

# SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update - Week 11

November 15th, 2011 at 3:30 pm



The banner features the 'SCHOOLS NorthEast' logo on the left, with the tagline 'The future of our region is in school'. The main text reads 'WEEKLY UPDATE' in large blue letters. To the right is the Samuel Phillips Law Firm logo, which includes a blue umbrella icon and the tagline '...we've got it covered'.

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## Focus on... Cameron's campaign against coasting schools

In an article in the Daily Telegraph, Prime Minister David Cameron has suggested that Britain is facing a "hidden crisis" because schools in prosperous areas are failing to push middle-class children to reach their full potential. He states there is a "shocking gap" between the best and worst schools and their teachers as many "coast" and "muddle through". The Prime Minister argues that the "secret failure" of comprehensive schools in wealthy shires and market towns is as significant as the problems facing schools in deprived, inner-city areas and suggests that this is hidden from parents because league tables identify only problem schools rather than institutions achieving average results when their pupils have the potential to be top achievers.

Cameron suggests a number of actions to address the issues he raises:

- **Free Schools** - which he describes as "the shock troops of innovation in our education system. They are going to smash through complacency."
- **New Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw** - who has stated his intention to focus on "coasting schools" as a priority
- **Reform of league tables and increased transparency of pupil level data** - from January, changes to the league tables will kick in and, from June, data about the performance of all pupils (anonymised) from the National Pupil Database will be released
- **Toughening up exams and encouraging more pupils to take 'essential core subjects'** - EBacc

The article provoked a flurry of reaction from commentators and representative bodies. Brian Lightman, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, agreed "that there are examples of schools where the catchment is less challenging than the inner city, and where the pupils have fewer disadvantages, that have shown a disappointingly slow rate of improvement". However, he counters..."I would seriously challenge the assertion that there are lots of these schools, and the accompanying implication that some teachers accept mediocrity."

Neil O'Brien, Director of the Policy Exchange think tank was quoted as saying that "the floor target appears to have led to the neglect of potential high performers." He argues that some schools have concentrated on making the difference between a D and a C to meet their government target and can be accused of failing to give an extra push to those on course for a C so that they achieve a B. And columnist Peter Stanford describes anecdotal stories of schools where "bright pupils being put in for their GCSEs a year early because a school judged they would deliver a "safe" B/C grade, and free up teaching time to concentrate on lower achievers".

Commenting on the articles, a number of Head Teachers warn the Prime Minister not to put too much emphasis on the importance of the academies programme in driving school improvement. One Head Teacher is quoted as saying "I do get sick and tired of hearing about the fairy dust of academy status. Simply changing your status does nothing in itself to raise standards. It is down to leadership, investment, individual tracking of each pupil's attainment, and effective interventions. Yes, all of these happen in academies, and enable them to raise standards, but they are happening in plenty of other schools, too."

### Further reading

- [David Cameron goes to war on Britain's 'coasting schools'](#) (Telegraph)
- [We shall shame schools that 'muddle through'](#) (Telegraph)
- [Education reform: schools taught a lesson](#) (Telegraph)
- [Cameron's growing attachment to schools reform](#) (Spectator)
- [David Cameron's cry about 'coasting' schools will confuse parents](#) (Telegraph)
- [Letters: Allowing state schools more freedom will transform education](#) (Telegraph)

## North East education news

### Darlington

- [Schools to help crack down on bullying](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Darlington bus crash driver denies allegations](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Free School plan is nuts says town MP](#) (Northern Echo)

### Durham

- [Apprentice star's advice for Durham pupils](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Gym'll fix children's fitness](#) (Northern Echo)

### Hartlepool

- [MPs warning of lost generation](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Nursery parking permit wangle](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Appeal to help young get work](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

### Middlesbrough

- [Thornaby school celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Eston Park pupils fundraising for third Sri Lanka charity trip](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Teesside teacher takes part in charity cycle](#) (Gazette Live)
- [School backs Middlesbrough's Amelia Lily for X Factor win](#) (Northern Echo)

### Newcastle

- [Walbottle Campus pupils take jobs at council](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Tyneside youngsters show their respect for brave soldiers](#) (Chronicle Live)

### Northumberland

- [School spells out its success](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Ofsted's concerns over kids' home](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [MP Ian Lavery urges ministers to do more to help young unemployed](#) (Journal Live)
- [Woodhorn Museum helping children learn of industrial past](#) (Journal Live)
- [Schools missing out on tickets](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Youngsters rise to the challenge](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Students reach their peak](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Schoolchildren brighten the lives of cancer patients](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [The sign of success](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Youngsters have a frightfully good time](#) (Morpeth Herald)

### North Tyneside

- [North Shields school handed glowing Ofsted](#) (Chronicle Live)

### Redcar and Cleveland

- [Generous students think inside the box](#) (Northern Echo)

### South Tyneside

- [Playground revamp makes its mark](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School gets a glowing Ofsted report](#) (Shields Gazette)

### Stockton

- ['Satisfactory' Ofsted report for Thornaby CofE Primary School](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Green-fingered Yarm pupils seeking Wish support](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Pioneering mountaineer heads to Egglecliffe school](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Plans are unveiled for academy](#) (Northern Echo)

### Sunderland

- [Sunderland kids brightening up the community](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland College student's dance of delight](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Pupils' poppy day commemorations](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland school 'outstanding' say inspectors](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Read all about it! Sunderland kids love libraries](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sarah's the winning apprentice](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Cartoonist makes bid to inspire kids for 2012](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Sunderland cartoonist draws on his experience as he swaps Viz for the Olympics](#) (Sunderland Echo)

### Regionwide news

- [Region's best schools appear in new Sunday Times guide](#) (Journal Live)

## National education news

### Free schools and disadvantaged children

An investigation by an education blogger using Freedom of Information requests has revealed that free schools are taking only half the proportion of deprived pupils compared with other state schools in England. Rachel Gooch, a primary school governor from Suffolk, compared the intake of disadvantaged children at each of the free schools with the five nearest schools for pupils of a similar age group. She found that all but one of the free schools were taking fewer deprived pupils than average for their neighbouring schools.

The DfE have defended Free Schools saying "There is a shortage in good school places and free schools provide greater choice for parents and raise standards across the board." Yesterday, the Government announced another eight Free Schools had been approved taking the total number of approved schools to 87. The latest round includes the first Special free schools and two schools ran by football clubs. The Department for Education has also offered three magistrates courts and one youth court as suitable accommodation for free schools and identified two of its own office buildings, one in Darlington and the other in Runcorn, as 'suitable' for free schools.

- [Free Schools and disadvantaged children: the data](#) (SchoolDuggery's Blog)
- [Free schools taking lower numbers of deprived pupils, data shows](#) (The Guardian)
- [First special and alternative provision Free Schools given the green light](#) (DfE website)
- [Courtroom offer to Free School providers](#) (Mike Baker Blog)

### Free nursery places for 140,000 disadvantaged toddlers and cuts to Sure Start

The Government has set out details of their plans to roll out 140,000 free nursery or childcare places for disadvantaged two-year-olds in England. Eligible children will receive 15 hours of free "early education" a week from September 2013. Children's charities have welcomed the news but say more investment is needed. On Sunday, the Observer reported that pressure is growing on the Government to step in to protect the country's Sure Start children's centres. Shadow Education Minister and MP for Washington and Sunderland West, Sharon Hodgson, claimed in the article that the Government hadn't thought through the impact of local authority cuts on families.

- [Free nursery places for 140,000 disadvantaged toddlers](#) (BBC online)
- [Child poverty warning as cuts threaten to close 3,500 Sure Start centres](#) (Observer)

### Academies pay £200k salaries

Analysis of the most recent annual reports of five major Academy chains by The Guardian has revealed that some senior staff in their Academies are being paid more than £240,000 from public money. The reports, which are for the year ended 31 August 2010, show three chains – Ark Schools, Harris Federation and the United Learning Trust – awarded already high-earning staff performance-related bonuses, or increased their pension, salary and bonus packages from the previous year.

A 2010 National Audit Office report found that Academies have 50% more senior staff on salaries in excess of £80,000 than maintained secondaries and new workforce analysis from the Department for Education confirming that academies pay their senior staff more and have a higher proportion on leadership grades.

Responding to the reports, Christine Blower, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, stated: "Academies vary tremendously, but do tend to be top-heavy in leaders. The salary bill rises as

more is spent on senior staff who go on 'learning walks' round the school rather than actually teaching."

- [Academies pay £200k salaries](#) (Guardian)
- [Academies pay highest earners over £200,000](#) (The Independent)

## Events

### **Anti-bullying week; 14 – 18 November 2011**

This year's theme is verbal bullying with the slogan 'Stop and think – words can hurt'. The **Anti-Bullying Alliance** has a wide range of resources and ideas for your school. The website also lists activities and events happening in schools up and down the country, where we were delighted to see that St. Joseph's RC Primary in Loftus, Saltburn has planned a wide range of activities to raise awareness of the impacts of bullying.

### **SCHOOLS NorthEast MPs' lunches**

On Friday, SCHOOLS NorthEast held a very lively and informative lunch with Hartlepool MP, Iain Wright and local Head Teachers in which no educational stone was left unturned! Next week we are looking forward to lunch with Redcar MP, Ian Swales. 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.

We have limited spaces left so please book now to avoid disappointment.

### **Future lunches this term available to book**

Ian Swales MP (Redcar) - Friday 25 November  
Alan Campbell MP (Tynemouth) - Friday 2 December  
David Milliband MP (South Shields) - Friday 9 December

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 [info@schoolsnortheast.com](mailto:info@schoolsnortheast.com) or give us a call on (0191) 280 5037.

### **Occupational Health & Absence Management Seminar**

#### **Are you looking for a way to manage sickness and absence in your school?**

Muckle LLP is running a seminar on managing sickness and absence with a particular focus on how best to utilise your occupational health support and to interpret the advice given. The seminar will include input from experienced practitioners and experts in this field and will address disability issues and reasonable adjustments, as well as best practice for sickness management. The interactive session will provide a case study and opportunity for delegates to ask questions of the experts. It will conclude with a "Top Tips" summary that will be invaluable to you going forward.

The seminar will be held on Thursday 1 December 2011 between 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. at Muckle LLP's offices (Time Central, 32 Gallowgate, Newcastle, NE1 4BF).

This event is free of charge and you can register for a place by clicking [here](#).

## Resources and opportunities

### **Looking for leaders to join your team?**

Crying out for a Head of Maths? Desperate to find a highly qualified physicist? Looking to strengthen your leadership team? This Saturday, SCHOOLS NorthEast is heading to London for the Teach First Leaders in All Fields Career Fair. This event is a unique opportunity for Teach First participants and ambassadors to meet potential future employers who can provide them with their next challenge and we will be there to encourage these high calibre, qualified teachers/leaders to consider a career in the North East. So if you have any vacancies that you would like us to advertise at the event on your behalf or want more information about the event and how your school can get involved please get in touch with Beccy Earnshaw on 0191 280 5037 or email [r.earnshaw@schoolsnortheast.com](mailto:r.earnshaw@schoolsnortheast.com)

### **\*Offer extended\* - Want to get your school broadcasting around the world?**

If you're looking to give your learners an exciting opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills, have you thought about setting up your own School Radio Station? SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Member Anderton Tiger Broadcasting have developed the lowest cost digital school radio station on the market, it's also incredibly easy to use too. Everything is included to get you started and you will be broadcasting around your school on your first day. SCHOOLS NorthEast Enhanced Members receive a FREE upgrade to a whole day's training workshop for Staff & Pupils worth £450 when they purchase the Desktop School Radio Station. This special offer has been extended until the end of 2011.

For more details click on [www.AndertonTiger.com/Desktop](http://www.AndertonTiger.com/Desktop) or telephone 0845 838 5150 (local call rate) – this offer is exclusive to SCHOOLS NorthEast Enhanced Members and can only be used at time of delivery.

### **Get involved with research into influences on school exclusion in secondary schools**

Canterbury Christ Church University has been commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner to undertake a project focusing on the key decision-making processes and influences on school exclusions. As part of that focus an online survey has been set up to gather views, giving you a chance to get involved. The survey should only take between 10- 15 minutes to complete and is completed anonymously. The closing date for responses will be Friday 2nd December 2011.

To access the survey, please click on the link [here](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the research project manager ([Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk)).

## Grants and funding

### **Need to improve your football facilities?**

The Football Foundation's Facilities Grant Scheme is now open for applications for projects that improve facilities for football and other sport in local communities. All educational establishments are eligible to apply for funding for facilities such as grass pitches drainage/improvements, pavilions, clubhouses and changing rooms, artificial turf pitches and multi-use games areas and fixed floodlights for artificial pitches. Funding is available up to £500,000 and there is no application deadline.

For further details click visit <http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk/apply/facilities-grants/facilities-grant/>

## Head to Head

### **This week we spoke to Elizabeth Hush from St Mary's C of E First School in Berwick**

**Last week was** spent attending meetings ranging from Governors, Child Protection, LA to PTA and making arrangements for the school Christmas Fair.

**The two best things that happened at school last week were** the support our parents gave at a PTA meeting and the children who read at the Remembrance Day Assembly sharing their thoughts about conflict and war. They were very moving and thought provoking.

**The biggest disappointment at school last week was** the engineer not turning up to fix the printer in the Resource Room.

**The funniest thing that happened at school last week was** Year 1 children carrying out their Activate Session whilst singing " Head, Shoulders, knees and toes", in French!

**One thing that would have made my job easier** is a reduction in the number of forms to fill in.

**Top of my to-do list for this week..** is to prepare documentation for School Adviser's Visit.

**My hero of the week was** my son who cooked for me after a very LONG day.

**My Villain of the Week was** N-Power

**Answer to last week's Head Teacher "What would be your perfect weekend"** - a walk along the beach, lunch with my family, Strictly Come Dancing with a chilled glass of something nice.

**My question for next week's Head Teacher is** "what is your favourite memory of your own school days?"

## Star pupil...Ofsted success stories

This week saw a flurry of 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgements for North East Schools. Congratulations to Alnwick South First School, Northumberland, John Spence Community High School, North Shields and Grange Park Primary School, Sunderland, and to Dunn Street Primary School, South Tyneside who were only one judgement below being considered 'outstanding' overall. Well done to all the children and staff at these schools!

- [School spells out its success](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [North Shields school handed glowing Ofsted](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Sunderland school 'outstanding' say inspectors](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [School gets a glowing Ofsted report](#) (Shields Gazette)

## Could try harder... schools missing out on Olympics tickets

Many schools are missing out on the opportunity to secure free tickets for their pupils to attend the 2012 London Olympics as they have failed to fill in a simple form. Make sure your school is not one of them by clicking [here](#) to sign up now!

- [Schools missing out on tickets](#) (Hexham Courant)

## Have a great week!

Have you signed up as a SCHOOLS NorthEast Enhanced Member yet? For full details on the great range of benefits available to Enhanced Members, click [here](#).

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](mailto:r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com).

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