

SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update

The future of our region is in school

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Focus on...

Regular SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update readers will no doubt notice a few changes to the format this week. A few months ago we started using a new programme to send the update which allows us to track which links are clicked on the most, and by far the most popular area has been the regional news stories. We've therefore tried to focus more heavily on regional news, opportunities, funding and resources.

But we would love to know what you would like to see more of, what you would like to see less of, anything we don't do that you feel you would benefit from or anything we currently do that you think we shouldn't. And with your no doubt packed inboxes, on which day would you prefer to receive the update?

Any feedback would be most welcome to a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com, and as always if you want to share your views or opinions on anything education based from this week please get in touch at think@schoolsnortheast.com.

Finally, don't forget the remaining two Great North Schools Engagement Events are taking place in Durham and Tees Valley on Thursday and Friday this week, open to representatives from all primary, secondary, independent and special schools in the North East. Please feel free to attend whichever event is most convenient for you:

- Thursday 21 January, 8:30am til 12:00pm (followed by networking lunch) – Radisson Hotel, Durham
- Friday 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.

In the news

Regional education news

Regional education has been dominated this week by the publication of the 2009 GCSE league tables, which saw Sunnydale Community College, Berwick Community High School, Eston Park School, Churchill Community College and Tanfield School named in a DCSF report of maintained schools showing the greatest levels of sustained improvement between 2006 and 2009.

Central High School in Newcastle was the region's top performing school, while Emmanuel College in Gateshead was the best maintained school. North Tyneside was the best performing local authority in the North East, ranked 45th in the country.

Durham also fared well, with half of their secondary schools ranked in the top 10% of schools nationally for their value added scores while Gateshead has risen from 76th in the country two years ago to 53rd this year. In the separate A-level tables, Sunderland had the region's best results, ranked 19th in the country, followed closely by Newcastle and Northumberland.

Durham

- [Headteacher misses number 10 trip as invite fails to arrive](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Reassurances about new school funding given](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Inspectors praise primary school](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Hurworth Primary School to host evening highlighting refurbishment plans](#) (Northern Echo)

Gateshead

- [College raises awareness of internet risks](#) (Evening Chronicle)

Newcastle

- [Jubilee Primary School lollipop lady retires after 48 years](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Excelsior Academy pupils serve up tea dance](#) (Journal)
- [Lemony Snicket meets youngsters in Newcastle](#) (Journal)

Tyneside

- [Nurturing talent at £13m school](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Exam success for SEN pupils](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Minister congratulates Jarrow school](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School in a league of its own](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pupils celebrate best ever GCSE results](#) (Shields Gazette)

Northumberland

- [Governors admit defeat in fight to save Eglington school](#) (Journal)
- [College rated as improving, says Ofsted](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Schools reward outstanding students](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Northumberland College recovering after cash troubles](#) (Journal)

Sunderland

- [Tears as campaigners save school from axe](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [New head brought in to help out school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Schoolgirls get the boot in UGG row](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Gillas Lane Primary School saved](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Reading group off to a flier](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Teesside

- [Teesside education is improving to rank among the country's top 200](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Inspectors praise 'caring' West View primary school](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Tributes as teacher loses fight for life](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Tees Valley schools given cash reserves warning](#) (Evening Gazette)

- [Two new schools approved for Middlesbrough](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Students ace projects to take new star mark](#) (Evening Gazette)

Regionwide stories

- [School chiefs in warning over league tables](#) (Journal)
- [GCSE tables released for North East schools](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [School league tables reveal mixed picture in North East](#) (Journal)

National education news

Conservative draft manifesto

David Cameron this week launched the education section of the Conservative Party's draft manifesto, setting out plans to "enhance the prestige of the teaching profession, provide more on the job training and attract the best possible people into the profession". The manifesto also lays out plans for an overhaul of the National Curriculum and exam system, reform of school league tables and the setting up of technical Academies across England.

- [David Cameron: we will make teaching 'a noble profession again'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Tories promise to make teaching 'brazenly elitist'](#) (BBC News)
- [Tories to encourage high fliers to teach](#) (Independent)
- [Tories plan to raise teaching standards by denying funds to weak graduates](#) (Guardian)
- [The noble profession: only the elite should be given teaching jobs, says David Cameron](#) (Daily Mail)

Labour social mobility

In his response to Alan Milburn's report into social mobility, Gordon Brown has promised to help up to 130,000 of the brightest young people from poorer families get to college and university. He said they would get a "structured package of support" from 2012 to help break "the glass ceiling of social mobility". Mr Milburn's report said that professions such as law and medicine are dominated by people from affluent backgrounds.

- [Government plans to aid social mobility to be unveiled](#) (BBC News)
- [Government abandon key proposals in Milburn report on social mobility](#) (Guardian)
- [Social mobility drive a 'travesty' for private school pupils](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Class war and social mobility – not a zero sum game](#) (Observer)
- [Click here to read Alan Milburn's report in full](#)

DCSF Pupil and Parent Guarantees

The DCSF have published a consultation detailing the pupil and parent guarantees which were set out in the Children, Schools and Families Bill. While the guarantees largely cover existing requirements, new entitlements include extra support and catch-up lessons for pupils falling behind at KS1 and one-to-one tuition for pupils falling behind at KS2 or in Year 7. Personal tutors are proposed for all secondary pupils, and pupils will be able to study triple science at GCSE.

- [Government sets out details for parent and pupil guarantees](#) (CYP Now)
- [DCSF launches consultation on new role for school improvement partners](#) (eGov Monitor)
- [Click here to read the Pupil and Parent Guarantees report in full](#)

Raising achievement of white working class pupils

The NUT has published proposals for raising the achievement of white working class young people. Opening Locked Doors includes proposals for a new specific grant covering all groups of young people in need of additional intensive support (but without affecting current funding to minority ethnic groups), a similar grant which would allow schools to provide services to parents and training for school governing bodies on the relationship between social class and educational achievement.

- [Poor white pupils extra cash call](#) (BBC News)
- [NUT sets out improvements for white working-class pupils](#) (CYP Now)
- [NUT's Parliamentary launch of proposal for white working class young people](#) (politics.co.uk)
- [Teachers in call to aid white working class](#) (Independent)

Click [here](#) for a full round-up of all of the past week's education news.

Events and opportunities

Commissioning of and by schools workshop

The Schools White Paper, ASCL, Act and the 14 – 19 changes create a renewed focus upon how Children's trusts, schools and Partnerships will work to create the most effective change for children, young people and families. This workshop will work through some of the key issues facing the sector, look at the most current picture as it emerges in January 2010 and support colleagues to consider next steps.

The event will take place in Newcastle (venue details will be finalised shortly) on 26 January, and will be led by former DCS David Brown from the Commissioning Support Programme. To book a place please email Steve Davies at steve.davies@commissioningsupport.org.uk and advise of any dietary requirements.

Science Educators and Teachers Conference

The North East Regional Museums Hub Learning team is holding its annual Science Conference on 4 March at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland. The conference will explore opportunities to teach and learn from science in museums and galleries. Practical workshops and discussions will generate ideas and promote the excellent work taking place both regionally and nationally.

The event is free, but booking is essential, while limited bursaries are available to teachers to cover expenses. To book a place or for more information contact the Hub Learning Team on 0191 2639860 or email hubblearning@twmuseums.org.uk.

Use Your Loaf Conference

Use Your Loaf will be a partnership between the key organisations involved in enterprise education across the North East including Enterprise UK, Enterprise Learning Partnerships, Yong Enterprise, the Prince's Trust and the Young Chamber. They are holding a 'day of inspiration' for North East students aged 13 to 19 at Rainton Meadows Arena in Houghton le Spring on 10 March.

If your students would like to attend you can book a place by clicking here to download the PDF booking form. If you have any questions about the day please call Victoria on 0870 8502233.

Cafe Politique: Is formal education enough?

Does our education system set us up for what life throws at us? Tony Jeffs teaches community and youth work at Durham University, and he will be leading a discussion at The Urban Cafe in Dance City, Newcastle, arguing that informal education is just as important as our schooling, and that as a society we should consider taking more responsibility for the future of our young people.

The event will be held on 1 February at 7:00pm. It is free to attend and no booking is necessary, although the venue has limited seating so early arrival is advised. If you would like more information email l.sweeney@ippr.org.

BBC outstanding teachers

The BBC is looking for an inspirational teacher whose story deserves to be told, and we would love the name of a teacher from the North East to be put forward. Perhaps they have brought new and innovative methods to the classroom with outstanding results, or thrown away the rule book only to prove their way actually does work. They may have transformed a school, a class, or perhaps simply touched individual lives. They are also interested in hearing the stories of classroom assistants, school supervisors and other educational professionals.

For an informal chat contact Gemma Collins on 02920 322572 or gemma.collins2@bbc.co.uk.

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.

Royal Opera House KS3 fanfare competition

The Royal Operas House are looking for striking musical fanfares to be played front of house before performances. Pupils aged between 11 and 14 are being invited to create a fanfare of no more than 30 seconds, with the best entries arranged, recorded and played at the Royal Opera House.

For more information visit www.roh.org.uk/fanfare or email fanfare@roh.org.uk.

Grants and funding

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.

Inspire! Food competition

The Grain Chain and License to Cook are running a competition for the teachers of pupils aged between 11 and 14 who can demonstrate a passion and flair for practical food-based work in the classroom. The overall winner will be awarded £1500, and five other finalists will receive £300, with all prize money to be spent on enhancing food work at school.

You can find full information and an entry form at www.grainchain.com/competition.

BT Internet Rangers of the year award

BT have introduced a £5000 grant awarded to the school or group of schools which does the most to promote and increase intergenerational activity to the wider community as part of their Internet Rangers scheme. Launched in 2003, Internet Rangers sees young people attempt to bridge the digital divide by helping older generations acquire basic computer skills.

For full information on the scheme and how to enter, visit www.btinternetangers.co.uk.

Resources and ideas

Cancertalk week

Is Cancertalk week, giving teachers the opportunity to talk to pupils about cancer, reducing misconceptions and fears about a disease that many children and young people are affected by, whether diagnosed themselves or knowing a friend, relative or teacher with cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Support have a fantastic Cancertalk resource guide for teachers and youth leaders, offering information, support and resources to assist with talking to young people about cancer. Click [here](#) to visit the website, which includes class activities, information, support and details of how your school can get involved.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

You may also want to start planning this week for marking Holocaust Memorial Day in your school, which takes place on 27 January. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust have set up a website specifically aimed at teachers in the UK, offering lesson plans, worksheets, activities and assembly materials which are appropriate for primary, secondary, and post 16 education across all curriculum subjects. Click [here](#) to access the site.

Discover LabSkills from the Royal Society of Chemistry

LabSkills is an interactive web tool aiming to revolutionise the way A-level practical chemistry is taught, enabling both teachers and chemistry students to carry out pre-work ahead of practical classes, maximising the quality of the time they spend in the laboratory.

The Discover LabSkills project is offering all UK schools free access to the teaching resource for a 3-month period via their website at www.labskills.co.uk.

Head to Head

This week we spoke to Iain Veitch, Head Teacher of Park View Community School in Chester le Street, Durham. He told us about the importance of his school's site staff and an interesting approach to MFL teaching.

This week was interesting as the continuance of the snow visibly began to take its toll both on the staff and the students. It feels like we have taken longer to settle down than usual after Christmas and the young people, in particular, seem to be varying between tiredness and excitement.

The two best things that happened at school last week were firstly the Achievers' Lunch which we held for students in Years 7 and 8, as this is always a great time to spend time with and thank students who always give of their best, and secondly, in a similar vein, seeing Year 11 students genuinely delighted by their results in GCSE English, following examinations which they took in November.

The biggest disappointment at school last week was seeing that there was still so much ice/snow on the ground

The funniest thing that happened at school last week was in a Year 8 French lesson. The teacher had spent £35 on bread, cheeses etc for the students to taste but when she asked a young boy what had been his favourite, he replied, 'Miss, the Orangina was lovely!' Money well spent!!

One thing that would have made my job easier last week would be someone taking control over the data madness which has gripped this country's education system. We have a proliferation of systems, each producing different results, which we have to make sense of for our lords and masters, many of whom actually believe that they are reliable, valid measures of how effectively children are being educated. Consequently the testing empire continues to grow and the money continues to be wasted. At some point, surely someone in power must realise that the statistics emperor has no clothes on!

Top of my to-do list for this week is to update my SEF in preparation for Ofsted's 'desk-top exercise'.

My heroes of last week were my site staff, who continue to clear paths, car parks etc every day, almost like Canute pushing back the tide, without ever complaining. Indeed, my site manager put all of the examination desks up on Sunday to ensure he would be free on Monday morning to make sure the grounds were safe for students sitting those examinations. The unsung heroes of the education world

My villain of last week was actually the drive time presenter on Radio Newcastle the Friday before – at the end of a long, hard week, the last thing I needed was to hear that he was holding a phone-in entitled 'Have teachers let your children down by closing schools this week?' 44% of the workforce absent yet we are the villains of the peace again!

How do teaching Head Teachers effectively manage their time, prioritise and keep up to date when the pace of change and new initiatives is relentless? Prioritise what is important by always keeping the students at the forefront of your vision and deciding what will have impact upon them; everything else, give cursory attention to or deal with very quickly. Having a dynamic, intelligent, forward-think Senior Leadership Team who have specific responsibilities and can sift out what is important in their areas is also vital. The alternative is to be like Boxer in 'Animal Farm' and accept 'I must work harder!' as your mantra – he ended up literally in the knacker's yard!

My question for next week's head is: How do we sustain the momentum for change in the run up to an election when all major parties seem to differ so much in their view of education?

Star pupil... *improving North East schools*

Congratulations to Sunnydale Community College, Berwick Community High School, Eston Park School, Churchill Community College and Tanfield School who were all named in a DCSF report of maintained schools showing the greatest levels of sustained improvement between 2006 and 2009 following the publication of the GCSE league tables. They will be receiving letters of congratulations from ministers to mark their achievement.

Could try harder... *the IGCSE*

Just a year after taking up the controversial IGCSE exam, The Times reported this week independent schools are scrapping the qualification, which is not recognised by the Government in the league tables. This meant that schools may have received stunning results but still plummeted to the bottom of the tables when they were published this week. The qualification was meant to offer greater stretch and challenge to pupils, but fears that candidates grades and chances of a good university place will be reduced by the IGCSE have caused the u-turn.

And finally...

An Ofsted report has revealed this week how schools are abandoning traditional teaching methods in favour of extravagant lessons designed to appeal to bored pupils. In 'Learning: creative approaches that raise standards', Ofsted said that in one case a school staged a London Fashion Week style event in which pupils learned about the technology and science behind the clothing industry. It also reveals how a teacher told pupils to come up with a dance routine to develop their understanding of chemical bonding in a science lesson, and how the same school staged a mock crime scene in the school gym to create interest in forensic enquiry.

Click [here](#) to read the report in full, and possibly be inspired...

Plus congratulations to Jubilee Primary School lollipop lady Vera Ralph, who has decided the time has come to hang up her lollipop after 48 years helping pupils across the road outside the school in Wallsend. Vera, who will retire next month, said the decision was the hardest of her life: "It's a very sad decision for me, but I'm 80 this year and I think it's about time I had a bit of sunshine" she said, adding "I'll miss the bairns mind".

Have a great week!