
Education

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Education spending sees 5% rise

Education spending is to rise by 5% each year for the next three years, the Chancellor has promised. In his annual Budget, Gordon Brown also pledged to: provide one-to-one tuition for 600,000 children slipping behind in English and maths; do more to double apprenticeship numbers to 500,000; increase higher education student numbers to 1.2 million; and ensure after-school activities on all school campuses within the next four years. The increase in spending and an emphasis on one-to-one tuition were welcomed by unions, but there was concern that it would not be enough to reach the 2010 target of halving child poverty.

Mr Brown repeated his aim of eventually matching average funding per pupil to that in private schools and said that the money for all school services, including new buildings, should reach more than £6,600 per pupil by 2010. His plans suggested that education spending in the UK would rise from 4.7% of GDP in 1997 to 5.6% in 2007-8, and remain stable for three years after that. But while the pledge of annual increases of about 2.5% in real terms will take yearly spending from some £60 billion to £74.4 billion by 2010-11, it marks a significant slowdown in the spending spree since 2000.

Elsewhere in the Budget, Mr Brown announced that the Government would help 16 and 17-year-olds who commit themselves to developing new skills and sign up to activity and learning agreements. He promised the estimated 50,000 students a training wage, with £2,000 to £3,000 for any small business that commits itself to training an employee. He also stated that commitments would be met for 3,500 children's centres – an average of six per constituency – by 2010.

Reaction

Steve Sinnott, NUT general secretary, said: "I am delighted that the Chancellor is maintaining his commitment to narrow the gap between the amount spent on each pupil in the public and private sector. It is essential that there is no reduction in the rate of increase in expenditure per child. The Chancellor must make clear the target date for the achievement of equity for children in the state sector."

ASCL general secretary Dr John Dunford said: "I welcome the real-term increase in the national education budget up to 2010, in particular the recognition that extended schools will need extra resources to provide a comprehensive out-of-hours service. On the face of it, this appears to be a good deal for education. However, as with previous budgets, we will need to see the small print before we can calculate the real effect that this will have on school and college budgets."

Chris Keates, NAS/UWT general secretary, said: "The announcements on the proposed increase in per pupil funding and the extension to free entitlement to nursery provision for 3 to 4-year-olds are critical improvements in current provision ... Whilst the allocation is a 5% increase in cash terms, there is an ever-expanding list of demands which will be made on schools and the workforce."

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said: "We want public spending on higher education to rise as a proportion of GDP to the international average. UCU has called on the Government to use the forthcoming comprehensive spending review to bring Britain in line with countries such as America and our European neighbours. More money for employers to fund training is to be welcomed and hopefully the reduction in corporation tax will prompt companies into significantly increasing their outlay on training and career development. However, there was sadly no mention of how the Government intends to address the funding and pay gap between our colleges and schools."

It's official: school leaving age *will* rise, says Government

All young people are to remain in education or training until the age of 18 from 2015, the Government has announced. Its Green Paper, *Raising Expectations, Education and Skills*, proposes the introduction of a requirement to stay on until 17 in 2013, followed by the rise to 18 two years later. Under the proposals, young people would be required to work towards accredited qualifications at school, in a college, or in "on the job" training or day release. Also, apprenticeships would be significantly expanded, so that they are available to any qualified young person who wants one. As part of these arrangements, participation for young people not in employment would have to be full-time for a significant part of the week, and part-time for those working more than 20 hours a week. Those not in employment or training could be fined or prosecuted. Education Secretary Alan Johnson said: "As a nation we've toyed with the idea for almost a hundred years; now is the time to make it a reality for all." But teacher unions felt that criminalising youngsters who did not stay on would alienate and undermine any desire disaffected youngsters may feel towards continuing in education.

The great school uniform scam will finally come to an end

School uniforms must be affordable to all and schools must be sensitive to the cost implications of the uniforms they choose, the Government has said. In a new consultation document, the Government has also controversially stated that schools have the right to refuse to allow pupils to wear non-uniform items, such as the niqab veil. However, the guidelines stress that it is still for individual schools to decide what works best for them and to consult widely among parents before introducing a policy. ASCL General Secretary Dr John Dunford said: "I am pleased to see that the Government is supporting school leaders in upholding school uniforms. Repeated and blatant breaches of uniform policy undermine the school ethos and, in extreme cases, schools should have the option of exclusion. The Government's backing for this is important. Equally, the decision to send pupils home to change when they are not properly dressed, without formal exclusion procedures, is a sensible and proportionate response by the school. After recent court cases, schools will look to this guidance to provide clarity on the wearing of veils and other religious dress. They want reassurance that future court judgements will defend schools and communities that have agreed a uniform policy that accommodates the interests of all and promotes a sense of unity."

Experts want vaccine green light for teenage promiscuity

Schoolchildren should be given up to six new vaccines to fight a range of diseases including sexually transmitted infections, according to medical experts. The Government is already considering offering secondary school students vaccines against the human papilloma virus HPV, which could lead to cervical cancer in later life. Scientists now want teenagers to be vaccinated against hepatitis B, which can lead to liver cancer in older people, and is rising by 2,000 cases a year partly due to immigration from Eastern Europe, where it is more prevalent. A vaccine against sexually transmitted genital herpes is also being developed and could be given to teenagers. A group of experts led by Professor Adam Finn, of Bristol University, also called for other newly developed vaccines to be offered to schoolchildren to protect them against cancer and chickenpox. They want teenagers vaccinated against certain forms of meningitis, which are becoming more prevalent after being brought back from the Middle East.

New website makes government accessible to youngsters

Children will be able to find out about the Government and public services in a fun and informative way, thanks to a new website. DirectgovKids aims to get children from five to 11 engaged with some of the areas of government that have an impact on their lives, and to help them learn about and understand the society they are growing up in. It is the only free resource of its type for schools and children can also access it from their home PC. DirectgovKids can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/kids

PM calls for greater personalisation of our public services

Schools and hospitals must become truly personalised services, with greater choice and a greater sense of individual empowerment, the Prime Minister has said. Launching his public service review, Tony Blair said that gifted pupils and children in deprived areas across England should receive more support, and that the last year of primary school and first year of secondary school should have smaller tuition groups. Other recommendations in the review include following the example of some universities and giving HE students credits towards their degree for time spent volunteering.

Mr Blair said: “What we want is to keep these basic public service values, which are about access to quality public services irrespective of your wealth, but make sure those are truly personalised services where there’s a much greater diversity of provider and the old ways of working are broken down.”

QCA Chief Executive calls for national primary test lottery

The QCA has questioned the future of national pupil tests in primary schools in England. QCA chief executive Ken Boston suggested that rather than all primary school children sitting national tests every year, a cross-section of 3% could be tested instead, giving an indication of the progress of their year group across England. Mr Boston said that he supported the Government’s move to introduce more personalised learning in schools, and to test pupils when the time was right for them to be assessed. He said: “The objective is precision and timelessness: teachers do not want masses of data, but focused, diagnostic information.” The QCA admitted that Mr Boston’s proposal means the Government would have to come up with a new way of assessing a school’s overall performance. But the organisation refused to comment on whether it would bring an end to school league tables.

More funds for Welsh employment-based teacher training

Those following employment-based routes into teaching in Wales are to receive an increase in the grants available to them, Jane Davidson has announced. The Minister for education, lifelong learning and skills said that the salary and training grant package would now be worth up to £18,300 and would fund at least 43 approved places in priority recruitment subjects.

Employment-based training programmes tend to be taken by mature, well qualified people who can quickly begin to take on teaching responsibilities and who need to earn a living while they train. Many already have relevant experience in other sectors or in a support role in a school. Ms Davidson said: “The Graduate Teacher Programme ... provides an alternative route into teaching that is welcomed both by trainees and the schools who employ them. Our employment based training enables maintained schools to employ trainee teachers who are not yet qualified and to support them through an individual training programme leading to Qualified Teacher Status.”

Scottish strategy sets sights on global education domination

The Scottish Executive has announced a new strategy to make the country an international leader in international post-school education. The Executive has published *International Lifelong Learning – Scotland’s Contribution*, which sets out its aim to attract overseas talent into the country and facilitate the universal employability of Scottish students. The strategy also aims to see Scotland participating actively in European and international policy development and foster international partnerships and other strategic alliances.

Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Nicol Stephen, said: “We have a lot to be proud of in our education system and its reputation for quality and creativity. But with these achievements comes a responsibility to look forward and evolve as we deliver world class learning opportunities to people in Scotland and from abroad. This International Lifelong Learning Strategy is a collaborative approach which will enhance our reputation as a world leader in education excellence.”

EDUCATION JOURNAL

The magazine for children's services and education professionals

Issue 101 out now!

This issue of *Education Journal* is a special
Education Alliance conference issue.

The Education Alliance is holding a conference on 24 March exploring the concept of providing a good local school for every child. (See the conference section below for details.)

The organisations in the Education Alliance have been invited to contribute a series of articles, published in this issue, looking at what it takes to deliver a good local school for every child.

From the NUT to Human Scale Education, from ACE to CASE, from CSCS to CSN, a dozen organisations representing teachers, parents, students, local authorities, support staff and a wide variety of different perspectives contribute new ideas for a new era, anticipating the change in government that will occur later this year.

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Conference round-up

A Good Local School for Every Child

The Education Alliance is organising its second annual conference on 24 March 2007. Sponsored by the NUT and the London University Institute of Education, the Alliance brings together a wide range of organisations committed to providing a good local school for every child. The conference will take place at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Square, London. Doors open at 9.15 am for a 10.00 am start. Attendance is free though a contribution of £10 would be welcomed. To register at the conference email Sarah Thompson at the NUT at s.thompson@nut.org.uk

Document round-up

The Commission for Social Care Inspection has published *About Education: A children's views report*. This report from the Children's Rights Director for England looks at the views of 77 children and young people about their education. This report will be sent to the government officials who are looking at how education for children in care can be made better in the future. Download free from www.csci.org.uk/about_csci/publications/about_education

The DfES has published the Green Paper, *Raising Expectations, Education and Skills*. The Paper sets out detailed proposals so that from 2015 all young people will remain in some form of education or training until they are 18. Deadline: 14/06/07. Visit www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations The DfES has published *DfES Guidance to Schools on School Uniform Related Policies*. This consultation document includes draft guidance on school uniform, dress codes and other rules on appearance. The guidance provides advice to schools and governing bodies on how to develop fair and reasonable uniform policies. Deadline: 12/06/07. Visit www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

The QCA has published *Annual Review 2006*. The review considers the progress that has been made since the last review, reporting on the monitoring of the examination system, assessments, qualifications and the curriculum. Download free from http://www.qca.org.uk/2586_18540.html The QCA has also published *GCSEs and A-levels: the experiences of teachers, students, parents and the general public*. This report presents the findings from the 2005 survey and compares it, where possible, with the findings from the three waves of research conducted in March and November 2003 and November 2004. In addition, the 2005 survey includes some new questions which will act as benchmarks for any future surveys that track changes in perceptions towards A level and GCSE examinations. Download the report free from www.qca.org.uk/16312.html

Research round-up

Two journals came into our office this week. *Comparative Education* (Routledge, Vol.43 No.1) is a special issue entitled, 'Western Psychological and Educational Theory and Practice in Diverse Contexts'. It contains the article 'Culture, Instruction and Assessment' by Robert J Sternberg of Tufts University, USA. The article claims that instruction and assessment need to be understood and thought about within the cultural context in which they occur, a mistake often made by educational researchers. It describes studies that show the importance of this, and concludes that education and its goals must be understood in such contexts.

Gender and Education (Routledge, Vol.19 No.2) contains the article 'The Boys' Present... Hegemonic Masculinity: A performance of multiple acts', by Leanne Dalley-Trim of James Cook University, Australia. The article explores the performance of masculinity within the classroom site. Drawing on research

conducted in two co-educational secondary classrooms, it examines the ways in which two groups of boys took up positions of dominance within their respective classrooms and focuses on the way in which they came to construct themselves as embodied masculine subjects.

Media Watch

On Monday, the *Guardian* reported that Gordon Brown had pledged to expand the school Academies programme. Mr Brown said that the country was at “the foothills” of educational progress and that he would have “major announcements” to make on the privately sponsored City Academies programme in the budget. His comments were made at the Government’s launch of its policy review of public services, after the Prime Minister had held up an Academy school as the model for the introduction of “truly personalised” public services over the next 10 years.

Most of Tuesday’s papers carried the story about Alan Johnson’s announcement that he expected headteachers to ban schoolchildren from wearing the full Muslim veil on “safety, security and teaching” grounds. He said that the new uniform policy would give headteachers the right to stop pupils covering their faces, but not to stop girls wearing a headscarf. A consultation leaked to the *Sun* by Mr Johnson stated that it would be for headteachers to consult widely among parents before introducing the policy, but suggested that it was for teachers to judge whether the ability to see a child’s face was necessary for them to teach effectively and safely.

Wednesday’s *Guardian* also reported that the CBI had delivered an eve-of-budget warning to the Chancellor that the Government must back up its pledge to force all 16 to 18-year-olds into education or training with money to develop qualifications and high-quality careers advice. The director-general of the employers’ organisation, Richard Lambert, said it would support the moves, but added: “Some young people develop skills that make them more employable by being in a job, although they may not be training for a formal qualification.” The CBI recognised it had an important role in the drive for more vocational education and training. Although employers had complained that some new recruits were weak in basic literacy and numeracy, business awareness and life management, there was some unease about effectively raising the school-leaving age. Mr Lambert said better work experience for 14 to 16-year-olds was crucial. A CBI report found most students felt they had not been set clear goals during work experience and many received little feedback.

Wednesday’s *Guardian* also reported that the Government could be forced to step up its efforts to inform students of its specialist diplomas for 14 to 19-year-olds after a new Mori survey revealed few people knew about the new qualification. The survey showed that 52% of current A-level and GCSE students, 64% of parents, 65% of the public and 29% of teachers knew nothing about the specialist diplomas. In the independent schools sector, only 14% of teachers were aware of the new qualifications, but among teachers working in FE colleges, 43% of teachers said they knew about the qualification. The survey results were based on the findings of the 506 secondary school teachers, 138 students and 324 parents surveyed during the autumn term of 2006. The survey found that the new diplomas would have little impact on the number of students taking A-levels. Nearly 40% of teachers thought the new specialist diploma qualifications for teenagers would have no impact on the status of A-levels. Only 10% of the 506 teachers questioned thought that the new qualifications would undermine the status of A-levels.

Wednesday’s *Independent* published a warning from Boris Johnson who said that paedophile hysteria was prompting the brightest male graduates to shun teaching. The Conservative higher education spokesman told a conference of independent school headteachers in London that the result of the obsession with paedophilia was a ratio of 13:1 between female and male teachers in primary schools – with the result that many young boys lacked any male role models. Mr Johnson suggested that more men could be encouraged into the profession if teachers were protected from malicious allegations by giving them the right to anonymity while an allegation against them was being investigated. He said the teaching profession needed to be “re-yuppified” so it returned to its social standing alongside doctors and lawyers.

The *Independent* also warned that schools could become embroiled in expensive legal battles as a result of new guidelines allowing headteachers to ban the full Muslim veil. The guidelines were described as “simply shocking” by the Islamic Human Rights Foundation. Legal experts warned they may flounder as a result of new legislation – set to come into force next month as part of the 2006 Equality Act – which would make it unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against pupils on religious grounds.

On Thursday, the *Guardian* reported that student unions had warned that undergraduates must not be forced to pay back their fee and maintenance loans at commercial rates of interest as a result of the Chancellor’s decision to sell £6 billion of the outstanding debt to private companies. Subsidising the low interest rate would cost the Treasury more than £1 billion a year on top of the money borrowed. Sir Cyril Taylor, the chief executive of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, told *EducationGuardian.co.uk* that the removal of a VAT restriction on Academies to enable them to open their sports facilities to the public would lead to more sponsors getting involved in the programme. But specialist tax accountants, who had been advising the Government, claimed the changes would only apply to existing Academies – not new ones.

Thursday’s *Independent* predicted that the Green Paper which was due to be published on Thursday morning would indicate the chief aims of a new Brown premiership. The plan to force all young people to stay on in education or training until the age of 18 was signalled by Gordon Brown when he announced that 50,000 unemployed 16- and 17-year-olds would receive training grants to return to courses during his budget speech. Every pupil would have to take part in at least part-time education or training up until the age of 18 by 2015. Ministers argued that, by then, new specialist vocational diplomas in a range of subjects from engineering to health and beauty care would be up and running in schools – to entice those teenagers put off by a traditional academic education. But teachers’ leaders warned that the new diplomas had still not been tried or tested and employers would not recognise them because they have not been put on an equal footing with academic qualifications – as had been recommended by Sir Mike Tomlinson in a government inquiry into exam reform.

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