

## SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update

*The future of our region is in school*

### This week...

Will see the debate continue over last week's publication of the Cambridge Primary Review, the biggest enquiry into primary education in 40 years.

The Cambridge University-led review was based on 28 research surveys, 1052 written submissions and 250 focus groups, and was undertaken by 14 authors, 66 research consultants and a 20-strong advisory committee led by Professor Robin Alexander, one of the most experienced educational academics in the country.

The key recommendations laid out by the report are:

- Delay formal lessons until a child turns six, allowing them to focus on play-based learning so those who struggle at the age of four or five are not put off for life.
- Scrap Sats and league tables and replace them with teacher assessments in a wider range of subjects that just the three Rs, to encourage primaries to focus on the broader curriculum.
- A review of the system of general primary teachers to introduce more specialist teachers in history, music and languages.
- Funding should be increased to match that spent in secondaries on extra staffing, while teachers should have two years post-graduate training instead of one.

The review's conclusions have been backed by every education union in England, but have come under criticism from some teachers and Government ministers. We want to know what you think.

Should teachers be the judge of when a child is ready to start formal learning? What would you like to see in place of Sats and league tables? What do you see as the areas of concern in the primary sector? How does the future of primary education look to you? Send your thoughts to [think@schoolsneast.com](mailto:think@schoolsneast.com).

### Cambridge Primary Review dissemination conference

A dissemination conference will be held in Newcastle on 3 December 2009 as part of a nationwide series of events to discuss the review's main findings and recommendations, and to consider the implications for national policy, schools, local authorities, teacher education and research.

The conference is designed for primary school Head Teachers, senior local authority personnel and leaders in teacher education and research. The conference discussion groups will offer participants the option of working within their professional constituencies (schools, LAs, teacher training providers) or across them.

The conference fee is £225 plus VAT, which covers attendance for the day, morning coffee, sit-down lunch, conference pack and a copy of the Cambridge Primary Review final report. To book your place call 0844 800 5317 or go to [www.teachersfirst.org.uk/cpr](http://www.teachersfirst.org.uk/cpr).

### News and events

#### Local Government Summit 2010 call for schools

The North East Local Government Summit 2010 will outline the vision for the future and address how we can meet the challenges and opportunities facing the sector at such an important time. This high

profile event is the first of its kind in the North East, bringing together local authority councillors and officers from across the region's 12 councils and partner organisations.

Young people from the region are being invited to share their views through three five minute DVDs to be shown at the start of each session. This is a great opportunity for your pupils to work with key decision makers in shaping our region's future.

Pupils from participating schools will be invited to take part in the Summit, joining other delegates in the afternoon breakout sessions. If your school are interested in taking part in the event and you would like more detailed information contact [a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com](mailto:a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com).

### **DCSF Toolkit one year on**

In October 2008 the DCSF published a toolkit called 'Learning Together to be Safe' with practical advice on what schools could do to contribute towards the prevention of violent extremism.

On 17 November they will be hosting a conference to revisit the toolkit one year on from publication and give an opportunity for partners, including school leaders, local authorities and police, to meet and learn about the good practice that has been developed.

The conference will be structured around the 'tiered approach' described in the toolkit, from universal, through targeted, to specialist actions that schools may need to take and delegates will be encouraged to visit workshops and exhibits from all three areas.

For more information and to register your place go to [www.learningtogethertobesafeevent.co.uk](http://www.learningtogethertobesafeevent.co.uk). Places are limited so booking as soon as possible is advised. If you have any further questions contact [learningtogethertobesafeevent@comshows.com](mailto:learningtogethertobesafeevent@comshows.com) or 020 8747 4317.

### **Schools against waste workshop**

The Regional Improvement and Efficiency Programme and Waste Aware North East are working together to develop a project that will help change the behaviour of schools, students and families towards waste.

They are hosting a workshop that will enable them to update you on their project and the feedback they have received to date. You will also have an opportunity to help to develop the project in a way that will provide schools in the North East with the maximum benefits.

The workshop will be held at 4pm on Tuesday 3 November at the Woodhorn Museum and Country Park. Refreshments will be served on arrival. To book a place contact Jo Bennison on [jobennison@daxi.co.uk](mailto:jobennison@daxi.co.uk) or 07815 754931 with your name and school.

### **Juice Festival**

This half term, Newcastle and Gateshead will host the Juice young people's festival, with a packed programme of events, performances, sporting activities and entertainment. With over 40 events ranging from hip-hop to poetry, film-making to music and comedy to free-running, there are a huge range of things for your pupils to see and do.

The festival will run from 22 October to 8 November, and highlights include XPerience 09, where skateboarders, BMXers and inline skaters show off their skills in Tynemouth, Haircuts by Children where pupils from Walkergate Primary School will be styling in Newcastle and the Ouseburn Valley Family Day, where children lead their families on a history tour of the Ouseburn Valley.

The full programme can be viewed by clicking [here](#), where you can also find more information on times and location of all of the events.

## BBC Radio 3 free thinking festival

What would your pupils say are the big ideas for the future? Free Thinking is their chance to share them, and explore other big ideas alongside today's leading thinkers, artists, scientists and writers.

Maybe they could benefit from perfecting the art of listening with composer **William Orbit**, hearing what makes the Foreign Secretary **David Miliband** tick, exploring an invisible **'Word Forest'**, talking books with best-selling author **Lionel Shriver** or convincing the world of what it should be doing as a **Young Ranter**.

The full brochure is available at [www.bbc.co.uk/freethinking](http://www.bbc.co.uk/freethinking). Tickets for all events are free, but must be booked in advance. To reserve your place, please call The Sage Gateshead Ticket Office on 0191 443 4661 or visit [www.thesagegateshead.org](http://www.thesagegateshead.org).

## News round-up

### Regional news

- [Northumberland schools told to collaborate for a future](#) (Journal)
- [College sponsors training award](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Academy welcomes new students](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Class under glass help Blue Peter star](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Schoolchildren set to enjoy films for free](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Pupils sign to World Cup bid to win a star visit](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Teachers threaten to strike if head returns](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Students learn what schools have to offer](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Houghall College on course for change](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Cuddles of love from children](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Students are on board with eco-campaign](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy slams country's schools](#) (Journal)
- [Exam results worry North East business leaders](#) (Journal)
- [Branksome School officially launched as specialist science college](#) (Northern Echo)
- [School's bus appeal](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Are we forcing our children to learn too early?](#) (Journal)

### Cambridge Primary Review

- [Delay formal lessons 'to age six'](#) (BBC News)
- [Start school at six, key schools report recommends](#) (Guardian)
- [Devastating criticism of primary schools dismissed by ministers](#) (Guardian)
- [The Cambridge primary review's key findings](#) (Guardian)
- [Starting too early can harm child](#) (Guardian)
- [The pupil: 'you want to know some things'](#) (Guardian)
- [Children start school too young – wait till they're six, experts say](#) (Times)
- [Too much too soon or a crucial chance to interact?](#) (Times)
- [Families playing a numbers game with starting age in schools](#) (Times)
- ['Start formal lessons at six'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Scrap Sats tests, experts say](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Tough on standards, tough on tests](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Minister rejects plan to start lessons at six](#) (Independent)
- [A study that should sound the death knell for league tables](#) (Independent)
- [Children should start school at six says Cambridge review of primary education](#) (Daily Mail)

- [Children 'can start school at four', parents are told](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Disadvantage lies at the heart of primary review](#) (TES)
- [Generation of pupils being put off school, report says](#) (Independent)
- [Specialist teachers for infants](#) (Daily Telegraph)

#### Other primary school news

- [Boys 'lagging further behind girls'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Drop-outs at five?](#) (Guardian)
- [Vocational training for five-year-olds](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Results improve in all six areas of foundation stage](#) (TES)
- [Nappy curriculum 'boosts basic skills'](#) (Guardian)
- [Children struggle in school with lack of basic language skills](#) (Times)

#### New Children's Commissioner

- [Ed Balls rejects bully claims](#) (Guardian)
- [Balls overrides committee of MPs to appoint new children's chief](#) (Guardian)
- [Barry Sheerman on Ed balls' record in office](#) (Guardian)
- [Balls dismisses appointment row](#) (BBC News)
- [Ed Balls branded 'bully' by MP](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Ed Balls branded a 'bully' by MPs as he railroads appointment of Children's Commissioner](#) (Daily Mail)

#### Sir Terry Leahy criticism

- [Labour's school system has failed businesses like ours, says Tesco boss](#) (Guardian)
- [Tesco boss raps school standards](#) (BBC News)
- [Tesco boss criticises UK education system](#) (Times)
- [Tesco boss: school standards too low](#) (Independent)
- [Sir Terry Leahy's attack on lack of basic skills hits a nerve](#) (Sunday Times)

#### Conservative reform plans

- [Tories favour Swedish-inspired schools system](#) (Sunday Times)
- [Puzzle over missing pieces of Gove reforms](#) (TES)

#### GCSE results

- [Fewer than half get GCSE minimum](#) (BBC News)
- [Half of students in state schools hit government target](#) (Guardian)
- [Half of students 'failing to get good GCSEs'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Words and numbers leave us divided](#) (TES)

#### A-level results

- [A-levels: one in eight students scores straight As](#) (Daily Telegraph)

#### Home schooling

- [Home educators' worry at register](#) (BBC News)
- [Don't intrude, say parents who educate children at home](#) (Guardian)
- [Children educated at home are at severe disadvantage, study shows](#) (Guardian)
- [Children in home education](#) (TES)

- [New schools born on YouTube](#) (Sunday Times)
- [If home-schooling is good for our children it is for us to say](#) (Daily Telegraph)

#### Academies

- [Academies approval](#) (TES)
- [Tories attract new backers for plan to boost academies](#) (Times)
- [Tory academies could have a cult following](#) (TES)

#### Independent school news

- [Parents back plans for independent state schools](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Pupils from independent schools four times more likely to gain three As at A-Level](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Private school students 'moving to the state'](#) (Daily Telegraph)

#### Teachers

- [Headteachers stash the cash in preparation for redundancies avalanche](#) (TES)
- [Publish on the Net and you may be damned](#) (TES)
- [One of the incompetent 12: teacher struck off for five years of failings](#) (TES)
- [Teacher 'forged essays to improve pupils' marks'](#) (Times)
- [Side deals push head teacher's pay to £400,000](#) (Sunday Times)

#### School place 'lottery'

- [Rise in lottery allocation of school places](#) (Guardian)
- [Children will win secondary school places subject to 'lottery'](#) (Times)

#### Deaf facilities

- [Balls intervenes to force provision of deaf facilities](#) (TES)
- [Open-plan school hearing problems](#) (BBC News)

#### Sikh dagger incident

- [Boy's Sikh dagger in school ban](#) (BBC News)
- [Sikh pupil removed from school after ban on traditional dagger](#) (Times)
- [Sikh schoolboy sent home in uniform row](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School bans Sikh pupil over holy dagger](#) (Independent)
- [Dagger denied](#) (TES)

#### Art accident fine

- [Schoolgirl lost fingers in plaster of Paris](#) (Independent)
- [Fine as art pupil loses fingers](#) (BBC News)
- [Girl lost fingers in art class blunder](#) (Times)
- [School fined £19k after girl loses most of her fingers in BTec artwork accident](#) (TES)

#### Science news

- [Diplomas in science 'cannot work'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Rocket science for kids](#) (Guardian)

#### Technology in classrooms

- [Notre Dame High School to let pupils use mobiles in the classroom](#) (Times)

#### Standards and achievements

- [Britain 'embarrassed' by academic achievements, says head](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [School standards rise 'has been exaggerated'](#) (Daily Telegraph)

#### Exclusions

- [Excluded by schools and referral units, then let down by the system](#) (TES)
- [Appeals plummet by 40% within a decade](#) (TES)

#### Other education news

- [School quango 'paid staff £1.2m in bonuses'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Yoga and circus skills replace school rugby](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- ['Stark split' in education levels](#) (BBC News)
- [£5bn spent on SEN fails to boost results, says top official](#) (TES)
- [Reigning Supreme: student trial honour](#) (TES)
- [Balls' new champion](#) (TES)
- [Safety checks kick off](#) (TES)
- [Here's looking at you!](#) (TES)
- [Running riot in the corridors of power](#) (TES)
- [Anger grows over refused Sats appeals](#) (TES)
- [Legal threat over closure mishandling](#) (TES)
- [Another Dunblane: why it's 'when' and not 'if'](#) (TES)
- [Alexander review: give us back our schools](#) (TES)
- [PM's golden award](#) (TES)

## Head to Head

This week we spoke to Hazel Scott, Head Teacher of Guidepost Ringway First School in Choppington, Northumberland. Hazel told us about their Divali Festival, and how the pupils have all worked together on enterprise projects which have seen the school awarded three trophies this term. For pictures showing the ways Ringway include enterprise into their curriculum click [here](#).

**The two best things that happened at school last week were** firstly that I really enjoyed the whole school working together first to produce products for our Divali festival and then as part of our enterprise activities to sell our goods to parents, grandparents and our neighbours. Secondly I really enjoyed the lovely service at the local church which our pupils delivered with Reverend Moat, outlining harvest customs around the world. The day was completed when our older children visited the local residential home to distribute the harvest gifts.

**The biggest disappointment at school last week was...** I don't think I had any this week!

**The funniest thing that happened at school last week was** watching staff and students trying out different recipes to make Indian sweets to sell at our festival. Listening to the instructions and ideas and tasting some of the efforts was indeed an experience I will never forget, and neither will the fudge maker!

**One thing that would have made my job easier last week was** less paperwork and more staff.

**Top of my to-do list for this week is** I suppose I'd better make a start on the school self evaluation forms.

**My hero of last week was** all of the children in the school, but a special thank you to the year 3 and 4 staff who organised the festival from start to finish.

**My villain of last week was** the school cook as I had to help out in the kitchen!

**Why do you love your job?** Every day brings a new challenge and a new focus. We work very hard at Guidepost Ringway First School and especially like to create opportunities to embed Enterprise activities into our curriculum giving children opportunities to work in real life situations. This term has been really rewarding as the school won three trophies in recognition of our projects.

**My question for next week's head is...** What do you do to encourage Enterprise skills?

Star pupil... *honesty*

A group of students in Tamworth this week went straight to the Head after they discovered their teacher had rewritten their English essays to improve the answers. The students at Woodhouse High School complained that the Shakespeare essays they had been scored on were not their own, with one saying: "I'd put a lot of effort into that piece of work and it's heartbreaking that somebody changed it. I'd rather have my own work back with a lower mark because then I can improve myself." The full story is available [here](#).

Could try harder... *traditional school sports*

It seems as though noble sports such as rugby and cricket could be on their way out of schools, to be replaced by yoga and cheerleading. An Ofsted report has found that fewer than a third of children compete in sport, with just 19% regularly playing against other schools, while a massive 58% of secondary schools are teaching cheerleading, with 'street dance' and 'circus skills' also on the rise. The report also notes that pupils in PE lessons are also invited to watch YouTube clips of great sporting moments to 'inspire debate' but, it would seem, not try to emulate them.

## Opportunities and Resources

### DCSF 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

For free advice, ideas and funding information visit [www.globalgateway.org/horizons](http://www.globalgateway.org/horizons).

### Edexcel BTEC 2010 sector briefings

Edexcel are holding a series of briefings around the country to demonstrate how the new BTECs launched next year will make a difference to you and your learners. They will be in Newcastle on 1 December to discuss Applied Sciences and Sport & Sport Exercise Services and 13 November to discuss Health and Social Care.

There will also be a full range of online webinars discussing all of the available subjects. For more information or to book your place go to [www.edexcel.com/btecsectorevents](http://www.edexcel.com/btecsectorevents).

### Teachers TV education resources

Education website Teachers TV offer a huge range of free video resources across English, Maths, Science and ICT for early years, primary and secondary pupils. Resources are grouped based on Key Stage, and can be found simply by using a key word search.

They also offer a great selection of educational videos aimed at teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders and governors. Simply go to [www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv) for more information and to take advantage of this great free opportunity.

### **Stronger management systems for school leaders**

The DCSF have launched a new programme to help schools improve how leaders and managers, across all phases, play their part in improving standards.

The guidance focuses on the practical but essential elements of management, providing materials to help schools review, refocus and improve their systems and structures.

To access Stronger Management Systems, please visit [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/ad12/sms](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/ad12/sms)

And finally...

In the week where Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy suggested that education was failing businesses such as his, the Guardian Mortarboard blog asked whether schools should try to be more like Britain's largest supermarket chain, prompting some interesting responses! You can read the blog and add your views by clicking [here](#), or alternatively send your thoughts to [think@schoolsnortheast.com](mailto:think@schoolsnortheast.com).

Have a great week!