

EDUCATOR SECTOR NEWS – JULY 2016

TES

Primary heads 'unite against testing chaos' – According to the NAHT heads' union, almost all primary school leaders believe the governments testing regime is "chaotic and distracting". The union has called for a review of primary assessments, arguing that they are currently having a negative effect on young people.

Can Scouting fire up pupils with skills to build character? – The Scout association has been awarded £300,00 by the Department of Education to run character education pilot schemes within 6 primary schools across the Midlands and South of England. Teachers have reported an improvement in behaviour and more focus in class.

Help teens to switch off – A new project has been launched to help minimize the time young people spend in front of screens. The project involves size 1hr interactive lessons which have been delivered during PSHE lessons at KS3 and KS4 level. The project culminated on an optional 1 week challenge to go without screen use. Eight schools are currently involved, and have reported a positive response from students, improvements in social behaviours and an improvement in social relationships.

The disability jobs gap is still 'unacceptably wide' The Learning and Work institute (LWI) have released a report which states that at the current rate of progress it will take over 200 years to reach the government's pledge to halve the disability gap and help more than 1 million extra disabled people into work. The gap has decreased by 0.1 percentage points since 2015. Concerns have been raised over the amount of support being provided.

INSTITUTE OF OUTDOOR LEARNING

Outdoor learning 'boosts children's development' – Natural England's Natural Connections project report has been published, along with an accompanying film. The report outlines the positive impact of outdoor learning on children's development, and makes suggestions for a "Framework for 21st Century Student Outcomes" which would be delivered through regular lessons in natural environments. The outcomes were grouped into five main themes: a healthy body and happy mind, a sociable and confident person, a self-directed and creative learner, an effective contributor, and an active global citizen. <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=801>

Film link: <https://youtu.be/HJPuwDsZdRI>

Report link: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6636651036540928>

COUNCIL FOR LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

New appointments for Learning Away will ensure many more young people enjoy brilliant residentials – Joe Lynch, Commercial director of the YHA is to become the new chair of the Learning Away Consortium. <http://goo.gl/EAmyAA>

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Technical education overhaul unveiled by Skills Minister – The Skills Minister, Nick Boles, published the 'Post-16 skills plan which outlines the governments vision for the future of technical education. The plan outlines 15 routes for students who have finished their GCSEs to lead them to employment. The routes will link directly with apprenticeships, colleges, or work placements. The reforms are supposed to enable young people to move more easily between academic and technical options. If the young person is not ready for academic or technical options, there will also be an option of a 'transition year', which would be fully funded, and focused on the skills needed to 'move forward in their education'. The new routes will be closely linked to employers, with employer panel discussions shaping the programmes. The first routes will be made available from 2019. <https://goo.gl/8ZWgoL>

SCHOOLS WEEK

How the brightest are slipping down the tables - New data shows that improvements of low-attaining students remains low, despite the governmental focus on 'closing the gap' between disadvantaged young people and their peers. The reported 4% point decrease in the gap has now been attributed to a fall in attainment in the previously high attaining peer group, suggesting that students are not being supported adequately.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Taking Learning Outdoors (Independent Education Today) – Discussion of Farlington School's Forest School programme as an innovative way to develop social, personal and emotional skills. They acknowledged the benefits of outdoor learning and learning to manage risk appropriately. A very positive case study for Forest Schools.

Freedom without anarchy (Independent Education Today) - Second case study looking at King Alfred's School village project, which saw 50 children camping outside for 1 week of their term, forming their own community, electing governance, and taking responsibility for daily living. The project was designed as acknowledgement that all children learn in different ways, and that outdoor learning can be just as valuable as time in the classroom.

Autism to be included in initial teacher training (SEN Magazine) – The government is reported to be planning to include specific training on Autism within the core Teacher Training, with rumours via Nicky Morgan on twitter and statements from an undisclosed source in The Telegraph. There has been no formal government statement on this.

Outdoor learning: the secret to improving behaviour in schools (The Guardian / WWF Partner article) – The article reports on the wide body of evidence supporting improvement of behaviour being linked to outdoor learning, specifically the 2008 report by Reading University and WWF, which focuses on the effects of learning about sustainability. It highlights the challenges outdoor learning provides young people, and the sense of connection with the natural world which develops. <https://goo.gl/cjQdGj> WWF Report: <http://goo.gl/R3JhN4>