

# Campaign for Real Education

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

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

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## Newsletter

No 111, Winter/Spring 2022-23

### Contents

01. Editorial .....	Pg 2
02. The Education Secretary Carousel .....	Pg 3
03. Catching Up with the Best Education Systems Around the World .....	Pg 3
04. Decolonising the Curriculum in Higher Education .....	Pg 4
05. A Triumph for History Teachers .....	Pg 4
06. CND - The Campaign for Non-Deterrence in Schools .....	Pg 5
07. The Decline of Education in Wales .....	Pg 8
08. Observance Months .....	Pg 11
09. No Comment .....	Pg 12

## 01. Editorial

The Campaign for Real Education has never been more necessary. We live at a time of widespread groupthink across the spectrum of educational opinion. The very notion that there might be alternative points-of-view is neither accepted nor, even, acknowledged. Minds in UK education, today, are closed.

The current demand for more school funding is illustrative. For educationalists, money is magic. It is the cure for under-achievement and the key to 'levelling up'. Never, though, is there enough of it. Schools are always short of money. The fact that education spending in the UK, as a proportion of GDP, is already amongst the highest in the world and well above the OECD average [4.9%] is ignored. According to a House of Commons Library publication [17 November 2021]:

***...the UK's total spending on education in 2018 was 6.1% of GDP, Only Norway, Chile (both 6.6%), New Zealand and Israel (both 6.2%) and had higher figures.***

In addition, an Institute for Fiscal Studies report concluded that between 1953 and 2009 overall government expenditure on education increased by around 900 per cent in real terms [*A survey of Public Spending in the UK, 2009*].

For all this spending, the OECD has noted that UK pupils are mostly at a lower level of basic skills than their grandparents. It has noted that:

**At every qualification level, low basic skills are more common among young people in England than in many other countries...**

*Building skills for all: A review of England 2016*

The unthinkable conclusion is that our child-centred, anti-didactic, teaching methods are not only very expensive, but they do not work very well. The need for an overload of classroom support staff to sustain fashionable but flawed teaching methodologies explains why our schooling costs so much and achieves so little. It is extraordinary that according to the government's own statistics, most school staff are not teachers. They are support staff, too often recruited to, unwittingly, sustain bankrupt and failing, child-centred teaching methods.

To improve the quality of our schooling and make it value for money we need to think the unthinkable. We need a return to more of the whole-class teaching methods we ditched here in the 1970s, and which today characterise teaching in the Asia-Pacific region. They are much less dependent on classroom assistants.

Ironically, traditional whole class teaching makes life less stressful for both teachers and pupils because it is more effective both in terms of learning and, consequently, in terms of maintaining good behaviour. Because it requires fewer classroom

assistants it has the benign impact of releasing a sizeable chunk of the budget to recruit, reward and retain high-quality teachers.

Education is not short of money, as comparison with post-war spending and with spending in other countries shows. It is only short-sighted and narrow-minded groupthink that prevents this inconvenient truth from being recognised.

**Chris McGovern**

Chairman

## **02. The Carousel of Education Secretaries**

Nadhim Zahawi, Michelle Donnellan, James Cleverley, Kit Malthouse and Gillian Keegan have all done a turn as education secretary in the past few months. That governments can treat education in such a cavalier manner says much about the status in which that particular portfolio is held.

During the Conservative Party's woeful leadership contest, education got barely a look-in. This was remarkable. Andreas Schleicher of the OECD has warned that, "Your education today is your economy tomorrow."

Our governments have too often been blind to the longer-term consequences of their policies or to their lack of policies, in the field of education. The UK's Economic growth is dependent on a well-educated workforce having the necessary skills to compete in a global marketplace. We cannot for ever rely on immigration to fill the skills deficit in our economy.

## **03. Catching Up With the Best Education Systems Around the World**

According to the OECD, our 15-year-olds are up to three years behind the best performing education systems around the world. The good news is that we can catch up. Following its independence from Britain in 1971 Singapore transitioned from an educational backwater to a world leader in pupil attainment. The lesson to be drawn is that very significant progress in educational attainment is achievable.

The bad news is that the process of improvement takes several decades. There is no short term, quick solution. Few politicians, sadly, show much interest in anything beyond what is an immediate news story. It is remarkable, indeed, that they believe they have a choice about whether to prioritise education.

## **04. Decolonising the Curriculum in Higher Education**

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the watchdog for standards in higher education. It has published new benchmarks for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in order to ensure that the full spectrum of university subjects is decolonised.

Classics and Ancient History, for example, must address the issues of “imperialism, colonialism, white supremacy and class division”.

Subject matter should also embrace disability, gender and sexuality, whilst bringing out racial, ethnic and other diversities. This enforcement of anti-white and anti-Western racial hatred and division is iniquitous. It will undermine racial integration in our country and breed either resentment or self-loathing.

Most damning of all is the QAA’s failure to understand that human behaviour - including empire building - has never been dependent on racial background or on skin colour.

Evil or virtuous conduct is demonstrably not race dependent. The QAA should be promoting enlightenment and knowledge, not a Woke empire of prejudice and ignorance.

## **05. A Triumph for History Teachers**

A recently published poll by the *Policy Exchange* think tank showed that only one in five 18-to-24-year-olds have a positive view of Winston Churchill. This represents something of a triumph for the nation’s woke history teachers.

In 2013, the educational establishment hoodwinked the then education secretary Michael Gove into endorsing a flawed National Curriculum for History. It does not require the teaching of Churchill or World War 1 or World War 2, or, indeed, any specific personality or event from British history.

It is a free-for-all, Sex Pistols [*Anarchy in the UK*], curriculum. True, some aspects of world history, such as Benin and Baghdad, are prescribed but, mostly, teachers are free to do what they wish. It is no surprise, therefore, that if Churchill is taught, he is more more likely to be portrayed as an imperialistic and racist bigot rather than as the saviour of democracy and western civilisation against fascism.

Mary Seacole, the Jamaican ‘nurse’, who held equally strong racist views and put her life on the line for the British Empire is, in contrast, portrayed and taught only as a woke heroine.

## 06. CND - the Campaign for Non-Deterrence in Schools

This article first appeared on the *conservativehome* website.

Head teachers face a new threat when it comes to keeping order in their schools. For once, the challenge is not coming from violent and out-of-control pupils. It comes instead from the CND. I am not, however, referring to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is, though, an educational version of the same thing and can most aptly be described as the Campaign for Non-Deterrence.

Southwark Council in London has started the ball rolling. It has produced a 14-point, 'zero-exclusion' charter that takes away a head's right to expel a pupil for unacceptable behaviour. Out-of-control kids who seem hellbent on destroying the learning and life chances of their classmates will no longer be at risk of removal.

Head teachers in Southwark are, understandably, less than happy about being unilaterally disarmed. According to a [report in The Sunday Times](#) a majority are demanding that, 'where the safety and wellbeing of staff is put at risk', the right to exclude is retained.

Southwark Council plans to replace exclusion with 'trauma-based' therapy sessions. The hope is that this will keep the recalcitrant youngster in class and away from the influence of street gangs. Most schools will, of course, already have used counselling sessions before reluctantly pressing the nuclear button of permanent exclusion.

There can be little doubt as to Southwark's good intentions. The path to hell may be paved with good intentions but other councils, including Kirklees and Kent are already reported to be considering a similar move. There is no indication, sadly, that a school community as a whole – pupils, parents and teachers – will be given a vote or even a voice.

This is not surprising, even though for most of us, the best interests of the overwhelming majority take precedence over what may erroneously be construed as in the best interest of a few disruptive individuals. This does not mean that expelled pupils be cast aside. On the contrary, they should be given every support possible but not at the expense of wrecking the life chances of other children.

In too many schools, pupil behaviour is already troublesome. Back in 2015 the BBC sent five teachers from China into an English comprehensive school for four weeks. They were given a Chinese-style class of 50 pupils to teach. The school had been declared 'School of the Year' by the Times Educational Supplement, was rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted and had GCSE results that put it in the top ten in the country.

The Chinese teachers raised the standard of attainment of their class compared to a control group with far fewer pupils. Although they gained some affection for the English school and its pupils, they [expressed how appalled they were](#) by pupil behaviour in the school.

So low is the behaviour bar in our schools that it is already extremely difficult for a pupil to find a way of getting expelled. I have, myself, been part of a local authority exclusion panel when, as chairman of governors, I was in the process of rescuing a failing school. It was easier to find a way of providing breakfast to under-nourished children than to expel a single child.

The folly of Southwark council and other councils that follow its example, will be exposed when teachers and headteachers decline to work in its schools. Teachers need to be supported, not undermined by well-meaning but irresponsible and thoughtless councillors. I challenge any one of those Southwark councillors to spend a month teaching classes which include difficult-to-manage pupils and to be filmed doing so by TV cameras.

Having, myself, successfully taught for 35 years across a full range of schools, including a comprehensive of 2000 pupils, and been a headteacher, the thinking behind the 'zero-expulsion' charter suggests that I may still have something to learn. Teach me and thousands like me, Southwark council. Show us how it is done.

The best advice I can give to Southwark is to publish, with permission, this letter I received from a London parent after discussing the 'zero-expulsion' charter with Nick Ferrari on his LBC breakfast show:

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*Dear Mr McGovern*

*I refer to your compelling arguments in support of pupil exclusion, which you so eloquently expressed on LBC radio this morning, 20th July 2022.*

*I am a Ugandan-born British citizen, who was educated by African and British teachers in the last decade before and after the end of the British Protectorate. Our teachers had used traditional teaching methods, which required that children/students to unquestionably listen to and respect their teachers, and not speaking until asked to speak. We were given weekly, monthly and end of term tests and exams to assess our progress, with results displayed on the notice board.*

*This display of test and exam results created a sense of healthy competition, which prompted those falling behind to work harder with a viewing to appearing nearer the top in the coming weeks and months. The reward of such hard work was a promotion from the last to middle-, or top-class stream.*

*Yes, classes were streamed, not to embarrass any pupil, but to motivate us to work ever harder! The end results were doctors, engineers, lawyers, Airline captains and many of today's leaders in Africa are a product of that teaching method.*

*It is today a tragic irony that many African parents who enjoyed the best education and succeeded despite the difficult social, economic and political conditions before fleeing to the UK, hoping to give their children the opportunity to benefit of the UK's well-funded education, are having to send their children back home to save them (the children) from becoming victims of drug-addiction and or drug-fuelled knife murders.*

*In fact, British schools have become more dangerous for African children than the tribal violence back home. To add insult to injury, some of these desperate parents have been accused of taking their children back for child marriage or FGM practices.*

*Those opposing the exclusion of a few disruptive pupils from schools are unwittingly destroying thousands of law-abiding, hardworking and highly motivated African children.*

### ***What is the solution?***

*The government should allow willing communities to form voluntary primary and secondary schools, where children are admitted on a written commitment by parents that:*

- 1. Children will listen to and respect their teachers, and not speak until asked to speak*
- 2. Teachers will teach a balanced history of the British Empire, highlighting both its real and alleged excesses as well as the lasting contributions to the countries it once ruled.*
- 3. Classes will be streamed*
- 4. Children will sit for weekly, monthly tests and exams*
- 5. Test and exam results will be displayed on notice boards outside each classroom*
- 6. Disruptive children will be expelled*

*Kind regards,*

*[Name and address supplied and available].*

**An opinion piece by Anthony Lewis, former manager, and subsequently internal consultant for Education and Training at the Ford Motor Company, European Automotive Operations**

## **07. The Decline of Education in Wales**

The future of society's well-being is dependent upon the quality of its education. The quality of an education system, however, cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.

Front-line teachers carry an increasing burden of responsibility in poorly funded, undisciplined environments whilst being subjected to ill-informed criticism. I know of no other position, in the private or public sectors, which has such a demanding role. They are subjected to constant change and there is evidence of high levels of stress and low morale.

Having retired from the private sector where I was responsible for 'education and training' for a major international organisation, I was sufficiently concerned to begin a self-funded review of the Welsh education system.

Prior to 1939 the participation of Welsh children in secondary level education was higher than in England and the proportion progressing to higher education was surpassed in Europe, only by Scotland. In the post-war period Wales, compared with England, had a higher proportion of pupils in grammar schools. By 1979 almost all secondary schools in Wales were comprehensives and technical schools had vanished.

The annual report of Estyn (Welsh HMI) for 2015-2016 stated that in Science, Mathematics and Reading, Wales was outperformed by many other countries, with the lowest proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels of PISA.

In 2016 the Welsh Government's response, following a review by Professor Graham Donaldson, was to introduce a new curriculum. Scotland also embarked upon the introduction of a similar curriculum. A key principle is 'subsidiarity', decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level, and schools will be required to design their own curriculum and assessment processes.

The Welsh and Scottish proposals have similar objectives. Wales will have '*Four Purposes*' at its heart, and they are:

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.



You could begin each of those statements with....” *wouldn't it be nice if all our children were...*” but as a foundation upon which to build a new curriculum it has flaws. Questions arise such as these: ambition for what? How is achievement to be measured? Against what standards would you measure ‘Enterprising’? Whose ‘Ethics’ – Judeo/Christian/ Islamic/ Socratic/ et al?

Scotland proposes ‘*Four Capacities*’ which at least have the virtue of being simpler.

In 2017 a review of Estyn reports for 25 secondary schools highlighted concerns regarding the quality of teaching and school leadership. I intended to focus on the development of head teachers in Wales, but the introduction of the new curriculum resulted in my concentrating on its implications.

In 2021 I conducted an in-depth review of Estyn reports completed in 2019-20, for 35 secondary schools, with a total of 32,584 pupils. 19,000 (58%) were judged to be in schools rated as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’.

However, over 13,000 (42%) were in schools rated as only ‘Adequate’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’. Extrapolation would indicate that there over 75,000 pupils in ‘Adequate’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’ schools. This is hardly the ideal environment in which to introduce a new curriculum.

When introducing new initiatives into an existing environment it is essential that it has the capacity to benefit from the changes. Normal practice is to conduct pilot studies to ensure that all elements of the new proposals will deliver the required outcomes.

Although a group of selected schools experimented with devising their own curricula there has not been a complete pilot study covering all aspects. Criteria for assessment were not announced until November 2021.

**The Curriculum for Wales Implementation Plan states the following:**

*All schools will be the designers of their own curriculum*

Such responsibility will produce different outcomes. The current systems of examination and inspection cannot, therefore, apply.

*High quality learning and teaching underpin every curriculum*

Will schools rated as ‘Adequate’ and ‘Unsatisfactory’ get additional support?

*Enabling partners. Including Estyn, Regional Consortia and local authorities will provide distinct support and actively remove obstacles to achievement.*

What is ‘*distinct support*’? Does it exist, and If so, what resources have been allocated and deployed? If not, who will design them and when will they be

deployed? What are the '*obstacles to achievement*' and what resources will be made available to eliminate them?

Throughout the implementation plan there are statements of intent which demand major changes to existing functions. It is not clear upon what evidence will be based what additional resources will be required?

Any decisions to improve education in the short term (3 to 5 years) must address the following:

- Future success will depend entirely upon the competence, conscientiousness, and commitment of front-line teachers whose importance must be duly recognised and rewarded.
- Accept that vocational competence is, at least, as valuable as academic competence and plan the facilities, development, and resource allocation accordingly. The lack of vocational capability severely limits economic progress.
- There is an urgent need to establish a research centre to stimulate the development of educational software and its implications for the future structure, organisation, and funding of education.
- The justification for existing examinations needs a review to ensure relevance. Given the implications of the different outcomes resulting from devolution, there is the potential for incompatibility of qualifications.
- Recognise the dearth of effective leadership and review top heavy organisation structures so that the roles and responsibilities of schools' leaders contribute to the improved performance of teachers.
- Address the need for discipline throughout the education system and encourage and support parental and societal responsibility.

The proposed changes will require significant effort, but as David Lloyd George said..." You cannot cross a chasm in two bounds". Introducing a new curriculum cannot of itself ensure that education in Wales becomes a model of excellence.

Until such time as the necessary resources and improvements to the existing system are delivered there is the potential for failure.

The new curriculum's significant statements of intent demand equally significant resourcing and support for those who will have to deliver the required outcomes – the teachers.

## **08. Observance Months**

**January [Veganuary] – Veganism Month**

**February – LGBT+ History Month**

**March – Women’s History Month and Irish History Month**

**April – Care Experienced History Month**

**May – Local and Community History Month**

**June – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month**

**July 18 to August 17 – South Asian Heritage Month**

**September – Organic Awareness Month**

**October – Black History Month**

**November – Islamophobia Awareness month**

**November 16 to December 16 – Disability History Month**

Observance months now cover each month of the year and examples of what is to be observed are set above. To a lesser or greater extent, and partly offset by holidays, they impinge on what is taught in schools. However well intentioned, they squeeze curriculum time.

Being essentially celebratory they can readily lead to unbalanced teaching. In terms of virtue or vice there is often little to separate different standpoints. This is, however, unlikely to be reflected in subject matter that is selected for teaching.

All the perspectives set out above have a place in a balanced curriculum, but they should be seen as all-year round topics, to be taught ‘warts and all’, not filtered, manipulated and sanitised.

## **09. No Comment**

**Billionaire Ken Griffin slammed woke ideology at schools across the US as “crushing” for children**

New York Post Nov 22, 2022

**Dundee will ensure that a child’s right to literacy and education is not forgotten**

National Literacy Trust Nov 4, 2022

**The number of five and six year olds who need speech and language support at school has risen by 10% in England over the past year, BBC analysis shows.**

BBC News Nov 6, 2022

**Rethinking fairytales as feminist fables is rescuing them, not ruining them.**

The Guardian Nov 4, 2022

**Schools ‘heading for bankruptcy’ by 2024 without a change in income or drastic cuts, business leaders warn.**

Daily Mail 12 November 2022

**Schools can cancel lessons so kids can watch Wales at World Cup.**

CymruOnLine Nov 11, 2022

**Violent incidents in London-area elementary schools have more than doubled since the end of the last school year.**

The London Free Press Nov 10, 2022

**Singapore has among the world’s best education systems, so what can Australia learn from it?**

ABC News [Australia] October 20, 2022