



independent
schools
council

ISC POLITICAL SUMMARY

Wednesday 13th - Tuesday 19th January 2010

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1. Parliament

Questions

ContactPoint and the *Children Missing Education* function

Tim Loughton MP (Con.; East Worthing & Shoreham):

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for how many months ContactPoint has operated without its children missing education function; and what steps have been taken to restore that function.

Dawn Primarolo MP (Lab.; Bristol South):

ContactPoint's Children Missing Education (CME) report function is working properly and is available to all local authorities in England.

On 2 November 2009, the Department raised an issue with the supplier of the ContactPoint system, following the identification by a local authority that it could no longer access the CME report function. This issue was raised using the standard problem resolution process and the functionality was restored on 18 December 2009.

Standards in Academies

Paul Holmes MP (Lib. Dem.; Chesterfield):

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what system his Department has in place to (a) monitor and (b) assess the performance of academy sponsors in improving the (i) Ofsted status and (ii) number of examination passes in academies.

Vernon Coaker MP (Lab.; Gedling):

The performance of academy sponsors is monitored and assessed through the performance of their academies. The Department has a rigorous range of measures to achieve this, including education advisers, School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and where appropriate National Challenge Advisers. All of these professionals provide challenge and support to academies, help the academy leaders to evaluate their own performance, identify priorities for improvement, and plan effective change. They report regularly to governors and the Department. Where necessary, the frequency of visits to academies is increased and/or a tailored intervention programme is agreed.

The 2009 GCSE results show that the increase in the proportion of pupils achieving at least five GCSEs at A*-C including English and maths is 5.0 percentage points, double the average national increase. However, where an academy is not making satisfactory progress we have been clear that the Department will work closely with sponsors to secure whatever changes are necessary to accelerate progress. This may include a change of leadership, a new partnership with a successful strong academy, sponsor, partner or school.

Mr. Holmes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what his Department's plans are for academy schools in the National Challenge category where fewer than 27 per cent. of pupils have achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.

Mr. Coaker:

We expect all academies open for three or more years to have more than 30 per cent. of pupils achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics by 2011, or be making very strong progress with clear evidence that they will be above this benchmark very soon after. Where an academy is not making satisfactory progress the Department will work closely with sponsors to secure whatever changes are necessary to accelerate progress. This may include a change of leadership, a new partnership with a successful strong academy, sponsor, partner or school.

Note: Academies will soon fall under the auspices of the Freedom of Information Act, allowing a detailed study of their GCSE 'or equivalent' results. The Civitas think-tank has twice raised suspicion about the performance of many academies. Their most recent report, The Secret of Academies' Success, was published in December:

http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/secrets_success_academies.pdf

Free School Meals and GCSE attainment

David Laws MP (Lib. Dem.; Yeovil):

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in (a) rural, (b) non-rural and (c) inner London schools in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Diana Johnson MP (Lab.; Kingston upon Hull North):

The information requested for the academic years 2004/05 to 2007/08 is provided in the following table. The first year for which the requested information is available is 2004/05. School level data for 2008/09 is not yet available.

[Table on following page]

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) at the end of Key Stage 4 in maintained schools in (a) rural areas (excluding inner London), (b) non-rural areas (excluding inner London) and (c) inner London schools achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A-C including English and maths GCSEs, 2004/05 to 2007/08*

	<i>Pupils eligible for FSM in rural schools (excluding inner London) in England</i>		<i>Pupils eligible for FSM in non-rural schools (excluding inner London) in England</i>		<i>Pupils eligible for FSM in inner London schools</i>	
	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths GCSEs</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths GCSEs</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths GCSEs</i>
2004/05	4,947	18.4	66,056	16.9	8,332	27.2
2005/06	4,969	21.3	63,751	18.2	8,432	30.7
2006/07	4,896	20.9	63,434	20.1	7,812	33.3
2007/08	4,736	22.7	61,724	22.3	7,900	37.2

Source:

National Pupil Database and Achievement and Attainment Tables (final data)

2. Speeches & Ministerial Statements

David Cameron MP, Leader of the Conservative Party:

Conservative Education Manifesto

Monday 18th January; Walworth Academy, London SE1

David Cameron promised to be ‘brazenly elitist’ in recruiting standards for teachers as he launched the Tories’ draft education manifesto in South London on Monday. Should they win the election, those with a third class degree would no longer qualify for state-sponsored teaching qualifications, as the Tories “begin at source” with educational reform.

Academy status is expected to become the norm if the Tories win, with any school rated as outstanding by Ofsted being ‘pre-approved’ to become an academy, and the country’s most deprived areas getting 220,000 new academy places.

http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2010/01/David_Cameron_We_need_urgent_action_to_improve_our_schools.aspx

(See Part 3 for a more detailed summary of the manifesto.)

Pat McFadden MP (Lab.; Wolverhampton South East):

Fair Access to the Professions

Monday 18th January

A new Social Mobility Taskforce will ensure a “fairer” society as the Government reinforced its message on Monday that social mobility must be the “heart of [universities’] mission”.

Almost all of the 88 recommendations in the Milburn Report, *Fair Access to the Professions*, were accepted today in a document which only made it to the third paragraph of the foreword before rolling out the standard “Seven Percent” argument against independent education.

The exceptional performance of independent school alumni in the professions has been the focus of two recent ISC research pieces, which together provide an effective response to the Milburn Report. [Exam Trends](#) and [Independent Schools and Social Mobility](#) were published in our last two Bulletins.

A transcript of Mr. McFadden’s statement is available from Hansard:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100118/wmstext/100118m001.htm#column_1WS

(See Part 3 for *Unleashing Aspiration*, the Government’s official response)

3. Publications & Press Releases

Conservative Party draft education manifesto

Monday 18th January

The manifesto the Tories released on Monday will come as no surprise to those familiar with their earlier (and more detailed) policy paper [Raising the bar, Closing the gap](#).

Here is a summary of its key points (the section titles are those of the manifesto itself):

1. BETTER TEACHERS & TOUGHER DISCIPLINE

- a. Entry requirements for taxpayer-funded primary school teacher training raised from a C in English and Maths GCSE to a B.
- b. Degree qualification needed to qualify for state-funded training raised from a third to a 2:2.
- c. Head teachers will have “the power to pay good teachers more”.
- d. Student loans for maths and science graduates will be repaid by the state provided they become teachers, “for as long as they remain teachers”.
- e. *Teach Now* (which will eventually replace the GTP) and *Troops to Teachers* will be introduced.
- f. Home-school behaviour contracts will be strengthened.
- g. It will become “easier” for teachers to use reasonable force to deal with violent/disruptive pupils “without fear of legal action” and teachers will be given powers to “ban any item that can cause disruption in the classroom”.
- h. Head teachers will now have final say over exclusions, and no longer be “overruled by bureaucrats.”

2. CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS

- a. Systematic Synthetic Phonics will be introduced in schools, with training provided to teachers in using this method.
- b. A national reading test for six-year-olds will be established.
- c. The National Curriculum will undergo “reform”, with the Primary curriculum organised around “subjects like Maths, Science and History.”
- d. Overhaul of KS2 examinations.
- e. Exams will become “more robust & rigorous” by giving universities and academics more power over them.
- f. State schools to be given the same choice of examinations as independent schools.
- g. All schools’ performance data will be published so that “web-based applications can create new and different sorts of league tables”.

- h. An online database of exam papers and marking schemes will allow research into how exams have changed.
- i. Technical Academies will be introduced in Britain's twelve biggest cities (initially), and 400,000 apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, college and other training places will be funded over two years.
- j. Schools will have more freedom to allow workplace training.

3. GIVING EVERY PARENT ACCESS TO A GOOD SCHOOL

- a. Any "good education provider" will be allowed to set up a non-selective Free School.
- b. The most deprived areas in the country will see new academies established, and at least 220,000 new academy places.
- c. Every school will be offered the opportunity to become an academy, with outstanding schools (as rated by Ofsted) being pre-approved.
- d. Academy programme extended to primary schools.
- e. Introduction of a pupil premium based on socio-economic background of pupils.
- f. "Ideologically-driven" closure of special schools suspended, and "bias" towards inclusion of SEN pupils in mainstream schools ended.
- g. Ofsted inspections will focus on the following categories only:
 - i. Quality of teaching
 - ii. Effectiveness of leadership
 - iii. Pupils' behaviour & safety
 - iv. Pupils' achievement
- h. More unannounced inspections, and frequency of inspection will be a function of how well a school performs.
- i. Any school in special measures for more than a year will be taken over "immediately" by an Academy provider.

The full manifesto can be read here:

http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Schools.aspx

Unleashing Aspiration

Monday 18th January

The Government's response to the [Milburn Report on Fair Access to the Professions](#). Numerous supporting documents and reports are available on the Unleashing Aspiration website (see below).

Given recent answers to Parliamentary questions (including the question in Part 1), the Government's response to a critical Milburn report has been seen as quite tame, focusing on making the professions provide more internship and information to schools, as well as improving children's "soft skills". There is very little mention of actually raising attainment, save for recommendation 15.

In an interesting similarity to Conservative education plans, recommendation 15 in Milburn's original report called for parents to be given the right to choose a better school with an educational voucher worth up to 150% of the cost of a child's schooling. This, it was claimed, would incentivise good schools to expand pupil numbers and broaden their social intakes. The Government's response to that recommendation fails even to mention this!

[The Unleashing Aspiration website](#)

4. Organisations & Unions

The Russell Group

Monday 18th January

It was the Russell Group which pointed out the “stubborn fact” that the key to university access is attainment rather than aspiration, though their press release broadly welcomed the Government’s renewed drive on social mobility.

<http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/russell-group-latest-news/121-2010/4066-social-mobility-and-access-to-professions/>

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

Monday 18th January

ATL used *Unleashing Aspirations* to draw attention to the recently proposed higher education budget cuts, claiming that they were “difficult to square” with increasing access to higher education for disadvantaged students. They also questioned the need for yet another quango to oversee social mobility.

<http://www.atl.org.uk/media-office/media-archive/Creating-quangos-will-not-improve-social-mobility.asp>

5. Parliamentary Business for the Week Ahead

Wednesday 20th

09:45, Wilson Room, Portcullis House
Children, Schools & Families Select Committee
Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services - Oral Evidence Session

Thursday 21st

09:00, Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House
Children, Schools and Families Bill Committee
The Committee will take evidence on the Bill.

Monday 25th

House of Commons
Oral Questions - Children, Schools and Families

15:45, Room TBC, Portcullis House
Children, Schools and Families Select Committee
Children not in education, employment or training - Oral Evidence Session

6. Index of Parliamentary written questions 13/01/10 - 19/01/10

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