

SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update - Week 19

January 31st, 2012 at 4:45 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. On the right is the 'GO 4 SCHOOLS' logo, where 'GO' is in a green circle, '4' is a large blue number, and 'SCHOOLS' is in blue text below.

This week's update is sponsored by GO 4 Schools. They are hosting a free seminar on school data on Thursday this week at Kenton High in Newcastle. See below for further details or [click here](#) to find out more.

In this Issue

- A roundup of all the latest local and national education news
- Details of school improvement event with GO 4 Schools
- 'School to School' with Mark Frazer from Newker Primary School in Durham
- An update on vocational exams being cut from tables
- Live 'Tweets' from the Education Select Committee

Focus on... Education Select Committee

Education Secretary Michael Gove was subjected to his regular grilling by the Education Select Committee this morning and SCHOOLS NorthEast was in Westminster to watch.

Whilst we have often complained about the lack of North East education voices in the corridors of power this certainly can't be said of the Education Committee in which three of the 11 MPs represent North East constituencies – Pat Glass MP for North West Durham, Ian Mearns MP for Gateshead and Alex Cunningham MP for Stockton South.

Unsurprisingly therefore, issues close to the heart of our region's Head Teachers were on the agenda.

Topics covered included:

- Accountability and performance measures
- The Ebacc and vocational qualifications
- Pupil premium and how you know if it is working
- Rates of academy conversions and academy chains
- Government intervention in 'failing' schools
- Governance
- Early intervention
- Teacher quality
- Teaching conditions
- School to school support
- And, the Secretary of State's use of private emails for Department business

In addition, local issues touched on included:

- School transport
- Local Authority school improvement services in Durham
- Free Schools in areas where there are still places at existing high performing schools
- The fall in applications at all NE Universities, except Durham

We were particularly pleased that Gateshead MP Ian Mearns raised a specific point regarding Ofsted Inspections brought to his attention at the SCHOOLS NorthEast MPs Lunch last week.

Prior to the hearing, the Committee had taken the novel step of asking the public for their questions to 'ask Gove', on Twitter. Apparently, 5000 responses were received and the Committee put many of them to the Secretary of State in a quick fire round.

Our full report of the session will be available on the Blog section of our website tomorrow morning and you can watch the session on the [Parliament website](#) .

Local news story of the week... Durham school is 'most improved'

Fyndoune Community College in Durham has topped the most improved table for GCSE results. In 2008 just over a quarter of pupils at Fyndoune were achieving five good GCSEs, including maths and English. However, five years after agreeing to join forces with Durham Community Business College in The Durham Federation, four out of five students are receiving at least five A* to C grades.

- [Durham school is 'most improved'](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Fyndoune Community College sees exam pass rates triple](#) (Journal Live)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Pupils relive the Darlington bus crash horror](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Bridge crash bus driver spared jail](#) (Berwick Advertiser)

Durham

- [Students pamper soldiers](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Student Jayde proves to be top class](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [MP's war of words over Consett Academy site](#) (Journal Live)

Gateshead

- [Emmanuel College head on school league tables](#) (Chronicle Live)

Hartlepool

- [English Martyrs pupils celebrate record-breaking GCSE exam results](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [St Hild's pupils quiz councillors](#) (Hartlepool mail)

Middlesbrough

- [Four Teesside schools that are failing pupils](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [RGS teacher ridicules school league tables](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [West Newcastle Academy plans win backing](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Canning Street School pupils visit Alnwick farm](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Tyneside dinner ladies cook up storm in kitchen](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Whickham pupil collects over 6,000 Wish tokens](#) (Chronicle Live)

Northumberland

- [Ford Castle resurrected as outdoor study centre](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Schools consult over academy](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Partnership breathes new life into castle](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [£1.5m bid for sports complex](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Barton backs young readers scheme](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Ex-miners join Blyth pupils to celebrate pit site](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Bates Colliery monument unveiled at Blyth's Morpeth Road Primary School](#) (Journal Live)

Stockton

- [MP urges 'failing' Stockton academy to accept help](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Tilery Primary School pupils prepare for lantern parade](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Inspectors blast North Shore Health Academy](#) (Gazette Live)

South Tyneside

- [School tells apprentice Michaela: 'You're hired!'](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [A-level students go to top of class](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Bridget makes regional final of School Chef of the Year](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Inspiring kids to learn through Olympics](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School's forging links with Mumbai](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Class of 2012 makes the grade](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [South Tyne ranks high in region](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Joy after college's dramatic turnaround](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Seven schools unite to improve teaching standards](#) (Shields Gazette)

Sunderland

- [More Wearside kids making the grade at GCSE - see how your child's school performed](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland schools 'constantly strive to improve'](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Regional

- [North East university applications fall by 2,000](#) (Journal Live)

National education news

Vocational exams cut from tables

Thousands of vocational qualifications are to be stripped out of school league tables, the Government has announced. Schools will still be able to offer these courses, but they will no longer boost their position in league tables.

The Government says vocational qualifications have created "perverse incentives" for schools to offer exams that boost their league table position. From 2014, only 70 "equivalents" will count in the GCSE tables and on a like-for-like basis with GCSEs.

The announcement follows a [review of vocational education carried out by Prof Alison Wolf](#), a public policy expert. She argues that pupils need to acquire "broad skills" to enable them to thrive over a lifetime of change.

The education secretary, Michael Gove, said: "The weaknesses in our current system were laid bare by Professor Wolf's incisive and far-reaching review. For too long the system has been devalued by attempts to pretend that all qualifications are intrinsically the same. Young people have taken courses that have led nowhere."

- [Most GCSE equivalents axed from school league tables](#) (BBC News)
- [Thousands of vocational qualifications to be stripped out of GCSE league tables](#) (Guardian)

Gove gives the green light to 'for-profit' company to run free school

Last week the education secretary, Michael Gove, gave the green light to Breckland Middle School in Suffolk to be renamed IES Breckland and run under a £21 million, 10-year contract by Swedish for-profit firm Internationella Engelska Skolan (IES). IES is the UK arm of a Swedish company which runs a number of free schools in Sweden, earning profits of £5 million a year. It says that it will only charge IES Breckland, the costs of services it carries out for it.

What is most interesting about this latest development however is the expected impact the new school will have on the education system. The Observer believes that the changes at Breckland will encourage more for-profits to run schools in what promises to be a watershed in British education. It is thought that the floodgates have now been opened to an unprecedented level of commercial involvement in British learning under the education reforms spearheaded by Michael Gove.

- [State schools hover on the brink of huge private sector revolution](#) (Guardian)
- [Breckland Free School in Suffolk approved by government](#) (BBC News)

Jubilee cooking contest may be illegal

School children across the UK are being invited to come up with ideas for food to be served at Buckingham Palace to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The contest, launched by the Duchess of Cornwall, is for 10 to 15-years-olds. Pupils from the top four winning schools will see their ideas made into canapes by royal chef Mark Flanagan.

However, the anti-monarchy group Republic is warning schools they may be breaking the law if they take part in the cooking contest. They say involving children in celebrations of the monarchy without teaching them about republicanism as well is a breach of the Education Act. However, the Government said the rules were not designed to stop children taking part in national events.

- [Jubilee cooking contest may be illegal, says Republic](#) (BBC News)
- [Children to create Queen's Diamond Jubilee menu](#) (BBC News)

Events

National story telling week: 28 Jan - 4 Feb

Get involved with national story telling week and visit [TES online](#) for many useful resources.

School Improvement seminars: 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 a seminar on school improvement and how you can always be prepared for inspection. The event will be on this Thursday 2 February 2012 at 4.30pm at Kenton School Newcastle. **Please note the session on Wednesday 1 February at The Education Centre in Stockton has been cancelled.**

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

Guys and Dolls presented by Central Newcastle High School: 9 and 10 February - 7.30pm

Following on from Central High's acclaimed performance of West Side Story last year at the Northern Stage, the pupils will be performing Guys and Dolls at the same prestigious theatre.

There is a special group rate for schools booking for 10 or more seats - £5 per ticket (full price £10 for adults and £7 for under 18s). Tickets can be purchased from the Northern Stage Box Office on 0191 230 5151.

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.

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 clegg@schoolsnortheast.com or give us a call on (0191) 204 8866

'Whose Curriculum is it Anyway?' - Durham Conference: 14 March

These are unique one day events for schools and colleges who want to take advantage of increasing curriculum freedoms. Keynote speakers include Sir Tim Brighouse, Professor Mick Waters, John Dunford, Marcus Orlovsky, Lord Knight and David Crossley with more to be announced!

The event will take place on **Wednesday 14 March at Durham Leadership Centre**. Tickets for schools are £175 and you can take advantage of the 33% early-bird discount by quoting WEConf_Earlybird (closes Sat 18 Feb)! You can book using a credit card [online](#) or call 020 7250 8053 and we can invoice your school.

SCHOOLS NorthEast Clash Diary

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

Funding

School Improvement Grant from National College

The National College is awarding grants of about £2,000 to schools (LA maintained and academies) to pay for workshops for groups of chairs of governors. The grants aim to improve school leadership by:

- encouraging collaboration across governing bodies
- improving the sharing of best practice across governing bodies
- sharing examples of governing bodies' contributions to school improvement

The grant will cover the hire of a facilitator to co-ordinate and deliver the workshop, and write reports for the College first on the local practice, and later on the actions taken as a result of the workshop. The workshop must be held this school year and you do not need to have organised a facilitator or date by the deadline for application of **25 February**. [Apply now](#) for your chance to get funding.

Resources and Opportunities

Deadline for Teaching Awards

The deadline for the Teaching Awards is 5pm tomorrow (**1 February 2012**) so you don't have long to nominate an amazing teacher that you know. Nominate now by writing a thank you message on [Thank a Teacher now](#).

Future Leaders - developing outstanding leaders for challenging secondary schools – expands to the North East:

As part of their expansion plans, Future Leaders are now fully operational in the region with a local office in Leeds. They are delighted to announce the appointment of Bill Jordon as Regional Director for the North East. Bill has recently stepped down from a long-standing position as Head Teacher at Dyke House Sports and Technology College in Hartlepool (although he remains there in a part-time advisory capacity) and he is also a member of the SCHOOLS NorthEast board. Bill will be working with Matthew Robinson, the new North East Regional Officer, to extend Future Leaders' work in tackling educational disadvantage.

For those Head's interested in becoming a Future Leaders residency school or if you have a member of staff who you feel may benefit from being on the Future Leaders programme, please visit www.future-leaders.org.uk or contact Matthew Robinson on matthew.robinson@future-leaders.org.uk or 07824536047.

School to School

In this new feature, we ask a local Head give us a brief insight into their school. This week we spoke to Mark Frazer from Newker Primary School in Durham.

Our school is good at... we have an excellent sporting reputation, high academic standards and strong links with the community.

Our school is working on...developing the school environment as well as providing better opportunities for our children both in the taught and wider curriculum.

The biggest challenges for our school are...the physical nature of the school can prove problematic. The school used to be three separate schools which have now been joined together to form one very large, rambling site!

We think other schools would be interested in our...greatly enhanced ICT facilities. As well as a great computer suite we now have 64 netbooks!

We would be interested in hearing from other schools about... How mainstream schools are coping with the burgeoning number of pupils with increasingly complex educational, physical and emotional needs.

Question from last week's school is: **Should we be working with Free Schools and UTCs?**

Yes – especially in the context of SCHOOLS NorthEast which as an organisation embraces all aspects of the education community to secure the best outcomes for all of the region's children.

Our question to next week's school is? If you could eliminate one thing from your daily routine to make you more effective, what would it be?

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 SCHOOLS NorthEast Tweeted live from the Education Select Committee. Here are our highlights;

"Ian Mearns quotes story he heard from a local HT at the SCHOOLS NorthEast MP lunch" [#AskGove](#)

Gove: "Good thing if schools feel sense of friendly rivalry" [#AskGove](#)

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, I would love to hear from you at the above address.