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Week 31 09 May 2012

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Focus on...NAHT national conference

On Friday and Saturday, Head Teachers congregated in Harrogate for the NAHT national conference with the quality of Ofsted, 'forced academisation' and new phonics tests all on the agenda.

As the Union which mainly represents Primary School Leaders, the Governments' programme of 'academisation' for primaries deemed to be underperforming was a hot topic of debate; four motions condemning 'forcing schools to become academies' were carried by delegates. The debates were followed by reports in Monday's Guardian highlighting the situation in Birmingham where a number of Primary Schools claim that despite showing 'real improvement' they are being 'forced into academy status.'

In his speech to the conference, Education Secretary Michael Gove appeared to try to appease delegates on a number of key issues.

Gove told the conference that he understood the profession's concerns over schools in a category having to show a greater than average level of progress, and the stress this caused. He promised: "No school or Head will be penalised for moving in the right direction. We must not put anything in the way of these people, whose moral purpose drives them towards the most challenging schools," adding that Heads demanded to be judged fairly. "It's more than a compromise, it's a new way forward," he promised.

Gove used the speech to respond to opposition to the introduction of No Notice Ofsted Inspections. The Education Secretary seemed to signal that this proposal could be dropped following the consultation on changes to Ofsted, stating:

"People fear it [no-notice inspection] sends a message that we don't trust the profession, that Ofsted has become an arm of the Spanish Inquisition or Sean Connery's Untouchables, that they have to be

ready to storm in without any notice in order to deal with something that has gone drastically wrong. That was never the intention....teachers and heads deserve to have the chance to know when an Ofsted inspection is coming and to be there in order to present the best face of the school".

The Education Secretary also talked of the possibility of paying inspectors more to ensure that they were of the highest quality, encouraged Head Teachers to come forward to become inspectors themselves, and attacked the media for not reporting widely enough the OECD pronouncement that English school leaders are some of the best in the world.

Shadow Secretary of State, Stephen Twigg, used his wide-ranging speech to talk about the consultations he had instigated to explore a new 'middle tier' for accountability and the foundation of an Office for Educational Improvement which would consider and commission research to underpin policy making.

"Whether schools wish to seek greater autonomy is a choice that should rest locally and Labour has been clear about this. However, what concerns me is the absence of early warning systems and accountability mechanisms in place for some schools that have taken this course. The functions that have traditionally been fulfilled by local authorities - with varying degrees of success - are now left with individual schools," said Mr Twigg.

He also highlighted a proposal by Dr John Dunford, who is leading the consultation on his proposal for an Office of Educational Improvement, for the appointment of Area HMIs who are 'charged with monitoring performance of schools in their area, getting to know Head Teachers and keeping an ear to the ground for good and bad practice in local schools.'

Mr Twigg called on the Government to 'think again' in relation to the Phonics Test. This call was echoed by delegates who threatened to boycott the new grammar tests for 11 year olds and reading tests for six year olds if the Government used the results to rank schools.

Reporting on the decision in its typical measured and reasonable tone, a Daily Mail column headline stated "The National Association of Head Teachers has undertaken an evil conspiracy to create an illiterate Britain"!

Ofsted and its Chief Inspector, Michael Wilshaw were the target of much of the anger from the conference floor. The NAHT raised concerns that inspections were "too variable" and "too subjective" and that inspectors were arriving at schools with their minds already made up about performance. The Chief Inspector was accused of "bully boy tactics" and a motion stating that the Union was "both saddened and dismayed" by the approach taken by Mr Wilshaw was supported by over 98% of delegates.

A spokeswoman for Ofsted said: "Ofsted has been listening to the views of Head Teachers, teacher and parents about its proposed changes to school inspections and will announce the results of its consultation at the end of the month.

"The intention is to work closely with good Heads as they drive improvement in their schools."

The conference also included the launch of two new initiatives to support schools. Russell Hobby, NAHT General Secretary announced plans to establish a pool of high performing Head Teachers who would act as mentors to those at schools facing the threat of failing their inspection, and Schools View, a new website to collect evidence of School Leader's experiences of Ofsted inspections.

Further Reading:

- [Heads are urged to report back on Ofsted inspectors](#) (BBC News)
- [Watching the watchdog](#) (TES)
- [Angry heads force U-turn on school inspections](#) (The Independent)
- [U-turn signalled over no-notice inspections for schools](#) (BBC News)

- [Heads attack chief inspector's 'bully boy tactics'](#) (BBC News)
- [Ofsted risks put off school leaders, say heads](#) (BBC News)
- [Forced academies policy condemned by Conference](#) (NAHT)
- [Heads attack chief inspector's 'bully boy tactics'](#) (BBC News)
- [Heads threaten fresh boycott of primary school exams](#) (The Telegraph)
- [Only the poor schools need worry when an inspector calls](#) (The Telegraph)
- [Headteachers claim forced academy status is unjustified](#) (The Guardian)
- [The National Association of Head Teachers has undertaken an evil conspiracy to create an illiterate Britain](#) (Mail Online)
- [Michael Gove Considers U-Turn Of No-Notice Ofsted Inspections](#) (Huffington post)
- ['Crack squad' of heads to target schools facing Ofsted failure](#) (The Independent)

Patron's Dinner success!

Last week saw the third SCHOOLS NorthEast annual Patron's Dinner, where over 180 Head Teachers, Senior Academics and business people met for dinner with keynote speaker Keri Face, who spoke about the importance of 'future building' in education.

We had great feedback from the event. As one of the delegates said: *'It was good to catch up with so many colleagues from the region and to be reminded of the great work that goes on in the North East.'*

Thanks to all who attended and thanks again to [Gentoo Group](#), who have kindly supported this event as our main sponsor. We would also like to thank our supporters [Aura Newcastle](#), [Avec Partnerships](#), [Dickinson Dees](#), [The Education Broker](#), [Muckle LLP](#), [Newcastle University](#), [UNW LLP](#) and [Ward Hadaway](#) for their support.

Top national education news

Queens Speech: announcement on SEN reforms

In today's Queen's Speech the Government announced plans to reform the system for diagnosing and helping children with special educational needs. Plans to reform parental leave, in order to make it more flexible, were also announced along with the intention to strengthen the role of the Children's Commissioner for England.

- [Children and families feature in Queen's Speech](#) (BBC News)
- [Family Friendly Agenda Queens Speech](#) (Guardian)

Priority Building Scheme delays

The Government has been accused of "wasting precious time" with school building plans, by the Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg. The criticism follows the long delays in announcing which schools will benefit from the £2bn Priority School Building Programme.

Applications had to be in by mid-October 2011 and schools were told they would hear in December. However the programme was oversubscribed and a decision is now expected by the end of May 2012.

In March, the Government commissioned a new survey of the condition of all schools in England but this will not be available for over 15 months. A DfE spokeswoman said the survey would be used to help decide future funding and that the Priority programme would be decided by the department's internal funding agency.

['Time-wasting' accusation over school buildings](#) (BBC News)

Academies Commission calls for evidence

A new Commission examining the implications of the mass academisation of state schools and the impact on outcomes, chaired by former Ofsted Chief Christine Gilbert, opened its call for evidence yesterday.

The Commission will explore five questions:

1. What are the levers and barriers to school improvement within a totally academised system? How can achievement be secured for all pupils within such a system?
2. What are the likely implications when academies start to use their new freedoms to their full extent?
3. What are the implications of an academised system on admissions?
4. What is the impact of diversification and mass academisation on existing academies and schools?
5. What are the key issues concerning governance, accountability and due diligence within an academised system?

In late June, SCHOOLS NorthEast will be holding a consultation event to feed into the Commission, details will be circulated soon but if you would like to take part or be kept informed email think@schoolsnortheast.com .

For more information visit <http://www.academiescommission.org>

- ['It is hard to see that there can be any turning back'](#) (TES)

Local news by area

Darlington

- [Carmel College Go From Strength to Strength!](#) (SCHOOLS NorthEast)
- [Schools reassure parents over admissions policy after bus cuts](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Housing plan for Harrowgate Hill infants site](#) (Northern Echo)

Durham

- [Trust land is set to be freed up for school](#) (Gazette Live)

Gateshead

- [Academy status could be forced on primary school](#) (Chronicle Live)
- [Gateshead teacher has her debut novel published](#) (Chronicle Live)

Middlesbrough

- [Middlesbrough school crossings escape axe](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Find out how popular your Teesside school is + MAP](#) (Gazette Live)
- [Oakfields Community College head vows to do better](#) (Gazette Live)

Newcastle

- [Archibald First School in Gosforth apologises over 'racist' note](#) (Chronicle Live)

Northumberland

- [Tuba tuition for Spittal children](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Lillie in the pink for children's charity trek](#) (Berwick Advertiser)

- [Schoolchildren support blind](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Make school journey safer](#) (Mopeth Herald)
- [Petition calling for road safety measures near village school](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Pupils given insight into Sally's novel](#) (News Post Leader)
- [School faces axe for failing to make the grade](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Apprenticeship numbers rocket](#) (Northumberland Gazette)
- [Debbie takes over at school](#) (Northumberland Gazette)

Redcar

- [Redcar and Cleveland College students going back to Romania](#) (Gazette Live)

Stockton

- [Space-age auditorium brings Sydney to Yarm](#) (Northern Echo)

South Tyneside

- [Allotments open for kids' classes](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Students putting gymnastics in the picture](#) (Shields Gazette)
- [Ofsted's damning verdict on special school](#) (Shields Gazette)

Sunderland

- [Sunderland schools shortlisted for national awards](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Pupils dig for a greener school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Primary pupils' Olympic fun](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Six pupils a day kicked out of Sunderland schools](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland schoolboy to run at Olympic stadium](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Special school gets the thumbs up from inspectors](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Pc takes on three peaks challenge to help school](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Special schools team up to become academy trust](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [School girl triathlete makes a splash with new wetsuit](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland MP drops in to see school success for herself](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Sunderland kindergarten forced to close](#) (Sunderland Echo)
- [Rap group writes educational song for water firm](#) (Sunderland Echo)

Events

'Community use agreements' breakfast seminar - 17 May

Schools and academies are uniquely placed to provide access to opportunities and facilities which may help the local community. The benefits of such engagement are not only financial but can engender a greater commitment to the school or academy and to education generally. Regrettably, often the arrangements around community use are ad hoc and not fit for purpose.

This free breakfast seminar for schools addresses the dos and don'ts of community use and what a community use agreement should cover.

The event will take place on Thursday 17 May between 8.30 am and 10.30 am at Muckle LLP's offices in Newcastle Upon Tyne. [Click here](#) to register your place.

Academy Conversion event – 22 May

SCHOOLS NorthEast Commercial Supporter Samuel Phillips is hosting a free event to discuss the opportunity that academy conversion presents to our region's schools. Speakers include the Department for Education's Academy Conversion Division and a Head Teacher who has been through the conversion process and will share their experiences. There will also be a debate where the audience will have a chance to put their questions to the panel.

The event is taking place on Tuesday 22 May 3.00pm until 5.30pm at Middlesbrough Football Club, Riverside Stadium. For more information and to book [click here](#) or email sarah@beaconhouse-events.co.uk or phone 0191 289 4805.

Academies...the process of conversion and beyond – 29 May

Join Bexhill and Town End Academies Limited (a multi academy chain), Rowlands accountants and Muckle LLP, for a free seminar on the process of academy conversion and beyond. The seminar will include advice the conversion process, record keeping, Value Added Tax, accounts and audit as well as other top tips.

The event will take place on Tuesday 29 May at Town End Academy, Sunderland between 4.00pm and 5.45pm.

The conference is suitable for Head Teachers, Business Managers, Bursars and Governors. All schools are welcome to attend. For more information or if you would like to attend please email emillynette.roberts@rowlandsaccountants.co.uk.

Resources and Opportunities

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.

Free online School Radio Calendar

One of our Marketplace partners, Russell Prue, has setup a free online School Radio Calendar. Any school with a live internet radio station can join and post their live show times on the free calendar so that more people get to know when you're broadcasting. This is an invitation to all SCHOOLS NorthEast members and joining is easy, just follow this link www.SchoolRadioCalendar.org

Fundraising event for the Percy Hedley Foundation - Reason To ...Swim

Reason To Swim is a sport related fundraising event, raising funds for The Percy Hedley Foundation*. The idea of this event is to see how many miles the children of the North East can collectively swim in a week. Reason To Swim will take place from **Monday 2 to Friday 8 July**.

The organisers are asking all schools in the North East to allow children to participate in the event as part of their school swimming lessons. Please encourage your school to take part, make their swimming lessons that week count, and give the pupils a Reason To Swim!

For a registration pack please email fundraising@percyhedley.org.uk

*The Percy Hedley Foundation works with children and adults with cerebral palsy, communication difficulties and profound and multiple learning disabilities from across the country. will raise funds for The Percy Hedley Foundation.

Institute of Physics Teacher Awards Nominations

The Institute of Physics (IOP) is calling for nominations of practicing teachers for their teacher awards. They will recognise outstanding teachers of both primary school science and secondary school physics.

Nominations can come from anyone in the UK or Ireland including teachers, students, colleagues, parents, physics enthusiasts...etc. and must be in by **31 May**.

The nomination process is easy: go to www.iop.org/teachersawards and download a nomination form. If anyone has any queries or needs help during the nomination process, please contact the awards team directly via teachersawards@iop.org

School to School

This week we spoke to David Kinninment from Bedlingtonshire Community High School in Northumberland.

Our school is... Bedlingtonshire Community High School

Our school motto is... Semper Sursum (Always Striving)

Our school is good at... Developing the quality of lessons through high quality personalised CPD that we design and deliver internally.

Our school is working on... Attendance was a key issue for us in the last Ofsted (2011) and improving this in a sustainable way has been a key focus this year. We are on average 2% above where we were each month compared to last year, but we need to improve further in the coming months and years.

The biggest challenges for our school are... The biggest challenge our school faces is to continue to improve student attainment year on year. After a rise last year of 9% and a projected rise this year of a further 9% we need to continue to push towards national standards in a sustainable fashion. The changes we made four or so years ago are coming to fruition now but we need to work on continuing this. Perhaps radical change is needed. Improving teaching and learning further is also a key concern.

We think other schools would be interested in our... Work in engaging parents. Using the LPPA (Leading Parent Partnership Award) as a process rather than a badge we have developed the way we engage with parents at all levels - from parents' evenings to involving them in the development process of the school.

We would be interested in hearing from other schools about... How student voice is used at all levels of school and how it can be used to raise aspirations for all students.

Question from last week's school is: *In a climate of increasing autonomy, how do we encourage schools to cooperate with each other to improve outcomes for all children?* In the recent past the work of NCSL in promoting schools to work as Networks and learn from each other seemed a good model for schools to cooperate - as there was something in it for everybody. It was also voluntary and those schools who put a lot into it tended to get most out. There does need to be a mechanism to get schools together in the first place and with an increasing number of academies perhaps it is a role that the NCSL needs to play rather than the Local Authorities.

Our question to next week's school is? How can we address the needs of all of our students when we also need to have a 'broadly academic' curriculum?

In the last 7 days we learnt...

- [Staying in education makes people smarter later in life](#)
- [Pupils want more real-life maths](#)
- [Parents handed the blame for five-year-olds who start school unable to learn](#)
- [New fines for GCSE and A-level exam errors](#)

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.