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### How can you fight the press?

Teachers who are accused by pupils can find their names dragged through the local press, despite the fact many accusations are false. Find out how you can fight back Pages 8 and 9



### Meet the language champions

Find out how the Business Language Champions project is engaging pupils around the country in modern languages Page 13



### Aiming higher

A look at the Aimhigher roadshow, which drops in on schools to inspire pupils to go on to higher education Page 15

### Licence to teach

Software licensing can be a headache for many ICT managers, but help is at hand Page 11



Testing times: Educationalists have backed calls this week for the end of key stage exams to be scrapped for children aged under 16

## Debate rages over call to scrap tests

Despite strong support from teachers Despite strong support from teachers and parents, both the Labour and Conservative parties have emphatically rejected calls to scrap end of key stage tests for under-16s.

The week has been dominated

by a row between educationalists and the government, which started when Keith Bartley, chief executive of the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE), called for the tests, which are sat at age seven, 11

tests, which are sat at age seven, 11 and 14, to go.
Education secretary Alan Johnson rejected the calls immediately, while the Conservatives labelled the tests as "crucial".
However, education unions backed Mr Bartley's stance and on Monday the GTCE released new suidence source pagents.

evidence showing that some parents think the key stage test results and league tables are merely "promo-tional tools" for schools and "do not help children achieve their poten-

Mr Bartley originally made his

call as part of the GTCE's evidence to an inquiry being held by the Education Select Committee on

the Education Select Committee on testing and assessment. In his submission, Mr Bartley told the committee: "England's pupils are among the most frequently tested in the world, but tests in themselves do not raise standards. Tests are used for too many purposes and this compromises their reliability and validity."

poses and une compromes their reliability and validity." He recommended that the com-mittee should consider replacing key stage tests with a "nationally-devised bank of tests/tasks to be used when the teacher judges that

the pupil or pupils are ready."

He said he wanted to see an increasing degree of teacher professionalism, and increased govern-ment investment in teachers' assess-ment skills.

ment skills.

The call was backed by unions, including the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, whose deputy general secretary Martin Johnson said: "We need to give teachers the freedom to inspire youngsters so they want to learn,

not just pass tests, and give pupils the space to develop as rounded

The most successful school systems test latest and least often which is why we agree that the time for national assessment is at school leaving age," he added.

The Association of School

The Association of School and College Leaders said that the review of testing and assessment is "urgently needed".

However, the education secretary hit back, saying that the tests helped parents to know what their schools are like. Mr Johnson added: "They like to know what the educational attainment is in each of the schools in their locality. They want schools in their locality. They want

schools in their locality. They want transparency, they want openness and they want accountability.

"I don't think, incidentally, that any government of any political persuasion is going to go back to those days (when schools were closed institutions); certainly we have no intention of doing that."

Consequently education spokess.

Conservative education spokes man, David Willetts, was equally blunt saying the tests are "cru-

cial" for improving standards. He added: "If it weren't for testing we wouldn't know that 40 per cent of Wondon't know that 40 per center of the control of the control of the capetal standard in reading, writing and arithmetic."

However, there was support from the Lib Dems, whose educa-tion spokesman Sarah Teather said that teachers should be able to conthat teachers should be able to con-centrate on what is best for their pupils and should not feel "com-pelled" to teach to national tests. She added: "The current system of testing and targets perverts the

of testing and aget of the true purpose of education – children get drilled on how to pass tests, not educated. Now is the time to abolish this stressful and bureaucratic process and make a positive change for our children."

And as the row developed this week, a new study carried out by the British Market Research Bureau for the GCTE said that some parents also think too much time is being spent on preparing pupils for external tests, sometimes to the detriment of their academic achievement

The parents from London and Birmingham, who took part in dis-cussion sessions in March, said they felt that teachers are in the best position to carry out a pupil assess-ment because they have "detailed knowledge about the curriculum, the work that has been covered and

the work that has been overced and each child's progress."

Mr Bartley added: "The tests can depress pupils' motivation and increase anxiety. They do not adequately serve the interests of parents or pupils and they lead to a narrowed curriculum and encour-

a narrowed curriculum and encourage 'teaching to the test'.

"The system diminishes teachers' professional judgements because summative outcomes reached by the teacher carry less public weight than the outcomes from end of key stage tests," he early less than the outcomes from end of key stage tests," he

The GTCE suggested that mon itoring could still take place, but by using only small samples of pupils.

The Education Select Committee will be making its recommendation to government later this year.

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News Scottish news Psycho babble A problem shared... NQT diary Stevens gets even At the chalkface

### Diany of an NOT

## Entering the final furlong

Well I must confess that the trials of the half term break left me both physically and mentally exhausted. On the plus side, we have a place to live. Sadly, it is a room in a national chain of travel

motels.

Thankfully, the first day back went really well and helped to put my current housing problems to the back of my mind. There is no question that having year 7 groups for the last two periods of the day is a particular challenge, especially when it is the first day back after a holiday. However, the new half term also brings a new topic and this time we began looking at web design. Hands up all those colleagues who have uttered colleagues who have uttered excited year 7s?

In addition to the web design we have also started new

units with the rest of key stage 3, and as if that isn't enough excitement, Big Brother has started. I could just sit back and Isten to the continual debates about "she said", "he said", "she did", "she did", "she did", "she did", "she did", kind of a coursework group made in heaven.

Enough about that though. The

Enough about that though. The passing of the latest compulsory holiday brings about the final furlong for the current NQT population. I think ir's fair to say that we've all learned it lessons over the past 10 months. dition to this we've also had some new, possibly unexpected experiences; some good, some bad. In the most part though, I think we generally remember the best and worst of the experiences and subtly about the middle ground. experiences, and subtly absorb the middle ground

Nevertheless the learning curve has been, at times, quite severe, but I think I can be quite honest when I say that the past few months have been as easy or as

say that the past tow flowins have occur a casy or as difficult as I thought they'd be this time last year.

I can also be honest when I say that my personal circumstances have made my situation not quite as I had envisaged it last June, but on the flip side I have a great deal to look back upon and be more than

at deal to look back upon and be more than happy about.

T've forged fantastic friendships among my colleagues and, some might say, more importantly, I've managed to build strong relationships with pupils from all year groups. I've also been able to take time to look at myself, consider my strengths and weaknesses, and make an effort to narrow the gap between the relative extremes.

to narrow the gap between the relative extremes.

I realise that as I write this we still have six weeks to go until the end of term, and as such it may seem a little early to be talking about the past academic year; but I aim to spend the next the past academic year; but I aim to spend the next the past academic year; few weeks making sure that I've appreciated and acted upon any of the weaker areas of my professional development. But this isn't about "ticking boxes".

But this isn't about "ticking boxes".
Far from it. At this stage I hope that
the powers that be have seen that I meet
the standards. This is only about making
sure that I're identified my weaknesses as a
professional teacher and made real progress in

proving myself. Here's wishing good luck to all.

Diary of an NQT is written by Stewart Thompson, who started teaching at Shenley Brook End School in Milton Keynes in September. Continues next week.

### Stevens gets even

into our professional psyche.

### Letter from America

I'M WRITING this in a few snatched hours off from work and play during my first ever visit to America. where I've come to attend a conference of teacher educators in the English Language Arts (as referred to, appropriately enough I think, by my American colleagues) in a university campus near Chicago, followed by a couple of days for purely recreational

purposes.

My flight over from England was uneventful enough, then took a turn for the worse. I had something of a nightmare welcome to Chicago airport, a huge

or a mightmate wetcome to Chicago anpolt, a fing construction site, it seemed to me, intersected by runways and drowned in a cacophony of noise: I felt over tired, over hot and over here; my luggage had been lost somewhere between Philadelphia had to break the flight) which had to break the flight)
and cago. The customs of the common the cago. The customs of the common the cago. The customs of ficial in question, no could be called the cago. The customs of ficial in question, no could be called the cago.

The customs official in question, no doubt feeling that anyone from outside the USA was a potential terrorist, or at very least an immigrant scrounger, took lengthy persuading that I'd come to the conference purely from academic interest, insisting that I must be receiving payment for services rendered and refusing to acknowledge that financial earlies in the only

financial gain is not the only motive for people's activities.
This reminded me powerfully, if perhaps superfluously in this country of unbridled capitalism, of

country of unoncled capitains, or the mercenary nature of our culture. Never mind – things have looked up since. Following a disturbed and pretty sleepless night in a rather disappointing hotel, tom between the uncomfortable heat of the room and the racket of the air conditioning system, I retraced my way back to the airport to see if my luggage had been found. No, it hadn't, I was

if my luggage had been found. No, it hadn't, I was cheerfully told, and a good 10 per cent of lost bags are never recovered.

Then I encountered a young woman at the baggage reclaim desk who couldn't have been more helpful and pleasant, making me feel a lot more positive. We got talking, and I explained my professional role as English teacher currently working as teacher educator at Durham University.

"You mean, you teach English to English teachers teaching English to English people in England?!" she asked me incredulously. I had no choice but she asked he included by the description of the asked he The important thing is, though, that my luggage then appeared miraculously on the reclaim belt. I'm pretty sure it was all down to this assistant's encouraging "can do" attitude – the positive side of the American psyche.

I'm at Lake Forest College now participating enthusiastically in the conference where I am one of just two of us from the UK. It's a wonderful campus too, set in beautiful landscaped grounds rolling down to the shores of Lake Michigan.

My colleagues
conference are warmly

conference are warmly welcoming, and seem appreciative of everything I have to say or do (including my clumsy attempts at dancing during the quaintly named "sock hop" held one evening to celebrate as success of the conference). I'm more and more struck, as I speak to more and more people here, by the parallels between our educational experiences and challenges hack in

Experiences and challenges back in England, and those felt so keenly by my new-found friends and colleagues over here in the USA.

The Bush administration, which I already knew to be oppressively right-wing in the international arena, is just as dreadful in its educational policies. My American colleagues' most venomous disdain is reserved for the euphemistically termed "No Child Left Behind" policy (as if any teacher would otherwise leave any child behind - I'm reminded of our own "Every Child the child the

behind - I'm reminded of our own "Every Child Matters", implying that somehow they didn't really matter beforehand) which in reality means just more targets and reductive testing.

But the strongest similarity between our English and American experiences is more positive: the desire to make the world a better place through good teaching. I'll raise a glass to that, and have a good day

David Stevens directs the secondary post graduate certificate in education at Durham University.

### FALSE ACCUSATIONS

# Fighting





As part of its Don't Abuse My Name campaign, SecEd has previously reported on the damage that can be caused by the way newspapers often report accusations made

by students - accusations that are often false. Here Sue Roberts, from the Press Complaints Commission, reinforces what it can do to keep newspapers in check

UCH HAS been said about the way newspapers report allegations made by pupils and parents against teachers

and schools.

SecEd has previously encouraged teachers to complain to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC)

if they find themselves to be victims of unfair and unfounded newspaper and magazine stories.

But there may be many who remain cautious about taking such a step and who wonder whether it can really be effective. The advice of the PCC would be, it

Certainly can.

Just a few months ago, a national newspaper claimed that a headteacher had made pupils as young as three provide fingerprint samples on the pretext of a game and told them there was no need to inform their

However, the claim was untrue, and the PCC subsequently received a complaint from the teacher at the centre of the story. When the matter was taken up with the newspaper, it admitted that the allegation was unfounded and offered to publicly apologise in order to resolve the complaint. The teacher agreed that a published apology and correction would settle the case

and the newspaper therefore ran an agreed text.

The PCC's jurisdiction extends to almost every

newspaper and magazine in the UK. Our role is to

newspaper and magazine in the UK. Our role is to administer a 16-point code of practice and to investigate potential breaches of it.

The code covers four main areas: accuracy, privacy, newsgathering, and protecting the vulnerable. While complaints to the PCC from teachers and schools are relatively rare, we are always happy to offer advice and guidance to any teacher when it is required.

It may well be that those who find themselves unjustly attacked are reticent about complaining or are not sure how the PCC could help. In such cases, they might find it useful to use our confidential helpline and speak to one of the organisation's complaints officers, who can help to assess whether the complaint is likely to fall within the PCC's remit. to fall within the PCC's remit.

to fall within the PCC's remit.

An emergency helpline is available 24 hours a day.

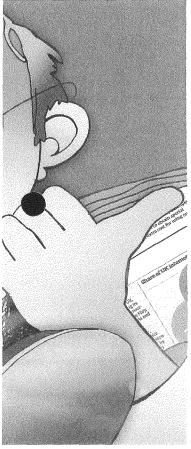
Additionally, the PCC's website has full details about the code of practice; information about the complaints process; and details of all resolved and adjudicated complaints (see the essential contacts list for full contact details).

Probably the most relevant parts of the code for

Probably the most relevant parts of the code for accused teachers are the clauses on accuracy (clause 1), accused teachers are the clauses on accuracy (clause 1), which states that the press cannot publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information; on privacy (clause 3), which states that everyone is entitled to respect for their private lives; and on harassment (clause 4), which says that journalists must not engage in "persistent pursuit".

### FALSE ACCUSATIONS

## the press



has received more complaints from former pupils, or nas received more companies from noner pupils, or the parents of pupils currently at school, than teachers themselves. Not long ago, the Commission upheld a copy bint under clause 11 of the code (victims of sext hult), after an article in a local newspaper was one of the victims of a former PE teacher who had been

It may come as a surprise that, to date, the PCC

Don't Abuse My Name: essential contacts Don't forget - ALWAYS contact your union

### Press Complaints Commission

The PCC's service is free and open to all
To contact the Commission, ring 020 7831 0022
Contact the local-rate helplines on: 0845 600 2757; 0131 220 6652 (for callers from

Scotland); and 029 2039 5570 (for callers from Wales) For the 24-hour emergency line call 07659 152656

Email: complaints@pcc.org.uk

### Visit: www.pcc.org.uk Teacher Support Network

Teacher Support Line England: 08000 562 561 (24 hours)

Teacher Support Line Wales: 08000 855 088 (24 hours)

Website: www.teachersupport.info (includes factsheets and teacher support online, which ou can register for, although you can ask one question without registering)

### **FACT (Falsely Accused Carers and Teachers)**

Charitable support network

Helpline: 02920 777 499 (9:30-12:30 and 6:30-9:30 Monday to Fridays) and occasional

Saturday mornings. Closed bank holidays Email: info@factuk.org

### Website: www.factuk.org FASO (False Allegations Support Organisation)

Charitable support network

Helpline: 0870 214 6650 (6pm to midnight, Monday to Friday) Website: www.false-allegations.org.uk (contains email facility)

SecEd newsdesk

Pete Henshaw: 020 7501 6771

### SecEd You can fight the press, teachers told

convicted of indecently assaulting

pupils some years before.

Although the former pupil was not named, details of his injuries, the dates he was at school and other information might have been pieced together by those who knew him to discover his identity.

Other complaints have come from teachers concerned about the welfare of the children in their care. One such complaint was upheld when a headteacher and the chair of governors of a primary school complained about an article by a journalist who had gone into the school and

spent a week there posing as someone who wanted to

Such behaviour clearly breaches the PCC's own guidelines on this matter, and on such (fortunately rare) occasions, the PCC can contact the editor concerned to ensure that the journalist in question desists immediately.

reviews the code of practice) to change the code to take

immediately.

ther measures needed to first

themselves.

better account
of the vulnerable position in which
teachers accused of untoward behaviour find

The message from the PCC is the same as it has always been: that teachers need to make complaints to demonstrate that there is a serious problem and therefore a need for guidance before it could consider

such a suggestion further.

The PCC is always happy to offer advice and to help frame complaints where appropriate, but it cannot act if teachers do not come forward.

Sue Roberts is the PCC's external affairs manager.

Comments made over the last year as part of SecEd's Don't Abuse My Name campaign against false accusations

"(My innocence) still doesn't reduce the stress and feelings of anxiety that I and my family lived under for all of that time."

When Charlie King was falsely accused of sexual assault (touching a girl's bottom during class), it was the start of a 13-month nightmare that would see him quit the profession for good

"We do live in a country where one is innocent until proven guilty, but by having their names out there it reverses that."

Shadow schools minister Nick Gibb. The Conservative Party has strongly backed SecEd's campaign and our push for the anonymity of accused teachers to be maintained and only released if they are proved guilty

"In the days before our conference I know of two people falsely accused who attempted to take their own lives."

David Baines, a North Wales support worker for the Falsely Accused Teachers and Carers charity, speaking at its annual



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Visit: WWW.RECYCLE-MORE.CO.UK/ECO-PARLIAMENT to find out more. The deadline for completed entries is 1 August 2007.

Ref: LFYE0905







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