

In the News (12 December 2016)

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Featured news: NFF consultation stage 1 consultation outcome and stage 2 are now published, Private schools to offer up to 10,000 free places per year to low-income families, just six areas have parents who want grammar schools and creating them would benefit the school population, UK places in OECD shows little overall change, school suggests that large donations could secure places, bursar steals £30,000 from school and faces 20 months in prison

The DfE has now published the [national funding formula outcome from the stage 1 consultation and stage 2 is also open for responses until 22 March 2017](#) (14 December 2016).

[Private schools will offer to provide up to 10,000 free places a year to low-income families in England \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\)](#). The Independent Schools Council (ISC) says if the government pays £5,550 per place - the cost in the state system - the schools will cover the rest. This is expected to cost up to £80m.

[Research by the Education Policy Institute \(EPI\), which modelled the impact of government plans to expand grammar school provision, has suggested there are just six areas where parents want new grammar schools and creating them would benefit the school population in those areas \(BBC News, 12 December 2016\)](#).

[The latest set of Pisa rankings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) \(for 2015\) were released last week and show that the UK's position has changed very little from the last set of results published three years ago \(BBC News, 6 December 2016\)](#). The UK still falls short of the leading countries. In maths, the UK is ranked 27th, down a place from three years ago and the lowest since it began participating in the Pisa tests in 2000. The UK however has climbed from 23rd to 22nd in reading. Science saw a bigger climb, up from 21st to 15th place.

[The OECD says the best-performing nations across the 2015 Pisa tests are united by four policies: high and universal expectations for all students; a strong focus on great teaching; resources targeted at struggling students and schools; and a commitment to coherent, long-term strategies \(The Times, 7 December 2016\)](#).

[The Telegraph reports that Stowe School's registrar has suggested large donations could secure places for the children of overseas parents \(9 December 2016\)](#).

[Sara Jacques, a former bursar at St Pius X preparatory school in Preston, stole more than £30,000 from the school and has been jailed for 20 months \(The Daily Mail, 9 December 2016\)](#). She admitted four counts of theft and two of fraud over the theft of money for school trips and payroll. When this came to light, Ms Jacques was dismissed from the school in a disciplinary hearing.

School structures, leadership and policies

[The NAHT has condemned the Prime Minister's plans to enable the creation of more grammar schools, saying an unpublished document submitted to the DfE is understood to refute Theresa](#)

[May's belief that selective education will improve social mobility \(The Observer, 10 December 2016\).](#)

[Plans for an overhaul of the education system to address declining standards in Scotland have been criticised by teachers with a warning the changes are "politically" driven and regressive \(The Scotsman, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[The Scottish Conservatives have threatened to withdraw their support from the Scottish Government's flagship Curriculum for Excellence, saying the reform is "on probation" while urging an evaluation of its effectiveness \(BBC News, 8 December 2016\).](#)

[Chris Pyle, the head of Lancaster Royal Grammar School, has said the collection of pupil nationality data was not fully explained to schools \(The Guardian, 8 December 2016\).](#) He says he assured parents that the data was DfE research, while it now appears that it was "a murky compromise with a Home Office plan to tackle illegal immigration."

[There are concerns that a £1.3m scheme to give children free breakfasts is being abused, with fears that some youngsters are taking two or three helpings while a number of parents are simply not bothering to prepare meals \(The Daily Star, 12 December 2016\).](#)

[Departing chief inspector of schools Sir Michael Wilshaw has criticised Birmingham City Council's ability to run schools and social services, saying the issue has been his greatest cause of concern during his five years in office \(The Sunday Times, 11 December 2016\).](#)

[The entire board of governors at the Five Islands School, the only school on the Isles of Scilly, is to step down \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\).](#) The board are resigning following an 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted, saying they are not happy with a resulting action plan drawn up by the school in conjunction with the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

[Three families who refused to pay Swindon Borough Council fines for taking their children on holiday in term time have won their court case, with Salisbury Magistrates' Court overturning the fines, as the children all had good attendance records \(BBC News, 6 December 2016\).](#)

A number of primary parents have criticised Schools Will Rock You, an initiative based around the play *We Will Rock You*, after pupils attending a dress rehearsal of the production at Tiverton High School, in Devon, picked up swear words from the musical (The Daily Mail, 5 December 2016). Tom Williams, assistant headteacher at the high school, said the show has been specifically written for schools and that attending primary schools were advised on the nature of the script.

[Bridlewood Primary in Blunsdon accidentally sent a list of children entitled to free Christmas lunches to every parent, as well of details of those whose parents have yet to pay for the lunches. The school apologised, blaming human error for the mistake \(The Sun, 7 December 2016\).](#)

[The headteacher of the Pear Tree Mead Academy in Harlow has scrapped the school's Nativity play so the six and seven-year-old pupils can focus on their studies \(The Metro, 7 December 2016\).](#) "The children are devastated. "They feel they are being punished for something," one unnamed parent comments.

[A poll from France's Le Figaro Magazine shows that a majority of people want a compulsory uniform for the nation's school pupils \(The Times, 12 December 2016\).](#) The survey saw 58% of respondents say they favoured uniforms in all primary schools, with 56% in support of them for secondary pupils.

[Mother Hayley Andrew has criticised Bishop Lonsdale Primary School in Derby after it said her son had breached uniform rules with a short back and sides hairstyle it has deemed "extreme" \(The Daily Mail, 6 December 2016\).](#)

School places

[Research by the Sutton Trust suggests that access to grammar school education is not just restricted for poorer families but also for families who are 'just about managing' or so-called JAMs \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[Signatories from bodies representing schools across Catholic, Jewish and Muslim communities have welcomed the proposed removal of the cap on faith-based admissions for free schools as it will "make it easier for children from different backgrounds to mix between schools while respecting religious differences" \(The Times, 10 December 2016\).](#)

[Rachel Sylvester in the Times writes that the Prime Minister's plan to expand free faith schools goes against Dame Louise Casey's report on integration, arguing that "As Britain becomes more secular, it is time to separate education and faith \(The Times, 5 December 2016\)."](#)

[Figures show that all five secondary schools in Inverness are forecast to be over capacity by 2030 \(The Press and Journal, 12 December 2016\).](#)

[Councillors in Aberdeenshire have suggested new catchment areas could help ease a crisis over places \(The Press and Journal, 7 December 2016\).](#) This comes after it was revealed that Dunnottar, Auchenblae and Laurencekirk schools are at more than 100% capacity, with Portlethen and Mearns academies, Newtonhill, Marykirk, Dunnottar, Laurencekirk and Lairhillock expected to exceed the 100% mark by 2022.

[Manchester could get a new 1,800-place high school as demand for places continues to grow \(Manchester Evening News, 6 December 2016\).](#) The number of high school students is expected to rise even more dramatically.

[Birmingham has some of the most segregated schools in the country, with pupils overwhelmingly from just one ethnic group despite the huge diversity of the city's population, according to the Casey Review \(The Birmingham Post, 5 December 2016\).](#) The report warns this can encourage fear and prejudice, damaging pupils' chances of getting a job once they leave.

[Schools and local authorities have been told to expect hundreds more child refugees over the coming months following the closure of the Calais Jungle \(The Daily Mail, 9 December 2016\).](#)

Education funding and efficiencies

[A poll of more than 900 headteachers in England conducted by the ASCL and law firm Browne Jacobson shows that 94% are unhappy with education funding, with some saying cost-cutting measures could include a move to a four-day school week \(The Daily Mirror, 9 December 2016\).](#)

Teacher recruitment, pay and conditions

[The Times notes that more than £14m of taxpayers' funds have been spent by the Department for International Development on encouraging teachers across the UK to "build their skills and confidence" in talking about global issues as well as promoting teaching about development \(The Times, 8 December 2016\).](#) The Global Learning Programme was judged to have succeeded after teachers were allowed to carry out their own assessments "as part of their reflective practice". The paper notes that three years after the programme began in 2010, Dfid committed further millions despite not a penny going to developing countries, and difficulties in accurately assessing the project's impact.

[Last week, teaching assistants in County Durham called off their latest round of industrial action \(BBC News, 5 December 2016\).](#)

[New Charter Academy, Ashton-under-Lyne, was forced to partially close when a number of staff walked out over "oppressive" workloads \(Yorkshire Post, 8 December 2016\).](#) NUT members at the school say there is a blame culture at the school, accusing it of using excessive scrutiny and saying staff are demoralised and being caused undue anxiety. Principal David Shaw said an urgent need to improve the quality of teaching means the academy is "reasonably asking colleagues to undertake improvement activities."

Teaching and learning

[New regulations in Scotland could see mandatory qualifications introduced for headteachers \(The Press and Journal, 12 December 2016\).](#)

[A disciplinary panel has heard how science teacher Lisa Lock submitted her pupils' results to an exam board and wrongly stated that they had all passed, even though more than 100 had yet to complete coursework for the exam \(The Daily Telegraph, 6 December 2016\).](#) When this was uncovered, the board automatically failed the whole year group of students from Abertillery Comprehensive School in Gwent for their Welsh Baccalaureate.

[Keeping a diary helps boost children's writing skills, according to research from the National Literacy Trust. Children's author Jacqueline Wilson agrees diary writing "increases your fluency and helps you become more comfortable at expressing yourself" \(BBC News, 8 December 2016\).](#)

[The Times' Greg Hurst has interviewed Lucy Crehan who travelled to Singapore, Shanghai, Japan, Finland and Canada to gauge what makes their education systems the world's best performers \(10 December 2016\).](#) She says these systems encouraged and incentivised expert teaching. She adds that Singapore, which topped the latest Pisa rankings, focuses on structured, teacher-directed lesson planning.

[Figures from Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy show that there has been a 16% drop in the number of students going to the country's further education colleges in the past three years \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\).](#)

Curriculum, standards and testing

[Michael Rosen in the Guardian suggests a need for an “arts for all” policy, saying arts offers “a method of interpreting the world that can include everyone of all ages” \(The Guardian, 6 December 2016\).](#)

[The Children’s Commission Anne Longfield has launched a year-long investigation into why many children in the north get left behind, highlighting that children in London and the south-east are 57% more likely to get into universities ranked among the top third than those in the north of England \(The Guardian, 5 December 2016\).](#)

[A Cardiff Metropolitan University professor says the results of Pisa’s most recent round of tests for 15-year-olds, should be taken seriously and treated with respect – but has urged caution on “over-using” the rankings in a manner that is “invalid, unreliable and probably counter-productive” for the Welsh education system \(The Daily Telegraph, 6 December 2016\).](#)

[Sir Michael Wilshaw has said Wales’s poor results in the international PISA tests had ‘dragged down’ the UK’s overall score \(Wales Online, 7 December 2016\).](#) He also suggested Welsh education was "paying the price" for the devolved government’s decision to end SATs for seven and 11-year-olds.

[Five out of six pupils are being predicted wrong A-level grades by teachers trying to boost candidates' chances of getting into a good university, a study shows \(The Daily Telegraph, 8 December 2016\).](#) Around 84% of students are predicted at least one wrong grade, with the majority of these receiving over-estimates.

[Data from the Scottish Qualifications Authority shows that almost 14,000 requests were made to re-mark papers or check how marks were tallied – up from just over 12,000 in 2015 \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\).](#)

Health, wellbeing and health and safety

[Lucie Stephens, whose mother died from cancer linked to exposure to asbestos in schools during her teaching career, has vowed to rid schools of the substance \(The Daily Mail, 8 December 2016\).](#) She has launched a petition calling on the Government to protect children and staff from asbestos exposure, and has already secured 10,000 signatures.

[Last week, more than 1,000 pupils from St Ambrose Barlow RC High in Swinton had to be evacuated after a chemical leak in a school science lab, while a member of staff was taken to hospital \(Manchester Evening News, 7 December 2016\).](#)

[School bus driver Graham Jones drove past two road closed signs before driving his bus into floodwater. He told York Crown Court that his actions – which saw 23 pupils from Yorkshire’s Easingwold School have to be rescued by firefighters – were a “genuine mistake” \(The Daily Mail, 9 December 2016\).](#) He admitted his driving was careless but insists it was not dangerous, saying he did not think the water was deep enough to cause him any problems. Jones has been jailed for a year.

[The Treasury has confirmed that a planned “sugar tax” will be introduced \(The Independent, 5 December 2016\).](#) Ministers said the measure would be introduced in April 2018.

[Junk food advertisements aimed at children are to be banned online, in print and in the cinema after a consultation on the damage they do by encouraging children to eat fattening and unhealthy food \(The Times, 8 December 2016\).](#)

[Cancer Research UK has said Scotland should routinely weigh pupils while they are at primary school in an effort to tackle obesity \(BBC News, 6 December 2016\).](#) In a paper submitted for the Scottish Parliament's health committee hearing, it said: "Monitoring BMI status of children is vital to monitor societal trends, the impact of interventions and identify social inequalities linked to obesity."

[Denbighshire Council is considering a plan to formalise a ban which stops ice cream and burger vans selling within 100 metres of schools, with a Street Trading Policy proposing that mobile food sellers will have to move on from spots every 20 minutes or risk losing their licence \(BBC News, 6 December 2016\).](#)

[A school has been hit by an outbreak of flu, with almost 250 pupils and teachers forced to stay away from lessons because of the bug \(Manchester Evening News, 7 December 2016\).](#) The outbreak has also forced Bramhall High School in Stockport to cancel a planned inspection by Ofsted. Dozens of pupils, teachers and other staff at the school started complaining about flu-like symptoms over the last few days.

Safeguarding

[Birmingham's former education commissioner Sir Mike Tomlinson has warned that hundreds more children in the city are at risk of exposure to extremism through home schooling than two years ago, with around 250 more children being educated since the Trojan Horse controversy in 2014 \(The TES, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[The children's charity NSPCC says nearly 19,000 children were admitted to hospital after harming themselves last year - a 14% rise over three years \(BBC News, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[Almost all secondary pupils across Aberdeen have been given anti-weapons lessons following the stabbing of Cults Academy pupil Bailey Gwynne, who suffered fatal injuries in a fight with a fellow pupil \(BBC News, 6 December 2016\).](#)

SEND

[Disabled pupils and their families could be disadvantaged by a new Scottish law governing the number of hours they must attend school, according to a leading charity \(The Herald, 9 December 2016\).](#) Enable Scotland says it is concerned the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 effectively offers local authorities a legal loophole, allowing schools to reduce school attendance for a child who is struggling, rather than providing additional support.

[Charity Enable Scotland has published a report showing that 60% of children with a learning disability feel lonely at school, while 67% have been bullied.](#) The study, of 800 young people with learning disabilities, parents and education professionals, found that 98% of staff said their initial training had failed to prepare them for teaching youngsters with additional support needs. It also reveals that 62% say they have suffered stress due to a lack of support. The charity has highlighted 22 steps it wants the Scottish Government to take to bring about a "systemic change" for Scotland's 15,000 affected children.

[Law firm Simpson Millar has accused a number of local authorities of missing a DfE deadline to complete education plans for young people in further education and training with special educational needs \(Liverpool Echo, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[Mum Nicol Hankin claims Samuel Laycock School, Ashton-under-Lyne, banned her autistic son Tyler-Jaye from taking part in his school's Christmas dance show because he did not know all the steps \(The Sun, 9 December 2016\).](#) The school says the youngster would not know all the moves as he had missed classes but insists there will be other chances to perform during the year.

Higher education and careers

[A study from Deloitte shows that students from under-privileged backgrounds earn almost 10% less than the most advantaged six months after graduating in the same subjects \(The Press and Journal, 12 December 2016\).](#)

[The University of Cambridge has voiced concerns that Brexit could see admissions of EU students fall by two-thirds \(The Times, 9 December 2016\).](#)

[Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership \(LEP\) is pushing its Enterprise Adviser Network to urge local bosses to ensure young people are leaving school with the right skills \(Yorkshire Post, 7 December 2016\).](#)

[The Institution for Engineering and Technology is warning against gender stereotyping of toys in the run-up to Christmas amid concern that it could be discouraging girls from pursuing a career in engineering and technology \(The Guardian, 8 December 2016\).](#) The engineering institution found that toys with a science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) focus were three times as likely to be targeted at boys as for girls. Additionally, and in spite of high-profile recent campaigns, toys listed for girls are still overwhelmingly pink.

[A teacher in China has been caught on camera as he forced pupils to slap peers who arrived to class late \(The Daily Mail, 9 December 2016\).](#) The footage, filmed covertly, shows the students slapping late-comers while the staff member tells them he would slap them if they did not slap each other or if they did not slap hard enough.

[The Bank of England has added the bonds of some of Britain's universities to a list of debt it is prepared to buy, with debt sold by Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool and the University of Cambridge among a list of securities it will accept \(The Times, 12 December 2016\).](#)

Government announcements, guidance and consultations

[Lincolnshire Council has been congratulated by Ofsted on the proportion of children in South Holland in good or outstanding schools \(12 December 2016\).](#)

[The DfE has published good practice guidance for academy trusts including those establishing new trusts and existing trusts planning to grow \(9 December 2016\).](#)