



**REPORT ON THE 2013 HOMERTON RESIDENTIAL  
SUMMER SCHOOL**

**FOR TEACHERS OF  
ENGLISH, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, MODERN FOREIGN  
LANGUAGES AND LATIN**

**24<sup>TH</sup> - 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2013**

**HELD AT HOMERTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE**

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## PRESENTATIONS BY SUBJECT LEADERS

WEDNESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

Brief presentations were made on the last day of the Residential Summer School by Subject Leaders from English, Geography, History, Modern Foreign Languages and Latin, summarising the outcomes of the teachers' group discussions. The main points were:

### English

Literature helps *"to identify with someone you don't see, who's a different colour, who eats a different kind of food"* (Chinua Achebe). Teachers' horizons have been extended by the academic talks they have heard and by the discussions that have followed. Similarly, the things they would hope to engender in the classroom include: intellectual stimulation, fascination, a sense of awe, freedom to explore and a 'holy curiosity' of the mind.

The issues raised in discussion were:

- The importance of retaining the value of Speaking and Listening in the English curriculum.
- Assessment at KS3 and 4, which is not only rigorous and challenging, but also allows for freedom to develop independent inquiry and rewards originality of thought.
- The conviction that the right of every child to access the literary canon must not be eroded. *"Literature opens the doors to many wonders and it must be available to everyone"*.

### Geography

The benefits of the Residential Summer School were:

- Opportunities to deepen teachers' subject knowledge and acquire up to date material for use in the classroom.
- Discussions about the importance of Geography and what makes an outstanding lesson.
- A fieldwork outing which provided a data-rich case study of a successful new town as well as an opportunity (which could be replicated back at school) to carry out innovative emotional bio-mapping.

The benefits of the revised National Curriculum are:

- A stronger position for Geography at KS3.
- Teachers will be empowered to develop a rich and challenging geographical education through greater emphasis on skills such as GIS and map-work, a renewed focus on locational knowledge, and a better balance between human and physical Geography.
- As a consequence of this better balance, more opportunity for pupils to contextualise the major issues of today such as climate change, migration and the use and abuse of resources.

Outstanding concerns are:

- The difficulties faced by departments over the cost and time available for fieldwork.
- The assessment of fieldwork at GCSE.
- The lack of prominence given to conceptual knowledge and knowledge acquired through geographical inquiry (such as fieldwork), these being just as important as factual knowledge about places and processes.

## History

Academically challenging lectures encouraged serious thought about the subject and highlighted:

- The gap between public perception and academic study (in the context of the Great War).
- The responsibility of History teachers to rationalise the past, in all its complexity, and explain the nation to itself.

Challenges to be faced were seen as:

- The new National Curriculum, whose aims are admirable and whose emphasis on knowledge as *“necessary bricks to the mortar of skills”* is welcome, but in which more of the precise choice of content would be better retained by teachers than decided by transitory politicians and their advisors.
- The great disparity in time allocated to History in different schools.
- The need to provide a huge amount of supportive training to those teaching History in primary schools so that pupils emerge *“aware of skills, mindful of chronology, literate, but above all enthusiastic and inquiring”*.

## Modern Foreign Languages

The benefits of the Summer School were:

- An opportunity to put to one side the problems of curriculum constraints, assessment and qualification criteria and instead to celebrate the creativity, diversity and commitment of a wide variety of schools.
- The Prince’s Teaching Institute (PTI) ethos of ensuring that every pupil has access to the best possible experience and learning opportunity.
- Sharing ideas about resources for trips, exchanges and other enrichment possibilities.
- Intellectually challenging lectures to help develop specialist subject knowledge.
- Innovative and creative ideas to help raise the profile of languages in school.
- The general desire to include foreign culture and get beyond the mundane requirements e.g. to ‘describe your house’.

Issues raised included:

- The problems of transition, not just from GCSE to A level but even more at the end of the primary stage, particularly when a school may have as many as 60 primary feeders who differ widely in their approaches to language teaching.
- Enrichment opportunities such as overseas trips and exchanges being affected by loss of funding.

- The difficulty of retention in an age when students are bound to assess their educational choices in terms of material benefit.

## Latin

The benefits of the Summer School were:

- A rare and valuable opportunity for Latin teachers from a diverse range of schools to come together and explore their love of their subject and share examples of excellent practice.
- Confirmation from the pupil panel that the most compelling reason for studying Latin is that it is interesting and enjoyable both for what it is in itself and for the satisfying intellectual challenges that it offers.
- Collaborative discussion and resource sharing, which was of particular value where Latin teachers have to operate in a school on their own.
- The lectures and museum visit, which highlighted the breadth and diversity of the subject and illustrated the wealth of cultural material, which is not an additional extra but integral to it.

The principal challenges to be faced are seen as:

- The shortage of teachers being trained, even as interest in Latin grows.
- The reluctance of students to see a passion for their subject as sufficient reason for continuing to study it.

# PLENARY PANEL DISCUSSION IN RESPONSE TO SUBJECT PRESENTATIONS

WEDNESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

## Panel Members:

<b>Bernice McCabe</b>	Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute (Chair)
<b>Hardip Begol</b>	Director for Assessment, Curriculum and General Qualifications, Department for Education
<b>John Carr</b>	Deputy Director of the National College for Teaching and Leadership
<b>Tim Oates</b>	Cambridge Assessment, Director of Assessment, Research and Development
<b>Graham Goldup</b>	Assistant Principal and Teacher of Geography, Cardinal Newman Catholic School
<b>Rebecca Howard Wearn</b>	Assistant Principal and Teacher of Modern Foreign Languages, Ravens Wood School

The proceedings opened with presentations by Teacher Leaders in English, Geography, History, Modern Foreign Languages and Latin, summarising from the group discussions during the Residential Summer School what had been of particular value in the course and what the current issues were in the various subjects.

This was followed by a plenary discussion with a panel made up of Bernice McCabe, Hardip Begol, John Carr and Tim Oates, together with Stream Leaders from two subjects: Graham Goldup (Geography) and Rebecca Howard Wearn (Modern Foreign Languages).

The main areas of discussion were:

1. Curriculum
2. Policy
3. Examination and assessment

## Summary of the main points raised:

### 1. Curriculum

*Do you think that changes in the curriculum are intended to give teachers more power and freedom to be creative, and do you think they actually will? What else has been gained or lost in the development of the new curriculum?*

- The revised curriculum contains only half as much detail as what it replaces. The aim has been to strip out much of the guidance on how to implement it, reducing pressure on teachers and encouraging creativity.
- It was a category error to call the 2007 National Curriculum 'motivating'. It is up to teachers to make subjects interesting by creative teaching, even topics that may seem intrinsically boring. The business of the state is simply to

determine what is the necessary knowledge capital for every child and to ensure that they have access to it.

- The National Curriculum is intended to be conceptually rich, based on sophisticated knowledge derived from years of inquiry and carefully articulated.
- From the teachers' perspective, although they support the subject objectives and welcome the primacy given to knowledge, they still feel that – in History at any rate - they should be given more freedom to teach the topics they want. If the intention of the policymakers is the empowerment of teachers, the message is not always getting through.
- There has been widespread involvement of teachers in the consultation process and plenty of opportunities for schools to develop their own curricula, whether as academies or in partnership with other schools or subject associations.
- The existence of a College of Teaching might not have made much difference at the consultation stage, but it would perhaps have established a closer connection between the content and its implementation through Initial Teacher Training and Continuous Professional Development.

## 2. Policy

***Do you think that education policymaking should be taken out of the hands of government and put into the hands of teachers? What do you think the effect of this might be, and what might be the role of a new member-led College of Teaching?***

- Analysis of the way the curriculum is managed in successful education systems all over the world shows that you cannot separate education from politics, but you can take it out of the political cycle. It should not become subject to party political dispute.
- Teachers are used to change, but are too often made to feel that they are incompetent by being told to stop doing one thing and to do another instead. One cannot imagine government treating heart surgeons in this way.
- Teachers are usually unclear about what is a legal requirement and what is only a recommendation. In the best national education systems there is coherence between the different facets – curriculum, assessment, training, support and so on – and this is the responsibility of government. A College of Teaching, on the model of the medical colleges, would help towards achieving this coherence.

***Do you think policymakers have a responsibility to try and sustain certain minority subjects, like Latin and German, or should their continuance be entirely dependent on demand and other market forces?***

- Schools don't want more central intervention. The trend is towards devolution of responsibility to schools, and this would be difficult to reverse.

- The National Curriculum has helped to promote the study of languages by making it a requirement in primary schools, and the English Baccalaureate performance measure has provided some further incentive, but the main recruiting instrument remains the enthusiasm of individual schools and teachers.
- Schools are being encouraged to work together, and partnership may provide a means of sustaining minority subjects. This will, however, require a change of attitude in areas where schools feel themselves in competition with their neighbours and the emphasis is on compliance and the achievement of targets.
- Schools can compensate for the withdrawal of some funding streams by collaboration, so long as their strategic planning frees teachers to participate actively.

### 3. Examination and Assessment

***Will everyone benefit from a more rigorous, linear system of examination, or will there be winners and losers? If the exams are tougher, does that mean that more people will fail, and do we mind that?***

- Since the introduction of the first modular A levels (which did not in fact allow for any retakes), the way they have been used has been developed on lines that are rational but not necessarily desirable in educational terms.
- It is difficult for pupils and demoralising for teachers if there is uncertainty over where the grade boundaries will be drawn. Boundaries cannot, however, be lowered just to keep up pass levels, otherwise the value of the qualification could be diminished.
- If the system is to be tougher, a proper safety net has to be devised for those who are disadvantaged by that shift.
- The emphasis on the C/D borderline, which has arisen for historic reasons, needs to be widened, perhaps to include a measure of progress across a broad range of subjects.
- The loss of AS as a staging post has potential disadvantages both to the student, in making choices about A levels and University, and to the Admission Tutor in the evaluation of candidates. However, most Russell Group Universities seem happy to use GCSEs as predictors and schools have plenty of opportunity for formative assessment within their own systems.

***Do you think GCSEs have had their day?***

- GCSEs were introduced with the honourable purpose of replacing a norm-referenced examining system which restricted the number of passes.

- Children like to know how they are doing, and exams offer an objective pathway for the disadvantaged to achieve success. But it is quite wrong that exams should be run by commercial companies who are competing for profit, particularly when they are also publishing related textbooks.
- The narrow specification of three A levels is necessary if this country is to retain its highly regarded intensive three year University courses, and this narrowness has to be balanced by breadth in the educational stratum that underpins it, with formal assessment at the end of it. So that is why the GCSE is necessary.
- What some other successful countries have, and we do not, is a Sixth Form curriculum in which six or seven subjects are studied but only half of these are formally examined. We would benefit from restructuring our own 16-19 education to include more uncertificated elements.
- The subordination of assessment to the aims of education is a fundamental principle.

Final reflections on what delegates will take away from the last three days:

- Teachers are empowered by the feeling that they have the ability to inspire.
- The development of subject knowledge is essential to the making of an excellent teacher.
- Teachers should feel confident in the ability of their profession to take control of the political agenda and win the arguments, so that, even if things change, it will be in response to their needs.
- The PTI enables teachers to share their professionalism and raise their standards.
- Teachers are, and should be, ultimately accountable to their pupils.

# PUPIL PANEL DISCUSSION

MONDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE

The course opened with two pupil panels, one featuring pupils studying a combination of Modern Foreign Languages and Latin, and the other English, Geography and History. The pupils, from Y10 to Y13, were drawn from a variety of state maintained schools in Essex and Herts.

The session opened with a short presentation from each pupil on the panel, before opening to questions from delegates.

## Pupil presentations - reasons for studying particular subjects

### English

- Encouraging creativity and the expression of one's own opinion
- Developing communication skills and the confidence they bring
- Giving insight into other cultures and realities

### Geography

- Introducing pupils to the lives that others live, all over the world
- Offering different perspectives on the world: economic, political, social and cultural
- Providing the information which enables international help and support to be properly directed

### History

- Providing an understanding of how the world around us came to be what it is and of how the past impacts upon the present
- Encouraging independent thinking and the articulation of evidence-based argument

### Modern Foreign Languages

- Developing transferable communication skills which bring added confidence and increased employment opportunities
- Providing a global outlook and wider perspectives on history, literature and culture
- Offering the challenge of the new; starting a language with no previous knowledge

### Latin

- Developing analytical skills and knowledge of grammatical structures and word meanings that underpin other subjects
- Giving a better understanding of the roots of European culture and institutions
- Studying stories, mythical and historical, that are interesting in themselves

These were followed by a wide ranging discussion with delegates, out of which the following points were raised:

### **The characteristics of effective teaching**

- Engagement with the individual; mutual respect between teacher and pupil.
- The teacher's passion for the subject passed on to the pupil.
- Measured use of technology – some pupils are visual learners, but good teaching starts from the teacher's own knowledge and the interaction that follows, not from someone else's downloaded presentation. Similarly, getting pupils to do their own research needs careful monitoring as what they are able to learn by copying chunks from the internet is limited; teaching needs to highlight different issues, different interpretations.
- Feedback from teachers is an essential component; the grade by itself is comparatively unimportant against the one-to-one conversation, the recognition of work well done, and the setting of specific targets for future improvement.
- A strongly positive class dynamic; it is easier to be motivated if everyone else is and collaborative working helps towards this.
- Specific to MFL: doing as much teaching as possible in the target language and getting the grammar secure. Grammar is a problem for some; it is easier if you can learn the rules first, but at the end of the day the details just have to be memorised.

### **Examination and assessment**

- Ofsted inspections offer the opportunity to showcase the school and the learning opportunities it provides, as well as indicating how teaching and learning may be improved.
- Good teaching for examinations requires going beyond the specifications in order to embed knowledge in its context.
- Controlled Assessment and modularity reduce the all-or-nothing end of year stress and are a help to those who are less good at terminal exams.
- Practice papers help to consolidate knowledge and accustom pupils to timing requirements.

### **Key Stages**

- There is something to be said for starting KS4 in Year 9 as it enables a broader approach to the subject and less focus on exam specifications. However, there is little point in taking the actual exams earlier if that incurs the risk of getting a lower grade.

- The different requirements of KS3, 4 and 5 should be reflected in different styles of teaching as pupils become more mature and develop more of their own opinions.
- In languages you can do well at GCSE just by using memory; at higher levels you have to understand the rules which underpin the language structure.

### **Extracurricular enrichment**

- Field trips help to develop passion for the subject and enable pupils to see for themselves, in their real context, things that they have previously only read or heard about.
- Exchanges and overseas visits (so long as they are not just for tourism) are key components in language learning and are particularly valuable for pupils who have little opportunity for holidays abroad.

### **Advice to teachers**

- Keep trying to find new ways of keeping your pupils interested, even if they don't all work. Respect the individual and be conscientious in providing feedback.
- Be proud of what you do. It is your inspiration that engages pupils with their subjects.

## SELECTION OF QUOTES FROM DELEGATE EVALUATIONS

*“Empowerment and nurturing my needs I realised are essential to enable me to share a passion with my students. Thank you for the opportunity of caring for my personal learning, being able to nurture my own curiosity again. It’s 20+ years since I was encouraged to do so, so positively.”*

*“The opportunity to immerse ourselves once again into the subjects we love was fantastic.”*

*“I have enjoyed the unapologetic focus on intellectual rigour in the lectures and workshops. It has been beneficial to indulge in historical fact.”*

*“Fantastic, varied course and brilliant to feel 'smart' again getting academic content to make us love our subjects again!”*

*“Excellent balance between rekindling academic interest and practical sessions for the classroom.”*

*“An enjoyable and valuable experience away from the hustle and bustle of the school day; allowing time to reflect on the moral purpose we have for the children we teach and how we can improve their learning experience.”*

*“The course was highly inspirational and it felt good to be back in such a highly academic environment.”*

*“It was a welcome breath of optimism and excitement at a time when it is all too easy to feel pessimistic and demoralised.”*

*“I feel empowered and want to move forward, and feel stronger to be able to see through and lead my subject with passion.”*

*“There was a genuine buzz about learning and teaching. The PTI clearly value the profession and our professionalism.”*

*“It reminded me of how much fun learning should and can be for all.”*

*“The quality of lectures was so inspiring I really appreciated the opportunity to hear the insights of experts in their field. Sharing good practice with a variety of colleagues from different contexts was very useful indeed.”*

*“Course has allowed me to re-evaluate my own passion for my subject and consider a multitude of strategies to improve the teaching of English in my school. It has re-evaluated my love of learning.”*

*“Opportunities to share ideas, experience and discuss our subjects in depth across 3 days has been invaluable and has touched to the heart and will stay with me a long time. Good teaching practice is centred on sharing.”*

*“I will return to my school with rekindled passion for my subject and refreshed empathy for my students.”*