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- What would you 'ask Gove'?
- 'School to School' with ...Kenton School, Newcastle
- MPs' lunches with Ian Mearns and Roberta Blackman-Woods

Focus on... Publication of new style performance tables

On Thursday the new style Secondary School league tables reflecting the reforms outlined by the Government in July 2011 will be published.

For the first time the new league tables will:

- Split pupils from each school into three bands based on their performance in Sats tests taken at the age of 11. It will then show the amount of progress made by low, middle and high achievers in GCSEs at 16.
- Chart the performance of children eligible for free school meals — the standard measure of deprivation — compared with other pupils.
- Strip out "equivalent" courses such as BTECs, which are offered as an alternative to GCSEs to enable parents to assess school GCSE performance with and without equivalent exams.

In addition, the data will also show schools performance in the Ebacc.

Writing in the Telegraph on Saturday, Schools Minister Nick Gibb said: "We are determined to stamp out any incentives to "game" the system whereby some schools focus just on those pupils who will affect their league table position. It is vital that all schools give every pupil the best chance to maximise their potential."

Gibb criticised schools for focusing on borderline pupils at the expense of high and lower achieving pupils and accuses some schools of entering pupils for qualifications more in the "interests of a school's league table position than the child's own prospects".

He also restated the Government's commitment to closing the attainment gap between those from poorer and wealthier backgrounds by telling schools that in return for the increased pupil premium payments he expects schools to deliver "the same level of achievement for all children regardless of background".

The Government plans to further reform the league tables by only including "high value" vocational qualifications from 2014. With the number of equivalent qualifications taken in schools increasing from 15,000 in 2004 to 575,000 in 2010, the Department for Education has set out strict new criteria as to what vocational qualifications will still count in performance tables.

Commentators have warned that some schools' scores are expected to 'plummet' as a result of the changes. Last summer, more than 80 per cent of pupils in state comprehensives gained five A* to C grades in any subject but that proportion fell to 56 per cent when results in practical qualifications were removed.

SCHOOLS NorthEast will be sending out a special update when the league tables are released and we would welcome your views on the changes. To comment please email:think@schoolsnortheast.com

Further Reading:

- [The Government's Statement of Intent from July 2011 on changes to performance tables:](#)
- [Nick Gibb: The game is up for schools that put league tables before real learning](#)
- [Schools minister cracks down on league table 'incentives'](#)
- [Schools that fail bright pupils to be named and shamed](#)
- [Failing secondary schools placed on list of shame](#)
- [Explanation on some of the difficulties in reporting performance by groups:](#)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Headteacher achieves a first](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- [St John's Catholic school and sixth form college in Bishop Auckland becomes an academy](#) (Journal Live)
- [Durham pupils stage shows at the Gala Theatre](#) (The Journal)

Hartlepool

- [Rossmere pupils excited about the Olympics](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [St Helen's pupils looking ahead to working life](#)(Hartlepool Mail)

Middlesbrough

- [Headteacher swaps Cyprus for Eaglescliffe](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Two Teesside academies' designs set to be revealed](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [MP Catherine McKinnell pledges support for Feversham School sex abuse victims](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Pupils enjoy training session with NUFC stars](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [National backing for Newcastle free school bid](#) (The Journal)

North Tyneside

- [School's new facility will be pitch perfect](#) (News Guardian)
- [Minister pays visit to school](#) (News Guardian)

- [It's all adding up for pupils](#) (News Guardian)

Northumberland

- [School visit tradition to Ford Castle are back on again](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Pupils make their green vote count](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Ford Castle to reopen as outdoor education centre](#) (Journal Live)
- [Cornhill First School amazed as Ofsted visits school likely to close](#) (Cornhill First School)
- [Pupils tread boards for nature project](#) (Newspost Leader)
- [Parent interest in threatened school](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [From classroom to command centre](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Heating failure closes first school](#) (The Hexham Courant)
- [More funding on offer for town schools](#) (Morpeth Herald)

Stockton

- [Thornaby school kids enjoy One World Week](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Two Teesside Academies designs set to be revealed](#) (The Gazette)

South Tyneside

- [Children's centre is a happy ship](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School chiefs hit out at Ofsted rating change](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Shields school taken off 'failing' list](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Head of new £23m school is stepping down](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Outstanding effort by ever-present pupils](#) (Shields Gazette)

Sunderland

- [New college to create jobs](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Ex-Roker star inspired Jean](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Teens bid to track down war graves](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Teacher aims to make a difference](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Teachers sacking changes welcomed](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Library holds key to learning](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Eco pupils looking on the bright side](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Redcar

- [Minister Sarah Teather set for talks on Teesside school](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Kilton Thorpe Special School celebrates outstanding Ofsted report](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Brotton pupils scoop Big Lottery windfall](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Green light for Teesville school move](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Two Teesside Academies designs set to be revealed](#) (The Gazette)

Regional

- [Rise in children in care linked to economic crisis](#) (Journal Live)

National education news

Sleepless nights over safeguarding concerns back on the agenda

A report from Action for Children highlights how teachers often face sleepless nights worrying what they should do in cases of suspected child neglect. Children's Minister Tim Loughton said: "The earlier that help is given to vulnerable children and families the more chance there is of turning lives around and protecting children from harm." However, teachers often don't feel empowered to intervene in the early stages.

Also, this week a school in North Yorkshire came under the spotlight when a class of four to six year olds was left unattended for over an hour after the regular supply teacher did not turn up for work. Some of the children made their way outside, however none came to any harm. A statement released by North Yorkshire County Council said, "The fact that no child came to harm does not detract from the serious nature of the episode, and we will be undertaking a thorough review of the school."

- [Parents' shock as infants left unsupervised at school](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Richmond primary school children left unsupervised](#) (BBC News)
- [Teachers' 'have sleepless nights' over child neglect](#) (BBC News)

Rethinking the National Curriculum

Former Education Secretary Estelle Morris writes in the Guardian questioning why Academies and Free Schools are able to opt out of the National Curriculum and challenges current Education Secretary Michael Gove to clearly express the assumptions on which the new national curriculum will be based. In the same paper, Philosophy Professor, Jonathon Wolff describes his ideal national curriculum based on drama, design and daydreaming.

- [The national curriculum: why have one if it's not for everyone?](#) (The Guardian)
- [Reworking the national curriculum](#) (The Guardian)

Science curriculum should be harder pupils urge, but parents struggle to keep up

Over 150 students who took part in a study at the Royal Institution's L'Oréal Young Scientist Centre have raised concerns over the quality of the current science curriculum. The young people called for include more theory and less practical work because they felt most classroom practicals were of limited value focussing on following prescribed instructions rather than true experimentation. The scrapping of mixed-ability science classes at the start of secondary school and offering pupils the choice of a single, double or triple award course at GCSE was also suggested.

The results of the report come as its revealed parents are falling to keep up with their children's science questions. A survey from the Big Bang UK Young Scientists and Engineers Fair found two-thirds of parents struggled with their children's science queries and a quarter felt frustrated.

- [Science lessons should be tougher, pupils claim](#) (Telegraph)
- [Children's science questions 'stump many parents'](#) (BBC News)

Social networking abused by teachers

An analysis of disciplinary cases has found social networking sites such as Facebook have been used by more than one in ten teachers accused of misconduct, to forge inappropriate relationships with their pupils.

There are big differences between schools' policies on social networking. Some ban teachers from having accounts entirely, while at others staff can be Facebook "friends" with pupils. If your school has its own social networking policy please let us know by emailing r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com

- [Teachers warned over befriending pupils on Facebook](#) (Guardian)

Events

This Month's Events:

Match-funded training in Early Years and Key Stage 1 Phonics - 31 January

Looking for effective strategies to raise reading standards across Early Years and Key Stage 1? To support schools in implementing effective 'Letters and Sounds' teaching and learning strategies and to improve pupils' literacy attainment in preparation for the Year 1 phonics screening check, Cambridge Education are holding a Letters and Sounds: Synthetic Phonics training course on 31 January in Newcastle.

The course will cost £195 + VAT (match-funding available). To book a place for you and your colleagues please call Alexander Coombes on 01223 463883 or enquiries@camb-ed.com As an approved synthetic phonics training provider under the Department for Education (DfE) match-funded scheme, half of the costs of this training can be claimed back from your local ESPO office. Click here for further details.

SCHOOLS NorthEast MPs' lunches

These lunches are great opportunities for Head Teachers to sit down with local MPs to discuss and debate the key challenges and opportunities facing North East schools.

This week's MPs Lunch: Ian Mearns MP (Gateshead) – 12.00pm Friday 27 January 2012 at the Greenhouse Brasserie. We have limited spaces left so please book now to avoid disappointment.

Upcoming lunches this term:

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (Durham) - Friday 10 February 2012

Places at the lunches are free but are very limited and exclusive to Head Teachers. If you would like to attend a lunch, or if you would like any more information, please email r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com or give us a call on (0191) 204 8866

Future Events:

School Improvement seminars – 1 February and 2 February

In light of the announcement of no notice inspections by Ofsted, you may need to access all your up to date school statistics at the touch of a button.

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter, Go 4 Schools is hosting seminars on school improvement and how you can always be prepared for inspection. Attend on either Wednesday 1 February 2012 at 4.30pm – The Education Centre Stockton or Thursday 2 February 2012 at 4.30pm – Kenton School Newcastle.

Please book early as places are limited. Visit <http://www.go4schools.com> or contact Jackie Davies on 01793 516326.

SCHOOLS NorthEast Clash Diary

To view all upcoming events please visit the SCHOOLS NorthEast Website and view the [clash diary](#).

Funding

Phonics match funding

The Department of Education has reported that thousands of primary schools have already signed up for the match funding phonics scheme launched in September. Under the scheme, any state-funded school with Key Stage 1 pupils – including Academies and Free Schools – can claim up to £3,000 of match funding to buy products and training from an approved catalogue of approved products and services. The scheme is open until 13 March 2013.

[Click here to view the approved phonetic product providers.](#)

Green Schools Competition - win cash for school

How green is your school? Enter a competition to find out and win up to £5k for your school.

TOTAL Green School Awards aim to assist and encourage environmental education for young people aged 5-11. They promote cross-curricular work on the environment and offer opportunities to study energy including fossil fuels and alternative technologies. [Click here to enter the competition online.](#)

Resources and Opportunities

Free science lectures for students and staff

As part of their Science Festival , Central Newcastle High are inviting pupils, parents and staff from schools across the region to attend a series of free lectures tackling some of sciences greatest conundrums.

Lecture 1: Viva Las Vegas (and Cockermouth) – “water, water, everywhere nor any drop to drink.”

Mr Tim Fay, Technical Director, Royal Haskoning will talk about two major projects undertaken by Royal Haskoning: the response to the 2009 flooding at Cockermouth in Cumbria and the clean water coalition project in Las Vegas. This lecture will appeal to scientists, geographers, economists and those with an interest in environmental issues from Year 10 and above.

Date: Monday 30 January, 4.30 - 5.30 p.m

Lecture 2: Lies and Catching Liars.

We all lie, but some of us are better at it than others. Likewise, some people are good at detecting lies and liars, or at least they think they are. But what makes a good liar? And how are liars caught? This talk Professor Grubin, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry will explore the nature of lying and lie detection, and the techniques that have been developed to help distinguish truth from fiction.

Date: Monday 20 February, 4.45 p.m (suggested for Year 10 and above)

Lecture 3: How do Scientists know what will happen to the climate in the future?

We are now able to predict the future climate with a high level of confidence. But, where does that confidence come from? What determines the likely feel of our future climate? Using a "Wizard of Oz" theme, Dr Hiro Yamazaki, Newcastle University will explain all.

Date: Wednesday 22nd February, 4.30 p.m. (suggested for Years 6 – 9)

The events will all be held at Central Newcastle High School, Eskdale Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne and tickets are available from Janice Graves on 0191 281 1768 or j.graves@cnh.gdst.net

National Careers Week

Schools are encouraged to sign up for National Careers Week which runs from March 5 to 9 this year to access online resources, face-to-face workshops and win up to 100 hours of free enterprise workshop time for your school. To sign up online visit <http://www.nationalcareersweek.com>

SCHOOLS NorthEast New Website

Our [website](#) has undergone a major makeover for 2012. As well as giving the site a fresh look, we have responded to feedback from our schools and supporters to incorporate time-saving features. Our online [Clash Diary](#) allows you to view upcoming events and we will regularly be updating our [news and events](#) section.

Stay posted as we will shortly be adding many useful resources to our 'resource section' and our Commercial Supporters will be uploading interesting case studies and exclusive discounts to the [Marketplace](#). Visit now at www.schoolsnortheast.com.

Welcome to new Commercial Supporters

SCHOOLS NorthEast has a growing network of Commercial Supporters who help us to be able to continue to work on behalf of North East schools. The network offers opportunities for schools to interact with organisations that provide a range of products and services to education many of whom offer special discounts and unique provisions for SCHOOLS NorthEast member school.

We now have around 70 Commercial Supporters and this week we are delighted to welcome [ACE Resourcing](#) to SCHOOLS NorthEast. They specialise in providing high quality supply staff to all those within the education sector. [Please click here to view their page on the SCHOOLS NorthEast Website.](#)

School to School

In this new feature, we ask a local Head give us a brief insight into their school. This week, **David Pearmain SCHOOLS NorthEast Chair and Head Teacher at Kenton School, Newcastle** is in the hot seat.

Our school is... a very large and very complex 11-18 secondary on the fringes of Newcastle, with approx.. 2,100 students, a large proportion of which are eligible for free school meals.

Our school motto/mission/vision is...all different, all equal.

Our school is good at...being all different and all equal. We are particularly good at providing a broad curriculum to cater for our diverse intake; particularly in regard to vocational provision. Our arts, performing and visual, are outstanding, and we are very good at providing for both our G & T students and special needs. We also pride ourselves on our professional development of staff.

Our school is working on...becoming World Class. In particular, we aim to narrow the gap and ensure that all of the different cohorts within the school progress regardless of their starting points e.g. our FSM students. To help us achieve those goals we are working on the provision of an appropriate three year KS4 curriculum.

The biggest challenges for our school are...converting to an academy and all of the issues that entails. Our biggest challenge, however, is probably multiple moving goal posts. Specifically, ofsted, performance tables, new school structures, funding, curriculum, EBacc, etc etc!

We think other schools would be interested in our...curriculum provision and our staff CPD. In particular, we think other schools would be interested in how we develop opportunities for emergent leaders to hone their skills and gain the confidence and experience they need to progress within the school and their careers. Our curriculum provision, particularly around quality vocational subjects, would also be of interest.

We would be interested in hearing from other schools about...how to achieve three and four levels of progress between KS2 and KS4.

Question from last week's school is: **What funding / support have you been able to access to support ICT development in school.** None, unfortunately.

Our question to next week's school is? Should we be working with Free Schools and UTCs?

Tweet of the week

We are seeing an increasing number of NE schools using social networks such as Twitter. If you are a Tweeter then make sure you follow @SCHOOLSNE for the latest regional school news. Every week we will pick the 140 characters on Twitter that have inspired/challenged or informed us the most... please forward us your suggestions for next week.

This week we have gone Twittertastic as the Education Select Committee in Parliament is using Twitter to request suggestions as to what you would like them to 'ask Gove' in his evidence session on the 31 January.

Some of the tweets are not repeatable in a reputable publication like the SCHOOLS NorthEast weekly update but below are a few of the questions posed so far (there are so many we could fill a full newsletter):

#askgove What advice to a primary school that sees no current direct benefit in Academy status but is mindful of risks of NOT converting?

#askgove My child wanted 2 take Drama rather than History. They will not achieve an EBacc. Does this disadvantage them, or is it nonsense?

#askgove If you're making it easier for parents to sack 'bad teachers' are you going to make it easier for schools to deal with bad parents?

#askgove Have you broken the record for announcing changes yet? Can you remember what all your own announcements have been?

#askgove If unqualified parents can 'root out' bad teachers can I spend half a day watching you and then sack you?

#askgove Any chance you'll teach a week in a secondary school based in a deprived area outside London? Perhaps the North East or North West?

#askgove Are we preparing students for their future or your past?

Let us know what you would like to 'ask Gove' (in no more than 140 characters of course!) and @schoolsne will pass on to the Committee – email think@schoolsne.com

Have a great week!

The SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update goes out to every Head Teacher in the North East every Tuesday, but if anybody else in your school or LA would like to receive the Update, please send their name and email address to r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com.

Plus if you have any issues you would like to see covered in the Update, or any other comments, we would love to hear from you at the above address.