



independent
schools
council

ISC POLITICAL SUMMARY

Monday 22nd & Tuesday 23rd February 2010

1. Pupil and Parent “Guarantees” in the CSF Bill
2. Gordon Brown & Ed Balls speak on education
3. Business for the Week Ahead
4. Parliamentary Questions

1. CSF Bill Debate

Tuesday 23rd February

Pupil and Parent Guarantees began debate on the Children, Schools and Families Bill on Tuesday, with Nick Gibb MP suggesting that their introduction would lead to thousands of complaints where schools failed to live up to what could easily be inferred (from use of the word “Guarantee”) as a contractual obligation for schools to meet certain standards.

His first example is “Guarantee” 2.2 - “The curriculum is tailored to every child’s needs so that every pupil ... secure[s] good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills...”, which he contrasts with the statistic that 40% of primary school leavers have not mastered reading, writing and arithmetic. So, to what extent is it guaranteed?

Amendment 67 read (as originally tabled) “A pupil or parent guarantee shall not be capable of creating any obligation in respect of whose breach any liability arises in contract or tort.” Substitute “pupil or parent guarantee” for “home-school agreement”, and one has Section 111 (6) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Vernon Coaker MP provided some assurance to those present that “no contractual agreements arise as a result of the guarantees in the Bill.” Mr. Gibb, though indicating that the Tories would not oppose the guarantees, concluded that they “will not create one single thing that will help to raise standards in schools.”

Criticism of the guarantees went on when David Laws MP asked how it would be possible for any ombudsman to enforce such “vague and unhelpful” guarantees. He suggested that it would be “impossible” for any ombudsman service to make head or tail of most of them.

A transcript of Tuesday’s debate can be read in Hansard, here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100223/debtext/100223-0005.htm#10022358000002>

The Bill as it currently stands is available to read here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/061/10061.i-iii.html>

2. Gordon Brown & Ed Balls speak on education

Tuesday 23rd

The Prime Minister and Secretary of State were at Woodberry Down Community Primary School, in Hackney, yesterday, comparing and contrasting Labour and Conservative education policy.

As well as setting an “objective” to elevate Britain amongst OECD countries to the top three in science and top five in mathematics by 2015, the Prime Minister also renewed his commitment to the Licence to Practice and making teaching a masters-level profession.

Attacking Conservative education policy as “reckless free-market experiment”, he also unveiled the “recognised brands” which will be encouraged to merge with or take over failing schools. Mr Brown said he would ensure that where parents were “dissatisfied” with their school, Local Authorities would be obliged to ballot all of the parents on whether or not they wish to bring in one of the new providers.

The speech can be read here:

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22580>

Ed Balls also wrote about the proposals on the LabourList website:

<http://www.labourlist.org/ed-balls-education-schools-policy-accredited-networks>

3. Parliamentary Business for the Week Ahead

Wednesday 24th February

09:30, Wilson Room, Portcullis House

Children, Schools and Families Select Committee

Young people not in education, employment or training - Oral Evidence Session

With evidence from: City of Bath College, and Leicester College; Bury Council

Monday 1st March

17:00, Location TBC

CSF Select Committee

Young people not in education, employment or training - Oral Evidence Session

With evidence from: Iain Wright MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for 14-19 Reform and Apprenticeships, DCSF, and others

Tuesday 2nd

10:30, Location TBC

Home Affairs Select Committee

The work of the United Kingdom Border Agency - Oral Evidence Session

With evidence from: The Chief Executive and Chief Inspector, UKBA.

Wednesday 3rd

09:30, Location TBC

CSF Select Committee

Learning outside the classroom - Oral Evidence Session

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