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PRIMARY EDUCATION EDITION

The Parliamentary Review

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

■ FOREWORDS

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP

The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

■ NORTH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

Bell Lane Academy

Broad Oak Primary School

Central Walker CE Primary School

Cheadle Primary School

Hendal Primary School

Hunslet Moor Primary School

Kings Oak Primary
Learning Centre

Robert Ferguson Primary School

St Edward's RC Primary School

Stanley Grove Primary
Academy

■ FEATURES

Review of the Year

Review of Parliament



The Rt Hon Philip Hammond

Chancellor of the Exchequer

This Government is clear that a strong economy is the essential prerequisite to delivering prosperity and improved life chances for all, building a Britain that truly works for everyone, not a few.

Since 2010, we have made significant progress. Britain has been one of the fastest growing advanced economies in the world over the last few years; our employment rate has reached record highs as living standards rose to the highest level ever last year. At the same time, the deficit as a share of GDP has been cut by almost two-thirds from its post-war peak in 2009–10.

While the decision to leave the European Union marks the beginning of a new chapter for our country and our economy, we start from a position of strength and our economy is well-placed to confront the challenges ahead.

Britain will, in due course, begin negotiations to leave the European Union. We recognise there may be some uncertainty as we negotiate and then a period of adjustment as the economy transitions to the post-EU reality. As we go forward, we are determined to build on our strengths as an open, dynamic, trading nation to forge a new global role for Britain.

We are determined to make a success of Brexit and have seen some positive developments with large companies such as Siemens and Lockheed Martin confirming that the UK remains an attractive place for them to invest.

This is all good to see but we cannot be complacent. At the same time as we seek the best possible trade

arrangements with our European neighbours, we must also redouble our efforts to promote trade with the rest of the world. Since the referendum we have seen a number of countries indicating their wish to agree trade deals with the UK, and I'm certain the list will continue to grow.

People can be assured that we are prepared to take the necessary steps to safeguard the economy in the short term and to take advantage of the opportunities that arise in the longer term as we forge a new relationship with the European Union.

The message we take to the world is this: we are the same outward-looking, globally-minded, big-thinking country we have always been – and we remain very firmly open for business.

“As we go forward, we are determined to build on our strengths as an open, dynamic, trading nation to forge a new global role for Britain”



The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Education Select Committee

As Schools Minister in 2001–2, I introduced TeachFirst. Last February I joined the Education Select Committee. Some things have changed dramatically in the past fifteen years – and some haven't.

Local Education Authorities I dealt with are being replaced by Multi-Academy Trusts. We didn't have Schools Commissioners in the past. Sir David Carter, the National Schools Commissioner, told the Select Committee in June 2016 that 'we are trying to academise the system'.

Tory opposition scuppered the plan announced by the Chancellor, George Osborne, to academise the entire system by 2022 but the Government's goal remains unchanged. Evidence increasingly suggests that academisation is not the solution for raising school standards. Academisation before 2010 – applied to failing schools – did deliver improvement.

Among the much wider range of schools converting since 2010, outstanding schools becoming academies have become better still. However, standards in other schools becoming academies since 2010 have not improved. Some Multi-Academy Trusts are doing brilliantly but others have expanded much too fast. We are starting to see in some the kind of stifling bureaucratic control which gave LEAs a bad name. Schools' local accountability is being lost and the requirement for Parent Governors abolished. Many academies don't have Governors any more. Instead power is centralised in the hands of Trustees and local interests sit only on a talking shop.

A few Trusts have troubling links with companies with which they do business. The former Education Secretary suggested that Trusts with no track record of improving their schools shouldn't be allowed to expand and that disgruntled parents might petition for their local academy to leave its current Trust and transfer to another, giving parents a backstop power. I hope her successor, Justine Greening, will pursue these ideas.

Large scale conversion of schools to academies won't solve the school standards challenge. Just as fifteen years ago, we have a teacher recruitment crisis. At that time, TeachFirst was key to the successful response.

I hope ministers will respond successfully this time round and that schools will be enabled to equip the next generation to build the kind of society and economy of which we all want to be part.

“Schools will be enabled to equip the next generation to build the kind of society and economy of which we all want to be a part”

The rebellion that sunk the flagship policy to make all schools academies



Former Chancellor George Osborne, announced all state schools would have to become academies by 2020

On Budget Day Chancellors like to pull a rabbit out of the hat, but this year's surprise package wasn't about tax or finances but about the future shape of the state school system in England.

In March, George Osborne announced that all state schools would have to become academies, with a deadline set for 2020 for the conversion to have been completed or there to be plans in place for academy status by 2022.

This sweeping announcement was delivered in conjunction with the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, and would have been the biggest policy announcement of the year for schools; in the end it turned into the most high-profile reversal and by the time this story had run its full course, both Chancellor and Education Secretary had lost their jobs.

The Chancellor's announcement wasn't entirely without prior warning. There had been signals, including some from

the Prime Minister, David Cameron, that there was a desire to end schools being run by local authorities.

That had seemed like a forecast of the general direction of travel – with most secondary schools already having become academies – rather than an impending and compulsory requirement.

The announcement by Mr Osborne would have meant the remaining local authority secondary schools having to change status but the biggest upheaval would be in the primary sector.

Four out of five primary schools have remained as part of local authority networks and there were immediate questions about the practicality of thousands of, quite possibly reluctant, primary schools having to be turned into free-standing academies or matched with academy trusts.

A fact that made this an even more difficult proposition was that many of these primary schools were already rated good or outstanding, raising the question as to the purpose of creating so much disruption for schools that already seemed to be successful.

What really made this such a politically controversial issue was that much of the scepticism came from the Government's own benches.

Teachers' unions had voiced their anger at the proposals to force all schools to change status. They accused the Government of trying to push through an expensive reorganisation



Concerns about the impact of academisation, specifically on smaller and rural schools, have been raised

without any evidence that it would raise standards. The Labour Party also challenged the academy plans, arguing it would remove local democratic accountability and that such structural changes failed to address the practical issues facing schools, such as the struggle to recruit teachers but the biggest blow came from a sizeable number of Conservative backbenchers who remained unconvinced about the compulsory academy plans.

An Opposition Day debate in the House of Commons on the Government's White Paper proposals was dominated by criticism from Conservative MPs.

'Call me old fashioned, but I hold the view that if you've got a well-governed, well-run school that's performing well, just leave it alone and let it do its job,' said Will Quince, reflecting the comments of many of his Conservative colleagues.

MPs with high-achieving local authority schools in their constituencies saw little merit in such a compulsory upheaval when it seemed to be without any real support from either headteachers or parents. There was sharp criticism

about a policy which seemed to impose a lack of choice without any proof of necessity.

There were particular concerns about what this might mean for small rural schools and unease at the idea of popular, successful local primary schools being taken over by academy chains that might be based in another part of the country.

With the task of defending plans against cross-party criticism, Mrs Morgan told the NASUWT's teachers' conference that there was 'no reverse gear' but the opponents in her own party showed no sign of retreat – and they made it clear that they would stop the proposals as they stood.

As well as a broad swathe of backbench MPs, there were prominent grassroots Conservative voices in local government who spoke out publicly against their own party policy. The evidence on whether academy status would improve results was also ambiguous. Most academies are so-called 'converter' academies which had already been high performing schools, so their continuing achievement

wasn't really to do with how they were labelled. There were clearer signs of improvement for 'sponsored' academies, which had often previously had weaker results.

Even if this strengthened the argument for academy status for underperforming schools, it did not advance the case for excellent schools to be required to change against their will. It was this element of compulsion that proved the sticking point.

It had become apparent that even if there was 'no reverse gear' for the forced academy plan, it would certainly need a good set of brakes.

Less than two months after the academy deadline had been proposed,

the Education Secretary announced a climb down. Good schools might be encouraged to become academies but it would no longer be compulsory.

It was a major U-turn. It also proved to be something of a last stand for Nicky Morgan as Education Secretary. The decision over whether she would press on with the rest of her school reform plans was put to one side during the EU referendum campaign.

It was a question she would never answer because, when the political fall-out had finished, the new Prime Minister, Theresa May, replaced Nicky Morgan with a new Education Secretary, Justine Greening.

Political upheavals that overturned the landscape for education

This year's political earthquake was the referendum on whether the UK should leave the European Union – and the shockwaves from that seismic event

produced some unexpected twists and turns for the leading political figures in education.

In what might now seem like another political era, the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, began the academic year facing her new opposite number, Shadow Education Secretary, Lucy Powell.

Ms Powell had taken over as Labour's Education Spokeswoman in September 2015, replacing Tristram Hunt, as part of an opposition team put together by the party's newly-elected leader, Jeremy Corbyn but she resigned in June 2016.

After their general election mauling, the Liberal Democrats began to rebuild their education profile with John Pugh as their spokesman.

Mrs Morgan, having been re-appointed after last year's general election,

Lucy Powell replaced Tristram Hunt as Labour's Education Spokesperson, before resigning in June 2016



was seen as having a key role in delivering David Cameron's plans to improve underachieving state schools and to encourage more schools to become academies.

The Education Secretary announced plans to tackle 'coasting schools' which were not doing enough to make sure pupils reached their full potential. This included plans for schools which were underachieving to be turned into academies.

The Education Department was also keen to promote another of Downing Street's favourite projects, the target to create 500 free schools within the lifetime of the Parliament.

Political lifetimes can be unexpectedly truncated and a chain of events saw all such confident, long-term planning, for government and opposition, swept away by unforeseen storms.

Barely had the ink dried on her legislation to improve 'coasting' schools, when Mrs Morgan faced her first unanticipated thundercloud. The Chancellor, George Osborne, in his Budget speech, threw her the challenge of forcing every state school in England to become an academy.

The rejection from MPs within her own party was almost immediate – and with the Government only having a slim House of Commons majority of 12, it became apparent that she faced an uphill and ultimately insurmountable struggle. Instead of being a Secretary of State serenely laying out her own plans for the school system, she became locked in a losing and bruising battle with her own backbench colleagues. It meant that she faced weeks of attempted negotiations before having to publicly concede defeat.

If politics requires luck Mrs Morgan might have felt unfortunate in a series of embarrassing difficulties



Justine Greening,
Secretary of State for
Education

over primary school tests with leaked papers, problems with reliability and then claims of sabotage all making headlines. The collective impression was not what she would have intended.

In addition, her challenges with changes to primary tests continued when she had to issue a warning that changes to SATs tests, making them more difficult, meant that results could no longer be compared with previous years.

If these had proved rocky months for the Education Secretary, it was all overshadowed by the impact of the EU referendum.

Mrs Morgan had campaigned, with her long-time ally David Cameron, in defence of remaining in the EU. She had issued a strong warning saying that the adverse economic consequences of leaving would be most harshly felt by the young.

Both the Education Secretary and her Shadow, Lucy Powell, were to lose their posts in the aftermath of Brexit.

Ms Powell must have thought her first year as her party's Education Spokeswoman had been very successful. The U-turn over academies would have counted as a major

triumph for the opposition and Ms Powell had pushed hard on issues such as teacher shortages and weaknesses with some academy chains.

Instead the recriminations within the Labour Party following the EU referendum saw her walking out of the Shadow Cabinet, along with many of her colleagues, who wanted Jeremy Corbyn to step down as leader.

She had only been Shadow Education Secretary for nine months when she resigned in June. What should have been a successful debut became a hurried departure.

Her successor, Pat Glass, proved an even shorter-lived education spokeswoman for Labour. With a longstanding career in education and having served on the House of Commons education select committee, she described her appointment as her 'dream job'. Two days later, with Labour's leadership turmoil continuing, she resigned saying that her position was no longer tenable. It raised questions about whether this was the shortest ever time in post by a Shadow Education Secretary.

Mr Corbyn replaced her with Angela Rayner, a 36-year-old who had entered the House of Commons in 2015 as MP for Ashton-under-Lyne. Before her

promotion, she had spent less than a week as Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities.

It meant that Labour – once the party of 'education, education, education' – had had three Shadow Education Secretaries in the space of a week.

If the reverberations of the EU referendum caused huge and unresolved changes within the Labour Party, there was also a massive upheaval within the Conservative Government.

David Cameron stepped down as Prime Minister and his successor, Theresa May, announced a far-reaching reshuffle in July that removed Nicky Morgan from office.

Justine Greening, formerly in charge of international development and the first openly gay female Cabinet Minister, was announced as the next Education Secretary, with an expanded remit to include universities. She will now have to put forward a new set of ideas for education in the autumn, from a party under new leadership.

When Nicky Morgan and Lucy Powell began the year, arguing across the chamber of the House of Commons, they could have had little expectation that both of them would be returning to the backbenches by the summer break.

Ofsted's fiercest watchdog, Sir Michael Wilshaw, steps down

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the outspoken head of Ofsted, has been one of the most influential figures in education in recent years but he is stepping down at the end of the year and the Education Secretary has named his successor as Amanda Spielman.

This brought attention to what has made Sir Michael such a dominant character in debates about education. An unusual row about Ms Spielman's appointment raised questions about whether the education watchdog would be different under new management.



Free school meals are still needed in deprived areas

When Sir Michael became Chief Inspector for England's schools he was seen as working in step with the Education Secretary, Michael Gove; so much so that they were known as 'the two Michaels'.

However Sir Michael proved to be an independent-minded and fearless figure who was ready to challenge ministers and highlight weaknesses in government policy.

This became most apparent this year in the arguments over whether all schools should be forced to become academies. Sir Michael made a high-profile intervention that many academy chains were underperforming and that their top managers were overpaid. As a former academy head, he made it clear that switching to academy status was no guarantee of improvement.

Such directness did not make him popular with ministers but he saw it as his responsibility to present the evidence found by his inspectors, even if the conclusions were politically inconvenient.

His outspoken approach also made him unpopular with the teachers' unions who criticised Ofsted for putting unfair pressure on teachers. They saw his approach as bruising rather than inspiring.

Sir Michael had made his name as a no-nonsense inner London headteacher, who had turned around struggling schools. He had worked as a teacher, often in deprived areas, for more than forty years and he had a distrust of ideological distractions.

He warned that it was often pupils from the poorest families who were 'caught in the crossfire' in the political battles in education.

In a speech in June, looking back on his long career in schools, Sir Michael said that schools in the 1970s and 1980s had suffered from left-wing ideologies which promoted 'anti-academic nonsense' and which had 'undermined the authority and respect of school leaders'.

He also attacked the influence of 'free marketers' on the right, warning



Nicky Morgan, former Secretary of State for Education, was advised by MPs not to appoint Amanda Spielman as the new Head of Ofsted

that it needed much more than the ‘magic of the market’ or some ‘hastily rebranded schools’ to make improvements that would last.

As the Chief Inspector prepared to step down, he said the biggest unresolved problem was the ‘continuing failure as a nation to improve the lives of our poorest children’.

‘The lot of disadvantaged children in primary schools has improved – a bit. But in secondary schools, the attainment gap between children on free school meals and their better-off peers has refused to budge in a decade.

‘Despite all the good intentions, the fine words and some imaginative initiatives, we are not making a real difference. The needle has barely moved,’ he commented.

The next Chief Inspector of Education will be Amanda Spielman, whose experience includes being the chair of another education watchdog, Ofqual, the body responsible for regulating exams and qualifications

in England. She was also one of the team that founded the Ark chain of academies, which is seen as one of the success stories of the academy movement.

What should have been a straightforward appointment has, however, proved to be an unexpected power struggle.

Ms Spielman had to appear before the House of Commons Education Select Committee, in what would have been expected to be a rubber-stamping of the Education Secretary’s endorsed candidate. The MPs, showing their own streak of independence, decided that her answers were so lack lustre that they told Nicky Morgan that she should not proceed with the appointment. The cross-party committee of MPs said they had ‘significant concerns’ about her suitability to be the new head of Ofsted.

This was a substantial snub but the select committee does not have a right of veto, which meant that Mrs Morgan could, and did, decide to overrule the MPs and pressed ahead with putting Ms Spielman into the post.

Teachers’ unions said that the MPs’ concerns followed their own criticism that Ms Spielman was being appointed as Chief Inspector of Schools, even though she had never had experience as a teacher.

Under Sir Michael, Ofsted was a watchdog that wasn’t afraid to bark. His argument was that the Chief Inspector’s job was to maintain standards in schools, even if that meant crossing swords with politicians or teachers’ leaders.

Ms Spielman, having survived attempts to block her, will have to put her own stamp and style of leadership on Ofsted. She might not have been particularly outspoken in her previous jobs but as Chief Inspector she will be taking on a role that is never far from controversy.

The long road to finding a fairer way to fund schools

Amid all the political earthquakes this year, there was another more practical, long-running debate that is likely to have far-reaching consequences. How should schools be funded? How much money should each school be allocated?

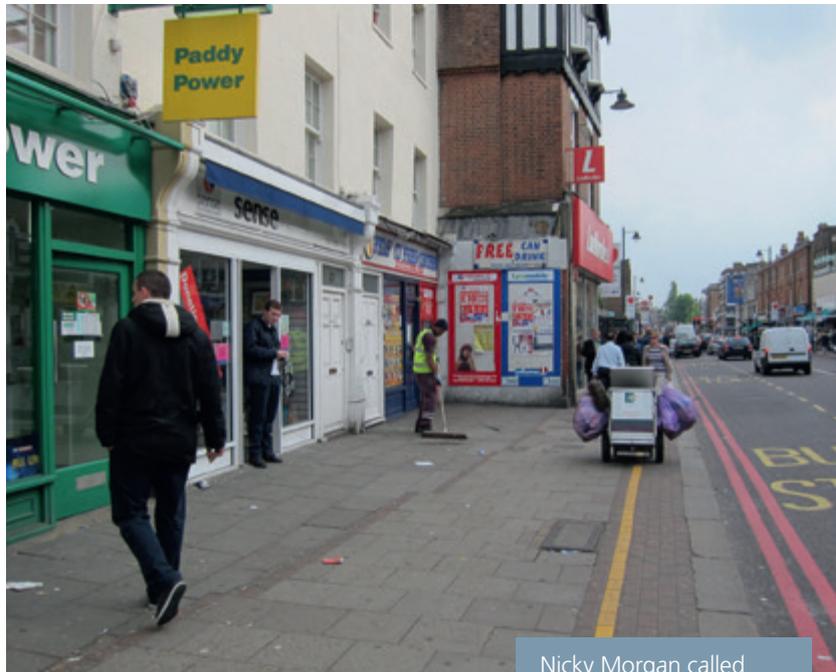
For many years there have been calls for a more consistent and fairer approach to how much public money is given to state schools. The amount schools receive per pupil can vary widely depending on factors such as where the school is located and the particular needs of the intake; extra funding is given to schools in deprived areas.

There has been a long-running campaign saying that the spread of money has become much too uneven and that there needed to be a fundamental overhaul. Campaigners for a new national funding formula have said that some schools receive £6,300 per pupil per year, while others might only receive £4,200.

Of course, making funding 'fairer' by increasing support for schools in one part of the country might seem very unfair to schools who end up receiving less.

Inner city schools, particularly in London, are thought to be vulnerable to such a change and any cutting of individual school budgets would be politically sensitive. This delicate political balancing act has meant that for many years there has been support in principle for a 'national funding formula' but this has remained a thorny challenge to put into practice.

Last year's Conservative election manifesto promised to grasp this



Nicky Morgan called current funding arrangements 'outdated, inefficient and unfair' regarding deprived areas

nettle – and the Chancellor, George Osborne, signalled a move towards such a national funding formula in his spending review statement in November 2015.

'We will phase out the arbitrary and unfair school funding system that has systematically underfunded schools in whole swathes of the country.

'Under the current arrangements, a child from a disadvantaged background in one school can receive half as much funding as a child in identical circumstances in another school,' said Mr Osborne.

In March, the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, set out plans to tackle uneven levels of funding, saying that the current arrangements were 'outdated, inefficient and unfair'. As an example of the current funding anomalies, she said that schools with similar levels of challenges in Plymouth received £500 less per pupil than a school in Rotherham.



Department
for Education,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Westminster

Mrs Morgan's timetable promised a national funding formula to be introduced in stages from 2017.

There was also a political dimension to the changes, with funding to go directly to schools or to academy chains, cutting out the role currently played by local authorities.

The proposals would mean that all schools would receive a nationally-agreed basic level of support for each pupil. This would then be topped up on the basis of three other criteria: additional pupil needs, such as deprivation; extra school costs, such as those serving sparsely-populated rural areas; and 'geographic costs', such as higher costs in London.

Having put forward the big picture there remained the important question of detail. How much of the budget would be a core amount – and how much would be for additional needs? How would these additional needs be weighted? Would the location, rural, urban or suburban, make a bigger

impact on funding than the levels of deprivation?

Such a formula, applied to all schools, will mean winners and losers. If there are unsustainably big cuts for some schools it raises the question of what transitional support could be offered.

School leaders waited to find out what the funding changes would mean. They wanted clarity so they could plan ahead. It would have implications for their staffing which represents the biggest slice of their budgets.

Realistically, such an announcement, with bad news and good news for local schools, had to wait for a break in the political weather. It was unlikely to appear before local elections had been completed, or during the EU referendum campaign. When that was followed by the resignation of David Cameron and a Conservative leadership election, headteachers' leaders began to be concerned that once again a standardised funding formula could slip away.

Justine Greening had barely got through the door of the Department for Education, when the headteachers' unions were asking for answers on what was happening and whether the plans were still going ahead.

They received part of the answer on the final day before Parliament finished for its summer break. The new Education Secretary said that she was still committed to a national funding formula but that its introduction was going to be delayed by another year. It would not be implemented until 2018–19.

'This is a once in a generation opportunity for an historic change and we must get our approach right,' said Ms Greening.

The battle over term-time holidays becomes a courtroom drama

This has been the dispute that refuses to go away, dividing parents, schools and even legal opinion. What should be the response of schools to parents who take their children on term-time holidays?

The Department for Education has been unambiguous about this 'Children should not be taken out of school without good reason'. Missing lessons means pupils falling behind, ministers have argued, and a family holiday during term-time is not acceptable; this tough stance has been backed by rising numbers of penalty fines. Official figures showed that more than 150,000 penalty notices for pupil absenteeism were issued to parents in England last year, an annual increase of more than 50%.

There was far from widespread agreement on this. There were parents who said that they could not afford the inflated cost of travel during the school

holidays. As such they had the choice of either never having a family holiday, or going in term-time and accept that they would have to pay a £60 fine.

They didn't really see this as truancy but rather as parents exercising their rights on behalf of their family. They might have made the calculation that even with a fine, the overall cost of a holiday remained lower.

One parent waged a legal challenge against the validity of the penalty system, questioning whether parents should really have to pay these fines. Jon Platt had refused to pay a fine of £120 to the Isle of Wight council for taking his daughter on an unauthorised term-time holiday. In the High Court in May, Mr Platt won a legal challenge, with the court ruling that he had no case to answer. Even with a week's absence in term-time, the court deemed that overall the pupil had attended the school regularly.

Term-time holidays can cause children to fall behind in their learning



When the court found in favour of Mr Platt, the Department for Education responded immediately to say that 'children's attendance is non-negotiable so we will now look to change the law'.

Ministers made it clear that, despite the court ruling, there would be no green light for such bargain term-time holidays or trips to family events. The Isle of Wight council has also been given the right to appeal against the decision, so this argument is going to rumble on through the courts in the next academic year.

Until the legal dispute is resolved, local authorities and schools will have to

wait and see how they should enforce attendance rules. It's a dispute that sets the wishes of individual families against the wider collective needs of the school system. Parents might think in principle that they have the right to make a choice about whether their children should miss a week or a few days from school. On the other side of the argument, headteachers have warned about the disruption it causes, as teachers have to help children catch up when they return. They say that it would be impossible to organise a class if pupils are randomly taken out of school.

This is an argument that shows no sign of being settled.

Independent schools gain pupils but lose members of the Cabinet

'The storm of the worst recession in living memory has passed,' said a private school headteacher as the independent sector, in more confident mood, announced buoyant figures in its annual census.

Theresa May was a pupil at Wheatley Park School, Oxfordshire, which is a mainstream state school



The Independent Schools Council has run an annual survey of pupil and school numbers since 1974 and it says that 2016 has been one of its best years. There are now 1,280 independent schools, the highest figure in this century and the number of pupils has reached a new high of more than 518,000.

The independent school sector, relying on the spending power of parents, faced tough times during the recession but it now says that independent schools have recovered and are returning to expansion.

Independent schools, with an intake of overseas pupils, are particularly sensitive to the global economy; so the international nature of the recession as well as the pressure on family budgets added to their financial squeeze.

'Having felt the pressures of worldwide recession in 2008, independent schools have adapted where necessary



The courtyard of Durham University, a member of the Russell Group

and are thriving just eight years on. It's both heartening and reassuring to see the numbers of schools at such healthy levels,' said the Independent Schools Council's General Secretary, Julie Robinson.

The annual snapshot showed what now constitutes a typical private school pupil. Most are day pupils at co-educational schools, with the biggest concentration in London and the south east. Only a quarter of private schools are single sex and the proportion of boarders remains about 14%. The biggest numbers of overseas pupils are from China, Hong Kong and Russia.

The independent sector makes a big selling point of its exam results. Half of A-level grades and two thirds of GCSE grades achieved by independent school pupils were either A* or A, far exceeding the national

averages. When they finish their A-levels, 92% of private pupils go to university with 56% going to a Russell Group university.

Exam results remain very important to these fee-charging schools and independent school headteachers have been among the most dogged pursuers of any perceived problems with exam boards or individual qualifications.

Headteachers have loudly complained about what they see as the unreliability of some exam results and this year there were long-running arguments about the outcome of an English IGCSE exam.

Independent schools, as well as being sensitive to financial pressures, have faced questions about whether they are a barrier to social mobility.

The other side of the disproportionate success of private school pupils in getting into top universities is that disadvantaged youngsters are under-represented in those universities.

There have been concerns about state school pupils not getting enough places in the most prestigious universities and there have been warnings that too many former private school pupils dominate the top roles in public life.

This came to the surface during the Cabinet reshuffle that followed Theresa May's success in the Conservative leadership campaign. Her choice of Education Secretary, Justine Greening, was hailed as a rare example of someone who would be responsible for state schools who actually had attended one herself. Ms Greening had gone to a comprehensive in Rotherham.

As the Cabinet took shape, the Sutton Trust education charity made the calculation that Mrs May's appointments had the lowest proportion of privately-educated ministers since the post-war Cabinet of Clement Attlee in 1945.

In the new Cabinet appointed by Mrs May, there were 30% of ministers who had been taught privately, compared with 50% of David Cameron's Cabinet after the 2015 election and 62% in the coalition Cabinet in 2010. This meant that 70% of ministers in this new Cabinet were state-educated, either in comprehensives or grammar schools.

'Anyone should be able to become a minister, regardless of social background. It is good to see so many more comprehensive and grammar-educated cabinet ministers,' said the Sutton Trust chairman, Sir Peter Lampl.

Baseline testing struggles to get off the ground

The idea of introducing tests at the very beginning of primary school has always been controversial. From the outset there were warnings about adding another test into primary schools when teachers were already complaining of over-testing and too much accompanying paperwork.

There were also particular concerns about tests at the start of school, with claims that children of four were too young for such assessments.

Despite the controversy, the Government had doggedly persevered, arguing that there was a valid underlying principle. The idea of the baseline test was to provide a

benchmark against which to measure progress through primary school. If there was no reliable starting point, how could there be any assessment of how far pupils had advanced in the following years?

Such a test would be fairer to schools, argued the Government, accurately comparing how much they had helped pupils and revealing those pupils who might already have been relatively advanced when they entered school.

Even though the teachers' unions had been opposed to baseline testing, there had been broad political support for the concept. At the general election, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal

Democrats had been supportive of the idea as a useful starting point for measuring progress.

In a way that might not have been anticipated, the push for baseline testing suffered a major reversal this year.

Primary schools were offered three different types of test, each of them approved as a way of meeting the requirements of the baseline assessments. Headteachers could choose which approach they preferred.

The idea was that schools could find a type of test that suited their needs, with some structured in a way that was meant to be less disruptive and intrusive. It was a flexibility that sent the message that this was not a standardised, formal mini-SATs test for four-year-olds.

When the Department for Education commissioned research from the Standards and Testing Agency to examine the different types of test it came up with an uncomfortable conclusion.

The study found that the three versions of the tests were not adequately comparable. If pupils of similar ability took the three tests they would not have similar results. If comparisons were not reliable across schools using these different tests then it meant that they could not be used for measuring progress.

This meant that, in April, the Department for Education had to announce that it was dropping their use as a progress measure this year, saying that it would have been 'unfair' to schools to have used them.

The Government said that schools could still use baseline tests for their



The testing of young children upon starting school is unpopular with some teachers

own internal purposes and it repeated its commitment to the principle. In the short term their use as a formal measure had been postponed and it remains to be seen how it might be resuscitated in future.

Labour claimed that the Government had been forced into a U-turn. Teachers' unions and headteachers' unions seized upon the reversal as evidence of a Government that had failed to listen to the teaching profession.

The National Union of Teachers had only recently gathered for their Easter conference where there were vehement calls to oppose the implementation of the tests. They could not have foreseen how quickly the tests were going to unravel.

The National Association of Headteachers, which complained of 'poor planning and a lack of consultation', delivered the verdict: 'It is hard to avoid saying we told you so'.

The leaked spelling test that had to be cancelled



A spelling test was leaked on the Department for Education's website

It is usually students who might feel that they have had a tough time from nasty surprises in tests and exams but this year the Government has run into difficulty with some unexpected questions, particularly with primary school tests.

Seven-year-olds in England's primary schools were expecting to face questions in spelling, punctuation and grammar this summer, as part of their Key Stage 1 SATs tests in English.

Unfortunately, the tests had to be called off a few weeks before they were due to be taken when it emerged that the questions had been published in advance on a Department for Education website.

Instead of providing examples of the type of questions that pupils were likely to face, there had been a mistake and the actual questions were published. According to some claims the question paper had been on view to schools for several months.

A teacher who had been taking part in a trial of the test had noticed the error and when this was brought to the attention of the Department for Education, ministers faced their own rather difficult set of questions.

They rapidly came to the awkward conclusion that they would have to cancel the test for this year. It was not really possible to know how many people might have used the practice papers or how much this might affect the outcome. As such it wouldn't be possible to use the tests as a reliable measurement.

'To remove any uncertainty and clarify the situation for schools, I have decided that we will remove the requirement on them to administer the Key Stage 1 grammar, punctuation and spelling test for this year only,' said Schools Minister, Nick Gibb.

He said it had been a 'regrettable incident' and the Standards and Testing Agency was going to be subject to a 'root and branch' inquiry.

The Standards and Testing Agency said the mistake had been the result of 'human error' and that an immediate review would be undertaken.

Headteachers' leader, Russell Hobby, having already seen the sudden collapse of this year's baseline testing, welcomed the decision to call off this year's spelling, punctuation and grammar test.

Mr Hobby had earlier warned ministers that they had little choice except to pull the plug on tests which seemed to have been compromised saying that schools couldn't be fairly

compared on unreliable test results. He said the Department for Education had acted 'quickly and appropriately' in reaching the same conclusion.

The opposition seized upon the embarrassment, saying that pupils had been working hard for these tests and all their efforts had been wasted because of ministerial 'failure and incompetence'.

Only a few weeks before, the National Union of Teachers' annual conference had heard calls to campaign against both baseline tests and these spelling and grammar tests in primary schools.

Even the teachers' union's most diehard supporters could hardly have expected that both tests were going to be called off with such suddenness and in such unpredictable circumstances.

The school strike that was by parents rather than teachers

When a strike affects schools the first assumption is usually going to be that teachers are staging a walk out but in May, possibly for the first time, it was parents who organised a day of protest that saw children kept away from school.

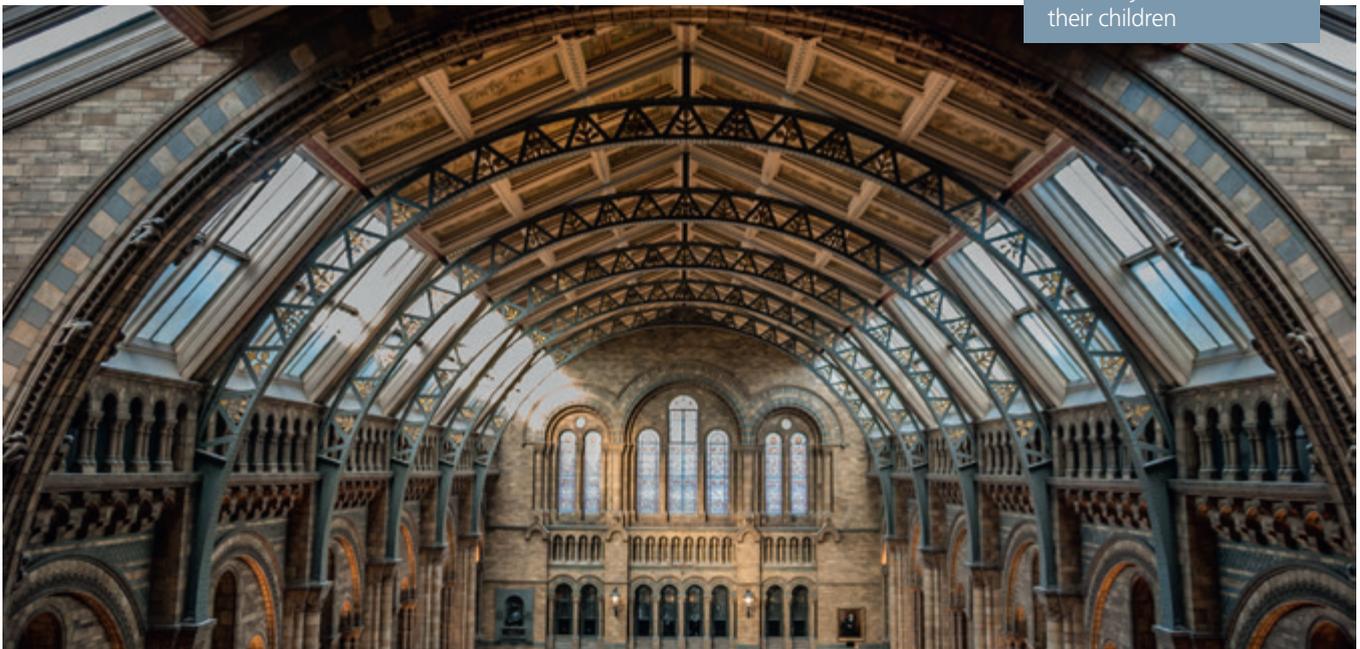
Primary school parents, under the heading of 'Let Our Kids Be Kids', staged a one-day strike, protesting against what they claimed to be a classroom culture with too many tests and too much pressure on young children.

In particular they were protesting against changes to the primary school curriculum and the way that it is going to be tested. They claimed that the new SATs tests were too difficult and put unnecessary stress on these young pupils.

Instead of bringing their children to school, protesting parents took their children to rallies in parks or on organised visits to museums or places for educational trips.

This was a protest organised and shared through social media, with tens of

In a protest over testing, some parents organised trips to visit museums and art galleries with their children



thousands signing a petition collected online, which was then handed in at the Department for Education in London.

The message from the parents was that they were opposed to primary schools being turned into 'exam factories' and that they wanted children to have more creativity and fun in their learning.

In terms of making an impact, the novelty of a parents' strike certainly captured the headlines and it prompted debates about whether young children were being over-tested.

The fact that the campaign was popular on social media meant that it was difficult to know how widespread the support really was among parents across the country.

There was no sympathy for the parents' strike from either government ministers or the head of Ofsted, Sir Michael Wilshaw.

The head of the education watchdog said that too often, when children fell behind in the early years at school, they never really caught up. The idea of the tests was to make sure that any children who were failing to keep up could be identified and teachers could intervene.

'The Government is right to introduce greater structure and rigour into the assessment process. Those who oppose this testing need to consider England's mediocre position in the OECD education rankings,' said Sir Michael.

Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, argued that the tests need not be stressful and that it was important to raise standards.

Nicky Morgan, who was the Education Secretary during the parents' strike, said 'Keeping children home, even for a day is harmful to their education'.

The argument over the new tests continued to rumble through the year including when the results appeared in July. Almost half of pupils failed to reach the expected level, prompting headteachers to say that the results were unreliable and should not be published. Ministers said that the lower results reflected tougher standards and that in the longer term it was better to raise the bar in this way.

The summer term also saw a more familiar strike, when teachers walked out for a one-day protest over what they argued was a lack of funding for schools.

The strange case of the 'rogue marker' and claims of sabotage

Among the least predictable stories of this year must have been the strange case of the 'rogue marker'.

Primary school assessments had already faced a difficult time, with the postponement of the baseline tests and the disruption of part of the English test for seven-year-olds but what added to the air of uncertainty was what was claimed as a deliberate

attempt to undermine the SATs tests taken by 11-year-olds.

It seemed that there had been an attempt to leak part of the English test due to be taken by hundreds of thousands of pupils in England in the final year of primary school.

The night before the test date in May, it appeared that the test had been

accidentally published on a password-protected website operated by Pearson, the private firm that administers the test, and that a marker with access to the website had attempted to make it more widely available. About a hundred markers, many of whom are likely to be teachers, could have seen the test.

In the end, the attempted leak was considered so limited that the Department for Education thought there was no need for a cancellation and the test went ahead.

This did however mean that once again ministers had to appear in the House of Commons to answer urgent questions. Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, told MPs it had been a 'serious breach' but that parents could still have confidence in the reliability of the tests.

The Department for Education said that this attempted leak appeared to be the work of a 'rogue marker' and claimed that it was part of a wider campaign to undermine the tests. This was not an accident or an administrative mistake, the Department suggested, but a deliberate ploy by those who were

campaigning against the underlying principle of these primary school tests.

For the opposition, with three separate problems in this year's primary tests, there was no holding back.

'The Government has woefully mismanaged and caused absolute chaos and confusion in primary assessment,' said Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, Lucy Powell.

What made this even more difficult and high profile for the Government was that there seemed to be a cumulative problem with this year's primary school tests.

Teachers' unions had already been opposed to changes to make primary school tests more stretching but now it seemed that the implementation of the tests seemed to be dogged with problems. It was as if the story kept switching from stretching academic goals to rather embarrassing own goals.

Whatever the eventual outcome, the tests went ahead and schools' results will be published in league tables in the new academic year, when the cycle of politics and education begins all over again.



Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, admitted a 'serious breach'

Many schools are adopting outdoor learning as part of their methods



Bell Lane Academy



Learning together

Bell Lane Academy (formerly Bell Lane Primary School) is situated near the centre of the large village of Ackworth, eight miles to the south-east of the city of Wakefield. Our catchment consists of a largely White British population. Our number of Pupil Premium children is low at 9% as is our number of children with Special Educational Needs which is also 9%. We have 251 pupils and a 56 place Nursery. We have 12 teachers, 3 of whom are part time. With an admission limit of 40 children per year group, we have 9 classes several of which are mixed year groups.

For years Bell Lane Primary School was stuck in a rut: its Ofsted grade was never better than satisfactory/requires improvement and morale was at an all time low.

When I moved from Deputy to Head Teacher in 2010, I inherited a situation where strong leadership was needed to rebuild staff confidence and provide a clear plan for moving the school to 'good'. One of the biggest barriers in achieving this was Wakefield Council's initial reluctance to accept that the school had serious weaknesses followed by their subsequent over-reaction in the changes they wanted to impose.

In September 2014, having won several battles with Wakefield Council, the school finally achieved its elusive Ofsted 'good' grade. A year later it left the council's control and became part of Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT).

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Louise Ward
- » Location: Ackworth, Pontefract, West Yorkshire
- » Part of Wakefield City Academies Trust from August 2015
- » 251 Pupils on roll
- » Ofsted Rating: Good
- » Investors in People Silver Award

“The whole school now ensures a feeling of togetherness and belonging.”

Investors in People 2015

Consistency and teamwork have been the two key factors in moving the academy from the rut that it had been in, and these are now helping us to finally break down the last of the barriers that have been holding us back.

An initial change in focus for the academy came from something that I had been told whilst applying for headship: *'It's lonely being a head.'* The realisation that if anyone felt lonely working in our school then it would be impossible to achieve consistency, led to our team approach where everyone is valued, supported and provided with opportunities to learn from others. This has secured improved practice for all staff, regardless of their role within the school. It also ensured that leadership was shared. The success of this team approach has recently been acknowledged through the achievement of the 'Investors in People' Silver Award.

'The whole school now ensures a feeling of togetherness and belonging.'

Investors in People 2015

A historical lack of consistency in monitoring procedures was addressed through the introduction of a structured monitoring schedule that enabled appropriate support for all, along with clear accountability.

Key to monitoring is the focus on termly pupil progress meetings that include work scrutiny, looking at progress, agreeing the achievement to date of each pupil and target setting. This is done as a team, which includes the class teacher, head teacher, deputy (who is assessment leader), teachers who lead Literacy and Maths (who are also key stage leaders) and recently the lead for Special Educational Needs. The inclusion of subject leaders allows for appropriate targeted support to be agreed and actioned with immediate effect when needed.

A clear focus on ensuring consistent evidence in pupil's work books has also played an important role in our development. These books showcase the academy's development in many key areas: pupil progress; effective feedback and pupil response to this; an exciting curriculum that meets the needs of all children; and the pride that our children take in all of their work.

Developing consistency in pupil's books was achieved through the introduction of whole staff work scrutiny sessions that take place throughout the year for different subjects. During these sessions all teaching staff (including Higher Level Teaching Assistants and, when relevant, support staff), in small teams, scrutinise work from Nursery to Year 6 making observations on agreed areas. Information is then collated by the relevant subject leader, identifying strengths and points for development.

'Meetings are very much about a community approach rather than a top down approach to both decision making and actions.'

Investors in People 2015

This way of working provides whole academy accountability for outcomes, whilst allowing individual staff to reflect on their own practice and seek help from colleagues as needed.

Investigating our world



If consistency is to be achieved, then sharing the bigger picture and ensuring that staff have both understanding and ownership of all agreed policies and procedures is key.

‘Staff share senior leaders’ views on how successful Bell Lane Primary School can be and work together closely to achieve the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.’

Ofsted 2014

Being part of a successful and effective academy trust enables us to draw on the expertise of their advisors who work as part of our staff team, broadening our view and building our capacity to identify and implement any changes that are needed more quickly.

As well as a lack of positive support from Wakefield Council in resolving ongoing issues another barrier to moving forward was unstable staffing within the academy. Both were overcome by a determination to seek help proactively from a variety of different places – such as ‘headhunting’ an ex Ofsted inspector as chair of governors and ultimately joining an academy trust (WCAT) with an ethos that allowed us to set our own clear direction of travel rather than constantly having to change our course under the guidance of Wakefield Council.

Although we have only just achieved a full complement of permanent staff, joining WCAT in August 2015 (and working with them for two years prior to this) has enabled us to continue the development of teaching and learning to move the academy forward and further the development of internal monitoring systems and procedures that support all staff in continuously developing their practice.



Reading for pleasure



Developing our creativity

The academy continues to have to ‘plug gaps’ in children’s learning following earlier staffing issues. However the skills of current staff, links to other academies within the trust and advice from supporting trust advisors are enabling us increasingly to show accelerated progress across the academy, which will ultimately impact on our outcomes.

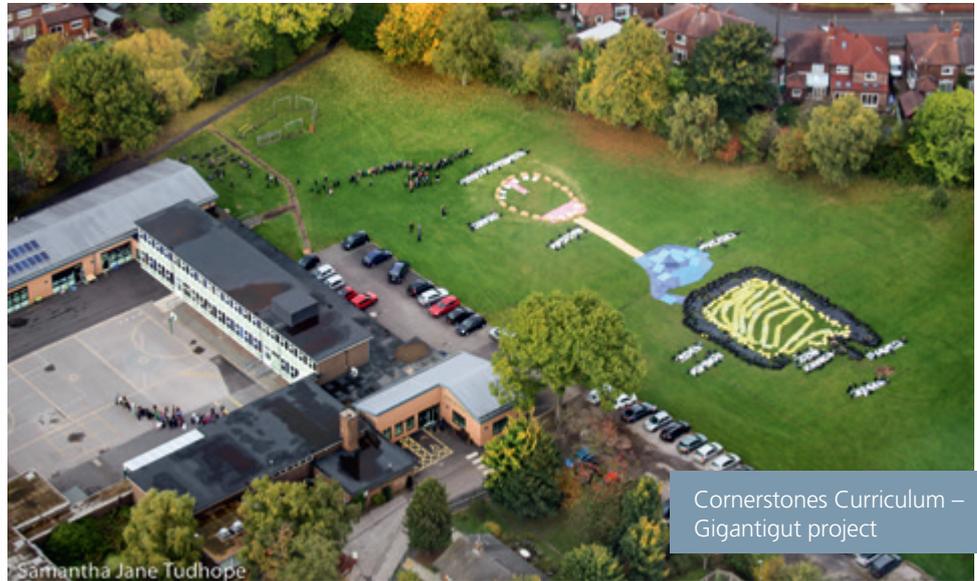
The security and positive support provided by joining Wakefield City Academies Trust means that our academy will never be ‘lonely’ and can further strengthen its work as a team to maintain consistent, highly effective strategies that allow us to continue to develop into the future.

“The school has secured effective partnerships, which make a strong contribution to staff training and improved outcomes for all pupils.”
Ofsted 2014

Broad Oak Primary School



Mr. Kevin Corteen (Headteacher)
with pupils



Cornerstones Curriculum –
Gigantigut project

Three years ago, it became obvious that our curriculum needed significant overhaul. It met statutory requirements, but was in no way as exciting and engaging as our children deserved. Our inspection in May 2013 confirmed what we knew, giving us the impetus for root and branch change. This change was based on a thematic four step learning philosophy called Cornerstones.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher:
Mr. Kevin Corteen
- » Location: East Didsbury,
Manchester
- » The school serves a diverse
population and is part way
through an expansion from
2 to 3 forms of entry
- » 530 pupils and 86 members
of staff
- » 34% of pupils have English
as an Additional Language
(EAL)
- » 26% are Pupil Premium
qualifiers

Each unit begins with memorable first hand experiences, which either involves a visit out of school or inviting visitors into school. The purpose of which is to *engage* and stimulate the children's imaginations, encouraging them to make observations and begin to formulate questions to be answered later. As the topic progresses, the children increase their knowledge and understanding and practise and *develop* new skills. They then *innovate*, applying this knowledge in solving real or imagined problems. Finally, the children *express* their learning, becoming the 'experts and informers', linking their learning back to the questions they generated earlier in the topic. Our children see a real purpose to their learning and consequently are highly motivated and engaged, and consequently proud of what they have achieved. Examples of this 'Express' element have included: pupils setting up and running a one day café; the creation of a classroom sized aquarium simulation; performances of Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream at a city centre theatre; a 60M model human digestive system (Gigantigut), and an Egyptian funeral procession involving all of our pupils.

The positive impact on pupil outcomes has been very clear. In 2015, attainment and progress in writing is significantly above national averages; the levels of absence and persistent absence fell to well below national averages.

Our Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies are at the heart of all that we do, from the use of red, amber and green (RAG) cups and self-selection of activities, to quality questioning and thinking time and the use of green pens to highlight strengths and pink pens for areas for development.

RAG cups as tools for pupils to self-assess are rather like a traffic light. A child selecting green is ready to go and be challenged; amber may need support and red needs a different approach from the teacher. This visual approach ensures that the pace of learning is brisk in all lessons and frequent checks on pupils' understanding are used effectively so individuals can self-select well matched activities, which build upon their knowledge and skills. Pupils have more opportunities to learn independently and collaboratively. These simple but powerful strategies have raised teacher expectations, as well as the quality and quantity of work that our pupils are producing. Our children have ownership of what they learn and how they are going to learn, whilst driving the lesson forward and being totally immersed in learning.

With an increased focus on the mental health of young people we support the Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) of identified pupils through our work with **eQe** (Equilibrium and Enablement) accessing whole school input and capacity building interventions that are underpinned by the principles of therapeutic play, safety, creativity and emotional literacy.

For classes/groups we provide indoor and outdoor interventions which are appropriate to need.

Where pupils present with higher levels of social, emotional and well-being needs Broad Oak provides individualised therapeutic provision. Pupils receive weekly sessions with

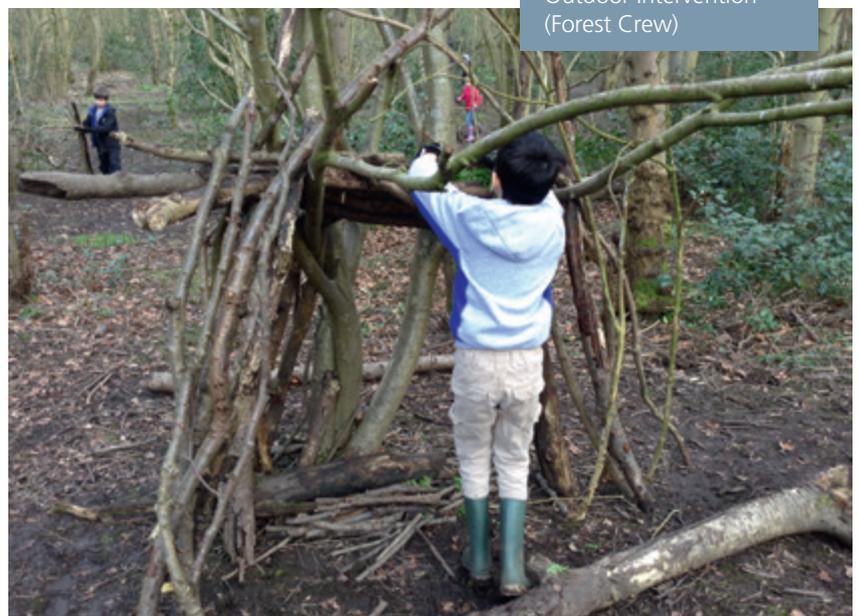
a play worker or play therapist who nurtures attitudes and strategies to help our pupils to recognise and address their issues.

Impact is measured by tracking pupil attainment and entry/exit data from the Goodman's Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about children's behaviour, emotions and relationships). Each child receives a score relating to their social abilities with exit data demonstrating a reduction in social difficulty and improved social ability.

Additionally Broad Oak funds a coaching mentor from the company *One Goal* to deliver a universal offer for all pupils to build character by developing the pupils "six habits". This is a bespoke programme designed to give our pupils the required skills to think in an informed way, to work collaboratively with others successfully and have positive mind sets that will set them on the path to success.

At Broad Oak we understand the importance of physical education, recognizing that it has significant benefits to health and wellbeing, improving brain function and thus the ability to learn.

“Our children have ownership of what they learn and how they are going to learn”



Outdoor Intervention
(Forest Crew)



Early Years Foundation Stage

“Moderation is key in increasing the accuracy of assessment judgements”

We use our Sport Premium money innovatively to ensure we provide high quality PE and school sport for all pupils. Bespoke CPD for staff is provided by a PE specialist one afternoon a week through team taught sessions.

Targeted physical intervention groups support learning. A physiotherapist works with our SEN children to develop their balance, co-ordination and agility. These children also access a multi-sensory room experiencing combinations of sound, light and aromas to meet their sensory needs. Fitness sessions are run for our less active children.

We have developed a broad variety of enrichment opportunities before, after school and at lunchtimes to engage all children in sport and physical activity. The percentage of KS1 and 2 children taking part in these activities has risen from 56% to 78%.

In 2013 the proportion of children achieving a “Good Level of Development” at the end of Reception was 42%, well below the national average. In 2015 this had risen to 76% (national 66%).

Underpinning the drive for improvement has been a focus on

the quality of relationships between the Early Years team and the children and families in their key worker groups. During the summer term the new nursery intake are invited to individual family meetings with their new keyworker to share important information about the child and the setting. Nursery practitioners support parents to complete an “Ages and Stages Questionnaire” to gain a better picture of the child’s development so far and enable quality dialogue with the parents. Areas of concern are identified quickly and early interventions planned right at the start of the school year.

Regular parent workshops are held to inform parents about how and what we teach, with presentations and teaching video clips posted on the school website.

Moderation is key in increasing the accuracy of assessment judgements. This is done in various ways; with the whole team, with individual keyworkers and with other schools in the local Early Years cluster group. Rigorous tracking ensures that children are identified early for interventions in speech and language, phonics or fine motor skills to develop hand muscles ready to write, and keyworkers meet with the phase leader every half term to discuss their observations of independent learning, levels of attainment and progress and to plan next steps for each child.

A joint project with the local Surestart Centre enabled the school to increase links with the local community and target vulnerable families for early language support prior to starting school. The school hosts a weekly “Stay and Play” session for parents and children 0-3 years, a baby massage group and several adult education courses including a “Family Language” course for parents with English as an additional language.

Central Walker CE Primary School



The pupils chose as their Christian values:
Love and Friendship / Hope / Endurance / Forgiveness / Peace and Reconciliation



Barbara Redhead,
Executive Head Teacher

Central Walker Church of England Primary School is a newly built school opened in September 2012, formed from two closing schools set in the most deprived part of Newcastle upon Tyne.

When I began at Central Walker in 2013, I was told by the Local Authority that Ofsted were expected the next term and their judgment would be Special Measures. By Easter 2014 – two terms later – we were judged GOOD with lots of positives in the report. By the time of our Anglican ethos inspection in May 2015 we were judged Outstanding and now we are a successful voluntary aided school looking towards a bright future.

It struck me

I'd been teaching a long time when I realised I was already a teacher before my deputy head was born! I've been a head for more than 20 years and for the past decade I have had a double role as the permanent Headteacher at Wyndham Primary School and also the Interim Executive Head role of a second school in Newcastle; never the same second school but always the same focus: going into a school in difficulty, turn them round and create the conditions for a permanent head to take over. I am lucky to have learnt so much from each of these very different experiences.

So how did we do it at Central Walker?

School improvement is about patterns and systems. Rather than feeling trepidation in taking over a new school in huge difficulties, waiting for the storm of Ofsted to arrive, what I try to do is expressed very well in this quotation by Vivian Green which conjures up an image of fun, of sharing, of getting over difficulties in the face of adversity: "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain".

REPORT CARD

- » Executive Head Teacher: Barbara Redhead
- » Deputy Head Teachers (job-share): Dawn Day/Faye Kerr
- » Location: Walker, East Newcastle upon Tyne
- » Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School
- » Two form entry: aged 2-11 years
- » 374 pupils; 36 staff
- » 80% Pupil Premium
- » 22% EAL
- » Ofsted Rating: Good



“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass its about learning to dance in the rain”
Vivian Green

Through the use of simple patterns and systems, we have created a positive climate in our school. Many storms have come and more are on their way; together we can dance through them because the children are at the heart of all we do.

A school must have a pattern

Small children (indeed most of us) need routines which we know and understand to make us safe. Since primary school children (even the 11 year olds) are all still very young, these routines make the basis of a safe, secure environment. So we have a pattern to the school day, a pattern to the school week and a pattern to the school year. These patterns are arranged around the integrated curriculum with subjects under an umbrella half term topic: Maths, English, Science, RE, Humanities, Sports and the Arts. It also means that we can have exciting “different” days for special events or to have an inspirational artist/story teller in for Book Week – these are days when the children don’t wear uniform. We all love to dress up! My magic chicken costume based on the book, *The Wizard and the Fairy and the Magic Chicken* (with the deputies in wizard and fairy outfits) shocked the school into silence! Then giggles galore! We have a themed week at the end of each term: an International week, a Science/Technology/Engineering/Maths week, and a multi faith week.

We (or rather the talented staff) record these in our own printed photo books – which add to our collective memories of fun and the joy of learning together. They make lovely books to share when a pupil is upset or troubled.

So how did the transformation at Central Walker start? – well as Antoine du Saint Exupery said, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum people to collect wood, assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless sea.”

I joined a school – in which the majority of staff wanted to belong to a good school; they just didn’t know how to get there. Together we introduced these six systems that are the processes which hold us all together. There are systems for teaching, for inspiring both children and staff to excel. They are for team work, pastoral care, positive behaviour, planning, marking and leadership. Monitoring is always a thorny problem: ‘*so how about if it moves, ask how far and if it does not move, ask why not!*’ Yes, I am being ironical; schools are about more than valuing what it is easy to measure. If we wish to provide an outstanding education we must cherish more than that. We must also monitor attainment and progress in all aspects of learning.

Monitoring learning is something everyone should be doing every second they are at work. Everyone needs to think about what they are seeing, and always from the pupils’ perspective. As they walk around the school at different points in the school day they must ask, “how does it feel to be a pupil here?” If the feeling is not one of warmth and set in a background of positive relationships with well supported learning then we must tackle this. Monitoring of lessons and pupil book scrutiny is far more effective if it is carried out by teachers themselves. At Central Walker staff do this with training and

» THE SIX SYSTEMS

1. Clarity and organisation of teaching systems
2. Presentation of overall learning environment and values to accelerate progress
3. Systems for supporting, developing and promoting expectations of staff
4. Shaping and leading development planning and preparation
5. Support functions of the school with a rigorous focus on wider outcomes for pupils and best value financial decisions
6. Governance and the Parental community

a shared understanding of the purpose and expectations. The staff when monitoring learn so much of value and their teacher expectations are high, both more challenging and supportive. Our teaching style is illustrated by the Seattle Fish Market story – not a policy but an attitude. The policy always comes after and from the change, so when monitoring happens and there is an issue we set up a personal training plan, in which peer staff will support and challenge each other. There has been a major turn over in staff – 75% of the senior leaders and 30% of the teaching staff are new.

Our structures and ethos at Central Walker

These are evident in our school building which is set out in an orderly structured pattern; not an easy task given an open plan space. However the children love the new part-walls which make them feel secure in their class base, whilst the space allocated to each Key Stage gives a light airy feel. In doing this – the learning of new skills together – our school walls are hung with quotes, alongside silk arts, ornate windows, and art work from graffiti to fairy tales – all different – to inspire each child.

Above and beyond

Everyone at Central Walker gives his/her personality, character and time to the pupils. We have a daily breakfast club for over 100 pupils, after school clubs from gardening to geo-caching. Every child each half term goes on a visit or has a 'wow' visitor day. For World Book Day we took the whole school, in class relays, to our local bookshop for a story, their free book and refreshments. As an inner city school we attract deprivation funding – additional cash, so I worry about the coming national funding changes. As it is, with this extra money we can include pupils in a genuinely worthwhile educational experience.



“Educating the mind without the heart is no education at all.”
Aristotle

We seek to address the processes... by which pupils acquire emotional wellbeing. We nurture their skills in learning to learn and monitor these strategies as carefully as we monitor progress in reading.

The final part of the plan at Central Walker is events

Days that are not routine but involve parents and the community. We have open mornings or afternoons so that parents can sit beside their child and see learning happening, with termly parents evening/ afternoon so that they can talk about their child. If parents don't attend we ring them up to make a new appointment or find out why not. We bend and flex to engage our parents but we don't drop our standards of expectation.

“Our pupils are truly ready for the next stage of their education.”

The data story reflects the growth of our school

As we are now in the top 10 % nationally for progress and last year we achieved 92% level 4 reading, writing and maths combined. It is the hard work, dedication and having enough staff paid for via pupil premium cash – and the experiences we can provide using disadvantaged funding – that makes closing these gaps possible.

Our pupils are truly ready for the next stage of their education. They will be a joy for society!

Cheadle Primary School



Newly Appointed Headteacher,
Karen Leech



Cheadle Primary School
was built in 1909

We are a popular school in the heart of Cheadle which is situated in the southern suburbs of Greater Manchester. Our community reflects modern Britain well and we have children from a range of faiths and cultures. Indeed, we have over 20 different first languages spoken and a steadily increasing number of children for whom English is an additional language. We place great emphasis on developing tolerance, understanding and community cohesion and our strong values are firmly embedded within our learning. We recognise, respect and celebrate difference within our community. Our curriculum is enriched by regular cultural events such as our ever popular Breakfast Weeks where parents and children have the opportunity to breakfast together and sample a wide range of authentic foods from around the world!

We are very proud of our children. When they step through our door, many visitors comment upon the warm and friendly atmosphere in school, how happy, polite and well behaved our children are and how wholly engaged they are in their learning.

Our children are very articulate, they have an excellent understanding of how they learn best and they can identify the key elements of outstanding teaching and learning! They regularly report to Governors and speak knowledgeably about our systems, structures and curriculum!

As a new headteacher in my first year in post, I am resolute and wholly committed to ensuring that we meet the key demands of the curriculum whilst being equally passionate about giving children as much freedom and ownership as possible in relation to how and what they learn. Our children are confident to express their opinions and they expect to be consulted on many aspects of school life. They never disappoint and regularly offer fabulous and imaginative solutions that take our school forward. They love to be given responsibility, treated like adults and they happily sit around the table and share their views and ideas! Many decisions are made democratically from formally voting on members for the School Council to naming our newly born chicks! Recently, they have completed questionnaires on how safe they feel at school, the quality of school lunches and the improvements that they would like to see. They are currently working on a new school prayer that is personal and bespoke to our school and which children from all faiths will feel comfortable with. Also, they are in the process of interviewing each other about what they think of our school and creating film clips for our new website!

Our curriculum is engaging and creative and in June 2014, OFSTED judged it to be outstanding. We provide lots of opportunities for skills based, active and cross curricular learning which is led by the children's interests. At the beginning of each project, they decide what they want to find out and how they want to do it. By giving the children ownership of their learning it creates clear focus, enthusiasm and excitement.

From their individual starting points, our children make good progress. However, this year, we have been working extremely hard to further raise attainment throughout school.

We were keen to do this without losing our commitment to providing our children with an outstanding child centred curriculum.

Our annual intake of 40 children presents us with a daily logistical challenge and encourages us to manage our mixed age teaching groups in a range of innovative ways. For example, in order to create additional time for SATs preparation, we have experimented with different time efficient ways of grouping our cohorts during afternoon sessions where, throughout Key Stage 1 and 2 we operate a rotational system of teaching similar to that of a high school.

Teachers have the opportunity to teach Foundation subjects in which they have a particular skill, talent or interest. This means that the children receive high quality and consistent teaching and that the teacher gains an excellent overview of standards and achievement in a particular subject. This works exceptionally well for subjects such as French, Information Technology and PE.

“Our school is fun, forward thinking and creative and we are not afraid to do things differently! Our continued success is a result of great teamwork, comprehensive self evaluation, innovation and the ability and desire to try new things ”



Breakfast Week April 2016 - a regular and hugely popular event with children and parents!



Our Nursery children celebrating World Book Day 2016!

We use a range of expertise including a sports coach, a dance teacher, an art specialist, a music teacher and even a professional cheerleader! By pairing one of our teachers with an 'expert' it has meant that for some curricular areas we have been able to teach the children as a cohort and this has been great for both staff and children. Teachers have received excellent professional development whilst the children have loved the opportunities to be together as a year group.

Establishing and maintaining really good relationships with our parents is

Our talented Junior Performance Band hard at work!



crucial. The teachers go out on to the playground at the beginning and the end of each day so that they can chat informally to them. This principle has significantly improved communication and it has been exceptionally well received and much appreciated.

Seeking the views of parents and carers is extremely important to us. We consult them regularly, ask them for feedback on many aspects of school life and use what they say to improve what we do. Our aim is to have happy and satisfied parents who feel valued, listened to and who embrace and support the changes that we make.

We look for every opportunity to engage our parents and carers in their child's education and school life. Each half term we offer fun-packed events where children and parents take part in exciting and creative tasks which consolidate and extend skills learnt. These can be anything from cake making to highly competitive and challenging competitions and quizzes! Such events are hugely popular, extremely well attended, and provide shared memorable learning for both parents and children.

Cheadle Primary School is a good school. We aim high and have a relentless drive for further improvement. We want every child to make the best progress possible during their time with us. Our school is fun, forward thinking and creative and we are not afraid to do things differently! Our continued success is a result of great teamwork, comprehensive self evaluation, innovation and the ability and desire to try new things.

We have made many changes this year and it is wonderful to see the positive impact that they are already having on the children's progress and attainment and we have many more exciting changes to come!

Hendal Primary School



Hendal Primary School
Senior Leadership Team



Our new extension provides
an outdoor learning space for
year six children

Hendal Primary is a 350 pupil strong primary school, at the heart of the local community of Kettlethorpe near Wakefield. 107 children receive pupil premium and we welcome this funding as an important way to help them. Our approach ensures that all aspects of the school support children from all backgrounds and targeted interventions are provided when needed. Pupil premium represents a significant proportion of our budget and we are committed to ensuring it is utilised to maximum effect.

We believe that there is no “one size fits all” so it is essential that we identify individual barriers in order to provide support targeted to the individual’s needs, enabling all our children to flourish. The school was judged to be ‘good’ at the most recent inspection (November 2012) and continues to ensure high achievement remains a key priority. In April 2014 an expansion programme was agreed to increase admissions from 45 to 60 per year group and our new extension was opened in January 2016. When this works through the school, it will take our numbers to 450.

At Hendal we believe that childhood is a time of play and that through play we discover the excitement of learning, the rewards of achievement and acquire our life skills. The Early Years setting is a colourful, well-planned and busy environment which develops playing and exploring skills, active learning and creative thinking. We have chosen to invest heavily on our outside facilities, especially in foundation as it supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering the children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement,

REPORT CARD

- » Head Teacher: Christine Platts
- » Local Authority maintained school
- » Behaviour Resource Unit attached
- » 350 pupils aged 3 to 11, 56 staff
- » 31% Pupil Premium
- » Sing Up Platinum Award
- » Open Futures Flagship School



Outdoor provision contributes strongly to the development of children not only in foundation but throughout school

and promoting a sense of well-being. Children in foundation are able to move freely throughout the inside and outside early year's areas, choosing for themselves where to learn, as well as taking part in more conventional lessons and structured learning throughout the day. They have opportunities to explore, solve problems, develop their imagination through role play and small world (imaginative play where children are provided with small, beautiful objects), be creative when model making and painting, share stories and rhymes and become confident and independent writers and readers.

Children at Hendal are lucky to have access to a large and exciting outdoor area as well as an outdoor classroom. They enjoy playing in the large sand pit, making music, challenging themselves on the adventure trail and gardening with friends amongst other fun activities. At Hendal we "play together, whatever the weather" in our superbly resourced outdoor environment and children can be seen in wellies and raincoats jumping in puddles on rainy days.

We believe that reading is the gateway to all knowledge and we strive to prevent our children falling behind. Our specialist reading recovery teacher

works with individual children for 30 minutes a day, four days a week. Each lesson is tailored to the child's particular needs and the programme is intensive and highly effective with children who experience difficulties with literacy learning. Detailed observation records are taken daily to ensure evidence of learning. Effective and accurate strategies are then designed by the teacher to provide meticulous and effective activities. Reading recovery brings the most challenging children from "low achievers," to a level where they can fully engage with the curriculum.

Art and design is a subject about which both teachers and pupils are passionate. Staff plan exciting creative opportunities throughout topics, linking art to the curriculum whenever possible. Children explore drawing, painting and sculpture through a range of art and design activities, learn about great artists and techniques from different cultures. We celebrate achievements and every child's art work can be seen on display around school.

In addition we have access to two fantastic art resources in Wakefield: The Hepworth and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Children visit both and really enjoy the exciting workshops on offer. We take part in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park "Ignite" programme, which involves artists working in school with each class to create works of art and explore techniques such as sculpture, printing and puppet making. This is also a great opportunity for staff, children and parents to work alongside an artist, learn new skills and engender a love of "the arts."

As part of our partnership with the British Council and a link school in Chengdu, China, we welcomed four Head teachers from this city to the Wakefield district. During their visit

“Reading recovery brings the most challenging children from ‘low achievers’, to a level where they can fully engage with the curriculum”

we demonstrated our love of singing, showcased our outdoor provision and highlighted the range of delicious school meals prepared by our award winning kitchen team. The Head teachers took many ideas from Henda! to enhance the provision in their own schools: such as allowing children to explore their own ideas in lessons and the importance of singing across the curriculum.

We now employ a Chinese Language Assistant to deliver Mandarin lessons throughout school to enrich our children's understanding of the world beyond the UK and to appreciate the culture of China. Children in Foundation and KS1 are taught basic commands and look more into the culture and art of China. Children in KS2 are exposed to more language delivered in a formal setting; much like that of a Chinese classroom.

Henda! Primary has a very high standard of singing throughout school. Our achievements were recognised by Sing Up, for which we attained the Platinum award. As ambassadors for singing, we have undertaken outreach work with other schools. We have hosted joint events collaborating with children from other schools, coming together for rehearsals and performing for parents in the evening. These have been outstanding events, appreciated and enjoyed by all. Music permeates throughout our curriculum.

We are passionate about enabling our children to contribute to the constant process of improving our school. The School Council gives children the opportunity to voice their own opinions and make important decisions about key issues, and aims to find new and exciting ways of raising money to benefit all our children. Ideas to improve all aspects of school life can be placed in a suggestion box or discussed with School Council representatives at class 'surgeries'.

The Council is made up of two representatives from each year, who are elected by their peers after taking part in a challenging and democratic election process. The Council meets regularly to discuss a whole range of issues prompted by the needs and suggestions of the children. To date, our Council has been consulted on a wide variety of policies and school developments, had contact with our MP and interviewed candidates for teaching posts. The School Council is the true embodiment of 'Pupil Voice'.

Our School Council take their role very seriously whilst enjoying a visit to the Mayor's Council Chamber



Henda! Primary is a welcoming, friendly, bright and happy school where children feel secure. There is a clear moral purpose and a shared belief that the school can impact upon the lives and opportunities of children. We encourage a culture where staff believe all children can achieve (there are no "excuses" for underperformance) and we work in close partnership with parents, who are the child's first and most important educators.

It is a school where good behaviour is expected and where children enjoy growing up. It will *always* be a place of enjoyment, where we encourage, reward and celebrate all our diverse successes.

Hunslet Moor



Developing inquisitive learners



Active learning!

Hunslet Moor is a thriving, inner city school in the south of Leeds. At the time of writing this, the school is on the verge of a significant expansion from 315 to 420 pupils. We have families who have attended the school across generations, as well as a growing number of families who join us as new to the country. The past 10 years has seen a significant period of social change within the local area and has presented challenges for the school.

REPORT CARD

- » Head teacher: Hannah Darley
- » Location: South Leeds
- » Community Primary School
- » Number of pupils: 366
Number of staff: 65
- » Number of pupil premium: 162
- » Number of SEN pupils: 68
- » Ethnicity of pupils: 80% minority ethnic pupils
- » Ofsted rating: Good

Painting a picture of what this school looked like ten years ago would still highlight deprivation in the local area. However, there was a distinct difference in the ethnic and culture mix we see today. The majority of the population were White British and approximately a third of the children's first language was Bengali. Fast forward to 2016 ... the school has a very multi-cultural feel. At the most recent count, 33 languages were spoken across school. Children are drawn from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and a significant number of children are from deprived backgrounds. This has had a big impact on the school community and we have needed to ensure our school is inclusive and reflective of all cultural influences whilst continuing to adapt and respond to the emotional and social needs of children and their families.

The most recent Ofsted inspection in 2014 recognised the rapid improvements that have been made by the school. The culture within the school is reflected in our motto: Aiming for Excellence: Unlocking Your Child's Potential. The school's drive for success has come through those who have shown a sustained commitment, determination and belief in the uncompromising vision for the school in the most challenging of times: a handful of leaders, a skilled Governing body and a number of staff who have 'kept the faith' over the years with the direction in which the school is heading.

Future leaders – growing from within

Having been the Deputy Headteacher for 3 years, I took over the Headship of the school in 2013 following a period of extensive transition between myself and the previous Headteacher. I believe this was significant in sustaining the pace and direction the school was heading towards in its improvement journey.

The approach we take in the development and recruitment of school leaders reflects my own career development at Hunslet Moor. Recruitment processes over the years have shifted within the school. We focus on exploring the values, attitudes and experience in individuals that are relevant to the challenges many of our families face rather than on technical abilities. We are always on the 'lookout' for potential leaders; teachers who have proven themselves within the classroom and who demonstrate high aspirations for pupil achievement and also for themselves as learners. Whether teachers, volunteers or support staff, we endeavour for our adults to reflect the diversity of the community, as well as to be positive role models to our boys and girls.

We have appointed middle and senior leaders with a growth mind-set along with beliefs that align with the schools' values. We have given them the continuous professional development needed to progress as influential leaders, driven to secure the best outcomes for pupils through shaping and driving whole school change. There is a strong model of distributive leadership to empower and develop leadership behaviour. This has been achieved through planned programmes of coaching and mentoring which support leaders in achieving their potential.

Conditions for learning

Walking into Hunslet Moor, we are often told by those new to the school they are struck by a sense of calm and

peace which is often not associated with the bustle and activities of the local area. Their second impression forms quickly after spending time with our children: their energy and spirit is infectious! Respect and tolerance are strengths within the school. Class assemblies are well established and we use these as a way of celebrating together different religious events and learning about different cultures. Our annual community event is planned by year 6 children and is a great opportunity for us to come together and enjoy entertainment across cultures with a 'festival' like atmosphere.

For many of our children, the socio-economic factors faced by their families have a significant impact upon their social, emotional and mental health needs. This may include contending with chaotic home lives and a lack of resources to support them. Whilst such factors could be seen as excuses, as a school, we have instead created a strong focus upon developing the conditions to support children in becoming 'ready' to learn. Driven by the school's Pastoral team, children's personal, social and emotional development has a high priority across the school and much work is done to ensure conditions are in place to enable individual children to 'thrive'. Additional resources often include accessing further support from local Cluster therapists, as well as in-school and off-site additional provision.

“Staff are expected to actively build relationships and engage with families, after all, the school is at the heart of this community”

Capturing our school values through our 'DREAMS' ethos



For me, as a leader, the school's success is embedded in the time spent securing the fundamental elements as outlined in the phases of development below. This is my interpretation of our journey and is in no way meant to represent a linear process:

- » Community: How can the community become further engaged? What do they want from their school?
- » Personnel: Do people have the right skills, values and behaviours to ensure they work consistently to achieve the best chances for children to succeed?
- » Recruitment: Recruiting for values and resisting the pressure to fill vacant posts with bodies.
- » Disciplined development: All professionals understand their role, responsibility and accountability and can articulate the strategic direction of the school. Growth from within allows this to be possible.
- » Functionality: Going back to essentials, instilling order and discipline in ways of working. Creating appropriate systems and structures and embedding across school. This creates shared expectations across school about 'how we do things around here.'
- » Growth and innovation: A commitment to continuously developing staff skills and expertise. Embedding a culture of achievement and ownership of practice in an environment in which principles and practice align to the values of the school.

The school's journey over the last decade is further documented in a book co-authored by Hannah.

We have further developed an approach to embed developing relationships and this includes a focus upon promoting and engaging teaching and support staff in understanding the importance of these relationships across the community. We have developed the use of restorative approaches to develop staffs' understanding of people's behaviour when under stress or having experienced trauma. Our work to promote the rights of the child has been recognised as we have secured our Level 1 in the Rights Respecting Schools Award. We have also developed our Behaviour and Discipline Policy to further promote relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils. The policy embodies the ways in which we develop behaviour for learning and pupil's abilities to self-manage their own behaviour.

Staff are expected to actively build relationships and engage with families, after all, the school is at the heart of this community. We work hard to reach parents who may be reluctant to approach school, recognising the multiple barriers that some parents face, such as language and previous negative experiences of school. We use parenting classes and family support workers to engage with parents and our parent consultation meetings are very well attended. We have been successful in securing the Achievement for All Quality Mark and this work has been beneficial in supporting and equipping more inexperienced staff with understanding approaches which can breakdown such barriers with families.

As a school, we have developed a real focus on values and behaviours important to us and these are set out in our 'DREAMS' expectations, with each letter standing for a specific behaviour or value:

- D Dreams
- R Resilience
- E Engagement
- A Ambition
- M Mutual Respect
- S Self-belief

Alongside this, we have developed the use of Hunslet Moor 'DREAMS' currency which children can use to 'buy' reward time such as extra playtime, cooking activities, or a football tournament. This is used by all staff to promote and reward the 'DREAMS' behaviours exemplified by our children. Assemblies are used to promote and illustrate the 'DREAMS' behaviours and values, and 'DREAMS' ambassadors are used as role models to their peers.

Many of our children have had little experience of places of interest outside school. We organise many enrichment experiences, such as visitors coming into school and educational visits outside of school and in the immediate locality. These are well supported by our parents and valued by the children. Our Breakfast Club and After-school clubs offer a real range of sporting and other activities, all of which are oversubscribed and have grown in popularity in the past couple of years. Such wider opportunities have proven to be significant in inspiring pupils to want to achieve and to engage in wider learning opportunities.

The future for Hunslet Moor Primary is looking bright. We have shown, in terms of challenge and facing the need for change, this does not faze us. Instead it has been the catalyst for us to adapt and grow. As a community, we are on a mission to continue to build a school that is a place of outstanding learning and from which children develop the values, behaviours and attributes of lifelong learners within a multicultural Britain.

Kings Oak Primary Learning Centre



Left: Year 5 celebrating World Book Day
Above: Alison Wilks, Headteacher

Wombwell in Barnsley, is in the bottom 15% of social and economic deprivation in the UK. There is a history of low aspiration, high levels of unemployment and teenage pregnancy. More than a third of our families have been involved with social care and 45% of pupils qualify for pupil premium. As a result of a good reputation and increasing levels of migrants, predominantly from Eastern Europe, the school now has 449 children on role compared to 320, 10 years ago.

Kings Oak was born after the closure of two schools which the new Headteacher, Alison Wilks was appointed to oversee. Eight out of the existing 45 members of staff met the criteria and were employed in the new learning centre. Four Assistant Headteachers were also recruited to enable rapid sustainable change to take place. Three of these staff have now secured their own headships.

Kings Oak Primary Learning Centre has always had vision at its very core. We recognised that our community was trapped in a cycle of poverty and low aspirations and so it became our mission to break that cycle and empower our children and their families through learning, therefore we adopted "Learning for Life" as our motto.

The responsibility of ensuring that this vision is disseminated throughout school and the community is down to every member of staff. Leadership is distributed at every level and the degree of commitment from each leader cannot be over emphasised or taken for granted. We have invested heavily in leadership development and every Ofsted inspection has resulted with an outstanding judgement for Leadership and Management. The Headteacher has been invited to work with the National College

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Alison Wilks
- » Number on roll: 449
- » Ethnicity: EAL (English as an additional language): 45 (32 European, 13 other), Gypsy Roma: 4, White British: 400
- » SEND (Special Educational Needs and disability) : 99
- » FSM (Free school meals): 120
- » Looked after children: 7
- » Teachers: 21
- » Non- teaching staff: 46

“We are passionate about the quality of our curriculum and ensure that creativity lies at its heart.”

and the DfE on leadership development programmes and is now a Local Leader of Education and a Pupil Premium Champion.

One of the ways we develop a love of learning so that they become lifelong learners is through teaching the Seven Rs. These are: responsibility, resilience, reflectivity, reasoning, risk taking, resourcefulness and relationships. They are taught alongside the National Curriculum and form the foundations of a lifelong learner. Bloom’s Taxonomy (a hierarchy of thinking skills ranging from remembering to creating) has always been used by our teachers to encourage the children to think at a deeper level, enabling them to strive for mastery in all areas. We are passionate about the quality of our curriculum and ensure that creativity lies at its heart. When children are allowed to express themselves and have ownership over their learning, then we see the effects through high levels of motivation. Learning at Kings Oak has real purpose and our children apply this into a context that is celebrated at the end of the topic, whether it be a production that they have written and produced themselves or through curating an exhibition about the Egyptians. Learning in this way not only helps our children to develop and apply key skills but enables the brain to store new learning in the long term

memory. Our children love coming to school and they are passionate about learning. Since opening, attendance has increased by 5%.

In order to raise aspirations, we need to have high expectations. To enable children to achieve these high expectations, they experience first quality teaching from committed and highly trained members of staff who believe that every child in their class can be successful. Careful recruitment of the right teachers with specific skills, attitudes and philosophy has enabled us to build an outstanding and unique team. We are committed to high quality continuous professional development for all our staff including peer coaching. Many of our teachers have moved on to leadership positions in other schools, while some have been promoted. Teaching assistants have gained degrees with some becoming higher level teaching assistants or moving on to a career in teaching. In addition to this, parents have been supported in getting back to work or education through doing voluntary work or placements at the school. This is one way that our school regenerates and instigated a parliamentary visit in 2007. It is important that our children see that even as adults, we all value and enjoy learning.

One way of ensuring that learning is for life is by promoting a passion for reading. We regularly have “book weeks” where the school celebrates a specific author or genre. Authors and poets are invited to come into school and perform, inspire and work with the children. All the children’s learning will revolve around a particular text, resulting in enthusiastic, fired up children creating inspirational pieces of writing and artwork. Parents are invited to a weekly session where they can read with their children. We encourage siblings to join together for this to create an enjoyable and

Year 6 children raft building whilst on a residential visit.



purposeful opportunity for learning. We invest a lot into our foundation stage to develop early language and literacy skills. Highly skilled practitioners and early interventions have enabled us to highlight quickly and address any potential concerns. The literacy leaders in school hold parent workshops for them to find out exactly what is expected from their children by the end of the year and how we will enable them to achieve it. This is a chance for parents to develop strategies to support their children at home in an environment where they feel safe to ask questions. In 2015, 67% of our children achieved a level 5 in reading.

We have focused on building strong relationships with our parents and employ a parent support advisor who works closely with parents and carers needing support. She deals with a whole variety of issues from head lice, bed wetting and behaviour management to handling finances, support with medical appointments and home visits. This has resulted in our families having a huge amount of trust in the school and allows us to support our children at a deeper level to maximise learning.

The warm and friendly environment is commented on frequently by parents and visitors to the school. We have worked tirelessly to break down barriers with our families and encourage them to become involved with their children's education as much as possible. We aim to make them feel welcome as soon as they enter the building. It is important for us to use parents' names, smile and empathise with their issues. Emotional intelligence is something we value greatly in the school. We look for it at interview, we model it as a leadership team and as a result, positivity permeates throughout the building.

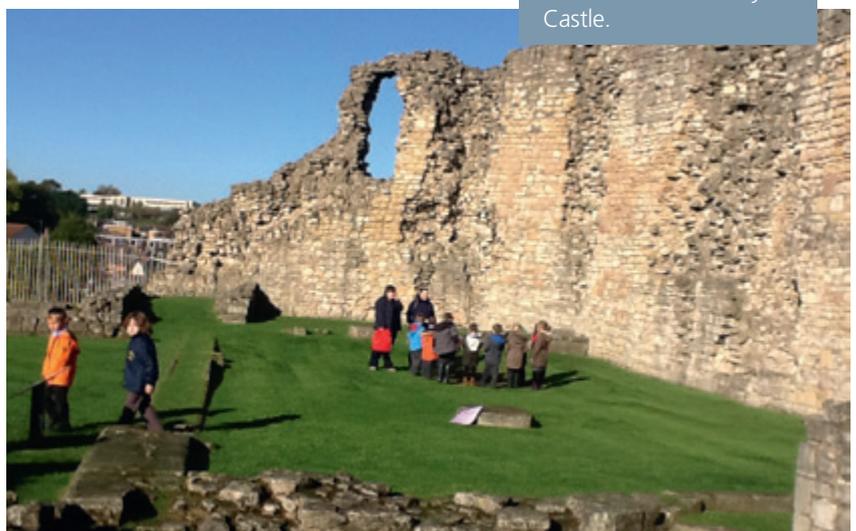
So, what next? Despite the challenges of Ofsted and the ever increasing expectations of children at the end of



Year 3 children experiencing what life was like in a Victorian workhouse.

Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Two, we will continue to teach in the way that we whole heartedly believe is right for the children in our community. We are investing in a virtual learning environment, a room that will provide sounds, smells and visual effects to immerse our children in the next best thing to a first-hand experience, for example, we can take them on The Polar Express, to the top of Mount Everest or to the battlefields of The Somme. We are determined to keep inspiring our children and our families and equipping them with the skills and attitudes to become successful and compassionate human beings for a challenging, unpredictable but exciting future.

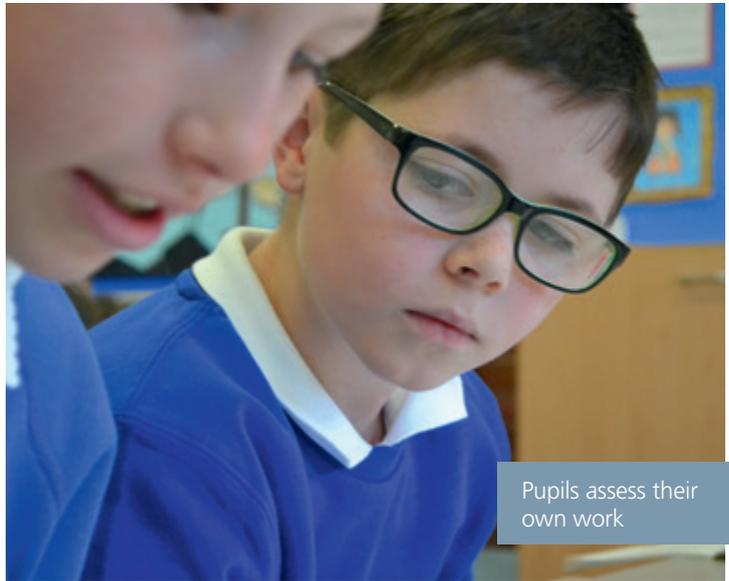
Year 2 children investigating medieval times at Conisborough Castle.



Robert Ferguson Primary School



Graham Frost, Headteacher and pupils catch up on the day's events



Pupils assess their own work

When I became headteacher of Robert Ferguson Primary School in 2009, the school needed urgent action to raise standards, restructure the staff team, restore dilapidated facilities and recover from rapidly declining pupil numbers. The teachers had all the responsibility, but lacked the authority to make the necessary changes. I quickly secured their commitment to a “no-excuses” approach.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Graham Frost
- » Location: Carlisle
- » Ages 3-11
- » 410 on roll
- » Above average pupil premium entitlement

Three years later Ofsted rated the school “good” and today the school is radically transformed. Numbers have risen from 280 to 410, the school budget is back in the black, and children benefit from teaching of the highest standard and excellent facilities. Simultaneous improvements to teaching and learning through high quality professional development are key to our success.

All staff contribute to the identification of strategic goals, collectively find solutions and hold themselves to account for achieving results. In all our decision-making the needs of the children are paramount, with changes to teaching firmly rooted in research evidence, collectively agreed and acted upon by all. It is no longer necessary to “manage performance” because staff are highly motivated, supported and encouraged to prioritise their own professional learning and engage in research. We currently have four teachers studying towards a Masters in Education (MA).

Early Years practice and a greater emphasis on aspects of learning such as resilience, perseverance and problem-solving have strongly influenced what we call “LEEP” (Learn, Extend, Enrich, Practise) – our way of organising lessons so that pupils become increasingly self-regulating in their learning. Never content to build

Robert Ferguson Primary School is a most welcoming school. It provides trainee teachers with a great experience in a rich, stimulating learning environment supported by enthusiastic, skilled practitioners. All staff working with students are experienced mentors who uphold their trainees and recognise and welcome the strengths and attributes that they bring into school. The caring and respectful ethos ensures that the children respond most positively to the additional adults that they meet in their classes, ensuring a happy and fulfilling experience for all concerned. The students from the University of Cumbria who have a placement at Robert Ferguson School are indeed very fortunate.

*Stephanie Hewison
Professional Partnership Tutor (PPT)
University of Cumbria*

I feel a great sense of community in the school from the office staff right through to the headteacher and everyone in-between. I have found all the teachers in the school approachable and willing to help or offer insights to different aspects of teaching. I feel fortunate to have had such a positive experience whilst on placement.

*Alistair Kane
Trainee Teacher*

“Changes to teaching are firmly rooted in research evidence.”

practice on passing fads, we are jointly researching and evaluating this approach with University of Cumbria.

Our research is underpinned by two hypotheses, based on professional experience. First, when there is a pupil-teacher ratio of up to 30 to 1, a combination of skilful teaching and pupil self-regulation leads to high motivation and deeper, broader learning. Second, we are finding reciprocal benefits in the combination of formal, subject-led learning (approx. 70% of the timetable) and cross-curricular, applied learning (30%). This approach enables pupils to deeply embed knowledge and skills, and helps teachers resist pressure to “teach to the test”.

Our assessment practice has evolved through three key stages:

1. Providing “learning menus” (lists of learning criteria) to enable pupils to participate in assessing their own learning and selecting their next steps.
2. Self- and peer-assessment against criteria determined by the teacher.
3. Self- and peer-assessment against criteria determined jointly by teachers and pupils.

A Year 5 Playground Leader helping a Reception pupil.





Podcast Production Team

“When we start a new topic, the teacher asks us what we want to find out and do, and we put it on the topic plan.”

“We choose our own challenge, and if we choose something too easy we can just move on to something harder. If it’s too hard, we can choose something easier until we feel confident.”

“I like being on School Council because your opinion is used, and you ask other classes what they want to make school better.”

Alongside our formative assessment approaches, we have devised and programmed a bespoke, online system for checking how well pupils are progressing with core learning. We listened to our parents’ views and made radical changes to our termly progress reports which describe learning simply, accurately and constructively to inform further progress.

“When teachers mark our work, we get a new step so that we can improve.” – Year 5 Pupil.

We place the highest level of trust in our pupils. For example, they organise the library, a healthy tuck shop, playground games and an enterprise week. They express their learning to a wide range of audiences through the written word and recorded media (e.g. video recordings and podcasts - YouTube and iTunes). As a result, pupils make an exceptional contribution to community life through charitable fund-raising (see the December 2015 newsletter on our

website), and our student school councillors successfully enlisted the support of Cumbria County Council to fund an essential extension of school hall and kitchen. At a classroom level, teachers routinely involve pupils in planning new topics, factoring in prior learning and pupils’ personal interests. Moving forward, pupils now plan their own topic learning, including what and how they will learn, and the medium in which they will express their learning.

Our plans for the future have one word at their core - empowerment. Robert Ferguson Primary School has become a highly effective, professional learning community characterised by continuous self-improvement for teachers and pupils.

“We place the highest level of trust in our pupils.”

» WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT OUR SCHOOL?

Nursery:
“Being outside and making a tent.”
“Doing hard jobs with numbers.”
“I like reading books.”

Reception:
“We keep trying!”
“Being kind to people.”
“Playing outside.”
“Learning new letters.”

Year 2:
“I like LEEP because there are lots of different things to do.”
“I like the different challenges.”
“I feel like I have really pushed myself this morning.”

St Edward's RC Primary School



Left: May 2016 St Edward's girls football team – National Champions
Right: Reception children – exploring and understanding the world

St. Edward's RC Primary School is situated in Linthorpe, one mile from Middlesbrough town centre in the North East of England. It serves a mixed catchment area, and pupils progress to well above national average by Year 6. Graded outstanding in both Ofsted and RE inspections, the challenge to maintain performance is one that drives the school forward. At the end of 2015, St. Edward's became one of eleven schools to form a new Multi Academy Trust comprising ten primary schools and one secondary school.

Constantly achieving outstanding results means you need to know the school inside out, embrace ambition and set outcomes which people can relate to. Learning needs to be personalised and engaging, and as a leader you need to be willing to push the boundaries and take risks without any fear of failure.

The key to sustaining outstanding status is to ensure that everyone shares the vision and I set the highest of expectations in all aspects of school life. Our values, culture and direction are lived and observed by governors, teachers and assistants, cleaning staff, and of course pupils and parents. Everyone is therefore accountable; we are all leaders together.

KS2 results are high, and in the past three years have improved further. In 2015 for example, 100% pupils achieved Level 4b or above in maths, reading and writing making us one of only 187 schools to achieve this. We have been named 'Top Teesside School' the past two years and in 2014 awarded first place in the North East. The Times Newspaper Power League ranked St Edward's as 33 in the 300 best schools guide.

REPORT CARD

- » Head teacher: Mary Brown
- » Ofsted rating: Outstanding
- » 409 pupils, 49 staff
- » 2 form entry
- » Diocese of Middlesbrough
- » Part of St. Hilda's Catholic Academy Trust

“As a leader, you need to be willing to push the boundaries and take risks without any fear of failure”

» QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- » What would you want to learn at their age?
- » How will it be taught to make it exciting yet probe their understanding further?
- » What are the Key Skills (what they need to know) and Core Skills (how will it be taught)?

Each individual pupil has a *right* to achieve the highest standards possible within a safe environment. You therefore need a challenging curriculum, continuous monitoring of standards and assessment and consistent communication. The curriculum needs to be personalised well beyond any statutory objectives, and should include community news as well as wider world issues. In doing this, I tell the staff to take risks and think outside the box!

As Head teacher, I want pupil voice at the forefront of what we do. We ask, “what do you want to learn?” Their responses are collated, displayed, and incorporated. We expect our pupils to be part of the planning of the curriculum and in turn, our pupils want to be challenged. Their thirst for knowledge is evident and we encourage pupils to provide feedback and offer ideas to help personalise learning. This approach enhances the curriculum and helps to develop pupils’ own leadership skills.

I am passionate in creating a curriculum which is rich and innovative with thematic approaches and cross-curricular links. History drives the curriculum in Autumn for example, with Geography and Science taking over in Spring. Literacy and Maths skills are interwoven and embedded throughout.

My dedicated staff inspire and motivate pupils; they ensure teaching and learning in the classroom is adapted to excite and develop curiosity. I expect teachers to work at the mastery level, which is to achieve the highest level of attainment for all children. Progress is evident in pupils’ books and can be measured through comparative assessment before and after learning.

The titles of ‘higher, middle and lower’ ability groups have been removed. Instead, pupils are grouped into tasks which enable them to be challenged based on their learning and understanding from the previous day’s lesson. For instance, a child previously considered as ‘lower ability’ could face a higher level task if their understanding was good on the previous occasion. This approach relies on accurate marking, feedback and assessment, all of which are recognised strengths in our school.

The Senior Leadership Team is strategically placed in every year group to lead and impart the vision, supported by some important appointments:

- » A senior leader develops and embeds the social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum to encourage the right behaviours in children, focused around our values and community. Based on positive evidence, this teacher has been asked to be Senior Leader in Education to share good practice.
- » My School Sports Coach develops able and talented pupils, leads extended school activities and small intensive training with vulnerable pupils. He contributes to planning and assessment, and is now being funded for a Foundation Teaching Degree.
- » A teaching assistant with a Psychology degree was funded through Pupil Premium to help ‘unlock minds’.

Celebrating the curriculum



» ENCOURAGING AND NURTURING PUPILS' LEADERSHIP, LEARNING AND RESPONSIBILITY

- » The 'Sports Crew', where children organise and purchase sports equipment. Trained Play Leaders are responsible for leading competitions.
- » The School Council enthusiastically inputs into my school development plan.
- » The Chaplaincy Team meets regularly with the parishioners and community to develop links.
- » Our 'Fruit to Suit' initiative – a healthy snack business organised entirely by Year 5 pupils as purchasers, product controllers, budget holders and sales assistants. They report termly to governors on profit and sales.

Working with all ages, she has made exceptional progress with some children increasing their reading age by 20–30 months.

- » Higher Level Teaching Assistants, one of whom is a fully qualified teacher, have expertise in specific areas such as Food Technology, Eco-schools and Maths. They are able to manage behaviour, assess and plan.

Our Extended School Programme stimulates and extends understanding. We have 37 extended school clubs; each with a clear purpose. The Roller Skating club, for example, encourages self-discipline and core muscle development whilst the Debating club solicits opinions. These are organised by teachers, parents and teaching assistants with 99% pupil involvement.

The Department for Education policy 'Assessing without Levels' relates to the removal of national performance levels for children. In the past two years, I have developed formative assessments in the core subjects which show progress against the term's work and is highlighted in pupils' books. I recently shared this initiative at a Head Teachers' Conference in York which generated requests for assistance from schools in and around the region of the north east. Due to high demand, I held an open day for other schools to observe teaching and learning in the classroom and to discuss our assessment practices. Such collaboration and school-to-school support is essential for learning and continual self-development.

I am inclusive with my senior team, and we regularly scan the external environment for new information and innovations. Embracing creativity is key, alongside a 'go for it' attitude and evidence of impact. I constantly ask the following questions to clarify direction and deliver objectives:

- » Do they know the vision and how it can be achieved?
- » Are they empowering others; developing their own people skills?
- » Am I being clear in how I want the school to perform?
- » "So What?" – progress and impact is my motto

I believe my passion and drive to do what is best for pupils coupled with innovation, communication and rigour are vital elements to success. My next challenge is to apply and share this philosophy as a director on the board of the new Multi Academy Trust. I also mentor future Head teachers and leaders and I am in the process of applying for National Leader in Education.

I want pupils to feel safe and come to school with genuine hope and enthusiasm; eager to learn. I also want staff who are dedicated to the whole child each and every day. The desire to make a difference and succeed is always achievable, and your base or location should not limit ambition. There is no better example of this than St. Edward's girls' football team, who recently won the Danone Nations Cup 2016 and really helped put us and Middlesbrough on the map!

Sports science lesson



Stanley Grove Primary Academy



Phil Mellen, Executive Principal



School of News in partnership with the University of Salford

Stanley Grove is a large primary school with 671 pupils on roll serving the community of Longsight in central Manchester. The pupil population is predominantly from a Pakistani/Bangladeshi background but there are a total of 26 different home languages spoken. Every single pupil starts school below or significantly below expected standards for English and Maths skills and half of pupils are entitled to free school meals. In some year groups this hits eighty per cent.

REPORT CARD

- » Executive Principal: Philip Mellen
- » Head of School: Amy Footman
- » Location: Longsight, East Manchester
- » Academy Status: September 2012
- » Three Form Entry (674 on roll)

The school has a team of one hundred and seven employees with more than a third of the staff now from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The best the school had ever been graded by Ofsted was satisfactory/requires improvement until June 2014 when inspectors judged the school to be good. The school has been part of the Bright Futures Educational Trust since September 2012. Phil Mellen started as Principal in July 2013 with 10 years' experience as a Headteacher and moved to the role of Executive Principal of Stanley Grove and Gorton Mount Primary, which is also part of Bright Futures, in September 2015. Amy Footman has been Head of School at Stanley Grove since September 2015.

It is impossible to attribute the improvement in teaching, learning and outcomes at Stanley Grove to one thing, or even to half a dozen things. Schools are often eager to look for the miracle cure - the new assessment scheme, teaching style or resource that will transform their establishment. In reality it is much more complicated. Recruitment and training of a permanent teaching and support team was important but so was success in sport. Investment in reading books and IT was essential but community links and large scale events also played an integral role.

Reading is a good place to start. The school invested heavily in books for the classroom, library and the home. A full time Reading Leader was appointed with a brief to improve the teaching of reading across the school. Events with visiting authors attracted as many as two hundred parents into the school and hundreds of books were sold, an outcome that was replicated at regular book fairs. Book swaps were initiated, with a low quality of books to start with but then increasingly better stories for all age groups. 'The Big Book Bash', a family festival based around children's literature, attracted nearly 2000 parents, pupils, friends and neighbours to the school field in July 2014 and was followed by an equally successful 'Bikes, Books and Beyond' in 2015.

These events were part of a drive to open the school doors in particular to parents. Adult learning classes, regular workshops on teaching and learning, 'Bring an Adult to School' weeks and community festivals helped to build a closer partnership between the school and the wider Longsight community. The appointment of a full time parental liaison officer also enabled parents to have a single first point of call for queries that could not be easily answered by the Stanley Grove admin team.

Partnerships play a key role in providing the staff and pupils of Stanley Grove with better opportunities and improved outcomes. The school is part of Bright Futures Educational Trust, a small multi-academy trust (9 schools) and the community of practice between schools is a key element of school improvement and professional development. The Trust schools are also all part of a wider teaching school alliance (Alliance for Learning) which has opened up to staff a wide range of training opportunities, helping to improve teaching across the school to the point where senior leaders are grading all teaching good or better and 70% outstanding. The Reflective Inquiry programme, where teachers do

partner observations with the support of a coach, has also been a major factor in this improvement.

The school has also established close working partnerships with The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester Museum, Lancashire Cricket Club, Manchester University and The Diane Modahl Sports Foundation. This was prompted by a cultural experiences survey of pupils in Autumn 2014 which showed that many Stanley Grove pupils had never visited cultural facilities that were in some cases less than a mile away (1% of pupils had been to The Whitworth, 9% to Lancashire Cricket ground at Old Trafford, for example). These new relationships have paid immediate and lasting dividends with all pupils going to the Whitworth and Manchester Museum and pupils having the opportunity to be the guard of honour at a Lancashire T20 match. During October half term 2015, Stanley Grove pupils exhibited animations at the Whitworth and led workshops for families in what is now the Art Fund Museum of the Year. These unique opportunities are part of the mix that has led to pupil and parent surveys being overwhelmingly positive about the provision offered by the school.

“Partnerships play a key role in providing the staff and pupils of Stanley Grove with better opportunities and improved outcomes”

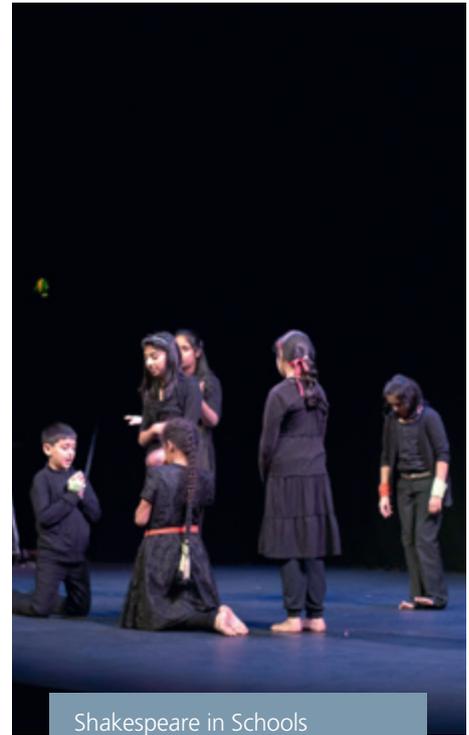
Manchester Libraries
Reading Challenge Winners
2015



“Stanley Grove is now exceptional with more than forty different clubs”

The sport and PE provision at Stanley Grove is now exceptional with more than forty different clubs running across the year and 88% of pupils taking part. The school is now regularly winning local tournaments and reaching Manchester Wide finals in cricket, football, basketball, athletics and more. We are the current Manchester hockey champions and went on to finish 3rd in the Greater Manchester tournament. Pupils also have many opportunities to attend sporting events to inspire them and groups have recently attended Wimbledon, World Squash Championships, England v New Zealand T20 cricket, football at Manchester United and more.

Residential trips have also developed with all pupils from Years 3 – 6 being offered opportunities from an overnight stay to a week long Lake District experience. All pupils go on at least one day trip per term with a new approach linking these trips to vocabulary development, which is having a very positive impact on pupil reading and writing. As pupils lacked experience of a variety of settings (the seaside, forests, farms for example), it was seen as crucial to give those experiences to all children at Stanley Grove and to link them directly to vocabulary development and quality



Shakespeare in Schools performance

stories. The school funds the majority of the finance for all trips, to prevent cost becoming an issue for our families.

All of these initiatives and inputs have combined to improve pupils outcomes with an increase from 22% to 52% in good level of development at end of Reception, a 20% increase in pupils attaining Level 3 at Year 2, and combined Level 4 at Year 6 moving from 59% to 71% in two years. Pupil progress across the whole school has also improved rapidly in all subjects and pupil attendance is improving year on year.

Stanley Grove is part of a collaborative and innovative Trust and at the centre of a supportive community with whom the school has built a relationship of trust. The investment in reading, the strong partnerships and ongoing teacher development have led to rapid improvements in educational experiences and outcomes for all pupils. The school, the community and Bright Futures Educational Trust believe that Stanley Grove is providing an outstanding education for all pupils. Long may it continue.

Big Book Bash parade



Graceful in defeat – David Cameron responds to the verdict of the EU Referendum



David Cameron's resignation speech outside 10 Downing Street

Eleven months after delivering the first outright Conservative General Election victory since 1992, David Cameron came to the Commons Dispatch Box as a lame duck Prime Minister, a caretaker who would remain in office only until his successor could be named. The Referendum vote to leave the EU had ended his career with brutal finality.

He was cheered by his MPs as he arrived in a packed Commons Chamber and he seemed remarkably good humoured. Moments before he rose, the newest MP, Rosena Allin-Khan, who had been elected to replace Labour's Sadiq Khan, the new Mayor

of London, had been introduced. With mass resignations from Labour's Shadow Cabinet as the leadership crisis in the Opposition unfolded, he advised her to keep her phone on because she might be promoted by the end of the day.

Then he gave his response to the Referendum decision. 'It was not the result that I wanted, or the outcome I believe is best for the country I love but there can be no doubt about the result. Of course I do not take back what is said about the risks; it is going to be difficult...' He also promised that an upsurge in hate crime against migrants would be stamped out.

One of his key announcements was that he would not trigger the formal EU exit process – Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty – and the timing of that decision and the nature of the future relationship Britain would seek with the EU were matters for his successor. He said he would take that message to the emergency European Council meeting that had been convened for the next day, to respond to the Brexit vote.

'Tomorrow will also provide an opportunity to make the point that although Britain is leaving the European Union we must not turn our back on Europe or the rest of the world,' he added.

For Labour, Jeremy Corbyn – accused of fighting a lacklustre referendum campaign – said his party had put

forward a positive case for Remain and had convinced two thirds of its supporters. He said people in many communities felt disenfranchised and powerless because they had been failed, not by the EU, but by Tory governments.

He complained that the campaign had been marked by untruths and half-truths and added, in a pointed rebuke, that ‘the country will thank neither the Government benches in front of me nor the Opposition benches behind for indulging in internal factional manoeuvring...’ – an observation that provoked a blast of scorn from Tory and SNP MPs, and silence from the Labour benches.

With Scotland having voted to remain in the European Union, the SNP’s Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, said the Scottish Government would seek to protect Scotland’s place. ‘We are a European nation and it really matters to us that we live in an outward-looking country, not a diminished little Britain.’

The Liberal Democrat Leader, Tim Farron, said he still passionately believed British interests were best served by being at the heart of Europe. A few moments later his predecessor, the former Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, said it could not be right that the Conservative Party members who would elect Mr Cameron’s replacement would, in effect, choose a



With the upheaval caused by the UK’s European referendum, many questions are still to be answered

new Government. Surely, he said, there should now be a General Election?

A series of Conservative Leave campaigners, the veteran Sir Bill Cash, the former Cabinet Minister, Owen Paterson, and others praised the Prime Minister for holding the referendum, a line also taken by UKIP’s sole MP, Douglas Carswell, who was heavily heckled as he warned that the task of implementing Brexit could not be left to ‘Europhile mandarins’ and called for prominent Leave campaigners to be involved – a comment which provoked a backbench shout of ‘Yeah Farage.’

This was the first of what will doubtless be scores of Commons statements on the Brexit process – they will become a fixture in Parliament for years to come.

Trident Submarine Renewal

The first Commons outing for a new Prime Minister is normally a great occasion in its own right, but Theresa May’s debut, following the withdrawal of her final opponent in the Conservative leadership race the week before, was overshadowed by a spectacular outbreak of Labour infighting.

She was moving a motion to confirm plans for a multi-billion pound programme to replace the submarines which carry the UK’s Trident Missile nuclear deterrent – a move which underlined her personal commitment to Trident renewal which, she said, was essential to national security.



The UK's Trident Missile nuclear deterrent was one of the first issues Theresa May faced as the UK's new Prime Minister

She was challenged by the SNP's George Kerevan who asked if she, personally, would order a nuclear strike which would kill 100,000 innocent men, women and children. Her response was a blunt, unadorned 'Yes'. A nuclear deterrent was pointless if a government was not willing to use it, she added.

She had open support from Labour backbenchers including John Woodcock, MP for the submarine-building seat of Barrow and Furness... 'Whatever she is about to hear from our Front Benchers, it remains steadfastly Labour Party policy to renew the deterrent while other countries have the capacity to threaten the United Kingdom and many of my colleagues will do the right thing for the long-term security of our nation and vote to complete the programme that we ourselves started in Government.'

The Prime Minister answered with an approving quote from Labour's manifesto, which said Britain must remain 'committed to a minimum, credible, independent nuclear capability, delivered through a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent'.

The Green MP, Dr Caroline Lucas, said the UK's nuclear weapons drove

nuclear proliferation. Theresa May did not accept that at all – and she took a direct swipe at Dr Lucas. 'Sadly, she and some Labour Members seem to be the first to defend the country's enemies and the last to accept these capabilities when we need them.'

The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, questioned the 'ever-ballooning' cost of Trident renewal – but for him the central issue was this 'Do these weapons of mass destruction – for that is what they are – act as a deterrent to the threats we face and is that deterrent credible?'

Unlike the Prime Minister he was not prepared to press the nuclear button. 'I would not take a decision that killed millions of innocent people. I do not believe that the threat of mass murder is a legitimate way to go about dealing with international relations.'

Mr Corbyn faced repeated challenges from his own MPs. Angela Smith noted he was 'Fond of telling us all that the Party Conference is sovereign when it comes to Party policy. Last year the Party Conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the nuclear deterrent, so why are we not hearing a defence of the Government's motion?' Mr Corbyn retorted that Labour's policy was under review, provoking more shouts from Labour MPs.

The bombardment continued. The former Defence Minister, Kevan Jones, compared Labour's defence review to the mythical unicorn; people believed it existed but no-one had ever seen it. Former Shadow Armed Forces Minister, Toby Perkins, said the case for not replacing Trident had fallen apart. Former Shadow Defence Secretary, Vernon Coaker, said Britain could not abandon its responsibilities as a senior member of NATO.

The SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, said the people

The Government voted in favour of the renewal of Trident





HMS Vanguard
returning to Faslane,
Scotland

of Scotland had repeatedly shown their opposition to Trident renewal – and he added ‘The Government have a democratic deficit in Scotland and, with today’s vote on Trident, it is going to get worse, not better.

It will be for the Scottish people to determine whether we are properly protected in Europe and better represented by a government that we actually elect. At this rate, that day is fast approaching.’

The vote to bomb ISIL in Syria

The Commons surprise vote in August 2013 rejecting armed intervention in the civil war in Syria was undoubtedly David Cameron’s worst-ever parliamentary defeat. That moment reverberated when, two years later in the wake of the Paris attacks, he returned to the Commons with a motion to allow British forces to strike at ISIL, or Daesh, in Syria.

He warned MPs that ISIL was plotting Paris-style attacks against Britain and had already targeted this county. ‘We face a fundamental threat to our security. ISIL has brutally murdered British hostages. They have inspired the worst terrorist attack against British

people since 7/7 on the beaches of Tunisia and they have plotted atrocities on the streets here at home. Since November last year our security services have foiled no fewer than seven different plots against our people, so this threat is very real. The question is this: do we work with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat and do we go after these terrorists in their heartlands from where they are plotting to kill British people, or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us?’

He was attempting to rally all-party support for the use of British forces in Syria – they were already launching



Hilary Benn took the opposite view to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn over intervention in Syria

airstrikes against ISIL in neighbouring Iraq – but many Labour MPs were fuming about remarks he had made the previous evening to a meeting of Conservative MPs, when he suggested people who voted against airstrikes were ‘terrorist sympathisers’. He faced repeated challenges to withdraw and apologise – but stuck to a formula that unity was needed and that it was time to move on.

One focus for questions was the Prime Minister’s claim that there are 70,000 moderate Syrian opposition fighters who could act as a ground force against ISIL while the UK gave air support. Under questioning from the SNP’s Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, he said he was not arguing that all of those 70,000 were

Tim Farron, Liberal Democrat Leader



ideal partners but if action was not taken now, those forces would soon be reduced.

Another issue was the position of Labour MPs. In 2013, the Opposition Leader at the time, Ed Miliband, had not been prepared to back the Government. By 2015, a combination of horror at the brutality of ISIL and at the Paris attacks meant there were many who supported the use of armed force and would defy any attempt to make them vote against it. Crucially, their number included the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Hilary Benn.

Jeremy Corbyn was opposed to extending the bombing but, under huge pressure, had allowed his MPs a free vote. ‘It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Prime Minister understands that public opinion is moving increasingly against what I believe to be an ill thought out rush to war. He wants to hold this vote before opinion against it grows even further.’

Another key force in the debate was the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee which had earlier published a report raising a series of questions about any intervention which the Prime Minister was careful to answer in detail. Its Chair, the Conservative Crispin Blunt MP, said Britain’s military effort in Iraq had helped stabilise the country in the face of a rapidly advancing threat from ISIL and he now supported extending that effort to across the border into Syria.

The ensuing debate produced a series of passionate speeches – the Liberal Democrat Leader, Tim Farron, gave an emotional description of his experiences visiting refugees who had made the risky journey to Greece. ‘A seven-year-old lad was lifted from a dinghy on the beach at Lesbos. My Arabic interpreter said to me, ‘That lad has just said to his Dad, “Daddy are ISIL here? Daddy are ISIL here?”’

Winding up the debate for Labour was Hilary Benn who took the opposite view to Jeremy Corbyn. 'The carnage in Paris brought home to us the clear and present danger that we face from Daesh. It could just as easily have been London, Glasgow, Leeds or Birmingham and it could still be.' He said the UK could not leave its defence to others and asked what message inaction would send to Britain's allies – France, in particular.

He listed some of their atrocities: the gay men thrown off the fifth storey of a building in Syria, the mass graves in Sinjar said to contain the bodies of older Yazidi women murdered by Daesh because they were judged too old to be sold for sex, the killing of 30 British tourists in Tunisia, 224 Russian holidaymakers on a plane, 178 people in suicide bombings in Beirut, Ankara and Suruç and of 130 people in Paris 'including those young people in the Bataclan, whom Daesh, in trying to justify its bloody slaughter, called apostates engaged

in prostitution and vice. If it had happened here they could have been our children.

'We are faced by fascists – not just their calculated brutality but their belief that they are superior to every single one of us in this Chamber tonight and all the people we represent. They hold us in contempt. They hold our values in contempt. They hold our belief in tolerance and decency in contempt. They hold our democracy – the means by which we will make our decision tonight – in contempt... My view is that we must now confront this evil. It is now time for us to do our bit in Syria. That is why I ask my colleagues to vote for the motion tonight.'

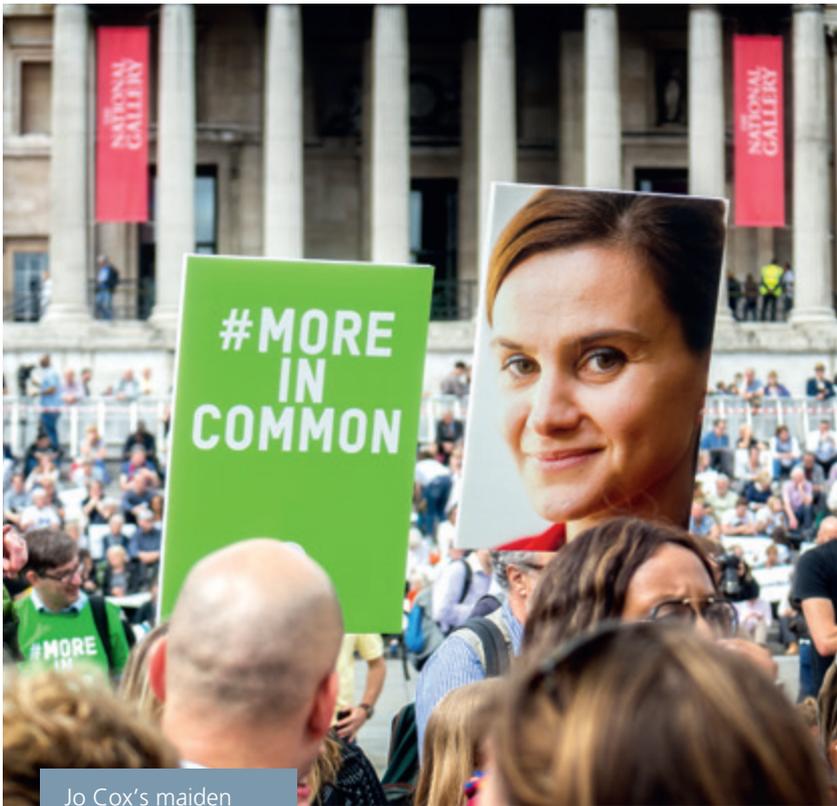
While Jeremy Corbyn folded his arms and looked away, Mr Benn sat down to rapturous cheers and even applause from both sides of the House. A few minutes later the Government motion was carried with 66 supporters from the Labour benches outweighing the seven Conservative opponents.

MPs pay tribute to their murdered colleague, Jo Cox

On Thursday 20 June, a week before the EU Referendum, campaigning was in full swing – the usual cycle of attack, rebuttal and counter attack was being played out. Suddenly the political world shuddered to a halt as news emerged of the brutal murder of the Labour MP, Jo Cox, outside a constituency surgery in her Yorkshire seat.

The House of Commons had been in recess for the Referendum, and was recalled to pay tribute the following Monday. The chamber was packed but the seat normally occupied by Jo Cox was left empty, except for two roses – Labour's red rose and the white rose





Jo Cox's maiden speech to Parliament: 'We are far more united than the things that divide us'

of Yorkshire. In the gallery, Mrs Cox's husband Brendan sat with their two young children and members of their family.

MPs wore white roses and several women Labour members were dressed in the suffragette colours of purple and green. Some MPs wept quietly as the Speaker, John Bercow, opened proceedings 'We meet today in heart-breaking sadness but also in heartfelt solidarity... all of us who came to know Jo during her all too short service in this House [she had been elected in 2015] became swiftly aware of her outstanding qualities, she was caring, eloquent, principled and wise.

'Jo was murdered in the course of her duties, serving constituents in need... An attack such as this strikes not only at an individual but at our freedom.'

The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, agreed the murder was an attack on democracy and he quoted from Jo Cox's maiden speech when she told the Commons 'We are far more united

and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us'.

David Cameron said the House could best honour her memory 'by proving that the democracy and freedoms that Jo stood for are indeed unbreakable, by continuing to stand up for our constituents and by uniting against the hatred that killed her, today and forever more'.

Tributes were paid from all sides, in a short sitting, which was followed by a memorial service at St Margaret's, the parish church of Parliament. The Labour MP, Rachel Reeves urged colleagues 'to carry on Jo's work and guard against hatred, intolerance and injustice and to serve others with dignity and love.... Batley and Spen will go on to elect a new MP, but no-one can replace a mother'.

Jo Cox had been a leading figure in several all-party groups – the Conservative former International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, served with her, as co-chair of the Friends of Syria, making common cause, as he put it, 'with a crusty old Tory'.

The Labour MP, Stephen Kinnock, had shared an office with Jo Cox. He spoke first of the unspeakable personal suffering her murder had brought on her family. He said Jo Cox would have been outraged by a poster unveiled on the morning of her death by the UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, showing a queue of migrants 'A poster on the streets of Britain that demonised hundreds of desperate refugees... She would have responded with outrage and with a robust rejection of the calculated narrative of cynicism, division and despair – because Jo understood that rhetoric has its consequences. When insecurity, fear and anger are used to light a fuse, an explosion is inevitable'.

The Lords reject the Government's Tax Credit changes

The Government lost more than 50 votes in the House of Lords in the first year of the 2015 Parliament – but by far the most significant, both in terms of the money involved and of the constitutional aftershocks, was the Peers' rejection of controversial plans to cut tax credits – the benefits used to top-up the incomes of low-paid workers.

Peers are not supposed to meddle in financial matters but this measure was not part of a finance bill. Instead it was put forward in an order, or statutory instrument, issued under existing legislation, which meant it was both un-amendable and subject to a one-off vote.

Faced with claims that the order would cost the poorest families thousands of pounds a year, the Lords passed a Labour motion calling on ministers to postpone the cuts and provide extra support for those affected, for a three-year transitional period. The result was

to throw the Chancellor's financial strategy into chaos, because it removed £4.4bn of savings.

George Osborne immediately warned that the vote raised constitutional issues and shortly afterwards the Government commissioned Lord Strathclyde, a former Leader of the House of Lords, to review the powers of the Upper House.

The debate began with the Leader of the House, Lady Stowell, defending the plans. She said spending on tax credits had risen from £4bn to £30bn and the bill was no longer sustainable, warning that interference in a key budget measure would overstep the conventions which prevent the Lords from overriding the tax and spending decisions of the elected Commons.

'In our manifesto, my Party made it clear that reducing the deficit would involve difficult decisions, including finding savings of £12bn from the



The interior of the House of Lords



Baroness Stowell argued that tax credits 'will remain an important part of the welfare system'

welfare budget. The regulations that we debate today deliver no less than £4.4bn of those savings next year alone,' she explained.

That argument was challenged by Lord Campbell-Savours, a Labour peer and former MP. 'When the Prime Minister said at the last general election that an incoming Conservative government would not cut tax credits – child tax credits – was he telling the truth or was he deliberately misleading the British people?' Lady Stowell retorted that the Conservatives had been very clear in their manifesto that they would aim to make welfare savings of £12bn and that working-age benefits would be targeted.

There were four amendments in front of Peers: the Liberal Democrat Lady Manzoor had put down a 'fatal motion' which would stop the changes; the second and third introduced delays. The fourth – from the Bishop of Portsmouth – simply expressed regret at the policy. All but the last, Lady Stowell warned, would challenge the primacy of the Commons on financial matters.

Lady Manzoor said 4.9 million children would be affected by the cuts to tax credits. 'We have a duty in this House to consider our constitutional role but

we also have a duty to consider those affected by the decisions we make and the votes we cast.'

She went on to say that it was wrong to enact such a major change via 'a statutory instrument, a tool designed for minor changes to processes and administration, being used to implement a substantial change in policy that will affect millions of people's livelihoods. That is not my decision but I hope that we will do everything we can to stop it'.

The second amendment was from the crossbencher, Lady Meacher, who wanted to delay the changes. 'The lowest income families, stand to lose more than £20 a week. For one of us this can mean a meal in a restaurant. For a poor working family it can mean a pair of shoes for a child who comes home from school crying because their toes are hurting in shoes that are too small, or money to feed the meter to keep the family warm.'

The Labour former Work and Pensions Minister, Lady Hollis, proposed the third amendment which would postpone the cuts for three years while transitional protection was brought in. She dismissed talk of constitutional crisis. 'We can be supportive of the Government and give them what they did not ask for – financial privilege – or we can be supportive instead of those three million families facing letters at Christmas telling them that on average they will lose up to around £1,300 a year.'

The Conservative former Chancellor, Lord Lawson, supported the changes and insisted peers had no right to reject them but he wanted reform of the whole tax credits system because too much money went to well-off families. 'It is perfectly possible to tweak it to take more from the upper end of the tax credit scale and less from the lower end,' he said.



Lord Lawson, former Chancellor of the Exchequer

An unexpected Leader of the Opposition

When the Speaker called on Jeremy Corbyn, as Leader of the Opposition, at Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQ), it was the first time in 30 years in the Commons that the veteran left-winger had spoken at the Dispatch Box. Unlike the three rival candidates he had defeated so conclusively in Labour's leadership election, he had never been a minister or shadow minister still less sat in Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet.

He was facing a Conservative Leader who had been one of the main players in PMQs for a decade and who had coached previous Tory Leaders on how to handle it for years before that. Things were about to change, Labour's new leader wanted a different kind of PMQs, led by the concerns of the public – and he received 40,000 replies when he asked people to email him with their questions for David Cameron.

'I have taken part in many events around the country and had conversations with many people about what they thought of this place, our Parliament, our democracy and our conduct within this place,' he explained. 'Many told me that they thought Prime Minister's Question Time was too theatrical... and that they wanted things done differently but above all they wanted their voice to be heard in Parliament.'

The result was something quite different, dominated by bread-and-butter issues but with little of the familiar professional political fencing – at least at first. The opening question was from a woman called Marie who wanted to know what the Government intend to do about the 'chronic lack of affordable housing and the



Jeremy Corbyn, Labour Leader of the Opposition, reads questions from the public at PMQ

extortionate rents charged by some private sector landlords'.

David Cameron observed parliamentary protocol and congratulated Mr Corbyn on his resounding leadership election victory and he welcomed the idea of a new style at PMQs. He agreed more affordable housing was needed but added that the record of the Governments he had led was better than that of the previous Labour Government.

Mr Corbyn followed up with questions from Steven, on social rents and from Paul and Claire, on cuts to tax credits – a subject raised in a thousand of his emails – that he warned would cost families up to £1,300 per year and was 'absolutely shameful,' he said. The strategy was to continue; by his hundredth question, in March 2016, he had asked about health issues in 25 of them, welfare in 24, housing in 16 and education in five; it was a far less Westminster-centric approach.

Those first exchanges were courteous and careful as the two circled one another. It was left to the leaders of two of the smaller parties in the Commons to insert a couple of barbs. The first came from the SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, who said he was looking forward to working with the new Labour Leader to oppose Tory austerity and fight



Theresa May, speaking as Home Secretary

in the public interest.’ As some MPs wiped away tears, she added ‘No-one should have to suffer the loss of their loved ones through such appalling circumstances and no-one should have to fight year after year, decade after decade, in search of the truth’.

Labour’s Shadow Home Secretary, Andy Burnham, said the inquest jury had delivered a ‘simple, clear, powerful and emphatic’ verdict. ‘But it begged the question: how could something so obvious have taken so long? There are three reasons: first, a police force that has consistently put protecting itself over and above protecting people harmed by Hillsborough; secondly, collusion between that force and a complicit print media; and thirdly, a flawed judicial system that gives the upper hand to those in authority, over and above ordinary people.’

He said a similar inquiry was now needed to clear up what had happened at Orgreave during the 1980s Miners’

Strike and his final words, about the families of the 96, produced applause from MPs. ‘They have kept their dignity in the face of terrible adversity. They could not have shown a more profound love for those they lost on that day. They truly represent the best of what our country is all about. Now it must reflect on how it came to let them down for so long.’

The Conservative, Bob Neill, who chaired the Commons Justice Select Committee asked the Home Secretary to look at creating a mechanism to ensure ‘proper equality of arms,’ between the families of disaster victims and the authorities in dealing with inquests and legal proceedings.

The former Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Steve Rotherham, – one of several MPs at Hillsborough that day – said the Liverpool fans had always known they were not to blame. ‘It took political intervention to force the judicial process of this country to take 27 years to recognise what we knew from day one – that Hillsborough was not an accident... that drunken and ticketless fans did not turn up late, hell-bent on getting in and that it was not caused by a drunken “tanked-up mob”.’

The Liberal Democrat, Greg Mulholland, said the families of victims had been treated appallingly in the aftermath of the disaster. ‘We saw police officers sitting eating chicken and chips in the gymnasium as the bodies were lying there, while families were told that they could not hug their loved ones in body bags because they were the property of the coroner. Worst of all, the initial coroner forced alcohol testing on all these victims – including children such as 10-year-old Jon-Paul Gilhooley – of this unlawful disaster. That was a disgrace, and we want to know that it will never happen to a single victim again.’

An unexpected Leader of the Opposition

When the Speaker called on Jeremy Corbyn, as Leader of the Opposition, at Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQ), it was the first time in 30 years in the Commons that the veteran left-winger had spoken at the Dispatch Box. Unlike the three rival candidates he had defeated so conclusively in Labour's leadership election, he had never been a minister or shadow minister still less sat in Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet.

He was facing a Conservative Leader who had been one of the main players in PMQs for a decade and who had coached previous Tory Leaders on how to handle it for years before that. Things were about to change, Labour's new leader wanted a different kind of PMQs, led by the concerns of the public – and he received 40,000 replies when he asked people to email him with their questions for David Cameron.

'I have taken part in many events around the country and had conversations with many people about what they thought of this place, our Parliament, our democracy and our conduct within this place,' he explained. 'Many told me that they thought Prime Minister's Question Time was too theatrical... and that they wanted things done differently but above all they wanted their voice to be heard in Parliament.'

The result was something quite different, dominated by bread-and-butter issues but with little of the familiar professional political fencing – at least at first. The opening question was from a woman called Marie who wanted to know what the Government intend to do about the 'chronic lack of affordable housing and the extortionate rents charged by some private sector landlords'.



Jeremy Corbyn took a different approach at his first PMQs, tackling former PM David Cameron with crowdsourced questions

David Cameron observed parliamentary protocol and congratulated Mr Corbyn on his resounding leadership election victory and he welcomed the idea of a new style at PMQs. He agreed more affordable housing was needed but added that the record of the Governments he had led was better than that of the previous Labour Government.

Mr Corbyn followed up with questions from Steven, on social rents and from Paul and Claire, on cuts to tax credits – a subject raised in a thousand of his emails – that he warned would cost families up to £1,300 per year and was 'absolutely shameful,' he said. The strategy was to continue; by his hundredth question, in March 2016, he had asked about health issues in 25 of them, welfare in 24, housing in 16 and education in five; it was a far less Westminster-centric approach.

Those first exchanges were courteous and careful as the two circled one another. It was left to the leaders of two of the smaller parties in the Commons to insert a couple of barbs. The first came from the SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson,



Nigel Dodds, Deputy Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

who said he was looking forward to working with the new Labour Leader to oppose Tory austerity and fight against renewal of the Trident nuclear missile submarines – a highly divisive issue among Labour MPs, most of whom do not share their leader’s unilateralist views.

Then, the Leader of the DUP at Westminster, Nigel Dodds, raised Mr Corbyn’s key appointment to Labour’s front bench team, his veteran left-wing ally, John McDonnell, as Shadow Chancellor. Mr Dodds pointed to the plaques by the entrance to the Chamber in memory of Airey Neave, Robert Bradford, Ian Gow and Sir Anthony Berry – MPs murdered by terrorists. He added ‘The Opposition Leader has appointed a Shadow Chancellor who believes that terrorists should be honoured for their bravery.

Will the Prime Minister join all of us, from all parts of this House, in denouncing that sentiment and standing with us on behalf of the innocent victims and for the bravery of our armed forces who stood against the terrorists?

That produced loud ‘Hear, hears’ and the Prime Minister replied that Mr Dodds had spoken for the vast majority of people in Britain. ‘My view is simple, the terrorism we faced was wrong... The death and the killing was wrong. It was never justified and people who seek to justify it should be ashamed of themselves.’

That flash of steel was a harbinger of the Prime Minister’s increasingly dismissive treatment of the Labour Leader in later PMQs – culminating in his advice to Mr Corbyn to ‘put on a decent suit’.

Responding to the Chilcot Report on the Iraq War



Tony Blair, Prime Minister during the invasion of Iraq

It had been a long time coming, and the Parliamentarians in both Lords and Commons had complained about the time taken by Sir John Chilcot to produce his report on the decision to go to war in Iraq. When it did arrive, seven years after he started work, his two million word verdict provoked cross-party soul-searching and recrimination.

Sir John concluded that the UK went to war before the peace process was exhausted, that the intelligence on which the decision was based was flawed and that the planning for the aftermath was inadequate. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, responded with a Commons statement – he began by addressing the families of the 179 British servicemen and

women and 23 British civilians who died in the conflict. ‘In their grief and anger, I hope they can draw at least some solace from the depth and rigour of this report and, above all, some comfort from knowing that we will never forget the incredible service and sacrifice of their sons, daughters, husbands and wives.’

He turned to the keystone of the argument for war in 2003. ‘Central to the Government’s case was the issue of weapons of mass destruction. Sir John finds that there was an “ingrained belief” genuinely held in both the UK and US Governments that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological capabilities.’ The evidence for that belief, he found, was not properly examined.

Mr Cameron voted for military action as a Conservative backbencher, in 2003. He said lessons needed to be learned – and the first was that ‘taking the country to war should always be a last resort and should only be done if all credible alternatives have been exhausted’. He then added that the British people should not, in future, recoil from any military intervention. ‘There are unquestionably times when it is right to intervene, as this country did successfully in Sierra Leone and Kosovo... there have been times in the recent past when we should have intervened but did not, such as in failing to prevent the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica.’

The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who voted against military action in 2003, was heckled by some of his MPs when he condemned the invasion. ‘Frankly, it was an act of military aggression launched on a false pretext, as the inquiry accepts, and has long been regarded as illegal by the overwhelming weight of international legal opinion. It led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions of refugees... By any measure, the invasion and occupation of Iraq have been, for many, a catastrophe.’

In what many took to be a veiled reference to Tony Blair he added. ‘We now know that the House was misled in the run-up to the war and the House must now decide how to deal with it 13 years later.’

The Chilcot inquiry published more than 200 memos from Tony Blair to President George Bush. The Leader of the SNP at Westminster, Angus Robertson, pointed to one which he thought was particularly telling. ‘On 28 July 2002, Tony Blair wrote to President Bush saying I will be with you, whatever.’

His point about the real reason for the invasion was picked up by the senior Conservative, David Davis. ‘The aim was regime change, not WMDs. That fact, and the fact that, as Sir John Chilcot says, Blair’s commitment made it very difficult for the UK to withdraw support for military action, amount to a deception and a misleading of this House of Commons. It is not the only one. Sir John has been very careful about avoiding accusing the former Prime Minister of lying to the House but a lot of the evidence suggests that he did. What action can this House take to deal with that?’

UK troops in action in Iraq



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