Reasons to be cheerful about the new GCSE English examinations
understanding and responding to the positives in the new grading and accountability systems

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Introduction

GCSEs are currently undergoing the most radical series of reforms – in design, content, grading and accountability – since they were introduced in 1987. There is cross-party agreement about the need for these reforms and the political policies that underpin them are rational and progressive – essentially to raise overall attainment in England’s schools and to reduce the ‘tail’ of students who leave school with poor qualifications or none. However, neither the two Coalition parties nor Labour will explain the changes in terms that appeal to and inspire the schools which are required to implement them. As a result, the changes are widely viewed negatively and fearfully, as ‘another stick to beat schools with’, rather than, as intended, as an opportunity to raise the quality of education and to make teaching and learning more stimulating, effective, equitable and enjoyable for teachers and students.

This paper sets out the policies and aspects of the new grading and accountability systems designed to achieve them as a series of positives with the view of helping schools to respond to them to their students’ best advantage. This is now urgent because the new system is designed particularly to raise the attainment of students assessed as moderately and less able (Positive 5) by developments in pedagogy promoted by an HM Inspectorate restored to its former influence (Positive 7) and supported by research (Positive 8). Unless the implications are understood, schools are likely to underperform in the new GCSE examinations and to do so for several years until they understand what is necessary.

The DfE will provide no guidance for schools on how to respond most effectively to the new GCSEs and their grading and accountability arrangements. This is similar to the lack of guidance or advice on how schools should respond to the new National Curriculum without levels. This refusal arises partly from the Government’s wish to promote competition between schools as the most effective way of raising student attainment, a policy that also underlies the promotion of academies and free schools, and partly from a reaction against the centrally-led target-driven policies on raising attainment of previous governments, particularly the Labour governments from 1997.
These policies had established the National Strategies, led from the DfE and delivered by Capita, which had created a formulaic approach to lesson delivery, and a curriculum and assessment advice body, eventually called the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA). This had in turn promoted a policy, adopted in due course by the Strategies, of ever more detailed assessment of students’ work as a way of raising attainment with, in sequence, National Curriculum sublevels, assessment focuses and Assessing Pupil Progress (APP), each underpinning National Curriculum tests in Years 2, 6 and 9.

Neither the Strategies’ nor QCDA’s approach was based on any significant research and by October 2008 the Government had accepted that neither had delivered improvements in education in England as measured by international comparisons. The Secretary of State (Ed Balls) abolished the KS3 National Curriculum tests and announced that the Strategies would be wound up and not replaced when Capita’s contract ended in March 2011. The decision to legislate to create Ofqual was taken at the same time.

QCDA was left in existence and abolished in 2012 following transfer of its regulatory powers to Ofqual in 2010 and its responsibility for the remaining National Curriculum tests to the Standards and Testing Agency in 2011.

England is accordingly undergoing complex reforms of school curriculum and assessment without guidance on how to respond effectively to them. Secondary schools are left to choose between advice from various competing sources: the Awarding Bodies which, as providers of examinations, have a commercial interest in maintaining their market share; commercial providers of advice such as PiXL and Building Learning Power; and professional bodies such as the Association of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Association of Teachers of English.

The Government’s lack of guidance for secondary schools on major curriculum and assessment reform is regrettable for several reasons. First, it may be contributing to the “stalled” performance of secondary schools described by the Ofsted Annual Report 2013/14 (Ofsted 2014B, pages 4 – 9). By contrast, primary schools are more successful – few have become academies so that Local Authority primary curriculum support teams have remained largely intact.

Second, lack of frankness about the failure of the previous governments’ assessment-driven approach is causing greater pressure on teachers who, in many schools, are being required both to prepare to teach the new GCSE specifications and to continue formulaic teaching and data-driven assessment policies which have been discredited. This seems to be a major reason for a rising number of teachers leaving teaching in their early years in the profession. Research by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers indicates that the number of teachers leaving teaching within a year of gaining qualified teacher status had almost doubled in 6 years, from 20 per cent in 2005 to 38 per cent in 2011 (Wiggins 2015). This exodus is continuing and the DfE has now commissioned the University of Nottingham
to research the causes of teachers leaving the profession and returning to it. The last such research, commissioned under pressure of teacher resignations, was in 2003 when Smithers and Robinson found that 14.1 per cent of teachers left teaching completely in 2002 with workload, government initiatives and stress given as the main reasons. This situation led to rapid improvement in teacher contracts and salary increases in the form of teaching and learning responsibility payments (TLRs). However, at that time almost all state-funded schools were owned by or funded through Local Education Authorities. National changes in working conditions and payment are no longer possible when most secondary schools are academies, nor is there likely to be significant extra funding during the current period of financial austerity. At the same time the numbers of students in schools is rising, so a recruitment and retention crisis is imminent. In these circumstances, explicit DfE and Ofsted guidance to schools to prioritise research-led teaching and learning (as actually intended by Government and HMI) and discontinue discredited teaching and assessment practices would help with staff retention.

Third and most urgent for our purposes, failure to understand and respond to the imperatives of the new grading and accountability systems will cause students to underperform in the new GCSEs with unfortunate effects on their life chances and the school’s reputation.

Against this negative background, it is worth pointing out the positives of the new GCSE grading and accountability system because, when implemented, they will unquestionably improve the quality of teaching and learning in England. They will restore greater professional autonomy to English teachers and improve morale. And when the new system has proved to be reliable and led to higher attainment in international comparisons, current restrictions like the exclusion of short stories, non-British and media texts from GCSE English Literature (themselves the result of a political trade-off) will no doubt be relaxed.

It is hoped that, by making the positives explicit, schools will be more ready to respond to them. Each is accompanied by any apparent caveats. Each is fully referenced and supported by additional information in the appendices.

Positive 1: a rational and progressive political policy

The new grading and accountability systems reflect two policy objectives of the Coalition and previous Labour governments. The first is a response to the fact that, while GCSE and A Level grade rates rose steadily year on year from 1987 to 2012, this rising attainment has not been reflected in international comparisons – PISA, PIACCE, PIRLS and TIMSS (see Appendix 1). The previous Government therefore created Ofqual with a statutory remit to ensure consistency of standards between Awarding Bodies and year on year, and the present Government has extended this remit to include international qualifications taken by state-funded schools in England such as IGCSE. The first policy objective is therefore to ensure that examinations set by the various Awarding Bodies are valid, reliable and
consistent in standard year on year, and that they make demands on students and teachers comparable to those of higher-achieving jurisdictions.

The second policy objective reflects governments’ longstanding concern about low attainment by less able students. England has one of the longest attainment ‘tails’ among advanced countries – students who leave school with poor qualifications or none. In the first Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAACE), England’s 16 – 24 year-olds came 22nd of 24 jurisdictions in literacy and 21st of 24 jurisdictions in numeracy (Department of Business Innovation and Skills 2014, pages 32/33 – see Appendix 1 to this paper).

Rectifying this, like raising standards as measured by international comparisons, was one of three policies outlined by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in their foreword to The Importance of Teaching White Paper in November 2010 (DfE 2010). It has led to the pupil premium; the establishment of the Educational Endowment Foundation with £110 million funding to research ways of raising attainment of disadvantaged pupils; the creation of a National Curriculum without levels; and the requirement on Ofsted to report on schools’ progress in ‘closing the gap’.

The implementation of these policies since 2010 has led to cross-party agreement that the new GCSE specifications and the grading system and accountability systems based on them should be:

- **more demanding** in examination (end of course only), content and assessment (more challenging questions)
- **consistent in standard** between the various Awarding Bodies
- **internationally referenced** to standards in more successful jurisdictions
- **referenced to national standards over time** by national reference tests in English and Mathematics
- **equitable** so that all students’ grades count towards Attainment 8 and Progress 8 with higher expectations of students assessed as moderately and less able
- **focussed on effective teaching** through accepting evidence provided by HM Inspectorate and others and by commissioning formal research into effective teaching methods through the Education Endowment Foundation and the London Schools Excellence Fund.

The aim is to provide public recognition of schools that do well with all their students, including the less able and disadvantaged, and to expose those that are coasting or concentrate on the more able.
**Positive 2 : all GCSE Boards with the same standards and grade rates**

The new grading system replaces A* to G with 9 to 1, beginning with English and Mathematics in 2017 with the other subjects following in 2018. The new grades will be aligned by statistical prediction with the present grades in three grade-groups:

- new grades 9 – 7 will have the same proportion of students as A*/A
- new grades 6 – 4 will have the same proportion of students as B/C
- new grades 3 – 1 will have the same proportion of students as D – G

Ofqual gives the following examples of the new grading system for English and Mathematics (Ofqual 2014).

**Figure 1 : Ofqual examples of new grading system**

Other aspects of the new grades are that grade 9 will be limited to the top 20 cent of students attaining grades 7 and above, with 30 per cent of these students receiving grade 8 and 50 per cent grade 7 (Ofqual 2014, paras 55 – 68); and the new mid-grade 5 will be aligned with average performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland so is more demanding than current grade C (paras 39 – 50). Within each grade-group the mark ranges for each grade will be set arithmetically as at present.

The method of deriving the numbers of students awarded each grade is a development of present arrangements. The total numbers are calculated in advance using predictions by the Awarding Bodies together with evidence from the students’ Key Stage 2 test results.
This is a feature of Ofqual’s policy of seeking comparable outcomes year on year, as required by its statutory remit to ensure comparability of standards between Awarding Bodies and over time, but will be further tightened to ensure no Awarding Body can take advantage of others by setting an easier examination or marking an examination more generously.

This requires the final abandonment of criterion-referencing as part of the awarding process. As Ofqual points out, GCSE has never actually been criterion-referenced (Ofqual 2014, 25). The Awarding Bodies have traditionally followed a policy of “comparable performance” by which grade boundaries have been set by a trade-off of senior examiners’ judgements of the quality of answers in relation to previous years (criterion-referencing) and calculations based on historical statistics. This process has led to gradual grade inflation with larger numbers of higher grades awarded year on year.

The Awarding Bodies decided to prioritise “comparable outcomes” over “comparable performance” in 2002 to prevent the first cohort to take the reformed A Levels from being unfairly disadvantaged. This ensured that the national proportion of students of students attained each grade remained the same.

Since its inception in April 2010, Ofqual has required Awarding Bodies to use “comparable outcomes” rather than “comparable performance” as better fulfilling its statutory remit of ensuring comparability between the Awarding Bodies and year on year. With the new GCSEs, Ofqual has decided that grades will be awarded on the basis of statistical prediction only, with no reference to examiners’ judgement of performance in relation to previous years. Ofqual’s rationale for this is expressed bluntly, seeking “an approach that has to work in a system in which different exam boards provide competing products in the same subject – a peculiarity of the British system that provides additional challenges to standard setting” (Ofqual 2014, 27).

For the new GCSEs these challenges are to be met in three ways:

- all Awarding Bodies are required to use the same tightly-drawn subject content and assessment objectives resulting in very similar specifications and mark schemes
- continued and improved use of KS2 scores to refine predictions (Ofqual 2014, 94)
- using interboard screening of results data to improve comparability of standards between Awarding Bodies (Ofqual 2014, 95).

The aim is therefore for the various specifications in each subject to be marked and graded with such consistency between Awarding Bodies that they are in effect a single national test, as in other countries. For example, if an Awarding Body sets a paper which is ‘easier’ than those of others, it will not be allowed to generate a larger proportion of higher grades. The use of KS2 scores and interboard screening of results data will reveal this anomaly before grades are awarded and Ofqual’s statutory powers to ensure
consistency will allow it to require the Awarding Body to alter its grade boundaries appropriately.

Under this system a similar proportion of students will receive each grade each year. There may be changes in national cohort performance over time and, to identify this, national reference tests in English Language and Mathematics will be taken by a representative sample of 16 year olds each year. These tests will be trialled in 2016 and taken fully early in 2017 with the new GCSEs in those subjects being used to establish equivalent performance standards for the national reference tests (Ofqual 2014, 99). As students will take the same national reference test each year, changes in the standards of GCSE English Language and Mathematics over time will be apparent and changes in the proportions of each grade permitted accordingly.

Caveat

The great advantage of the new system is that it will be impossible for an Awarding Body to achieve higher grades by setting papers that are easier than those of others or marking papers more generously. If it tries, Ofqual will require it to change its grade boundaries to ensure parity with the other Bodies. Initially this would seem to have no affect on grade rates so that the same proportion of, say, grade 7s (no more but also no fewer) would be achieved by an easier paper. But the effects of the two new external controls on the GCSE system – alignment of standards with higher achieving jurisdictions and the national reference tests – are as yet unknown. In principle they should provide objective evidence if an Awarding Body attempted to set easier papers or mark papers more generously which may result in further changes in grade mark boundaries which would disadvantage schools using the specification.

This issue has already arisen in relation to an AQA specimen paper for new GCSE Mathematics which has been criticized by other Awarding Bodies and the DfE as being insufficiently challenging, prompting concerns that Awarding Bodies may still attempt to maintain or increase their market share by this means (Stewart 2015). It seems that aspects of AQA’s sample English Language material are less demanding than that of another Awarding Body – see Appendix 2. Crucially Ofqual is charged by statute to ensure than no Awarding Body can gain advantage over others, so schools will be able to choose specifications solely on their educational qualities.

Positive 3: accountability focused on value-added

From 2016 secondary schools will be required to publish four accountability measures:

- Attainment 8 – each student’s best 8 GCSE results including English Language or English Literature (one double weighted if both are taken in the same series), Mathematics (double weighted), 3 other EBacc subjects and 3 others from a
permitted list; the school’s Attainment 8 figure is the average of its students’ Attainment 8s;

- Progress 8 – each student’s progress score from their KS2 test scores in Reading and Mathematics; this is calculated by relating each student’s Attainment 8 score to their Key Stage 2 test score in Reading and Mathematics using an annual matrix of average fine level scores (see Figure 2 and Appendix 4); the school’s Progress 8 is the average of its students’ Progress 8s;

- the percentage of students achieving a threshold measure in English and Mathematics; when the new GCSE examinations are taken, this will almost certainly be grade 5 as the new mid grade; and

- the percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate.

Schools will be required to publish these four figures in a standardised format on their website each year for easy comparison by parents and others. It appears that they will also be required to publish the school’s average point score for each GCSE subject.

**Figure 2 – example of Progress 8 calculation (source: DfE Powerpoint)**

Progress 8 will be the most important of the four measures. Schools will be judged primarily on their overall Progress 8 score to show those that add value to their students’ prior attainment at KS2 as against those that are coasting or, less obviously, those that prioritise their more able students. **If a school’s Progress 8 score is less than minus 0.5, i.e. less**
than half a GCSE grade, this will trigger an Ofsted inspection. On the other hand, schools with a Progress 8 score of plus 1.0 or more will be exempt from routine Ofsted inspections in the next academic year (DfE 2015, page 8). These decisions underline the primacy of Progress 8 in making judgements about schools.

The focus on Progress 8 has profound implications for teaching and learning for all students. These are addressed next.

Caveat

2016 is a dry-run for the calculation of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 using current point scores: A* = 8, A = 7, etc. These will transfer to numerical grades 9 to 1 for English Language, English Literature and Mathematics in 2017 and for other GCSE subjects in 2018. Owing to changes in the grading system, all schools’ point scores for English and Mathematics are likely to fall sharply between 2016 and 2017. This is illustrated at Appendix 3.

Other GCSEs apart from English and Mathematics (called ‘legacy GCSEs’ by the DFE) will move to an interim points system for 2017. This will also cause large falls in point scores for those subjects between 2016 and 2017 – see Appendix 3B. In 2018 all GCSEs will have moved to the 9 – 1 grades.

It is obviously important for schools to understand that falls in point scores between 2016 and 2017 are a consequence of the new grading system and are not directly related to quality of teaching.

Positive 4: equity for students of all abilities

Two features of the new grading system are directly relevant to schools’ examination results.

(a) Narrower mark ranges for the higher grades

The current top four grades (A* to C) are replaced with six grades (9 to 4) each with narrower mark ranges than at present. This will make it easier for students to move up a grade with appropriate teaching.

Ofqual has suggested that grades 6, 5 and 4 (replacing B/C) will be the same number of marks wide and suggests 11 for each rather than, as at present, 17 marks for grade B and 16 for grade C (Ofqual 2014, paras 88 – 93 and Annex C). Grades 9 to 7 (replacing A*/A) will be awarded in the proportions 20:30:50 respectively of candidates attaining marks above grade 6 (Ofqual 2014, Annex C).

As a corollary, the six top new grades carry considerably more points than the current top four – 39 of 45 points (86 per cent) as against 26 of 36 (72 per cent).
The implications of the new grading system are that most students are expected to continue to attain grades 9 – 4 (as they do A* - C at present) despite the fact that the examinations will be significantly more challenging than currently. **Finer grading with narrower mark ranges per grade will enable students to attain higher grades more readily if they are appropriately taught**, with a majority attaining mid-grade 5 (the international benchmark) or higher. The Government accordingly expects schools to respond effectively to the greater demands of the new GCSE specifications and to the opportunities provided by the new grading system, backed by a system of school accountability which includes a calculation of the value added in the five years since Key Stage 2.

**(b) Abolition of the C/D borderline**

Current school accountability by grades A* to C is replaced by Attainment 8 and Progress 8 in which all the GCSE grades count. At present, schools concentrate much of their energy at the C/D borderline to ensure that as many students as possible achieve grade C or above. Abolishing the C/D borderline means that schools will need to ensure that all their students attain the highest possible GCSE grades. For the first time there will be a fully unified assessment and accountability system at age 16. The amalgamation of GCE O Level and CSE as GCSE in 1987 was quickly followed by an accountability system in which only grades A to C, subsequently A* to C, were counted in school results tables. This ends for English and Mathematics in 2017 and other subjects in 2018.

The bottom four grades (D – G) are replaced by three grades (3 – 1). Arithmetically the new mark ranges for these lower grades will be wider than currently, the reverse of the position with grades 9 – 4, but this is equitable given the support for students assessed as moderately and less able by how Progress 8 is calculated (see next).

**Positive 5 : Progress 8 designed to support less able students**

When understood, the abolition of the C/D borderline so that all grades count towards Attainment 8 and Progress 8 will transform the teaching of students assessed as less able. Most obviously, raising a student’s expected performance from grade 2 to 3 has equal value for Attainment 8 to raising it from grade 7 to 8. **But Progress 8 will also mean that less able students will often make greater progress than able ones.**

Progress 8 is calculated by relating students’ Attainment 8 score to their score in the KS2 Reading and Mathematics tests, that is, each student’s Attainment 8 score is measured against average Attainment 8 score for students nationally having same KS2 attainment – see Figure 2 and Appendix 4. The scores are for 2013 in Figure 2 and for 2014 in Appendix 4. They are not significantly different and are likely to be similar in future years. If anything, owing to greater Government expectations at KS2 and increased pressure on primary schools, they will be higher.
The effect of Progress 8 can be shown most directly by considering a student’s Attainment 8 estimate in terms of GCSE grades by dividing the Attainment 8 estimate by 10, that is, the students best 8 permitted subjects (= 8) with English Language / English Literature and Mathematics double-weighted (=10). Referring to Appendix 4:

**Example 1.** For a student who enters Year 7 with the highest KS2 fine level score of 5.8 (i.e. close to Level 6 in Reading and Mathematics), the required Attainment 8 score is 76.32. Her expected average GCSE grades are 7.63 and she will therefore need to attain Grade 8 in more than half her Attainment 8 subjects if she is to have a positive Progress 8 score. If she attains grade 7 in all eight subjects (= 70), her Progress 8 will be minus 6.32. If she attains four grade 7s including one double-weighted and four grade 8s including one double-weighted (= 75), she will still have a minus Progress 8 score (-1.32). Only if she attains five grade 8s and three grade 7s with grade 8 for both English and Maths (= 77) will she attain a modest positive Progress 8 score (+0.68). If she attains grade 8 in all eight subjects (= 80), her Progress 8 will be +3.68.

Any grade 9s will secure a higher Progress 8, but grade 9 will be awarded only to the top 20 per cent of students nationally attaining grades 7 – 9. Grade 8 will be awarded only to the next 30 per cent of students attaining grades 7 – 9. These limitations will make attainment of the highest grades more challenging than others.

**Example 2.** For a student who enters Year 7 with a KS2 fine level score of 2.9, the required Attainment 8 score is 21.78. His expected average GCSE grades are therefore 2.18. This means that if he attains grade 3 in two Attainment 8 subjects and grade 2 in the others including English and Maths, his Progress 8 will be +0.22 (8 x 2 + 2 x 3 = 22). If one of the grade 3s is in English Language/Literature or Maths, Progress 8 will be +1.22; if both, +2.22. If this student were to attain grade 3 in all 8 subjects, his Progress 8 would be +8.12 (10 x 3 = 30 less 21.78) – far higher than the student attaining grade 8 in all subjects (3.68).

In line with government policy on ‘closing the gap’, Progress 8 has been designed to reward progress by moderately and less able students more than able ones. Schools therefore have a strong incentive to develop the teaching and learning of students assessed as moderately and less able. This incentive can be tracked up the Pupil progress matrix (Appendix 4). Less able students require lower attainment than their KS2 fine level score to register as positive Progress 8, viz:

- a student entering with 2.0 KS2 fine-level score has average Attainment 8 of 18.06 (= expected average grade 1.81) so that each net grade 2 attained shows as +1.94 Progress 8 (+3.96 if for English or Maths)
- 3.5 fine-level score requires average Attainment 8 of 26.98 so each net grade 3 shows as +3.02 Progress 8 (+6.04 if for English or Maths)
- 4.0 fine-level score requires average Attainment 8 of 36.55 so each net grade 4 shows as +3.45 Progress 8 (+6.90 if for English or Maths)
The matrix equalises at 4.4 fine-level score which requires 44.41 Attainment 8 and then reverses so that more able students require higher Attainment 8 than their KS2 fine level score to register as positive Progress 8, viz:

- 5.0 fine-level score requires 57.33 Attainment 8 so an average of grade 6 is required for + 2.67 Progress 8
- 5.5 fine-level score requires 69.72 Attainment 8 so an average of grade 7 is required for + 0.28 Progress 8

As mentioned, 5.8 is the highest permitted KS2 fine level score and requires five grade 8s including English and Maths to attain a positive Progress 8 score – see Example 1 above.

In summary, students entering secondary school with a fine-level score below 4.4 (which is close to the mid-point of the new 9 to 1 GCSE grades) will gain significantly more in terms of Progress 8 for each GCSE grade above expectation than students with a fine-level score above 4.4 for which the reverse is true. The Progress 8 system has been designed to require schools to focus their energies on the second of the Government’s (and cross-party) policy aims – raising the attainment of those who currently leave school with poor qualifications or none.

Positive 6: double-weighting for English Language / English Literature

The higher of students’ grades for English Language or English Literature will be double-weighted for Attainment 8 and Progress 8 provided both examinations are taken in the same series. This was originally seen as a desirable response to schools which were considering discontinuing English Literature, but it has two implications of which schools may not be fully aware.

First, if a student does better in English Language which is double-weighted, her English Literature score can be included (single weighted) in the ‘open group’ of subjects for Attainment 8. This is shown in the DfE presentation School accountability: Fairer measures, higher standards, slide 10 (Department for Education Powerpoint, 2014B) where Attainment 8 is calculated. English Literature grade 6 (double-weighted = 12) and English Language grade 5 provide 17 of the student’s total of 61 points, i.e. 28 per cent. English is therefore potentially, and in many cases will be actually, by far the largest contributory factor to students’ Attainment 8 and Progress 8. Some Heads of English have already argued successfully for a higher allocation of curriculum time in KS4.

Second, some schools seem to be planning to enter students assessed as less able for a non-EBacc English examination rather than GCSE in English Language or English Literature. These schools have evidently not understood the underlying imperatives of Progress 8, in particular the way it has been designed to support students with low attainment in the KS2 tests. Only GCSE English Language / English Literature will be
allowed to count in the English ‘slot’ in Attainment 8 and Progress 8 and be double-weighted. **Schools that do not enter students for GCSE English Language and English Literature, and do not prepare them fully for the examinations, will reduce the students’, and the school’s, Progress 8 score significantly.**

**Caveat – the end of ‘gaming’**

It has been suggested that some schools may teach students assessed as less able for GCSE English Language or English Literature and enter them for both examinations solely to obtain double-weighting. As absentees will probably be disallowed for double-weighting unless they provide a medical certificate, students would have to attend the examination, but would be double-weighted for the other English GCSE if they wrote little and were graded U.

Requiring students to attend an examination for which they have not been properly prepared would be cynical and may cause problems with the students and their parents. But there may be other reputational problems. It appears that schools will be required to publish their average point scores for each GCSE subject as well as their overall Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores. These will be published on the school’s website for easy reference by parents and others year on year. If a school were to focus, say, on English Language – not preparing students assessed as less able for English Literature but entering them for the examination to achieve double-weighting – there would be a significant discrepancy between the point scores for the two subjects which may raise doubts with intending parents. It would also lead to public criticism by Ofsted.

Overall, double-weighting together with Attainment 8 and Progress 8 will put an end to the ‘gaming’ that some schools have carried out. With other changes such as strict consistency of specifications, removing the advantage of early or multiple entries and bringing IGCSE into line with GCSE, there will be no alternative to a uniform, transparent examination system which is the norm in other countries. Within this, there will be no feasible alternative to preparing all the school’s students to do their best in GCSE English Language and English Literature as the country’s designated examination for 16 year olds in its mother tongue.

**Positive 7 : renewed emphasis on the quality of teaching**

The 2010 White Paper setting out the Coalition Government’s vision for education in England is titled *The Importance of Teaching*. It repeatedly emphasises the importance of the quality of teaching without, perhaps inevitably, being very clear about how this is to be achieved. This arose from a realisation, continued from the last years of the previous Labour government, that the National Strategies, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), the emphasis on repeated assessment and tracking in schools and rising GCSE and A level grade rates had all failed to raise England’s performance in international comparisons.
It also marked the success of a quiet campaign by HM Inspectorate. Since 1997, HMI had been limited to a training and monitoring role on behalf of Ofsted while guidance on teaching and learning was provided by the National Strategies and assessment was led by QCDA and its predecessors. The National Strategies introduced a formulaic lesson model which was fast-paced, directed at the whole class, with learning objective(s), a starter, episodes, learning evidenced immediately in writing and a plenary. This was introduced without any research evidence that it raised attainment, but was delivered year on year by consultants employed by Capita in every Local Authority in England.

Accompanying this reliance on the National Strategies to guide pedagogy, from 1990 Governments followed a target-driven model of raising attainment, led by QCDA, with increasingly detailed assessment criteria – National Curriculum levels, sublevels, assessment focusses (AFs) and Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) – against which teachers were required to assess students frequently to track progress. Again, this was implemented without any research evidence that it raised attainment except in terms of National Curriculum tests based on these same criteria.

By October 2008 the Government accepted that the National Strategies/QCDA approach had failed to raise educational standards as shown by international comparisons. The KS3 tests were abolished immediately, Capita’s contract to deliver the National Strategies would be terminated when it expired in March 2011 and the decision was taken to legislate to create Ofqual.

Following these decisions, HMI began to reassert its traditional role of surveying good practice in schools and publishing advice. For English, there were a series of progressive reports culminating in two major surveys which provided the necessary basis for rethinking English teaching: Excellence in English (Ofsted 2011) and Moving English forward : action to raise standards in English (Ofsted 2012). The second lists the other reports compiled during the period and is reproduced as Appendix 4 to this paper.

On the basis of this evidence, the HMI Subject Adviser for English, Phil Jarrett, and his colleagues set about persuading DfE (and teachers at meetings to which they were invited) that the worst excesses of the now discredited National Strategies needed modifying, in particular:

- outstanding English departments focus on learning rather than teaching.
- it is a myth that outstanding teaching is achieved by the teacher working hard.
- pace should be the pace of learning, not the pace of teaching.
- too many lessons attempted too many things – pupils need time to think.
- learning objectives should be seen as longer term than the lesson – what is the purpose of the unit and how does the lesson fit into this?
Other evidence from leading researchers was presented to DfE officials; for example, Robin Alexander who presented a detailed paper, *Improving oracy and classroom talk in English schools: achievements and challenges* at a DfE seminar on 20 February 2012 (Alexander 2012).

The outcome was a political compromise in the content and design of the new GCSE English specifications by which the preference of the Secretary of State (Michael Gove) for content-led specifications traditionally assessed was modified by the great majority of marks for Reading being awarded for open-ended questions requiring evaluation and comparison. The exclusion of non-British texts and short stories from English Literature is evidence that the compromise was hard-fought, but these restrictions will no doubt be lifted when the new specifications have proved reliable and led to higher attainment in international comparisons.

The new GCSE English Language sample papers provided by the Awarding Bodies indicate that:

- unseen texts have a higher linguistic demand than at present and will always include words and phrases that many students will not understand;
- unseen texts have a historical and cultural context; students will understand them better if they have read and discussed others of the same period and genre; and
- students will need confidence and resilience to do well on the new papers and these qualities can best be built up by frequent experience in making reasonable deductions and inferences about unfamiliar texts.

Each of these considerations also applies to English Literature both in the context of texts which are studied and in questions on unseen texts. The greater emphasis on literary unseen texts in English Language indicates a greater overlap between the two subjects than at present.

HMI’s view of the teaching and learning needed for students to do well in the new examinations, as indicated in its reports, can be summarised as follows:

- confidence and resilience are developed through challenging discussion of texts in which students are given the opportunity to develop and test their own ideas;
- wider reading enables students to develop ‘cultural capital’ – experience of a variety of texts to ‘place’ unseen texts historically and draw on this experience when reading and writing about them; reading for pleasure should be encouraged as part of this;
- experience of these needs to begin in Key Stage 3.
Caveat

HMI has, as yet, been largely unsuccessful in persuading schools to adopt this approach for two reasons. First, it lacks the resources to counteract the influence of the National Strategies from 1997 to 2011 when the Strategies/QCDA model was promoted in every Local Authority. Owing to lack of clear advice, many schools still require their teachers to teach according to the Strategies model and to assess students’ work frequently against level criteria. This is despite the introduction of a new National Curriculum without levels; the removal in 2013 of the requirement to report students’ teacher-assessed National Curriculum levels in English, Mathematics and Science to the DfE at the end of Key Stage 3 so that no record of students’ attainment is now held centrally between Year 6 and Year 11; and the decision that from 2016 education from 11 to 16 will be judged only on schools’ GCSE results.

Senior Leadership Teams’ continuation of discredited policies is due to the second reason for HMI’s failure to influence schools – the fact that most Ofsted inspections are carried out not by HMIs but by inspectors employed by contractors. These developed their senior experience of teaching and assessing teaching during the Strategies/QCDA period and tend to value Strategies-style teaching although it is discredited. Some still expect every student to show evidence of progress in lessons observed although this ‘progress criterion’ was removed from Ofsted observation schedules in 2009. Ofsted officially now accepts that progress cannot be shown in a single lesson and that expecting it encourages narrow, heavily teacher-directed learning, but not all contracted inspectors comply with this view.

Uncertainty about contracted inspectors’ compliance with the intentions of the Ofsted inspection framework make SLTs reluctant to abandon the Strategies/QCDA approach. **Fortunately the inspections by inspectors employed by contractors will end in July 2015 and from September inspections will be conducted again by HMIs together with other inspectors employed directly by Ofsted, led and supervised by HMIs.** This is discussed further at Positive 11 below.

The removal of detailed teaching and assessment requirements is intended to give teachers the freedom to develop lessons that will enable students to be successful in the new higher-demand GCSE examinations. However, many schools’ adherence to the discredited Strategies/QCDA model with formulaic lessons and frequent formal assessment is causing increasingly intolerable pressure on teachers when taken together with the need to maintain grade rates with current GCSE specifications and simultaneously to start teaching the new, very different specifications. As indicated on page 2, this seems to be a major cause of very high rates of premature resignation.

This problem needs addressing urgently in the interests of staff welfare, effective teaching and success in the new examinations. From an educational perspective, the new GCSE specifications require teachers to develop an exploratory, cognitively-aware style of teaching, understanding the more subtle and complex kinds of progression that this offers. If
appropriately designed and implemented, twice-yearly tests would provide sufficient evidence of cognitive enhancement and higher attainment, so that frequent criterion-referenced assessment would become unnecessary.

**Positive 8 : raising attainment with research-led teaching**

In November 2010 the Secretary of State (Michael Gove) announced a grant of £110 million to fund research over 15 years on improving the education of disadvantaged students. This was both in line with declared Coalition (and cross-party) policy and a reaction against education policies imposed by previous governments without significant research. In April 2011 the grant was awarded to a new charity, the Education Endowment Fund (EEF), which is managed by the Sutton and Impetus Trusts. EEF commissions research which is evaluated by independent academics for effectiveness and repeatability.

Accepting the value of this approach, the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has recently announced a fund of £100 million for the same purpose in Scotland which, in terms of population, is a much higher investment than in the EEF (Learmouth 2015).

The EEF projects whose results have been reported so far have not achieved significant educational outcomes, but these were small-scale, short-term and not derived from significant academic research.

For English, there is urgent need for research because the new GCSE examinations:

- use more challenging unseen and studied texts than at present
- award most marks for evaluation and comparison questions
- need to be taken by all students including those assessed as less able.

Fortunately there is already clear evidence, from two sources, of the kind of research that will prove most effective. The first relates to the limitations of instruction. Instruction is sometimes called IRE: *Initiation-response-evaluation*, or teacher (closed) question – student (recall) answer – teacher yes/no or correct/incorrect feedback. This has been identified as the ‘essential teaching exchange’ that differentiates classroom interaction from human interaction elsewhere, and it is the default teaching mode in Britain, the United States and perhaps worldwide.

It has long been evident that instruction is an inefficient method of developing students’ understanding because it relies on their working with information provided by the teacher in ways prescribed by her. As an example, Carol Ann Duffy’s poem *Prayer* might be set as an unseen poem for interpretation. It ends:

> Darkness outside. Inside, the radio’s prayer –
The last line may be glossed in an examination as some of the sea areas around the UK and Ireland used by BBC Radio for twice-daily weather forecasts to ships at sea.

A lower level response would identify “the radio’s prayer” as a metaphor but struggle to go further. A somewhat higher response would relate “Darkness” in the penultimate line to the dusk falling earlier in the poem and “the radio’s prayer” to the other sounds described there as sounds which give their hearers comfort. A higher response still would perceive a symbolic implication – that the poem presents its characters in darkness and needing guidance or at least reassurance in a secular age as sailors at sea do. The highest possible response might relate “the radio’s prayer” back to “the minims sung by a tree” in the first stanza as minims are long notes typically sung in hymns or plainsong, supported by “the distant Latin chanting of a train” in the second stanza, or explain that Finisterre means the end of the world and perhaps brings the poem to an end on a questioning note – where do we go after life ends?

My point is that it is impossible explicitly to teach students all the information they will need to answer questions on unseen texts well (and that content-driven schemes of work will fail for this reason). To achieve higher level responses to unseen texts, students will need regular opportunities to develop the skills of inference and deduction in a literary context and, to do this, they will need to explore the implications of a variety of texts with careful but light-touch guidance by the teacher rather than instruction.

This has been repeatedly demonstrated in England by the work of Robin Alexander, Neil Mercer, Guy Claxton and others. The case is well summarised by Alexander in *Improving oracy and classroom talk in English schools: achievements and challenges*:

> Pupils need, for both learning and life, not only to be able to provide relevant and focused answers but also to learn how to pose their own questions, and how to use talk to narrate, explain, speculate, imagine, hypothesise, explore, evaluate, discuss, argue, reason and justify …

> … we now have robust and replicable evidence, from studies using pre-test/post-test with experimental and control groups, that talk that is cognitively demanding, reciprocal, accountable and/or dialogic has a direct and positive impact on measured standards in English, mathematics and science. (Alexander 2012, pages 4 & 5)

For English, talk of this kind needs to be exploratory but not unfocussed. To achieve cognitive development effectively, discussion needs to be carefully focussed on literary features of text such as genre, mood, tone, the writer’s purposes, language, structure, and figurative devices.

A common response by teachers using cognitively stimulating approaches is that students are more fully engaged in the work and enjoy the lessons which are also enjoyable to teach. This may have a bearing on the low-level disruption which Ofsted has noted as a feature of
lessons in some schools and the draconian behaviour policies implemented by some schools to prevent this which, in turn, require a passive, teacher-led approach to learning and lower teacher satisfaction.

This view of the limits of instruction is supported by the second source of evidence. Only three teaching programmes have been repeatedly proven in international trials to increase students’ cognitive (reasoning) skills substantially: Philosophy for Children, Reuven Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enhancement, and Adey and Shayer’s Cognitive Acceleration. All three:

- are based on secure psychological principles relating to effective learning
- require discussion of ideas in groups moderated by the teacher
- significantly increase the cognitive (reasoning skills) of students of all abilities.

Of these, only Cognitive Acceleration (CA) relates directly to school subjects – English, Mathematics and Science. Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education (CASE) is the longest established of the CA programmes, having been developed during the 1980s. It has been repeatedly shown to increase attainment by between one and two GCSE grades (CASE 2013). The "robust and replicable evidence" to which Alexander refers above includes Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education (CASE) as a prime example.

The Mathematics programme (CAME) was developed during the 1990s with similar results. The CA programmes were renamed Let’s Think in 2012.

An English programme (Let’s Think in English) has been developed since 2009 on the same principles. It is currently under formal trialling, but initial outcomes are of the same order as Science and Mathematics, showing significant rises in attainment for all students but especially for students assessed as moderately and less able – see Appendix 6.

Two Let’s Think research projects are being undertaken currently:

- The Education Endowment Foundation is funding Let’s Think in Secondary Science (£645k), a two-year research project which is due to report in Autumn 2015;
- The DfE provided a further £5 million for the London Schools Excellence Fund to research methods of further improving education in London schools. Let’s Think in English was awarded £134k in 2013 for a two-year research project and is due to report in Winter 2015.

As the Let’s Think pedagogy has been repeatedly shown to raise attainment of students of all abilities, schools may find it helpful to adopt Let’s Think in English as part of their strategy in response to the new GCSE specifications.
Positive 9 : mapping cognitive development onto new GCSE grades

A specific advantage of the Let’s Think pedagogy is that it provides a framework for the guided discussion that develops cognition which is assessed incrementally in terms of Piaget’s stages of cognitive development. These can be mapped onto the new GCSE grades enabling the teacher to track and enhance attainment. This gives Let’s Think programmes their power to raise attainment at all levels of ability.

Let’s Think lessons are based on Vygotsky’s perception that understanding is usually developed not alone but in discussion with others. The lessons require students to resolve specified challenges based on texts through group discussion and feedback. The teacher listens to the group discussions and guides the students’ feedback without directing it. Through training in Let’s Think and experience of teaching the fortnightly lessons, the teacher becomes aware of the Piagetian stage within which each student usually works.

By questioning certain comments in an exploratory way and by drawing attention to more insightful comments without praising them or suggesting they are correct, the teacher gradually raises the cognitive quality of discussion by the whole class lesson by lesson. This leads to greater confidence in the expression of ideas, wider vocabulary and more varied grammar which is gradually reflected in written work. This process accounts for the higher attainment, by students of all levels of assessed ability when they regularly experience appropriately taught Let’s Think lessons.

The process of raising the cognitive quality of discussion through awareness of the Piagetian stages can be mapped onto the new GCSE grades. The formal process of mapping is complex, involving close analysis of sample answers published by the Awarding Bodies, but outcomes can be shown with examples at Appendix 7A and 7B. These use questions in two Let’s Think in English lessons: The Bridge which uses a very short text and is available at www.letsthinkinenglish.org/how-lets-think-works/ and Sredni Vashtar which uses a Saki short story published in 1911 and is available at introductory training days. These show how the process works similarly with very different texts. The comments were spoken by students but not, of course, in the order shown. The comments are selected as examples of reasoning at each Piagetian stage and in most cases are not complete. (Full transcripts are much longer, but provide many insights and are used for Let’s Think in English training.)

As can be seen in the sample lessons on the website, indicative student responses are included in the lesson plans. These are common responses but not required as there may well be others. They help teachers to become aware of the Piagetian stage at which each student usually works, as a basis for facilitating and encouraging higher-level thinking by every student.

Experience of CASE and Let’s Think in English is that teachers need training and support in developing the cognitively-rich style of teaching needed to enable students to make maximum gains. It is when teachers themselves become aware how cognitive skills
develop, so that they provide more and better opportunities for reasoning, that students’ ability in English significantly rises.

**Positive 10 : mixed-attainment grouping**

As shown at Positive 5 (page 10), Progress 8 has been designed so that students assessed as moderately and less able will generally make greater progress in value-added terms than students assessed as able. **In these circumstances it would be prudent for schools to explore moving to mixed-attainment groupings.** (The term ‘mixed-attainment’ is preferred to mixed-ability because allocation to teaching groups on the basis of test results is known to be restrictive. Such tests assess attainment at the time and in the particular circumstances of the test, not potential future development. It is well established that reasoning ability can be increased by providing cognitively-stimulating opportunities and diminished by preventing them.)

When Let’s Think in English tutors introduce a high-quality text to an unfamiliar streamed or setted class in an open-ended exploratory way, it is very common for the class teacher to be surprised by perceptive comments made by students assessed as low attaining. This frequent experience calls into question the value of grouping students by tests of attainment and, in fact, there is considerable evidence that this prevents many students from gaining the grades of which they are capable.

Mixed-attainment groupings were common in comprehensive schools until the development of governments’ target-driven policy from 1990 with its requirement to show students making levels of progress and schools being judged on their percentage of A – C (subsequently A* – C) grades. With this focus on the results of able and reasonably able students only, streaming and setting by attainment was understandable and became the norm.

However, the removal of levels from the National Curriculum, the requirement that all GCSE grades count towards Attainment 8 and Progress 8 and the design of Progress 8 make teaching by attainment-groupings less appropriate.

In 2012 the Sutton Trust commissioned the University of Durham to research the 30 best ways of spending the pupil premium to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. This research now appears on the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) website as a Toolkit. **Of the 30 approaches, attainment grouping is one of only two to have a negative effect on students’ attainment, exceeded only by requiring students to repeat a year.** The EEF comments:

> Low attaining learners fall behind by one or two months a year, on average, when compared with the progress of similar students in classes without attainment grouping. It appears likely that routine setting or streaming arrangements undermine low attainers’ confidence and discourage the belief that attainment can be improved through effort. (Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit)
This is supported by a great deal of research, summarized for example by Boaler and Wiliam (2001) in relation to Mathematics:

in bringing together the different research studies on attainment grouping the general conclusion is that streaming has no academic benefits whatsoever, while setting confers small academic benefits on some high-attaining students at the expense of large disadvantages for low attainers.

However the benefits of setting for high-attaining students are now removed by the new GCSE system. In the past setting has had two advantages in relation to examination results: able students achieve more highly when they undertake a differentiated curriculum matched to their attainment and in these circumstances, they can take an examination a year or more early and perform as well as others taking the examination later. But these advantages are now irrelevant under the new GCSE specifications. All students will be required to take papers written under tight requirements by all the Awarding Bodies and therefore very similar, and early entry is now discouraged by allowing only the first result to count.

On the other hand, there is substantial evidence that attainment grouping does not enable most students to achieve their best, summarised recently by writers like Ed Baines and Francis and Wong. In summary:

- less able students perform less well in attainment groupings than in mixed attainment settings, but this is not true of able students
- teachers’ expectations are lower with groups of lower-attainment students; they naturally provide them with less challenging work and this is reflected in poorer results
- students are sometimes misallocated to attainment groups for reasons such as poor performance in a test, erratic motivation or untidy written work, but once allocated to an attainment group movement from it is unusual
- students assessed as lower-attainment often underestimate their attainment and resort to “learned helplessness” (e.g. Hattie 2011, page 53); they develop a negative view of their attainment which limits their willingness to work and can cause poor behaviour
- schools typically allocate their less experienced/effective teachers to lower attainment groupings
- by international surveys like PISA, the more countries group by attainment, the lower their students’ performance overall; for example, Finland, which is one of the most successful countries educationally, abandoned attainment grouping in 1985 (Sahlberg 2011, page 22).
On the other hand, high-attaining students also benefit from mixed-attainment grouping because students with lesser attainment as measured in tests often contribute complex and original ideas in discussion when given the opportunity. Baines observes:

Mixed attainment groups promote the use of elaboration, explanation and collaborative discussion between peers – all essential ingredients for developing high level understanding and high level thinking skills. Homogenous attainment groups are less likely to facilitate these forms of talk possibly because all participants have similar understandings or assume that others already have these understandings. (Baines 2012)

Schools may find moving from attainment-grouping to mixed attainment difficult to manage because it requires changes in teaching approach. Schools may also fear resistance from parents although, when the rationale of mixed attainment teaching is explained in terms of pedagogy and the new GCSE grading system, parents are likely to give schools the benefit of the doubt; and when examination results rise under the new grading and accountability arrangements more than at schools which retain attainment grouping, they will accept that the change is beneficial.

An alternative is to introduce mixed attainment teaching incrementally from Year 7 although, if this begins in September 2015, it would leave students in Year 8 and above to prepare for the new GCSE examinations in attainment groupings.

As an interim measure already adopted by some schools using Let’s Think in English, schools may wish to arrange for one lesson per week to be taught in mixed-attainment groups, using this lesson for the fortnightly Let’s Think/Cognitive Acceleration programme with the other lesson used to ‘bridge’ to other similar work – all Let’s Think/ Cognitive Acceleration lessons include suggestions for bridging. All Let’s Think lessons have been fully trialled with mixed attainment classes and shown to work very well in terms of cognitive growth and student engagement.

This will give teachers who may lack previous experience of managing mixed attainment teaching effectively practical experience of it. Over time the engagement of all students in these lessons and higher quality of work achieved by those deemed less able, without loss of attainment by those assessed as able, is likely to lead schools to accept that:

- students develop greater understanding through exploration (discussion) rather than instruction;
- they need time to develop understanding;
- questioning needs to be open-ended (exploratory);
- writing improves through guided discussion as well as through teaching grammar, etc (through increased vocabulary and more varied grammatical structures developed by use); and
• mixed attainment achieves higher results overall than attainment grouping.

In due course the issue of attainment as against mixed-attainment grouping will be resolved by outcomes in schools under the new grading and accountability system. It is very likely to be found that mixed attainment achieves higher Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures.

Positive 11: new Ofsted inspection arrangements – ‘closing the gap’

Three changes in Ofsted inspection arrangements will support all the positives outlined above. First, Ofsted’s contracts with private providers of inspections will not be renewed when they expire in August 2015 and inspections will then be conducted by HMIs and inspectors directly employed by Ofsted (as has always been the case with the Independent Schools Inspectorate). This arises from continuing concerns about inconsistency of inspections by contractors. The Chief Inspector has said that inspection is too important for Ofsted simply to have oversight of third party arrangements.

From September 2015, HMI will have much tighter control over the selection, training and quality assurance of contracted inspectors. This will complete HMI’s return to its previous position as the Government’s central monitor and provider of advice on teaching and learning.

Second, the move to a wholly objective assessment of secondary schools’ teaching to age 16 through their GCSE results will enable Ofsted inspections to be more focused and, in principle, much less frequent. From 2016, schools will on principle undergo Section 5 inspections only when their Progress 8 is below minus 0.5, there is a steep decline in the performance of Outstanding or Good schools or there are other concerns such as safeguarding. Otherwise schools previously judged as Outstanding or Good will have a one-day visit by an HM Inspector each two or three years for “a challenging but also constructive conversation” with the Senior Leadership Team which will be reported by letter to parents. There will be few, if any, lesson observations on these one-day visits.

Third, inspections will focus more closely on how schools ‘close the attainment gap’ for disadvantaged students. There is concern by Government that the high expenditure on the pupil premium is not resulting in significant progress by the relevant students. A revised Ofsted inspection framework will take effect in September 2015 and will focus particularly on two key areas:

• the attainment gap between those of free school meals and those who are not

• the achievement and aspiration of disadvantaged children including those looked-after.

Pilot inspections by two HMIs jointly, using the revised framework, are currently taking place. Interestingly, under a new Education(Scotland) Bill closing the attainment gap is to be a legal
obligation for local councils in Scotland which are still responsible for all state-funded schools (Learmouth 2015).

**It is likely that schools which are not spending their pupil premium money on targeted interventions which actually raise the attainment of the relevant students will be found to require improvement however successful they are in other ways.** Beyond this, for English the approach expected of schools by HMI is set out in *Excellence in English* (Ofsted 2011) and *Moving English forward: action to raise standards in English* (Ofsted 2012). Given HMI’s implicit and explicit criticism of the Strategies/QCDA approach to teaching and learning, schools that show no response to the imperatives of the new GCSE grading and accountability system with its focus on raising the attainment of students assessed as moderately and less able are also likely to be judged to require improvement. This would include continuation of Strategy-style teacher-led lessons; frequent assessment which does not actively inform learning; using levels of a National Curriculum that has been discontinued; and setting/streaming on the basis of tests that assess literacy and confidence in taking tests rather than ability.

**Positive 12: a clean slate in 2017**

Schools will be unable to predict their students’ GCSE English and Mathematics grades in 2017, and grades for other subjects in 2018, for three reasons.

1. Ofqual’s decision to abandon any element of criterion-referenced assessment and move wholly to “comparable outcomes” by statistical prediction will free the Awarding Bodies and Ofqual from any need to relate standards of attainment in 2017 (and 2018) with those in previous years. Provided that similar numbers of students attain the equivalent grade groups (A*/A = 9 – 7, B/C = 6 – 4, D – G = 3 – 1), distribution of grades within those grade groups can be subject to other policy considerations (see 2 and 3 next).

2. The new mid-grade 5 will be aligned with average performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Ofqual has not yet explained how this will be done, but it will inevitably involve a detailed comparison of subject content and standards of attainment. It is to be hoped that this work will be carried out and published in time to inform the teaching of the new specifications. If it is not, there will be even greater uncertainty about standards in 2017.

3. The new national reference tests in English Language and Mathematics will be taken fully for the first time early in 2017 and the GCSE results those subjects will be used to establish equivalent performance standards for the national reference test (Ofqual 2014, 97 - 99). The standards established in GCSE English Language and Mathematics in 2017 will therefore be very important because they will establish the standards against which secondary education in England will be judged year by year for many years.
It is difficult to envisage a more far-reaching decision than to increase the demand of GCSEs so as to align standards with attainment in other more successful countries and simultaneously to use these as the baseline both for national reference tests and a school accountability system (Attainment 8 and Progress 8). Standard-setting in 2017 by the Awarding Bodies, supervised by Ofqual, will therefore need to be done with great care.

For most, perhaps all, schools, grade rates in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics will be considerably lower in 2017 than in 2016. This will be due to the higher demand of the new specifications, their unfamiliarity to teachers and students and the new grading system (see Appendix 3). Politically this will be presented by Ofqual and whichever government is in power as students’ true level of attainment in contrast with previous grade inflation and as a springboard from which England’s future educational success can be accurately measured.

This situation can be seen as a positive because it is envisaged, indeed planned, by Ofqual and the DfE. All schools will be in the same position, resulting from government policy. Accordingly schools’ staff and students cannot be blamed for the drop in grade rates between 2016 and 2017, provided the drop is within a ‘normal range’ of minus Progress 8 scores to be determined by Ofsted. Clearly the benchmark of minus 0.5 which is planned to trigger an Ofsted inspection in the future cannot apply in 2017 (or 2018) when minus scores will largely be caused by transition from one grading system to another. For these two years at least, Ofsted will need to determine the minus Progress 8 score that it deems unacceptable.

However, after schools’ Progress 8 scores are stabilised in 2018, they will be judged on how these rise in subsequent years with scores worse than minus 0.5 triggering an Ofsted inspection. In these circumstances schools will be more successful if they review and develop their teaching and learning in the light of the imperatives of the new grading and accountability system outlined in this paper earlier rather than later.

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28 April 2015

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Appendix 1 – Outcomes of international comparisons

Note: in each case the score of the highest attaining jurisdiction is given in red.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
Organised by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
Tests 9/10 and 13/14 year olds in Mathematics and Science in 60+ countries every 4 years.

Scores for 13/14 year olds in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>496 (604)</td>
<td>538 (569)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>No participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>513 (598)</td>
<td>542 (567)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>507 (613)</td>
<td>533 (590)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)
Organised by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
Tests 9/10 year olds in Reading in 60+ countries every 5 years

Scores for 9/10 year olds in Reading in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>553 (559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>539 (558)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>552 (571)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
Organised by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Tests 15 year olds in 57+ countries in Reading, Maths and Science

Scores for 15 year olds in the UK
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Scores invalid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>No participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>495 (556)</td>
<td>495 (549)</td>
<td>515 (563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>494 (556)</td>
<td>492 (600)</td>
<td>514 (575)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>500 (570)</td>
<td>495 (617)</td>
<td>516 (580)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2012, problem-solving was also tested with the result: England 517 (562)

**Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)**

Organised by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Tests adults in 24 jurisdictions in Literacy, Numeracy and Problem-solving

First survey in 2013

**Average scores of adults aged 16 – 24 in literacy (Table A1)**

England 265 299

England’s score was 22nd of 24 jurisdictions

**Average scores of adults aged 16 – 24 in numeracy (Table A2)**

England 256 285

England’s score was 21st of 24 jurisdictions

Problem-solving is not presented as scores.

[Department of Business, Innovation and Skills 2014, Appendix A]
Appendix 2 – Apparently different standards between specimen GCSE English papers

An AQA specimen paper for new GCSE Mathematics which has apparently been criticized by other Awarding Bodies and the DfE as being insufficiently challenging, prompting concerns that Awarding Bodies may still attempt to maintain or increase their market share by this means (Stewart 2015).

Without assuming any commercial intentions, specimen papers and/or sample answers may also be insufficiently challenging in international terms because the examiners who set new papers and select sample answers may be insufficiently aware of standards required in more successful countries. As an example, one of the assessment objectives for new GCSE English Language is:

Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views [emphasis added].

Questions will therefore require candidates to analyse literary structures in relation to unseen texts.

The specimen papers and mark schemes published by some Awarding Bodies give rather simplistic accounts of literary structure while others address this in greater depth. For example, AQA states that “Structural features can be: at a whole text level, e.g. beginnings / endings / perspective shifts; at a paragraph level, e.g. topic change / single sentence paragraphs; at a sentence level e.g. sentence length” and addresses the specimen answer in these terms (AQA 2014A, pages 10 -12). In AQA’s discussion of question design rationale, a list of 11 “possible areas for students to develop understanding” of structure are given, again in mostly simple and general terms, e.g “sequence through passage”, “movement from big to small – ideas or perspectives” (AQA 2014B, page 3).

On the other hand, OCR provides a commentary which is more closely focused on structural devices such as figures of speech, e.g. sarcasm/irony, hyperbole/exaggeration, heroic/prosaic language, tricolon and sibilance, inversion of word order (OCR pages 12/13).

It is currently unknown which approach is closer to the standard of examinations for 16 year olds in more successful countries. If awareness and explicit discussion of figures of speech is the norm in these countries, Ofqual is committed by government policy to take this into account when supervising grade setting in GCSE English Language in 2017. A similar problem will presumably arise if an Awarding Body sets unseen texts which are linguistically simpler than the norm in more successful countries and, potentially, than other Awarding Bodies. To fulfil its commitment to aligning the standards of the new GCSEs with average performance in more successful jurisdictions, Ofqual would presumably require Awarding Bodies whose examination papers and mark schemes did not meet those standards to adjust their grade boundaries accordingly.
Appendix 3A – Transition for English between the two grading systems 2016/17

In the example below, a school’s English Language and English Literature grades in 2014 have been treated as its 2016 grades. Exactly the same mark ranges and numbers of students have been used for 2017 using the new grading system. 20 per cent (rounded up or down) of those achieving grades 9 to 7 have been awarded new grade 9. The other grades have been distributed fairly across 8/7 and 6 to 4 (= B/C), and D to G have been mapped across directly to 3 to 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCSE English Language 2016</th>
<th>GCSE English Language 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCSE English Literature 2016</th>
<th>GCSE English Literature 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of the new grades, there are large falls in points for 6 to 4 (B/C) and 3 to 1 (D to G). This is because the bottom third of grade Bs are now worth 5 points instead of 6, the bottom two-thirds of C grades are now worth 4 points instead of 5 and D is worth 3 instead of 4. On the other hand, although few students attain A*/A, the points for grades 9 to 7 rise slightly because some grade As are now worth 8 points instead of 7.

The total point scores fall from 1057 to 936 (English Language) and 1035 to 896 (English Literature). Similar falls will happen with Mathematics in 2017 and the other GCSE subjects in 2018.

**Appendix 3B – Transition for other GCSEs in 2016/17**

The transitional point scores are given in *Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017* (DfE 2015, page 23).

**Table A.1 New point score scales for legacy GCSEs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCSE grade</th>
<th>2016 Points</th>
<th>2017 Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect can be illustrated as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>337</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1057</td>
<td>913</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4 – 2014 Attainment 8 estimates [DfE 2015, page 29]

The estimated Attainment 8 score is the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils nationally with the same prior attainment at key stage 2 (KS2). The following table shows the Attainment 8 estimates for each KS2 average fine level, based on the 2014 cohort averages.

Changes to national subject entry patterns and performance will cause these estimates to change in future years, as they will be derived from averages from later cohorts. As such they should be treated with caution if extrapolating to cohorts beyond 2014.

Table B.1 2014 Attainment 8 estimates for each KS2 fine level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KS2 average fine level (English &amp; Maths)</th>
<th>2014 Attainment 8 estimate</th>
<th>KS2 average fine level (English &amp; Maths)</th>
<th>2014 Attainment 8 estimate</th>
<th>KS2 average fine level (English &amp; Maths)</th>
<th>2014 Attainment 8 estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5a</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>31.75</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>55.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0b</td>
<td>18.06</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>33.02</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>57.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5c</td>
<td>19.03</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>34.71</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>59.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8d</td>
<td>20.88</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>36.55</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>62.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>21.78</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>38.48</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>64.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>23.12</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>40.42</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>66.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>23.38</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>42.26</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>69.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>24.98</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>44.41</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>72.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>26.04</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>46.37</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>74.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>26.98</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>48.52</td>
<td>5.8e</td>
<td>76.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>28.39</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>50.67</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>29.95</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>52.84</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Pupils with mean KS2 fine grade score of less than 1.5 are assigned a KS2 score of 1.5
b. Pupils with mean KS2 fine grade score between 1.6 and 2.0 are assigned a KS2 score of 2.0
c. Pupils with mean KS2 fine grade score between 2.1 and 2.5 are assigned a KS2 score of 2.5
d. Pupils with mean KS2 fine grade score between 2.6 and 2.8 are assigned a KS2 score of 2.8
e. Pupils with mean KS2 fine grade score of more than 5.8 are assigned a KS2 score of 5.8
Appendix 5 – Research by HM Inspectorate

Curriculum innovation in schools (070097), Ofsted, 2008; 
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070097

English 2000–05: a review of inspection evidence (2351), Ofsted, 2005; 
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/2351.


Excellence in English (HMI 100229), Ofsted, 2011; 
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229.

Learning: creative approaches that raise standards (080266) Ofsted, 2010; 
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www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100197.

Removing barriers to literacy (HMI 090237), Ofsted, 2011; 
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090237.

The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage (HMI 100231), Ofsted, 2011; 
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100231.

Other publications

Getting going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing, Department for children, schools and families, 2008; 

Report of the inquiry into overcoming the barriers to literacy, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education, 2011; 
www.educationappg.org.uk/inquiry.

The importance of teaching: schools White Paper, Department for Education, 2010; 
www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/schoolswhitepaper/b0068570/the-importance-of-teaching.

The Skills for Life survey: a national needs and impact survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills (RR 490), Department for Education and Skills, 2003; 
www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/BasicSkills/Page3/RB490
Appendix 6 – Raising attainment with Let’s Think in English (LTE)

Case study 1 – able students

Ruth Pringle is KS3 English Coordinator at a mixed comprehensive school in South London. She used Let’s Think in English fortnightly with her top set Year 8 class for a full year. Her class and the parallel Y8 top set had the same end-of-year assessment (an imaginative writing task and a response to a Shakespeare scene, both under controlled conditions), as had her previous year’s top Y8 set. These were cross-moderated to ensure consistent marking. The results were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level 7</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y8.1 class with LTE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Y8.1 class without LTE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Y8.1 class without LTE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Case study 2 – lower attainment and disadvantaged students

Six schools in Hampshire provided two teachers each. They were trained in July 2013 and taught LTE lessons fortnightly to Year 8 and Year 9 classes throughout 2013/14, attending half-termly joint support sessions led by Leah Crawford, Hampshire Inspector/Adviser, and myself.

All of the schools set the students by attainment. As the teachers’ timetables turned out, at least half of the classes were assessed as lower ability with a significant number of students on free school meals (FSM). The students were teacher-assessed at the beginning and end of the year for Reading and Writing and took two different APP tasks in response to an unseen text in timed conditions with a shared mark scheme in September 2013 and June 2014.

All the students made better progress than expected with the FSM students making greater progress than others, for example:

- **Year 8 TA Reading** – 3+ sublevels progress: All students 28% FSM 38%
- **Year 8 APP Reading** – 2+ sublevels progress: All students 61% FSM 90%
Year 8 TA Writing – 2+ sublevels progress: All students 65%  FSM 100%
Year 9 TA Reading – 4+ sublevels progress: All students 15%  FSM 28%
Year 9 APP Reading – 3+ sublevels progress: All students 42%  FSM 50%
Year 9 TA Writing – 3+ sublevels progress: All students 38%  FSM 44%

4+ sublevels progress: All students 15%  FSM 28%

**Average sub-level gain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TA reading</th>
<th>APP reading</th>
<th>TA writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Select table column</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 lowest attaining classes</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One group in Year 8 and two in Year 9 stood out as particularly low attaining classes at the start of the year. Significantly, the average gain across these groups was greater than for the students as a whole (above).

One school (see table below) was able to present data from a parallel ability group who had experienced the same curriculum but not the LTE intervention. These were both Year 9 low attaining groups, in which the students were working largely at L4a/5c at the start of the year. The comparative data, presented in terms of the average sublevel gain for these groups is particularly compelling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TA reading</th>
<th>APP reading</th>
<th>TA writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LTE group</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These outcomes were achieved in one year. Let’s Think in English (LTE) is designed to be used for at least two years and raises attainment by similar amounts each year.
Appendix 7A – Let’s Think Piagetian stages mapped to new GCSE grades : The Bridge

Can you think of a good or acceptable reason why the boatman asks for $100 to take the woman across the river? (Students are aware that $100 was a very large amount of money in the 1860s.)

Early / middle concrete [grade 1]
He needed the money.

Mature concrete [grades 2 – 3]
He needed the money to feed his family.
He needed the money to because his wife was very ill and needed treatment.

Concrete generalisation [grades 4 – 5]
He needed the money to repair his boat because it was getting old

He asked for a lot of money because he might have got shot.

He asked for the money so he could leave the town and get away from the war.

Early formal [grade 6]
If you’re not allowed to cross the bridge, you’re not allowed to cross the river. He wants paying for the risk.

Since the army stopped people crossing the river, he’s had no business so he’s desperate.

Mature formal [grades 7 – 9]
Since the bridge has been built, he’s had very little business so he’s very short of money.

If the soldier has orders to shoot anyone crossing the bridge, other soldiers will have orders to shoot anyone crossing the river. He wants danger money.

He knows how dangerous it is to cross the river, so he charges her an impossible amount to put her off, to try to save her life.
Appendix 7B – Let’s Think Piagetian stages mapped to new GCSE grades : Sredni Vashtar

Why do you think Conradin bought a ferret from the butcher’s boy?  Why doesn’t he get something he can touch or stroke like a guinea pig or rabbit?

**Early / middle concrete [grade 1]**
He can use it to scare Mrs De Ropp.

**Mature concrete [grades 2 – 3]**
He can use it to attack Mrs De Ropp.
He finds it exciting because it’s dangerous.

**Concrete generalisation [grades 4 – 5]**
He wants something more exciting than guinea pigs or a rabbit because his life is dull.

He is interested in wild animals and this is the only one he can find (Mrs De Ropp probably won’t let him go to the zoo).

He likes it because he knows Mrs De Ropp would disapprove of it.

**Early formal [grade 6]**
He has a lot of anger because of how he is treated but he has to hide it. Somehow the ferret fits this feeling.

He’s not used to being touched.

**Mature formal [grades 7 – 9]**
He likes the ferret because it’s fierce and that’s how he feels inside.

No-one has treated him kindly and he doesn’t want anything he’s expected to treat kindly. He wants something aggressive, like he feels.

The ferret is like him. He’s trapped in the house with Mrs De Ropp and the ferret is trapped in its hutch.
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www.ascl.org.uk/download.0621F643-3196-4A73-BFEA9F2ABB3C1383.html
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(London: Routledge)

Learmouth, A (2015) – Closing the attainment gap in schools will be a legal obligation :
The Nation website

Let’s Think About Mathematics and Let’s Think About Secondary Science –see
www.letsthink.org.uk

Let’s Think in English – see http://www.letstthinkinenglish.org

OCR (2014) – Unit J351/02 – Exploring effects and impact – Sample assessment material, pages 12/13

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Ofsted (2014B) – Ofsted Annual Report for Schools 2013/14 –


http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4759/1/RR430.pdf

Stewart, W – Ofqual seeks to ensure all things are equal in maths: Times Educational Supplement, 23 January 2015

Wiggins, K – Two in five teachers quit within a year, union warns: Times Educational Supplement website, 30 March 2015