

Report



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Children left behind

How poverty still creates an educational gap between more and less advantaged children



PROFILE

TEACHER TOOLKIT

Ross Morrison McGill on Ofsted, bravery and Twitter

AGENDA

ABILITY GROUPING

Overwhelming evidence shows mixed-ability groups fare better

FINAL WORD

ANDY DAY

The children's TV presenter celebrates difference to tackle bullying

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Contents

UPFRONT

4 UPDATE

Latest news, including the union's independent schools conference, teachers' pay, and members meeting their MPs to discuss the future of FE

11 AGENDA

Mary Bousted offers food for thought on the debate around ability grouping

13 WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Mark Langhammer on how tackling tax-dodging could enable an increase in teachers' pay in Northern Ireland, and Keith Bowen on attempts to close the attainment gap in Wales

FEATURES

14 LEFT BEHIND

The issues both in and out of schools that mean disadvantaged pupils fall behind their peers, and what needs to be done to close the attainment gap

18 TEACHER TOOLKIT

Report meets Ross Morrison McGill, the man behind online education phenomenon TeacherToolkit

21 SHUT UP, MOVE ON

Trainer Edward Hollamby offers mental SUMO tricks to deal with workload issues

30 FINAL WORD

Children's TV star Andy Day on celebrating difference to stop bullying



YOUR UNION

23

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Welcome

NIAMH SWEENEY
NEU-ATL NATIONAL PRESIDENT

I hope the holiday gave you time to catch up with family and friends and recharge your batteries. The new year gives us the opportunity to take stock and recognise the positive impact we can have on the children and young people we work with. Schools and colleges are focusing on raising attainment in disadvantaged groups like never before.

I'm proud of the work ATL has contributed to raising awareness on issues of work poverty, zero-hour contracts, job insecurity and holiday hunger, and the impact these have on families, children and achievement. The new professionals network has raised considerable awareness through its hashtag #2Poor2Learn, and provided excellent CPD on this for many members new to the profession.

But we have such a long way to go, as the feature on page 14 shows, with absolute child poverty set to increase by around four per cent by 2022. The National Education Union cannot allow successive Governments to fail to provide for those who need support to achieve their potential. Schools and colleges cannot solve social inequalities alone, although we can be a better part of the solution.

The Government needs to reverse the cuts in early years education, schools and FE. We have the solutions to problems: investment in the profession, investment to reverse the recruitment and retention crisis, and investment in the next generation. We need them now.

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Independent thinking

Workload and league tables were among the topics debated at the National Education Union (ATL section) independent schools conference in November

A hundred reps and active members working in the independent sector – including NUT section members for the first time – heard ATL section president Niamh Sweeney open the event, before a panel discussion and a question and answer session.

National Education Union joint general secretary Mary Bousted was joined by Richard Harman, Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools general secretary, Ed Dorrell, head of content at the *TES*, and Nicola Powell, founder and director of Primary Matters.

Asked if teachers should undertake duties in lunchtime and after school, Dorrell said workload articles receive the most hits on the *TES* website, and all the panellists expressed concern about teachers' workload and work-life balance.

Despite different views, the panel was in broad agreement that league tables corrupt schools into exam factories. Powell said she is concerned league tables inhibit both innovation and improving performance.

Dr Bousted said independent sector membership is now 30,000 and she congratulated rep Simon Northwood, who successfully secured the first trade union recognition agreement signed in the name of the National Education Union at Charterhouse school.

A key theme of her address was the National Education Union's workload campaign. She highlighted a critical observation from Education Datalab that the "audit culture" in schools has intensified workload over the past 15 years.

She explained how teachers are required to create a paper trail that proves learning has happened, for people who were not present in the room at the time. School leaders need to understand that they cannot audit teaching and learning, she said, and that teaching must become compatible with having a family.

Members also had the opportunity to discuss practical issues in the classroom and workplace with colleagues in the afternoon, with sessions on legal developments, charitable status and public benefit.

The panellists answer questions from delegates



PHOTO: SARAH TURTON

Workload up in independent schools

Independent school staff give up an increasing amount of their free time to manage heavy workloads and deal with parents' queries

In a National Education Union survey of more than a thousand teachers and leaders in independent schools, 70% said their workload has increased over the past year, while almost a third (29%) said they are expected to respond immediately when contacted by parents.

With 45% saying their school has no policy for dealing with out-of-hours parental contact, many said they are expected to respond to emails and texts during evenings and weekends.

Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said: "All education staff must be given the time to switch off after a working day or week.

"Teachers' workloads are already unmanageable without the added pressure of being expected to respond to parents during evenings and weekends. Schools need to ensure policies and procedures are in place to help staff deal with work outside of core school hours."

A teacher based in the north east said: "Officially, I should only respond

in school hours. In practice, most staff respond outside of school hours, as it's considered normal."

Another member, a teacher in the south west, said: "We can send a holding email, but must do a full recorded response within 24 hours, even if we are teaching six hours straight, two days in a row, and are on duty. If we can't do it in school hours, we have to do it from home. If a parent complains we haven't responded, this is often brought up in the staffroom by senior management."

Meanwhile, almost a quarter (22%) of independent school staff spend the equivalent of up to two working days (15 hours a week or more) on activities related to their job during their evenings and weekends, while 18% spend between 11 and 15 hours a week working outside their core school hours.

A teacher from the south west said: "I now have more lessons that begin earlier and finish later. I'm also required to work during the lunch break and after school. Most of the time, I find

myself struggling to find time to make annotations in my students' lessons and even finding time to prepare lessons."

A head of department in the south east said: "I seem to spend so much time completing safeguarding training, filling out paperwork and answering constant emails, that there is no time for planning. Thus work has to be done outside of the school day."

More than a quarter (29%) said they spend between 16 and 25 hours a week carrying out other activities related to their job, such as administration or marking. Almost a fifth (18%) spend over 30 hours a week doing so – the equivalent of spending over four working days a week on administration.

A teacher from the south east said: "Workload is increasingly unmanageable as teaching, marking and extracurricular support, combined with new initiatives, leave little slack, so 'busy' times, such as examination lead-ups, become an impossible burden. Colleagues are exhausted."

Four in five (80%) said they must work extra hours because their workload demands it, and half said they are expected to. Worryingly, 58% said their school has no policy, system or process in place to help manage their workload.

To read more about the National Education Union's workload campaign, see www.neu.org.uk/workload.

Teachers need a pay rise

The National Education Union called on the education secretary to implement a fully funded five per cent pay rise for all teachers

The National Education Union and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), UCAC and Voice wrote to education secretary Justine Greening ahead of the budget in November to set out their concerns about the adverse impact teachers' pay is having on teacher supply, after their pay levels fell behind those of other graduates.

The unions outlined how, after seven years of real-terms pay cuts due to the Government's public sector pay policy, a significant pay increase for all teachers and school leaders is needed. Teachers' pay levels must be restored to at least the levels

that existed before 2010, with an immediate rise of five per cent in 2018 as a first step, they said.

In his response, schools minister Nick Gibb stated that no decisions on pay would be taken without recommendations from the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). The STRB call for evidence was announced on 7 December and evidence must be submitted by 25 January 2018. The National Education Union was preparing its response at the time *Report* went to press.

The National Education Union also signed an open letter from the TUC to the chancellor, published in the *Daily Mirror* in November, calling for him to scrap the one per cent public sector pay cap.

REPS' KEY ROLE FOLLOWING A-LEVEL EXCLUSIONS

National Education Union reps helped secure an independent investigation and the suspension of the headteacher at a Kent grammar school that illegally excluded Year 12 A-level students predicted to achieve anything lower than a grade B.

The students at St Olave's Grammar School in Orpington were allowed to return after a legal challenge by parents. Then, after repeated calls for action from National Education Union reps and the school's parents association, headteacher Aydin Önaç was suspended in October. The National Education Union welcomed his suspension but urged the local authority, the London Borough of Bromley, to hold an independent investigation, to which it subsequently agreed.

National Education Union reps at the school said: "Students should feel confident that teaching will not be affected by the investigation – our colleagues are, as always, totally behind every child getting the most out of their opportunities and having a fulfilling time at St Olave's. Staff will continue to put the students at the centre of their work."

Lisa Crivello, senior regional official for the National Education Union (ATL section) in the south east, said: "The National Education Union will support staff to make sure their concerns are addressed. Teachers at St Olave's want their students to achieve their potential and do as well as possible in exams.

"Children learn and develop at different rates and it is wrong to effectively write them off at the end of their first year of sixth form. Schools should not be exam factories – education should also provide children with the skills and knowledge they need for life after school."

PHOTOS: PAULA DUCK



New professionals learn about leadership

LEADING THE WAY

In November, hundreds of trainee and newly qualified teachers took part in two union-organised events tailored to developing their careers

At 'The positive classroom', an all-day event at Edge Hill University in Lancashire, National Education Union members took part in sessions led by vocal care expert Dr Margaret McAliskey, recruitment consultant Jenny Lampkin, behaviour specialist Tim Milner and headteacher Steve Wilson. National Education Union member Louise Atkinson also chaired a panel discussion with all the speakers.

Earlier in the same month, newly qualified and trainee members took part in a leadership

conference in Manchester, aimed at developing knowledge and understanding of leadership and overcoming barriers to ethical leadership in education today, which was run in conjunction with AMiE, the section of ATL representing leaders.

To find out more about the National Education Union's new professionals network, see www.neu.org.uk/get-involved. For local and national training and events, see www.atl.org.uk/learningzone.



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Ethics focus at first leadership conference

AMiE president
Josie Whiteley

The need for ethical leadership was the central theme at the first AMiE leadership conference, held in November

PHOTO: SARAH TURTON

AMiE president Josie Whiteley welcomed more than 130 members to the event in London, before ATL national president Niamh Sweeney spoke about the pressures currently faced by schools and colleges, which she said have created an acute need for ethical leadership.

"There is the biggest educational crisis in a generation," she said. "When Theresa May repeats her rhetoric that there is more money in education than ever before she is correct, but there are more children and higher costs than ever before. Without critical intervention, FE will be funded at a rate similar to the 1980s by 2020."

She said school and college leaders always had to make difficult decisions, but urged them to embrace an ethical leadership approach. "The best leaders are ethical leaders," she said. "They do not shy away from the difficult decisions, but make them with a consideration for the welfare of their staff, children and young people. They treat their staff well."

The programme featured presentations from a range of inspirational speakers on a number of themes, including the psychology of positive leadership, hopeful and resilient leadership, and authentic leadership, as well as a programme of workshops focusing on key challenges

such as recruiting and retaining staff, managing change in difficult times, and personal and organisational resilience.

AMiE director Mark Wright used his conference address to launch AMiE's publication, *Leading in Tough Times: keeping ethics at the heart of your practice*, which explores the many aspects of ethical leadership, using case studies, scenarios, tasks and reflective conversations to examine how leaders and their organisations can act in a transparent and trustworthy way.

The booklet is available at www.amie.org.uk/images/ethical-leadership-december-2016.pdf.

ILL-HEALTH WARNING FOR EDUCATION SECTOR

More than 125,000 people working in the education sector suffer from a work-related illness, and there are 54,000 non-fatal injuries to workers in the sector each year, statistics from the Health and Safety Executive have revealed.

The figures, published in November, show that stress, depression or anxiety make up more than half (51%) of the cases of work-related ill health in the education sector. Musculoskeletal disorders make up 24% of illness in the education sector, with 22% caused by other illnesses.

Education was highlighted in the findings as having an ill-health rate statistically significantly higher than the rate for all industries – with 3,630 per 100,000 workers.

Carolina Sankarsingh, National Education Union member adviser (ATL section), said: "Contrary to popular belief, health and safety is not just about slips, trips and falls. Workers in traditionally 'safe' professions like education are now experiencing some of the highest levels of work-related illness, in the forms of stress, depression and anxiety, and they are taking record levels of time off work as well as leaving the profession in droves.

"This is simply unacceptable. Research also shows that the other illnesses such as musculoskeletal disorders are either caused or made worse by work-related stress. The reasons for stress among education staff are not hard to find. Low pay, job insecurity, unsustainable workload

and intense scrutiny are all factors in stress being the number one health and safety concern our members face.

"The important thing to remember is that stress is an organisational problem, not an individual weakness. If you are suffering from work-related stress, your employer has a legal duty to tackle it. There is no stigma attached to asking for help."

In terms of non-fatal accidents, the most common was a slip, a trip or a fall on the same level, making up 42% of these accidents, followed by lifting/handling accidents (12%), and acts of violence (10%).

For more information about health and safety in the workplace, see www.atl.org.uk/advice-and-resources/health-and-safety. The National Education Union offers training for members and reps on health and safety – see www.atl.org.uk/learningzone.



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Time to tackle teacher retention

New research that shows the increasing rate of teachers leaving the profession is further evidence of the retention crisis in the sector and the impact of workload, the National Education Union says.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) report, *Teacher Retention and Turnover*, used the Department for Education's School Workforce Census to examine the key factors associated with teachers leaving the profession or moving within the sector.

The report calls for the Government to investigate why the rate of leaving among older teachers in particular has increased, how to bring about more and better part-time working in secondary schools, and for bursaries or other financial incentives to be structured to incentivise retention during the first few years of teaching.

Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said: "The NFER report is yet more evidence of a deepening crisis

in teacher supply that ministers must develop a coherent strategy to address.

"The report reminds us the rates of wastage have increased among younger teachers and older teachers alike in the last five years. We fully support action to address these problems, but we already know that workload is the biggest single factor in teachers leaving the profession. The Government must work with the profession to find solutions to the teacher supply crisis.

"Fundamentally, the Government must fund schools properly. Then schools will be able to employ sufficient teachers, pay them a decent wage, and invest in CPD and career development to make the profession more attractive. They will not have to deliver teaching on the cheap or be tempted to replace competent older teachers with newly qualified staff. It is damaging to children's learning that less than half of teachers in England have ten years' or more experience."

FOCUSING ON FE'S FUTURE

Labour's Toby Perkins is one of the latest in a series of MPs who have met with National Education Union members to hear about the challenges facing their FE college as part of the union's Effective Education project. He met with members to talk about the issues they face at Chesterfield College. Labour's Alex Norris MP was due to hear from members at Bilborough College in Nottingham later in December. In November, Ian Mearns MP met with members in Parliament to discuss the challenges at Gateshead College, and, in the same



Ian Mearns MP with Judith Doyle, principal of Gateshead College

month, National Education Union rep Mike Pevitt met Conservative MP for Bolton West Chris Green at his constituency office, when he talked about the impact of funding cuts and the damage caused by the forced maths and English GCSE resits policy. Effective Education is about recognising that FE colleges are vital in developing a skilled workforce for the post-Brexit economy and ensuring colleges are equipped to meet this challenge. Find out more about the project and how to get involved at www.neu.org.uk/effectiveducation.

"STICKING PLASTER" BUDGET FAILS EDUCATION

Spending plans unveiled in the budget ignore parents and the problems of real-terms cuts to education, sending a clear message that today's children deserve less than what was spent in previous years, the National Education Union has warned

In November, chancellor Philip Hammond announced more investment in maths, including £600 for every A-level maths student, as well as plans to train 12,000 computer teachers and more support for adult retraining – but no significant investment in education at a time when nine out of 10 schools face real-terms per-pupil cuts.

Commenting on the speech, Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said: "The Government had a big political choice to make – to invest in education, or to continue with its damaging policy of real-terms cuts. The Government has chosen to ignore the anger of parents and the clear evidence of the problems being created by real-terms cuts to education. Parents and teachers will be deeply disappointed.

"Despite the worsening teacher recruitment and retention crisis and the huge real-terms cuts in teacher pay since 2010, the chancellor had nothing to offer teachers or the profession. Instead of school staff losing jobs or seeing the value of their pay cut, the Government needs to invest in those working in education."

The budget included £42 million for teacher training, equivalent to about £1,000 per teacher in selected schools – but "sticking plaster" solutions like this have not worked in the past, Mr Courtney said, with the "only credible response to the widespread and worsening teacher recruitment problems" being proper investment in education, including fully funded, proper pay levels.

"Offering schools in desperate financial circumstances £600 per student if they take up A-level maths could steer students towards subject choices that may not be in their interests. If this investment isn't accompanied by significant new funding for schools then it won't make enough of a difference to pupils' life chances and skills development. It is a drop in the ocean compared to billions of real-terms cuts to per-pupil funding," he said.

The National Education Union will continue to campaign alongside parents for the investment children and young people need.



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WHAT I AM about to argue may be uncomfortable, controversial or common sense, depending on your point of view.

Grouping pupils by ability does not raise educational standards – indeed, it depresses standards for those pupils placed in lower-ability groups. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF's) summary of 30 years of research concludes that low-attaining learners who are set or streamed fall behind by one or two months a year, on average, when compared with the progress of similar students in classes with mixed-ability groups.

The EEF concludes: "It appears likely that routine setting or streaming arrangements undermine low-attainers' confidence and discourage the belief that attainment can be improved through effort. Research also suggests that ability grouping can have a longer-term negative effect on the attitudes and engagement of low-attaining pupils."

Yet the practice of segregating pupils by ability is commonplace in secondary schools, prevalent in primary, and, in new research commissioned by the National Education Union, *Grouping in Early Years and Key Stage 1*, increasingly common from the moment children start formal education.

Four out of five (81%) reception teachers and 58% of nursery teachers said they used ability groups for phonics. The research shows widespread ability grouping in nursery and Years 1 and 2 for phonics, literacy and maths.

And yet, teachers were concerned about the effects at such a young age. Two thirds (65%) of the respondents to the survey agreed with the statement that 'Children are aware of which group they are in', and some were concerned that would negatively impact on some children's confidence and belief in their ability to learn. One teacher noted: "They know. We might call them foxes and rabbits, but they know." Another wrote: "Children are aware of groups and it damages self-esteem and sets expectations that only the more able can do the



Group thinking

Ability grouping is increasing in early years, but evidence says it is detrimental to children, says **Mary Bousted**

more challenging work, and the rest of the class can feel they have nothing to offer."

One of the most worrying aspects of the increasing use of grouping by ability right at the very start of formal schooling is that it is driven by the pressures of Government policy – and the need for schools to perform well in the phonics screening check and key stage 1 SATs. One school leader talked about "the incredible amount of pressure to get children to a certain level". And it was notable how the language of pressure and fear has invaded early years practice – leading, in some schools, to the scourge of data intensification, the obsessive charting of pupil 'progress'. One teacher talked about the number of pupil progress meetings, including meetings between meetings, and review meetings. The teacher concluded: "The idea almost being that you can double their rate of progress by meeting more often."

How huge would the mound of misplaced data be, I wonder, created by teachers under such enormous pressure to prove that pupils are making progress? How valid and reliable is this data and

what use is it in supporting children's learning? These are questions that I feel it would do Ofsted a great deal of good to ponder.

Another concerning finding of this study is that very young children are being placed in ability groups partly as a result of the influence of private companies providing educational services to schools, and in particular, Read Write Inc, provided by Ruth Miskin Training, which is used in more than 5,000 schools in the UK and which promotes ability grouping based on phonics phases.

Some teachers had clear concerns about using an external scheme to decide on teaching practices within a school, one remarking: "Ability grouping shouldn't be done. Read Write Inc phonics doesn't work if you don't though."

Questions must be asked when commercial interests so closely align with Government policy to put pressure on school leaders and teachers to adopt teaching practices with which they are clearly uncomfortable. It was estimated, three years ago, that around £40 million has been spent on the rollout of synthetic phonic programmes. What professional choice about teaching and learning does this leave teachers and school leaders? Particularly when the over-reliance on synthetic phonics is contested within the research community.

I would contend that not one educational professional enters the teaching profession in order to limit and circumscribe a child's perception of their ability. In practice, grouping by ability significantly diminishes the educational attainment of lower-attaining pupils. The English education system actually does very well with high-attaining pupils. Our problem is with the huge gap between their achievements and those of their lower-attaining peers. More successful education systems have much smaller gaps, and most of those do far less grouping by ability.

This may be counterintuitive, and hard to accept. But it is food for serious thought. ■

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Wales

KEITH BOWEN

The search for a solution to the attainment gap



THE POPULATION OF Wales includes people across the whole range of financial wealth and security, but it is the educational outcomes for children from low-income households that dominate the political agenda. With recent reports highlighting that almost a quarter of the Welsh population live in poverty, Welsh Government policy has seen education as a key lever in addressing economic challenges.

However, the Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee undertook a review into the issue in 2015, concluding that none of the programmes and initiatives introduced over recent years have demonstrated significant success in closing

the attainment gap for children from low-income families. Estyn has highlighted a number of schools across Wales that have been able to buck the trend, but overall the problem remains intractable.

Kirsty Williams, now cabinet secretary for education, was instrumental in pushing for the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant in Wales, one of the key mechanisms to help target funding towards pupils from low-income families. This year, she continued to support the renamed Pupil Development Grant with continued investment, as well as expanding the scheme to include the early years. The grant is one of the key actions in her *Education in Wales: our national mission*, published in September.

Many, including the Bevan Foundation, argue that poverty and its impact on achievement remains the major challenge facing Wales' education system. The solutions go far beyond the school and college gates, with parents and families, local communities and other public services all having vital roles to play.

Northern Ireland

MARK LANGHAMMER

Cut tax-dodging and increase teachers' pay

THE GENERAL IDEA of individuals and the state balancing rights and societal obligations for the common good – the 'social contract' – is disappearing fast. The unveiling of elites no longer bound by society's rules, through the 'Paradise Papers', is Mrs Thatcher's "There's no such thing as society" writ large. From the monarchy to Madonna, from premiership footballers to wealthy corporates, this elite eschews the basic civic duty of paying a fair level of tax. This tax-dodging elite is also the main reason why teachers' pay is going down the swanee!

Recently, teachers' unions in Northern Ireland submitted a 4.9% pay claim. This comprises one per cent for the pay not awarded in 2015-16 plus 3.9%, the current rate of inflation by retail price index. This claim will not make teachers any better off, but would allow them to maintain their current lifestyle in circumstances where they have lost 12-15% of pay since 2010 in real terms. The Government public sector

pay limit is one per cent, so we have a problem.

Tax Research UK, and the redoubtable Richard Murphy, estimates the sum of tax avoided, evaded and uncollected at £123 billion. This may be over- or underestimated, but I have yet to see Murphy's figure demolished in argument. If we collected even half of this, every UK minister could fulfil their wildest wish list, and then some.

Trust in Government, and its ability to regulate for all, is broken. It is time to put the tax-dodging industry on notice, and 4.9% is a bare-minimum start.



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No one left behind

Why closing the attainment gap requires a rethink on child poverty

Words by **Charlotte Tamvakis**

WE NEED TO tackle “the phenomenon of left-behind Britain”. That was the conclusion of the Social Mobility Commission’s (SMC’s) *State of the Nation 2017* report, which highlights a social mobility postcode lottery of “hotspots” and “coldspots” around the country. The report, published in November, also describes a “self-reinforcing spiral of ever-growing division”, in which disadvantaged children are 14% less likely to be school-ready at age five in some areas.

Social mobility is getting worse, not better, the report says, and it points to the lack of an overall national strategy to tackle the social, economic and geographical divide, concluding that “tinkering with change will not do the trick” to tackle the problem of children being left behind. The report’s conclusions were reinforced when, in early December, all four members of the SMC, a public body charged with advising the Government, resigned, including Conservative peer Gillian Shepherd and chair of the group Alan Milburn.

In his resignation, Milburn, who had chaired the group for five years, said: “I have little hope of the current Government making the progress I believe is necessary to bring about a fairer Britain. It seems unable to commit to the future of the commission as an independent body or to give due priority to the social mobility challenge facing our nation.”

This news was quickly followed by a report from social policy research charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, showing 400,000 more children are now living in relative poverty than in 2012-13.

Of course, schools play a key role in improving social mobility. At a debate on the role of schools in addressing poverty and inequality at the Conservative Party Conference in the autumn, National

Education Union joint general secretary Mary Bousted told the audience: “We know that poor children make the most progress when they are taught by the best teachers, and that good teaching disproportionately benefits the most disadvantaged children.

“Schools focus like they never have done before on the disadvantaged children. The attainment gap is narrowing between advantaged and disadvantaged children, with a reduction of about three months, or about 14%, in the attainment gap over the last 10 years. But there still is in the UK a stronger relationship between parental income and background and the children’s test scores than there is in other rich countries.”

But it cannot all be down to schools and their staff to try to close this gap, as Dr Bousted explained: “When they start school, disadvantaged children born into persistent poverty are already 40% behind in their attainment compared to their more advantaged peers. We need to spend a lot more on early years; we need to restart Sure Start.”

By the time they reach school, children born into persistent disadvantage and poverty hear 30 million fewer words than more advantaged children, have fewer extended conversations, and less extended speech, and are much more likely to have never gone very far from their home. Their parents are much more likely to be stressed, particularly due to poor and insecure housing, insecure jobs and low pay.

This gap continues when a disadvantaged child is in school. In August, think tank the Education Policy Institute published a report looking at trends in educational attainment and disadvantage. It found that, while the gap between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers is narrowing very slowly, disadvantaged pupils still fall behind their more affluent peers by around two months each year during secondary school.

And the economic prospects for these children do not look likely to improve. Statistics from the campaigning charity Child Poverty Action Group show there were 3.9 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2014-15 – which is 28% of children, or nine in a class of 30. Although child poverty reduced dramatically between 1998-99 and 2011-12, when 800,000 children were lifted out of poverty, since 2010, child poverty figures have flatlined.

Indeed, the Institute for Fiscal Studies projects that, as a direct result of tax and benefit decisions made since 2010, the number of children in relative poverty will have risen from 2.3 to 3.6 million by 2020, while absolute child poverty will increase four per cent by 2022.

Helen Barnard, who leads the data monitoring and analysis team at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, agrees that good-quality education is important. “Central to helping young people succeed is the quality of teaching, and that is more the case for people from poorer

“WHEN THEY START SCHOOL, DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN BORN INTO PERSISTENT POVERTY ARE ALREADY 40% BEHIND IN THEIR ATTAINMENT COMPARED TO THEIR MORE ADVANTAGED PEERS”

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backgrounds than children from better-off backgrounds," she says.

But children's experience before they start school is also vital, she says. "We know growing up in poverty has a direct impact on children's attainment. Some of the research we funded... shows that if you raise family incomes, that does have a direct pay-off in terms of increasing children's attainment. Early relationships with parents or caregivers are very important, and responsive parenting and doing educational things with young children makes a very big difference to children.

"And we have evidence that shows very good high-quality pre-school education makes a big difference, and we have much better evidence of how to do that. We need a revolution in how we look at childcare – we need to see childcare and early education as part of our infrastructure."

Childcare does two things in terms of poverty – it can help parents work, which can have a big effect on families and their prospects. "If you can enable a parent who wants to get a job, it can transform that family's prospects, their security," says Barnard. There are also the developmental benefits of childcare; however the evidence is clear it needs to be high-quality childcare for this to happen.

"But we also know that most of the childcare in the UK is not that high quality – and that's one of the things that should be a big focus, because if you can get children entering school having had some high-quality childcare, that will be a massive benefit to them and will also help schools to have a good basis to build on," she adds.

The *State of the Nation 2017* report from the SMC contains many findings and recommendations. It highlights the "substantial inequalities in educational attainment linked to social disadvantage and place" and says schools should provide children with the skills and confidence to succeed educationally and in the labour market. It also highlights the "major challenges with the way teachers are recruited, particularly in isolated areas" and points to long-standing inequalities in the way funding is distributed in England

– issues the National Education Union continues to fight hard to improve.

Yet it is curiously quiet on child poverty specifically, something Janet Clark, NEU-ATL policy adviser, explains. "In 2016, the Government scrapped the child poverty targets that had been introduced by the Labour Government, and instead introduced indicators relating to work, worklessness and educational attainment, which is really not the same thing, because we know that there are a large number of families in poverty. Those indicators do not capture this at all.

"It steered attention away from poverty at birth, and the new targets point the finger at education. The report gets quite a lot of attention every year, but the way the Government is operating now means it cannot really address the issues. [Education secretary] Justine Greening has talked about social mobility a lot over the past year and she sees this is affected through education. But it's also about pay for families – we've got stagnating wages, the public-sector pay freeze, and the precariousness of the job market.

"Plus, we have education funding cuts and larger class sizes, so teachers cannot give the individual support to children who need it to close that gap. Subjects are getting cut, which we know also disadvantages those students who might have been encouraged into education through a less academic subject."

The fact is 62% of children who are living in persistent poverty live in a household where more than one parent works. There are now eight million

working-age adults and children in poverty in working families where at least one adult is in work, Barnard says, compared to only 4.1 million working-age adults and children in poverty in workless families.

"What the evidence we've looked at really suggests is the way to tackle this is with a comprehensive strategy. If you only focus on education and don't worry about any of the other things, children from poorer backgrounds will be entering the education system already behind, and they generally make slower progress as well, so schools and education providers are having to try to undo the damage that's been done not only early in life, but through children's [pre-school] education.

"The Social Mobility Commission, the Government, the coalition of people who want to tackle this need to do several things at once. We need to address family incomes – make sure that they are keeping up with costs of living, when what we're seeing at the moment is wages falling and benefits and tax benefits frozen at the same time as the cost of living is rising pretty quickly.

"If you look at the working-age population, the vast majority of those in poverty are now in working families rather than in workless families. Getting into work is definitely better than being out of work, but it doesn't necessarily lift them out of poverty."

The National Education Union wants to see the Government do more to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality, as well as enabling education professionals to give children the best education possible once in schools and colleges. Janet Clark concludes: "It's about social justice rather than social mobility; about starting everybody off on an equal footing, rather than simply increasing your chances later. It's about creating a level playing field at birth." ■



Raging against THE MACHINE

There are many fires to fight in education, starting with funding and standing up to Ofsted, Ross Morrison McGill, AKA TeacherToolkit, tells **Alex Tomlin**

ROSS MORRISON MCGILL, better known to his 182,000-plus Twitter followers as @TeacherToolkit, is excited about his future after making the momentous decision to step away from teaching after 24 years.

Having started training as a teacher at 18, McGill has spent his whole career to date working in state schools in north London, as a middle leader, a senior teacher, and, for the last three or four years, a deputy head “in difficult circumstances”.

Ultimately, those circumstances caused him to leave day-to-day school life and concentrate fully on his TeacherToolkit website, along with a teacher-training role, which has given him time to reflect on education from a different perspective.

“All I’ve ever known is teaching,” McGill says. “I never thought I’d step out, but now I have, I can reflect and go around schools; I’m richer in knowledge. My passion for TeacherToolkit has given me the opportunity to reflect on the difficulties I, and others, face, and the possible solutions. I now have a duty and obligation to challenge policy and do what I can for teachers.”

He is certainly a man of influence, dubbed the ‘most followed teacher on Twitter in the UK’ and writing one of the most widely read blogs in the country. In 2015, he was named one of the ‘500 most influential people in Britain’ by Debrett’s.

He accepts he is one of a modern breed of bloggers who have become influential in the education debate, and is even something of a celebrity – with many keen to get a selfie with the man behind @TeacherToolkit.

His foray into blogging came about in trying personal times in 2010, using the internet to keep relatives up to date with the progress of his prematurely born son. Having found this a cathartic process, he moved to writing about education, striking a chord with his views and ideas.

“I’ve started Twitter wars, been under troll attacks, dictated agendas, exposed things, seen Ofsted documents and challenged [schools minister] Nick Gibb about the EBacc

Ross Morrison McGill believes teachers and leaders need to be braver in order to stop working in a broken system



policy," he says. "I'm not saying it's just me alone. I guess I'm a news conduit. People ask me to blow the whistle on their behalf."

However, the bread and butter of both his teaching and his online life are ideas about how to improve practice in the classroom. "My passion is common-sense ideas," he says. "Some of those ideas are a solution to a broken system; many are to reduce workload and increase impact. Some are to bypass measures about how you are judged or reviewed on how a kid makes progress."

"We always make progress through learning, but now they're trying to define it. We had Ofsted myths about 20-minute progress in lessons. I've had teachers telling me privately that their head is still telling them they need to make progress in 20 minutes – but it's just nonsense."

Indeed, McGill describes his most recent experience of Ofsted, where he disputed its use of data, as "the final nail in the coffin" that caused him to move on from teaching. However, it is clear many of the previous nails were also hammered in by brushes with the inspectorate, which have left him with "scars".

"I'm sure I'm not the only person," he says. "There are thousands of great teachers, dedicated to education, forced out of schools by people who love an Ofsted report and love an Ofsted banner, who believe in the tripe sometimes written on reports."

Much of the excessive workload blighting the profession stems from Ofsted too, McGill says, although he believes school leaders, including himself, have to take some responsibility. "I think the key driver of teacher workload is Ofsted, and I'm not denying school leaders are partly to blame as well. I've been part of that. I'd been trying to lead teaching and learning from behind a desk, crunching numbers – what was I doing? That is not my passion. I was trying to produce evidence. We've got to stop doing silly stuff because of external forces."

He does acknowledge Ofsted's efforts to improve perceptions of itself, although says there is more to be done. "Ofsted has done a lot of great work, [its national director of education] Sean Harford has been fighting fires on Twitter, although a lot of teachers are not on Twitter."

"And half of school leaders haven't even seen the [Government's] workload recommendations or posters," he continues. "It's quite frightening that they haven't seen advice on reducing workload and supporting staff." He asks why the workload posters say what Ofsted wants to see. "Why don't they say what teachers want?" he asks.

McGill says too much work in schools is dictated by perceptions of what inspectors

want to see, or by the goal of achieving a certain Ofsted grade, something Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman told *Report* in October that she did not want schools to do.

McGill would like to see the current grading replaced by a simple two-tier system, whereby a school is classed as either 'good' or 'not yet good' because it is on the journey to 'good'. The current system, he believes, is a clear example of the tail wagging the dog, with many schools acting on what they believe Ofsted wants to see, rather than on what they believe is best



"THESE OFSTED BANNERS OUTSIDE SCHOOLS SAYING 'OUTSTANDING' ARE CELEBRATING THE MACHINE. AND WE NEED TO STOP IT"

for learners. "If an inspector comes in and tells you how to do something, you're going to do it to suit the inspector."

"These Ofsted banners outside schools saying 'outstanding' are celebrating the machine. And we need to stop it. We all need to stop, to change it."

He relates a recent press story about a school with a curriculum designed around the stage a pupil is at, rather than their age. This is an example, he says, of a school being brave and trying something different, yet the press story was about the school being judged inadequate by Ofsted.

"Other schools see that," McGill says, "and they say 'we don't want to try that because Ofsted will give us inadequate. We're just going to do the template that everyone else wants us to do.'"

He pulls out a well-thumbed and heavily annotated copy of *Flip the System* by Jelmer Evers, saying it talks about 99% of what school leaders do is to fulfil the tick-list of external verifiers. "But you know as a school leader that what you're doing is not right. Ultimately people have got mortgages to pay and if that's how the machine judges you, it's how you behave. It's my belief that we

all need to start being braver, because if we all do what we know is right for kids, we'll start to dictate the agenda."

McGill wants to see more teacher involvement in policy-making, with a national steering group, akin to a school governing body, containing expertise in curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning, data, and so on. "We can't just have Justine Greening, Nick Gibb and a few advisers churning out their preferences," he says. "In the next election, if we go back to Labour, we'll get new policies, abandon this and that, and keep teachers busy with reforms."

"You go into schools now and teachers don't have time to breathe. They have no time for marking, so they end up taking it home, and then you have teachers crying about 60-hour working weeks and the leadership team beating them over the head for not marking in a pink, green and red pen. It's a sad state of affairs."

"Teaching is a very complicated business; it's a very emotional career. Everyone has an opinion on teaching because they all went to school. There are the battles – traditional or progressive, Labour or Tory. I think we need to get to a place where there's governance of a mixture of people, pockets

of expertise for teaching and learning, etc. The entire world is looking at England and thinking 'what the hell's going on?'."

"Working with kids is always going to be hard work. It can be helped by removing the external stuff we don't need: judging a school, forcing school leaders to jump through hoops. But if you jump through the hoops, you keep your job, no one gets made redundant, and parents want to send their kids to your school, so your funding is fine."

McGill says the ideas in his most recent book, *Mark, Plan, Teach* (deliberately in that order), may be the product of a broken system, and that is backed up by the fact that the themes of workload and funding run through it. The two are linked, but McGill thinks it is the lack of money that is crucial.

"We need to get to a place where schools are funded better, not just so they can find staff and kids can do school trips, but so staff can mark, plan and teach during the school day, and have time to reflect, to train, to visit other schools. Every teacher would be better if they had more freedom and choice."

"There are so many fires to fight," he concludes. "We have to pick the biggest, and that is funding." ■

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KICKING THE HABITS

Overwhelmed by workload? Trainer **Edward Hollamby** offers tips on tackling that mountain of tasks

HAVING WORKED IN more than 60 schools throughout the UK, I am increasingly aware many people working in education feel guilty they are not the parents or partners they want to be due to the demands of their jobs. I hear comments such as: "The unending prep, marking and assessments, along with the constant changes within education, rob me of energy, enthusiasm and joy."

If you can relate to any of the above, the following unhealthy and unhelpful habits may probably be true too.

1. FAILURE FOCUS

We sometimes fall into the trap of focusing our thoughts on "What if I fail or it isn't good enough?", which can render us powerless to act. In an environment when we can always do more, and good isn't good enough, we understandably find our confidence and self-belief undermined. If you find yourself continually downplaying your strengths and overplaying your weaknesses, it's time to SUMO – 'Shut Up and Move On' – shut up your inner critic, and move on to listening to your head coach.

2. COMFORT BLANKET SYNDROME

Embracing new changes and challenges may at times require us to leave our world of familiarity, safety and security. This feeling of uncertainty can see us

reaching out for the comfort blanket of old habits and behaviours, and withdrawing from the new challenges. Remember, life's opportunities often lie outside our comfort zone.

3. FROZEN BY FEELINGS

We can allow our feelings to dictate whether or not to take action. So, we wait until we feel motivated or creative. Put simply, emotions can take our actions hostage. Remember, right feelings often follow right actions.

4. ACTION ILLUSION

At times, we fall into the trap of confusing activity with effectiveness, confusing being busy with being successful. Our lives can become cluttered with activities, but are we making time to focus on what is really important? We spend time doing the wrong or less important things, while the pressing things build up. Tiredness, distractions and a fuzzy focus can result in us appearing busier than we really need to be. Planning, discussing and researching may all be very necessary, but there comes a point when only action will do.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Because we care about our roles, responsibilities and those we teach, we should desire to do our jobs to the

best of our ability – that's what makes us good at what we do. If we lose the passion and stray from our love of teaching, we do ourselves and others a disservice. However, if we are efficient with our workload and manage the expectations of ourselves and others, we will see the stress reduce. While there might not be one simple solution – no magic wand to reduce all the plates we are spinning – the following practical tips will certainly help to prioritise, rationalise and focus us on the tasks we have set before us.

1. DON'T CONFUSE ACTIVITY WITH EFFECTIVENESS

Are you filling your time with lots of activity in order to avoid addressing the real issue? Ask yourself: "Is what I'm doing necessary and worthwhile?"

2. JUST START IT

Quit worrying about completing the task, just start it. Action brings motivation.

3. TACKLE THE NASTIES FIRST

'Nasties' are tasks you are not looking forward to. By delaying acting on them, you allow stress to build up at a subconscious level. Tackle them first, then once they're out of the way, you've got something to look forward to.

4. REWARD YOUR PROGRESS

Give yourself mini rewards when you complete a task. Just finished a nasty? Give yourself permission to start a more pleasurable task or to have a break.

5. PAINT A PICTURE

Ask yourself: "What does success look like?" and "How will I feel when I have done it?" Allow those positive emotions to spur you into action.

6. LEARN TO SUMO (SHUT UP, MOVE ON)

Constantly replaying reasons not to do something inside your head? Say to yourself: "It's time to shut up the dithering and move on to the acting." Then decide what the first thing you need to do is and get on and do it!

Next time you feel overwhelmed with the mountain of tasks in front of you, try remembering these six tips.

Edward Hollamby is senior schools consultant for SUMO4SCHOOLS. To find out more about how SUMO can help, visit www.thesumoguy.com or email contact@thesumoguy.com.

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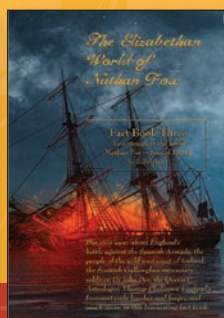
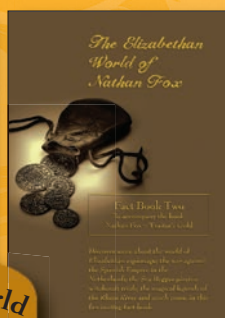
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IN THIS SECTION

25

LEGAL ADVICE

The ATL section legal team offers advice on the disciplinary process

26

GENDER LANGUAGE

ATL section policy adviser John Shortell offers practical advice on discussing transgender issues

27

YOUR VIEWS

ATL members share their thoughts on raising funds, the Prevent scheme, and whether older teachers are deliberately being made obsolete

28

NOTICEBOARD

Useful information and opportunities to get involved

28

RESOURCES

Newsletters for our reps and for our independent sector members

29

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Dealing with disciplinary action

Being the subject of a formal disciplinary proceeding can be distressing. ATL solicitor **Sharon Liburd** outlines the process

EMPLOYERS SHOULD HAVE written, accessible procedures specifying conduct that could lead to disciplinary proceedings. They should try to raise concerns informally where appropriate. However, sometimes it is appropriate to go straight to formal disciplinary proceedings.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

The *Acas Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures* sets out the steps employers must normally follow. These include carrying out a reasonable investigation to establish the facts, informing the employee of the problem, holding a meeting with the employee to discuss the problem, allowing the employee to be accompanied to a disciplinary meeting, deciding on the appropriate action, and providing a right of appeal. The Acas code is admissible as evidence before employment tribunals. Failure to follow it can result in a 25% uplift of compensation to successful employees in unfair dismissal claims. The Acas code is expanded on by the non-statutory *Discipline and Grievances at Work: The Acas guide*, which contains detailed advice.

In some instances, the employer may deem it appropriate to provide limited information on the alleged misconduct and to suspend the employee while an investigation is carried out. This is common in allegations relating to child protection issues and in police investigations. However, suspension should not be a knee-jerk reaction. The Acas code recommends that when the employee is suspended with pay, it should be as brief as possible and kept under review. It should also be made clear that suspension does not amount to disciplinary action. Suspension without pay will be in breach of contract, unless the contract permits it.

It is common to appoint an investigating officer whose role is to establish the facts. The Acas guide emphasises that the more

serious the allegation, the more thorough the investigation should be. Investigations should look for evidence that supports the employee's case, as well as evidence against. It is important to keep an open mind.

It is good practice to hold an investigatory meeting with the employee, to give him/her an opportunity to respond to the allegations before proceeding to a disciplinary hearing. The employee does not have the right to be accompanied to an investigatory meeting unless the contract or disciplinary procedure permits it.

THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

If, on completion of the investigation, disciplinary action is considered necessary, the Acas code states that the employee should be informed of the full allegations and possible consequences in writing. This should include the time and venue for the disciplinary meeting and copies of any written evidence, including witness statements, and the names of witnesses the employer intends to call. The employee should be given the opportunity to call witnesses.

The notification should also inform the employee of his/her right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or co-worker. The companion can address the meeting, put forward the employee's case, confer privately with the employee, respond on the employee's behalf to any views expressed (but not answer questions on the employee's behalf), and sum up.

The Acas code states: "Where an employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend a disciplinary meeting without good cause, the employer should make a decision on the evidence available." Before deciding, the Acas guide suggests the employer should take account of issues such as medical

evidence on the fitness of the employee to attend, disciplinary record, seriousness of allegations and how cases have been dealt with in the past. The employer is not obliged to postpone a meeting indefinitely because an employee is in continuing poor health.

DECISIONS AND APPEALS

It is not uncommon for employees to raise grievances during the process. Employers can decide to temporarily suspend the disciplinary process to deal with the grievance. However, where the disciplinary and grievance issues are related, the employer can deal with both concurrently. It is good practice to adjourn the disciplinary meeting before coming to a decision. The Acas guide advises that a number of areas need to be considered, including the employee's disciplinary record, general work record and position and length of service; the penalty imposed in similar cases in the past; whether standards of other employees are acceptable and whether this employee is being unfairly singled out; whether the penalty imposed is reasonable in all the circumstances; whether there are any special or mitigating circumstances; and whether it is appropriate to offer additional support or training, or to make adjustments to the work.

The Acas code states that the employee should appeal if he/she considers the disciplinary sanction to be wrong or unjust, even when the employer has failed to state that there is a right of appeal.

Download *The Acas Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures* and *Discipline and Grievances at Work: The Acas guide* from www.acas.org.uk. Members should seek assistance at the earliest opportunity – see page 23 for contact details.

"IT IS GOOD PRACTICE TO HOLD AN INVESTIGATORY MEETING WITH THE EMPLOYEE, TO GIVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND"

TOOLS TO TALK

Advice to help you have confident conversations about gender from NEU-ATL equalities officer John Shortell

IN AMONG ALL the recent debate about gender and gender identity, one thing that has become clear is that a lot of people do not have the tools to talk about gender.

Language is constantly evolving and can be confusing. However, it is important that we do not let the fear of getting it wrong stop us talking about issues. To create truly inclusive environments for staff, students, parents and carers, the key is using respectful language that does not offend or exclude.

The following terms are not exhaustive or absolute, but this list will help you feel more confident having conversations about gender. There may be some disagreement about the terms and how they are used, so the best advice is to trust the person using the term and their definition, and to welcome the conversation.

SEX is assigned at birth and is usually based on the appearance of external anatomy. People are medically classified as male, female or intersex. 'Sex' and 'gender' are used interchangeably, but there are important differences between the two.

GENDER describes social and cultural differences, as opposed to biological ones. Gender is assumed from the assigned sex at birth. Gender is determined by social roles, behaviours and characteristics usually associated with males and females, and uses scales of masculinity and femininity. Gendered behaviours and the way people perceive gender vary from culture to culture.

GENDER IDENTITY is a person's internal sense of their own gender and does not always correspond to the sex assigned at birth. A person's gender identity could be male, female or something else. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses it differently.

GENDER EXPRESSION/PRESENTATION describes how a person communicates their gender to others, for example, through clothing or body language. A person's gender expression does not always correspond with their sex or gender identity.

GENDER DYSPHORIA is when someone experiences a mismatch between their sex and their gender identity. People who experience gender dysphoria are not mentally ill. Discomfort and distress can come from hiding their identity, prejudice and discrimination, and/or not being supported.

INTERSEX describes people who may be born with a mix of male and female biological traits that do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes a male or female. Not all intersex people identify as transgender.

TRANSGENDER/TRANS is an umbrella term used to describe a person whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people could describe themselves as third gender, transman, transwoman, trans masculine or trans feminine. Always use the term a person uses to describe themselves. A trans person can be gay, straight, bisexual, lesbian or any other sexual orientation. You cannot tell if a person is trans just by looking at them.

TRANSITIONING describes the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify with. Every person's transition is unique and will involve different things. There is a lot of focus on medical transitions, but not all trans people want, or can access, hormone therapy and surgeries. Transition may involve purely social aspects such as telling friends, family and colleagues, dressing differently, and changing names, pronouns and/or official documents. There is no right or wrong way to transition. A person's transition is private, so it is inappropriate to ask questions about trans people's bodies.

TRANSSEXUAL is an older term used to describe someone who had transitioned to live in a different gender than they were assigned at birth. This term is still used, but many people prefer the terms 'trans' or 'transgender', as some people believe transsexual is overly clinical and associated with physiological disorders.

NON-BINARY is one term people use to describe genders that do not fall into the

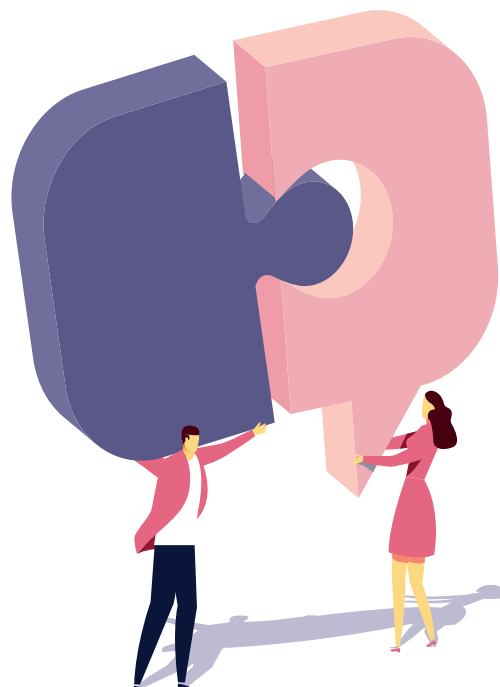
binary categories of man/woman or male/female. Non-binary people may feel they are not exclusively male or female and embody elements of both. Other terms that may be used are gender-queer, gender-fluid, nongender or agender.

CISGENDER/CIS describes a person whose sex and gender identity align. For example, someone assigned as female at birth who identifies as a female could describe themselves as cisgender.

PRONOUNS used correctly are one of the easiest ways to show respect for someone's identity. Some people use 'he' and 'she', while some prefer gender-neutral pronouns like 'they'. You can ask "What are your preferred pronouns?". Always use the name a trans person is using, not any previous names they have used prior to transition.

MISGENDERING means using a pronoun, title or gender to refer to someone as a gender that is not theirs. The best way to get it right is to listen to transgender people speaking for themselves.

It can be difficult to start using new language, but small steps make a big difference. Using the correct language will have an impact on trans people's sense of belonging and mental health, and can help reduce feelings of dysphoria. It is okay to make mistakes; apologise and move on. If you do not know something, ask respectful questions in private.



YOUR VIEWS



STAR LETTER

RAISING REVENUE

As a governor at a primary school I am, like most members of governing bodies up and down the country, attempting to deal with a severely overstretched budget, while maintaining the quantity and quality of staff needed to provide the level of education and support that our children need. The obvious answer to this problem is for the Government to come to its senses and make some different spending decisions in order to fund education properly, rather than throwing billions at Brexit (wasn't that supposed to save us money?) or buying the support of other political parties. However, expecting more money from the state for state education seems like wishful thinking at this point.

So, while we wait for some help from the powers that be, what other options do we have, bearing in mind we really do not want to cut staff and we cannot continually take advantage of the kindness of parents?

A friend of mine, from the corporate world and with no experience of the public sector, suggested blithely that we "look to increase our revenues". Now, maybe I am being naïve, but beyond hiring the hall out to the local community out of school hours, which we already do, what else can we do that will raise significant funds? I am fairly sure child labour laws prevent us setting up a chimney-sweeping business.

So, a genuine question to all readers: what can we do to raise more money? All ideas welcome. Answers on a postcard please!
Name supplied

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

As a classroom teacher with more than 10 years' experience, I realise I am now in a significant minority ('Recruitment crisis continues', *Report*, October 2017). Most teachers in English schools have now been teaching for less than 10 years – and my son, who has just started economics A-level, has given me an insight into what may be going on.

Cynical manufacturers, he tells me, develop products along the lines of planned obsolescence. In other words, products are not built to last. Over time, they are designed to break, fail or be superseded by newer products, with constant changes and updates making the older models look tired and out of date, even if they are continuing to function. Sound familiar? Is this what the Government is trying to do to the profession, with constant curriculum reform and new demands placed on us at every turn? Our cumulative wisdom and experience are certainly ignored whenever reforms are introduced.

Our salaries are designed not to keep pace with the wider world. We become tired and jaded and move out of teaching; and newer, fresher trainees give it a go, full of burning ideals and enthusiasm until they too are drained by the pace of constant change. The result? The Government continues to dictate the agenda and the overall salary bill is pegged to younger, less expensive staff. If we don't like the pace of change, we can always move on. Unfortunately, it's not just the teachers who are losing out. Just think of the effect on the nation's pupils. Imagine if the NHS was staffed mainly by doctors who had less than 10 years' medical experience. The impact

on the nation's health would be enormous – and surely there would be an outcry. It is time parents noticed that teachers really are looking younger every year – and it's not a reason to celebrate.

Name supplied

PREVENT IS NOT SAFEGUARDING

Lord Nash may perhaps be sincere in his belief that the Prevent strategy "is fundamentally a safeguarding duty", "not a duty to report" (*Report*, October 2017). But he is wrong. Safeguarding is not why the scheme was conceived. We know perfectly well it was

conceived in response to terrorism. What

it tries to 'prevent' is the creation of terrorists. It is a defence project, essentially a policing project.

And its method is surveillance. Anyone who has read a little about the strategy will know how much it has been rejected by experts in all fields: how its 'conveyor-belt' notion of the inspiration to terrorise is mistaken, but

convenient for the Government; how it excuses intricate surveillance of children and families and storage of information that can be used to control people; how it stigmatises Muslims and non-British people. Is Lord Nash blissfully unaware of this? Representing the Government of divide-and-rule, spy-and-control, his article is conveniently rose-tinted.

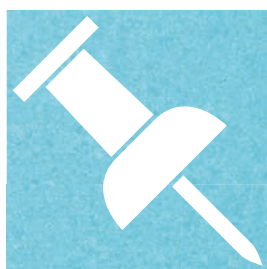
R Williams-Wandoch, Cambridgeshire

WIN!

The author of the star letter wins £100 in book tokens. If you want to voice your opinion on issues raised in *Report* or any other aspect of education, please send a letter or email to the addresses below, including your phone number. One letter will be chosen every issue to win the tokens.

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DEBATE...

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NOTICE BOARD

HAVE A SAY ON T-LEVELS

The Government is consulting on its T-level proposals until 8 February 2018. These proposals represent a major overhaul of post-16 education.

It is intended that, in the future, the vast majority of post-16 students will study level 3 qualifications – either A-levels or the new T-levels, and the thousands of vocational and technical qualifications currently offered will be reduced to T-levels in 11 occupational pathways. In order to achieve a T-level, students will need to successfully complete a programme of study, to include level 2 English and maths, and a work placement of between 45 and 90 days in duration.

National Education Union education policy adviser (ATL section) Janet Clark would like to speak to members working in schools and colleges about how these reforms will impact their work with students – email janet.clark@neu.org.uk.

NEW TO LEADERSHIP?

Are you new to leadership or moving into a leadership or management role? Then move into AMiE for specialised support, expertise and guidance. AMiE is dedicated to leaders and managers in education, with bespoke learning

and development, resources and legal advice to support you as your career develops. We understand leaders and managers have specific needs, so we provide a specialist level of expertise and guidance, including:

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- excellent personal and professional development: accredited training and development opportunities for you as a leader or manager
- publications and resources: a range of free publications focused on contemporary leadership issues
- the website www.amie.org.uk: packed with advice, support and guidance
- a voice in the education debate: an opportunity to influence policy and get involved in issues that matter most to you
- more for your membership: discounts and rewards for you and your family on a range of products and services.

Not yet a leader or manager? Then we have a range of invaluable publications and CPD courses to support your next career step. Call 0345 811 8111 or see

PARTNER OF THE MONTH



**You're about to retire.
Decisions, decisions.**

How will you make the most of your additional pension pot? There's a lot to consider. Do you need more income now? Or would you rather leave it invested in case you need it later, or pass it on to your loved ones? What about tax?

First decision – talk to Lighthouse Financial Advice. It offers practical, affordable advice, specifically for education professionals, about accessing additional pensions.

To book a complimentary, no obligation appointment call 08000 85 85 90 or email appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk. See www.lighthousegroup.plc.uk/affinity/atl for more information.

www.atl.org.uk/amie for more information. AMiE membership fees will apply following your annual renewal date.

RESOURCES

BEING A REP

Workplace reps, health and safety reps, union learning reps, and contacts in the ATL section of the National Education Union have been sent the spring issue of the *Being a Rep* newsletter, which features results from the National Education Union workload survey that show the problem has worsened since the Government issued its workload advice in 2016.

Elsewhere in the issue, there are details of the union's call on the Government to improve teachers' pay to address the growing recruitment and retention problem and improve funding levels for schools. For the post-16 sector, there are updates on pay negotiations in FE colleges and sixth forms.

Health and safety reps can read detailed advice on how to set up a health and safety committee, while union learning reps can read about the way members from both NUT and ATL sections can access each other's CPD offerings.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

In the latest *Independent Schools* newsletter, members of the ATL section of the National Education Union working in the independent sector can find out about the excitement at our independent schools conference, which was described as "superb and empowering", and featured many discussions of the sector, plus inspiring CPD for members.



The findings of the regular pay and conditions survey were also unveiled and discussed, and you can read about these in the newsletter, along with news of compensation for members working in a school that was suddenly closed down, which also raised the question of whether there should be a 'fit and proper persons' test for school owners.

WIN!

A £50 Marks & Spencer voucher

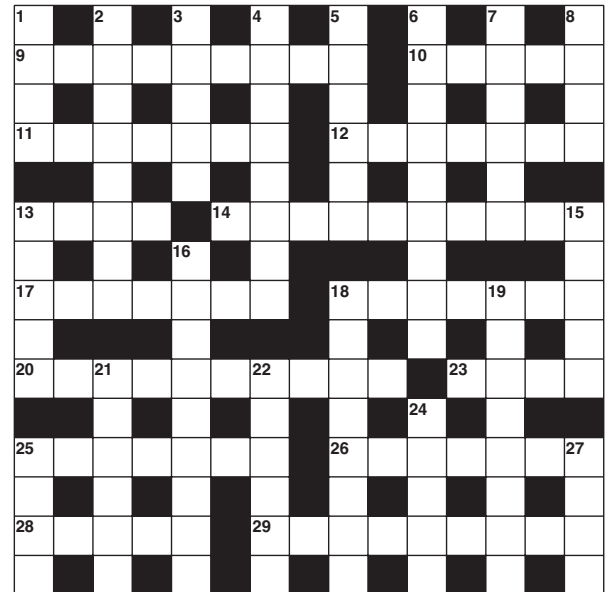
Prize crossword

ACROSS

- 9 Make clear that unusual clue idea includes the letter 'T' (9)
- 10 Rub out part of paper as erroneous (5)
- 11 Her risk is possibly to become one who avoids hard work (7)
- 12 Alternatively, a Conservative chapel (7)
- 13 University teacher at end of lecture – finished (4)
- 14 For example, I join extraordinary concert, thinking only of myself (10)
- 17 New term, and Hal is involved with heat (7)
- 18 Introductory passage ruled out in gym lesson (7)
- 20 Sir and swot in a tangle on the floor below (10)
- 23 First 25% educated entirely in the old garden (4)
- 25 Maybe move us around library initially to get books (7)
- 26 Later UN resolved to be supporting neither side (7)
- 28 Serious and strict, we abandon cowboy film (5)
- 29 A coat peg's broken, and this person takes the blame (9)

DOWN

- 1 It's written up in the press, we notice (4)
- 2 Those watching the play are due a nice version (8)
- 3 Senior barristers start singing in local karaoke sessions (5)
- 4 Crazy, crazy girl includes a part-song (8)
- 5 Elgar's first choir composition is courageous (6)
- 6 Something that causes you to remember to include a number left after doing division (9)
- 7 Political party gets small science room for Open University, right? (6)
- 8 Depend on religious education with extreme litany (4)
- 13 'Stepped out with'? Old-fashioned! (5)
- 15 Lance turns out to be no longer taking drugs (5)
- 16 During exam, use mental arithmetic as entertainment (9)
- 18 Pre-natal arrangement is to do with the mother and father (8)
- 19 One who has little chance of winning, but no drudge, surprisingly (8)
- 21 Head of Wellington to solve anagram: 'wild dogs' (6)
- 22 Evaluate the quality of blockheads at top of school! (6)
- 24 Tempts to break rules (5)
- 25 Might it be bullet-proof during investigation? (4)
- 27 Instrument that will turn up in a quartet ultimately (4)



HOW TO ENTER

Send your completed crossword with your contact details to: Report January crossword competition, Think Publishing, Capital House, 25 Chapel Street, London NW1 5DH. The closing date is 6 February 2018. If you have a union membership number, please include this here: _____. The winner of the January competition will be announced in the March issue of *Report*.

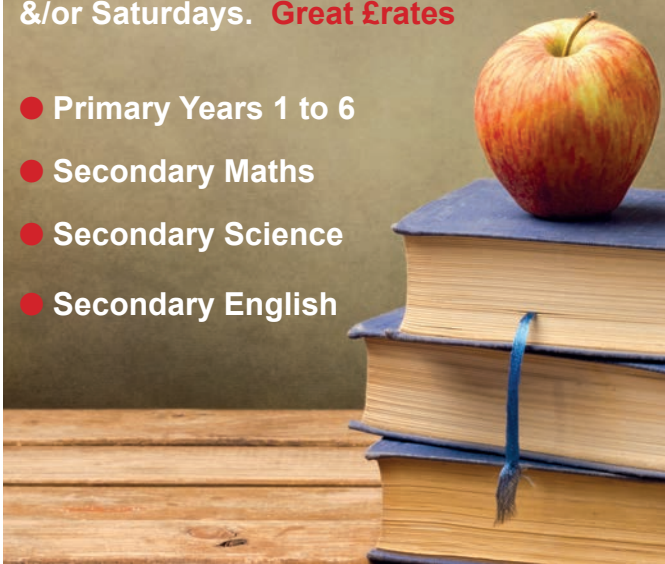
LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION Across: 1 Lethal 4 Badger 9 Ache 10 Award 11 Tidy 12 Muddle 13 Canteens 14 Betrayals 16 Kids 17 Romp 18 Surrogate 22 Overtake 23 Making 25 Gown 26 Titan 27 Ajar 28 Intake 29 Desire Down: 1 Lecture 2 Trend 3 Academy 5 Ardent 6 Gathering 7 Ridings 8 Baccalaureate 15 Rembrandt 17 Ravioli 19 Romance 20 Tyndale 21 Bartok 24 Khaki

CONGRATULATIONS TO OCTOBER'S WINNER – M WINTERFLOOD, LYTHAM ST ANNES

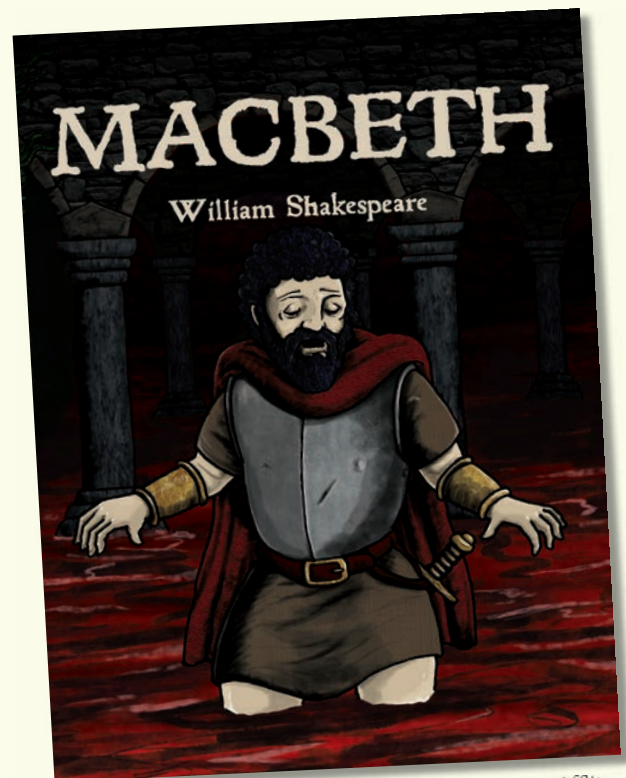
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All different, all equal

Children's TV presenter and anti-bullying campaigner **Andy Day** explains why it's so important to celebrate what makes us all unique

I HAVE ONE thing in common with every single person reading this. We are all different. That difference may be well hidden or it could be something about how you look. I am a fair bit taller than the average and, as you can imagine, I've had my fair share of teasing.

Being different is so universal that it's inevitable it will be our constant companion through life, so it makes sense that we learn to celebrate it.

And it makes sense that we prepare children for a world where they will have to coexist with people who speak different languages, have different views or prefer different kinds of food. Difference is everywhere and that's what makes the world so interesting.

But when I was growing up in Essex, too often that was not

the case. Anyone who stood out in school, for whatever reason – being too tall or too short, having glasses or a different skin colour, or anything that stood out from the 'norm' – could make you a target. Some of it of course was just banter, kids being kids, but some of it crossed the line. Although I was never bullied myself, I did see it happen, and I was often the one to speak out and say it was wrong. Maybe being taller than most kids gave me that extra bit of confidence.

The simple fact is if people were more used to being different from others, and we all felt comfortable that other people in turn were accepting of our quirks, then perhaps the children I saw suffer bullying when I was young could have been spared the experience. And, I think, there would be

far less hate crime, prejudice and bullying in society.

A poll of more than 1,600 children aged eight to 16 in England, published during Anti-Bullying Week in November 2017, found that 40% would conceal or change aspects of themselves for fear of being bullied. Three fifths of these said they would hide or change the way they look, with many others saying they would change or hide their opinions, the friends they hang out with or other things that make them unique.

I feel strongly that much of this anxiety, and the bullying that can happen as a result, can be changed if we get young people celebrating difference around them.

That's why I've formed a band called Andy and the Odd Socks, and last year we fulfilled a lifelong dream to take this message wider by signing a record deal with Universal Music. Due to my privileged position working in kids' TV, I can connect with young children and deliver the message through music. Being part of the Odd Socks has been a lot of fun, but we are on a serious mission to get people to embrace their uniqueness – we especially do this through our catchy song 'Unique', which fast became an anthem for Anti-Bullying Week, during which I also encouraged children to wear odd socks to school to raise awareness and money for anti-bullying charities.

The work that we are doing is aimed at younger children, and for good reason. There is growing evidence bullying is a problem that often starts in primary school, with more than a fifth of primary teachers taking part in a recent TES survey saying bullying is a problem in their school.

My bandmates and I encourage children to be themselves, be proud of who they are and to be accepting of one another. Andy and the Odd Socks are about being unique and whoever you want to be, not just one of the crowd. For more information, see www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying-week/odd-socks-day-anti-bullying-week. ■



Andy Day is a TV presenter and performer, best known for his work on CBeebies

You're about to retire. Decisions, decisions.



Make good decisions now and enjoy retirement free from money worries

Do you know how much money you will get when you retire? Have you worked out how your income and expenditure will change? One thing is more or less certain – your income will drop, maybe by as much as a third. Will this lower income be enough to live the lifestyle you envisage? Do you have other pensions or savings, apart from your occupational pension scheme? If so, what can and can't you do with them? Do you have enough to retire early? How could you boost your pension?

We are the ATL Plus partner for financial advice and we specialise in affordable financial advice for education professionals. We can explain:

- how your pension works, when you can take it and how much you can expect to receive
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- tax considerations, including your lifetime pension allowance and tax-free lump sum
- planning for later life, including paying for long-term care and passing on more of your wealth to your loved ones.

To book a complimentary, no obligation appointment with one of our professional financial advisers call 08000 85 85 90 or email appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk.

The value of your investments can go down as well as up, so you could get back less than you invested. A pension is a long-term investment. The fund value may fluctuate and can go down. Your eventual income may depend upon the size of the fund at retirement, future interest rates and tax legislation. Tax advice which contains no investment element is not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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