

Campaign for Real Education

www.cre.org.uk

“Freedom to teach, freedom to learn, freedom to choose”

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Newsletter

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Editorial

The return to school has been an anxious time for many parents. How safe are they for pupils, let alone for teachers and other school staff? Are mums and dads putting themselves at risk by congregating around the school gate? Will asymptomatic youngsters spread the virus? And so on.

In truth, however, most of us now realise that the only thing that would have been worse than re-opening schools, would have been to have kept them, mostly, closed.

Many schools have worked heroically to provide online teaching. Millions of young people, though, have been missing out. Children from under-privileged backgrounds have suffered most of all. Parents with limited literacy or numeracy skills, themselves, are least able to support their offspring. The gulf between society's 'haves' and 'have-nots' has been widening.

Is it going to be possible for pupils, of whatever background, to catch up what they have missed this year in terms of schooling? Pupils preparing for next year's GCSE and A-Levels are most affected and their parents are justifiably concerned. This summer's fiasco has already done enormous damage to the credibility of the exams.

In 2021, delayed exams based on slimmed-down syllabus content with a greater choice of question is the likely outcome of current discussions. Online tests are being considered in the event of another lockdown.

This summer's reliance on teacher predictions is unlikely to be repeated. It was necessary but it has caused irreversible damage to what was an already devalued examination currency. Awarding fake grades for fake exams is no way to run an education system. Pretending that grades based on teacher predictions have any genuine validity is dishonest in the extreme.

A University of London report in December 2016 found that the accuracy rate for teacher A-Level grade predictions was just sixteen percent. In a follow-up report last month, the University concluded that accurately predicting A-Level grades is a 'near-impossible task'.

The game is up for GCSEs and A-Levels in their present form. After decades of grade inflation with 'pass' marks of under 20 percent, reliance on teacher predictions have delivered the final blow to our exam system in its current form. Our qualifications currency has lost any meaningful value. We need to start again. In the management of national economies, runaway currency inflation is not resolved by printing more money. Grade inflation, equally, is not resolved by inflating grades by an extra 10 per cent or so, as the government has done this summer.

We have not had public examinations this year. Why not face up to this fact? Simply publishing teacher grades, as teachers' grades would, at least, have admitted the truth.

A short term start to restoring credibility to the examination system in our schools would be to adopt exams that have international credibility. In terms of keeping a lid on grade inflation the International Baccalaureate is an obvious alternative to A-Level. It has seen nothing like the runaway grade inflation caused by examination boards that compete to be easier and thereby reel in more punters.

We could, alternatively, revert to the grading based on norm referencing that determined grades prior to 1988. That system allocated the same percentage of specific grades from year to year. Only 10 per cent, for example, were awarded the top grade at A-Level with around 20 per cent a B grade and so on. This meant that grade inflation was eradicated. The grades were determined by what amounted to a rank order within a single year's cohort. This was especially helpful for sorting out entry to higher education.

Another way forward would be to adopt the examination of another country. The monetary equivalent sometimes happen when a currency collapses. Argentina, Zimbabwe and Venezuela, for example, have, in recent years, reverted to the US dollar.

We should, perhaps, resort to the equivalent in examination terms by adopting what is on offer in one of the super-star education systems.

Singapore comes to mind. And how easy that would be! The city state never relinquished GCE O-Level. We banned that examination in 1988 in order to protect what was then the new GCSE examination from competition. The handful of teachers who objected, lost their jobs.

The good news is that although prohibited here, the examination is conducted in conjunction with our own University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. What is more, Singapore-Cambridge also provides its own version of A-Levels.

If the government ever decides to face up to educational attainment reality it could do worse than adopt the Singaporean-Cambridge version of 16+ and 18+ exams. True, the international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) places our youngsters well behind those in the top performing school systems of Asia-Pacific. But we need to allow some of our own children, at least, to rise to that challenge. Mountains are there to climb.

Instead, unlike crowded Singapore where pupils did sit exams, we decided to opt out of exams altogether this summer and to rely on teacher predictions.

A vocational pathway, such as most pupils around the developed world benefit from, needs to be provided alongside the academic route. England, belatedly, is about to introduce a new post-16 technical qualification – the T-Level. Vocational education needs to start earlier. Germany, Switzerland and South Korea provide suitable templates and there are many others.

It is understandable that many parents and pupils are currently concerned about catching-up on months of missed schooling. Of greater concern, is the need for British pupils to catch up on pupils in the most high attaining school systems around the world. According to the OECD, the catch-up gap is up to three years.

Chris McGovern

02. Academic Freedom and the teaching of Black History

Right-wing academics ‘forced to hide views’, The Times has reported.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/right-wing-academics-forced-to-hide-views-jftvx3mtp>

A YouGov poll for the Policy Exchange think tank has found that 32 per cent of academics with right-leaning views have stopped airing their opinions. Only 13 per cent of those on the left or in the centre feel similarly constrained. Trevor Phillips, former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, has described the findings as ‘deeply disturbing’.

Few others, though, seem over-bothered. Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union opined: ‘The idea that academic freedom is under threat is a myth.’ Provided, presumably, that one’s academic outlook is on-message, there is nothing to fear.

The Times newspaper, of course, is well positioned to report on this matter. It was unwise enough, recently, to reveal its hand by initiating correspondence with Chris McGovern, the chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, over his audacious attempt to quote from the autobiography of Jamaican nurse and Crimean war ‘heroine’, Mary Seacole.

<https://conservativewoman.co.uk/was-mary-seacole-racist-the-times-and-an-idiotic-attempt-to-erase-history/>

Although, Seacole, herself, pointed out that that she had no more than ‘a few shades of deeper brown upon my skin’, she has been voted the greatest black Britain. Her statue stands opposite parliament. Media reports are circulating that she may soon be appearing on our currency notes.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46577975>

As a courageous and jingoistic imperialist Seacole was prepared to put her life on the line by setting up a so-called ‘British hotel’ close to the front line, near Balaclava during the Crimean War. Notwithstanding her racist views – she described the Turks, for example, as ‘degenerate Arabs’, worse than fleas and she was happy to deploy the n***** word and to denigrate those of a ‘dirty skin’ – Seacole has been sanctified by the academic left.

The Times appeared upset that our chairman had dared to quote Seacole. It demanded, on more than one occasion in its correspondence with him that he prove that her well-attested autobiography was NOT a fake, e.g.

'Is there clear, irrefutable evidence of who wrote this book and when, and who published it? If so please provide it. It still seems odd that she should admire Nelson so much given that Trafalgar coincided with the year of her birth.'

Our chairman pointed out that the preface to Seacole's autobiography was written by W.H. Russell, the famous Times Crimean War correspondent. The Times was unmoved.

In a recent interview on Channel 4 News the Bishop of Dover and Professor David Olusoga (Order of the British Empire) appeared to be of a similar mindset to The Times. They called for more Black History in the school curriculum. The bishop stressed, though, that we need the 'correct history'. Olusoga claimed this with regard to current teaching of Black History:

'We tell half-truths, half-histories and that is no longer viable in a country that by the middle of this century will be one third BAME. [We need to find a new history that is going to work for the country we are and the country that we are going to become.](#)'

He is right to suggest that pupils get only half the story when it comes to teaching about Black History. The real problem, though, is that they mostly get only Olusoga half. An inclination to enslave others is not confined to whites but this part of the story is rarely taught. The shared responsibility of Africans for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and for slavery in general, is not a hot topic in British schools these days.

The perspective on trans-Atlantic slavery presented by Henry Louis Gates Jr, a decade ago, in The New York Times - the support, compliance, and cooperation of many Africans - has never gained traction.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/opinion/23gates.html>

Nor will it, if a search by academics for any 'truth' outside of today's parameters is regarded as right wing and, consequently, has to be muzzled or declared 'fake'.

Those currently lobbying for more Black History in schools

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/30/exclusive-tone-deaf-ministers-reject-bame-review-of-english-curriculum>

seem to be unaware that there is no requirement to teach any specific event of personality from British history in the current National Curriculum. BAME history, though, is prescribed through a statutory requirement to teach the history of Benin (West Africa) or central America or Islamic Baghdad.

The fact is, there is no barrier to teaching more BAME history in our schools. A problem arises, however, when it comes to the content of what is taught.

Teaching children that there were African Roman legionaries in Britain, for example, is well 'on-message'. It is regarded, though, only as a way of elevating the Black contribution to British history. This is where Black history can easily fall off the rails of accuracy. Any African legionaries in Britain were here, after all, as an army of occupation that enslaved the local population.

Nor was the presence in Britain of the African Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus, benign. Faced with rebellion against a 'peace' he had imposed north of Hadrian's Wall he called for genocide. Quoting Homer, this was what he demanded of his army:

***'Let no one escape sheer destruction,
No one our hands, not even the babe in the womb of the mother,
If it be male; let it nevertheless not escape sheer destruction.'***

Roman History (Epitome, Xiphilinus) LXXVI, 15

An African emperor ordering the extermination of Brits as part of an enslavement policy does not fit the preferred narrative of Black History. The fact is that humanity, of whatever racial background, tends to be much the same in its capacity for good and evil.

In an academic environment that promoted freedom of speech and a search for truth, this lesson from history could and would be taught without constraints. This is no longer the case. Academic freedom is diminishing, and the narrative of history is being moulded to fit preconceived notions of political correctness.

03. Exam grade inflation has now spread to France

The latest self-inflicted calamity to strike Macron's France concerns a severe outbreak of an English malady – 'mad assessment disease' (MAD).

It took our schools twenty-three years to raise the pass rate at A-Level by 12.6 percentage points. It rose from 87.1 per cent in 1997 to 99.7 per cent this year, 2020. Macron's miracle is to have achieved more for French school leavers in a single year than our schools managed in the past twenty-three. The pass rate in this year's equivalent for A-levels, the Baccalauréat, is 91.5 per cent. This compares with just 77.7 per cent last year – an increase of 13.8 percentage points!

Is Macron a secret admirer of the UK's educational achievement? Does he feel the need to match the UK's inexorable rise in examination grades? Has he been taken in by the siren voices of self-congratulation emanating from our numbskull educational establishment, the Blob? If so, he has, indeed, contracted mad assessment disease and is making a serious error of judgement.

If Macron really does seek to out-perform the Brits when it comes to exam results, he has made a promising start. However, he still has some way to go. An A-Level pass could be achieved here last summer with a score as low as 13 per cent, and [54 per cent qualified for an A-grade](#).

When it comes to grade inflation, no one does it better than us. And inflating gradually – *à l'Anglaise* – is, surely, more convincing than the Macron government's 'big-bang' approach. Believe it or not, the *Times* is reporting that in France: 'The education sector has been awash with claims that schools have inflated marks to boost their pass rates.' It even goes so far as to report that there is talk of a 'laughable' fall in standards. The French government's order that juries of examiners show 'extreme benevolence' has clearly been followed.

Macron's pathway for schooling is clear. From next year, 40 per cent of Baccalauréat marks will be based on so-called continuous assessment by the teacher. The dilution of standards is to be entrenched. Britain's mad assessment disease has taken hold. Macron has learnt nothing, it seems, from the British experience. Unlike in the UK, however, opposition to the dumbing down has come from France's teaching unions. Continuous assessment they conclude will favour the children of pushy middle-class parents. It will do nothing for the less privileged.

Has the time arrived for us to feel sorry for French youngsters?

04. England's two-metre social distancing rule for Covid 19 epidemic was based on estimation of population's stupidity

There was a soundly based, mathematical rationale behind the UK's two metre rule for social distance during the current pandemic. It was considered that Brits leave school too 'thick' in terms of mathematical comprehension, to understand or visualise a distance of one metre:

'We knew it [the required social distance] was one metre but we doubled it to two because we did not think the British population would understand what one metre was and we could not trust them to observe it, so we doubled it to be on the safe side.'

This is the explanation provided by Professor Robert Dingwall who has been advising government on epidemic preparedness since 2018 and currently feeds advice into our-policy-determining Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). He was being interviewed for The Daily Telegraph's political podcast. The newspaper does not appear to have spotted the importance of its own, slightly hidden-away, discovery. It comes in at around 19 mins, with the whole interview starting four minutes earlier.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E36t5LD-yA&list=PLJnf_DDTfIWA4n9zpML5l8kLVJCqc3uN-&index=3&t=0s

The British Weights and Measures Association (BWMA) brought the professor's disclosure to the attention of its supporters and asked them to write to their MPs.

The BWMA advice is sensible enough but it does not address the heart of the problem highlighted by Professor Dingwall. Too many Brits are unable to cope with basic maths such as understanding even the most basics measurements.

This should not come as a surprise. Reality has a nasty way of over-turning dogmatic claims about the quality of our education system, especially in terms of mathematics. When the new GCSE maths exam results were published back in August 2017 The Times reported:

Leading exam boards reduced pass marks for the new GCSE maths exam to as little as 15 per cent so that enough pupils made the grade.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gcses-2017-maths-pass-mark-cut-to-15-so-enough-pupils-make-the-grade-jwl8mb9vt>

The grade boundary for a pass in the most recent GCSE maths exam sitting (Nov 2020) has risen – but only to 18 percent. In truth, this should be labelled as a certificate of incompetence in the subject rather than celebrated as a success and as a passport into the professions.

<https://www.tes.com/news/gcse-resits-grade-boundaries-18-needed-4-maths>

A stunning example of growing innumeracy has been the decision by many schools to remove analogue clocks from examination halls.

Schools are removing analogue clocks from examination halls because teenagers are unable to tell the time, a head teachers' union has said.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2018/04/24/schools-removing-analogue-clocks-exam-halls-teenagers-unable/>

Small wonder, then, that reducing the social distancing rule to 1m, and thus making it easier to restore some kind of normality to everyday life was regarded as beyond the boundaries of the mathematical comprehension for the average Brit. Only necessity and greater understanding of the virus has brought about greater flexibility in terms of the extent of social distancing.

One metre was, though, from the start, enough for the likes of Singapore, China and Hong Kong. And Taiwan's world-leading success in combatting Covid 19 has been based on social distancing of 1.5m indoors and 1m outdoors. In South Korea the rule is 1.4m. Just imagine us Brits trying to work that one out! It so happens that these states are also leading the field when it comes to mathematical attainment in schools.

How demeaning and shameful it is that UK decision-making over social distancing rules appear to have been shaped, in part, by failures in the teaching of basic mathematics over several decades.

05. Schooling according to the new Chipping Norton Set

A new [Chipping Norton Set](#) is emerging to prepare children for our changing world order. It is centred on the town's secondary school and is part of a nationwide phenomenon.

'The World Has Turned' according to Barry Doherty, head teacher of Chipping Norton School. In a long online letter to parents, Mr Doherty is rather chipper about his school's plans to meet the challenge:

Under the heading 'The World Has Turned' he writes: 'In my regular communication to colleagues on Friday, I also spoke of our challenge to respond to the events that have been taking place in our world, in particular the tragic death of George Floyd.

'Our curriculum is and will remain organic, preparing students for the world we live in now and not one we imagined even six or twelve months ago.'

Moving into messianic mode he informs parents:

'I left my colleagues with some questions for us all to consider as we devote more time to curriculum planning going forward . . . How can we help mould young people to become leaders who fearlessly smash

racism, sexism, transphobia, ageism, intolerance, bigotry or intransigence whenever they encounter its subtle or festering presence in our slowly improving world?’

The death of George Floyd was, indeed, tragic. Should it mean, though, that schools must now ‘mould young people’ in a new way? As a vehicle for social revolution, brainwashing has been tried in the past. It has mostly ended up becoming a foundation stone for all kinds of horrors.

Headmaster Doherty chooses the verb ‘smash’ to set out what is required of young people. This could create some difficulty for both the ‘smashers’ and the ‘smashed’. What begins with smashing ideas and statues usually ends up with smashing people.

What, we wonder, will Doherty tell pupils about the views of those who disagree with him? Homophobia, transphobia and sexism, for example, are endemic in much of Africa. If Black Lives Matter, does it matter that homosexual acts are [criminalised in the majority of African countries](#)?

Will the pupils at Chipping Norton School be informed that if they travel to the Middle East to watch soccer in Qatar at the next World Cup, they will be entering one of the states where homosexual actions can incur the death penalty?

Will the headmaster ‘mould’ his pupils into believing that those billions who disagree with him are, at best, moral inferiors who need to be civilised?

What will his pupils of religious faith make of the re-mould being proposed for them? The Catholic catechism, for example, confines to Hell those who practise homosexuality. LGBT rights are not universally respected amongst the major religions.

Schools have a legal responsibility to promote so-called ‘British Values’. This includes an obligation to respect the views of those with whom one may disagree, not to ‘smash’ them.

Chipping Norton School is, certainly, promoting one side of the great LGBT debate. According to parents who have contacted the CRE, pupils were recently asked to submit a photograph of themselves in coloured clothing to celebrate Pride Month and Diversity Week. As an incentive there was to be a prize for the class with the most photographs.

Not only do some parents at the school regularly advise their children not to put photos of themselves online, one of the head’s main objections to live online teaching was ‘safeguarding’.

The photo competition was set as a task, not as an option. According to some parents, not every child was comfortable with what was being required.

A homework message sent out by the school on June 25 further upset some parents: ‘As some of you know, June is Pride Month! Usually there would be parades and parties and all sort of fun things. But this month, we have been reminded that Pride marches have always been a form of protest. Let’s do our best to support each other in this difficult time and learn a bit about the LGBTQ+ community.

‘Today we’re going to be looking at LGBTQ+ flags and thinking about their communities.’

An attachment sets out the pupil tasks. It is headed: ‘LGBTQ+ Flags and their Meanings’. Amongst the flags presented and explained are: ‘Asexual Flag’, ‘Bisexual Flag’, ‘Lesbian Flag’, ‘Labrys Flag’, ‘Pink Flag’, ‘Lesbian Community Flag’, ‘Transgender Flag’, ‘Non-Binary Flag’, ‘Intersex Flag’, ‘Straight Ally Flag’. You can see the details [here](#).

Pupils are provided with this advice: ‘If you are concerned about someone or yourself, please speak to your tutor, your HOY/AHOY or the school nurse.’

There is no suggestion that troubled children should speak to their parents.

The school’s new mould for its children was reinforced in a newsletter of June 25. Under the heading: ‘Insightful Podcasts About Race To Listen To Now’, it said: ‘Right now, many of us are looking for podcasts that discuss race and racism to educate ourselves on the matter. Here are just a few of the best podcasts out there that provide thought-provoking conversations on race, black experiences and the Black Lives Matter movement.’

Children are directed to podcasts such as these:

About Race with Reni Eddo-Lodge, author of *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*;

Black Gals Livin' by Victoria Sanusi and Jasmine Braithwaite;

No Country for Young Women by Sadia Azmat and Monty Onanuga.

A Cambridge academic's announcement, backed by the university, that '[white lives don't matter](#)' came too late, presumably, to be included.

This is the world that the Chipping Norton School headmaster tells parents has 'turned' over the past months. He is right! His perspective is very much in line with the spirit of a New Age. Forget Dave Cameron and his pals of the old Chipping Norton Set. This is the new, improved version, with the new improved vision of the future. Tomorrow belongs to those who embrace it.

It used to be enough for schools to tell pupils to treat others as one would wish to be treated oneself – the Golden Rule. How unsophisticated, how out-of-touch and how inadequate that now seems.

06. Are school leaders not sufficiently anti-racist?

There are many areas of failure within our school system. Teaching quality, for example, is variable and academic standards are well below those in the best educational systems around the world. In addition, pupil behaviour is often poor and parental support inadequate.

Teacher training is inclined to regard schooling as being more about therapy than about the acquisition of subject knowledge. Too often its main focus is on political correctness. As a consequence, many schools have succumbed, sometimes unconsciously, to a philosophical outlook that is narrow-minded and dogmatic. Strangulation of alternative views and open discussion has become the norm. Closing down debate and the promotion of ignorance is applauded, however inadvertently.

When, indeed, it comes to the enforcement of political correctness, the UK sits alongside the United States, as world-beating. The CRE knows from parents who write to it that teachers are even telling pupils that answers to exam questions must be not only correct, they must be politically correct.

Above all else, within today's moral quagmire, schools have embraced an 'anti-racist' creed. 'Treat others as you wish to be treated' is no longer enough. Far from it! Teachers now have to play the role of thought-police in the classroom.

That racial bullying has been a problem in some schools appears clear. It should be unequivocally condemned, as should all bullying. The pendulum of prejudice, however, is now moving in the opposite direction. The new 'racism' is 'anti-racism'. Aberrant opinion that fails to classify all blacks as 'victims' is distinctly off-message and, consequently, punishable. The enthusiasm amongst young people for moral crusading and for metaphorical self-flagellation over the sins of the past, is evidence of successful brain washing in schools and universities. The herd-instinct of supposedly well-educated young people has rarely been stronger or more intolerant.

It comes as a surprise, then, to learn that the BBC feels the need to tell us that, 'Schools have a statutory duty not to discriminate against pupils over race.' Schools may be saturated in anti-racism but, it seems, they are not saturated enough. 'Black pupils,' the BBC reports, 'are disproportionately hit with fixed-term exclusions in England – by three times as many in some places, data shows.'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-53516009>

The data has been highlighted by Lib-Dem education spokesman, Layla Moran. 'It is a glaring injustice,' she told the BBC, 'that black pupils growing up across the country are so much more likely to be excluded from school than their peers.'

The Guardian puts it all down to hair. 'The UK school system has a problem with afro-textured hair,' its readers are informed by Emma Dabiri – academic, broadcaster and author of 'Don't Touch My Hair'.

It turns out, though, that the exclusion rate for black children is trumped by those from a Roma/Gypsy background. Speaking on behalf of the Roma Support Group, Mihai Calin Bica told *The Independent* that, 'he thought more cultural awareness in schools could help support these students.' Schools need to 'better engage with Roma communities.'

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/gypsy-roma-traveller-black-caribbean-permanent-exclusions-school-dfe-figure-a9646561.html>

And, would you believe it, the official data on which pupil exclusion rates are based, has a different category for the group topping the exclusion table. Children on free school meals, including blacks and Roma, of course, are four times more likely to be excluded than their classmates.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>

So, it is back to a predominance of less well-off, white working-class pupils who are mostly excluded from school.

Calls for schools to become more accommodating of different cultural backgrounds should not be ignored but in practice it could lead to severe fractures in the school community. One rule for the blacks and one rule for the Roma, one rule for the well-off whites and one rule for the poor whites. And what about the LBGT community in schools and those of different faiths and so on and so on?

The CRE has long been critical of what goes on in schools but the current suggestion that school leaders are insufficiently anti-racist is absurd. It is the very opposite of the truth. Schools may be failing in many areas but, to a fault, the teaching profession does not fail the anti-racist test.

07. No Comment

This is my daughter's music homework:

Anti-Racism – What does the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' mean?

Bo@KingBobIV

The Department for Education spent thousands on "coaching services" for its top official, and other senior staff, less than four months before he was sacked in the wake of the exams fiasco.

TES 11/9/20

"We attract students who are, I think, predisposed to be successful."

Louise Richardson, vice-chancellor of Oxford university.

The Guardian 5/9/20

"The tragedy of results day was when people you would bet your house on getting a grade C were given a U grade," he said.

Brian Conway, chief executive of the St John the Baptist academy trust

BBC News website 13/9/20

With the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, headteachers have come under increasing pressure to signal that they are on the 'right side of history' on a wide range of issues.

MailonLine 12/9/20

"I'm concerned about hundreds of children missing out on classroom teaching, especially because this has happened because of just one child."

Parental comment to Manchester Evening News. 11/9/20