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Let's Start Again (published in the Daily Telegraph on 20 December, 2016 as 'What has gone wrong with our schools? We need to get back to basics and start again.')

'*Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system.*' Sidney Hook

'20,000 pages of on-line guidance overwhelms Scottish teachers.' Glasgow Herald headline, 1 December, 2016

What is wrong with our schools? What is this malaise that is affecting so many of our teachers and driving them from the profession? And furthermore, how is it, despite all our legislation and political push, we have ended up with a system that, according to PISA, still lags behind similar countries? By what process have we arrived at a system smothered in a mish-mash of requirements, wrapped up in endless policies and bespoke language that obfuscates and frustrates: in essence, a rampant bureaucracy that is slowly suffocating our schools. Why is it that so much of what schools are required to do has become unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming? Why can't we get rid of the dross and start again?

To answer these questions, we need to strip our system back to the bones, to a simple, common-sense and pragmatic approach to education without all the meaningless debates about school types, whether we should call boys and girls 'children (or he and she, ze as Oxford suggests). We need to get our focus back to where it should be, on the education of children (and adults, for education will need constant renewal in this brave new world). We suspect that much of what schools are now required to do is pointless,

layered over the years, adding to, but never subtracting. But how can we do it differently? How can we change what has become an ever-more complex, label-laden, bloated and anachronistic system into something that actually works?

First, we must get teachers back to spending more of their time teaching children. We need to work at reducing the excessive, time-wasting requirements placed on schools and, if that does not work, then appoint administrative support to take care of the work that does not need to sit in the teachers' domain, ie inputting data, filing, collecting, manipulating and extrapolating information, managing parent concerns and e-mail traffic. To make best use of our greatest assets, teachers must spend more time engaging directly with children rather than sitting in front of a screen, dealing with a surfeit of administrative tasks that can be dealt with elsewhere.

To make our schools work for all, we need to bury the myth of selection. Every time selection is mentioned, there is the downside, which is what happens to the rest, those who at eight years old or eleven or thirteen cannot jump over the bar, but who will be able to in time and need to compete with those who can? What we want, surely, is rigour for all schools, where streaming and setting through a semi-permeable membrane allows for each to be taught according to their stage of readiness and need. Rigour is not the preserve of selective schools; indeed, selective schooling often dilutes rigour, softens the edges and leads to complacency on both sides of the divide. What is needed in all schools is for children to develop a sense of purpose, through self-discipline, clear goals, outstanding teaching and an appreciation of the gift of education.

We need to revisit the whole rationale of inspections. Why are Heads Teachers perpetually frustrated and nervous about inspections? Why are they seen as ambushes? Why should Schools have to be subject to constantly changing, and often contradictory requirements? (I remember being told to put glass windows in dormitory doors one inspection (safety) and take them out at the next (privacy) Simplify, simplify! We all know just how spurious and petty inspections can be, with so many pointless requirements and reams of documentation that cannot possibly be managed by teaching staff – except that in small schools, without a bevy of

staff members employed to deal with human resources, it actually is – and decry the waste of time and resources.

Safeguarding, Child Protection and Health and Safety have, likewise, become industries, generating work, necessitating the employment of armies of advisers, consultants, spawning inset days, conferences, articles and books. Of course, the safety of children must be a paramount concern yet, in many ways, our excesses have made children less safe. Constant tweaks, wasted days going over revisions of revisions, generic comments when there is nothing sensible to say, so much content, piled up and constantly changing does little for safety. Policies should not have to be tweaked by individual schools at ridiculous cost, often flying blind, advised by expensive outside agencies. Regulations need to be simplified so that inspections work for schools, not to justify the cost and excessive bureaucracy of an inspectorate.
Ideally, the key points (and there are usually only a few KEY points in each policy, i.e. who is the LADO, what do you do when approached by a child in confidence etc) should be on flashcards that can be carried about and referenced as appropriate. Safe-guarding is too important to risk losing the focus in the detail and yet the reality is we are in danger of doing just that. The same may be said of PREVENT which has created an industry of its own. And through it all, despite the excessive attention to detail, have we actually made our children safer: many fewer walk to school or take exercise; many are more risk adverse, have had their initiative and competitiveness stunted, are more dependent, more vulnerable, more unhappy than ever before. Somehow, we need to restore the balance. Let's focus on areas that matter: the fact that nearly 19,000 children were admitted to hospital after self-harming last year in England and Wales – a rise of 14% over the past three years; the fact that 62% of 13 – 20 year olds have experienced cyber-bullying; or the fact that most children have begun using a mobile phone or are on-line by the age of eight. How have we protected them? How have we taught children appropriate values and behaviours so they don't use the internet as a weapon of choice? How have we protected them from themselves?

Which leads us onto the elephant in the room, technology. Having wasted billions experimenting with anything from raspberries to whiteboards, we must revisit the place of the internet in our schools –quite distinct from the teaching of computer science and coding.

Marc Goldman recently wrote *'I am increasingly concerned about the ubiquity of computing in our lives and how our utter dependence on it is leaving us vulnerable in ways that very few of us can even begin to comprehend.'* We need to look at the whole way we teach about the internet. Here we should consider a new subject – 'The Internet and Social Media' or suchlike – that teaches children how to use the net, and includes such sub-topics as using social media, identifying fake news, internet safety, cyber-bullying, the dark web and how to use the net to its potential, all under-pinned by a robust, ethical framework. Without some rules, some self-regulation, we are placing our children in danger.

In teaching, we should focus on teaching and deal with the small stuff, such as handwriting, in the classroom, keeping learning support staff for those who have more significant learning difficulties. We should put more emphasis on writing, in sentences, paragraphs and essays, to learn how to reason, argue and communicate. And let's take seriously the proposition that philosophy and ethics should be compulsory from a young age to underpin nanotechnology and science, to guard against the inducements of the Net. Teaching values and ethics, responsibility and community, is the best way to keep them safe and protected from the selfishness of money, power and prestige, which is what young children are inadvertently being tempted to pursue.

We need to make education more attractive and relevant for all and raise its profile (and promote it as a life-long commodity). To do that successfully, we must engage more with parents and guardians and educate them too – to say they need help and guidance is not condescending, but a reflection of the helter-skelter world they live in, assailed on all sides by so much misguided and contrary advice from parenting sites and magazines that cannot help but make them insecure in wanting to do their best.

And for their sake, let's move children away from the centre of the universe, placed there by doting, well-meaning parents and put them back in their families, in their communities and other social groups so they learn to share, socialize and take some responsibility.

Let's get rid of the shameful distinction between good school – bad school, in fact, let's forget about school types and treat schools according to need.

Let's look at where we are spending our education pound, and work on training, procuring and looking after the best teachers. Let's not get hung up on class sizes or resources and be properly cautious of all the extraneous advice offered by experts, the quality of in-service training we buy into and keep asking ourselves, 'is this going to improve the education (or safety) of our children?" And we should celebrate those schools that demand more from their students through discipline and standards and stand up to those 'experts' who view such methods with opprobrium.

We should look after children by helping them through each stage of development and ask 'is anything more likely to cause mental health issues than those experts who tell us children need to know every detail of drug abuse, death, disease and sexuality before they are 'ready' – yes, readiness again – and nothing of the joy and adventures of life? We should prioritise Mathematics and English, but not through testing alone which determines the learning process and ignores how learning – deep learning –happens; we should stop being in such a hurry by trimming our curriculum, removing the colour and floss, or by closing doors early through selection, separating children from other children for reasons of IQ or maturation and producing the stratified society that does us such harm.

We need simplified inspection frameworks; we need teachers to get back teaching; we need easily understood and simple guides to safeguarding and child protection, we need risk assessments to focus on real risks, not some meaningless compliance or box-ticking. We need to get rid of the legalese that permeates our schools, do a time and motion study and see how much time, especially teacher time, we are wasting. Let's give inset days back to improving teaching rather than an endless succession of first-aid, fire-training, prevent and compliance courses. Let's simplify our schools and get some rigour and pride back into the classrooms and make sure they are places that are both relevant to children's needs and where teachers and pupils want to be. Let's start again.

The American Option
Published on the ISC Website, 1 December, 2016)

After sitting her A Levels at an English boarding school in the 1980s, Amanda Foreman was awarded an E for English – even after a re-sit. Not

surprisingly, no British University made her an offer, leading her to look abroad for her tertiary study, not by choice, but by necessity. Yet a few short years later, after completing her under-graduate studies at Sarah Lawrence College in the USA, then Columbia University, she won a scholarship to Oxford where she completed a DPhil on 'Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire' (later to win the Whitbread Prize for best biography), launching her on a career as an academic and writer. What was it in the United States education system that allowed her to flourish? And, conversely, what was there in our system of assessment that allowed her (and many like her) to slip through the net?

One possible explanation is that some students take time to find their academic potential, to find out what they want to do or to learn what study is really all about. Another, more plausible, is that some approaches to tertiary study suit some students more than others and that for an increasing number, the breadth offered by American universities, particularly in the liberal arts, is much more appealing and relevant to them compared to the more rigid system we have in England. Even the process of application focuses as much on character as academic prowess, with the admissions process including essays and pieces of reflective writing an important part of the process.
While the cross-Atlantic traffic is still firmly in the UK's favour, over the past decade the numbers of UK students going to study in the United States has grown steadily, and is now increasing by around 8% per annum. Each year, over 10,000 students are leaving to study at American universities, with the majority going to the prestigious Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Stanford and Yale, more than half at under-graduate level. As well, the number of students at UK universities studying abroad as part of their studies has soared by 50 per cent last year, a trend that seems likely to accelerate in the future. Even for students initially put off by the high costs, the very many generous bursaries and scholarships available at American universities have, on investigation, made it a realistic proposition

Two years ago, Sir Anthony Seldon, then master of Wellington College, Berkshire, suggested that students were being attracted by the breadth of the liberal arts curriculum, in which students take a range of subjects in their first two years rather than specialising in one discipline, suggesting

that British universities should take note of a growing feeling that British degrees were too narrow.

"There's an allure about studying in America and having a broader, liberal arts approach with greater focus on sport, music and artistic prowess. It is a more generous vision of what higher education can be rather than the utilitarian approach we see in the UK."

For those who go to university with only a vague idea of what they want to do, being able to select their 'Major' after their first two years of study rather than at the outset has considerable appeal. As part of their liberal arts education, mandatory for all, students study a wider range of subjects in comparison to English universities, (more akin with the position in Scotland). Students are encouraged to take other courses to provide complementary skills and interests that designed to give students a greater breadth of knowledge. Hence, even if set on studying engineering, a student will receive a broad education in the liberal arts before specialization, something we may see as wasteful of time and resources, but which is fundamental to the American tertiary system.

At the recent Education Theatre, now an integral part of the annual Independent Schools Show in Battersea, one of the key talks centred around the process of applying to American universities. Without repeating the detail of the talk that can be accessed on the YouTube link below, or the difference in requirements (applications, for instance, have to be made to individual universities and need to start a good year earlier etc), there is a clear difference in the ethos and approach of the two countries in their approach to tertiary study. Not surprisingly, a growing number of schools are considering the option of American universities in all its diversity as they seek to offer the best advice for their students.

Charity should begin at home – but should not stay there (Philip Brooks) ' (published in the Daily Telegraph on 22 November, 2016 as *'Fundraising for charity should be commended, but schools must focus on more than cash and cake stalls'*

'*One must be poor to know the luxury of giving'* George Eliot

Every day through the mail we are besieged by charities, either at home or abroad, extolling causes that need our support. Good causes are everywhere, bewilderingly so, and the public conscience is swamped by the ever-growing numbers, all touting for their money. With around 160,000 general charities operating in the United Kingdom, with a combined income of around £37bn, charities are big business.
There is no doubt that schools are one of the prime targets for many charities. One only has to read the newspapers and websites to read of considerable amounts of money being raised by children for worthy causes. I know that schools I have been involved with have always taken pride in their charitable endeavours, often raising significant sums for different charities through a mixture of mufti days, appeals, cake stalls, donations, spellathons, marathons and the like. And that is fairly typical of most schools, as a constant stream of press releases and websites would attest. Surely, then, we can feel satisfied that we are doing our bit?

Quite possibly we are – or at least we do what we can without undergoing personal hardship, sacrifice or inconvenience. In other words we are doing what every affluent society does, giving away surplus money and goods. We seldom, though, give to the point of personal inconvenience or hardship.

Despite all the charitable giving, there is a danger that children are becoming desensitized by the sheer number of charities that confront them and end up feeling fatigued by a seemingly endless wave of disasters, diseases and afflictions. This feeling of helplessness is no doubt exacerbated when they can read that one in five of the UK's biggest charities are spending less than half of their income on good causes. For a child, the world must, at times, appear to be a very bleak place.

In recent years, many of the young, encouraged by numerous celebrities imbued by a sense of idealism and social justice, have set up their own charities to address inequality, poverty or some specific cause, perhaps linked with saving a species of animal. Such initiatives should be commended, but with the health warning that charity should not just be seen as something best managed at a distance. Helping earthquake victims in Haiti, coffee pickers in South America, textile workers in Bangladesh or the starving in the Sudan are all hugely invaluable causes, but giving aid on

its own is never enough. To be properly charitable it is essential that the sense of responsibility and compassion, the spirit of charity accompanies it and extends both to our own communities and others. It is about engendering the traits of simple kindness and thoughtfulness in our schools and communities towards those who are not so fortunate as ourselves in the world at large. It is about imbuing children both with the habit of giving and sharing and with a sense of responsibility about the world they live in. It is showing a willingness to listen and befriend those in our own increasingly soulless and fragmented community who may have enough to live on, but who crave company and opportunity, people often without hope, stranded in an emotional desert, perhaps the neighbour preparing to spend next Christmas alone.

Charity is not just about money and aid given; it is about intent. It is a well-known fact that those who have little, give, proportionately, much more than those who have a lot (it is estimated that the bottom 20% give away four times the percentage of income than those in the top 20%). Giving away excess funds is commendable, but charity should also be measured by commitment, empathy for those in need without discrimination or bias and making a personal effort, even if only measured in time spent. Which brings us to work days, sponsored projects, cake stalls and the like. Of course, anything that raises money is commendable, even if it doesn't involve the child directly, but those parents that simply hand over money to their children do nothing to inculcate the habit. In our schools, we should try to encourage both.

The hope is with the next generation. They are more community-minded than we have been, more aware, more international in their thinking, more altruistic, guided as they are by a new wave of philanthropists who rightly inspire them. It is important that they do not come to think of charity as just an endless stream of good causes, for there will always be good causes; rather, we need to imbue them with the spirit of charity in their lives, a particular mindset so they will look charitably at those in their own country while also looking outwards to see what they can do to help others, as citizens of the global village.

'Charity looks at the need and not at the cause' – German proverb

The Value of Value-Added (published in the Daily Telegraph on 7 November, 2016 as '*It's No surprise that selective Schools get the best results – parents should look at Progress not Oxbridge places'*)

For families from abroad looking for schools in the United Kingdom, there are invariably two initial requests: first, how to get their children into one of the cache of well-known (and often heavily over-subscribed) schools; and failing that, to assess how any other schools suggested to them perform on the league tables. This is altogether understandable, first to seek out the known for the unknown and, second, to provide a recognised measure based on examination results. What is not obvious is that the vast majority of the high-performing schools are there because they are highly selective and need to be seen in the light of entry requirements that set the bar so high that getting into their schools at 13 years requires a standard at or above GCSE. This is not to say that their value-added is negligible, although it is likely to be constrained by the limiting process of selection, but what it does not tell you is the quality of their learning and teaching in comparison to other schools.

The challenge of establishing a dependable method to rank schools by value –added (ie the improvements made from a base score over a set period of time) has long been a target for educators trying to find comparative means to show how schools are performing relative to each other. In this, the Government is leading the way through its ranking of schools based on CVA (contextual value-added). Over recent years, value added tables for measuring progress between KS2 and KS3 and also from KS2 to KS4 have shown value added scores based around 1000 with measures above or below 1000 representing schools where pupils on average made more or less progress than similar schools nationally. This system was replaced, first on a trial basis in 2015 and now nationally by Progress 8 which measures how well pupils at any school have progressed between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils in other schools who got similar results at the end of primary school. This is based on results in up to 8 qualifications, which include English and Mathematics with the average Progress 8 score for 'mainstream' schools in England being 0.

In the independent sector, by comparison, while many schools subscribe to independent external moderators, such as 'Alis' to provide value-added

analyses for their schools, there is less consistency in the gathering and use of data. While there is undoubtedly an appetite for this information to be used externally, the Centre of Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University who crunch the data and provide the analyses, do so with the caveat that it is only to be used as a guideline for individual schools, and not for comparative purposes. Rather the focus of independent schools on the subject of 'value-added' has taken a different tack. Recent research commissioned by the Independent Schools Council from the Centre of Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University compared 'academic' value-added between sectors – rather a different thing altogether and designed for a different purpose. Its findings, that 'attending an independent school in England is associated with the equivalent of two additional years of schooling by the age of 16' is helpful in promoting the sector, but not being able to see which schools are performing best based not on the basis of selection, but on the quality of their learning and teaching.

I recently attended a governors' meeting at Wellington School in Somerset where the subject of exam results was discussed. Despite the enviable feat of achieving five Oxbridge places (sadly, still used as the gold currency for marketing results by many independent schools), refreshingly, the focus of the discussion was not on the success of a few, but on value-added, on how all their students had fared and how much they had improved over their time there. Of course, it is important that all schools show that they can achieve excellent results with their brightest and most talented students, but what got the teachers excited here was the improvement shown by their students and just what they had been able to achieve for each individual. This is what education is all about – maximising potential, whatever the starting point, rather than selecting the most able and duly celebrating their achievements.

Working in a school that adds value to all its students from a wider base, teaching a range of abilities is what education is all about. Being in a more selective school is no guarantee of better exam results; conversely, attending a school where children mix with a wider range of abilities and backgrounds, and crucially where they also have the opportunity to move up (and down) the order as they mature, can often be hugely advantageous. Without proper data for value-added, however, we cannot be adamant either way.

There is a great deal of satisfaction seeing students come through the ranks, by dint of hard work, to see the late developer hit his or her straps, or the student in whom one or more teachers have invested considerable time, doing well. This is why teachers teach. To make a difference. This is the joy, not of putting a cherry on top of a well-baked cupcake, but to take responsibility for, and be involved in, the preparation from a much younger age / stage – and having that progress accurately measured and acknowledged.

Building on from the bottom up (published in the Daily Telegraph on 11 October, 2016 as '*Our Obsession with Hierarchy means Primary Schools often struggle to be heard*')

One of the most frustrating aspects of being a prep school head was the way that our schools always seemed in thrall of their senior colleagues, always deferring to their opinions and decisions, waiting to be told what was happening before reacting – even to such unfriendly gestures as senior schools moving to a Year 7 point of entry or timing their scholarship exams ever earlier in the school year – and our reliance on them to take leadership of the independent sector. This is in no way to disparage the senior sector; to the contrary, I am sure it is not a state of affairs they seek (after all, they have their own battles to fight with the constantly changing national qualifications and pressure to get students from A to B). Indeed, I am sure they would welcome a more active and vocal prep school voice.

In suggesting that prep schools take a more prominent role in the education debate, I am mindful of the pressure they are under from the marketplace and workloads that have increased disproportionately in recent years. But that should not distract from the need for prep schools to become more in such issues as the shape and content of the curriculum, the teaching of values and languages, blended learning and technology, social education and well-being – and not being afraid to opine on secondary and tertiary issues as well.

Apart from the fact that it is in the junior years that children learn most of what they know and where children spend the majority of their school years, this is the time when teachers can focus on children, free from

national exams that strangle so much initiative and creativity. This is when children can learn independence, the purpose of education (which is to embed the habit of life-long learning), to teach values, how to study and how to develop proper work habits and attitudes; a time to ask questions, however tangential, before the time comes when they are told, hush, it's not on the exam syllabus so it doesn't matter.

Senior schools, with league tables hanging over their heads and encouraging even greater selection, with all its social consequences, have not always been the best exemplars, leaving prep schools with the quandary 'how do you get pupils to reach the level demanded by some scholarship examinations while wanting to offer an all-round education and ensure children's well-being? How do you build foundations both for those schools that start at the ground floor and those who aspire to start eight stories up?'

Prep schools should be asking why are there not more prep school heads on senior governing bodies (and for that matter, why are there not more pre-prep heads on prep school boards and senior school heads on university councils?) How many prep school heads ever speak at senior school conferences compared to the number of senior heads who regularly appear at prep school conferences to tell us what we should be doing (do we really need senior heads to tell us about values and social skills, the importance of breadth and education for education's sake when they have often been the impediment to this happening in the first instance?)

Prep schools need to stop looking up to their senior colleagues and being so deferential. They need to be more involved in sharing ideas and take a lead in where education is heading. They need to be proactive, not reactive; leaders rather than followers; innovators rather than bastions of tradition for no good reason other than that is what is expected of them – until no longer needed. They need to promote their own strengths and the importance of their role, not as 'preparatory' to another stage of education (for all education is preparatory), but as the most influential, most important and most dynamic time in a child's life.

This is a challenge for prep schools. Where possible, schools should be speaking out on the issues that affect our children (female mental health being one currently in the news), by standing up and saying what they think

to be the right way forward, from their experience of teaching children at different stages of development and of the learning process, for a raft of social and academic reasons and for the well-being and future mental health of their pupils, without fear of ruffling feathers or being seen as speaking out of turn.

What are Schools for and where are they heading? (published in the Daily Telegraph on 27 August, 2016 as '*School's out forever; New Zealand's plan to allow children to study on-line raises the question, 'what are schools for?*')

As we debate whether the increase in the number of grammar schools will improve social mobility, or even if selection at the age of eleven is a good thing or not, education elsewhere in the world moves on. In a presage of the future, last month the New Zealand Government outlined legislation that will allow any school-age students to enroll with an accredited online learning provider who will have the responsibility for determining whether their students will need to physically attend for all or some of the school day.

The radical change that allows any registered school or tertiary provider such as a polytechnic or an approved educational body to apply to be a "community of online learning" (COOL) has met with an equally cool response from the primary teachers' union. As well as potentially undermining their own livelihood, the idea of young children learning some or all of their lessons out of school, has prompted educationalists to revisit the question 'what are schools for?

On-line learning is hugely important in making available subjects to students that schools could otherwise not offer, or for those unable to access school or university, for social, health or geographic reasons. Yet while a part of everyday life, its extensive use in schools, particularly primary schools, has been greeted with caution. Not surprisingly, therefore, the suggestion that children not be required to attend school for part or all of their learning has been seen as having huge ramifications for families concerned with the monitoring and supervision of their children. While one assumes common-sense will prevail and that the Government will insist that most remote learning takes place in a supervised physical community, (perhaps dependent on age), it invariably poses the question about what will be the role of schools in the future as more and more

subjects and courses, delivered with increasing levels of sophistication, will become available on-line.

Schools will argue, rightly so, that they are not only about learning, and the imparting of knowledge and skills, but provide a holistic view of education, with other equally important priorities, mainly linked around the socialization of pupils, developing their EQ, social and communication skills and team work and community. And yet, clearly the idea of a school offering 'blended learning' where students spend part of their school time accessing specialist subjects on-line, already well-established and growing exponentially, needs to be managed. The question is then how do we define education and what purpose and new functions our schools will take on. One finding that is reassuring for the teachers' union and teachers generally is that evidence from New Zealand suggests that students learning remotely do worse than those learning in face-to-face environments, suggesting that the role of the teacher will continue to be pivotal in the future, even if significantly changed from that of today.
As technology continues to provide opportunities and challenges to the education sector, the internet-based virtual learning model will continue to encourage us to re-think how schools can make best use of the opportunities provided and how they are best developed and delivered in schools as well as their impact on the organization and physical environment. There is an inevitability about change per se that highlights the need for more forward planning and a review of what we are doing now – including whether continued innovation through technology will negate the need for more selective schools as schools become providers for all according to their needs and stages of development. The provision of education will continue to change dramatically in the years ahead, with more and more learning delivered remotely, even if under the auspices of a teacher or facilitator, but we still need to be careful that we manage such change appropriately and don't hand over our children to the VLE for their academic sustenance without considering what our schools do for their social, physical and emotional well-being.

The University Divide (published in the Daily Telegraph on 12 August, 2016 as *'Scrapping student grants will do nothing to broaden access to our universities.'*)

As A Level results come out in a week's time and as universities fight for a diminishing number of students, it is timely to reflect upon the decision

made late last year to abolish grants and the whole issue of widening access. In May, a report by the Sutton Trust found that students from relatively affluent homes are between two and a half and four times more likely to go university than those from more deprived backgrounds with Scotland being the worst performing country. Sadly, the removal of grants in January this year will do little to improve this situation, indeed the opposite.

The divide in education reflects the divide in society and despite all attempts at social engineering and the good intentions of politicians, it is a situation that won't easily be addressed. At one time, when local authorities and government met the costs of university and there were jobs at the end of it, the numbers of young moving onto tertiary education grew steadily from around 4% in the early 1960s to around 40% today. The growth even continued after tuition fees were introduced because of the availability of grants, but we are now at a tipping point as a combination of mounting student debt with no guarantee of employment post-university, becomes a potent mix.

The abolition of student maintenance grants in favour of loans, promoted as fair and equitable based in part, on future projected earnings, is anything but, and shows an ignorance of the mindset of those looking at university from poorer backgrounds who look at future debt in a completely different way from those whose families have never experienced hardship. Telling students that hardship grants, bursaries, scholarships and sponsorships are available for those who bother to look shows is patronizing and misses the point: the decision will deter those who are already half-hearted about going to university for any number of social and practical reasons. The idea of incurring a debt of £41,000 for the time at university with no guarantee of future employment (even though loans don't have to be repaid below the earning threshold, few like to live with such a level of debt hanging over them) is daunting as is the knowledge that those from affluent homes or who get support for their time at university are also more likely to get the internships or the better jobs.

Like it or not, our universities are reflection of our society, post-Brexit. There are students who having enjoyed gap years, will move into university accommodation or flats where in many instances, they will enjoy all the comforts and trappings of home; students who don't spend their holidays

working to minimise their loans, who have the latest technology, who expect to travel and have the same trappings and social life as if they were earning. There is a world of difference in knowing that you have parents who won't see you go under or who you can expect some financial help from both directly or indirectly compared to those, the majority, who get no help from home, not because their parents won't help them, but because they can't. It is hypocritical to talk about future earnings when they have nothing to fall back on, not the faint sniff of being a future beneficiary from a non-existent estate; nor the security of family money or even access to the best jobs (after all, it's more often than not the quality of degree that determines achieving the best jobs). I can see how they would weigh the decision up and decide it is not worth it

University should be about more than jobs and future earnings, but the rising costs have made them increasingly so. They should be about equality of opportunity and transparency from the university that they are being responsible in the courses they offer, and not just about their roll and financial viability. The choice of those from poorer backgrounds is more likely to be pragmatic, based on how it will help them, leaving others the privilege of pursuing knowledge for knowledge's sake. Clearly, more must be done in schools to encourage students in need to overcome their reluctance and access the avenues of assistance available, but I fear that without such support, many will not bother.

In the meantime, the removal of grants can only be seen as a retrograde move that will do nothing to broaden access to our universities.

Educating the Whole Family ((published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 30 July as *'Schools must take an active role in educating disengaged parents'*)

There has been a lot in the news of late about the importance of parents and the home in supporting children's education. The correlation between parents who play an active role in their children's education and achievement at school tells us what we have always known: that a supportive home environment is crucial in getting children to achieve and shaping their attitude to the importance of education. Without that support and encouragement, the path for many children is made hugely more

difficult. The challenge is how: how to engage with parents, especially those families that are most in need of support, but eschew it; how to intervene in such a way as to make a difference to those children most in need; and how to ensure the support parents give is not blinding advocacy, but is realistic, encouraging and in the child's long-term interests.

So much is written about improving aspirations and life chances for the young and yet attempted in isolation, there is little chance of success. What is required to break down barriers to learning and improve social mobility is to raise the aspirations of whole families: somehow we need to develop the concept of 'whole family education.'
In such a model (and it is there, albeit in its infancy), school and home do not function as separate entities, but have a shared responsibility for education – as is happening through technology and better channels of communication between home and school, through tweets, twitter and various school apps that link home and school. Schools are no longer the only place where learning takes place, especially as the internet has allowed for increasingly sophisticated and inclusive providers of on-line education and new means of learning.

Technology in its many guises, the rise of alternative models of education and different means of access as well as other models of learning, based on home-schooling and tutoring, represent a ground-shift from what has been the norm and has led to new ways of looking at education, including its delivery a shift which lies the home-school accord.

So where to start? Technology has already removed much of the mystique about education, allowing parents to be better informed of their children's education, and this is only the start. Curriculum and homework on-line, the use of texting to provide direct feedback to parents, as well as involving them in checking and reminding them of their role; these things are already in place and are having an impact. According to the findings of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) released earlier this month, regular text messages sent to parents and guardians to remind them of forthcoming tests, to report whether homework was submitted on time and to let parents know about what topics were being taught have resulted in improved performances in Mathematics, English and school attendance.

The question is how to reach all parents and how to ensure that teachers and families are working in unison. Courses run by schools or independent providers can encourage parents to take a more active interest in education and are important in encouraging and cajoling parents, but without state support, such measures are only likely to reach a small percentage of parents and, almost inevitably, the more committed. Which is why the onus should also fall onto schools, not just to communicate more explicitly and informatively with their own parents, (which has its own implications about the role of teachers and support staff), but to train their own teachers on the pressures faced by parents, how parents see their role and how they can work together for the betterment of their children. For it is by informing and equipping individual teachers to work with their class community, the parents and guardians of their pupils, that is most likely to bring success.

If we are going to move children across boundaries, shape aspirations and reach those families that don't see the point of education, we need to find ways of redefining education as something that sits in the home. We don't want to encourage the pushy parents, fighting to get their child into a good school, but rather advocate for the quiet parent who doesn't ever feel it is their place to question a system that should be doing the right thing by his or her child. So long as the terms, 'Good school bad school' linger, so long as so many of our children are receiving little or no support from home, we need to do more – and working with the whole family seems the best way of doing so

The Best in the World (published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 13 July as '*Does British education deserve its gold standard reputation abroad?*)

For sometime now there has been an apparent contradiction about the reputation of our schools abroad: that on one hand, we are seen as a world leader in education, admired and emulated by many countries, even those ranked higher in the PISA rankings, while at home, we see a system in disarray with constant in-fighting about exams, academies, funding or teacher shortages. We read that A Levels remain a gold standard abroad and that the numbers of international schools, largely based on the UK model, are expected to jump from 8,000 to almost 15,000 by 2025, while

our own schools struggle to balance their budgets and see their own experience of A levels through the prism of inconsistent marking and grade inflation. Not surprisingly, Sir Roger Fry, founder and chairman of the King's Group, which runs schools in Spain and Panama, as well as the UK recently noted that "British education is admired around the world in every country except one, and that is the United Kingdom."

Which is why when we talk of the international reputation of our schools abroad and the gold standard that is A levels, it can seem disingenuous, almost as if we talking about somewhere else. When Fry highlights the rigour and integrity of British exams, or the greater breadth of learning and extra-curricular provision in our schools, how much is he talking about a system alien to the majority of his own country? The international schools we most commonly read about are the off-shoots of leading individual schools (Harrow, Repton, Wellington, Dulwich) or school groups (such as GEMS, Nord Anglia and Cognita), usually run on strict business lines – which is, after all, the rationale, for going abroad in the first place. Data from ISC in 2014, based on a report by the British Council and the University of Oxford, that identified the desire to learn in the language of English is a 'growing global phenomenon' and one of the reasons why the number of students attending English-medium international schools (teaching children aged from 3-18) are predicted to increase from 4.26 million children to over 8 million by 2025.

Such international schools strive to do what independent schools have traditionally done, focusing on excellence of teaching and learning and promoting a broad, all-round education, often contrasting with the rigorous didactic models found in many of their host countries. And yet, when our much maligned examination system gets a good rap despite all our domestic concerns over recent years (latest figures showing 40% of international schools teach the English national curriculum), how much do we recognize? How does such good news relate to a system that is constantly tearing itself apart at home, a system divided into 'good and bad schools' (and how often do we read of politicians and celebrities who eschew independent education giving a sigh of relief when they get their progeny into a 'good school' whilst ignoring the corollary, that someone's else's children are left with the 'bad' school). What relevance does it have for schools where teachers work in large, multi-cultural schools, often

dealing with children mired in poverty and from fractured families? How far are these schools removed from the British model, so prized abroad?

Almost two years ago when The World Education News and Review (WENR) noted that:

'The international schools market has transformed itself from a niche market serving the educational needs of children of overseas workers and diplomats to a booming and highly lucrative market that now draws 80 percent of enrolments from local, typically wealthy, families in the countries in which they are located. Where schools were once mainly not-for-profit, the vast majority are now operating firmly with the bottom line in mind, and large proprietary operators have stepped in to develop chains of schools covering many of the key markets around the world.'

It is not British education per se, it is almost exclusively an independent school model, with its associated traditions and trappings, aided and abetted by the British curriculum and examination system, taught in English, as much as the quality of its education provision that is in demand. In reality, it has little relevance to the education provision for the vast swathes of the British population and remains the preserve of independent schools (even allowing for the recent excursion of an academy chain, Ark, to sponsor a school in India). Yet, however misleading, it is the way much of the world perceives British education. The Council of British International Schools (Corbis) now has 260 affiliated schools in seventy five countries educating 135,000 children, representing a substantial off-shore industry, but many more schools using the English curriculum are run from other countries, notably the United States or Australia. Naturally, such schools cater for those that can afford it, because that is the way they operate: partly as a response to financial pressures at home; partly to fund bursaries at home in order to meet their charitable aims; and partly for reasons of selling the brand. Many independent schools simply have seen an opportunity to grow their business and embraced it.
It would be churlish not to acknowledge the success of British international schools and education groups in the United Kingdom that have identified a marketplace and have taken the business decision to set up schools abroad. While there will always be criticism that some schools are promoting elitism abroad or are too focused on maximizing profits for their shareholders, (or, as recently argued, draining our stock of good teachers), we should see exporting the franchises of our leading schools as

akin to exporting Rolls Royce cars: as a nation, we can celebrate the quality of the product and that they represent the face of British education abroad; the tragedy is it is a quality of education not available to the vast majority of children in our own country.

Making the Connection: Changing the way we see Education (published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 21 June as '*We've tinkered with education for too long – what we need to do is start again from scratch*)'

"The will must be stronger than the skill'
Mohammad Ali

"I think the difficulty is the aspirations that anyone can have placed in front of them can only be based on what you see."
John Bishop Desert Island Discs 29 June, 2012

In Question Time last week there was an animated discussion about the failings of white working class boys. According to a report published last year by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, poor white boys are now the lowest-achieving group in Britain, with just 28 per cent getting five GCSEs at grade C or above and being 10 per cent less likely to participate in higher education than any other ethnic group. It is a growing problem that sits alongside the increasing gender gap in higher education, Britain's disappointing PISA rankings, and even the debates over shorter holidays, longer school days and the taking of holidays during term time. In each of these areas, the response is that spending more time at school will solve the problem. It most surely will not.
Rather, the greatest challenge we face as a society is motivating large numbers of our school population to take education seriously, to see it as relevant to their future and especially, to their job prospects, but we are not going to do it without some radical attitudinal changes. Many students see our current model of education as obsolete, not talking to them in any way or form. How do we change it? How do we get a better fit? How do we make education something they want rather than something they have to endure? How do we engender the will to learn and give a purpose to going to school?

The dice is particularly loaded against young children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who have grown up in families where unemployment has become a habit, aspiration crushed by the shortage of opportunities and worse, the value of education is not promoted in the home. What relevance does the current system have for them? Where is the incentive to learn when schools have geared their teaching towards exams rather than getting the best fix for their students (or even, for the inherent value of learning for learning's sake); where, also, when most internships and many of the best jobs are swallowed up by insiders, able to pay the piper? Where are the extra apprenticeships, the new skills, the new curricula with their greater relevance, encouraging creativity and enterprise?

But it is not just the lower socio-economic group that is currently being disadvantaged by the current education system although their marginalization is the most catastrophic. It is a crisis facing all the young, locked into a school system still influenced by a curriculum that is still steering students towards careers that are fast becoming redundant. Increasingly, there is a contradiction in pace and direction, between where education is headed and where the world is going to be by the time children leave school.

The report this week by the Commons Science and Technology Committee, that the United Kingdom needs 745,000 workers with digital skills by 2017 highlights the parlous state of teaching Computer Science in our schools, with a shortage of teachers and a shortfall of adequate equipment. The reality is that our schools are in danger of becoming obsolete and that technology, in particular, is still a tag-on in schools rather than helping define the curriculum and the process of learning. Schools have traditionally reflected the needs of society, which worked well when change was gradual and predictable. Today, it is neither. There are too few people looking at education with fresh eyes: all we do is tinker, when what we need to do is deconstruct the existing paradigm and start again. One of the most quoted clichés of recent times is that the world is changing four times faster than our schools. Since first uttered some 24 years ago, what have we done to address the gap? Not enough because we have not looked outside the box, but have reverted to upholding a system that tries to mold children to the shape of the school and its curriculum instead of looking at what children and society might need.

Where to start? Libby Purves is right to focus on the home, especially when we know that 50% of a person's ability to learn is developed in the first 4 years of life and another 30% by age 8. If we accept that the home, not school, is the most important institution for early intervention, then we need to promote and elevate the status of education in the home. To do so, we need to convince everyone of its value, not only convince, but demonstrably prove. Schools can't work on the promise that education is important. More than ever, we cannot cajole people into education; rather, we have to show them the point of it and its benefits which, sadly, are too often invisible.

Education works best when children want to learn. When talking about a love of learning or education for life we run the risk of dealing in clichés, but then clichés become clichés because they have legs. It is helpful to look at education through children's eyes: there needs to be a point to it; it should be something you want to do as well as have to do; there should be some positive outcome; it should be fair and equitable at the point of delivery, (for if not, disillusionment and cynicism follow); it should have a purpose and be seen as in a positive light as central to all else that happens in life; and if it isn't working, and it isn't in so many instances, we need to look at ways to fix it. Children need to possess a sense of purpose and the will to succeed and that is what we must try and engender, for any other approach is no more than a band-aid fast losing its stick.
At present, there is a disconnect between the problem and the outrage, between the cause and the effect. It is the failure of an education system no longer connecting. Too many young don't see its relevance. They don't see the spoils as evenly distributed. They don't see what it can lead to, especially when they come from a culture where work is not a given. They don't see the opportunities it creates, because they are beyond their life experience. In order to make education desirable and sought after, relevant to job opportunities and life choices, it has to become more relevant and responsive in order to be seen as something valuable and desirable. We cannot keep blundering on in a school system with a curriculum (and assessment methodologies) that have been extensively tinkered with without being fundamentally changed, in content and process, since the mid twentieth century. We cannot just allow educational and vocational opportunities to go to those who can afford them and closing the door to those who cannot. What we teach and how we teach, how we connect to

children to make schooling relevant to them and the new world of work and leisure requires some very considerable work in the years ahead.

Exiting School – Choosing what comes next (published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 13 June as '*When the Country is flooded with graduates, why are we pushing so many students to University*?'

Last month, it was announced by UCAS that the number of students enrolling for A levels was set to increase by 4,000 with a commensurate decline in those enrolled for vocational courses. In the view of Mary Curnock Cook, the UCAS chief executive:
'*It's now a good decision to take A levels even if you are not an A* student,*' justifying her view by arguing that:

'*. . . choosing A-levels means teenagers can keep their options open without having to fix a career path so early in life'* whereas those choosing vocational qualifications such as sports science or health and social care' (she was careful in the examples she chose!) are more likely to go into those fields, closing their options rather early in life.'

She concluded her argument by stating that 'sticking to academic qualifications doesn't close any doors, regardless of whether you want to apply for a top apprenticeship or a top university.'

Even accepting that she was batting for the universities who are having to chase rather harder for business these days, her argument does raise several questions about what education is about and whether many of those going on to university have the time or resources to pursue education for anything other than for a vocational end.

A study conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development some ten months ago revealed that 58.8 per cent of UK graduates have ended up in non-graduate jobs, and around one in 12 of those working in low skilled jobs, such as in coffee shops, bars, call centres and at hospitality events. Surely, therefore, it is right to question whether we are getting the fit right and whether university is the best option for all of these students, particularly considering the levels of debt they rack up. This year's White Paper on Higher Education refers to the consumerist

ethos of students, measuring the costs they are incurring in their study and short and long-term returns on their investment – and who can blame them?

Celebrating an increase in numbers sitting 'A' Levels is rather contrary at a time when the country is flooded with graduates with degrees in subjects that have little market value at the same time that employers are crying out for young people in subjects such as computing, design and engineering (courses which are offered through BTEC).

While there is an argument is that you can access these subjects after A Levels, (appropriate for the majority of students), there are many young people who struggle with the examination system as it is or whose abilities, enthusiasm and practical skills are not best assessed by exams; or perhaps, even, those who, at sixteen, know what they want to do. Getting into a vocational course, with its greater emphasis on formative assessment is a good option for many especially in the knowledge that further education is there to access in the future in the sure knowledge that no job is for life. In making their decision, they might also reflect on the fact that, as well as the number of graduates whose degrees have not led to employment in their study areas, that between 1996 and 2011 89.8 per cent of graduates with BTEC qualifications were in employment, compared with 88.1 per cent of graduates with A Levels.

What is crucial is that those with the ability and desire to go on to university should not be deterred from doing so, particularly because of cost. This is where the greater effort is required, by teachers, schools and universities, to ensure that we encourage and support the most able and those who have the ability, focus and maturity to do well, rather than trying to steer all students towards university as a matter of course, often going without them having any clear reason as to why they are going (and by the same token, we should be wary of the many schools that proudly advertise how many of their students go onto university). Of course, it is imperative that those who are able and set on a certain course of study, especially those from poorer socio-economic groups, are not put off because they fear the threat of falling into debt with no guarantee of employment at the end of their course. University should not be seen as simply what you do between school and work, just as vocational courses should never be chosen as an easier or less expensive option. Arguably, far too many

students go to university because it is what their peers do and too many others who should go, eschew the opportunity for the same reasons – and addressing that contradiction is the challenge.

Instead of focusing on university entry, schools should be looking closer at the changing job market and the ability, skill set and aptitude of their students. Education, as we know it, is undergoing a dramatic transformation (as with the job market) and our schools and systems need to show more flexibility in recognizing that A Levels, (even if they are the best measure we can come up with – and adherents of the IB would argue not), are an inadequate vehicle to measure a student's ability to find and solve problems, think critically and creatively, skills as important as content knowledge. Quite possibly, rather than pushing more students towards A Levels and then university, it is possible many more students would benefit from taking a vocational course, possibly in conjunction with A levels (and perhaps, also, we need to look at establishing more some rigorous vocational courses in the future). Schools should be promoting alternatives and look at the breadth of what they offer by way of syllabi and career advice and not steer all students towards university simply as a matter of course or because their schools can offer no other options. Few students can afford the idealistic view of education opined by some academics, of education for education's sake and whose views, laudable in theory, should not be foisted on students who simply need to get a job without being buried in debt and no way of paying it off.

There are numerous examples of entrepreneurs, including Alan Sugar and Richard Branson who left school early in preference of starting work (and their views, business success and methodology have gone on to educate others). With education changing through technology and the fact that traditional methods of teaching are in danger of holding back learning rather than facilitating it, we need a more flexible approach and remember that the concept of readiness applies just as much at eighteen as in pre-school when children begin learning to read.

Comparatively few so-called academic schools offer BTEC courses although some offer their own alternative (such as the Bedales assessed courses). Academic schools argue that they cannot be all things to all students although their rigidity and adherence to league tables is arguably

holding them back and costing them some of the more able students, even if their lack of orthodoxy may take more careful handling.
If we are serious about the purpose of education being to prepare students for the next stage in life, we need to stop pushing university as the first choice for all at eighteen and not see A Levels as the bespoke option for all at 6th Form. There are other alternatives that allow for different skills sets, different stages of development and different aptitudes. To go down a vocational route should not be seen as closing a door on university with education (and the job market) changing so rapidly that adaptability, initiative and a good work ethic are, arguably, more important to employers than a degree. BTEC, like A Levels and the IB, have their limitations, but well-taught, they and other vocational courses should not be seen as the lesser option in an age when on-going access to education and frequent changes of jobs will become a feature of their lives.

Teachers – it's not about Recruitment, it's about Retention (published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 2 June as *'Good Teachers cannot be replaced by 'buying' new teachers – we must ask why so many are leaving'*

As schools are busy recruiting staff for the next school year, once again they are faced with a shortage of specialist teachers, especially in subjects such as physics and design technology where as few as one third of advertised posts are filled. Although the official government view is that there is no shortage of teachers (and this, despite recruitment targets having been missed for the past four years and an expected roll surge of some 600,000 pupils to cater for in the next five years), more schools are having to make do with teachers teaching in non-specialist subjects or by using supply teachers to cover classes. Despite incentives, through enhanced salaries and conditions (such as the provision of housing), or bursaries up to £25k to train as teachers (the amount the department of education offers for prospective maths teacher for 2016 – 2017), the problem is not one that should be approached through extra recruitment in the first instance, but by addressing the quite unacceptable rate of attrition that currently stands at around 10% (45,000 teachers) a year. Good, experienced teachers cannot be replaced simply by cranking up a production line and much more needs to be done to keep hold of those who joined the profession before resorting to 'buying' new teachers.

The first question that needs to be answered about the exodus of teacher is why? Why are so many leaving the profession? And what can be done to fix it, to turn them around and persuade them to stay?

In March, Christine Blower, the union's leader, described the loss of experienced teachers from the classrooms as a 'desperately serious situation' and cited the causes of the retention problem as: 'workload, workload, workload – for not enough pay.' Undoubtedly, workload is a principal reason in its many guises including increased record keeping and administration; ever more compliance and regulation; an enhanced pastoral role; more academic accountability; more pressure from parents and ever more restrictive health and safety regulations. Add in greater pressures to produce good exam results; the requirement for more differentiation and for early identification of pupils needing intervention; the need (in many schools at least) to provide wrap-round care; the challenge of teaching children for whom English is not their mother tongue; and a myriad of other requirements that fall to schools from providing counselling and offering school meals to a raft of extra-curricular activities.

Undoubtedly, it is a different job than the one many teachers signed up for and at times, they must feel that the malaise of the whole of western society, the lack of discipline, teenage pregnancy, drugs, knife crime and ignorance are all laid at their door.
Second, we need to address the concern of the profession about increasing attacks (including physical attacks) and the proliferation of false allegations.

In a recent survey (March, 2015) more than one in five school and college staff (22 per cent) surveyed had been the target of a false allegation by a pupil while one in seven had been subjected to false accusations by a pupil's parent or family friend. In another, more recent poll, 60% of teachers reported being abused on social media. Teachers are more vulnerable than they have ever been before and while child protection must underpin what the profession is about, the balance has tipped too far. Careers have been ruined, good teachers driven from the profession while a culture of fear and vulnerability has been created.

Third, part of the reason for the above, is the lack of respect and way in which the profession is perceived and represented by politicians, parents

and the press. Increasingly, teachers have seen their profession treated in a cavalier way by being touted as a refuge for those wanting to jump jobs, former servicemen and women and others who had lost their jobs in the City. With so little importance placed on being a teacher, little wonder that only two per cent of the highest achieving graduates from our top universities train to become teachers on graduating compared with South Korea which recruits teachers only from the top five per cent of graduates and Finland from the top ten per cent. Little wonder, also, for the lack of respect for teachers from children when parental attitudes and conversations in the homes fed by the media are so negative. The profession needs to be promoted by government, not denigrated, and its teachers treated as professionals, not lackeys. It is a vicious cycle that needs to be broken.

Fourth, the lack of autonomy in the curriculum largely brought about by the demands of tests and the gathering of data, as well as the addition of extra subjects to fulfil the government's social agenda has done much to dampen the desire of teachers entering the profession to 'make a difference'. SATs and the pressures of GCSE, AS and A Levels, as well as the restrictions of the EBacc, especially on the creative subjects, leaves us with a curriculum where testing does not allow for teachers the time to teach children according to need rather than dictate, and restricts the ways they can bring their own enthusiasm and expertise into the classroom. Many teachers are repelled by being part of an examination system that they believe drives education in a way that creates unnecessary stress, that takes no notice of readiness and which mitigates against good learning and teaching.

Fifth, the overwhelming amount of record keeping and bureaucracy that teachers are expected to deal with detracts from the time they can give over to teaching. They have seen the hours of work increase dramatically in order to churn out the documentation required for health and safety, for the raft of new policies related to child protection, early years, inspections and the like and the cost is in the classroom, in planning and preparation and in teaching. Allied to this is the requirement to be up to speed with technology and social media and, increasingly, the time given over to direct communications from parents. If we want to see what our teachers are capable of we need to give them time to teach, not become administrators.

Sixth, the lowering standards of discipline in schools has made the job much more difficult. Sadly, schools are a reflection of their society and while it is easy to blame teachers, the lack of discipline in homes allied with the fact that children are much better informed on their rights (and know that their parents are likely to support them even when they know they are being unreasonable or breaking a school's code of behaviour), adds extra pressure to teachers who increasingly feel let down and unsupported. The lack of respect and support for teachers trying to establish ground rules and boundaries from those who have failed to discipline their own children at home is particularly frustrating to the traditional home-school accord by which parents and teachers once worked together in the best interests of the child.

Lastly is the need for better pay and conditions. I put this last in the full knowledge that for most teachers, this is not the deal-breaker. In a society that measures worth by how much money you make, it is not the reason most teachers entered the classroom – – after all, why would they? But apart from the need to make teaching more competitive, if more is being asked of teachers, this should indubitably be reflected in their pay and conditions. Teachers are aggrieved when their job and responsibilities are increased with no acknowledgement from government. With a drain on teachers overseas (up to 100,000 of our teachers are now teaching abroad), there is a need for financial incentives, not in the way the government perceives, of giving schools more control over who they reward, but in increasing the salary pot.

When Michael Gove was the Secretary of State, he said: "*If we want to have an education system that ranks with the best in the world, then we need to attract the best people to train to teach, and we need to give them outstanding training. More important, we need to keep them.*"

Keeping them, I would suggest should come first. Stopping the current cycle of attrition, freeing up teachers to be able to teach more effectively and moving some of the bureaucratic workload elsewhere while protecting teacher's rights and promoting the profession in a more positive light, would be a good place to start.

Crossing the Line (published in the Daily Telegraph on-line on 27 May, 2016 as '*Schools as Businesses – when education doesn't always come first)*

A principal motive of the government's drive to convert all schools to academies is to provide them with more freedom over their finances, as well as their curriculum, admissions and staffing. Funded directly by central government, academies are able to set their own priorities for the allocation of funds according to their own priorities, subject to the same broad regulations that affect all state schools. Similarly, 'free schools' – set up by private organizations and groups of parents and teachers, again funded by government, are given considerable autonomy to decide how to run their schools.

The drive towards the marketization of education, however, raises the dilemma faced long faced by independent schools, as to whether they are first and foremost purveyors of education or businesses that need to operate with an eye to the marketplace in order to survive.

Most independent schools are constituted as charities and while enjoying the obvious benefits of charitable status, (as well as the constraints), are largely run as businesses based on a straightforward business model. Many of these business ventures have been responsible for sponsoring academies, joining in partnerships with local state schools, setting up schools abroad to help augment the bursary pot (a few, arguably, as the result of pressure from the Charities Commission rather than for any altruistic motives).

Of the three main sources of income for independent schools, fees are the both the most important and flexible as most schools employ a variety of discounts, offered as a mixture of bursaries, including free places and scholarships, to attract students including those who will benefit the school as well as benefit from what it offers. This is particularly prevalent in academic scholarship, sport and music where talented students are often enticed from the state sector to help raise the profile of their new school by sharing their particular prowess.

Other sources of revenue are trading income, which can comprise of renting facilities and income generated from off-shore franchises with endowments or foundations providing the third significant income stream.

Inevitably, there is a danger of the business model intruding upon decisions schools take in regards their education provision, especially through the desire to market and promote their schools to best effect. With this potential clash of interests, the decisions made by schools while good for raising the school's profile, but not necessarily serving the best interests of their students. Perhaps this tension is inevitable, but schools should always consider their educational foundation, mission statements and ethos when making business decisions and in promoting themselves on social media. Keeping children's best interests to the fore is what schools should always be about, not future markets.

The blurring of the line between the business and education arms of schools is not new in the independent sector where marketing has become such an important part of their operation. While all schools would argue that their primary role is to educate children, many prioritize their role as 'profit-making charities' in which profits are used to 'grow' the school as an essential prerequisite. After all, the financial health of a school, usually represented by pupil or student numbers, is what governors are most concerned with, for without taking care of the business, they may cease to exist – as has happened recently to several schools. With independent schools, however, the equation is even simpler: they have to attract students in order to survive and it is this imperative that can led to unhealthy competition and 'grey areas': Where, for instance, is the educational (or ethical) rationale for the 'buying in' of top games players, usually at sixth form (and one only has to look at the current England rugby and cricket squads to see the evidence), especially when they take over the positions held by players who have turned out for the school year on year? Or the culling of students after GCSEs on premise that their grades at A level would drag the school's results down? Or the belittling of competitor schools using league tables or sports' results; or by spending considerable sums to find niche areas that raise the school's profile, but benefit few of the students; by offering an array of school trips that Thomas Cook would be proud of, but which have hidden costs and too often, little educational justification; by placing Oxbridge places at the fore of their marketing, often achieved by disproportionately maximising their teaching resources to do so; or by seeking out the market edge by building new and ever more extravagant facilities (and it was, after all, to a school that Olympic rowing turned in 2012); or by employing sculptors, actors, writers and poets to promote their schools and hosting national teams and

events, (Brighton College, for instance, have just hosted the England rugby team for three days).

Some of the above are, of course, commendable initiatives that do benefit both the business and the students, but too many are decisions taken specifically to promote and grow the school and justified, accordingly, as pragmatic, even if they may mitigate against the best interests of current students. It is a difficult tightrope to walk for all independent schools, long subject to market forces, as it will be, albeit to a lesser extent, for academies and free schools in the future.

My concern is that there is not enough debate on the principal role of schools, which is to keep asking 'what is the best education possible for each child?' – and not just a chosen few. This may mean not pushing students through A level courses that the School thinks they will get the best grades in or teaching to the test at the exclusion of the best long-term interests of the student and whether they can cope when the props are removed – this debate should be part of every school's operation, every fundraising venture, every market decision taken.

I wonder whether some schools no longer ask the question, not because they don't want to, but because they can't afford to.

Do we 'over egg' IQ? (Published in the Daily telegraph on-line, 21 May, 2016 as '*What is it with our obsession with IQ and raw intelligence in children'.*

"He's like a lighthouse in the middle of a bog – brilliant but useless."
John Kelly

The news that Donald Trump has challenged Sadiq Khan to an IQ test (in response to being labeled as 'ignorant' for his comments on Muslims) is a timely reminder, if we needed it, of the outrage caused in 2013 by the Mayor's predecessor, Boris Johnson, with his observation that a person's IQ was a major determinant in life and that some people were simply not bright enough to succeed. Sadiq Khan, then the shadow justice secretary, was one who responded at the time, describing Johnson's comments as "shameful," adding "he has never had to struggle or fight to survive in his life. How could someone so out of touch with most Londoners' lives possibly understand the reality of poverty in London?"

What is it with our obsession with IQ and raw intelligence and why are children separated off from their peers by virtue of having a high IQ? Why do we send them off at a young age to selective schools, separated by this one interpretation of intelligence where they will only mix with the top ability range, (and often those from a high socio-economic group as well) without any thought for their all-round development and socialization? Should we not consider the importance of a child's EQ, their attitude and work ethic as equally important in the formative years? Should we not make a priority of having children grow up in society, not isolated from it? And why do we make such a virtue of raw intelligence when on its own, without commonsense, energy, application, it is nigh on useless?

The widespread use of the IQ test in the first half of 20th century came about for a variety of reasons, including the need to identify mental retardation in children. One of the pioneers, French psychologist Alfred Binet, a key developer of what later became known as the Stanford–Binet tests, however, thought that intelligence was multifaceted, but came under the control of practical judgment 'otherwise known as good sense, practical sense, initiative, or the faculty of adapting oneself.' Intellect on its own is not a measure of potential success; sadly, it is often the opposite, as Binet was to evidence himself when his tests were used by the eugenics movement in the USA as a proof of intellectual disability, resulting in thousands of American women, most of them poor African Americans, being forcibly sterilized based on their scores on IQ tests.

I have been in education long enough to treat IQ scores with caution. I even have misgivings about some teachers knowing the IQ of their pupils

and most certainly, would not want to share it with parents for fear of how the information might be misused. This isn't some form of denial, but simply knowing the effect of having a high IQ affects the way we judge people, creating a glass ceiling of expectation. By assessing children – and adults – by an intelligence quotient ignores all the variables that make for a successful adult – even a successful academic. I have known too many people with high IQs who achieved nothing of note, who lacked any sense of responsibility or morality and whose EQ was sadly deficient. Is it any wonder that so many 'intelligent' people, confident in their academic standing, are lacking in other areas of life, when they were separated by virtue of their IQs for almost all their school lives from the majority of the population with all their limitations and strengths, their viewpoints and their foibles? The same people who often lack empathy and struggle to make moral judgments and yet who end up in positions of power by virtue of a misplaced confidence in an ability that might well have no practical currency whatsoever. Should we not be worrying about the pressures of academic selection that promotes such elitism at a young age and the cost – for there is always a cost – of such separateness to the child and to society.

On the other hand, I have also known a similar number whose IQ was in the average band, or even below, but who more than compensated for a lack of IQ points by displaying Binet's 'practical judgment' who overcame whatever number was attached to them. They didn't grow up in a vacuum and their empathy for others was not merely cerebral, but actual.

We should look at the damage done to children separated at a very young age by dint of their IQ. In the end, what is important is a child's attitude, work ethic, their ability to learn from others (and from other, less measureable intelligences), plus a sense of purpose and a modicum of curiosity and enthusiasm. After all, in all the most successful leaders, EQ trumps IQ every time.

"It is not clear that intelligence has any long-term survival value." Professor Stephen Hawking

"He's very smart. He has an IQ." Leo Rosten

Time for a Moratorium on SATs? (ISC Website, May, 2016)

One of the first things I did when I first became a Head in 1998 was to withdraw my School from KS2 tests, admittedly to a certain amount of consternation from parents. Many independent schools followed, especially those that went through to age 13, and by 2012, the number was fewer than 20% and declining. Nevertheless, the current debate about SATs has relevance to all schools if for no other reason than to see which way the state sector is moving.

The recent debate about the SATs has, of course, resulted in considerable fallout. We have read, daily, of boycotts; the disclosure of leaked papers; the poll undertaken to assess the emotional effect of SATs on children; the 'Let our Kids be Kids' campaign; the comments about the negative effect of testing at 7 and 11 years; the untimely sacking of Natasha Devon, the government's mental health champion for schools; and the charge that the tests are really about measuring teachers and schools rather than pupils.

During the past few days, this list has grown even longer, with charges of maladministration and cheating; criticism of the difficulty of some of the content in the test papers (and whether they are age appropriate); and the suggestion propounded by some observers that SATS and testing were one and the same and that to oppose one meant opposing the other and, as night follows day, having lower expectations. All of which raises the overwhelming question about whether it is time to step back and look at the purpose and content of the these tests, and if they do the job they are supposed to do and the arguments of those opposed to them.

Despite the recent criticisms, the Government is right to want to raise standards, but perhaps it is time they consider whether the concentration of time and resources on SATs is the best way of doing so. It should at the very least address some of the concerns raised and sort out what, if any, criticism is valid. After all, when we read Allison Pearson's attack on those criticizing SATS and note her aside, that GCSE's are "killing the love of learning for its own,' perhaps she – and we – should be mindful that SATs are quite capable of doing the same.

Nick Gibb said at last week's conference at Brighton College that the 'beautiful command of English' shouldn't just be the preserve of the middle class, a sentiment all would agree with, but it's rather more elemental than that. First, we should be ensuring all children have a good working knowledge of English and the tools to communicate accurately. Writing should be the vehicle through which children learn about tenses and agreement and parts of speech, not the other way round (and if we are insisting on a sound knowledge of grammar at this age, for goodness sake, let's continue it and make it a central part of national testing later on). When reference is made to 11 and 12 year olds being unable to read, should we be looking at the focus on SATs in Year 6 that, in many schools, dominate the year's teaching at the expense of extra reading and writing? Sometimes, the statistics of children unable to read and write hides a number of issues including the quality of teaching, classroom discipline (which is a societal as much as a school problem) and the swathes of time given over to teaching children how to pass tests, but also whether we are addressing the task in the best and most direct way. We need to clarify what we are teaching and why, rather than dealing with the extraneous (and the equally misguided suggestion that all students take Mathematics up to A Levels is another indication of killing by excess). Let's narrow down on what skills and learning take priority and get those sorted first.

The obsession for measurement, however unreliable it may or may not be, lies at the heart of the issue. Allison Pearson argued in her article 'SATs aren't damaging kids: Low Expectations are' that if you don't find out, 'the level a child is at when they enter school, then you won't be able to measure progress, or lack of it' which would be fine if the tests could do that. Inevitably the tests are skewed for a variety of reasons, including differing levels of readiness, which can vary considerably at age 7 and 11 and the impact of the home, school and tutoring. Piaget may not have the same central place in education he once did, yet it may be worth revisiting his stages of cognitive development, particularly the concrete operational stage which occurs between the ages of 7 and 11 to see what we should expect them to know and do at each stage, but also to the variables that can apply. The fact that parents are given their child's raw score (the actual number of marks they get) which will be set against the national average is deeply flawed, and will do little other than reinforce parental expectations, upwards and downwards. Frightening that at age 11, those around you, your parents and teachers, will have the marks by which to judge or excuse

you, marks which will provide a benchmark for your onward journey to be used by those charged with your future education. Fine if you come from a middle-class literate household where parents are readers and writers and your children are confident and articulate, but there is a world outside of the liberal and often advantaged schools. Fine if you see the job of education at primary schools being about preparing for the tests through drilling and repetition, because that is what happens. Little wonder, then, the mad scramble for the places at the 'better' state schools, through the postcode lottery, often based on the socio-economic factors and ambitious parents wanting to seek every advantage, a situation more likely to be made worse by SATs, not better. Phrases used like 'in good schools children aren't stressed' asked today by Sir Steve Lancashire begs the question as to what happens to unfortunate children who aren't lucky enough to go to 'good schools'? Who is being judged? Who owns the 'mark'? Small wonder, also, that the desperation runs amok at this time of year with publishers and tutors offering assistance in preparing for SATs through publishing extra materials and practice papers along with the extra coaching and the distortion that can only distort the attempt at benchmarking. Fair? Not really.

Added to the mix is the effect, real or imagined, that SATs are having on parents and children. A recent survey (is it wise to survey children in such leading ways?) found that nearly 90% of 10 and 11 year old pupils feel pressure to do well in tests. Now, a little pressure is no bad thing, but so much depends on how well teachers and parents (at least as much as children) deal with it. When 28% of the children polled say they feel a lot of pressure and stress and 17% said the tests made them sad, moody and has affected their sleep, then we should tread a little more carefully as well as remembering it is often parents who are increasing the stress.

This does not necessarily mean jettisoning the tests, but asking whether they cannot be handled a little more sensitively and the data gathered a little more discretely. SATs are made too much of in many schools, undoubtedly, but perhaps that is because the government has hung so much on them. And yes, parents don't always get it right in knowing how to support their children. Yet while the Government says the tests should not be stressful (and many heads have come out this week with calming strategies to set their pupils' minds at ease), the fact is that children, teachers and schools are being measured and that fact does not always

produce learning and teaching that serves the best long-term interests of young children.

In all the arguments, I struggle sometimes to see clearly what do we want? If we want children to read better, are SATS going to help that happen? Do we want national benchmarking? If so, how do we ensure all children are treated the same and factor in problems of different stages of readiness? Do we want teachers to be held to account? Then give them the tools to enable them to ply their trade in properly disciplined classrooms and find other ways to measure their effectiveness than by their pupils' scores. Re-visit the question as to how much grammar is appropriate to be taught at this age (and some questions clearly were difficult even for adults)? How much of what we teach should we include in SATs so as not to detract from our primary goal of ensuring all children can read and write accurately in different genre.

Ideally, the teaching of grammar should be an implicit part of developing such skills rather than being treated in isolation. If we want children to be able to read and write competently and accurately at age 11, then get them reading and writing, not preparing for multi-choice tests (and the answer may be fewer, better tests that focus on the key outcomes, parts of speech, being able to construct accurate sentences and paragraphs). And let's stop comparing us with schools in South East Asia. We will get nowhere mimicking other school systems; we just need to improve ours in different ways, developing the skills that the workplace and society needs, instilling a greater sense of purpose and a better work ethic (and a little more breadth in curriculum in Year 6 would help). In this, prep schools have led the way in abandoning SATs where they can to get on with teaching.

It is time for a moratorium: Not for the reasons that columnists who are busily criticizing parents and schools are proposing, nor to appease those parents talking about stress and boycotts. The issue should be is this the most effective way of ensuring competency in English and is it achieving its goals of improving the ability of our children to read and write? If the tests are deemed necessary does the process need fine-tuning? After all, testing is time-intensive (even if schools are told it shouldn't be) and should not be driving teaching as it clearly is, particularly in Year 6. Children can handle quite complex language and literature, but not all, or not at 11 years. Rigour is fine, as are high expectations and tests, properly employed, but it is timely to look again at what we need to assess. We need

to re-examine the impact of SATs, the process and the industry it has begotten and ask whether the tests are serving our children well and if not, be prepared to change them.

We can leave the last word to Allison Pearson who is fierce in her condemnation of ' touchy-feely educationalists' who decree that asking children 'questions to which they might not know the answer was a) unfair, b) discriminatory, or c) quite possibly a violation of their human rights.' Might it not be (d) that the question is irrelevant, wasteful or unlikely to do what it says on the packet?

It's Not a Joke! (published on-line in the Daily Telegraph, 9 May, 2016 as *'It's Criminal the Amount of Time Given Over to SATs Material that even the Prime Minister Struggles With'*

As the reaction to the SATs continues to run, amid threatened boycotts and outrage from parents and teachers, we are right to feel angry. It is not enough to question whether the exams are appropriate at this age (they're not) or whether they are important in raising standards and providing benchmarks (hardly). The more important question is whether children are being subjected to inappropriate and unnecessary preparation for these tests and losing valuable learning and teaching time? When the Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb managed to mix up a preposition with a subordinating conjunction, he should have paused long enough to ask himself about whether the question was age-appropriate – although by admitting his error he did rather better than the Prime Minister who, when asked to explain the progressive tense, conjunctives and modal verbs, terms used in the SATs for 11 year olds at Prime Minister's questions simply fobbed it off. If Nick Gibb (or the Prime Minister) had been a pupil in my class, their failure to answer the questions correctly would have reflected on my teaching – for that's how it works.

Teaching English is a joy and children enjoy grammar, taught well. It is important for children to know the various parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, interjections and the definite and indefinite article. Some children at 11 years can handle the subjunctive, phrases and clauses, but not all are at that stage of readiness

and certainly not for its inclusion in national benchmarking. But beyond that we should tread very carefully and certainly not expect the less able, those for whom English is a second language to have to sit down and learn parts of grammar that even adults have shown they don't understand. Spelling, punctuation, constructing sentences and paragraphs, handwriting, yes, let's reinforce them; figures of speech, too, which can be taught in such a way as to engender a love of language: similes and metaphors should be known, but otherwise other examples should not be included in testing at this level. Children enjoy playing around with figures of speech: Tautologies; euphemisms; hyperbole; oxymoron's; puns and proverbs. Homonyms and antonyms, as well as figures of speech and literary terms that can be easily explained and woven into children's work. Taught properly, children enjoy using them. The same of poetic terms, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, but they don't need to be included in a baseline test at 11 years. As for modal verbs, determiners, (where did that term come from?), the progressive tense and subordinating conjunctions, no thanks.

What this unrealistic syllabus does is put pressure on every teacher in the country to teach this to all abilities, including the less able, for whom less is more, and who need really good foundations. What a soulless job it is to drum such extraneous detail into children who cannot even get nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs right. All this time given over to teaching material the teacher knows is inappropriate or irrelevant, and moreover, teaching it for a test (and, yes, this does affect how it is taught) because your job as the teacher and the school's future depend upon it) is criminal. Someone should be called to answer for the appalling waste of valuable teaching time, given over to material that has even seen the Minister and Prime Minister caught short of an answer – and to be fair, they would be in good company including some English teachers.

They need to remember that these tests are not just for the 'bright, well-tutored child from a good London home', but for all 11 year olds from all backgrounds and socio-economic groups throughout the country. I am all for getting the basics right, but I am not surprised that teachers who joined the profession to teach, feel powerless; no wonder they feel betrayed, suffocated by prescription and unrealistic expectations, while being slated by columnists like Harry De Quetteville propounding that '*SATs are not about testing children, but teachers – and that's a good thing'* and accusations of

cheating that taint the profession When are teacher's going to be given their jobs back and the profession given some credence and respect?

The Devil's in the Data (published on-line in the Daily Telegraph, 5 May, 2016 as *'The Devil's in the Data: school exams have become the master, rather than a tool to measure progress.'*

We live in a world of education where data rules. Whether in assessing schools, appraising teachers, measuring performances in national exams, tracking pupil performance or assessing value added, it has crept insidiously into all areas of education. The use of data as a force for change has been seen as responsible for driving school improvement, pushing up standards of learning and teaching and also academic results –and with some justification.

If we look at the dependence of many schools on data for tracking pupils and measuring academic achievement, as well as making predictions about future academic performance, however, rather than celebrating how much better we 'know' our students, we should be a little concerned. Armed with a battery of tests that assess IQ, verbal and non-verbal, spatial and numerical reasoning skills as well as various psychometric tests, schools are busy plotting the potential and future academic paths of their students in a way that is, at best impersonal, and at worse, dehumanising. There is no doubt that the tests provide a useful tool in making judgements, assessing abilities and potential and identifying learning difficulties, but too often they have become the master, rather than the tool, no longer there to assist teachers and schools in making measured judgements about their students based on their best interests, but as the driving force behind shaping teaching practice.

There has long been a suspicion that some data is gathered more for the benefit of the institution than for the student, whether to meet some government benchmark or in marketing and promoting schools. While improved academic standards should benefit all, the reality, when based on predictive data, is that it can also work against a student's best interests. Hence, when teachers strive to achieve the predicted grade for every student, we have the rather unnerving spectacle of data driving the

teaching process, rather than the teacher's wider knowledge of the student or any of a number of variables that determine what works with a particular student. Of course, data should be used to support teaching; it is when it compels teachers to work slavishly towards meeting targets determined by data that is, by its very nature, impersonal, and taking any necessary short-cuts to do so that the process begins to unravel. Small wonder that schools that have used a battery of such attainment tests to select pupils for their schools have come to depend more on what they glean from interview than from the battery of marks, often (as they have come to realise) the result of drilling , extra tutoring or constant practice on similar test papers.

It is difficult for teachers not to feel the expectations of data when they are told what is expected of their students. The pressure is not so much to achieve certain thresholds, but how, and the effect such pressure can have on the style of teaching. For students to achieve the grade that is expected, is not (or should not be) the end of the school's responsibility. If the student has been denied a sustainable education, that is having been taught the skills, aptitude and knowledge to build on his / her schooling and the ability to keep on learning without the props and prompts of school – when all that has been learnt is how to pass an exam – then a school has failed its students, regardless of what league tables might tell us.

The fear is that the excessive amount of assessment that is based on a strict adherence to data, actual and predictive, sets teacher expectations rather than grows them. The concern is that in working to data, we ignore the caveats: where, amongst all these figures, for instance, do we measure attitude, determination, work ethic; where do we consider curiosity, the ability to think creatively, to hypothesise; what happens when we use this data to set our expectations in stone – not so much for those you are trying to drag up, but for those who through a combination of other factors, are held back?

Of course, we have got better – much better – at teaching to the test. But that is not the same thing as a good education. Which is why so many young adults struggle to think for themselves and struggle to continue to work at the same level at university or who lack the skills and motivation to think and work independently and to make good employees.

What's worse is what it has done to teaching. While the availability of a vast range of data has enabled teachers to tailor their teaching, and to help student learn how to pass examinations, with all the tricks and shortcuts they can pass on, it has stolen valuable hours and hours of teaching and planning time from teachers each week and given it over to record keeping, to assessment and other bureaucratic functions. It has taken away a sense of freedom to teach without expectation or to engage students in learning new skills and ideas and go off-piste if that is where the students' interests take them; it has taken away the joy of developing a love and appreciation of a subject; and it has curtailed and stunted the enthusiastic teacher while diminishing their core role to teach.

Frustratingly, while I am sure that teaching without the restraints of being told the outcomes from the start is a lot better – I just don't have the data to prove it.

Comparing Education (published on-line in the Daily Telegraph, 19 April, 2016 as '*In New Zealand, it's rare to be asked what school you attended: Will this ever change in Britain?*)

While the independent sector continues to bat away recent criticism from Sir Michael Wilshaw, Alun Ebenezer and Sir Keith Burnett emanating from the last Sutton Report, it is interesting to look at similar educational systems abroad to see how they cope with the state – independent divide. Where better to start than the country that, rather to its surprise, has retained the Union Jack as a cornerstone of its flag, New Zealand.

Like the United Kingdom, New Zealand has a small percentage of its pupils in independent schools, (around 5%), although a further 11% attend integrated schools. These are independent schools that have integrated into the State system, albeit that they remain, for all intents and purposes (except in their fee structure) almost indistinguishable from other independent schools.

Of the three classifications of schools: state, independent and integrated – it is the latter that is of the most interest. The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975, introduced in the 1970s to bail out a Catholic schools system that was in danger of collapse has seen a steady transfer of independent (private) schools into the state, the most recent example being

Wanganui Collegiate Schools, one of the oldest and best known New Zealand schools. The Act allows for proprietors to retain ownership of the school and its buildings and to take on the responsibility for preserving the school's special character while the State picks up the bill for staff salaries and running costs (up to the level of comparable state schools). Thereafter, integrated schools can charge parents a variety of fees, variously labelled attendance fees, boarding fees, (if applicable) contributions and donations, in order to protect the unique character of the School (which allows for lower teacher / pupils ratios, paying for facilities and extra resources or courses).

The popularity of integrated schools lies in the fact that they provide the perceived benefits of independent education (smaller class size, a wider range of extra-curricular activities) as well as significantly reduced fees that makes them accessible to a much larger percentage of the population.

So what would you notice going to an independent school compared to a British counterpart? Not a lot. Many were set up as boarding schools for remote rural families based on the traditional British public school model. Although their clientele has now broadened considerably, including a growing number of overseas' students, many would be indistinguishable from traditional British boarding schools. Apart from similarities in the way they are run based on the trappings and traditions of their British counterparts, many offer an impressive standard of education, based around smaller class sizes, excellent academic results, a broad and vibrant extra-curricular programme and outstanding facilities and resources.

That is where the similarity ends. New Zealand has a strong and robust state school system and competition is strong. Independent schools are very much part of their local communities, especially in extra-curricular activities, notably sport, playing in local competitions against local state schools while retaining a traditional fixture list (which, again can be a mix of state, integrated and independent schools). Likewise, staff and pupils move comfortably between sectors, even at headship level, something still not so common in the UK.

The major difference is what happens thereafter. In New Zealand it is rare to be asked what school you attended. It would be naïve to think that networking doesn't have some sway, but what there is, is as influential

amongst the leading state schools as amongst independent schools. Talking about what school you attended is rarely a subject of conversation, and seldom mentioned in any article or news story. So it was unusual when, several years ago now, the Listener, (equivalent of the Radio Times) listed the twenty most eminent New Zealanders and made brief reference to where they went to school: None had attended an independent school. Not one. Twenty years on, even those New Zealander best known in Britain: John Hood, former Vice Chancellor at Oxford, James Belich, Professor of Commonwealth History at Oxford; Dame Judith Mayhew, formerly Chair of the Independent Schools' Board and Provost of King's College, Cambridge; Sir Malcolm Grant, Chairman of the NHS and Chancellor of York University; Ross McEwan, Head of the RBS all came through state schools. As did (going further back) Sir Archibald McIndoe (the father of plastic surgery) and Ernest Rutherford, the father of nuclear physics all came from state schools); as do contemporaries Eleanor Catton, Russell Crowe and Peter Jackson. Notably also, only one Prime Minister in the last 100 years went to an independent school and that on a 100% scholarship.

Similarly, with Governor-Generals since that have been New Zealanders. It is state schools (mostly traditional city schools) that lay claim to all the above. That is not to say that privately educated New Zealanders do not hold positions of power. It's just, in the UK, the statistics are stark. According to the Sutton Trust's report , half of the UK Cabinet were privately educated – including David Cameron, the Prime Minister – and more than three in five top doctors.

There are some reasons we can put forward: the academic gap, real or perceived, between state and independent schools in the two countries (although independent and many integrated schools in New Zealand perform very well relatively); the absence of comparable extra-curricular opportunities in many UK state schools, especially in sport and drama; historic reasons mitigating against social mobility; or – and this is always an uncomfortable, even unpalatable truth – the importance of an independent school background in procuring highly competitive jobs in the UK in any raft of professions from acting to politics.

It is a conundrum faced by UK independent schools, many of who are not in the financial position to widen access and who feel trapped by government demands for change along charitable lines. Yet with the

traditional political and historical opposition by governments of all hues to any sort of accommodation with independent schools, such as happened in New Zealand, allied with the hugely influential and disproportionate place of independent schools at the heart of British society, it is hard to see the hope of Alun Ebenezer that tomorrow's leaders may come from outside the 'gilded cage of fee-paying schools' being realised.

What are they Teaching? A look at the complexities of the modern curriculum in our schools. (Attain Magazine, Issue 10, Volume 30, Summer, 2016)

It is not difficult to find any number of parents who worry that something has gone badly wrong with our education system. So many of the previous benchmarks seem to have fallen away: the ability to write with a legible cursive script; a knowledge of times tables; being able to spell (or at least having the pride to consult a dictionary); an ability to read and to write – all once seen as foundations for all that followed. The claim, oft-made by universities and employers, that too many children are leaving school almost innumerate and illiterate, only adds to the disquiet. But is this concern justified?

We have all had the experience of going to school at some point in our lives. It gives us an insight into how schools work but also lulls us into thinking we know more than we do – after all, the vast majority of us have only experienced schools as pupils, not teachers. As we get older, and especially when our own children go to school, we draw on this experience of our own school days and all the things we learned, in order to measure our own children's learning. From knowing their tables and essential mathematical formulae or how to head up a letter, through to being able to recite poetry from memory, a list of kings and queens, and so on. It is not surprising, therefore, that parents ask why schools do not ensure the basics are in place before trying to teach other subjects and question what, exactly, is being taught?

The short answer is that a lot more than was taught in the past – and often under more trying circumstances. The role of schools has moved from its traditional function of imparting knowledge and skills. It now focuses on a curriculum looking at the whole child, including their social and moral

development. Schools are tasked with providing more childcare as well as taking a much greater responsibility for well-being, health and safety, gathering data for assessments and compliance or even identifying radicalization in our schools.

In recent years, there has been a very significant change both in what is taught and how it is taught. Reading provides one example of the latter. The 'look and say' approach – where children learnt to memorise words and that held sway until the late 1960s – seemed to most parents to work just fine. Now the trend is focused on phonics-based teaching, where children decode words by sounds.
The Teaching of Mathematics has also fragmented. If you follow the debate about what methods we should be using, it is like a geography lesson, with Singapore Maths competing with systems and methodologies imported from Shanghai and Finland.

Experts debate the value or dangers of learning tables and the battle of methodologies between East and West. No wonder parents are confused. Your school, however, will have a programme of study – usually working towards Common Entrance, scholarship or some entrance exam – and while your children might not know all you learned at school, I venture they will know a lot more besides.

As well as the blurring of how to teach the basic subjects, other traditional subjects such as History, Geography, Science and Languages, have all evolved and in some ways are better for it. History was traditionally the domain of a relatively small group of white academic historians, but is now as concerned with asking questions as with learning facts by rote. Geography now has a much more practical element and the same is true with Modern Languages. Other subjects have also evolved – Religious Education now has to cover all the major religions, not just Christianity, and science is increasingly involved in its practical work and applications.

But it is the other things which have been layered on top which are particularly significant: Computer Science, which is such an important part of modern life; Design Technology; Physical, Social and Health Education (PSHE); 'new' languages such as Spanish or Mandarin; philosophy; well-being; Forest skills and so on. Schools are also charged with all manner of new tasks from providing nutritional school meals, teaching sex education,

providing extended day care, monitoring health and safety through risk assessments and rafts of record keeping and bureaucracy. Little wonder there is such frustration and misunderstanding amongst parents about what is going on education.
Schools struggle to satisfy two masters. On one hand, the need to educate children to be imaginative and creative, possessing good communication skills, self-confidence, an ability to think independently and be able to show initiative. On the other, the need to prepare them for the barrage of tests they will face as their privilege for being educated in the most over-examined country in the western world.

Yet while schools do their best to deal with a conveyor belt of new statutory requirements and curriculum changes, so parents' also have to learn to modify their views and expectations on education. Parents need to be well-informed about what is going on in the classroom, as ever, and have some understanding of the curriculum, but they must also accept that education is dynamic and ever-changing. While I suspect some might still feel their children are not as accurate or knowledgeable as they were at the same age, (which may be the case in a very few subjects), they should celebrate the fact that their children are being prepared for life in a way that earlier generations were not.

The Age of the Selfie (published on-line in the Daily Telegraph, 4 April, 2016 as '*Selfies, Mindfulness and the Destructive age of Self-obsession: It's too easy to blame the internet*')

"To do more for the world than the world does for you, that is success." Henry Ford

As our society contracts and fragments, with more and more people isolated in their own communities and families or lost to the lure of the net, our response has increasingly been to look inwards in order to find the resources to cope. This search for greater self-awareness through learning more about ourselves and ways to counter stress is now our default response to the pressures of modern life. We are busy seeking self-improvement and well-being by all the pathways open to us, drip fed through the media, in the guise of articles on meditation and learning to cope, delivered by personal trainers, life coaches or even the Dalai Lama,

all searching for some understanding of a world that is increasingly incomprehensible. This is particularly true of our young who are better informed of global problems, such as climate change, war and poverty than previous generations, but many of whom are more traumatised, isolated and alone than ever before. Which is where 'Mindfulness' comes in, with its aim of helping children cope with the world and make sense of it. In schools, mindfulness is now the new buzzword, helping children find that mental state of being aware of the present and keeping all else in proportion. Happiness, self-confidence and self-esteem have become the emotional targets in our quest for greater self-awareness and well-being.

Self-awareness is seen as the antidote to all the stresses and pressures of life in the 21st century. After all, when we look at the incidence of depression and mental illness, suicide and crime, the isolated, the disengaged and the lost in our communities, something is clearly going wrong. However, whether the solution to the pressures of modern life lies within each person is debateable when many of the ills of modern life can be attributed to living in the net. It is not easy to counter the exposure exacted by the selfie, by sexting, from the entrapment by social media that allows the individual to live virtually, to have a presence 'out there' while struggling with their 'aloneness', adrift from friends and family. Social media is awash with sites that encourage self-promotion, encouraging the promulgation of images and opinions that, surprise, sometimes come back to bite their author. Add in reality television, endless self-improvement books and articles, role models who are rich and famous, and we have a generation pushing their profile, their looks, their wit and credentials as hard as they can without any thought for others, or their greater place in the world. No wonder they need help.

The trouble with the virtual world is that while it is not real, for many caught up in cults, religions, quasi-political movements or as victims of abuse or bullying, it is all too real. While often its manifestations are to do with perception, that does not protect children from getting caught up in the maelstrom of the net with all its savage anonymity. But it is too easy to blame the internet for all the dislocation of young people from society; much of the responsibility lies with poor parenting, hand-wringing liberals who have closeted our young and made them ever more vulnerable; with successive governments that have done so little to monitor the use of

technology by the young while deciding what is best to eat, think and, most alarmingly, teach our children and the dependent mind-set it promotes.

The problem is, in part at least, rooted in our obsession of self or, in the instance of parents, with the exclusivity of their children. As a result, the idea of society has contracted, its inhabitants more introspective, less caring of others and more concerned with looking after themselves and their own.

While Mahatma Gandhi's words that *"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others"* may seem idealistic and naïve, we would do well to reflect on this mantra in our schools. So much we do encourages the cult of the individual, rather than the good of the community, more thinking about oneself than others. Just as children need to learn values, so they need to learn the concept of being a small part of a larger whole. To get children to look outwards, we need to look after them better at a young age and pay attention to the concept of readiness in emotional terms and heed the dangers of children being asked to deal with emotional and societal issues before they are emotionally equipped to do so (and this includes aspects of sex education). Choice, given to children at too young an age, is not helpful (and this includes anything from choosing their food, what television programmes they watch or even selecting the school they attend). Two things we do in our schools have exacerbated the problem: the constant belief that children need to know about everything: birth, death, sex, drugs and health issues before they can emotionally cope with such topics; and second, our promotion of children's rights as enshrined in 'Every Child Matters', without any point of reference to the family, the community or society.

At the risk of criticising 'Mindfulness' which, after all, is a sacred cow, endorsed by Government, it is a belated response to a horse that has already bolted and arguably not that useful either when 'taught' in isolation. Taught badly, (and how many teachers are equipped to teach it well?) it can arguably create more angst and introspection amongst children. Self-awareness is, of course, hugely important, but children, encouraged by adults, need also to look outwards and learn about the sensitivities and needs of others, even if just within their own families and schools. We need to work harder on inclusion, on socialising our children, and helping families stay together before taking them too far, too early on the journey

within. Self-obsession is unhealthy and destructive, not only of self, but of the families and communities they populate. And while we benefit from being more self-aware, I venture we can benefit more by promoting the recuperative benefits of looking outwards.

"*Non nobis solum nati sumus.* (Not for ourselves alone are we born.)"
Marcus Tullius Cicero

Making a Difference Published on-line in the Daily Telegraph under *'The Importance of Great Teaching on Children's Success'* 22 March, 2016

As a society, we spend an inordinate amount of time, resources and money looking at how to improve the quality of education in our schools.

The questions we ask ourselves are always the same. How do we improve the quality of teaching and learning? (and its corollary, our examination results?) How do we make our children more motivated and competitive? And how do we get children to value and 'own' their education?

And yet, after all the talk of new methodologies and curricula, after new and different methods of teaching and models of assessment; after all the time and money spent on technology; after the personalization of education and differentiated teaching; after learning styles and habits of mind, after mindfulness and Every Child Matters; after the debates about continuous and formative assessment and after all the constant tinkering, bureaucratic and legislative, with their greater focus on data and compliance, we seem to be no closer to establishing what are the most important factors that makes children succeed. The only consistent factor we can identify is the role of the teacher, whose abilities and skillset, knowledge and enthusiasm are crucial in determining the success or otherwise, of the children they teach.

Teaching, after all, is about engagement, about getting children to listen and switch on. The best investment any government can make is to get the most effective, the most talented, the best teachers they can in front of the children. By best, I don't mean those who are the best qualified, but those teachers who know how to enthuse and connect with children regardless of their own levels of education. I mean those teachers who can properly

engage with children and teach them by inspiring and challenging them. Sometimes the pathway dictates that the process comes down to hard work rather than inspiration, but teaching is all about the relationship between teacher and pupil / student more than anything else. Children will work harder for a teacher they respect even if he / she demands more and insists on discipline and high standards. One can only speculate what would have been the impact if all the money spent on technology had gone instead into lowering the teacher-pupil ratio and improving the identification, selection and training of the most effective and passionate teachers, where we would be now. In a somewhat better place, I would suggest.

I look back at outstanding teachers from my own teaching career and remember, in particular, one woman, whose ability with children was legendary. She was strict, uncompromising, but children wanted her approbation. One particular year she took on a particularly difficult class of Year 4 children, two of whom had considerable physical and intellectual difficulties and could not even print their names and yet finished the year with impressive cursive writing – achieved through repetition, practice, discipline and unwavering high expectations. She made such a difference to their young lives (and writing was just a shop window) and all who were fortunate enough to have her as a teacher.

Good teachers don't need the security of extra resources and technology that, evidence suggests, can detract rather than add to the learning process. While they may use resources to embellish their lessons, they will not allow the resources to become the lesson. The best teachers are always wanting to do and find out more about their own craft, pushing out the boundaries of their learning and teaching which is why many exceptional teaches re-work or even discard their teaching notes on a regular basis and look for new topics, and ways, to teach.

This lesson came home to me when I was asked to introduce Art History into the 6th form in a New Zealand school and finding, after the subject had been offered, and places filled that my knowledge of the period (Italian Art, 1300 – 1650) was almost as deficient as were my resources. That year, with a few old text books and slides, I learnt alongside the students and at the year's end, we were the top performing department in the school with one student in the top ten in national scholarships. The next year, I went to Italy and soon had the best resourced art history department anywhere

with videos and CD Roms, slides, a library of outstanding books of reproductions, computer programmes on every aspect of the course, but my students never did quite so well ever again. I think they learned better, as I did, by having to think more, by having to eke out what they could from the meagre resources, by having to think and having a teacher learning alongside them. There was no hiding place for any of us.

Teachers need to keep learning and growing – it is not a profession for the cynical or indifferent. The best can be identified by their enthusiasm and interest in pedagogy. They are not characterized by their own high academic performance, but by a thirst for passing on the benefits of education. They may be unorthodox, idiosyncratic, employing a variety of approaches to get children to want to learn and to question what they are being taught. They are typified by their passion, their non-negotiable standards, breadth of interests, high expectations, understanding of how children learn, and empathy for them, an insistence on greater self-discipline and by their relationship with their pupils.

Interestingly, children know who are the best teachers, even if they try and avoid them in favour of the more popular variety who may make their lives easy. They often criticize them to their parents for being too demanding and only realise later the opportunity they have squandered. They are the teachers who entered the profession in order to make a difference. And they do.

I want to be Rich, I want to be Famous. Published on-line in the Daily Telegraph under '*Fame and Fortune Should not be the Only Ambitions of our Young,*" 5 February, 2016

Over recent years, there has been a significant change in the aspirations of young children. You only have to talk to a class of young children to see just how much focus has shifted from wanting to 'do' something in life to wanting to 'be' someone. In a survey conducted in late 2014, a sample of children aged under 10 were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up: 22% responded by saying that they wanted to be rich while another 19% said they wanted to be famous. Such responses may be dismissed as symptomatic of the times we live in and society's obsession with fame and

money, but the implicit lack of purpose and ambition to 'do' rather than to 'be' prevalent amongst our children should concern us all.

At a conference towards the end of last year, Nicky Morgan spoke of the need for children to be taught that instant success and money do not just happen, citing the deleterious effect of X factor on the young. Her argument concluded *". . . what I want to see in teacher training is more talk about character education. Children must be taught that there are no shortcuts to success and that "instant fame and money" do not happen overnight."*

It is a commendable aim even if it begs the question about what form such 'character education' should take. But even more important than instilling grit and resilience in our young is the need to teach them values. Value education may have been out of favour over recent years, partly because of the inevitable concern about just what values we should espouse and promote, but without learning tolerance, integrity, honesty, the importance of community and the like, children will continue to be attracted to goals that are often vacuous and shallow. Rather than the reason suggested by the Education Secretary., the blame doesn't just lie with programmes like X Factor and similar various reality shows. Rather it is a reflection of what we read of in the daily papers, a society that shamelessly celebrates celebrity, fame and wealth (even when such goals are achieved through the manipulation of expenses, bankers' bonuses, tax evasion / avoidance and the like). With the widespread and undiscriminating celebration of wealth and fame, it is naïve to think that such views will not drip down to our children.

It has not always been so. In a programme on BBC 4 just last month, there was a compilation of interviews with children recorded between 1967 and 1974 whose aspirations focused around service vocations including nursing, law and teaching. Their attitudes about money sound unnaturally idealistic today. One child commented, '
"If somebody left me some money, I wouldn't take it, I don't think, for I'd like to work for all the money I get" (interviewer: WHY?) "Because I don't think it's fair – it should really go to poor people who work just as hard as I do."

There was also evidence of a social conscience rarely heard today. In response to the question, 'Would you like to be very rich?' the child replied "I wouldn't like it, but I think if I did have a lot of money, I'd make a

school for the rich people and the poor people because I think that when poor people are separate from the rich people, they don't feel they're in with it and feel they are worse than they really are."
Naïve and innocent, perhaps, but there was a strong sense of idealism in their responses and in their choice of vocations that were largely jobs focused on service, in areas such as health and education.

Children are a reflection of the society they live in. They may need grit and resilience, as Nicky Morgan suggests, but even more important, children today need to learn the value of community, of looking after each other, of honesty and integrity. Character education is important, yet when the focus of our children is increasingly on seeking self-promotion, instant gratification and looking after self rather than on having a sense of purpose and vocational aspiration, then we have work to do.

Do I Miss Inset Days? Not Likely! (published on the ISC website 11 April, 2016)

Since 1988, state schools in the United Kingdom have been required to offer their staff a total of five inset days each year – often called 'Baker' Days after the then Conservative Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker who introduced the measure. In state schools, these days can be scattered throughout the year while in independent schools, they tend to be held immediately before the start of each term, usually for one or two days duration.

Initially, in-service (inset) days were designed, in part, to accompany the introduction of the national curriculum and to provide the opportunity of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff. They were usually given over to matters of education and the classroom: discussing individual pupils; looking at the balance of the curriculum and how to improve the effectiveness of teaching; sharing ideas, skills and good practice; working out how to challenge and extend children; and all the time providing staff with an opportunity to learn something new, to be inspired or challenged about their teaching and to reflect, both individually and collaboratively, on how to do things better. Inset days were an opportunity to catch up with new developments, to talk about individual pupils, or classes, and their learning and pastoral needs. Properly used, they provided an excellent

opportunity for teachers to examine and improve their craft, so crucial in what is a dynamic profession.

In recent years, however, the whole educational rationale for inset days has been subsumed by the need to use the allotted time for the purpose of ensuring staff are properly trained in social and pastoral areas, particularly safeguarding and child protection. Frustratingly, they have become something to be endured rather than a source of inspiration and ideas. Like groundhog days, they have tended to focus on the same topics at regular intervals out of necessity, with little tweaks here and there, but leaving little room for much else.

Since 'Every Child Matters', the momentum of change has gathered ever greater pace as the prime purpose of inset days has 'morphed' into ensuring staff have the required accreditation or certificates in order to ensure their schools are compliant. Most inset days therefore consist of various child protection and safeguarding courses, training for First Aid or health issues, internet safety and cyber-bullying, nutrition, teaching British Values or, as with the PREVENT programme, identifying and preventing radicalisation – all important initiatives in themselves, but deleterious as a whole when they take up whole inset programmes. On the back of government requirements for inset training, there has grown a whole industry of providers, offering workshops on any new government initiatives, such as WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) or CARE ('Confidently Addressing Radicalisation and Extremism') or, indeed, on a wide range of topics that have currency, but not always relevance, to particular schools. In a profession where shared time is of the essence, perhaps more could be done to consolidate training to allow for staff to meet together for discussion, rather than to receive information that can easily be communicated in some other way.
Of course, the argument is 'what is as important as the safety and well-being of children?' but that misses the point. The extra requirements of school staff to be compliant have come at a cost, and that cost is the opportunity to fine-tune what schools are required to do, which is to educate their pupils. Parents, who are required to find childcare for the equivalent of a full school week, (although a number of schools do, helpfully, run the days concurrently) also deserve to know that the inconvenience caused is at least directly, or indirectly, going to benefit the all-round education of their children.

This is not to play down the vital importance of child protection and other matters of compliance, rather to bemoan the loss of time available to refresh teaching and learning. While safeguarding properly lies at the heart of schools, we should not be surprised at a degree of weariness felt by teachers as they await their first mandatory session on compliance, whilst champing at the bit to get into the classroom. We need the pendulum to turn, at least a little, perhaps with more training being done on-line, in shorter sessions or in different formats, so teachers have some time over to focus on improving their core competencies and the quality of their teaching.