

In the News (22 August 2016)

Featured news: AS and A-level results week, academy trust pays £700,000 to a company owned by the Chief Executive, more than 200 schools in Scotland built under PFI – concerns after earlier closure of 17 Edinburgh schools due to construction faults, father sues school for son’s low GCSE results, parents spend £200 for their child’s return to school, fire destroys large parts of West Sussex school ahead of new term and Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn advocates <30 class sizes

[During AS and A-level results week last week, the decline in entries to modern foreign language A-levels has been blamed by head teachers on severe funding pressures \(BBC News, 18 August 2016\).](#) Compared to last year, entries to A-levels in French have dropped by 6.4%, in German by 4.2% and Spanish by 2.7%. Malcolm Trobe, ASCL, said schools and colleges were finding it hard to run courses with small pupil numbers, due to funding shortages. [The Times is also reporting the story.](#) Other stories relating to results week are presented in the Curriculum, standards and testing section.

[An academy trust has paid out almost £700,000 over two years to a firm owned by its chief executive \(Guardian Executive, 16 August 2016\).](#)

[The BBC is reporting the story that more than 200 schools built in Scotland under private finance initiative \(PFI\) schemes are now at least partially owned by offshore investment funds \(22 August 2016\).](#) Under PFI, the private sector builds and manages school buildings in return for a fee, typically over 25-30 years. In one project in Edinburgh, 17 new schools were built, with the council paying £1.5m a month. BBC Scotland is airing the following programme tonight on BBC One: How Safe is my School? Seventeen schools built in Edinburgh under the PFI PPP1 were closed for repairs earlier this year after construction faults were found. Most are just re-opening over the last week ready for the next academic year. [The TES is also reporting the story.](#)

[A father from Staffordshire is suing a £28,000-per-year private school after his son left with just one pass at GCSE \(The Independent, 17 August 2016\).](#) [The Times is also reporting the story.](#)

[Research conducted by Nationwide Credit Cards suggests that parents expect to spend around £200 on sending their child back to school this year, collectively representing more than £1.5 billion \(The Daily Mail, 20 August 2016\).](#) Clothing and footwear make up the bulk of the costs. [The TES is also reporting on the research.](#)

[A fire at Selsey Academy near Chichester on Sunday has, according to the Chair of Governors, left parts of the school in a skeletal condition.](#) The extent of the damage is leading to major concerns over educating pupils during the forthcoming academic term (The Guardian, 22 August 2016). [The Times is also reporting the story.](#)

[Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has said that primary class sizes need to be kept to 30 or less, and that this would mean more teachers were needed in the classroom \(The TES, 16 August 2016\).](#) Corbyn also said that teachers are leaving the profession very early due to workload pressures.

School policies, structures and funding

[The headteacher of Theresa May's former school has said she is "astonished" that the prime minister is reportedly planning to increase the number of grammar schools.](#) Kate Curtis, head of Wheatley Park School in Holton, Oxfordshire, argued that while more could be done to promote social mobility in the current school system, reintroducing selection at 11 was not the answer (The TES, 15 August 2016).

Teaching and learning

[Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is challenging pupils across Scotland to read from a list of 100 books as part of a drive to improve literacy \(BBC News, 19 August 2016\).](#)

[Barnaby Lenon, chairman of the Independent Schools Council, has said teenagers should not put themselves under undue pressure to achieve top grades in the new GCSEs and the new grade 9, which is to replace A* in the redesigned GCSEs, will not be required to apply for top universities or jobs \(The Times, 22 August 2016\).](#)

[Teachers across Scotland could be at risk of being forced to move schools without consent \(The Times, 17 August 2016\).](#) The NASUWT union said the clause was in every teacher's contract.

Curriculum, standards and testing (including AS and A-level results week stories)

[NAHT has produced advice on the use of NASBM Professional Standards \(15 August 2016\).](#)

[According to overall data on university place offers, the gap between male and female pupils has slightly narrowed \(The Daily Mail, 18 August 2016\).](#) The TES is also reporting on closing of the A* gender gap.

[A-level results in Wales have raised concerns that its pupils are falling behind the rest of Britain, with Conservatives using the results to argue that schools in Wales need reforms similar to those in England \(The Guardian, 18 August 2016\).](#)

[According to the complaints received from examiner's this year, poor handwriting and use of the wrong colour pen may be hampering students' chances of exam success \(The Guardian, 22 August 2016\).](#)

[According to the Times article, one in seven schools is offering pupils a chance to take a new maths qualification designed to ensure that every teenager continues to study the subject until the age of 18. It is reported that Ministers expected the figure to be higher and may re-consider the case for making maths compulsory to 18 \(22 August 2016\).](#)

Government guidance and consultations

The EFA has updated guidance on post-16 funding (19 August 2016). The update reflects a small change in the recently published sub-contracting guidance. [The SFA has guidance on sub-contracting.](#)

[Employers will be able to choose the training they would like their apprentices to receive from an approved training provider when the digital apprenticeship service is introduced in May 2017 \(SFA](#)

[Update, 17 August 2016](#)). The basis of this list will be the register of apprenticeship training providers (RoATP). On behalf of employers who do not pay the levy, the SFA will contract with RoATP providers who are successful in an additional invitation to tender.

[The Government Equalities Office has released a consultation on proposals to require larger \(250 employees or more\) public sector employers to publish their gender pay gap data \(18 August 2016, with the consultation closing on 30 September\)](#). This is a follow-on from the introduction of a government mandate on gender pay gap reporting for large private and voluntary sector employers.

