

GATHERround

EDUCATION NEWS FROM THE GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION
THROUGHOUT HULL AND EAST RIDING

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Welcome!

We hope you're refreshed following a restful if rather damp summer. It's time to think about our schools and what we can offer to keep them in the vanguard of educational excellence. At this time of year, everyone involved in our world will be gearing up for the new academic year - and that includes politicians who will no doubt have some surprises for us to contend with.

Talking of which, there's quite a lot of political commentary in this issue due to the fact that statements are often made by politicians just before they go on their summer holidays. Usually it's to bury bad news but in a refreshing change this year some of it is potentially good news for us as governors.

Our annual autumn seminar and AGM this year is on Tuesday 17th October. There's more about this in Section 9. Put the date in your diary!

As usual, I'm making a plea for you to tell us news about your schools. We want GATHERround to report on more of the good things that are happening, an example of which is in Section 1.

To share your news and views on anything to do with governance, use any of the methods below. Our new forum will be up and running soon and there's more on this in Section 8.

E-mail us at: info@ga-ther.org

Post on the Forum at: www.ga-ther.org

Tweet us: [@ga_ther](https://twitter.com/ga_ther)

1. 100% effort

Let's start the new academic year with some good news in our schools from the end of last year. In July, five Hull primary schools celebrated the achievement of pupils who had completed the first six years of their education without missing a single day. That's no mean feat and our congratulations go to all those boys and girls who have already laid the foundations for enjoying a successful life. Praise must also go to the staff and governors of Greenway Academy, Maybury Primary, Gillshill Primary, Paisley Primary and Thoresby Primary for providing an environment that encourages children to strive to attend every day.

Of particular note, though, must be Thoresby Primary pupil Vanessa Chicumbo who not only achieved full attendance, but has also secured a highly sought-after scholarship to study at Hymers College. Vanessa's mum Valentina is obviously very proud of her daughter's work ethic and praised her teachers for creating a learning environment that helped her thrive. She said, "It was her teachers who first suggested that Vanessa should apply for Hymers and I'm extremely proud of her." Roisin Hawksley, Vanessa's teacher said, "Vanessa is so conscientious. Not a lot of people get 100 per cent attendance. She has worked so hard to get the scholarship. Everyone at Thoresby Primary is extremely proud of her."

Everyone at Thoresby Primary must be very proud of their school too because an Ofsted inspection in June 2016 resulted in an 'Outstanding' judgement. In their report, inspectors said:

"Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and the rapid progress they make is a direct result of the outstanding teaching they experience. Attendance has improved from a good level at the time of the previous inspection to a level above that achieved in most schools, and has continued to improve even further this year. The number of pupils who are frequently absent is very small and their families receive a high level of support to improve their commitment to getting their children to school."

We've included this item because it illustrates the three main ingredients for primary schools to have in place to help children make a successful start in life:

1. Close interaction with parents to encourage involvement in their child's education
2. Outstanding teaching
3. A positive and open school ethos

It has to be said that if you also have parents who are instinctively supportive both of their children and the school, that is an extra ingredient for success.

Well done to all these Hull schools and a special thanks to Thoresby Primary School and Vanessa's mum Valentina for their permission to tell their story here. Head and deputy team Melissa Milner and Kath Corner, the staff and governors have clearly worked hard to create the 'warm and supportive environment' that Melissa describes in her welcome on their website.

Has your school got the ingredients in place to ensure your pupils want to attend? Have you had any 100% attenders? Tell us your story.

2. Ofsted - Is it at last becoming a Force for Good?

In the last *GATHERround*, governor Joe Buchan wrote about how, in his experience, Ofsted inspections can be a force for good in moving schools forward. At about the same time, the new Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, addressed the Festival of Education at Wellington College in Berkshire and, from what she said, she could have been briefed by Joe before making her keynote speech. She stressed the importance of educating the whole child and how education seems to have become driven by data output. She also feels that Ofsted should be playing a greater part in discussions about national education policy:

“I also want us to have a much greater engagement with the wider research community. My hope is that, by sharing and analysing more of what we find, we can play a larger role in informing education policy. Not a role that is based on personal prejudices or hobby horses, but on proper evidence from the ground.”

Ms Spielman was also very supportive of the role of leadership teams in schools:

“... transforming a school involves more than just one individual. It needs the work of a whole team. Schools are transformed when these teams work well together, make use of everyone’s strengths and build robust processes. Of course, the head matters. But they should be concentrating on the overall direction of a school. They need strong deputies and assistants looking after curriculum and behaviour as well as good department heads, effective business and finance managers, making sure the school balances the books, and, of course, governors providing strong support and challenge.”

We got a positive mention! The only thing she didn’t acknowledge, unsurprisingly, is the part played by some of her predecessors’ blustering and bullying ways in creating some of the problems in the first place. We can only hope she follows through on these promises and provides some light to dispel the current doom and gloom.

Read Amanda’s full speech [here](#)

3. More Good News

Talking of cutting through doom and gloom, we now seem to have a local hero speaking out on our behalf. Emma Hardy, pictured right, is the new MP for Hull West and Hessle. She is a former teacher at Willerby Carr Lane Primary School and made her maiden speech in the Commons on 18th July. She clearly wants to use her experience in education in her role as MP because a large part of her speech illustrated her views on current educational policy. She criticised government for the real terms cuts to education funding and said that schools were becoming “learning factories” with creative subjects such as music, art and drama being pushed out of the curriculum. She also argued that the pressure of constant assessments had contributed to the rise in poor mental health amongst children. She paid tribute to her father as an example of how school qualifications shouldn’t be the sole predictor of success in life in that her dad had left school with “next to nothing in terms of qualifications” but that he got a “second chance” by taking night classes, allowing him to eventually become a headteacher.



She said those same opportunities are not available to children growing up in her constituency today, adding:

“31 per of children in Hull live in poverty and I don’t think it can be right that any child’s life story should be determined by birth. But with the cuts facing Hull College, Sure Start and all of education, how can we say we are offering our children the same opportunities and those same second chances?”

We say good for Emma. She clearly understands the issues in education that we all face and due in large part to this understanding, she has been appointed to the Commons Education Select Committee that scrutinises government and DfE education policies. Not only that, she has been promoted to be parliamentary private secretary to Shadow Brexit Secretary Keir Starmer.

We think Emma is destined for great success in her new career and look forward to hearing of her progress. If you live or work in her constituency, make contact with her and give her your support in her bid to address some of the crazy education policies of the last few years. You can read the whole of Emma’s speech [here](#)

4. Money for nothing.

And now back down to earth. After the furore during the election campaign about the crisis in schools’ funding, Justine Greening announced on 17th July that schools in England will receive an extra £1.3bn between them over the next two years. Funny how these important announcements are made just as schools are about to break up and parliament goes into the summer recess. Anyway, this is yet more good news isn’t it? Not necessarily because none of this cash is new; it has to be taken from existing DfE funding. This is where she’s intending to pinch it from:

- £416m from DfE efficiency savings in 2018-19 and a further £884m in 2019-20
- £315m cut from healthy schools and pupils projects
- £280m cut from the free schools budget

That all adds up to well over £1.3bn but disregarding the poor maths, what does it mean? Firstly, it’s difficult to see how the DfE can suddenly come up with such huge savings. Why hasn’t it done so before? The school funding crisis hasn’t just suddenly happened. Next, at a time when childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles are such an issue, why make cuts to this? Finally the free schools’ budget cut suggests that free schools have been over-generously funded in the past. Is this so? It would be interesting to hear from governor colleagues serving in local free schools.

Ms Greening told the House of Commons this "significant investment" would help to "raise standards, promote social mobility and give every child the best possible education". She also said the new funding formula would go ahead with a promise that from 2018-19, the minimum funding per secondary pupil would be set at £4,800 per year - a gain for many but a loss for some.

In a separate announcement made on 18th July, Ms Greening pulled a rabbit from the hat by telling us that the primary sports premium pot would be doubled for 2017-18 from £160m to £320m, paid for by revenue from the tax increase on sugary drinks, thus replacing some of the money she had earlier cut from healthy projects. There was no mention of whether this money would be equally distributed or weighted in favour of

schools in deprived areas. Is it any wonder we don't know whether we're coming or going with our budgets? Details of an updated version of the funding formula with budgets for individual schools are promised before Christmas. We shall see.

In the meantime, I pose what is perhaps a naïve and rather simplistic question regarding public spending on education. When the 152 local authorities in England maintained all the schools in their area, each employed a Chief Education Officer to oversee the running of those schools who was paid, for the sake of argument, an average of £100,000. That's a total spend of public money of £15,250,000. Now we have around 1300 MATs in England, each responsible for running various numbers of schools. Each has a Chief Executive who is paid, again for the sake of argument, an average of £100,000. That's a total spend of public money of £130,000,000. That's a huge difference in the amount we (the taxpayer) fork out for the running of our schools. My question is - have I got this wrong?

5. 'A' Level and GCSE results

The end of August has become the season of young people jumping in the air whilst waving their exam results letters triumphantly and this year was no exception. This time around though, things could have been very different. Thanks to government tinkering with examinations, initiated by the infamous Mr Gove in 2013, grades nationally appear to have dropped slightly - not that this year's results can be easily be compared with previous years. This is because 2017 is the first year that the outcomes of Gove's reforms have been examined. 'A' levels are now based solely on a final examination at the end of the two-year course and GCSEs too are much more focused on the final exam. Not only that but the grading system in GCSE Maths and English has been changed from A*-G to 9-1 with grade 9 being the highest and grade 1 the lowest. Grades 9, 8 and 7 have replaced the old A* and A, with 6, 5 and 4 equivalent to B or C. The only advantage of this on a personal level is that it makes the 'O' Level grade 6 I achieved in 1967 look respectable! All other subjects have remained graded A*-G. This has resulted in much confusion and has meant that this year's GCSE students have a mixed bag of letter and number grades. It will, of course, be interesting to note the grade boundaries for the maths and English, which as yet have not been revealed. How do they compare with the old system? There are mutterings that to get the new grade 4 in the upper tier maths paper (a 'low' C in old money) students only need to achieve 18%. It will be a while before prospective employers (and us!) make sense of it.



So, how have schools and colleges in our neck of the woods fared? 'A' level results were published on Thursday 17th August and it was feared that with the 'A' level restructuring, results could have dipped. Not so in the East Riding or Hull. Sixth forms and colleges in our area have much to celebrate. Most exceeded the national 97.6% A*-E pass rate and Bridlington School, East Riding College, Hessle Academy, South Hunsley School and St Mary's Academy students are to be congratulated on achieving 100%. This is an amazing achievement and we applaud them.

GCSE results were published on Thursday 24th August and, again, results could have been negatively affected by the changes. But they weren't. The published national average for

A*/9-C/4 is 48%. In Hull, school and college students achieved well over 50% and in the East Riding, a best-ever 68% achieved the so-called 'gold standard' - i.e. 5 A* to C (or equivalent).

These are indeed good results from our local schools and we congratulate their senior leaders, teachers and, of course, governors on their hard work in making this happen. We also recognise the huge efforts made by all those successful students and we wish them well as they embark on the next stage of their lives.

This isn't the end of statistical reporting of the 2017 results. Watch out for more on Progress 8, Achievement 8 and Ebacc later in the year.

6. Ask GATHER

I am a governor in a large local authority maintained primary school and we have been discussing our relationship with the neighbouring secondary school where the vast majority of our children go when they reach the end of Year 6. I don't think we work closely enough with the governors and SLT at the secondary school in terms of how we operate, exchange information, make visits and so on that would be helpful in ensuring pupils' transition from our school to theirs is as smooth as possible. The problem we have is that the secondary is an academy and we are not. I'd like us to co-opt a staff member of the academy on to our governing board but some of my colleagues say this would be like having a spy in the camp and won't hear of it. I say we would at least have a link to what goes on next door because at the moment we don't have a clue. What should we do?

The first thing to ask in response is why don't you have a clue? Your SLT will surely liaise with the academy on any issue that affects pupils whether it be crossing patrols, finishing times or ensuring no clashes of school events. You can also learn much for yourself about the way the academy operates by exploring its website and reading past Ofsted reports. The second thing to ask is why do you see the secondary school being an academy as 'a problem'? It's still a school and the one to which your pupils progress.

Regarding the exchange of information, we are all for sharing general matters such as pupil expectations and curriculum but detailed information about individual pupils must not be disclosed until such time it is known that they will be moving on to the academy. Once all the names of your Year 6s transferring are confirmed, it is good practice to have in place partnered transition activities such as Year 6 pupils visiting the academy towards the end of Y6 and Y6 teachers meeting with Y7 teachers to discuss groupings and to ensure that any potential issues are addressed. Such arrangements are of course operational and so are the responsibility of your Senior Leaders but they should be held to account by the governing board if no such arrangements are in place. After all, both schools should have an interest either in what's gone before or what's coming next for pupils.

As for an employee of the academy becoming a governor at your school, there are very few rules about who can and who can't put themselves forward to be a governor. Volunteers only need to be over 18 and have the mandatory DBS check which will reveal if there is anything in their background that makes them unsuitable for governance. Having said that, you can't just demand that someone becomes a co-optee on to your board but there is no reason why, say, a teacher at the academy shouldn't volunteer to be a governor at your school. There are already many secondary school teachers serving

on primary school governing boards, often joining as parent governors and their understanding of secondary education can be an asset to primary governance. However, the fear expressed that such a governor could be a 'mole' who would share confidential governor information should be disregarded as the same concern could be raised about any other governor whether they be parent, staff or co-opted. All governors must abide by your Code of Conduct which will include a section on confidentiality and all must agree to this. Have you checked your Code of Conduct lately?

7. The things they say

Andrew (Lord) Adonis was an education minister in Tony Blair's New Labour Government and in 1998 was largely responsible for the introduction of Higher Education tuition fees to contribute to universities' running costs. Tuition fees have been a contentious issue ever since with the cost to students rising from £1000 per year at the outset to over £9000 today. Rather surprisingly, in the Guardian of 7th July 2017 Lord Adonis wrote an article attacking the system of student finances, accusing the government of running a scheme that leaves students in England with crippling debts.

"In my view, fees have now become so politically diseased, they should be abolished entirely," he said. He then went on to blame universities saying "Vice-chancellors increased their own pay and perks as fast as they increased tuition fees and are now 'earning' salaries of £275,000 on average and in some cases over £400,000."

Surely when planning the fees system, Adonis should have factored in that there was the distinct possibility of some misuse of this new income in the long term and put in place legislation to prevent it? But no. This clearly wasn't a consideration and we have now ended up with a corrupt system that leaves students up to £60,000 in debt.

What's Andrew doing now? Apparently he heads up the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC). What does the NIC do? It provides the government with impartial, expert advice on major long-term infrastructure challenges!

8. Website and Forum

You may have noticed that our website has become dysfunctional following the departure of our web guru Lance Boanas. We decided to go for a complete re-design and are very close to finalising the new site. It will contain news items and resources of interest to governors and is complete with a forum. We hope that all our member governors will want to register to use it to comment on current news, let off steam or chat with other governors. More information about the site and how to register for the forum will follow soon.

9. GAtHER Autumn Seminar and AGM

The annual GAtHER autumn seminar is taking place this year at 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm on Tuesday 17th October at Wolfreton School, Well Lane, Willerby, HU10 6HB. Our AGM will open the programme which will give you a chance to hear about our plans for the association and we'll also be launching our brand new website and forum. The East Riding Director of Children, Families and Schools, Kevin Hall, will present an overview of the year and raise matters of interest to Governors.



Bringing us news of an organisation that has been supporting the work of schools in our region for nearly two decades will be Natasha Banke (left), Director of Hull and East Yorkshire Children's University (HEY CU). Its mission is to raise the aspirations of young people of all ages across the region and Natasha will talk about the involvement of the university in both the primary and secondary sectors, its expansion into the East Riding, the Children in Care Project and Passports to Learning.

In order to cover costs, we have to charge for this event which is £5.00 per delegate for GATHER member schools and £7.50 per delegate for non-members. Further details of our autumn seminar will follow very soon.

10. Council News

This month we welcome two new members on to the GATHER Executive Council. Terri Chambers is a retired headteacher, her last post being at Riston Primary School and John Suddaby is a retired Planning and Design Manager in the Construction industry. Terri is now a governor at King's Mill Special School in Driffield and so will bring her knowledge of SEND and John is a governor at Martongate Primary School in Bridlington; he's picking up the role of Membership Secretary. We welcome them both and hope they find their new roles both challenging and enjoyable.