

# Grammar School Heads' Association



Chairman: Russel Ellicott

Chief Executive: James Skinner

[jimorjameskinner@gmail.com](mailto:jimorjameskinner@gmail.com)

[gsha.org.uk](http://gsha.org.uk)

Newsletter - Edition 22 Autumn 2016

## GRAMMAR SCHOOLS, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE MOST ABLE



**On behalf of GSHA I was invited to attend the Prime Minister's speech, 'Britain the great meritocracy', on 9 September. Her passionate commitment to a meritocracy where the best academic education is available to all, regardless of their background, came across very strongly and is surely right.**

The Prime Minister rightly stated that in grammar schools, 'the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils is reduced to almost zero' and that 'they provide a stretching education for the most able, regardless of their background, and they deliver results'.

Many of you will have data which clearly demonstrates this; for example from the various attainment and progress measures (including progress 8) for disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the Performance Tables and Raise on-line. Do use this responding to the many media enquires you are all receiving!

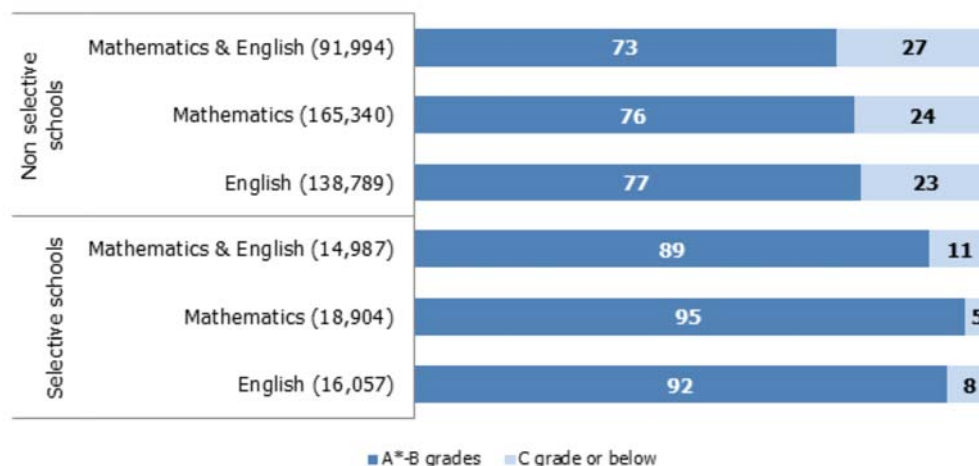
Sutton Trust research also provides evidence of the difference selective schools make for disadvantaged pupils, specifically that like for like FSM pupils gain about 2/3rds of a GCSE grade better in selective schools than the same group do in comprehensives and that grammars make a significant contribution in terms of the number of students who are the first in their family to gain a Russell Group place.



## Grammar Schools, Social Mobility and the Most Able cont ...

There is also clear evidence of how much better **all** able pupils do in Grammar Schools than other schools. The Ofsted 2015 update report on 'the most able students' has clear cut data on this:

**Figure 2: Percentage of most able students who previously attained Level 5 at Key Stage 2 gaining A\* to B grades at GCSE in 2014**



The report was a follow up to the June 2013 report *The most able students: are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools?* Ofsted were disappointed that non-selective schools had been slow to take forward the recommendations from 2013. Amongst the key findings of the 2015 report are:

- **“National data show that too many of the most able students are still being let down and are failing to reach their full potential.**
- **Nationally, too many of our most able students fail to achieve the grades they need to get into top universities.**
- **Schools visited were rarely meeting the distinct needs of students who are most able and disadvantaged.**
- **Leaders had not embedded an ethos in which academic excellence was championed with sufficient urgency.**
- **Too often, the curriculum did not ensure that work was hard enough for the most able students in Key Stage 3.”**

We can argue strongly that this provides evidence for the case for the expansion of selective schools in which none of these concerns arise.

The government’s proposals in ‘Schools that work for everyone’ build on the work done by existing grammar schools in recent years. Grammar schools have been at the forefront of prioritising disadvantaged pupils in their admissions policies and have worked closely with test providers to make entrance tests much less susceptible to coaching. Almost all grammar schools have outreach programmes, typically targeting primary schools in disadvantaged areas. An increasing number are now leading multi-academy trusts and are sponsoring both primary and non-selective secondary schools. Again you will be able to demonstrate what you have done in this area whilst the paper ‘New Grammar Schools and Social Mobility’ which was sent to member schools on 10 September gave more information on this.

Those opposed to selective schools will of course argue their case very strongly and as always they will use data which supports, or can appear to support, their arguments. This will inevitably lead to criticism of existing grammar schools as part of the continuing high level of media interest.

At our September steering group meeting we agreed that we need to get more data to combat this. Some of this we should be able to obtain from the DfE but some we need from you. Later this term we will send out a survey to all member schools to this end.

**James Skinner - CEO**

**This consultation was launched on 12 September, following the Prime Minister's Speech on 9 September and runs until 12 Dec 16.**

**We would strongly encourage all schools to respond.**

The questions are open in that they all ask for written comments, which is encouraging. The questions are not numbered in the consultation paper but are in the online response form. The consultation questions cover the four areas as outlined in the Prime Minister's Speech. These are the roles that can be played by Independent schools, Universities, Selective Schools and Faith schools in building on what has already been achieved to ensure good school places are available for all families. We would encourage you to respond to all the questions but especially those that relate to selective schools: as in all consultations the number of responses in favour or against proposals is critical. GSHA will of course also respond as an organisation and at our steering group meeting on 23 September we looked at these questions. Below is further information on the questions that relate to selective schools (Q5 & 6 and Qs 19-29) along with some pointers which may help in your response and which will be reflected in the GSHA response. The relevant page and paragraph (para) numbers from the consultation document are included in the commentary.

Page 11 para 10 confirms the intention to develop a means of identifying people who are disadvantaged but just above the FSM threshold and asks for suggestions on how to do this. Para 22 (page 28/29) commits to reflect this in the National Funding Formula.

**Q5 *How can we better understand the impact of policy on a wider cohort of pupils whose life chances are profoundly affected by school but who may not qualify or apply for free school meals?***

**Q6 *How can we identify them?***

This really is encouraging: we have for a long time argued that FSM (and PP) are blunt tools and ignore all those families that are 'just getting by'. We should welcome and support this, but the challenge is identifying them: IDACI doesn't identify individual families. One possible way forward is to use the parental income bands that are used for post 16 bursaries.

Qs 19-21 cover the 3 proposed ways of creating new selective spaces and page 24 para 13 talks about the £50m per year to support existing grammars to expand. Expanded places will be paid for upfront on estimated numbers to address the lag funding problem and satellite site expansion will be supported.

**Q19 *How should we best support existing grammars to expand?***

As well as supporting the suggested uses of the £50m above, we should raise the issue of some LAs blocking access to basic needs funding pots to selective schools. Additionally a capital stream specifically for expanding selective schools would really be needed: the 20% of the current academies condition and improvement fund available for expansion is heavily over bid and consequently many strong bids are unsuccessful.

### **Q20** *What can we do to support the creation of either wholly or partially new selective schools?*

They intend to remove the restrictions that prevent new free schools being selective. As well as doing this it is crucial that the Free School application criteria are amended to reflect this change. Further the DfE will need to ensure that they have people with experience of successful selective education to advise and support applicants, act as educational assessors and serve on interview panels.

### **Q21** *How can we support existing non-selective schools to become selective?*

This may be the most controversial proposal of all. A crucial issue will be who will be advising and supporting schools considering this and of course who will be making the decisions. A point that can be raised here (but also relevant to Q20 &21) is what will be the role of Regional Schools Commissioners and their headteacher boards. If they are to have a role than the lack of selective head representation and potential hostility is a concern to raise.

Page 25-27 paras 16-20 covers the conditions to be placed on new and expanding selective schools which are one or more of:

- ◆ Take a proportion of pupils from lower income households. This would ensure that selective education is not reserved for those with the means to move into the catchment area or pay for tuition to pass the test;
- ◆ Establish a new non-selective secondary school, with the capital and revenue costs paid by government;
- ◆ Establish a primary feeder in an area with higher density of lower income households to widen access, with the capital and revenue costs paid by government;
- ◆ Partner with an existing non-selective school within a multi-academy trust or sponsor a currently underperforming and non-selective academy. Under these arrangements, we would expect selective schools to share resources, assist with teaching, provide curriculum support, assist with university applications and contribute to governance expertise.
- ◆ Ensure that there are opportunities to join the selective school at different ages, such as 14 and 16, as well as 11. This might be facilitated through the partnership or sponsor arrangements with other schools.

### **Q22** *Are these the right conditions to ensure that selective schools improve the quality of non-selective places?*

### **Q23** *Are there other conditions that we should consider as requirements for new or expanding selective schools, and existing non-selective schools becoming selective?*

## **Q24** *What is the right proportion of children from lower income households for new selective schools to admit?*

These conditions make comfortable reading for us as they chime with what many existing grammar schools are doing, with the possible exception of entry at age 14. However the proposed way this is envisaged within MATs is, no doubt, worth pursuing.

**Q24 is critical:** the answer must surely relate to local proportions and of course is difficult to answer without knowing what new measures of lower income (Q6) may be used. Is the answer a proportion that is equal or greater than the current proportion of disadvantaged children in the area achieving well at KS2 (i.e. whatever is the new equivalent of L5+)?

Q25 & 26 cover sanctions for non-compliance by new or expanded schools which seem reasonable.

Page 27-28 para 21 covers expectations on all existing selective schools; specifically outreach activities with local primaries targeting disadvantaged pupils and fair admissions and access arrangements such as giving priority to pupil premium. It also covers encouraging existing MATs to set up virtual or physical centres for their able students.

## **Q27** *How can we best ensure that the benefits of existing selective schools are brought to bear on local non-selective schools?*

The key here is schools having the capacity and funding to deliver. Many schools will be able to reference how their capacity to support both primary and non-selective secondary schools had been compromised and of necessity cut back in the last few years due to severe financial pressures.

## **Q28** *Are there other things we should ask of existing selective schools to ensure they support non-selective education in their areas?*

Surprisingly the document does not talk about more existing selective schools leading MATs and this is clearly something that could be mentioned.

## **Q29** *Should the conditions we intend to apply to new or expanding selective schools also apply to existing selective schools?*

The best approach here maybe to again reiterate that the conditions, above, for new and expanded selective schools build on what existing selective schools are doing and to that end all selective schools should be encouraged (Q27) to do so. Equally though, they should not become requirements (Q29) as local circumstance may make some of these impractical for some schools. (That said it probably isn't unreasonable to expect all to do at least one of these.)

## Admissions policy 2018 consultation

**Schools wishing to make changes will need to consult for 6 weeks prior to 28 Feb17, which is the deadline for Governors to determine the admission arrangements for 2018 entry.**

72 grammar schools have included some priority for disadvantaged pupils in their 2017 policy. Some do this for Pupil Premium (PP) pupils and some for Free School Meal (FSM) pupils. Several others have already decided to consult on this for 2018 and in light of the current consultation on 'Schools that work for everyone' it would be wise for all grammar schools to consider whether or not to do so.

The most clear cut way to do this is to set a specified number of places for such priority and this is clearly an approach favoured by the Government. Whilst the over-subscription criteria used by grammar schools are wide ranging, reflecting their different circumstances, it is possible to do this in most scenarios. For example were the main criterion is rank order, the second priority after LA children might be:

Up to (say20) places for children attracting PP/FSM who achieve the qualifying score in rank order of score.

Or where distance is the main criterion:

Up to (say20) places for children attracting PP/FSM who achieve the qualifying score in rank order of distance from the school.

The wording here is intended simply to get across the core principle: actual wording would need, as always, to ensure everything is defined precisely and fit in with current criteria wording.

This is of course not the only way to include some priority for disadvantaged pupils: there are several models that grammar schools have adopted which may better suit some schools circumstances.

Some schools may feel that adopting such a priority will make little or no difference, perhaps because they are not over-subscribed. It is worth remembering however that there are many factors which influence parental perceptions. Simply having a priority for disadvantaged pupils may encourage disadvantaged families to consider a selective school or do more to help their child prepare for selection tests, for example attending the familiarisation/ preparation sessions that many grammar schools run or looking at the materials on school and test provider websites.

If you want some further advice on this do please contact one of the executive officers or your regional reps who will either be able to advise you or put you in touch with someone with experience in this area.

### **Access to Information from the National Pupil Database**

The DfE are still keen to work with some schools on pilot applications to access to information from the National Pupil Database to identify potential PP or FSM pupils. They confirmed that individual schools can apply for such information and it should be granted if it for the purpose of research or promoting equality of opportunity. It will be rejected if the application gives the impression it is for marketing purposes. Data protection rules mean that pupils' names will be anonymised; however it should be possible to get specific information about unnamed pupils at named primary schools, hopefully including year groups and attainment data alongside PP/FSM status. We agreed that the best next step is for one or two schools to test this out and the DfE team are willing to liaise with us on these first applications. Please do get in touch if you are interested in this.

## Character Education at Townley Grammar School

**There is a growing consensus in Britain that values and characteristics, traditionally linked to a good moral character such as: Resilience, Compassion and Confidence represent the solutions to some of the societal problems that presently exist.**

Townley Grammar School is at the forefront of developing Character Education nationally. In June 2016, the school was “Highly Commended” by the DfE at the Character Education Awards for its “Innovative and consistent approach” towards Character Education.

The purpose of this article is to: i) Define Character Education ii) to share our ideas and our Character Education story, iii) to invite other schools to begin to lay the framework for, or further add to their Character Education Provision. Following on from our DfE award we feel it is our duty to advocate for and further develop Character Education with other schools. Indeed, the Minister of State for Children and Families has personally asked for the school to share its practice and work with other schools, to ensure that young people in Britain are: Determined, Resilient and Confident, able to take a proactive part in modern life.

Over the last year the Townley Grammar School has developed links with Wellington College and numerous other leaders within Character Education. The school is in the process of developing a series of CPD workshops for Head teachers to class room teachers aimed at developing Character Education

Character Education, can be defined as: Providing students with the confidence, resilience and ability to make ethical, sound decisions that will empower them to be active and positive change agents in the world. Character Education is not an abstract idea; it is an enabler, an intellectually established method through which students can acquire character traits that enable them to participate and succeed in spheres they may not have aspired to in the past.

Within the current discourse regarding Grammar schools and Social Mobility, Character Education can play a very significant role in helping students, particularly those from less privileged backgrounds gain confidence and skills to ensure that they can enact positive change in their local and global communities. Parents are very keen for their students to gain a rounded, holistic education: “91% of UK adults said that it is important for schools to help children develop good character.” (Jubilee Centre, Birmingham University 2014.)

At Townley Grammar School we encourage all students to “Be the Change they want to see in the world.” A Townley student should aspire to have the following qualities: Confidence, Resilience, Courage, Compassion, Integrity, Spirit, Social Conscience and the Ability to Inspire. These school values encompass our Character Education vision. Students from all years are given ample opportunity to explore their own character and develop these qualities. For example, over the last three years, all year 10 students have taken part in the First Give programme which actively develops youth philanthropy. In June of this year, we hosted First Give’s flagship school final where Sir Bernard Hogan Howe amongst other VIP’s judged the final student presentations.

Through First Give, our students have further developed their social consciences and compassion through campaigning and advocating on behalf of local, small, grass root charities. The links our students make with these charities are enduring. In April of this year, two of our Lower Sixth students were invited to speak at Bexley Women’s Aid AGM. The same students have led student assemblies on the importance of healthy relationships. This year, Townley Grammar School has been nominated for two awards, “Best School” and “Best Student.” The First Give Awards will take place in October, at London’s City Hall.

At Key Stage Three, all year 7 and 8 students receive leadership workshops and are given the opportunity to take part in the Diverse Leaders Network leadership challenge. The bespoke leadership workshops culminate in a “Tomorrow’s Leaders” show case event at the Capital Club, in the City of London. This year, students found the process personally exhilarating and rewarding as half of the students had a fear of public speaking before they started the process. Each presentation represented an individual Character Education journey that the students had embarked upon. Confidence, resilience, spirit and integrity are all personified by the programme.

## Character Education at Townley Grammar School cont ...

Since September 2015, the school has developed a Global Leaders Programme that unites school and House values with the United Nations Global Goals. Every tutor house group has a Global Goal to focus upon and plan how the school community can help achieve that Global Goal. Each year group has a Global Ambassador, they meet weekly as part of the Global Committee and advocate school actions with regard to the Global Goals. In November 2015, a group of Townley Students attended the Community Development Leadership Summit in Delhi, representing the United Kingdom amongst other chosen school groups from across the world. This year, all students will be able to compete for a Global Leader Award within Townley. The students will be encouraged to design and lead a school campaign that is innovative, inspiring and creative. Once again, the school's focus is on giving students the opportunity to put our values into action, be it at a local, national or global level.

In terms of Well-Being, Townley Grammar School was chosen by the "Time to Change" mental health charity to lead its campaign aimed at reducing mental health stigma and providing more help to students who may face mental health challenges and excessive exam related stress. The school works tirelessly to ensure all students are given the support and care they may need. Indeed, having won the national Jack Petchey Award last year, the school has invested in a therapy dog to further take care of our students' well-being.

The school promotes intellectual mobility and confidence through empowering students to think independently and apply the skills and knowledge they gain within the classroom to the wider world. Our Question Time sessions are one way in which year 7 to Upper Sixth form students can debate contemporary moral and societal questions not solely with each other but with leading experts and decision makers. This November, Townley Grammar School be hosting a special Question Time, debating whether Grammar schools promote social mobility with Laura McInerney, the editor of Schools Week and Guardian columnist. The event will be an excellent opportunity for our students to engage with a prominent voice on a subject that directly affects them.

The Townley Leadership Programme is entering its fifth year and has nurtured Lower Sixth students' well-being, confidence and public speaking skills through professionally and creatively led workshops, culminating in the annual "Leadership Showcase." This annual event has been held at the RSA and Landsdowne Club in Mayfair.

The locations of the showcases are incredibly important to inspire and widen the horizons of the students who take part in the programme. The locations have helped normalise a situation which may have been alien to them in the past. Many of the students who take part come from less privileged backgrounds or may have had confidence issues throughout their school lives. The showcase represents a zenith in their Character Education journey.

Townley Grammar School is a leading proponent of STEM education, under the leadership of Desmond Deehan the school has developed outstanding opportunities for its young female students to excel, feel confident and to look for career opportunities within a historically male dominated sector. Once again, supporting academic excellence with a strong Character Education spine. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, the school launched the national "Digital School House" project, having been chosen by leading tech and STEM organisations on the basis of our excellence and primary outreach work within this field.

*"To Strive, To Seek, To Find and Not to Yield."*

The ethos at Townley Grammar School can be summarised by the following line from Alfred Lord Tennyson's Ulysses: "To Strive, To Seek, To Find and Not to Yield." Every student is encouraged to take these values and apply them to every challenge they face within their life. It is the school's duty not only to raise the aspirations of its students, but, more importantly to ensure that students gain the strong character they will need to make sure their aspirations become a reality.



# *Embedding Outstanding Character Education and SMSC within your school*

***The social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils was “exceptional” which meant pupils were “collaborative and supportive of each other and confidently probe national and global topics”.***

*(Townley Grammar School, Ofsted Report January 2016)*

***Townley Grammar School “Highly Commended” by the DfE at the 2016 Character Education Awards.***



## **Townley Grammar School**

is offering 8 sessions at a cost of £400 delivered by leading SMSC practitioners. The training package will enable your school to begin to lay the framework or put in place the final steps to achieve outstanding Character Education and SMSC for your students in every educational setting. The sessions have been designed in collaboration with various experts within the field, including, Former HMI and SMSC expert Melanie Rose, Personal Development specialist John Rees and collaboration with Wellington College.

**For further information on the training course please contact Fabian de Fabiani,**

**Director of Character Education and Personal Development:**

**[Fguptadefabian.303@townleygrammar.org.uk](mailto:Fguptadefabian.303@townleygrammar.org.uk), 07921 826840**

## Narrowing the Gap - Could 1:1 Technology be Key?

The use of one to one technology at Churston Ferrers Grammar School appears to have caused a significant improvement in boys' performance and that of Disadvantaged Students. At GCSE and AS Level the school has recorded a large reduction in the gender gap which bucks national trends and previous experience. It is too early to say if this is due to the use of technology or other factors, but the results are interesting, and invite further analysis.

GCSE Boys VA	AS Boys VA	Disadvantaged students
2015 996	2015 -0.29	2015 991
2016 1007	2016 +0.47	2016 1028

In 2014 CFGS issued all year 10 students one to one technology in the form of a Chromebook. This would be used during lessons, taken home for homework and provide support for revision. The response from students, parents and staff was very positive.

**One teacher stated it was:** *"the biggest game changer of the last decade in terms of differentiation."*

**A student commented:** *"We use the Chromebooks to take notes, they are faster and easier to use and we can go back and edit new information into them if necessary. Another bonus to the Chromebooks is the ease of group work."* Aimee yr11, P.P student.

2016 sees the school's first external results from this trial and we are delighted with the difference that it seems to be making to our students, particularly boys and disadvantaged students. In 2015 we extended the trial to include our new AS Level students - again the results give us confidence that this investment is creating a significant improvement in our results. The cost per year group is around £20,000 - this is partly funded through Pupil Premium resources and partly funded through not having to upgrade a computer suite.

### Why have the Chromebooks particularly affected boys?

Our assessment of this dramatic improvement is probably due to a number of different factors: boys tend to be more interested in technology; keeping notes digitally has enabled boys to become more organised; teachers have been able to devise more interactive, personalised lessons with clearer use of differentiation all enabled by the Chromebooks. The ability to share resources with students without the cost of photocopying has provided students with more extensive revision material; communication between teachers and students has increased with the use of online marking encouraging a dialogue to occur outside the classroom. Collaborative learning has also been transformed as Google Apps For Education (GAPE) enables students to all edit the same document.

We now have four year groups issued with school Chromebooks: Years 10 to 13. Teachers and students have been inspired by the use of technology and together we are embracing the additional resources for learning opportunities. With Chromebooks now established within the school we look forward to next year's results to see if the technology has truly made a significant difference to our results.

Sarah Howgate

Lead Teacher for Mobile Technology

Churston Ferrers Grammar School

## GSHA Preparation for Headship Course

I was delighted to attend the GSHA Deputies conference in June to introduce myself and also to seek their views on how best the Association can help them in their roles. Their feedback was very useful and it became apparent that there are a number of common themes that we can look at this year. To that end I am meeting with some of the group who have volunteered to help put a programme together, which I plan to lay out in more detail by the end of the year.

One issue that many Deputies have spoken to me about is the prospect of becoming a Head and how they might best prepare themselves for the process. As a sector we are aware that there will be a turnover of Headteachers in many Grammar Schools over the next few years and it makes sense to ensure that our best Deputies are fully prepared to embrace these roles. Last year we advertised an 18 month CPD programme that focused on the specific skills and knowledge needed to progress onto Headship in a Grammar School. Unfortunately, although we had 15 keen participants, we were short of Senior Leaders and Heads to deliver the training. However, I think we need to give it another go!!

The programme will cover the following key strands:

- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Reforms in Teaching and Learning - December 9<sup>th</sup> 2016 at Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham**
- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Community and Collaboration – April 2016 [Date/venue TBC]**
- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Grammar School Admissions and Funding - July 2017 [Date/venue TBC]**
- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Learning from Others – October 2017 [Date/venue TBC]**
- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Applying for Headship – January 2018 [Date/venue TBC]**
- **Leading Exceptional Schools: Summer Conference – June 2018, London [Date TBC]**

I envisage that we will take the programme 'on tour' and the other dates and venues will be determined when we have delegates signed up. To get the full benefit from the programme it is assumed that delegates will attend all of the six training days to give them a full understanding of the role.

So, if you have a Senior Leader in your school who is aspiring to Headship in a Grammar School in the next 3 years then please do urge them to apply. I will email out a course flyer for you to distribute with all of the details included. If a member of your senior staff signs up it is expected that you, as their Head, will deliver a session on one of the training days, so please do start to think about which of the areas you would be happy to talk about. Alternatively, you may not have someone who is suitable for this course but you are still keen to offer your services and facilitate part of the training, and that would be fabulous too!

This course **does not** aim to be a substitute for NPQH and does not lead to any recognised qualification. Instead it aims to sit alongside the NPQH programme and to cover additional topics and issues particularly relevant and current within the Grammar School sector.

I really hope you are able to support this very valuable CPD opportunity. I myself benefitted immeasurably from the support and guidance I received from established Heads when I was considering the role and this is surely the best investment any of us can make for the future of our Grammar Schools. We have such a strong and diverse leadership in GSHA and I hope that we will be able to grow the next generation of Heads with a secure understanding of what it means to lead a successful school in this sector, and give them the confidence to do it. If you have any questions or would like to discuss things further then please email me at [rellicott@patesgs.org](mailto:rellicott@patesgs.org)

## 'Your concerns have been noted'

**A GP friend of mine recently asked me what I did.....all day long. She seemed unable to envisage a sufficient number of substantial or important activities that could fill my diary. Keen not to be outdone in a public services workload comparison, I quickly gave her a flavour of my weekly work.**

I would have loved to have waxed lyrical about the important meetings I had led that had collectively moved our global understanding of teaching and learning forward. In truth I recounted a story of daily attrition that regularly produces behaviour of a strange and bizarre nature.

I described how, on arriving at school early one morning, I spied a parent waiting for me in her car. She jumped out, rushed over and repeatedly knocked on my window whilst I was trying to park. Make no mistake this is urgent I thought. Once she had explained to me that she felt her daughter's Y8 citizenship homework had been unfairly marked, my initial suspicions were confirmed, this was a genuine emergency.



I received a three page complaint from a parent who was outraged that we had thoughtlessly arranged our New York and Ski trips in the same half term. He was furious that our ineptitude prevented his daughter from going on both. His opening words were, **'It beggars belief,'** and it certainly does.



The admissions tests always provide some odd interactions, for example the parent who on reading the equipment list, emailed in to ask what the pen was for. This week a parent held up a fine selection of pens and asked us to recommend one on the grounds that it might just give her daughter the edge. We recommended the one that had a go- faster stripe.



Students often underestimate the consequences of their actions. One Y11 girl stuck her finger in a metal part of her chair and we had to have her (plus chair) admitted to hospital in order for the surgeons to remove it. Another girl decided to burn her books on the last day of term. Unfortunately she set the playing field alight causing the evacuation of the nearby Primary school. During the exodus their Deputy Head fell down the stairs and broke her arm. Relations are still frosty.

Trips are always a worry but most issues can be avoided by thorough planning. I say most, because our recent Y9 trip to London had indeed been meticulously planned. After receiving a very positive last day report on the trip I thought what could possibly go wrong now, only for the group leader to ring back to tell me an unexploded WW2 bomb had been discovered next to the hotel and the whole area had gone into lockdown.

Some behaviour is plain irritating, like the parent on Open day who, despite listening to all the wonderful things we do for our students, kept going on and on and on about the poor appearance of our 80 year old building. I thoroughly recommended to him another school, with a shiny new building and a notice to improve.



Some behaviour is difficult to explain; An experienced member of staff e-mailed me to ask whether she should use staples or drawing pins on the display boards;



A parent e-mailed me in the holidays with a photo of one of her daughter's trainers, asking me whether I would immediately go to look for the other one in her locker; One parent actually screamed at me because her daughter had not been put into the House she was expecting.



Whatever the behaviour as Heads we are duty bound to keep smiling; though after a while your face muscles begin to ache. The energy that should be used on strategy and vision is actually used up smiling and dealing with the relentless stream of nonsense.

When I was a deputy I naively thought that improving a school would be really straight-forward. In theory it is, I am sure all Heads would come up with similar improvement strategies. The issue is clearing the decks to get to those things sitting in Covey's, 'important not urgent,' box. The business of school life is like thick treacle, it gets in the way. Last Easter I counted up 55 major initiatives I have overseen since taking up Headship. We call it list 55 and as a SLT we solemnly vowed that we would not add anything else to the list, unless we removed something already on it. This has proved hard to do, we now call it List 59.

However, I offer some hope. A colleague of mine developed a strategy in his final years of Headship designed to reduce the treacle. He sent out a standard letter to all complaints which simply said,

## ***'Your concerns have been noted'***

and left it at that. He claimed this mollified about 90% of complainants. I encourage you to join me in creating your own similar letter.

When I had finished describing what I do all day long I like to think I saw a glint of admiration in my friend's eye. Of course it could have been a trick of the light.

**Dr Nick Smith**

**Head of Torquay Girls' Grammar School**

*If you have any of your own enjoyable examples of odd behaviour I would love to add them to my extensive collection. Please e-mail me at [nsmith@tggsacademy.org](mailto:nsmith@tggsacademy.org)*



## Funding Update



**Tom Goldman, who leads the DfE Funding Policy Unit, will speak about Reforming School Funding at our Seminar on 18 October. With the second stage of the National Funding Formula consultation likely to be launched sometime this term, this provides another excellent opportunity for us to have dialogue on this crucial area and reiterate our priorities as well as the urgency of the current financial crisis facing many of our schools.**

**At our Steering group meeting on 23 September we agreed that our key priorities in respect of funding are to:**

- (a)** Urge that actions are taken now to ensure the lowest funded schools are protected from financial collapse in 17-18. Specifically we would ask that clear direction is given to LAs and their Schools Forums that, for 17-18, they should:
  - ◆ increase their basic per-pupil funding (AWPU) rates to a level at or close to the minimum funding levels, as set as part of the 15-16 fairer schools funding, multiplied by the area cost adjustment
  - ◆ reduce and certainly not increase, any top-slices from schools block to high needs, early years or central costs.
- (b)** Continue to argue strongly for a hard national funding formula, without any local authority discretion, and a minimum per pupil funding element which represents 85% of total funding.
- (c)** Continue to press for adequate post 16 funding.

## Exams and Accountability Measures

**GSHA** is represented on the professional association groups of QFQUAL, JCQ and the main exam boards. These groups usually meet termly and the autumn meeting are mostly in late October or November. The many changes that are currently taking place are the main items on these agendas, in particular:

- **The new exam marking review and appeals process**
- **Linear A and AS levels**
- **GCSE grades 1-9**
- **Progress 8**
- **National reference tests**

If you have any particular experiences or concerns in these areas or from this summer's results to do please let me know.

At all these meetings we continue to raise our ongoing concern about marking consistency and we will have the opportunity to raise this with Sally Collier, the new QFQUAL chief regulator who is one of the speakers at our Autumn Seminar.

The FFT/GSHA Collaborate will continue this year. Both Heidi Leung [heidi.leung@fft.org.uk](mailto:heidi.leung@fft.org.uk) and I would welcome any feedback on this.

*James Skinner, CEO*

## ... Dates for the Diary ...

**18 October 2016** GSHA Autumn Seminar and House of Commons Reception. Seminar speakers: Shah Scott, Chief Schools Adjudicator, Sally Collier, QFQUAL Chief regulator and Tom Goldman, Deputy Director, DfE Funding Policy Unit.



**9 December 2016** First session of GSHA Preparation for Headship Course at Pate's Grammar School.

**13/14 June 2017** GSHA Annual Conference, at the RAF Club 128 Piccadilly, London. Booking forms and further details will be circulated next term.



# Executive Committee



## ***Chairman:***

Russel Ellicott - Pate's Grammar School

## ***Vice Chairman:***

Philip Wayne - The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe

## ***Treasurer:***

Yvonne Wilkinson - King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham

## ***Chief Executive:***

James Skinner

## ***Regional Representatives:***

Kent	Robert Masters, John Weeds, vacancy
Medway	Simon Decker
Buckinghamshire	Phillip Wayne, Mark Sturgeon, vacancy
London	Desmond Deehan, Jonathan Wilden
Lincolnshire	Heather Payne, Simon Sprague
South West	Stuart Smallwood
Gloucestershire	Ewa Sawicka
Birmingham	Dominic Robson
Reading/Slough	Jon Constable
Lancs/Yorks/Cumbria	Martin Pearman, Andrew Fisher
Essex	Michael Skelly, Nicole Chapman
Midlands	Trudi Young
Trafford	Tim Gartside
Merseyside	Elaine Cogan
Warwickshire	Bennet Carr, Charlotte Marten

