

Week 21: 21.2.12

In this Issue

- A roundup of the latest in local and national education news
- Details of our meeting on forced academisations tomorrow
- Samuel Phillips LLP's Academies 'Decision Time' Event
- 'Where next for North East Education?' – Education Foundation debate
- School to School with Hilary Cooper from Barnes Junior School in Sunderland.
- Welcome to new SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporters [BHP Law](#) and [UNW LLP](#) .

Focus on... speaking skills

When polls are conducted on people's greatest fears public speaking always come out near the top and surveys of employers highlight the quality of young people's verbal communication skills as one of their key areas of concern. At SCHOOLS NorthEast events and consultations, Head Teachers regularly identify the standard of speaking skills in the classroom and the use of appropriate language by students as an area for development within their schools.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the recent report from the expert panel leading the Government's curriculum review called for a greater emphasis on oracy in the new national curriculum, due to be introduced in 2014. The expert panel highlighted the need for oracy to become a stronger feature in teaching across the whole school and not solely an issue for the subject of English.

Giving evidence to the panel, Jean Gross, former Government 'Communication Champion' emphasised the particular importance of the development of language skills for students in deprived communities, stating "in areas of social deprivation, you have to do extra to develop the language of those pupils. They are disadvantaged compared with articulate peers." Gross's evidence demonstrated how at age 6, the gap in reading age between children with good oral language skills and those with poor skills is only a few months. However, by the time they are 14, this gap has widened to a five year difference in reading age. Gross argues that if teachers pay explicit attention to children's speaking and listening skills they can start to reduce the deficit.

In addition, a major report by the Sutton Trust found that the vocabulary of children from the poorest backgrounds lags more than a year behind that of their classmates from richer homes by the time they start school. The charity called the problem a "tragic indictment of modern society".

In the last few months, many reports and media stories have highlighted the decline in language ability amongst children starting school and the increase in demand for speech and language therapy. Just this week, a new study recommends the introduction of a simple test to identify toddlers struggling with speech before they reach school. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) who compiled the test suggest that by comparing a child's speaking ability against a checklist of 310 basic words, parents can determine whether they are at risk of language-related difficulties that last into adulthood. The researchers found that children who could speak fewer than 50 words on the list at the age of two were more likely to be behind their peers in their vocabulary, grammar and reading ability at 17. According to Prof Rescorla "Children really need to have people talk to them in order for them to acquire a language - not that they don't learn anything from videos and television, but really they need language partners."

To address these problems, many schools have developed innovative activities and projects to encourage language skills in the classroom and beyond. In a pilot programme cited in the TES, the University of Sunderland and TV Presenter (and SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter) Kim Inglis took part in a year-long project working with school children to enhance their speaking skills through weather forecasting.

In related news the issue of 'correct speech' has been hotly debated this week following reports of a schools banning the use of slang and introducing elocution lessons for pupils. Pupils at Sheffield's Springs Academy have been ordered to stop using slang while at school to improve their job prospects. Teachers introduced the policy to encourage their pupils, aged from 11 to 18, to use only Standard English inside the school gates. The Trust that runs the academy said it wanted children to cut out slang words and phrases such as "hiya" and "cheers" in favour of the more correct "good morning", "goodbye" or "thank you".

And a school in Essex is giving students weekly elocution lessons with a private tutor to improve their writing skills after the primary school's teachers had found the area's accent had damaging effect on children's spelling and grammar. Terri Chudleigh, the school's literacy co-ordinator, insisted: "This is not about being ashamed of the Essex accent – it's about helping the children to speak properly so they can improve their reading and writing. They weren't saying words correctly and were therefore misspelling them. We had lots of youngsters writing 'sbort' instead of 'sport' and 'wellw' instead of 'well'"

SCHOOLS Northeast would be very interested to hear about your school's approach to oracy. How do you encourage speaking and listening throughout your school's curriculum? Do you think that schools in the North East, an area well known for its distinctive accents and dialects, should consider a similar approach to the school in Essex? What innovative methods are in action in your school and what help would you like to improve the speaking skills of your students? Let us know your views think@schoolsnortheast.com

- [The only way is elocution: Pupils in Essex being taught to talk proper!](#) (Daily Mail)
- [Curriculum Review Panel Framework](#)
- [Checklist can tell if toddlers' language skills are up to scratch](#)
- [A ban on playground slang? Not bloody likely!](#)
- [Pupils banned from using slang in school](#)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Church given new lease of life repays host school](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Concern over school transport funding](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [School hosts foreign visitors](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Kids urged to get on their bikes](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Mowden chosen for primary school expansion](#) (The Northern Echo)

Durham

- [Free school applications re-open](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Consett Academy online petition calls for speedy construction](#) (Journal Live)
- [Plans to modernise school in Wingate reach important milestone](#) (The Northern Echo)

Gateshead

- [Gateshead youngsters in Sport Relief pancake race](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Five Gateshead students offered Oxbridge places](#) (Chronicle Live)

Hartlepool

- [£53m college hailed by Duke](#) (Hartlepool Mail)
- [Love's not in the air just yet for Golden Flatts Primary pupils](#) (Hartlepool Mail)

Middlesbrough

- [Success for Teesside colleges](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Wilton Primary School win cash prize for garden project](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Teesside youngsters set to graduate from Children's University](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Middlesbrough College students helping kids in Africa](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Middlesbrough's Prince Bishop School 'improving', says Ofsted](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Faith school travel support set to be axed](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Eston pupil referral unit praised by Ofsted](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Apology after Trinity Catholic College pupils sit wrong exam](#) (GazetteLive)

Newcastle

- [Being good sports wins staff prize](#) (News Guardian)
- [North East parents fined just 16p for childrens' truancy](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Royal Grammar School head: 'Childhood at risk'](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Newcastle Central High perform Guys and Dolls](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Morpeth school pupils reach final of BT Big Voice project](#) (Journal Live)
- [Fears over teaching of maths in schools](#) (Journal Live)
- [NUFC players give language class at Newcastle School for Boys](#) (Journal Live)

North Tyneside

- [Barbarians founder is the latest recipient of Town Cup](#) (News Guardian)
- [Ross takes leading role in stage show](#) (News Guardian)
- [MINT puts talent in the spotlight](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)

Northumberland

- [Branching out for right royal event](#) (News Guardian)
- [Pupils poisoned by school bus fumes](#) (News Guardian)
- [Turning 'an accident waiting to happen'](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Longridge establishes links with library](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)
- [Chinese students visit Berwick Middle](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)
- [Out of Africa and back again with Berwick school pupils](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)
- [Pupils start community work at Seton Hall](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)
- [Pilgrim 'drops' in to take Belford coaching session](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)
- [First class Ofsted for Cornhill](#) (The Berwick Advertiser)

- [SOS pays off as school is saved](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Encouraging the next generation](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Rotakids get going](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Cornhill First School struggles to stay open with just one pupil](#) (Journal Live)
- [Empty Blyth school gets guardian angel tenants](#) (Journal Live)
- [Students work in the 'real world'](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School wins fairtrade status](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Pupils pay a penny to learn their R's Victorian style](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Building youngsters' construction skills](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School's out forever as Head announces his retirement](#) (Hexham Courant)

Stockton

- [Stockton Riverside College principal highlights importance of apprenticeships](#) (GazetteLive)
- [Youngsters join 130,000 others in record attempt](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Young entrepreneurs win challenge](#) (The Northern Echo)
- [Academy wins votes for an £18m school](#) (The Northern Echo)

South Tyneside

- [Apprentices helping to build a future](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [College revamp set to enter new phase](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Church group celebrates 20 years of child's play](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Pupils show they have a head for business](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [College students turn on style to scoop awards](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [School praised for continued improvement](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Ofsted inspectors praise education centre](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Hundreds harbours hopes of a job at sea](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Students' hi-tech visit good for networking](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Youngsters dress down for charity](#) (Shields Gazette)

Redcar

- [Pupils introduced to world of industry](#) (The Northern Echo)

Top national education news

Term time holidays will be banned

Education Secretary, Michael Gove has announced he will abolish the right of Head Teachers to "authorise absence" from the classroom, which has been used to let families take their children out of school during term-time to save money on holidays.

- [At my free school, the end of term will be too good to miss](#) (Telegraph)
- [Term time holidays will be banned](#) (Telegraph)
- [Government to fine parents who take children on holiday during term-time](#) (Mail Online)
- [Gove to crack down on term-time holidays](#) (Guardian)

'Outstanding' schools to be re-examined

Ofsted Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw has confirmed that in future only schools that get Outstanding in Teaching and Learning will be able to gain an overall grading of Outstanding from Ofsted and that quarter of schools currently deemed "Outstanding" whose teaching and learning did not get the top mark will be re-examined. 11 out of 24 North East schools awarded Outstanding status last schools will be subject to re-examination as a result of the changes.

- ['Outstanding' schools to be re-examined](#) (BBC News)

Twigg calls for Office of Educational Improvement

Labour Shadow Education Minister Stephen Twigg today called for the creation of an Office for Educational Improvement to raise standards in education in England using objective research evidence about what really works in schools. Responding to the proposal ASCL General Secretary Brian Lightman said:

“ASCL has long advocated an independent body for education, equivalent to the Chief Medical Officer, which would provide a neutral, expert, policy-based perspective in the development of education policy...For too long education policy has been a political football used by politicians on all sides, with the result that schools and colleges are continually criticised for not doing enough, rather than recognised for the vast improvements made”.

- [Twigg calls for independent school standards agency](#) (BBC News)
- [Education Policy must move beyond political football](#) (ASCL)

Who'd be a Head Teacher in 2012?

According to the latest annual survey of senior staff appointments in schools across England and Wales, 28% of Head Teacher posts are re-advertised. The results published by Education Data Surveys found that deputy heads and other senior teachers were increasingly reluctant to make the step up to Headship. Commentators blame the level of scrutiny and high stakes culture encapsulated last week by Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw's accusation that 5,000 heads were failing to do their jobs properly.

The report suggests that fast-trackers from outside the profession are bucking the trend to take up the school leadership challenge. SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter Future Leaders is highlighted as one of the programmes that are set up to fast-track new joiners and other junior teachers into headships. Future Leaders' chief executive Heath Monk explains that the project wasn't conceived as a way of enticing those from other backgrounds into becoming Head Teachers but over the five years it has been in existence that has been one of the outcomes. He said "the idea of Future Leaders was to identify people who were able and prepared to take on headships in the country's toughest schools – the ones that find it hardest to recruit leaders – and what we always expected was that a proportion of those who applied to the scheme wouldn't come from traditional backgrounds.”

- [Who'd be a Head Teacher in 2012?](#) (Guardian)

Events

Forced Academisation meeting – 22 February 2012

Tomorrow, Wednesday 22 February, SCHOOLS NorthEast will be hosting a consultation to discuss implications, impacts and responses to the Government's programme of 'forced academisations' of Primary Schools. The meeting will be an opportunity to share views, experiences, concerns and intelligence and to explore potential local solutions. Schools Leaders and Governors from all schools, whatever their phase, status or interest in the issue, are welcome to attend.

The event will take place at the Peterlee Campus at East Durham College from 8.30am with the aim to finish around 11am. Please email r.clegg@schoolsnortheast.com if you would like to attend or [click here](#) to find out more.

Education Britain: Where next for North East Education? - 22 February 2012

In November, The Education Foundation, the UK's first cross sector education think tank, asked 35 leading figures in education to identify where education goes next. Their visions were varied, challenging and inspiring. Now the Foundation is taking to the road to engage educationists, policy makers and business leaders outside of the Westminster Village in the debate. Education Britain Newcastle is a preview of an event series which will run across the country from the Summer 2012 and you are invited to take part.

Join the Education Foundation and a high level audience from the worlds of education, local government, policy and business to discuss the future priorities for education in the North at 5:30pm on the 22 February at The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle Upon Tyne. To find out more and book your place [click here](#). You can download a copy of the educating Britain report by [clicking here](#).

Future Leaders information session – Tuesday 28 February

Future Leaders are hosting an information session for current or former teachers in the North East region who would like more information about Future Leaders and joining the 2012 cohort. Future Leaders North East Regional Director, Bill Jordon, will talk about the programme and Claire Cuthbert, from their 2011 cohort currently in her residency year at Academy 360 in Sunderland, will discuss her experiences of the programme.

The event will take place on Tuesday 28 February from 5:00pm -6:00pm at Dyke House Sports and Technology College in Hartlepool, TS28 8NQ. To book onto the Information Session please call 0800 009 4142 or email: recruitment@flct.org.uk

Decision Time: Free Academy Conversion event - 1 March 2012

To help the schools and governing bodies across the region currently debating whether or not to convert to an academy, SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter Samuel Phillips LLP is hosting a free workshop in Durham for School Leaders, Governors and Business Managers. At the event, John Edmunds from the Academy Conversion Division, Department for Education will be presenting and will be joined by a school that has first-hand experience of academy conversion.

The event will be chaired by Beccy Earnshaw (Director of SCHOOLS NorthEast). The event will take place on 1 March 2012 between 3.00pm and 5.30pm at Lumley Castle, (Garter suite). To find out more or book a place please contact Sarah Thackray on 0191 289 4805 or email sarah@beaconhouse-events.co.uk

Sing Up North East Learning Network Day – 3 March 2012

The free "Singing in Transition and Youth Leadership" day is a chance to learn valuable techniques, sample brand new resources, play around with fresh material and share ideas with other teachers and singing leaders, all within the glorious setting of The Sage Gateshead. It is a great opportunity for

teachers, support staff and music educators to network, learn and explore singing together and is suitable for anyone regardless of experience.

This free event will take place on 3 March from 10am to 3.30pm at The Sage Gateshead, Gateshead Quays. Please register online at <http://fs2.formsite.com/singup/form63/index.html> to book your place or please contact Sam Clark on 0191 443 4617.

'Whose Curriculum is it anyway?' – 14 March 2012

Whole Education is hosting a series of regional conferences across the country during March. Join them in Durham on Wednesday 14 March at Durham Leadership Centre between 9.30am and 3.30pm. The one day conference will allow you to hear from leading educationalists including keynote speaker Marcus Orlovsky and learn in breakouts about up to 30 innovative projects and initiatives to enrich the curriculum and provide a more rounded education.

Quote SCHOOLS NorthEast when booking to receive a 10% discount . To book contact jo@wholeeducation.org or call 020 7250 8053 or [click here](#) to find out more.

Resources and Opportunities

£2,000 school improvement grants for Governors

The National College is offering one-off grants for groups of governors who would like to run facilitated workshops to share best practice within their local area.

Find out more and apply now by [clicking here](#). The deadline for applications is 25 February 2012.

Design a mug competition to win sports equipment for your school

The Education Network would like to give you the opportunity to design some of their free marketing gifts and are looking for ideas for a new coffee mug. The winning entry will be announced July 2012 and the winner will receive £100 in gift vouchers for themselves and £500 worth of sports equipment for their school.

Closing date for entries Friday 1st June 2012. [Click here](#) to find out more or call 0191 2323780.

Welcome to new Commercial Supporters

SCHOOLS NorthEast has a growing network of Commercial Supporters who help us to be able to continue to work on behalf of North East schools. This network offers opportunities for schools to interact with and receive exclusive offers from organisations that provide a range of products and services to education.

This week we are delighted to welcome both [BHP Law](#) and [UNW LLP](#) to the SCHOOL NorthEast network.

School to School

In this feature, we ask a local Head Teacher to give us a brief insight into their school. This week we spoke to Hilary Cooper from Barnes Junior School in Sunderland.

Our school is... 110 years old and quite austere on the outside but everyone who visits says it feels warm and welcoming inside. The children are always polite to visitors and love the opportunity to talk about the things they do in school and on school activities.

Our school vision is... that Barnes Junior School is a place where children will want to come to school and where everyone is proud to achieve their fullest potential

Our school is good at... making sure that all pupils feel involved in decision making and choosing how to use their entrepreneurial spirit to raise money for a wide variety of charities.

Our school is working on... introducing a learning platform of our own and helping parents to see its potential.

The biggest challenges for our school are... proving how good we really are to satisfy Government targets. As with almost all Junior Schools we have our own particular set of data challenges when Ofsted comes to call. We are keen to be even more rigorous about our point of entry data – but I wish I had had a crystal ball four years ago when the current Year 6 entered school and free schools and academies were a distant dream – or depending on your point of view , nightmare!

We think other schools would be interested in our... range of residential activities and extracurricular programme.

We would be interested in hearing from other schools about... more ideas for transition from infant to junior and junior to secondary school. It sometimes feels we are not very creative about this.

Question from last week's school is: *How does the media coverage of education have an impact on your school?* At the moment it feels hard to keep up staff morale as they drive to work listening to another idea from the heart of government which doesn't seem to show the least bit of understanding of what pupils and their families in the middle of Sunderland are feeling.

Our question to next week's school is? What do you do to keep some fun alive in your school?

What we learnt in the last 7 days...

Click the links below to go straight to the story.

- [MPs say religious education in schools is 'a priority'](#)
- [Parents fear 'supersize' primary schools](#)
- ['Anti-gay' book puts Gove at centre of faith school teaching row](#)
- [Primary school classes 'could be taught in sheds'](#)

Question of the week

[Who would be your dream education secretary?](#) - The Guardian asked a selection of teachers and parents who they would like to see in charge of education and their suggestions included Simon Cowell, Charles Dickens and South Shields MP and former Schools Minister, David Miliband. Tell us who you would like to see in the top job for schools and why email think@schoolsnortheast.com

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.