

## MAKING CHILDREN HAPPY

This year's CASE Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held earlier than usual, on the afternoon of Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. It will follow up the work we did together last autumn regarding children's mental health and happiness in school. For a membership form and full details, see enclosed.

*This is a brief report on the Reclaiming Education Conference held on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 entitled "What are we doing to our children?" Full details can be found at [www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk](http://www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk).*

The conference's keynote speaker was Diane Reay, Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge, and author of *"Miseducation, Inequality, Education and the Working Classes"*.

Her research had shown that English children reported being bullied more than in both the other home nations and in another 35 OECD countries.

She argued that the case constantly made by the present Government, that poor results ruin a child's chance of a good job, produced anxiety and failure, especially for working class children. This often led to the ghettoising of schools characterised as *"bad schools for bad kids or stupid schools for stupid kids"*, accompanied by a narrower curriculum with excessive memorisation and rote learning.

The high workload of teachers in England – 65% of contact time, compared to an OECD average of 45% – was a factor in the growth of joyless and passionless teaching.

Her case was strongly supported by the evidence from three headteachers who showed, in different ways, how brutal cuts, particularly to funding for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has led to mainstream schools finding it extremely difficult to meet their needs. Although staff make heroic attempts to cope by working long hours, morale is often maintained only by an effort of will.

Richard Rieser of *World of Inclusion* said that the movement towards more inclusive education had gone into reverse in the last decade, driven by both the funding cuts and the accountability agenda.

The impact on SEND pupils had been profound, as around 70% of permanently excluded pupils have some form of SEND.

As a result, there had been a growth in highly expensive independent settings and an increase in exclusions and "off-rolling".

Mainstream schools were closing SEND resource centres and there were 6,000 fewer teaching assistants. In many areas, local specialist support services have disappeared.

The conference was closed by Kevin Courtney, joint General Secretary of the National Education Union. English schoolchildren were reported to be the unhappiest in the western world. Teachers in England have the highest work load by international comparisons, resulting in a huge turnover of teachers and a recruitment crisis.

He argued that the English system deliberately "ration success" through its methods of assessment with the almost inevitable consequence that those children do best that start with an educational advantage - often the children of the better-off.

The effect of base-line testing would therefore only be to disadvantage working class children most of all because it labels them as failures from the start.

*CASE believes in a fully comprehensive, locally accountable and democratic education system.*

# Joan Sallis R.I.P.

Joan Sallis, who died on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 aged 91, was one of the original members of CASE, campaigning for the end of 11+ selection and for universal comprehensive education.

A governor of her local comprehensive school for many years, Joan developed a particular expertise in school governance, a subject which featured prominently among her many educational writings and about which she once said, "All important decisions about the school are made by or in consultation with the governors."

This support for governors put her at odds with some technocratic head teachers, whose aim was always to keep their governors at arm's length - typified by such sayings as "My governors don't bother me much" - but Joan believed in the governance of schools by ordinary people, an approach endorsed by Professor Tim Brighouse. She believed that good governance was about understanding relationships between people so they could work together, rather than developing systems for running schools like businesses.

In her role as the national president of CASE and as a consultant working with and on behalf of school governors, she believed passionately that a more equal partnership between schools and their users offers the only hope for better funded and respected state education. Naturally, she was opposed to the "academies" programme.

Joan's expertise in school governance was recognised when she was appointed as one of the 23 members of the Taylor Committee, set up in 1977 to review the arrangements for the management and government of maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales. Although school governance has changed a great deal since the report, some of the 89 recommendations made still hold.

Joan was also, for a long time, the expert for the *Times Educational Supplement's* 'Ask the Expert' column, where she frequently expressed her strong belief that education should be the concern of the whole society, saying, most memorably, "We live in a world of other people's children".

An inspirational speaker, Joan was in constant demand from groups of parents and governors across the country, particularly those seeking support to resist government moves to undermine the status of LEAs. One CASE NEC member still recalls how a visit by Joan stiffened the resolve of parents of an East Midlands school to resist the desire of governors and senior staff to opt out of the local authority by embracing Grant Maintained status.

In 1996 Joan was awarded an OBE for services to education and also was made an honorary Doctor of Law by the University of Oxford.

## **Joan's daughter, Lucy, has added some personal details:**

Mum was born in Ebbw Vale in 1928, the cherished daughter of George, a coalminer, and Eva, and much loved older brother, Ted. She had a very happy although scholarly childhood, and was a Sunday school teacher at the Methodist Chapel.

At the age of 16 she met Howard, five years older and the son of a Draper, a love that was to endure for 60 years. Mum won a scholarship which gave her an opportunity she wouldn't otherwise have had, and Dad went to war on the ships and as a fighter pilot, but returned with TB, which meant he attended university at the same time as Mum. So off they went to London, Dad to LSE, and Mum to UCL where she got a First in German with English Literature. They married in Chelsea in 1951.

After a few very happy years in Chelsea, Dad's job in industrial relations in the electricity supply industry sent him to Leeds. Mum left her job as a Principal in the Civil Service and was very happy to become a Mum. It was 1959 and in the five years they spent in Leeds, she produced David, John, and Lucy!

In 1964, Howard's job sent him back to London and the family settled in a little new build house in Ham, near Richmond.

Joan loved being a mother to small children, but as they got older it was their education she threw herself into. She spent long hours reading to them and helping with homework. She became involved with PTAs and then with setting up Richmond ASE. In 1973 Richmond abolished the 11+ and 'went comprehensive' and daughter Lucy was one of Grey Court School's first comprehensive intake. Joan became a Governor there, and then Chair of Governors for 25 years.

In 1981 she was invited by the Australian Government on a lecture tour of all the states, an experience she remembered all her life. In 1996 the Queen presented her with the OBE for services to education.

When the grandchildren (John's children) were born, she became Governor of their school, Latchmere School, until a few years ago.

# RELIGION AND SCHOOLING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Churches in Northern Ireland have always had a high degree of influence over schools.

Currently the Education Authority in Northern Ireland manages Controlled schools, but the Protestant Churches have representation, as of right, on the School Boards, and most of the pupils and teachers in these schools are Protestant.

Maintained schools are owned and run by the Catholic Church and most of the pupils and teachers are Catholic. Even religiously integrated schools see themselves as having a faith dimension, usually focused on a sense of shared Christianity.

There is a sector of academically selective voluntary grammar schools which deal directly with the Department of Education, but they too are divided between those with mainly Protestant or Catholic enrolments.

Cross-over between schools is possible, though rare, and has changed only a little in recent years: the proportion of Catholic pupils in 'Protestant' schools has risen from 4 per cent in 2000/01 to 8 per cent in 2016/17, although these pupils are largely in grammar schools.

Over the same period the total number of pupils in integrated schools has risen from 14,000 to 22,000 (a rise of 4 per cent to 7 per cent overall), but the proportion of Catholic pupils in these schools has declined from 41 per cent to 36 per cent.

With the outbreak of political violence a half century ago many assumed that the system of separate denominational schools had played a role, though opinion divided on whether it was a contributor or a symptom of societal division. Despite a lack of consensus on the effects of separate schools, many educators tried to promote reconciliation through schools through curriculum innovations, contact programmes, equal funding for all schools and the establishment of new religiously integrated schools.

The first of 65 planned Integrated schools opened in 1981 and the sector now comprises about 7 per cent of the school age population. Integrated schools can result from the opening of entirely new schools or the 'transformation', though a parent ballot, of existing schools.

Advocates of Integration prefer the former route, but the latter has been more common in recent years due to a period of falling rolls. No Catholic school has ever transformed in this way.

The peace process of the late 1990s provided an opportunity to review the experience of education initiatives

throughout the years of the violence. This highlighted the inspirational role of many teachers in Integrated, Protestant and Catholic schools, but there was little evidence of systemic change; the growth of the integrated sector had slowed, and emergent evidence on the impact of interventions suggested it had been, at best, limited.

Work on reconciliation in education was largely peripheral to schools' main priorities and was rarely a high priority for the education system as a whole.

Perhaps the most significant development over recent years has been the growth of 'shared education' which involves the development of locally-based collaborative networks of Protestant, Catholic and Integrated schools.

Within these networks, pupils move between schools to take shared classes and teachers work together on professional development and related activities.

In some respects this initiative tries to find a third way between separate schools and a unitary system by allowing communities to maintain their own schools, while providing pupils with opportunities to encourage with their peers across the denominational divide.

The first twelve partnerships began in 2007 and the approach has now been taken up by the Education Authority as an official mainstreamed programme, with between a half and two-thirds of all schools involved.

The NI model for shared education has also attracted interest in parts of the Middle East, South East Europe and other regions with divided societies.

*By Professor Tony Gallagher, Dean of Research in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Queen's University, Belfast.*

## COMMENT

Orwellian "newspeak" abounds in modern educational discourse. The Ministry of Truth, a.k.a. the Department for Education, regularly complained that PISA results for UK schools "stagnated" under Labour – i.e. stayed the same.

Under the Tories things are different: in the 2015 PISA tests, says Universities Minister Chris Skidmore, results for England and Northern Ireland were "stable" – i.e. stayed the same. Perhaps he was thinking of "stable" as used by Theresa May in the 2017 General Election campaign?

Meanwhile Durham has a new private school: "The Independent Grammar School", opened by Professor James Tooley, a long-time advocate of "low cost, no frills" private education. Except that it is not a grammar school but a primary school which opened with just six children, although Tooley states that numbers have now risen to twelve.

Perhaps, having redefined "grammar school", he will now redefine "oversubscribed"?

# EDUCATION POLICY – Evidence of Equity and Effectiveness

Stephen Gorard – Policy Press, 2018

This book by the Professor of Education and Public Policy at the University of Durham assembles the results of 20 years of thorough and painstaking research into the effectiveness of education policy in the UK.

The conclusions are based upon the analysis of the educational progress of three cohorts of 600,000 pupils – one of the largest ever research projects of its kind.

Apart from Chapter 2, which is concerned with the details of statistical method and which Gorard suggests can be skipped and revisited when the rest has been read, the book is surprisingly readable.

The first part deals with the wide range of outcomes that result from the UK's education system and the second part examines a range of possible explanations, in the course of which many of the assumptions uncritically held by politicians, journalists and others are shown to be false.

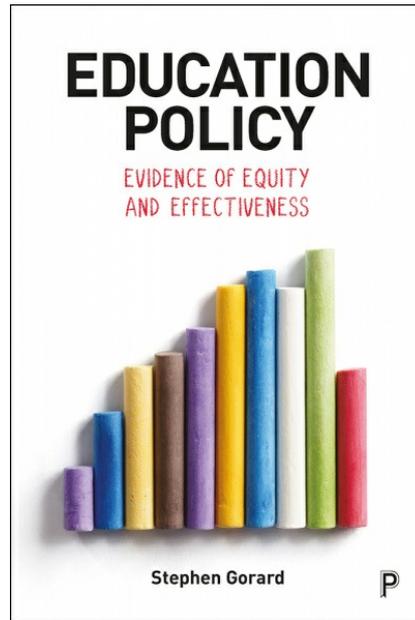
Finally, Gorard reminds us that it is not the role of research evidence to determine policy but to inform and support it.

A striking paragraph in the opening chapter establishes the dispassionate tone of the book: *“In education new policies and interventions are rarely based on good prior evidence of effectiveness and of their side effects. Many policy areas are evidence-resistant...the policies are proposed and implemented even though the clear weight of evidence is against them... Of the few that are robustly evaluated...many are then found to have been ineffective or even harmful. But their ineffectiveness does not lead to them being improved or cancelled.”*

Anyone familiar with the way education policy has been conducted in this country since at least the 1988 Education Reform Act will recognise the truth of this criticism.

Interviewed about the book by *The Guardian*, Gorard pointed out how his analysis undermines a great deal of the conventional wisdom about schools and their effectiveness.

For example: “The most important factor that determines school test and exam results is not the quality of teaching or leadership but who they teach, the propor-



tion of pupils who are disadvantaged through poverty, family circumstances or special educational needs and most crucially the length of time they have been disadvantaged.”

This, of course, is not what politicians want to hear and it comes as no surprise that the book questions many of the ideas and practices dreamed up by politicians in the last thirty years, among them the academies programme, “free” schools, the desire to expand 11+ selection and, above all, the idea that schooling is or ever can be a remedy for structural inequality.

Unlike many books on education, which, however well written, quickly

lose relevance because of the ever shifting nature of policy, especially since 2010, this book ought to become a standard work of reference.

Michael Pyke

## Who We Are

### Campaign for State Education

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