

# Campaign for Real Education [CRE]

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

*“Freedom to teach, freedom to learn, freedom to choose”*

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## Newsletter

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## 01. Editorial

### The King's Speech

*My Ministers will strengthen education for the long term. Steps will be taken to ensure young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed, through the introduction of the Advanced British Standard that will bring technical and academic routes into a single qualification.*

*Proposals will be implemented to reduce the number of young people studying poor quality university degrees and increase the number undertaking high quality apprenticeships. [7 Nov 2023]*

The King's speech to mark the opening of the current session of Parliament provided little of substance for those wishing to improve education. There were, however, a couple of expressions of good intention. In particular, the promise to cut back on low quality degree courses and to increase the number of high quality apprenticeships is to be applauded.

It remains to be seen, however, if the proposal for an *Advanced British Standard* qualification will ever see the light of day. Even if matters proceed as planned it will be the middle of the next decade before assessments take place.

The challenge facing those seeking educational improvement is that it takes both time and patience. Post-colonial Singapore, on a developmental 'high-speed track', still needed half a century to achieve the excellence that now characterises its school system.

The King followed up his reference to education in an apposite way by stating that his ministers, *will take steps to make the economy more competitive*. If these steps are to be effective we shall certainly need to raise our nation's educational attainment. The connection between a competitive economy and high standards of education is clear.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] has warned that if one wishes to see the state of a country's economy in twenty years' time it is necessary look at its educational performance today.

Although the King's reference to educational reform was narrow in perspective it did, at least, put down a marker for improvement. In a limited way it faced up to a simple fact about our education system. It needs fixing. By the age of 15 UK pupils are three to five years behind those in the best performing education systems around the world, as the latest international PISA tests make clear [see article 2 below]

The real battle to raise standards and to provide vocational as well as academic pathways is still to be fought in our country. It is a battle, though, that must be fought,

however difficult. And difficult it will be since the educational establishment, unless stopped, will hi-jack the committees and working parties that determine the detail of even such modest proposals as those that have been set out by the King.

The process of school reform for the educational 'Blob' places equality of outcome above equality of opportunity and above what is in the best interests of the economy.

Its stranglehold must be loosened, its pernicious influence resisted.

**Chris McGovern**

Chairman

## 02. PISA Test Results

The latest test results for the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] of 15-year-olds were published in early December 2023. They focus on attainment in reading, mathematics and science. Because the usual three-year cycle was interrupted by the COVID lockdown these results are a year late.

Against the background of COVID lockdown, scores for the UK showed a decline in all three subject areas. The decline, however, was less than the average for OECD countries. This means that our international league table ranking actually improved in two subject areas since the previous set of results in 2018:

**Reading: 13<sup>th</sup>** [up from 14<sup>th</sup> in 2018]

**Mathematics: joint 12<sup>th</sup>** [up from 18<sup>th</sup> in 2018]

**Science: joint 14<sup>th</sup>** [the same as in 2018]

England performed better than other parts of the UK:

**Reading: 13<sup>th</sup>** [up from 14<sup>th</sup> in 2018]

**Mathematics: 11<sup>th</sup>** [up from 17<sup>th</sup> in 2018]

**Science: joint 13<sup>th</sup>** [the same as in 2018]

Wales was the only part of the UK whose PISA results were all below the international average. Its performance fell to a record low. Scottish pupils also scored a record low on the tests but only in science was it below average amongst the 81 participating nations.

The performance gap in Scotland between pupils from advantaged and disadvantaged background was wider for than the other parts of the UK. Northern Ireland out-performed Scotland in both maths and in science.

England's declining scores but comparatively better performance on the tests than other UK nations allowed Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, to laud its performance. England "is now firmly cemented as one of the top performing countries for education in the Western world," she asserted.

Around a third of England's schools, however, refused to take part in the survey. This meant that the participation rate was below the PISA specification for samples and is likely to have led to an inflation of marks.

In addition, a report by Professor John Jerrim of the Social Research Unit at University College London has previously cast doubt on the integrity of the PISA tests administration in the UK. In Scotland, last time round, 9 percent of pupils drawn for participation in the tests were later declared 'ineligible'.

The OECD average for 'ineligibility' is under 2 per cent. Professor Jerrim also found clear evidence that in England and Wales that low-achieving pupils had been systematically excluded.

On the latest tests the UK, including England, performed less well when compared to some of our economic competitors in the Asia Pacific. Our UK pupils have previously been assessed by the OECD as being up to three years behind high performers such as Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Shanghai.

The latest results suggest that this attainment gap has widened by another couple of years. Improvement rather than decline characterised attainment during COVID in those part of the Asia Pacific where testing took place.

When the PISA tests were introduced back in the year 2000 with a smaller cohort of nations, the UK was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> for mathematics and 8<sup>th</sup> for reading. Science was first assessed in 2006 and the UK was ranked 13<sup>th</sup>.

An area of PISA assessment that shows pupils in the UK to be well above average is in lacking a sense of well-being. According to an analysis by the Education Policy Unit the UK has the "second lowest average life satisfaction of 15-year-olds across all OECD countries."

### **03. Desecrating War Memorials: A Case of Decolonising History?**

The War Memorials [Local Authorities' Powers] Act [1923] empowers local authorities to build and maintain war memorials. It is testimony to the respect and reverence in which the 'fallen' were held in the aftermath of the First World War and it is still in force. These days, sadly, this responsibility, too often, has to be discharged by the removal of anti-war graffiti and the repair of vandalism.

In the run-up to Armistice Day, for example, the war memorial in Rochdale was graffitied and poppy wreaths trashed. A police guard had to be mounted to prevent any further damage. Similar defacements and vandalism have recently been reported elsewhere, from Norwich to Morecambe. Nor are matters better north of the border as, in 2022, a torching of poppy wreaths on the Edinburgh's Stone of Remembrance evidenced.

The 2023 round of desecration messages range from "Free Palestine" to the perennial assertions of Nazi, racist and homophobic hatred. Politicians have, of course, sat by and deplored such violations of those the nation has sought to honour but they have done nothing.

The closest we have got to any preventative action was Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's warning that memorials to the Fallen could be "desecrated" on Armistice Day.

James Cleverly, the new Home Secretary, is promising some action after pro-Palestinian protestors were filmed climbing over the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner. This is not a criminal offence but Cleverly has promised to give the police any extra powers they need to stop such insults to our war dead. He has the backing of the veterans minister, Johnny Mercer. Will we finally see a demonstration of 'guts' from ministers of the Crown?

How on earth, though, did we ever get into this situation? Could it be down to a failing in how we teach history in our schools? A recent Ipsos poll reported in the *Telegraph* [14<sup>th</sup> November] indicated widespread ignorance about Armistice Day, most of all amongst younger people. Only a third of Generation Z [born between mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s] know what event is commemorated on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

A tongue-in-cheek piece [14<sup>th</sup> Nov] in the *Daily Telegraph* by columnist, Michael Deacon informs readers that Lord Roberts is mistaken to call such ignorance, "a damning indictment of history teaching in our schools." "It can't be the schools' fault," he opines because, "The First World War is on the curriculum for all parts of the UK. Every pupil get taught it." He is wrong and Lord Roberts is right. Deacon does, however, state the opposite of the truth with great humour.

The sad reality is that the National Curriculum for England specifically states that teaching about the First World War is “non-statutory”.

It is mentioned only as an “example” of what a teacher might choose to teach. This “non-statutory” status is blazoned twelve times across the document since “non-statutory” applies, also, to every other specific personality or event from British history. In contrast the teaching of at least one of the following three topics is statutory rather than “non-statutory”:

. . . early Islamic civilization, including a study of Baghdad c. AD 900; Mayan civilization c. AD 900; Benin (West Africa) c. AD 900-1300

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study>

Over the years a representative of the CRE has been a dissenting member of government working parties for the writing of three versions of the National Curriculum for History, including the current one. This latest edition was produced during Michael Gove’s stewardship of the Education Department.

Following its publication the *Daily Telegraph* published an article by the editor of *Labour Teachers*. It compared Gove to a defeated First World War general and stated, “ ... make no mistake, the new History National Curriculum ... is as near identical to the one most English schools have been operating off for a decade ... history teachers have won and Gove has lost.

Some might say he has more than lost: he has been humiliated , just punishment for wasting our time.” Gove was thwarted in his efforts to keep his promise to party conference in 2010 that he would stop the “trashing of our past” in school history lessons.

The current History National Curriculum presents, therefore, a ‘Sex Pistols’ version of the subject. It is ‘Anarchy UK’ – a free-for-all as far as the choice of subject matter relating to the history of the UK and the West is concerned. Small wonder, then, that young people, in particular, are so ignorant of what Armistice Day represents.

The rot set in, of course, long before Michael Gove attempted to turn back the tide. In 1995, for example, to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, a Government-sponsored video was sent to every school in the country.

The primary school version lasted 34 minutes and the secondary school version 24 minutes. Neither version gave more than 14 [sic] seconds to Winston Churchill, and largely to inform children that he lost the 1945 general election. Pupils did have it explained to them, however, that the war was “ quite sexist”.

The same Andrew - now Lord - Roberts, quoted by Michael Deacon in the *Telegraph* article mentioned above, wrote a lengthy piece at the time for the *Daily Mail* [April 26, 1996]. He deplored the video and noted that, “it was not sponsored by some lunatic fringe . . . but by the Government itself.”

Several years earlier, in 1988, when the first version of the History National Curriculum was drafted Mrs Thatcher exclaimed to CRE committee members that it did not include the First World War. A couple of CRE representatives were summoned to No. 10 the following morning to see if anything could be rescued from the historical shambles. . . and thereby hangs another tale.

What applies to schools in England with regard to the marginalisation of World War I and other landmarks of our national identity, applies equally to other parts of the United Kingdom.

Under the heading, “Developing pupils as Contributors to Society” the curriculum for Northern Ireland requires only that pupils: “Investigate the impact of significant events/ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the world, for example, *war, women’s rights, international terrorism, developments in transport, medicine, the arts etc.*”

The Welsh National Curriculum for History comes no closer to requiring the teaching of the First World War than: “how some twentieth century individuals have shaped our world today”. Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence [sic] states: “There is no prescribed content in *Historical Study: British*”.

A revised History Curriculum for England is currently being written and should be published in 2024. It is unlikely to bridge the ignorance gap in young people’s knowledge of the First World War and other defining landmarks of our past.

The revision is part of the Government’s response to *The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities*. Writing for the Royal Society of Arts, Milla Nakkeeran explains that the central aim of the new curriculum is to ‘decolonise’ the subject in the interests of greater ‘inclusion’.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research>]

Far from ‘decolonising’ our history, however, there is a very real danger that the new curriculum becomes part of the growing empire of politically correct Wokeism. Stoking the fires of resentment about Britain’s past in the name of ‘inclusion’ is likely to lead to many more war memorials being desecrated and climbed over.

## **04. Re-Education for Pupils Who Are Deemed Insufficiently Woke**

The Aquinas Church of England Education Trust runs nine primary and two secondary schools in London, Kent and East Sussex. Its published mission is to deliver “Life-Transforming-Learning”. As part of this life transformation policy the Trust is urging its schools to “challenge” pupils who use “negative language and actions, re-educating and using sanctions where appropriate.”

Its message to teachers is that they 'must challenge' pupils using phrases such as 'that is mental' and 'stop acting like a girl'.

Teachers are told to “re-educate” any child who repeats such non-woke playground banter. Other sanctions include a phone call home, detention, and community service.

Programmes of re-education to promote ‘correctness’ in the use of language has, until recently, largely centred on the use of the correct pronouns. The Aquinas Trust is in the vanguard of enforcing a similar ‘correctness’ more widely and to include infants within this enforcement.

Many will regard such intrusion into childhood as a sinister development. “Re-education” is a very unfortunate term since it is associated with authoritarian and totalitarian thinking. What seems likely is that some children will be fearful of speaking out of turn whilst others will be drawn to the phrases deemed as not acceptable and will regard using them as a challenge.

The new policy of The Aquinas Trust is symptomatic of a narrowing of language to suit an increasingly woke ideology that has even led to the censoring of certain words in the works of children’s authors such as Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton.

The Aquinas Trust , of course, has form when it comes to enforcement of its ideology. In June 2023 a teacher at its Rye College secondary school in East Sussex branded a 13 year-old girl “despicable” for not accepting a classmate’s identification as a cat. The plucky girl was kept behind at the end of the school day by the teacher for “life education”.

She secretly recorded the teacher telling her that her view that gender was binary was “really despicable” and “very sad”. The teacher also told the girl along with another pupil that they needed a “proper educational conversation about equality, diversity and inclusion.” One suspects that Saint Thomas Aquinas would have taken the side of the girl in the dock.

## 05. Uniform Thinking

According to a report in *The Daily Mail* hundreds of schools across the UK have decided to ditch the terms 'boy' and 'girl' when describing items of school uniform. Instead, uniforms are to be de-gendered into 'Uniform A' and 'Uniform B'.

This allows children, such as those at Blofield primary in Norwich, to self-identify their gender from the age of four. The policy, it seems, reflects the schools stated values of "Fairness, Respect, Challenge, Perseverance, Thoughtfulness".

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12474499/Schools-boys-girls-outfits-gender-neutral-uniform.html>

Prestigious independent schools such as Brighton College, and Wellington are also on the bandwagon and have gone further in cementing in place woke credentials. They are amongst the private schools that have added a 'Uniform C' to what is on offer to pupils. The *Mail* reports Brighton's headmaster Richard Cairns explaining that he wants to 'give transgender children personal leeway'.

This is best achieved, it seems, by replacing the terms 'boys' and 'girls' with a depersonalised, gender-free, anonymous, letter of the alphabet. Such "leeway" is not provided in schools that Brighton College has set up in the United Arab Emirates where LGBT rights are suppressed by the law and changing gender is illegal.

In many parts of the world and in many religions the de-gendering of individuals is seen as shameful and even as sinful. If children are to be categorised in this way, the least that schools can do is to explain to their pupils why much of the world has a different perspective on gender identity.

Children must, of course, understand the need to treat others as they themselves wish to be treated. Banning the description "boys" and "girls" may be well-intentioned but as so often happens, the path to Hell is paved with good intentions.

In order to alleviate the woke angst of adults children are being stripped of their identity. School uniforms should be identified by gender names not by letters of the alphabet. There is nothing to be ashamed of or to hide regarding personal gender identity.

A starting point for discussion amongst older pupils in our schools about removing personal, identity, including gender identity, might be the viewpoint of Giorgia Meloni, the prime minister of Italy, one of our closest European allies and in some ways a cultural and spiritual mentor for our civilisation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEovvFeyWis>

## 06. Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay – it's already having a positive impact across society, including in the education sector [Dept. for Education, Education Hub, December 2023].

The emergence of AI, defined as 'high level machine intelligence', will increasingly impact on education. 'Experts' are more inclined to see the benefits it will provide humanity rather than any drawbacks. In a recent survey for *The Economist* 45 percent of these 'experts' predicted that its impact will be "extremely good" or "good". Only 15 percent saw its influence as likely to be 'bad' or "extremely bad".

Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, is an enthusiast. She told a recent Education World Forum in London that AI could mark pupils' homework and generate lesson plans. It will take the "heavy lifting" out of teaching, she opined, and it will improve the classroom experience for children.

Marking, though, should in part be diagnostic. It should inform a teacher about a pupil's progress in learning. It is unlikely that, in most cases, 'machine marking' can accomplish this as effectively as a teacher. In addition, a machine's capacity for marking certain types of assignment, such as opinion-based essays, is very much open to question.

Nor should we assume that a standardised, machine-generated, lesson plan will be better than one tailored by a teacher for a particular class of pupils.

This is not to suggest that AI does not have an important role to play in education. Effective interactive learning programmes can be a considerable improvement on sub-standard teaching. In teacher-shortage subjects such as maths, physics and modern languages AI may, indeed, be a godsend even if it cannot replace the human, face-to-face, interactions associated with inspirational teaching.

Some potential dangers of AI for young people, however, are becoming evident. The annual Digital Youth Index by Nominet found that:

More than half of young Brits (53%) have used an Artificial Intelligence chatbot like ChatbotGPT over the last year to help with their schoolwork, emails or their job.

<https://www.nominet.uk/nominets-annual-digital-youth-index-shows-changing-attitudes-of-8-25-year-olds-to-technology/>

This "help" provided by AI often means the machine does the writing of an assignment such as school homework or a university course essay. By providing a ready invitation to cheat and to take short cuts it has the capacity to undermine knowledge and understanding as well as to enhance it. There is, also, a very real

danger that AI will lead to the de-skilling of our children. How long will it be, for example, before handwriting becomes a defunct and lost skill?

For all the benefits that it can bring there are some obvious dangers associated with AI. It is educational opium which may be beneficial in the form of morphine but is destructive in the form of heroin. We should embrace it with considerable caution. It must be a servant, not a master.

## 07. Teacher Shortages?

According to *The Guardian* newspaper [8 June 2022] teachers in England “are abandoning their profession in record numbers.” Referencing the most recent workforce survey by the Department for Education it states that almost 9 percent of teachers resigned from state schools last year [2022], excluding those who retired.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2022>

Do we, therefore, have a recruitment crisis? The same workforce survey recorded an overall increase of 2,800 teachers for the same year. In addition it pointed to “an increase of 27,000 since 2010 when the school workforce census began.”

More worrying for government is the fall in recruitment for teacher training. *The Daily Telegraph* [8 Dec 2023] reports a 5 percent decline in the recruitment of trainee teachers for 2023-24.

This is the lowest level for five years. Recruitment for maths, science, technology and engineering was at 49 percent. It was just 33 percent for modern languages and as low as 17 percent for physics. Teacher recruitment problems clearly lie ahead in several key subject areas.

Equally, if not more important, is the quality of those seeking to become teachers. Too often, it seems, it is not the brightest and the best of new graduates who enter the profession.

These days subject expertise can be trumped by a perceived need for trainee teachers to be sufficiently ‘on-message’ in terms of their woke credentials. This can be a real ‘turn-off’ for those who hold Enlightenment values of reason and the pursuit of knowledge.

At the very least, capable teachers deserve to be well rewarded. The funding for a substantial pay rise does not, however, require an increase in overall spending on schools. It requires a cutback in the number of non-teaching support staff which currently exceeds the number of teachers. This will have the added benefit of

requiring teachers to move away from too much ineffective 'child-centred' group work, only sustained by an army of classroom assistants.

A reduction in the number of such assistants would fund a substantial teacher pay rise. It would also force teachers to return to more traditional 'whole-class' teaching methods that characterise high-flying Asia-Pacific classrooms.

It might also attract into the profession those potential recruits who would prefer to be a subject teacher rather than a social worker or pseudo-psychiatrist.

## **08. Ofsted Nonsense**

Standards in almost 90 percent of schools in England are "good" or outstanding" according to Ofsted. The CRE has argued that this judgement is absurd. The inconvenient truth is that latest round of international PISA tests places our pupils between three and five years behind those in parts of the Asia Pacific.

Three cheers, then, for former Ofsted boss, Sir Michael Wilshaw. He has told the Commons education select committee that such claims are, "nonsense, complete nonsense ... it is giving false information to parents".

The record-breaking grade inflation at GCSE and A-Level consequent upon school closures during the COVID lockdown suggests that closing down schools is the most effective way of raising standards.

## **09. Crumbling Concrete in our Schools**

The Prime Minister and former Chancellor of the Exchequer has told us that he cannot be expected to take responsibility for crumbling concrete in some of our schools. Does he have a case?

Gillian Keegan clearly thinks so from her inadvertent remark, caught on camera, that the Government has done a "f...ing good job because everyone else has sat on their ar..s and done nothing."

How refreshing it is to hear an Education Secretary telling us exactly how it is at the Department! This was the most illuminating insight we have had since Dominic Cummings compared entering the Department to entering a lunatic asylum. He was, at the time, a special advisor to Education Secretary, Michael Gove. We need a bit more straight talking and honesty when it comes to the education of our children, however much that upsets the educational 'Blob'.

In the wake of the revelations about the safety of school buildings, a former Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education was interviewed on the BBC's Today programme by a gullible Nick Robinson.

The former Secretary put on an impressive and emotionally-charged performance. In, effectively, demonising Rishi Sunak, it warranted an Oscar nomination. But what lay behind the smoke and the mirrors?

The fact that some school buildings are in a potentially dangerous state of decay is an apt metaphor for our education 'service' in general. Nothing, of course, is more important than the safety and well-being of the nation's children. We do, though, really need to understand what is going on. The *Today Programme* broadcast a case for the prosecution without an adequate cross-examination. Its interviewee told only part of the story.

What he did not mention was that our country spends more per head on education than most other developed countries. According to the much-quoted Institute for Fiscal Studies, overall spending on education increased by almost 900 per cent, in real terms, between 1953 and 2009.

There is always enough money in the education budget to build or re-build decaying school buildings. The problem has been a disproportionate allocation of funding that goes to the staffing of schools with non-teachers, at the expense of building repair and restoration. It is extraordinary, indeed, that the majority of staff in schools are support staff rather than teachers.

The Department for Education has failed for years to advise the Government to shift some of the funding for surplus staffing into the funding for building maintenance and capital projects.

The consequent reduction in the number of classroom assistants would require teachers to adopt more traditional front-of-class teaching methods that are the norm in most of the successful education systems around the world. They would have to rein in some of the so-called 'child-centred' learning and restore some 'old-fashioned' didactic teaching that is the norm in the Asia-Pacific super-star education systems.

The Campaign for Real Education appears to be alone in advocating a redistribution of current educational spending from the unnecessary to the necessary. The OECD, though, agrees. It has pointed out that high educational standards are not related to high expenditure.

Post-War governments must share the responsibility for the current poor and dangerous state of some school buildings. As Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, like his predecessors and successors, shares some of the blame for not questioning and reviewing the distribution of the considerable and generous funding on education.

The real blame, though, lies with those senior civil servants at the Department for Education who, for decades, have failed to provide governments with sound advice about how funding is allocated. Closed mindsets and a lack of peripheral vision is the root cause of many of our failures in education.

It took the Campaign for Education several decades to win the debate over the decline of literacy standards in our primary schools. Who remembers, now, that under the redoubtable leadership of the late Nick Seaton, it was the CRE that started the battle against declining literacy and the need to restore the teaching of phonics?

Thanks to the former Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, that battle has now, belatedly, been largely won. How our generous education budget is distributed and spent is another battle that one day will have to be fought.

## **10. Nick Gibb**

Nick Gibb MP is to step down from politics after serving as MP for Bognor and Littlehampton since 1997. He served as ministers of state for schools on three separate occasions: May 2010 – September 2012, May 2015 – September 2021, October 2022 – November 2023.

Eighteen different schools' ministers have been in office since the Campaign for Real Education [CRE] was set up in 1987. Along with Emily Blatch [April 1992 – April 1994] the service of Nick Gibb stands out as an exception to the legacy of failure at the Department for Education.

Nick was, unfailingly, a polite and willing listener to informed argument that questioned fashionable educational dogma from the educational 'Blob'.

His greatest achievement was to accept the arguments of the CRE and a handful of others in favour of restoring phonics to the teaching of reading in our primary schools.

What was important to him was the best interests of pupils, not modish ideology. The interests of children came first and the current improvement in literacy levels is testimony to the debt young people owe to him. He will be missed.

## 11. No Comment

**Around one in three schools and one in four pupils overall refused to take part in the [PISA] study ... PISA estimates that this means England's maths and reading scores could be 7 or 8 points higher than they should be ... it would knock England into the groups currently classed as countries that "scored significantly lower than England" in maths and reading!**

Schools Week 6/12/23

**UK universities 'infested with antisemitism', former minister tells MPs.**

Jewish News 7/12/2023

**Thousands of pupils have been kicked out for using weapons in the classroom. In 2022, 549 were expelled and 13,179 were suspended for violence or threats with weapons. Some were as young as four, although the average age was 14.**

The Sun 2/12/2023

**New apprenticeships will put teenage teachers in the classroom**

The Times 9/12/2023

**The Education Secretary is writing today, 24 October, to all schools in England to make clear that they can and should share relationships, sex and health (RSHE) curriculum materials with parents.**

GOV.UK Press release 23/10/23

**An Ofsted inspection "contributed" to the death of head teacher Ruth Perry, an inquest has ruled. The inspection "lacked fairness, respect and sensitivity" and was at times "rude and intimidating", senior coroner Heidi Connor said.**

BBC News 7/12/2023

**Labour announces 'phonics for maths' scheme in planned curriculum review**

The Guardian 10.10/2023

**PISA 2022: Performance in Finland collapses ... In the early 2000s in Finland, only seven percent of students were weak in mathematics, while the most recent study found it is now one-in-four students. Additionally the percentage of top-performing students fell overall.**

Yle [Finnish Broadcasting Company] 5/12/23