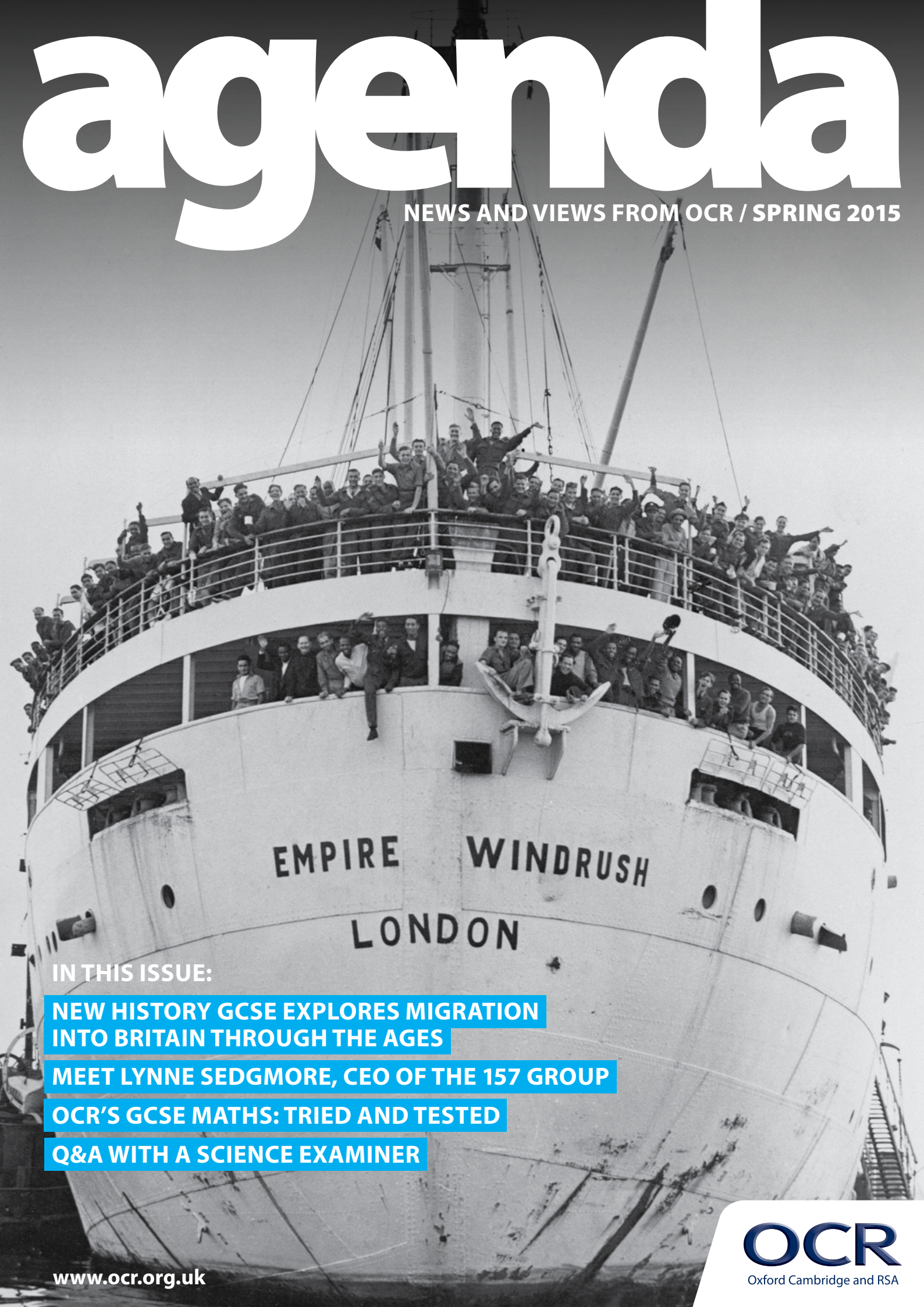


agenda

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OCR / SPRING 2015



IN THIS ISSUE:

NEW HISTORY GCSE EXPLORES MIGRATION INTO BRITAIN THROUGH THE AGES

MEET LYNNE SEDGMORE, CEO OF THE 157 GROUP

OCR'S GCSE MATHS: TRIED AND TESTED

Q&A WITH A SCIENCE EXAMINER

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Welcome to the Spring 2015 issue of **agenda**, OCR's termly magazine which offers a snapshot of our news and views.

With the summer exams on the horizon, we are working hard to ensure that the exam season goes as smoothly as possible for all involved.

The span and reach of OCR's work never ceases to amaze me. Whether it's adding challenging new topics such as migration into new History GCSEs, sharing our Functional Skills expertise with other exam boards, supporting the 'up skilling' of vulnerable women in an East London bakery or debating science practicals, assessment is inextricably linked to education as a whole.

We hope you enjoy reading our interview with the 157 Group's CEO, Dr Lynne Sedgmore, recently named by Debrett's as one of the 500 most influential people in the UK, who is retiring after 35 years working in the FE sector. There's also a case study about a high performing school's Maths department gearing up for the new Maths GCSE and why a science teacher recommends getting involved in examining.

To get in touch about anything you read here, email agenda@ocr.org.uk.

Mark Dawe

Chief Executive, OCR

CONTENTS

NEWS



4

History GCSE explores migration into Britain

FEATURES



8

Interview with Lynne Sedgmore, CEO of the 157 Group

COMMENT



14

Paul Steer ponders the new drive for character and resilience

NOTICEBOARD



15

Diary dates with OCR



6

Supporting Sport and IT in Zimbabwe



10

OCR's GCSE Maths: Tried and Tested



7

Baking a pathway to employment



12

Q&A with a Science Examiner

Cover Story: Exploring Migration into Britain

The Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury docks in June 1948, with nearly 500 Jamaicans on board who had responded to an advert offering cheap passage for anyone who wanted to work in the UK. "The theme of migration into Britain is a perfect lens through which students can explore change and continuity over a long sweep of history," according to OCR's Head of History, Michael Goddard.

Read more about the challenging new strand within OCR's History GCSEs for 2016 on page 4.

Cover photo: Daily Herald Archive / Science & Society Picture Library

“Who do you think you are?”

OCR's new History GCSEs to explore migration into Britain down the ages

Having created a broader History A Level for schools for this Autumn, OCR is also introducing stimulating new content into its History GCSEs for 2016 with the study of migration into Britain since Roman times.

Mike Goddard, Head of History at OCR, said: “Migration is an ideal history topic for GCSE students to study, allowing them to consider fundamental historical concepts such as continuity, change and significance, rooted in the major events of England’s history. Doing this through the lens of the movement of diverse groups of people has the added benefit of contemporary relevance and will make for

a rigorous, stimulating and enjoyable course.”

He continued: “Migration has been a constant and, in many important ways, a defining feature of our history. Tracking it thematically over time makes for a complex and fascinating study, will build on recent academic research, and will reveal many new and enlightening aspects of our past.”

Helped by teachers, academics and subject experts, OCR is developing two new History GCSEs for teaching in 2016, one on the Modern World and the other in conjunction with the Schools History Project (SHP), both of which will include migration as an optional new topic.

Students will be required to demonstrate that they understand the reasons people migrated to Britain, the experience of migrants in Britain and their impact on Britain. They also need to be able to explain the roles played by factors such as Britain’s connections with the wider world, beliefs, attitudes and values, governments, economic forces and communications.

“Students might be surprised to learn, for example, about the size and experiences of the Black population in London in the 1750s, which, although estimates vary, may well have numbered up to 15,000 people,” Goddard continued, “or that at least ten languages were in use in medieval England.”

Reforms to History GCSEs mean that students should now undertake an extended study of a theme from at least medieval times to today. This will make up one fifth of a new ‘Modern World’ History GCSE. ‘Migration to Britain’ is one of three themes proposed by OCR for this study; the other two are monarchy, and war and society. While the Modern World GCSE is focused on the key international events and interactions of the 20th century, the SHP GCSE puts more emphasis on a range of periods and different approaches to studying history. Both draft GCSEs will be submitted for accreditation this spring for teaching in schools from Autumn 2016.

www.ocr.org.uk/history

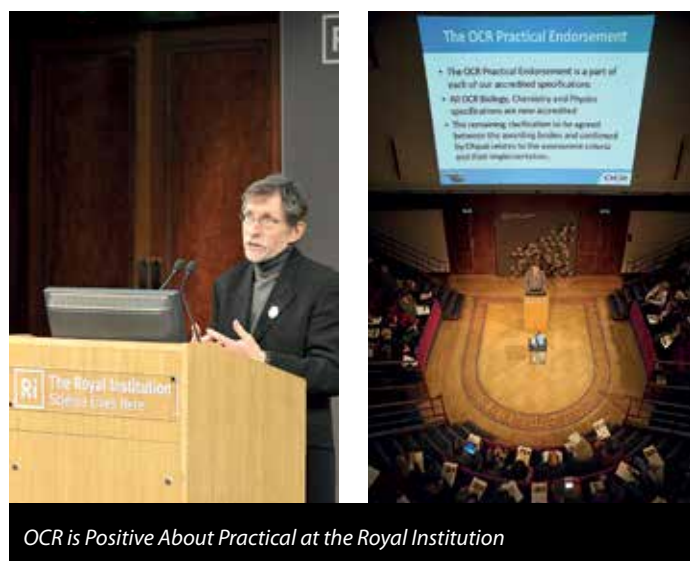
#Positive About Practical

On 6 February, OCR launched its distinctive approach to the new Practical Endorsement for A Level sciences at the home of science, the Royal Institution in London.

In front of a large audience of teachers and the wider science education community, OCR staff, supported by Tim Oates, Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment (pictured right), explained the thinking behind the new approach. They outlined OCR’s model which has been designed to offer choice, integration with teaching and progression. In his opening remarks, Tim Oates stated: “Assessment should not drive the curriculum and the new approach to science practicals puts the curriculum first. We need to get real – the current system does not achieve what it set out to achieve.”

The assessment of practicals in science is something OCR has long campaigned about, including commissioning research from Cambridge Assessment on the subject. In 2013, a report authored by Tim Oates, called for an end to the practice of coursework marks contributing to final results as this puts strain on teachers, pupils and parents, does not assess what it set out to assess and encourages superficial learning. Based on this research and on teacher feedback, OCR believes Practical Endorsement for the new A Levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics will be an improvement in several ways; increasing the amount of practical work by students (a minimum of 12 experiments per subject will be assessed, whereas that can be as low as four currently); changing to assessment over a full two year course; making achievement (a Pass or Fail) visible for the first time; and engendering a deeper understanding of science through greater experimentation.

Steve Jones, Director of CLEAPSS, who spoke at OCR’s Royal Institution launch, said: “We have to be honest about previous



OCR is Positive About Practical at the Royal Institution

attempts to assess practical aspects of science and reconnect with the real reasons for doing practical work with pupils.”

Another speaker, ASE Field Officer Frances Evans, outlined her experience and ideas on moderation, verification and the transition to monitoring.

From September 2015, students will keep a log allowing teachers to see their understanding and aiding students in their revision for questions about practical work which will make up 15% of the end of course examinations. This record could also be useful for interviews for HE courses.

For more on OCR’s practical activity groups and information and support for teachers such as the activity tracker, visit www.ocr.org.uk/PositiveAboutPractical.

Extending horizons with the EPQ

In many schools and colleges, the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an optional module. At Hills Road Sixth Form in Cambridge, one of the top performing state schools in the country, the qualification is compulsory. The College recognises that it provides students with the opportunity to work independently and creatively whilst developing valuable skills that universities and employers look for and which helps students stand out from the crowd.

"In the past four years we've put over 3,000 students through OCR's EPQ and it is quite unlike any other course that we offer," explained Nicola Dartnell, Curriculum Director and Head of Extended Curriculum at Hills Road. "The choice of topic is entirely up to each student, in consultation with the teaching staff. Some are very clear about what they want to do because they have an idea already or a strong interest in something, others will genuinely not have a clue and need to think about it some more."

Nicola continued: "The volume and variety of topics mean that marking can be an enjoyable experience as no one project is ever quite the same. One moment you're focusing on a Cub Scout Book or a Japan Day, the next you're assessing a pop-up restaurant or even a loft extension!"

"The final outcome isn't the most important part of the qualification," commented Nicola. "The key aspect is the progressive learning along the way."

For 18 year old Hills Road student, Jonah Balmford, the EPQ presented him with the chance to do something quite different from his other A Levels - Maths, Geography and Biology. "I'm interested in Maths, and I've also baked from a young age, so I decided to produce a book that was all about living on a budget," said Jonah. "My idea was to produce a book about pies that cost less than the value of 'pi' - £3.14. I did some research and there was nothing on the market with this angle."

Jonah hit on the idea of contacting well known chefs and inviting them to contribute to his book. "I did a lot of baking and eventually settled on 15 recipes for the book," he explained. Jonah wrote and designed the book, 'Easy as Pi', and had it published in paper, PDF and e-book formats. It has since been promoted by several of the contributing chefs and he has also started selling copies.

He commented: "The EPQ has been one of the most rewarding projects that I've ever been involved with."



A good BETT for Computing support

At BETT 2015, the leading technology event that took place in January, OCR's focus was on supporting and inspiring teachers getting to grips with the new Computing curriculum.

Over the last year, the number of candidates studying GCSE Computing with OCR rose by 300%, and interest continues to grow in the support offered by the free Computing MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) at www.cambridgegcsecomputing.org. Visitors to BETT were treated to a demo of the new adaptive learning version of the MOOC, which offers teachers and learners a personalised journey.

OCR also announced a new collaboration with a technology partner Codio, who offer a cloud-based computer programming platform for teaching coding in schools and universities. Joining forces with Codio will enable OCR to create new forms of content to support the Computing curriculum. Watch this space!

We were also delighted to be able to host a presentation on OCR's stand by staff at Shireland Collegiate Academy in the West Midlands about its innovative use of technology to support learning for its students (62% of whom speak another language at home) and for their families.

More information on OCR's wide range of Computer Science and IT qualifications, from Entry Level to A Level and beyond, can be found at www.ocr.org.uk/computing.

Supporting you through GCSE and A Level reform

The last of OCR's 37 new qualifications for teaching from September 2015 was accredited in early January. With GCSEs, A Levels and new Core Maths qualifications, OCR has developed more new qualifications for 2015 than any other exam board. This has only been possible by working in collaboration with teachers, academics and subject specialists to create distinctive and engaging new qualifications, within the criteria set by the DfE and Ofqual. We would like to say a big 'Thank You' to everyone who has helped to make this possible.

Preparing for 2016

OCR is now pressing ahead with developing stimulating new qualifications for 2016. This means new OCR GCSEs in Ancient Languages, Art and Design, Biology, Chemistry, Citizenship, Computer

Science, Food Preparation and Nutrition (currently D&T), Double Science, Drama, Geography, History, MFL, Music, PE, Physics and RS. At A Level, there will be new OCR qualifications in Ancient Languages, Drama, Geography, MFL, Music, PE and RS. (Maths, Further Maths and D&T have been put back for development till 2017).

Along with new specifications and assessment materials, OCR has created over 180 new resources – such as transition and delivery guides – for the 2015 GCSEs and A Levels and published a sample range for the 2016 portfolio. OCR is running EXPO training events this summer term on the key changes in 2016 to help teachers to prepare. (See www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk). And did you know there's A/VAS Level co-teachability guidance across a range of subjects? For more support and details on all new qualifications, visit www.ocr.org.uk/gcsealevelreform.

Supporting Sport and IT in Zimbabwe

Following on from the success of introducing Cambridge Technicals in Mauritius, 2015 sees the delivery of OCR's Cambridge Technicals in Sport and IT at one of OCR's international pilot schools – St John's Educational Trust in Harare, Zimbabwe.

OCR was approached last year by this leading independent school (teaching IGCSEs and International AS and A Levels from our sister company Cambridge International) to pilot the delivery of Cambridge Technicals in Sport and IT. The school sought an alternative course for their less academic students, as a means to engage them through a more practical, work-related approach to learning and assessment. At the same time, they wanted their students to achieve an internationally-recognised qualification that would allow them to either be better equipped to find a job or to progress into further education.

This pilot has helped OCR to push boundaries in developing



innovative and pioneering moderation models to ensure effective assessment delivery to schools regardless of geographical location. The remote process is facilitated by an e-portfolio system, and offers a huge amount of flexibility to users in managing and submitting student work.

In addition to being a digital repository to upload and store all student work, this system provides a user-friendly network-style interface which allows students to communicate with teachers and teachers to comment and mark on screen, as well as submit to OCR for moderation when ready.

Teachers in St John's have also benefitted from using OCR's e-community network to share best practice with fellow schools in the UK, allowing the vibrant e-community to flourish and expand its boundaries across the world.

OCR Head of International Projects, Dominique Slade, commented: "Growing international demand for high quality vocational qualifications such as Cambridge Technicals clearly indicates that finding solutions for the skills race is a truly global issue."

In brief

English and Maths Progression on demand

OCR's Cambridge Progression qualifications, designed to underpin key English and Maths skills, are now available on screen and on demand. With auto-marked tests and results turned around in as little as two days, the flexibility and reduced burden of administration is a huge benefit to colleges responsible for large numbers of learners.

Winston Scotland, Curriculum Manager at City and Islington College, said: "Exam officers have far less administration to encounter, saving the college time and money. We liked that the technology enabled us to add on up to 25% extra time for our students who are dyslexic. Students benefited from (free) on screen practice tests to get them used to the system and tutors were helped in being able to view the score report in the results tab, which showed the students' scores as a percentage."

Cambridge Progression Entry Level to Level 2 qualifications are eligible for funding.

Baking a pathway to employment

The Luminary Bakery in East London is a social enterprise running a six month programme that helps vulnerable women from backgrounds of domestic abuse, prison, prostitution, drug addiction and homelessness to get ready for employment through learning to bake. OCR is providing support in the form of relevant qualifications and guidance on approaches to teaching and learning.

The 'myLife' course includes identifying the characteristics of an employable baker, undertaking a food hygiene qualification and working towards OCR's (Level 2) Life and Living Skills qualification.

The artisan baked goods created by the trainees are sold in the Kahaila Café on Brick Lane, with all the profit re-invested back into the charity.

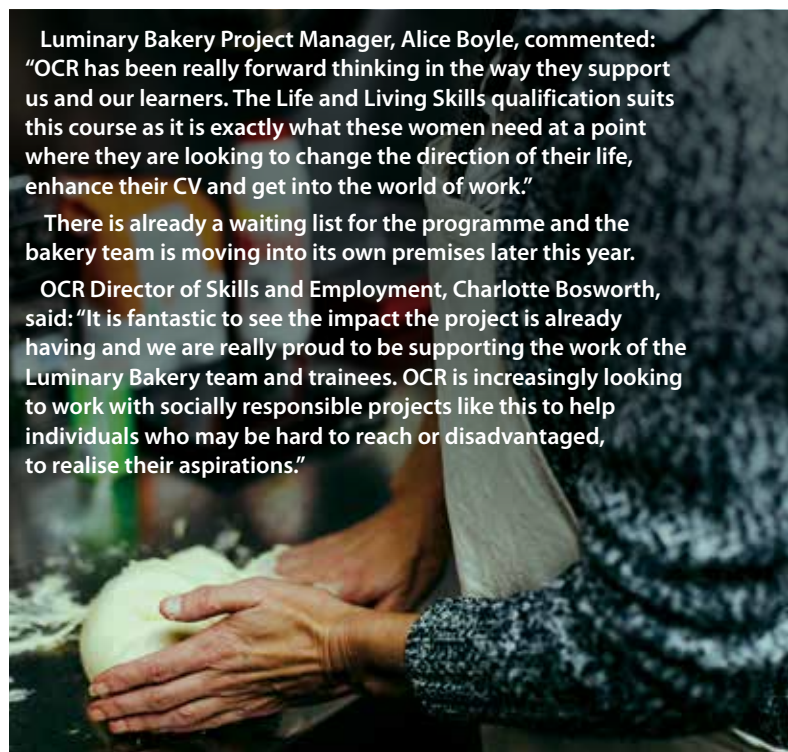
One of the women on the training programme told the Evening Standard (which supports the project through their Dispossessed Fund): "Being inside has made it hard for me to get work – this is a chance to start a new life for me and my son."

OCR staff are also advising the team running the project on teaching and learning approaches within their programme delivery, and will be supporting them to contextualise English and Maths alongside employability skills.

Luminary Bakery Project Manager, Alice Boyle, commented: "OCR has been really forward thinking in the way they support us and our learners. The Life and Living Skills qualification suits this course as it is exactly what these women need at a point where they are looking to change the direction of their life, enhance their CV and get into the world of work."

There is already a waiting list for the programme and the bakery team is moving into its own premises later this year.

OCR Director of Skills and Employment, Charlotte Bosworth, said: "It is fantastic to see the impact the project is already having and we are really proud to be supporting the work of the Luminary Bakery team and trainees. OCR is increasingly looking to work with socially responsible projects like this to help individuals who may be hard to reach or disadvantaged, to realise their aspirations."



Engineering connections

Roger O'Loughlin of the Society of Engineers (SOE) recently presented a certificate marking OCR's corporate membership of the Society to Charlotte Bosworth, OCR's Director of Skills and Employment at OCR's offices in Coventry. OCR is the first exam board to become a member of SOE.



Charlotte said: "We are delighted to become members. This will allow us to build on the work we are already doing with employers to address the skills gap recently identified in the Institute of Engineering and Technology report. Employer members of the SOE will now have access to our new Cambridge Technical qualifications for apprenticeships in engineering, available from September 2015. We are currently aiming for it to be recognised by the Engineering Council at EngTech level."

Getting personal



Pictured: Students from Priory School in Shrewsbury with their design which won the Rymans National Enterprise Competition, sponsored by OCR. 'Graphoto' is a plastic pencil case which can be personalised. The prototype impressed the judges, including Dragons' Den's Theo Paphitis, so much that the case is now on sale in a local branch of Rymans. For details of this year's challenge, visit www.nationalenterprisechallenge.co.uk

Connecting OCR examiners and assessors

A social networking tool is encouraging discussion, information sharing and collaboration among OCR's examiner and assessor community. Over 3,500 members of the community now connect via the Yammer networking tool, and OCR Chief Executive, Mark Dawe, recently joined in to talk online about issues of concern to the community. The conversation ranged over a number of topics including the different profiles of OCR examiners, policy around disability and preparations for the 2015 summer exams.

Mark ended the Yammer session by telling examiners: "I've found it really valuable to hear from you and engage in these conversations. I've also been heartened to hear about your commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm and witness the positivity you've expressed in your comments."

Interested in examining for OCR?

Many teachers find the experience of assessment gained through being an OCR examiner is invaluable. It helps teachers to gain a better understanding of a specification they are teaching, enables them to share best assessment practice with colleagues back in the staff room and is a clever way of keeping subject knowledge up to date. Applications can be made online at www.ocr.org.uk/assessors, or by calling **01223 552558**.

Support service on Functional Skills

Other awarding organisations such as FutureQuals are taking advantage of OCR expertise to help them to deliver Functional skills to their learners. OCR can provide a simple administrative process plus accessible tests (available on demand both on paper and on screen) and prompt delivery of results.

Chris Young from FutureQuals commented: "We are delighted to be in partnership with OCR to offer Functional Skills to our centres, in the form of a comprehensive package for our apprenticeship learners. It will provide an adaptable, yet highly regulated service that satisfies the requirements of learners, educational organisations and training providers."



From left to right: Natalie Jenkins, Sector Manager, OCR; Chris Young, CEO, FutureQuals; Charlotte Bosworth, Director of Skills and Employment, OCR; Cath Evans, Head of Qualifications, FutureQuals



Formed in 2006, the 157 Group represents some of the largest, urban FE Colleges in the UK, with a combined turnover of over £1.5 billion and employing more than 37,000 staff. Numbering around 30 Colleges, the Group gained its name from paragraph 157 of a government paper (the Foster Report) on the role of FE Colleges.

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE was appointed CEO of the 157 Group in 2008. Here she tells *agenda* about her own path into education and the challenges her organisation faces.

What was your background before taking on your current role at the 157 Group?

I originally trained as a secondary school teacher, to teach History and English. I spent some time in community outreach including the WEA. And then in 1980, I entered the world of FE, when the YTS and YOPs schemes were running. I had found my 'home'. And I have worked my way from a part timer through virtually every grade and area within FE ever since.

What I have always loved about FE compared to school is the freedom to innovate. We could make our own curriculum, it wasn't set for us. I love the wide age range and background of the students. I was Principal of Guildford College for six years and then CEO of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL). While this is my third 'chief exec' job, I'd say being a teacher has stayed at the core of my identity.

What do you like about working in the field of education?

Unequivocally, it's about seeing students learn and grow, helping them to maximise their potential. In FE, we have all sorts of students – part/full time, vocational/academic, from all sorts of backgrounds. I must have been to hundreds of graduation ceremonies but I still cry every time. I believe education is a public and social good and I am lucky to work in a field where I can carry on growing and learning all the time.

Who do you admire in your field?

Above all, I admire lecturers and support staff who devote their lives to their students. There are so many staff who go the extra mile, who stay committed to their students. They are amazing. Leaders in FE have a tough time these days. If I had to pick one individual in the public sector who had a major impact on me, it was the Chair of the NHS Trust I worked for in Croydon, Adrienne Fresco. She showed me how to be a strong, tough but empowering leader. I learnt so much from her.

Was your own experience of education a positive one and what lessons did you learn from it?

I'm a working class kid from a Midlands sink estate and I loved school, absolutely loved it. And school was easy for me, I was academic and I was good at sport too. My Welsh parents were definitely an influence here as they were keen on education and for me to get on. When I left my primary school, I was one of three kids crying our eyes out in the playground not wanting to leave. And then I went on to the girls' grammar school where we were "Miss Farrars' girls". There was an ethos in those girls' grammars at that time that was great. So school was always liberating for me – it was only when I got to university that I found it was more difficult for girls to progress. But my friends on the estate were more likely to go to FE. Just because I found school easy, I didn't want to distance myself from those who didn't. I wanted to go back

and help. I had always helped my Dad who struggled with words as he left school at 14. I believe if you have a talent, you give it back.

What do you do when – if – you have time off?

Well over the last three years, I've completed a doctorate and also renovated and extended a Georgian chapel in Somerset. I also write poetry (and had my first pamphlet published in 2013). Strictly, I'm only supposed to work a four day week, you see. But my favourite time off is with my family, particularly spending time with my granddaughters who are 8 and 11. I am their completely besotted "Granny Lynne".

What is the remit of the 157 Group?

We are a national, influencing membership organisation of up to 30 of the largest, urban FE Colleges. The 157 Group has three key functions:

- Provide thought leadership – we set out a visionary, radical agenda
- Practice improvement – we enable our members to work together and share good practice
- Influence policy – we set out to influence national policy affecting FE/Skills sector

How do you meet the needs of your members/those you represent?

In many different ways. We are in constant dialogue with our members to ascertain

"I believe education is a public and social good and I am lucky to work in a field where I can carry on growing and learning all the time."



their priorities. Regular meetings and strong networking enable us to do this. Our mechanisms for finding out what our members want are sophisticated. As we've built up huge trust we are in a strong position to really understand our members. We are 'servant leaders' – I really like this model – in that we aim to offer a genuine service to our members. And although the 157 Group staff is small – there are only seven of us – they are a fantastic team.

What are the greatest challenges that your organisation faces over the next five years?

Firstly, supporting our members through serious financial times. Reductions in budgets are being discussed ranging from 20% up to 60% from some analysts. So we also have a role to play in fostering new forms of investment into colleges. Secondly, we need to ensure that the newly elected government makes sensible policy decisions about FE and Skills. We have made

proposals recently in our 'Future Colleges' document. A key problem is that most politicians and their families have never experienced FE. Also the turf wars over the Skills budget are getting worse. The third challenge is to keep coming up with radical and workable ideas to help our members survive and flourish. But we can do this. I think the 157 Group has a reputation for finding solutions, not for being defensive.

What achievements are you proudest of as Chief Executive?

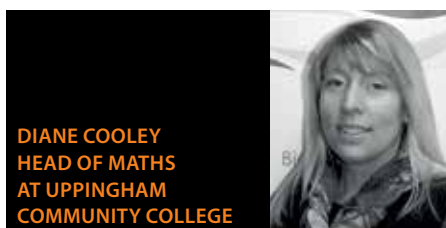
Actually, getting into the 2015 Debrett's list of the 500 most influential people recently makes me proud. As my job is to influence, it's good for me but, more importantly, good for the FE sector. I'd say that the fact that the 157 Group has really earned its place at the top table as an influencer is significant. And looking back, the rise in student success figures, from 48% to 84%, over the six years when I was Principal at Guildford College.

If you were stuck in a lift with a government minister, what three things would you ask for on behalf of your sector?

- 1) Listen to FE professionals in a spirit of authentic trust and act on our advice
- 2) Understand that constant short term policy initiatives disconnected from real practice do not improve anything (however clever they seem on paper)
- 3) Be bold and enable sustainable change for the right reasons based on evidence, not ideology.

OCR'S GCSE MATHS: TRIED AND TESTED

Diane Cooley is Head of Maths at Uppingham Community College (UCC), an 11 to 16 comprehensive in the East Midlands, with 887 pupils across the ability range on its roll.



DIANE COOLEY
HEAD OF MATHS
AT UPPINGHAM
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Diane joined the school as HoD in September 2013, and the school began using OCR's GCSE Maths for the first time. She had used OCR's Maths GCSE since 2010, as KS4 co-ordinator then HoD. The UCC Maths department, which consists of four full time teachers, one part time teacher and two members of the SLT who teach Maths, is a particularly successful department at the school.

"In 2011, 65% of Maths students achieved A* to C with a modular GCSE. The results were improving but with the move from modular to linear, everyone expected results to drop," said Diane. "In fact, in 2014, using OCR's linear GCSE Maths for the first time, Uppingham's results went up to their highest ever. 86% of Maths students got A* to C. We achieved 47% in our '4 levels of Progress' measure last year. All students are entered for the GCSE; last year 50 at Foundation and 130 at Higher Tier."

Diane explained how the school has achieved these results. "I think we have achieved this through the quality and dedication of teachers. We provide students with plenty of constructive feedback and as a team we share resources, plans and good practice. I think the students respond when they know how hard we are working for them. And that goes up to the Headteacher who runs after-school detentions for students to catch up on work if they have missed a deadline."

What extra support does the Maths team provide for students? "We also run extra sessions to help Maths students: Friday after-school sessions, half term revision sessions and focused revision between exam papers. In 2013/14, we had a dedicated intervention teacher employed to do 1:1 work with individual students across the ability range on pre-identified topic areas – this particularly helped the A-A* students; it's not just focused on the C/D borderline students. Our students can also email their teachers for help on homework tasks outside of school hours."

THE MOVE TO LINEAR

"I feel that OCR really understands linear. The papers are well laid out with clear progression from beginning to end. The questions are accessible, but sufficiently challenging at the end of each paper to ensure that it caters for all types of learner."

"I first encountered OCR as a parent when my daughter did her GCSE Maths – she did OCR's Graduated Assessment Mathematics GCSE. It made so much more sense than any of the other modular courses available at that time, by building up knowledge and confidence in graded stages over the two years rather than teaching certain topics in blocks never to be seen again once that module was complete."

"I taught Graduated Assessment then swapped to teaching linear in 2011/12. I moved over to linear before it was compulsory, and I swapped because I really liked the OCR linear course and papers. There is a sensible amount of overlap from Foundation across to Higher. The Higher paper has a good amount of algebra, and questions that can be answered using an algebraic method.

"I think our students like the gradual challenge through the papers and the accessibility. They also like the fact that there is good course coverage so when they use past papers they really do help them to revise."

SUPPORT FROM OCR

"OCR Interchange offers a superb service; it allows me to analyse the results and act upon students' strengths and weaknesses. I like the fact OCR have always been positive and enthusiastic about their own materials and the quality of their resources. I find the OCR website is easy to navigate for what I want and there are lots of materials available online for current Year 9 students who will be our first year group through the new GCSE (9-1).

"Only the most recent materials are password protected through the Interchange service. We can use them as mocks, safe in the knowledge that students have not already seen them.

PREPARING FOR THE NEW MATHS GCSE (9-1)

Following on the schools' success with OCR's existing Maths GCSE, Diane is confident about switching to OCR's new GCSE (9-1). "From what I can see of the current sample materials, we like the style of the questions and the breadth of topics covered. The context is not overly adult – it is more accessible to 16 year olds. There is scaffolding in place which helps to break down some of the questions into achievable parts rather than one daunting task. The additional marks that are available for working out are good – we really encourage QWC and this reinforces our ethos and we like the fact that each paper is out of 100."

DEVELOPING PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

"We have endeavoured to build in greater emphasis on problem-solving activities, particularly algebra, to the scheme of work throughout the last year and a bit. We have participated in the UKMT Maths Challenge for many years for example. I see the GCSE as a 5 year course anyway, we don't differentiate dramatically between KS3 and KS4.

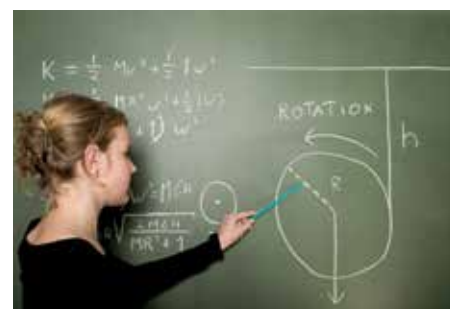
"What will be most challenging is the emphasis on problem solving and interpreting questions to identify the mathematics required. But as a department we are working on that by increasing the students' exposure to solving problems. Once a fortnight, every KS3 class has a lesson where the focus is an open-ended task, encouraging them to select the appropriate mathematical concepts and strategies, to work systematically, and to analyse and interpret their findings. This should be preparing them for the new style exams that have less signposting than the previous specification. A colleague in the Maths team has already attended an OCR problem-solving training event, and we intend to book onto further training events including SOW development."

FOUNDATION OR HIGHER?

"There will always be Foundation students that will not be able to access all of the Foundation topics, and the same for Higher. We will plan the scheme of work for progression just as before. We will continue to be positive and encourage students to achieve the best that they can achieve.

"Decisions will be more difficult in the first year when the new exam is an unknown quantity. In the first instance, I will be looking at expected levels of progress and progress achieved throughout KS3. Currently I know the exam inside out and know instinctively the appropriate tier of entry, but I will seek advice from OCR representatives for the new GCSE.

"We also have some really bright students here at UCC and we are relishing the additional challenge offered by the extended specification. This will work alongside an additional Maths course that we already run in year 11 and allow us to further prepare students for the challenge of A Level Maths."



OCR: Making problem solving easy

One of the major changes in the new GCSE Maths (9-1) is a greater focus on problem-solving skills. Problem solving has been included within the Assessment Objectives for GCSE Maths for some time, but the emphasis has grown dramatically in the new GCSE.

Students will be required to translate problems in a variety of contexts into mathematical processes, to make and use connections between different areas of Maths, to interpret results within problems and to be able to evaluate results, methods used and any assumptions made.

OCR is working hard to help teachers get to grips with problem solving. Between March and June, we are running a series of free 'Approaching Problem Solving' events around the country. We also have new resources which explore problem solving in greater depth than ever before, including a Curriculum Planner with suggestions about how topic can be expanded and developed around the new focus on problem solving. Take a look at our training events for GCSE Maths here: www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

To find out more about OCR's GCSE Maths (9-1) visit www.ocr.org.uk/maths

Q&A

WITH A SCIENCE EXAMINER

OCR works with over 14,000 examiners. The vast majority, over 90% in fact, are either teachers or those who have retired from the teaching profession. As examiners or assessors, they may be marking, moderating or verifying exams and assessments across a range of subjects and qualifications, both general and vocational. The size of assessment that OCR undertakes is staggering. Last summer, for instance, OCR's examiners marked nearly 4 million GCSE and A Level exam scripts.

Assistant Headteacher
and Science Teacher
Julie Gauntlett



With busy timetables, many teachers find the prospect of examining daunting. In this Q&A, science teacher, Julie Gauntlett, outlines some of the benefits of a greater knowledge of assessment to her teaching, including better understanding of questions and mark schemes, an expertise she shares with her colleagues.

Q: Julie, could you tell us a bit about yourself?

A: I have been teaching for almost 30 years, starting my career in a mixed comprehensive school in Hampshire. I am currently Assistant Headteacher in a Federation of a boys' and a girls' school in the North West and I teach OCR GCSE Gateway Science, Additional Science & Chemistry across both schools. I became a GCSE Assistant Examiner for OCR in 1993 and from 1999 worked as a Team Leader before being appointed to my current role as Principal Examiner, responsible for setting and leading the marking of papers, in 2008. I have also worked as a GCSE Coursework Moderator, and Team Leader, for 14 years before giving up that role in 2011 (to spend a little bit more time with my family!)

Q: What made you initially sign up to be an examiner?

A: As a young teacher of science, keen to further my career, it did not take much persuasion from my then Head of Science to join her in applying to be an examiner. She was convinced that examining work would benefit me professionally and would bring departmental benefits in terms of teaching. That has certainly proved to be the case. My husband and I had also just bought our first house and the extra money certainly came in useful!

Q: How do you manage to fit it in around being a full-time teacher?

A: I won't deny that the exam marking season can be very busy, juggling examining and school work. However, provided you are disciplined, it's not a problem. Before I begin marking, I prepare by making sure that I am as on top of my school work as possible. The marking period itself only lasts for about 4-5 weeks and coincides with Year 11 and Year 13 being on study leave so my time at school is a little more flexible.



Q: What do you enjoy about being an examiner?

A: Examining has given me added confidence as a teacher. I am secure in the knowledge that I am interpreting the specification in the way that it will be examined. When students ask me “So what might a question on this topic look like?” I am able to immediately draw on a wealth of past exam questions that I remember marking to illustrate what they might be asked.

Even though only the senior examiners attend standardisation meetings, examiners still have telephone contact with their Team Leader. I thoroughly enjoy the interpersonal aspects of the role and have made some great friends during the years that I’ve been examining for OCR.

I get a tremendous amount of job satisfaction from examining. After all, if it wasn’t for the teachers who mark GCSE and A Level exams, how would our students get the results that we work so hard to prepare them for?

Q: How has it changed the way you teach?

A: The most recent redevelopment of the Gateway specification saw the introduction of 6 mark questions, which are marked using a level of response mark scheme. By learning how to apply these mark schemes I think I’ve been able to take the ‘fear’ out of these longer questions for my own students. I often write sections of sample answers at Levels 1, 2 and 3 for my students, which they then have to build into answers at each level using the mark scheme. This gives them an in depth understanding of what is required to achieve 6 marks. Students are often surprised that you don’t

necessarily have to write a long answer to gain full marks. It’s about understanding what the question is asking and not waffling! I am also meticulous in teaching my students key terms and phrases, which I know will secure the marks in the exams.

Q: What are some of the challenges of being an examiner?

A: Time management can be tricky, juggling school work and examining. However, provided you are organised and plan your time, then it’s not a problem. In order to maintain the consistency and accuracy of marking, it’s important to mark at a steady pace during the marking period, rather than rushing as marking deadlines approach.

You have to be able to always apply the mark scheme accurately, even if there are times when you don’t entirely agree with an aspect of it. The Senior Examiners attending the standardisation meeting will have spent a long time considering the mark scheme and a large range of candidates’ answers. The job of an examiner is not to question their decisions, but rather to apply them to the marking process.

Q: What support do examiners receive?

A: Examiners receive thorough training in the consistent application of the mark scheme. Through a process of marking practice scripts, then standardisation scripts, examiners become familiar with the mark scheme and receive feedback and guidance on their marking (via telephone conversations and in writing) from their Team Leader. This enables them to become confident that they understand the mark scheme before they mark the test scripts

prior to being approved to mark. Examiners then receive feedback on seeding scripts throughout the marking period, ensuring that their marking remains consistent and accurate. An examiner always has someone to refer problems to – their Team Leader. A Team Leader can consult the Principal Examiner, and the Principal Examiner can consult the Chief Examiner. There’s a clear line of support so that any difficulties are resolved swiftly.

Q: Would you recommend examining to others?

A: Absolutely! I honestly believe that the benefits of examining, both on a personal and school level, cannot be underestimated. I have been able to share my expertise with colleagues, talking specifically about the specification and giving advice on the interpretation of mark schemes. It’s effectively free ‘in house’ training. I can advise my students about the pitfalls of particular questions, giving examples of key misconceptions around topics and the kind of answers that fail to gain credit. When it comes to marking mock exams (a chore for many teachers), I already have an expert knowledge of the mark scheme and am able to advise the department on its consistent application. My colleagues often comment that I am able to mark mock papers faster than they can, as I am already very familiar with the mark scheme. Teachers are increasingly required to make expert grade predictions for their students and I am able to do that with a unique insight and knowledge. I’ve also been able to mentor new staff and develop their confidence in preparing students for examinations.

DEVELOPING CHARACTER



PAUL STEER, OCR'S HEAD OF POLICY, PONDERES THE NEW DRIVE FOR CHARACTER AND RESILIENCE

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A quick scan through news items about the attitudes and skills of young people can be an alarming experience. The headlines shout with lurid tales of risky behaviour, and worrying attitudes to work, old people, drinking, voting, police – you name it. Maybe we older people like to read about the shortcomings of the new generation and gain some sort of pleasure by having our views reinforced that the world is going to 'hell in a handcart'.

Many criticisms of young people are in fact anecdotal, or result from surveys of the attitudes of older people towards young people, which produce a slightly different truth. The CBI skills report tells us every year that young people are ill equipped for the transition to work, lacking basic communication and number skills. Recently an industrialist spoke of the tragedy of a generation that 'can't fix gadgets', another bemoaned the loss of the art of the handshake. Colleagues in Higher Education are concerned about a lack of critical thinking and research skills, although it is hard to tell if it was ever thus, something endemic, or a change in the nature of the intake.

Of course, when you look into the detail of the surveys and studies that have spawned these negative stories, the picture becomes more balanced, positive even! It is possible to read evidence of young people being diligent and hardworking in fact, and even that they show a capacity to care for the well-being of others and the planet. Young people in the UK might even be some of the happiest. According to a study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, published in April 2014, young people in the UK rank number 4 in a Global Youth Well-being index out of a study of 30 countries.

Through our own contact with schools, we know that young learners are incredibly

hard working, engaged and creative. We have also worked with professional organisations such as the NUS which gives young people a much-needed voice on many issues, in the face of the myth about a generation that does not care or cannot articulate its views. OCR has also lent its support to Student Voice, a democratic and student-led organisation working towards becoming the representative body of secondary school students in England.

People who talk about character in education are a broad church ranging from the highly respected and rigorous Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues to some rather dewy-eyed individuals harking back to Aristotle, to some advocates of extreme fresh air.

Yet the myth of young peoples' failings is strong. A relatively recent manifestation of the anxiety about the skills, attitudes and behaviours of young people, picked up on by Nicky Morgan, is the return to discussions about 'character and resilience'. People who talk about character in education are a broad church ranging from the highly respected and rigorous Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues to some rather dewy-eyed individuals harking back to Aristotle, to some advocates of extreme fresh air. Perhaps the genesis of this new conversation about character development in education is above all a reaction to a narrowing academic core and a set of all-dominating school accountability measures

– a realisation that we are in danger of creating an obsession with exams, not education.

As an exam board, OCR is bound to believe that exams are very important. But things have gone too far; education goes way beyond exams. A broad rich curriculum and pedagogy which encourages inquiry and critical thinking and helps people to develop an empathy with a range of perspectives (beyond any single set of 'British values'), an approach that nurtures skills in Maths and English and the pursuit of knowledge and understanding might take us closer to what is meant by an 'education'. Our partnership with Whole Education for example, which, as the name suggests, campaigns for a fully-rounded education, supports their conference programme as well as giving OCR the opportunity to shadow teachers in their networked schools and to work together on areas such as STEM.

All these things have to work together however – there is no 'bolt on' we can call character and resilience. And there are no crude accountability measures for these things either.

There are many versions of the truth about the skills and attitudes of young people but we should take note above all that young people need to be given confidence and trust – that's what they respond to – and if we knock them all the time, we might be creating the problem, we certainly won't be solving it. One thing is for certain, our children will have to be pretty skilful to adapt to the competitive and economically challenging future us older, wiser folk have built for them.

Email your comments to agenda@ocr.org.uk

JOIN OCR AT THESE EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES SPRING/SUMMER 2015

MARCH

20/21

ASCL Annual Conference

Hilton London Metropole

OCR will be exhibiting at this year's Annual Conference of the Association of School and College Leaders which has the theme of 'Trust to Transform'. This event offers school leaders an opportunity to debate the future of our schools, engage with policymakers and a chance to network with colleagues. Keynote speakers include Nicky Morgan, Tristram Hunt and Sir Michael Wilshaw.

www.ascl.org.uk

20/21

Language World 2015

Newcastle University

Where else - under one roof and over just two days - can you find top thinkers in languages education, speaking on topics close to their hearts? The ALL Language World conference will be at Newcastle University this year, which will be a first for the Association. OCR will have a stand there, with our language experts on hand. Come and join OCR at this important event in the Languages calendar.

www.all-languages.org.uk

30-02 Apr

Association of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Conference

Staverton Park Conference Centre, Daventry

Among a number of Maths events in 2015, OCR's Mathematics team will be on hand to answer your questions about the new GCSE and new Core Maths qualifications at the Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM) Annual Conference. This year's conference addresses the theme of Thinking Mathematically.

www.atm.org.uk

APRIL

9-11

Geographical Association Annual Conference

Manchester University

OCR is delighted to sponsor this major event in the calendar for Geography teachers. Our subject specialists will be on hand with guidance and a presentation on OCR's new GCSE and A Level Geography specifications for 2016. On behalf of OCR, world class adventurer, Leo Houlding, will talk about 'The Most Remote Mountain on the Planet'. He will outline his plan to become the first person to ascend the Trans-Antarctic Mountains and the expedition will be shared and documented with support from OCR resources, to inspire GCSE learners.

www.geography.org.uk

29

STEMTECH

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London

The STEMtech Annual Conference brings together leaders in education, industry and government with a common interest in advancing STEM study and careers in the UK to discuss and be inspired by the latest developments in this sector. OCR is delighted to sponsor the event where Dr Deidre Hughes, Commissioner for UKCES, will be the keynote speaker. Come and join us at stand F20.

www.stemtechconference.com

MAY

8/9

Historical Association Annual Conference

Royal Marriott Hotel, Bristol

OCR is sponsoring this key event in the calendar for History teachers. Our subject specialists will be at our stand and at a workshop to offer guidance on the new History GCSEs for 2016. Key speakers at the two day conference will include Dr Lucy Worsley, Professor Justin Champion and Juliet Gardiner (speaking on the significance of VE Day).

www.history.org.uk

JUNE

10

VQ Day

OCR will be sponsoring the VQ Day for the 3rd year running.

This is an annual celebration of vocational achievement, with the aim of raising the status of technical, practical and vocational learning. This year, OCR will be sponsoring the Learner of the Year award and OCR Director of Skills and Employment Charlotte Bosworth will present the award.

www.vqday.org.uk

JUNE

24/25

Whole Education Summer Conference and Awards Dinner

York (tbc)

Whole Education is a partnership of like-minded schools, organisations and individuals that believe that all young people should have a fully rounded education, developing the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to help them thrive in life and work.

OCR works in partnership with Whole Education and will be exhibiting at the Whole Education Summer Conference in York.

www.wholeeducation.org

26/27

National Association of Teachers of English Annual Conference

Newcastle (tbc)

OCR is delighted to return as sponsors of this key event for all English education professionals. NATE's 52nd Annual Conference will be themed 'Brave New World', and will feature a range of workshops alongside an exhibition. Visit the OCR stand to meet our team of English subject specialists. There will also be a workshop entitled 'Creative Responses to 19th Century Texts' where teachers can hear Stephen Lucas, Head of English and key developer of materials for GCSE English, discuss how texts and context from the 19th century can be opened up for study for both GCSE and A Level.

www.nate.org.uk

To join OCR at these events, visit www.ocr.org.uk/events to find out more

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