

SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update - Week 14

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The banner features the 'SCHOOLS NORTH EAST' logo on the left, with the tagline 'The future of our region is in school'. The main title 'WEEKLY UPDATE' is in large blue letters. On the right is the logo for 'CLIVE OWEN & CO LLP' with the text 'CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & BUSINESS ADVISERS'. Below the banner, a dark blue box contains white text: 'Sponsored by Clive Owen & Co LLP, a regional firm of Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers with offices in Darlington, Durham and York. To find out more please click here.'

In this issue

- All the latest regional and national education news.
- Details on this week's MP lunch with David Miliband.
- Head to Head with John Anthony from Gilbrook College in Redcar.

Focus on...Unsatisfactory Satisfactorys

When is satisfactory not satisfactory? When you are a secondary school that has not improved within six years, according to a new report by the Royal Society of Arts. Their report published jointly with Ofsted, says half of the 40% of England's schools classed as "satisfactory" failed to improve within two Ofsted inspections.

Mapping the location, improvement trends, and demographics of 'Satisfactory' schools, the research shows that disadvantaged pupils are over-represented in these schools, and that inconsistent quality of teaching practice is the strongest characteristic of 'Satisfactory' schools.

The report calls on Ofsted to scrap the term 'Satisfactory' and replace it with 'Performing Inconsistently'. The authors argue that "the ascription 'Satisfactory' suits no one: it is pejorative enough to deter (some) families from choosing a school and to dampen staff morale, but at present there is little to help schools and their stakeholder constituents to identify what specifically needs to improve, and little support to achieve improvement. The term 'Performing Inconsistently' is a more accurate reflection of the school's situation, and clearly flags that while some aspects of the school's provision may be good or better, improvement is needed in others."

The Government is criticised in the report for concentrating on school structures (Free Schools and Academies) whilst a significant proportion of schools continue to provide lower quality educational provision, and for not providing a framework for supporting those schools to improve.

The report author, Professor Becky Francis, said: "It seems to me to be genuinely quite preposterous that we have a very high quality inspection system but very little framework to ensure schools improve."

"Given the larger proportion of 'satisfactory' schools compared to failing schools, they are having a more widespread impact on outcomes for disadvantaged children than are failing schools.

The issue of "coasting schools" has also recently been highlighted by the Prime Minister and Ofsted's new Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw.

Sir Michael said he wanted to replace the word "satisfactory" in Ofsted inspections with a clearer explanation of why a school could not be called "good".

Reacting to the report, Brian Lightman, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it was "seriously misleading" for Ofsted to interpret the term satisfactory as the opposite of its dictionary definition, stating "If they mean unsatisfactory they should say so".

He called for the distinction between 'good' and 'satisfactory' to be abandoned and the introduction of three new grades: "above expected level of performance, around expected level of performance and below expected level of performance."

The Department for Education said it agreed with the thrust of the report and from January, a tougher inspection regime will be operational, targeting schools at risk of falling back or making slow or no progress.

We would like to hear from you...what labels should Ofsted use? How would you like schools to be supported to improve? Let us know, email think@schoolsnortheast.com

In the news

North East education news

Darlington

- [Lollipop man campaigns to save school crossing service](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Mother's plea over classroom absence](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- [Students' quirky Christmas gifts](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Hartlepool

- [School makes the grade in top guide](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Middlesbrough

- [Acklam school launches Bridgebook social networking site](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Caedmon Primary School in Grangetown is improving states Ofsted](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Teesside students urged to check out scholarships](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [Youngsters get Theatre Royal panto sneak preview](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Newcastle headmaster's talks will spread word on issue](#) (Journal Live)
- [Percy Hedley School pupils join in with the festive fun](#) (Journal Live)

North Tyneside

- [Killingworth pupils get to explore final frontier](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Longbenton kids get a visit from Peppa Pig](#) (Chronicle Live)

- [Educate kids on dangers of North East railways](#) (Chronicle Live)

Northumberland

- [Further education hopes raised](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Last bell tolls for school founded in garden shed](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Berwick schoolgirl wins national Christmas card competition](#) (Journal Live)
- [Buddist monks make cultural visit to Prudhoe High School](#) (Journal Live)
- [Teachers grow top 'taches for charity](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Brims transforms old school](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Schools closed by strike](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [County schools get top marks from inspectors](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Schools join forces to form academy](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [World-class award for high school](#) (Morpeth Herald)

Stockton

- [Many moustaches make cash for charity](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Pupils show off their creative side](#) (Northern Echo)

Sunderland

- [North East youngsters scoop first aid awards](#) (Journal Live)
- [Fears for future of Sunderland kindergarden](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Success on the menu for Sunderland school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Winning teacher is an inspiration](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Prize-winners- by design](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [A Frank lesson in war for Sunderland kids](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Students face up to challenge](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Youth Parliament shows the way forward for Sunderland](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- ['Time not right for strike' says Sunderland headteacher](#) (Sunderland Echo)

South Tyneside

- [Centre's hat-trick of outstanding Ofsted](#)s (Shields Gazette)
- ['No longer a stigma over free school meals'](#) (Shields Gazette)
- ['Badger' honour for young first-aiders](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Teenagers' social skills blossoming](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Cats pair go back to the classroom](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Watchdogs praise children's centre](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Class in a spin as DJ takes teaching prize](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [First past the post for Washington and Sunderland MP](#) (Shields Gazette)

Redcar

- [Sculptor brings inspiration to school](#) (Northern Echo)

Omitted articles

We try to include all the local press coverage relating to North East schools in the Weekly News Update, but there may be occasions when articles are overlooked. If you are aware of an article which has not been included please email the details to r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com so that we can include it in a future edition.

National education news

Changes to Head Teacher qualification

The Department of Education has announced the outcome of a review of the National College's NPQH qualification. As a result of the findings, from early 2012 (subject to the Parliamentary process), NPQH will become optional and changes will be introduced aiming to enable prospective Head Teachers from all types of schools (including Independent schools, Academies and Free Schools) the chance to develop the best skills for the job. In addition, the bar for entry and assessment for the qualification will be raised and a demanding core curriculum focusing on the key skills of headship and with a greater emphasis on behaviour will be introduced. The revised qualification will be launched in spring 2012 with the first participants starting in September 2012.

Steve Munby, Chief Executive at the National College, said: "We believe the new non mandatory NPQH will be ranked alongside the best leadership development in the world and become the mark of quality that governing bodies and academy boards choose to rely on when appointing head teachers and principals, as only the most talented candidates will get through."

- [Head Teacher Qualification to be overhauled](#) (DfE)

Faith school academy conversions and funding agreement rules on promoting marriage

New figures emerged showing dozens of faith schools in England are preparing to switch to become academies in the next six months. Nearly 800 Church of England and Catholic schools have registered an interest with the Department for Education about becoming an academy and approximately 140 faith schools have already converted.

The release of the figures coincide with the news that Education Secretary Michael Gove has outlined a set of strict rules setting out what pupils must learn about sex and relationships as part of the model funding agreement for new Academies and Free Schools. Gove plans to ensure that every new Free School and Academy will be required to teach children about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and "protect children from inappropriate teaching materials" as part of their legally binding funding agreement.

- [Catholic faith schools in academy switch](#) (BBC News)
- [Free schools and academies must promote marriage](#) (Telegraph)

Council cuts hit school transport provision

The Campaign for Better Transport has revealed that around three-quarters of councils are cutting school transport budgets. The figures, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, show that 38% of councils were reviewing or cutting transport to faith schools and 46% were reviewing or cutting transport to schools other than faith schools. Meanwhile, 51% were reviewing or cutting post-16 transport and in total 72% were reviewing or cutting one or more areas of school transport. The Campaign points to councils that are cutting back to their statutory minimum in areas such as Surrey and Durham.

- [School transport services face chop as council budgets squeezed](#) (CYPN)
- [School transport: Many councils 'making cuts'](#) (BBC News)

Calculator use in primary school reviewed

Ministers are planning to limit the use of calculators in primary schools to stop children becoming dependent on them. Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced a review of their use, saying children should not "reach for a gadget every time they need to do a simple sum". He warned that too many children had come to rely on calculators and that their mental and written arithmetic had suffered as a result. It has been found top-performing primaries only introduce calculators in the final years.

- [Use of calculators in primary schools to be reviewed](#) (DfE)

- [Calculators in schools: Pupils face limits](#) (BBC News)
- [Should the use of calculators be restricted in primary schools?](#) (Guardian)

Events

SCHOOLS NorthEast MP's lunch with David Miliband

This Friday, 9 December, concludes this term's series of MP's lunches. This term has seen local MPs from Redcar to Northumberland attend lively and informative lunches with local Head Teachers in which no educational stone was left unturned! To round off the programme until the New Year, David Miliband, MP for South Shields, will be meeting with School Leaders this Friday at the Customs House, South Shields from 11.30am until 1.30pm.

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

Places at the lunches are free but are very limited and exclusive to school leaders. If you would like to attend a lunch, or if you would like any more information, please email clegg@schoolsnortheast.com or give us a call on 0191 2048866.

Give parents a break this Christmas and engage their children in sport

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter ACG Sports is working in partnership with Benfield Centre for Sporting Excellence and Fusion to deliver a 4 day activity programme during the Christmas holidays. The programme is designed to get children (aged 5-11) involved in fun activity sessions, delivered by professional coaches. These events are a great way for children to interact with others and to try activities they may not have participated in before. This is also an opportunity for parents to relax, knowing their children are in a safe environment and having fun throughout the holiday period.

The event will run from **Monday 19 December** through till **Thursday 22 December** between 10am and 3pm and cost just £2.50 per child, per day.

To advise parents how to book a place for their child please call ACG Sports on 0191 5194322 or click [here](#) to view their website.

Discounted leadership course from Common Purpose

Leadership development organisation [Common Purpose](#) is offering heavily discounted places to SCHOOLS NorthEast members on their North East senior leaders courses. A place on the course, offers a flexible modular format that means leaders can tailor it to meet their individual needs and to match their diaries. The participant group, drawn from all sectors and backgrounds in the area, explore a huge range of real-life challenges. Participants work in small groups learning constantly from each other, the contributors, and the experience of operating in very unfamiliar situations.

"I thought the course was enlightening, inspirational, thought provoking, intellectually challenging, refreshing and exhilarating. Having been a senior leader in the field of education for many years I appreciated the opportunity to see leadership challenges from a different perspective – that is what the course offered and more!" said Linda Halbert, Principal at Freebrough Academy, Saltburn-by-the-Sea. "

The next course will start in **February 2012**. The discounted places, aimed at Head Teachers and Principals, are limited (to ensure complete diversity of the participant groups). For more information please call 0191 227 0390 or e-mail gemma.messenger@commonpurpose.org.uk.

Resources and ideas

Help fill your governor vacancies

If your school is looking to recruit high quality school governors then School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) is a charity that recruits skilled volunteers to be school governors. They work with any school or Local Authority that has governor vacancies and their services are completely free. From Community and Associate governors to Foundation and Parent, the new Online Governor Recruitment Service from SGOSS provides practical advice and guidance for governor recruitment. By registering your school and adding your governor vacancies, SGOSS can provide skilled governors for certain types of vacancy or use its experience and expertise to provide support and advice to help your school find the right volunteer.

Please visit <http://www.sgooss.org.uk> to utilise this resource.

Win a Wildlife Makeover

Schools in the North East are being invited to compete for a £10,000 wildlife makeover for their grounds. Quarrying and construction materials company Tarmac Ltd has joined with Northumberland Wildlife Trust to make the offer. To take part, schools will survey their grounds to discover the species and habitats already present.

Schools must register for an application pack before December 16 by emailing mail@northwt.org.uk or telephoning Tracy Evans on 0191 284 6884. Also, you can register for free with the local Environmental Records and Information Centre (ERIC) at www.eyeproject.org.uk for more information about the project.

[North East schools offered the chance of a wildlife makeover](#) (Journal Live)

Competition to design the 'smart class' of the future

If you're wanting to unleash your pupils' imaginations and **win an Intel® Classmate™ PC for each Year 7 pupil at the same time, then enter** The Guardian/Intel Smart Class of 2025 competition.

The competition challenges your students to produce a three-minute video, showing their vision of the classroom of the future and how it will build on the classroom of today.

To enter the competition you must first email smartclass2025@guardian.co.uk to notify them of your intention to take part. Final entries must be submitted by **17 February 2012**. For more information click [here](#).

Grants and funding

Funding for music education "hubs"

If you want to ensure that every child in your school has the opportunity to sing and learn a musical instrument then the Arts Council England is investing more than £171 million of funding between August 2012 and March 2015 in a network of music education "hubs", on behalf of the Department for Education. Music education "hubs" will replace the existing music services model. They will be collections of organisations working together in a local area, to create joined up, high quality music education provision for children and young people, in and out of school. "Hubs" will be identified through an open application process, which opened on 25 November 2011.

You can submit your application online by clicking [here](#). Applications close on 17 February 2012 and successful applicants will be announced in late April. The hubs will be in place by September 2012.

Head to Head

This week, we spoke to John Anthony from Gilbrook College in Redcar.

This week was quieter than most as Wednesday was the first strike day that our school has closed on; only 15 staff in school but all very actively engaged. It also gave me time to prepare a presentation. Isn't it strange; it took me three hours, if I had been under pressure it would have been done in one.

The two best things that happened at school last week were that we sorted out the development of Learning Support by appointing a qualified teacher to the SENCo role and most importantly we secured a Green/Amber rating at the Readiness for Opening meeting with the Academies division of the DfE. All systems go...

The biggest disappointment at school last week was the number of students who incur a C5 (isolation for a day) thereby missing out on their education and enjoyment of school. The number that effectively choose this never ceases to disappoint me, they are worth so much more.

The funniest thing that happened at school last week was the variety of comments made about the three "Movembers" as they came to their climactic ending, descriptions and accounts of the shaving off let alone the growing were hilarious.

One thing that would have made my job easier last week was the kids suddenly started clearing up all the post break and lunch debris!

Top of my to-do list for this week is to begin to consult on the use of the Environmental Improvement Grant with our sponsor and our PFI partner... Also check my blood pressure...

My hero of last week was Leeds United fans chanting Gary Speed's name for 11 minutes from the 11th minute in their game. Sometimes they've made me ashamed this time they made me proud.

My villain of last week was Michael Gove, unashamed elitist!

Question from last week's Head Teacher: What has been the most rewarding aspect of your headship so far? It has always been, and will always be; supporting those students who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to engage with school. I don't care half as much about the 5A*-C Grades, I care about each individual contributing positively to the community.

My question for next week's Head Teacher is...How many students have you permanently excluded in the last two years, and did you have to...?

Star pupil...teachers with 'taches for charity

The end of November also marked the end of 'Movember' - where teachers have been growing moustaches for charity. SCHOOLS NorthEast would like to congratulate all those teachers who adopted additional facial hair in the name of charity including the staff at Prudhoe High School in Northumberland, who raised around £600 for good causes.

[Teachers grow top 'taches for charity](#) (Hexham Courant)

Could try harder... book-free millions

Almost four million children in the UK do not own a book, according to a report by the National Literacy Trust. Children with their own books were more likely to be above-average readers and do better at school, the study of 18,000 children suggested. Poorer children and boys were less likely to have books, it added.

[National Literacy Trust highlights book-free millions](#) (BBC News)

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.

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.