**Academy and School News Update, February 1 -18 2015**

***Documents mentioned below can be found on*** <http://tonystephens.org.uk>

* **State schools in England will need to find annual savings of more than £1bn** – the equivalent of more than 20,000 full-time teaching posts – to balance their budgets in coming years, according to analysis of the increasing cost pressures that schools will face in the next parliament. The largest share of the additional costs comes from higher national insurance contributions, costing nearly £500m a year from 2016 onwards. Calculations estimate the combined effect of increases in national insurance, pension contributions, wages and inflation will eat away £378m from budgets in 2015-16, rising steeply to £1.1bn from 2016-17 onwards. A typical state secondary school would have to account for more than £200,000 a year in extra pension and national insurance contributions, while a two-form entry primary would effectively lose £40,000. Currently, most schools pay a 14.1% employer contribution rate into the teachers’ pension scheme. In September 2015 this will rise to 16.4% following public sector pension reforms, at a national cost of £330m from 2016 onwards. For some academies this could be even worse, as many currently pay contribution rates of less than 10%. Meanwhile, new rules on national insurance that remove rebates for salary-related pension schemes will take effect from April 2016. The estimate is that the change would place an annual cost of 2% on the school staff budgets amounting to £460m nationally, although the effect will vary between schools. The effects of inflation and annual pay increases would account for a further £300m of spending in 2016. For example: a teacher on a salary of £34,000 would currently attract employer national insurance and pension contributions of £7,500. But by 2016-17, assuming the teacher received pay increases, the contributions would be worth £11,200 – a rise of nearly 50%.
* The [**early years pupil premium (EYPP)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-and-range-of-education-and-childcare-from-birth-to-5-years/supporting-pages/early-years-pupil-premium), worth £50 million in 2015 to 2016, will be given to early years providers who are delivering the funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds. The funding equates to up to £300 extra per year for each disadvantaged child who meets the eligibility criteria. The DfE is giving councils an additional £1.5 million to help them get ready. It means that each council with eligible children will receive £10,000 to support the introduction of the early years pupil premium - and they can choose how best to use the money.
* It has been announced that front line professionals will have a mandatory duty to report cases of **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM**). The government has tabled amendments to the Serious Crime Bill to ensure the new duty is legislated for ahead of the dissolution of Parliament. The government will also include a measure to provide multi-agency statutory guidance for front line professionals.
* Ofqual has confirmed the assessment arrangements for a number of the remaining **GCSE, AS and A level subjects that will be taught from 2016**.

The reformed GCSE subjects covered are:

* citizenship studies
* food preparation and nutrition
* drama
* religious studies

The reformed AS and A level subjects covered are:

* drama and theatre
* religious studies

Summary of decisions

* As previously confirmed, new GCSEs should only be tiered where a single set of assessments cannot assess students across the full ability range. Ofqual has decided that assessments for the GCSE subjects listed above will not be tiered.
* Citizenship studies GCSE: They have decided that this subject will be assessed entirely by exams, with 15% of the marks allocated to questions that assess specific knowledge and skills for citizenship action.
* Food preparation and nutrition GCSE: The assessment for this subject has been split evenly to cover 50% exam and 50% non-exam assessment. This reflects the balance of practical and theoretical knowledge and understanding required in the subject content.
* GCSE, AS and A level drama: They have decided that non-exam assessment for GCSE, AS and A level drama should count for 60% of the overall assessment, with 40% of the qualification done by exam.
* Religious Studies GCSEs, AS and A- levels: They have decided that the assessment in this subject should be entirely by exam. They are still considering what changes they need to make to the assessment objectives to ensure they appropriately reflect the content requirements and take into account responses to our consultation. They will publish the finalised assessment objectives in March.

The following consultations outline further details for each subject:

* [Developing new GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications for first teaching in 2016: September 2014](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016) including GCSEs in citizenship studies, food preparation and nutrition and drama and AS and A level in drama and theatre.
* [Developing new GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications for first teaching in 2016: November 2014](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016) including GCSE in religious studies and AS and A level in religious studies.
* See also “AS, A-level and GCSE Assessment Objectives Update”

***These are available on the above website, Documents – Subject related documents –New AS, A-levels or New GCSEs***

* In relation to the above, the DfE has published **new subject content** for citizenship studies, drama, food preparation and nutrition, and religious studies.

The final content for GCSEs in:

* [citizenship studies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-citizenship-studies)
* [drama](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-drama)
* [food preparation and nutrition](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-food-preparation-and-nutrition)
* [religious studies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-religious-studies)

For A levels in

* [drama and theatre](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-drama-and-theatre)
* [religious studies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-religious-studies) .

The key changes to the reformed qualifications are:

* a citizenship studies GCSE which will require students to develop more detailed knowledge of citizenship, including knowledge of democracy and government, the legal system, society and the public finances. Students will be required to undertake at least 1 in-depth, critical investigation leading to a campaign or other similar activity
* new religious studies (RS) qualifications which will provide students with a broader and deeper knowledge of religion
* in GCSE RS, students will spend at least half of their time developing knowledge and understanding of 2 religions, with the option to spend up to three-quarters of their time studying 1 of the 2. Students will also be able to study texts and learn about critiques of religion and other non-religious beliefs through the study of philosophy and ethics
* in A- level RS, students will study at least 1 religion in depth. They will also be expected to read and understand the works and arguments of key theologians, scholars, philosophers and/or ethicists
* a new drama GCSE and A level which are more rigorous and require greater breadth of study. At GCSE students will study at least 1 play in depth including its social, cultural and historical context, and 2 extracts from a second play. In the A level students will study at least 2 plays in depth, as well as 3 extracts from other plays and 2 theatre practitioners (individuals or companies)
* a new GCSE in food preparation and nutrition that draws and builds on the best of current food-related qualifications. This GCSE will place a greater focus on knowledge, including scientific knowledge of food and nutrition, and will enable students to apply this when preparing and cooking meals

***These are available on the above website, Documents – Subject related documents –New AS, A-levels or New GCSEs***

* **Ofqua**l has published the following **useful summaries**, correct as of Feb 2015:
  + Changes to GCSEs, AS and A-levels as will affect current school year groups
  + GCSEs, AS and A-levels accredited for Sept 2015
  + Timeline, GCSE
  + Timeline, AS and A-level

***These are available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* The DfE is providing a further £1.3 billion in 2017 to 2018 to help ensure every local authority has the **school places** they need ready for September 2018. An additional £300 million will be allocated in 2015 to 2017 to help provide school places in areas experiencing significant and unexpected increases in their pupil numbers - this is in addition to the £2.05 billion already allocated for this period. In addition, around 100,000 more places will be provided by free schools that have been approved but not yet opened.
* The DfE is expanding the **Troops to Teachers** scheme
* The DfE has confirmed that around £2 billion will be invested in **rebuilding or** **refurbishing** buildings at 277 schools across England, under the second phase of the government’s [Priority School Building Programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/priority-school-building-programme-psbp). 260 schools are already involved in the first phase of the programme, bringing the total number to receive a revamp to 537.
* New laws have come into force, changing when children can take part in **public performance.**

***A copy of the new guidance is available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* The government has published its [**response to the Workload Challenge Survey**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-for-schools-government-response) which was launched on 21 October 2014 and closed on 21 November 2014. 20,533 respondents provided substantive answers to 1 or more of the following 3 key survey questions, generating more than 57,000 separate answers:
* tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time - where do these come from?
* send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload - what works well in your school?
* what do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload - by government, by schools or by others?

Pledges in the response include:

* commitments by Ofsted:
  + not to change their handbook or framework during the school year, except when absolutely necessary
  + to keep updating their new myths and facts document stating what inspectors do and do not expect to see
  + from 2016 onwards, to look to make the handbook shorter and simpler, so that schools can more easily understand how inspectors will reach their judgements
* giving schools more notice of significant changes to the curriculum, exams and accountability, and not making changes to qualifications in the academic year or during a course, unless there are urgent reasons for doing so
* making it easier for teachers to find examples of what works in other schools, and research about the best way to do things like marking, data management and planning by bringing together a central repository of evidence
* support for headteachers to carry out their demanding jobs by reviewing all leadership training, including reviewing the opportunities available for coaching and mentoring for leaders
* tracking teacher workload over the coming years by carrying out a large scale, robust survey in early spring 2016, and every 2 years from then

Leaders of five unions wrote a letter to say that the Workload Challenge report was a “missed opportunity” to address high workload, saying it would be a “disappointment” for teachers and school leaders.

***A copy of the response is available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* The DfE has published an analysis of **2014 national GCSE and equivalent results**

***A copy of this is available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* **KS1 assessment and reporting arrangements** can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* Ofsted has issued statements criticising the standard of education in **Blackpool and Reading**
* Ofsted has confirmed changes to the inspection of education, following public consultation in **“Better inspection for all”**.

From September, Ofsted will inspect good schools and further education and skills providers approximately once every three years, meaning that signs of decline can be spotted early and the necessary action taken. The focus of these inspections will be on ensuring that good standards are being maintained, that leaders have identified key areas of concern and that they have the capacity to address them. These frequent but shorter inspections will also mean that parents and employers can be kept much better informed.

A common approach will be taken to all education inspections from September 2015. This will ensure even greater consistency in inspections and will make it much easier for parents, pupils, learners and employers to compare different providers and make more informed choices.

The final key reform is to conduct full inspections of every non-association independent school in the country by July 2018. This was supported by nearly 75% of respondents.

The breadth and suitability of the curriculum will remain as part of the judgement on the quality of leadership and management

‘Outstanding’ schools will continue to be exempt from routine inspection

Alongside the changes to inspection, Ofsted is making significant changes to the way it contracts with, trains and manages inspectors.

“We are determined to recruit and retain inspectors of the highest calibre to carry out inspections using the new framework. We have tightened up our selection criteria and quality assurance procedures. All contracted Ofsted Inspectors will have to go through a stringent assessment process and assessed training, with clear performance measures in place.

***The***[***full report on the consultation outcomes and next steps***](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/better-inspection-for-all)***can be found on the above website, Documents –Latest documents***

* Ofsted has issued new guidance on **safeguarding in schools**

***A copy of this is available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* It is confirmed that the following **subjects are statutory at KS4**: English (literature and language), mathematics, science, citizenship, computing, PE, RE, SRE (sex and relationship education). In addition, students have an entitlement to study a minimum of one course in each of the following four entitlement areas: the arts (art and design, music, dance, drama, media arts), design and technology, humanities (history and geography) and MFL.  The statutory requirements in relation to the entitlement areas are as follows: schools must provide access to a minimum of one course in each of the four entitlement areas; schools must provide the opportunity for pupils to take a course in all 4 areas, should they wish to do so and; a course that meets the entitlement requirements must give pupils the opportunity to obtain an approved qualification. In addition, all schools must publish their school curriculum by both subject and academic year online. Schools are also required to publish online information in relation to each academic year, relating to the content of the school’s curriculum for each subject and details about how additional information relating to the curriculum may be obtained.
* David Cameron says he “strongly supported” good schools growing and included **grammar schools** in that context. Mr Cameron [is reported to have said](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-31508030): “I strongly support the right of all good schools to expand. I think that’s very important and that should include grammar schools. “Under this government, grammar schools have been able to expand and that is all to the good.” It comes as education secretary Nicky Morgan is considering the opening of an “annexe” to an existing grammar school – Weald of Kent Grammar School – in Kent.
* The cross-party group of MPs, the Education Select Committee has called for the government to give **personal, social and health education (PSHE) and sex and relationships education (SRE)** statutory status in both primary and secondary schools, including academies and free schools. In January the House of Lords voted against such a proposal. However, the MPs want SRE to be rebranded relationships and sex education (RSE), putting the focus on relationships.

This is also Labour Party policy, and the Party also wants to introduce training for teachers in how to deal with homophobic bullying

* The **Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust** (CHAT) in north London has been served a [financial notice to improve](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403259/Financial_notice_to_improve_Cuckoo_Hall_Academies_Trust.pdf)following a damning [report](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403771/Investigation_report_Cuckoo_Hall_Academies_Trust.pdf)by the Education Funding Agency (EFA).
* The government has rejected recommendations made in the aftermath of the Trojan horse scandal that **school governors** be restricted on the number of boards they can serve on.
* Ed Miliband has announced he would “introduce” a **30-pupil cap for infant school** **classes** which had been “scrapped” by the coalition government, but the Conservatives deny that it has ever been scrapped. A review of the law in 2012 allowed for class sizes to be larger than 30 to account for certain children, but maintained classes otherwise still had to have a maximum of 30 pupils. There are eight circumstances for when a child can be admitted into an already-full class. They include children of armed forces personnel, those with statements of special educational needs, when errors were made in the admissions process for a particular child, for twins, and for those children whose families have moved mid-year.
* More than 70 MPs have [written](http://feweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Fairer-Funding-for-Sixth-Form-Colleges_0.pdf) to Education Secretary Nicky Morgan calling for **sixth form colleges to be exempted from paying VAT.**
* The **funding rate for 16 and 17-year-old learners** will remain at £4,000, EFA has confirmed and the £3,300 annual rate for **18-year-olds** would also stay the same in 2015/16.

***A copy of the full document is available on the above website, Documents- Latest documents***

* David Cameron has said that schools labelled as **“requiring improvement**” by Ofsted are “mediocre” and “coasting. He said he would “wage a war on mediocrity” by targeting schools with the second lowest Ofsted rating. He said that any school told it required improvement would have to become a sponsored academy if it could not prove it had the capacity to turn itself around.
* David Cameron has pledged to protect **state school pupil funding** if the **Conservatives** remained in power. However, while he said spending per pupil would be protected in cash terms until 2020, he admitted the rate would not rise with inflation. Schools therefore face a cut in “real-terms” funding. The pledge also does not apply to early years and post 16 education or cover the new NI and pension costs
* Ed Miliband has announced the **Labour** Party’s plan to protect the overall education budget from early years to age 19 in line with inflation if his party forms a government after May 7. But any decision on whether to ring-fence separately funding for early years, schools and 16 to 19-year-olds won’t be made before the election. His pledge would also not cover the NI and pension cost increases
* The **Liberal Democrats** are putting education at the centre of their [**general election**](http://www.tes.co.uk/GeneralElection2015) campaign and also have a pledge to protect real-terms budgets for schools, 16-19 colleges and sixth forms, and early years’ education.
* Nicky Morgan has said: “We will expect every pupil by the age of 11 to know their **times tables** off by heart, to perform long division and complex multiplication and to be able to read a novel. They should be able to write a short story with accurate punctuation, spelling and grammar.”Tests will be completed on these topics at the end of Key Stage 2, and students would be ‘required’ to pass the **tests**. Senior leaders in schools failing to get 100% of their pupils to pass the tests for two years running face being replaced in an academy ‘takeover’.
* **Paul Ginnis**, one of the best providers of CPD ever and a friend to all teachers has died- a great loss to education
* The new guide on **pupil exclusion** has been withdrawn – less than a month after updated rules came into force. School reform minister Nick Gibb is to adapt the guide “to address some issues with process

***The guidance to be used for now can be found on the above website, Documents-Latest documents***

* It won’t regulate, discipline or force membership – but the newly proposed **College of Teaching** will support the profession in ‘taking responsibility for its destiny’. That’s the claim of a [proposal released today](http://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/College-of-teaching-expression-of-interest-v-final-010215-Embargoed-pdf.pdf)by the ‘Claim Your College’ coalition, which includes the existing College of Teachers, Prince’s Teaching Institute, Teacher Development Trust, and SSAT along with practising teachers and school leaders. Joining the new college will be voluntary, the proposal says, and the independent organisation behind it will run on a charitable basis. Costs for membership are estimated at £70 per annum, and though anyone interested in education can join, ‘chartered’ membership will be reserved for practising classroom teachers. Membership routes for teaching assistants and exam officers are mooted as future possibilities, but the proposal makes clear this would only happen after consultation. Estimated start-up costs for the project will run to £11.9m over five years, with the group likely to crowd-fund for founder members as well as considering a range of philanthropic donations. Pursuits for the college include the development of teaching standards, as [recently described in the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training](http://schoolsweek.co.uk/carter-review-let-independent-body-design-teacher-training-nicky-morgan-agrees/), and sharing good practice from around the world. “It is essential that teachers are at the heart of the College of Teaching. It must be designed, driven and run by teachers and it will only be effective if it is relevant, high-status and provides true professional progression for teachers.”

***A copy of the report can be found on the above website, Documents-Latest documents***

* ATL has unveiled the results of a survey of 1,668 **support staff** from UK state-funded schools with 75 per cent of respondents reporting that they had to work extra hours because their “workload demands it” and 70 per cent saying they did not get paid for the overtime. A further 46 per cent said they worked one to three hours per week over what was agreed in their contract, with 21 per cent putting in an extra four to six hours-a-week. Only 11 per cent of respondents held a postgraduate certificate in education (*PGCE*) or *qualified teacher status* (*QTS*), yet 72 per cent of these unqualified teachers reported that they were still expected to teach whole classes on a support staff pay rate.
* Pupils in some parts of England are unlikely to take **exams that could be vital to their job prospect**s - such as sciences and languages - according to an analysis of exam results. Researchers examined GCSE statistics from 2013 and found in some authorities a third of schools did not offer triple science. There are concerns such "subject deserts" could harm social mobility.
* **Phonics techniques** commonly used with primary school pupils also provide a significant boost to struggling readers at secondary level, new research suggests. Low-attaining students in Year 7 can rapidly improve their reading ability by spending up to an hour a day on a phonics-based programme that includes deciphering nonsense words, according to a study published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). And according to researchers at Durham University, including phonics techniques alongside other approaches with secondary students shows “considerable promise as an effective catch-up intervention for low-attaining readers”. Students using the Fresh Start phonics programme would make an extra three months’ progress in reading comprehension over a year compared with their classmates, the research estimates.
* Party leader Natalie Bennett has said that the **Greens** would, among other things, abolish Ofsted and the national curriculum; raise the school starting age to 6; return academies and free schools to the control of local authorities; and scrap all national tests in primary schools. Private schools are also in Ms Bennett’s sights. Under Green policy, they would lose all their tax breaks and be treated “as the businesses they are”.
* More than half of children in the UK (57%) have done something **"risky" or anti-social online**, a poll of 2,000 11- to 16-year-olds suggests.
* Labour says it can boost spending on schools by £230m per year, through a **clampdown on the nearly £2.5bn of surpluses held by academies**, and by recycling cash saved from cuts in the Conservative’s free school and academy conversion programmes. The cuts would include ending payments to “academy brokers” who find sponsors for local authority maintained schools targeted for conversion to academy status, and by ending funding for the New [Schools](http://www.theguardian.com/education/schools) Network, a DfE funded charity that helps groups bidding to open new free schools. A Labour source said that there would be no clawback of the savings, with a transition period to allow academies to adjust their balance sheets, but added: “The current situation can’t continue”.
* Allies of Michael Gove say that one of his core exam reforms is under threat after arrangements for leading universities to advise on the redesign of A- levels were suspended. A company set up by **Russell Group universities to advise on the content of A-level syllabuses** has been registered dormant after Nicky Morgan, the education secretary, refused to provide further funding. Though it had completed its initial work, after reviewing the content of new A- levels to be introduced in stages over the next three years, vice-chancellors had pressed to remain involved. Mrs Morgan rejected their request for the company,
* **Sure Start** centres to help children in deprived areas would be expanded again under a Labour government, shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt says. He said the party, which launched Sure Start in 1998, would create 50,000 new places and the centres would be run by charities or childcare companies. It would re-impose a requirement on councils to provide childcare via Sure Start, reversing a coalition decision.
* Politicians and academics are fighting a campaign to save the **citizenship A-level** after the only exam board offering the qualification revealed that it planned to drop it from 2017. AQA attributed its decision to falling student numbers and said that the current course no longer met the needs of most schools. There are similar protests about the decision to drop **A-level anthropology**
* **Creativity and the arts** are being “squeezed out” of schools, with pupils from low-income families being hardest hit, according to a major report. A commission led by the University of Warwick to examine the value of culture in British society warns that the most deprived students are missing out on opportunities in the creative industries. The report, drawn up by academics and cultural leaders, calls for evidence of “excellent cultural and creative education” to be a prerequisite for schools to be graded outstanding by Ofsted, as well as a dedicated arts and culture pupil premium similar to the £450 million physical education premium currently on offer.
* Schools should teach “**digital literacy**” alongside reading, writing and maths if the country is to address the urgent digital skills shortage, a Lords report has warned today. The House of Lords Digital Skills Committee has called on any future government to address the growing shortage of young people capable of filling jobs in the technology sector by making digital literacy the third core subject alongside literacy and numeracy. The cross-party committee said that although the introduction of the computing curriculum in September last year was “welcome”, doubts remained over the workforce’s ability to teach it. Too many teachers are “not confident or equipped” to provide their pupils with the relevant skills, and fewer than half of secondary ICT teachers have a relevant qualification beyond A-level, the report says.
* **Academies face being forced to sign land over to the government** so that new schools can be built to tackle the growing pupil places crisis. Changes to funding agreements mean the Department for Education now has the power to compel academies to give up parts of their grounds, as schools struggle to cope with the increase in pupil numbers.
* **Labour** has issued a “call to arms” to bring back the “best” of the 200,000 teachers who have left the profession in a bid to address the looming teacher recruitment crisis  highlighting the fact that 50,000 “experienced” teachers have left the workforce in the past year, an increase of 25 per cent on the 2010 figure. He also announced that each region will be set a new “standards challenge”, modelled on the previous Labour government’s London Challenge, which will aim to raise attainment among the country’s most underperforming schools. A Labour government would also:
  + Introduce compulsory work experience for 14- to 16-year-olds;
  + Lower the voting age to 16
  + And guarantee two hours of organised sport a week.
  + Aim to create at least 80,000 extra apprenticeships a year – all at Grade 3 level or above – by 2020.
  + Cut university tuition fees by £3000
* More than a third of parents have taken their children on **holiday during term**-**time** since stricter holiday-absence rules were introduced, a new survey suggests. Thirty-six per cent of parents with children aged between 5 and 16 have chosen to risk fines of £60 per pupil in order to avoid paying the increased price of flights and hotels during school holidays. On average, families holidaying during term time saved £237.10 per person, the survey of almost 800 parents found. And 35 per cent of those who took their children on holiday during term-time said that they saved more than £250 per person. Twenty-eight per cent said that they could not afford to take their children away during school holidays. However, only 14 per cent of the parents who had taken their children out of school for a holiday said that they faced a fine on their return. And 56 per cent of parents said that the current rules had no impact on their holiday-making decisions.

From this September, however, headteachers will have the power to set holiday schedules – and a new study suggests that almost 70 per cent of head teachers intend to make immediate changes to holiday schedules. More than 60 per cent said they will consider changes to allow families to enjoy more affordable holidays and because it will help match school holidays to religious and cultural holidays and festivals. Heads who planned changes were most likely to be considering introducing shorter, more-frequent holidays, but the survey found no consistent proposals, suggesting that holiday schedules will vary across the country.

* England’s schools are "missing" 1,700 **female headteachers** because too many women are either discriminated against or do not put themselves forward for the role, it is claimed. Official figures show that while 74 per cent of teachers are women, just 65 per cent of headships are held by women.
* A **London comprehensive** is to become the first school in the country to offer a **degree**, to encourage more students to pursue higher education and a career in teaching. The Woolwich Polytechnic School will offer a three-year BSc in maths with qualified teacher status (QTS) from this September, making it the first school to cater to 11- to 21-year-olds.
* **The pupil premium** has failed to close the attainment gap between children from deprived backgrounds and their richer classmates, new research claims. Analysis of the latest GCSE results by thinktank Demos suggests that the national attainment divide has widened slightly since last year, despite significant government investment in the pupil premium. In 2014-15, £2.5 billion was allocated to schools to support pupils from lower-income households through the premium. Although 33.7 per cent of pupils on free school meals achieved 5 A\*-Cs at GCSE including English and maths, among other pupils the figure rose to 60.7 per cent. This means that the attainment gap now stands at 27 percentage points, an increase of 0.3 per cent from the previous year.
* **Black and minority ethnic students** find it harder to get into **university** than their classmates even when they have the same grades, according to a report due to be published tomorrow. After A-level grades were taken into account, 52 per cent of applications made by white British students to the 24 Russell Group institutions resulted in offers. This rate compared to 44.7 per cent for Black Caribbean students, 42.6 per cent for Bangladeshi students and 39.6 per cent for Pakistani students. The lowest success rate was for applications from students with a Black African background, with only 35.7 per cent of these applicants receiving offers. A similar pattern applied in other universities.
* **Directors of trusts that run academies** have been allowed to “develop inappropriate business interests”, Chris Wormald, chief official of the Department for Education (DfE), has been warned. The warning comes in a letter by Margaret Hodge, chair of the Public Accounts Committee. It also warns that the DfE must draw up tougher guidelines for “what constitutes fit and proper behaviour for those in positions of responsibility in the academy sector”.
* One in 10 prospective university students could be lured overseas by plans to make it easier to apply to foreign institutions, education experts have warned. **Ucas** has announced it was allowing **European universities** to join its system if they can show that they meet the same standards as universities in Britain. Fees in Europe are significantly cheaper — an undergraduate degree in the UK costs around £27,000, whereas in the Netherlands many courses cost less than £4,000.
* The number of students taking **foreign languages at university** has dramatically declined over the past seven years, according to new figures. Entrants for modern foreign language degree courses fell by 16 per cent between 2007/08 and 2013/14.
* Young people out of work, education or training for six months will have to do **unpaid community work** to get benefits if the Conservatives win the election. David Cameron said about 50,000 18 to 21-year-olds would be required to do daily work experience from day one of their claim, alongside job searching.

**Tony Stephens**