

## WHOSE EDUCATION IS IT, ANYWAY?

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> November  
Time: 10:00 - 16:00  
Venue: Mander Hall  
Hamilton House  
Mabledon Place  
London WC1H 9BD

### *Conference and Annual General Meeting*

CASE is organising a London conference in collaboration with our partner organisations in the *Reclaiming Education* alliance.

The Education and Adoptions Bill's passage through parliament threatens to remove democratic local accountability from the Education System, leaving dissatisfied parents with recourse only to the Secretary of State or the private corporations running schools.

This conference will challenge government policy on education and propose a campaign to make state education a liberating experience that serves the needs of all children and the wider society rather than the interests of a narrow elite.

#### Speakers will include:

- Richard Wilkinson, joint author of *The Spirit Level*
- John Howson, expert on the supply of teachers
- Daniel Jeffery of Southampton City Council on the funding impact on local authorities
- Alasdair MacDonald, former headteacher of Morpeth School in LB Tower Hamlets
- Wendy Scott, Early Years

Tickets bought in advance are available from TicketSource\* at a cost of £27.50. On the day, tickets will cost £30. *Some concessions will be available to CASE members (see panel for details).*

\* [www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/181569](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/181569)

The **CASE AGM** will follow-on from the conference at 4-5pm in the same venue.

This meeting elects our National Executive Committee and Officers, as well as setting CASE's policies.

Existing members and interested newcomers will be very welcome to participate.

*To encourage a wider audience who might not otherwise be able to attend, such as students and trainee teachers, CASE is sponsoring a limited number of concessionary tickets to the conference. For further details, contact the CASE Secretary, Keith Lichman, at [keith.whose-ed@zen.co.uk](mailto:keith.whose-ed@zen.co.uk).*

*A booking form for the AGM and conference will accompany the mailing of this newsletter.*

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

# FIDDLING WHILE ROME BURNS

## TEACHER RECRUITMENT

There is no crisis in teacher recruitment. This must be true because Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister, said so. He told the TES in early July: "I don't believe there is a crisis. There's a challenge and we're managing the challenge."

Our members tell us otherwise. We hear stories of recruitment ads garnering no applicants, and teachers leaving and not being replaced.

The government's own data tell a different story too. Figures published on 2 July show that teacher vacancies have grown from 750 in November 2013 to 1,030 in November 2014. The number of temporarily-filled teacher posts went up from 2,330 in November 2013 to 3,210 in November 2014. And the number of teachers in secondary schools has fallen from 214,200 to 213,200 over that period, despite the beginning of an increase in pupil numbers.

What's equally worrying is the small but significant decrease in the proportions of lessons being taught by teachers with relevant post-A level qualifications. In 2013, nearly 83% of maths lessons were taught by teachers with relevant qualifications; that had fallen to 80% in 2014.

These may be small numbers, but analysis from Teach-Vac suggests the problems will worsen from September. Their June review paper reports that the subjects of Design and Technology and Business studies are already facing a recruitment crisis, which is likely to worsen. In Physics, IT, Geography, English, RE and Social Sciences, schools anywhere in the country could face a problem. Other subjects may face recruitment problems in particular parts of the country.

This means more pupils being taught by non-specialist teachers, including in Ebacc subjects, as well as the likelihood of being taught in larger classes or by a succession of temporary teachers, none of which is particularly good for high quality learning, or building the kinds of relationships needed for teachers to provide support for the multiple needs within each class.

On 30 July, UCAS figures showed applications to teacher training had dropped by 9% compared with this time last year.

Unfortunately, according to Teacher Support Network, 34% of all teachers plan to leave within the next 5 years. 54% of those will retire, but others cite excessive workload, unreasonable demands and the rapid pace of organisational change, as well as the perennial, student behaviour, as factors which will influence them to leave.

This is a problem that's getting worse, not a challenge that's being managed.

*Nansi Ellis is ATL's Assistant General Secretary*



## SCHOOL BUILDINGS

As a governor of our local primary school in the late 1990s, I well remember the crumbling state that the buildings were in when Labour came to power. All of the window frames were rotten and some classrooms were becoming dangerous. Staffordshire County Council were sympathetic but pointed out that, compared with some of their schools, this one was basically sound and not at all a priority for repair.

The governors agreed with the Head that we might have to take at least one and possibly two classrooms out of use if the windows seemed likely to collapse.

Fortunately, the government soon embarked on a policy of restoring and enhancing the nation's school buildings and our windows were replaced in the nick of time.

After five years of George Osborne and Michael Gove, it seems that those days are set to return. The February edition of the trade magazine "**Construction News**" revealed that the vast majority of school buildings require maintenance work over and above the routine.

The Property Data Survey Programme surveyed almost 19,000 schools in England built before 2004, accounting for around 85 per cent of the entire school estate. It surveyed the individual buildings, or 'blocks', at each school, and graded 49 of the building components on a scale from A ('good') to D ('bad').

**Of almost 60,000 blocks surveyed, just 5 per cent had all components of the building graded A**, meaning that they were "performing as intended and operating

## **SCHOOL BUILDINGS** *continued*

efficiently". Of all building components with a 'condition need', 9 per cent were graded D and classed as 'life-expired and/or at serious risk of imminent failure'.

A further 39 per cent were graded C, meaning they were 'exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended'.

One source told Construction News that the proportion of school blocks whose surveys were not all grade A was "very high and higher than the normal profile of any estate". "There are very few schools in such a bad condition that you cannot teach in them," the source said. "But a lot are in a condition that is not acceptable and (that) does not provide the right environment to teach and learn in."

Education secretary Nicky Morgan this week announced £4.2bn of targeted school maintenance allocations spread over the next three years to 2017/18.

**The annual budget for maintenance thus remains £1.4bn, the same level as the previous two years.**

University College London construction economist Alex Murray told Construction News the £1.4bn of annual maintenance funding pledged by the government was "definitely not enough to get everything up to category A".

Meanwhile, Warwick Mansell revealed in *The Guardian* on August 11<sup>th</sup> that the DFE is spending £468,000 annually in rent to a private investment company in order to provide premises for a "free school" in Tottenham that currently has 153 pupils.

Michael Pyke

## **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**

In 2010, new Children's Commissioner, Maggie Atkinson, warned that the pressure on children to succeed in examinations was likely to make a significant number of them ill. After 5 years of Michael Gove, a report by Professor Merryn Hutchings of London Metropolitan University has completely vindicated Ms Atkinson's warning.

**Professor Hutchings has found that children in Britain's schools are suffering from a rise in self harm, anorexia, and other mental health issues because of a focus on "constant testing".**

The research, released in her report, "*Exam Factories*", found that the pressure and stress of exams was making some pupils seriously ill. 76 per cent of primary teachers and 94 per cent of secondary teachers who responded to a survey conducted as part

of a study agreed that pupils were driven towards stress-related conditions during exam periods. "Parents confide that the children cry at the thought of coming to school and are often exhausted due to the stress of learning," said one anonymous primary school teacher who took part in a survey.

*"Children are suffering from a rise in self-harm, anorexia, and other mental health issues because of a focus on "constant testing."*

"I have never known stress-related conditions ... to be so prevalent in secondary education," said another teacher, who worked in a secondary school. "Self harming is rife in KS4. Last year ... one [student] was hospitalised for three months in a psychiatric ward following a suicide attempt, another very nearly starved herself to death, and again was institutionalised for five months in a specialist eating disorder unit."

Professor Hutchings also suggested that government policy could have the biggest effect on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. "There is evidence that disadvantaged children, who on average have lower attainment than their peers and are therefore under greater pressure to meet targets, can become disaffected as a result of experiencing 'failure', and this is being exacerbated by recent changes to the curriculum to make it more demanding and challenging," she concluded.

*"I have never known stress-related conditions ... to be so prevalent in secondary education"*

Her findings certainly contrast with the ideas of Michael Gove, who in 2012 told the Academies Association conference, on the basis of no research, that exams "make children happy".

A DFE spokesperson said: "*Part of our commitment to social justice is the determination to ensure every child is given an education that allows them realise their potential.*"

*"That's why we are raising standards with a rigorous new curriculum, world class exams and a new accountability system that rewards those schools which help every child to achieve their best."*

The idea of a "commitment to social justice" being best realised by making children mentally ill surely strikes a new low, even by the rock bottom standards of the DFE.

# THE EDUCATION AND ADOPTION BILL 2015

The new Education and Adoption Bill represents a further advance in the government's determination to remove all vestiges of local democracy from the running of our schools.

The Bill - too long to summarise here - is designed to allow the Secretary of State to intervene not only in "failing" schools but also into those deemed to be "coasting" (a term as yet undefined, probably because no-one knows what it means) and to force schools to convert to academy status, regardless of the wishes of parents and governors.

As with *fracking*, the government proclaims its commitment to "local" decision making, while, in practice, reinforcing the ability of central authority to override local wishes.

Whatever it may say in public, the government is well aware that converting schools to academies achieves no educational goals whatsoever. The unacknowledged long-term agenda is the continued privatisation of public services.

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## COMMENT

### SIXTH FORM COLLEGES –THE DEATH OF A SUCCESSFUL IDEA

According to a newly published report by the Association of Sixth Form Colleges, **more than a third of the current 93 colleges believe that, thanks to continuing government neglect of the sector, they will have been forced to close by the end of the present decade.**

Many colleges have seen their finances decline in recent years by almost 50%. This is a disgrace: Sixth Form colleges have been one of the most successful innovations of post-war education.

They not only provide a wider range of courses, both academic and vocational, than conventional school Sixth Forms but they also teach them more successfully, offer a better preparation for work and/or Higher Education and they cost less to run.

They have proved a particular boon for young people, many from working class homes, who have needed a second chance.

**Our politicians, who seem unable to imagine any form of education that does not resemble that of their own schooldays, should be thoroughly ashamed.**

## STRESS LINES

"I am about to take my GCSEs and I am under so much pressure as my parents are expecting me to do really well. I am going to revision classes and trying really hard but I feel like it is not good enough for them. My parents don't allow me to do anything else apart from revision and if I try and talk to them it always ends up in an argument."

*A schoolboy*

"Since beginning my in-school training I have spent every day in fear. I fear the Sunday emails. I fear the notice board in the staff-room which lists the many 'observations' that are coming up. I long for a 9-5 job. I would hopefully be spared the misery and self-loathing caused by 'feedback' in my current hellish profession."

*A young teacher*

## Who We Are

**Campaign for State Education**

[www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk](http://www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk)

Email: [case.campaign@gmail.com](mailto:case.campaign@gmail.com)

**President:** Joan Sallis, OBE

**Chair:** Melian Mansfield

**Vice Chairs:** Jane Eades, Peter Thomson

**Secretary:** Keith Lichman

**Treasurer:** Paul Martin

### Membership

To join CASE please send £18 (£6 concessions) with your name, address, email and phone number to CASE at 11 Wilderton Road, London N16 5QY

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Contributions to CASEnotes are welcome.

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*The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of CASE.*