

2015 / 2016

SECONDARY 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

Clacton County High School

Felpham Community College

The Eastwood Academy

Cheshunt School

Hadlow Rural Community School

Liskeard School & Community College

Mulberry School for Girls

Plume Academy

Queen Elizabeth's School

The King Edmund School

The Purbeck School

The Sittingbourne  
Community College

Waingels College

Wyedean School &  
Sixth Form Centre

## ■ 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.

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



Free school meals are still needed in deprived areas

1980s had suffered from left-wing ideologies which promoted 'anti-academic nonsense' and which had 'undermined the authority and respect of school leaders'.

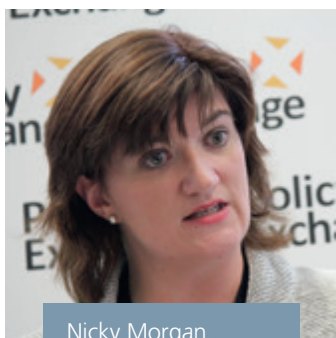
He also attacked the influence of 'free marketers' on the right, warning that it needed much more than the 'magic of the market' or some 'hastily rebranded schools' to make improvements that would last.

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,



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

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 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.

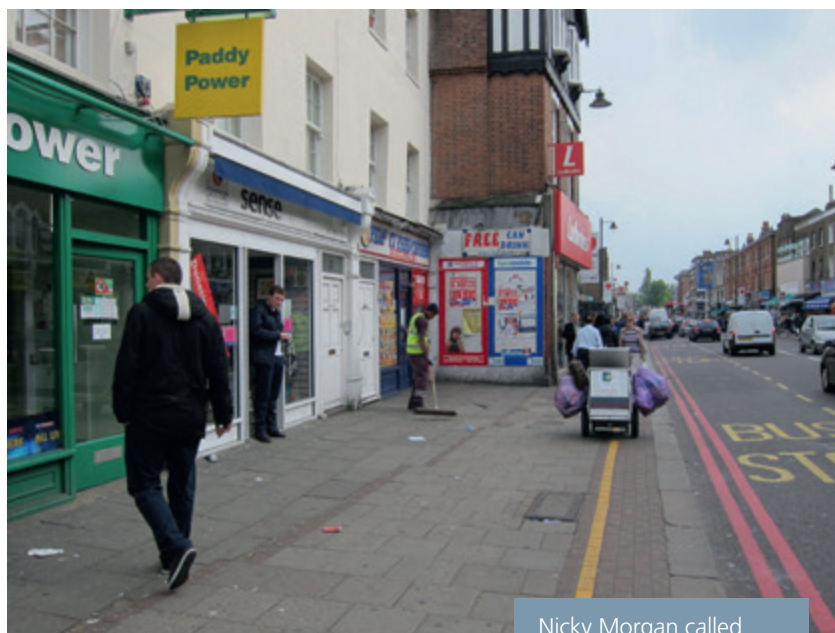
'Under the current arrangements, a child from a disadvantaged background in one school can receive half as much funding as a child in identical circumstances in another school,' said Mr Osborne.

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:



Nicky Morgan called current funding arrangements 'outdated, inefficient and unfair' regarding deprived areas

additional pupil needs, such as deprivation; extra school costs, such as those serving sparsely-populated rural areas; and 'geographic costs', such as higher costs in London.

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

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

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

Realistically, such an announcement, with bad news and good news for local schools, had to wait for a break in the political weather. It was unlikely to appear before local elections had





Department  
for Education,  
Sanctuary Buildings,  
Westminster

been completed, or during the EU referendum campaign. When that was followed by the resignation of David Cameron and a Conservative leadership election, headteachers' leaders began

to be concerned that once again a standardised funding formula could slip away.

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was far from widespread agreement on this. There were parents who said that they could not afford the inflated cost of travel during the school holidays. As such they had the choice of either never having a family holiday, or going in term-time and accept that they would have to pay a £60 fine.

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

One parent waged a legal challenge against the validity of the penalty system, questioning whether parents should really have to pay these fines. Jon Platt had refused to pay a fine of £120 to the Isle of Wight council for

taking his daughter on an unauthorised term-time holiday. In the High Court in May, Mr Platt won a legal challenge, with the court ruling that he had no case to answer. Even with a week's absence in term-time, the court deemed that overall the pupil had attended the school regularly.

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



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

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.

## The first 'new' grammar school for 50 years gets the green light

After years of lobbying, argument and uncertainty, a new grammar school was finally approved in October 2015, the first such expansion in selective education in England for five decades.

Except that it wasn't technically a 'new' school.

The decision allowing the grammar school to open in Sevenoaks depended on this not being a newly-created institution. Instead the ruling accepted that this was an extension of an existing grammar school several miles away in Tonbridge.

Nevertheless the green light given to the Weald of Kent school to open in 2017 was seen as a symbolic triumph for the supporters of grammar schools. It suggested that the long retreat in grammars had ended and there could be a modest revival.

From a peak in the late 1950s, grammar schools declined in number sharply through the 1960s and 1970s and remained at a stable but relatively small number through the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

There are currently 163 grammar schools, with no increase in the



11-plus exams are still used for selection in the UK's 163 Grammar Schools

number because the school being opened is not counted as new but as an 'annexe' to an existing school.

The decision last year by the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, that the expansion in Kent could go ahead was hailed by grammar school supporters as a significant turning of the tide. Families who had campaigned for the grammar school in Sevenoaks welcomed the decision as a victory for 'parent power'; political reactions were divided.

Labour's Shadow Education Secretary criticised the decision to open another grammar school as a backwards step.

'They do not increase equality of opportunity, they make it worse,' said Labour's Lucy Powell, with accusations that grammars were too often the 'preserve of the privately tutored'.

On the Conservative backbenches, where there has been a longstanding traditional sympathy for the grammar school cause, there was a more enthusiastic welcome. Graham Brady, a long-time supporter of grammars, described it as a step which would give parents more options.

The advocates of grammar schools argued that this was a way to achieve greater social mobility, giving bright

youngsters from disadvantaged families access to a high-quality education.

From the Government perspective the grammar school decision was a more difficult balancing act. Although ministers accepted the case for expansion in this case, there was a clear message that this would not open the way to a full-scale return of grammars. The priority for the Government would be academies and free schools rather than going back to the 11-plus.

Alongside the ruling allowing the expansion of the grammar in Tonbridge was a reiteration that this did not mean any move towards allowing entirely new selective schools. The status quo established in the late 1990s which prevented the creation of new grammar schools remained in place.

Mrs Morgan said the plans in Tonbridge represented a 'genuine' expansion of an existing school. This was a technical ruling rather than a political shift.

'I don't think this will open any kind of precedent or floodgates,' said Mrs Morgan.

The change in leadership in the Conservative Party could give an extra impetus to grammar campaigners. Prime Minister, Theresa May, has been seen as being more sympathetic to allowing an expansion in grammar school places. Mr Brady has urged the Government to scrap the ban that currently outlaws the creation of entirely new grammar schools.

At the very beginning of her time as Education Secretary, Justine Greening was pressed on whether she would allow more grammar schools. She said that she remained 'open minded' and it's likely that she will face more questions on this until a clearer policy direction emerges.



## The population bulge that means secondary schools will have to keep building

When Justine Greening looked in her new in-tray at the Department for Education there would have been one topic that was an inescapable priority. There needs to be a substantial expansion in England's secondary school places to keep pace with the rising birth rate and numbers of young people in that age group.

The most basic requirement of any government's education policy is to provide enough school places – and it's one of those tasks that no one will notice if it is achieved but will be a disaster if it is missed.

The scale of the extra demand was revealed in official projections published by the Department for Education, which showed there needed to be an additional 750,000 places by 2025. This represents a 10% increase in the number of pupils in the state school system.

The bulk of this extra demand will be for secondary schools, which will account for 570,000 of the 750,000 places that need to be created. The population bulge that had seen primary schools adding temporary classrooms and extensions is now going to work its way through to the secondary sector.

There might be some grounds for optimism in coping with this expansion, because the school system has already absorbed an extra 470,000 pupils since the primary school population began to rise in 2009. The increase in primary numbers is now slowing, although it will mean adding another 180,000 pupils before the numbers are expected to peak in five years.

This means that the Department for Education's planners will be working to see if the demands of rising numbers will be different for secondary schools compared with primary. It raises the question of providing enough specialist teachers, when subjects such as science are already struggling to find enough suitably-qualified staff.

Secondary schools usually occupy bigger sites than primary but they also have more complex requirements and when it comes to GCSEs and A-levels, they need the space to be able to teach smaller groups of pupils.

Primary schools have so far managed to build enough extra capacity, with the average primary school having grown by the equivalent of another class in these years of rising pupil numbers.

New school building is finding its way through to secondary education



Inevitably it will mean a sustained pressure on school places, with the projections suggesting that schools will have had 16 successive years of increasing numbers, adding more than 1.2 million pupils to the school population.

Whatever other ambitions education ministers might have, this basic issue of school capacity is going to cost time and money. The Department for Education says it has already committed £7bn to creating extra places and that keeping up with rising numbers is a 'top priority'.

Headteachers' leaders say that the pressures of this expansion will require better strategic planning, involving local authorities and with less emphasis on relying on the creation of free schools.

They also highlight the importance of making sure that there is an adequate pipeline of teachers being trained because extra classes will need extra teachers and support staff. Schools have been loudly warning about their current difficulties in recruiting teachers, particularly in shortage subjects such as science and modern languages.

'The Government will need to take teacher recruitment and retention more seriously,' said Russell Hobby, General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers.

The Department for Education says that its record has so far been successful in providing places. Last year alone, schools took on an extra 121,000 pupils and the education department says this has not had an unduly negative impact on class size or school choice.

'The latest figures show that the system is responding well to growing numbers of pupils,' said a spokesperson at the Department for Education.

'Fewer children are being taught in large infant classes, the average primary school class size remain stable at 27.1 pupils and the vast majority of parents get places [for their children] in their preferred schools.'

The building boom that has seen primary schools filling up every space is going to be a feature of many secondary schools for the next decade.

## How Knowsley became a local authority where no schools offered A-levels

Knowsley, a local authority in the North West, became the centre of an unwanted exam story this year when the last secondary school in the borough offering A-levels decided to close its sixth form.

Halewood Academy's local decision and the prospect of an English authority without any schools for pupils to take A-levels, raised national questions about the oversight of schools and how there could be a more joined-up approach in a school system that has become increasingly fragmented.

The school's decision to stop teaching A-levels was based on funding, arguing that it was no longer financially viable to maintain a sixth form.

This would have been no more than a local dispute but because it was the last school in the borough offering A-levels it meant that pupils in one of the country's most deprived boroughs would have to travel to schools in other neighbouring authorities if they wanted to take A-levels.

What added to the political complexity was that the school was an academy

and not the responsibility of the local authority. The academy could take its individual decision without any consideration to wider local or strategic consequences.

The local council expressed its concern but it was powerless to intervene. It seemed inconceivable that an entire inner-city local authority could be left with no A-levels on offer but that was indeed the decision.

Parents, who formed protest groups on social media, called for this last local sixth form to be saved. They complained vociferously about feeling excluded from the decision-making but they too could only look on as the academy trust pressed ahead with shutting down the sixth form.

It will mean that next year pupils from Knowsley who want to study A-levels and apply to university will have to compete for places in schools in other boroughs. A few years ago there were several schools offering A-levels in the borough, soon there will be none.

A majority of secondary schools in England are now academies and the Government's target is to see as many as possible acquiring academy status. The example of Knowsley highlighted that such an autonomous system can have unintended consequences. It also highlighted concerns about social mobility.

A major speech this year by Prime Minister, David Cameron, had called on leading universities to make greater efforts to ensure access to youngsters from poorer backgrounds and from ethnic minorities.

In the case of Knowsley it seemed that social mobility was going backwards, with young people not even being given the opportunity to take A-levels within their own borough. While much of the ambition and aspiration has



There is nowhere in Knowsley for students to take A-Levels

been about widening access to higher education, in this case the barriers seemed to be raised.

Knowsley already has one of the lowest rates of university entry in the country and that, presumably, will not be advanced by the reduction in access to A-levels.

The coverage of this loss of A-levels certainly identified some problems and inconsistencies. After decades of political projects to raise education standards – and with Government plans currently promising ‘educational excellence everywhere’ – the reality on the ground seemed very different from the rhetoric.

Perhaps the most striking factor was the difficulty in making a response.

The local authority was a bystander without any control over a decision taken by an academy. The Department for Education and its regional schools commissioners seemed unlikely to change the sixth form funding rules for a single school.

After meetings between ministers, MPs and councillors, a statement emerged promising that they would find a way for A-levels to return to Knowsley – but who will teach them remains uncertain.

## Headteachers complain about problems with teacher shortages



Young people are uncertain about a career in teaching

There was one practical concern that was repeated again and again by secondary headteachers this year – the difficulty in recruiting teachers.

It was a concern that reached the House of Commons Education Select Committee and National Audit Office, as well as being debated wherever school leaders gathered.

Ofsted chief, Sir Michael Wilshaw, reflected the worries of headteachers, saying that recruitment difficulties were having a 'significant impact' on schools.

The National Audit Office reported that teacher recruitment targets had been missed for four years and that only about a quarter of physics lessons were likely to be taught by a teacher with a physics degree.

The National Association of Head Teachers said it had become a 'crisis' and that when school leaders advertised for teachers they often struggled to find the right staff and sometimes could not appoint anyone at all.

There were particular concerns from the secondary sector about the impact this could have on the quality of lessons,

including for GCSE and A-level. Even if schools could find someone to put in front of a class they might not be specialists in the subject. Schools having to rely there were also concerns about on a succession of temporary staff.

This was not a one-dimensional shortage. There were some subjects, such as maths and sciences, where it was particularly difficult to find appropriately-qualified teachers. It was also not a problem evenly spread across the country.

It could be harder to get good staff in coastal towns, which might find it hard to attract ambitious young graduates. It could also be difficult to keep staff in areas where house prices were so high that teachers could not afford to live. Low-achieving schools found it particularly hard to get staff with the suggestion that when teachers could pick and choose jobs, they might not opt for a school that was already struggling.

No matter how it showed itself, there was a problem. Professor John Howson, an expert on the teachers' employment market, said that the situation was the worst since 2001–02.

So what was causing this teacher shortage? A big underlying factor has been the wider recovery in the jobs market. There is a well-established pattern that during a recession more people go into more secure jobs, such as teaching.

When the recession finishes and there is more competition for graduates it becomes harder to attract people into teaching. For maths and science graduates, this means that teacher training has to compete with the lure of the banks, financial services and hi-tech industries.



If the wider jobs market puts pressure on the supply of teachers, there was another big factor shaping the demand. There has been a population boom in the school-age population, affecting both secondary and primary levels, which means even more teachers are needed for the rising number of additional classrooms.

With such a surge in pupil numbers, more teachers would be needed just to stand still.

The teachers' unions argued that another factor was that schools were now so overburdened with bureaucracy that teachers were leaving the profession, so that as well as problems with recruitment schools could also struggle with retention.

When the National Foundation for Educational Research investigated the teacher shortage, it found that the extra demand for rising pupil numbers was a key factor and that the numbers leaving teaching had remained broadly constant.

There were also suggestions that the changes in how teachers are trained could contribute to creating recruitment cold-spots. The emphasis has shifted away from university education departments to a more localised pattern of training teachers in schools.

The Government accepted that schools faced difficulties but warned against 'talking down the profession' in the process.

The Department for Education could also point out that teacher numbers were not falling but were at an all-time high.

Ministers launched a renewed bid to attract even more applications to teaching. There was a television advertising campaign, emphasising the financial gain as well as the personal fulfilment of a career in teaching.



Influences from Asian school systems have been considered when it comes to teacher placements

There were increases too in the level of cash incentives to enter teaching. A physics graduate with a first class degree could receive £30,000 tax free and those with an upper second degree could receive £25,000. There were also cash offers in other shortage subjects, such as modern languages and maths.

This year also saw the beginning of the pilot stage of the National Teaching Service. This has been an attempt to find a way to match high-quality teachers with the schools that need them most. This idea of putting the best teachers in the toughest schools has been a characteristic of successful Asian school systems such as in Shanghai. The aim is to develop a pool of teachers who can be deployed to struggling schools or to areas which find it hard to recruit.

As the education select committee observed, there was a political difference of opinion about language, whether the recruitment problems should be seen as a 'challenge' or a 'crisis'.

However it is labelled, finding the right teachers remains a serious concern for schools.



# Clacton County High School



Executive Principal, Jeff Brindle (right) and Principal, Neil Gallagher (left) discuss option choices with Year 8 students. The school runs a full three year KS4 programme



Clacton County High School

**T**he challenge of raising the expectations and aspirations of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is a national priority, particularly in coastal areas. At Clacton County High School staff are finding innovative ways of collaborating with other providers to tackle this issue.

CCHS is a 1500 student comprehensive school that serves the coastal town of Clacton-on-Sea. As with many traditional seaside resorts, Clacton has witnessed a decline in tourism since the 1980s and there are areas of significant deprivation, including the adjacent village of Jaywick, named in September 2015 as the most deprived area in England. An ageing population and limited employment opportunities for school leavers, has led to the School looking at innovative ways to raise achievement and aspirations for young people in the area. Our success in 'closing the gap' for the most disadvantaged students was recognised in 2015 when we were named as regional runner-up for the East of England in the Pupil Premium Awards.

With the expansion of academy status and less support available from local authorities schools have had to find different ways of working together and headteachers often have a wider remit which takes them beyond their own school. Where schools have converted as standalone academies this has created a degree of isolation and an inward looking approach. At Clacton County High School we believe passionately in collaboration, right through from primary to further/higher education, as a means of securing rapid and sustained school improvement.

A significant part of how the School has achieved success in recent years is our willingness to develop partnerships with a wide range of other institutions to maximise opportunities and outcomes. We have actively sought out like-minded partners and will continue to do so, adapting to the needs and demands of our students.

## REPORT CARD

- » Executive Principal: Jeff Brindle (responsible for strategic oversight and developing partnerships)
- » Principal: Neil Gallagher (responsible for day to day running of the school)
- » 11-18 Academy
- » 1560 students on roll with 300 in the Sixth Form
- » 232 staff, teaching and non-teaching
- » 50% of students eligible for Pupil Premium
- » East of England runner-up in Pupil Premium Awards 2015



Staff and students from across six schools celebrate the launch of the VI6 initiative at Essex University

## Post-16

CCHS has a large Sixth Form of over 300 students with a diverse range of abilities and we endeavour to provide a wide offer of Level 3 courses to match the needs and aspirations of all learners. However, with cutbacks in funding, particularly at post-16, it was evident that it would no longer be viable to deliver some minority subjects that have low student enrolment. In September 2015, supported by the University of Essex, CCHS developed a partnership with six other local sixth form providers, creating the 'VI6 (Six, Six) Initiative'; a unique model, creating a local solution for a familiar problem.

Our students travel to the campus for one full day each week to study some key subjects with low student numbers, such as a modern foreign language. The need for more students to study a foreign language at both A level and beyond is a national priority. Unless this is tackled the country will not be able to train sufficient MFL teachers

### » COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- » **VI6** – Colne Community School, Philip Morant, Thurstable, Clacton Coastal Academy and Harwich & Dovercourt High School
- » **NEEEP** – Stanway School, St Helena School, Thomas Lord Audley, Gilbert School, Manningtree High School and Harwich & Dovercourt High School
- » **NETT** – Colne Community School, Philip Morant and Harwich & Dovercourt High School

to deliver the proposed expansion of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Experienced teachers from each school deliver the lessons, but the University gives support in terms of facilities, resources, additional expertise as well as providing our students with a learning experience that extends beyond the school gates and Clacton.

The excitement of studying at the university in a more adult environment, providing their preferred subject choices and free transport, has seen the demand for the VI6 courses increase substantially in just one year. As a result, an expansion of the range of courses offered is being considered for September 2017/18. On the first day of the VI6 programme 2015/16 the cohort were surveyed and 64% said they would pursue higher education after A Levels, when they were re-surveyed eight weeks later after settling into the experience this rose to 87%.

Many students coming from disadvantaged families with no experience of attending university are now considering this as a preferred option post-18. The support of the University of Essex has been exceptional and crucial in securing the success of this initiative.

## Teacher Recruitment

Teacher recruitment is often cited as the main barrier to school improvement. Outside of our cities, in deprived coastal towns such as Clacton, the issue is even more acute.

To overcome this obstacle schools in the Tendring district created one of the first School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) schemes in the country. For the past 20 years CCHS has been the lead school for North Essex Teacher Training scheme (NETT). The School is proud that currently half of our teaching staff were trained via this route. Indeed eighteen of these colleagues actually attended CCHS as students.



The lack of trainee teachers undertaking teaching practices from higher education institutions outside of Essex (the nearest being 75 miles away in Cambridge) has led to an ethos of 'growing our own teachers' out of necessity.

The school has worked closely with a local Teaching School Alliance to ensure there is a structured programme of both initial and ongoing teacher training linked to the identified needs of each institution. Most recently we have introduced a programme of pre-initial teacher training opportunities for graduates to gain experience in the classroom and provide essential support for their applications. Nine potential trainees are employed as Graduate Teaching Assistants at CCHS and plan to begin their teacher training with NETT in the next two years.

### Academy Partnership

In April 2012 CCHS converted to academy status as part of North East Essex Education Partnership Umbrella Trust (NEEEP) – an important collaboration of eight schools that continually work together to raise standards, outcomes and opportunities for all students. The Partnership has shared expertise via secondments, provided continuous professional development opportunities for middle and senior leaders, and established strategic working groups to share best practices. Each school has been able to bring something to the Partnership with the focus of driving up standards and successfully improving the teaching and learning experience for our students.

### Multi Academy Trust

Creating an Umbrella Trust allowed the schools in NEEEP to convert to academy status and at the same time set up a powerful collaborative model. However, it has not provided the level of accountability and governance now



Sean Duffy, one of 18 current teachers who are ex-students and have been trained by North Essex Teacher Training (NETT)

required by the DfE. A group of the NEEEP schools have, therefore, decided to establish a Multi Academy Trust which, in addition, will include two local primary schools. Whilst as a result of our initial teacher training scheme, we are fairly secure in recruiting staff at NQT level, it remains a significant challenge at middle and senior leader level. School improvement in this area is frequently hampered by key staff moving on at relatively short notice. The aim is to create a model of excellence across the partner schools built around shared leadership and the new MAT will have the power to intervene and provide additional capacity in such circumstances.

At CCHS, whilst we are always focussed on how we can achieve the best here and now for our current students, we are equally determined never to stand still and will continue to look at innovative ways in which we can share what we have learned and gain knowledge from others. We are making a difference to the lives of our students by providing appropriate opportunities, having exceptionally high expectations and raising their aspirations for the future.

Clacton County High School's motto has long been "Higher Expectations, Wider Aspirations" and this continues to define our key purpose.

The school aims to raise expectations and widen aspirations of all its students regardless of background



# Felpham Community College



Mark Anstiss with Deputy Headteachers, Marion Harrington (centre) and Pat Ashman (right)



Children need to feel safe and happy if they are to be successful in school

There is no point spending millions of pounds on a Thierry Henry or a Cristiano Ronaldo unless you have a strong back four and a good goal keeper. In order to sustain school improvement you must similarly make sure that you have the basics in place first.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Mark Anstiss
- » Location: Bognor Regis, West Sussex
- » 11-18, mixed, local authority comprehensive school
- » 1320 students (220 in the sixth form)
- » 21% Pupil Premium
- » 85 teachers, 60 associate staff
- » Established in 1974

When I started as Headteacher at Felpham Community College in April 2010, the school ticked along reasonably happily each day, was fully staffed and in place were all the policies, plans and awards that might be expected. On the surface it may have appeared an outstanding school but scratch below the surface and what was revealed was a school facing significant challenges. Led by the excellent Chair, Ken Lloyd, governors had decided that a 'Step Change' was needed and they wanted someone to provide radical change and take the school forward in a determined way.

The school was part of the Gaining Ground Strategy because of a history of uninspiring results, there were pockets of very poor behaviour from a significant minority of students, attendance was low and exclusions were high and the school had a rapidly falling roll. The reputation of the school in the community suffered due to a poorly enforced school uniform policy and how the students behaved to and from school each day. Whilst I was aware of many of these issues when I took the job, what was a surprise was the enormous budget deficit which became apparent a few weeks after starting! The challenge of turning around a troubled school is significant at the best of times; when you don't have any money it's really tricky.



What were the problems that needed to be addressed first? Prior to starting I surveyed staff, governors and students to gain their views on the priorities for improvement. If their priorities matched mine then buy-in to any proposed changes would be more likely and they would feel empowered to make a difference. The overriding message from the survey was the same: improve student behaviour. Many students did not feel happy or safe because of the attitude and culture of the older students 'ruling the roost' and teachers could not teach effectively because of low-level (and high-level) disruption in lessons. (Actually, a number of the teachers could not teach effectively because they were not very good at teaching.)

So student behaviour needed to be tackled first – we needed to create a calm and ordered learning environment. There was a vacancy on the senior leadership team and we required someone who could lead by example, take staff with them, devise and implement very clear expectations and do the 'hard yards' around the school. Fortunately, I knew just the person. The secret of leadership is to surround yourself with great people and Marion Harrington, from my previous school, joined the team as a new Deputy Headteacher to lead this area of work.

We started by improving the students' appearance by strictly enforcing the uniform policy and not allowing them to come to school adorned in jewellery. At an early staff meeting I used the great quote from the baseball pitcher, Bob Ojeda, 'We've been working on the basics because, basically, we've been having trouble with the basics.' The school had a large number of policies and procedures but they were not being followed consistently. With the staff galvanised for action we started the new term with much higher expectations. A few students kicked



Sixth formers, led by the Head Girl and Head Boy (pictured) increasingly work with younger students

against the new rules but quite quickly we had 100% compliance.

Although the headline, 'New Head Bans Bling!' in the local newspaper was not quite what I had anticipated, it did get the message across that the school was changing. Success breeds success, and once the staff realised that things could be improved if we all pulled together and did not give up, we were able to move on to ensuring consistently good behaviour in lessons and around the building.

We focussed on traditional aspects of a good school: uniform, behaviour, attendance, punctuality, politeness and mutual respect. I do not like jargon and gimmicks and education is peppered with them; we renamed

Extra-curricular enrichment activities are important for all students, including the sixth form (pictured)





“You need to get the basics right and recruit and retain the highest quality staff”

the ‘Learning Resource Centre’ the Library and the ‘e-Learning Centre’ the Computer Room. We disbanded staff training through the ‘Teaching & Learning Communities’ because there was little point exploring pedagogical innovation if teachers were not actually setting homework regularly or marking effectively. We stripped it all back to basics and laid a firm foundation for improvement.

The new year 7s were told there are only three school rules: ‘Turn up every day, work hard and be nice.’ Working with governors we established our core values: ‘Achievement – Care – Equality’. We added these to the school logo, publicised them widely and used them as a living set of values. Everything we did in the school needed to promote student achievement; the pastoral system was there to break down the barriers to learning and every child was of equal value. Where previously there might have been excuses and low expectations, gradually things shifted. The ‘tears and tissues’ pastoral system became much more robust and parents and students got the message that laziness

was not actually a recognised Special Educational Need.

Throughout this, the quality of teaching was being addressed by my other outstanding Deputy Headteacher, Pat Ashman. With an initial focus on English and mathematics, we set increasingly challenging targets for students and held staff to account. Whilst I have never believed that Performance Management in education is a significant lever for improvement, outstanding staff were rewarded and poor staff were supported but also challenged to improve. A number of teachers unable to raise their game left the school but we had a healthy supply of staff wanting to join us and share in the work we were doing.

There is no silver bullet that will guarantee school improvement – but you need to get the basics right and recruit and retain the highest quality staff. We do not benefit from good buildings at Felpham Community College; we serve a mixed catchment area with a comprehensive intake and a growing Eastern European population, while West Sussex has traditionally been terribly underfunded through the national formula. But if you can get the right people on the bus, keep it simple and are relentlessly obsessive then you will improve. Progress in the school is now in the top 25% of schools nationally, exclusions are below the national average and attendance above.

Since its inception in 1974, Felpham Community College had only ever been OFSTED ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘Requires Improvement’. In January 2016, the school was awarded OFSTED ‘Good’ in all areas. We were delighted that the report also captured the essence of what makes Felpham a special place: a happy, caring and purposeful school with high staff morale and a shared culture of continual improvement.



# The Eastwood Academy



Principal, Neil Houchen, with the Student Leadership Team.



Students engaged in a science lesson

Every year since 2010, when I became the Headteacher, The Eastwood Academy has been the highest performing non-selective school in Southend. In 2015, this success was recognised nationally when the School and College Performance Tables ranked the academy 2nd in the country when compared with similar schools. What makes this achievement more salient is that the school, which became an academy in 2011, is located in a coastal town. Coastal areas, as highlighted in the most recent Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, face many challenges and barriers to learning. Eastwood has met these challenges head on and is providing a first class education for its students.

## Background

Eastwood is heavily oversubscribed, typically receiving over 400 'first preference' applications for 180 places. Although a mixed gender school, students are largely taught in single-sex classes. This, I believe, is one of the key reasons for the academy's success. The distractions for learning are greatly reduced and teachers can employ instruction techniques geared toward specific genders. The proportion of students who are classified as 'disadvantaged' (25.9%) or have 'special educational needs' (16.4%) is broadly in line with the national average.

## REPORT CARD

- » Principal: Neil Houchen
- » Location: Southend-on-Sea, Essex
- » Number of students: 840
- » Status: 11-16 converter academy
- » Disadvantaged students: 26%
- » Ofsted rating: good
- » Value added: 1028.3 in 2015
- » Progress 8: 0.53 in 2015

## » VALUE ADDED

Value added is a measure of the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It gives an indication of whether, as a group, pupils in a school make above (a score greater than 1000) or below (a score less than 1000) average progress compared to similar pupils in other schools.

## » PROGRESS 8

Progress 8 is a measure of the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It gives an indication of whether, as a group, pupils in a school make above (a score greater than 0) or below (a score less than 0) average progress compared to similar pupils in other schools. From 2016, Progress 8 will be the headline accountability measure for schools, replacing 5+ A\*-C grades including English and mathematics.

Students in a production of Les Misérables.



## High Expectations

Expectations are unwaveringly high - students believe that they will succeed because of the effective partnership they have with staff. This is encapsulated in the academy's culture and ethos - '*Believe, Succeed, Together*'.

The academy places great importance on creating a purposeful climate for learning. The behaviour policy is rigorously enforced with a centralised detention system for those students who fall short of our high expectations. Visitors to the academy comment on the productive learning environment and excellent relationships between staff and students.

'All lessons were characterised by students diligently engaging in learning. Students listened to their teacher and other students with rapt attention. Relationships with teachers and with other students were very productive. There was an atmosphere of mutual respect.' (Ofsted 2015)

High expectations are also maintained through an extensive rewards system. Students' achievements are recognised through the weekly newsfeed, celebration assemblies, special lunches, commendations events and an award scheme sponsored by Sir Jack Petchey, a British businessman

and philanthropist. Our philosophy with rewards is simple: take every opportunity to celebrate success and share this together.

## Curriculum

The academy has a broad and balanced curriculum which does not place a limit on aspiration, irrespective of any barriers to learning or starting points. From Year 9, all students are expected to follow GCSE courses that allow them to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), which I believe is the hallmark of a good education system. These are completed alongside other GCSE subjects and compulsory high value vocational courses.

Curriculum time is also allocated to the personal development of the students, particularly in regard to leadership skills. From Years 9-11, one hour a week is allocated to the Arts Award, Sports Leader Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award and Student Leader Accreditation. By incorporating these formally within the curriculum, participation is an expectation, not an option.

## Extra-curricular

There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities to add to the enrichment, challenge and personal development of the students.

'Students are proud to make the most of the opportunities they have to take responsibility. They enthusiastically participate in an enormous range of extra-curricular activities.' (Ofsted 2013)

The academy's predecessor school held specialisms in maths and computing, performing arts and sports. Whilst the funding is no longer provided, the academy's participation in local and national events and competitions remains high.



The academy has some of the best sports facilities in the country. The basketball court was designed along the same lines as those used in the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the sports track has the same (Mondo) surface as that used in Stratford for the 2012 London Olympics.

In addition to first class facilities, the academy is the hub school for the Southend West School Sports Partnership (SWSP) which provides services for 54 schools in Southend. This unique partnership was key in achieving the School Games Gold Award in 2015.

Outside of the classroom, we offer a comprehensive programme of trips including: USA, Italy, France, Belgium, Morocco and Holland, to name but a few. A rich cultural experience is critical to the students' wider development as well-rounded individuals.

## Impact

Over the past 5 years, the number of students attaining 5+ A\*-C including English and mathematics has ranged from 64-71% and the Key Stage 2-4 value added peaked at 1028.3 in 2015, generating a progress 8 of 0.53.

The most significant achievement, however, is the performance of disadvantaged students. In 2015, they achieved higher than the national average in every key performance measure and the gap between them and their non-disadvantaged counterparts was narrowed considerably – for example the gap in respect to 5+ A\*-C including English and mathematics was narrowed by 37% with disadvantaged students achieving 60% (against a national average of 34%) and non-disadvantaged students achieving 74% (against a national average of 63%).



In September 2015, this achievement extended into Higher Education, with the first student in the Academy's history gaining a place at Cambridge University. Sharna Willis, who left the academy in 2013 to attend Southend High School for Girls Sixth Form, is currently studying Linguistics at Sidney Sussex College. Sharna is part of the academy's growing alumni network and has since visited the school to give talks to students. We are confident that the precedent she has set will be an inspiration to others and the beginning of a legacy of students who gain places at Russell Group universities.

## » KEY STRATEGIES

The success of the academy can mainly be attributed to:

- » Distributed leadership with clear lines of accountability;
- » A relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and sharing of best practice;
- » An overhaul of performance management to encourage, challenge and support continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning;
- » Forensic use of data through the development of an in-house student tracking facility – Student Achievement Tracker (SAT) - which has enabled staff to become more focused and responsive to the needs of all students;
- » Additional staffing for core subjects to facilitate smaller class sizes; and
- » A systematic tuition programme to support and extend students' progress.

# Cheshunt School



Andy Stainton, Headteacher



Our culture is that we are a place of work preparing students for adult life

In September 2010 I took up my first headship of a school that was in a perilous state: significantly low attainment, poor behaviour, low attendance and demotivation at all levels. Two months later, after inspection in November 2010, the school was placed in Special Measures. In spite of this, Cheshunt School was fortunate in having all the elements present for success: a restructured and more motivated governing body with a newly appointed Chair of Governors with the skills to make changes to improve accountability, an eager staff desperate for strong leadership and students who have great personality and immense potential. What was required was a strong vision and a complete overhaul of every aspect of the way the school worked to ensure everyone pulled in the same direction with the tools to enable them to do so.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Andy Stainton
- » Location: South-East Hertfordshire
- » Foundation School
- » 475 Students
- » 45% Pupil Premium
- » 25% SEND

The task was made doubly difficult due to a particularly demanding decline in the number of students from primary schools in the area which led to cut-throat competition amongst local secondary schools. It contributed to reducing our intake and put extreme pressure on the school finances leaving us with no option but to reduce staffing and cut services whilst continuing to support a large number of families living in poverty with many broad social needs.

## Culture Change

From the first day we were clear that low aspirations from staff were not acceptable – there were to be no excuses. We were 98th out of 100 similar schools – we could

and would do better! So we embarked on a root and branch evaluation of the effectiveness of the school which resulted in significant staff turnover through cultural change.

Our initial imperative was classroom non-negotiables:

- » Develop a work culture as soon as students enter the school – rewarding students who demonstrate this whilst changing the work behaviours of students who struggle by giving support and challenge
- » Active learning from the second the student walks in the room so they were inspired and involved from the beginning
- » A “no-hands up” policy so that all students had to be prepared with an answer even if it was wrong as it made them think
- » We don’t accept “don’t know” as a response
- » The teacher decides who answers the questions, carefully structured to deepen the learning
- » Learning intentions are shared so that students know what the lesson is about
- » Clear benchmarks called Progress Criteria are established in every lesson so students can check independently their progress
- » Teachers doing less; students doing more

It was also crucial that we had an effective and accessible system to measure progress so we consolidated four different data management systems into one holistic system saving staff hours of time whilst improving tracking of student progress through more regular data collection. We also improved marking so that students receive regular feedback and respond to it to improve their work. Our emphasis on improving learning focuses on progress over attainment

and we set aspirational targets that challenge everyone to succeed at their own highest level. Most recently we have developed with students and staff our own student-friendly assessment model as part of our ‘life after levels’ strategy.

Previously the needs of the students were not being met by the curriculum which had lost direction and we had to reassert a clear vision for a curriculum which is aspirational and meets the students’ needs. We did this by introducing learning pathways in Key Stage 3 which enables those who need additional literacy and numeracy support to receive it whilst the high ability continue to be stretched. We also ensure there is breadth of vocational and academic examination courses in Key Stage 4 and include Learning for Life and Life Skills programmes to teach the students the skills and knowledge they need to live as successful adults.

All the changes rely on consistent, strong leadership. I developed a ‘One Leadership’ Model whereby Governors, Senior and Middle Leaders and Student Leaders have input to

“A powerful school ethos based upon these values: ‘Supportive. Inclusive. Effective.’”

OFSTED 2016

#### Attainment

5 A\*-C inc English and Maths:

- » 2010: 38%
- » 2015: 54%

#### Value Added

- » 2010: 954
- » 2015: 1010

Improving literacy is a key focus







Our Strong Community is evident in lessons and through our House system

the strategic development of the school – everyone pulling together in the same direction. Further, we empower Middle Leaders through Continued Professional Learning (CPL) to take ownership of their empires: outcomes for students, development of staff, monitoring and evaluation, action planning and behaviour. Essential to our progress is a policy of only employing teachers who are good or better whilst nurturing talent from within – many staff have gone on to promotions both within the school and to other schools, having system-wide impact. Developing all our staff through bespoke CPL that supports the ambition of the school improvement plan is important as is developing Student Leaders with strategic responsibility and financial support to get things done. The Chair of Governors recently conducted a review of governance which led to a reconstituted small yet highly effective Governing Body with no sub-committees. All governors learn about all aspects of the school and can hold the staff to account with individual governors responsible for specific monitoring of whole school strategies reflecting the priorities in the school improvement plan.

I wanted the whole school to feel valued within a strong community so we introduced a new House system which has enabled regular friendly competition and a positive promotion of the school through local community activities. We restructured all year groups into a vertical tutoring system for form time whilst remaining in year groups for lessons so that each form group is a family of students of different ages who look out for each other and support each other's development. We effectively support every child from pre-admission through to when they leave us to ensure they will be successful and work with over 17 external agencies to support both the student and their wider family. The school has also successfully improved attendance and punctuality to better than national which is supporting improved results.

### Now the future is bright

Cheshunt School has a track record of sustained improvement. We have kept up with changes from central government to the accountability measures, endured four full inspections and five HMI visits in six years and assimilated changes to the inspection framework, too many to count, which have continually raised the bar. I am proud to say we are on track to demolish the now unjustified reputation for being the worst school in the local borough – in fact we were the third best in 2015. Strong leadership at all levels will ensure stability and future progress supported by a fantastically committed staff who want to work in a challenging school environment, students who are now achieving what they deserve to have successful futures in a safe and caring community and a new building providing accommodation to inspire learning in the 21st century. Every day we live the values espoused in our motto: "Supportive. Inclusive. Effective."

“I am impressed with the investment in the individual child.”

Parent

“We are one big community.”

Student

# Hadlow Rural Community School



Paul Boxall, Headteacher  
with Year 10 Students



High expectation and aspiration  
is a perpetual part of our culture

Students experience opportunities very different from those in other schools because of our vision and commitment to integrate land-based education into everything we do. To complement our traditional academic curriculum students participate in a wide variety of life-enhancing and enriching experiences whilst working in a beautiful outdoor environment in areas such as agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and animal care, all supported by our leading specialism in Science.

They achieve vital skills in teamwork, discipline, respect and responsibility, as well as gaining a better understanding of the natural environment as they work towards a meaningful vocational qualification in addition to their GCSEs.

10% of the curriculum is designated to land-based subjects and involves studying a wide range of subjects including livestock management, agricultural machinery, cultivation and crops.

The demand for qualified young people to take the rural industry forward is high; whether that be as research scientists to vets and geneticists, IT specialists programming agricultural software to machine operators handling millions of pounds worth of sophisticated kit. That is why our curriculum puts an emphasis on science-based subjects and integrates land-based vocational training with academic teaching in a way that inspires and excites pupils to find out more about the industry and its related professions.

## A new way of learning...

Hadlow Rural Community School is an innovative and inspiring place to learn and achieve – not just because of its location but because of its unique ethos and education.

### REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Paul Boxall
- » Location: Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent
- » Opened: 2013
- » 11-16 Free School
- » 250 students, rising to 375
- » Land-based and Science Specialism
- » Ofsted rating: Good



Paul Hannan, Group  
Principle and CEO  
The Hadlow Group

“The land-based activities develop traits which are preparing students well for their next steps in education and employment, such as leadership, teamwork and confidence in unfamiliar situations”  
Ofsted, June 2015

We offer our students an outstanding environment in which to reach their full potential by following a challenging curriculum with specialisms in Land-based and Science.

What makes us different is all students study for a land-based vocational qualification alongside the core curriculum. In this way, we dovetail practical tasks with academic discipline, enriching education inside and outside the classroom.

Our aspirations don't stop there, we expect high standards of behaviour and conduct and our staff deliver high quality care and guidance with a relentless pursuit of excellence through outstanding teaching linked to structured support for a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

In this way we believe children become confident, fully rounded individuals with inquiring minds and a life-long love of learning, prepared and eager to take the many challenges of an ever-changing society.

### Our journey...

Hadlow Rural Community School was set up in 2013 as an 11-16 free School by Hadlow College in Kent.

Already recognised by Ofsted as an outstanding college for land-based studies, it had worked with students from visiting schools for many years, but was keen to explore new ways to inspire 11 to 16 year olds, particularly in science-based subjects.

It did this by putting Hadlow Rural Community School at the heart of its 2,000-acre estate and making its world-class facilities and expert lecturers available to students and their teachers.

However, the inaugural year of the school was not an easy one and on my appointment in Easter of 2014 I became the third Headteacher within an eight month period.

The school had been through a turbulent time being undersubscribed and experiencing substantial changes in staffing with only two permanent members of staff remaining (both incredibly loyal and both outstanding teachers) and was in a challenging position; I recall meeting with the school's DfE advisor to review my impact, having been in post for only a few days! The School is now in a significantly better place having received 'Good' in our recent Ofsted inspection and with an acknowledgement of the improvements made so rapidly.

Although competing within the Kent grammar school environment, we are now oversubscribed and attracting students substantially beyond our catchment area. Due to demand our offer of places has now increased for future years and we will be expanding from our current roll of 190 to a maximum of 375 over the next 2 years.

Student progress is significantly above national performance for all subjects and we have 100% progression onto Further Education (the large majority now completing courses within the land-based sector). Staffing is now also consistent with twenty five permanent members of staff; all highly committed, professional colleagues with a passion and drive to make the School a progressive success.

### How have we achieved this?

The staff I inherited, joined by some exceptional appointments, have provided the inspiration and catalyst for positive change. Consistency in our approach to behaviour management, teaching and learning, an innovative curriculum and exceptionally high *expectations in everything we do* has made the difference.

Attracting the best staff has been critical for the future of the School; we ensure that successful candidates completely understand our expectations and the vision they will be promoting.



As a small school the importance of high quality staff is magnified and our structure provides succession management in key areas and encourages the potential of support staff in accessing teacher training.

We believe that anything is possible for the students in our care and that glass ceilings are never tolerated for any student. Highly aspirational targets are set and students challenged to achieve them. Rigorous tracking, guidance and support has enabled students to aim higher and raise their own aspirations. Parental engagement has been essential in achieving this and positive communication has fostered a shared focus on achieving together.

Behaviourally, consistency is key and we focus heavily on the small details. Daily briefings for the whole school ensure that students are prepared and ready to learn throughout the day. The relentless focus on the finer details ensures that the opportunities for poor behaviour do not arise and that learning is not compromised.

Our expectations are supported by the promotion of mutual respect and the celebration of equality and diversity. 'Family Dining' is a strong example of this, where students and staff sit and eat together at lunchtime. With a quarter of the school arriving through in year admission the environment continues to be overwhelmingly positive, a clear indicator of the high expectation for all.

Learning and teaching is closely monitored and the professional development of staff is given the highest priority. Training is bespoke to the needs of the teaching staff and there is a culture where it is encouraged to take risks and be innovative with styles of teaching. Coaching is now playing a key part in ensuring that teaching is consistently of the highest quality.

I have one core principle: 'the students come first' – and every decision is

based upon this principle. However; it is essential to acknowledge that my most important and valued resource is the staff that work within the school, providing the stretch, challenge, support and caring environment for all of the young people in our care. I see it as my role to ensure that they are equally cared for and supported, stretched and challenged. Always aiming higher in our continual development and ongoing journey.

### Next steps ...

Our prime focus is to consolidate the excellent practice we have developed and, as we expand and move into a purpose built school in 2016, to ensure that this is embedded as part of the school culture in the future.

This does not mean that we do not have further plans, whether that be looking forward to broadening our curriculum to promote greater aesthetic experiences for students or developing our enrichment programme to provide greater extra-curricular opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award or Young Farmers club.

Similarly, as a new and developing school we have the exciting and challenging prospect of adding to our already high performing body of staff and ensuring our high expectation and aspiration is a perpetual part of our culture.

“The close links between the academic curriculum and land-based studies provide an innovative and inspiring experience for students”

Ofsted, June 2015



First Prize, Breed Champion

# Liskeard School & Community College



The whole school is working together to build resilience



Head Teacher,  
Alex Lingard

In 2011 OFSTED highlighted that the school needed to make significant improvements. Two years later we successfully achieved a strong 'good' judgement. With serious funding challenges now a reality, national recruitment difficulties and a falling school population, we would be justified in being apprehensive about the future, but in fact the school is determined to pursue its ambitions for greater things. An outstanding number of parents would recommend the school to others, staff morale is exceptional and the Team Liskeard spirit is stronger than ever. Despite the difficulties ahead, the future looks bright.

Located in South East Cornwall Liskeard School & Community College sits in the centre of a once thriving market town. The school serves a rural catchment area which includes areas of high deprivation. Self-employment is double the national average and under-employment is high. The school's predominantly white population is comprised largely of students from nine partner primary schools. Students enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are consistently significantly below the national average. The school hosts a very successful Area Resource Base specialising in Autism.

## Securing Improvement

Following OFSTED in 2011 we identified three key levers for immediate change:

### 1. Raise expectations of staff and students

We worked tirelessly to raise expectations: aspirational targets were set for every student; more demanding benchmarks for performance management were



agreed and effective use of data became standard for classroom teachers and middle leaders.

## 2. Raise general standards

Underpinning all of our initial success was an unrelenting focus on improving general standards. A new behaviour system was already taking shape so we ensured it was being implemented consistently. A zero tolerance approach to poor standards of uniform, punctuality and homework were all introduced with remarkable impact. Since then the systems we have in place for each of these have evolved further and now include other aspects of schooling, such as equipment and the use of rewards.

## 3. Introduce more robust monitoring procedures

A robust system of monitoring and support was introduced to ensure teaching was focussed on progress for all. Senior and middle leaders undertook book trawls, a variety of lesson observations, student focus groups and faculty reviews co-ordinated by a unified monitoring calendar and completed to a specific format to help ensure greater consistency across the school. Governors took an active role in quality assuring the level of scrutiny, challenge and support of the Head Teacher and the senior team.

## Building an Ethos

We knew that sustained success would require everyone to co-operate and collaborate. In 2012 we signed up to the Co-operative values (self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity) which now form the foundations of the school's inclusive ethos. Assemblies led by a community chaplaincy team focus on these values each week. Awards for co-operation are presented at the end of the year,



A focus on general standards and the importance of co-operation has been key to our improvements

co-operation themed days (where the normal timetable is suspended for the day) take place annually and co-operative learning strategies have been developed in classrooms across the school. Professional development for teachers now involves being part of a triad and working in cross-curricular teams.

In the spirit of the Co-operative values and our inclusive ethos, we asked the staff and students to come up with a new motto for the school. 'Achieving more together' was the outcome and now features prominently on everything we do. The school built a new website and improved its branding. We created our own Duke of Edinburgh style Community Awards to encourage students to undertake voluntary work within our community. Last year over 700 Community Award certificates were presented to students throughout the school. An extensive peer mentoring programme has evolved over the last three years that now includes both academic and pastoral mentoring involving students in every year group, including some in Year 6 at one of our partner primaries.

## Team Liskeard and the Liskeard Bus

Four years ago, in a professionally commissioned staff survey, staff

“All leaders have the highest expectations for students, so that achievement will be raised further  
OFSTED 2013 ”



A Summer School for our most disadvantaged Year 6 students runs during term time with remarkable impact

morale was given the lowest rating possible and ranked bottom. Last year it was ranked top and rated as 'outstanding'. This turnaround has come about through a conscious effort to build a team spirit across the school.

In September 2014, in the first staff meeting of the year, we used a visual metaphor of a school bus with all the staff on board, all going in the same direction to the same destination. Last year the bus got upgraded to a state of the art team coach as we aim for bigger and better things! Staff health and well-being is a key part of our school improvement plan every year and staff welfare is a standing agenda item at senior team meetings. We have trained two members of staff as Health Champions and offer staff health checks every other year. Frequent 'thermometer group' meetings and union rep meetings are held to gauge staff feeling and gain feedback on current issues. We have improved communication with staff by introducing a bulletin with weekly whole school messages from the Head Teacher. Weekly staff briefings always

start with thanks and celebrations. A high profile senior team lead by example and are recognised for their supportive approach. We regularly run whole school campaigns that promote *Team Liskeard*; the biggest of which has been how we can all build resilience.

## Preparing the Next Generation

Our partner primaries greatly value our partnership work. We meet regularly to work together and share resources financially. Transition work is an essential part of our collaboration. Over recent years this has been developed into an area of excellence. Of particular note is the summer school we provide for students in Year 6. A two week programme runs during term time, ensuring that students who need it most have the opportunity to attend. A third of every cohort each year now attend a programme that helps to develop literacy, numeracy and self-confidence. The summer school has been so successful that, despite the removal of government funding, we are committed to its continuation. The programme has helped our disadvantaged and vulnerable students, now in Key Stage 3, to make the same if not better progress than their peers.

## Next Steps

- » Further develop a coaching model to:
  - » reduce in-school variation in teaching quality by raising all teaching to the standard of the best
  - » support leadership at all levels
- » Improve the consistency and reliability of assessments, in an era of changing qualifications
- » Evolve our pastoral system to provide more specialist wrap-around care with fewer financial resources.

“An ‘outstanding’ number of parents would recommend the school to others”  
Parent Survey, 2015

# Mulberry School for Girls



Mulberry students at the White House

*Date:* November 17th 2015.

*Place:* Washington DC.

*Location:* the White House.

*Present:* Michelle Obama and 20 pupils from Mulberry School For Girls.

*Subject of discussion:* Mrs Obama's global campaign for girls' education, Let Girls Learn.

*The question on everybody's lips at the time was:* how did twenty girls from a Tower Hamlets state school end up sitting down with the First Lady to discuss girls' rights? The answer is simple: she invited them.

As a result of our pioneering work in education and girl empowerment, Mrs Obama chose our school as the site for the UK launch of Let Girls Learn in June 2015. During her visit, the First Lady saw in our pupils the same thing we see in them: their drive to change the world for the better. Struck by their energy, she invited us to bring 20 girls to the White House to discuss further action on Let Girls Learn. After an extensive in-school application process, 20 Year 10 and 12 pupils sat down at a meeting table with the First Lady at its Head.

We have a particular vision for our pupils which is captured by that image: empowered young women sharing the floor with world leaders, raising their voices for social change. Our school identity is distinctive. At the heart of our ethos is the belief that every young person deserves the opportunity to develop as a fully rounded individual, with the skills required to lead a successful and fulfilled life. We place great emphasis on empowering young women to see themselves as leaders.

We have pioneered a unique initiative which helps equip our girls to achieve their best: our Extended Learning and Women's Education programme. Our Extended Learning Team coordinates the UK's most extensive school enrichment programme,

## MULBERRY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

- » Head Teacher: Dr Vanessa Ogden, National Leader in Education
- » Location: Tower Hamlets, East London
- » Outstanding school and a pioneer in girls' education
- » Non-selective local authority school with 1411 pupils aged 11-18
- » Our students come from a predominantly British-Bangladeshi heritage, and the majority have English as an additional language
- » We serve one of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the country: 76% of our pupils are entitled to the Pupil Premium
- » We have an excellent academic reputation, and currently rank amongst the top 100 UK state-funded secondary schools



“I know I’ll be  
a success  
because my  
school  
believes in me”

Naimah Mahmud,  
Year 10 student

offering more than 50 school clubs, as well as a range of external projects run in partnership with organisations including the National Theatre, the British Film Institute and Southbank Centre. Students access a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills, from peer mentoring and debating to Model United Nations conferences.

The Women’s Education programme is a key part of Extended Learning. At the centre of our practice is the recognition that girls have a particular identity and position within the world. The Women’s Education programme encourages awareness of issues surrounding gender equality; builds girls’ confidence; and gives a platform to their voices. These aims are fulfilled through a combination of in-school initiatives, including our feminist discussion group, our school-based Girl Guides unit, and our yearly women’s conferences for UK secondary schools; and more

extensive projects in collaboration with external partners. We are currently working with the White House to discuss further partnership on Let Girls Learn.

Confident, ambitious and articulate, our pupils thrive individually; but we also see the way empowered young women transform communities. Most of our pupils progress to Higher Education, vocational training or paid work: their increased economic participation helps to revitalise the local economy, while their achievements establish them as positive role models who inspire younger girls to work for the same level of success – this goes some way toward breaking the cycle of poverty and worklessness within Tower Hamlets.

Our success rests on a foundation of high quality teaching. We follow a traditional academic curriculum, and our pupils achieve well above expectation at GCSE.

Michelle Obama visits  
the school in June 2015



In 2015, Mulberry girls were placed in the top 3% nationally for value added in their best eight GCSEs. In February 2016 the Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, informed us that we now rank amongst the top 100 non-selective state schools, based on the percentage of pupils achieving the Ebacc. The majority of Year 11 leavers remain at the school to attend the Sixth Form; over 80% progress to University, many achieving competitive places at Russell Group and other prestigious institutions.

These would be figures to celebrate for any school, but in the context of our school population, they are remarkable. The majority of our students have English as a second language – primary languages spoken at home include Somali, Italian, Gujarati and, for most pupils, Bengali. Our community is one of the poorest in the country, and well over half of our pupils are entitled to the Pupil Premium. Nevertheless, our girls thrive academically.

We have reached this level of success through a consistent focus on high standards of teaching and learning, and an evidence-based approach to classroom practice. Our research-led approach encourages innovative classroom strategies which ensure that all pupils can achieve their best. Examples include our Fetch Me A Pen project, inspired by research conducted at Queen Mary University. The project is based on the premise that writing is part of the learning process: when students can write about a subject clearly and effectively, their understanding of it improves. Fetch Me A Pen supports teachers in developing effective approaches to teaching academic literacy. We have applied our methods from Year 7 upwards, and seen a remarkable impact on academic results. We take a cross-school approach to this work, sharing



A Mulberry Prefect networking at our 2014 Women's Education Conference

best practice through conferences and workshops.

At Mulberry, we believe that girls will change the world. We know that girls are powerful when somebody believes in them, that they have much to say when somebody offers them a platform, that they are leaders of change, bringing their families and communities with them as they rise. We stand for girls, and we stand with them.



A Mulberry student speaks at a Women's Education Conference



# Plume, Maldon's Community Academy



The Executive Leadership  
and Chairs of Trust of Plume  
Academy



Teaching is engaging  
and innovative,  
and the drive  
towards continuous  
improvement is  
relentless

Plume Academy is a large, split site comprehensive in the market town of Maldon, Essex. Everything we strive to achieve at Plume is built on a foundation of respect, integrity and hard work and we strongly believe that education should be an enjoyable, challenging and truly inspiring experience for all students who attend our community Academy.

## REPORT CARD

- » Principal: Carl Wakefield
- » Location: Maldon, Essex
- » 400 year continuous endowment since first grammar school
- » Academy convertor 2012 with a roll of 1700 students
- » Sixth Form College of 300 students
- » NEET figure almost negligible
- » A skilled and fully committed team of staff

Plume is the only secondary school in Maldon and was formed in 1970 by the simple expedient of joining the mixed grammar school with two single sex secondary schools to form a comprehensive. We still operate on two sites half a mile apart.

Our intake is largely White British, but located near the Essex coast we have very real challenges of rural and coastal deprivation. As a result, our cohorts are significantly below national average upon entry to Plume in terms of prior attainment. In addition, with a significant number of selective schools within easy reach impacting on admissions, we have to work very hard as a school community to generate and maintain parental enthusiasm and commitment.

The Academy, led by our Principal, Carl Wakefield, who has been in post since September 2015, has enjoyed a very successful year. However, there have been many challenges to overcome. Three that required immediate focus this year were: reversing a dip in applications to meet our Planned Admission Number of 295, reining in a potential £1million budget shortfall to achieve stability and closing the achievement gap that continued to exist between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.



At the start of this year, the Academy undertook a vigorous and honest collaborative initiative with our local community and that has continued throughout 2015/16. We are pleased to say the Academy is now oversubscribed for September 2016.

Working closely with our two vastly experienced and highly skilled Vice Principals, Ruth Crang and Nigel Brunt, as well as our highly qualified Directors of Finance and Human Resources, Richard Scott and Pat Hume, since September 2015, Carl has initiated a policy of 'stealth frugality'. This has ensured judicious cost savings across a number of budget areas to the extent that the 2016/17 budget will now show that we have kept costs within our revenue allocation. This has also been with minimal staff turnover and without compromising the high quality educational provision we continue to provide.

The achievement of our disadvantaged students is still very much a 'work in progress' however, but with robust and ambitious plans now firmly in place, we expect notable improvements from 2016/17 onwards.

The whole Academy community is now focused on our long term vision – to be the education provider of choice for all young people in the town and to be the employer of choice for both current as well as prospective staff.

### Discipline with Dignity

Discipline with Dignity, sitting alongside our desire to promote and instil core British Values, underpins our ethos based on integrity, trust, honesty and respect for each other and the local community of which we are proud to be at the heart.

The high profile of Carl and the Senior Team around the Academy – at the gates where students are greeted

every morning, are complimented on their uniform and whilst ensuring they are ready for learning – very much exemplifies our inclusive, respectful ethos and has already had a positive impact across both campuses.

Whilst students are in our care, we seek to develop and educate them not only academically but as decent and considerate individuals. We also take their physical and mental wellbeing extremely seriously and as Ofsted formally noted during their last visit: "Opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are extensive and have a strong community focus."

### Distributed Leadership

Self-evaluation is rigorous and highly effective at Senior Leadership whilst continuing to develop and embed extremely well at Middle Leadership. As a result, whole school planning has, in recent years, become more strategically focused.

Faculty Leaders work to a rigorous model of accountability with the primary objectives of ensuring quality first teaching whilst aiming to secure only the best possible outcomes for

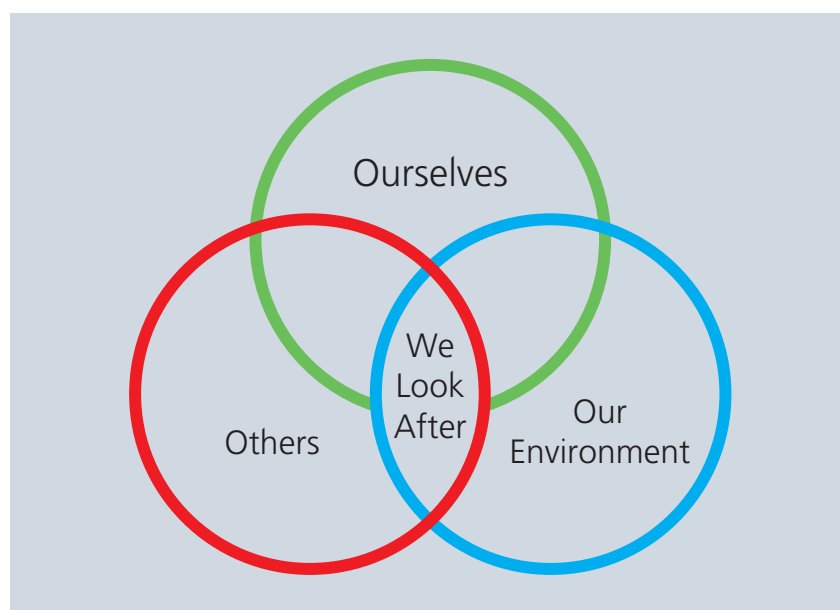
“This is a great school and the lessons are fun”

Student to Inspector during the last Ofsted visit

#### » PLUME ACHIEVEMENTS

- » Recognition of Quality Award (RoQA) in Careers Education and Information, Advice and Guidance – November 2015
- » Record numbers securing places at Russell Group Universities last summer
- » 'Young Builder of the Year – Youth Build Award' – Two National Finalists in the autumn of 2015
- » Greenpower electronically powered car – International Finalists 2015

#### » DISCIPLINE WITH DIGNITY





Head Boy, Reece Bawden and Head Girl, Amber Hegarty in one of their regular meetings with Maldon's Mayor, Councillor Richard Miller

"Mr Wakefield has brought great energy and enthusiasm to Plume Academy which can now be seen in students and staff alike."

– Amber Hegarty,  
Head Girl

"As a student leader, I have had the opportunity to work alongside some inspirational students, members of staff and professional business people this year which has helped me to develop key skills for later life."

– Reece Bawden,  
Head Boy

the Academy's students. They work in collaboration with the Senior Leadership Team, are highly effective in their assigned roles and are fully committed to ensuring the Academy continues to improve.

## Student Leadership

This is driven by our College Student Leadership Team and at all levels representation is based on democratic principles. An Executive Student Council (ESC), managed by our Head Girl and Head Boy, meets regularly and has already had a massive impact on efficacy and impact of the Academy's 'Student Voice'. The ESC also meets with the local Town Council to discuss community related matters and as the Town's Mayor, Councillor Richard Miller states:

From its first tentative meeting only six months ago, I have observed these energetic students evolve into a confident and effective body capable of high quality debate and decision making amply demonstrating the value of Student Councils."

## Community and Parental Engagement

Geographically as well as metaphorically at the heart of the local community, members of our staff very much encapsulate our approach:

- » "Employability and personal skills are well developed through active engagement with local businesses."
- » "This is about opportunities for academic and vocational students; several successful local businesses are owned by ex-students."
- » "I am able to work closely with students and their families to enhance their experiences of school and raise aspirations."
- » "The East London Cabbies excursion to Maldon is an annual highlight and has been taking place for over 50 years. Over 100 cabs bring disadvantaged children, parents and carers to be served lunch and entertained by our Year 10 students."

Now that our educational vision and ethos are firmly established, Plume Academy is very much looking forward to 2016/17 and towards another enjoyable and ultimately successful year for all its stakeholders.



The Annual 'Taxi Day' event has been coming to Maldon and to Plume since the 1960's

# Queen Elizabeth's School Wimborne



For over 500 years, Queen Elizabeth's School has provided education and opportunity to young people.



Martin McLeman, Headteacher

Queen Elizabeth's School became an Academy in 2014, retaining its distinctive ethos as a Church of England School serving a mixed student population with a semi-rural catchment of over 180 square miles. A catchment of this size brings many challenges and when the Governors appointed Martin McLeman in 2013 to Headteacher there were three clear priorities – improve outcomes, raise aspirations and raise the profile of QE in the community.

Partnership working and the development of a new House system has been the key to raising standards and aspirations. The past 3 years have seen an incredible transformation at QE with changes being driven by robust leadership, a governing body that is skilful, focussed and effectively led and students that excel in their leadership activities, hard work and commitment to learning.

Martin says that partnership working has been the key to addressing all of the above challenges. "We set about developing strong links with parents, local and regional businesses, universities in the region and beyond and with other organisations that could offer the support needed to ensure that our students could flourish." The Academy is well placed in this part of Dorset being close to leading universities such as Bournemouth and Southampton and major employers including Teachers Building Society, Meggitt, Cobham, Lorica and many others.

Our work with the University of Bournemouth has been immensely productive. Students from all year groups are able to attend a number of Bournemouth University Insight Days, which are offered in a whole range of subjects including Accounting, Finance and Economics, Business, Management and Marketing,

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Martin McLeman joined in September 2013
- » Wimborne, Dorset
- » Founded in 1563 by Royal Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I
- » New build in 2011
- » 13-18 Academy
- » 1560 students including over 400 in Sixth Form, 185 staff



“Our work with the University of Southampton has been an incredibly exciting process and with their support we launched our Science Learning Partnership in 2014.”

Computer Animation, Games and Visual Effects, Computing & Information, Games and Music Technology, Design and Engineering, History, Politics and Social Sciences/ Studies, Law, Science and many others.

University staff and students work alongside our students helping them to write informative and proper CVs and providing interview preparation as well as numerous work related learning and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics events. Many students attend the annual UCAS conference held at Bournemouth University and Bournemouth University attend our annual careers fair.

Our work with the University of Southampton has been an incredibly exciting process and with their support we launched our Science Learning Partnership in 2014. This enables us to offer professional development opportunities to science staff across the south west region enabling them to access a range of courses. We are also able to offer training and re-training to teachers who wish to return to the profession or enhance their skills in different subject areas. Staff at QE work very closely with staff at the University to ensure that we are addressing the correct skill of teachers to enable them to develop conceptual understanding of science with their students.

The introduction of the House system in 2014 has seen a major shift in the focus of the student life of the school with a change from traditional pastoral care to a focus on achievement, community and enjoyment. The House system was fully researched prior to opening by Jan Watson, Deputy Head and she believes that the House identity brings a fresh approach to and a fresh focus on academic progress, pride in both the House and the school and of course a great concentration on competition and co-operation. The names chosen by the students for the houses reflect our longstanding Royal connections; Tudor, Lancaster, Wessex, Stuart and York.

One of the excellent partnerships we have developed is with Teachers Building Society, SMART Development Solutions of Bournemouth and AFC Bournemouth who have been instrumental in improving our outcomes and aspirations for disadvantaged children through workshops designed to improve their engagement and widen their horizons in the world of work and learning.

As a Voluntary Aided school of the Church of England our partnership with the Diocese of Salisbury is extremely important. The Diocese of Salisbury has a Board of Education that is very forward thinking, responsive with targeted support and enriching in

We continue to develop the potential of every member of the School community.



Students are encouraged, nurtured and stimulated in their studies



its involvement with young people. Working closely with the diocese has enabled the school to remain faithful to its foundation and ensure that the Christian values of Faith, Hope and Charity are at the forefront of all we do.

Queen Elizabeth's has had a long tradition of sporting excellence and continues to play a leading role in the development of sporting opportunities in the region. The school works very closely with the Youth Sport Trust in promoting the importance of sport and physical activity as a way of enjoying a healthy lifestyle and contributing to academic progress. The Head chairs the local Headteachers Alliance for PE and Sport and is very proud to be a Headteacher Ambassador for the Youth Sport Trust.

As well as sporting success our school boasts an excellent Performing and Creative Arts tradition and the recent launch of our HyPE Academy has seen an increase in the numbers of students pursuing careers in the industry and also growth in the number of sponsors in the area prepared to support the Academy.

The school has received many awards in the past two years including the NACE Challenge Award for our work with high performing students and a Partners in Excellence Award for improved GCSE results.

All of the above has brought about particular financial challenges to



Queen Elizabeth's aspire to a model of community where the ethos is one of mutual service – the welfare of the other is sought in preference to one's own.

the leadership team of the school and Academy Board. The success of the school has meant that student numbers and demand for places has increased. Recruiting staff has not been assisted by the Education Funding Agency's particular approach to our funding agreement and the traditionally low funding in Dorset schools. We are looking forward with great anticipation to the Fairer Funding Consultation and a more strategic relationship with the EFA.

The future of the Academy is being considered in a series of meetings of the Academy Board which will determine the strategic direction of the school over the next five years. We will be considering options including the development of a Multi-Academy Trust and a University Technical College.

The future certainly looks bright in this part of Dorset!

The school encourages students to look out for ways of helping and supporting one another.





# The King Edmund School



We offer a wide range of Product Design courses



With unique performances every year our Creative Arts department goes above and beyond

When I was appointed Headteacher of KES in September 2010 the school had been judged to be 'Good' nine months previously by Ofsted. However, it was clear on closer inspection that there was much work to be done. Raising our expectations of KES students, improving the quality of teaching and developing governance were urgent priorities.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Jonathan Osborn
- » Location: Rochford, south-east Essex
- » Academy status since July 2011
- » 11-18 comprehensive school
- » 1580 pupils
- » 110 teachers & 120 support staff
- » 29% pupil premium students
- » 92% White British
- » 83% of post-16 students in 2015 progressed to higher education

Some subject areas of the school were significantly underperforming, some teachers were significantly underperforming, and while the pastoral care for students was outstanding (and had been judged as such by Ofsted), pastoral and academic did not work effectively together to ensure students achieved highly. We also needed to build links into the local area in order to change the way that "school" is viewed. Many of our parents have had negative experiences of school themselves, so increasing their involvement was vital to help them work with us in supporting their children.

Our journey over the past six years has been to continually work on these areas, particularly the recruitment, retention and development of teachers. A school stands or falls by the quality of its teachers; our goal is to ensure KES students have the very best teachers possible.

KES serves a diverse area that is over 90% White British, mixing a significant rural community with students from more urban backgrounds. Often, students from these two extremes of background lack the wider support from outside the school to not only achieve well, but also to reach their potential. Our primary challenge is to inspire students from these diverse backgrounds to raise their aspirations and to believe that they can achieve far more – that they can achieve excellence.



We often talk with students about the need to work hard and learn from failure as part of the route to success. This dialogue has been, and will continue to be, a vital part of our work to help our students achieve. Our motto, 'In Pursuit of Excellence' encapsulates the passion that we want our students to share with us. We work hard to ensure students understand that it isn't all about achieving A's and A\*'s. It is all about working hard to improve on the best you have achieved so far in all areas of school life. We now see increasingly a different attitude from students – they look to improve on their best and this spurs them on to do even better.

While we started with, and continue to work on, 'hearts and minds', attention to detail and persistent hard work are key – there are few short cuts to sustained school improvement. We are a community, so it is not just students who are pursuing excellence: it is true for staff as well. While some staff have been replaced and others have chosen not to stay with us on our journey, my main focus has been staff development. We have done this in several ways. Firstly, by growing programmes that train and coach different groups of staff in appropriate ways so that they become

better teachers – we all have to keep moving forward in developing our teaching expertise. This is a constant and persistent focus for us as a school. For example, from September we will alter our meeting structure so that all meetings are focussed on driving the improvement of teaching.

Our second focus is to grow our leadership capacity at all levels across the school, partly through recruiting strength and partly by developing it. We want to see a healthy flow of new staff into the school who train and develop with us and who then move on to other schools, taking with them what they have learned while with us.

The outcome of this development work is that KES teachers are increasingly working at an outstanding level with the resultant improvement in the quality of student learning and progress made.

Another key challenge over the past six years has been to improve outcomes while making these changes to the way we teach and while we increase our expectations of students. Historically, almost all KES yeargroups have been significantly below average in terms of KS2 achievement. Previously, around 40% to 44% of students achieved five GCSEs (including English and Maths).

“Dialogue has been, and will continue to be, a vital part of our work”



Our students have showcased their musical talents at events within the school and the wider community



We take pride that our Sciences departments inspire our students to explore the world around them

Now, around 54% of students achieve this benchmark. This improvement has been hard-won and we are rightly proud of it, but we know that there is far more to come from KES students in terms of achievement. More important to us is the fact that we see students from all different starting points making good progress.

Improvements have been more rapid in our Sixth Form. Year-on-year we have seen improvements in all major measures for the past five years. We now see achievement above national averages consistently, from a lower than average starting point. Our curriculum, which allows the mixing of A Levels and BTEC qualifications, has meant that students can play to their strengths. As a result, we have seen the proportion of students going on to higher education increase from around 50% five years ago to 85% now.

Although the area served by the school is diverse, we create a strong community ethos in the school. Many local groups and sports clubs use the school's facilities – it is open almost every day late into the evening with a huge range of activities. This has been part of our drive to involve the community, and parents, as closely as possible with the school. Parents now feel far more engaged in the life of the school. I regularly hold parent surgeries in the local community and our mechanisms for

home-school communication now work very effectively. Parents have access to governors at every consultation meeting and the vast majority of parents tell us that they are very happy with almost all aspects of our work. We are now oversubscribed with many parents from outside our area seeking a place for their child at KES.

Celebration and reward are important in helping students enjoy and achieve. We reinvigorated the school's house system three years ago to provide a better vehicle for recognising, celebrating and rewarding students. Some of these rewards are material, but we find that the most valued reward is the phone call or postcard home. Our aim is to incorporate every aspect of school life into the house system. Each year we take over the Cliffs Pavilion in Southend and put on a stunning show for parents and guests – an exhibition of some of the outstanding Art and Technology work from the year, as well as a mix of dance, music and performances on the main stage. This is followed by an awards ceremony where not only high achievers are rewarded, but also a wide range of other students from all yeargroups – awards for progress and special achievements are at least as important!

There is still so much to do at KES: improving student capability to write at length, improving quality of homework so that students are better-equipped to work independently, developing student ability to use technical language effectively, enhancing the stretch-and-challenge for the most-able, continuing to support and challenge staff to improve the quality of their teaching... all of this leading to better achievement and as rounded an education for KES students as possible.

The school we are now looks very different to the one we were six years ago. We have no intention of sitting still – and our aim is that it will look at least as different again in another six years!

“Celebration and reward are important in helping students enjoy and achieve”

# The Purbeck School



Students enjoy the particular focus on science and mathematics



The school has benefitted from a recent multi million pound refurbishment

## A year to remember

The 2014/15 academic year was one to remember for The Purbeck School. First, in December 2014 Ofsted upgraded us from a 'satisfactory' to 'good' under their new toughened inspection regime; in May 2015 we joined an elite group of 127 schools nationally that hold the NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) Challenge Award, recognising excellence in the teaching of more able children; and for the first time in the school's history our new intake was over-subscribed. However, it was that summer's results that signified that our school had become one of the most improved schools nationally. The results promoted our school from the bottom of local league tables to the top performing school in Dorset for progress at both GCSE and A Level, and secured the school a place in the top 10% of all schools nationally for progress at GCSE.

## Back to basics

Three years ago education in the Purbeck area was undergoing a major reorganisation, dismantling a 3 tier system with first schools (finishing in Year 4), middle schools (from Year 5 to Year 8) and an upper school (starting in Year 9, when students are 14 years old) to replace it with a classic two tier system of primary schools and a secondary school. We were due to welcome our first 11, 12, 13 year old students in September 2013 and as newly appointed headteacher I knew I had to act quickly in order to deliver the quality of education that these students deserved. The school had a long way to go in a very short time, especially if it was going to win the confidence of local parents. The lack of confidence in the school at the time had even led a group of parents to set up a free school in our catchment area, dividing the local community, and impacting on our pupil numbers and budget.

### REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher 2012-2016: Leanne Symonds
- » Headteacher from 2016: Adam Darley
- » Location: Wareham in Dorset
- » Maintained School
- » Age range: 11-19
- » 1,000 students; 122 staff
- » Ofsted rating Good (Dec 2014)
- » NACE Challenge Award, May 2015
- » KS2-4 Value Added 2015: 1028.5; Progress 8 score in 2015: +0.5 (top 10% in England).





Inspiration and aspiration

## The Purbeck Learning revolution

At the time everything, including a major building project, was demanding our attention away from the classroom. However my first task as the new headteacher was to ensure the quality of teaching and learning here. I needed to ensure that I had a taskforce of teachers who could deliver excellence in the classroom and that meant pruning the staff workforce for strength and encouraging new staff to join us to add to our capacity for improvement. As a consequence 46% of the current teaching staff have been appointed by me. This freshly formed team of new and existing teachers developed a shared understanding of what the culture in our school should be in every classroom for every child. We reflected upon the latest pedagogical research carried out by leading educational thinkers such as Hattie, Claxton, Dweck, and Wiliam. We also looked inside the school: what did the children of the Purbeck area really need? The answer to this question lay in Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power and, from his research, we created a learning strategy to meet our needs in the form of the Purbeck Learning Tree.

The culture in all classrooms was dictated by the learning habits that we wanted to develop in each student. These learning habits formed the branches of our new 'learning tree' – resilience; relationships; reflectiveness; reasoning; resourcefulness; literacy and numeracy. We used the skills within the seven branches of the learning tree as a lesson planning tool and as core criteria in our self-assessment processes, helping to hone the skills of every learner within an environment of high expectations and 'no excuses'. This has led to progress outcomes that have put the school at the top of Dorset league tables at Key Stage 4 and 5.

## The Growth Mindset approach

Resilience is a critical branch of our Learning Tree and we took our understanding of the development of resilience further with Carol Dweck's theory of 'Growth Mindset'. This seemed to sit perfectly with our students in our rural context. Dweck's key idea that you can learn to learn and that intelligence is not fixed, is a maxim that can be taken into any industry or workplace. We have embraced this ethos of hard work and endeavour and it has helped us to deliver a Progress 8 score of 0.5, securing each student on average a half grade higher than what could be expected. This new accountability measure (compulsory for all secondary schools from 2016) measures student performance in GCSE English and maths and six other subjects. We think that this is an excellent measure as, unlike the A\*-C measure, it includes all students in all their subjects – everyone's performance counts.

With Dweck's approach in mind we have made many significant changes. We have revolutionised our feedback to students so that it becomes 'powerful' and really impacts on student learning. Teachers now praise and demonstrate the next steps for students to guide them carefully as they make progress. Time is then set aside in lessons for students to seize upon this feedback and redraft work to improve it further. This modelling for success is replicated in the organisation of the school in our new house system where our new house captains in the sixth form act as positive role models for our main school students. The house system delivers a range of competitions and leadership opportunities to help our learners to develop confidence and try new things- once again helping them to cultivate the learning habits of the learning tree.

“Our new house captains in the sixth form act as positive role models”



## Partnering the local and global community

Aspiration is a key part of the Growth Mindset approach and a challenge facing rural educational establishments. In a globally competitive marketplace, it is paramount that students have an understanding of the world beyond their own community and receive the opportunities to realise the same aspirations as their counterparts elsewhere in more urban settings. The school has embraced and extended external links with the local and international community to address this rural deficit. Business leaders interview students; Russell Group universities visit and work with us; students are informed about, and secure, ambitious apprenticeships; educational visits take our students to the far corners of the globe; a teacher exchange has taken place to Shanghai; we are active members of a local teaching alliance; and we have hosted national political

discussions and offered exciting science fairs of our own.

2016 will be busy!

Leaders in the school review our provision frequently and robustly. We have moved the previously 'top down model' to a peer review system, whereby faculties assess each other's performance and development. Additionally we have embarked on a professional development journey in how to coach each other (and our students) effectively. We are developing our understanding of mastery in the new curriculum; re-examining the dramatic impact of reading for pleasure; and reviewing our structures to embrace the benefits that literacy can provide across the curriculum. Above all, we will not lose sight of our core business and ensure that the delivery and approach to teaching and learning remains at the heart of everything we do.

The development of key learning habits helps our students to make great progress and go onto successful destinations

“Aspiration is a key part of the Growth Mindset approach...”

# Sittingbourne Community College



Pride in progress



Confident students

At Sittingbourne Community College, we don't have extensive mission statements pinned to classroom walls. Students are not encouraged to recite the school's priority list or to quote from a student charter. Instead, we work tirelessly to ensure that our ethos is apparent in everything we do, from the relationship between the classroom teachers and their students to the interaction between the Headteacher and our parents. As a result, we have created a community of learners underpinned by emotionally intelligent collaboration and leadership networks. Our ethos is not words on a page; it is, as visitors so often remark, so deeply embedded that it is almost tangible.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Fiona Trigwell since December 2013
- » Attainment on entry in Year 7 is significantly below national average
- » 41% of students are entitled to free school meals
- » The school has two resourced provisions, one of which serves hearing impaired students; the second supports students with speech and language difficulties
- » We are a non-selective school operating within a selective system (Kent)
- » Approx. 1200 students on roll with a total staff of 268

## Building a community

The pressures facing schools today are well documented. Robust new accountability measures and concerns over work-life balance mean that the challenge of retaining staff is a real one. Add to this the worrying statistics regarding increased incidents of mental illness in children, and the need to create a culture in which 'failure' is seen as a learning opportunity becomes paramount.

A key part of our success has been to initiate a cultural shift in the way that we think and talk about our learning. Changes to the marking policy have put a greater emphasis upon the dialogue between the student and the teacher; success is celebrated via identification of what went well and progress targets couched in terms of 'it would be even better if you had done x'. Follow-on learning activities



ensure that students engage with this feedback. They are not afraid of 'getting it wrong' because they understand that reviewing what didn't work is essential if they are to make progress next time. Similarly, interactions between senior leaders and staff are developmental rather than judgmental in nature, reflecting the importance placed upon emotional intelligence in the recruitment of middle and senior leaders. A rota system ensures that senior leaders observe and 'drop in' during every period of the school day. Feedback is given verbally where necessary, but lessons are not given a numerical grading. All teachers are entitled to coaching, which provides bespoke support in relation to an area of practice that has been identified for improvement. Unusually, this coaching is offered to all teachers on an equal basis, from those who are outstanding to those who require improvement.

### Solving our own problems

Teachers are encouraged to take part in action research projects via membership of the school's research fellows group, which allows staff to engage in critical enquiry into key pedagogical questions. Current research projects include an investigation into the effectiveness of revision techniques and an analysis of the impact of collaborative learning on student progress. This 'live' research on our own students is driving improvement because it provides effective, evidence-based solutions to problems identified by our own staff. Swale Academies Trust also offers a subsidised MA programme, which is hugely popular with staff and has proved to be a powerful recruitment tool.

### Care and support

Essential to our ethos is an understanding that a school is a community of individuals, and that the needs of these

individuals will, by definition, vary. Meeting the needs of individuals goes beyond ensuring that lessons are tailored to different abilities, and involves ensuring that our pastoral and academic support systems are able to provide bespoke support for every child. All students are assigned a Learning Leader – a dedicated member of the teaching staff who is responsible for overseeing their academic progress and championing the students' interests. The role of the Learning Leader becomes particularly important in the run up to the examination season, when he or she will work with classroom teachers to ensure that appropriate and timely intervention takes place for students who are at risk of underachieving. The school Archway team pulls together key members of staff, who form teams around individual students. This initiative provides vital additional support for students with complex difficulties and often negates the need for external agency involvement.

### Pride in progress

We recognise that success comes in many different forms and in many different guises. As a non-selective school operating within a selective system, it is imperative that our

“They are not afraid of 'getting it wrong' because they understand that reviewing what didn't work is essential if they are to make progress next time ”

Live research on our own students is driving forward improvements





Engrossed in learning

“Our students understand and take pride in their progress”

students understand and take pride in their progress. Achievement is celebrated publicly not in absolute terms, but rather in terms of the progress that it represents for the individual relative to his or her starting point. Boards in the canteen display the progress of every student in the school, allowing students to compare their progress with that of their peers and providing an equitable way of celebrating growth and development. Extra-curricular activities provide further opportunities for students to succeed, with performing arts and archery students achieving national acclaim.

### English – the foundation stone for achievement

Successful communication with and between all stakeholders is crucial to our success. Removing barriers and encouraging positive and trusting interactions with students has always been a key priority. An initial investment in the Accelerated Reader programme and the employment of three highly-skilled librarians sent a clear message to all that the school was totally committed to the development of literacy skills in every student. This has paid dividends in terms of the exceptional increase in the number of students who meet and exceed national benchmarks in English and mathematics. Our rationale was that if students' literacy skills are not

sufficiently developed to allow them to access or understand the questions on a GCSE mathematics paper or science paper, their progress will always be hindered. For us, lack of literacy skills was a key barrier to progress across all areas of the curriculum.

### Confident communicators

The Headteacher and a team of deputies regularly hold lunchtime meetings with students to identify key issues and monitor students' progress. Over lunch, which is provided by the Head, students are invited to discuss their learning and make suggestions for school improvement. This is a powerful tool in ensuring that our students are able to speak with confidence about their experience as learners. It also provides us with a regular and invaluable way of measuring the 'pulse' of the student body.

### The journey ahead

The school has always enjoyed success in the performing arts and sport. The challenge for us has been to ensure that these successes are matched by academic progress. Our journey so far has been underpinned by an absolute conviction in the importance of effective relationships. Over the forthcoming year, we need to build upon this by ensuring that our students leave us as emotionally resilient and academically successful, confident, young people. Developing skills of literacy and communication will remain a key priority, as will ensuring that the impact of the staff research is felt in every classroom. We are proud of the fact that the school's reputation in the local community has improved to such an extent that due to popular demand, we have been asked to increase our intake by sixty students per year by 2017.

# Waingels



Team taught History lesson in Red Zone Open Area

The ambitious school building programme under the auspices of Building Schools for the Future, greatly improved the nation's educational infrastructure. In 2011, as part of this investment, Waingels College in Wokingham, a large 11-18 school, received a £32m new build. The students who commenced school that year have now taken their GCSEs. Five years on perhaps it's the time to ask 'Was it worth it?'

I arrived as the new headteacher of the school in September 2011 when it had just been completed, but instead of euphoric celebration, there was great consternation. Parents, pupils and staff were all debating the 'school with no walls'. Large spaces in the new school were that scourge of laissez – faire 70s education – Open Plan! I'd had no part in any of the decisions regarding its design or operation. The Governing Body gave me a one line Job Description. 'Make it work'.

Waingels faced a double challenge; arresting pupils underperformance and learning to operate in a very unfamiliar environment.

The first task was to persuade the staff that the radical change needed in the way they taught was both do-able and desirable. My head of History was not alone in feeling that Armageddon had arrived. In her view she led a good department which had been successful for many years; the school certainly didn't need all of this unnecessary change.

The performance tables showed the percentage of pupils gaining 5A\* - C at GCSE was above the national average, but this masked the fact that they were underachieving significantly. By 2011 the progress of children was well below that expected and, for less able pupils, was particularly poor.

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Ann Keane Maher (retired August 2016)
- » Location: Wokingham
- » No Pupils: 1450
- » No Staff – total FTE: 132.3
- » The School received a £32m Pathfinder building grant. It was prefabricated entirely of wood and erected on site. It has won a number of awards



“It was no longer sufficient to do what has always been done... with the demolition of the old building the rug had been pulled”

The new build demanded that the school alter its entire way of learning. It was no longer sufficient to carry on doing what it had always done and all they needed was to just ‘try harder’. With the demolition of the old building the rug had been pulled. This required a complete rethink of the philosophy upon which the culture of the school was based. Learning was going to have to look very different. Both staff and pupils had to work closely to ensure success. It would be a lie to say that there was no turbulence, but leadership demanded that this was handled with confidence.

When Ofsted arrived in April 2013 they judged the school to be ‘Good’ with the 6th Form as ‘Outstanding’. Teaching was described as ‘good with many examples of outstanding practice’. In particular the lessons taught by the History Department in the Open Areas were all judged as ‘Outstanding’. The methods of collaborative teaching which had been embraced in KS3 were deemed to be ‘demanding and exciting’. The challenge of rising to the demands had resulted in a journey from ‘Resistance’ to ‘Outstanding’.

The new build had carried high risks, but the absolute focus on the primary purpose of ‘Achievement’ meant that pupils were placed at the heart of everything we did.

Whole school gathered on the Quad for special event framed by the four Zone buildings



## Pupil Voice

The designers consulted fully with pupils in order to get as close as they could to an understanding of how to help them learn best. This led to the development of some unexpected outcomes.

Pupils had suggested that the school should be arranged in four identical buildings; they wanted to walk outside between each lesson arriving from the fresh air re-energised for the next class. Interestingly this has worked well and they very rarely dawdle.

The building is made entirely of wood and each of the four blocks is painted a different colour. They are called Zones and became Schools within Schools. Pupils wished to have a strong sense of belonging. Each Zone has 400 pupils with two Houses divided into Form Groups.

Over the 5 years these groups have altered their composition. On each occasion the Pupil Council has put forward and led the changes. This year they have opted to move to Blazers from jumpers, but they were adamant that the colour of their Zone continue to be part of their uniform, with a colored strip across the pocket. The Zones have Forum Steps where pupils have university style lectures, watch TV and have Zone assemblies. They are a vibrant part of the extra curricular life of the school.

Given the open nature of the buildings pupils suggested that there should be wide walkways around the teaching spaces which allowed movement without congestion. This dramatically changed the way in which pupils treated the building. The Ofsted inspector was amazed by the self discipline the pupils exhibited. He said it was like being in a very focused office environment with adult working behaviour.

At first, it is true, that the open areas were noisy. Putting 60 thirteen year olds into an open space required some adjustment. In response everyone raised their voice to be heard. It didn't take long to work out that this was counter productive. So staff lowered their voices. And within a very short period of time so did the pupils.

If the Governors and the senior staff had not held their nerve there would have been walls built everywhere within the first year, but actually not a great deal has changed from the original design.

Pupils are inordinately proud of the school. They embraced the vision of learning that the new school heralded. Those that leave this year will demonstrate greater progress than all of their predecessors. The level of aspiration for the pupils, held by staff, has increased steadily across all abilities. In 2015 the progress measure of Value Added performance rose from 994.7 (2011) to 1020 putting the school's performance in the top quintile nationally.

The new building challenged the whole community of Waingels to:

- » Seize opportunities with optimism;
- » Develop collaborative teaching; it is much more than a sum of its parts;
- » Listen to the learners; staff and pupils;
- » Hold its nerve when taking a risk;
- » Accept accountability. It comes with the territory;
- » Embrace change;

## The Future

Each year Waingels trains at least 10 young teachers. At the end of their training most stay on with us. Instead of feeling isolated behind a closed door they cite the open plan classrooms as fundamental in allowing them the privilege of practicing their teaching skills alongside experienced professionals.



HRH Prince Andrew debates with 6th Form students on the Forum steps

Recently a local Headteacher appointed a newly qualified teacher who had trained with us. She remarked that NQTs from Waingels were always of such high quality. It has been a source of immense personal professional satisfaction to see young teachers take up the baton, knowing that for most of them it will be the most rewarding job in the world. They will be the leaders of our educational future who will demonstrate resilience in the face of change.

We owe it to the communities that we serve and the taxes that they pay to reflect upon the impact of such investment in our Schools. We should both ask and be clear about the answer to 'Was it worth it?' Sometimes the answer is sadly 'No'. In our case it is a resounding 'Yes'.

Pupil Global Group petition support from Prime Minister Mrs May – Waingels' local MP to provide education for all children in the world





# Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre



Rob Ford, Headteacher



Year 8 students taking part in a STEM project day

## REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Rob Ford
- » Location: Forest of Dean, Chepstow, Gloucestershire
- » Intake from Gloucestershire and Wales
- » Founded: 1973
- » 11-18 academy
- » 1000 students (250 in the Sixth Form); 130 staff
- » OfSTED (2014): Good
- » 2015-16: Member of RSC South West "Race to Outstanding" group of schools
- » Member of Challenge Partners
- » Famous alumni: Author JK Rowling (former student, Head Girl), Actor Owain Yeoman, BBC Journalist Ross Hawkins

Wyedean School, overlooking the Welsh border near Chepstow, is a popular, oversubscribed school in the area, drawing students both from Gloucestershire and Wales. The school opened on its present site in 1976 and grew to around 1250 students with a very successful Sixth Form of around 300. In 2011, the school became a stand-alone academy convertor but still continued to work closely with its networks in the Forest of Dean, Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire.

Wyedean School has always been very heavily engaged with the local community ensuring a very strong relationship supporting parents & carers as well as community groups. The catchment area for the school is truly comprehensive with areas of high affluence, social housing and the local army base, the home of 1st Rifles battalion. The school prides itself on the calm and purposeful learning atmosphere around the campus as a key feature of the "Wyedean Way".

Wyedean School only ever received "Good to Outstanding" in previous OfSTED inspections. In October 2013 Wyedean School was graded at "Special Measures" in its scheduled autumn inspection from OfSTED. The school's response and leadership to this huge shock merited a remarkable response. In less than one year the school was declared to be "Good" under the November 2014 OfSTED inspection through the herculean efforts of staff to ensure core priorities were not only efficiently conceived and effectively carried through but they had a deep impact on the education of all students at Wyedean School. Staff verdict on the Oct 2013 OfSTED was not only that this was a "wake up call" but also the necessary "call to arms" needed by the school. GCSE results in the summer



of 2014 saw A\*-C (with English and Maths) rise to 70%. Remarkably the number of A Level A\*-B grades in summer 2015 went to a school high of 62% outperforming many successful grammar schools in the area. Nearly 90% of Year 13 students in the cohort applying to university and obtaining either their 1st or 2nd Higher Education choice. The school used its membership of PiXL, its school improvement partnerships and a sharper focussed strategy on learning as part of the foundations of this turnaround.

In the summer of 2015 the Leadership Team, under the new Headteacher, Rob Ford, came in with the brief from governors with the target of Wydean School to be a high performing school in all educational outcomes and a beacon of excellence in the local area working towards achieving "Outstanding" in its next OfSTED. The preliminary work the new Leadership Team undertook in the summer transition laid the necessary foundation work including a robust quality assurance system and a focus on the school's values and vision which also meant a new motto for the school reflecting the new approach; "aspire together, achieve together". It was clear to the new Leadership Team that from the hard efforts of all staff throughout 2013-15 there had to be a specific focus on "positive school culture" to ensure all staff, no matter what the role or title, wanted the very best for the students in our care and felt that this was their primary goal.

There was a complete change in how leadership was seen in the school with a commitment to distributive leadership and leadership with morale purpose at all levels. Simon Sinek's work, "Start with the Why?" underpinned this new approach to get all staff being a part of distributed decision making as the school moved to a much more transparent culture.



Rt Hon Mark Harper  
MP visit October 2015  
meeting with Senior  
Leadership Team

The Leadership Team also linked wellbeing strongly to its approach on positive school culture including simple ideas such as asking staff not to exchange work related emails late at night and on the weekends. In the autumn of 2015 Wydean School linked up with a group of principals in Virginia, USA to discuss about the relative impact of positive school culture and the philosophy of sustained improvements and outcomes in American schools. A programme that is now well established and growing



Year 10 Gifted and  
Talented students Critical  
Thinking Programme



French Partner School visit  
February 2016 swapping  
St Tropez for the Forest of  
Dean



BTEC Food Technology Group  
with Kate Lewis Head of DT

“The ‘Wydean Way’ means we are a dedicated learning community striving for World Class education, delivering 21st Century learning every day to our students”

between the UK and US networks of the schools involved. In the autumn of 2015 recognition of Wydean School’s significant improvement came as the school was invited by Sir David Carter, the then South West Regional Schools Commissioner, to join his “Race to Outstanding” group of South West schools. These types of partnership and networks are important to the future of how Wydean continues to develop as a high performing school.

The most significant change at Wydean has undoubtedly been its embrace and championing of 21st Century innovative learning as part of raising and challenging aspirations of every student. We created three learning strands to go across the curriculum and key stages as well as to link up transition work with our primary schools. These are: Digital Learning; Global Learning and Creative Learning. Three coordinators were appointed with a developmental brief and the results have been extraordinary. Digital Learning has seen a surge in the use of social media to promote the school and showcase learning. A range of educational apps have significantly improved

communication, homework and learning. Global Learning has seen compelling opportunities in school created that has allowed students and staff to work with their peers in countries over Skype Classroom or our Moodle ranging from Canada, USA, Russia, Europe, South Africa, India and Indonesia. Our work with Lycee Georgi Ashkai in Moldova a particular success story and recognised as such by the British Council. We are a Confucius Classroom hub and we have Mandarin lessons here, for parents and in our primary schools. Latin and Critical Thinking are also part of this curriculum enrichment. Our commitment to Creativity has transformed learning through initiatives such as our learning garden, greater commitment to the arts and our summer Creativity Festival.

Wydean School continues to develop. Students, community and staff share the goal of Wydean to be a high performing school and ensure the bar is set very high for our aspirations and the transformational education we want here in our corner of the English-Welsh borders.



## 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.



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

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

## Acknowledgements

Images in this publication have been reproduced courtesy of the following individuals/organisations:

George Osborne on Budget Day | Flickr | HM Treasury  
Rural UK | Flickr | Simon Norris  
Lucy Powell | [lucypowell.org.uk](http://lucypowell.org.uk) | Lucy Powell  
Justin Greening | Wikipedia | DFID - UK Department for International Development  
children eating lunch | Flickr | UK Parliament  
Nicky Morgan | Flickr | Policy Exchange  
Deprived areas | Flickr | Alan Stanton  
The Department for Education and Skills | Flickr | Steph Gray  
Children and mother swimming | Flickr | Thalassa Blu  
Wheatley Park | Flickr | Christian Guthier  
Durham University | Flickr | Jean-Etienne Minh-Duy Poirrier  
Children Taking Exam | Flickr | Illja Heric  
New Building | Flickr | Travis Price  
A-Level Students | Flickr | Penn State College of Education  
Exam Hall | Flickr | Alev Adil  
Young Teacher | Flickr | Supafly  
Shanghai High School | WikiMedia | Nanyangmodelhighschool

### Parliament

Jeremy Corbyn PMQ | Flickr | David Holt  
Jeremy Corbyn cnd | Flickr | Garry Knight  
House of Lords | Flickr | Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo  
Baroness Stowell | Wikimedia | H M Government  
Lord Lawson | Flickr | Financial Times  
Hilary Benn | Flickr | Chatham House  
Supermarket | Flickr | Yuichi Shiraishi  
Amazon delivery | Flickr | ActualLitté  
Protest | Flickr | Tom Morris  
Scarves | Flickr | Bryan Ledgard  
Theresa May | Wikimedia | Foreign and commonwealth office  
David Cameron | Flickr | Tom Evans  
Iraq missiles | Flickr | Steve Dock  
Tony Blair | Wikimedia | Müller / MSC  
Theresa May | Wikimedia | Home Office  
HMS Vanguard | Flickr | Tam McDonald

Westminster Publications is grateful to Mark D'Arcy and Sean Coughlan for their contributions to this publication.

COPYRIGHT © WESTMINSTER PUBLICATIONS 2016

All rights reserved by Westminster Publications. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from Westminster Publications. Westminster Publications warrants that reasonable skill and care has been used in preparing this publication. Notwithstanding this warranty Westminster Publications shall not be under liability for any loss of profit, business, revenues or any special indirect or consequential damage of any nature whatsoever or loss of anticipated saving or for any increased costs sustained by the client or his or her servants or agents arising in any way whether directly or indirectly as a result of reliance on this publication or of any error or defect in this publication. Westminster Publications shall not in any circumstances be under any liability whatsoever to any other person for any loss or damage arising in any way as a result of reliance on this publication.

---



