range of new vitally important skills on young people. He talks about how the traits of the gaming world - fairness, equality and transparency – are made all the more important by the forthcoming General Election. You can read the article in full by clicking [here](#).

This view was echoed at the recent SCHOOLS NorthEast Patron's lunch, where Lord Puttnam spoke about how computer games such as Sony's 'Little Big Planet' promote creativity, and have even been used in the classroom in America.

Could try harder... *The weather*

As you will no doubt be only too aware, the unprecedented snow this week saw thousands of schools across the North East forced to remain closed after the Christmas holidays, and with GCSE, AS and A-level module exams taking place this week some schools were left facing the possibility of postponing the tests until June. Thankfully today most schools have been able to open their doors and welcome pupils back after their unexpected extra week off.

Opportunities and resources

British Tourism Week 2010

Tourism is the sixth largest industry in the UK, contributing £76 billion to the economy and tourism is very important to the North East. In 2008, 55,000 people were employed in the tourism industry in the region and tourism contributed £3.5 million to the North East economy.

With British Tourism Week takes place from 15 to 21 March 2010, SCHOOLS NorthEast have produced an education resource on behalf of ONE North East offering everything you might need to create a lesson plan around tourism in the region. Click [here](#) to view the resource in full.

So you want to be a scientist?

Material World, BBC Radio 4's weekly science show, is searching for their Amateur Scientist of the Year. The competition is open to anybody who is not a professional scientist, and could be a fantastic opportunity for your sixth form students to work with some of the UK's leading professional scientists, with the winner presenting their work at the British Science Festival in September.

Click [here](#) for full information on the competition, and how your students can enter.

Sing Up resources

How do you make any subject as exciting as a fire-breathing space monkey? With so much going on in your pupils' heads, it can be hard to make room for the basics. Sing Up offer lesson plans and teaching resources, as well as training workshops, to show you how to use singing across the curriculum to get your class engaged.

Visit www.singup.org for more information

London 2012 Olympics – Get set

SCHOOLS NorthEast are working with regional partners to encourage as many schools and colleges in the North East to sign up to the Olympic Get Set network, a special community of schools and

colleges that all have one thing in common – they are all doing things that show they care about the Olympic and Paralympic values.

Our ambition is for the region to have the most schools signed up to the campaign which will offer great opportunities in the run up to the Olympics in 2012.

For more information and to sign up visit <http://getset.london2012.com/en/join-us>.

Grants and funding opportunities

Who Do We Think We Are Grants

As part of 'Who Do We Think We Are? Week' 2010, schools are again being offered the opportunity to apply for grants of up to £500 to develop activities linked to the focus week in June. Who Do We Think We Are? is an annual programme of advice and curriculum support that helps schools explore the issues of identity, diversity and citizenship at the local and national scales through four key themes:

- School and community
- Relationships, belonging and faith
- History and settlement
- 'Britishness', national identity/values and the 2012 Games

Click [here](#) for full information on the application process.

Roman Society funding for schools

The Roman Society's Schools Committee makes grants to schools to help promote the teaching of Latin and Roman studies. Grants usually range from £50 to £500, and are awarded for the purchase of textbooks and other books on Roman topics, but the Committee also makes awards to groups and schools organising lectures or study days on Roman themes.

For more information and details on how to apply for a grant visit www.romansociety.org/about/grants/funding-for-schools.html.

And finally...

To mark the beginning of the new term, the TES teamed up with English teacher Beverly Briggs to produce a jargon-busting A to Z of 2010 classroom speak. Entries include F for 'flexibility in the national curriculum', I for 'independent learners' and M for 'metacognition'. If you would like to bring yourself bang up to date with a thoroughly modern alphabet, click [here](#) to read the complete list.

Have a great week!