

Independent schools are too cowardly to do their duty and run academies, says Adonis

Greg Hurst Education Editor

Independent schools have been accused of failing their charitable duties by Lord Adonis, the former Schools Minister, for refusing to play a bigger role to support state education. Too many heads of independent schools preferred to “sit on the sidelines and carp” about standards in the state sector rather than risk their reputations by getting involved, he said. He

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was also critical of independent school governors, saying that many had missed an opportunity to breach the divide between state and private education by sponsoring academies.

His attack is significant because Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, has promised to continue with Lord Adonis's policy and has privately urged headmasters of leading independent schools to back academies.

In his first interview on the subject since leaving the Government after last year's election, Lord Adonis said he “deeply regretted” that only a handful of independent schools had responded to his appeals to start academies.

“I do not think the private school sector has risen up to its responsibilities properly at all. I think the majority of good private schools should be sponsoring academies and should be actively engaged in the opportunities which academies present,” he said.

Although many independent schools have shared facilities and forged links with local state schools, he criticised them for lacking the courage to run state schools themselves.

He told *Attain*, the magazine of the Independent Association of Prep Schools: “They are too timid to rise to the challenge of managing a state school directly; they are far more comfortable with sitting on the sidelines and carping about the problem of standards in state education while not taking any responsibility whatsoever for doing anything about it.”

He dismissed as “an excuse” the suggestion that fee-paying parents wanted heads and governors to focus solely on running their own schools.

Although a minority of private schools are owned by proprietors, most are charities, which gives tax advantages such as exemption from VAT. Labour tightened the law to require charities such as independent schools to show “public benefit” to justify their charitable status. The Independent Schools Council will challenge the Charity Commission's interpretation of this at a tribunal in May.

Eight independent schools have sponsored academies and six parent bodies of independent schools have done so. A handful of independent schools have also converted to academy status.

David Levin, chairman of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, and headmaster of City of London School for Boys, told *The Times* that hostility towards academies from local authorities was the chief reason that many independent schools decided against becoming involved.

“A number of schools just don't feel equipped or qualified and don't have the manpower or resources to take responsibility for a whole educational establishment,” he added.

CHRIS HARRIS FOR THE TIMES



Andrew Adonis: independent schools “lack courage” over academy system

Schizophrenic stabbed brother, 9, to death

A man suffering from paranoid schizophrenia stabbed his young brother to death hours after community mental health workers left his house saying there was no immediate problem, a court was told.

Daniel Taylor, 21, attacked Jack, 9, at their sister's house in Bradford, West Yorkshire, in February last year. Yesterday, a judge ordered that Taylor be detained indefinitely at the top-security Rampton Hospital in Nottinghamshire. Taylor admitted manslaughter due to diminished responsibility at an earlier hearing. The court was told that he had doted on Jack when he was born and they were close.

Counsellor's tribunal



A prison counsellor was unfairly dismissed by a charity after blowing the whistle on the alleged theft of

over £300,000 of public funds, a tribunal has ruled. Robina Husain-Naviatti, 38, above, who is also a model, was awarded £47,580 in compensation. The Charity Commission will look at her claims against Forensic Therapies, which was recently put into liquidation by its trustees.

Friendship is in DNA

Choice of friends may be influenced by DNA, according to a new study that suggests we are likeliest to have close relationships with people whose genes are most compatible with our own. Scientists at the University of California have identified two genetic variations that appear to have an influence. For the research, published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, James Fowler and his team looked at six genes that come in different variants, examining how often they were shared between friends.

Oil threat to whales



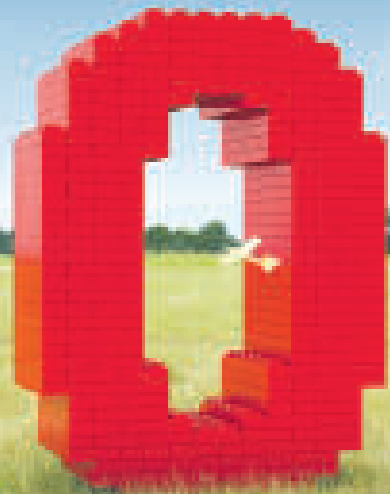
The critically endangered Pacific grey whale is being further threatened by plans to construct an oil platform in important feeding grounds off the east coast of Russia. Sakhalin Energy, a company part-owned by Shell and Gazprom, is to build the platform near Sakhalin Island in the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk, where the remaining 130 whales feed before migrating to breeding grounds.

Stolen phone tracked

A schoolboy used GPS technology to track down his mother's mobile phone after it was stolen in a nightclub. Kristen Richardson, 12, from Felixstowe, Suffolk, had earlier downloaded a security app on to the phone and discovered that it was within four metres of a house about ten miles away. Gemma Richardson, 32, then used Google Street View to find a picture of the house. She called the police, who found the phone in the possession of a 21-year-old man. She decided not to press charges and instead accepted a letter of apology.

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