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- All the latest regional and national education news
- Information on a new Regional Associate opportunity with the National College
- Details of your school can secure up to £250 funding for a long-term sustainable project

Focus on... *the future of school improvement*

SCHOOLS NorthEast are pleased to welcome Prof Mel Ainscow to the region this week to deliver a free breakfast seminar.

As Professor of Education and co-director of the Centre for Equity in Education at the University of Manchester, Mel has published extensively on issues including school improvement, inclusion and methods of inquiry. As the Government's Chief Adviser for the Greater Manchester Challenge, Mel is leading the £50 million programme that aims to make significant impacts on educational performance across that region.

This seminar will provide a unique opportunity to take part in a discussion of the future of school improvement with one of the country's leading academics and most influential figures in education. It will take place at the Radisson Hotel in Durham on tomorrow morning from 8:00am (for 08:30am start) to 10:00am.

There are also still a few places available for an exclusive free employment surgery SCHOOLS NorthEast are holding alongside Newcastle-based commercial law firm Muckle LLP for all primary, secondary, independent and special schools in the North East. The seminar will give practical advice on how to address current legal issues affecting schools and colleges, focusing on 'Managing Poor Performance' and 'Sickness and Absence'.

The event is open to Head Teachers and school senior management teams, and will take place from 8:30am to 11:00am on 25 February at the Muckle LLP offices in Newcastle upon Tyne. Click [here](#) for details on the location of the Muckle LLP offices. If you would like any further information or to reserve a free place at the surgery please contact Ruth Craig at Muckle LLP on (0191) 211 7930 or email rcraig@muckle-llp.com, stating your name, job title, organisation, address, telephone number and email address.

In the news

Regional news

Darlington

- [Internet safety campaign targets region's parents](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- [Fresh objection set to delay Consett Academy](#) (Journal)
- [PM Brown holds cabinet meeting at Durham school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Public quiz the cabinet on North East visit](#) (Evening Chronicle)

- [School praised by Ofsted](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Brown learns lessons during day of history at new school](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Governor cautioned over porn](#) (Northern Echo)

Newcastle

- [Wallsend pupils perform old North East songs](#) (Evening Chronicle)

Tyneside

- ['Happy' school earns praise from Ofsted](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School celebrating a great report](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [A new wind is blowing at Killingworth School](#) (Journal)
- [MPs meet parents over special schools plan](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pupils get lesson in culture](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [More kids could get free school meals](#) (Shields Gazette)

Northumberland

- [Mardi Gras marks flip side of pancake day](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Teachers through to final of Live and Unsigned talent show](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Pupils look to save their library](#) (News Post Leader)
- [School is top of the class](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Election time as pupils go to the polls](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Northumberland parents enraged at loss of school field](#) (Journal)
- [Logical plan to Branton pupil problem](#) (Journal)
- [Ground-breaking Head Teacher Liz Clubbs retires](#) (Journal)
- [Tributes pour in for inspiring Northumberland teacher](#) (Journal)
- [Girls bring school's past to life](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Dragon is classroom](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Voila! Dinner is served](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Half term police patrols prevent vandalism](#) (News Post Leader)
- [School fundraiser all adds up to helping children](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Pupils step out for hospice](#) (Morpeth Herald)

Sunderland

- [Fulwell pupils get crash course on net safety](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Inspectors give school thumbs-up](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Three same-school pals aim for Eton scholarship](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Caretaker faced school raiders](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Teesside

- [Preston park on Stockton school shortlist](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Meat-free Monday introduced at Bydale School](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Stockton pupils scoop award for green club](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Last-ditch attempt to save Teesside schools](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Stockton primary school wins Ofsted praise](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Pupils to get sneak preview of eco-friendly school](#) (Northern Echo)

National education news

Funding for most deprived pupils fails to improve results

An official independent evaluation has found that a £250 million Government scheme to transform education in England's most deprived areas has failed to improve results, and has even had a negative effect on some. The £2 billion New Deal for Communities programme has seen £249 million spent directly on education since 2002, but according to the study by Oxford's Social Disadvantage Research Centre there has been no "statistically significant improvements".

However, in a study of KS3 and GCSE results there was a rise in KS3 science and GCSE passes in Sunderland, although in Hartlepool numbers at the recommended level in English at KS3 had declined by 4% and KS4 performance fell by 14%.

- [£250m on deprived pupils fails to improve results](#) (TES)
- [£250 million Government investment 'made no difference' to deprived schools](#) (Daily Telegraph)

Labour promise parent power plan

Gordon Brown has today announced that parents will be given the opportunity to vote on whether struggling schools should be run by a different organisation including accredited school trusts such as Outward Grange or school providers such as Sunderland University. The Prime Minister was giving a speech on raising standards in which he promised parents 'a strong voice'. This has prompted NUT general secretary Christine Blower says that all this is doing is complicating the system.

- [Brown pledges parent school vote](#) (BBC News)
- [Brown makes pledge on parent power](#) (Press Association)
- [Labour tries to counter Tory school reform proposals](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Teachers attack more 'parent power' in schools](#) (Times)

Government U-turn on sex education policy

Ministers were accused this week of caving into pressure from faith schools over plans to make sex and relationships education lessons compulsory in schools from 2011. The Catholic Education Service released a statement saying that the Government had introduced a late amendment which would allow schools to teach the lessons in line with their religious beliefs. This prompted Ed Balls to say that the amendment would not 'water down' the plans, and that the changes were 'overdue and radical'.

- [Claim of U-turn on sex education](#) (BBC News)
- [Fury over U-turn on sex education in faith schools after amendment](#) (Times)
- [Victory for faith schools as Labour's new sex education laws are 'watered down'](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Ministers 'in a terrible muddle' over sex education](#) (Independent)
- [Ed Balls denies offering faith schools opt-out from sex education rules](#) (Guardian)
- [Balls defends last minute 'U-turn' on sex education](#) (Times)
- [Sex education 'not watered down' says Ed Balls](#) (BBC News)
- [Balls denies watering down sex education bill](#) (Channel 4 News)

Factors that influence a parent's choice of primary school

A study published this week by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies revealed that most parents put school performance behind other factors when choosing a primary school. The school closest to home, small class sizes and childcare are all more important than high academic achievement according to the study, part of the 'Children of the 21st Century' which is tracking 18,000 children as they grow up, and the attitudes of their parents.

- [League tables 'do not influence' parents' choice of school, study says](#) (Times)

- [Parents 'too fatalistic' in choosing schools](#) (Independent)
- [Parents fatalistic over school choice](#) (BBC News)
- [Researchers track lives of 19,000 British children](#) (Guardian)

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

Events and opportunities

Change in date of BSF Meeting of Minds Conference

The Building Schools for the Future Meeting of Minds conference which was to be held this Friday has now been postponed until 26 March.

Shadow Minister for Schools and Families Lord Bates has been confirmed as the keynote speaker at the event which will be held at Newcastle Civic Centre. The conference will bring together stakeholders in the Building Schools for the Future programme, including Governors and Head Teachers. The morning will provide a forum for participants in the BSF programme to take stock of their experience, exchange good practice in the design and procurement of facilities and make recommendations to enhance the progress of the BSF scheme, while in the afternoon there will be an opportunity to visit Kenton School in Newcastle, a recently completed BSF project incorporating a biomass boiler.

Places are £60 including refreshments, lunch and transport to Kenton School. To book your place or for more information please contact Amanda McManus on (0191) 261 7441 or email riba.northeast@inst.riba.org.

Show Racism the Red Card Educating for Equality

Show Racism the Red Card are hosting two free conferences for school leaders in the North East aimed at tackling discrimination and promoting equality. The first conference is on the subject of Islamophobia and will be held on 15 March at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, and the second conference is on the subject of homophobia and will be held on 22 March at the same venue.

If you would like any further information on these events or to book a free place click [here](#).

New National College Regional Associate

The National College are recruiting for a new regional associate for the North East. There are two regional associates in each Government region, with the post being held for two years for two or three days a week, usually on a secondment basis. As Pete Davies will be completing his second year as regional leader in September, and therefore a new North East representative will be required from later this year.

The post is open to Head Teachers of all phases, and recruitment will go live this Friday for two weeks. If you would like to discuss the role in the North East please contact current North East Regional Leaders Pete Davies on 07769 936696 or Maureen Bates on 07971 329760, or alternatively contact Regional Facilitator Jeni Ling on 07973 313822.

14-19 Reform online conference

Iain Wright MP (Under Secretary of State for 14-19 Reform and Apprenticeships) and Stephen Meek (Director of Young People, Qualifications, Strategy and Reform) will be taking part in an online conference with the National College on 3 March from 4:00 to 5:00pm.

This is a great chance to question the ministers directly on the reforms, as well as taking part in a discussion of successful implementation and the barriers that might prevent it. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the conference.

PR and communications support for North East schools

SCHOOLS NorthEast have once again teamed up with Newcastle University to offer communications, marketing and PR support to schools. If you have an area in your school that you feel would benefit from some additional help, from a school newsletter to a full PR campaign, send your details along with details of the type of support you require to a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com.

In addition to this activity, we are developing an ongoing PR support service which will be launched later this year. A central aim of SCHOOLS NorthEast is to create positive publicity and advocate on behalf of North East schools, promoting their quality and diversity. We understand that is often hard to find the capacity within schools to proactively promote your achievements and activities. We are therefore developing mechanisms for our schools to access media and PR specialist support when needed and offering media training opportunities for school leaders.

CEM latest information system pilot

Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring is extending its INSIGHT system to include Year 8 following requests from teachers, and they are offering North East schools the chance to trial the new system for free. Designed to provide a comprehensive pupil profile, INSIGHT stems from the tried and tested Yellis, MidYIS and SOSCA assessment systems and provides measures of curriculum, developed ability and student attributes.

If your school would be interested in taking part in the trial contact a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com or call 0191 280 5037.

TDA world languages survey

The Training and Development Agency for Schools has commissioned research to identify the issues around language delivery in schools to be used as part of the long term strategy for sustainable, fair and expert delivery of all world languages in schools in England.

A significant feature of the research is a survey for Head Teachers, teachers and teaching support staff the opportunity to share their experiences of language learning. If you would like to take part visit www.tda.gov.uk/worldlanguages.

Grants and funding

B&Q One Planet Living grants

The B&Q One Planet Living grant offers between £50 and £250 of B&Q materials to schools for long term sustainable projects which fall under one of the following themes: 'grow your own', 'support local culture and heritage', 'save energy' or 'conserve nature'.

Schools can apply to their local B&Q store (within a 20 mile radius of your school), talking to the store manager or environmental champion about your project and how your pupils will get involved. For full information on the scheme and details on how to apply, click [here](#).

National School Quiz 2010 for pupils aged 8 and 9

The National School Quiz offers your pupils a fun and interactive way of learning, and could win your school £3000 worth of ICT equipment or training.

This year's quiz includes categories sponsored by the Science Museum, Natural History Museum and Historic Palaces. Pupils can enter on their own or in teams of up to ten, with prizes awarded for individuals, teams and schools. To register before 11 March visit www.nen.gov.uk/nsq.

Creative Partnerships funding

The application process for the Creative Partnerships Enquiry school programme opens on 1 March for the 2010/2011 academic year, with £3,000 of funding available for schools to explore, over the course of a year, how a creative approach can address a particular aspect of a school improvement plan or other need. The deadline for applications is 1 June 2010.

Full information can be found at www.creative-partnerships.com where you can download guidance information and FAQ documents.

Resources and ideas

The primary curriculum is changing

Free information, guidance and support is available from QCDA's National Curriculum website at www.qcda.gov.uk/curriculum where you can:

- Explore the new curriculum to be introduced from September 2011
- Try out innovative curriculum design tools
- Watch case studies to see how the new curriculum has inspired schools to make real improvements
- Find out about support networks and events.

Narrowing the gaps in primary mathematics

'Moving on in mathematics: Narrowing the Gaps' sets out ways to help subject leaders and teachers in primary schools to be more successful in narrowing the gaps in attainment in mathematics. The guidance addresses key elements that impact on attainment such as attitudes, aspirations, behaviour and attendance, issues that relate to gender, mathematical knowledge and skills, language and fit-for-purpose pedagogy.

For each key element there is guidance on what to look out for and suggestions as to how practice might be adapted or changed. To access the booklet visit www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/ad24/ntgmaths.

Star pupil... *Durham Johnston School*

Durham Johnston School hit the national headlines this week when Prime Minister Gordon Brown held a meeting of the Cabinet in their new building. Before the behind-closed-doors discussion, a special public engagement event allowed members of the public to question the Ministers about their own personal issues. It is the first time the Cabinet has ever met in the North East, and the first time they have ever met in a school anywhere in the country. Education was high on the agenda, with Ed Balls saying the best schools were those that gave pupils a voice.

- [Gordon Brown's cabinet meet in Durham city school](#) (BBC News)
- [Brown Cabinet on school visit](#) (Press Association)
- [PM Brown holds cabinet meeting at Durham school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Public quiz the cabinet on North East visit](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Brown learns lessons during day of history at new school](#) (Northern Echo)

Could try harder... *traditional school uniform*

Official guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission has warned schools this week that insisting that girls wear skirts may breach the rights of transsexual pupils who feel compelled to live as boys. The watchdog, which has enforcement powers against public bodies that break equality law, said: "requiring pupils to wear gender specific clothes is potentially unlawful. Pupils born female with gender dysphoria experienced great discomfort from being forced to wear stereotypical girls' clothes".

- [Girls, you can take the skirts off](#) (Sunday Times)
- [Schoolgirls could be allowed to swap skirts for trousers](#) (Sunday Telegraph)
- [Plans to ban school skirts](#) (The Sun)

And finally...

The cost of bringing up a child has risen to over £200,000 for the first time, according to figures released this week by investment and insurance group LV=. The survey showed that education costs on average £52,881, second only behind childcare which came in at an average of £54,696. 77% of parents said that they had been forced to cut back on expenditure during the past year because of the recession, although the average pocket money level rose by 5% to a lifetime total per child of £4,338.

Have a great week!