

The Nuffield Foundation Newsletter

Spring 2008

Issue

8

A good investment?

Independent schools in Britain employ a disproportionate share of teachers relative to the number of pupils they educate, and the gap between the independent and state sectors has been increasing. What's more, independent school teachers are more likely than state school teachers to possess postgraduate qualifications, and to be specialists in subjects – such as Maths and Science – where there are shortages of teachers.

These are among the findings of a new Nuffield-funded study by Professors Francis Green and Stephen Machin and colleagues. In a related study, they find that not only do independent school pupils enjoy facilities that are usually far better than those available in state schools, but these pupils also benefit through improved pay later in life. These financial returns are broadly comparable to the returns on other capital.

Professor Green comments: 'Our findings imply that the rising importance of independent schools needs to be given more serious attention by educational policy-makers – not just as a model for the improvement of state

schools but as a significant player in the market for scarce teaching resources.' Professor Stephen Machin adds: 'Since selection into the schools – despite some bursaries and the Assisted Places Scheme –

is primarily based on families' ability to pay, and given the substantial returns achieved, it is hard to escape the conclusion that private schools have served to reproduce inequalities in British society.' [www](#)



Independent schools more than doubled their fees in real terms over the two decades following the 1980s, and used the increased resources to lower the pupil-teacher ratio and to invest in facilities.

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Welcome to the Nuffield Foundation Newsletter which highlights our current areas of grant making and focuses on the outcomes of the projects we fund.

Further details on all the stories marked with this icon [www](#) can be found on our website.

The Newsletter is published three times a year and you can obtain further copies or ask to be put on the mailing list by contacting the Foundation. If you have any comments on the Newsletter we would be delighted to hear from you.

www.nuffieldfoundation.org

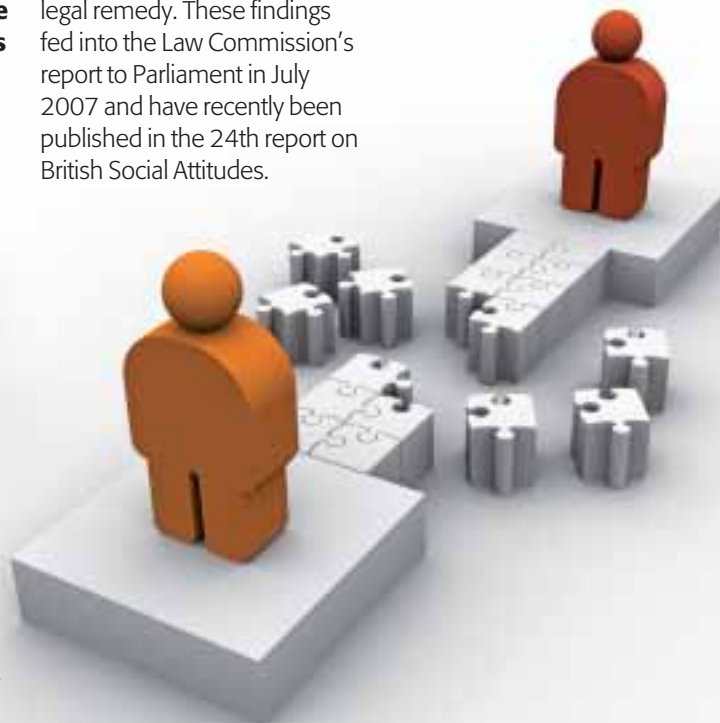
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The marriage myth

Nuffield-funded research carried out by Anne Barlow and colleagues as part of the 2000 British Social Attitudes Survey showed that over half of all adults wrongly believe there is such a thing as 'common law marriage', conferring many of the same rights as marriage. The findings prompted widespread media interest and government concern, resulting in information campaigns and a Law Commission review.

A recent follow-up study by Anne Barlow's team found that people may still be confused by the disjuncture between the social acceptance of marriage-like cohabitation and its often unmarriage-like legal consequences. Where a partner has been legally advantaged or disadvantaged at the expense of another because of their

co-habiting relationship, there is strong public support for a legal remedy. These findings fed into the Law Commission's report to Parliament in July 2007 and have recently been published in the 24th report on British Social Attitudes.



Childcare and access to FE

The Leitch report (2006) acknowledges that childcare costs can be "a formidable barrier" to parents wishing to access further education and training, seen by the Government as essential if parents are to gain stable and well-paid employment, and in helping to reduce child poverty.

The Daycare Trust, in conjunction with the Elizabeth Nuffield Educational Fund, has produced a policy briefing, *Childcare for Students in Further Education*. The briefing examines the funding for childcare available to UK students aged 20+, points out the problems with the current system and calls for changes to be made to the discretionary Learner Support Fund for English students. [www](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk)

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Ideas, Evidence and Argument in School Science (The IDEAS project)

Good IDEAS for Science Education

The focus of the IDEAS project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation in 2003, was to develop teachers' understanding of the role of evidence and argument in establishing scientific ideas and how this might be introduced in the classroom.

It resulted in a set of materials, including a DVD/video, exploring what argument is in science, why it matters, and how to teach, assess and evaluate it. The need for such resources emerged from a programme of work, funded by the ESRC, exploring the quality of argumentation in school science. The pack was developed by drawing on the expertise of the teachers who had worked on this project and sample excerpts are drawn from their lessons, giving an authenticity that other such materials often lack. To date over 750 packs have been sold and it has been translated into 6 languages. [www](http://www.ideas-project.org)



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No Overall Control? The impact of a 'hung parliament' on British politics

There has been increasing speculation that the next general election will produce a Parliament in which no single party holds a majority of seats in the House of Commons.

Although such a 'hung parliament' might revitalise interest in politics, it might also bring uncertainty to a system which has been traditionally stable. This Hansard Society book, the result of a Nuffield Open Door funded project, brings together the thoughts of parliamentarians, academics and commentators from across the political spectrum to discuss what impact a hung parliament might have on British politics. *No Overall Control?* is published in March 2008.

The results of another Nuffield funded study, *Law in the Making*, which looks at the influences that affect legislative proposals, will be launched by the Hansard Society in summer 2008. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

A National Bioethics Commission?

Periodically, it seems, the issue arises of whether a National Bioethics Commission should be established in the UK, and this question has recently been raised during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill through Parliament. On 12th December and 28th January, the House of Lords debated amendments to the Bill proposing the establishment of such a commission. In each case after lengthy debate the amendments were withdrawn.

Those in favour noted that unlike other European countries, there is no single, Government-sponsored UK body with this responsibility. Instead, however, there is a wide range of forums for debating the ethical,

legal and social issues of new advances in biomedicine – including the Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCOB) and the Human Genetics Commission. Those opposed argued that the existing "distributed" system of bioethical advice worked well. The NCOB received particular praise for its "excellent work" (Lord Alton of Liverpool) and "very measured reports after a lot of consultation and research" (Lord Warner). It was suggested that bodies like the NCOB, which is, crucially, independent and non-political, had the appropriate expertise and sufficient time to devote to complex issues within their fields, and a national human bioethics commission would not bring sufficient benefits in comparison. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

Pensions reform

The recently published Pensions Policy Institute paper, *Will Personal Accounts increase pension saving?*, prepared for a seminar funded by the Nuffield Foundation, illustrates the potential impact of the Government's key reform proposals for work-based pension saving in the UK.

The paper uses scenarios that illustrate the potential combined impact of the reforms on the numbers of people saving for a pension, the level of contributions made to pension schemes and the total assets within pension schemes on the assumption that individuals and employers act in certain ways.

In January, The PPI submitted written and oral



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evidence to the Pensions Bill Committee 2007/8. The PPI will publish further Nuffield funded research in Spring 2008 which will evaluate the Government's reform programme on public sector pensions and assess the implications for individuals and for Government expenditure of the proposed reforms. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)



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'Small and Special'

This website contains the database of the Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) Registers project and provides opportunities for research into the healthcare of children in the nineteenth century. With help from a Nuffield Social Sciences Small Grant, this fascinating web resource has been extended to include information from the records of the Hospital's convalescent home at Cromwell House in Highgate. Between 1869 and 1910 thousands of children treated at the hospital were sent here to make a full recovery before having to return to their homes in foul coal-filled air of central London. [www](#)

Sarah Coulson, age six, admitted for treatment in 1875



Image courtesy of the Museum and Archive Service, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust

Living ever longer

Life expectancy in the UK is increasing by 5 hours each day. This 'quiet revolution' is going to have impacts on society as big as globalisation and climate change, but is less appreciated. Exciting advances in scientific understanding of the ageing process tell us why and how we age, whether the increase in lifespan is likely to continue, and how we might harness insights from science to help citizens of today and tomorrow get the

most from their longer lives.

Tom Kirkwood explored these issues in the Nuffield Foundation Lecture at the 2008 ASE Science Conference in Liverpool. [www](#)



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Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, a cornerstone of ministers' strategy to encourage more teenagers to remain in education, present only "limited prospects for growth" in student numbers, according to recent research from the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training. The review's *Issues Papers 3 and 4* conclude that parts of the economy may be moving too rapidly for such schemes to fit. The research suggests numerous ways to increase the take-up of apprenticeships and their suitability for the economy. [www](#)



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New Appointments

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics was delighted to announce the appointment of Albert Weale, Professor of Government at the University of Essex, as Chair of the Council, from January 2008. [www](#)



Josh Hillman, the former Head of Education Policy at the BBC, has been appointed as Assistant Director with responsibility for the Nuffield Foundation's work in education. [www](#)



William Morris, Lord Nuffield
1877-1963

The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust established in 1943 by William Morris (Lord Nuffield) the founder of Morris Motors with the aim of advancing social well being. We fund research and practical experiment and the development of capacity to undertake them, working across education, science, social science and social policy. While most of the Foundation's expenditure is on responsive grant programmes we also undertake our own initiatives.

Full information on all our current activities and on how to apply for grants can be found at www.nuffieldfoundation.org

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