

2016 / 2017

SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Parliamentary Review

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

■ FOREWORDS

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Lucy Powell MP

■ SOUTH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

The Astley Cooper School

Plymouth School of Creative Arts

The Warriner School

Purbrook Park School

Corfe Hills School

Roundwood Park School

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Hounslow School

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Selwood Academy

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Review of the Year

Review of Parliament



The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Prime Minister

This year's *Parliamentary Review* follows a significant year in British politics. It was a year in which our economy continued to grow, as the Government followed its balanced plan to keep the public finances under control while investing to build a stronger economy. It was a year in which we began to deliver on the result of the EU referendum by triggering Article 50 and publishing the Repeal Bill, which will allow for a smooth and orderly transition as the UK leaves the EU, maximising certainty for individuals and businesses.

And, of course, it was a year in which the General Election showed that parts of our country remain divided and laid a fresh challenge to all of us involved in politics to resolve our differences, deal with injustices and take, not shirk, the big decisions.

That is why our programme for government for the coming year is about recognising and grasping the opportunities that lie ahead for the United Kingdom as we leave the EU. The referendum vote last year was not just a vote to leave the EU – it was a profound and justified expression that our country often does not work the way it should for millions of ordinary working families. So we need to deliver a Brexit deal that works for all parts of the UK, while continuing to build a stronger, fairer country by strengthening our economy, tackling injustice and promoting opportunity and aspiration.

In the year ahead we will continue to bring down the deficit so that young people do not spend most of their working lives paying for our failure to live within our means. We will take action to build a stronger economy so that we can improve people's living standards and fund the public services on which we all depend. We will continue with our modern Industrial Strategy,

deliver the next phase of high-speed rail, improve our energy infrastructure and support the development of automated vehicles and satellite technology, building a modern economy which creates the high-skill jobs of the future.

At the same time, work needs to be done to build a fairer society – where people can go as far as their talents will take them and no one is held back because of their background. So we will continue to work to ensure every child has the opportunity to attend a good school. We will continue to invest in the NHS and reform mental health legislation, making this a priority. And we will work to address the challenges of social care for our ageing population, bringing forward proposals for consultation to build widespread support.

So this is a Government determined to deliver the best Brexit deal, intent on building a stronger economy and a fairer society, committed to keeping our country safe, enhancing our standing in the wider world, and bringing our United Kingdom closer together. We will continue to put ourselves at the service of millions of ordinary working people for whom we will work every day in the national interest.

“We will continue to work to ensure every child has the opportunity to attend a good school”

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for School Standards
and Minister for Equalities



When we took office in 2010, too many children were leaving primary school struggling with the basics of reading and arithmetic, the national curriculum was failing to ensure pupils left school with the knowledge needed to be successful and artificial grade inflation had destroyed public confidence in national examinations. Reform was badly needed.

The reforms have had a dramatic effect on England's schools. Teachers and headteachers were given increased powers to improve their schools; rigour was re-introduced into the curriculum and examination system; and standards were raised for pupils of all ages.

Already, the fruits of our reforms are showing:

- » This year, 147,000 more six-year-olds are on track to become fluent readers than in 2012 thanks to systematic synthetic phonics and the phonics screening check
- » The GCSE attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers has shrunk by 7% since 2011, and
- » There are almost 1.8 million more Good or Outstanding school places.

But there is much more to do.

Outstanding free schools, such as Michaela Community School, Bedford Free School and the West London Free School, are providing a high-quality, knowledge-rich education for their pupils, but over one million pupils still attend schools that are not yet rated as Good or Outstanding. Whilst the quality of schools has improved, Ofsted has highlighted that provision in

Key Stage 3 remains weak in too many schools. And despite doubling the proportion of pupils taking the EBacc combination of academic GCSEs from one-fifth to two-fifths between 2010 and 2016, too few pupils are being given the opportunity to study English, maths, the sciences, a humanity and a language to 16.

Government must now provide support and a stable accountability framework to allow teachers and headteachers to deliver even greater results for all pupils, whatever their background and wherever they live in the country.

We must share the evidence from the best free schools and academies, so that all pupils can benefit from the effective curriculum and behaviour policies in these schools. We must continue to support teachers and headteachers in achieving the best for their pupils, as our reforms bed in. And we must maintain high expectations for all pupils, of all backgrounds, whatever their circumstances, because it is only when we do this that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed.

“We must continue to support teachers and headteachers in achieving the best for their pupils”



Lucy Powell MP

Education Select Committee (Lab.)

Education has rarely been out of the news in the last year with strong campaigning on school funding by teachers and parents having a big impact on the General Election result.

A hung Parliament means that the Prime Minister's plans for more grammar schools have been dropped. Ministers have found additional funding for the National Funding Formula although it is still not enough and does nothing to help with cost pressures now. Whilst government machinery is fixated on Brexit, school leaders may have some respite from the initiative-itis of recent years.

Schools across the country have lots of which to be proud, and the work you are doing is making a real difference to the lives and prospects of children. Thank you. I know from talking to headteachers in Manchester the real pressures you face to achieve good results. School budgets are falling; teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge; and changes to SAT and GCSE assessment are yet to bed in.

There is excellent practice across the country, with governors and schools leaders innovating and providing a rich learning experience for children. Yet there are also pockets of persistent disadvantage where the gap between rich and poor pupils is widening not narrowing. Even in high-performing schools, the gap can be stark between Pupil Premium children and their peers.

Boosting attainment for all, whilst narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, should be the major focus of government through the school years. Indeed, I would argue that tackling social mobility across all life stages should be the focus of government social policy.

The gap between poorer children and their peers starts pre-school, yet very little is being done to ensure all children are ready for school.

Ministers must redouble efforts to ensure there are enough good teachers in our schools. That means looking at pay. We won't have world-class schools without recruiting and retaining world-class teachers.

Fair funding will dominate the next few years and it's unjustifiable that schools in Bradford or Knowsley get far less per pupil than schools with similar intakes in Tower Hamlets. However, some already high-performing areas will see increases. New funding needs to address need, to narrow the gap and boost attainment where there are problems, not just allocate funding on an arbitrary formula.

We have debated education many times in Parliament this year, focusing Ministers' minds on the particular challenges schools face. I know that colleagues in Parliament greatly welcome invitations and visits to schools so that MPs can see firsthand the work you are doing.

I hope we continue to see education in the news, so that school leaders, and parliamentarians, can continue to work together to tackle the big issues affecting education.

“Boosting attainment for all should be the major focus of government through the school years”

Return of the Two Party System

The BBC's Andrew Neil gives his take on the state of Parliament following the June 2017 general election.

It was a year in which politicians learned not only of the power of a referendum to overrule the will of Parliament – but of its power to change the party system in which they operate. Nobody saw this coming. But, in retrospect, perhaps we should have, since we had the fallout from the Scottish referendum to guide us.

In the autumn of 2014 the Scots voted 55%-45% to remain part of the United Kingdom. That was supposed to settle the matter of Scottish independence for a generation, until some Scottish Nationalists began regarding a generation as no more than a couple of years. But in post-referendum elections to Holyrood and Westminster, it also recast the Scottish party system.

Remember, Scotland had been one of the first parts of the UK to throw off the British two-party system and replace it with a multi-party choice of SNP, Labour, Tory, Green, Lib Dem and even UKIP. But as the constitutional issue took centre-stage – and remained there even after the referendum – Scottish voters coalesced round a binary choice: for or against independence.

Thus was a new two-party system born of a centre-left Nationalist party (the SNP) and a centre-right Unionist party (the Scottish Tories). The other parties have not been completely obliterated, especially in Holyrood with its peculiar voting system. But by the general election of 2017 Scotland had become a battle between a dominant

Nationalist party and a resurgent Tory party representing the Union. Two-party politics was back north of the border.

So we should have been prepared for something similar when Britain voted 52% to 48% to leave the European Union in the June 2016 referendum. At the time, we remarked on the power of referenda to overrule both the Commons (where MPs were 65% pro-EU) and the Lords (probably 80% pro-EU). What we did not see was how the Brexit referendum would reconfigure English politics just as the Scottish referendum had redrawn Scottish politics.

So we were taken by surprise for a second time. In this year's general election – perhaps the single biggest act of self-harm a sitting government has ever inflicted on itself – almost 85% in England voted either Conservative or Labour. The English had not voted in such numbers for both major parties since 1970, when the post-war two-party system began to wane – and declined in subsequent elections to a point where barely 65% voted Tory or Labour, encouraging some commentators to think the decline terminal.

The referendum, however, reversed the decline. The Brexit vote ended the schism on the Eurosceptic Right as UKIP voters returned to the Tory fold; and those on the Left of the Greens and the Lib Dems flocked to Jeremy Corbyn's more 'Red Flag' Labour offering. So, as in Scotland previously, two-party politics was back with a vengeance in England too.

But without one crucial element. Our historic two-party system regularly produced one-party government for the life of a Parliament. But our new two-party system has produced a hung Parliament with no party having an overall majority. This knife-edge parliamentary arithmetic means the smaller parties may be down – but they are not out.

The Conservatives need an alliance with one small party (Ulster's DUP) to be sure of a majority. Even then, with the Tories and Labour divided over Brexit, no majority on any issue will be certain and on many votes the smaller parties will be pivotal in determining many outcomes.

So politicians return from their summer recess to a great parliamentary paradox: the two-party system has resurrected itself but rather than bringing with it the stability and certainty of the two-party politics of old, almost every major vote in the months ahead will be uncertain and unpredictable – and politics will be peculiarly unstable. Power will rest in Parliament. Government will be able to take nothing for granted. No vote will be in the bag until all the votes are counted. Westminster will have a new lease of life – perhaps even a spring in its step. Our democracy might be all the better for it.



Neil believes two referendums have redrawn the map of British politics.

Review of the Year

A year of political upheavals... again



The Queen's speech, following the June election, made no mention of any education proposals from the government

This was another year of political upheavals. It meant that many of the education policies and proposals set out by ministers and fiercely debated were in the end swept away without ever getting beyond the drawing board.

It was a curious case of big plans, false starts and then emergency stops. At the beginning of the year, education was in the headlines with radical and controversial plans over the return of grammar schools. The personal commitment of the Prime Minister Theresa May to improving social mobility meant a focus on reforming the education system and supporting the so-called 'ordinary working families'.

But when the election result left neither party with a majority, the manifesto promises on education were shelved. In the Queen's Speech that followed the election, there was not a single bill for education, which must be the first time for many decades that an incoming government had nothing in its legislative programme for education.

The Government's plans were not thrown away exactly, but they had been put into the political equivalent of long-term cold storage.

It wasn't an outcome that many could have predicted.

At the beginning of the school year, in September 2016, the Government set out its plans for re-shaping England's school system. This consultative Green Paper, 'Schools That Work for Everyone', prepared the way for the return of selection by ability, proposing a new generation of grammar schools. The ban on expanding selective education, introduced in 1998, would be abolished.

The ambition was to create a new type of grammar school, intended to become ladders of opportunity to help bright youngsters from poorer homes. They would support families who could not afford to buy their way into the catchment areas of the most successful schools. They would help those hard-working families under-served by a state education system which seemed to work in favour of the metropolitan middle classes.

There was much hostility to the plans – from teachers' unions, opposition parties and education researchers, who contended that academic selection tended to become a form of social selection.

The claims and counter-claims smouldered through the winter and the spring – with the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, arguing that these would be a new type of grammar school and would not be a return to the past. Campaigners against grammars lobbied hard, arguing that the Government should have other

priorities for schools, such as tackling funding problems.

But after all the sound and fury, the General Election was called, interrupting the plans for grammars before they had moved beyond the stage of a consultation. The Conservative manifesto set out the next stepping stones, promising to end the ban on new grammar schools and to review an admissions system based on 'selection by house price'.

The Conservative manifesto had a raft of other education policies. Universities wanting to charge maximum tuition fees would have to play a role in sponsoring academies or helping free schools. Teachers would not have to pay back tuition fees while they remained in teaching. There would be measures to encourage more free schools to be set up by faith groups. Free lunches for all infants were to be stopped and the money diverted back to basic school budgets.

But the election result in June meant a sudden end to all these policies.

It was a curious vacuum. Because, even though these plans were not going ahead, the Conservative Government was still in power. Education Secretary Justine Greening remained in place but there would be no education legislation.

There was quiet confirmation that bringing back grammars was officially dead. A written answer from Justine Greening conceded that the 'ban on opening new grammar schools will remain in place'. The plan to scrap free meals for all infants was not going to happen. But it remained uncertain as to whether other manifesto ideas would still be pursued or else be quietly rolled into the long grass.

If this electoral reversal stopped the Conservatives from implementing their plans, the result also gave no mandate to the opposition. Labour failed to win a majority and the education promises



Education Secretary Justine Greening had a difficult task in defending the government's proposal for grammar schools

of Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner could not be put into practice.

Labour had proposed a National Education Service, as a counterpart to the National Health Service. Mr Corbyn's plans focused on a major boost to school funding, picking up on the concern about budget shortages that had been raised by headteachers.

Labour promised smaller class sizes, better pay for teachers and free meals for all primary pupils. There would also be a return for the Education Maintenance Allowance, which provided financial assistance to keep people in education beyond the age of 16.

The emphasis of schools' policy would be switched from academies and free schools to a more strategic role for local authorities.

But none of these plans, either from the Conservatives or Labour, show any immediate sign of progressing, caught in the political gridlock of a government without a majority.

Education policies can take many years to develop and implement. They need enough political continuity to get from the concept to the classroom. But with the disruptions of two General Elections and a referendum in three years, any attempt to make headway with policy has struggled.

As the academic year ends, the political landscape is filled with uncertainty, with big ideological

changes giving way to a more low-key, pragmatic approach. Until the next political earthquake.

The rise and fall of grammar schools



Nicky Morgan, who was Education Secretary under Cameron, joined in calls opposing the planned legislation that would introduce academic selection

The prospect of the return of grammar schools in England has been a long-running saga, which this year seemed to come to a conclusion.

Under David Cameron's premiership, Education Secretaries had put an emphasis on increasing the number of academies and opening hundreds of free schools. The talk had been of 'academisation' and legislation had provided mechanisms that relentlessly shifted more schools from local authorities into academy trusts. The debate over grammars had always evoked strong feelings, both for and against, but under Cameron's leadership the cause of returning to selection had remained outside of the main thrust of Conservative education policy. Labour and the Liberal Democrats had been consistently opposed.

When Nicky Morgan had been Education Secretary there had been some movement at the margins, when it was decided that an existing grammar school could open another campus in another town, without this being

interpreted as a 'new' school. The creation of new grammar schools was not lawful, but Mrs Morgan's ruling meant that a so-called 'annexe' to an existing grammar was permissible.

This had stirred the grammar supporters to call for a new wave of these local expansions. But this would only be relevant in areas where there were already grammars and Mrs Morgan had made clear that this was not a signal that the floodgates were going to be open for a return for selection. This was going to be the exception rather than the rule.

Theresa May's arrival as Prime Minister in the post-referendum summer of 2016 completely changed the debate. Mrs May and her close advisers were much more sympathetic to the cause of bringing back academic selection and soon this was revealed as a major theme for her administration.

With Justine Greening as Education Secretary, the Government set out plans to remove the ban on creating new grammars. It was not clear how many new selective schools would be created, but there would no longer be a legislative barrier. The ban on increasing selection by ability would be lifted.

Mrs May presented her support for grammars as part of a wider push on creating more good school places. She argued that grammar schools had high attainment, including for disadvantaged pupils, and were sought-after by parents. When they offered examples of excellence, it was absurd to actively stop their expansion, said the Prime Minister, particularly in areas that were starved of good school places.

The Government argued that in too many parts of the country families did not have access to schools that were likely to achieve high results and so the push for grammars would be alongside expansions in faith schools and academies supported by independent schools and universities. This was the new focus of education policy. The more places created in such high-achieving schools, the more opportunities would be available to help pupils succeed.

The new grammars would also have to be available to poorer families – including those described by Downing Street as ‘just about managing’ and ‘ordinary working families’. There were suggestions this would mean entrance systems relying on more than the raw 11-plus exam results, such as setting aside a number of places for disadvantaged pupils. The tests would have to be ‘tutor-proof’ so that better off families could not buy an advantage with many expensive hours of private tutoring.

Not only would new grammars have to be seen to have such inclusive admissions policies, this would also mean changes for existing grammars. They too would be expected to show that being academically selective did not mean that they were socially exclusive.

This was no longer an equivocation about whether a grammar school ‘annexe’ was or wasn’t a new school. This was a clear commitment to re-introducing the principle of selection by ability of a kind that no Government had made for decades.

But there was strong opposition.

Teachers’ unions had long been against expanding academic selection, arguing that no matter what conditions were applied for entry tests, grammar schools would always work to the advantage of wealthier families and would never be equitable.

Headteachers were exasperated that millions were being made available to



Theresa May, on assuming leadership, looked to remove the ban on creating new grammar schools

experiment with new grammars, when the rest of the school system was, in their words, ‘cash starved’.

Former Chief Inspector of Schools, Michael Wilshaw, still playing an outspoken role in education debates, said bringing back grammars would undermine years of progress in raising standards in mixed-ability comprehensives.

He argued that for every grammar school created with the highest achieving 25% of pupils, it would mean that three other schools would have to be created without a top stream. He asked whether parents really wanted three quarters of local schools to become secondary moderns?

Former Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, also joined the critics of a return to grammars, writing alongside former Liberal Democrat Leader, Nick Clegg, and former Labour Shadow Education Secretary, Lucy Powell, that expanding selection was not the way to push for social mobility.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) education chief, Andreas Schleicher, weighed in on the debate to say that the international evidence suggested that academic selection tended to improve the chances of those who were already rich – but without any improvement to overall standards.

The battle lines were drawn. The two sides seemed implacably opposed – with both those for and against grammars saying they were acting in the cause of promoting social mobility – and both sides furiously contesting the claims of their opponents.

The battleground for deciding the outcome proved to be the General Election. This was the Conservatives’

flagship education policy – and with their failure to secure a majority, the return of grammars was wrecked on the rocks.

At the beginning of 2017, this re-birth of grammar schools had seemed closer than at any time for 50 years. It seemed to be in touching distance. A few months later, before schools broke up for the summer holidays, it seemed further away than ever.

Schools campaign for better funding



A widespread campaign led by teachers’ unions and allies has decried the shortage of funding for schools

The biggest education story to emerge from the General Election, in terms of doorstep issues and public debates, was the question of school funding. There were concerns that state schools were suffering from cash shortages, with reports of parents being asked to make contributions to cover budget shortfalls.

This should not have been a surprise to any of the political parties, because there had been a sustained, increasingly vocal campaign running through the year over what school leaders had called a ‘funding crisis’.

This was a claim rejected by the Government, who said repeatedly that school budgets had been protected. But school leaders, often important figures in their local communities, were emphatic that they faced an unsustainable real-terms cut in budgets.

There had been lobbying by teachers’ unions and local publicity about the impact of funding shortages on individual schools. This had been supplemented by regional organisations of headteachers who had become adept users of media and social media to put out their messages over what they saw as a damaging funding squeeze.

There were also parents’ groups adding to this groundswell of concern over school budgets and some governors in West Sussex announced an unprecedented one-day ‘strike’ as a protest over inadequate funding.

In one single, co-ordinated message, headteachers across the South of England sent a joint letter to the families of about two million pupils, telling parents that unless school budgets were improved, there would be staff cuts, subjects dropped and fewer support services.

This very direct form of campaigning put pressure on MPs and turned school funding into a major public debate.

Teachers and headteachers claimed that their warnings were backed by independent evidence. The National Audit Office said that schools would face a £3 billion funding shortfall by 2019–20. This would mean real-terms cuts of 8% for schools, the public spending watchdog warned.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that schools faced falling budgets for the first time in two decades and another £3.7 billion would be needed for school budgets to maintain current levels of spending.

Although school funding came to be seen as a single campaign – there were two distinct parts to this question. There was the debate over the overall size of the school budget – and there was a separate debate about how it was allocated to individual schools.

The overall budget, which was over £40 billion in 2016–17, was defended by the Government as running at record levels. But headteachers argued that it had failed to keep pace with additional costs, such as rising numbers of pupils and higher employer charges for National Insurance.

But a much thornier question was how it was divided. For many years there had been complaints that there were unacceptable differences in the level of funding in different parts of the country and that these anomalies had to be resolved. A school in Barnsley only receives half the per pupil funding of a school facing similar challenges in Hackney in East London.

But trying to unpick this, within the context of limited overall budgets, was immensely difficult.

Education Secretary Justine Greening grasped this nettle in December 2016, when she issued a new National Funding Formula. This proposed a different allocation of funding, intended to resolve historic unfairness, but with a phased, transitional approach, which would limit the increases and decreases for individual schools.

Although there was a widespread recognition that such a reform was needed, there was only a lukewarm reception for the proposed new arrangements. Those who would lose

money – such as in the big cities – were unsurprisingly unenthusiastic, while some of those who had previously felt seriously underfunded still felt not enough was being changed. There was still backbench grumbling from MPs who were facing local pressure.

Headteachers saw the new proposals as shuffling around an inadequate amount of overall funding. Russell Hobby, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that a change in distribution would not tackle a ‘fundamental lack of investment’.

The arguments over funding continued into the General Election. The Conservatives promised that no school would lose out from the funding formula, with plans to release money by scrapping universal free meals for infants. But Labour wanted to make school funding one of their key messages, promising an even more significant increase in school budgets, with a pledge of £20 billion in investment by 2022.

With neither side achieving a majority in the election, it meant that both funding plans were put on hold – while schools were still campaigning about their need for extra cash. Headteachers wrote a letter to MPs demanding answers on what was going to happen next.

Would the Treasury loosen the purse strings and find extra money for schools? Would this become an example of showing that the Government was listening to a public mood that seemed to be less willing to accept more cuts and austerity? There was intense speculation whether there would be a shift in attitudes to public spending.

But when Ms Greening’s announcement on funding came in July it was another kind of balancing act. There would be another £1.3 billion put into school budgets over two years, but it would not be new money. Instead it would be taken from other budgets, including free schools, and be reallocated to core spending. It would be enough to make



Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary, has pressured the government to increase school budgets

sure that for two years schools would have budgets that were protected in real-terms.

Headteachers offered a cautious welcome to the funding announcement as a 'step in the right direction'. They were pleased that there seemed to be a recognition from Ministers that there was a genuine problem. But there were accusations from the National Union of Teachers that this was only 'smoke and mirrors' and that switching around budgets was not a substitute for extra

funding. The extra money for two years would not make up for the real-term cuts already imposed.

The announcement on school spending was made to the House of Commons in the last week before parliament broke up for the summer. It promised a temporary reprieve in the worries about funding and it showed that ministers were listening. But it is unlikely to be the end of the matter, with more tough decisions about money lying ahead for both school leaders and the Government.

Teachers' pay does not break the public sector pay cap



The public sector pay cap has created tension between the Government and those in education

There are more than half a million teachers in England and Wales and their pay has been capped for the past seven years, as part of restraints on pay affecting more than five million public sector workers.

This began with a pay freeze in 2010 which lasted two years, after which the pay limit became a series of 1% increases, with teachers' pay grinding along as part of the process of austerity and efforts to improve the public finances.

After the June election there was widespread speculation that public

sector workers might this year begin to escape the long shadow of the financial crisis. There were apparent signals, including from within the Government, that it might be time to take off the shackles and offer some more extensive increases to staff in schools, the health service and emergency services.

But after much debate about 'will they or won't they' lift the pay cap, the response from Ministers to the School Teachers' Review Body report was that pay would still be kept at 1%. The Government was sticking to its guns over public sector pay and teachers would not be the first to breach it.

According to the National Union of Teachers, the successive years of below-inflation increases had left teachers with a 13% real-terms pay cut. This was difficult for individual teachers, who had seen their earnings falling against inflation. But there was a wider challenge for the profession, with such a stagnation in pay being seen as exacerbating problems with staff recruitment.

Heads have been complaining bitterly about what they see as a 'recruitment crisis', particularly in some shortage subjects, such as science, maths and

languages. The prospect of another year with a real-terms pay cut has been seen as making it even more difficult to bring bright young graduates into the profession.

These concerns were raised not only by the teachers' unions. The pay review body itself highlighted some serious concerns about the implications for recruitment, saying that there were already 'substantial pressures' and that targets for recruiting new teachers had been missed for five years in a row.

The review body said there was a 'real risk that schools will not be able to recruit and retain a workforce of high-quality teachers to support pupil achievement.'

The topic of pay was interlocked with funding, not just for the Department for Education, but even more widely in terms of the economic path to be taken by the Government after losing its majority. Would there be less emphasis on austerity or would the focus remain on keeping down public spending? After the election result, the prospect of continued belt-tightening seemed to be becoming increasingly unappetising.

Even the modest pay round that was announced – only adding a few pounds a week to the starting salary for teachers – was forecast to mean an extra £505 million on the Department for Education's overall pay bill, taking

it to over £25 billion. This pay lift will have to come from existing budgets, adding to the pressure on school finances. If there had been a pay rise keeping up with inflation, let alone a real-terms increase, it would have meant a much more substantial slice of extra funding.

Headteachers said they wanted to see a more generous pay deal than had been offered, but they warned that any pay rise had to be accompanied with adequate funding. They wanted to see pay addressed alongside the bigger picture of an improved funding deal.

The pay review body's report acknowledged that 'many schools will face both real-terms reductions in the level of per-pupil funding and growing cost pressures. Difficult choices may be inescapable'. In such circumstances, even though better pay is needed for recruiting and retaining good staff, the review body says 'some schools will find it challenging to implement any pay uplift at all'.

In the end, teachers were not the first to go through the public sector pay limit and ministers imposed another year of a 1% pay cap. The Government argued that it was a fair deal for teachers and the taxpayer. But teachers' unions complained of a failure to address the recruitment shortage and the need for teachers to be adequately rewarded.



Schools have argued that the lack of pay increases is leading to a recruitment crisis, particularly in STEM subjects

GCSEs changing to a new type of grading

This will be the first year for a new way of grading GCSEs. Instead of students being awarded A*s or As or Bs and all the way through to G, there will be a new calibration introduced, with the number 9 as the pinnacle and then going down to 1 as the lowest.

This will at first only be for maths and English language and literature, with

other GCSEs to be phased in to use this numerical system over the next couple of years. It will mean that for a while both the numerical and alphabetical systems will work alongside each other. But eventually it will mean the end of using letter grades of the kind that have been used for GCSEs since they were introduced in the 1980s.



What effect the change in exam style will have on boys and girls' grades is one of many questions that remains to be answered

It will also mean that a GCSE awarded in England will be graded in terms of numbers, while GCSEs in Wales and Northern Ireland will still keep with the letter grades.

Apart from the unfamiliar change to number grades and being slightly counter-intuitive to have a scoring system working downwards from 9, there will be other adjustments.

In the old alphabetical system, a grade C had become established as a widely-used measure of a pass. When people spoke of a 'good' GCSE, it was understood to mean a grade C and above. But the new numerical system will have two forms of a pass – with a 4 being seen as a 'standard' pass, while a grade 5 will be seen as a 'strong' pass.

It is also going to become much more difficult to achieve the very highest grade. While As and A*s became increasingly widely awarded, the grade 9 is going to be a rarer sighting, available to only the extremely able. The intention is to have a system of grades that gives a more detailed impression of a student's ability, with a more differentiated scale than the outgoing system of letters.

This is all part of the culmination of long years of planning for curriculum and exam changes. The new grades are a signal for a new type of qualification. These are meant to be more rigorous, with less coursework and a greater emphasis on final exams. In maths, there is significantly more content than the previous version of the GCSE.

There are also changes being phased in at A-level, being separated from AS-levels and decided by final exams rather than coursework or continuous assessment.

The outcomes of such changes will be intensely scrutinised and there will be attention for any unintended consequences. Will the new ultra-high grade 9 at GCSE become the preserve of independent schools and only a few top state schools? How will the change in exam style affect the results of girls and boys? How will changes to A-levels affect entrance to university? And will there be acceptance of the new system by employers and the wider general public?

Such changes to exams are the latest point in a long, slow process, following years of upheaval to the curriculum and course content. There will still be another couple of years of implementation of the new GCSEs and A-levels and presumably readjustments still to come if there are any teething problems or unexpected turbulence in the results.

But this is beginning to put in place the ideas for a more robust exam system, scrapping the modules and coursework, that had been proposed six or more years ago. It has taken this long to reach the new-look GCSEs and it will take a few more years still to see how they will be established. By then, no doubt, it will be time for the next upheaval.

Schools warn of teacher shortages

Along with funding, the most recurrent concern raised by school leaders has been about difficulties with recruiting teachers. In particular there have been warnings in secondary schools about the lack of teachers for subject specialists, such as science, maths, computing or modern languages.

This isn't a new problem. But this year the warnings seemed to become more insistent and MPs on the education select committee complained that there didn't seem to be a clear strategy on how to stop the problem getting worse. In February, the cross-party committee of MPs highlighted 'significant teacher shortages' and said that there needed to be more effective efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of staff.

Earlier in the school year, a ministerial answer had revealed that about a third of teachers who qualified in 2010 had left the profession by 2015. In terms of staff numbers, retaining existing staff had become as important as attracting new recruits.

The struggle to find an adequate supply of good teachers was claimed by headteachers as having direct consequences for standards. For subjects such as maths and physics, it was not acceptable to rely on cover teachers without in-depth subject knowledge. Depending on temporary, supply staff was seen as a poor substitute for permanent, specialist teachers.

But while school leaders spoke of a 'teacher shortage crisis', ministers could point to record numbers of teachers in schools. The government has been running a £1.3 billion recruitment campaign and they could say that it had been successful, with no sign of any reduction in staffing levels, despite the warnings of teachers' unions.

But this is a difficult, moving target. The rising number of teachers has to keep



Recruiting teachers for STEM and language departments has become increasingly difficult for schools

up with a rapidly increasing number of pupils. There has been a population boom in the secondary school age group, requiring more classes, schools and teachers. This shows no sign of slowing down, with the latest forecasts published in the summer showing that secondary school numbers will rise by a fifth in the next decade. This will mean providing places and teachers for more than half a million additional secondary school pupils.

Recruitment also has to keep up with the turnover of staff, replacing teachers who are leaving the profession or reaching retirement. Every year 30,000 new teachers are required for the staff/pupil ratio just to stand still. A report from the National Foundation for Educational Research showed that those most likely to leave teaching were among those who were most needed. Maths, science and language teachers had particularly high rates of leaving teaching within five years of qualifying, further compounding the staff shortages in these subjects. Maths teachers were about twice as likely to leave as PE teachers.

Figures in March showed a drop in students accepting places on teacher training courses, suggesting no immediate end in sight for recruitment problems. But it is also a reminder that teacher recruitment operates in

the context of the wider economy, regardless of the changing demands of classroom numbers.

A career in teaching is traditionally seen as a safe haven in times of recession, with applications rising when the jobs market is tighter. But when the cycle turns, and more jobs are available, teaching usually finds it more of a struggle to recruit. The response to this might be to find ways to make teaching a more attractive option, but this becomes more difficult when pay has been restrained by public sector limits. Teachers have faced successive years of wage restraint and the School Teachers' Review Body specifically highlighted concerns that if pay continues to slip behind it will become increasingly difficult for schools to find and keep the right staff.

With little flexibility over pay, the Department for Education has

emphasised other factors, such as trying to address concerns over teachers' workload and cut unnecessary paperwork. Such measures are seen as a way of reducing the numbers who might leave the profession.

There could also be more ambitious projects to encourage applications. During the election campaign, the Conservatives promised that they would allow teachers not to pay back their tuition fees as long as they remained in the profession. Such relief on tuition fees would potentially save teachers tens of thousands in repayments, providing a financial incentive to enter teaching and then to stick at it as a long-term career.

When this will be implemented remains uncertain, but its proposal suggests an awareness of the need to make teacher recruitment a priority.

Pisa tests reveal international comparisons



Singapore achieved the highest score in the Pisa tests

This was the equivalent of World Cup year for education systems across the developed world, as the results of the international Pisa tests were published – which once again showed the UK as a middle-ranking performer and making little progress on the last round of tests three years ago.

These exams – the Programme for International Student Assessment, but usually known as 'Pisa tests' – provide

a ranking of about 70 countries and education systems, showing comparative standards among 15-year olds in maths, science and reading.

With economic performance being linked to education standards, governments around the world have become quietly obsessed with how well their countries score in the Pisa tests and whether they can climb up towards the powerhouses at the top of the rankings. Run by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Pisa rankings have become the predominant international measure of education systems.

When the latest results were published in December, the highest achieving countries were once again in Asia. Singapore was the highest scoring of all – coming first in all three subject areas. The city state, which only gained independence in 1965, had overtaken the world in school standards.

At independence, it had been a country with a poor, often illiterate population, with few skills for the jobs market. But it had pursued a sustained focus on education as a cornerstone of economic prosperity. Now it had been lauded as having the best-educated young population in the world.

The success was attributed to a relentless and systematic approach to improving school standards and to the quality of its teachers, who are recruited from among the top graduates and then given much professional training during their careers.

Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam and Hong Kong were also successful. Although the previous top performer, the Chinese city of Shanghai, was now included in a wider measure of four Chinese provinces, this collective Chinese entry was still among the high achievers.

Among Western countries, Estonia, Finland and Canada all performed well.

The UK came 15th in science, 22nd in reading and 27th in maths, but the scores showed little significant improvement on three years ago, when the results were dismissed as evidence of 'stagnating' standards. When the results were broken down into the separate education systems, England was ahead of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

But the results for the UK were less than inspiring – described by the OECD's Director of Education, Andreas Schleicher, as 'flat in a changing world'.

While countries such as Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam seemed to be in a hurry to improve and racing ahead, the UK seemed to be running on the spot.

This prompted a spate of soul searching in the UK about what was going wrong. After years of initiatives and reforms promising to improve the

education system, there seemed to be little tangible proof that it had been effective.

In England, Pisa results in 2010 and 2013 could be claimed by Conservative ministers as the overhang of a system created by the previous Labour administration. But after three successive Conservative education secretaries, and rafts of changes to the education system, responsibility was much more firmly on the shoulders of the current Government.

The National Association of Head Teachers described the outcome as evidence of a 'lost decade' for England's education system. The headteachers blamed an excessive political focus on school structures rather than standards – with so much attention having been paid to issues such as trying to change schools into academies or to put them into academy trusts. From the Pisa results, the heads argued that such administrative changes did not seem to have translated to higher standards.

The National Union of Teachers argued that there needed to be more attention paid to immediate problems, such as tackling a shortage of teachers.

Teach First, a charity which recruits graduates into teaching, said the results were a case of 'must try harder' for the UK's education systems, after little substantial progress in the tests since the previous results were published in 2013.

The Pisa rankings had been published at the time when grammar schools seemed to be destined to return and Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, suggested that creating grammar places could be the way to boost results in future. In retrospect, the grammar plan proved to be a dead end rather than a way out – and in three years Ministers will have to find another reason to explain the success or disappointment in results.



Andreas Schleicher, Director of Education for the OECD, was critical of the UK's performance in the tests

The Astley Cooper School



Headteacher Edward Gaynor and students celebrate a successful Ofsted inspection

The Hemel Hempstead Gazette's headline in September 2011 was 'Academy plans on the scrapheap'. In July 2016 the same newspaper's front page headline said 'Astley Cooper's Got Talent'. The two 'splashes' give a punchy summary of the school's fortunes over the past few years.

Astley Cooper's problems had led to its designation as a national challenge school and Ofsted had never rated it higher than Satisfactory. In 2011, Hertfordshire County Council and the Governing Body were in negotiations to convert the school into an academy, sponsored by the Swedish education company Kunskapsskolen. An experienced headteacher, I was initially seconded to the school as the interim head for a year. Astley Cooper was, according to one of the senior advisers, the school that 'parents didn't send their children to...'

Within the first couple of weeks of taking up the post, I was informed that there would be no capital funding to convert the school and Kunskapsskolen had withdrawn its offer. It was a school that remained in limbo. The staff were understandably concerned about the school's future and how this would be seen publicly, particularly as the local press were usually critical of the school.

I was determined to create a better relationship with the press and prepared a press statement saying that, while the plans to turn the school into an academy would not go ahead, I saw this as 'an opportunity to make a fresh start with the public perception of the school.' Unfortunately, these good intentions resulted in the 'Scrapheap' headline above.

There was work to be done.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Edward Gaynor
- » Location: Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire
- » Foundation School
- » 425 students
- » 48% Pupil Premium
- » 37 Teaching Staff
- » 27 Support Staff
- » Ofsted rating: Good

“A school is as good as its staff”

The school had a longstanding senior leadership team, strength in its Performing Arts specialism and some really engaging young people – the lifeblood of a school. However, a number of departments were drifting and there was an unspoken culture of low expectations. This was exemplified by what can only be described as a sin bin, a dark room with individual booths, tucked away in the bowels of the Science department, where misbehaving children were sent to repent.

In the next year – by which time my headship had been made permanent – the leadership team undertook a major staff restructure, which involved the departure of 12 staff, reflecting in part previous overstaffing, appointed new leaders in the core subjects, closed the sin bin and created an Inclusion Centre. Despite these positive changes the school still faced significant challenges: the quality of teaching varied too much and a two day local authority review graded us as Inadequate. We were placed on its register of schools causing concern.

Two weeks after that review, we had an Ofsted inspection and were fortunate to have an experienced senior inspector who, despite grading us as Requires Improvement, could see what we were trying to achieve

We believe that the opportunity to experience new activities outside the curriculum enriches the quality of education at Astley Cooper



and wrote that ‘students [were] disappointed that improvements are not always acknowledged by the local community’ and that ‘the school’s good reputation is spreading’.

By this stage we had begun to work with Roundwood Park School (RPS) in what would become a highly rewarding education improvement partnership that benefited both schools in a number of ways.

The immediate benefit to us was the appointment of a talented middle leader at RPS to Assistant Headship. Alexandra Gray was seconded to Astley Cooper for two days a week, worked closely with individual staff, led engaging training sessions and set up a coaching programme. She also acknowledged good practice at our school and shared it with staff at RPS. Alex was to be followed by another newly appointed Assistant Headteacher from RPS and both of them gained valuable experience as new senior leaders working in a very different type of school.

This was the beginning of a series of important partnerships that would turn us into a far more outward-looking school. In collaboration with two other local secondary schools – Adeyfield and Longdean – and the Co-operative College, we founded the East Dacorum Co-operative Learning Trust, the first co-operative education trust in West Hertfordshire. The three schools work together to provide a wider range of opportunities for our young people. Our partners in the trust include RPS, Herts for Learning (HfL), the Hemel Hempstead Rotary Club and the University of Hertfordshire.

No school is an island. We have benefited greatly from working openly with our partners in the Trust and with Kay Leach, a School Effectiveness Adviser from HfL, who has supported us through three Ofsted inspections, two HMI monitoring visits and a



Deputy Headteacher Matt Stevens and Key Stage Leader Deb Cansick in discussion with Year 11 students

meeting with an official from the DfE who recognised that the school was on an 'upward trajectory.'

A school is as good as its staff. We have been fortunate to retain a number of highly committed staff, including our three Key Stage Leaders, who manage the students' pastoral welfare, have established a thriving student council and know our tight-knit community very well. Assistant Headteacher Brett Daddow runs the rewards system and leads our work on inclusion, behaviour and attendance; the students now take a greater pride in their appearance and attendance, which at its worst was 88%, has improved to 95%.

We have also recruited a number of talented new staff who have brought a fresh perspective to the school. Matt Stevens joined us as Deputy Headteacher in 2013 and brought with him invaluable experience of working in inner city academies. An outstanding colleague, Matt's focus has been on raising aspirations and refining the analysis of data to enable students to know exactly where they are and where they need to be in order to achieve their potential. He enrolled us in the PiXL (Partners in Excellence) Club and is setting up a work-based learning programme to link us with

local business partners to identify the skills students need to start a successful apprenticeship.

The overall quality of teaching is good and continues to improve, thanks to the resilience and determination of hard working staff who have risen to all the challenges we have faced. Our recent examination results were the best in the school's history, our Ofsted inspection in 2016 graded us as Good for the first time, student numbers are rising and we have finally been removed from the local authority's register of schools causing concern.

There is still work to be done. We look forward to it with confidence.

Learners feel safe and are happy at school. They told inspectors that, 'You come to school to learn' and 'Being at Astley Cooper is about doing the very best you can do' Ofsted, June 2016



The Warriner School



Dr Annabel Kay, Headteacher



Our culture for learning has at its heart students acting responsibly

The Warriner School is unusual in that we have a 120 acre farm on site, making it the largest school farm in the country. We also have a highly-successful Area Resource Base for Autism on site and our reputation for nurturing students with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) means that we have a higher than average numbers of students with complex needs. In 2011, although an Ofsted Good school, there were many areas that needed reassessing and refocusing.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Dr Annabel Kay
- » Location: Near Banbury in North Oxfordshire
- » Age range: 11–18
- » Number of pupils on role: 1,294 (Disadvantaged 142)
- » Number of teachers: 80

We had a significant issues with low-level disruption in lessons. The rural nature of our large catchment means that many children are geographically isolated and view school as the centre of their social lives. To address this we introduced behaviour for learning (B4L) which was based upon students being ready to learn with sanctions being put in place for those who did not have the necessary classroom equipment and a higher sanction for those who were disrupting the learning of others. Initially this resulted in alarmingly large numbers of detentions and a certain amount of parental unhappiness. Two years on, we felt that the system needed refreshing and that our emphasis was too focused upon the negative aspects of behaviour.

Our ethos

What emerged was our Culture for Learning that we based upon our core principles, the three Rs:

- » Responsible – being in the right place at the right time, looking after each other, doing the right thing, catching up work if absent

- » Respectful – be polite and courteous to all, treat others with dignity, respect the school environment and community, listen to and act on instructions
- » Ready – be on time, look smart, be fully equipped, have homework completed to a good standard, be ready to learn.

These behaviours are at the heart of all that we do and apply to staff and students alike. We have been able to shift from focusing upon what children are doing wrong, to what they should be doing, right. The whole school community is now aligned with this culture and the quality of learning in lessons has improved as a result.

Making feedback effective

Marking is hugely time consuming and so must have impact. We have made significant changes to our marking policy by placing much greater emphasis upon the dialogue between teachers and students. We introduced FAR: success-based *feedback* is given (F), meaningful, developmental *actions* are given (A) to which the students *respond* (R). Whilst there is still work to do, we have seen significant improvement in the engagement of students with their feedback and marking has shifted from ticks and bland comments such as ‘well done’ and ‘good effort,’ to effective two-way conversations about learning and progress.

Raising standards

The Senior Leadership Team, whose job it is to ensure that the right bespoke interventions are being targeted where they can have the most impact, has been restructured around the formation of Raising Standards Leads in each key stage; up to this point the approach was a little random. We now also have champions who shine a spotlight on our vulnerable groups such as the most-able, boys, disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs.

Raising aspirations through effective role models

In 2013 we opened our doors to our first sixth form students. Prior to this we suffered from a lack of these academic role models which meant that some students did not aspire to achieve at the highest level – instead they made do with ‘good enough’. Furthermore, staff did not have experience of A Level teaching so were not always adept at supporting the most able to achieve the top grades. Since opening the Sixth Form, we have benefited hugely from the calming influence of the older students, are able to recruit highly-qualified staff more readily and are far better-equipped to support those students who wish to follow an academic pathway.

Our Academy

In August 2015 we formed a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with three of our feeder primary schools. Our overarching vision is to set up a family of like-minded local schools which collaborate in order to share what we do well, so that all our children receive the best education. The values that underpin all that we do are:

- » Excellence – doing the right things for the right reasons
- » Collaboration – working together for the benefit of all our children
- » Trust – sharing our challenges so that we can support each other to improve

“We achieved significant improvements in students outcomes by reviewing all that we do – nothing was sacred”

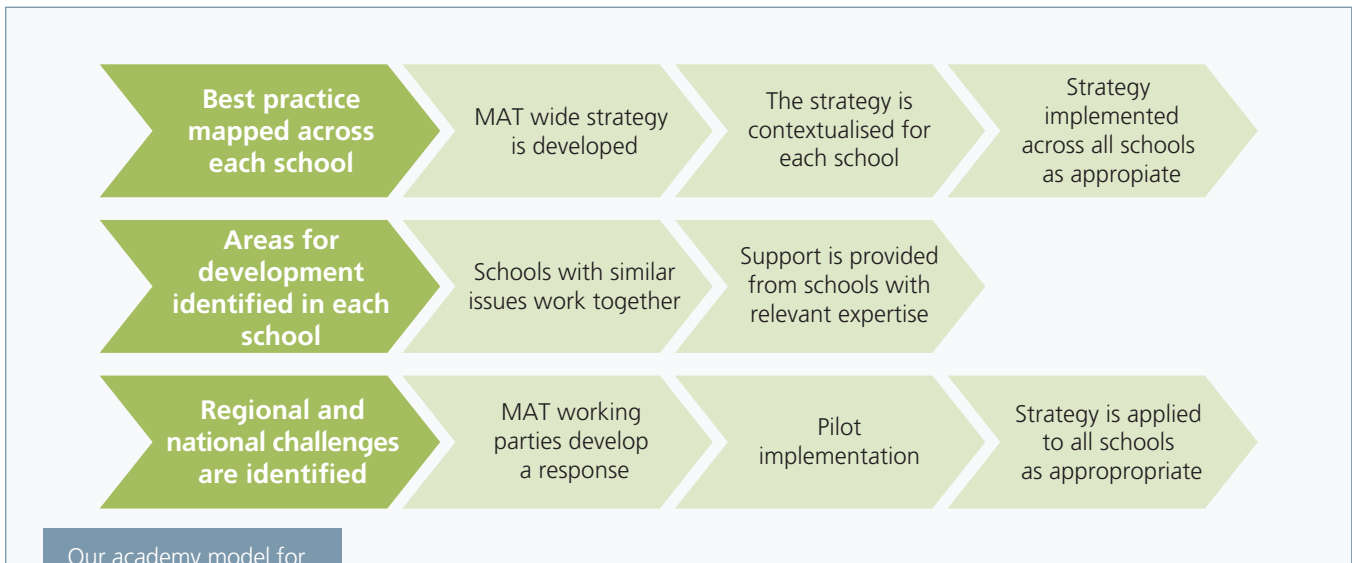


Students are encouraged to work independently

Students are supported in being ready to learn



Our school improvement model is based upon collaboration and operates in the following way:



Our academy model for school improvement

This flexible model enables us to respond quickly to local and national issues. By developing key issue-based hubs, staff across all our schools are able to work collectively and collaboratively, thus saving time and resources. We also run a flexible hub structure based on identifying issues and matching best practice. These changing groups of staff work together to support each other in addressing identified progress gaps such as phonics or maths. Such hubs are also used to working together to respond to changes such as the development of new data systems. Therefore, this structure is not fixed – it can be adapted as further schools join depending upon their skills and areas of development. These ‘task and

finish’ hubs have a finite timescale and deliver against agreed action plans.

Our collaborative approach has resulted in a common assessment framework from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 13 based upon skills that are then mapped against national curriculum outcomes as children progress up through each Key Stage. Our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme involves all staff within the MAT working together and, as a result, children experience a much more seamless transition to secondary and we no longer see dips in progress when children transition from primary to secondary school because everyone understands the journey that the children are making and their contribution to it.

Students respond to feedback that forms an ongoing dialogue with their teachers



The outcome

All these changes have culminated in the outcomes for our young people improving year on year such that in 2016 we were proud to be in the top 100 most improved schools. There has been no single thing that has brought about this school improvement; instead our success has been down to developing synergies that have come together to effect a root and branch culture shift.

Corfe Hills School



Corfe Hills School



Acting Headteacher, Phil Keen

Corfe Hills School has been consistently successful in ensuring that its students have an appropriate destination at the end of their time in the school and its pupil destination figures compare very favourably with local and national averages.

It is one of the minority of schools which hold the full Investors in Careers Award, which IiC themselves describe as demonstrating 'a commitment to provide impartial, independent careers education, information, advice and guidance to all young people'.

This accolade is all the more remarkable for a school in a very unusual position. It is the only 13–18 school in Poole (the other seven schools all transfer at 11) and students enrolling at Corfe Hills arrive in almost equal measure from both Poole and Dorset Local Authorities – with a significant number transferring at 13 having started their secondary education elsewhere two years previously.

As a consequence, aged 13, Year 9 students are only in the school for 16 weeks before embarking on the 'Guided Choice' process for their non-Core GCSE and other courses. Though this is founded on excellent collaboration with feeder schools throughout the transfer process, we have to move quickly in the autumn term to get to know the students really well and recognise their skills and aspirations. Students themselves only experience some subjects in a fully-equipped secondary school for the first time.

At the end of this process, students are issued with personalised options forms and they complete these with support from staff, assemblies, parents evenings and access to the school's careers adviser.

REPORT CARD

- » Acting Headteacher: Phil Keen
- » Location: Poole, Dorset
- » 13–18 Academy
- » 1,120 students on roll
- » 320 in the Sixth Form
- » 10% Pupil Premium
- » 23% Special Educational Needs
- » 160 teaching and support staff

“Corfe Hills School believes that learning is exciting and at the heart of what we do. We inspire and grow unique, compassionate individuals who contribute positively to society”

Perhaps more unusually, the school hosts a website containing video clips of current students describing the various courses, and staff are available for a lunch time drop-in surgery throughout the options period.

The Careers Education process continues in Year 10 with 'Which Way Now Day' and a two-week work experience programme at the end of the Spring Term. Year 11 includes a 'Next Step Day' with students able to explore possible post-16 opportunities, culminating in a Careers Convention in the evening. This is a remarkable event which fills the Sports Hall with local employers, training providers, colleges and a range of universities, enabling students and parents to find out about the various progression routes. Its quality and reputation is such that it is not uncommon to find staff sneaking in with offspring who attend other schools, and ex-students coming back for information and advice (many alumni also find themselves on the presenter side of the display stands). This is then followed up by senior staff holding individual interviews with every Year 11 student to ensure that each one has

a clear plan and receives the help and support needed to take the next step.

The level of ambition that characterises the sheer size and scale of the Careers Convention is found in many other aspects of life at Corfe Hills. At a time when the Creative Arts are under pressure due to the national focus on core subjects, there is still fierce competition during auditions for the school's annual musical. This is cast in September and takes place at the end of November each year in the professional theatre at Poole's Lighthouse Centre for the Arts. This year's *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* was a truly outstanding series of performances showcasing talent and teamwork and demonstrated just what high standards young people can achieve given the right mix of aspiration and support.

Creativity of a different kind is in evidence at the school's annual Oscars celebrations. At these, with the traditional Oscars dress code applied, awards are presented to Media Studies students in Years 11, 12 and 13 based on the quality of their video

Our production of 'Seven Brides for Seven Brothers'





Year 10 work experience, 2017



Charity 'Sandwalk' 2016

production pieces. The event is hosted at Bournemouth University as a result of the school's strong links with its Faculty of Media and Communication and it was no surprise when an ex-Corfe Hills student was selected by the Faculty to interview Justine Greening for the Student Room website earlier in the year.

Ambition of a different kind can be seen in another of the school's long-standing traditions – the annual charity sponsored walk. Though this has changed location in recent years from an arduous trek through the Dorset countryside to a more comfortable walk along Poole Bay, it still involves practically the whole school walking to raise money for charities they have chosen, wearing T-shirts that one of them has designed.

The sponsored walk enshrines the outward looking nature of one of the school's core values, that of community. The other three are aspiration, independence and respect and these really do form the central plank of much of what takes place in the school on a daily basis, including the regular assessments of academic progress.

However valuable these activities are, we do, of course, recognise that it is primarily on student progress that the school's success will be judged.

Therefore, we are delighted to see the significant and sustained improvement that has taken place in GCSE maths results in the past two years, while our maths faculty leader has been recognised as a specialist leader of education and is also able to support others through the local SIGMA Teaching School Alliance.

We are passionate about adopting the approaches that have been shown to make a real difference for students, such as marking and feedback which demands and allows time for a response from them as they make their next steps in the learning journey. We are delighted that this year has seen an even stronger partnership with parents through the launch of improved information evenings and the adoption of 'Show My Homework'. This is a web-based resource which allows teachers to set homework in school and attach the resources which students need. This can then be viewed by both parents and students on their phones, tablets and other devices.

We are totally committed to giving every young person who enrolls at the school the very best chance to make progress, irrespective of their starting point. In short, we believe that the school fulfils its vision both through its curriculum and broader activities.

“We are totally committed to giving every young person who enrolls at the school the very best chance to make progress, irrespective of their starting point”

Warblington School



Developing students as individuals



Student voice is a key priority

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Julia Vincent
- » Location: Havant, Hampshire
- » Established in 1954
- » 11–16 mixed local authority comprehensive school
- » 683 students
- » 47 teaching staff, 41 associate staff
- » 32% Pupil Premium

“18% rise in 5 A*–C including English and mathematics”

In January 2012 I became Headteacher of Warblington School in Havant. It was the third most deprived school in Hampshire. It had been underperforming over a period of time and had moved from Satisfactory to Requires Improvement. My task was to ensure sustainable, positive change.

My first priority as Head was to work with and support the staff in the school enabling them to focus on the students in the classroom. Building the capacity of the senior team and middle leaders was crucial. To accomplish this, we built a culture of coaching, enabling teachers to take responsibility by working with others to find solutions to their own professional issues. Too many schools confuse coaching with mentoring; our preference was coaching. I believe that the best chance to improve a school is to invest in the existing staff.

We needed to ensure that all Continuing Professional Development (CPD) within the school was high quality. Initially the weekly CPD was universal and focused on the improvement plan. Extra opportunities were offered such as the Improving Teacher Programme and the Outstanding Teacher Programme. All our Middle Leaders were expected to complete a National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders. Over time CPD has become staff led.

Using a Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) model it is focused on need and is used as a change agent. Trained ‘lead coaches’ form the teaching and learning team instigating and conducting research with colleagues. They pilot ideas and innovations and then present their findings to others. Staff develop their practice in an atmosphere of trust and support which has resulted in a grounded, high-quality pedagogy and professional dialogue.

This approach extends to the senior team and the governors, all of whom have embraced a coaching approach to school improvement. As a leadership group we talk issues out, supporting each other to lead our improvement journey, even when it is difficult and unpalatable.

The school serves an overwhelmingly white British working class area characterised by a high percentage of free school meals, pockets of unemployment and a lack of aspiration. Recruitment in this area has never been easy, so developing existing staff is a priority. The next cornerstone of our development has been designing an inclusive school which has the ability to support and nurture students from a wide range of backgrounds and primary experiences. We set about developing a nurture unit and trained selected staff. Gateway now nurtures 15 students annually in Year 7 and supports a range of interventions, academic and emotional in all other years. It is at the heart of our inclusive school. An inclusion team was developed to focus on the needs of individual students and ensure that they are supported to learn. Behaviour for Learning turned

a corner last year and the school is a calm, purposeful learning environment. We take a measured approach to poor behaviour and endeavour to use praise and reward far more than sanctions. I have not permanently excluded any students and only rarely used a fixed-term sanction.

Clear rules are important, as are building good relationships between staff and students. One notable example was banning mobile phones. We saw a pattern of unacceptable social media communications, some of which were happening during school hours. I informed the school and the parents what I was going to do and why. Many parents wrote in support of my actions. Now if a student gets out a mobile phone a member of staff just puts out their hand and the student hands it over. The phone is then collected by the student at the end of the day and no further action is taken. All this was achieved by incrementally increasing the expectations the school has of its students.

Safeguarding has also been at the forefront of our improvement journey. We are explicit about it with all students and focus on keeping them safe through our behaviour policies.

“Staff develop their practice in an atmosphere of trust and support which has resulted in a grounded, high-quality pedagogy and professional dialogue”

Maintaining breadth and balance in the curriculum



Feedback to students is at the heart of our culture





Student to student support helps personal development



Building positive relationships is crucial

Students train to be peer mentors, have opportunities for leadership as prefects and become e-safety ambassadors. Our student leadership programme is growing and ensures students can provide support within the school i.e. reading buddies, prefects, e-safety ambassadors, peer mentors or that they can help the wider community through cake sales or singing to the elderly.

We spend time focusing on building resilience in our students, encouraging the practise of skills in the classroom and instilling the belief that practice and effort will lead to positive GCSE outcomes. We have worked hard to ensure that feedback to students focuses on the effort they have put in and regularly lead assemblies on people who have achieved against

the odds and how they have done it. In students who lack aspiration and positive role models it is hugely important that all staff are prepared to take on this mantle. In this way the school has developed itself as a community and has found its place within our locality. We have a community group who listen to our students and we have student projects such as litter picking in the area or sending Christmas cards to residents or raising money for local good causes.

Our focus has always been on doing the right thing and keeping it simple. We never over-complicate an idea. We have always tried to remember our core business as a school which is teaching and learning – if what we plan to do does not make a positive impact, then why do it? We have relentlessly ensured that the building blocks for success in terms of systems and strategies are in place. None of this is flashy, it is not headline grabbing but it has ensured an 18% increase in 5A*–C including English and mathematics over a four-year period, something of which I, the senior team and the whole school are proud of. We believe that we have laid the foundations for continuing school improvement.

“We take a measured approach to poor behaviour and endeavour to use praise and reward far more than sanctions. I have not permanently excluded any students and rarely use a fixed term sanction ”

Blessed George Napier Catholic School



Learning in action



The leadership team

The key to good learning is effective teaching. The main focus for our school improvement has been the development of teaching and learning for all teachers, at all levels, and the implementation of systems to support this.

The first stage in improving our teaching and learning was the formation of a deep learning group which was set-up many years ago, with teachers who had a keen interest in pedagogy. A key aspect of this group was its structure; it was composed of teachers from different subjects with varying levels of experience. These teachers trialled different ideas and then implemented them across the whole school. An early example of this was the development of our whole school lesson plan.

This subsequently led to us develop an internal course: Good to Outstanding teaching, in conjunction with an external provider. Many of our staff have been through this training and it is now a routine part of the development for our teachers who are in their second year.

Our next stage was to look at what we thought was excellent teaching with Alastair Smith, one of the UK's foremost trainers, leading our training day. The following year we invited Dylan Wiliam, a British educationalist, to lead training for our staff and other schools in the locality. Coupled with this, we launched a two year programme of teaching and learning Communities (TLCs).

These TLC groups comprised a mix of subjects, with differing levels of teaching experience. Each group was chaired by a member of the teaching staff who was trained in the process of TLCs. We have continued this model over a number of years. After the first two years, we then looked at our priorities and tailored a new programme accordingly.

REPORT CARD

- » School: Blessed George Napier Catholic School and Sixth Form, part of The Pope Francis Catholic MAC
- » Opened: 1962
- » Location: Banbury, Oxfordshire
- » Catchment: Banbury and the surrounding areas
- » Ethos: The education of the whole person: intellectually, creatively, spiritually, morally, socially and physically
- » Number of pupils on roll: 855
- » Number of pupils in Sixth Form: 158
- » Progress 8 score: +0.19



Chapel window

“Everything we do is based upon our Gospel values of Compassion, Respect, Truth, Service and Forgiveness”

This year we are using small teams of teachers – the Triad model – based around five areas:

1. Giving incisive feedback: focusing on how Feedback, Action, Response (FAR) marking is used to support pupils in improving their knowledge, understanding and skills.
2. Using highly-effective questioning: to engage pupils, check understanding and correct misconceptions.
3. Creating a positive climate for learning: focusing on establishing a learning environment where pupils love learning and are resilient to failure.
4. Ensuring high expectations and challenge for all groups of pupils: focusing on making maximum use of lesson time to ensure all pupils make progress.
5. Demonstrating progress over time: focusing on how a department can use pupil work and assessments to deliver progress.

The staff are grouped according to development areas identified from lesson observations.

To support our whole school focus on teaching and learning, we have also established a quality assurance process that enables reflective self-evaluation for our Middle and Senior Leaders. This has developed over time and involves lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutinies and analysis of trends, with areas for development arising from collated evidence. Each Subject Leader and Head of Year has an Executive Summary based upon the key Ofsted criteria. This information is collated and the evidence is kept within the separate departments.

We use the same pro-forma for each area and for the whole school, which means we are all focused on our key areas. This consistent approach has helped to improve on practice and on all priorities and is linked in to our development plan.

Everything that we do is based upon Gospel values of compassion, respect, truth, service and forgiveness.

We have been actively involved with the Youth Sport Trust for many years, and are currently a lead school for health and wellbeing. One advantage to this has been the development of leadership for all pupils. All children in Key Stage 3 PE have leadership lessons which develop with the creation of House Activators, Sport Captains and Gold Ambassadors. Many subjects have leaders who run activity days for local primary schools and the pupils are actively involved in organising cross-county championships and all area competitions for our primary cluster. We are also proud to offer our students the opportunity to obtain their bronze, silver and gold Duke of Edinburgh awards.



Science in action

We have a very active performing arts department who put on biannual shows, along with a huge youth choir who take part in events throughout the year, including an annual Carol Service, singing for charity in local care homes and retail establishments and supporting the Rotary Crocus Appeal. This year, during the summer term, they will be embarking on a European tour. Our Year 12 students will travel with the Birmingham Diocesan pilgrimage to work with sick and elderly pilgrims in Lourdes. Pupils also plan and lead high-quality collective

worship to the whole school and other year groups.

Our relatively small size enables us to get to know our pupils well. Each Key Stage has a Head and within each Key Stage there are individual Heads of Year. We also have Pastoral Managers who do not teach but support the pupils in many different ways. This is one of the greatest strengths of our school, it means that issues can be dealt with quickly and efficiently within a supportive network. As our children say, we are just one big family who get on well together.

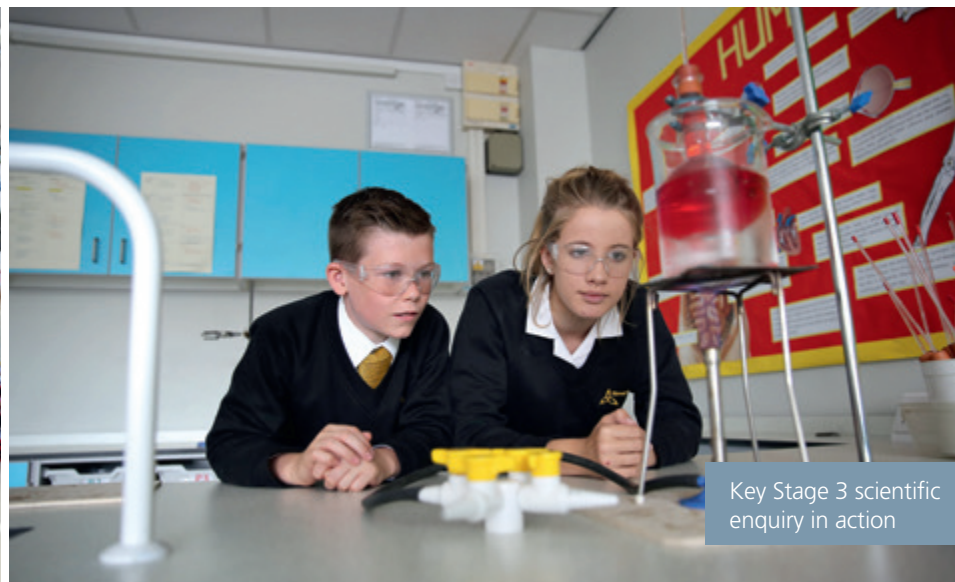


Year 12 pilgrimage to Lourdes

Hounslow School



'All pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged very effectively with skilful questioning' – Ofsted 2017



Key Stage 3 scientific enquiry in action

REPORT CARD

- » Executive Headteacher: Mrs Julie Turvey
- » An 11–16 Co-Educational 2011 Converter Academy in Totton, Hampshire
- » Designated Outstanding by Ofsted in March 2017
- » We have 1,235 students on roll; 121 Pupil Premium, 126 SEND and 5 Children in Care
- » 39% of our Year 7 students were not achieving expected progression on entry
- » We have 85 teachers, 12 learning support assistants and 50 support staff
- » School motto: Be the best that you can be

At Hounslow School we live by our school motto, 'Be the best that you can be', and our working practice and belief that 'getting better never stops'. All headteachers seek to gain improvements and improved outcomes for students year-on-year. The focus of my leadership and management of the school over the past few years has been to seek improvements by applying the principle of 'marginal gains'.

We are already a high-achieving school, putting in place numerous interventions and additional support, however we wanted to be Outstanding and provide an exceptional education for our students. In order to move even further forward, we therefore looked at what small steps and changes we could introduce to bring about further improvement and success.

In 2016 we achieved our vision of being one of the top state schools in Hampshire. We were absolutely delighted that our GCSE leavers made outstanding progress during their five years with us. In maths our Year 11 students made more progress than any other Hampshire school. They ranked first in the new Progress 8 measure with English also ranking within the top ten. In our most recent Ofsted in March 2017 we achieved an Outstanding judgement, cementing our status as one of the top state schools in Hampshire. We were very proud that the feedback from the inspectors identified us as Outstanding in all four Ofsted judgement areas and made a point of noting that the school certainly lives by its motto.

We have a relentless focus on students' performance with interventions being put in place as a result of our rigorous data analysis. We then evaluate the impact of

each intervention. If the intervention has not led to the desired outcome we then abandon that intervention and try something else. For example, we found that giving a student an individual maths specialist mentor was more effective than introducing a general academic mentor for individual students because when students improved their progress in maths their motivation improved across the school.

Our approach is centred on the necessity of creativity and our willingness to try new things to solve a new problem. For example we introduced dog therapy in response to individuals' needs regarding transition, having high levels of anxiety or supporting students with autism. We are unapologetic in our constant drive to ensure access to the curriculum for all students by focusing on literacy and numeracy.

We are also definitely on our journey of embedding the 'Anything is possible, nothing is impossible' mind set. We have an abundance of positive inspirational quotes around the school, including 'Be the Best That You Can Be' across the top of our school stage. That, coupled with visits from inspirational speakers and motivational assemblies, has supported students' self-belief.

Over the past four years we have trialled and introduced a range of specific interventions for both individuals and groups of students to improve their literacy and numeracy. We have students in all year groups undertaking one-to-one additional weekly literacy and numeracy support with specialist teachers and significant improvements have been achieved. We have also appointed a specific dyslexia teacher who delivers weekly one-to-one support sessions. Furthermore all Year 7 and 8 students follow an Accelerated Reader programme to improve their reading comprehension skills, the

results of which have been amazing. Our Year 10 students also act as reading mentors for Year 7 students.

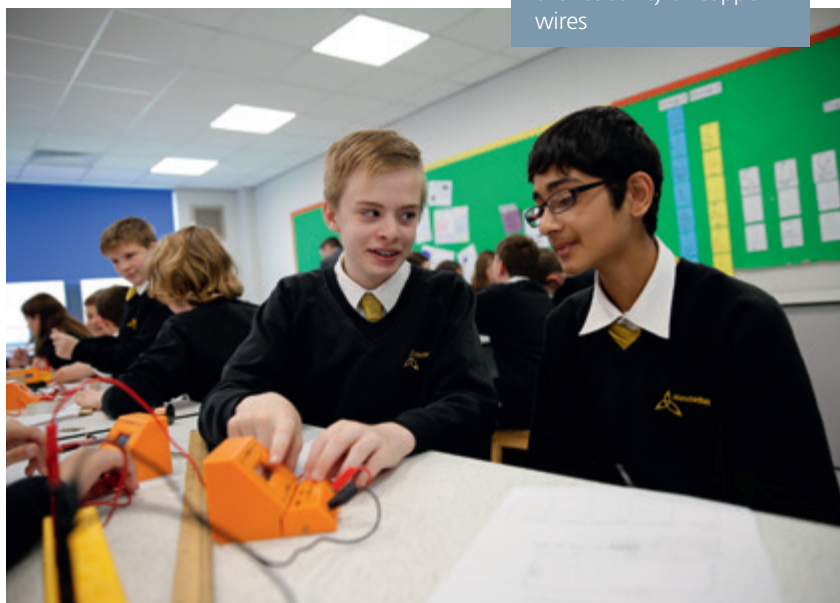
From 2015 the school introduced a Closing the Gap programme, where we worked with targeted students in Year 6 from our link primary schools during the summer term and summer holidays. This included parents attending regular literacy and numeracy workshops with their child. This programme continues, with parents and students attending workshops together when they start at our school in September. For those students who arrive at Hounslow below the expected age-related ability we introduced a discrete transition curriculum for them. This is taught by specialist primary- and secondary-trained teachers with more curriculum time given to literacy and numeracy teaching. The results have been phenomenal.

We have introduced an after school Maths Hub where 20 targeted Year 11 students were tutored in maths throughout the year by some of our ex-students, who come back from Sixth Form College and are paid for their time. The results speak for themselves with 15 of the students in 2016 (75%) achieving their target GCSE grade.

“Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, challenging teaching and highly effective progress-tracking systems ensure that all groups of pupils, including vulnerable pupils and the most able, achieve very well”

Ofsted 2017

Students investigate the resistivity of copper wires





Alternative methods of improving students' literacy

“Accurate assessments inform a wide range of teaching interventions and support for disadvantaged pupils”

Ofsted 2017

In addition to subject revision sessions after school and in the holidays, over the past two years we have provided students with 20 minute morning revision sessions every day in all subjects. Identified students are requested to attend those subjects where further improvement is needed and this continues for the entire year.

We have also introduced the following small changes and Marginal Gains to our teaching practice:

- » Targeted parental workshops and sessions
- » Creation of a Pupil Premium cluster group to enable colleagues across our local area to discuss and share good practice strategies to improve the achievements of disadvantaged students
- » Weekly staff briefing slots sharing good practice. These have led to time-saving practice (Mega Seating Plan) and enhanced classroom challenge (Thinking Hard Strategies – as seen at a Partners in Excellence (PiXL) conference)
- » Weekly morning department Raising Standards Meetings to discuss

students who are underachieving, and who need additional focus and intervention

- » Monthly and half-termly Raising Standards Meetings between the Senior Leadership Team and individual departments to review further interventions
- » A focus on Mastery Assessment in Years 7 and 8 with students given lesson time to return to areas in which they are not secure
- » All support staff have a performance management target of either being a reading mentor or providing one-to-one maths support, including our Site Manager
- » A 'non-negotiables' teaching focus check list is given to all teachers at the start of each academic year.

What have been our learning points?

Never be afraid to abandon those strategies that are not working or are not achieving the impact required. However, we also ensure that we build upon what has been successful.

What has been most successful or effective?

One-to-one teaching alongside additional curriculum time. One cannot forget the impact of regular formative assessment and feedback by teachers where students are asked to respond to targets set. We have adopted the PiXL 'scorecard' principles and found these to be highly effective and beneficial for colleagues and students.

Future plans

We are working closely with our link junior and post-16 colleagues to undertake some cross-phase teaching and support work, especially to extend the challenge to our more-able students.

Plymouth School of Creative Arts



Dave Strudwick, Headteacher

Plymouth School of Creative Arts (PSCA) is a 4-16 mainstream all-through Free School founded by Plymouth College of Art (PCA) in 2013. PSCA has Creativity and Making at its core. It is looking to prove that children don't have to choose between being either academic or creative, they can be both. It provides a greatly enriching experience.

In the words of the Principal of PCA, Professor Andrew Brewerton, 'PSCA was established with an emphasis on learning-through-making, and the learning ethos of the school draws upon and develops the intrinsic motivation of all learners towards understanding and practice. Plymouth School of Creative Arts isn't just a new kind of school, it aims to become a new kind of learning community. Students of all ages collaborate across age-groups, and with practitioners, in studio environments, focusing on their learning and their life.'

Together PSCA and PCA are creating what Tate director Sir Nicholas Serota hailed as a new model of creative education: 'a progressive continuum' of creative learning from Early Years to Masters level. A place where making is central to all learning including reading and writing, science and maths; a place where the business of learning is inseparable from that of leading and living one's life.

As part of this continuum students of all ages collaborate with each other. Students traveled from Plymouth to London to create a pop-up school in Tate Modern, where the public engaged in making alongside students.

The dynamic model we are creating combines pedagogy, practical experience and assessment connected by the following principles.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Dave Strudwick
- » Current Number of students on Roll is 750 expanding to 1050 in September 2018
- » 39.1 FTE Teachers, 30.5 FTE Teaching Assistants
- » Current Year groups: Preschool to Year 5, Year 7 to Year 9
- » Age Range 3–14 currently rising to 16 in September 2018
- » Lower Super Output Area the school is in is profiled in the 1st percentile of need nationally
- » Pupil Premium: 43%
- » English as an Additional Language: 15.5%
- » Statement or Education Health Care Plan 3.5%

“A key strength of the school’s inspiring curriculum is that pupils can see the relevance of their activities to life outside of the school... Pupils’ love of learning and thirst for knowledge is palpable ”

Ofsted

1. Personal Purpose (the process of making).

When something is compelling to an individual everything else changes. Time races, the room disappears. When learning is authentic the magic is much more likely to happen. We are on a journey turning something that is realistic into something that is real. A real project with a real audience generates a tender loving care and some edge. It is this stretch, based on intrinsic motivation, towards something not yet made which means that our school is a great place to learn. This is resulting in increased confidence, development of core skills and accelerated progress.

2. Being alongside

To connect with an individual is to understand their motivations, their passions. The significance of entering another’s world, listening to enable understanding rather than telling what, and how, to do, cannot be overstated. Our use of making and digital learning gives permission for learners and facilitators to stop, watch, listen and notice.

3. Transparency

The school has a culture of transparency between all its members. We look to create a curiosity of what we might learn from experience. The fundamental aim of our teaching approach is that we share without judgement (but probably not discomfort) what’s working, what’s missing and what’s next. The open plan studios hugely support this and aid the learning of staff and students from one another.

4. Rigour

The creative process is full of rigour and challenge. Assessment that helps the learner make sense of their learning in all its complexity is rigorous. In many ways we are assessing more often. Assessing to inform an understanding of where I am and how I see my world. We use Artificial Intelligence (*Realizeit* – a platform that adapts to your understanding and the way you learn) to build a clear picture of need enabling progress in Maths (and soon in other subjects). This understanding is deepened and applied into real projects across subjects. Tracking of students means we intervene early using real-time data.

Pop Up School in Tate Modern connecting to students in Plymouth
Photo by Hannah Miles



Learning is felt and enters the muscle, Photo by Chris Sutherland



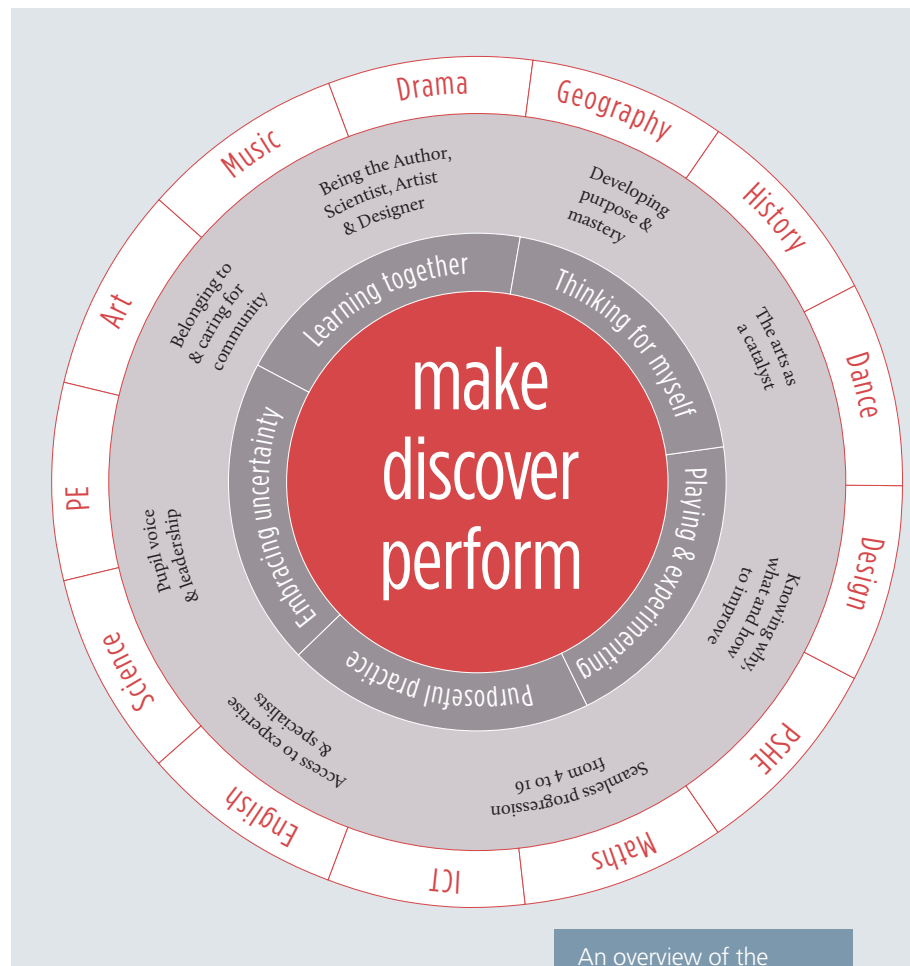
5. A part of the community

One of the most striking things about our culture is how the community support students' learning. This helps build a different sense of where the Horizon is. People from all walks of life make the possibility of being the author, artist or scientist tangible and within touching distance when students are meeting 'real people'. Plymouth College of Art students 'make' alongside our students, providing an almost touchable sense of the possibility of being a ceramicist, a painter, a photographer, or filmmaker. Players from Plymouth Raiders train in the school. Our position next to the ferry port enables our children to walk to France to buy ingredients from a market to make food with on their return. Experts from organisations like Kier Construction and the National Marine Aquarium assist students as they develop their projects.

Development of Staff

The success of our school is based on the special gifts that each staff member brings. They are not delivering someone else's vision but creating and recreating a community of possibility. We are looking to create a new kind of student and therefore need a new kind of teacher, indeed we need many new kinds of teacher. Rich, a secondary science specialist expresses this clearly when he suggests:

Project Based Learning, facilitated by the HERO (a learning management system which has a strong evidence base in the states), has meant I have been able to change almost everything about the way I teach, from how I structure lessons to what I'm assessing pupils for, and how I assess. It has been a steep learning curve, which doesn't



An overview of the schools curriculum with making at its core and subjects connected to purpose

look set to level off any time soon, but it feels like a hugely positive step in the right direction of what it is to be a graphic illustrator, an architect, builder, project manager and published scientist!

One simple story illustrates these principles in action. Following the making of fish fingers from their fresh ingredients in school a 5-year-old went home and asked for the same for tea. Her mum went to the freezer and her daughter explained no I want to make them. Once her mum had bought the ingredients she then taught her how this could be done recalling her own memorable experience and creating another.

With the above principles in mind we are making our approach to reveal learning and will continue to be 'Creating Individuals, Making Futures'!

Learning and making are visible in our studios
Photo by Hannah Miles



Purbrook Park School



Paul Foxley, Headteacher



Our pupils enjoy attending Purbrook Park

I became Headteacher at Purbrook Park School, in Purbrook, Hampshire, in January 2012. Eight weeks later, Ofsted threatened to put the school into Special Measures. This was later commuted to Notice to Improve. With the sustained support of Paul Evelyn, our Chair of Governors, we rapidly improved the school to Requires Improvement in the first year. We improved again to Good in all areas by May 2015.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Paul Foxley
- » Location: Purbrook, Waterlooville, Hampshire
- » Opened: 1907
- » 11–16 Foundation Trust School
- » Number of pupils: 650 (and rising!)
- » www.purbrookparkschool.co.uk

In 2016, the pupils who were eleven years old when I joined, delivered the school's best examination results yet. This testifies to the incredible journey of school improvement. That sense of pride and achievement, which is evident every day throughout the entire school community, is the reason why I am looking forward to my next five years as Headteacher.

My best piece of advice to any new headteacher would be to establish the right staffing structure as soon as possible and then build an outstanding team of self-motivated leaders to help you achieve your goal of greatness. The renewal of staffing is vital and 75% of my excellent teaching staff team are new. Purbrook Park's success is a result of both my own resolve and determination, combined with the enthusiasm and optimism of my brilliant senior and middle leaders. Emma Bolton, my Deputy Headteacher, inspires and supports me in equal measure. Being an outstanding headteacher is not a job you can do on your own.

A school at the heart of the community

Purbrook Park School welcomes all children from any background. One of the key tasks in 2012 was to establish a clear behaviour and anti-bullying policy and to

motivate pupils and parents to share our high aspirations. One of our most effective strategies so far has been to establish an excellent team of non-teaching pastoral leaders. By facilitating regular contact with parents and by focusing on improving pupils' attendance and wellbeing, we now provide exceptional care and support to every child. Our growing reputation has resulted in many parents contacting us to move their child to Purbrook Park – word of mouth is crucial in building the school's success and esteem in our community.

Many of our pupils are already excelling in their field of expertise. We have several promising great footballers, linked to Portsmouth, Southampton and Chelsea football clubs! Others are successful swimmers, musicians, actors and singers. Over 100 pupils take part in the annual Rock Challenge. We won the regional competition in 2014 to join the national premier league. Our pupils are successful academically and also encouraged to pursue what drives them individually.

Everyone in education recognises the importance of developing suitably qualified leaders, as the role of headteacher evolves and becomes

increasingly equivalent to a chief executive officer in trade and industry. Our governing body meets once a month to develop strategy and, as a trust school, we are fortunate to have the support of a variety of local businesses and colleges. I have recently begun my own Masters in Business Administration (MBA) at Portsmouth University and I encourage all my staff to participate in regular high-quality professional development.

Enjoy Enrich Excel

This is our new school motto, which underpins everything we do. Children must be safe at school and then they must be happy at school so that they can work as hard as they can and do as well as they can. Excellent teachers ensure that pupils enjoy their learning and really care about the progress made by each individual child. The best teachers inspire and motivate children to want to do better, whatever their starting point.

Teachers' time is precious, and our new marking policy empowers them. Rather than ticking pupils' notes on every page, teachers plan and select the most important work to mark. Feedback is vital in telling children what they are getting wrong, and then teachers

“The way in which school leaders check the progress, attendance and well-being of every student is now outstanding”

Ofsted May 2015

Our pupils excel in sports, theatre & music



We encourage our pupils to be ambitious in all aspects of life





Engaging learning in science

must give them an opportunity to put it right. Marking is valuable when it has a direct and measurable impact on improving pupils' knowledge and understanding. I believe that every child has the capacity to make excellent progress, when given the correct balance of challenge and support.

A school with a growth mindset

It is essential for any publicly-funded school to deliver best value for money in a challenging economic environment. My senior team and I have worked hard to maintain a balanced budget, even when this has meant making tough

decisions on spending. Since 2012, our trust has invested over £5 million pounds into the infrastructure of our school, to build brand new sports facilities, and exceptional new classrooms for our young people.

Carol S. Dweck, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, coined the term 'growth mindset' to help explain how children who believe that they can continually improve are far more likely to work hard and put in the extra effort needed to be successful.

Matthew Syed, British sports journalist for *The Times*, talks about the 'power of purposeful practice'. It is only by consistently working hard to improve something you cannot yet quite do, that you develop into the expert you want to become. Great teachers plan lessons which inspire and engage young people to work hard to achieve what they never thought possible. This includes providing a wide range of after-school enrichment activities to develop pupils' creativity, talents and passion for learning. Over time, this is what leads to excellent examination results and this is what will make our school outstanding.

“We are incredibly grateful that Martha has been lucky enough to attend a school as nurturing as Purbrook, with the complementary levels of discipline and ambition to enable her to succeed academically, providing she is prepared to work hard”

Mrs Reid, parent

Roundwood Park School



Alan Henshall, Headteacher
with students

'Habits of learning are as important as facts if you wish to develop the whole child'. If you agree with that statement then you are very much on board with the ethos of Roundwood Park School (RPS) and its philosophy enshrined in 'Aspire', our approach to teaching and learning.

Seven years ago I inherited a school which had a good reputation, had recently been graded 'outstanding' by OFSTED and had a strong, committed staff. Obviously there was a choice to make – keep it on track or move it forward by innovating and building on its success. We didn't rush in. The school was doing well and we wanted to formulate something which would be sustainable and long term – a key idea which would thrive in the turbulence of change in education policy nationally. We also needed a common language of learning across the school, so that learning could be connected from subject to subject, something that can be a challenge in a large secondary school. To summarise, we would only move forward with our vision when we were certain it was in the right direction for all of us.

Glen Pettengell, my Deputy Headteacher, and I had many discussions during our first two years of working together about what this idea would look like and how it could be represented around the school and inform our daily practice. We had both read the works of Guy Claxton, an academic from Winchester University, and we were also particularly inspired by the work of Dr Carol Dweck, the Stanford University psychologist and author of *Mindset*, which focuses on how a growth mindset could be nurtured and developed. Glen, along with Kate Callaghan, our Head of Geography, and Mike Garbutt, Head of Expressive Arts, went to visit various schools which were performing exceptionally well. We were

REPORT CARD

- » Alan Henshall has been the Headteacher of Roundwood Park School in Harpenden since 2010
- » The school has 1260 students and 192 staff
- » Harpenden is a picturesque, affluent town in Hertfordshire
- » The students at Roundwood Park come from the town and its surrounding villages
- » Although most of the students at the school arrive with high prior attainment, the school is proud to serve students of all abilities

“Aspire had to be something which we all created together”

particularly inspired by Dr Challenor’s School in Buckinghamshire and its then Deputy Headteacher, Mark Sturgeon.

Having had our ideas shaped by these experiences, we then set about creating the vision the RPS way. ‘Aspire’ had to be something which we all created together, rather than being something taken directly from another source, without any buy-in from the school community. In April 2012, Glen and I ran a series of consultations with all of our staff, a group of parents, our governing body, who brought the expertise of employers to the debate, and over 150 of our students. In these sessions we asked two very simple questions: ‘What qualities should Roundwood Park leavers have?’ and ‘In order to achieve this, what habits of learning do they need to develop to be

successful in an ever changing world?’ ‘Habits’ was used as a key term from the start because habits, unlike skills, would only be embedded if they were seen repeatedly in an individual’s behaviour rather than only once.

After the consultation, Glen, Kate and Mike found themselves in a room with hundreds of pieces of flip chart paper and a take away pizza! After several hours they emerged with only two pieces of paper; one containing the characteristics of the RPS leaver and the other with the learning habits needed to attain those characteristics. These were made into signs which went around the school and into every classroom.

From then, our task was to implement ‘Aspire’. A series of training days, assemblies and parent information evenings took place in

Learning habits at Roundwood Park School

ASPIRE
LEARNING
FOR LIFE
 @
RPS

LEARNING
INTEGRITY
FRIENDSHIP
EXCELLENCE

Learning to understand
 Problem Solving
 Adapting existing knowledge and skills, to tackle unfamiliar problems
 Thinking Logically
 Experimenting and trialing, thinking things through step-by-step
 Questioning
 Having an enquiring mind. Exploring how, why and what if?
 Making Links
 Seeing the connections with all learning or the outside world
 Being Resourceful
 Seeking and selecting the best available resources for a task
 Creative Thinking
 Using imagination to generate fresh ideas and original solutions

Individuality
 Planning Ahead
 Researching, exploring and preparing thoroughly, anticipating potential problems
 Organising
 Prioritising, designing a route and tracking your progress
 Reflecting
 Understanding yourself as a learner and learning from experience
 Risk Taking
 Trying new things, seizing the opportunity, whilst managing the risk sensibly
 Evaluating
 Identifying strengths and weaknesses in a task. Seeking improvements and further refinements
 Responsibility
 Directing and taking control of your learning

Focusing
 Inspiration
 Enjoying learning, approaching it enthusiastically and with a smile
 Self Discipline
 Identifying goals, avoiding distractions, finishing tasks, meeting deadlines
 Determination
 Staying motivated and positive to achieve your desired goal
 Perseverance
 Readiness to make mistakes without fear of failure, accepting them and carrying on
 Insight
 Being aware of detail and the bigger picture, balanced by the right amount of perfection

Evolving with others
 Flexibility
 Knowing when to work alone or co-operate with others
 Collaboration
 Working effectively in a team, drawing on everyone's individual skills
 Communication
 Presenting ideas and views clearly, and accurately for an audience
 Learning Respectfully
 Listening to, understanding and exploring the views of others, developing your thinking
 Valuing Others
 Recognising and utilising the strengths of others to enhance your learning



Kate Callaghan working with students



September 2012 and we began our new approach. Each teacher was asked to put not only a learning objective on the board – for example ‘By the end of this lesson we will have learned the key features of the Cold War’ – but also a learning habit, such as ‘risk taking’ in order to encourage students to make hypotheses and be bold in their thinking. At the end of the lesson, the teacher and students would then evaluate, not only whether the learning objective had been met, but also whether the students had taken any risks with their thinking and extended the quality of their writing as a result, such as making links between the actions of both the East and the West. We allowed the teachers the license to experiment with their use of Aspire. We developed a series of ‘Insights’ – lesson observations where teachers observed each other, not with the usual qualitative observation form, but with a pro forma which directed them to look at the habits being used by the students and the opportunities they were given to practise them. The information we gathered informed our future in-service training and our priorities for our school improvement planning.

Five years later

In 2017, after five years of Aspire, now run by Alexandra Gray, one of our Assistant Headteachers, the past three years have been the most successful in the school’s history, both at GCSE and A Level, in terms of our value added scores. We have twice been named in the top 100 non-selective schools in the country for the proportion of students getting five good passes including English and Maths, and we have used our expertise to work with another school featured in this Parliamentary Review, The Astley Cooper School, to help it gain a ‘good’ grade in its most recent inspection from OFSTED. We are also working with the two other outstanding Harpenden schools, Sir John Lawes and St George’s, to build a new free school to accommodate the rising population in the area. Not all of this is down to Aspire, but it has certainly helped in bringing us together as a community and in giving us an understanding of what binds us together as educators and students.

“The past three years have been the most successful in the school’s history”

Selwood Academy



John Boyne inspiring the love of reading and writing

Middle school education is at risk, we need to act now. Rigid key stages of Primary and Secondary structures have existed since 1926 when 11 was the minimum school leaving age. Why are we allowing a highly successful three tier system, incorporating specialist provision, more developmentally appropriate environments, and a clear driver of the momentum of learning for children aged 9–13 to be extinguished? Can we really endorse the dissolution of the ‘Magic of the Middle’?

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Mrs Jean Hopegood, January 2013
- » Status: Joint Anglican and Methodist Academy
- » 625 mixed pupils ages 9–13, Staff 97
- » SEND 16%. Disadvantaged 27%. EAL 4%
- » Ofsted: Good, May 2017
- » SIAMS: Outstanding all four categories, June 2014
- » Committed to the C of E vision for education, July 2016.

Selwood Academy is an oversubscribed, highly successful middle school. It has exceptionally strong and effective communication within the Frome Learning Partnership. We ensure quality school improvement initiatives and contribute to the national education agenda through the National Association of Middle Schools Forum. In 2015 we were chosen to pilot the new section 5 inspection and in May 2017 we were re-designated Good.

We will not allow the findings of the ‘Cambridge Primary review 2010’, a key endorsement for the 3 tier system, to become another piece of obsolete research. Whilst deemed Secondary, Selwood demonstrates the best of Primary and Secondary. It provides an environment that not only supports and promotes wellbeing; it proactively enables a culture of aspiration where the pupils do not face the social pressures of adolescence before they have matured emotionally and securely as children. Our ethos is clear and tangible: we want our children to develop and participate in society, we want to enable them to be empowered, to experience and contribute to ‘life in all its fullness’ (John 10:10).

Academically, standards have risen year on year, we still have further to go. Literacy across the curriculum has been a key focus over the past two years to improve core learning skills. The implementation of a peer and self – assessment strategy for pupils to learn the non-negotiables of written English, swiftly allowed them to focus on the raised expectations of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Aspiration is high; the pursuit of accuracy is relentless and embraced by all. For many children, what was once an endured task of response to teacher driven corrections has become a focus of pride. Allowing children to think for themselves, become more independent and resilient in their learning has been a significant change for them all.

Inspired by our visiting speaker programme, including Siobhan Marie O'Connor – Rio 2016 Olympics silver medallist and Shlomo – world champion beat boxer, the children learn from meeting highly successful role models. Building upon small steps leading to larger successes, recovering from setbacks and building resilience are key messages. Listening to John Boyne ('The boy in the striped pyjamas') read his latest novel uninterrupted for almost an hour, inspired a surge in reading which continues to thrive.

The most eagerly awaited weekly visitor is 'Zevah', our reading dog. This beautiful German shepherd sits patiently listening to children read. Children who are reluctant to read out loud, will happily tell him stories. Reading ages rise significantly for those who spend time at his side. We believe creativity is key to unlocking potential.

The bold step of cancelling staff after-school meetings for a term to favour self-led school improvement groups, dramatically impacted on our cultural shift. Leadership at all levels received professional development resulting in staff members supporting



Zevah, patiently listens to children reading

schools across Somerset. The Middle schools 'Leaders of Learning' initiative, promoted and developed emerging leaders. Subsequently staff have pioneered development programmes, presenting outcomes to members of the Church of England General Synod, including 40 Bishops. A highly creative, Personal Aspirational Social Health Educational (PASHE) Programme in which EVERY pupil creates, leads, and participates in local community projects resulted.

This enhanced curriculum is inspiring. 12 year olds devising a multi-sensory

“Rapid progress was made by pupils from starting points”
Ofsted 2017

Jean Hopegood
Headteacher, Mr Richard Sage, History Faculty head and Selwood pupils receiving a National award presented in the House of Lords for Legacy 110 innovative History work





Stephen Sondheim's 'Into the woods' performed by pupils aged 9-12 in the woods



Aiming high – National UK gymnastics finalist 2016 and 2017

“Pupils challenge themselves in all aspects of their learning... Literacy is now a strength across the curriculum”
Ofsted 2017

story for visiting pupils from the local special school enabled understanding and responsiveness to the individual challenges of others. A publicity video created to support the local YMCA café fundraising initiative enabled children to understand homelessness and how they have capacity to contribute positively to effecting change. Young pupils are emerging as confident, ambitious and articulate leaders before they choose GCSE options.

We educate an increasing number of children with significant emotional delay which create challenges for the whole community, as does improving the achievement of the disadvantaged. Acting as a conduit and triage centre for the support of children with such complex needs is part of the daily challenge for our experienced and dedicated staff. The middle years are crucial in building the understanding

and framework of support that will last throughout their school years. Creating a culture of inclusion and inspiring all children to believe they can become more confident and achieve has resulted in significant development of wrap around care. As a result of the Somerset Challenge we have begun a partnership with 'Achievement for All' and their Founder and CEO Professor Sonia Blandford. Our work will contribute to a two year research project across the South West of England studying the impact of a range of initiatives and resources upon the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. We know that learning needs to engage, be meaningful and creative, and that children need to be emotionally attached to it for progress to take place. Selwood proves that middle school is a perfect place to explore this fully.

Tring School



Our community stimulates and encourages a love of learning



Susanna Collings, Headteacher with successful, confident and responsible students

When I started as Headteacher at Tring School in 2011 it appeared to be doing well: fully staffed, all year groups full, pleasing post-16 results and Good Ofsted in 2010. Underneath the bonnet, however, a very different picture emerged: science results were very poor, teaching was variable and too many staff were simply not good enough. In addition, it was difficult to know if Tring School was a Church of England school, the role of Chair of Governors changed regularly and the school buildings were in a poor condition.

In response I developed three goals:

- » 'Revolutionise' the quality of teaching and learning
- » Address staffing and organisational culture
- » Create a school fit for the 21st century.

Revolutionising the quality of teaching and learning

To bring about change, the leadership team established a learning and teaching group to innovate and inspire. Every teacher was observed during a three-day 'mocksted'. Paired observations revealed 49% of lessons were judged as Requiring Improvement or Inadequate and 51% were Good or Outstanding. This meant on average half of the teaching for each student was simply not good enough.

Science had a bad reputation. Far more serious were the science GCSE results which were poor and there was an exodus of A-level students who left to study elsewhere.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Susanna Collings
- » Tring School, Hertfordshire
- » 11-18 Converter Academy
- » 1,530 students including 330 in Sixth Form
- » 180 staff

“We are now defined as the ‘30th Google Reference School’ in the country”

The situation was likely to get worse before we could make it better, as initiating the processes of dismissing staff and replacing them was neither quick nor straightforward – yet absolutely essential. Changing half of the department has made a huge difference.

With a bolstered leadership team I knew we could move forward more quickly. Senior staff had clear accountabilities for raising academic standards and the quality of delivery improved. As a result 93% of lessons are now Good or better and over 50% are Outstanding. Progress has been positive for the past three years and science is now one of our top performing departments. In January 2014 Ofsted saw the improvements first-hand; they awarded Good with many Outstanding features in their report.

By 2015 we revised our IT strategy and began an extensive research and training programme into Google Education. In May 2016 we launched our 1-2-1 Chromebook scheme for all students and we are now defined as the ‘30th Google Reference School’ in the country. Our staff and students use ‘Google Applications For Education’ to explore new ways of learning and teaching. Many administrative functions have become hugely more efficient, leading to significant savings. More importantly, we have seen a dramatic improvement in academic progress, for example our middle ability boys’ results improved by 11% within a year.

With large student numbers it’s essential to have clear systems in place. We insist upon excellent attendance and punctuality, timely completion of homework, clearly understood rewards and sanctions along with politeness and mutual respect. Tring School has great students and we are incredibly proud of them. We are delighted to be in the top 10% of all schools post-16.

Uniform has always been good; however, skirts had become too short! We spelt out our requirements to families before September 2015 and the vast majority of students arrived looking smart, but some were incorrectly dressed. This wasn’t a new policy, yet some parents were upset and the local press descended. However, within three days the students were all wearing the correct uniform – and when Sir Michael Wilshaw made reference on national TV to his support of the Head in Hertfordshire, I knew to whom he was referring!

Key to revolutionising learning for students is the formation of a strong 3-19 education in Tring and the surrounding areas. We are the only secondary school in Tring, with very close relationships with local primaries. This has allowed us to explore the formation of a Multi Academy Trust. Whilst the economies of scale from shared services will be useful, we can clearly see the educational and pastoral benefits.

The House system forms a strong community within our school



Staffing and organisational culture

Changing organisation culture is always challenging and rarely swift. It is essential to set, and then drive unwaveringly towards, the ethos and vision. Clear articulation of Christian values and beliefs, actions taken from a strong moral position, uncompromising commitment to high standards – they all form part of changing the culture. Over time people who don't feel that they 'fit' will move on. When filling the vacancies it is again essential to be uncompromising, only recruiting and then training the best possible staff.

Having excellent staff remains the best strategy for raising achievement and we're a leading school in the Dacorum Teaching School Alliance. Our comprehensive training and wellbeing programmes explain why 98% of staff are 'proud to work at Tring School', 95% 'know what the school is trying to achieve' and 95% 'have the skills and training to do a good job'.

Schools have to become entrepreneurial and we have established a trading company to sell the school uniform and related items. We can think differently about our finances and help plug the falling revenue from the Education Funding Agency. It's early days but in time we can see that the new company will provide



Exploring new ways of learning through Google

sufficient funds to maintain our present staffing levels.

Creating a school for the 21st century

In 2011 the school boilers were at the end of their life. Over £200k was needed and no funding was available but eventually the local authority were persuaded to fund the work. Through prudent financial management and access to capital improvement funds, we replaced several roofs and improved existing structures. However, this was only a temporary fix; we needed a more strategic solution. We engaged a local architect to create a masterplan for a state-of-the-art learning environment. This proved to be a valuable part of our application for new-build funding in 2014. Our thorough application built a compelling case and over 70% of the estate will now be rebuilt or substantially refurbished. Our application was 100% successful, making the project one of the largest in the country.

“We're a leading school in the Dacorum Teaching School Alliance”

Looking forward

Our three goals are coming to fruition. Our collective desire and passion for improvement has transformed our culture and hugely improved classroom practice and outcomes, and we're on the brink of a huge rebuilding project.



Review of Parliament

A snap election

On the 19th April 2017, having repeatedly insisted that she had no intention of calling a snap election, Prime Minister, Theresa May, sprung a complete surprise when she summoned the press to Downing Street to announce she would seek a Commons vote to go to the country on June 8th 2017.

It was all the more dramatic because the first inkling came only when it was announced that the Prime Minister would make an important statement outside Downing Street.

The announcement, made as Parliament returned from its Easter break, had the force of a thunderclap in Westminster. Quite unexpectedly, MPs and parties were plunged into election mode – with no-one in any doubt that the two thirds Commons majority, required to trigger a dissolution, under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, would be reached.

The immediate effect was to turn what were now the two remaining Prime Minister's Question Times of the Parliament into *de facto* leader's debates – especially since it was made clear that Theresa May would not take part in the kind of televised debates held in the 2010 and 2015 elections.

On this occasion, her first questioner was the Conservative backbencher, Alberto Costa, who zeroed in on his Party's campaign theme: 'Strong countries need strong economies. Strong countries need strong defences. Strong countries need strong leaders. As the nation prepares to go to the polls, who else in this House, apart



Prime Minister Theresa May sought to strengthen her position before negotiations with the EU began

from my Right Hon. Friend, can provide the leadership that is needed at this time?'

The Prime Minister did not miss a beat: 'There are three things that a country needs: a strong economy, strong defence and strong, stable leadership. That is what our plans for Brexit and our plans for a stronger Britain will deliver... The Right Hon. Member for Islington North (The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn) would bankrupt our economy and weaken our defences and is simply not fit to lead.'

To Conservative jeers, Mr Corbyn counter-attacked: 'She says that it is about leadership, yet she refuses to defend her record in television debates. It is not hard to see why. The Prime Minister says that we have a stronger economy, yet she cannot explain why people's wages are lower today than they were 10 years ago or why more households are in debt. Six million people are earning less than the

living wage, child poverty is up, and pensioner poverty is up.'

The two leaders traded more accusations with Theresa May warning that ordinary working people would face higher taxes and lost jobs under Labour while Mr Corbyn claimed the Prime Minister's priority was 'tax giveaways to the richest corporations while our children's schools are starved of the resources they need to educate our children for the future'.

Brexit emerged as one of the Prime Minister's main campaign themes: 'every vote for the Conservatives will make me stronger when I negotiate for Britain with the European Union.

And every vote for the Conservatives will mean we can stick to our plan for a stronger Britain and take the right long-term decisions for a more secure future for this country.'

The SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, raised the headline in the *Daily Mail* which called on the Prime Minister to 'Crush the saboteurs' working against her plans for Brexit. He said that struck a dangerous tone in a democratic state: 'so does the Prime Minister agree that political opponents are not "saboteurs"?'.

Later that afternoon, the Commons voted to call an early election, by 522 votes to 13.

The Queen's Speech

The Queen's Speech announced the government's legislative plan for the coming Parliament

What a difference. Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn's final Commons confrontation before the election had seen the Conservatives limbering

up for a triumphal campaign which would culminate in the inevitable smashing of their Labour opponents. When the diminished, battered band



of Conservative MPs reassembled, minus their parliamentary majority, for the state opening of Parliament on June 21st, they were chastened and uncertain, while euphoria gripped the occupants of the Labour benches.

When they came to speak in the traditional debate on an address thanking Her Majesty for the Queen's Speech – the new Government's legislative programme – the dynamic between the two main figures had changed completely. Mr Corbyn seemed a far more confident, assertive parliamentary performer, relishing the opportunity to throw back the taunts that had been hurled at him during the campaign.

A Government which had warned that he could only gain power in a 'coalition of chaos' with the SNP and the Lib Dems had been forced to negotiate for the support of the Northern Ireland Democratic Unionists ... and as the first debate of this new Parliament began, that support had not been secured. Mr Corbyn could not resist the open goal. To triumphant Labour laughter he noted that 'the latest coalition may already be in some chaos'.

'Nothing could emphasise that chaos more than the Queen's Speech we have just heard: a threadbare legislative programme from a Government who have lost their majority and apparently run out of ideas altogether. This would be a thin legislative programme even if it was for one year, but for two years – two years? There is not enough in it to fill up one year.'

That was a reference to the Government's decision to declare a two-year Parliamentary Session – a procedural move intended to ensure ministers could push through vital Brexit legislation in time for the exit date in March 2019. Mr Corbyn mocked the Prime Minister for



Jeremy Corbyn received a boost in support following the election

dropping a series of election promises that had not found favour with the voters.

'It is therefore appropriate to start by welcoming what is not in the speech. First, there is no mention of scrapping the winter fuel allowance for millions of pensioners through means testing. Can the Prime Minister assure us that that Conservative plan has now been withdrawn? Mercifully, neither is there any mention of ditching the triple lock. Pensioners across Britain will be grateful to know whether the Tory election commitment on that has also been binned.'

Also absent from this slimmed down legislative programme were the Government's controversial policy on social care (dubbed the 'dementia tax' by Labour), plans to cut free school meals, and the promised expansion of grammar schools.

On Brexit, Mr Corbyn stuck to Labour's careful positioning in favour of a deal with the EU 'that puts jobs and the economy first'. He called for full access to the single market and a customs arrangement that provided Britain with the 'exact same benefits' as now. And in his final flourish he warned the Prime Minister that Labour were now 'not merely an Opposition; we are a Government in waiting, with a policy programme that enthused and engaged millions of people in this election, many for the first time in their political lives. We are ready to offer real strong and stable leadership in the interests of the many, not the few.'

The Prime Minister attempted to puncture Labour's mood with a

barbed welcome for Mr Corbyn's return to the Opposition benches – and she reminded him that the Conservatives still had 56 more Commons seats than Labour. She said her policies were aimed at 'grasping the opportunities for every community in our country to benefit as we leave the European Union; it is about delivering the will of the British people with a Brexit deal that works for all parts of our United Kingdom.' She said the referendum vote to leave the European Union was 'a profound and justified expression that our country often does not work the way it should for millions of ordinary families. This Queen's Speech begins to change that, by putting fairness at the heart of our agenda.'

Grenfell Tower



Tributes for the Grenfell victims came from across the country

The fire that destroyed Grenfell Tower, a social housing block in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, seemed to some to crystallise the issues that had driven the 'Corbyn Surge' in the General Election just days earlier.

Accusations about the neglect of social housing tenants, chronic under-investment and official incompetence were flying, even while the pall of smoke still hovered over the capital and the horrific images of the blaze were replayed on TV.

So potent was the symbolism that it became intertwined in the debates on the post-election Queen's Speech - but the Government also committed to keep MPs informed about the aftermath, the efforts to identify casualties in the wreckage of the tower, to re-house and assist those who had lost their homes, and to set up a public inquiry.

So it was that the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, came to the Commons on July 3rd to announce £2.5 million had been distributed from the special £5 million fund set up to help the residents. Mr Javid said the public inquiry and the criminal investigation had to be allowed the

space to follow the evidence wherever it took them, and everyone should be careful not to prejudice their work. Responding to the Labour MP, David Lammy, who had lost a family friend in the fire, he added that although it was for the judge to determine the scope of the inquiry, he expected it to be 'as broad and wide-ranging as possible'.

Mr Javid also dealt with the key issue of the authorities' inability to say exactly how many people had died: 'There has been much speculation about who was in Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire, and it is vital that we find out. The Director of Public Prosecutions has made it clear that there will be no prosecution of tenants ... who may have been illegally sub-letting their property, ... There may have been people living in flats that were illegally sub-let who had no idea about the true status of their tenancy. Their families want to know if they perished in the fire. These are their sons, their daughters, their brothers and their sisters. They need closure, and that is the least that they deserve.'

The Government was also taking urgent action to avoid another tragedy in buildings with architectural cladding similar to that which appeared to have been a factor in the Grenfell fire. Mr Javid said the early findings were disturbing: 'So far, all the samples of cladding tested have failed – that is 181 out of 181. ... the priority now is to make those buildings safe. Where appropriate mitigating measures cannot be implemented quickly, landlords must provide alternative accommodation while the remedial work is carried out.'

The Lib Dem, Jo Swinson, raised suggestions that the fire had been caused by a faulty fridge: 'so will the



Public anger at the tragedy was widespread, the government responding by launching an inquiry into the disaster

Government revisit the decision of March last year to dismiss or delay many of the recommendations of the Lynn Faulds Wood review into product recall, which I commissioned [as a Coalition minister] and in particular look at enforcing the regulations.' Sajid Javid said the issue was being addressed.

The Communities Secretary clashed with the Labour MP, Andy Slaughter, who attacked the management record of the local council: 'It is an open secret in West London that the administration in Kensington and Chelsea could not run a bath. That is why the residents of North Ken have had such a raw deal for so long. So when will the Secretary of State put country before Party and send in the commissioners?'

Mr Javid retorted that Slaughter was a local London MP: 'he has an opportunity now to put party politics aside and just do the right thing for his constituents. His constituents are watching him.'

Last rites on the Brexit Bill



David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union since July 2016

Back in March, when an election seemed a distant prospect, parliament's main focus was on the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. This Bill, which would give Theresa May the authority to begin the UK's divorce from the European Union, was forced on the Government after a Supreme Court ruling that Parliamentary approval was required to begin the process.

Despite fears that the Bill could be watered down or even reshaped to reverse the Referendum verdict, it passed through the Commons unscathed. All attempts to amend, or add, to its 136 words were voted down. Predictions of a major rebellion of up to 50 Conservative Remainers proved unfounded, and only a handful (notably the arch-Europhile former Chancellor, Ken Clark) defied the party whip.

But when it moved on to the House of Lords, where there is no Government majority and a large concentration of pro-EU peers, the Bill was amended twice. One change guaranteed the

rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and the second promised Parliament a 'meaningful vote' on the final Brexit deal. That meant the Bill had to return to the Commons because both Houses of Parliament must agree on the final wording of legislation. This is the arcane process known as 'Parliamentary Ping Pong', with each house voting on whether to accept or reject changes made by the other.

When the changes were put to MPs, the Brexit Secretary, David Davis, said they should not be accepted. On the issue of EU citizens, he agreed that they made a vital contribution to the UK. But the issue was that the European Union would not begin talks until the UK had begun the formal process of leaving, so their status could not be confirmed. Securing their status, and that of UK citizens living in the EU, was an early priority for the forthcoming negotiations, he said.

He also rejected the second amendment – giving Parliament a vote on the final Brexit deal – as unnecessary, because the Government had already promised a vote. And he was wary of a hidden agenda behind the push for a 'meaningful vote', warning: 'what we cannot have ... is any suggestion that the votes in either House will overturn the result of the referendum. That is the key point.'

Mr Davis warned that the amendment 'effectively, seeks to prohibit the Prime Minister from walking away from negotiations, even if she thinks the European Union is offering her a bad or very bad deal ... The Government will be undertaking these negotiations and must have the freedom to walk away from a deal that sets out to punish the UK for a decision to

leave the EU, as some in Europe have suggested.'

For Labour, the Shadow Brexit Secretary, Sir Keir Starmer, backed both Lords' amendments. He said protecting EU citizens was a matter of principle – but he was challenged by the senior Labour backbencher, Frank Field, who warned: 'if we pass this amendment and give those rights to European citizens here, there will be no incentive whatsoever for other European countries to concede those rights to our citizens.'

Sir Kier retorted that the wording asked Ministers to bring forward proposals within three months, and so did not tie anybody's hands.

Another Labour ex-Minister, Pat McFadden, suggested that, in the event of no deal being agreed, the Government was seeking the authority to default to a trading relationship with the EU, based on the World Trade Organization rules – without a Commons vote. Keir Starmer warned that would be the worst possible outcome, quoting the Confederation of British Industry's view that 'the cost of change is simply too high to even consider it'.

The leading Labour leave campaigner, Gisela Stuart, said the Government should make the status of EU citizens in the UK a priority, but she opposed including the issue in the Bill: 'I shall vote against all the amendments on the simple basis that this Bill has one purpose and one purpose only: to give legal effect to the decision of the people on 23 June ... However, I look to the Secretary of State to give firm assurances that his top and first priority will be the rights of EU citizens.'

One of the Conservatives' leading backbench Brexiters, John Baron, said the Commons, in approving the EU referendum in the first place, had made



Parliament, and the general public, remain divided regarding the relationship that the UK should have with EU

'a contract with the British people ... if there is a good deal, we will take it, and if there is not, the Prime Minister has made it very clear that we will not accept a bad deal, so we move on, and we move out of the EU.'

The Conservative, Anna Soubry, a strong Remain campaigner, said her Party wanted to honour the vote to Leave: 'now, however, we are talking about the sovereignty of this Parliament and about what would happen in the event that our Prime Minister does not strike a good deal. I trust our Prime Minister ... but let us be under no illusion that if she does not do so, there will be no alternative but WTO tariffs, regulations and rules, and the people in my constituency certainly did not vote for that.'



Nicola Sturgeon, leader of the SNP, announced her intentions to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence

The debate was held within hours of the announcement by Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, that

she would hold a second referendum on Scottish independence. In the Commons, the former First Minister, Alex Salmond, complained that the Government had broken its promise not to trigger the formal process for leaving the EU until there was an agreed 'UK approach' backed by Scotland, and had ignored the SNP compromise proposal to allow Scotland to stay inside the EU Single Market. And he added: 'there might not be a meaningful vote in this Chamber, but there shall be a meaningful vote in Scotland about protecting our millennium-long history as a European nation.'

When MPs rejected both Lords' amendments, the Bill was sent back for immediate consideration in the House of Lords, where David Davis came to watch his Junior Minister, Lord Bridges, call on Peers to drop their opposition. And while the Liberal Democrat, Lord Oates, did urge Peers to continue defying the Government, support for the amendment melted away, and the attempt to throw it back to MPs was once more rejected, as was the attempt to keep the 'meaningful vote'. The final form of the Bill was settled – and it was sent off for the Royal Assent, un-amended.

Article 50 is triggered

The passage of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act cleared the way for the Prime Minister to act on the Referendum verdict and formally trigger Britain's departure talks with the EU.

She was greeted by cheering Conservative MPs when she announced, on the 29th March, that the process had begun: 'A few minutes ago, in Brussels, the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the EU handed a letter to the President of the European

Council on my behalf confirming the Government's decision to invoke Article 50 of the treaty on European Union. The Article 50 process is now under way and, in accordance with the wishes of the British people, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union.'

She added that she wanted to build a close partnership with the EU: 'We know that we will lose influence over the rules that affect the European economy. We know that UK companies that trade with the EU will have to



Theresa May meets with European Council President Donald Tusk in Downing Street

align with rules agreed by institutions of which we are no longer a part, just as we do in other overseas markets – we accept that. However, we approach these talks constructively, respectfully and in a spirit of sincere co-operation, for it is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that we should use this process to deliver our objectives in a fair and orderly manner. ... We will continue to be reliable partners, willing allies and close friends. We want to continue to buy goods and services from the EU, and sell it ours ... Indeed, in an increasingly unstable world, we must continue to forge the closest possible security co-operation to keep our people safe. We face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism.'

Jeremy Corbyn warned against leaving without a trade agreement: 'the Prime Minister says that no deal is better than a bad deal, but the reality is that no deal is a bad deal. Less than a year ago, the Treasury estimated that leaving the European Union on World Trade

Organization terms would lead to a 7.5% fall in our GDP and a £45 billion loss in tax receipts ... It would be a national failure of historic proportions if the Prime Minister came back from Brussels without having secured protection for jobs and living standards, so we will use every parliamentary opportunity to ensure the Government are held to account at every stage of the negotiations.'

He said the debate had now moved on to what a post-Brexit Britain would be like: 'There are Conservatives who want to use Brexit to turn this country into a low-wage tax haven. Labour is determined to invest in a high-skill, high-tech, high-wage future ... Labour will not give this Government a free hand to use Brexit to attack rights and protections and to cut services, or to create a tax dodger's paradise.'

The SNP's then Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, accused the Prime Minister of breaking her promise that Article 50 would not be triggered

without the agreement of the devolved administrations. He noted that Scotland had voted to remain in the EU: 'On this issue, it is not a United Kingdom, and the Prime Minister needs to respect – respect – the differences across the nations of the United Kingdom. If she does not – if she remains intransigent and if she denies Scotland a choice on our future – she will make Scottish independence inevitable.'

The then Lib Dem Leader, Tim Farron, called for a second referendum on the terms of the final deal: 'Today the Prime Minister is not enacting the will of the people; she is at best interpreting that will, and choosing a hard Brexit outside the single market that was never on the ballot paper. This day of all days, the Liberal Democrats will not roll over, as the official Opposition have done ... I am determined to be able to look my children in the eye and say that I did everything to prevent this calamity that the Prime Minister has today chosen ... Surely the Prime Minister will agree with me that the people should have the final say.'

The Westminster Leader of the Northern Ireland DUP, Nigel Dodds, congratulated Theresa May on

delivering on the will of the people: 'Is not the fundamental point that this United Kingdom – this Union – is far more important for the political and economic prosperity of all our people than the European Union?'

The veteran Conservative eurosceptic, Sir Bill Cash, hailed what he called an historic day: 'At the very heart of this letter lies the democratic decision of the referendum of UK voters given to them by a sovereign Act of Parliament by six to one in this House, enabling the British people to regain their birthright to govern themselves for which people fought and died over generations? ... Trade and co-operation, yes; European government, no.'

Another Conservative, Jacob Rees-Mogg, quoted the Elizabethan hero Sir Francis Drake: "There must be a begynnynng of any great matter, but the conteneuing unto the end untyll it be thoroughly ffynysht yeldes the trew glory' ... I wish my Right Hon. Friend good luck and good fortune in her negotiations until she comes to true glory and is welcomed back to this House as a 21st century Gloriana.'

The former Labour Minister, Pat McFadden, was less optimistic: 'There are two kinds of future stemming from the process triggered today. The first is that we spend two years desperately trying to secure the exact same benefits as we have, while gaining control of immigration, which, as Ministers have suggested, may make little difference to the numbers. In which case, people will ask, "What is the point?" Or there is another future where we crash without an agreement, defaulting to WTO rules with all that would mean for industry, agriculture and services. In which case, people will ask, "What is the price?" So which future does she think is the more likely: "what is the point" or "what is the price"?''

Negotiations on leaving the EU are expected to take several years to complete



A terrorist attack on Parliament

On the afternoon of March 22nd, as MPs were engaged in a routine vote of the Pensions Bill, a man drove his car into pedestrians just outside, killing two people and injuring dozens more, before stabbing to death a police officer who was guarding the gates to the Houses of Parliament, and he was then shot dead himself.

The sitting of the Commons was suspended and MPs were held in their Chamber for several hours, before being escorted away. When they returned the next day, they began with a minute of silence. Then the Speaker opened proceedings by expressing 'our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of this outrage. A police officer, PC Keith Palmer, was killed defending us, defending Parliament and defending parliamentary democracy.'

The Prime Minister was heard in silence as she updated MPs: 'Yesterday, an act of terrorism tried to silence our democracy, but today we meet as normal, as generations have done before us and as future generations will continue to do, to deliver a simple message: we are not afraid, and our resolve will never waver in the face of terrorism. We meet here, in the oldest of all Parliaments, because we know that democracy, and the values that it entails, will always prevail.'

She gave an account of the previous day's events. 'A single attacker drove his vehicle at speed into innocent pedestrians who were crossing Westminster Bridge, killing two people and injuring around 40 more. In addition to 12 Britons admitted to hospital, we know that the victims include three French children, two Romanians, four South Koreans, one German, one Pole, one Irish, one



The attack on Westminster was one of several terrorist attacks in the UK during the year

Chinese, one Italian, one American and two Greeks, and we are in close contact with the Governments of the countries of all those affected. The injured also included three police officers who were returning from an event to recognise their bravery; two of those three remain in a serious condition.

The attacker then left the vehicle and approached a police officer at Carriage Gates, attacking that officer with a large knife, before he was shot dead by an armed police officer. Tragically, as the House will know, 48-year-old PC Keith Palmer was killed.'

She ended by declaring that the best response to terrorism was to act normally: 'As I speak, millions will be boarding trains and aeroplanes to travel to London and to see for themselves the greatest city on Earth. It is in these actions – millions of acts of normality – that we find the best response to terrorism: a response that denies our enemies their victory, that refuses to let them win, that shows we will never give in; a response driven by that same spirit that drove a husband and father to put himself between

us and our attacker, and to pay the ultimate price; a response that says to the men and women who propagate this hate and evil, 'You will not defeat us.' Mr Speaker, let this be the message from this House and this nation today: our values will prevail.'

The Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, said people should not allow the voices of hatred to divide or cower them – adding that PC Keith Palmer had given his life defending the public and democracy.

Watching impassively in the crowd of MPs standing at the Bar of the House, in the area across the Chamber facing the Speaker's Chair, was the Foreign Office Minister, Tobias Ellwood. He had tried to save PC Palmer's life by giving him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Many MPs took a moment to exchange a word with him as they passed or pat him on the arm. And many of those who spoke over the next hour praised his actions.

Tributes and thanks came from all the Party Leaders – the SNP's Westminster Leader, Angus Robertson, the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron, and the DUP's, Nigel Dodds.

The Conservative MP, James Cleverly, had served with PC Palmer in the army. His voice cracked as he spoke: 'I would like, with your indulgence, Mr Speaker, to turn for just a moment to PC Keith Palmer, whom I first met 25 years ago, when he was Gunner Keith Palmer at Headquarters Battery, 100 Regiment Royal Artillery. He was a strong, professional public servant, and it was a delight to meet him here again only a few months after being elected. In recognition of the work that he did, and that the other police officers and public servants in the House do, would the Prime Minister consider posthumously recognising his gallantry and sacrifice formally?' Theresa May promised that she would.

PC Keith Palmer, who died trying to stop the attacker, was given a full police service funeral, and praised for his heroism



President Trump

This year more than most, US politics had a bearing on our own. Not only were many MPs looking across the Atlantic for a trade deal and an enhancement of the 'special relationship', following the decision to leave the EU. But the American people themselves had managed to outdo the British electorate when it came to delivering the most surprising democratic decision of 2016.

As recently as January 2016, a small number of MPs had gathered in Westminster Hall to debate whether or not Donald Trump should be banned from entering the UK altogether. His comments about Muslims, among others, had led to an online petition for him to be considered a 'hate preacher' and therefore banned from British soil. Even those who supported the motion knew there was little chance of such a ban being implemented. But few would have suspected that, just 13 months later, Parliament would be discussing the appropriateness of a state visit from President Donald Trump.

One of the first acts of the new US President was to order a blanket ban on people from a list of Middle Eastern countries travelling to the US. In the Commons, the former Labour Leader, Ed Miliband, and the Conservative, Nadhim Zahawi, joined forces to ask the Speaker for an emergency debate – and it was held that day.

Mr Zahawi, born in Iraq to Kurdish parents, arrived in the UK as a nine-year-old refugee from Saddam Hussein's regime. He is now a British citizen, but because he was born in Iraq, he believed he came under the Trump ban.

He told MPs his place of birth already meant he had been required to go through an interview at the US embassy,



Nadhim Zahawi MP strongly criticised the Trump administration's travel ban on certain Muslim countries

to secure the right to travel to America, under rules imposed by President Obama. But the new restrictions were much tougher: 'I learned that ability to travel to the United States – a country that I revere so much for its values, for which I have such great affinity, affection and admiration, and to which I have sent both my sons to university – was to be denied to me. I learned that this great nation had put in place measures that would prevent my family and me from travelling, studying and feeling welcome there. I was concerned about the next time I would see my boys ... my wife and I despaired at the thought that, had one of our sons again been taken as seriously ill as he was last year while at university, we would not be able to go to him when he needed us most.'

The US Government has since clarified that people with British passports will not be affected by the ban, whatever the country of their birth, but Mr Zahawi still thought the ban was 'wholly counterproductive'. He described how it was already being used by pro-Islamic State social media accounts as 'clear evidence that the USA is seeking to destroy Islam. They have even called it the "blessed ban"'.



President Trump meets with Theresa May in Washington D.C. following his surprise electoral victory

Ed Miliband said the debate gave the Commons a chance to send President Trump a clear and united view: 'One of the most chilling things ... was that the accounts of what happened to individuals over the weekend sounded like the results of the actions of a tinpot dictatorship. They did not sound like what we would expect, or hope for, from the United States ... the United States has always been our oldest and closest ally, and some will say that this is not a matter for us as long as our citizens are protected. I profoundly disagree ... Allowing the measure to stand and shrugging our shoulders will amount to complicity with President Trump ... President Trump is a bully, and the only course of action open to us in relation to his bullying is to stand up and be counted.'

Donald Trump's mother was born in the constituency of the SNP MP, Angus MacNeil, who said that as a Hebridean he felt 'utter shame' at the ban. 'It is absolutely disgraceful and shameful. I hope he rescinds and changes the measure – not recasts, but rescinds it.'

Labour's Yvette Cooper, who chairs the Home Affairs Select Committee, was 'deeply worried' that the Government had already invited the new President to make a state visit to Britain: 'it will be not a normal visit by a Head of Government, but a ceremonial state visit involving our royal family ... instead of it being a celebration of friendship and shared values and a sign of increased co-operation ... It will look like an endorsement of a ban that is so morally wrong and that we should be standing against.'

The Conservative, Sir Simon Burns, disagreed: 'I think it is absolutely right that the British Government continue the work of the Prime Minister to build bridges with President Trump so that we can, through engagement, seek to persuade him and to minimise or reduce the danger of his more outrageous policies ... I believe that very little would be achieved by cancelling a state visit to which the invitation has already been extended and accepted.'

The emergency debate was on a formal motion that MPs had 'considered' Donald Trump's travel ban, so no call for a policy change was voted on.

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