

Subject: SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update - Week 14



Our update goes out to every Head Teacher in the North East weekly, 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

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Focus on...global race to the top

The obsession with international education league tables continues this week with the publication of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

The studies tested pupil performance in reading (age 10) and in Mathematics and Science (age 10 and 14) in May/June 2011.

The wealth of data in the report presents a mixed picture and commentators, politicians and the media have, as always, seized upon the statistics and analysis that reinforce their interpretation of the health of England's education system. So, whilst some headlines celebrate England's top ten performance in Maths, others warn of plummeting standards!

- England's average score in PIRLS has increased since 2006, and our relative ranking compared to other jurisdictions has improved
- England's average score in Science at age 10 in TIMSS has decreased since 2007 and our relative ranking has also declined.
- England's average scores in Science at age 14 and Mathematics at ages 10 and 14 show no statistically significant changes since 2007 and our relative position in the rankings is broadly unchanged.
- At primary level, England is ranked 9th in Maths, 11th in Reading and 15th in Science

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study presents a generally very positive picture. England's performance in Reading in 2011 was well above the international average and significantly higher than that seen in 2006.

As with other studies, the issues of the 'tail' in England's educational outcomes and the size of the gap between highest and lowest performing students are highlighted. The study found that our best readers were among the best in the world but there are a greater proportion of weaker readers than in many other high achieving countries.

In addition, the difference between the reading achievements of boys and girls was greater than that seen in many other countries.

The report also explores teaching, attitudes to learning and resources.

In England, more time was spent on the teaching of language (in our case English) with slightly less time spent on the teaching of reading than the international averages.

England had the highest proportion of pupils in schools where teachers reported that teaching of a range of reading skills was emphasised at or before the academic year in which pupils turned eight and the reported use of strategies to engage pupils in their learning was high compared to other countries.

There are more areas for concern raised in the findings of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

For Year 5 Mathematics and Science and for Year 9 Science, England had 40 to 50 per cent of pupils at the two highest benchmark levels and only 32% at Year 9 Maths. This compares to 60 to 80 per cent achieving these levels in the highest performing Pacific Rim countries.

The study shows that there has been no change in the proportion of Year 9 pupils at the top two benchmarks for Maths and Science or for year 5 Maths since 2007 but the proportions at the top two benchmarks for Year 5 Science in England has decreased significantly.

Unlike in reading, the study found no significant gender differences for either Maths or Science.

Comparing curriculums, the study found that fewer Year 9 pupils in England were taught the Algebra topics, compared with those in the highest performing countries but that at Y5 pupils would have encountered more of the mathematics content included in the TIMSS assessments than their peers in some of the highest performing countries.

The report also found that teaching time for Mathematics in England was relatively high in Year 5, but relatively low in Year 9 compared to other countries and that teaching time for Science was relatively low in England for both Years 5 and 9.

Both studies reveal that teacher satisfaction in England is among the highest in the world, with teachers reporting levels of career satisfaction similar to, or higher than, those of teachers in the highest achieving countries and rating their working conditions positively.

There were also positive findings in relation to student attitudes. Pupil attitudes in England to Science and Maths compare favourably to European comparators, for example, at Year 9, over 64% of learners in England enjoy learning Maths, compared to only 46% in Finland or Korea. The current results are more positive about Reading than in 2006 with over half of the pupils in England reporting that they read for at least half an hour every day out of school.

Speaking at a conference for the think tank Reform, Education Minister Elizabeth Truss said today's results demonstrate the urgent need for the Government's reforms:

"The rise in performance in Reading is encouraging but there is too long a tail of under-performance. The lack of progress in Maths and the decline in Science, linked to the removal of compulsory tests for all 11-year-olds, is a real concern.

That is why we are driving forward the academy programme and giving schools the freedom to make their own choices. That is why we are bringing in new rigorous exams that will be on a par with the best in the world and reforming the curriculum to focus on core arithmetic, algebra and geometry like high-performing jurisdictions.

This is what they do in the world's most successful education states - and we are following suit."

In their press release on the research, the Department for Education linked the decline in Science performance with the decision to drop compulsory tests in Science for all 11-year-olds, stating “England’s results underline that externally marked tests drive up standards and that teacher assessment alone cannot improve, or even maintain, standards.”

Commenting at the launch of the reports, Dr Newman Burdett, Head of Centre for International Comparisons at NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research), said:

“When we look at the results of international surveys such as TIMSS and PIRLS, it is important to remember that they are about more than just rankings – the data also helps us interpret the complex picture of education in England and helps guide effective policy, especially important when we are facing a period of exciting educational reform and global challenge...What these results tell us, among other things, is that England has a world class education system but that we cannot afford to be complacent.”

Reports

- [Reading achievement in England](#) (NFER)
- [Mathematics and science achievement in England](#) (NFER)

Further Reading

- [Asians top of school tables - England in maths top 10](#) (BBC)
- [England plummets in international league table for science](#) (The Telegraph)
- [Global survey sees English schools rise in reading but slip in science](#) (Guardian)
- [Concern as major slump in science standards in primary schools is revealed](#) (Independent)
- [International tests results published](#) (DfE)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Lessons in healthy eating](#) (Northern Echo)
- [New technology boost for Darlington pupils](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- ['Nothing to fear' from free school - director](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Healthy eating is lesson of the day](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Panto at Belmont school](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Children produce healthy eating book](#) (Northern Echo)

Gateshead

- [Bensham school wants a place where children can relax](#) (Chronicle Live)

Hartlepool

- [Apprentice scheme pays off](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [A hole lot of trouble over school shoes](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Middlesbrough

- [St Alphonsus RC Primary School celebrates 'good' Ofsted report](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [Central snatch the cross country title from hosts](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Westfield School pupil Georgia Lapping to sing at The Sage](#) (Journal Live)

Northumberland

- [Corbridge school head replaced for 'immediate future'](#) (Journal)
- [School tees-up golf day for OAPs](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School buses accused of driving lorry drivers away](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [A world of new tastes](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Outstanding school is top class](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [RAF get students to work as a team with challenges](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Proposal put forward to turn school into academy](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Duchess marks the start of a new era](#) (Northumberland Gazette)

North Tyneside

- [Pupils light way for hundreds of festival visitors](#) (News Guardian)
- [Delight in top rating for school](#) (News Guardian)

South Tyneside

- [Leading the way in special centres](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pavilion will become centre for community](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Movie actor gives talk at school ceremony](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Students are good poll models!](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [MP Miliband commends engineering students](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Radio legend's masterclass for students](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School feels the heat in closure row](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School's plea to help raise £1.6m](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pupils' efforts are tree-mendous](#) (Shields Gazette)

Sunderland

- [War hero honoured by Sunderland school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland schoolgirls' punishment threat for wearing boots and wellies in cold weather](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland youngsters speak up at Youth State of the City Debate](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Regional

- [Schools praise plan for £1bn of investment](#) (Northern Echo)

Top national education news

GCSE grades challenge goes to court

An alliance of pupils, teaching unions, schools and councils are meeting today at London's High Court seeking a judicial review of last-minute shifts in grade boundaries in June's exams.

If the court grants a judicial review, a three-day hearing will begin immediately. Secondary heads' union ASCL said it was "quietly optimistic".

Look out for a special update from SCHOOLS NorthEast when a decision is made.

- [GCSE grading row reaches high court](#) (Guardian)
- [GCSE English results challenged in High Court](#) (BBC News)
- [GCSE English grades challenged in High Court](#) (Telegraph)
- [GCSE grades challenge goes to court](#) (Independent)
- [ASCL optimistic as court date approaches for GCSE English legal action](#) (ASCL)

Gove challenged over exam changes by watchdog Ofqual

Exams regulator Ofqual has written to Michael Gove setting out its concerns regarding the potential introduction of the new English Baccalaureate Certificates.

During the Education Select Committee meeting last week, Gove confirmed he had received a letter from Ofqual, but refused repeated requests from the MPs to reveal what was in it. Ofqual has since released the [letter](#).

- [Gove challenged over exam changes by watchdog Ofqual](#) (BBC)

Overhaul school history, urges report by MPs and peers

A group of politicians has urged that school history lessons are overhauled and a British history qualification brought in for 16-year-olds. The group, made up of more than 20 MPs and peers, consulted historians and teachers as part of its research and has recommended building “firebreaks” into the syllabus to ensure a broader range of historical periods are studied.

The group recommended that pupils should study a “broad chronological framework across all periods”, encompassing “local, national and international perspectives on British history”, and called for a stronger foundation of local history, with schools finding the best ways to teach it.

- [Overhaul school history, urges report by MPs and peers](#) (BBC)
- [History is not all Hitler and Henrys, say MPs](#) (Telegraph)

What else we learnt this week...

- [Teachers' pay rises pegged to performance](#) (BBC News)
- [Military in schools projects get £2m boost](#) (BBC News)
- [University personal statements 'further disadvantage' poor](#) (BBC News)

Resources and Opportunities

National poetry competition to inspire teens

Do you have any potential young poets in your school? From January 2013 a new national poetry recitation competition will be launched in schools to inspire pupils. The Poetry Archive's competition, 'Poetry by Heart', will see thousands of students aged 14 to 18 competing to become national champion for their skill in memorising and performing poems.

The Department for Education is providing £500,000 of funding to The Poetry Archive to develop and run the National Poetry Competition. The competition aims to develop and support inspiring poetry teaching in schools and to motivate pupils and teachers to explore England's rich literary heritage.

To find out more about the competition please [click here](#).

Future Leaders School and Participant Recruitment for 2013 Cohort now open

Future Leaders is a leadership development programme for teachers with the talent to accelerate to Headship in 4 years and the commitment to improve children's' life chances.

Your school can get involved by:

- Offering a residency year – Future Leaders are looking for schools to host a Future Leader on your SLT for their first year on the programme.
- Supporting an existing member of staff – places are available for schools to nominate staff to join the programme and remain in your school for their residency year.

The first window for participant applications runs until **8 January 2013** and the second window runs from 9 January to 19 February 2013.

Please see further down this newsletter for details on a regional awareness session delivered by Future Leaders next week.

Chance to be Chancellor

Chance to be Chancellor is open to all 14-18 year olds. The initiative challenges participants to grapple with issues that face the Chancellor ahead of the official Budget in mid-March 2013. Students are required to learn about, and share their opinions on, a selection of possible policies detailed on the Chance to be Chancellor [website](#).

Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) Guidance and Support

If you are engaged in the Priority Schools Building Programme and are uncertain of the level of autonomy you will have over the design of your buildings and the impact the EFA proposals will have on your visions, then Aura may be able to help.

Aura is committed to ensuring school designs meet the school specific educational drivers in relation to curriculum organisation, teaching and pedagogy, behavioural and pastoral care and staff and student health and wellbeing, having worked with numerous North East schools providing funding, consultancy, design and construction services.

For further information please contact Marisa Nethercott on 0191 223 6818 or m.nethercott@auranewcastle.com

Design a Football Shirt - Competition to Win a Signed Newcastle Shirt

Recruitment company First Class Supply and Training are holding a competition to challenge local schools to design their "own" football shirt. The competition will be open to both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children. The winning entries will have their shirts designed and receive a signed Newcastle shirt.

Simply send your school's designs to daniel@1stclassteachers.co.uk or First Class Supply and Training, 131-133 Whitley Road, Whitley Bay, NE26 2ET.

The closing date for entries is Wednesday 30 January 2013 and the winners will be informed by Friday 1 February 2013.

GCSEPod take home top honours at awards

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter GCSEPod has won the Education Investor Award. A judge at the awards stated: “GCSEPod recognises the technology being adopted by young people and provides great value content which has been proven to deliver strong educational outcomes.”

Get award-winning GCSEPod in your school today – call 0191 2111 999 or [click here](#).

Events

Future Leaders: Regional Awareness Session – 11 December

Future Leaders will be running a Regional Awareness Session for interested participants and schools on Tuesday 11 December from 5pm to 7pm at All Saints College, West Denton Way, Newcastle, NE5 2SZ. The session will outline the programme, the application process, the benefits to participants and schools and a chance to hear from Senior Leaders already on the programme about their experiences.

If you would like to attend the session, register your interest in Future Leaders or discuss any elements of the programme further, please contact Matthew Robinson on 07824 536 047 or ormatthew.robinson@future-leaders.org.uk

Is Academy Conversion on Your 2013 “to-do” List? - 10 December, Sunderland & 12 December, Durham

To support local schools through the decision making process around academy conversion Law firm Samuel Phillips are hosting a couple of round table discussions. The sessions will be led by the people that are directly affected by the issues around academy conversion, with representatives from Samuel Phillips on hand to offer clarity on risks and share experience of running conversion projects.

These free events will take place between 4pm and 6pm on Monday 10 December at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, and on Wednesday 12 December at Durham County Cricket Club. Afternoon tea will be served following the round table discussion giving you the opportunity to talk informally to fellow guests and event representatives.

To book online for the Sunderland event [please click here](#) and for the Durham event [please click here](#).

Welcome to new Commercial Supporters

As a self-funded charity, SCHOOLS NorthEast relies on the kind support of both our schools and commercial organisations.

We are delighted to welcome [Education World](#) as a SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter. Education World is a local recruitment agency based in Gateshead, providing staffing solutions to schools across the North East.

Number crunch

In this new feature SCHOOLS NorthEast will give you some thought provoking statistic from the latest educational research.

- 1.3m pupils claim free school meals in England
- 2% of eligible pupils in the North East do not claim free school meals
- The UK spends 116 hours a year teaching Maths at age 14, compared to 160 hours in Chinese Taipei

- England's schools have increased from 15th place to 11th place for reading in global league tables
- In Japan, 85% of students do Maths equivalent of A Level

Have a great week!

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 think@schoolsnortheast.com