



Welcome to Focus On... Education, our special bulletin looking at issues relevant to particular sectors and topics of interest.

In the Winter Focus On... Education, we find out about the new National Schools Commissioner and his duties, and learn about a £4.4 billion school rebuilding programme. There is also news of putting times tables at the heart of education and as well as meeting a member of the Nicholsons Academy team, we discover why academies are having grants cut.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of our specialist audit and accountancy services for schools, please contact Emma Murray, Audit and Compliance Partner at Nicholsons, at [emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk](mailto:emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk) or phone **01522 815100**.

## £4.4 billion school rebuilding programme yields results



Pupils across the country are being given a fresh start for 2016 as they return to state-of-the-art new school buildings funded through the government's rebuilding programme.

A total of 13 schools across England are benefitting from the £4.4 billion priority school building programme (PSBP).

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said: "The priority school building programme is allowing young people across the country to be taught in facilities fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, giving them the best possible chance to fulfil their potential. As the programme continues, I look forward to seeing even more schools reopening in modern buildings as we continue to deliver educational excellence everywhere."

Thanks to the PSBP, school buildings are being rebuilt faster and cheaper than those under the previous school building initiative; Building Schools for the Future (BSF). Under BSF, it took three years for construction work to begin. This has been cut to one year for the PSBP, with projects costing around a third less. Some 537 schools will benefit from construction through the two phases of the PSBP.

## Times tables on the agenda for Education Secretary

Under new government plans, every pupil in England will be tested on their multiplication tables before leaving junior school.

Pupils aged 11 will be expected to know their tables up to 12x12 and will be tested using an on-screen check that will involve children completing multiplication challenges against the clock. The checks will initially be piloted to approximately

3,000 pupils in 80 primary schools this summer, before being rolled out across the country in 2017.

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan said that maths was a non-negotiable aspect of a good education, adding: "Since 2010, we've seen record numbers of 11 year olds start secondary school with a good grasp of the three Rs. But some continue to struggle. That is why, as part

of our commitment to extend opportunity and deliver educational excellence everywhere, we are introducing a new check to ensure that all pupils know their times tables by age 11.

"They will help teachers recognise those pupils at risk of falling behind and allow us to target those areas where children aren't being given a fair shot to succeed."

## Academies to have grants cut

The Autumn Statement and Spending Review, delivered by Chancellor George Osborne at the end of November 2015, has indicated that sixth form colleges are to be allowed to become Academies, exempting them from VAT, but there will be significant cuts for thousands of academies as the government is set to slash the Education Services Grant (ESG).

However, not only will £600 million be slashed from the grant, but "additional funding" that schools receive through the funding stream is to be phased out. The reductions come on top of the £200 million cut the Department for Education was forced to make to the ESG budget – then £1.02 billion – last year. That meant a per-pupil cut from £140 to £87 for academies.

The cut to the grant will mean a significant further reduction of the local councils' role in running schools. The official Autumn Statement and Spending Review document states: "The government will reduce the local authority role in running schools and remove a number of statutory duties. The government will consult on policy and funding proposals in 2016."

## New National Schools Commissioner appointed

Sir David Carter, currently the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the South West, has been appointed by the Department for Education as the new National Schools Commissioner. He will succeed Frank Green who completes his term at the end of this month (January 2016).

Sir David – who received a knighthood in the Queen's birthday honours in 2013 in recognition of his 30 years of service to education – will play a key role in the government's education reforms, leading the team of eight RSCs to tackle underperformance and ensure all

schools across the country are providing their pupils with an excellent education. This will include:

- supporting the creation of new academies and free schools
- intervening in failing and coasting local authority schools, exercising the new powers to be introduced through the Education and Adoption Bill currently before Parliament
- recruiting high-quality academy sponsors
- improving the performance of underperforming academies and free schools

Sir David Carter has previously worked as the CEO of the Cabot Learning Federation, one of the first multi-academy trusts in the country.

Speaking of his latest appointment, Sir David said: "This job is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference to the learning of children across our schools led system. My aim will be to work with the regional commissioners, academy leaders and trustees to challenge all schools to perform better than ever before and deliver educational excellence everywhere."

## Spotlight on Jennifer Mackin



Jennifer Mackin

Grimsby-born Jennifer has been with Nicholsons since the end of October 2015 and joined the firm after a tenure in the finance department of Healing Science Academy in her hometown.

Her previous role gave Jennifer experience of a fast paced and busy environment where she

was working with the purchase ledger for two schools that were part of the Multi Academy Trust. This involved completing payment runs, dealing with supplier enquires, collecting and monitoring monies and inputting invoices and credit notes.

It was whilst studying her AAT Level 2 that Jennifer recognised her desire to work in an accounts-based environment and applied for a role at Nicholsons.

Now working towards her AAT Level 3, the University of Lincoln graduate holds an Upper Second Class Honours degree in Business and Management. "I studied quite a broad degree at University, enabling me to gain an insight into all areas of business,"

said Jennifer. "The finance modules were the ones I enjoyed most and sometimes the ones that made more sense to me.

"In just over two months at Nicholsons I have learnt a great deal. The part I most enjoy is meeting new clients, working with them, furthering my knowledge and learning new things. The chance to work with clients and further my experience is something that attracted me to Nicholsons."

Jennifer can provide cost-effective transactional support and visit academies to provide financial assistance as it is required. Contact Emma Murray at: [emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk](mailto:emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk) or on: 01522 815100 to find out more.

t: 01522 815100

f: 01522 815101

newland house  
the point  
weaver road  
lincoln ln6 3qn

[info@nicholsonsca.co.uk](mailto:info@nicholsonsca.co.uk)  
[www.nicholsonsca.co.uk](http://www.nicholsonsca.co.uk)