

2015 / 2016

PRIMARY EDUCATION EDITION

# *The Parliamentary Review*

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

## ■ FOREWORDS

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

## ■ SOUTH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

Botwell House Catholic  
Primary School  
Cayley Primary School  
Conway Primary School  
Corringham Primary School  
Crofton Junior School  
Delce Academy  
Eversley Primary School

Janet Duke Primary School  
Mulberry Primary School  
Okehampton Primary School  
Paddock Wood Primary School  
Risley Avenue Primary School  
Earley St Peter's CE Primary  
School  
Worcesters Primary School

## ■ FEATURES

Review of the Year  
Review of Parliament





## The Rt Hon Philip Hammond

Chancellor of the Exchequer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Education Select Committee



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Political upheavals that overturned the landscape for education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Justine Greening,  
Secretary of State for  
Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Free school meals are still needed in deprived areas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The long road to finding a fairer way to fund schools

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

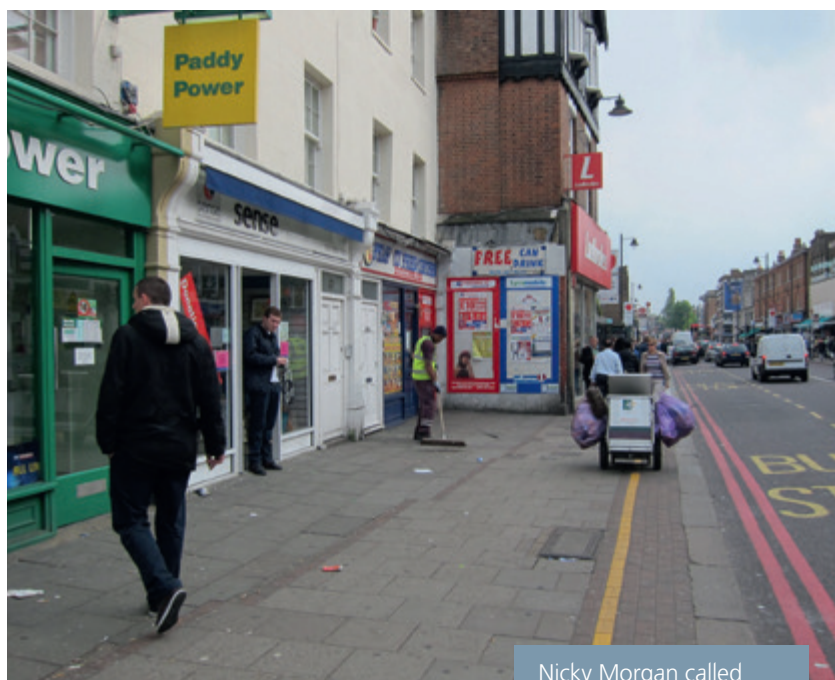
For many years there have been calls for a more consistent and fairer approach to how much public money is given to state schools. The amount schools receive per pupil can vary widely depending on factors such as where the school is located and the particular needs of the intake; extra funding is given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

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

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

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

Last year's Conservative election manifesto promised to grasp this



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



Department  
for Education,  
Sanctuary Buildings,  
Westminster

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

impact on funding than the levels of deprivation?

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The battle over term-time holidays becomes a courtroom drama

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

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

There was far from widespread agreement on this. There were parents who said that they could not afford the

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

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

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

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



answer. Even with a week's absence in term-time, the court deemed that overall the pupil had attended the school regularly.

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

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

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

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

## Baseline testing struggles to get off the ground

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

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

Despite the controversy, the Government had doggedly persevered, arguing that there was a valid underlying principle. The idea of the baseline test was to provide a benchmark against which to measure progress through primary school. If there was no reliable starting point, how could there be any assessment of how far pupils had advanced in the following years?

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

Even though the teachers' unions had been opposed to baseline testing, there had been broad political support for the concept. At the general election, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats had been supportive of the idea as a useful starting point for measuring progress.

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

Primary schools were offered three different types of test, each of them approved as a way of meeting the requirements of the baseline



assessments. Headteachers could choose which approach they preferred.

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

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

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

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

The Government said that schools could still use baseline tests for their own internal purposes and it repeated its commitment to the principle. In



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

the short term their use as a formal measure had been postponed and it remains to be seen how it might be resuscitated in future.

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

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

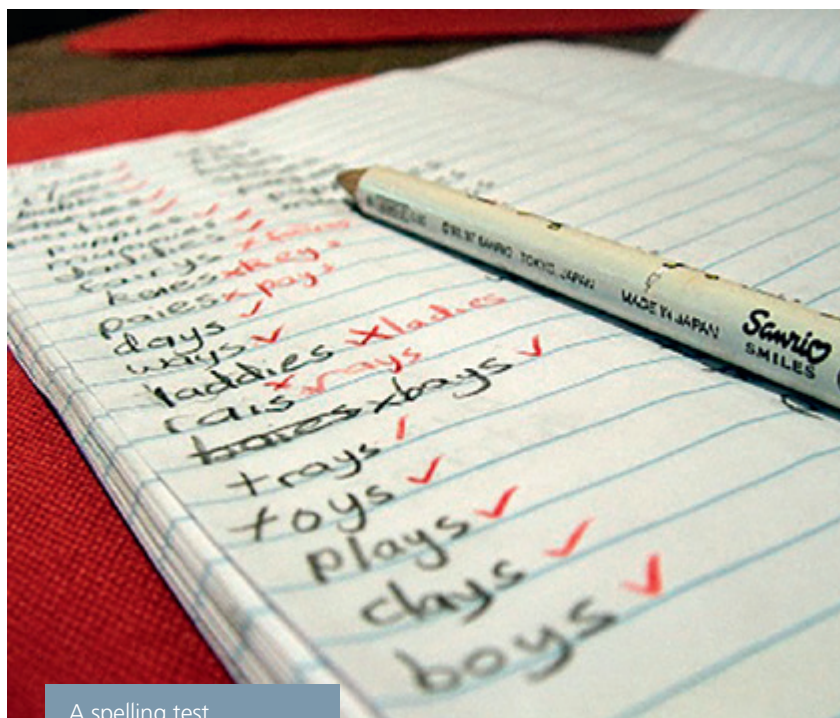
The National Association of Headteachers, which complained of 'poor planning and a lack of consultation', delivered the verdict: 'It is hard to avoid saying we told you so'.

## The leaked spelling test that had to be cancelled

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

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

Unfortunately, the tests had to be called off a few weeks before they



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

were due to be taken when it emerged that the questions had been published in advance on a Department for Education website.

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

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

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

'To remove any uncertainty and clarify the situation for schools, I have decided

that we will remove the requirement on them to administer the Key Stage 1 grammar, punctuation and spelling test for this year only,' said Schools Minister, Nick Gibb.

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

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

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

Mr Hobby had earlier warned ministers that they had little choice except to pull the plug on tests which seemed to have been compromised saying that schools couldn't be fairly compared on unreliable test results. He said the Department for Education had acted 'quickly and appropriately' in reaching the same conclusion.

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

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

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



## The school strike that was by parents rather than teachers

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

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

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

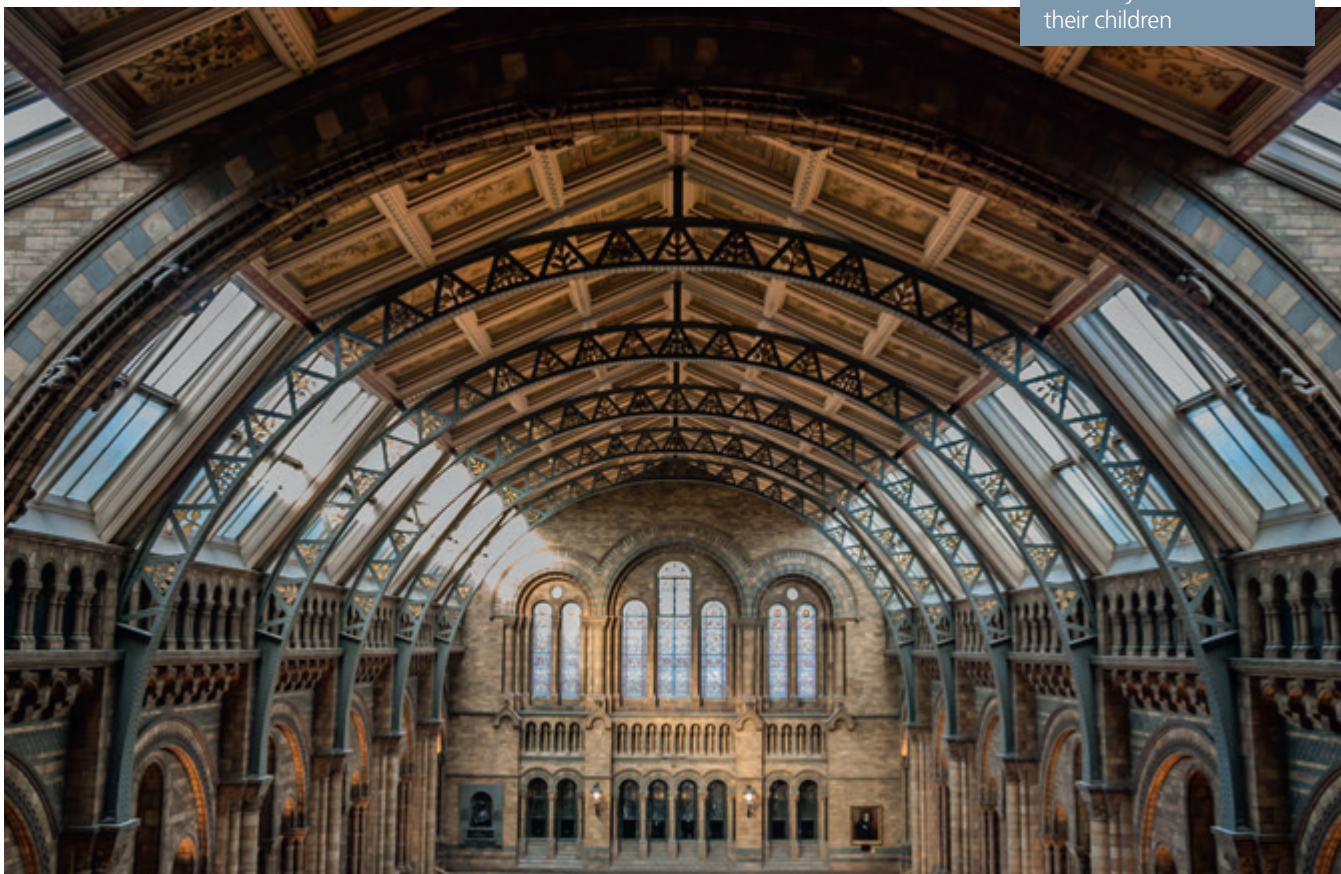
Instead of bringing their children to school, protesting parents took their children to rallies in parks or on organised visits to museums or places for educational trips.

This was a protest organised and shared through social media, with tens of thousands signing a petition collected online, which was then handed in at the Department for Education in London.

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

In terms of making an impact, the novelty of a parents' strike certainly captured the headlines and it prompted

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



debates about whether young children were being over-tested.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Primary school assessments had already faced a difficult time, with the postponement of the baseline tests and the disruption of part of the English test for seven-year-olds but what added to the air of uncertainty was what was claimed as a deliberate attempt to undermine the SATs tests taken by 11-year-olds.

It seemed that there had been an attempt to leak part of the English test due to be taken by hundreds of

thousands of pupils in England in the final year of primary school.

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

In the end, the attempted leak was considered so limited that the



Department for Education thought there was no need for a cancellation and the test went ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



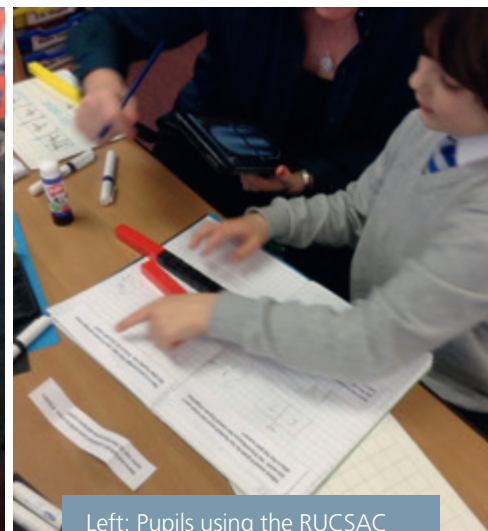
Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, admitted a 'serious breach'

Many schools are adopting outdoor learning as part of their methods





# Botwell House Catholic Primary School



Left: Pupils using the RUCSAC method to solve problems.  
Centre: Pupils trying out the Far Eastern Bar Model Method.  
Right: Same day tutorials being used to support understanding.

**B**otwell House Catholic Primary School is a three form entry school in Hayes, West London. 75% of our pupils are from an ethnic minority background. We also have a large intake of Irish Travellers. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is well above average at 41% compared to the national average of 19%. This is increasing.

Despite these challenging circumstances, we have consistently achieved “above average attainment” in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. We want our pupils to be challenged, passionate learners and achieving above average expectations at the end Key Stage 1 and 2.

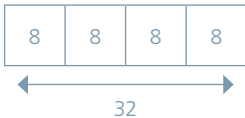

PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) has shown that Mathematical problem-solving has emerged as a critical part of proficiency. This has led to ‘an intellectual arms race’ (Wildavsky, 2011), with nations competing against each other for the highest ranking. In 2000 England ranked 9th out of 32 countries in mathematics, by 2009 the ranking fell to 28th out of 65 countries. Whilst England’s position in mathematics has declined, by contrast the Far East has experienced continual success. China, particularly Shanghai, has ranked in the top four since 2000. Pupils from Shanghai routinely outperform their Western counterparts. These tests not only show Chinese pupils are more advanced, but show children from the poorest upbringings are more than a year ahead of British children from wealthier, more privileged backgrounds.

In wanting to replicate the success of other nations we turned a Year 3 class into an experimental teaching group to judge how Far Eastern practices could be relevant to our school. The research project wanted to compare success rates during problem-solving when using the Far Eastern Bar Model method compared to the traditional RUCSAC technique, a specific school-based approach. This aimed to answer the research question:

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Pauline Glancy
- » Large primary school with 707 pupils on roll
- » 75% of pupils from an ethnic minority background
- » 41% speak English as an additional language
- » 17% Pupil Premium pupils
- » OFSTED Inspection 2014: Good

## How effective is the Far East Bar model method in teaching mathematical problem solving?

The Bar Model method	The RUCSAC approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Bar Model method follows a Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (CPA) sequence</li> <li>» Concrete: Pupils are first introduced to an idea or a skill by performing it with real objects.</li> <li>» Pictorial: Bar Models are mathematical representations of a word problem to show the structure of a word problem:   <div data-bbox="124 568 488 654"> <p>There are 32 children in a class. There are 3 times as many boys as girls. How many girls?</p> </div>  <p>Each square is 8, so there are 8 girls and 24 boys.</p> <p>(NCETM, 2013)</p> </li> <li>» Abstract: Pupils move to using mathematical symbols. This allows pupils to apply their newly acquired skills and progress to more difficult tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The RUCSAC approach identifies the main phases involved in problem solving:    </li> <li>» Pupils now use the acronym RUCSAC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>R</b> – read the problem</li> <li><b>U</b> – understand the important parts</li> <li><b>C</b> – choose the calculation</li> <li><b>S</b> – solve the problem</li> <li><b>A</b> – answer the question</li> <li><b>C</b> – check your answer makes sense</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

However, differences in the teaching of mathematical problem solving are not just down to techniques, teaching approaches between the Far East and UK are vastly different too.

Step inside a maths classroom in Shanghai and you would see mixed ability pupils all learning the same topic. Teachers do not split their pupils into different ability groups; they wait for academically weaker pupils to reach a basic standard in each topic before the class moves on to the next concept. The able pupils study the topic in greater depth while waiting for the weaker pupils to master it - thus gaining greater depth of knowledge than their UK counterparts. For those who have struggled, immediate tutorials are given prior to the start of the next lesson. Pupils are taught one method of adding or subtracting throughout their school life and there is no variation between teachers or schools.

Now step into a UK classroom, like Botwell, you will notice pupils are grouped according to ability. There are slight differences to the content of lessons according to ability. Multiple methods are taught. For example, children are taught several techniques for addition including partitioning and column strategies. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their learning by talking with their teacher. Pupils often work with partners or in groups to share knowledge and expertise. By contrast under the Far Eastern approach, children work alone with minimal interaction.

The experiment was split into two parts as our maths leader had been trained in the use of the Bar Model method. During the first part, pupils used the standard RUCSAC approach when problem-solving. During the second part, pupils were taught and used the Bar Model method and were organised into mixed abilities. Same day tutorials were also used to replicate Far Eastern approaches. However, stopping the use of discussion based learning and partner/group work was not in the best interests of the pupils (a large proportion who are EAL), or the schools desire to create independent learners.

However, surprisingly a new approach to problem-solving arose during the research project. Named after the school, the 'Bot-Bar' approach emerged as a fusion of effective practices in the Far East married with the preferred learning styles at Botwell.

Pupils were quick to grasp the Bar Model method, however they were limited by weaknesses in their mental maths skills.

It became clear that simply attempting to shoehorn a Far Eastern approach into a UK school would be ineffective. Instead we were able to merge Far Eastern approaches with the skills of our pupils.

“It became clear that simply attempting to shoehorn a Far Eastern approach into a UK school would be ineffective”

Data was collected from our pupils' work based on how long it took to answer questions. This was to find out if Far Eastern approaches made problem solving *easier* for pupils to understand and if they were able to answer more challenging questions.

It was apparent the RUCSAC approach led children to analyse word-problems at face value, our pupils were relying on word clues to identify the operation and calculation. Children associated words like 'more', 'and', 'altogether' with one operation. This was particularly common with EAL pupils and children of a Traveller Heritage. By contrast, the Bar Model method seemed to help children see the problem with greater clarity, strengthening their understanding. It was through the Bot-Bar approach that children could then use this newly found understanding alongside mental maths techniques and partner/teacher talk.

Children adopted 'coping strategies' including picking the numbers out, subtracting the "smaller number from the bigger one" and attempting a range of operations to find the answer. By contrast, when using the Bot-Bar approach, the lower and middle ability pupils were able to select the correct operation as well as discuss their thought processes in much greater detail.

Girls reported feeling more confident and "clever" than when using the RUCSAC method and completed more tasks correctly when using this approach. Girls particularly responded well to the one-to-one tutorials and boys persisted with questions for greater lengths of time than they had during week one.

The project really focused teacher and researcher attention on common misconceptions and the way in which our pupils develop new knowledge. It is

## » THE BAR MODEL METHOD

1) 18 boys and 26 girls were at the summer camp. How many children were at the summer camp altogether?

2) My hobby is collecting stamps. I have 65 stamps in my collection. 23 of the stamps are from the UK. How many are not?

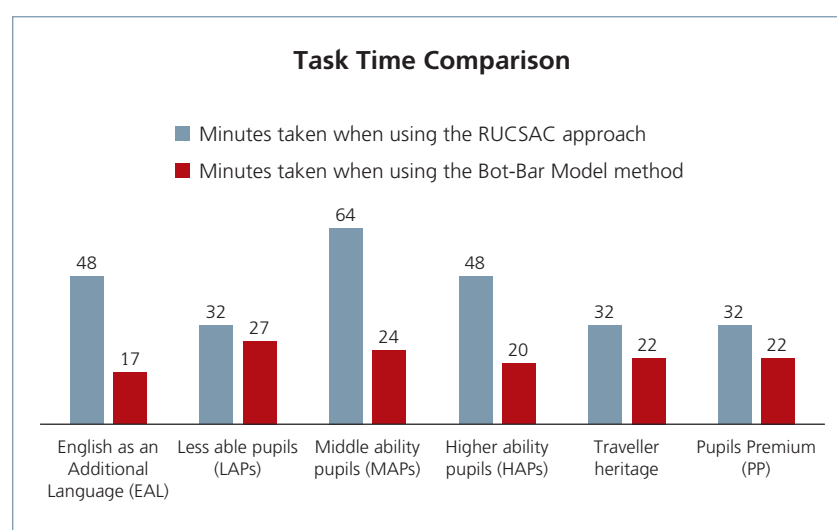
1) Sam has 27 pencils in his pencil case. Yesterday, he only had 15 but his sister Rosie gave him some of hers. How many did Rosie give him?

2) I need to make 45 sandwiches for the party. I have made 31 egg sandwiches and the rest will be cheese. How many cheese sandwiches do I need to make?

Here the pupil draws the Bars and selects the operation correctly but lacks the mental maths skills to find the correct answer.

Here the same pupil draws the Bars and selects the operation correctly, but this time uses Botwell approaches to support mental maths skills.

Focus group	Number of unanswered questions when using RUCSAC	Number of unanswered questions when using Bot-Bar
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	2	0
Less able pupils (LAPs)	4	0
Middle ability pupils (MAPs)	3	0
Higher ability pupils (HAPs)	2	0
Traveller heritage	1	0
Pupil Premium (PP)	4	0



something we are keen to look further into so that the strategies can be used across the school at an earlier age.



# Cayley Primary School



Lissa Samuel, Headteacher, with the children in the playground

Reception children exploring magnetic properties

Cayley Primary School is a multicultural school situated in the heart of Stepney, Tower Hamlets. 426 of the pupils are of Bangladeshi origin and 14 of the pupils are of Somali origin. One third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils from 29 different backgrounds other than English is 543. For 479 pupils, English is not their first language. In 2013 we opened an extension to the existing Victorian building and are in the process of moving from two to three form entry which will result in a school roll of 720 pupils.

## REPORT CARD

- » Head teacher: Lissa Samuel
- » Location: Stepney, Tower Hamlets
- » Community Primary School
- » 551 pupils, 103 staff
- » Ofsted rating: good

Reception assessments of pupils as they start their school career show that attainment is exceptionally low, with the intake working below age-related expectations of thirty-fifty months, with some at eight-twenty months. By the end of the Reception year, the majority of the children, although not meeting national expectations, have made exceptional progress in all areas. Indeed, in terms of expectations the percentage of pupils 'exceeding expectations' are above national averages, with those who have been at our Nursery showing best performance.

Our SATs results from 2014 showed that the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above is 94% in reading, 85% in writing and 98% in mathematics. However, the children not making enough progress from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two has been a priority for us this year.

## How do we tackle these issues?

We have twenty seven teachers including teachers specifically appointed to support English and Mathematics learning: Nursery Nurses across Nursery, Reception and Year One classes to support speaking and listening and across the curriculum: Teaching Assistants to support in class or one-to-one for pupils with additional needs in addition to delivering catch up programmes. We employ graduates to help develop, reading, writing and speaking and listening skills for professional development, and to train as teachers within the school.

Last year the Leadership Team began a whole school restructuring process. This started with increasing the Leadership Team itself to five Assistant Heads, four of them responsible for a stage of education and one for the whole breadth of Inclusion. In addition, we increased the number of teachers working under the Teaching and Learning Responsibility mandate to focus on raising levels of achievement. Our present priority is enhancing the value added by support staff and identifying the specific support requirements needed in all areas of learning.

We have invested heavily in the professional development of all staff with four days of English training and a comprehensive in-school training programme.

Our Assistant Head with responsibility for Nursery and Reception has worked alongside the Deputy Head to provide an extensive and supportive programme to develop behaviour management and behaviour for learning across the school.

Following our performance management observations we reviewed the way we teach English across the school. This highlighted for us that levels of development in Speaking were inhibiting

reading development, which we tackled by providing smaller groups to enable accelerated progress for pupils identified by our assessment tracking.

The Deputy Head has begun unpicking the problem of underachievement of children with poor working memory skills, developing teaching approaches that support the children in managing their working memory loads. For example, repeating instructions, talking in short, simple sentences and breaking down tasks into smaller chunks of information. We are already beginning to see children in a different light knowing more about the difficulties faced by particular children with impaired working memory. We know that these pupils are not daydreamers, inattentive or underachieving, they are pupils who simply need a different approach.

Thematic planning that is highly responsive to children's needs begins in Nursery and Reception. In Key Stage One and Two our creative Cayley Primary Curriculum is broad and balanced, with a strong emphasis on personal, social and emotional development and The Arts, making learning more powerful and generating excitement and enthusiasm through imaginative connections and engaging titles. For example the topic 'I'm a Student, Get

“The headteacher is well supported by members of the senior leadership team and they have an ambitious vision for the school.

OFSTED 2012 ”



Science Investigation





Children's playground installation



Wonderful Original Work exhibition 2016

'Me Out of Here', is based around a residential trip to Wrotham. Writing opportunities are identified for each topic area, planned to develop a breadth of writing across the curriculum and of different genres.

Our School Council is taking an active role in providing a pupil voice; they meet weekly with their classes and then feed back into their Key Stage meeting. They have been instrumental in the development of the outside areas, designing the equipment that has been installed. This is being further developed with our Sports Ambassadors who are leading games sessions.

As part of our commitment to equality we work with the 'Reach Out' mentoring scheme which inspires the girls and raises their aspirations through weekly meetings and activities across Year 6.

Our Governing Body is strengthening its skills through working alongside staff and engaging with parents and the wider community, so that they are gaining greater depth and understanding about the school.

Cayley has developed clear and open channels of communication with parents and carers. Weekly coffee mornings are held by the Pastoral Support Team, where we actively seek parent's feedback and views and develop our parental engagement in the ethos of the school. The team works bilingually with parents as required with Governors attending each term. Teaching and Support Staff are able to meet the parents daily as are the Leadership Team. Parents are kept informed through weekly newsletters, half termly class newsletters which focus on the curriculum and through termly parents meetings of which one of these is our WOW – Wonderful Original Work – exhibition which links with our application of skills and knowledge. This is further developed through our Family Home work devised by a partnership of local schools and sent home each holiday full of activities that our families can engage in together. Parents bring very different social and cultural attitudes to school. We believe that our staff reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community has supported parents in sharing our vision of children deserving the best and achieving the best.

We continually reflect on our practice and meet challenges with enthusiasm. Cayley is a learning and developing school. I was asked at interview what my 'non-negotiables' were, my unwavering answer is for the children and staff to achieve the best they can and to be happy, confident and ready to take the next steps into the rest of their lives: 'Explore. Excite. Excel'.

# Conway Primary School



"Be the change you want to see in the world"  
Mahatma Ghandhi

Serving at the heart of the Plumstead community since 1865, Conway Primary School is an inner city school serving a wide, diverse and transient population in South East London. This consists of a range of over 500 pupils ranging from 2–11 years old. Over the past 4 years the school has been on a path of reinvention, which has resulted in a dramatic increase in standards.

At the start of this journey, the standards in mathematics, reading and writing were significantly below national expectations. I began with myself and one other senior leader. Together we took challenging steps to reshape and redesign the staffing structure to ensure high quality teaching and learning. We now have a highly skilled team of senior and middle leaders as well as a supportive and effective governing body. We have a strong path of distributed leadership with staff who have a shared belief in our ethos and vision.

The successes of the improvement of the school have been through innovative opportunities for professional development such as, partnership work with other practitioners. Developing and maintaining staff who are emotionally intelligent as well as skilled in their areas of expertise has contributed towards the effectiveness of the team. Working in partnership with teachers to reflect and improve has created a learning culture which is reflective and constantly allows for growth and development. Part of this process has been my own opportunity and scope for growth and development as a Headteacher. Collectively we work to disseminate good practice across the school and maintain this consistency.

As a result we have been recognised by the DfE for two consecutive years as one of the top 100 schools nationally for progress, in the top 5% of schools for



Mrs Yalini Carlsson-Ruban,  
Headteacher

## REPORT CARD

- » Name of school:  
Conway Primary School
- » Number on roll: 505
- » Headteacher: Mrs Yalini Carlsson-Ruban
- » Ethnicities: 39
- » Percentage of disadvantaged pupils: 56%
- » Percentage of SEND pupils: 17%





"Children must be taught  
how to think, not what  
to think"  
Margaret Mead

phonics and recognised as a school demonstrating exceptional practice in its use of PE premium funding. Our work to create an effective team has been recognised and this year we were awarded the Silver Status by the Investors in People.

Our vision is that Conway children achieve what is expected of them and beyond. These expectations are high and this ethos and vision is integral to the whole school community. Over time we have developed and continue to maintain a skilled leadership team, governing body and supportive cohesive team of professionals who have delivered this vision with integrity.

We have developed a culture of high expectations. As Headteacher my mantra, which is now a shared one, is that end goals remain the same, but the journey changes as necessary in order to achieve these. The leadership team work closely with teachers to assess whether the children are learning well and work in partnership to review different ways to support children and staff.

We are educating our children to develop a strong sense of aspiration, personal development, achievement and social responsibility as part of a whole community. Conway children are taught to understand their part in creating a future society based on respect and understanding. We respect, understand and celebrate their differences but we also develop and emphasise our commonalities and values as part of being British. We are teaching our children to see both differences and commonalities as two aspects that sit in harmony and not conflict. Our work through London Challenge exemplifies this. For example, our children have been working and developing a whole school community pledge to promote kindness, compassion and golden rules.

We have developed teams that promote a culture of learning and aspiration. The children and whole school community understand the expectations to achieve.

We strive to work in partnership with children, parents, governors and staff to ensure a shared belief and determination to ensure the best educational opportunity possible. Parental workshops to support children's education, leadership and governor sessions all help to create close working partnerships aimed at the same end goals.

We make mistakes and we get things wrong. We have a culture where we accept our mistakes and learn from them. Developing an ethos or resilience, hard work, dealing with difficulties, are part of what we model and develop. Ultimately I take responsibility for anything that goes wrong, but we work together as a team to resolve things within a work environment based on integrity, opportunity and unity.

“We challenge  
ourselves to  
enable  
maximum  
potential and  
aspiration in  
every child!”



## Overcoming Obstacles and Challenges

Whilst we are in an area of high social deprivation, this is not a barrier to high educational achievement. Where there are obstacles, we know it is our responsibility to find solutions to overcome these barriers together. Initiatives in recent years such as pupil premium have been instrumental in enabling headteachers to close these gaps in inequality. Strategies such as quality training and support, peer work and small class sizes have enabled us to achieve this.

The challenges of English as an additional language, Special Educational Needs or challenging social circumstances are challenges not obstacles. Building and working with our communities to develop a value of education is part of our ethos. We have recently opened a centre for two year olds. The rationale is to target disadvantaged families and children within the community through this early intervention to ensure they access quality educational experiences and skills at a young age. This supports government initiative to create a level playing field, particularly pertinent to our school community.

At Conway there is no room for complacency. We know that our educational starting point is low so we put in clear goals and structures for children to achieve the right foundations from the start. Having the support of a strong governing body and teaching community has enabled significant change.

Pupil Premium funding has been vital to our successes. With over half of our children categorised as disadvantaged, our challenges both in standards and social difficulties are significant. Through both this funding and the PE premium funding we have been able to tailor the curriculum in a unique way to ensure all children have the



"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it".  
Lou Holtz

opportunity to reach their potential. Use of resources such as Kindles to extra group sessions and one to one personalised sessions have all been part of that tailoring to support our children. The pupil premium funding has enabled us to be creative in how we tap into the drivers of both staff and children to reach their own goals.

## Maintaining the momentum

The next challenge is to both maintain and improve. Keeping the teams motivated and challenged with further innovation is important. For example, some of next steps are around the development of reading. We are in the early stages of building reading partnerships between some of our non-teaching staff and targeted children to develop their opportunity to read and be heard by an adult reader. It is a new experience for many children. However it will be how we deliver this that will enable impact and that is what I will look at. Further challenges will lie ahead. Creative uses of funding, developing partnerships both in and outside of education will be a growing area of focus over the next year. We still have a lot more to do and will strive to innovate and improve. Having developed the right team puts us all in a privileged and enjoyable position to fulfil this.

“At Conway there is no room for complacency”

# Corringham Primary School



Lorna Hamilton, Head Teacher



Corringham Primary School

In January 2013, Corringham Primary School was placed in special measures because of poor results, inconsistent and inadequate teaching and concerns over safeguarding procedures and systems. Following this, 14 of the 16 strong teaching staff left the school. The school then joined the Stanford and Corringham Schools' Trust in October 2013. Subsequently, I was appointed as Head Teacher in March 2014. From this point, the school made rapid progress in all areas – Key Stage One results improved six times faster than national rates of progress and Key Stage Two results improved four times faster. In July 2015, the school was re-inspected and was judged as Requires Improvement overall. Three areas recognised as good were: Leadership and Management, Early Years and behaviour and Safety – with safety rated as outstanding.

## REPORT CARD

- » Head: Lorna Hamilton
- » Location: Corringham, Thurrock, Essex.
- » Academy status October 2013
- » Two form Entry (408 pupils) with specialist Speech and Language provision (20 pupils)
- » Pre-School – joined September 2015 (71 pupils)
- » % pupils with EHC: 5.9% (National 1.4%)
- » Number of teachers: 21

## So what has made the difference?

We joined a newly established academy trust as a two form entry primary with enhanced learning facilities for children with identified speech and language difficulties. Inside the trust we formed an alliance with a highly successful local secondary school. This was a natural partnership since 95% of our children attend this secondary school following year six. This partnership gave capacity to allow Corringham Primary to make rapid progress. This was possible through the following key actions:

- » Development of leadership through establishing an experienced and knowledgeable governing body;

- » Before my appointment, the trust appointed an interim Head Teacher and seconded a senior leader from the secondary school in an Associate Head Teacher role: they addressed the immediate safeguarding concerns;
- » The CEO of the trust provides continual, external challenge and support;
- » Building capacity to financial structures including securing additional funding for four major building projects.

Following my appointment in March 2014, my first task was to get the whole staff to share the values and ethos I wanted our school to have. This developed into our school vision “to be the best that we can be”. I then ensured that the children understood what this meant and how their learning and behaviour should reflect this vision.

The school’s rapid improvement plan focussed on four key, interlinked priorities:

1. Development of an effective leadership team;
2. Raising achievement and attainment;
3. Improving the quality of teaching and learning;
4. Promoting the environment to enhance learning.

Following the exodus of staff due to the special measures grading, recruitment became the biggest focus. As a result, we were able to secure a balance of experienced teachers alongside newly qualified teachers. This recruitment drive included:

- » A proactive advertising campaign, including the use of social media and openly supporting job shares;

- » Maintaining high expectations to secure quality teachers.

Within just over a year, staff turnover has stabilised and we now have a fantastic teaching and learning team who are child focused and are an integral part of the school’s vision.

Within this team, a new staffing structure was created. This allowed us to develop a leadership team including a Deputy Head Teacher and three Assistant Head Teachers for teaching and learning. These additional leaders effectively modelled and monitored the high standards needed to move forward in line with the school’s ethos and vision. We also strengthened the teaching team by appointing additional teachers because of the need to close gaps in learning and catch up.

The leadership team developed a culture of honest communication, support and challenge to enable staff to be critical of their own performance and recognise how to support colleagues in order to improve learning for the children. Support plans were introduced and coaching given to improve practice. These support plans had clear, specific targets and staff had clarity around their success. Peer support, through shared planning, preparation and assessment sessions, shared moderation and team teaching, has further supported the professional development and expertise of all staff. As a result, “inadequate teaching has been eradicated” (Ofsted report 2015).

One of the difficulties with the change of culture was that the children were not used to being challenged and lacked enjoyment for learning. We have therefore developed a new curriculum which supports cross curricular learning, where the topic children are being

“Rates of progress were faster than national.”



Developing enquiry skills as part of a broad and balanced curriculum



Paired learning

“...inadequate teaching has been eradicated.”  
Ofsted report 2015



Year 2 designed menus and made smoothies to open a profit making café for parents.



taught changes every four weeks. Each four week topic starts with a launch lesson to inspire and engage children's interest and ends with a celebratory end point or product. In year two, for example, as part of a topic on "What I need to be me", the children explored healthy eating and how to engage others to eat more healthily. Alongside the curriculum, we also changed the structure of the school day:

- » School opens earlier to allow children to respond to their marking and next steps. Over 90% of our children attend;
- » Increased opportunities for maths throughout the curriculum as a discrete subject and through applied maths lessons.

Improvements were also made to assessment for learning. One of the first steps was to introduce pupil progress dialogues with every teacher. This forensic system clearly identifies children who are at risk of not making adequate progress or reaching the

required level of attainment. The improved system for assessment allows leaders to challenge teachers where there are gaps in learning.

Our journey to good and beyond continues with a current focus on:

- » Embedding good practice and consistency;
- » Ensuring a no excuse culture for learning;
- » Early identification of children not attaining or making progress in line with expectation;
- » A rapid response to interventions and personalised learning programmes to close and prevent gaps.

Although I am very proud of the rapid progress throughout the school and the impact this has already had on the children, I know that there is still more to do. With the team and their continued commitment to our children, I have every faith that this school will go from strength to strength in order for us to fulfil our aim "to be the best that we can be".

# The Crofton Schools Academy Trust



The Crofton News Team makes regular broadcasts on events at Crofton



Wendy Giles, Head of School at Crofton Infants (left)  
Andrea Carter, Executive Headteacher of the Crofton Schools Academy Trust (Centre)  
Susie King, Head of School at the Crofton Juniors (right)

The Crofton Schools Academy Trust (CSAT) in the London Borough of Bromley is a highly successful multi-academy trust comprising of Crofton Juniors and Crofton Infants with the most recent Ofsted report recognising it as Outstanding in March 2016. As a large six form entry Infant and Junior, the Crofton Schools Academy Trust faces the daily challenges of a secondary school in terms of size yet its high achievement, innovative approach and friendly feel, makes Crofton popular and hugely over-subscribed year on year.

As an authority, Bromley is an intrinsic part of the London suburbs, having one of the largest borough economies, amongst the highest employment levels of any of the London boroughs and educational standards that show above national trends (London Borough of Bromley 2010). To maintain and improve on these expectations for future generations in Bromley, we need to be at the forefront of the most innovative and forward thinking approaches to education.

## So what are our Key successes?

As an Executive Headteacher I am constantly considering trust strengths and weaknesses but what do I consider has made the most significant difference at CSAT?

## Vision and Values

At CSAT we have a clear vision and agreed values that underpin everything we do. Educational challenges are a part of a Headteachers' daily routine and to have a clear sense of direction when making decisions makes the job a whole lot easier!

## REPORT CARD

- » Executive Headteacher: Andrea Carter
- » Heads of School: Susie King and Wendy Giles
- » Location: Petts Wood
- » Primary Multi Academy Trust
- » Six form Entry plus Severe and Complex Need Unit (18 place)
- » Ofsted rating Outstanding (1) and Good (1)
- » Number of pupils: 1265
- » Number of Staff: 201





Creativity is at the heart of the Crofton ethos

The team at Crofton is highly committed to the vision and work tirelessly to deliver the highest standards on a daily basis. This team buy-in has a significant impact on the standards we achieve.

Using our vision and values we have developed an educational model for use in our schools. The basis of the model is now fully embedded in our approach to education and highly successful in our current schools. Through this model we:

- » Deliver a curriculum that is relevant to our community, is built on core values and beliefs and as a result produces highly successful, self-motivated learners;
- » See staff development/recruitment as crucial to sustainable success;
- » Believe that the highest quality education can only be achieved where everyone including directors, governors, staff and parents subscribe to its vision.

### Core Skills

CSAT believes that core skills are central to curriculum planning, ensuring every child is educated in the basic skills of English and Maths to the highest standards possible. We pride ourselves on extremely high expectations with a real belief that,

given the opportunity, children can and will achieve expected standards and beyond. Master classes also support provision for the more able in core areas. Central to outcomes is the robust focus on progress with systems that monitor this daily at a teacher level, weekly at year group leader level and every two weeks at a leadership level. We have found that early identification of gaps, alongside planning to fill these has had a huge impact on standards for all.

### Opportunities

CSAT believes in powering inspirational learning that feeds the mind, develops curiosity and fosters a determination to succeed. To fulfil this ambition we constantly seek to provide children with new opportunities that inspire, motivate and challenge them using the highest level of expertise wherever possible. These include:

- » specialist music teachers who provide the opportunity for all children to learn an instrument and develop specific expertise in music technology
- » specialist sports teachers enabling children to learn the rules and skills of a wide variety of sport alongside being given opportunities to compete at different levels
- » highly skilled technology teachers to provide children with IT opportunities generally only seen at secondary level.

We also run a forest school which links learning in core areas to the outside environment and we have recently introduced Crofton allotments which provide vast and varied opportunities for children to acquire agricultural skills under the supervision of a qualified gardener. The Crofton News Team is also very popular with children producing termly broadcasts showcasing the events at Crofton.

Learning opportunities in the outdoor environment



As a result of this constant drive to provide new opportunities we have seen children develop passion and enthusiasm in new areas, pursue new challenges beyond the school environment and develop a greater confidence in themselves, seeing opportunity as a positive rather than a challenge.

## Life Skills

The ethos and organisation of CSAT has been designed to support the development of life skills as we see these as key when considering the life chances of individuals. Study skills, time management and organisation are intrinsic to the delivery of the curriculum with restorative justice providing vital skills when considering conflict resolution. Leadership skills are developed through the many positions of responsibility such as the junior leadership team and children as mentors.

Our whole curriculum is built around 5 core C's, developing children who are Caring and have a sense of Community as well as developing children who are Creative, Collaborative and Critical thinkers. Our planning ensures that children can develop an understanding in these areas through the activities they participate in. A dialogic approach, based on quality talk to deepen learning, is used throughout planning to enable our children to develop these skills that we believe support life-long learning.

As a result of this it is clear when you talk to Crofton children that they are resilient, self-motivated and excited about their future.

## Rapid Progress - The Crofton Split Input teaching method

At Crofton, we believe that individually targeted learning improves outcomes for every child in our schools. Over the past two years we have developed a method of teaching that can enable

all children, at all levels, to make outstanding progress within a lesson. Children work in groups and teaching input is administered to each group throughout the course of the lesson, specific to each child's learning needs. As a result of this split input teaching method, every child's individual needs are met on a daily basis with technology playing a key role in this process. Each group is taught effectively as well as being given daily focused opportunities for independence and challenges including tasks requiring higher order thinking. This split input method has become known as 'The Crofton way of teaching' and we have invested significant amounts of time and resources ensuring that all of our staff are competent at delivering lessons in this way.

Our teachers clearly understand that differentiation is not about providing multiple resources. It is about providing quality input at an appropriate level for each child within the class. Teachers' knowledge of their children is key alongside an ability to build an appropriate learning path with high expectations for all at the core of everyday practice. Teachers thrive using this new method of teaching, as they see their pupils' progress soar.

As a result of this teaching method Crofton has seen outcomes significantly improve; progress is outstanding across the board and every child in our schools is learning at a faster pace than was seen previously.

I have no doubt that there are many more challenges ahead but with the wealth of expertise we have on the CSAT team I am confident that we will be able to manoeuvre our way successfully through the ever changing educational landscape, still keeping our ultimate goal of creating highly successful learners, at the heart of what we do.

“Our teachers clearly understand that differentiation is not about providing multiple resources. It is about providing quality input at an appropriate level for each child within the class”

High quality split input teaching enables outstanding progress



# Delce Academy – Castle Trust



Mrs. Karen White, Principal and  
CEO



Learning together

In 2009, the children were asked to create a motto which encompassed all that their school meant to them and this is what they came up with – ‘Learning towards a brighter future.’ From this, we started on the journey which is ensuring the children do indeed have the brightest future possible.

Reflecting on what was needed to achieve those dreams, we embarked on renewing the curriculum taught in the school – it needed to be relevant, exciting, challenging, hands-on and practical – a creative curriculum which would ensure children made the links between school-based learning and the world they lived in and the world they would work in in the future. We needed to replace the passivity children showed in school, where they failed to thrive, with children who took ownership of their learning, loved coming to school every day and were risk-takers.

## REPORT CARD

- » Principal and CEO:  
Karen White
- » Location: Rochester, Kent
- » Multi-Academy Trust
- » 2 schools
- » Sponsor of SEN Free School,  
opening in 2017
- » Over 1000 pupils
- » 35% Pupil Premium
- » 150 staff
- » Ofsted Rating: Good

We built our learning community up from the bottom – our core values were agreed with our children to include resilience, reflection, independence, integrity and courage. By focussing on everyone as learners, with adults helping to facilitate the learning, we took away the need for children to be right or wrong. We reduced the fear and increased their willingness to be risk-takers. Adults took on this mantra too, looking at developing their ideas in the classroom in order for children to be better learners – so small action research projects are on-going in school, looking to improve our practice, at all times.

We recently started on our journey of becoming a primary MAT – it is an exciting time – in an ever-shifting landscape. Underpinning our ambitions as a MAT in our locality, we secured our vision. First and foremost, we are a vibrant learning community – strongly believing everyone is a life-long learner.



The children and the staff constantly strive to be the best, where everyone fulfils their potential. Aspiration is the key for all – the future starts now, not some distant point in the years to come.

Everyone in the organisation is responsible for their own learning journey. Using regular conferencing, it is agreed how each person is going to develop over time – some learning needs are immediate, some are medium term and some are long term. As a MAT, we are beginning to be able to offer wider opportunities for those who seek them within our growing family of schools. We heavily invest in people, offering extensive professional development, at all levels. We grow our own teachers through our graduate internship programme. The Trust's pupils benefit from this daily and although people will inevitably move on, taking their expertise with them – the Trust sees this as success – the whole education community benefits from the investment we are making in people and pupils.

So far, we have found the most powerful school improvement elements are:

- » absolute focus on pupil progress and the removal of barriers to learning
- » expanding children's and adults' horizons
- » explicitly supporting, coaching and mentoring the children and the staff
- » working collaboratively with our partners
- » getting involved in action research
- » cross-school working – moderation, teaching and learning strategies, topics, planning, ideas, behaviour for learning strategies, inclusion, modelling expectations in books, behaviour, environment
- » developing career opportunities, including 'growing our own'
- » spending money carefully and collectively
- » developing and implementing whole trust policies and procedures

The shared practice goes beyond just teaching and learning – it includes business, administration, family support and governance.

## Challenges

Castle Trust is only just beginning its journey as a MAT; as a stand-alone academy, Delce Academy has been very successful, however, in the long term the trust needs to grow to realise its potential as a force for school improvement in education.

The main challenge was deciding on how to move from being a stand-alone academy to a primary MAT, which would bring greater capacity into the Trust through effective partnerships. The members and directors were pivotal in the visioning undertaken, creating a clear vision for the future as well as designing the roadmap to get there. We worked with an independent leadership consultant to support and challenge our thinking – ensuring everyone was on the same page. The directors have a clear, strategic view of the Trust and the outcomes wanted over the next five years. We were also well-supported, when creating the MAT, by good lawyers.

People can potentially see MATs as adversarial. Local situations influence people and their decision-making – having a MAT in a challenging area can make people nervous. Not everyone agrees with the academy agenda and may seek to slow the process. School leadership teams, and especially governors, are being asked to make decisions which move them away from considering their school in isolation. The trust needs to ensure that its new partners support the ethos keeping the right balance across the whole organisation – welcoming new partners into the trust who bring capacity – alongside other partners who need the trust's capacity to help them improve.

“Aspiration is the key for all”

Exploration



Thinking skills



Creativity





Reflection time



There is financial challenge – a start-up MAT needs to create the infrastructure required to support schools as they come on board. Balancing the needs of schools coming into the trust is vital. Schools joining need to bring capacity with them as well as development needs. There is a financial lag and this poses challenges to a trust when first starting. The financial relationship between the trust and its schools needs to be transparent. It is important to be clear over what is being top-sliced and what it is being used when helping the schools in the group – the investment must clearly drive school improvement, supporting the schools' priorities.

community, the culture of the schools becomes solution-focussed.

As money becomes tighter, recruitment becomes more challenging, expected standards continue to increase, schools coming together in groups serving communities will help achieve a flexible, dynamic, creative response to the challenges ahead. The creative use of people and resources across whole organisations will support school improvement, get the best value for money and , most importantly, improve outcomes for pupils, academically, socially and emotionally.

Education is about preparing children for a world which does not yet exist – resilient, reflective solution-focussed individuals who can work as a team, ask insightful questions and make effective decisions – life-long learners engaged in learning as a community.

Ambitious expectations, backed up by high quality teaching and learning and the removal of barriers for everyone helping them to become 21st century citizens we want and need as a world.

Teamwork



Being brave in a changing world – the Trust has a clear vision of what successful learning is, supports the changes required when a new partner joins the group. The aim is for sustainable, fast-paced improvement, ensuring children get the best shot at their education. They only go to school once and every day should count positively for them. As learners in a learning



# Eversley Primary School



Mrs Wood and members of school council in front of the Eversley Values Mural



Eversley Primary School

Eversley Primary School in the Southgate ward of the London Borough of Enfield is a large, popular; three form entry school with 630 pupils. Pupils live locally and come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. With 80% of the pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds the school celebrates the fact that it is truly inclusive, being a Flagship school for the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) and an 'Autistic Friendly School.'

Eversley was designated as a Teaching School in March 2014, being part of the Connect Teaching School Alliance and is a National Support School, working in partnership to support schools in more challenging circumstances. In 2014 the school also became a Hub school for the International Values Quality Mark, in recognition of the school's exceptional practice through values based education.

I have been the Head teacher since September 2004 and have seen the school through many changes, including an expansion from two to three form entry, with the accompanying building works. The school has been graded as consistently outstanding in all areas by Ofsted since 2006; our latest inspection being January 2015. Achieving that outstanding grading; maintaining it and leading the school through many changes and challenges has been and continues to be very exciting and rewarding. However, sustaining an outstanding record also demands constant hard work and a strong drive for continuous improvement. The Leadership team at Eversley places the children at the core, values our hard working Eversley staff, gives CPD for staff a high priority and embraces change and challenge. If there's an initiative and we can see the ultimate benefit for our children, then we want to be

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Patricia Wood
- » Location: Enfield, North London
- » Local Authority maintained school
- » Teaching School (Connect Teaching School Alliance)
- » National Support School
- » Flagship School for Inclusion (Inclusion Quality Mark)
- » Hub School for the International Values Quality Mark
- » Pupil Premium High Aspiration Award Winners 2015
- » Three-form entry
- » 630 pupils, 98 staff
- » 12% pupil premium
- » 80% minority ethnic pupils
- » 58% of pupils do not speak English as their mother tongue
- » Ofsted rating: outstanding (January 2015)



“If you put all the values together they make the perfect person. If you follow them then you have good behaviour and good learning”

in the pilot group, working party or be the first to produce our own materials! We also value highly working in partnership with other schools, for the ultimate benefit of all our children.

As a Teaching and National Support School we welcome many visitors and host a number of training courses and events. We are always delighted when visitors comment on the warm, friendly atmosphere that permeates throughout the school and the happiness of the children that they encounter. Our shared values are at the heart of all that we do. Values based education is an approach to teaching, working with values, which creates a strong learning environment, enhances academic attainment and develops pupils' social and relationship skills. The school decided on 22 values, one a month over two years, following very intensive consultation and involvement with staff, children, parents and governors. Each month the value of the month is taught explicitly through assemblies, through pieces of art work and in classes. For example, if the value of the month is 'determination' teachers will teach a lesson on what 'determination' is and how to model it, using a range of resources and supported by the PSHE subject leader. Each lesson throughout the day also has a values' objective as well as a learning objective. In addition, classes take 'just a minute' reflection and mindfulness time throughout the day, building self-control and preparing themselves for learning. Assemblies also end with this reflection time. Our values based education has a positive impact on both the behaviour and learning of our children. To quote a current year 6 pupil:

'If you put all the values together they make the perfect person. If you follow them then you have good behaviour and good learning.'

Values based learning and enterprise shape and drive the Eversley curriculum, which is skills based and incorporates the requirements of the National Curriculum. We believe that creating our own curriculum has helped make it more relevant to our pupils, enables them to make connections in their learning, excites and engages them, putting learning in a real life context and encouraging them to think. Whilst English, maths and science are generally taught as single subjects our curriculum encourages teachers to make cross curricular links wherever possible. Through termly topics, enhanced through external visits or through visitors coming in to school, we try and bring the different curriculum areas alive for the children and capture their interest, whilst building upon their prior learning. The curriculum is further enriched through the variety and number of enrichment activities that the school offers, including a wide range of sporting and musical activities. As a Gold PE Kitemark school and Artsmark school our children have achieved much success in these particular areas. All our teachers and many of our support staff run these activities and we also involve ourselves in a range of enrichment activities beyond the school.

Complementing the curriculum is our new assessment system which ensures that individual needs are focused on. Class teachers are able to identify exactly what children can and cannot do. They can therefore plan future lessons and interventions based on the exact area of focus needed.

Whilst the school has a significant number of pupils with EAL, with the highest ethnic group being Greek Cypriot, they are mainly advanced bilingual learners, with good acquisition skills in English. Where pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition, the school uses language enriched teaching programmes and interventions to support them.



Pupils demonstrating the value of the month – Cooperation



Working in partnership with parents

At Eversley our School motto is 'Enjoy, Persevere, and Succeed'. We want all our children to enjoy school and develop a love of learning. We encourage them to persevere, to have self-belief and the determination to succeed in order to be the best that they can be. We are rewarded by the outstanding results that they achieve.

Pupils at the school consistently achieve highly and make excellent progress. In March 2015 the school was awarded the High Aspiration Award at the Pupil Premium Awards in recognition of the exceptional progress and attainment of its Pupil Premium pupils in their Key Stage 2 SATs. All our pupil premium children have individual action plans to ensure that the funding directly impacts on their opportunities and achievements. Subsequently I, and the National Leader of Education from our Teaching School partner school, Oakthorpe Primary, have been made Pupil Premium Champions for London.

Our outward facing work is something that we value very highly. It helps us to challenge ourselves, whilst supporting others and provides excellent leadership and management opportunities for our senior staff, thereby ensuring that the issue of succession leadership is being addressed. The Teaching School CPD

that we are involved in directly impacts on the CPD of our staff and ultimately on the achievements of our children. One example is the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme' which we run in conjunction with the LA and consequently which our own teachers can attend.

The future holds an increasing number of opportunities and challenges for Teaching Schools, particularly in terms of wider whole school improvement and that is a challenge we look forward to. In addition, with diminishing school budgets, collaboration and partnership is key to ensuring Best Value for all our schools.

Ultimately it is our stakeholders who tell us whether we are doing a good job, day to day. During a recent Inclusion Quality Mark re-assessment, parents, staff, governors and children were interviewed. One parent said:

'I wanted a school with people who care, because what happens today can impact on what happens in ten years' time. That's what I saw on paper with Eversley, that's what I found when I came on a visit, and that's what I experience on a day to day basis.'

I'm happy with that!

“The future holds an increasing number of opportunities and challenges...”



Curriculum enrichment

# Janet Duke Primary School



Deputy Headteacher Mrs Christina Rowan (left) and Headteacher Mrs Harriet Phelps-Knights (right)



Janet Duke Primary School, Together We Learn, Together We Achieve, As One

In 2010 Janet Duke Junior School was a failing school and it was imperative to appoint a new Headteacher and they failed to do so. Meanwhile the Infant school, of which I was head, was graded good by OFSTED.

The Junior School governing body therefore asked the Infant school governing body to consider a merger. Janet Duke Primary School opened in September 2010 with me as its Headteacher. One of my first jobs was to look hard at what had been inherited with no escaping the review of teaching. 50% of staff left and now there are very few indeed at the Primary School.

In 2015 OFSTED graded the school as requires improvement. Nonetheless with good leadership highlighted and good behaviour and safety. We were commended for our systems of safeguarding children's welfare practice – 'The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding'. Amongst our successes in 2015 we saw a Good Level of Development for Early Years Foundation Stage rise from 44% to 64%, the Year 1 phonics check rose from 56% to 71%, our Infant Average Points Score improved and the Year 6 results increased by more than 10% at level 4 combined and increased outcomes in all three progress measures.

How did we achieve this? In 2013 we were approached by a cluster of schools which were working with National Association of Headteachers and the DfE to develop an improvement programme with Edison Learning –delivering the Aspire programme. We joined this school improvement partnership known as Aspire and have seen a number of benefits as a result. We have embedded quality teaching and learning by developing goals to achieve the OFSTED schedule and national

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Harriet Phelps-Knights
- » Location: Basildon, Essex
- » Community School
- » 614 pupils
- » 150 staff
- » 48% free school meals



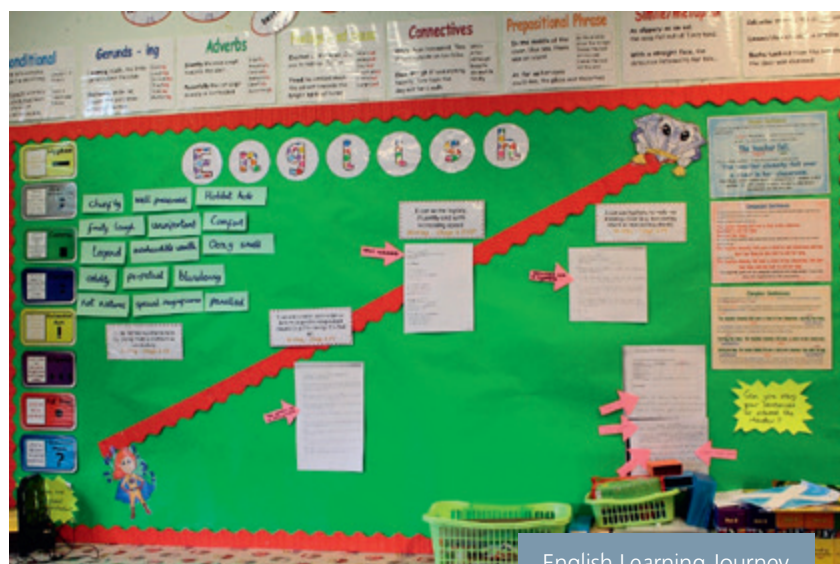
expectations. We have identified what adults do to ensure learners are effective and improving their results.

The project has also allowed us to develop distributed leadership more effectively. Key leadership roles for five strands were allocated to staff and have focused on the school's desired outcomes and the vehicles to get us there.

Leadership has focused on asking staff to take on responsibility across the school with teachers in charge playing a vital role on school improvement with year group leaders and subject leaders taking ownership and accountability of improved outcomes for pupils. The assessment for learning strand has developed our systems in order to access, track and plan for pupil learning. We use achievement team meetings to focus on the outcomes and barriers to success for the pupils. The staff then work together to find solutions and report back and develop further as the needs of the pupils dictate.

The learning environment strand focuses on the displays and physical learning space. Our working walls have developed into journeys for the pupils to explore their learning and understanding of what they need to do next to progress even further. Pupils have a voice in their learning and suggest topics they want to explore. Our Early Years Foundation Stage chose a topic of super heroes and one of their goals was to rescue the Headteacher from her kidnappers. This was wonderfully staged and fortunately they found me! The pupils were able to rescue me from the rabbit enclosure! Pedagogy and curriculum strand is focused on subject knowledge, understanding the learners and developing Core Learning Skills.

The final strand is students and families support. The school serves an area



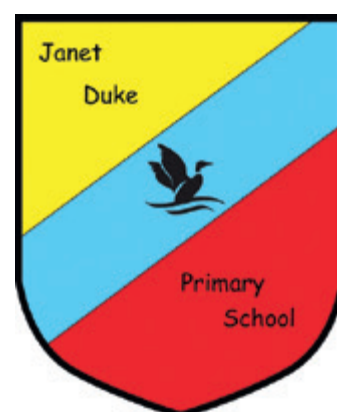
English Learning Journey Display

that is categorised by high deprivation with adverse social and economic factors. The work of the school is to develop parental engagement in order to develop the aspirations of the pupils and families. The focus of this strand is to support all pupils and their families in order to improve the outcomes for the pupils. We have developed a different style of parents evening which we call Termly Learning Conferences and the pupils share their success with their parents and, in some cases, carers. Parent, carers and staff then explore what each can do to support the child and pledge to do this by signing the Termly Learning Agreement in order to work together to improve the outcomes for the child. As a result of our changed approach, parental engagement has increased by over 10%.

We share our success within the cluster and we share our challenges. The key leads meet together regularly at network meetings and explore different ways to develop the strands and identify foci for each school to develop and evolve throughout the term.

I was cynical at the start of this journey and never thought that it would have the impact that it has on the school community.

“The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding”



Maths Learning Journey  
Display



“Together  
We Learn,  
Together  
We Achieve,  
As One ”

The Aspire pilot has allowed us to embed further what we do well and explore other opportunities to improve the outcomes for all our pupils. We are now developing this further through the Basildon Excellence Panel, working in clusters with other Basildon schools for the good of all the pupils

within Basildon. Our aim is to have every school in Basildon with good and outstanding OFSTED ratings.

Our next challenge is to consider the government's agenda of academy status and working within our cluster of schools towards this end.



Janet Duke Whole School



# Mulberry Primary School



Mulberry Primary School



Head Teacher - Michelle Akarsu;  
Deputy Head Teacher -  
Emma Cansdale

The Mulberry Primary School was created in 2003 via the amalgamation of the existing infant school, which was in special measures, and junior school which had come out of special measures. At that time, 46% of children left Key Stage 2 having attained level 4 in their national tests. The school sits in the heart of a vibrant multicultural community in Tottenham. It is one of the largest primary schools in Haringey. We serve a lively and diverse population and educate children from many different countries, 45 different languages and celebrating most major world religions. Children joining the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage are exceptionally below average.

The catchment area is one of the most deprived within London, with most families having low incomes and challenging social circumstances, including single parent households, refugee status and temporary accommodation. The school was in the heart of the area affected by the Tottenham rioting in 2011. Every year we have a significant proportion of children join us as refugees and economic migrants from overseas and because of the area being high in temporary housing, we also have high pupil mobility. The number who have been assessed as having special educational needs and disabilities is way above the national average at 23%, and we have an increasing number of pupils with statements.

We also have an 18 place Provision for Autism on site catering for a range of needs within the autism spectrum. We have a specially modified rooms designed to support sensory needs and speech and communication needs.

## REPORT CARD

- » Head Teacher: Michelle Akarsu
- » Location: Tottenham, London
- » Community primary school
- » 720 pupils – three form entry
- » 140 staff
- » Provision for autism: 18 places
- » Ofsted Rating: good





Outdoor learning in the Early Years

Michelle Akarsu was appointed in 2014 following a turbulent period, having had no substantive head teacher for two years. Michelle had a specific mandate to address the significant staff turnover of 75% and to appoint good and outstanding teachers alongside the appointment of a strong substantive senior leadership team, including a new deputy head teacher, Emma Cansdale. We have come through this period stronger and more resilient and we now have substantial capacity to drive forward improvement ensuring our children receive nothing less than good or outstanding teaching.

As a result of this, our school has shown rapid improvement in the attainment and progress of all pupils. Our disadvantaged pupils have improved as well as, if not better, as those who are not disadvantaged.

In 2013 we were rated as good by Ofsted, having been 'satisfactory' since amalgamation. Our 2015 SATs results show our pupils are attaining at the national average with extremely high progress rates.

According to our Ofsted report 2015, "there is an effective leadership team in place to continue to make improvements."

## Narrowing the gap

### HOW HAVE WE DONE THIS?

At the forefront of everything we do is to have a relentless focus on teaching and learning. We believe the children are entitled to the best teachers to enable accelerated progress; nothing less will do. To achieve this, we have developed a coaching and mentoring programme for all teachers and senior leaders. We have highly skilled assistant head teachers who enable teachers to improve in their practice through a support package of team teaching and lesson study based on current pedagogy.

We are working in collaboration with other local primary and secondary schools to develop and share good practice. We have set up partnerships with outstanding establishments, including the Institute of Education and Teach First. Through this, we have been able to employ and grow our own outstanding practitioners.

We have implemented a creative curriculum designed to encourage independence and creativity alongside a multicultural outlook with a strong emphasis on British values.

### Collaborative learning



“We believe the children are entitled to the best teachers to enable accelerated progress”

We enrich this broad and balanced curriculum by providing workshops and school visits that enthuse and engage the children.

### Pupil Premium

Over the past few years we have methodically planned how we spend our pupil premium money so that it has the maximum impact possible. This funding has had a significant impact on what we can provide within our school. We ensure that all pupils who are at risk of not attaining national expectations are provided with additional tuition and targeted intervention support provided by well trained staff across the whole school.

We offer speech and language support and reading initiatives, such as Accelerated Reader. This has had a significant impact in engaging families and pupils in a positive reading experience. For children with behaviour difficulties, we work alongside TBAP (Tri-Borough Alternative Provision) and counselling organisations who provide specialist programmes to support the successful integration of these pupils.

Our pupil premium pupils are now attaining exceptionally well and demonstrate extremely high progress rates.

According to Ofsted, 2013, "The school is using additional funding effectively to raise standards. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are now making even better progress than the other pupils"

### Conclusion

The Mulberry Primary School has continued on an upward trend of improvement because of years of well-planned and embedded policies,

“The current, outstanding Head teacher took over the school whilst The Mulberry was somewhat destabilised and in a period of change; she provided confidence and an approach which took the staff, governors and community forward. The focus always remained on the quality of teaching and leadership of learning, capitalising on growing staff and targeted succession planning.”

investment in staff development and consistency of approach. Every day is unique; challenges that come our way make us a stronger school. We plan carefully in response to government and local changes. Our overarching aim is to be an outstanding school that works in partnership as a teaching school.

Using IT to develop writing skills





# Okehampton Primary School



An eye for detail



Baking for our community

In December 2009, a year six Okehampton Primary School pupil sent her head teacher a Christmas card. At first glance, she wanted to thank the staff for calming the unruly behaviour hindering her learning. But the poor spelling, bad grammar and abysmal punctuation also betrayed how far the school had slipped below the standards parents, governors and Ofsted expected. The card showed the school had to improve but also, that pupils retained a passion for learning.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Hazel Fox
- » Location: Okehampton, Devon
- » Co-operative Trust School
- » 680 pupils, including nursery
- » Ofsted rating: Good

A few months earlier, Ofsted had placed the school in special measures. Such a decision can tear the heart out of the community. Parents leave the area, businesses suffer, house prices fall and confidence collapses. Okehampton Primary, one of the largest in the county, avoided this fate. The school came out of special measures in July 2011, and the education watchdog now judges it as good.

The turnaround started with an open-door policy. Rather than be defensive about its problems, Okehampton Primary began hosting informal drop-in sessions for parents on Friday mornings, as well as regular open evenings. The approach helped both parents and teachers stay focused on the child's learning, rather than external events.

It was a way of looking forward together. Staff and parents need to have confidence in themselves and pride in the school. They need to understand they can be ambitious and visionary, despite the difficulties.



An urgent issue for the school, due to its rural remoteness, was its ability to recruit quality staff. It's a national problem. Around 10,000 assistant heads, deputy heads and headteachers are aged over 55 and approaching retirement according to UCL. Meanwhile, in a National Governor's Association survey, 43 percent of 4,383 respondents said it was difficult to find good candidates when recruiting senior staff.

Despite this, over the past five years, through the school's culture of staff development, two members of the teaching team have gained headship roles and one has moved to be a senior specialist advisor.

In 2015 a survey by school support service The Key found 86% of school leaders believed headship was less attractive a career choice than it was in 2010. At a time when recruitment for headteachers is difficult the school is helping three more staff train for headship.

The school's key challenge was to improve literacy teaching and learning standards. We called upon the entire community to inspire children, staff and parents to tackle the challenge.

Farmers, firefighters, builders, and electricians have all worked with the school in the last six years, providing the raw material to bring literacy to life.

For example, a local vet talked to a class about the food pets need to stay healthy. With the teacher's help, the children started experimenting with different recipes, baked the resulting dog biscuits and sold them at the vet's surgery. All the while, the children were reading for research, writing up their results and improving their literacy. Learning within a context is essential for pupils to retain knowledge and has ensured the school achieves the higher standards in the new National Curriculum and end of phase tests.

Although these projects started locally, the school has now reached a global community. Working with Akazul, a turtle conservation charity in Guatemala, Okehampton Primary led a community project to publicise the dangers of plastic bags to wildlife and the environment. Children canvassed support outside a local supermarket where they encouraged shoppers to stop using 'throw away' plastic bags. They learnt to knit using plarn, strips of plastic bags knotted together, and covering street furniture in the fabric

“An engaging and creative curriculum grounded in the context of the community brought learning alive”



National winners Total Green School Award



Children lead  
community litter pick

in what's known as yarn-bombing. The pupil's creations were ultimately sewn together to form a giant shopping bag.

In another strand of the campaign, the class Kes Tor (all of our classes are named after Dartmoor landmarks) wrote letters to Okehampton's mayor explaining their concerns about litter. One frank missive claimed the official was unlikely to do anything about the problem, spurring him to organise the twice-yearly Community Litter Pick.

For its environmental projects, the school has been crowned UK Champion in the Total Green School Awards in 2015 and has won the regional award three times. But the school's community work also gives something back to an area suffering from rural poverty.

Growing ambition



By organising family outings to local beaches and landmarks, it promotes social cohesion, offering struggling parents help from their peers. The school also provides a support advisor to help parents in managing children's problem behaviours or in dealing with any difficulties at home.

The school has achieved consistent rising academic standards over the past six years, particularly in reading and writing. Its ambition does not end there however. As well as working towards an improved Ofsted rating, it has introduced a mentoring programme to develop leadership skills in the teaching profession by partnering with other schools and Exeter University. It is also part of the School Direct Teacher Training programme, where students are paid to train on the job. As a result, the school employs one of its former trainees and is set to offer four salaried placements in the coming year.

The school's buildings also reflect its growing ambition. It has added a modern annexe to host staff and parent meetings and school training. Meanwhile, a traditional cob construction, built with the help of local volunteers, and a space-age geodesic dome, have added outdoor learning venues. The school plans to build an additional classroom and an all-weather sports field facility in the summer of 2016.

Despite the economic difficulties in the rural south-west, Okehampton is a growing town and the prospect of rebuilding rail links is encouraging further expansion. Significant investment in housing is bringing an influx of new pupils to the school, which has seen numbers rise from 570 in 2009 to 681 in 2016. Its pupils have always possessed a passion for learning, but it took the community to give that shape and improve standards, adding to a growing confidence shared in the town.



# Paddock Wood Primary School



Head Teacher Scott Opstad with pupils



Children's learning has developed in depth and complexity in all curriculum areas

I was appointed in 2013, with a track record of turning around schools in difficulty, to inject fresh enthusiasm and ambition into Paddock Wood Primary School, and bring about necessary, sustainable improvement. At that time morale among groups of staff was low; corridors, classrooms and the school grounds were tired and dated; and curriculum programmes and practice were largely chaotic and unambitious, presenting children with far too little challenge. Members of the School Leadership Team were unclear about roles and responsibilities, and there was little sense of authority and accountability. In short the school lacked vision and direction. The fact that teachers' potential, skill and commitment, children's drive and enthusiasm, and parents' ambition and support were all high, simply highlighted the school's urgent need for strong, progressive leadership.

I was determined to retain and refocus as many colleagues as I could, without compromising standards, and I brought with me some key beliefs. They are:

1. *Children* and their interests should be at the heart of everything schools do;
2. Ultimately everyone working in education wants to succeed – no one *wants* to get it wrong;
3. Staff can be highly effective and successful *and* achieve a healthy, appropriate work-life balance;

## ABOUT PADDOCK WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

- » Headteacher: Scott Opstad appointed in September 2013
- » Location: 10 miles from Tunbridge Wells
- » Large community school with 600 pupils
- » The proportion of SEND pupils is 6% and Pupil Premium is 17%
- » Ethnically diverse, with 13% of pupils from 'other ethnic backgrounds' and 3% with English as an Additional Language
- » Ofsted inspection in November 2011: Good

**Keep it simple,  
do it extremely well.**





We are committed to teaching the whole curriculum to the highest standard

4. One size *does not* fit all – everyone should be given the freedom and support to take considered risks and enjoy success in their own right;
5. National Curriculum strands, statements and descriptors should be regarded as a *floor* not a *ceiling*;
6. Truly outstanding schools are recognised as such by virtue of *being* rather than *appearing to be* so; and
7. Improvement work should be based on a clear, shared vision, such that everyone recognises what success will look like – and the criteria for success should be *demanding*.

I started at Paddock Wood with two watchwords for staff: *clear* and *simple*, and three for pupils: *quality*, *quantity* and *perseverance*. There was so much

clutter in school in the beginning – both literal and figurative. We spent days and weeks together discarding redundant furniture and obsolete books, and, more importantly, redundant policy and obsolete practice. For example, teachers in some year groups were teaching exclusively to the middle of the class, to the perpetual detriment of higher ability pupils, and some children's attainment records had been informed as much by guesswork as by formative assessment. We followed this *cleansing* with time and space for colleagues to reflect and grow. I promoted straightforward, transparent teaching of skills, based upon robust knowledge and understanding at all levels. As children's learning developed in depth and complexity I encouraged staff to help pupils to be confident, to take risks, and to build independence. We did this by teaching children to break complicated tasks down into simpler parts, which they could more easily explore, manipulate and understand, and then put together again, to create high quality, comprehensive solutions.

I needed children to learn these transferable skills quickly, to persevere to achieve great things from day one, and, increasingly, they did. Now, because teachers' classroom practice is consistently right, and learning and teaching continue to improve apace, our pupils are always engaged. Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. In fact, there's a palpable thirst for learning in our school, and our classrooms and corridors are decorated with high-quality displays of pupils' achievements. The past three years have played witness to significant changes for all schools in England, but our changes in Paddock Wood have been greater still. I try to resist published 'improvement checklists' and 'formulas for success', but rather strive to enrich the education we offer

by listening to children and identifying and introducing wider and better opportunities which support national policy, but are right for us, in our unique context. For example:

- » I continue to fund two specialist teachers, in *Reading Recovery* and *Numbers Count*, to boost significantly achievement and success among our most vulnerable pupils, with excellent results;
- » I employ specialist teachers in *Computing, French, Music, Art* and *PE* to deliver specific parts of our skills-based curriculum, with passion and rigour, again with excellent results;
- » I invest in high quality ICT equipment regularly, including introducing individual Windows tablets for pupils in Key Stage 2, to promote and inform highest quality 21st century learning;
- » I frequently set our School (Pupil) Council ambitious improvement projects, such as their most recent challenge to develop our school grounds and extend our 'outside classrooms' and 'adventure learning' areas;
- » In 2013, I invested in two new school minibuses to allow for class visits to local villages, towns and places of interest as well as to London museums, theatres and events, and even across the Channel into France – to develop exciting, engaging learning, extending well beyond the classroom;
- » Last year, I introduced outdoor education to Key Stage 2, comprising Year 3 initiative and strategy exercises, Year 4 mountain biking, Year 5 rock climbing and Year 6 skiing, to promote and develop children's stamina and resilience.

“In my opinion, quality learning and teaching will always require hard work. The product of this for us has been a transition to rapidly improving standards and almost universal good or better progress among all groups of children”

For me, core literacy and numeracy are at the heart of successful learning. I introduced 1:1 reading between children and adults every day, where it had previously been once a week; I introduced extended writing once a week (with contributions every day), where it had previously been once a month; and I called an end to 'quick fix' maths. In my opinion, quality learning and teaching will always require hard work. The product of this for us has been a transition to rapidly improving standards and almost universal good or better progress among all groups of children.

Three years have passed, and most staff are still with me. A small number have moved on to promoted posts in other schools or have retired, but of our 90-strong staff only a handful have chosen or been required to leave. Morale is now high, the school is bright and exciting, and learning programmes are engaging and challenging. We have recently restructured leadership and there is no longer any doubt about roles and responsibilities; everyone recognises what they must do, and leaders are committed and very capable. As a school, we are implementing the new National Curriculum with drive and enthusiasm, but we have not yet compromised on our principles.

That said, there is still a lot to be done.



Children's high quality achievement is founded on stamina and resilience



# Risley Avenue Primary School (RAPS)



The Risley Staff Team

## Achievement against the odds

Our school is distinctive because it provides a stable environment for many pupils who live in areas with high levels of deprivation, who face a range of challenges every day. They are supported by a superb, enthusiastic and highly skilled team of staff, who are caring and relentless in nurturing the development of our children and encouraging them to do their best. We are aware that many of our pupils find it difficult to access their learning because of poor communication skills, low self-esteem and under developed social skills. Over the years Risley, steered by an accomplished and deeply committed Governing body, has developed an ethos and positive culture that enables them to succeed. This has been done through:

- » a focus on developing high quality learning and teaching
- » a broad and balanced, exciting curriculum equipping pupils with skills and knowledge for their lives now and in the future.
- » strong emphasis on resilience, well-being, creativity, inclusion and diversity
- » developing pupils sense of place in the world through partnerships with schools locally, nationally and internationally
- » clear systems and strategies
- » a strong focus on Personal, Social and Health Education, also our Vision and Values
- » working in partnership with parents to help the children to excel, be happy and enjoy their learning.
- » a real commitment to developing the whole staff team through high quality professional development and concern for well being

Risley is first and foremost a school where everyone can succeed, where every voice is heard and where no child will go unsupported in developing to their full potential. We expect pupils to do their best, to behave well and push themselves to achieve high

### REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher Linda Sarr
- » Tottenham, Haringey, London
- » Community school
- » Three-form entry; 104-place nursery
- » 684 pupils of which 94% are minority ethnic; 120 staff of which 75% are minority ethnic
- » 67% pupils have English as an additional language
- » Over 50 languages spoken
- » 61% free school meal eligibility
- » Budget: £4 million
- » Ofsted rating: Good



standards. We have a strong emphasis on reading and ask parents and carers to support with this at home.

All these things have helped to achieve a calm base from which learning can take place and sustained achievement becomes possible.

Despite the barriers that many of our pupils face they achieve consistently well. Our disadvantaged groups have bucked the national trend for the last three years in Reading, Writing and Maths and the gap between our disadvantaged pupils and other groups in these subjects is much smaller than experienced across the country. We have significant mobility and regularly induct pupils who speak very little English. In 2015 ten new pupils arrived in Year six, despite this our results in maths at level four and writing at level five matched and exceeded the national average. The percentage of pupils making better than expected progress, matched the national average in reading and exceeded in writing.

Risley is a school for its community where children come first. Every child is cared for, valued, inspired and nurtured to achieve success through encouraging their intellectual curiosity, academic achievement, physical development, imagination, creativity, spirituality, personal and social development.

Learning, for many, starts early in the morning (8.15am), and continues way after the regular school day has ceased (5pm). Saturday School for our more able students provides an opportunity for extending skills and knowledge further. We invest heavily in providing extra tuition when pupils reach Year six, recognising that families cannot afford a private tutor. Class teachers run extra lessons three times a week, also during school holidays and many interventions go on throughout the day and after school for those who need targeted support. Year six pupils learn

Mandarin each week with a Chinese Foreign Language Assistant which gives them additional brain training!

A large array of enrichment activities are provided to nurture the vast range of talents and abilities of our students, both academic and creative. We want to give them something they wouldn't otherwise have access to, for example free piano lessons for pupils with low self esteem. Currently 30 students are taught to play by our music mentor, many of whom are now ready for their first grade examinations. Risley is top of the Haringey Cycle League where local schools compete against each other in cycle trials at nearby Finsbury Park and often at the Olympic Park. Risley has its own garden and all classes grow vegetables throughout the year which are harvested, cooked and tasted or sold to raise funds. Pupils audition each year to acquire a much sought after place in our school choir. Our choir has performed at a number of local venues such as the Bernie Grant Centre in Tottenham and Carol Singing in our local Morrisons store. They've also ventured further afield to All Souls Church, Oxford Circus and later in the year will perform at the Royal Albert Hall.

Free breakfast for any Risley child is provided at our Breakfast Club from 8.15am, courtesy of the Charity 'Magic Breakfast'. School meals are heavily subsidised and must be the cheapest in the country at £1.20 each! Risley is part of the Haringey Obesity Alliance and a Healthy School, where we promote health and well being amongst our pupils and also the staff and parents.

Our school community, staff, governors, parents and pupils work together to serve each other and find solutions. Nothing is too much trouble. If a child isn't finding something easy, a new strategy is sought to unlock their learning potential. Home and school work in harmony and parents are consulted at every juncture on



Linda Sarr, Head teacher



Risley Avenue Primary School Choir performing at the Haringey 'Outstanding For All' Awards ceremony



Year 6 pupil preparing for secondary transfer



Building strong relationships



Learning through play in the Early Years



Ofsted said 'The progress made is consistently good for all pupils'

school policy and practice. Leaders regularly hold coffee mornings with parents to showcase their subject organised by our Parent Involvement and Support Officer. Continuous self review of all aspects of what our school provides keeps us aiming for 100% customer satisfaction.

### Partnerships for improvement

We capitalise on various partnerships to improve our practice and regularly benchmark ourselves against provision in settings judged to be outstanding. I am receiving coaching from a National Leader of Education, Evelyn Davies the Headteacher of Coldfall Primary School in nearby Muswell Hill. Coldfall is a three form entry school like ours and although the catchment is very different I have learnt so much from Evelyn about the generic aspects of running a large school. All staff have visited an outstanding local school and compared their practice and children's work to their own. If we are to become outstanding we need to know and feel what outstanding looks like. Everyone is fiercely ambitious to achieve this, but we must follow our own unique journey to excellence.

### Growing a workforce for sustainability

Teaching and working in Tottenham isn't for everyone. Special and gifted individuals are required to have the stamina, determination and commitment to ensure pupils achieve, regardless of the many barriers put before them. Risley belongs to a Schools Direct Partnership where trainee teachers are employed and learn on the job. We are also training partners with Middlesex University and The London Metropolitan University and place students across the school. Many of our teachers trained at the school and thus have a deep

commitment to our vision and values. Our support staff are encouraged to achieve their higher level qualification (HLTA) which many have acquired, helping to further raise the achievement and attainment of pupils.

The members of our highly skilled staff reflect the positive goals of our school community and really care about our success both now and for the future. They are always looking for better ways of promoting learning.

We undertake a process of rigorous on-going self-evaluation. This informs our School Improvement Plan, which guides our actions to generate continuous improvement. We are a forward looking school, always looking to improve the quality of what we do and to build on our previous best.

Staff will identify approaches and activities to ensure that every child at Risley achieves their very best and none is left behind.

Senior leaders are mentored and coached by the headteacher and middle leaders by senior leaders. Everyone is encouraged to reflect on their leadership skills and set targets for self improvement. We have developed a LEADER'S PALETTE, measuring ourselves against four leadership competencies: ENABLING, RELATING, DRIVING & OPERATING. Leadership is distributed wherever possible to build a self sustaining system of improvement. Risley Avenue is over 100 years old and everyone involved with the school today cares deeply about its continued success.

**'Learning is at the heart of living'**, part of our **Risley Avenue Primary School** mantra where everyone, regardless of background is expected to 'Respect, Aspire, Persevere and Succeed (**RAPS**)'. Adults and pupils alike live out this vision each day.



# Earley St Peter's Church of England Primary School



School Choir



Senior Leadership Team

Earley St Peter's is a large Church of England Primary School which serves a diverse community on the western border of Wokingham. Although we are a Church of England school, a significant proportion comes from non-Christian backgrounds. About 30% are Muslim and other religions represented are Hindus and Sikhs. This fusion of cultures is therefore the essence of life at ESP.

For years the school trailed along being designated as in need of improvement by Ofsted. The core of the problem was the quality of teaching but over the past two years the school has made rapid improvements and for the first time in 16 years has been judged to be good by Ofsted.

After unsuccessful attempts to attract a new Headteacher, the governors approached me and asked me to combine my Consultancy role with that of Executive Headteacher at ESP in order to start turning it around. The governors had a clear vision that ESP should be a centre of educational excellence to serve the local community. A non-class based Deputy Headteacher had begun the work of change and from day one we have shared an office and worked together in a strong partnership. In January 2014, I became the substantive Headteacher. At the same time we appointed a Business Manager whose role has been crucial in ensuring rapid improvement.

As a Church of England School, Christian values underpin our work. Our pupils are taught the importance of honesty, kindness, forgiveness and consideration for others. We have strong links with St Peter's Church and the School Council took part in interviews for a new Vicar in 2015. All the children attend weekly collective worship in the Church and regular services led by each year group are held there.

## REPORT CARD

- » Earley St Peter's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School
- » Headteacher: Hester Wooller
- » Location: Earley, Wokingham
- » 533 pupils; 57.5 staff
- » 59% ethnic minority of which 22% are Pakistani
- » 29% English as an additional language
- » Ofsted rating: Good



“The Senior Leadership Team has been together for two years and its leadership was recognised by Ofsted as the key driving force in raising standards”

### Challenges at ESP

The key leadership challenges were:

- » to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupil progress in English and maths was maximised;
- » to ensure a consistent approach across a large teaching team;
- » to create a curriculum which inspires our children to develop a love of learning;
- » to create more teaching areas – for large groups, small intervention groups and a nurture room;

I quickly negotiated a grant from the Diocese and the additional learning spaces were completed by summer 2014. Still needing further learning spaces, I had to think creatively and by June 2015 we became the proud owners of a state of the art Learning Bus, providing an additional classroom upstairs and a multi-purpose area downstairs.

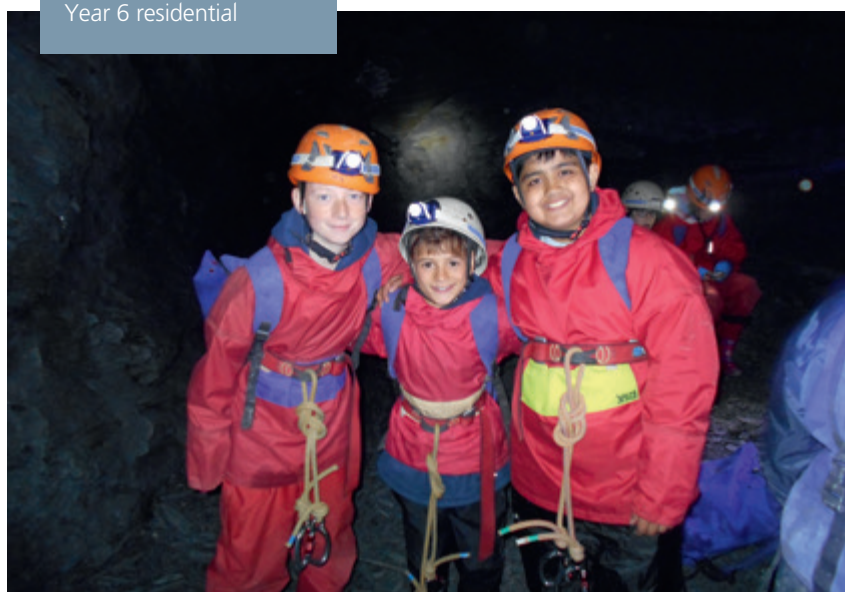
Our school logo is the crossed keys of St Peter with motto “unlocking the future”. To realize this, a culture amongst pupils and staff of high expectations in terms of achievement and behaviour is now in place. The first step was to set targets for individual children which would ensure the whole school performance data was rated as

at least good. Through a programme of high quality CPD the quality of teaching and learning rapidly shifted to good throughout the school and within a year our school had shot up to number 2 in the Wokingham Primary School Guide.

To improve the quality of teaching a set of non-negotiables for teachers was introduced. The impact has been summed up by many long serving members of staff who have said, “we knew what we were expected to do, but you have shown us “how” to do it effectively.” In week one, the Deputy Head and I introduced a culture of learning walks to visit class rooms at least twice a week to support staff in embedding the non-negotiables. This involved immediate feedback to staff and often modelling and coaching whilst in the classroom. The areas identified for development on the learning walks then formed the CPD focus for the next staff meeting. This highly responsive focus on developing the quality of teaching and learning ensured the rapid progress recognised by the local authority during its inspections.

Half termly pupil progress meetings take place where the progress data of every child is discussed with class teachers and senior leaders. Timeframes are very tight which ensure that no time is wasted in identifying pupils requiring additional support and interventions. This has been a very effective system for rapid school improvement. The Senior Leadership Team has been together for two years and its leadership was recognised by Ofsted as the key driving force in raising standards. ESP has been nationally recognised for its exceptional 2015 performance by the Schools, Students and Teachers network – a large network which shares innovative practices and identifies Educational Outcomes Awards. The Senior Leadership Team has a shared vision for the school and a wide range of expertise which enables

Year 6 residential



us to continue our development of a rich curriculum. We are well on our way to achieving the IT Mark, the Artsmark, and further Eco Awards whilst ensuring that there is also a wide range of sporting opportunities for pupils.

### Inspired to Learn within a Rich Curriculum

I envisaged the new curriculum as an opportunity to place creativity at its heart and we considered how to launch each topic so that children would become inspired to learn from the start. Teachers ensure that every topic has enrichment learning opportunities which include trips, residential visits, workshops, authors, visiting speakers and outdoor learning opportunities. Our amazing Parent School Association provides financial support for this. To extend the involvement of our parents in the home learning projects, exhibitions for each Year Group were introduced and these are always very well attended.

Workshops for parents are held and we have invested heavily in digital signage both in and outside school. To overcome language barriers, this is regularly updated with photographs of the children's learning activities. The weekly newsletter promotes key opportunities for enrichment and day to day learning at ESP and we do the same through our twitter feed @wokinghamearls. Another new role is our Parent Support Advisor, offering pastoral support to children as well as parents. This role is key in celebrating the cultural diversity within school through hosting events such as The International Buffet which promote rich cultural traditions.

### A Flying Start at ESP

A significant number of our pupils come into the Nursery with a performance well below age related

expectations in the Prime areas of learning because they have English as a second language, little experience of being outside the home, and some have Special Educational Needs. Due to the strength of provision, pupils make rapid progress and have an excellent start to their education which has always been one of the key strengths in the school. The Reception curriculum is delivered through short thematic topics designed to inspire and fire the children's imagination. A key strength in the planning process is the way the children and staff work together to come up with creative ideas for how the continuous provision and role play area can be designed for each topic. In 2015 we invested in enhancing the outdoor learning area for Reception children.

The teaching team largely remains the same as when I arrived in September 2013. Morale is very high and the outcome of the recent Ofsted Report in April 2016 is testament to their continued commitment, dedication and determination to ensure that our children receive an education which inspires them to learn and encourages them to be the best they can be. However, we are not at all complacent and in partnership with governors already have systems in place that will enable us to continue our school improvement journey so that we are rightly recognised as a centre of excellence serving our local community.

“This highly responsive focus on developing the quality of teaching and learning ensured the rapid progress recognised by the local authority during its inspections”



Nursery children

# Worcesters Primary School



Our outstanding school goes from strength to strength



All pupils have a really positive attitude towards their learning

## REPORT CARD

- » Community primary school for children aged 3-11. It is a large and growing school
- » In 2012-13 there were 470 children on roll
- » In 2016 we now have 600 pupils on roll thanks to a two-phase expansion programme to meet the needs of a growing population in Enfield
- » The school serves a culturally and linguistically diverse area; over 40% of pupils speaking English as an additional language, with a high proportion speaking Turkish and Polish.

**W**orcesters moved from a Satisfactory Ofsted judgement to Outstanding in 18 months. In February 2010 some aspects of the school's work were described as 'inadequate' and the school received an Ofsted category of 'notice to improve'. Leadership and Management were judged to be inadequate. This resulted in a number of families removing their children from the school, increasing the mobility of pupils.

I was appointed as Headteacher and the new deputy was appointed shortly afterwards. The new Headship team joined at the beginning of February 2011 and quickly set about implementing change; it was obvious that the school was in trouble and radical action was needed.

When Ofsted returned in May 2011 they judged the school as satisfactory and improving. 'The school is now settled after a period of instability. The new headteacher has acted robustly to accelerate the pace of development so that outcomes for pupils are now improving rapidly and there is a sense of confidence and optimism about the school's future'. As a result of the changes implemented, we achieved an Outstanding judgement only 18 months later, in February 2013.

One of the key drivers towards improving all aspects of the school was to achieve consistency in what we did. We developed a document called 'Worcesters Ways' which detailed expectations around key aspects of teaching and learning. All staff development within the first two terms was around 'Quality First Teaching' and what went on day to day in the classroom. We drew up a common language for all staff for talking about learning, so that everyone was clear about what was meant by a learning objective and success criteria. Curricular targets were introduced,



planning formats were revised and staff training also focused on effective guided group work. Marking and feedback became less of the ticks and “well dones” but instead was focused on diagnostic comments and creating a dialogue between pupils and the teacher. We rapidly improved the school environment, ensuring conditions for learning supported pupils to develop independent learning through the use of working walls.

As a Leadership team we had a school improvement plan with clear objectives and measureable targets. Alongside this was our monitoring and evaluation schedule, which set out a rigorous programme of support, tracking and improving the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation was reviewed to ensure it was accurate and we introduced a teaching profile which analysed evidence from monitoring to ensure that we had a clear and robust picture of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The focus moved away from relying solely on lesson observations to using a range of evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching.

Evidence from the teaching profile helped us to form our staff development programme and focus on our mentoring and coaching support. Some teachers chose to leave the school whilst others embraced the changes, enabling them to move their practice to outstanding.

A key area for development was to ensure that the assessment data was accurate, as under the old assessment system there had been a practice of moving pupils up a sub-level each term. This meant that the school was not responding to pupils’ learning needs. Once the data was accurate we trained all staff to ensure they had a clear understanding of progress and attainment. The school’s use of data is ‘strategic and live’; determining and



Outdoor learning in Early Years Foundation Stage involves caring for our animals

regularly changing not only grouping arrangements but also associated decisions about the deployment of staff. Pupil progress meetings track pupils who are underachieving (red) and those who are a slight concern (amber). We also record those who are doing well (green). Why are they doing well? What made the difference? How can we share this good practice?

The curriculum was a key area that needed to improve, as there was no clarity around the coverage and how skills were built upon. We consulted with all stakeholders to see what they felt were key areas for pupils to learn. Pupils told us about the topics and famous people they wanted to learn about, and the experiences and visits they wanted. Parents wanted a higher focus on Personal Health and Social Education subjects

Pupils have fun recording and broadcasting on our very own radio station



## “‘Be the Best you can Be’ permeates throughout the whole school”

linked to being a good citizen and personal development. Our curriculum embraces all of these ideas and prepares pupils to leave our school with the relevant skills, experiences and knowledge that will help them in the future. They are taught about how to make money, with Year 6 organising and running the summer fete to fund their end-of-year trip. Roles and responsibilities around the school require pupils to apply for the job so they learn how to fill out an application form and conduct themselves in an interview. Enterprise and innovation permeates the school and begins with our youngest pupils, to make sure they are ready for life in the 21st century!

The school now offers a broad range of after-school and lunchtime clubs with a strong emphasis on being physically active, as well as opportunities for older children to develop responsibility for their younger peers. Health and well-being has always been a priority, with the school being a key advocate of the ‘Healthy Schools London’ programme. Recent developments have involved the introduction of a healthy packed lunch policy and the funding of a part-time family therapist/psychotherapist to support the whole family. Our sports coach also works with our youngest pupils developing their co-ordination and movement through a swing hang club that develops pupils’ upper body strength and dance sessions to improve their handwriting skills.

We consistently promote healthy lifestyles having achieved ‘Healthy Schools London’ gold award

## How did we pull all of this together?

Inspired by the Olympics, we launched our new school motto ‘Be the Best you can Be’, which promotes self-responsibility, self-awareness and resilience. This was key to driving everything we did to a high standard. Our whole school ethos revolves around this and filters across everything we do. It drives our PSHE programme and is promoted throughout our whole-school curriculum. We support this message through inspirational speakers and by encouraging pupils to be resilient and never to give up. ‘Be the Best you can Be’ is not just a slogan: it can be witnessed throughout the school and drives both teaching and learning and the curriculum.

At Worcesters there is a strong culture of respect, care and tolerance across the school. Staff treat pupils with a high level of respect, listening carefully and responding with kindness and good humour. Worcesters is now a popular and over-subscribed school which has seen results consistently rise above the national over the past four years. We are also a designated support school with the National College and work in partnership with other local schools to support them to improve, therefore sharing our good practice with others.



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



David Cameron's resignation speech outside 10 Downing Street

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Labour, Jeremy Corbyn – accused of fighting a lacklustre referendum campaign – said his party had put forward a positive case for Remain and had convinced two thirds of its



supporters. He said people in many communities felt disenfranchised and powerless because they had been failed, not by the EU, but by Tory governments.

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

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

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



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

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

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

## Trident Submarine Renewal

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

She was moving a motion to confirm plans for a multi-billion pound

programme to replace the submarines which carry the UK's Trident Missile nuclear deterrent – a move which underlined her personal commitment to Trident renewal which, she said, was essential to national security. She was challenged by the SNP's George Kerevan who asked if she, personally, would order a nuclear strike which would kill 100,000 innocent men, women and children.



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

Her response was a blunt, unadorned 'Yes'. A nuclear deterrent was pointless if a government was not willing to use it, she added.

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

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

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

The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, questioned the 'ever-ballooning' cost of

Trident renewal – but for him the central issue was this 'Do these weapons of mass destruction – for that is what they are – act as a deterrent to the threats we face and is that deterrent credible?'

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

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

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

The SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, said the people of Scotland had repeatedly shown their opposition to Trident renewal – and he added 'The Government have a democratic deficit in Scotland and, with today's vote on Trident, it is going to get worse, not better. It will be for the Scottish people to determine whether we are properly protected in Europe and better represented by a government that we actually elect. At this rate, that day is fast approaching.'

The Government voted in favour of the renewal of Trident



## The vote to bomb ISIL in Syria

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

He warned MPs that ISIL was plotting Paris-style attacks against Britain and had already targeted this country. 'We face a fundamental threat to our security. ISIL has brutally murdered British hostages. They have inspired the worst terrorist attack against British people since 7/7 on the beaches of Tunisia and they have plotted atrocities on the streets here at home. Since November last year our security services have foiled no fewer than seven different plots against our people, so this threat is very real. The question is this: do we work with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat and do we go after these terrorists in their heartlands from where they are plotting to kill British people, or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us?'

He was attempting to rally all-party support for the use of British forces in Syria – they were already launching airstrikes against ISIL in neighbouring Iraq – but many Labour MPs were fuming about remarks he had made the previous evening to a meeting of Conservative MPs, when he suggested people who voted against airstrikes were 'terrorist sympathisers'. He faced repeated challenges to withdraw and apologise – but stuck to a formula that unity was needed and that it was time to move on.

One focus for questions was the Prime Minister's claim that there are



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

70,000 moderate Syrian opposition fighters who could act as a ground force against ISIL while the UK gave air support. Under questioning from the SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, he said he was not arguing that all of those 70,000 were ideal partners but if action was not taken now, those forces would soon be reduced.

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

Jeremy Corbyn was opposed to extending the bombing but, under huge pressure, had allowed his MPs



a free vote. 'It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Prime Minister understands that public opinion is moving increasingly against what I believe to be an ill thought out rush to war. He wants to hold this vote before opinion against it grows even further.'

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

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

Winding up the debate for Labour was Hilary Benn who took the opposite view to Jeremy Corbyn. 'The carnage

in Paris brought home to us the clear and present danger that we face from Daesh. It could just as easily have been London, Glasgow, Leeds or Birmingham and it could still be.' He said the UK could not leave its defence to others and asked what message inaction would send to Britain's allies – France, in particular.

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

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

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

Tim Farron, Liberal Democrat Leader



## MPs pay tribute to their murdered colleague, Jo Cox

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

The House of Commons had been in recess for the Referendum, and was recalled to pay tribute the following Monday. The chamber was packed but the seat normally occupied by Jo Cox was left empty, except for two roses – Labour's red rose and the white rose of Yorkshire. In the gallery, Mrs Cox's husband Brendan sat with their two young children and members of their family.

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

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

The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, agreed the murder was an attack on democracy and he quoted from Jo Cox's maiden speech when she told the Commons 'We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us'.



Tributes to Jo Cox MP

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

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

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

The Labour MP, Stephen Kinnock, had shared an office with Jo Cox.



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

## The Lords reject the Government's Tax Credit changes

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

Peers are not supposed to meddle in financial matters but this measure was not part of a finance bill. Instead it was

put forward in an order, or statutory instrument, issued under existing legislation, which meant it was both un-amendable and subject to a one-off vote.

Faced with claims that the order would cost the poorest families thousands of pounds a year, the Lords passed a Labour motion calling on ministers to postpone the cuts and provide extra support for those affected, for a three-year transitional period. The result was to throw the Chancellor's financial strategy into chaos, because it removed £4.4bn of savings.

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

The debate began with the Leader of the House, Lady Stowell, defending the plans. She said spending on tax credits had risen from £4bn to £30bn and the bill was no longer sustainable, warning that interference in a key

The interior of the House of Lords





budget measure would overstep the conventions which prevent the Lords from overriding the tax and spending decisions of the elected Commons.

'In our manifesto, my Party made it clear that reducing the deficit would involve difficult decisions, including finding savings of £12bn from the welfare budget. The regulations that we debate today deliver no less than £4.4bn of those savings next year alone,' she explained.

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

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

Lady Manzoor said 4.9 million children would be affected by the cuts to tax credits. 'We have a duty in this House to consider our constitutional role but we also have a duty to consider those affected by the decisions we make and the votes we cast.'

She went on to say that it was wrong to enact such a major change via 'a statutory instrument, a tool designed for minor changes to processes and administration, being used to implement a substantial change in policy that will affect millions of



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

people's livelihoods. That is not my decision but I hope that we will do everything we can to stop it'.

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

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

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



Lord Lawson, former Chancellor of the Exchequer

## The Hillsborough inquest verdict



The 96 remembered at Hillsborough

When an inquest jury ruled that the 96 Liverpool football fans who died at Hillsborough on April 15th 1989 had been unlawfully killed and that mistakes by the police and ambulance services had caused or contributed to their deaths, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, came to the Commons to announce the Government's response in an emotionally-charged statement to the House.

The new inquest had been ordered following the devastating findings of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, chaired by Bishop James Jones, which had re-examined the evidence. Its revelations that witness statements by police officers had been altered were so significant that it led to the new inquest and to two major criminal investigations. With 296 days of hearings it had been the longest inquest in British legal history.

Theresa May said that the findings 'Overturns in the starkest way possible the verdict of accidental death returned at the original inquests. However, the jury's findings do not, of course, amount to a finding of criminal liability and no one should impute criminal liability to anyone while the ongoing investigations are still pending'.



Theresa May, speaking as Home Secretary

She praised the families and survivors, who had never accepted official accounts which laid the blame on Liverpool fans. 'They have faced hostility, opposition and obfuscation and the authorities, which should have been trusted, have laid blame and tried to protect themselves instead of acting in the public interest.' As some MPs wiped away tears, she added 'No-one should have to suffer the loss of their loved ones through such appalling circumstances and no-one should have to fight year after year, decade after decade, in search of the truth'.

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

He said a similar inquiry was now needed to clear up what had happened at Orgreave during the 1980s Miners' Strike and his final words, about the families of the 96, produced applause from MPs. 'They have kept their dignity in the face of terrible adversity. They could not have shown a more profound love for those they lost on that day. They truly represent the best of what our country is all about. Now it must reflect on how it came to let them down for so long.'

The Conservative, Bob Neill, who chaired the Commons Justice Select Committee asked the Home Secretary to look at creating a mechanism to

ensure ‘proper equality of arms,’ between the families of disaster victims and the authorities in dealing with inquests and legal proceedings.

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

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

## An unexpected Leader of the Opposition

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

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

‘I have taken part in many events around the country and had conversations with many people about what they thought of this place, our Parliament, our democracy and our conduct within this place,’

he explained. ‘Many told me that they thought Prime Minister’s QuestionTime was too theatrical... and that they wanted things done differently but above all they wanted their voice to be heard in Parliament.’

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

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

Mr Corbyn followed up with questions from Steven, on social



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





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

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

Those first exchanges were courteous and careful as the two circled one another. It was left to the leaders of two of the smaller parties in the Commons to insert a couple of barbs. The first came from the SNP’s Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, who said he was looking forward to working with the new Labour Leader to oppose Tory austerity and fight against renewal of the Trident nuclear missile submarines – a highly divisive issue among Labour MPs, most of whom do not share their leader’s unilateralist views.

Then, the Leader of the DUP at Westminster, Nigel Dodds, raised Mr Corbyn’s key appointment to Labour’s front bench team, his veteran

left-wing ally, John McDonnell, as Shadow Chancellor. Mr Dodds pointed to the plaques by the entrance to the Chamber in memory of Airey Neave, Robert Bradford, Ian Gow and Sir Anthony Berry – MPs murdered by terrorists. He added ‘The Opposition Leader has appointed a Shadow Chancellor who believes that terrorists should be honoured for their bravery. Will the Prime Minister join all of us, from all parts of this House, in denouncing that sentiment and standing with us on behalf of the innocent victims and for the bravery of our armed forces who stood against the terrorists?’

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

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

## Responding to the Chilcot Report on the Iraq War

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

Sir John concluded that the UK went to war before the peace process was exhausted, that the intelligence on which the decision was based

was flawed and that the planning for the aftermath was inadequate. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, responded with a Commons statement – he began by addressing the families of the 179 British servicemen and women and 23 British civilians who died in the conflict. ‘In their grief and anger, I hope they can draw at least some solace from the depth and rigour of this report and, above all, some comfort from knowing that we will never forget the incredible service and sacrifice of their sons, daughters, husbands and wives.’

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

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

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

In what many took to be a veiled reference to Tony Blair he added. 'We now know that the House was

misled in the run-up to the war and the House must now decide how to deal with it 13 years later.'

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

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



Tony Blair, Prime Minister during the invasion of Iraq



UK troops in action in Iraq

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