

Comment: Why we can't let schools become book-free zones

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A Week in Education

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National tests should be scrapped in their existing form because they are distorting pupils' education, an influential parliamentary committee recommended.

The report said that academic targets had too often become the goal of education. The House of Commons children, schools and families committee said that test data did not necessarily provide an accurate picture of school and teacher performance, or deeper pupil understanding. Page 8

Attainment in primary schools is not improved by streaming and setting, which can have a detrimental impact on children, according to research published today by the Primary Review.

The independent inquiry, led by Professor Robin Alexander at Cambridge University, also found that the potential benefits of learning in small groups were lost because children did not know how to work together. Page 10 and page 27

Pupils would be barred from starting school if they have not had MMR jabs, under plans reportedly being considered by Gordon Brown. The idea comes from a group drawing up Labour's next general election manifesto on public health. It would allow children to have the measles, mumps and rubella vaccinations separately or in a combined "triple jab".

Mary Creagh MP, the group's chair, said that the plan was based on systems in parts of the United States where school authorities were responsible for vaccinations.

Monkseaton High School in Tyneside will be teaching all of its GCSE subjects using eight-minute lessons from this autumn after finding that they boosted results by half a grade, the Sunday Times reported.

The short bursts of learning, often based around PowerPoint presentations, will be interspersed with frequent breaks for sport and word games.

The TES reported last year that the school had been piloting the scheme, known as "spaced learning" with its science and humanities pupils.

As the Education and Skills bill passed its third reading, raising the compulsory education and training age to 18, the Government was briefing on its next reforms. The Sunday People reported that it intends to have at least 30 per cent of pupils in every secondary achieving 5 top-grade GCSEs within three years by encouraging good schools to admit failing pupils. This week's draft Queen's speech was also expected to include plans to consult on giving parents new rights to gain information about their children and sit on parents' councils.

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