

# impact

*NFER's research news for schools* .....

## **PISA results** Behind the headlines

## **What makes children happy?**

## **School trip safety**

## **Creative Partnership Programme** Its impact on teaching

## **Citizenship** understanding and improving attitudes



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### Impact

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Welcome to *Impact: NFER's research news for schools*, my first issue as editor. Much recent media attention has centred on the Big Society and the role young people can have in their local communities. This edition features articles which focus on this theme and report on the results of recent national and international work we have carried out looking at how young people engage with their communities and examining their views on issues such as immigration and equality. Other work in this area involved the evaluation of a scheme which aims to encourage links between schools and the effect it has had on pupils' engagement with and understanding of other young people outside of their immediate environment.

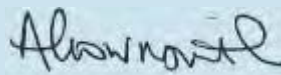
In another article the theme of civic knowledge and participation continues with a report on one of our recent international comparative studies. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Survey shows how the knowledge and understanding of English pupils compares with their European counterparts on a number of issues relating to the European Union and its policies.

The international theme of this edition carries on with a piece discussing the outcomes of the PISA survey and looking at the facts behind some of the headlines that appeared when the report was released.

Closer to home, our researchers also discuss the results of work covering themes ranging from the use of a US style aptitude test for UK university entrance, through to the benefits and difficulties of learning outside of the classroom.

*Impact* is available online as a free download from the NFER website, [www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk), where you can also find more details on the reports mentioned in this and previous issues, as well as other past and current projects.

I hope you'll find the articles in *Impact* interesting and informative; if you have any comments or suggestions for future editions please get in touch.



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# Reasons to be cheerful: Being a 12-year old boy who eats dinner with his family

Tom Benton

**R**ecent NFER research has explored what aspects of a young person's life are associated with them being more likely to state that they are happy. Analysis was based on the responses of over 32,000 young people aged between 10 and 15 to the Tellus4 survey that was conducted in autumn 2009.

The things most associated with an increased chance of a young person feeling happy were:

- Feeling able to talk to parents when something worried them
- Having one or more good friends
- Not being bullied
- Not often feeling worried about parents or family
- Often sitting down to have a meal with the people they live with

- Being a boy
- Being pre-teenage.

The results of the survey also showed that

some things which might have been thought to cause young people to worry, do not appear to have a considerable effect on their happiness. One such aspect was poverty, (measured either by eligibility for free school meals or by the level of deprivation in the areas where young people live), where, once other factors were allowed for, no significant association was found.

It is clear from these results that the quality of relationships in a young person's life are far more important in determining

their chances of being happy than their level of material wealth. In particular, secure relationships between young people

*the quality of the relationships in a young person's life are far more important in determining their chances of being happy than their level of material wealth*

and their parents including a sense that they are able to discuss problems are crucial. Spending time together such as during mealtimes is also very important. Since conducting this research, these broad findings have been confirmed from an independent source by academics working on the Understanding Society survey.

demics working on the Understanding Society survey.

#### Further information

[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/99910/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/99910/)

*Average A level points  
score was the best  
predictor of HE  
participation and  
degree class*



# Can a university aptitude test predict degree success?

Catherine Kirkup

Over recent decades there has been a huge increase in the number of students going into higher education (HE). For universities, selecting the best candidates, whilst at the same time creating fair access for all, can be a daunting task, particularly with an increasing number of students achieving the highest A level grades.

From 2005 to 2010, the NFER examined the potential use of a general university admissions test by tracking the progress of over 8000 young people who had agreed to take the SAT Reasoning Test™ in 2005, during their final A level year. There was considerable variation in the SAT® scores of HE applicants with similar A level attainment, particularly amongst high ability students. It was hoped that if students with high SAT® scores generally achieved better degrees than those with low SAT® scores and vice versa, the SAT® test might provide useful additional information for HE admissions departments.

The research was completed in 2010 with the analysis of the university degrees of approximately 2800 of the original 8000 students, who had graduated in 2009 after three-year courses.

The results of the research show that:

- The SAT® has some power to predict how students are likely to perform in HE. However, for students with GCSE and A levels results, the SAT® adds very little additional information (even for the most able applicants with three or more A grades at A level).

- More importantly, there is no evidence that the SAT® identifies students with the potential to benefit from HE whose ability is not adequately reflected in their prior attainment because of their disadvantaged circumstances.

Although the SAT® will not help to identify young people who will do well at university, this 'negative' finding is evidence-based and therefore as important as a 'positive' result may have been. It shows that it is not

sufficient for a test merely to differentiate between applicants in terms of test scores; admissions tests or other measures should only be used if they are reliable and valid predictors of HE performance.

Other findings emerged about the relationships between students' backgrounds, attainment and HE participation and performance.

- Girls were more likely to be in HE than boys with similar GCSE and A level results, yet girls tended to be on courses with lower entry requirements (courses at less selective<sup>1</sup> universities) than would be expected from their prior attainment.
- Students from high-performing schools, students from independent schools, Asian students and students learning English as an additional language (EAL) were also more likely to achieve places on courses with high entry requirements.
- Average A level points score was the best predictor of HE participation and degree class, followed by average GCSE points score; both together gave the best prediction of performance.

*Girls were more likely to be in HE than boys with similar GCSE and A level results, yet girls tended to be on courses with lower entry requirements*



- Boys were neither more likely, nor less likely, to do better at university than girls with the same prior attainment.
- Students from comprehensive schools generally achieved higher classes of degree than students with similar attainment from grammar and independent schools.
- High ability students from schools with high numbers of students going into HE tended to do better than similar students from schools with poor progression rates.

Although not the original focus of the research, the findings relating to school type and school progression rates indicate that prior educational context has a significant impact on degree performance. This is an important issue for schools, colleges, higher education institutions and policy makers that would benefit from more research.

#### Further information

[www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/u/10-1321-use-of-aptitude-test-university-entrance-validity-study.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/u/10-1321-use-of-aptitude-test-university-entrance-validity-study.pdf)

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning>

<sup>1</sup> Selective universities are generally prestigious institutions where the demand for places exceeds the supply and admissions staff must make choices between applicants. Due to the competition for places, entry requirements are generally higher than those of non-selective universities.

# What's in progress at NFER?

Allie Chownsmith

## Creative Partnerships impact on attainment and attendance



Creative Partnerships is a national creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raise their aspirations and achievements, and open up more opportunities for their futures. NFER have been commissioned by Creativity, Culture and Education to establish how the performance of schools and pupils involved in Creative Partnerships compares with that of similar schools and pupils which have not been involved. Data on pupil attendance in Creative Partnerships Schools will be compared with data on attainment and attendance from the National Pupil Database, taking key pupil and school characteristics into account. The results from this study will help us to understand the potential of Creative Partnerships to contribute to key outcomes for pupils: attainment and attendance.

Whilst Creative Partnerships is due to finish in 2011, it is hoped that this evaluation will make the potential of such work clear and that this will have an impact on future arts development.

## Community cohesion through new approaches to learning

The Creating Citizenship Communities project is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and is being conducted by NFER and the University of York. The aims of the project are to identify current thinking and practice in schools in relation to community cohesion; explore young people's perceptions and practice; and encourage partnerships to be established between professionals and others.

The research will help the Esmée Fairbairn

Foundation to:

- find out about community cohesion activities in schools, and how they contribute to students' understanding and practice
- understand how students characterise community cohesion and what range of community activities they are involved in within and beyond school
- produce a wide range of resources for new approaches to learning.





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# Data in Schools

Jon Williamson

Schools thrive on effective usage of data. It can tell them what level their pupils are achieving and how to support them in moving forward. It can provide insights into the wellbeing of pupils, and how parents feel about schools. It can also be used to tell stakeholders about the performance of a school. Yet many schools struggle to turn the data they collect into information they can use.

There are many different types of data that can be used to influence school policy, but two are fundamental – understanding

how children are performing and gaining insights into their wellbeing. However, these raise two issues – firstly, how to get the information, and secondly how to interpret the data.

There are many ways schools use to get and analyse assessment data, including RAISEonline, bought-in assessments and teacher assessment. All of these approaches have differing strengths and weaknesses – but the key point with any assessment is what you use the data for. The output of any assessment can be used both

formatively and summatively – however the main issues around using a “test” formatively are timely receipt of data (i.e. speed of marking) and ease of analysis of data.

Collecting data to help in understanding pupils’ and parents’ attitudes to a school is also important. Currently this data is required for the Self Evaluation Forms, but should also form the basis of school planning – perceived issues can be addressed and strengths built upon. Many schools gather this data using questionnaires they

develop internally, however there are approaches available on the market that enable schools to compare their performance against national norms.

In order to help schools address these issues, NFER for Schools has used its experience in data gathering and interpretation to develop tools specifically targeted at these areas. We believe that data is crucial to planned school improvement. We support schools with their assessment data by both helping them make efficient use of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency optional tests, through the analysis and marking service and by providing the formative assessment service to help schools identify issues with individual pupils and understand what to do to help them progress. Similarly, our Pupils and Parent attitudinal surveys (PPS) help schools to understand how they are perceived.

There is much data available within schools, and much time is spent collecting it. Services which support schools in collecting and interpreting that data can help schools focus on the right areas to drive improvements, and also to identify whether interventions have been successful.

#### Further information

To understand how NFER for Schools can help you with your data requirements please visit: [www.nfer.ac.uk/schools](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/schools)









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[www.pre-online.co.uk](http://www.pre-online.co.uk)



# Common sense and a celebrity gardener

Joanne Kelly and Karen Lewis

In the last edition of *Impact* we reported the concerns of Dr Mark Spencer from the Natural History Museum about a spiralling lack of engagement of teachers and pupils with the natural world and how concerns about health and safety may be restricting children's access to learning opportunities outside the classroom. Subse-

quently, Lord Young's review of health and safety laws, *Common Sense Common Safety*, has been published. In this article we consider the review's recommendations on school trips. We also report on an interview with the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) about their initiatives to address teachers' concerns regard-

ing health and safety on school trips and on some reflections from TV gardener Alan Titchmarsh on his commitment to encouraging gardening in schools.

Lord Young described a 'climate of fear' permeating the workplace, schools, voluntary, sporting and cultural activities in relation to health and safety that has arisen from a cocktail of media reporting, a growing compensation claims industry and the actions of some over zealous health and safety consultants. His report advocates a common sense approach not just to compensation but to every day decisions. On school trips, he highlighted excessive bureaucracy that is disproportionate to the



*'For too long our children have been wrapped in cotton wool; it is time we gave them the chance to be up close and personal with nature for their own good and that of our countryside'*

role it plays in reducing the risk of accidents but 'merely serves as a deterrent and an excuse to do nothing'. In consequence, Lord Young felt that children are potentially missing out on vital education. His report recommends:

- Simplifying the process that schools undertake before taking children on trips.
- Introducing a single consent form covering all activities a child may undertake during their time at a school.

The Government has accepted all Lord Young's recommendations. In response, the Department for Education acknowledged that its guidance on health and safety for schools was unduly complex and, at 150

pages, too long. Revised guidance is due to be published in late spring and the Department will be consulting stakeholders on the development of a generic consent form.

Elaine Skates from CLOtC welcomed the reduction in red tape recommended by Lord Young. The Council is a charity that promotes and champions LOtC. Over 700 venues providing learning opportunities for schools now hold the Council's Quality Badge which was introduced to provide assurance for teachers regarding the safety and quality of the educational provision at accredited venues. In addition, CLOtC provides online guidance to teachers to help plan and implement visits. These initiatives

have enabled staff to overcome perceived barriers to undertaking LOtC and provided tangible help in cutting the bureaucracy associated with planning visits. Echoing the findings in Common Sense Common Safety, Elaine felt that health and safety can be an excuse in some schools for not undertaking LOtC. In schools where the importance of LOtC is recognised the approach is different and typically one of 'where there is a will there is a way'.

A range of organisations and individuals are involved in championing the benefits and importance of LOtC, including gardener and presenter Alan Titchmarsh. Alan told us how gardening had helped him to 'find his feet' as a child and, in turn, how he wanted to give other children the chance to enjoy the great outdoors, rather than it feeling remote and intimidating. He and his wife ran a small charity, Alan Titchmarsh's Gardens for Schools, from their kitchen table for about eight years, awarding grants to primary schools to enable them to construct gardens for pupils. His charity funded about 300 gardens and is now administered by the Royal Horticultural Society as part of its campaign for school gardening. He concluded, 'For too long our children have been wrapped in cotton wool; it is time we gave them the chance to be up close and personal with nature for their own good and that of our countryside'.



#### **Further information**

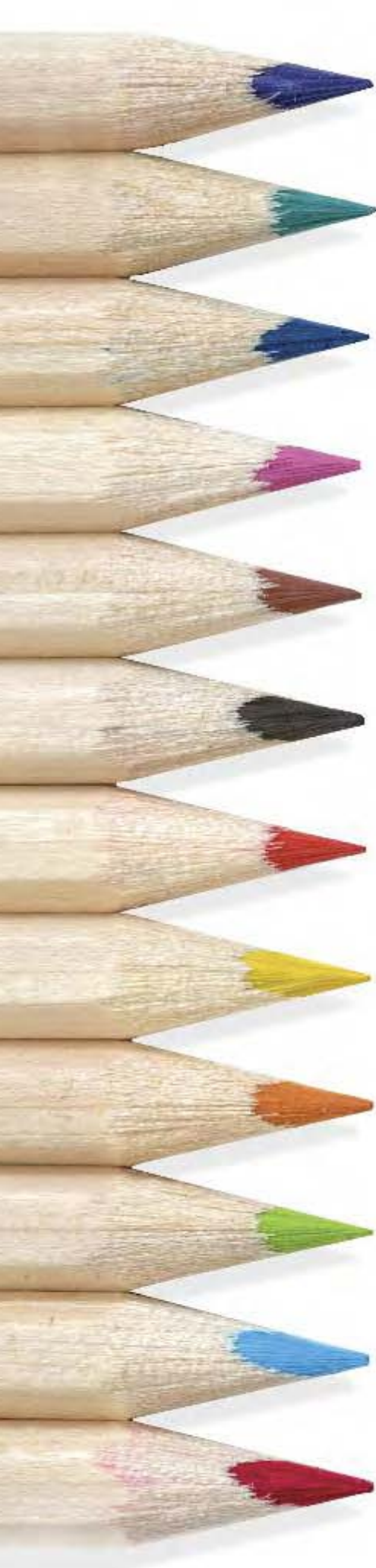
CLOtC's guidance on planning school trips  
[www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk)

Common Sense Common Safety  
[www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/402906\\_CommonSense\\_acc.pdf](http://www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/402906_CommonSense_acc.pdf)

The RHS campaign for school gardening  
<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/default.aspx>

NFER's report on the impact of school gardening on learning  
[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/publications\\_home.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/publications_home.cfm)

With thanks to Alan Titchmarsh and Elaine Skates



# The impact of the Creative Partnerships Programme on the teaching workforce



Emily Lamont, Jennifer Jeffes and Pippa Lord

**S**chools around the country have been involved in the Creative Partnerships programme, which brings creative workers such as artists, architects and scientists into schools to work with teachers to inspire young people and help them learn. In order to evaluate the impact that the programme is having on participating teaching staff, NFER was commissioned by Creativity Culture and Education (CCE) to carry out an in-depth analysis of the nature, range and extent of the impacts. The research included in-depth case-studies and a national survey.

The results show considerable evidence of the impact of Creative Partnerships, leading to a wealth of benefits for teaching staff, and highlighted the programme's value as a form of professional development. Almost two-thirds of teachers considered it to have had a greater impact on their professional development than other programmes and initiatives in which they had engaged.

## The main impacts of the Creative Partnerships Programme on teaching staff

Impacts fell into four areas:

- Personal impacts (e.g. enhanced enthusiasm, confidence, creative development)
- Interpersonal and leadership impacts (e.g. development of leadership and communication skills)
- Teaching and learning impacts (e.g. improved practice, curriculum developments)

- Career-related impacts (e.g., promotion, progression or changes in role).

The most commonly reported impacts fell into the personal, interpersonal and leadership areas. Impacts from the career domain did not feature as highly. However, significant numbers of teachers still reported that their career had been enhanced as a result of their involvement with Creative Partnerships. For example, 43% felt that Creative Partnerships had changed or enhanced their career, and 35% reported that their involvement had enhanced their confidence to develop their career.

The most commonly reported individual impacts on teachers were:

- the development of skills for working with creative professionals (86% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they had experienced this impact)
- enhanced confidence to try new things and to 'have a go' (80% agreed or strongly agreed)
- provision of skills to help children to be more creative (79%)
- enhanced enthusiasm for their job (76%)
- development of the curriculum in their key stage, department or school (72%)
- communication and sharing of their learning with other teaching colleagues (71%)
- development of skills for leading projects (68%).

'Average impact scores' were calculated to

indicate the amount of impact reported to have been experienced. Teachers who rated themselves as having 'considerable involvement' with Creative Partnerships experienced a significantly higher level of impact than those who had been less involved. Indeed, this was the factor that led to the biggest difference in mean impact scores. Other influential factors included the level of responsibility that a teacher takes for Creative Partnerships, where greater responsibility leads to a higher score, and length of time that teachers have been involved with Creative Partnerships. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who have been involved for the longest have higher average impact ratings.

#### **Creative Partnerships as a form of professional development**

The vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that Creative Partnerships had contributed to their professional development or 'professional journey' as a teacher. Taking on responsibility for Creative Partner-

ships and being more heavily involved is likely to make the Creative Partnerships experience more rewarding in terms of professional development.

Sixty-two per cent of respondents to the survey reported that Creative Partnerships had a greater impact on their professional development, when compared to other programmes and initiatives in which they had engaged. The reasons behind this included the opportunities that Creative Partnerships provides to develop and use new skills, the opportunities to work with external partners and the sustained whole-school involvement that the Creative Partnerships programme facilitates.

#### **Conclusions**

The research highlighted the overwhelmingly positive impacts of involvement with Creative Partnerships. High proportions of teachers consider themselves to have experienced a number of impacts, some of them very strongly. The impacts of involvement in Creative Partnerships are wide

ranging and involvement does not solely offer enhancements to teachers' own creative skills or to the use of creativity in the classroom, but it enhances leadership abilities, impacts on personal development, and for some, leads to career enhancement or progression.

#### **Further information**

[www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/TWIZ01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/TWIZ01)

More information about Creative Partnerships: [www.creative-partnerships.com/](http://www.creative-partnerships.com/)





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The **Eurydice network** website is available at: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/>.

**INCA** provides descriptions of the curriculum, assessment and initial teacher training frameworks in several countries in Europe and Asia, plus the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The **INCA** website covers pre-school, primary and secondary education and is available at: [www.inca.org.uk](http://www.inca.org.uk).

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# PISA 2009

**Jenny Bradshaw**

*... we cannot be in any doubt that while reform accelerates across the globe no country can afford to be left behind.*

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, Education World Forum  
11th January 2011.

[www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072274/michael-gove-to-the-education-world-forum](http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072274/michael-gove-to-the-education-world-forum)

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a survey of educational achievement of 15-year-olds, organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which takes place every three years. A total of 65 countries took part in the 2009 PISA survey and the results were published in December 2010. In England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the PISA 2009 survey was carried out by NFER on behalf of the respective governments, with 481 schools and 12,179 pupils taking part.

The PISA survey involves tests and questionnaires for pupils and a questionnaire for schools. The subjects tested are reading, maths and science, with each PISA survey having one of these as the main subject. In 2009 this was reading, so the pupil questionnaires concentrated on aspects of reading habits, learning reading and attitudes to reading.

The results of PISA 2009 showed that the UK mainly performs around the average

for OECD countries in maths and reading, but is above average in science. It is interesting to see who the leaders are – and for reading, the PISA results show that Pacific-Rim countries, in particular, are well represented in the highest scoring countries. The countries or regions which scored significantly higher than the UK for reading (in order of their scores) were:

1. Shanghai-China
2. Korea
3. Finland
4. Hong Kong-China
5. Singapore
6. Canada
7. New Zealand
8. Japan
9. Australia
10. Netherlands
11. Belgium
12. Norway

As well as results for the UK, which are included in OECD's international report, there are separate results for England, Wales,

Scotland and Northern Ireland. This means that PISA gives an opportunity to learn about differences between the four separate education systems in the UK, as well as showing comparisons with other countries. In PISA 2009, the results proved somewhat of a shock for Wales. In England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, scores were very similar, with no significant differences between them. This was the case for all three subjects. Wales, however, was both significantly lower than the other UK countries and significantly below the average for other OECD countries in all three subjects. This has led to intense debate and proposals for educational reform in Wales over the last few months.

However, the PISA data gives a lot more information than is contained in the headline-grabbing country league tables. Among the many other findings are:

- Girls were better than boys at reading in all 65 countries – but the difference in the UK was less than in almost every other country.
- Socio-economic background has a relatively large connection with scores in the UK, with those from a more disadvantaged background tending to have lower attainment.
- Pupils born outside the UK or whose parents were born outside the UK scored lower than others, although the difference was smaller than in most other countries with similar proportions of such pupils. It was also largely connected with having a different home language. Comparing only those whose home language was English, second generation pupils (those born in the UK with parents born elsewhere) showed no significant performance gap.
- Around 40% of pupils in the UK said they never read for enjoyment. This was similar to the international average. Internationally, there were strong connections between positive attitudes and reading scores, although this does not tell us the direction of cause and effect. Do pupils read better if they enjoy it more, or do they enjoy it more if they are better at it?

- Pupils in the UK reported more frequent online activities than many other countries – in particular, chatting online and reading emails. Interestingly – and perhaps surprisingly – they reported more online activity than their contemporaries in the USA.

#### Further information

[www.nfer.ac.uk/pisa](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/pisa)

*PISA is a highly respected and robust measure of the relative performance of educational systems and the Welsh school system underperforms for all ability levels. These results cannot be argued away or excused.*

Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, Reardon Smith Theatre, Cardiff, 2 February 2011

[www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationand-skills/allsectorpolicies/ourevents/teachingmakesadifference/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationand-skills/allsectorpolicies/ourevents/teachingmakesadifference/?lang=en)

*It is important that we continue to benchmark our system internationally, learning from the best, because we aspire to be at the top end for all our young people, not just some of them.*

Caitriona Ruane, Minister of Education, Northern Ireland Assembly debate, 14 December 2010  
[www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2010-12-14.6.60](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2010-12-14.6.60)

*..., the PISA results provide further cast-iron proof that for Scottish Education, the tide has turned.*

Michael Russell, Education Secretary, 7th December 2010.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/12/07102939](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/12/07102939)

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*'What role does the school system play in teaching them their rights and responsibilities as good citizens?'*

# International citizenship survey shows crucial link between civic knowledge and civic participation

Professor David Kerr - NFER Research Associate

## The ICCS Study

NFER researchers have played a leading role in the groundbreaking IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). They were part of the international consortium (along with ACER and University of Rome Tre), which designed a new European module and also conducted England's participation for the DfE.

ICCS surveyed over 140,000 lower secondary students from 5,300 schools in 38 countries, including England. In addition, over 75,000 students from 3,000 schools in 24 European countries took part in a European module which assessed students' knowledge about the European Union and attitudes toward EU-related policies and issues.

The study was commissioned to help countries across the world, including England, in preparing their young people to take an active part in society in the 21st century. As the IEA's Executive Director, Dr Hans Wagemaker explained 'every country is trying to answer some critical questions: what do its students need to learn to prepare them for the social and political life in their countries, in Europe, and in the world? What role does the school system play in teaching them their rights and responsibilities as good citizens?'

## ICCS Outcomes

The results of the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) show a complex picture of young people's attitudes and understanding of their societies and their role within them. Although the vast majority expect to vote in national elections, political parties were the least trusted civic institution. The study highlights a strong relationship between civic knowledge and participation, with students with higher civic knowledge reporting greater likelihood to participate in society.

## Outcomes for pupils in England

The outcome of the survey in England has shown:

- Knowledge of the European Union (EU) amongst pupils in England is significantly below that of other pupils in Europe. Teachers in England have low confidence levels in teaching about European issues and the EU.
- Pupils in England scored significantly above average in the international test of civic knowledge and understanding when compared to all participating countries. However, when compared only to their European counterparts, their performance is average.
- Pupils in England have views and attitudes that are broadly democratic and tolerant. However, their tolerance of immigration is well below the international average and their view of European migration is particularly critical.
- Pupils in England have a low level of interest in social and political issues. This is an international trend – however, it is notable that they have a level of news media interest that is significantly below the international average. They also have low levels of confidence in their personal efficacy – their ability to influence political issues.
- Pupils in England, as in other countries, are much more likely to participate within their schools than they are to take part in community activities.
- Pupils' civic knowledge, attitudes and engagement are influenced by a range of factors. At school an open climate of discussion and debate and a school ethos that encourages active pupil engagement in decision-making have a positive influence on pupils' civic outcomes.

### Implications

With a growing emphasis on international comparisons in striving for a world-class education system in the UK, England's participation in the ICCS study allows us to compare the civic knowledge and attitudes of young people in England with those in other European and international coun-



tries. It reveals a mixed picture. On the one hand, it highlights a deficit in pupils' civic knowledge about the EU, their negative attitudes toward immigration in Europe and lack of community participation. On the other, it reveals that young people will vote and do participate in school and confirms the positive influence of school ethos and of such opportunities for pupils to discuss and participate in school on their civic knowledge and engagement

The ICCS results for England provide considerable food for thought for citizenship education policy and practice in a period of curriculum review. They suggest that if young people in England are to compete alongside their European and international counterparts then there will be a need to address their current low scores in matters such as tolerance of immigration and knowledge of EU policies and practices and to strengthen the ability to teachers to address such topics. Above all, ICCS underlines how schools, and the citizenship curriculum, have an important role to play in helping pupils to improve their knowledge

and understanding of the local, national, European and worldwide community in which they live as well as providing a secure environment where pupils are encouraged to express opinion, to debate and to participate in decision making.

The finding in ICCS that high levels of civic knowledge lead to high levels of civic participation is a crucial one for policy-makers and practitioners in England and across the world. It underlines the importance of balancing civic knowledge ('knowing') and civic participation ('doing') in the school curriculum for all pupils.



### Further information

Further details of the ICCS study and access to its International and European reports can be accessed at: [www.iccs.acer.edu.au/](http://www.iccs.acer.edu.au/)

Full details of England's report from ICCS are available via: [www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/ICCX01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/ICCX01)



*School linking can have a positive impact on many aspects of pupil's skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours*

# Citizenship Education, Engagement and Community Cohesion: Equipping young people with positive attitudes for the future

**Professor David Kerr - NFER Research Associate**

**T**wo recent reports from NFER underline the important role of schools and teachers, through citizenship education and schools linking, in helping young people to engage with and make a positive contribution to their communities.

## **Citizenship education in schools**

The final report from the nine-year Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) presents the broader view of what attitudes pupils have and how they are formed. It reveals a mixed picture of the civic engagement, attachment, understand-

ing and attitudes of young people in England over time from age 11 to 18.

- The young people studied have become less tolerant in practice towards equality and society, with a hardening of attitudes towards refugees and immigrants, jail sentences and benefit payments.

- They show a weakening attachment to their communities (local, national or European), although their attachment to their school community remained strong.
- Although their trust in social, civil and political institutions remains high, 33 per cent reported in the latest survey that they do not trust politicians 'at all' (up from 20 per cent at age 11).
- They are aware of the impact of politics on their lives but feel only moderately that they can influence political and social institutions – what is termed 'political efficacy'.

The findings indicate that when citizenship education (CE) learning is delivered in discrete slots for more than 45 minutes per week and on a regular basis, it can have a positive effect on young people's chances of positive citizenship outcomes. It also suggests that this can lead to young people feeling more able to make a difference to their communities. The report makes a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of CE such as

- the increase of external examinations in the subject
- that the classes should be taken by trained citizenship teachers
- CE should be taught through to age 18.

#### Schools linking

The report on the evaluation of the Schools Linking Network (SLN) national pilot programme highlights the effects of a more targeted intervention in influencing pupil attitudes. The SLN programme establishes and encourages links between schools in order to allow children and young people to explore their identity, celebrate diversity and develop a dialogue with other young people in their communities. The belief is that such increased contact between pupils can have a positive impact on their attitudes to others and so help to strengthen integration and cohesion at the local level. The NFER evaluation of the SLN national pilot programme found that, overall, it was having a positive impact on the pupils and school and LA staff involved at local level.

- The key determinant of the impact and outcomes of school linking for pupils is

the intensity of the school linking experience. Linking had the greatest positive impact when the children at the linked schools met two or more times a year.

- School linking can have a positive impact on many aspects of pupil's skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, particularly their respect for others, their self-confidence and their self-efficacy, as well as broadening the social groups with whom they interact.
- LAs have a critical role to play in supporting the SLN programme in schools through partnership working with SLN and schools at local level.
- The majority of schools and LAs who took part in the SLN programme planned to continue their involvement.
- The sustainability of school linking is improved where conscious attempts are made to embed the learning across the school curriculum.

At a time of curriculum review and change in schools, alongside heightened tensions in communities at large, both reports provide a fascinating picture of the emerging civic attitudes and values of young people in England and the influences on the formation of such attitudes. Above all, they highlight the important role that schools and teachers can play, through consistent citizenship education provision and involvement in schools linking, in combating some of the more negative influences and helping young people to form positive attitudes to civic engagement and participation in their communities. In an increasingly diverse and fast-changing world such positive attitudes and values are vital in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms for everyone and strengthening our democratic society at all levels.

#### Further information

The final report from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) is available at: [www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/CEE11](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/CEE11)

The report Evaluation of the Schools Linking Network is available at: [www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SNOZ01](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SNOZ01)



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# Planning for school development?



To sow the seeds of successful school improvement, you need to start with a fertile information base. Work out where you would like to be, and then given your constraints devise a plan of action to achieve your desired change.

The key stage is the collation of information – the quality of your initial data has a direct impact on the final outcome.

NFER's attitude survey service is invaluable here. Designed to quickly and effectively canvass opinions from both your pupils and their parents, it provides a channel to help you discover your school's performance in a wide array of areas, and it supplies graphic, objective summary reports to illustrate how your school is performing against national norms.



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For more information on planning for school development visit [www.nfer.ac.uk/pps](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/pps)

NFER for schools provides a range of other services to help you make effective use of data in both formative and summative assessment. For more information please go to: [www.nfer.ac.uk/schools](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/schools)

## **Data in Schools** - Jon Williamson

Schools thrive on effective usage of data. It can tell them where their pupils are and how to support them in moving forward. It can provide insights into the wellbeing of pupils, and how parents feel about schools. It can be used to tell stakeholders about the performance of a school. Yet many schools struggle to turn the data they collect into information they can use. ...

[Read the full article on page 8]