

Could do better

After two years as Education Secretary, Michael Gove gets his report card from *The Teacher*.

Maths

Needs to check his sums.

Michael favours regional pay for teachers (a Government proposal currently under consultation), which the NUT believes would reduce teacher mobility, create shortages in areas of lower pay, hit recruitment and retention, and create extra bureaucracy for schools.

Michael's support for paying teachers according to pupils' results is also troubling. Evidence suggests it would create teacher shortages and hamper economic recovery.

Michael needs to practise his percentages. He could start by adding 15 per cent to teachers' pay to compensate for inflation and higher pension contributions.

English

Must pay closer attention...

to the experts in teaching reading. Almost all agree that synthetic phonics is just one of many ways to do this, yet the DfE pressed ahead with the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check this June. Fewer than a third of pupils 'passed' the pilot test. Many able readers performed poorly, 'correcting' the made-up words in the test.

The Education Secretary should encourage teachers to foster a love of language and stories among young pupils.

History

Overly keen.

Michael favours returning to an O level-style exam system with no modules or coursework.

His English Baccalaureate includes Latin and ancient history but excludes 21st century disciplines such as ICT, design & technology and business studies. The new draft primary curriculum has an old fashioned feel, with emphasis on rote learning of poetry, times tables and prescribed lists of spellings. Andrew Pollard, one of the advisers appointed to review the curriculum, has called the completed draft "fatally flawed".

Michael should instead familiarise himself with the joint NUT and ATL position on the primary curriculum.

Geography

Must try harder...

to ensure school provision matches local need. Michael's free schools programme has proved a huge waste of public money. This summer the proposed Newham Free School in London, Beccles Free School in Suffolk and One in a Million Free School in Bradford all collapsed due to lack of interest – the latter attracted just 30 applicants. The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce recently described the free schools initiative as an "unguided missile".

Physical education

Seems confused.

In 2010 Michael said: "I want competitive sport to be at the centre of a truly rounded education that all schools offer," yet he abolished the successful School Sport Partnerships and slashed funding, and despite Team GB's success at the Olympics has approved the sale of 31 school playing fields – including five against the advice of independent experts.

Design and technology

Displays a destructive attitude.

One of Michael's first acts as Education Secretary was to abolish the £55bn Building Schools for the Future programme and call off work on 715 schools already in the scheme. Six local authorities took legal action, prompting High Court judge Mr Justice Holman to describe Michael's lack of consultation as "an abuse of power".

ICT

Doesn't seem interested.

Schools technology agency Becta and Teachers TV were abolished within weeks of Michael becoming Education Secretary. ICT has been excluded from the English Bacc.

Home economics

Constantly disruptive.

Scrapping the Education Maintenance Allowance has hit teenagers from lower income households, and the hike in tuition fees to £9,000 a year has put university beyond the reach of many.

Expansion of the free school meals programme has been cancelled, while Michael's cabinet colleagues' cuts to local services, tax credits and child and housing benefits mean the austerity measures have affected children and families particularly severely.

Religious education

Enthusiastic but misguided.

Michael's decision to send a personalised King James bible to every state school in England was a fiasco. Tory donors had to bail out the £370,000 initiative after he was forbidden from using public money for the project.

Meanwhile three groups with creationist views have been given the go-ahead to open free schools, raising concerns over levels of government scrutiny. (State schools are prohibited from promoting creationism as fact.)

Public speaking

Consistently disappointing.

Michael and other men at the top in education take every

available opportunity to denigrate teachers and state schools, making on average two disparaging public statements a week, including:

"We are all in favour of longer school days, and potentially shorter summer holidays... If you love your job then there is, I think, absolutely nothing to complain about in making sure you have more of a chance to do it well."

ITV Daybreak, January 2012

[Successful schools] *"do not spend their time whingeing about resources or complaining about ministers' particular priorities because they know they are masters or mistresses of their own destiny."*

Speech to Ark meeting, October 2011

"happy with failure" and *"enemies of promise"*

– Michael's opinion of those opposed to the forced academies programme, January 2012

"We know we are making progress when we hear the opposition from vested interests – from those in trade unions who put adults' interests before children's..."

Speech at Brighton College, May 2012

Teacher's comments

Michael doesn't listen. He frequently ignores the wishes of school leaders, governors, teachers, parents and pupils in pushing through his policy of forced academies.

He has developed some worrying role models – in particular appointing as head of Ofsted Sir Michael Wilshaw, a man who says teachers don't know what stress is and believes: "If anyone says to you that 'staff morale is at an all-time low', you know you are doing something right". Under Wilshaw the Ofsted grading of 'satisfactory' has been deemed to mean exactly to opposite – this September it became 'requires improvement'.

He doesn't take qualifications seriously. In July 2012 Michael announced that academies would be allowed to employ unqualified people as teachers. He also failed to intervene in this summer's GCSE English marking row.

He behaves furtively. The announcement about unqualified teachers in academies was issued when the nation's attention was focused on the Olympics. Proposed reforms to the exam system were made public via a leak to the *Daily Mail*, and the number of school field sell-offs was initially disclosed as 21, rather than the true figure of 31.

Michael finds it difficult to make friends. A Populus/Sun survey in April 2012 found him to be the least popular cabinet minister. NUT General Secretary Christine Blower echoes the thoughts of many when she calls him "one of the least popular secretaries of state we've ever had".