

2016 / 2017

PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Parliamentary Review

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

■ FOREWORDS

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Lucy Powell MP

■ SOUTH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary

Wentworth Primary

St Francis Catholic Primary

Ernesettle Community School

St Andrew's CE Primary

Milton Park Primary

Bure Park Primary

Riverside Primary

Barnsbury Primary and Nursery

■ FEATURES

Review of the Year

Review of Parliament



The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Prime Minister

This year's *Parliamentary Review* follows a significant year in British politics. It was a year in which our economy continued to grow, as the Government followed its balanced plan to keep the public finances under control while investing to build a stronger economy. It was a year in which we began to deliver on the result of the EU referendum by triggering Article 50 and publishing the Repeal Bill, which will allow for a smooth and orderly transition as the UK leaves the EU, maximising certainty for individuals and businesses.

And, of course, it was a year in which the General Election showed that parts of our country remain divided and laid a fresh challenge to all of us involved in politics to resolve our differences, deal with injustices and take, not shirk, the big decisions.

That is why our programme for government for the coming year is about recognising and grasping the opportunities that lie ahead for the United Kingdom as we leave the EU. The referendum vote last year was not just a vote to leave the EU – it was a profound and justified expression that our country often does not work the way it should for millions of ordinary working families. So we need to deliver a Brexit deal that works for all parts of the UK, while continuing to build a stronger, fairer country by strengthening our economy, tackling injustice and promoting opportunity and aspiration.

In the year ahead we will continue to bring down the deficit so that young people do not spend most of their working lives paying for our failure to live within our means. We will take action to build a stronger economy so that we can improve people's living standards and fund the public services on which we all depend. We will continue with our modern Industrial Strategy,

deliver the next phase of high-speed rail, improve our energy infrastructure and support the development of automated vehicles and satellite technology, building a modern economy which creates the high-skill jobs of the future.

At the same time, work needs to be done to build a fairer society – where people can go as far as their talents will take them and no one is held back because of their background. So we will continue to work to ensure every child has the opportunity to attend a good school. We will continue to invest in the NHS and reform mental health legislation, making this a priority. And we will work to address the challenges of social care for our ageing population, bringing forward proposals for consultation to build widespread support.

So this is a Government determined to deliver the best Brexit deal, intent on building a stronger economy and a fairer society, committed to keeping our country safe, enhancing our standing in the wider world, and bringing our United Kingdom closer together. We will continue to put ourselves at the service of millions of ordinary working people for whom we will work every day in the national interest.

“We will continue to work to ensure every child has the opportunity to attend a good school”

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for School Standards
and Minister for Equalities



When we took office in 2010, too many children were leaving primary school struggling with the basics of reading and arithmetic, the national curriculum was failing to ensure pupils left school with the knowledge needed to be successful and artificial grade inflation had destroyed public confidence in national examinations. Reform was badly needed.

The reforms have had a dramatic effect on England's schools. Teachers and headteachers were given increased powers to improve their schools; rigour was re-introduced into the curriculum and examination system; and standards were raised for pupils of all ages.

Already, the fruits of our reforms are showing:

- » This year, 147,000 more six-year-olds are on track to become fluent readers than in 2012 thanks to systematic synthetic phonics and the phonics screening check
- » The GCSE attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers has shrunk by 7% since 2011, and
- » There are almost 1.8 million more Good or Outstanding school places.

But there is much more to do.

Outstanding free schools, such as Michaela Community School, Bedford Free School and the West London Free School, are providing a high-quality, knowledge-rich education for their pupils, but over one million pupils still attend schools that are not yet rated as Good or Outstanding. Whilst the quality of schools has improved, Ofsted has highlighted that provision in

Key Stage 3 remains weak in too many schools. And despite doubling the proportion of pupils taking the EBacc combination of academic GCSEs from one-fifth to two-fifths between 2010 and 2016, too few pupils are being given the opportunity to study English, maths, the sciences, a humanity and a language to 16.

Government must now provide support and a stable accountability framework to allow teachers and headteachers to deliver even greater results for all pupils, whatever their background and wherever they live in the country.

We must share the evidence from the best free schools and academies, so that all pupils can benefit from the effective curriculum and behaviour policies in these schools. We must continue to support teachers and headteachers in achieving the best for their pupils, as our reforms bed in. And we must maintain high expectations for all pupils, of all backgrounds, whatever their circumstances, because it is only when we do this that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed.

“We must continue to support teachers and headteachers in achieving the best for their pupils”



Lucy Powell MP

Education Select Committee (Lab.)

Education has rarely been out of the news in the last year with strong campaigning on school funding by teachers and parents having a big impact on the General Election result.

A hung Parliament means that the Prime Minister's plans for more grammar schools have been dropped. Ministers have found additional funding for the National Funding Formula although it is still not enough and does nothing to help with cost pressures now. Whilst government machinery is fixated on Brexit, school leaders may have some respite from the initiative-itis of recent years.

Schools across the country have lots of which to be proud, and the work you are doing is making a real difference to the lives and prospects of children. Thank you. I know from talking to headteachers in Manchester the real pressures you face to achieve good results. School budgets are falling; teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge; and changes to SAT and GCSE assessment are yet to bed in.

There is excellent practice across the country, with governors and schools leaders innovating and providing a rich learning experience for children. Yet there are also pockets of persistent disadvantage where the gap between rich and poor pupils is widening not narrowing. Even in high-performing schools, the gap can be stark between Pupil Premium children and their peers.

Boosting attainment for all, whilst narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, should be the major focus of government through the school years. Indeed, I would argue that tackling social mobility across all life stages should be the focus of government social policy.

The gap between poorer children and their peers starts pre-school, yet very little is being done to ensure all children are ready for school.

Ministers must redouble efforts to ensure there are enough good teachers in our schools. That means looking at pay. We won't have world-class schools without recruiting and retaining world-class teachers.

Fair funding will dominate the next few years and it's unjustifiable that schools in Bradford or Knowsley get far less per pupil than schools with similar intakes in Tower Hamlets. However, some already high-performing areas will see increases. New funding needs to address need, to narrow the gap and boost attainment where there are problems, not just allocate funding on an arbitrary formula.

We have debated education many times in Parliament this year, focusing Ministers' minds on the particular challenges schools face. I know that colleagues in Parliament greatly welcome invitations and visits to schools so that MPs can see firsthand the work you are doing.

I hope we continue to see education in the news, so that school leaders, and parliamentarians, can continue to work together to tackle the big issues affecting education.

“Boosting attainment for all should be the major focus of government through the school years”

Return of the Two Party System

The BBC's Andrew Neil gives his take on the state of Parliament following the June 2017 general election.

It was a year in which politicians learned not only of the power of a referendum to overrule the will of Parliament – but of its power to change the party system in which they operate. Nobody saw this coming. But, in retrospect, perhaps we should have, since we had the fallout from the Scottish referendum to guide us.

In the autumn of 2014 the Scots voted 55%-45% to remain part of the United Kingdom. That was supposed to settle the matter of Scottish independence for a generation, until some Scottish Nationalists began regarding a generation as no more than a couple of years. But in post-referendum elections to Holyrood and Westminster, it also recast the Scottish party system.

Remember, Scotland had been one of the first parts of the UK to throw off the British two-party system and replace it with a multi-party choice of SNP, Labour, Tory, Green, Lib Dem and even UKIP. But as the constitutional issue took centre-stage – and remained there even after the referendum – Scottish voters coalesced round a binary choice: for or against independence.

Thus was a new two-party system born of a centre-left Nationalist party (the SNP) and a centre-right Unionist party (the Scottish Tories). The other parties have not been completely obliterated, especially in Holyrood with its peculiar voting system. But by the general election of 2017 Scotland had become a battle between a dominant

Nationalist party and a resurgent Tory party representing the Union. Two-party politics was back north of the border.

So we should have been prepared for something similar when Britain voted 52% to 48% to leave the European Union in the June 2016 referendum. At the time, we remarked on the power of referenda to overrule both the Commons (where MPs were 65% pro-EU) and the Lords (probably 80% pro-EU). What we did not see was how the Brexit referendum would reconfigure English politics just as the Scottish referendum had redrawn Scottish politics.

So we were taken by surprise for a second time. In this year's general election – perhaps the single biggest act of self-harm a sitting government has ever inflicted on itself – almost 85% in England voted either Conservative or Labour. The English had not voted in such numbers for both major parties since 1970, when the post-war two-party system began to wane – and declined in subsequent elections to a point where barely 65% voted Tory or Labour, encouraging some commentators to think the decline terminal.

The referendum, however, reversed the decline. The Brexit vote ended the schism on the Eurosceptic Right as UKIP voters returned to the Tory fold; and those on the Left of the Greens and the Lib Dems flocked to Jeremy Corbyn's more 'Red Flag' Labour offering. So, as in Scotland previously, two-party politics was back with a vengeance in England too.

But without one crucial element. Our historic two-party system regularly produced one-party government for the life of a Parliament. But our new two-party system has produced a hung Parliament with no party having an overall majority. This knife-edge parliamentary arithmetic means the smaller parties may be down – but they are not out.

The Conservatives need an alliance with one small party (Ulster's DUP) to be sure of a majority. Even then, with the Tories and Labour divided over Brexit, no majority on any issue will be certain and on many votes the smaller parties will be pivotal in determining many outcomes.

So politicians return from their summer recess to a great parliamentary paradox: the two-party system has resurrected itself but rather than bringing with it the stability and certainty of the two-party politics of old, almost every major vote in the months ahead will be uncertain and unpredictable – and politics will be peculiarly unstable. Power will rest in Parliament. Government will be able to take nothing for granted. No vote will be in the bag until all the votes are counted. Westminster will have a new lease of life – perhaps even a spring in its step. Our democracy might be all the better for it.



Neil believes two referendums have redrawn the map of British politics.

Review of the Year

A year of political upheavals... again



The Queen's Speech, following the June election, made no mention of government education proposals

This was another year of political upheavals. It meant that many of the education policies and proposals set out by ministers and fiercely debated were in the end swept away without ever getting beyond the drawing board.

It was a curious case of big plans, false starts and then emergency stops. At the beginning of the year, education was in the headlines with radical and controversial plans over the return of grammar schools. The personal commitment of the Prime Minister, Theresa May, to improving social mobility meant a focus on reforming the education system and supporting so-called 'ordinary working families'.

But when the election result left neither party with a majority, the manifesto promises on education were shelved. In the Queen's Speech that followed the election, there was not a single bill for education, which must be the first time for many decades that an incoming government had nothing in its legislative programme for education.

The Government's plans were not thrown away exactly, but they had been put into the political equivalent of long-term cold storage.

It wasn't an outcome that many could have predicted.

At the beginning of the school year, in September 2016, the Government set out its plans for re-shaping England's school system. This consultative Green Paper, 'Schools That Work for Everyone', prepared the way for the return of selection by ability, proposing a new generation of grammar schools. The ban on expanding selective education, introduced in 1998, would be abolished.

The ambition was to create a new type of grammar school, intended to become ladders of opportunity to help bright youngsters from poorer homes. They would support families who could not afford to buy their way into the catchment areas of the most successful schools. They would help those hard-working families under-served by a state education system which seemed to work in favour of the metropolitan middle classes.

There was much hostility to the plans – from teachers' unions, opposition parties and education researchers, who contended that academic selection tended to become a form of social selection.

The claims and counter-claims smouldered through the winter and the spring – with the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, arguing that these would be a new type of grammar school and would not be a return to the past. Campaigners against grammars lobbied hard, arguing that the Government should have other

priorities for schools, such as tackling funding problems.

But after all the sound and fury, the General Election was called, interrupting the plans for grammars before they had moved beyond the stage of a consultation. The Conservative manifesto set out the next stepping stones, promising to end the ban on new grammar schools and to review an admissions system based on 'selection by house price'.

The Conservative manifesto had a raft of other education policies. Universities wanting to charge maximum tuition fees would have to play a role in sponsoring academies or helping free schools. Teachers would not have to pay back tuition fees while they remained in teaching. There would be measures to encourage more free schools to be set up by faith groups. Free lunches for all infants were to be stopped and the money diverted back to basic school budgets.

But the election result in June meant a sudden end to all these policies.

It was a curious vacuum. Because, even though these plans were not going ahead, the Conservative Government was still in power. Education Secretary, Justine Greening, remained in place but there would be no education legislation.

There was quiet confirmation that bringing back grammars was officially dead. A written answer from Justine Greening conceded that the 'ban on opening new grammar schools will remain in place'. The plan to scrap free meals for all infants was not going to happen. But it remained uncertain as to whether other manifesto ideas would still be pursued or else be quietly rolled into the long grass.

If this electoral reversal stopped the Conservatives from implementing their plans, the result also gave no mandate to the opposition. Labour failed to win



Education Secretary Justine Greening defended the government's plan to re-introduce grammar schools

a majority and the education promises of Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Education Secretary, Angela Rayner, could not be put into practice.

Labour had proposed a National Education Service, as a counterpart to the National Health Service. Mr Corbyn's plans focused on a major boost to school funding, picking up on the concern about budget shortages that had been raised by headteachers.

Labour promised smaller class sizes, better pay for teachers and free meals for all primary pupils. There would also be a return for the Education Maintenance Allowance, which provided financial assistance to keep people in education beyond the age of 16.

The emphasis of schools' policy would be switched from academies and free schools to a more strategic role for local authorities.

But none of these plans, either from the Conservatives or Labour, show any immediate sign of progressing, caught in the political gridlock of a government without a majority.

Education policies can take many years to develop and implement. They need enough political continuity to get

from the concept to the classroom. But with the disruptions of two General Elections and a referendum in three years, any attempt to make headway with policy has struggled.

As the academic year ends, the political landscape is filled with uncertainty, with big ideological changes giving way to a more low-key, pragmatic approach. Until the next political earthquake.

Term-time holiday court ruling



The UK Supreme Court came out in favour of schools, who had argued that term-time holiday was unacceptable without prior approval

A ruling at the Supreme Court in April brought to a conclusion a long-running dispute about term-time holidays. It was a success for the Government, schools and local authorities who argued that it was not acceptable for parents to take their children out of lessons without the approval of the school.

For many years, and across successive governments, there has been pressure to improve school attendance and to cut down on excuses for missing lessons. The Department for Education has argued that absenteeism, whether in the form of pupils playing truant or parents allowing pupils to be away, was dragging down standards, particularly for those from disadvantaged homes.

Headteachers and local authorities were encouraged to reduce such days away from school and, in particular,

there were calls to stop the practice of 'term time holidays', where families took their children away during school time without any authorisation from the school.

Such term-time breaks were often attributed to the higher costs of travelling during the school holidays, when it was said some families could not afford to go away together. There were other families who had working arrangements, such as seasonal workers, for whom travel during the school holidays was impossible.

There was also the question of parental rights versus the authority of the school. Did parents have the right to take their own children away for a week, whether or not headteachers approved?

The test case for this had been Jon Platt, who two years ago had taken his daughter away for a week to Florida, without the permission of her school on the Isle of Wight. He had faced a fine of £60 which then rose to £120 with non-payment – beginning a long march through the courts, where initially Mr Platt had been successful in opposing this penalty.

His argument was that, even with the missing week, his daughter had a very good school attendance record of over 92% and so he could not be said to have failed to ensure his child's regular attendance. This argument that 'regular attendance' should take into account the whole year, and that a missing week could not be seen in isolation, had been successful in a series of



A family holiday to Florida sparked a series of court battles on the divisive issue

courtroom battles. He was seen to have no case to answer.

But after Mr Platt's success in the High Court, the matter was brought for a final showdown this year in the Supreme Court in London. Apart from being a contentious issue in terms of determining parental rights, the lack of legal certainty had caused confusion in schools, where there was uncertainty about whether heads and local authorities really could fine parents of absent children or if parents did have the discretion to take term-time holidays.

Despite his earlier legal successes, the judges in the Supreme Court ruled against Mr Platt. It was decided that it was up to schools to interpret the definition of regular school attendance and that parents could legitimately face fines if they failed to comply with the school rules. Children could be taken out of school if there were exceptional circumstances, but that would be up to schools to assess.

In the judgement, Lady Hale said that if parents were allowed to take children out of school whenever they wanted, it would create an unreasonable amount of disruption.

'Unauthorised absences have a disruptive effect, not only on the education of the individual child, but also on the work of other pupils, and of their teachers,' she said.

As well as taking into account the rights of the parents wanting to take children out of school, there were also the rights to be considered of the parents who followed the rules on absences.

Mr Platt was disappointed by the outcome and said it was 'shocking' that parents wanting to go on holiday with their children needed to have the 'permission of the state'. He saw it as fundamentally undermining the rights of parents.

But there was relief from local authorities, headteachers and the Department for Education. There had been speculation that if the result had gone the other way that it would have opened the 'floodgates' to other parents choosing to take out their children.

Headteachers were glad that the ruling ended uncertainty and that their own authority had been endorsed over permission for absences.

The Department for Education breathed a sigh of relief that its position had ultimately been upheld. The department repeated that missed days at school could have long-term adverse effects, so there should be no unnecessary absences.

Even the Prime Minister, Theresa May, was drawn into the debate, saying that it was correct that headteachers should have the flexibility to set the rules on absences.

Teachers' pay does not break the public sector pay cap



The public sector pay cap created tension between the government and schools

There are more than half a million teachers in England and Wales and their pay has been capped for the past seven years, as part of restraints on pay affecting more than five million public sector workers.

This began with a pay freeze in 2010 which lasted two years, after which the pay limit became a series of 1% increases, with teachers' pay grinding along as part of the process of austerity and efforts to improve the public finances.

After the June election there was widespread speculation that public sector workers might this year begin to escape the long shadow of the financial crisis. There were apparent signals, including from within the Government, that it might be time to take off the shackles and offer some more extensive increases to staff in schools, the health service and emergency services.

But after much debate about 'will they or won't they' lift the pay cap, the response from Ministers to the School Teachers' Review Body report was that pay would still be kept at 1%.

The Government was sticking to its guns over public sector pay and teachers would not be the first to breach it.

According to the National Union of Teachers, the successive years of below-inflation increases had left teachers with a 13% real-terms pay cut. This was difficult for individual teachers, who had seen their earnings falling against inflation. But there was a wider challenge for the profession, with such a stagnation in pay being seen as exacerbating problems with staff recruitment.

Heads have been complaining bitterly about what they see as a 'recruitment crisis', particularly in some shortage subjects, such as science, maths and languages. The prospect of another year with a real-terms pay cut has been seen as making it even more difficult to bring bright young graduates into the profession.

These concerns were raised not only by the teachers' unions. The pay review body itself highlighted some serious concerns about the implications for recruitment, saying that there were already 'substantial pressures' and that targets for recruiting new teachers had been missed for five years in a row.

The review body said there was a 'real risk that schools will not be able to recruit and retain a workforce of high-quality teachers to support pupil achievement.'

The topic of pay was interlocked with funding, not just for the Department for Education, but even more widely in terms of the economic path to be taken by the Government after losing its majority. Would there be less emphasis on austerity or would the focus remain on keeping down public spending?

After the election result, the prospect of continued belt-tightening seemed to be becoming increasingly unappetising.

Even the modest pay round that was announced – only adding a few pounds a week to the starting salary for teachers – was forecast to mean an extra £505 million on the Department for Education's overall pay bill, taking it to over £25 billion. This pay lift will have to come from existing budgets, adding to the pressure on school finances. If there had been a pay rise keeping up with inflation, let alone a real-terms increase, it would have meant a much more substantial slice of extra funding.

Headteachers said they wanted to see a more generous pay deal than had been offered, but they warned that any pay rise had to be accompanied with adequate funding. They wanted to see pay addressed alongside

the bigger picture of an improved funding deal.

The pay review body's report acknowledged that 'many schools will face both real-terms reductions in the level of per-pupil funding and growing cost pressures. Difficult choices may be inescapable'. In such circumstances, even though better pay is needed for recruiting and retaining good staff, the review body says 'some schools will find it challenging to implement any pay uplift at all'.

In the end, teachers were not the first to go through the public sector pay limit and ministers imposed another year of a 1% pay cap. The Government argued that it was a fair deal for teachers and the taxpayer. But teachers' unions complained of a failure to address the recruitment shortage and the need for teachers to be adequately rewarded.

Independent schools are asked to help more

This has been a record year for pupil numbers in independent schools, up slightly on last year, according to the annual census of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). There are now almost 523,000 pupils in independent schools, which the ISC says has disproved the 'doom mongers' who thought that the private sector was set for long-term decline. The numbers in ISC schools are higher than at any point since a census began in the early 1970s. In 1982, pupil numbers were about 405,000.

The strong exam results continued with independent school pupils twice as likely to get grade A*s and As compared with their state school counterparts. It meant that 91% of private school pupils go on to university, with more than half entering top Russell Group institutions.

There were figures from the ISC and from the Higher Education Statistics Agency showing where these former



More than half of private school pupils go on to Russell Group universities

private pupils are most likely to go to university. As destinations, Bristol, Edinburgh, Exeter and Durham attracted the most independent pupils, but in terms of a proportion of the intake in mainstream universities, Oxford, St Andrews, Durham and Bristol had the highest percentages of



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has proposed adding VAT to private school fees, to secure funding for state schools

former private pupils. It meant that, against any stereotypes, Cambridge had a lower proportion of former independent school pupils than a number of other universities.

But there were some cross-winds for the independent sector this year, particularly in the run up to the General Election. Both Labour and the Conservatives made promises that suggested that the independent sector should be doing more to help pupils in state schools.

Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, said that he wanted to introduce VAT on private school fees as a way of raising money to give all primary school pupils a free lunch. There are already free meals for all infants, but the Labour Leader wanted to extend this throughout all the primary years. But linking the offer of free meals to an extra charge on private schools was a change in the political mood towards the independent sector.

The ISC rejected the proposals as something that would be 'counter-productive' and would hurt families where 'both parents work hard to pay the fees'. General Secretary, Julie Robinson, argued that it could lead to the closure of some small independent schools, which would put more cost onto the state sector if pupils were displaced from fee-paying schools.

But there was also a call in the Conservative manifesto for more involvement with the state sector, accompanied with a heavy hint of compulsion. The Conservatives said that at least 100 independent schools should be involved in sponsoring academies or founding free schools. If progress was not made on this, the manifesto suggested 'keeping open the option of changing the tax status of independent schools'.

In response, the Chairman of the ISC, Barnaby Lenon, said that there were already 10,000 partnerships between independent and state schools and that these developed best on a voluntary basis.

Having survived the recession, and returning to better health, the independent sector now faced having financial pressure applied by both of the two biggest political parties. But with the election delivering such an inconclusive outcome, neither party seemed to be in a position to pursue these proposals.

Instead independent schools, who like to lay claim to a high proportion of top grades, are likely to be focused on getting to grips with the new grading system for GCSEs and the new top measure of grade 9.

Cutting back on primary tests

Testing in primary school has always divided opinion. There are arguments in favour of testing that say that it is the best way to make sure that any problems can be detected early and interventions can be made before pupils fall behind. If pupils are allowed to struggle in primary school without detection it can set a pattern that is hard to change in the years that follow. Schools without effective external accountability have also been accused

of coasting and not getting the best from their pupils.

But there is another view that rejects testing in primary school as an unnecessary pressure on young children. The accusation is that tests are disruptive and take over everything else, when there is little reliable evidence that they provide much more than could have been gathered from the professional observations and assessments of teachers.

The current Education Ministers, as many of their predecessors over the years, have tried to find a balance. They want testing to maintain accountability and provide information for parents, but not too much testing that it dominates the school year and impedes the process of learning.

The latest version of this compromise was unveiled in March, when the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, proposed that the tests taken by seven year olds – the Key Stage 1 SATs tests – would be scrapped. Instead there would be an assessment when pupils began school, to provide a ‘baseline’ against which to measure progress.

There would still be the Key Stage 2 tests taken by pupils at the age of 11, which are used to create the primary school league tables. But it would mean that the set of tests for seven-year olds in English and maths would no longer be required.

Ms Greening has spoken of wanting to simplify the system of testing and accountability and free up more of teachers’ time. The decision to scrap the statutory testing for seven-year olds was welcomed by teachers’ organisations who saw this as an endorsement of arguments they have been making for many years. They have argued that too much testing in primary school becomes an unnecessary bureaucratic paperchase, putting pressure on children and making teachers spend too much time on generating the right results.

‘Minimising the number of high stakes tests is the right way to go. This will help every school to deliver a rich educational experience for all children,’ said Russell Hobby, Leader of the National Association of Head Teachers.

‘This creates the time and space in a pupil’s primary years for teachers to focus on teaching rather than on high stakes assessment.’

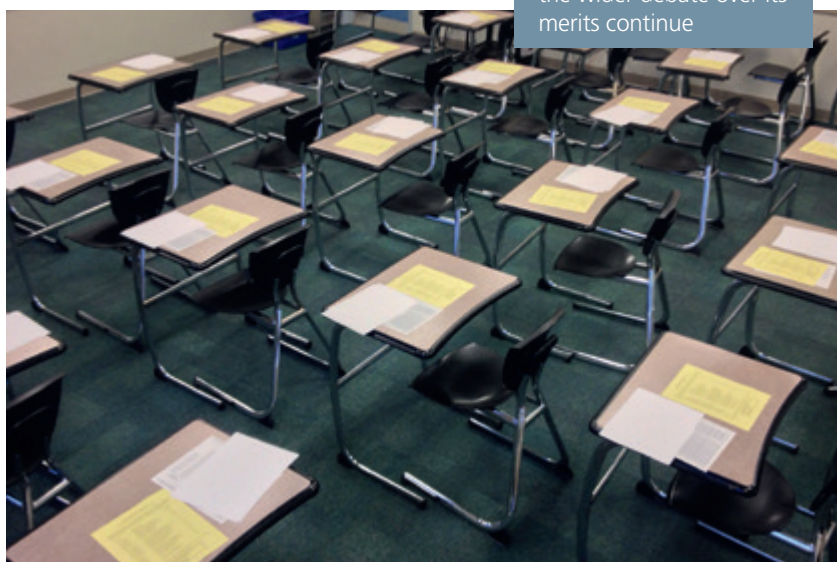


Reducing the amount of tests for younger pupils has been a long-standing trend in government policy

If the tests at seven are being removed, the SATs tests at 11 have gone in the other direction and become more difficult. Last year saw the first introduction of more difficult tests, with a big slump in results. This year saw the second cohort going through the new, more challenging tests, and the results improved quite significantly. There were 61% of pupils who reached the expected standards in reading, writing and maths, up from 53% in the previous year. Before the changes last year, there had been 80% of pupils at the expected standard.

The removal of tests at the age of seven is unlikely to end the debate about testing. As well as test results

Testing remains an important aspect of education policy, and the wider debate over its merits continue



being used for comparisons between schools, they are part of the data that will be scrutinised by Ofsted and can have serious consequences for the future of a school. The whole apparatus of testing is likely to face criticism from some within teaching.

But there has been a significant shift in intensity over the years. There used

to be SATs tests at the ages of seven, 11 and 14, with the tests taken at 14 abolished under Labour and now the tests at seven being removed by Justine Greening. Only the tests taken by 11-year olds are going to continue. But these have been part of the education landscape for more than 25 years and show no signs of disappearing.

Free infant school lunches stay on the menu

Another strange case of 'now you see it, now you don't' from the post-election fall out was the intention to remove free lunches for all infants in schools in England.

Former Deputy PM Nick Clegg pushed for free school meals legislation during his time in government



Under the Coalition Government in 2014 there had been a high-profile initiative to give a hot lunch to every child up to the age of seven, without any means-testing or charges. It was the latest stage in a long-running campaign over school food, with claims that poor quality food and fizzy drinks were contributing to childhood obesity and long-term health problems.

This had seen celebrity chefs, such as Jamie Oliver, become involved in calls for healthier school lunches, ending the era of crisps and chocolate stuffed into sandwich boxes and turkey twizzlers in the school canteen.

But within the coalition it had become very much a Liberal Democrat issue, with the then Leader, Nick Clegg, becoming the most prominent cheerleader for the cause of giving a hot, healthy lunch to every child.

This had caused some grumbling about whether this was the best use of scarce funding and whether it was justified to give free school meals to the children of affluent families.

But the plan had gone ahead. The kitchens were installed in schools and the requirement to offer free meals for infants was put into legislation, as a mark of political commitment.

Roll on to 2017 and the Conservatives' enthusiasm for the policy had waned. And when it came to writing the manifesto, the free meals for all infants were among the items that had been dropped.

This was part of a wider choreography over spending plans. The funding shortage in England's schools had become a major issue in the run up to the election campaign, with headteachers loudly protesting about budget shortages.

There were warnings of teachers' jobs being cut and schools having to adopt shorter days, putting pressure on the Conservatives to find a way to deliver more cash for schools' core budgets.

In their manifesto proposals, they announced that they would scrap the universal infant free meals and give the money – about £650 million per year – to schools to help plug the funding shortages.

There was also a suggestion for a more efficient way of feeding pupils, with the proposal for a free breakfast for all primary pupils, which it was claimed, would be much cheaper and would give children a healthy start to the day.

The calculations on the cost of these breakfasts seemed to become a little frayed at the edges during the campaign, with suggestions that the savings might not be as extensive as expected. But the Conservatives doggedly stuck to the principle that they no longer wanted to continue with free lunches for all infants.

The television chefs took to the newspaper front pages to condemn the move as reversing years of progress on healthy eating.

Headteachers were also angry that after the expense and disruption of putting in kitchen equipment, it was



After a tumultuous period of uncertainty, free school meals have survived

all going to be thrown away. They complained that it was an example of politics not working, when within three years of significant investment there could be such a change of direction.

But, following the June general election, there was no appetite for expending the limited amount of parliamentary room for manoeuvre on an all-out assault on infant school meals. Instead, in a terse statement, the Government said it was withdrawing any change to the arrangements.

That meant that free hot lunches were still being served, but it also meant that the issue of school funding remained unsolved. This scrapping of free lunches had been the single-biggest planned saving for getting extra money into school budgets and this had now been cancelled.

As well as the pasta bake and fruit juice, the financial headache was also staying in place.

St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School



Celebrating our Catholic mission



Teaching Read Write Inc Phonics

I became Headteacher at St Dominic Savio in April 2013. Five months later, Ofsted declared that the school Required Improvement. Quite frankly this did not come as a surprise. I had known this a few weeks into the job and had already begun the transformation needed.

The quality of teaching was inconsistent, there seemed to be no clear sanctions for poor pupil behaviour and academic standards needed to be higher. There was no vision and no ambition. It became clear that there was a lack of a professional culture. I became allergic to the phrase 'we've always done it this way...'

As a first-time headteacher I felt immense pressure to improve the school. It felt like being a football manager in the relegation zone. It was essential that I plucked up faith, courage and led from the front. I definitely have learnt resilience – as a headteacher you need to stand firm with your standards and not let the excuses that may come from a range of stakeholders put you off track. You have to be brave.

When I took over I had parents with concerns about a range of peripheral matters. We worked hard with our parents on supporting us as a school and focusing on what actually matters: their children's learning. We always welcome parental feedback to help us improve further but I am very clear that I run the school and parents have to respect this. I will not please everybody and I will not pander every time to somebody who does not like what we do.

The academic standards of the school have risen rapidly in the past three years. In 2015, we were placed in the top 5% of all schools nationally for performance at the end of Key Stage 2 and we are the number one ranked school in the local authority for 2016 and 2017 (Real Schools Guide). In October 2015, we were graded Good by Ofsted, with both leadership and behaviour graded Outstanding.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: James Broadbridge
- » Location: Woodley, Berkshire
- » Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
- » Number on roll: 400 pupils – two form entry
- » 51% of pupils from an ethnic minority background
- » 27% speak English as an additional language
- » 9% disadvantaged pupils
- » 45 staff
- » Ofsted inspection 2015: Good with Outstanding features

“Good heads concentrate on the basics – the culture of the school, behaviour, and – most importantly – the quality of teaching in the classroom”

Sir Michael Wilshaw,
Ofsted HMCI, March 2014

We will be converting to a multi-academy trust, as part of the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, in 2018.

Nothing illustrates the improvement of the school better than our end of Key Stage results.

In 2012, 74% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved level 4+ in the 3Rs; in 2013 only 53% of Year 1 pupils met the Phonics Screening Check. However, in 2015, 98% of pupils achieved level 4+ in the 3Rs and 100% expected progress in all subjects; many pupils achieved level 5+. In 2016, 100% of Year 1 pupils achieved the Phonics Screening Check. Our strategy is working for our pupils.

Key actions

What were the key areas that I felt would turn the school around?

- » Strong leadership with a clear vision and high expectations
- » Exemplary behaviour in all classrooms
- » High standards measured in pupil outcomes
- » A focus solely on teaching and learning – everything else is peripheral.

I needed a forward thinking and ‘no excuses’ leadership team to create a thriving Catholic learning community. I expanded the leadership structure

to form a ‘strategic leadership team’ which included phase leaders for Reception, Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. Following the appointment of a new Deputy Headteacher and School Business Manager in September 2014, I knew I had the leadership team to drive us to success. These leaders effectively modelled and monitored the high standards needed. Governance was key to leadership: our new Chair worked hard with a more streamlined governing body to support, challenge and hold us to account.

My first few weeks involved observing all teachers: half of the staff were well below par. I had a real ‘can I do this?’ moment. Rapid change was needed and there were many difficult and challenging conversations.

Sutton Trust suggests that the difference between a weak teacher and good teacher can be as much as one year of progress per year.

Since I became Headteacher, half the teaching staff have moved on, which was positive for the school. This enabled me to employ new teachers who would share my vision and bring professionalism and passion into the workplace. Staff are empowered to develop, deliver and share best learning practice; continual improvement is at the heart of our teaching, driving pupils’ progress. Recruitment still remains my biggest headache, but we now have a stable staff who I believe are an ‘outstanding’ team. It has taken many sleepless nights to get there!

We promote a no excuses culture at St Dominic Savio. Aspiration and a Catholic ethos where pupils are consistently kind and friendly, are absolute. We established Five Golden Rules which underpin our behaviour policy. Discipline is fundamental in a school and it is a word that should not be watered down. Sometimes it may mean issuing fixed-term exclusions if sanctions warrant this.

Year 6 with their Reception ‘Buddies’



Children need to respect everyone and know their boundaries. Excellent behaviour enables teachers to teach and pupils to learn. This is the bedrock at St Dominic Savio.

I am grateful to the work of Carol Dweck, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, and Matthew Syed, *The Times* columnist and former table tennis champion, in teaching our children and adults that intelligence is not fixed; that everyone should believe in their abilities and be resilient in this world. This growth mindset is best summed up as:

- » Learning is not always quick and easy
- » Learning involves effort
- » Learning involves making mistakes
- » Learning understands the power of practice.

We use the 'Assertive Mentoring' approach by Peter Boddy and Eamonn Farrar (former headteachers). It integrates target setting, tracking, mentoring and checking systems to raise achievement for all pupils. We adopt a data-driven instruction model as outlined in 'Leverage Leadership' by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. Pupils can succeed if we prepare them properly:

- » **Assessment:** define the roadmap for rigour
- » **Analysis:** determine where pupils are struggling and why
- » **Action:** implement new teaching plans to respond to the analysis
- » **Systems:** create systems and procedures to ensure continual data-driven improvement.

All staff instil high expectations and are accountable for pupil outcomes. The Assertive Mentoring half-termly testing enables us to know whether all pupils have made progress in English and mathematics. It is not about whether we have taught it; it is about whether the pupils have learned it.

We use Ruth Miskin's 'Read Write Inc Phonics' programme to teach our children to read, write and spell.



It has transformed standards in reading and writing for our young children. We are now in the top 3% of all schools nationally for the Phonics Screening Check. Our Reading Leader does not teach a group; this enables her to monitor standards, ensure rapid progress and support the professional development of staff. We use daily one-to-one tutoring to ensure all children keep up, rather than catch up.

As Headteacher, I am striving to reduce teacher workload and bureaucracy. I still remember many times as a class teacher thinking the paperwork I was told to do would have no impact on raising standards. As Headteacher I have the power to say 'no'. I value work-life balance and family life for all my teachers; this is at the heart of our Catholic ethos. I am amazed by the stories I hear from friends about what burdens leadership teams put on their staff. We are obsessed by myths about what Ofsted want and most of them are untrue and a waste of time and energy. We need to look after our teachers and retain them.

We use the 'Bananarama principle': 'It ain't what you do... it's the way that you do it'. The most important things happen in the classroom; focus your energies here. The role of the Headteacher is to lead teaching and learning. As a Catholic school, we are a community of faith, firmly embedded in Gospel values, where every member is being encouraged to be the best that they can be, aiming to 'Serve the Lord with Joy'.

“We have a great team spirit and are challenged to be the best we can be”

Staff member, Ofsted report, October 2015

St Francis Catholic Primary School



Story time with the Headteacher



Pupil Leadership Team

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher:
Elisabeth Blanden
- » Number on roll: 415
- » 47% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background
- » 31% speak English as an additional language
- » The children come from a variety of backgrounds
- » 9% of the pupils are entitled to pupil premium funding

In March 2013, the school was placed in Special Measures because of inconsistent teaching and learning, weak pupil outcomes and inadequate leadership. After some turbulence, the Headteacher left in May 2013 and the majority of the governing body resigned. I was appointed as acting Headteacher. I had been Deputy Headteacher at St Francis since September 2007 and so knew the school well; its staff, pupils, families and the great potential already within the school which, if utilised effectively, would ensure rapid progress could be made to get us out of Special Measures.

Following my appointment my first task was to focus on three key priorities:

1. Improving leadership at all levels
2. Improving the quality of learning and teaching
3. Improving pupil achievement.

I created a new staffing structure which consisted of a more distributed leadership. The new team was made up of phase leaders responsible for Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2, core subject leaders, the inclusion manager (focusing on pupils with additional needs) and the Deputy Headteacher. These leaders were responsible for modelling and monitoring new, higher expectations and standards which were essential if we were to move the school forward quickly. We promoted a culture of open and honest communication and a solution-based ethos in which staff worked together to support each other and engage in the language of learning.

We worked closely with the three members of the governing body who remained. Southwark Diocese appointed two foundation governors and together we worked with Michael Costello, a national leader of governance, who helped the new governing body develop the skills of being a critical friend to the school; asking challenging questions and understanding their strategic role in driving school improvement.

Historically, staff had had little access to quality professional development and as a result their understanding of the learning journey had not moved forward for several years. There was very little use made of assessment for learning and teachers' toolkits were weak. With the help of our local authority I commissioned expert help from a school improvement company and we worked together to support and challenge staff at all levels, including governors, to be critical of their performance and recognise how to improve and become good and outstanding teachers and leaders of learning.

From this, I was able to develop the professional skills and attitudes of staff.

A new learning policy was introduced which made expectations of the learning cycle absolutely precise and explicit so that everyone was clear about what would be seen in every classroom in the school. All continuing professional development and monitoring focused on the policy. Weekly staff meetings were used as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions to develop teachers' toolkits, concentrating on a specific area of assessment for learning each week. This would then be implemented in lessons and be the focus of that week's monitoring. Lesson observations, drop ins, planning and work scrutiny all took place weekly to ensure the effectiveness of CPD.

A culture of solution-based thinking was developed. All staff were expected to engage in all CPD and monitoring and poor engagement or performance was challenged.

Weekly meetings with leaders were used to monitor progress, identify strengths and highlight areas for development.

This relentless focus on learning and teaching ensured that inadequate teaching was quickly eradicated.

“A new learning policy was introduced which made expectations absolutely precise”

Enjoying the 'Music Around The World' Workshop



Acting out the Good Samaritan





Science experiments are fun



Two learning partners work out a maths problem

“In January 2015 our hard work was recognised by Ofsted when the school was removed from special measures and judged to be good”

I was determined to work with existing staff, almost all of whom remained, and our staff is now a highly-skilled and effective team.

I introduced half-termly pupil progress meetings to highlight children not making the expected progress as defined by national standards, and to plan actions that would be implemented to accelerate progress. Support staff were trained in the use of targeted intervention resources to support individuals and small groups of pupils as well as using their new expertise to support pupils with learning activities in the classroom.

We wanted to develop pupils to be critical thinkers, to show resilience and promote a 'can do' attitude; creating pupils who question and seek solutions with independence and perseverance. Improvements were made to the curriculum so that it focuses more on the children's interests, supports pupil dialogue and fosters enquiry-based learning. We introduced the concept of growth mindsets. Our children are now active learners who can talk about what they are learning, not what they are doing.

By 2014 the impact of everyone's hard work could already be seen in the rapid progress made by pupils:

- » Our Year 1 phonics outcomes improved by 20% to 77% of pupils meeting the expected standard
- » At the end of Key Stage 2 outcomes improved by 25% to 90% of pupils achieving Level 4+.

In January 2015, our hard work was recognised by Ofsted when the school was removed from Special Measures and judged to be Good, a remarkable achievement in just eighteen months.

In their 2015 Annual Report, Ofsted highlighted St Francis for our rapid progress out of Special Measures and for the progress we had made in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

In February 2016 I was delighted when our Section 48 Diocesan Inspection judged the school to be outstanding in all areas.

I am proud of the staff, pupils and families of St Francis and the rapid progress we have made. However the hard work doesn't stop and we remain focused on continuing the journey to achieve our aim of becoming an outstanding beacon for Catholic education.

St Andrew's CE Primary School



The banner of smiling pupils' faces has softened the entrance to the school



Andrew Tulloch, Headteacher

When I was appointed Headteacher at St Andrew's in 2010, I inherited the long struggle to discard its poor reputation. I found a school regarded as weak by many in the community, one whose low self-esteem was rooted in the out-dated, negative legacy of former years. Even though it had a well-deserved reputation for supporting pupils with special educational or pastoral needs, generally low SATs results confirmed the prevailing view that the school was under-achieving given its location in leafy, prosperous Surrey. Those shackles have now been thrown off with the development of a rich and inspiring culture that has led to improvements in pupil progress and outcomes. Transformed, the school is now recognised for its ambition to provide the finest experiences for all its pupils.

The most recent development has been our conversion to academy status in April 2017. This bold decision to partner with Esher High School in the Esher Learning Trust has increased opportunities for pupil and staff development across both schools and enhanced St Andrew's standing locally.

Approximately two thirds of the children of Cobham attend the prestigious independent schools that flourish in this affluent area. This means that St Andrew's School welcomes a rich diversity of cultures, one third of which live in neighbourhoods with identified socio-economic deprivation.

Since 2010, the school has grown numerically from 340 pupils to over 450 in 2017 and in reputation by establishing a strong culture that clearly underpins

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Andrew Tulloch
- » Location: Cobham, Surrey
- » Ofsted Rating: Good
- » Pupils on roll: 455
- » 18 classes
- » 25 Learning Support Assistants
- » 21% Pupil Premium

“We enable every child to experience life in all its fullness”

all its transformational work. This is articulated in the vision statement: We enable every child to experience life in all its fullness.

I worked with the teachers and assistants to identify the qualities of the ‘model St Andrew’s pupil’. The great qualities we recognised, including enthusiasm, independence, determination to succeed and responsibility as members of the community formed the bedrock of new school aims. We began to give substance to a culture that is openly ambitious for all our children to achieve their potential. These are now an ever-present feature in our classrooms, represented visually on the Saltire, the St Andrew’s Cross.

Whole staff INSET days have been dedicated to developing our cultural themes. In 2013, we identified three cultural processes that neatly summed up the purpose of every activity carried out at St Andrew’s:

- » Welcome
- » Challenge
- » Preparation for life.

These expressions have become our commitment to the children and families at St Andrew’s. We *welcome* all

children, celebrating their uniqueness and recognising their right to be respected as an individual and to have their voice heard. Parent Forum groups have been established to ensure this welcome is extended to every family and to enable the whole community to contribute to school developments.

We guarantee all our children will be *challenged* to recognise and achieve their potential.

We plan our curriculum carefully in order to *prepare* pupils for life, both now and in the future.

As we devoted time to defining our culture, the school’s motto was established: *Life in all its fullness*, a perfect maxim for a church school with high ambitions for its children.

I facilitated leadership development which has been a crucial factor in managing significant and constant change at the school. Several inspirational leaders on our team have led projects linked to their professional qualifications, revolutionising our approach to teaching and learning and overhauling the curriculum. I have overseen the leadership team’s positive and swift response to challenges from our School Improvement and Inclusion Adviser (SIIA) to sharpen our self-evaluation and address weak situations with a more robust response, resulting in further improvement in professional development within the staff team.

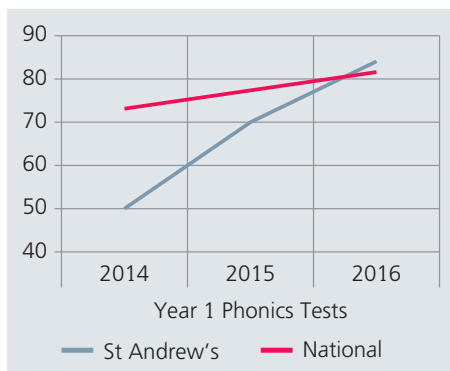
As we read the Sutton Trust research (May 2011) into improving children’s learning, it led to a major change in our marking policy as we acknowledged that excellent feedback to pupils is the most effective means towards pupil progress.

The constant drive to improve pupil outcomes led to significant curriculum overhauls, partly due to National Curriculum changes.

Corridors to galleries – superbly displayed children’s artwork lifts the inside environment



More robust monitoring of teaching and learning standards, clearer appraisal arrangements and further partnership work with our SIIA all contributed to rising standards, seen most dramatically throughout Key Stage 1, including a remarkable improvement in the school's Year 1 phonics test results.



A new curriculum initiative emerged after feedback from a survey of parents suggested we could make better use of our grounds. Activity Hour is an innovative approach that engages all our children in activities for the last hour on four days a week. These are mostly physical, mostly outside and make full use of our 10 acre grounds. Grouped in Houses in two-year clusters, the children practise skills in several sports and other activities including athletics, hockey, cross-country, orienteering, chess, gardening and cookery. Children have responded enthusiastically to the activities and to the frequent competitive opportunities created by inter-House events.

Our 'corridors to galleries' project sustained our school's tradition for outstanding artwork, making best use of the extensive indoor facilities.

The commitment of governors to raising the profile of our cultural aims and values statements, has provided essential support and challenge for the Leadership Team. This is evidenced through frequent well-attended learning walks and the work of the



The Year 6 residential trip to the Christian Mountain Centre in Pensarn, Gwynedd provides fantastic opportunities for genuine challenge



Year 4 pupils collaborating during a Maths Week project. The extensive school grounds are frequently utilised to good effect for cross-curricular purposes

governors' vibrant Teaching and Learning focus group. The drive to balance an enriched curriculum with excellent standards has been the governors' dual focus.

The introduction in 2015–16 of the St Andrew's Standard, a bespoke Gold, Silver and Bronze award scheme for pupils, confirmed the commitment to the preparation for life element of the school's culture. Pupils achieve the higher awards through excellent attendance, positive behaviour for learning and contributions to school and community life.

St Andrew's now has widespread respect in the community which recognises that we have put the past behind us. Excellent relationships with Cobham's independent schools and our new academy partnership demonstrate the confidence we have that the negative legacy has been dispatched.

“Widespread respect in the community... the negative legacy has been dispatched”

Bure Park Primary School



Yvonne Hewson, Headteacher



School Council standing around a pebble apple that the children who had a healthy snack for break created – a School Council-led activity in Healthy Eating Week

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Yvonne Hewson – September 2016 (formerly Deputy Head)
- » Location: Bicester, Oxfordshire
- » Number of pupils: 512
- » SEN: 10%
- » EAL: 5%
- » FSM: 10%
- » Number of teachers: 20 full-time equivalent
- » Number of teaching assistants: 36

Bure Park Primary opened in 2000 to serve a new housing development and has been growing steadily ever since. It began with 69 pupils and now has more than 500 pupils and 100 staff and is currently full in most year groups. The first Ofsted in 2001 recorded a Good grade, followed by two Satisfactory judgements. We needed to improve but were determined not to compromise the educational ideals that were so valued by the parents.

Striving to improve a school, whilst maintaining its teaching and learning ethos, is a big ask. This is particularly true when the school is serving a new and developing community which has no well-established roots. It requires careful planning and decisive leadership, having the staff, parents and pupils on board and carefully juggling change without compromising the unique characteristics and traits that have made this into an oversubscribed and popular school.

We have always prided ourselves on our creative, broad and balanced curriculum. We believe in educating the whole child with knowledge and skills that will serve them in life. Our aim is to raise standards by pursuing the topic-based curriculum that engaged our pupils so well. The challenge was to ensure that this went hand-in-hand with the increased rigour and the higher levels of accountability that were required.

One of the first things the senior leaders did was to raise the status of subject co-ordinators. This vital group of professionals were given greater responsibilities which included being more proactive in class, monitoring data and progress and bringing their conclusions to staff and Key Stage meetings.

In this way we began paying greater attention to detail with continuing analysis of groups and individuals in strategic pupil progress meetings between:

- » Class teachers
- » Head and Deputy
- » Inclusion and Pupil Premium Lead Teachers

Expectations of all pupils are high and the pace of lessons also reflects this.

Through their enhanced roles, subject coordinators also pinpointed school training needs and brought in advisory teachers to up-skill staff further in the bid to improve learning. There was a greater focus on lesson observation and work scrutiny which allowed teachers to share their plans with colleagues to improve the achievement of identified pupils and groups of children. Different teaching strategies supported this

Now, subject teams work together effectively using formative assessment and co-ordinating special themed days and events to enrich teaching and learning. The literacy and numeracy teams have been particularly proactive in testing and promoting initiatives such as the new assessment model and the introduction of greater depth across the curriculum. The creation of inclusion, pupil premium, music, art and PE teams has not only raised pupil attainment in these important subjects but also helped succession planning too.

Teaching assistants (TAs) are vital to the success of our school and have become champions for a range of interventions. TAs who are responsible for a particular strategy are sought out by colleagues for advice and training and, where appropriate, lead staff meetings. As support from local authorities shrinks, this approach



A Mexican hook-in day in Year 5 starting with a Day of the Dead Carnival

has been successful in making us more focused on the progress of all children.

Raising standards has put pupil learning at the heart of whole-school improvement. Pupils have become more reflective learners as feedback, both written and oral, has improved. Children love knowing where they have been successful and where a little more effort or input is needed, and they react accordingly.



A picture from Arts Week when the children worked with the Mighty Zulu Nation



A TA working outside on a wellbeing intervention with some children

“Our main priority is a broad, balanced and creative curriculum, taught in a vibrant environment”

Involving pupils in whole-school decision and policy making is part of our school improvement programme and has undoubtedly contributed to our school’s growing success.

- » Schools councillors, elected by their classmates following their presentation of a manifesto, are involved in discussions on issues such as premises, energy and eco policies, healthy eating and the review of key policies such as anti-bullying. Occasionally they may undertake some appropriate lesson observations.
- » Our global ambassadors’ council leads the way on international matters and our links with schools overseas and helps to organise events such as Fairtrade Fortnight and our international Family Food evening.
- » House and Sports captains lead initiatives, organise whole school events and hear younger children read, whilst spurring their House on to achieve the House Cup.

We have influenced student voice beyond our own school gates. Bure Park leads Bicester’s children’s town council, which comprises representatives from each school who meet with an agreed annual

focus. This might be a health-based campaign or an environmental project.

However, our main priority is a broad, balanced and creative curriculum, taught in a vibrant environment. Work on topics always begins with a stimulating and exciting activity, such as asking the pupils to dress up for the day as their favourite animal, turning a classroom into a crime scene or having a Mexican Carnival. The aim is for children to develop a range of skills and abilities that will serve them throughout their education and beyond. Through investigating, researching, collaborating and presenting in all sorts of different ways, children who may struggle in literacy and numeracy come to the fore as leaders or orators, demonstrating their creative skills in a way that raises their self-esteem and confidence. It gives every pupil an opportunity to shine.

Our annual Arts Week, when we invite professional artists to work with pupils and share their expertise, is one of the most eagerly anticipated events on the school calendar. At the end of this, the pupils show off their work with an exhibition which is always a joyful occasion and well-attended by families and the wider community. The standard of work is invariably high as we allow teachers – and therefore, pupils – to be as creative as they like, incorporating art, design, music and dance into their work.

Our hard work is paying off. Bure Park Primary is now a Good school with Outstanding features but the challenge is to sustain the strides we have made with systematic evaluation, reflection and development. Our strong team of staff and governors constantly strive to build on our experience and expertise to provide outstanding learning opportunities for all our pupils.

Wentworth Primary School



A broad and balanced curriculum is essential



The Wentworth Leadership team

Having been Deputy Headteacher since 1990, I was aware that a major overhaul had to be undertaken on my appointment to the position of Headteacher at Wentworth in September 2015. A challenging set of circumstances had been apparent in recent years culminating in the resignation of the previous headteacher and instability within the governing body. Harmony and morale had to be re-established in the school.

The first development day after my appointment went a long way towards this goal. During this day we worked collectively as a team to establish our ambition and vision for the children. This vision is referred to as the Wentworth Deal and defines the promises the staff have made to support the development of all children while clarifying the behaviour we expect from them. The charter identifies a culture of mutual respect between pupils, staff members and parents, where we all feel supported and our values are nurtured and adhered to, both in school and at home. Finally, the Wentworth Deal makes demands of our governing body to ensure they provide the trust, support and challenge to make our promises a reality.

The collective commitment, care and drive of our staff team on that development day left us all feeling empowered. Since that day, we have worked tirelessly to review our practice.

In the past year, there have been several key changes. A review of maths in December 2015, identified a number of children who had left Key Stage 1 with gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They had learnt tricks and 'quick fixes' instead of developing sound conceptual understanding. Our planning process was

REPORT CARD

- » Location: Dartford, Kent
- » Headteacher: Paul Langridge
- » Number of Pupils: 536 (and increasing)
- » Character: large, urban school serving both Kent and the London Borough of Bexley
- » Number of teachers: 23
- » Number of teaching assistants: 24
- » Famous former pupils: Mick Jagger, Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones, Graham Dilley ex-Kent and England cricketer and Adam Gemili – competitor at two Olympic games



The school grounds have received heavy investment to support children's learning

“Quality feedback is to create positive pupil outcomes and progress”

immediately overhauled to ensure that learning was leading the planning rather than vice versa. Following an analysis of several maths schemes, visiting pilot schools and after meeting Andrew Jeffrey, ‘the maths evangelist’, I decided to introduce Inspire Maths to Years 1 and 2. Inspire is very much based on the Singapore Maths curriculum and ensures that children develop a strong understanding of number, giving them secure knowledge in order to understand and explain how and why they know. This was further supported by training delivered by Andrew in September 2016, which was described as ‘inspirational’ by our staff. Children throughout the school now follow a mathematical process

» CONCRETE – PICTORIAL – ABSTRACT

Children use concrete objects to help them make sense of the concept or problem e.g. straws, counters, cubes.

These objects can be moved, grouped and/or re-arranged to illustrate the problem.

As the child's experience grows, they may no longer require physical objects, instead, they draw them.

As understanding develops, the child moves on to abstract representations such as the bar model to identify what is known and what is missing.

based on the concrete-pictorial-abstract approach. Problem solving has become much more successful, with children now applying the Singapore Bar Method to their reasoning. It is immensely satisfying to watch children experience a ‘lightbulb’ moment where they smile and recognise that they ‘get it!’ More importantly, they understand HOW and WHY they ‘got it’. Inspire will move into Year 3 from September and then be assimilated through the school.

I believe that marking and feedback are among the most important tools in creating sound pupil progress. As a result of a review of our marking process, I discarded all the previous perceptions and started with the premise – what is the purpose of marking? The main misconception was that extensive marking was needed to demonstrate effective teacher performance. It is not! Quality feedback is to create positive pupil outcomes and progress.

Having simplified the process, marking has become more time efficient resulting in a higher impact on progress due to focused feedback, development and challenge. Comments are only made if they positively impact on progress. A further emphasis has been placed on the children to ensure that they also take responsibility for their own learning by checking and editing their own work. Teachers providing extensive feedback because children cannot be bothered to check, detracts from their responsibility. Marking is now a joint process between the teacher and the pupil, with a positive dialogue developing between the two.

Our attention has now turned to our English programme of study, with a complete evaluation of its effectiveness underway.

At Wentworth, learning is based on collective development, where the strengths of individuals are recognised and support is provided to maximise the potential of all.

To enable this culture, learning walks are an almost daily occurrence, with members of the Senior Leadership Team visiting lessons across the school in order to interact with teachers, higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs), teaching assistants (TAs) and pupils, to celebrate successes, monitor progress and suggest ways to improve, should they be necessary. Unannounced observations are a regular feature of the school week and give us a clear understanding of our strengths and weaknesses across the school. I believe it was Einstein who said that the definition of stupidity is to keep doing the same thing over and over but expect the results to be different. This thinking is driving us forward in our quest for Outstanding. If through our observations, book reviews or data analysis we are aware that something is not working for the benefit of the children and their learning, we change it. Our INSET programme is reflective of our progress and is developed to ensure we are always improving and moving forward.

As a stand-alone converter academy it is easy to become isolated. To avoid this, I have forged links with a number of local schools and organisations. Our most fruitful liaison has been with Dartford Grammar School through the North West Kent Teaching Schools Alliance. As a result, we have introduced Japanese into our Year 6 curriculum, shared music events and one class in Year 3 are learning the violin via the Red Rooster Project, funded by Mick Jagger and named after The Rolling Stones' hit of 1964. In addition, we are now training Teacher Direct candidates in order to grow our own staff for the future. The alliance has allowed us to access exciting continuous professional development opportunities, with two teachers following a middle leadership programme and one a bespoke maths course.

Wentworth maintains an active role in the Dartford Area Schools Consortium and are a member of the Partners in Excellence (PiXL) programme. PiXL has been invaluable in developing our thinking, particularly in identifying conceptual weaknesses and applying 'therapies' to ensure the children can reach their full potential.

The key to our progress as a school has been the commitment of a strong leadership team, who are supported by caring and child-centred teachers, teaching assistants, support staff, parents and a pro-active PTA. We all strive together for the benefit of our wonderful group of confident, happy children.

To this mix, we add committed and capable new governors, who visit regularly, attending our key events with enthusiasm. We feel supported, yet effectively challenged to avoid complacency.

To accommodate the increasing pupil population, we are now expanding into a full three-form entry school, with a final cohort of nearly 700 children.

Whatever happens, our focus will always be children first, with all stakeholders ensuring they are Achieving Happily.

» SINGAPORE BAR METHOD

The bar model method is a strategy used by children to visualise mathematical concepts and solve problems. The method is a way to represent a situation in a word problem, usually using rectangles.

Learning must be fun



Experiential learning is essential for strong understanding



Barnsbury Primary School and Nursery



Mrs Clare Spires, Headteacher



As Numicon Advocate School, pupils are encouraged to explore and learn using concrete, pictorial and abstract representations to consolidate learning

REPORT CARD

- » Heateacher: Mrs Clare Spires
- » Two-form entry school located in Woking, Surrey
- » Became Barnsbury Primary School in 2008, our new school after the amalgamation of Barnsbury Infants and Barnsbury Junior
- » Has 440 pupils ages 3–11
- » Opened a nursery in September 2016
- » School motto: 'Believe, persevere, succeed.'

Following the amalgamation of an infant and junior school in 2008, Barnsbury Primary School was met with major academic challenges two years ago. Headteacher Clare Spires, who was appointed in April 2015, says adopting new approaches while staying true to a motto of 'Believe, persevere, succeed' have been central to Barnsbury overcoming these challenges.

Barnsbury is a very diverse school, educating children from mixed backgrounds, a reality that very much reflects our South Woking catchment area. This factor is definitely a positive – with the school being at national average attainment levels for a number of years until 2015.

Regardless of social background, we've performed strongly due to Barnsbury being underpinned by its values. Since we opened in 2008, we've been a designated values school and use this as a platform to promote a core set of values in all areas of school life.

Championing values

This means we abide by a different individual value every month, for example, if it's the value of trust, then this is championed across the school throughout that month and implemented into the children's learning.

The results are impressive: proudly championing a certain value has really permeated through everything the children do and in their behaviour; another strong area of Barnsbury. By encouraging the children to make good choices at an

early age and promoting this through particular values, we've been able to build a strong culture.

From a wider perspective, these initiatives are in tune with our school motto of 'Believe, persevere, succeed.' This is not only applied to the children, but also to us, the staff. Working from this motto has played a key role in my own success in just more than two years as Headteacher.

Recovering from a challenging 2015

Yet this success hasn't been guaranteed. In July 2015, our results data nosedived and put Barnsbury significantly below the national level in the majority of subject areas. Particularly bad was the fact we were in the bottom 3% for phonics at Year 1 level in England with just 34% passing in Year 1.

There were a number of factors contributing to this, but one major

point of concern identified was that the overall standard of teaching had not been consistently good for some time and the programmes in place were not as rigorous as they should have been. Had Ofsted decided to inspect us around this time, then I have no doubt that it would have resulted in a required improvement judgement.

Putting an action plan in place

Reversing these long-term effects meant formulating an action plan and seeing improvements in a relatively short space of time. The aim was to improve pupil attainment by increasing the quality of teaching and learning to result in better figures. To share this, the senior team and I were very honest with each staff member about where we were and what needed to be done to improve. This action plan was put into effect at the beginning of the 2015/16 academic year.

“Inspired by the positive, aspirational ethos you have created, staff have worked together effectively to restore high-quality teaching across the school”

Ofsted, 2016

We have raised the profile of reading, providing pupils with daily opportunities to enjoy a book and apply their phonic knowledge





Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work, believe and persevere so they can succeed

“I found the workshops on phonics for parents very helpful. This makes it easier to engage with your child at home and to support teaching”

Parent, 2016
(from Ofsted report)

Restructuring the leadership team

Another key change at this time was the decision to restructure my senior leadership team. This was driven by the fact that all of the senior figures, myself included, were new to our roles. This saw two deputies appointed, along with two other leaders. With this type of structure in its infancy, it was important for everyone in the senior team to learn together along the way.

Drawing on extra support

Our drive to improve all aspects of the school also led to us looking beyond the walls of Barnsbury. For our phonics programme, we drew on the Read Write Inc resource. This supported us in introducing different techniques and bringing in new ideas to build a stronger phonics programme.

Being part of an umbrella trust with four other Surrey schools has also worked to our advantage. We looked towards these other institutions and identified which one had performed well in an arealike phonics. One of our

associated schools had a pass rate of more than 90%, so it made sense to replicate this programme. We ensured teachers received the necessary training and pupils and teachers were made aware of the expected outcomes at point of the implementation. Following this was a tracking period throughout the year to monitor progress.

When the results came in, the turnaround was excellent. In just one year, pass rates rose from 34% to 77%, showing the effectiveness of our new phonics strategy. While the team has much to be proud about, we are well aware our work is not yet done. The mark is still below the national standard so we intend to carry on with our strategy. This year, we are expecting our phonics results to be in the region of 85%, so there is much to be positive about.

Our other future goals

In the long-term, our ambition reflects that of the majority of primary schools in that we want to be rated as outstanding. But to be there, it requires a consistent, high level of classroom teaching which we need to maintain for the long-term. Looking further ahead, our ultimate ambition is to become a specialist teaching school used as a showcase of classroom excellence for staff at other schools to learn from.

In the near-term, I'd like to see pupil attainment continue to rise and place every child above national level from reception right the way through to Year 6. We want to show that Barnsbury is a school where regardless of your background, you can achieve whatever you set your mind to through our creative, challenging and enjoyable curriculum.

Ernesettle Community School

Together We Learn...



Aaron Meredith, Headteacher

Ernesettle Community School in Plymouth is in the highest Department for Education quintile for deprivation with the Index of Multiple Deprivation placing the area in the most deprived 15% nationally. When the school was deemed as 'requiring Special Measures' for the second time in less than three years in May 2010, the legacy of low aspiration, academic standards being amongst the lowest in the country and high levels of local unemployment were only compounded.

I was appointed in May 2010 to address these issues and, seven years later, the school is now very proud to be the highest-performing school on average in the authority over the past five years and the regional winner of the Pupil Premium Award in 2016. This journey has been enabled by a staff team and a community of children and families who now have the potential to live happy, prosperous and rewarding lives.

As a result of our outstanding reputation and our 'school of choice for local families' vision, the school now has 449 children on roll compared with 240 in 2010. The increase in our Nursery provision and introduction of a nursery for two-year-olds have also added to what we are able to offer our community. This is all in line with our school's vision statement, 'always striving to be outstanding, transforming the aspirations of a community'.

High-quality teaching, interventions and specialist teaching

As well as being completely committed to developing the whole child, we understand the opportunities that our children enjoy when they achieve the national standards for reading, writing and mathematics.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Aaron Meredith
- » Location: Plymouth, Devon
- » Academy: converted on January 1st 2016 as the lead school in a new multi-academy trust
- » 508 place, two-form entry primary school for pupils aged 2–11 years
- » 72 place Nursery
- » Free School Meals: 50.9%
- » 16 place two-year-old Nursery (for the most deprived ME2 funded pupils)
- » English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils: 5.4%
- » 22 teaching staff, 20 teaching assistants
- » Ofsted rating: Good



We understand the opportunities that our children enjoy when they achieve the national standards

“Always striving to be outstanding, transforming the aspirations of a community”

» OFSTED HISTORY

- » Special Measures: March 2007
- » Satisfactory: June 2008
- » Special Measures: May 2010
- » Good: March 2012

The key elements of our approach to ensuring the best learning experiences and outcomes are:

- » The ARROW reading recovery programme
- » 1:1 tuition for Year 6 children in targeted subjects
- » Grammar school/secondary school top set tutoring for children in Years 4, 5 and 6
- » A specialist art teacher who links art lessons to curriculum topics and who also provides a range of experiences including: life drawing (with professional models), clay work (using the on-site kiln) and community art projects (which has involved rejuvenating the local shopping area in conjunction with the Housing Association)
- » The introduction of the 'Visual Maths' programme which provides accessible ways for the children to be confident in the four operations of mathematics
- » Across the school, every afternoon an additional non-class-based teacher is working with children on their misconceptions and areas for development (they also provide after-school support for Year 6 children in the build up to the End of Key Stage 2 Assessments).

Healthy body, healthy mind

At Ernesettle, we believe that a healthy body goes alongside a healthy mind. As a result, we have committed significant funding into delivering a high-class PE curriculum for every child.

This includes:

- » A free PE kit for all Pupil Premium children
- » Employing two female sports coaches (one who specialises in football/team games and another who specialises in gymnastics, dance and cheerleading)

- » Swimming lessons in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (with additional top up sessions in Year 6 where required)
- » Visiting specialists for extra-curricular activities such as 'bikeability', ballet, taekwondo and golf
- » Extensive after-school and lunchtime extra-curricular clubs which cover a range of activities including cheerleading, yoga, street dance, tag rugby, art and craft, dodgeball and drama
- » Competing at the national and regional levels including the Cheerleading Championships with two county gymnasts expected by next summer.

Extended schools provision

This subsidised provision has enabled families who may struggle with child care fees to go out to work and provide for their families. As a consequence, the children see the value of work and are inspired to achieve themselves.

The provision includes:

- » Breakfast Club from 7:45am providing child care and a suitable breakfast for £1.00
- » After-School Club until 6:00pm which includes a hot meal for £5.00
- » Regular reminders to families regarding how these fees can be claimed back by some working families
- » Explicit messages in newsletters explaining that the Board is subsidising these provisions to allow families to seek employment or further training
- » Both Breakfast Club and After-School Club are run by teaching assistants and playworkers and are managed by an Extended School Co-ordinator all of whom very much encourage children to complete their reading and homework.
- » An excellent resource to support punctuality, attendance and vulnerable families.

Subsidised educational trips, visits and residential visits

Fully-subsidised trips, visits and visitors add to our rich educational offer and are often used as a reason we are the 'school of choice'. The £22,500 (£2,500 per year group: Nursery to Year 6) that is allocated by the Board aims to ensure the curriculum is as broad and inspiring as possible, to do this:

- » Staff are given the incentive to negotiate with providers, as whatever funds are left at the end of the year can be used for 'extra' activities
- » A set criteria of what must be achieved for each six-week curriculum topic must be met (one off-site educational visit, one RE/SMSC-based visit/visitor, one visitor to school)
- » A subsidised residential trip for Years 5 and 6 children takes place annually (these alternate between an adventurous activity centre and a London visit)
- » Links between local businesses, faith centres and educational centres have been established, bringing further learning opportunities (these include Kawasaki, for STEM activities, and EDF, who undertake a reading project supporting vulnerable children).

Family Support Advisor (FSA)

The growing popularity of our Family Support Advisor and the increase in demand for the various services she offers, demonstrate that, over time, we are helping to transform the aspirations of the community we serve.

Our family support advisor:

- » Organises social and educational activities for parents and carers to share learning experiences with their children
- » Facilitates courses including phonics, storytelling, healthy eating, improved sleeping routines for children and craft clubs; these have all helped make the school a welcoming hub of the community
- » Signposts to a multitude of services including Foodbanks, support with charity applications for uniform, housing issues and SEN/Parent Partnership support
- » Liaises with Common Assessment Framework Officers, the school nurse and health professionals
- » Provides a valuable link with local Children's Centres and Community Groups
- » Arranges classes and supported our first group of parents to achieve GCSE English in July 2016. They are scheduled to begin GCSE maths next month.



Our rich educational offer is often the reason we are the 'school of choice' for many families

» OUTCOMES

'Soft' data

- » Evidence of the topic-based curriculum providing opportunities to develop core skills in real life contexts
- » Children succeeding in 'out of school' dance, sport and music competitions/events
- » Children attending in the correct uniform and punctually
- » Parental engagement becoming productive, challenging and focused on children's learning and progress

'Hard' data

- » Attendance increased by 1.6% over a three-year period and is now over 97%

- » Attainment put the school in the top 1,000 schools nationally for overall attainment and the top 100 schools for disadvantaged pupils' attainment in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17
- » Third highest performing school in the authority for 2015/16 End of KS2 Assessments (combined reading, writing and maths: 85%)
- » Four children from the 'tutoring' group started local grammar schools in September 2016
- » Eight children have completed the Arts Award which is already contributing towards a Level 2 qualification

Milton Park Primary School



'I am proud of my pupils, colleagues, parents and community, without them we could not have achieved as much in such a short space of time' – Miss Fitzpatrick, Headteacher



Our beautiful gardens inspire our children in outdoor learning

Milton Park Primary School is a warm, caring and nurturing school. Our dedicated staff provide excellent teaching and support to all our pupils. We also enjoy lots of support from our community, parents and governors. We believe that happy learners are successful learners, and through building positive, supportive relationships we can promote a lifelong love of learning, educating for the future.

REPORT CARD

- » Overall effectiveness: Good
- » Effectiveness of leadership and management: Good
- » Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: Good
- » Personal development, behaviour and welfare: Outstanding
- » Outcomes for pupils: Good
- » Early years provision: Good

Our school is vibrant, it is an excellent school, has high standards, children are well behaved, they enjoy learning and it is all about what they can achieve and their targets. It is a happy place, so a lot of children are very happy, which I am sure a lot of schools are, but one of the Ofsted inspectors who came said he has never been in a school where the behaviour was exemplary for the whole two days, for the whole 24 hours that he was there.

We have children from all walks of life and from very different backgrounds: some children come from a highly deprived area and we also have middle-class children, we also have a large number of children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) who are mostly Polish; all the children are mixed together, but you would never know which children have specific needs. In school they are all classed as the same and they work the same and it is this collaborative learning which has resulted in our success.

Developing personal development, behaviour and welfare

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are at the core of education. When I first arrived here a few years ago, the school had a Requires Improvement rating. For the last few years we have changed and we recognised that children need

high standards and they need to have high expectations in front of them. We tackled weak teaching, policies and procedures that were not robust or rigorous enough; everyone had to believe in themselves and at that time, they did not.

Our children now believe that they are nurtured, they know that they are listened to, that they have got a pupil voice and that things will get done. We have been recognised by North Somerset as some of our practices have been quite innovative. For instance, we do not just have a designated safeguard lead, we have a team, and this is something that was highlighted by Ofsted.

Our pastoral support manager is also the safeguarding trainer for the whole of North Somerset. We have high expectations and if we can cater for their needs then the children are ready to learn.

Empowering the staff

What we wanted to do was move away from what had been done historically. Since I started, my two Deputy Heads have been pivotal in achieving the changes the school needed. From the beginning, we looked at what the children were achieving, the progress they were making and the teaching they were receiving; some of which was not good enough. We put lots of continuing professional development (CPD) in place, we did lots of training and we challenged lots of teaching practices. We have now got a mixture of new staff and ones that were with us at the beginning and, of course, those key drivers who have been with the school for a long time. Between us all, we worked hard to raise standards. The children are achieving so much and everyone has invested in our vision so that we have had to grow our middle management.



One of the things that was highlighted as Outstanding was that the teachers have something aspirational to work towards in their personal development. They work incredibly hard, and they are willing to do that because they believe that it is good for the children. We work together so that the high expectations that we now have are very much set in stone. What we had found in the past was that headteachers can hold onto

“The inspiring curriculum engages pupils’ interest and provides for effective learning”

Ofsted March 2017

Happy children make great learners





We use expert adults to teach the wider curriculum

“The Headteacher’s driving ambition and high expectations of staff have led to sustained improvement in pupils’ achievement across the school”

Ofsted March 2017

All our staff are committed to every child’s wellbeing



everything and then when they leave so does their valuable information and management. We have learnt that if you empower all your staff members and you let them make decisions, then they feel as if they are valued and that what they are saying is correct; after all they are the ones on the shop floor. They are the ones that drive all the change and you are the person that just guides it all and ensures that everything is getting done. Because a successful school is never about a Head, a successful school is about how much the staff believe in the vision and how much they make it happen.

Passionate about engineering

This was the starting point for Milton Park. Our standards were very low in English, maths and basic skills. It was clear from reading the Ofsted reports that children did not have good starting points.

However, if you have ever tried to teach children just English and maths they get bored. We had a working party and we looked at, not just our primary school, but the community which we serve. It was clear two things were happening in tandem. One was that Western College was striving, at that time, to become a university and one of the key drivers for them was putting the emphasis

on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. They were finding it increasingly difficult to convince children, especially in Year 9, to take up STEM subjects.

The college felt that it needed to serve its community, because we have got Hinkley Point just down the road, and they need expertise. We want our children to be the ones that are employed there but we cannot do that if they are not excited or have passion about those subjects. We decided, as a primary school to do something to encourage this interest.

We applied for a grant with ENTHUSE, and we had a project that ran for two years across the whole five Trust schools and this has proved to be very successful. We have got children who are using Raspberry Pi and coding, they’re using Python, which is technically a secondary school-based programme, and they are creating weather stations. They have been ripping boards apart, they are starting to talk languages that even I do not understand. They have got themselves incredibly engaged in this process and they are linking it to their environment. We have started to see children who were incredibly passionate about subjects that had maybe gone underneath the radar.

Riverside Primary School



Where everyone matters and every day counts



Andy Douglas, Headteacher

In November 2011, fifteen months after the infant and junior schools amalgamated, Riverside Primary School was placed into Special Measures by Ofsted Inspectors citing 'it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement'.

Fifteen months later (February 2013), following relentless work from the staff, at all levels, and governors and with effective support from the Local Authority and its school improvement partner, Ofsted judged the school as Good in all areas. This was partly due to the data at that time pointing towards good outcomes for Key Stage 2 SATs. However, the outcomes were not as good as predicted.

I took over as Headteacher in September 2013. Shortly after this the Local Authority described the school as a 'Wobbly Good' school. We needed to improve our outcomes to solidify our Good rating, stabilise the school financially and move the school forward. With the full backing of the Governing Body, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) discussed a review of the curriculum to make it more creative and meaningful. We built in aspirational targets for the children. For example, we looked at a group of children who were rated at 2b at Key Stage 1 with the expectation they'd be 4b at Key Stage 2 and challenged ourselves to get some of these children to achieve 4a with some making accelerated progress to achieve Level 5. The aim was not to put a ceiling on the potential of any child.

Adopting a creative approach

The school is based in Hullbridge, a village in Essex of around 8,000 people, so we aren't a remote village and are based near to the town of Rayleigh. Nevertheless, although we are a village, it didn't feel like all parts had the same aims.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Andy Douglas
- » Location: Hullbridge, Essex
- » Type: community school
- » Number on roll: 313 Children
- » Number of Staff: 54
- » Ofsted Rating: Good



Diving lesson taking place in the school pool

“The PTA have really gone above and beyond for the school”

To change this, we really needed to get parents on board and beyond thinking that at primary level children are simply there to have fun. We wanted ALL our parents to support us in getting the best achievement for their child educationally. We wanted children to understand that they should have their own aspirational ambitions. This is discussed every term when the children update their self-portrait books on what their dreams and ambitions are for the future. As the new Headteacher and with the full support of the Governing Body, the parents gave me a chance to do things slightly differently. Not all our parents supported everything we introduced or proposed but the staff

Parents involved in their child's learning during an open teach event



and I have a belief that if we get around 95% of parents on board then we are doing the right thing. In general, we have very supportive parents who have really bought into our vision. The introduction of the Parent Council, which I had seen work well in another local school, has also been a great help. They often serve as a good buffer between the school and the parents as they see things from a parent's perspective. It's not uncommon that if a parent has raised an issue, a member of the Council would have resolved the matter before it reaches the SLT.

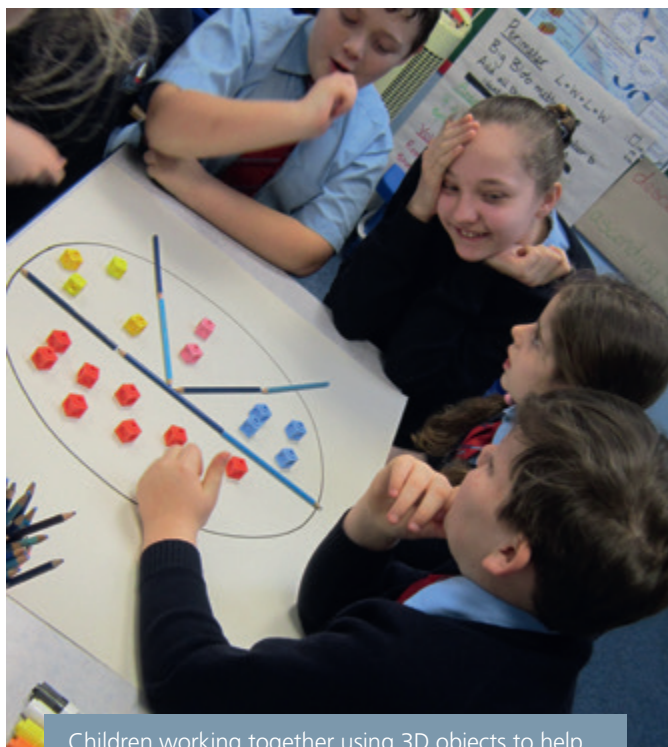
Thinking creatively is also a prerequisite for addressing financial shortfalls.

In terms of pupil numbers, we have fluctuating rolls across the school, with class sizes from 19 to 34. Naturally, these shortfalls are challenging and hit us financially. We have lost, through redundancy or not been able to afford to replace good staff who have left. The support staff we have are team players with a good range of skills often doing more than what's on their job description.

Riverside's Parent Teachers Association (PTA) have been immensely helpful in supporting the school with fundraising efforts to improve the quality of provision we offer. The PTA have really gone above and beyond for the school. Every aspect of the school is looking better: school text books, upgrades to our playgrounds, the range of activities we can offer. To avoid a deficit budget, we explore all avenues of funding including grants.

Fixing up the school

Towards the end of 2015, we won a grant of £25,000 from the OneFamily Foundation to carry out crucial repairs on our swimming pool. The pool had been in use for more than 40 years and, although useable up until the summer of 2015, it wasn't attractive. In 2015, unexpected major work was needed to the gas pipe that served the swimming



Children working together using 3D objects to help solve a pie-chart problem



Members of the school staff work tirelessly with children in Gardening Club to maintain such a beautiful school garden – often selling produce to our parents

pool, costing more than £10,000. This meant no swimming that summer! Winning the grant allowed us to remove the pipe and replace it with a more efficient electricity power source and this tied in with having had solar panels installed – the financial benefits to us in real-terms will start to come to fruition in the next two years. Work has started on new changing rooms and fundraising to enclose the pool is progressing. We won the grant because we got more votes from the public than any other project in the same category. This comes back to our determined group of parents and governors who had to actively campaign in the community to ensure we were getting votes.

Physical activity is important for all children; through our PTA we raised more than £9,000 for new outdoor gym equipment. This encourages our children to be physically active and enhances their playtime. We actively encourage children and staff to cycle to school and recently installed a 40-space bike shelter using money from a Big Lottery Grant topped up by children raising money through various curriculum based enterprise activities.

Enhancing pupil learning

Aiding the learning of the children has also been important and we've done this by obtaining the right technology through various sources. In recent years, we've introduced iPads to the school – most of which we bought, with a few donated by parents. They have proven to be really useful tools for the children, enabling them to use film clips or make recordings of their learning. Like every school, we'd love to have more.

Long term, our goals are centred on improving the outcomes for children. We have been creative and innovative in our approach and this has brought good results, but we have ambitions to do even better.

We have successfully engaged in partnership work locally, being supported or offering support; Our next big challenge is to successfully convert to an academy and become part of a local multi-academy trust (MAT) that has the interests of a wider community of children and families at its heart.

“Striving for the highest possible standards of achievement and behaviour in a stimulating and inspirational learning environment”

Review of Parliament

A snap election

On the 19th April 2017, having repeatedly insisted that she had no intention of calling a snap election, Prime Minister Theresa May sprung a complete surprise when she summoned the press to Downing Street to announce she would seek a Commons vote to go to the country on June 8th 2017.

The announcement, made as Parliament returned from its Easter break, had the force of a thunderclap in Westminster. Quite unexpectedly, MPs and parties were plunged into election mode.

The immediate effect was to turn what were now the two remaining Prime Minister's Question Times of the Parliament into de facto leader's debates – especially since it was made clear that Theresa May would not take part in the kind of televised debates held in the 2010 and 2015 elections.

The Prime Minister stated her case: 'There are three things that a country needs: a strong economy, strong defence and strong, stable leadership. That is what our plans for Brexit and our plans for a stronger Britain will deliver... The Right Hon. Member for Islington North (The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn) would bankrupt our economy and weaken our defences and is simply not fit to lead.'

To Conservative jeers, Mr Corbyn counter-attacked: 'She says that it is about leadership, yet she refuses to defend her record in television debates. It is not hard to see why. The Prime Minister says that we have a stronger economy, yet she cannot explain why people's wages are lower today than they were 10 years ago or why more



Prime Minister Theresa May sought to strengthen her position before negotiations with the EU began

households are in debt. Six million people are earning less than the living wage, child poverty is up, and pensioner poverty is up.'

The two leaders traded more accusations with Theresa May warning that ordinary working people would face higher taxes and lost jobs under Labour while Mr Corbyn claimed the Prime Minister's priority was 'tax giveaways to the richest corporations while our children's schools are starved of the resources they need to educate our children for the future'.

Brexit emerged as one of the Prime Minister's main campaign themes: 'every vote for the Conservatives will make me stronger when I negotiate for Britain with the European Union. And every vote for the Conservatives will mean we can stick to our plan for a stronger Britain and take the right long-term decisions for a more secure future for this country.'

Later that afternoon, the Commons voted to call an early election, by 522 votes to 13.

The Queen's Speech



The Queen's Speech announced the government's legislative plan for the coming Parliament

What a difference. Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn's final Commons confrontation before the election had seen the Conservatives limbering up for a triumphal campaign which would culminate in the inevitable smashing of their Labour opponents. When the diminished, battered band of Conservative MPs reassembled, minus their parliamentary majority, for the state opening of Parliament on June 21st, they were chastened and uncertain, while euphoria gripped the occupants of the Labour benches.

When they came to speak in the traditional debate on an address thanking Her Majesty for the Queen's Speech – the new Government's legislative programme – the dynamic between the two main figures had changed completely. Mr Corbyn seemed a far more confident, assertive parliamentary performer, relishing the opportunity to throw back the taunts that had been hurled at him during the campaign.

A Government which had warned that he could only gain power in a 'coalition of chaos' with the SNP and the Lib Dems had been forced

to negotiate for the support of the Northern Ireland Democratic Unionists ... and as the first debate of this new Parliament began, that support had not been secured. Mr Corbyn could not resist the open goal. To triumphant Labour laughter he noted that 'the latest coalition may already be in some chaos'.

'Nothing could emphasise that chaos more than the Queen's Speech we have just heard: a threadbare legislative programme from a Government who have lost their majority and apparently run out of ideas altogether. This would be a thin legislative programme even if it was for one year, but for two years – two years? There is not enough in it to fill up one year.'

That was a reference to the Government's decision to declare a two-year Parliamentary Session – a procedural move intended to ensure ministers could push through vital Brexit legislation in time for the exit date in March 2019. Mr Corbyn mocked the Prime Minister for dropping a series of election promises that had not found favour with the voters: means-testing the winter fuel allowance and replacing the triple lock on pensions among others.

On Brexit, Mr Corbyn stuck to Labour's careful positioning in favour of a deal with the EU 'that puts jobs and the economy first'. He called for full access to the single market and a customs arrangement that provided Britain with the 'exact same benefits' as now. And in his final flourish he warned the Prime Minister that Labour were now 'not merely an Opposition; we are a Government in waiting, with a policy programme that enthused and

engaged millions of people in this election, many for the first time in their political lives. We are ready to

offer real strong and stable leadership in the interests of the many, not the few.'

Grenfell Tower

The fire that destroyed Grenfell Tower, a social housing block in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, seemed to some to crystallise the issues that had driven the 'Corbyn Surge' in the General Election just days earlier.

Accusations about the neglect of social housing tenants, chronic under-investment and official incompetence were flying, even while the pall of smoke still hovered over the capital and the horrific images of the blaze were replayed on TV.

So potent was the symbolism that it became intertwined in the debates on the post-election Queen's Speech - but the Government also committed to keep MPs informed about the aftermath, the efforts to identify casualties in the wreckage of the tower, to re-house and assist those who had lost their homes, and to set up a public inquiry.

So it was that the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, came to the Commons on July 3rd to announce £2.5 million had been distributed from the special £5 million fund set up to help the residents. Mr Javid said the public inquiry and the criminal investigation had to be allowed the space to follow the evidence wherever it took them, and everyone should be careful not to prejudice their work. Responding to the Labour MP, David Lammy, who had lost a family friend in the fire, he added that although it was for the judge to determine the scope of the inquiry, he expected it to be 'as broad and wide-ranging as possible'.



Tributes for the Grenfell victims came from across the country

Mr Javid also dealt with the key issue of the authorities' inability to say exactly how many people had died: 'There has been much speculation about who was in Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire, and it is vital that we find out. The Director of Public Prosecutions has made it clear that there will be no prosecution of tenants ... who may have been illegally sub-letting their property, ... There may have been people living in flats that were illegally sub-let who had no idea about the true status of their tenancy. Their families want to know if they perished in the fire. These are their sons, their daughters, their brothers and their sisters. They need closure, and that is the least that they deserve.'

The Government was also taking urgent action to avoid another tragedy in buildings with architectural cladding similar to that which appeared to have been a factor in the Grenfell fire.

Last rites on the Brexit Bill



David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union since July 2016

Back in March, when an election seemed a distant prospect, parliament's main focus was on the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. This Bill, which would give Theresa May the authority to begin the UK's divorce from the European Union, was forced on the Government after a Supreme Court ruling that Parliamentary approval was required to begin the process.

Despite fears that the Bill could be watered down or even reshaped to reverse the Referendum verdict, it passed through the Commons unscathed. All attempts to amend, or add, to its 136 words were voted down. Predictions of a major rebellion of up to 50 Conservative Remainers proved unfounded, and only a handful defied the party whip.

But when it moved on to the House of Lords, where there is no Government majority and a large concentration of pro-EU peers, the Bill was amended twice.

One change guaranteed the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and the second promised Parliament a 'meaningful vote' on the final Brexit deal. That meant the Bill had to return to the Commons because both Houses of Parliament must agree on the final wording of legislation.

After much debate, MPs rejected both Lords' amendments, the Bill was sent back for immediate consideration in the House of Lords, where David Davis came to watch his Junior Minister, Lord Bridges, call on Peers to drop their opposition. And while the Liberal Democrat, Lord Oates, did urge Peers to continue defying the Government, support for the amendment melted away, and the attempt to throw it back to MPs was once more rejected, as was the attempt to keep the 'meaningful vote'. The final form of the Bill was settled – and it was sent off for the Royal Assent, un-amended.

Article 50 is triggered



Theresa May meets with European Council President Donald Tusk in Downing Street

The passage of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act cleared the way for the Prime Minister to act

on the Referendum verdict and formally trigger Britain's departure talks with the EU.

She was greeted by cheering Conservative MPs when she announced, on the 29th March, that the process had begun: 'A few minutes ago, in Brussels, the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the EU handed a letter to the President of the European Council on my behalf confirming the Government's decision to invoke Article 50 of the treaty on European Union. The Article 50 process is now under way and, in accordance with the wishes of the British people, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union.'

She added that she wanted to build a close partnership with the EU: 'We want to continue to buy goods and services from the EU, and sell it ours ... Indeed, in an increasingly unstable world, we must continue to forge the closest possible security co-operation to keep our people safe. We face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism.'

Jeremy Corbyn warned against leaving without a trade agreement: 'the Prime Minister says that no deal is better than a bad deal, but the reality is that no deal is a bad deal.'

He said the debate had now moved on to what a post-Brexit Britain would be like: 'There are Conservatives who

want to use Brexit to turn this country into a low-wage tax haven. Labour is determined to invest in a high-skill, high-tech, high-wage future ... Labour will not give this Government a free hand to use Brexit to attack rights and protections and to cut services, or to create a tax dodger's paradise.'

The eurosceptic Conservative, Jacob Rees-Mogg, quoted the Elizabethan hero Sir Francis Drake: "There must be a begynnyng of any great matter, but the conteneuing unto the end untill it be thoroughly ffynysshed yeldes the trew glory' ... I wish my Right Hon. Friend good luck and good fortune in her negotiations until she comes to true glory and is welcomed back to this House as a 21st century Gloriana.'

A terrorist attack on Parliament

On the afternoon of March 22nd, as MPs were engaged in a routine vote of the Pensions Bill, a man drove his car into pedestrians just outside, killing two people and injuring dozens more, before stabbing to death a police officer who was guarding the gates to the Houses of Parliament, and he was then shot dead himself.

The sitting of the Commons was suspended and MPs were held in their Chamber for several hours, before being escorted away. When they returned the next day, they began with a minute of silence. Then the Speaker opened proceedings by expressing 'our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of this outrage. A police officer, PC Keith Palmer, was killed defending us, defending Parliament and defending parliamentary democracy.'

The Prime Minister was heard in silence as she updated MPs: 'Yesterday, an act of terrorism tried to silence our democracy, but today we meet as



The attack on Westminster was one of several terrorist attacks in the UK during the year

normal, as generations have done before us and as future generations will continue to do, to deliver a simple message: we are not afraid, and our resolve will never waver in the face of terrorism. We meet here, in the oldest of all Parliaments, because we know that democracy, and the values that it entails, will always prevail.'



PC Keith Palmer, who died trying to stop the attacker, was given a full police service funeral, and praised for his heroism

She gave an account of the previous day's events and ended by declaring that the best response to terrorism was to act normally: 'As I speak, millions will be boarding trains and aeroplanes to travel to London and to see for themselves the greatest city on Earth. It is in these actions – millions of acts of normality – that we find the best response to terrorism: a response that denies our enemies their victory, that refuses to let them win, that shows we will never give in; a response driven by that same spirit that drove a husband and father to put himself between us and our

attacker, and to pay the ultimate price; a response that says to the men and women who propagate this hate and evil, "You will not defeat us." Mr Speaker, let this be the message from this House and this nation today: our values will prevail.'

The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, said people should not allow the voices of hatred to divide or cower them – adding that PC Keith Palmer had given his life defending the public and democracy.

Watching impassively in the crowd of MPs standing at the Bar of the House, in the area across the Chamber facing the Speaker's Chair, was the Foreign Office Minister, Tobias Ellwood. He had tried to save PC Palmer's life by giving him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Many MPs took a moment to exchange a word with him as they passed or pat him on the arm. And many of those who spoke over the next hour praised his actions.

Tributes and thanks came from all the Party Leaders – the SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron, and the DUP's, Nigel Dodds.

The Conservative MP, James Cleverly, had served with PC Palmer in the army spoke movingly and implored the Prime Minister to 'posthumously recognise his gallantry and sacrifice formally.' Theresa May promised that she would.

President Trump

This year more than most, US politics had a bearing on our own. Not only were many MPs looking across the Atlantic for a trade deal and an enhancement of the 'special relationship', following the decision to leave the EU. But the American people themselves had managed to

outdo the British electorate when it came to delivering the most surprising democratic decision of 2016.

As recently as January 2016, a small number of MPs had gathered in Westminster Hall to debate whether or not Donald Trump should be banned

from entering the UK altogether. His comments about Muslims, among others, had led to an online petition for him to be considered a ‘hate preacher’ and therefore banned from British soil. Even those who supported the motion knew there was little chance of such a ban being implemented. But few would have suspected that, just 13 months later, Parliament would be discussing the appropriateness of a state visit from President Donald Trump.

One of the first acts of the new US President was to order a blanket ban on people from a list of Middle Eastern countries travelling to the US. In the Commons, the former Labour Leader, Ed Miliband, and the Conservative, Nadhim Zahawi, joined forces to ask the Speaker for an emergency debate – and it was held that day.

Mr Zahawi, born in Iraq to Kurdish parents, arrived in the UK as a nine-year-old refugee from Saddam Hussein’s regime. He is now a British citizen, but because he was born in Iraq, he believed he came under the Trump ban.

He told MPs his place of birth already meant he had been required to go through an interview at the US embassy, to secure the right to travel to America, under rules imposed by President Obama. But the new restrictions were much tougher.

The US Government has since clarified that people with British passports will not be affected by the ban, whatever the country of their birth, but Mr Zahawi still thought the ban was ‘wholly counterproductive’. He described how it was already being used by pro-Islamic State social media accounts as ‘clear evidence that the USA is seeking to destroy Islam. They have even called it the “blessed ban”’.



Nadhim Zahawi MP strongly criticised the Trump administration’s travel ban on certain Muslim countries

Labour’s Yvette Cooper, who chairs the Home Affairs Select Committee, was ‘deeply worried’ that the Government had already invited the new President to make a state visit to Britain: ‘It will look like an endorsement of a ban that is so morally wrong and that we should be standing against.’

The Conservative, Sir Simon Burns, disagreed: ‘I think it is absolutely right that the British Government continue the work of the Prime Minister to build bridges with President Trump so that we can, through engagement, seek to persuade him and to minimise or reduce the danger of his more outrageous policies ... I believe that very little would be achieved by cancelling a state visit to which the invitation has already been extended and accepted.’

The emergency debate was on a formal motion that MPs had ‘considered’ Donald Trump’s travel ban, so no call for a policy change was voted on.

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