

Thu 24/06/2021 16:35

Dear Colleagues,

You Couldn't Make It Up

Government has many moving parts but the level of muddled thinking and contradictions reached new heights this week. We are way beyond a policy disconnect and firmly in the territory of an omni shambles. Here is a brief summary of just four events that illustrate the State we're in:

[Ofqual's decision](#) to dump mandatory fieldwork for another year bears little scrutiny on detailed reading. Ofqual's statement wishing to avoid schools "being forced to carry out activities against public health advice in order to satisfy a mandatory requirement of the qualification" is quite frankly ludicrous. To suggest that anyone - schools, teachers, parents or providers - would countenance doing something against public health advice strikes me as quite astonishing. Their other argument that "we have removed mandatory requirements that might exacerbate inequalities, such as the changes made ...in subjects such as geography" holds little water either, as we know that it's the mandatory element that at least guarantees some fieldwork for the most disadvantaged. I was relieved to see that a [new head of Ofqual](#) is due to be appointed because things can't get much worse.

Meanwhile, with perfect timing, Ofsted published the latest in a series of subject based reports. Their [Review on Geography](#) is well worth a read and is very clear in its support for fieldwork and geographical skills. "The experience of fieldwork draws together pupils' locational knowledge and that of human and physical processes. It should be practised regularly".

Oblivious to the Ofqual coach and horses being driven through learners' opportunities the PM took the opportunity to [author an article](#) proclaiming "We're restoring Britain's place as a scientific superpower". He lamented, with no apparent sense of irony, that "too many children think STEM subjects are not for them."

And finally, onto the stage at this year's Festival of Education came Gavin Williamson "I would like to assure you that we have never taken our eyes off the bigger picture. We are just as determined as ever to make sure that every child gets the world-class start in life that we expect and that they deserve."

FSC will continue to press these issues.

New MP for FSC Amersham

The above nonsense may make a one party state appeal, but other political events this week have given us a new MP for FSC Amersham and we have already penned a welcome letter to Sarah Green. One swallow does not make a summer should be a Lib Dem mantra. It's too early to assess whether this is indeed a turning of the tide or the UK electorate's attitude to voting in by-elections which often has a holiday feel - what happens on a by-election, stays in a by-election.

Better late than never? Not much.

Possibly as a result of a threat of judicial review, on Friday the Welsh government changed their guidance to allow primary residentials. With only a few weeks to go until the end of term, and a lot of business having already transferred to England, the ire of the sector [captured in this BBC article](#) is not to be wondered at.

Special Mention

Good news may seem a little in short supply this week, so the political Mad Hatter's Tea Party has inspired my choice to pick a [good news nature story](#) about the successful reintroduction of hazel dormice in the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Cumbria and Lancashire. It's part a wider species recovery programme, 'Back On Our Map' (BOOM) but reminds us of the need for people with fieldwork skills.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark