

Education

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New families taskforce launched

The Government is to set up a new childhood and families taskforce to help the two coalition parties resolve fundamental differences in their policies. Neither party can currently agree on such issues as the availability of Sure Start centres and whether or not to penalise married couples in the tax system. Launching the taskforce in London, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said: “This government believes that we strengthen our society by giving people the power to make choices over their lives.” He also said that the Government believed in “the informal networks between people that provide families with support, as well as the strong sense of community identity that helps make children feel secure”. And he promised to look at the legal rights of grandparents to give greater access rights to grandparents when couples separate. The task force will develop its proposals in the context of the comprehensive spending review and report its conclusions around the end of the year.

Ofsted wants compulsory registration for home educators

Local authorities must have more information on home educated children in their area if they are to offer the correct level of support and protect the welfare of the children in question, according to a new [report](#) from Ofsted. Inspectors visited 15 LAs across England and found that the young people they met were enthusiastic and keen to explain what they had gained by being educated at home. Inspectors also found that the parents who received monitoring and guidance from local authorities were generally positive about the advice and encouragement and would welcome more support. But, although schools alert LAs when parents decide to home educate their children, there is no reliable way to establish how many children never entered the school system. The report recommends that parents are required to register their intention to educate their children at home.

NICE recommends sex education for primary pupils

All children and young people should be entitled to high-quality sex, relationships and alcohol education, to help them make responsible decisions, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has said. Its draft [guidance](#), issued yesterday, cited research evidence demonstrating that “this type of education delivered as part of a planned and timetabled programme by trained and confident teachers” helped children better understand their own physical and emotional development. The research also suggested that effective sex, relationships and alcohol education could help a child make responsible, healthy and safe choices, and improve their performance at school. It wants primary and secondary lessons appropriate to children’s ages, because it believes that sex education is “more effective if it is introduced before young people first have sex”. In April, the Conservative Party forced the Labour Government to scrap plans to introduce compulsory sex education before it would allow the Children, Schools and Families Bill to be passed.

Toolkit helps teachers focus on learning in classroom

A cluster of 25 primary schools has been using a new toolkit designed to help headteachers focus on learning in their classrooms, rather than teaching. The Looking for Learning Toolkit project includes five manuals and supporting DVDs containing strategies and suggestions relevant for any school to become learning-focused. Deborah Cossins, headteacher at Emscote Infants School in Warwick and one of the leaders participating in the cluster, said: “In our school we had many teachers who performed well as teachers but were not very good at focusing on learning,” she said. “The Looking for Learning Toolkit has transformed the way our teachers think. They start with the learning bit when they begin their planning. It influences the whole thing they do.” The Looking for Learning Toolkit launched in March 2009 and is already being used in excess of 150 schools to date. For more information about the Toolkit from Fieldwork Education go to www.lookingforlearning.co.uk

More under-21s starting Open University courses

The rising cost of higher education has seen more people turning to the Open University to complete a degree, according to the latest figures. They showed that the number of students aged 18 to 21 applying for courses had also increased by 17.5 per cent, meaning that they now accounted for a quarter of all new undergraduates. OU Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean said that an increasing number of school leavers were opting for the cheaper option of studying at home with the OU, rather than a degree elsewhere. Mr Bean said: “The student demand moved on some time ago to demand part-time study because of the lives that we now lead. One of the fastest-growing cohorts at the Open University is under-25s. It will become more and more preferred by some people to study and work at the same time, even by people at a young age.” The National Union of Students have recently criticised Universities Minister David Willetts for “rebranding” students’ average £23,500 debt when he described it as “a burden on the taxpayer that had to be tackled”.

Government to review vetting and barring scheme

The controversial vetting and barring scheme currently being used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is to undergo a complete review, the Government has announced. The scheme, which would have involved the compulsory registration of nine million people working with children and vulnerable adults from 26 July, has been put on hold with immediate effect, pending a re-evaluation that will see it scaled back to “common sense” levels. Concerns over the scheme included the suggestion that foreign exchange trips would have to be cancelled. Home Secretary Theresa May said that the safety of children and vulnerable adults was of “paramount importance to the new government”, but that a measured approach was vital. “We’ve listened to the criticisms and will respond with a scheme that has been fundamentally remodelled,” she said. “Vulnerable groups must be properly protected in a way that is proportionate and sensible. This redrawing of the VBS will ensure this happens.”

Child safety adviser resigns following social work review

The chief adviser to the government on the safety of children has resigned, following the news that the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit (NSDU) was to be scrapped. Sir Roger Singleton’s first report, produced last year, had recommended a ban on physical punishment to be extended to all people working with children and young people. But, following the announcement of Professor Eileen Munro’s review of children’s social work and the scrapping of the NSDU, set up to ensure the implementation of the Laming Report recommendations following the Baby P case, Sir Roger has decided to step down. “The part-time advisory role was created in response to Lord Laming’s recommendations last year,” he said. “With the announcement of Professor Munro’s review the circumstances have now changed and the Secretary of State and I have agreed that I will step down as chief adviser.”

EDUCATION JOURNAL

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John Dunford, General Secretary of ASCL, explains why the Government should concentrate on raising standards. **Sue Rossiter**, Chief Executive of NFER, writes about the Local Authority Research Consortium, its work with NFER and its second report, *LARC2: Integrated children's services and the CAFF process*. **Ivan Ould**, chairman of the F40 group of local authorities, argues for a fairer funding system. **Tony McAleavy**, Education Director at CfBT Education Trust, writes about supporting disabled parents' involvement in their children's education. **Mike Milanovic**, Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL, writes about the changing role of the English language.

Our new Scotland editor, **Brian Cooklin**, looks at Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence programme which is causing concern among secondary school staff. He tells the Scottish government: "Fix it or ditch it."

It's complicated. That's how our Wales Editor, Professor **Ken Reid**, describes the post election situation in Wales. In a second article he reviews the just published report into Welsh education funding. Education administration costs Wales £1.3 billion a year.

This issue is packed with information and analysis about the new and rapidly changing post-election education landscape. Get your copy now!

Ofqual rejects improved GCSE science qualifications

Ofqual have rejected the new GCSE science qualifications, which they requested after identifying serious concerns in the 2007 and 2008 versions of the exams. Awarding organisations had submitted new versions of the qualifications for approval for teaching in schools from September 2011. However, Ofqual found that the new versions did not fully address the concerns raised. Kathleen Tattersall, Chair of Ofqual and Chief Regulator, said: “Ofqual’s job is to make sure that standards are maintained. If qualifications do not meet our standards, we can not accept them into the regulated system. “Learners, teachers, employers and universities look for the independent regulator’s stamp of approval as assurance that qualifications are rigorous, demanding and fair.” She said that, in the mean time, improvements had been built in to the current version, and the regulators would make sure that grades awarded this summer were appropriate and fair.

Number of inadequate schools has doubled, says Ofsted

New [figures](#) from Ofsted have shown that the proportion of schools rated as ‘inadequate’ has more than doubled this year, while the number of schools rated as ‘outstanding’ has nearly halved. Changes to Ofsted’s inspection regime have meant that inspectors now put teaching practice and exam results under closer scrutiny. Schools Minister Lord Hill said: “With almost half of schools inspected since September judged as only satisfactory or inadequate, it’s clear there is urgent need for real reform. We need to create more excellent schools and drive up standards across the board, and that’s exactly what our academy proposals will help to do.” But ASCL General Secretary Dr John Dunford warned that comparisons between school inspection grades from this year and previous years were meaningless. “The fact that there are three per cent fewer schools rated as outstanding does not mean school standards have fallen, but rather that Ofsted is using different criteria to judge those schools,” he said. “Some schools will not be able to achieve an outstanding grade, regardless of good they are, purely because of the criteria imposed.”

Govt. review to tackle fears of a compensation culture

The Prime Minister has launched a review of the country’s health and safety laws, to address fears that a “compensation culture” has led to an over-cautious approach by businesses, public sector organisations and charities. David Young will lead the review and act as adviser to David Cameron on health and safety issues, reporting back by the summer. “The rise of the compensation culture over the last ten years is a real concern, as is the way health and safety rules are sometimes applied,” said Mr Cameron. “We need a sensible new approach that makes clear these laws are intended to protect people, not overwhelm business with red tape.” A recent high-profile case saw schools banning conkers from the school playground, and one school even introducing safety goggles for pupils to wear when playing the game. Lord Young said: “I hope my review will reintroduce an element of common sense and focus the regulation where it is most needed. We need a system that is proportionate and not bureaucratic.”

More parents complain about primary school placements

The number of parents appealing against primary school placements in England has risen once again, according to the latest government [figures](#). They reveal that 88,270 parents with children of all ages lodged challenges against school places last year. This is an increase of 2,250 in the last year and means that the number of official challenges lodged by parents of four- and five-year-olds has almost doubled in just two years. Schools minister Nick Gibb said that the figures underlined “why it is so important we change the schools system so providers like teacher groups and charities can open new state schools wherever parents want them. By putting education in the hands of parents and professionals, rather than bureaucrats, we can raise standards in all our schools, particularly in the poorest areas where problems are most acute.”

C4EO to host Evidence and Excellence conferences

The Evidence & Excellence conferences are bringing together knowledge from each of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) themes to date – Early Years, Disability, Vulnerable (looked after) Children, Child Poverty and Safeguarding – enabling delegates to explore the interplay between these themes. These innovative conferences offer something for everyone, regardless of specialism or agency – with a particular focus on Early Intervention and Prevention.

At each event there will be a wide range of parallel workshops delivered by key partners of C4EO, each exploring the issues that matter to the children's sector. These include the Child Poverty Unit, Action for Children, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and many more. Each expert workshop will run three times through the day, allowing delegates to build their own conference, by selecting the sessions most relevant to their role and at convenient times.

The next events are taking place on the 22nd June in Bath, 24th June in Manchester and the 29th June in London.

You can find out more by visiting the events section of the C4EO website (www.c4eo.org.uk). To request a place and a booking form email c4eobookings@rip.org.uk (c4eobookings@rip.org.uk) or call 01803 849 999.

Events and conference round-up

C4EO – Evidence and Excellence Conference

Tuesday 22 June 2010, Bath

You can find out more by visiting the events section of the C4EO website (www.c4eo.org.uk). To request a place and a booking form email c4eobookings@rip.org.uk (c4eobookings@rip.org.uk) or call 01803 849 999.

C4EO – Evidence and Excellence Conference

Thursday 24 June 2010, Manchester

You can find out more by visiting the events section of the C4EO website (www.c4eo.org.uk). To request a place and a booking form email c4eobookings@rip.org.uk (c4eobookings@rip.org.uk) or call 01803 849 999.

Aspect – Early Childhood Education Group Annual Conference – The Gender Agenda

Friday 25 June and Saturday 26 June 2010

Venue: Hilton Puckrup Hall Hotel, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Email: mpack@worcestershires.gov.uk or jprangnell@worcestershires.gov.uk

C4EO – Evidence and Excellence Conference

Tuesday 29 June 2010, London

You can find out more by visiting the events section of the C4EO website (www.c4eo.org.uk). To request a place and a booking form email c4eobookings@rip.org.uk (c4eobookings@rip.org.uk) or call 01803 849 999.

Investors in Families - Schools working with parents– partnerships to raise achievement

Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, Westminster

2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. on Thursday 8 July 2010

Annette Brooke MP is hosting this event to examine the impact of the new government's education policy on parental involvement in schools. Sarah Teather, MP Minister for Children and Families has been invited to set out the government's approach. Tricia Hartley, Chief Executive of the Campaign for Learning will

discuss the implication for learning and teaching, and Chris Waterman, Executive Director of Investors in Families, will set out the impact on parental involvement in schools. If you would like to attend this event, please email kate.king@investorsinfamilies.org.uk

NUT National Education Conference – 9 to 11 July, Stoke Rochford, Lincolnshire. NUT members only

Aspect Annual Conference – 16 and 17 July 2010, Leeds

The Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts is holding its annual conference.

Email: info@aspect.org.uk

Learning in schools – A competency curriculum that delivers and assesses the PLTS (Personal Learning and Thinking skills) – 22 September 2010

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

Learning in schools – Learning for the 21st Century – 12 October 2010

Venue: To be confirmed

Learning in schools – Raising the bar – how to achieve 'outstanding' teaching and learning in your school – 10 November 2010

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

Learning in schools - Raising the bar – how to achieve 'outstanding' teaching and learning in your school – 8 December 2010

Venue: Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

For more information and to book a place on a Campaign for Learning event please visit

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk or contact Katie Bloom Tel: 020 7766 0010

Email: kbloom@cfllearning.org.uk

Document round-up

The British Academy published *Past, Present and Future: The public value of the humanities and social sciences* on 17 June 2010. This booklet argues that drastic funding cuts to university and research budgets will imperil the massive contribution to the UK's economic, social and cultural life made by the humanities and social sciences. <http://www.britac.ac.uk/templates/asset-relay.cfm?frmAssetFileID=9608>

The Department for Education published the following documents. *Admissions Appeals for maintained primary and secondary schools in England, 2008/09* on 10 June 2010. This Statistical First Release gives information about appeals lodged by parents against non-admission of their children to their preferred school in 2008/09. Ref: SFR15/2010. www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000934/SFR15-2010v4.pdf

Provision for Children Under Five Years of Age in England - January 2010 on 10 June 2010. This publication includes data on the provision of early years education for children under five years of age, including funded places and numbers of three and four year old children benefiting from some free early years education. Ref: SFR16/2010. www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000935/SFR16-2010.pdf

Youth Crime - Young people aged 10-17 receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction, 6 monthly figures to September 2009 on 10 June 2010. This release will provide local level information on the number of young people aged 10 to 17 receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction, April 2000 to September 2009. Ref: OSR12/2010. www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000933/OSR12-2010.pdf

The Home Office published *Experimental Statistics on Victimisation of Children aged 10 to 15: Findings from the British Crime Survey for the year ending December 2009* on 17 June 2010. This report

makes available for the first time estimates of victimisation from the extension of the British Crime Survey to children aged 10 to 15 years resident in households in England and Wales. ISBN: 9781849872249. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1110.pdf>

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence published *PSHE – Consultation on the Draft Guidance: draft guidance* on 17 June 2010. The guidance recommends that all children and young people should be entitled to high-quality sex, relationships and alcohol education.

<http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/11673/49240/49240.pdf>

The Office for National Statistics published *Labour Market Statistics 2010* on 16 June 2010. These statistics show that overall unemployment increased by 23,000 between January and April 2010. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0610.pdf>

Ofsted published the following documents. *Fairness and Unfairness* on 15 June 2010. This is a report of children's views by the Children's Rights Director for England. Ref: HMI 090116.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/11216/132623/file/Fairness%20and%20unfairness.pdf>

Local Authorities and Home Education on 17 June 2010. This report found that local authorities need more information and understanding about home education to provide effective support for children educated at home. Ref: HMI 090267. www.ofsted.gov.uk

Reform published *Reform Budget 2010: Taking the tough choices* on 16 June 2010. This plan to eliminate the government deficit in this Parliament emphasises cuts to the NHS, education and benefits. <http://www.reform.co.uk/portals/0/Documents/Reform%20Budget%202010%20FINAL.pdf>

The Trades Union Congress published *All Pain, No Gain: The case against cuts* on 16 June 2010. This report argues that the next round of Government spending cuts will weaken the economy, lead to hundreds of thousands of job losses, hit the poorest in society hard through a loss of services, and leave an even deeper deficit. www.tuc.org.uk/all_pain_no_gain

Research round-up

Three research journals came into our office this week. *Curriculum Journal* (Routledge, Vol.21 No.2) is the official journal of the British Curriculum Foundation. It contains an article on students' approaches to learning and their performance in the Extended Project pilot. Results showed that, notwithstanding the contribution of previous academic achievement, attainment on the EPQ was positively related to intrinsic motivation; clearly a desirable attribute for lifelong learning but also an indication that the qualification may encourage students to be more innovative and creative about their learning. *Journal of Early Childhood Research* (Sage, Vol.8 No.2) contains an article on methodological issues and innovative techniques for research with children, from researchers at Queen's University, Belfast. *Paedagogica Historica* (Routledge, Vol.46 No.3) contains articles on mass literacy and community development in late colonial Northern Ghana; and the organised culture of Scottish educational research in the mid-twentieth century.

Media Watch

Last Friday, the *Telegraph* featured an article from Charles Moore claiming that Michael Gove's vision for academies could succeed where the grammar schools failed. Mr Moore wrote that, for many long years, the Tories stuck up for grammar schools, arguing that they ensured high standards. And he claimed that, although they were right, the problem they faced was that, even at their height, grammar schools catered for only about 20 per cent of the school population. This meant that four fifths of pupils tended to feel hard done by, and their parents even more so. The Tories "want to replicate the excellence of the grammar schools, but not their selective structure. To do so, they are building on the idea of the 'Academy', with

which Mr Blair made a small start.” Mr Moore ends his article by saying: “The deepest problem with our educational system is that useless schools have hardly ever been ‘seriously jeopardised’. On they stagger, making it impossible for teaching to be valued as a profession, disheartening parents, moulding young minds for mediocrity. At last, we have a means of defeating this confederacy of dunces.”

On Wednesday, the *Independent* reported that former Education Secretary Kenneth Baker had unveiled plans to take over 20 failing schools and turn them into new technology colleges for 14 to 19-year-olds. Lord Baker made the proposal at a breakfast meeting with Education Secretary Michael Gove and Schools Minister Nick Gibb yesterday. The Conservatives have already agreed to open 12 University Technical Colleges, each one being sponsored by a university and further education college, and the 20 Lord Baker wants would be in addition. Lord Baker, a Conservative peer who set up a trust three years ago with the late Lord Dearing to mastermind the scheme, has set a target of opening 100 of the new-style schools. Two will open this September and three more before 2012. The idea is that UTCs would specialise in practical studies in the morning – such as engineering – and academic lessons such as English, maths and science in the afternoon.

The *Western Mail*, meanwhile, reported on Welsh Education Minister Leighton Andrew’s proposals to stop school closure plans being derailed by a single objection. The Labour AM wants to introduce legislation which will speed up the system and could give greater freedom to councils to make decisions about the future of schools. He wants “only a handful” of decisions about school reorganisations to be made by ministers in the Assembly Government. At present, objections to plans result in proposals being sent to Cardiff Bay for approval. Under the new proposals, plans for school closures “would not come to Welsh Ministers for determination after objections, unless, on rare occasions, ministers felt it necessary to ‘call in’ the proposals for determination”. But Rex Phillips of the NASUWT feared the proposals would allow ministers to dodge responsibility for difficult decisions.

Latest Issue Out Now

Children’s Services Weekly

Edited by Chris Waterman, Children’s Services Editor of *Education Journal*

Like its sister paper *Education*, the new *Children’s Services Weekly* is a free weekly electronic newspaper. It reports on the work of local authority children’s services departments, the DCSF, the youth service and health and criminal justice issues that involve young people. To receive your free copy by email every week just email us at csw@educationpublishing.com

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