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14 - 19 Learning and Skills Bulletin

Call for multi-billion-pound tax cut promises from leadership candidates to be spent on mending broken childhoods

Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, has launched her third annual *Vulnerability Report* with a call on the next Prime Minister to put the billions that had been promised for income and corporation tax cuts towards mending broken childhoods.

The Commissioner argued that Boris Johnson's income tax plans and Jeremy Hunt's corporation tax plans, which had been estimated by the IFS to be £9bn and £13bn a year, should instead be used to invest up to £10bn a year as part of a ten-year plan to rebuild services for the most vulnerable children and end high-cost, crisis-led provision.

This year's Children's Commissioner's vulnerability reports have estimated that 2.3 million children in England are growing up with a vulnerable family background, including those with parents with mental illnesses, addiction problems or domestic violence. Of those, 1.6m received either patchy or no support at all, including 830,000 children who were "invisible" to services. Around 128,000 children from a vulnerable family background were receiving the most intensive forms of statutory support, such as being in care or on a child protection plan.

The report warned that all the vulnerabilities identified could pose a risk to children's wellbeing and long-term life chances. Many of the children

"2.3 million children in England are growing up with a vulnerable family background, including those with parents with mental illnesses, addiction problems or domestic violence."

(Continued on page 5.)

In this issue

Problem children
News. Editorial. Documents. Feature.
Pages 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 20 & 21

Free schools
News.
Page 8

Literacy
News.
Page 9

Asbestos
News. Legal.
Pages 13 and 14

ADCS
Editorial. Conferences. Document review.
Pages 4, 15, 20 and 21

Apprenticeships
Parliament.
Pages 31 and 32

Oral questions
Parliament.
Pages 33 to 47

Editorial

- 4 Investing more in young people**
The Children’s Commissioner for England has just published a report calling for the money Conservative leadership candidates have promised for tax cuts to be spent instead on children. She is right but we need a more fundamental change than that.

News

- 1 Mending broken childhoods**
The Children’s Commissioner for England publishes her third annual *Vulnerability Report* with a call on the next Prime Minister to put the billions that had been promised for income and corporation tax cuts towards mending broken childhoods.
- 6 More help for teachers’ well-being**
The support on offer to help school and college staff look after their mental health and wellbeing is to change, following the launch of a government-led group to ease classroom pressures.
- 7 Young people’s mental health**
A survey of over 12,000 young people carried out by the mental health charity Mind, found that 59% had either experienced a mental health problem or knew someone who had.
- Running the UK’s first secure school**
Oasis Charitable Trust, which runs 52 Academies across England, will be the operator of the country’s first Secure School.
- 8 Let free schools take over failing schools**
The New Schools Network has called on the DfE to allow groups who are running successful free schools to be allowed to take over other schools that are currently “failing” their pupils.
- 9 Improving literacy in secondary schools**
Writing tasks in secondary schools can be as intellectually demanding as playing chess, according to new guidance published by the Education Endowment Foundation.

- 10 Tough talk on exclusions won’t help**
Responding to evidence given to the Education Select Committee by Edward Timpson, Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, argued that it was neither possible nor helpful to consider exclusion as a stand-alone problem.

Physical activity helps children cope

A new survey by Change4Life and Disney UK found that less than half of parents were aware that physical activity could build children’s self-confidence, reduce anxiety and improve their self-esteem.

- 11 Children in care helped into private schools**
The Children Minister has announced that more children growing up in care will benefit from places at top private schools

Teach about migration and empire

The Runnymede Trust has published a briefing paper that calls for the Government to make lessons on migration, belonging and empire mandatory in every secondary school in England.

Disadvantaged schools and recruitment

A report from the Sutton Trust published today shows how schools in disadvantaged areas find it more difficult to recruit staff.

- 12 Grammars not helping disadvantaged**
Grammar schools given money to expand on condition that they do more for the disadvantaged are not seeing a rise in their intake from that demographic.

- 13 Scale of asbestos in schools worrying**
Schools with asbestos in their buildings must ensure they manage it effectively to prevent staff and students from contracting incurable cancers like mesothelioma.

Pressure grows on asylum-seeking children

An increase in the number of UASC is putting pressure on LA budgets.

- Legal**
- 14 The dangers of asbestos**
Solicitor Kate Sweeney on the legal and health dangers of asbestos.
- Conference**
- 15 ADCS annual conference**
The ADCS president said DCSs were committed to working with the DfE to achieve a “joined up approach” to provision.
- 16 Amanda Spielman at Stonewall**
Amanda Spielman tackled LGBT issues including teaching relationships education.
- 17 Making London safer**
The CBI has said that business is committed to playing its role in making London safer by creating opportunities for young people.
- Research**
- 18 Masters research for further education**
The 2019/20 Practitioner Research Programme has been launched.
- International**
- 19 Nick Gibb at the G7 education meeting**
Nick Gibb met G7 education ministers in France to showcase the Recruitment & Retention Strategy.
- Post-graduate support for EU to continue**
Funding for EU nationals doing postgraduate studies have been given guaranteed.
- Document review**
- 20 Serious youth violence**
Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime, from ADCS.
- Feature**
- 22 Do vulnerable children really count?**
Chris Waterman looks at a report from the Children’s Society.
- Opinion**
- 23 Digital copy-and-waste culture**
Professor Jan Willam der Graff writes about the consequences of digital fragmentation.
- 24 No election likely**
Pericles explains why a general election won’t happen any time soon.
- 25 Nick Gibb goes global**
Chris Waterman on Nick Gibb at the G7.
- Policy papers**
- 26 Policy papers published last week**
Policy papers from Whitehall, parliament and think tanks published last week.
- Consultations**
- 26 Consultations and consultation outcomes**
There were none published last week.
- Statistics**
- 27 Statistics published last week**
Government statistics from last week.
- Delegated legislation**
- 27 Statutory instruments**
Statutory instruments issued last week.
- Parliament**
- 28 Parliamentary calendar**
Parliamentary activity last week and that scheduled for the weeks ahead.
- Parliament - Debates**
- 30 Education estimates**
The education estimates were debated in the House of Commons.
- 31 Apprenticeships**
Apprenticeships were debated in the Lords.
- Parliament - Questions**
- 33 Answers to written questions**
Answers to written parliamentary questions in the Commons and the Lords.
- Publisher information**
- 48 Subscription rates**
Writers and subscription details.

Investing more in young people

The *Vulnerability Report* from the Children’s Commissioner for England, which we report as our lead story in this issue, is timely. It is one of a number of reports that we cover today that makes for depressing reading. Others include the ADCS discussion paper *Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime* (reviewed on pages 20 and 21) and the Children’s Society report *Counting Lives: Responding to children who are criminally exploited* (page 22).

The survey of mental health of young people carried out by Mind (reported on page 7) as well as the ADCS discussion paper both pointed to reductions in provision in recent years as part of the cause of the problem, but that is not the whole picture. The Children’s Commissioner report revealed that local authorities are increasingly spending large amounts on a very small number of children with acute needs. A quarter of council spending on children goes on just 1.1% of young people. In one local authority, just 10 children with acute needs were costing 20% of the entire children’s services budget.

The ADCS discussion paper focused on just one area of activity, serious violence and knife crime, but its conclusions apply to a broader range of activity than this. ADCS concluded that “we need to work differently with children, young people and families and we – government departments, public agencies, the voluntary sector - need to work differently together and with communities in order to bring about real, lasting change.” While Directors of Children’s Services can and do provide the systems leadership that *Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime* talked about, and schools can and do provide a critical resource in dealing with problems that go far wider than just education, it is really central government that most needs to take the lead.

While this is not entirely about resources, funding is central to dealing with the range of increasingly acute problems facing a growing number of children. It is therefore instructive to look at where government spending goes now. There are three really big budgets in Whitehall, each of which spends well over a hundred billion pounds a year. The biggest of these is pensions, which by definition goes entirely on the elderly. The second biggest budget is the National Health Service. Most of that spending, and an increasing percentage of it, goes on provision for the ever-growing number of elderly people. The third biggest budget is welfare, a minority of which goes on pensioner credits. Spending so much on old people is a sign of a civilised society, and can be justified on grounds of fairness, but it’s not much of an investment in the future. The return on that investment, compared, say, to educating future generations, is low. Present trends are also unsustainable. Figures published last summer by the Office of Budget Responsibility showed that over the next half century, if present trends continue, services for the elderly (plus interest on the national debt) will consume the entire tax take.

We therefore need to ask some pretty fundamental long-term questions about where we want to invest scarce resources. The Institute for Government has pointed out that there are only three options, or a combination of three options. The state can do less. Given the impact of a decade of austerity on public services, which is part of the cause of the problems we face with provision for children, it is difficult to see how this could be achieved in a democratic society. We could raise money differently, so that some services are funded more by those who benefit from them. The shift in funding higher education from being a burden entirely on the state to one where students now make a contribution through loans (in reality more a type of graduate tax than real loans) is an example of this. Moving to a continental system of funding health care and greater forced savings for pensions are the only two policy options that would make a significant difference. Increasing taxation is the third option, with increasing borrowing a less desirable but politically more appealing alternative.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is reported today to be close to agreeing a deal with the Prime Minister to give her most of the money she has asked for as a legacy spend on education. The £5 billion involved will be welcome, but it needs to be used as part of a wholistic approach to policy, and as just the start of a long-term review of spending that needs to ask some difficult questions about what we as a society really value. We need to face the fact that we should be spending more on young people.

(Continued from page 1.)

started school significantly below the expected level of development, and their progress tended to be lower on average, which meant that they had a higher risk of leaving school without qualifications. The report pointed out that there were also more likely to have Special Educational Needs and mental health issues, which could make them more susceptible to gang violence or exploitation. The Children's Commissioner said that while there were many interventions that could help the children by breaking the cycle of family disadvantage, a failure to provide them early enough meant that millions of children were being let down.

The vulnerability reports had been published alongside new data on spending on vulnerable children. The research, which was the first time that anyone had looked in depth at what councils spent on children, revealed a system that was spending increasingly high amounts on a very small number of children with acute needs, as a quarter of the amount councils spent on children went on the 1.1% of children who needed acute and specialist services, such as children in care and a child in the most intensive residential placements cost on average £192,000 a year to look after. In one local authority that the Children's Commissioner looked at, ten children were costing 20% of the entire children's services budget.

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Anne Longfield argued that children and their families needed support from before birth and throughout childhood and she warned that without such help children could fall behind in school, become disengaged and even end up caught up in gang violence or dropping out of the school system. To really tackle the wider harm caused to the most vulnerable children, the Children's Commissioner called for a properly evidence-based strategy that would not just wait for problems to hit before intervening, including:

- A reinvigoration of the Troubled Families programme.
- Investment in the early years, Sure Start, family hubs and parenting support.
- Schools to open later and in the holidays and youth services to tackle gang violence.
- Earlier help for children with mental health problems and special educational needs.

Anne Longfield stressed that tackling the scale of the problem would require strong leadership from central government, capital investment in institutions to help the most vulnerable children, a 10-20-year investment in family and child support, commitments and targets to identify and support children's mental health needs and those of their parents.

Other findings in the vulnerability reports included:

- 831,000 children were living in households that had reported domestic abuse.
- 900,000 children were growing up in a family where there were parental mental health problems.
- 723,000 children were receiving statutory intervention from the state.

(Continued on page 6.)

(Continued from page 5.)

- 398,000 children in “Troubled Families” were currently being worked with.
- 2,000,000 children were living in food poverty.

The report also showed how some vulnerabilities had become more severe in recent years:

- The number of children living in temporary accommodation had increased by 76% between 2012 and 2018.
- The rate of permanent exclusions from school had increased by over 50% between 2012/13 and 2016/17, while the rate of children experiencing a fixed term exclusion had increased by 20% over the same period.
- The proportion of children with an emotional health problem, such as anxiety or depression, had risen by nearly 50% between 2004 and 2017.
- The proportion of children in custody who had been sentenced for a violent offence had risen from 21% in 2012 to 40% in 2018.

Responding to a the Children’s Commissioner’s warning that an estimated 2.3 million children in England were growing up in vulnerable family backgrounds, Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chairman of the Local Government Association’s Children and Young People Board, said that while council knew that early intervention services such as children’s centres and family support services played a crucial role in supporting children and helping to prevent problems becoming more serious later on, as the LGA and the sector had long warned, children’s services were at a tipping point as a result of increasingly high levels of demand for support and cuts in central government funding. She added that it would therefore be essential for the Government to use the forthcoming Spending Review to address the £3.1 billion shortfall in children’s services by 2025.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, said that the picture facing children with special educational needs was bleak, as not only were school budgets at breaking point, but there had been severe cuts to health and social care provision. He stressed that schools had been left struggling to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. But Mr Whiteman warned that without sufficient funding and a more coherent approach, the SEN code of practice was nothing more than an empty promise from government to parents and children.

Experts to support teachers’ wellbeing

The support on offer to help school and college staff look after their mental health and wellbeing is to change, following the launch of a government-led group to ease classroom pressures. The new group, made up of representatives from mental health and wellbeing organisations as well as schools and colleges, recently met for the first time.

During the meeting the CEO of the charity Mind, Paul Farmer, underlined the importance of placing teachers’ wellbeing at the heart of schools’ and colleges’ decision-making. He added that teachers and school staff must be consulted to change staffroom culture.

The Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister, Anne Milton, and representatives from organisations including the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, Education Support Partnership, and What Works Wellbeing Centre, attended the first meeting to discuss the mental health and wellbeing of school and college staff.

Three in five young people have experienced a mental health problem

A survey of over 12,000 young people aged between 11 and 19 carried out by the mental health charity Mind, found that three in five young people (59 per cent) had either experienced a mental health problem themselves, or they had experienced someone close to them who had. The research by Mind also revealed that one in seven (14 per cent) young people described their current mental health as poor or very poor.

When it came to accessing support within school, there were problems with knowing where to go, and getting the right kind of help. Mind's survey found that:

- Almost two in five (38 per cent) of all pupils said they would not know where to go to access support within school and half (52 per cent) said they would not feel confident approaching teachers or other school staff if they needed help.
- One in five young people (21 per cent) had accessed support for their mental health within school. Of those, almost one in two (43 per cent) said they did not find the support helpful and two in three (63 per cent) said they were not involved in decisions made about the support.
- In terms of receiving help outside the school gates, less than one in three pupils (28 per cent) who had experienced a mental health problem had used mental health services.

Louise Clarkson, Head of Children and Young People at Mind, said that while the Prime Minister's recent announcement about training for teachers was welcome, school staff needed to know that if they were starting conversations about mental health with a young person, there were services in place to refer them onto. Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, agreed that schools and teachers could not take care of children and young people's mental health all on their own. He added that teachers were not qualified mental health professionals, and they relied on access to specialist support.

Anna Cole, Parliamentary and Inclusion specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said that schools and colleges desperately needed an improved level of funding to meet the needs of their students and restore the counselling and pastoral support that had had to be scaled back over recent years.

Global education charity to run UK's first secure school

Oasis Charitable Trust, which runs 52 Academies with 30,000 students across England, has been announced as the operator of the country's first Secure School. The Government said that Oasis, which had provided a "clear and ambitious vision" would be given "complete autonomy" to set the curriculum and timetable, and it would decide how to recruit, train and pay staff.

The Justice Minister, Edward Argar, said that three quarters of Oasis' academies operated in the UK's most deprived areas and most had been rated by Ofsted as failing at the time they had been taken over. But he added that the organisation had overseen a turnaround as 80% were currently rated as good or outstanding. The minister said that the £5m investment would include extensive refurbishment of classrooms and residential areas to provide the best possible environment for Oasis to deliver services such as their existing mentoring and work with young people at risk of violence and abuse.

Call for free schools to take over failing schools

The New Schools Network has called on the Department for Education to allow parents and community groups who are running successful free schools to be allowed to take over other schools that are currently “failing” their pupils. The its 10th anniversary policy paper, *Free Schools: The next 10 years* report, the NSN outlines seven recommendations to “reinvigorate” the policy.

The report pointed out that as 92 schools had been rated as inadequate and were awaiting a suitable academy sponsor to take them on, the work needed to turn around the schools was not happening and an estimated 35,000 pupils were being left to languish in schools that were waiting for new management. The NSN claimed that around a third of the schools had become “untouchable”, as no sponsor had been willing to take them on for over a year.

While the NSN welcomed the commitment from the two Conservative leadership candidates to invest more funding in schools, it argued that funding alone would not be enough to spread educational opportunity without accompanying reform. The report analyses the impact free schools have had to date and it puts forward seven recommendations to “reinvigorate” the policy. As well as allowing successful parent led free schools to sponsor failing schools that others have “turned their backs on”, the charity has called for:

- 100 free schools to be opened a year.
- Expansion of the free school policy to all areas of the country.
- More community groups to be involved with the programme.
- Legislation to remove barriers to new free schools.
- Small, innovative trusts encouraged to grow.
- Investment in a new wave of specialist alternative provision free schools.

Luke Tryl, Director, New Schools Network, said that because Free schools played “a key role in transforming education across the country” the next Government, whether it was led by Boris Johnson or Jeremy Hunt, must commit to a “wholesale expansion” of the policy, to establish new schools in areas that desperately needed them and to support struggling “orphan” schools that had been left to struggle by themselves.

Commenting on *Free schools: The next 10 years*, a report by the New Schools Network which calls for the 92 “orphan” schools rated inadequate to be taken over by parent and community groups rather than wait any longer for a suitable academy sponsor, Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary NEU, said it was “beyond parody” that riding to the rescue of the free schools project should be the New Schools Network, a charity that was very largely dependent on DfE funding and which had been led since its creation by a succession of former Government staff and Conservative cronies. She argued that they needed look no further than their Christmas card list for the causes of the problems they sought to solve.

“The NEU argued that the fact that so many schools were ‘awaiting’ a sponsor and were effectively in limbo was a ‘searing indictment’ of the dysfunctional academies and free schools policies which the NSN promoted.”

Dr Bousted pointed out that the fact that so many schools were “awaiting” a sponsor and were effectively in limbo was a “searing indictment” of the dysfunctional academies and free schools policies which the NSN promoted. She argued that the “ridiculous dogma” that academisation was the answer needed to be abandoned, as there was no evidence that academy sponsorship improved pupil outcomes and forced academisation was both disruptive and anti-democratic.

Dr Bousted stressed the need for a “supportive and cooperative” framework for school improvement, which would involve the local authority and neighbouring schools in full consultation with parents and staff. She added that parachuting in NSN approved groups to take over schools would be a “recipe for disaster.”

Improving literacy in secondary schools

Writing tasks in secondary schools can be as intellectually demanding as playing chess, according to new guidance published by the Education Endowment Foundation. The report, *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools: Guidance report*, which reviewed the best available evidence to offer schools, made seven recommendations for improving literacy in secondary schools. It pointed out that writing essays or other extended answers placed a heavy cognitive burden on students, as they needed to use a wide range of knowledge and skills.

The report suggested that teachers could help students to cope with the challenges of writing by supporting them to break down complex writing tasks. Practical tips included providing sentence starters in history class which would encourage students to analyse sources more deeply (eg, “While initially it might appear that ... on closer inspection ...”). The report pointed out that teachers could also help students to monitor and review their writing by providing a checklist of the features that were expected in top mark answers.

Guidance on supporting complex writing tasks was one of seven recommendations in the report, which aims to improve literacy skills in secondary school pupils. The report challenges the idea that improving literacy in secondary school should just be the job of English teachers. Instead, it argues for improving literacy across the curriculum and it emphasised the value of supporting teachers in every subject to teach students how to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects. Previous research by the EEF had found that the strongest factor affecting pupils’ science attainment was how well they understood written texts.

“The report challenges the idea that improving literacy in secondary school should just be the job of English teachers.”

The other six recommendations in the report focused on:

- Prioritising subject-specific literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Teaching vocabulary to support pupils’ development of academic language.
- Developing students’ ability to read and access sophisticated texts.
- Breaking down complex writing tasks, such as essays and evaluations.
- Providing opportunities for structured talk, such as preparing debates or presentations.
- Providing high-quality literacy interventions for struggling students.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said that young people who left school without good literacy skills were held back at every stage of life. He pointed out that disadvantaged students in England were still significantly more likely than their classmates to leave formal education without being able to read, write and communicate effectively.

He argued that as reading, writing, speaking and listening, were at the heart of every subject in secondary school, focusing time and resources on improving reading and writing skills would have positive knock-on effects elsewhere. But he said that because writing tasks in secondary schools, such as essays, could be as intellectually demanding as playing chess, it should be no surprise that some students could struggle to get to grips with the complex skills expected of them.

Tough talk on exclusions will not help pupils

Responding to evidence given to the Education Select Committee by Edward Timpson, Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, argued that it was neither possible nor helpful to consider exclusion as a stand-alone problem. He pointed out that schools and young people were facing a double-whammy of cuts to education funding as well as the impact of cuts to the health and social care services on which they desperately relied for support.

Mr Whiteman stressed that funding shortages, the existing curriculum and accountability system, and the unavailability and inaccessibility of specialist health and social care all worked against schools' best efforts to avoid excluding children. He argued that exclusion was a legitimate, but limited, response to very challenging behaviour, physical violence or repeated disruption of learning. But Mr Whiteman pointed out that school leaders had a duty to make sure that they provided a safe environment in which all pupils could learn.

He said that as well as greater levels of funding, it should be made easier for schools to work together and have access to other support services so that there would be some collective responsibility for the outcomes and well-being of all pupils. Mr Whiteman acknowledged that too often provision for pupils at risk of exclusion was regarded as a separate element of educational provision for a specific group of pupils, in the same way that Special and Specialist schools were frequently "set aside" from the mainstream. He added that the situation needed to be changed urgently.

Physical activity helps children to deal with life's challenges

A new survey by Change4Life and Disney UK found that less than half of parents were aware that physical activity could build children's self-confidence (49%), reduce anxiety (47%) and improve their self-esteem (46%). Just 16% (1 in 6) thought that physical activity could help children to develop attributes which would make it easier for them to cope with life's set-backs.

Change4Life has also launched an online quiz to help children, with their parents, find activities and sports they could try, based on their skills and abilities. According to the survey, nearly half of children thought that they needed to be "fast" (49%) or "strong" (41%) to be physically active and only a quarter (25%) saw themselves as "sporty". The campaign aims to inform parents that simple daily activities such as active play, scooting or walking count.

"Children's physical activity levels were worryingly low, as only a fifth of boys met the guidelines and an even smaller number of girls".

Eustace de Sousa, National Lead for Children, Young People and Families, Public Health England, said that across England, children's physical activity levels were worryingly low, as only a fifth of boys met the guidelines and an even smaller number of girls. He added that the 10 Minute Shake Up campaign with Disney and Sport England in the summer would get children into the habit of doing fun, short bursts of activity that could set them up for life by improving not just their physical health but also by helping them to develop key life skills.

Children in care to be helped into private schools

The Children and Families Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, has announced that more children growing up in care will benefit from places at top private schools, as well as mentoring and access to sports and music facilities, in an aim to improve outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children. Ten teams will work across the country to identify opportunities in independent schools for young people in care, where it was suitable to meet their needs.

The minister said that the new programme, which would be backed by £500,000, would see 1,000 independent schools involved in schemes that offered opportunities to children in care. Mr Zahawi called on independent schools and the Directors of Children's Services to play a greater role in helping raise outcomes for vulnerable children. The Chairman of the Independent Schools Council, Barnaby Lenon, said that while the independent education sector was committed to playing its part in the diverse national education system to help give more children the best start, regardless of background, there was a limit to what it could do.

Teach about migration and empire

The race equality think tank the Runnymede Trust has published a briefing paper for a Parliamentary debate on migration that calls for the Government to make lessons on migration, belonging and empire mandatory in every secondary school in England. The Trust said that last year's Windrush scandal had exposed a "shocking lack of understanding" at government level about the winding up of the British Empire. It said that migration, belonging and empire can currently be taught as part of the history and English curriculum, but whether a pupil gets to study it is largely dependent on the modules, topics or texts selected by schools.

The Department for Education said it fundamentally disagreed with "the narrow scope" of the report. "The topic of migration and the British Empire are compulsory in several parts of the history and English curriculum for both primary and secondary school," the Department said. The report was produced with the Tide migration and mobility project at the University of Liverpool. If teaching about the Empire was made compulsory in all secondary schools, it is far from certain that in these more nationalistic and populist post-Brexit times that understanding of the kind the report has in mind would be what emerges.

Disadvantaged schools struggle with recruitment

The Sutton Trust today publishes a report, *The Recruitment Gap: Attracting teachers to schools serving disadvantaged communities* by Becky Allen and Laura McNerney, which showed that teachers in the most deprived state schools are less likely to report that their school department was well-staffed with qualified teachers, more likely to report that colleagues were planning to leave this summer, and less confident that current job vacancies would be filled.

The research shows that disadvantaged schools are struggling most with teacher recruitment, with 85 per cent of teachers in the most deprived state schools saying that recruitment issues were affecting the quality of education their school was providing, compared to 55 per cent of teachers in independent secondary schools, and 76 per cent in the most affluent state schools. When it comes to incentivising teachers to apply to teach at disadvantaged schools, one in five said that nothing would persuade them to apply for a job at a low-performing local school. Some 54% said they would if they could see a clearly enforced and effective behaviour policy while 49% also said they would be attracted by a substantial promotion – likely to cost the school around £5,000.

The Sutton Trust is recommending that Pupil Premium funding is used by schools in deprived areas to prioritise the recruitment and retention of effective teachers, including on wages, in line with the recommendations of the Education Endowment Foundation's Pupil Premium Guide.

Grammar schools not doing enough to boost disadvantaged pupil numbers

The pressure group Comprehensive Future sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the 16 grammar schools awarded £50 million of expansion funding in 2018, on condition they boost their numbers of poorer children. It asked how many disadvantaged pupils were offered places for entry this year compared to last year, and scrutinised 2020 school admission policies for changes aimed at admitting more disadvantaged pupils.

Thirteen out of the 16 grammar schools provided full information to the request. Their responses revealed a slight downturn in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils admitted this year, despite all the school's admission policies offering some form of priority access for disadvantaged pupils. In September 2018, the expanding schools offered 141 out of 1,849 (7.6%) of places to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, while in September of this year 145 of 1,929 places (7.5%) will be allocated to poorer pupils.

Comprehensive Future's chairman, Dr Nuala Burgess, said: "Sixteen schools were awarded funding based on plans to admit more children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The fact that just 7% of their places will be awarded to poorer pupils, when an average secondary school admits 28%, is a scandal. All of these schools have admission policies prioritising places for poorer children, but these policies are simply not working. The reasons they are not effective is because children from troubled backgrounds, or whose families are in low paid work, are rarely in the top percentage bracket for attainment and are therefore far less likely to pass the 11-plus. Incentivising schools to admit more children from deprived backgrounds has little to do with the numbers who actually pass the 11-plus. Raising the attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds needs properly thought-out policies which go far beyond the type of school attended. The government's grammar school ideology is fundamentally flawed."

Comprehensive Future checked admission policies for next year and found that only 9 of the 16 expanding schools were changing 2020 admission policies to further boost the chances of poorer pupils claiming places. Five schools were increasing the maximum number of priority places for disadvantaged pupils, four schools were adjusting score requirements while seven were making no changes at all.

Dr Burgess said: "Some of these schools are attempting to tweak their embarrassing statistics with measures such as lowering pass rates or setting a quota of places for poorer pupils. But this is merely tinkering around the edges. We would like to know how these grammar schools are deciding what counts as a suitable percentage of disadvantaged pupils. One school is lowering score requirements to ensure 10% of its intake are Pupil Premium eligible, for example. It seems arbitrary - why not aim for 15% or 20%? Why not 50%? Comprehensive Future argues that grammar schools have little experience of educating children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We suspect these schools are keeping their percentages low because they are not confident they can attain the same kind of results with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, or because they fear upsetting the predominantly middle class parents who have a monopoly on grammar school places. The stark reality is that grammar schools are not only academically selective, they are socially selective."

The next round of bids have now been submitted for the Selective School Expansion Fund with successful schools to be announced this autumn. Dr Burgess said: "The Government will soon be wasting another £50 million on their failed grammar school social mobility experiment. This money would be far better spent on expanding high quality schools which educate all children, irrespective of their level of attainment or ability to pass a test at 10 years of age. Comprehensive schools offer far more opportunity for disadvantaged pupils. They are also far more likely to contain the kind of skilled teachers who understand children from a variety of social backgrounds and their different learning needs. Comprehensive Future's study of the sixteen schools receiving expansion funding shows that even at their most ambitious, grammar schools admit very few disadvantaged pupils. The £200 million allocated for grammar school expansion is a scandalous waste of money. There is a very real opportunity for whoever becomes the next PM to show an intelligent understanding of what works in education and to turn his back on selective education. At the very least, we would urge him to abandon the highly questionable policy of awarding extra money to a handful of grammar schools who are doing little to earn their windfall."

Scale of asbestos in schools “deeply worrying”

Schools with asbestos in their buildings must ensure they manage it effectively to prevent staff and students from contracting incurable cancers like mesothelioma. The warning from the global body for workplace health and safety professionals comes as the scale of the issue of asbestos in the England’s school buildings is brought fully into focus by results from the Department for Education’s Asbestos Management Assurance Process.

Of nearly 25,000 English schools and academies, 19,522 responded to the process, with 676 referred to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) because they haven’t provided enough evidence that they are “managing asbestos in line with regulatory requirements”. Fiona Riley, chairman of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health’s (IOSH) Education Group, said: “It is deeply worrying that so many schools and academies have failed to provide sufficient evidence that they are properly managing asbestos. “It is equally concerning that a huge number of schools and academies, about a quarter, have not responded to this request. Asbestos is a killer and we know it lurks in many hundreds of thousands of buildings, including those occupied by schools and academies built more than 20 years ago. It is imperative that schools and academies know if asbestos is present in their buildings and, if it is, have a robust management plan in place to ensure staff and students are not exposed to it.”

IOSH has been raising awareness of the risks posed by asbestos during its No Time to Lose campaign to tackle cancers caused by work. It has produced free, easy-to-use resources for employers and employees to prevent asbestos exposure.

Fiona added: “Schools and other employers can use these resources. They guide them through the process of identifying asbestos and how to manage it. They can save lives.”

At least 5,000 people die every year from cancer caused by asbestos exposure at work. Victims include teachers and others exposed in schools. While asbestos has been banned in Britain since November 1999, it can still be found in hundreds of thousands of buildings constructed prior to this date. According to the National Education Union at least 319 teachers have died from mesothelioma since 1980, and 205 of these deaths have occurred since 2001.

“There are still a large number of local education authorities that have not tackled the issue of asbestos in their school buildings because they are still reporting high levels of the substance that can prove to be deadly,” said Kate Sweeney, a Partner in the Personal Injury team at Stephenson Solicitors LLP. “Schools need to be doing more to provide information to parents and staff about the presence of asbestos in their primary school buildings. We are calling for all schools and local education authorities to publicly disclose if asbestos is on the premises and the measures being taken to manage it.”

- Kate Sweeney writes about the problem of asbestos in schools in our features section on page 14.

Pressure grows on LAs over asylum seeking children

An increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) is putting pressure on local government budgets as a national scheme to deal with the problem, the Home Office’s National Transfer Scheme, is not coping, the Local Government Association claims in a report to its Leaders Committee meeting today.

Only around 60% of the cost of caring for UASC is currently covered by Home Office funding, a shortfall of more than £25,000 per child per year, and this does not include the substantial costs of supporting UASC when they leave care, piling pressure on areas where UASC are most likely to present themselves. These areas include the Port of Dover in Kent, Heathrow Airport in Hillingdon, the Home Office Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon, Gatwick Airport in West Sussex, and the Ports of Southampton and Portsmouth. USAC is a diverse group, covering genuine refugees fleeing from war and also economic migrants trying to get round the immigration system. Some are not even children at all, but adults who present themselves as under 18. The result is increasing pressure on LA budgets already under strain.

Asbestos – the school risk

By Kate Sweeney

Partner in the Personal Injury team at Stephenson Solicitors LLP

Asbestos was banned in 1999, however it was routinely used as a building material in primary schools up-and-down the country during the 1940s-1970s. The potentially deadly material is still present in many buildings due to aging school buildings. Parents and teachers have a right to know if asbestos is installed, what measures are being taken to manage exposure and if they need to take legal steps if they believe they've been affected.



Kate Sweeney

Number of cases

There are 11,217 local authority maintained primary schools in England. After a Freedom of Information (FOI) request into 152 local education authorities, we discovered 5,196 maintained primary schools are likely to have asbestos in their buildings. It is a similar picture in secondary schools, but because far more secondary schools are academies it is not possible to get a similar picture through FOI requests to local authorities.

So this is the tip of the iceberg as local authorities do not hold information about academies and free schools, which are now the majority of schools in England. A further 3,791 primary schools could potentially contain asbestos after 47 local education authorities failed to respond to our request. While 13 admitted they do not hold a record of asbestos in individual school buildings they are responsible for, three responded but did not provide figures and one refused.

Although no figures are available on the number of children of who have died as a result of exposure to asbestos in the classroom, it remains a potential threat and has been found to be particularly harmful to children.

School children are boisterous and if you don't know where the asbestos is, how can you ever ensure it's not disturbed? The simple act of pinning a piece of artwork to a wall can puncture it and release fibres. I believe teachers at the very least should know where asbestos is within their school buildings.

Danger of mesothelioma

The lifetime risk of developing mesothelioma, a form of cancer associated with asbestos, is predicted to be about three and a half times greater for a child first exposed at age five compared to an adult first exposed at age 25 and about five times greater when compared to an adult first exposed at age 30.

There are still many local education authorities that have not tackled the issue of asbestos in their school buildings because they have high levels of the substance on-site and are aware of the health and legal implications.

Department of Education crusade

Our investigation follows a call from the Department of Education last year for all schools to report how much asbestos is in their buildings. After nearly a quarter (23%) of schools failed to respond by the February 2019 deadline Parliament's Public Accounts Committee called for the department to "name and shame" those schools which failed to respond.

According to the National Education Union unfortunately at least 319 teachers have died from mesothelioma since 1980, and 205 of these deaths have occurred since 2001. It's now time to act. Schools have a social and moral responsibility to provide information to parents and staff about the presence of asbestos in their primary school buildings. We are calling for all schools and local education authorities to publicly disclose if asbestos is on the premises and the measures being taken to manage it.

ADCS President wants to see all children and young people thriving, not just surviving

At the ADCS Annual Conference in Manchester, the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services said that leaders of children's services were committed to working with the Department for Education to achieve a much needed "joined up approach" between the various government departments with responsibility for different aspects of children's services policy.

Rachel Dickinson used her speech, which was attended by senior leaders in children and young people services and the Children's Minister, to reflect on several breakthroughs in children's rights legislation including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. She said that central, was the idea that children's views, wishes and preferences must be taken into account when making decisions that affected them, but Ms Dickinson argued that there had been "little evidence of that from national politicians over the last three years in their quest to achieve Brexit", and serious domestic social policy issues remained.

Rachel Dickinson pointed out that one of the most significant principles underpinning the 1989 Act had been that the welfare of children was paramount, but many of the modern-day challenges faced by children, their families and the services they relied on had been unforeseen by those who had drafted the Act, 30 years ago., such as organised criminal and sexual exploitation, digital dangers and a rise in unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

She argued that local authorities had never been adequately resourced to identify, safeguard, protect and provide other services for children in need and their families. Ms Dickinson invited the Minister and the Department for Education, together with ADCS members "to reclaim and resource the core principles of prevention in the 89 Act" which she said would needs to include "re-visiting the expectations of social work as envisioned by the Act particularly in relation to Section 17". Ms Dickinson warned that it that did not happen, the most vulnerable in society would continue to bear the brunt of the impact of cuts to local government funding and there would be even fewer social workers available to help.

Turning to education reforms, she said that the Government's education reforms had "completely lost sight of inclusion". She stressed that education was a right for all, not a privilege for some and it was also an important protective factor in childhood and beyond. Ms Dickinson added that the new school inspection framework should shine a bright light on the use of formal and informal exclusions and it would hopefully incentivise or better still reward inclusivity and turn the tide on rising exclusions. She also suggested that it might be time to review head teachers' powers to exclude pupils.

On special educational needs and disabilities pressures, Rachel Dickinson said that while the sheer scale of the SEND challenges meant that an additional £250 million was nowhere near enough, the issue was not just about funding as it was about addressing the mis-aligned incentives across partners, and it was also about doing something to balance parental preference and the dire state of resources in Tribunal decision-making. She said that while local authorities had all the responsibilities for maintaining high-needs expenditure within budget, they had no levers with which to affect it. Ms Dickinson therefore urged the Government to consider a "re-booting" of local authorities powers.

In terms of mental health services, she argued that there was very little point in vastly improving the early identification of low-level mental health needs when there were no services available to meet those needs. Ms Dickinson insisted that the NHS Long Term Plan must reflect the key importance not only of commissioning adequate mental health services for children, but also for speeding up access to diagnostic, therapy and treatment pathways in children's wider health services.

"Ms Dickinson invited the Minister and the DfE, together with ADCS members, to reclaim and resource the core principles of prevention in the 89 Act ..."

Amanda Spielman at Stonewall

During her speech at a Stonewall conference, the Chief Inspector at Ofsted, Amanda Spielman tackled some of the LGBT issues, including the challenges in some primary schools that were teaching relationships education. She told the delegates which included education professionals that from September, Ofsted would be inspecting schools in a rather different way and the aim of the new inspection framework would be to encourage much greater emphasis on the substance of education, which was the curriculum that children were taught.

Ms Spielman argued that a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum was the best way to make sure that every child could benefit from a high-quality education. She pointed out that in the new inspection model, Ofsted was particularly interested in how schools contributed to the personal development of children, which created more space in inspection for discussing PSHE lessons in which wider life issues could be explored.

The Chief Inspector said that Ofsted wanted schools to be valued for making a culture where differences of all kinds were valued and respected, and bullying of all kinds was marginalised. She stressed that examining the overall culture of a school in thorough inspection discussions was a far better way of assessing that, rather than deploying a checklist to make sure that every conceivable permutation of racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance or any other possibility was specifically tackled by one school rule or another.

Ms Spielman pointed out that framed properly, inspection could complement and counterbalance other kinds of measurement and reporting, by making sure that good outcomes flowed from doing the right thing in the right way. She said that through inspections of education and social care, Ofsted was also the main checking mechanism for the Equality Act, which was part of the valuable framework of law and policy that provided for all children to be educated for life in modern Britain.

“The chief Inspector stressed that sex education was an expectation only for secondary schools, although a primary school child would normally learn about same-sex relationships in the wider context of human difference.”

The Chief Inspector said that, in recent interviews and discussions in the context of the Birmingham protests, she had been reminding people that equalities legislation protected a whole range of characteristics, which between them reflected many of the dimensions of difference in society. She said that Ofsted’s position, as the checking mechanism of equality, meant that it was obliged to make decisions in situations where the different protected characteristics were colliding, which was even more difficult where there were competing claims of individual rights, parental rights and group rights.

Ms Spielman pointed out that the current protests against relationship education lessons had begun outside a primary school in Birmingham, but the protests and campaigning had spread to other schools in Birmingham, Manchester and elsewhere. She said that while relationships and sex education, RSE, was described in government guidance under the catch-all term, at primary school, the expectation was unequivocally on teaching about relationships, despite some of the misleading rhetoric that had been pushed out from some quarters. The chief Inspector stressed that sex education was an expectation only for secondary schools, although a primary school child would normally learn about same-sex relationships in the wider context of human difference.

She said that even the youngest children noticed the various dimensions of physical differences between people and going beyond what was immediately visible, children’s families may worship differently and families may love and marry differently too. Ms Spielman pointed out that for young children the last part could be as simple as teaching them that some families had a mummy and a daddy, other families may have two mummies or two daddies, some may have just one parent, and some children may not live with their mummy or daddy at all. She added that nearly all schools were already doing that,

(Continued on page 17.)

(Continued from page 16.)

were doing it well, which was important because most children would come across same-sex couples in their young lives. The Chief Inspector pointed out that it was also important that children who were beginning to recognise some difference in themselves, would not assume that it made them bad, or ill, or alone in the world. She stressed that it was therefore right that the values of tolerance and respect for differences, were taught to children, just as explicitly as they were taught about arithmetic, or ancient Rome. Ms Spielman pointed out that the laws of the country, embodied in the Equality Act, were designed to ensure that equal weight was given to many of the facets of difference, the nine “protected characteristics”. She said that when voices were raised in argument, it could result in “cause wars” as in, “my protected characteristic should be more protected than yours”.

The Chief Inspector said that in terms of relationships education, the dividing line tended to be between religion and sexual orientation, but there were points of friction elsewhere and where protected characteristics bumped up against each other, it could be difficult to find common ground and to build a consensus. But she stressed that there must be some level of working consensus, to tackle the scenes that were being seen outside some primary schools, as it was profoundly disturbing for children to be faced by megaphone-wielding protestors as they arrived at school, just as it was for teachers and school leaders to be intimidated over the lessons they taught.

Ms Spielman said that the Department for Education had recently published guidance in the area, which was a welcome step forward, but she added that there was still latitude for headteachers on what was taught and when. The Chief Inspector pointed out that more generally, in England Ofsted gave schools a great deal of latitude and flexibility in the curriculum and other decision-making, which was part of what made teaching so rewarding, and it was also what gave schools their unique flavours, but she argued that it would be more helpful if primary heads, in particular, had more certainty over what they should be teaching and when. Ms Spielman added that as things stood, heads were largely left alone to manage what could be very fraught and sometimes angry discussions.

She argued that it would be better to have one national conversation about Relationships and Sex Education, rather than hundreds of local discussions, each coming to a slightly different conclusion. The Chief Inspector pointed out that as an inspectorate, Ofsted inspected and RSE was one of the very few where Ofsted had to carry out a compliance check to ensure that schools were meeting the minimum requirements set by equalities legislation. She added that in the vast majority of schools, that was happening. Ms Spielman said that while Ofsted did say what constituted a good lesson plan for relationships education, nor did it endorse a particular approach, inspectors did and would continue to defend the rights of schools to decide how they met their obligations, after consulting with parents.

Opportunities for young people, the cornerstone of a safer London

The CBI’s Director-General has said that business is committed to playing its role in making London safer by creating opportunities for young people to develop their skills and find good jobs. Speaking at the CBI’s annual London Summer Reception to an audience of the capital’s business leaders and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, Carolyn Fairbairn, CBI Director-General called for a lasting partnership between business and City Hall to tackle the major problems facing the city, from climate change to housing.

She said that driving change had to start early and getting business leaders into schools could make a huge difference. Ms Fairbairn added that, if a young person had 4 engagements with businesses at school, they were 5 times less likely to be unemployed as adults. She said that it could be as simple as offering work experience, taking to the stage at an assembly, or becoming a governor. Ms Fairbairn pointed out that the CBI was leading a campaign to help more schools connect with business and vice versa. She pledged that the campaign would not stop until every business and every school was involved.

2019/20 Masters research programmes for Further Education practitioners

The 2019/20 Practitioner Research Programme was launched at the Education and Training Foundation's Annual Practitioner Research Conference at Mary Ward House in London. Applications for the free of charge Masters programmes are open until 17 September 2019. Since their launch in 2014, 130 practitioners have been funded on the programme.

The PRP offers the opportunity for teachers, trainers and assessors in the Further Education and Training sector to work towards a Masters qualification and help improve practice in the sector through research. The Programme has been run by the ETF since 2014 and delivered in partnership with the University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training. Applications are now open for the Practitioner Research Programme's two, free of charge, Masters courses:

- A one-year MA Module in Educational Research (30 credits), targeted at teachers starting out in research and interested in engaging in small-scale, evidence-based and practice-focused research.
- A two-year Masters of Philosophy (MPhil) programme in Educational Research aimed at those seeking to take their research to the next level, specifically designed for practitioners with some experience in research.

At the Annual Practitioner Conference programme, participants from the current MA and MPhil research programmes presented their research to the conference delegates including the ETF's Director of Insights, Paul Kessell-Holland, and programme leaders from the ETF and SUNCETT as part of the PRP.

Current research topics include:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment in GCSE English and Maths.
- The Development of Craft and Skill in Vocational Education.
- Dilemmas in the Vocational-Academic Divide.
- The challenges of the Theory/Practice Divide.
- Problems and possibilities in curriculum design, implementation and evaluation.
- New approaches to professional learning and development
- Technology and the use of ICT.

Paul Kessell-Holland, Director of Insights at the Education and Training Foundation, said that there was a steady growth in the number of research projects being undertaken in the further education sector which had for years been woefully under-researched. He pointed out that at a time of considerable change, even for a sector renowned for constant evolution, there had never been a more important moment to support practitioners and institutions in being well prepared to understand the challenges they may face.

Professor Maggie Gregson, University of Sunderland, said that the university of Sunderland's extensive experience and expertise in delivering innovative approaches to supporting practitioner research had enabled it to develop highly successful customised research support programmes with the ETF that not only met the needs of sector practitioners and their employers but also improved the experiences of learners in Further Education and Training sector. She added that the potential of the programmes in delivering significant education improvement to the FE sector was considerable.

The 2019/20 programmes close for applications on Monday 16 September at 5pm. More information on the Practitioner Research Programme and how to apply can be found on the ETF website.

Minister calls for education to continue internationalist approach at G7

The School Standards Minister, Nick Gibb met G7 education ministers in France to showcase the Recruitment & Retention Strategy to an international audience. He told his international counterparts that the English education system would remain outward-looking and internationalist after Brexit. The minister also reaffirmed his commitment to drawing on best-practice and evidence from across the world to improve the education system.

The G7 Education Ministers' Meeting focused on early years schooling and teacher training. The minister signed a ministerial declaration which had stated that confronting inequality would require substantial efforts across borders to improve educational policies and systems. Ministers committed to sharing best practice and research evidence and unite against bullying in all its forms.

Postgraduate support to continue for EU nationals for a further year

EU nationals coming to the UK for postgraduate studies have been given guarantees for funding for studies starting in 2020. The guarantee will ensure that those coming to the UK will remain eligible for postgraduate training support from UK Research and Innovation for courses beginning in the academic year 2020 to 2021. It will also help to maintain the UK's research base.

PhD graduates are in high demand in the UK and the numbers qualifying with a PhD per year increased by 20% between 2013 to 2014 and 2017 to 2018, and 92% of those who graduated in 2016 to 2017 had moved into employment and further study after 6 months. The UK will also be collaborating with 13 European countries in joining Euro-BioImaging European Research Infrastructure, hosted by Finland.

Being part of the new initiative will enable UK life scientists to access its state of the art imaging technologies across Europe as they seek to investigate more about processes within cells and organisms. The work being coordinated by EuBI could lead to new and faster drug development leading to better diagnosis, therapy and disease prevention.

The Universities and Science Minister, Chris Skidmore, will meet with his European counterparts at the informal Competitiveness Council to discuss, amongst other things, sustainable growth, which is expected to be a key theme of Finland's Presidency of the European Union.

The minister will also reinstate the UK government's commitment to underwrite funding for recipients of Horizon 2020 funding. Businesses and researchers currently in receipt of the funding are being invited to submit their details on the web portal. Individuals will be contacted in the event of a no-deal Brexit scenario and they will be given details of how to get their funding underwritten.

Serious youth violence and knife crime

Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime: An ADCS discussion paper, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Piccadilly House, 49 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2AP. 4 July 2019. www.adcs.org.uk

The focus of this paper is serious youth violence and knife crime, which can be associated with gang involvement. This is not a new phenomenon nor is it common. Whilst it is the case that the vast majority of children and young people are not engaged in serious violence or knife crime, there have been recent increases in proven possession offences and a worrying rise in the numbers of children and young people treated for assault with a knife or fatally stabbed on our streets. Another common misconception is that these issues are limited to London and other big cities, they are not.

Those identified as at risk of carrying knives or becoming criminally exploited are not always known to children's social care or the police but are almost always known to wider services including schools and youth services. The average age of a gang nominal is 24 years old but we know that primary school age children can be drawn into gang activities or very young children can be severely impacted by their young parents' or older sibling's involvement in gangs, underlining the need for an integrated multiagency, multi-disciplinary response to tackling serious youth violence and knife crime. The paper notes that "schools are absolutely critical in early identification and prevention efforts".

ADCS believes that "in the face of increasing serious violence, knife crime and gang related activity - often linked to wider, organised criminality - we need to collectively hold our nerve ... The Association's view is that the legislative imperatives to have due regard to the prevention and tackling of violence, to the safeguarding and protection of young people and to the promotion of their wellbeing, already exist. The duty of all relevant public agencies to co-operate in the safeguarding, protection and wellbeing also already exists." ADCS concludes that "the absence of a holistic central government strategy to address the issues of serious youth violence and knife crime that articulates shared objectives, with an agreed action plan is keenly felt." Instead, ADCS believes that "increased political and press attention on County Lines and knife crime in particular has resulted in a somewhat piecemeal approach being adopted by government."

Although the child protection system was largely designed to respond to risks in the family home, a huge amount of work is happening in local areas to understand 'extrafamilial' risks in order to keep children and young people safe. Responses are evolving and now include multiagency panels to look at the vulnerabilities of adolescents in the round e.g. exploitation, going missing, radicalisation or offending behaviours. Charities and community groups are engaged in important work on the ground, particularly in the filling of the gaps left in youth provision.

ADCS believes that tackling the root causes of harm as well as the societal conditions that allow abuse and exploitation to flourish requires a radical shift in both policy, practice and funding. Several government departments lead on different aspects of related policy resulting in separate strategies and funding streams being developed for complex and overlapping risks including child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, modern slavery, offending behaviours, serious violence and radicalisation. The best way to make headway with these interrelated issues is to take a holistic and integrated approach. Presently, ADCS believes, the following are missing:

- At the most basic level we do not have a shared understanding and/or a clear definition of what constitutes a 'public health' approach to reducing serious youth violence and knife crime.
- Recognition that vulnerability does not end at 18 years old as well as a common agreement about the age threshold of the cohort we are working with; different agencies apply different thresholds and even within children's services some of our work ends at 18, 21 or 25 years old.
- Transitional safeguarding practices that both empower and work with the agency of older teenagers and young adults whilst harnessing the strengths of family and wider community networks via the use of proportional responses.

(Continued on page 21.)

(Continued from page 20.)

- We need to bring the system together behind a common narrative which expresses our shared ambitions for all children and young people. A comprehensive children's integrated workforce strategy that supports integrated multi-agency working is an important element of this.
- A national commitment to, and investment in, providing help and support at the earliest possible opportunity. High quality youth services and facilities in local communities to reach young people where they live are vital here. The Government has pledged £1.2 billion between 2016 and 2020 for the National Citizenship Service, a four-week summer programme for 16 and 17 year olds yet local authority spend on youth services has fallen by almost half between 2010/11 and 2017/18.

Way forward

ADCS admits that a public health approach isn't a quick win or a miracle cure. "It requires political buy-in, a longterm commitment to cultural change as well as funding beyond the life cycle of a spending review or a parliamentary term". ADCS points to the work of Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit, and notes that the UK government has pledged to adopt a similar approach in England and Wales. "However, there has been little information about how this would work beyond a consultation on a new statutory duty for public agencies to work together. As well as a focus on preventing future harm, a multi-layered response is needed to tackle current risks by drawing on universal services for all e.g. community policing or schools; targeted work aimed at those already at risk, including younger children attending primary school whose parents or older siblings might be involved in gang activities; and, specialist interventions offering intensive support to anyone already affected by serious violence e.g. young people already known to carry knives or who have received life changing injuries, to prevent the loss of further lives."

A public health approach does not inhibit the role of policing, particularly in relation to disruption and enforcement activities e.g. the use of protection orders or notices. A more sophisticated response that draws in learning from the joined up multi-agency, multi-disciplinary working locally to prevent and disrupt child sexual exploitation is needed. There is wider learning we can all draw on, from the focus on strengthening parenting capacity and integrated working at the heart of the Troubled Families Programme and coordinated efforts to significantly reduce the numbers of teenage pregnancies to the dramatic fall in children to young people entering the criminal justice system over the last decade. Similarly, lessons from our responses to radicalisation and extremism, including 'Prevent,' which offers the provision of bespoke help and support at an early stage must also be harnessed here. The use of an assets-based approach to working with victims, families and communities is the common theme here as well as recognition of a young person's agency. These lessons must be applied to other forms of child criminal exploitation and serious youth violence, including knife crime.

Next steps

ADCS believes that this challenge is one of systems leadership, which has sat at the heart of the statutory role of the Director of Children's Services for the last 15 years. "In acting as a champion and an advocate it is our job to secure the very best outcomes for all children and young people by challenging ourselves to do more and by influencing and persuading others to do the same when the services in question sit beyond our remit or control. We absolutely recognise that we cannot solve this alone, nor can schools and colleges, the police, colleagues in health services, charities and community groups, even individual government departments. If knife carrying is driven by fear and parents are supporting this course of action, if young people are being criminally exploited because they are disengaged from education, lack alternative employment options or because they're seeking a sense of belonging and a gang seems to offer this, then enforcement activity alone is not the answer."

ADCS concludes that "we need to work differently with children, young people and families and we – government departments, public agencies, the voluntary sector - need to work differently together and with communities in order to bring about real, lasting change. ADCS proposes to convene a roundtable meeting with key representatives from all relevant government departments, national partner agencies and representative organisations to progress this discussion and bring forward a set of shared recommendations."

Do vulnerable children really count?

Chris Waterman looks to the new Government to take child criminal exploitation seriously

Counting Lives: Responding to children who are criminally exploited is one of the most depressing reports that I have read in years. The foreword, by Nick Roseveare, the CEO of the Children's Society, opens with "Sadly, there is nothing new about children being exploited by criminals. And right now The Children's Society is seeing countless young lives torn apart by horrific violence and abuse. We hear from children being criminally exploited in many ways: forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs across the country, forced to shoplift, pickpocket or threaten violence against others. Children are being cynically exploited with the promise of money, drugs, status and affection. They're being controlled using threats, violence and sexual abuse, leaving them traumatised and living in fear."

There is nothing new about children being exploited by criminals, but what the report details about the 21st century is probably worse than what was happening a hundred and fifty years ago. I cannot imagine any modern playwright being able to stage a modern version of *Oliver*: it would be impossible to romanticise today's exploitation.

A key part of this report deals with the phenomenon called "county lines", which describes the distribution of drugs around the country through the use of dedicated mobile phone lines. Children, some as young as seven, are being criminally exploited as they are less likely to be spotted by police as they carry drugs from London across the country.

One of the reasons why a previous Secretary of State for Education is not one of the two contenders for the Conservative leadership is that he "confessed" (just before the publication of a book) that he had taken cocaine. He was not a young man at university, although he may have taken drugs while at Oxford, but an experienced journalist. What he tried to dismiss as a one-off, or two-off, or three-off is not a victimless crime: the victims are the people, often young people, who the drug traffickers use to supply the drugs. It is the consumers of drugs who create the market and the victims of exploitation. This report maps the "progression" of children from "target" to "test" to "trap" and sets out a strategy for professional to "prevent", "disrupt" and, when all else has failed, to "support" the victims of exploitation.

The key recommendations are that:

- The law should be clarified to ensure that all children who are groomed, coerced and controlled into committing crimes are recognised as victims of exploitation
- Statutory agencies should have access to appropriate resources to identify and support victims of child criminal exploitation
- The introduction of new local safeguarding partnerships should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that multi-agency arrangements are structured in a way to identify and respond to child criminal exploitation.
- Data collection and recording around child criminal exploitation should be improved to ensure more accurate understanding of scale and prevalence and the effectiveness of interventions.

One of the key elements of these recommendations is that statutory agencies, including the Department for Education, which, in spite of the change of name nine years ago, retains responsibility for children's services, should "urgently address the shortfall in children's social care funding".

It was the same Secretary of State for Education who, in between 2010 and 2014, managed the wholesale dis-integration of children's services, preferring to spend money on "academising" schools at the expense of the most vulnerable children.

Only time will tell whether the new Government will do something serious to protect children from criminal exploitation before this "burning injustice" becomes a wildfire.

Digital copy-and-paste culture

By Professor Jan Willem de Graaf

Professor of Brain and Technology, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Deventer, Netherlands

By the time of the summer holidays, every year again my wife gets carried away into the camping adventure. Weeks in advance, we visit camping shops and all available websites are carefully scanned for new 'necessities' to make primitive summer life as pleasant as possible. My wife commented that the accessibility of the sites this year is completely different from previous years. For each category - sleeping bags, camping items, tents - a separate 'specialist' has come to life, whose help can be called directly for questions about items of his/her speciality.

Meanwhile, my wife has built up a nice bond with Ellen, the tent specialist. The tent we finally ordered arrives at home and we try it out in our living room. When we remove the so called pop-up tent from the bag, it expands automatically. In only a few seconds the tent's set up! However, despite both our PhD's, we find it very hard to fold up the 2-seconds tent again. I suggest calling Ellen, but the site guides us to a YouTube video. After watching and discussing 5 times a 5-second passage of the 5-minute video, we succeed, hurray!

While we are standing there with the tent under tension - when we release it, it will pop up again - my thoughts wander. Frankly, from the music store sites I already knew this approach with "specialists". Rolf from the guitar department, Rolf from the digital studio equipment department, etc. To serve the customer even better and also to bring back a personal touch. If you have purchased an item via the site, the "aftercare" also appears to have been completely renewed.

No instructional manual

You will receive no or an extremely short instruction manual. Instead, the supplier of, for example, a midi interface (or another smart technology device) provides a forum on its website where you can ask questions, and to which Rolf sometimes responds, or a colleague specialist from the same or a competing retail company. But most of the time customers all over the world guide you through the problems you'll have with (new) devices. And why not, manuals were often hard to read, and writing a good manual is very expensive and requires real specialist work, but then in language and logical thinking.

That is precisely where my concern lies, that is what we are losing, overview and logical thinking. We have ended up in a digital "copy and paste" culture. It's for good reason that we are talking about "apps" in the app store, about raps, beats and sounds in contemporary pop (house) music culture. Everyone can do something, and the rest we get from a box, or better, app, or plug-in. Maggi (makes everyone a kitchen star) seems to have gotten us under her spell, I make music, with a bit of me and the rest of Logic, Garageband or Cubase.

To see where it can lead, it is good to look at specialists from the first hour. Medical specialists. With a bit of a tricky problem you will have three around your bed. My research group conducted research on children with multiple severe disabilities, and sometimes counted more than 20 disciplines around the patient (admittedly, most not medical, but paramedical, nursing and caring, or psychosocial). And in the end clients, parents, patients or family members are on their own; often they experience a lack of control. Thank goodness there are also generalistic specialisms, for example the general practitioner, or specialist elderly medicine.

What are the consequences of this digital fragmentation for education? It is certain that many Ellens and Roys now have a good job where they can fully merge with their role as specialists who know a lot about a very small number of items. Maybe this offers opportunities for people who were otherwise on the side. I will come back to this in future because my wife roughly disrupts my train of thought. Now that we've folded up the tent, we have to find the bag. Where is it? I don't know. Call Ellen?

No election likely

By Pericles

This is the last issue of *Education Journal* before the summer break. When we return in September we will be in a different world. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties will have new leaders and the country will have a new Prime Minister.

On the other hand, the parliamentary arithmetic will not have changed. The European Union has already disbanded its Brexit negotiating team and the current leadership will be nearing the end of their terms of office, with a new President of the Commission and of the Council of Ministers due to take over the day after Britain is scheduled to leave the EU. It is difficult to see how any renegotiation of the terms of Britain's departure can take place before the deadline of 31 October, especially as the EU knows that a new British Prime Minister would find it very difficult to leave the EU without a deal as that is the one thing that a majority in the House of Commons are agreed they will not countenance.

This has led a number of commentators to conclude that a general election may happen by the end of September. This will almost certainly not happen, at least not unless it is by accident. The latest opinion poll from YouGov showed the Conservatives back in the lead, with an increase of 2% taking them up to 24%. The Brexit Party was breathing down its neck, up 1% to 23%. The Lib Dems were also up 1%, to 20%, which is very good for them. Two points behind, down 2%, were Labour on 18%. The Greens were on 9%. This has Labour on its worst national share of the vote ever, so what ever Labour says about wanting a general election that is actually the last thing they want. They are in as bad a way as the Tories.

An Opinium poll a day later was better news for Labour. They were on 25%, down 1% from the end of June. The Conservatives were next, up 3% on 23%, with the Brexit Party on 22%, the Lib Dems on 15% and the Greens on 8%.

For some while now the polls have shown the four largest parties all on around 20% to 25%. Within a first-past-the-post electoral system, it is virtually impossible to predict how this will translate into seats. Not only do you have four parties all getting fairly similar numbers in the polls, but the Greens are doing better than ever with around 10% and in Scotland and parts of Wales the nationalists are also a major force to be reckoned with. That's five to six parties all getting a reasonable share of the poll.

Jeremy Corbyn has come in for increasing criticism because of his reluctance to come out strongly for a second referendum and then to commit Labour to campaign in favour of remaining in the EU. While Labour's polling numbers are dreadful and a large majority of Labour's membership, which is now overwhelmingly middle class, wants the party to back Remain, Corbyn is playing a weak hand with some skill. As Caroline Flint MP reminded us on last week's *This Week* programme on BBC1, one recent poll had calculated that Labour would lose 80 seats to the Brexit Party, 11 to the Lib Dems and 15 to the Tories. For the Labour Party to come out of an election with over a hundred seats less than they have now, as their working class base deserts them, is the reason why Corbyn is so reluctant to tilt to backing Remain.

The UK has not been in this position before, but Canada has been. The Canadian system is very similar to ours. They also have a House of Commons and an unelected version of the House of Lords, an appointed Senate. They even have a large clock that looks and sounds like Big Ben. Canada has a history of multi party elections. Until the 1980 election it had four significant parties, with the Social Credit Party (and its Quebec affiliate Les Creditistes) competing with the New Labour-like New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservatives.

Just how dangerous a combination of multi party politics and a first past the post electoral system can be for major parties was illustrated in the federal election of 1993. The Tory Party in Canada had won two majority elections under Brian Mulroney, who stood down and was replaced by Canada's first woman Prime Minister, Kim Campbell. The Tories lost the next election, coming second in terms of votes. But they came fifth in terms of seats, winning only two in the whole country. No Tory or Labour leader in Britain will risk getting that sort of result, which is why there will not be an election any time soon.



Pericles

Nick Gibb goes global

Chris Waterman looks at what the Schools' Minister told G7

Unfortunately, I had a prior commitment last Thursday when Nick Gibb addressed his international counterparts at the G7 meeting of education ministers. I had a ticket for Pakistan v Bangladesh and, anyway, couldn't find the invitation to G7. As I wasn't there to hear what he said, and couldn't find any press coverage, I had to rely on the DfE press release. It was the sub-heading which grabbed my attention: "Minister Gibb met G7 education ministers in France this week and showcased the Recruitment & Retention Strategy to an international audience".

After the ritual assurance to his counterparts that "the English education system will remain outward-looking and internationalist after Brexit", Nick explained that "many of the Government's reforms introduced since 2010 have been based on world-leading successful practices identified in other countries, such as technical and vocational education in Germany and maths teaching in high-performing Asian countries such as Shanghai".

Mmmm... Well I assume the first bit is about the introduction of T-levels (which are remarkably similar to the diplomas which Michael Gove dismissed as a flop in 2009 and got rid of in 2010). The Permanent Secretary had to be directed by the Secretary of State to continue with T-levels, such was his concern about whether they would be any good. As for Shanghai maths, I'm not sure how fruitful the Shanghai cherry will be in the English context. Having spent time in primary and secondary schools in Shanghai and Beijing, I think the cultural differences and the school climate might mean a very different outcome!

There is no detail in the press release about which bits of the "Recruitment and Retention" strategy he showcased, but the G7 countries, plus Singapore, Argentina and Estonia, will probably not be aware of the context in England.

Since 2010 Nick has been responsible for teacher supply (apart from a brief interlude on the back benches). In that time, the teacher supply situation in England has gone from "challenging", under Mr Gove, Ms Morgan and Ms Greening to "crisis" under Mr Hinds.

Rowing back

The DfE has, grudgingly, rowed back from encouraging schools to appoint teachers without any teaching qualification. However, the rise and rise of Teach First has meant that children in many challenging schools are being taught by graduates who have attended a summer boot-camp, but few, if any, of whom will have ever attended a challenging school.

The DfE has also come up with a stream of initiatives, too many to mention, to encourage undergraduates, graduates, foreigners, physicists with a PhD, and retired gentlefolk (is it called Teach Last?) to enter teaching. Attempts to attract the best teachers to teach in the most challenging schools have signally failed.

Andreas Schleicher of the OECD compared this situation to that in many other countries where service in a tough school is a pre-requisite for promotion. Compare this to the experience of a School Direct applicant for whom I was a referee. She asked, at my suggestion, at the interview for a post in a boys' grammar school, what experience she would get of other types of schools. The answer was a period in a school three miles away – it was a girls' grammar school.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession, and the Supply and Teacher Training Advisory Group (SATTAG), which preceded it, has argued consistently for a national strategy for the supply and training of teachers.

The recruitment and retention strategy is good in parts, in fact most parts. What it does not even aspire to is a comprehensive approach to delivering appropriately-trained teachers for pupils in every school.

By September, we will have, almost certainly, a new Secretary of State and, probably, a new schools' minister. I will be sending each of them a pair of special gloves to assist them in grasping the nettle of teacher recruitment and retention.

Policy papers published last week

School and College Performance Tables: Statement of intent

Author(s): -

Source: Department for Education

Document type: Policy paper

Published: Tuesday 2 July 2019

Reference: DFE-00139-2019

Geographical coverage: England

Description: This policy paper is about the information that the Department for Education will publish in the school and college performance tables. The four files contain statements of intent which explain which data DfE has or will publish for schools and colleges in the primary, secondary and 16 to 18 performance tables. It includes information on the data that will appear for the first time in these tables, as a result of government reforms to the way schools and colleges are accountable for their performance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-performance-tables-statements-of-intent>

Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime: An ADCS discussion paper

Author: -

Source: Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)

Document type: Discussion paper

Published: Thursday 4 July 2019

Reference: -

Geographical coverage: England

Description: See the review on pages 24 and 25.

www.adcs.org.uk

The Recruitment Gap: Attracting teachers to schools serving disadvantaged communities

Authors: Becky Allen and Laura McInerney

Source: The Sutton Trust

Document type: Research paper

Published: Wednesday 10 July 2019

Reference: -

Geographical coverage: England

Description: See the report on page 11.

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Recruitment-Gap.pdf>

Consultations published last week

There were no education consultations or consultation outcomes published last week.

Education statistics

Every week the Government publishes a wide range of statistics about every aspect of its many activities. We list here those reports that are relevant to education. This will cover official statistics, national statistics, statistical data sets, transparency data and guidance about statistics. Information will be taken from the Department for Education, other Government departments and Government agencies involved in education.

In the table that follows, the title of the document is given in red, followed by the date of publication, the issuing authority, the classification of information covered and, where there is one, a reference code. On the next line is a brief description of the data, followed by a web link to the statistics.

Youth Obligation Support Programme

1 July 2019

DWP

Official statistics

These two files contain statistics about the Youth Obligation Support Programme, data up until the end of April 2019. This ad hoc release provides statistics collected on the Youth Obligation Support Programme covering:

- caseload
- number of participants on an easement
- number of participants referred to provision
- job outcomes

The data is for participants starting the programme between October 2018 and April 2019.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-obligation-support-programme>

Abbreviations

DWP

Department for Work and Pensions

Statutory instruments issued last week

There were no relevant statutory instruments issued last week.

Parliamentary calendar

The parliamentary calendar lists all educational activity in Parliament that took place last week, and activity scheduled for the weeks ahead. The fact that a meeting or debate may be scheduled does not mean that it will necessarily take place as events may be postponed or cancelled. Equally, events that are not scheduled will take place.

Debates and answers to oral questions that took place in Parliament last week and early this week

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1.7.19	Commons	Estimates debate	Education estimates
2.7.19	Commons	Petition	School funding
2.7.19	Lords	Motion to Take Note	Augar Review of post-18 education and funding
3.7.19	Commons	Westminster Hall debate	Investment in ESOL classes
3.7.19	Commons	Adjournment debate	Schools in Winchester
4.7.19	Lords	Motion to Take Note	Apprenticeship Levy

Future debates and oral questions sessions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Subject</u>
10.7.19	Commons	Adjournment debate	CAMHS
10.7.19	Lords	Oral question debate	Auditing multi-academy trusts
11.7.19	Commons	Westminster Hall debate	Public libraries
15.7.19	Lords	Oral question debate	Combating childhood obesity
25.7.19	Lords	Oral question debate	Introduction of Sharia-compliant student finance
25.7.19	At the close of business Parliament rises for its summer recess.		
3.9.19	Parliament returns from its summer recess.		

(Continued on page 29.)

(Continued from page 28.)

Committee meetings that took place in Parliament last week and early this week

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Subject or type of activity</u>
2.7.19	Commons	Education	School exclusions with Edward Timpson
3.7.19	Commons	Work and Pensions	School holiday poverty
10.7.19	Commons	PAC	English language tests for overseas students

Future committee meetings

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Subject or type of activity</u>
None			

Abbreviations

CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
DfE	Department for Education
DIT	Department for International Trade
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE	Further education
HCLG	Housing, Communities and Local Government
HERA	The Higher Education and Research Act 2017
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
SI	Statutory instrument
UN	United Nations

- All parliamentary information is taken from *Education Parliamentary Monitor*.

Education estimates

On the face of it, this was a traditional debate, held every year, on the education estimates that is necessary to authorize spending on education in England. (House of Commons, Estimates day debate, Department for Education, 1 July 2019.) Yet this year the debate was noteworthy for what was not said rather than for what was.

In the long-running battles over Brexit an attempt had been made by Remain-supporting MPs to seize control of the parliamentary timetable by amending the estimates motion to allow spending only if Parliament had approved withdrawal from the European Union. The move was designed to prevent a no-deal Brexit under the next Prime Minister. However, this ruse could only work if Mr Speaker called the amendment for debate. Despite his renowned Remain views the Speaker, John Bercow (Ind., Buckingham) had made clear that he had not selected either of the amendments. The debate therefore proceeded along the traditional lines of discussing education spending.

Opening the debate on the spending of the Department for Education, the chairman of the House of Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow), a long standing friend and champion of further education, said he was delighted that the Brexit blocking amendments had not been selected, because it would have meant that the money would not be able to be spent on schools and colleges. He added that it was not the way to conduct the debate over Brexit.

While he welcomed the cash increase of 4% compared with 2018-19, the Department's planned further education budget was about £4.8 billion, which was a cash decrease of 3% compared with 2018-19. Mr Halfon said that his Committee would shortly publish a report on education spending to make the strongest possible case to the Treasury for the upcoming spending review.

He had been pleased that the candidates for the leadership of the Conservative party had talked about increasing education spending, and particularly the pledge that had been made by Boris Johnson that he would spend over £4.6 billion on education. Mr Halfon said that the national funding formula had been a "highly welcome" first step towards overcoming the postcode lottery of school and college funding and he added that the Department had announced almost £900 million to fund teachers' pension contributions, while the introduction of T-levels promised to make a substantial difference to the provision of technical education. He was glad that the total funding for high needs would reach £6.3 billion this year, which was a £1.3 billion increase from 2013.

Mr Halfon said that while participation in full-time further education had more than doubled since the 1980s, across 16-to-19 education, funding per student had fallen by 16% in real terms between 2010-11 and 2018-19 which was twice as much as the 8% fall in school funding over a similar period. He argued that the dip in 16-to-19 education made no sense, given the importance of further education and sixth-form colleges in providing a gateway to success in later life. Mr Halfon thought that the debate on school and college funding had become deeply polarised, and while some on the Government Benches insisted that more money than ever had been going into the system, the funding system was nearing breaking point because pupil numbers were rising, and education institutions were having to provide an increasing variety of services.

Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) agreed with the chairman of the Select Committee about the importance of post-16 and further education and she was particularly concerned that, even in days of near full employment, there were still 50,000 NEET young people, and according to the Learning and Work Institute's Youth Commission, progress in the number of 19-year-olds gaining level 2 and level 3 qualifications had stalled and fewer young people were doing apprenticeships. The youngest and least well qualified were losing out because employers preferred to fund higher level apprenticeships, and only 15,000 of those on benefits moved into work via an apprenticeship.

The Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb (Con, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) said that in 2019, the Department for Education resource budget had been around £68.5 billion and of that, £14 billion was for estimate lines relating primarily to post-16 and skills.

Apprenticeships

Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab) introduced a debate on the Apprenticeship Levy and the case for the effective delivery of workplace opportunities for young people. He pointed out that when the Government had announced its intention to create three million apprenticeships in the period up to 2020, there had been concern that the quality of apprenticeships would suffer.

Lord Young said that the Richards review had found that some training schemes which had been badged as apprenticeships had only lasted for six months and they had been of poor quality. He rightly pointed out that even though the review had recommended a minimum level of 12 months, he questioned whether that would be long enough, given the 20% off-the-job training. Lord Young said that when the apprenticeship levy had begun, employers had viewed it with suspicion as they saw it as just a payroll tax. He added that its introduction had been disappointing as the number of starts had been much lower than expected and lower than in previous years before the levy.

Lord Young said that while the situation had improved, some worrying aspects remained. He added that the Sutton Trust had warned that instead of looking just at the number of starts, the important thing was to keep your eye on the number of completions. Lord Young pointed out that in 2017, 32% of apprenticeships had not been completed.

He had listened with interest to some of the debate on the Augar report, which had stressed the importance of apprenticeships. Lord Young argued that even though whole swathes of industry were desperate for more skilled people, in nursing, for instance, the target of 1,000 apprenticeships was proving difficult to meet because of the funding arrangements. He said that because the average employer had claimed back only 15% of what they had paid into the levy, there had been concern about what would happen to the surplus. But Lord Young added that the National Apprenticeship Service had recently revealed that there was no surplus because of the expenditure from the couple of years that had preceded the levy on the existing frameworks and standards. In a report to the Public Accounts Committee, the Education and Skills Funding Agency had admitted that it would have to go back and renegotiate.

Turning to higher and lower skills, Lord Young said that the statistics had shown that the level 2s and level 3s had dropped significantly, while there had been a huge increase in the take-up at a higher level. He argued that it was vital not to neglect the level 2s and level 3s as they were a core area for young people. Lord Young also stressed the need to get a significant number of small and medium-sized employers to take up apprenticeships, or the levy would have failed. He said that while the Government had tried to address the situation by telling large employers that they could take 20% of their levy funds and help employers in their supply chain, the larger employers had warned that the funding would need to be properly managed.

Another problem was that while employers may have young people who could potentially be good at apprenticeships, they were having to spend time getting their English, maths and IT skills up to the standard that would enable them to complete an apprenticeship successfully. Starting the levy had depended on the Institute for Apprenticeships and its trailblazer groups to determine the apprenticeship standards, which had taken some time. But Lord Young said that employers had pointed out that over a two to three-year period, the standards would become a bit dated and they would need to be amended. He warned that trying to amend a standard was a difficult process and employers were saying that there was not enough flexibility. Lord Young quoted one retail employer with a lot of small stores who had told him that although he could recruit 500 more apprentices, the problem was that releasing an individual for one day a week meant that he would need to find some way to cover them but he did not have the surplus capacity. While Lord Young welcomed the review of the apprenticeship levy which was taking place, there was not enough transparency, as employers of apprentices had asked why they had not been formally involved in the review.

Lord Fox (LDP) said that the overall apprenticeship start numbers were down significantly from the position before the levy had started, which was particularly true for non-levy payers and for apprentices aged under 25. He pointed out that in March 2019, intermediate, level 2 apprenticeships were down 2% on March 2018, and they were down 67% from March 2017, before the levy.

In terms of advanced, level 3, apprenticeships Lord Fox said that there had been an increase of 7%

(Continued on page 32.)

(Continued from page 31)

between 2018 and 2019 but the figure was also down by nearly 49% on 2017. He added that while higher-level apprenticeships were up 35% on 2018 they were still down on 2017, which meant that the target of three million that the Government had set themselves would be unattainable.

Lord Fox pointed out that higher-level courses, including MBA degrees, had accounted for 12.8% of workplace training starts in the first year, which had been more than twice what had been going on before the levy had started. He added that management apprenticeships had been the most popular, with 28,000 starts in 2017-18. Lord Fox said that the finding had probably caught the Government by surprise because they were expensive apprenticeships. He added that that funding for non-levy paying SME employers was running out and it had been capped and there was no funding to support any future growth between April 2019 and March 2020. Lord Fox argued that industry deserved a transparent report on how the money was being spent and the plans for spending it in future.

Baroness Prashar (CB) argued that the current levy system was undermining the purpose of the entire strategy. She said that SME up-skilling, particularly at lower skill levels, was less expensive to run through the system and may be more attractive in terms of volume and two-thirds of apprenticeships were estimated to be merely “converting” existing employees and certifying existing skills. Baroness Prashar warned that those apprenticeships were not delivering the skills required, the levy was not doing its job either for business or for young people as neither are being best served.

She said that it was very difficult for employers to use the system, the system was overly complex, and staff such as agency or temporary workers who did not fit the apprentice template were unable to avail themselves of apprenticeship opportunities. Baroness Prashar pointed out that often, agency workers were filling a gap in the workforce and they were unlikely to be in a position long enough to undertake training alongside the job itself. She added that there was underclaiming among employers who had paid into the fund, as only 9% had claimed in the year 2017-18. Baroness Prashar said that while standards had been brought in by the coalition Government in 2013, as of 2018 only 360 of a potential 600 had been approved, which had left a marked lack of variation in apprenticeships. She added that to improve that aspect of apprenticeships, it would be important to know what was going on in terms of the approval system and when approvals were likely to be completed. Baroness Prashar said that the low take-up by minorities, which was around 10%, could not be improved without the relevant figures.

Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con), a Government Whip, said that while the Government was creating a programme fit for the future, all transformative change came with challenges. He pointed out that the Government was aware that it needed to maintain its focus on bringing new apprenticeship standards on stream, reflecting the needs of employers as the workplace evolved. Apprenticeship starts had been up by 10% in the first half of 2018-19 compared to the same period a year before, and high-quality standards currently accounted for almost 60% of those starts. Over the course of next year, all employers, not just the larger companies, would be given control over how they paid for their apprenticeship training and assessed and recruited their apprentices. Employers would also have access to a larger pool of training providers to deliver relevant training for them and alongside employers’ levy funds, the Government would spend over £2.5 billion in the current year, which was double what had been spent in 2010.

Turning to assessing the approach to funding, the minister said that co-investment was a central principle of the apprenticeship performance, and the Government would continue to monitor the impact of recent changes to funding policy to reduce the burden on smaller employers. He added that the co-investment would continue to be made available for apprenticeships at all levels to give employers a choice of apprenticeships to meet their particular skills needs. In terms of targets for nursing apprenticeships, Viscount Younger pointed out that nursing apprenticeships offered a high-quality work-based route into the profession, which offered more choice for career changes or for those who wanted to earn while they learned. He stressed that the Government was working closely with Health Education England to support the NHS to recruit the apprentices it needed. The minister said that almost half of apprenticeship starts had been directly supported by levy funds in employers’ apprenticeship service accounts in 2018, and smaller employers had benefitted from a generous co-investment from government of 95% of the costs of training. He added that the rollout of the apprenticeship service would give such employers access to new online tools to manage their funds and make informed decisions for the long-term needs of their business.

The following written questions were answered in Parliament last week.

House of Commons

Department for Education

Climate Change: Education

Hugh Gaffney: [267768] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to promote learning about climate change in schools.

Nick Gibb: Topics related to climate change are included in both the science and geography curricula and qualifications. Primary school science pupils are taught about how weather changes across the four seasons, and look at how environments can change as a result of human actions. In secondary school, science pupils are taught about the production of carbon dioxide by human activity and the effect this has on the climate. This is expanded on in GCSE science where pupils will consider the evidence for additional anthropogenic causes of climate change. As part of GCSE geography pupils will look at the causes, consequences of and responses to extreme weather conditions and natural weather hazards. In 2017, the Department also introduced a new environmental science A level. This will enable students to study topics that will support their understanding of climate change and how it can be tackled.

Monday 1 July 2019

Education: Judaism

Luciana Berger: [269714] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) children and (b) schools have covered the Battle of Cable Street at Key Stage 3 in the 2018-19 academic year.

Nick Gibb: The information requested is not held centrally. The history curriculum gives teachers and schools the freedom and flexibility to use specific examples from history to teach pupils about the history of Britain and the wider world. Schools and teachers themselves can determine which examples and topics to use to stimulate and challenge pupils and reflect key points in history. Additionally, there is scope within the citizenship curriculum to highlight relevant key historical events.

A high-quality citizenship education helps to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. The Department expects schools to go beyond the core knowledge set out in the shorter programmes of study to deliver other aspects of citizenship. Schools themselves are best placed to determine the most effective way of including these challenges within the school curriculum.

Monday 1 July 2019

Pupil Exclusions

Bridget Phillipson: [269043] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the number of (a)

fixed-term and (b) permanent school exclusions by local authority area for each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb: The national statistics release, 'Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2016 to 2017' includes information on the number and rate of permanent and fixed period exclusions. The release is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2016-to-2017>. In the underlying data, the file 'national_region_la_school_data_exc1617.csv' includes information at local authority level by year.

Monday 1 July 2019

Pupils: Absenteeism

Layla Moran: [269836] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department holds data on pupil absence in primary schools in England which is cross-tabulated by school week, year group and reason for absence.

Nick Gibb: The Department does not hold absence data by school week. Absence data by year group and reason is available in the National Statistics release 'Pupil absence in schools in England 2017 to 2018', which is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2017-to-2018>. In the underlying data, the file 'Absence_3term_201718_national_characteristics.csv' has data for primary schools by national curriculum year group and reason. The data in this file can be filtered by the columns 'Year', 'School Type' and 'Characteristics'.

Monday 1 July 2019

Pupils: Health and Sports

Anneliese Dodds: [268532] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how long the funding commitments are for the (a) Primary Sports Premium and (b) Healthy Pupils Capital Fund.

Nadhim Zahawi: The primary PE and Sports Premium funding is committed up until the end of the 2019/20 academic year. The healthy pupils capital fund was announced as a one-off fund for 2018-19. Funding for the 2020/21 academic year onwards will be considered in the context of the next Spending Review.

Monday 1 July 2019

Pupils: Sanitary Protection

Alistair Carmichael: [269008] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy for his Department to procure only plastic free period products for schools.

Nadhim Zahawi: The department is committed to encouraging the use of sustainable products where possible. The Invitation to Tender for the Period Products scheme in England has set out that the provision must include environmentally friendly sanitary pads as a minimum requirement. In addition, bidders are encouraged to provide further sustainable products and consider the environment in packaging, delivery and other ways over and above the products themselves. We are committed to keeping this subject under

review and we will continue to seek opportunities to encourage the use of sustainable products as the scheme develops, for example through guidance to schools and 16-19 institutions. In addition, we will actively monitor product take up through the course of the contract.

Monday 1 July 2019

Refugees: Children and Young People

Alex Sobel: [269802] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department provides to local councils to ensure that young refugees are protected by an adequate level of safeguarding.

Nadhim Zahawi: Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in their local areas for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare, this includes children who are refugees. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) clarifies the core legal requirements for how agencies work together to keep children safe, including responding to their needs. Some children arrive in the country as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a statutory obligation to provide accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This means that they become looked-after children and receive the same safeguards and services as any other looked-after child. The government recognises that unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children can be some of the most vulnerable in our society.

The government's vision and additional commitment to care for these children is set out in the 'Safeguarding Strategy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children'. The government has also published statutory guidance on the 'Care of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Child Victims of Modern Slavery' to help local authorities to care effectively for these children.

Monday 1 July 2019

Teachers: Absenteeism

Layla Moran: [269837] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department holds data on teacher sickness absence in primary schools in England in each school week.

Nick Gibb: The information requested is not available in the format requested. Information on the number and rates of teacher sickness absence is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>. Table 16 provides a national time series and there are also regional, local authority and school level tables.

Monday 1 July 2019

Teachers: Training

Laurence Robertson: [269621] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools are allocated to each of the teaching school alliance hubs.

Laurence Robertson: [269622] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department used to decide the regions that are pilots for the new teaching school alliance hubs; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The areas for the test and learn phase for teaching school hubs were chosen to test a variety of areas, for example, rural, coastal, urban or areas of high deprivation. This was done to test how the teaching school hub model will work in different contexts, prior to a decision being made about national roll out. There is one test and learn area in each regional schools commissioner region. In most cases, the area defined will cover whole local authority districts, aggregating to cover 200 to 300 schools.

The Department has published a prospectus which includes the names of the local authority districts in each region covered by the initiative. The prospectus can be found here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/98dde964-ac94-410c-8254-1cd573c2dc45>.

As the Department will be funding a maximum of only one hub in each region, it will be for the successful applicants to define the areas in which they operate. The Department will, however, expect hubs to serve all the state schools in their chosen areas. The deadline for applications is Friday 26 July and it is not until after this date that it will be possible to determine the exact areas covered.

Monday 1 July 2019

Mental Health Services: Young People

Heidi Allen: [268557] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support (a) schools and (b) local authorities in providing additional services to help young people with early signs of mental ill health.

Nick Gibb: The Department is working with NHS England and Department of Health and Social Care to help schools and colleges provide support for children and young people with emerging mental health issues and secure specialist treatment where it is needed. The NHS Long Term Plan set out that by 2023/24 an extra 345,000 children and young people in England aged up to 25 will receive mental health support via NHS-funded mental health services including new Mental Health Support Teams linked to groups of schools and colleges.

The teams will work with groups of schools and colleges to provide swift access to support for children and young people, especially those with emerging, mild and moderate needs. Teams will also support referrals to more specialist treatment. Roll-out is starting with a trailblazer programme to test how teams can be effectively delivered, including how they can work effectively with local authority services to provide coordinated support for children and young people. Staff for the new teams are currently being trained and the first 59 teams will be fully operational in 25 areas of the country by the end of the year. Directors of Children's Services and Directors of Public Health in Local Authorities will play an important role in supporting local implementation of the new teams. The Department for Education is working with Public Health England to ensure that local authorities are kept informed and are invited to contribute to local plans for implementation.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Performing Arts: Education

Stephen McPartland: [269055] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to fund performing arts education for young people under 18 years-old.

Nick Gibb: Performing arts education is an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum and should not be the preserve of the elite, but the entitlement of every child. Between 2016-20, the Government is providing almost £500 million funding for a range of creative and performance arts education programmes including the Music and Dance Scheme, and the Dance and Drama Awards. The Government is also funding

performing arts education through their Youth Performance Partnerships scheme which brings arts organisations and schools together to teach practical performance skills both on and off stage. The scheme is providing £5 million in funding between 2018-21 and aims to provide new opportunities for children and young people (aged 8-18) from areas of low cultural engagement and high levels of deprivation to take part in putting on productions, as well as developing backstage and technical skills including dance, art, creative writing, lighting, sound and set design. The Youth Performance Partnerships will be delivered by Arts Council England and will reach 10,000 young people.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Pupils: Poverty

Ian Lavery: [269736] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of living in poverty on the school attendance record of students.

Nadhim Zahawi: The information requested is not held centrally. The department has not made an assessment of the effect of living in poverty on the school attendance record of students. Absence data by income deprivation affecting children index and free school meal eligibility is available in the National Statistics release "Pupil absence in schools in England 2017 to 2018":

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2017-to-2018>.

All children of compulsory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Schools should continually monitor pupils' absence. If a child's absence reaches a level of concern, the school will wish to raise this with the parents and the local authority in the best interest of the child's education. Schools have a duty to inform the local authority of any child who fails to attend school regularly. School and local authorities should consider the individual circumstances of each case and take the appropriate course of action to ensure the child receives consistent education.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Schools: Discipline

Alex Sobel: [269136] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the Government's policy is on the use of isolation booths for discipline in schools; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the use of isolation booths.

Nick Gibb: Schools develop their own behaviour policies and strategies for managing behaviour. To help schools develop effective strategies, the Department has produced advice for schools which covers what should be included in the behaviour policy. This advice can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools>.

Schools can adopt a policy which allows disruptive pupils to be placed in isolation away from other pupils for a limited period. If a school uses isolation rooms as a disciplinary penalty, this should be made clear in their behaviour policy. As with other disciplinary penalties, schools must act lawfully, reasonably and proportionately in all cases. The school must also ensure the health and safety of pupils. As part of Ofsted inspections, schools will be asked to provide records and analysis of any use of internal isolation. Ofsted inspectors will expect schools to have clear and effective behaviour policies that promote high standards of behaviour that are applied consistently and fairly.

In reaching a judgement on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, inspectors will take account of a range of information, including schools' use of internal isolation. As part of the

Government's response to the Timpson Review of School Exclusion, we committed to publishing clearer, more consistent guidance by summer 2020. This includes guidance on managing behaviour, on the use of in-school units and the sorts of circumstances where it may be appropriate to use exclusion.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Schools: Insulation

Steve Reed: [270425] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department has provided to schools with timber cladding on the fire risks of that cladding. Mr Steve Reed: [270440] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the fire safety risk posed by timber cladding on school buildings.

Steve Reed: [270441] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what figures his Department holds on the number of schools in England that have combustible timber cladding.

Steve Reed: [270442] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the use of combustible timber cladding on schools below 18 metres in height meets fire safety regulations.

Nick Gibb: The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety of pupils and staff in schools. All schools must comply with building regulations and must also comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, including having an up-to-date fire risk assessment and conducting regular fire drills. Schools are generally very safe environments in this regard as they are typically occupied during the daytime and have multiple exit routes.

The Department continues to share relevant Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) advice with those responsible for fire safety in schools. The Department has made no specific assessment of the fire safety risk posed by timber cladding on school buildings and does not hold figures on the number of schools in England that have timber cladding. The Department will continue to take appropriate action in light of any further relevant advice from MHCLG.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Schools: Mental Health Services

Julie Cooper: [268626] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the *Transforming Children* Green Paper, what his strategy is for ensuring a joined-up approach between school mental health leads and other appropriate agencies to improve the mental health of young people.

Nick Gibb: [Holding answer 27 June 2019]: The Department has a joint programme of work with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Health Education England to deliver the proposals set out in the green paper *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision*.

New Mental Health Support Teams are being introduced jointly by the Department and NHS England and will be available to 20-25% of England by 2023. These teams will work with schools and colleges and other professionals such as educational psychologists, school nurses, counsellors and social workers to supplement existing support. The Department is also incentivising schools and colleges to identify and train a senior mental health lead, who will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of a whole school or college approach to promoting better mental health and wellbeing.

In addition, the Department is providing training through the Link programme to schools and colleges in England over four years from autumn 2019. The Link programme is designed to develop

effective partnership working between schools and colleges and NHS specialist mental health services for children and young people.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Teachers: Pay

Laura Smith: [268486] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a salary sacrifice car scheme for teachers in state schools.

Nick Gibb: There is a statutory process for revising the pay and conditions of teachers and any change must first be referred by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, to the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). The demands on the STRB's time and resources mean that the Government has to make hard decisions on prioritising the issues it refers. The Government is committed to making the teaching profession an attractive and competitive career but is not currently considering proposing an extension to the current salary sacrifice schemes for teachers to cover cars.

Paul Farrelly: [270312] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing starting salaries for teachers to make the profession more competitive.

Nick Gibb: In January 2019, the Government published evidence to support the independent School Teacher's Review Body's (STRB) considerations for the 2019 pay award. It includes evidence on the teacher labour market, based on the latest recruitment and retention data, and on affordability based on the information provided in the schools' costs document. On affordability, the evidence sets out the importance of ensuring that the pay award does not place undue pressure on school budgets, with a 2% increase in per teacher pay being affordable nationally, in the context of the cost pressures faced by schools and headroom available for increases in teachers' pay. The STRB has submitted their 29th report to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, in respect of the 2019 pay award. The Government will now carefully consider the report and the STRB's recommendations and publish a response as soon as possible. The evidence to the STRB: 2019 pay award for school staff is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-to-the-strb-2019-pay-awardfor-school-staff>.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

T-levels

Ben Bradley: [268544] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure that businesses understand the value of the new T Level qualifications before their implementation in 2020.

Anne Milton: With longer hours and meaningful industry placements, T levels will provide employers with the future skilled workforce they need to thrive. We have placed employers at the heart of T level development and implementation. We have extended the remit of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to promote awareness of T levels and industry placements with a wide range of employers – the NAS has worked with and gained the interest of nearly 10,000 employers in 2018/19. The NAS also work with business representative networks and recently held a T levels Twitter panel with myself and the Federation of Small Businesses. In addition, T level panel members, responsible for developing T level content, have become strong advocates for T levels. Many of these members are now part of the T level Ambassadors Network - a network of business advocates endorsing T levels on a regional and national basis.

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Further Education: Low Incomes

Alex Sobel: [269135] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department has allocated to further education colleges in low-income communities in each of the last five years.

Anne Milton: We do not have a standard definition of low-income communities. The department publishes the funding allocations for individual colleges annually. Links to the most recent years for both 16 to 19-year-olds and adults are given below. The link for funding allocations for 16 to 19-year-olds can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-allocation-data-2018-to-2019-academic-year>. The link for funding allocations for adults can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-allocations-to-training-providers2018-to-2019>.

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Schools: Counselling

Alex Sobel: [269133] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Research and analysis entitled, Supporting mental health in schools and colleges conducted by his Department, what steps the Government has taken to increase the provision of counselling services in schools.

Nick Gibb: The Department recognises that school-based counselling by well-qualified practitioners can play an effective role as part of a 'whole school' approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing. The 'Supporting mental health in schools and colleges' research indicated that 61% of schools offer counselling services, with 84% of secondary schools providing their pupils with access to counselling support.[1] It is for schools to decide what support to provide to their pupils, including how to draw on counselling provision made locally, for instance by local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. To help more schools to do so effectively, the Government has published advice on how to deliver high quality school-based counselling.

The Government is also introducing the new mental health support teams linked to groups of schools and colleges to provide additional mental health support for pupils with mild or moderate issues. The first 59 teams are being set up in 25 areas of the country and will be fully operational at the end of this year. The aim is for these teams to work together with existing provision, including school-based counselling. The Government will evaluate their introduction to ensure that they do not displace existing provision. [1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634726/Supporting_Mental-Health_survey_report.pdf

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Schools and Universities: Admissions

Paul Farrelly: [271404] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the June 2019 Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission report *Elitist Britain 2019: the educational backgrounds of Britain's leading people*, what steps he is taking to tackle social segregation in schools; and whether he plans to introduce contextual recruitment and admissions practices for entry to the UK's top universities.

Chris Skidmore: The gap between state-funded schools and independent schools has never been smaller. 85% of state-funded schools are now rated good or outstanding, compared to 68% in 2010. This has been driven by a range of reforms focusing on levelling the playing field and strengthening education from the bottom up. Phonics is helping early literacy. More pupils leave primary school meeting the expected standards in maths and English. Our reformed GCSEs make sure 16-year-olds have the knowledge parents

expect. The department is also encouraging good independent schools to provide means-tested bursaries, which broadens their intake to include pupils that would not otherwise be able to attend. Furthermore, the department is seeking to increase the number of partnerships between state-funded schools and good independent schools. Universities are independent, autonomous bodies. As such, they are responsible for their own admissions decisions. We are aware that many of them already adopt contextual admissions practices, to encourage increased numbers of applications from disadvantaged students with the potential to succeed at university and we support such initiatives.

Thursday 4 July 2019

STEM Subjects: Females

Giles Watling: [269798] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of women taking up careers in STEM.

Anne Milton: In order to increase the number of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries, we are encouraging more girls to take STEM subjects at school, college and university, as well as providing improved careers advice and awareness and working with the STEM sector to champion gender representation.

We announced substantial spending commitments in the Autumn Budget 2017 on maths, digital and technical education. We are funding programmes to increase the take-up of maths, such as the Advanced Maths Premium, and physics, through the Stimulating Physics Network, which has a specific strand focusing on increasing the number of girls in physics A level.

We are supporting better teaching of maths, science and computing in schools, including a new £84 million programme for computing teaching and participation. As part of this investment, we also launched the Gender Balance in Computing pilot programme this year, which aims to identify practical interventions that schools (at all stages, excluding post-16) can implement to improve girls' participation in computing. We have committed to improving STEM careers advice in schools in the Careers Strategy, including making sure that STEM encounters, such as with employers and apprenticeships, are built into school career programmes by updating school and college statutory guidance.

We are also raising awareness of the range of careers that STEM qualifications offer, through programmes such as STEM ambassadors. 44% of these ambassadors are women. Finally, we are taking steps to work with the sector through apprenticeships and using the employer Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network, now employing 70 members, to champion gender representation in industries where improvement is needed.

Friday 5 July 2019

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Pupils: Sports

Jo Stevens: [269076] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of schoolgirls aged between 11 and 18 participated in at least 30 minutes of sport at least once a week in 2018.

Mims Davies: The first set of data from Sport England's world-leading Active Lives: Children and Young People survey was released in December 2018. It shows that 33.6% of girls in years 7-8 and 27.7% of girls in years 9-11 do 30 minutes or more of physical activity per day. Activity is measured in daily levels, to align

with the Chief Medical Officers' guidance for children and young people. Levels of activity for girls aged over 16 are captured by the Active Lives (adult) survey, which has a slightly different methodology and so cannot be directly compared. Both surveys are available on Sport England's website.

Government is committed to addressing the gender gap in physical activity levels for boys and girls, including the drop-off in engagement from primary to secondary school. It is important that girls have access to the right sporting opportunities, both in and out of school. This is something government committed to tackle in the Sporting Future strategy, and which will be addressed as part of the new School Sport and Activity Action Plan which will be published before the summer recess.

Monday 1 July 2019

House of Lords

Free School Meals

Lord Bassam of Brighton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children of working parents who qualify for free school meals. [HL16486]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Free school meals are aimed at families who are out of work, and those in work with low earnings. For further information on the qualifying criteria, I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave on 18 June 2019 to Question HL15975, as attached. The Answer includes the following attached material: HL16486_Reference_PQ_HL15975 [HL16486_Reference_PQ_HL15975.pdf] The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-19/HL16486>

Monday 1 July 2019

Pupil Premium: Intercountry Adoption

Baroness Walmsley: To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to change the eligibility for Pupil Premium Plus funding to include children adopted from overseas. [HL16520]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government is currently considering the application of pupil premium plus to children adopted from care outside England and Wales and have not set a timetable for any changes. However, this should not prevent schools from providing full support to these children now, including, for example, the expertise of both designated teacher and virtual school heads, whose duties to promote the educational attainment of previously looked-after children include children adopted from care from abroad.

Monday 1 July 2019

Universities: Pay

Lord Storey: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the effect of Vice Chancellors being present at meetings of universities' remuneration committees. [HL16574]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Vice chancellor salaries must be justifiable and should not be excessive. The process for setting pay must be transparent. The government agrees with the recommendation made by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) in its senior staff remuneration code that vice chancellors should not sit on the committee that sets their pay.

The government set up the regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), to regulate the higher education sector and to ensure the sector is delivering real value for money. The OfS has said that universities should, as a minimum, be following the CUC senior staff remuneration code. Where issues with senior staff pay lead to concerns, the OfS has the power to carry out independent reviews to ensure that a provider's governance arrangements are fit for purpose.

Monday 1 July 2019

Further Education

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to mitigate the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU without a deal on the economic sustainability of the further education sector. [HL16627]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The department is considering all aspects of how exiting the EU might affect education and training in England. This includes consideration of participation in EU funded programmes, future arrangements for migration, and access to student finance support. Earlier this year, the department published a number of no deal notices to advise education organisations on how to prepare, including one for further education (FE) and apprenticeship providers. Our initial assessment is that, overall, there would be limited direct financial or economic impact on the FE sector of a no deal exit. However, the department will continue to keep this under review, alongside our normal monitoring of the financial health of the college sector.

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Further Education: Teachers

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made ahead of the spending review of the effect of trends in the level of (1) pay, and (2) workload, on the recruitment and retention of teachers in the further education sector. [HL16626]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Further Education (FE) providers are private sector institutions, independent from the government, and so are responsible for setting their own staff pay and conditions. However, we acknowledge that FE faces cost pressures, and that this can impact on teacher pay and workload. The department will be making a strong case for increased FE funding, including for investment in FE teacher recruitment and retention ahead of the Spending Review. We value our FE teachers and all the excellent work they do, which is why, since 2013-14, we have invested over £140 million in FE teachers and leaders. This includes workforce development through the independent Education and Training Foundation.

The department has worked closely with the FE sector, including providers and representative bodies, to understand the challenges for teacher recruitment and retention, and see where we can provide appropriate support. We have also commissioned research on the impact of previous incentives which is attached and available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incentiveprogrammes-for-the-recruitment-and-retention-ofteachers-in-further-education-fe>.

Research has also been conducted looking at comparable professions which is attached and available at the

following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identifyingfe-teacher-comparators>.

These research projects have been commissioned to inform our planning for the upcoming Spending Review. Ultimately, we know that lower teacher pay makes recruitment and retention more difficult in FE when compared to school teaching and relevant industries. We also know that workload is often one of the main reasons given for leaving the profession. Our Workload Reduction Toolkit, developed by system leaders, teachers and other experts (though aimed primarily at school teachers and leaders) can also be used by FE providers. The Toolkit is attached and available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-workload-in-yourschool>.

More widely, we know that ensuring teacher wellbeing is essential, which is why my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced earlier this year the establishment of an expert advisory group on wellbeing. This group brings together experts from the wellbeing, schools and FE fields who are providing expert advice and working with us to look at what government, FE colleges and others can do to promote staff wellbeing. The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL16626_Literature_review [HL16626_Incentive_Programmes_for_the_Recruitment_and_Retention_of_Teachers.pdf] HL16626_Research_Brief

[HL16626_Identifying_further_education_teacher_comparators.pdf] HL16626_Toolkit

[HL16626_Toolkit_Reducing_workload_in_your_school.pdf] The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-24/HL16626>

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Pupil Exclusions

Lord Storey: To ask Her Majesty's Government how they ensure that no children are off-rolled by schools. [HL16722]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The department is clear that off-rolling, as defined by Ofsted, is unacceptable, and whilst the department believes this practice is relatively rare, the government is committed to continue working with Ofsted to tackle the practice of off-rolling. Pupils leave school rolls for many reasons including: permanent exclusion, moving to another school, or changes of circumstances (such as when a pupil moves to a new area). All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register. There is no legal definition of 'off-rolling'. However, the law is clear that a pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended. Following media coverage of off-rolling in 2017, the department wrote to all secondary schools, reminding them of the rules surrounding exclusion. Ofsted already considers records of children taken off roll and has recently consulted on proposals that will see a strengthened focus on this issue. From September 2019, where inspectors find evidence of off-rolling, this will be addressed in the inspection report, and where appropriate will lead to a school's leadership being judged inadequate. In March 2018, the government launched an externally-led review of exclusions practice, led by Edward Timpson CBE. The review explored how head teachers use exclusion, and why pupils with particular characteristics are more likely to be excluded from school. It also considered the differences in exclusion rates across primary and secondary schools in England.

The Timpson Review and government's response were published on 7 May. The review makes 30 recommendations and highlights variation in exclusions practice across different schools, local authorities and certain groups of children. The government has accepted all 30 recommendations in principle, and the department has committed to working with education leaders over the summer to design a consultation on making schools accountable for the outcomes for permanently excluded children, to be launched in the autumn. As part of this, the department will seek views on how to mitigate the potential unintended consequences Edward Timpson has identified in his review, including the practice of off-rolling.

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Pupil Premium: Adoption

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government how many adopted children currently receive pupil premium plus. [HL16625]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Local authorities receive funding for post-looked after children (post-LAC) pupils through the pupil premium plus grant. This covers pupils that are no longer in the local authorities' care having been adopted or placed through a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order. In 2019-20 funding was allocated to local authorities for 52,492 such pupils. This information is provided in the document titled Pupil premium allocations 2019 to 2020: national, local authority, parliamentary constituency level (attached), which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupilpremium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2019-to2020>. The Answer includes the following attached material: HL16625_Table

[HL16625_Pupil_premium_allocations_2019_to_2020_national_local

authority_parliamentary_constituency_level.xls] The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-24/HL16625>

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Cybercrime: Apprentices

Viscount Waverley: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to recruit Junior Soldiers to cyber apprenticeships. [HL16634]

Earl Howe: Junior soldiers are signed up for an apprenticeship when they join, which will be specific to the trade they wish to specialise in. The Army does not currently offer a 'Cyber' apprenticeship but does offer other apprenticeships relevant to those who work in this area. Cyber security is vital to defence and training our personnel is of paramount importance to us. The Defence Cyber School, which celebrated its first-year anniversary in March, is a centre of excellence for cyber training established to meet the needs of defence and its partners, addressing all aspects of cyber training and education.

Thursday 4 July 2019

Post-18 Education and Funding Review

Lord Blunkett: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their assessment of the review of post-18 education and funding will take into account regional variations in salaries when examining the personal economic benefits of university study to graduates. [HL16690]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The independent panel's report to the government is an important step in the review of Post-18 Education and Funding. The government will carefully consider the panel's recommendations and will conclude the review at the Spending Review. The government has not yet taken decisions regarding the recommendations put forward.

Thursday 4 July 2019

Pupil Premium: Adoption

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to raise awareness of the availability of Pupil Premium Plus funding for adopted children among parents and schools. [HL16682]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Eligibility for pupil premium plus (PP+) funding for adopted children relies on self-declaration by adoptive parents. We respect the rights of parents to choose whether or not to declare that their child is adopted but have worked with the sector, including through social media, to encourage parents to declare. Statutory guidance for designated teachers requires them to help raise previously looked-after children's parents' and guardians' awareness of their entitlements, including encouraging parents of eligible previously looked-after children to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+ funding.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding for adopted children is properly scrutinised. [HL16683]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: For adopted children, pupil premium plus (PP+) is paid directly to their school. The school is free to use PP+ however it chooses to promote the educational outcomes of all eligible pupils. However, local authority-maintained schools must publish their strategy for using PP+ on their website and it is recommended that academies do the same. In May 2019, Ofsted published its education inspection handbook which will apply to school inspections carried out from September 2019 under the education inspection framework. This sets out how inspectors will gather evidence of the impact of the use of PP+ and how they will consider the impact of the curriculum on previously looked-after children, including those adopted from care. Statutory guidance for designated teachers requires them to encourage parents and guardians' involvement in deciding how the PP+ is used to support their child and be the main contact for queries about its use.

Thursday 4 July 2019

Speech and Language Therapy: Children

Lord Wigley: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Children's Commissioner We need to talk: Access to speech and language therapy, published on 11 June; and whether they intend to provide a response. [HL16635]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: On 20 June 2019, the government released a joint ministerial letter responding to the 'Bercow: Ten Years On' first anniversary update report. The letter reaffirmed our commitment to supporting more effective commissioning of communication support. The NHS long-term plan recognises the importance of speech and language therapists (SLTs) and proposes that local areas design and implement models of care that are age appropriate, closer to home and bring together physical and mental health services.

Our national workforce group for allied health professionals (AHPs) will be making specific recommendations, in particular for those professionals in short supply, such as SLTs. The chief allied health professions officer will further develop the national AHP strategy into action to focus on the delivery of the NHS long-term plan. We are aware of the concerns about the adequacy of funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England, including those with speech, language and communication needs.

On 3 May 2019, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced a call for evidence from schools, colleges and local authorities to consider how the SEND and alternative provision financial arrangements in England could be improved. The call for evidence is attached and can be accessed

at the following link: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policyunit/funding-for-send-and-those-who-need-ap-call-forev/>. The Answer includes the following attached material: HL16635_Report [HL16635_Provision_for_children_and_young_people_with_special_educational_needs_and_disabilities_and_for_those_who_need_alternative_provision_how_the_financial_arrangements_work.pdf] The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questionsanswers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-24/HL16635>

Thursday 4 July 2019

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Summer break

This is the final issue of *14-19 Learning & Skills Bulletin* before we take our regular summer break. The next issue will be published in September.

We wish all our readers a happy summer holiday.

14-19

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