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# Research Round-Up

Research Round-Up presents a selection of educational research and statistical reports from a range of government departments, educational agencies, research organisations and other sources – summarised by the Research Team at Learning and Teaching Scotland. Research Round-Up can be found on the [LTS website](#)



## How to find information that is relevant to you

On the next page, the summary titles are grouped by **keyword**, allowing you to find all the information on a certain topic. Each article title has been hyperlinked to take you directly to the relevant research summary. You may find that the range of research evidence will support you in implementing key aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

## Using the information

Research Round-Up does not claim to be comprehensive and the reports included have not been quality assured.

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## Achievement

Sherbert Research (2009), **Customer Voice Research – Aspirations and the Children and Young People Segmentation**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings from research which explored the aspirations of young people in England, including how aspirations are developed, influenced, shared and communicated. Researchers conducted 12 paired depth interviews with children and young people aged 11 to 17 throughout the week commencing 15 June 2009. Six interviews were conducted with girls and six with boys. Six participants completed a pre-interview task such as a short questionnaire and/or journals relating to their aspirations. Three categories of young people were identified: those with high ambitions, those who were anxious and unsure, and those who broke the rules. Young people with high ambitions were motivated in school, had already determined a potential career and back-up plan, and experienced a range of positive relationships. Young people classified as anxious and unsure did not enjoy school and were unclear how to achieve a positive future. Typically this group preferred practical to academic learning and did not have strong career plans. They did, however, have a significant amount of family input and support. The group classified as breaking the rules appeared to be re-active and focused more on the short term rather than the longer term. Most were unclear what career they wanted to follow and their families appeared to be a source of stress.

Sharp C et al (2009), **The Influence of Relative Age on Learner Attainment and Development**, Slough: International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive. [Link](#)

This thematic probe presents the key findings from a review of research evidence to investigate the influence of relative age on learner attainment and development in an international context. The review explores issues such as the extent to which the age of learners relative to other pupils in their year group affected their attainment and development, and whether relative age affects the attainment of some groups or types of learners more than others. Findings are drawn from 18 research studies published from 2000 to 2008 conducted in Australia, Chile, the UK and America. In addition, further information was used which had been gathered through key contacts in 13 countries and states. Research indicated that pupils who are younger in their year group do not perform as well as their peers in subjects such as maths and reading. In America and Chile, studies found that younger pupils often had to repeat a school year and research from the UK and America indicates that relatively younger pupils are often identified as having special educational needs. There appeared to be little direct evidence that relative age affects the attainment of one group or type of learner more than others.

## Assessment

Scottish Qualifications Authority (2009), **The Assessment Systems of Finland and Queensland**, Glasgow: SQA.

[Link](#)

This report presents the findings of a project which reviewed the assessment systems of Finland and Queensland to identify issues related to the operation of a flexible internal assessment system. The project involved the review of websites and relevant publications from the Queensland Studies Authority, the Finnish National Board of Education, the Finnish Matriculation Examination Board and the Finnish Education Evaluation Council. Findings indicated that internal assessment allowed learning and teaching to be aligned more closely with assessment and teachers felt a sense of ownership of the system. There appears to be a need for rigour in the internal assessment system in order to maintain external credibility. This can have an impact in terms of time, personnel and other resources. Despite a rigorous process, it was still necessary for students to undertake an external assessment when leaving formal education in order to demonstrate that students who had participated in internal assessments only could perform at the same level as students who had participated in external assessments only.

European Commission Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2009), **National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results**, Brussels: Eurydice. [Link](#)

This thematic report presents the findings of a study which provided a comparative review of the development, aims and organisation of national tests in countries in the Eurydice network. The study also aimed to determine how test results are used in the educational career of individual pupils as well as at school and system levels. The report draws on tests from 2008/09 at primary and secondary level. There appears to be a variety of assessment methods used in Europe, including internal, external, formative and summative assessment. The most frequently used method of assessment is continuous assessment. Three main categories of tests were identified, including tests to summarise the attainment of pupils at the end of specific educational stages. The results of these tests can have a significant impact on pupils' school careers. The second category of tests is standardised assessments, which are used to monitor and evaluate schools or the education system as a whole. The third category of tests is formative assessment, which is used to support the learning process and clarify the individual learning needs of pupils. The results of these tests are then used to tailor personalised follow-up support and teaching.

## Assessment continued

Mons N (2009) **Theoretical and Real Effects of Standardised Assessment**, Brussels: Eurydice. [Link](#)  
(The link is available alongside the main National Testing report).

This literature review was used as a background paper for the Eurydice *National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results* paper. The review explores the macro-political conceptual model of standardised assessment and the micro-policy level of the school and classroom to establish how assessment is expected to guide teachers' and pupils' activities. The review states that standardised assessment was introduced into education in order to measure pupil attainment as an indication of the quality of the education system. Additionally, it acts as a link between those responsible for delivering educational services, such as schools and teachers, and those at the national administrative level. This form of assessment is also expected to provide information on education to people outside the school system, in particular parents. At the micro-policy level, standardised assessment is expected to co-ordinate the actions of local educational participants and the decisions taken at the macro-policy level. The author argues that standardised assessment shifts the focus from managing education systems to the school and the classroom.

## Health and wellbeing

New Economic Forum (2009), **Backing the Future: Why Investing in Children is Good for Us All**, London: Action for Children. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings of the Happiness Counts project, which aimed to explore the impact of wellbeing on children's futures in Britain. A range of research methods was used, including a literature review of policy documents and academic literature and a secondary analysis of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development data. A Young Person's Reference Group also provided input throughout the project. The report aims to provide an argument for increased investment in support for children by exploring the current economic impact of a failure to provide adequate support. Findings indicate that over 20 years, the cost to the economy of coping with current social problems, for example obesity and mental health, would be approximately £4 trillion. Researchers suggest that if the UK Government were to provide funding for a dual investment package, such as targeted interventions and universal childcare, this would help tackle the approximately £1.5 trillion economic cost of social problems. The report also suggests that services which encourage collaborative working between professionals and children in the design and delivery of projects are an important factor in achieving and promoting greater child wellbeing.

## Higher education

Bates P, Pollard E, Usher T and Oakely J (2009), **Who is heading for HE? Young People's Perceptions of, and Decisions About, Higher Education**, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings of a research study which explored the attitudes and intentions of young people in England towards higher education. Research is drawn from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England wave 4, which involved interviews with 11,000 young people, approximately 17 years old, conducted during spring and summer 2007. Findings indicated that young people generally had positive views of higher education and recognised the benefits of a degree in the labour market. Young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to also identify social and personal development benefits. More than 55% of 16 and 17-year-olds in the study stated they were likely to apply to university and this increased to 76% for level two achievers. The level two achievers that are most likely to apply to university include females, black and minority ethnic groups, young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and those who had positive school experiences. Young white men, in particular those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, were least likely to apply to university. Approximately one-third of participants who wanted to apply to higher education were unsure of their decision as a result of financial concerns.

## Inclusion

Berridge D, Henry L, Jackson S and Turney D (2009), **Looked After and Learning – Evaluation of the Virtual School Head Pilot**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings of the Virtual School Head for Looked After Children project in 11 pilot authorities in England. The Virtual School Head acted as a co-ordinator in local authorities to instigate improvements in the education of looked after children. The pilot projects ran from 2007 to 2009 and research was conducted from October 2008 to June 2009. Four of the 11 authorities also piloted private tutoring under a scheme funded by the HSBC Education Trust. Researchers used a number of sources, including Department for Children, Schools and Families statistics, progress reports and interviews with Virtual School Heads, social workers, foster and residential carers, designated teachers and young people. Findings indicated that over the research period the 11 pilot authorities performed well in comparison to the national average, and that most authorities showed improvement in GCSE results. Examples of good practice included an innovative governors' model for the virtual school, a dedicated phone line for help with homework, taking children from the virtual school to concerts, workshops, museums and art galleries, and ensuring that looked after children had the opportunity to learn a musical instrument.

## Inclusion continued

Ridge T (2009), **Living with Poverty: A Review of the Literature on Children's and Families' Experiences of Poverty**, London: Department for Work and Pensions. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings of a qualitative review of research published in the UK over the last 10 years on low-income families and poverty. In particular the report focuses on the impact of living with poverty. Research was drawn from a wide range of sources, such as academic and non academic research studies and engagement activities. Children living in poverty experienced reduced opportunities to participate in shared social activities due to the financial cost and inadequate or expensive public transport. This restricted the opportunities they had to make and sustain friendships with their peers. They also appeared to experience restricted school opportunities due to their parents' inability to pay for resources such as study guides, uniforms and school trips. Children often experienced bullying as a result of poor quality clothing, lack of school uniform and their inability to participate in some social activities. Poor quality housing and the additional responsibilities, such as housework or caring activities, which some children faced, often had a negative impact on studying, sleeping and their general health and wellbeing. Children indicated they were concerned about their family's financial situation, the threat of homelessness and tension at home.

## Leadership

Matthews P (2009), **How do School Leaders Successfully Lead Learning?**, Nottingham: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. [Link](#)

This review explores how school leaders in England could create a learning community which would improve learning for all pupils. Included in the review are the measures which some school leaders have implemented to attract, appoint, develop and retain good quality teachers. The review draws on Ofsted inspection reports, research reports and policy documents. Inspection reports indicate that headteachers should be engaged in the design and delivery of learning and the methods of engaging with staff and pupils. In some schools there also appears to be an interest in pedagogic leadership and headteachers undertaking some teaching commitment. A recent research study identified the key characteristics of effective school leaders, which included motivating staff to improve outcomes for pupils in their schools. Additionally, the cumulative effect which good quality teaching has on pupils is discussed and used as a basis for suggesting a new model of teacher development for newly qualified teachers. It is also suggested that good school leaders should have significant interaction with new staff. Case study reports indicate that effective continuing professional development (CPD) should involve multi-layered approaches, which include in-school opportunities, local CPD opportunities, school networks and targeted use of national CPD provision.

## School improvement and performance

BMG Research (2009), **Customer Perception Tracking Research Parents Survey: Final Report – Waves 1–3**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

[Link](#)

A report which presents the findings from a Customer Perception Tracking survey of parents with children aged 0 to 19 in England. It was conducted as part of a three-year study of key audiences, including parents, the public and young people aged 11 to 19. Topics included the early years, parental involvement, child safety and wellbeing, and quality of education. Wave 3 interviews were conducted from December 2008 to January 2009 and a total of 1016 interviews were conducted. Approximately 93% of parents felt early years education was important and more mothers (95%) were likely to indicate it was important than fathers (87%). More than 90% of parents indicated they preferred to be involved with their child's education. Approximately three-quarters of parents did not feel there was a problem with bullying at their child's school. However, attitudes differed according to the age of the child, with parents of children at Key Stage 3 and in sixth form most likely to feel that bullying was a problem (29% and 30%, respectively). Parents were mainly positive about the quality of education, with 95% indicating early years was of good quality, 94% indicating primary education was of good quality and 80% indicating secondary education was of good quality.

BMG Research (2009), **Customer Perception Tracking Research Public Survey: Final Report – Waves 1–3**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

[Link](#)

A report which presents findings from a Customer Perception Tracking survey of members of the general public in England. It was conducted as part of a three-year study of key audiences, including parents, the public and young people aged 11 to 19. Topics included the early years, parental involvement, child safety and wellbeing, and the quality of education. Wave 3 interviews were conducted from December 2008 to January 2009 and a total of 1000 interviews took place. Approximately 87% of respondents believed that early years education was important. Almost three-quarters of respondents felt that bullying was a problem to some degree in English schools, but men were less likely to indicate bullying was a problem than women. Almost 90% of respondents indicated that the current quality of early years and primary education was good. In contrast, 70% of respondents indicated that secondary education was of good quality.

## School improvement and performance continued

BMG Research (2009), **Customer Perception Tracking Research Young People Survey: Final Report – Waves 1–3**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. [Link](#)

A report which presents findings from a Customer Perception Tracking survey of young people in England aged 11 to 19. It was conducted as part of a three-year study of key audiences, including parents, the public and young people aged 11 to 19. Topics included parental involvement, child safety and wellbeing, and the quality of education. Wave 3 interviews were conducted from December 2008 to January 2009 and 1005 interviews took place. Most young people (80%) stated their parents were involved in their education and 95% said they felt supported by their parents in their school work. While 18% of young people believe that bullying is a problem to some extent in their school, most of those interviewed (81%) do not believe that bullying is a problem. Those at Key Stage 3 are most likely to indicate that bullying is a problem. Young people in each stage of education generally indicated that school/college staff dealt effectively with bullying. The majority of young people interviewed (97%) rated primary schools as good or very good and secondary schools were also rated highly by most respondents (91%).

Blatchford P et al (2009), **Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings of a research study which aimed to gather reliable data on the deployment and characteristics of support staff in English and Welsh schools. This report focuses on Strand 1 of the research, which involved large-scale surveys in 2004, 2006 and 2008. These surveys included the Main School Questionnaire, the Support Staff Questionnaire and the Teacher Questionnaire. The findings indicated that there had been a significant increase in the number of support staff, in particular in the number of teaching assistants. The main reasons for the increase in support staff included the number of pupils with special educational needs, new school initiatives and changes in school budgets. Most support staff were female, aged 36 or over and classified themselves as being from a white ethnic background. Approximately 35% had qualifications above GCSE level and 9% had no qualifications. Almost 1 in 5 support staff worked full-time hours and over two-thirds worked additional hours. There appeared to be a significant decrease in support staff being paid for working additional hours.

## Statistics

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009), **Highlights from Education at a Glance 2009**, Paris: OECD. [Link](#)

This book presents key education indicators taken from the OECD's Education at a Glance 2009. Topics featured include education levels, whether these have risen over time and whether the education systems in OECD countries are meeting the needs of the workforce. Other topics include the social benefits of education, the incentives to encourage people to participate in education and spending levels on education. In addition, the book also discusses the amount of time that both teachers and students spend in the classroom, class sizes, job satisfaction and classroom behaviour. The latest findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey are also discussed. The significance of each key indicator is explained and key trends identified. Links to further information are also provided.

Scottish Government (2009), **Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from the 2007/2008 Scottish Household Survey**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government. [Link](#)

A report which presents the latest findings from the Scottish Household Survey, an ongoing survey based on a sample of the general population of private households. The survey covers a wide range of topics and aims to provide information on the composition, characteristics and behaviours of households in Scotland. Approximately one-quarter of adults had no qualifications, but approximately 23% of adults were participating in education or training at the time of interview with participation levels highest amongst the youngest age group (16–24). University courses were the most common form of education for this age group. Satisfaction with schooling appears to be high, with 92% of parents of school-aged children satisfied with the education their child's school provides, 88% satisfied with the amount of information about their child's progress and 80% satisfied with school recommendations for external support for their child. There were slight differences between satisfaction regarding the feedback on their child between parents living in the 15% most deprived areas (90% were satisfied) and parents living in other areas (87%).

## Statistics continued

Angle H, Fearn A, Elston D, Bassett C and McGinival S (2009), **Teachers' Workloads Diary Survey 2009**, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

[Link](#)

A report presenting findings from the teachers' workloads diary survey on the hours and working patterns of 1572 teachers in maintained primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales. Most categories of teacher, with the exception of secondary heads of department/faculty and special school classroom teachers, work over 50 hours per week. The number of hours worked by primary classroom teachers has decreased from 52.8 in 2000 to 51.2 in 2009. The number of hours worked by secondary classroom teachers has not changed significantly since 2000. The number of hours worked by secondary heads of department/faculty has decreased from 52.9 in 2008 to 49.5 in 2009. The total number of hours worked by special school classroom teachers has decreased significantly between 2008 and 2009 from 48.3 hours to 42.8 hours. Primary headteachers are most likely to feel they are expected to do things, such as administration, that are not part of their job and are unable to do things, such as spending time with pupils, that should be part of their job most or all of the time. Secondary classroom teachers and heads of department/faculty would like more time for planning and preparation, while primary classroom teachers would like to spend more time teaching.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2009), **Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Institutions Longitudinal Survey of the 2004/05 cohort**, Cheltenham: HESA. [Link](#)

This report presents the findings from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Institutions Longitudinal Survey of the 2004/05 cohort in the UK. This survey aimed to gather data relating to the destinations and activities of UK graduates three and a half years after graduation. In 2008 three-quarters of graduates were in full-time work, including self-employment, and approximately 6.1% were in part-time employment. Only 2.6% were unemployed. Graduates with postgraduate qualifications were most likely to be in full-time employment (78.8%), followed by those with a first degree (75.7%) and graduates with other undergraduate qualifications (71.1%). Statistics indicated that there was a higher proportion of male graduates (80.5%) in full-time work than female graduates (73.0%) and female graduates were more likely to be in part-time employment than male graduates (9.2% as opposed to 3.5%). In 2008, 81.1% of UK domiciled graduates were employed in 'graduate occupations'. The median salary of UK domiciled leavers who graduated from a full-time course and were now in full-time employment was £24,500. Approximately two-thirds of graduates who were undertaking further study or work were aiming for a postgraduate qualification.

## Statistics continued

Scottish Government (2009), **SQA Examination Results in Scottish Schools: 2008/09**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government. [Link](#)

This publication presents statistics on the pre-appeal attainment of pupils in Scottish schools at national and education authority levels. The statistics relate to the 2009 exam diet and present cumulative attainment figures for pupils in publicly funded secondary schools, rather than annual exam results for all examination candidates. Findings indicated that attainment by the end of SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 has remained stable in recent years and is greater for females than males in all stages and categories. Ninety-two per cent of pupils gained awards in English and Maths at SCQF level 3 (eg Standard Grade Foundation) or better by the end of S4. Thirty-five per cent attained five or more awards at SCQF level 5 (eg Standard Grade Credit) or better by the end of S4. By the end of S5, 23% of the previous year's S4 year group had attained three or more awards at SCQF level 6 (Higher) or better and, by the end of S6, 20% of the S4 year group from two years previously had attained five or more awards at SCQF level 6 (Higher) or better. Thirteen per cent obtained at least one award at SCQF level 7 (Advanced Higher).

Scottish Government (2009), **Pre-school and Childcare Statistics**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government. [Link](#)

This publication presents statistics on childcare centres and childminders registered with the Care Commission in Scotland. It also includes statistics on childcare staff. Findings indicate that in January 2009 there were 4274 registered childcare centres, a decrease on 4336 in January 2008, and that of these centres 4119 were operating, around 148 fewer than in 2008. Additionally, there were 2645 centres that provided local authority funded pre-school education. The number of registered childminders decreased from 6055 in January 2008 to 6039 in January 2009, but if inactive childminders are excluded this figure is 5534. A total of 196,750 children attended childcare centres during the census week and 28,980 attended childminders. These figures may include some double counting as children are counted once for each centre and/or childminder they attend. Ninety-six per cent of children eligible, or 97,200 in total, were registered for the ante-pre-school or pre-school year of education, similar to the previous year. Seventy per cent had access to a General Teaching Council for Scotland registered teacher during census week, slightly higher than in 2008. This includes children whose access was to a teacher providing only ad hoc or occasional support to the centre during census week.

## Vocational education

Awodeyi T and Rittie T (2009), **Employers' Views on Improving the Vocational Education and Training System**, Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Educational Research. [Link](#)

This report from Australia presents the findings of a study which explored employers' views on vocational education and training (VET), and ways they could engage with the system. Findings are drawn from the 2005 and 2007 NCVER Surveys of Employer Use and Views on the VET system. Three means of engagement were identified and are discussed in the report, including having vocational qualifications as part of a job requirement, employing apprentices and trainees, and using nationally recognised training. The study found that employers are generally satisfied that the VET system meets their skills needs (50%). Those who are dissatisfied with the system (10%) believe the relevance of skills taught should be revised and training should be more practical and specific. Employers recommended that, in order to improve the VET system, training should be tailored more specifically to specific industries and a degree of flexibility should be introduced. In particular small businesses indicated that there should be greater flexibility in the timing, structure and delivery of training. It was also suggested that access to training opportunities in regional areas should be improved and there was a need for greater government funding.

Learning and Teaching Scotland  
The Optima, 58 Robertson Street  
Glasgow G2 8DU  
Customer Services 08700 100 297  
enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk  
www.LTScotland.org.uk

