

## **The School I'd Like: 2020**

*Chris Waterman asks students to answer questions – big and small – about post-pandemic education*

In 1967 *The Observer* ran a competition called *The school that I'd like* which was written up by Edward Blishen in a Penguin Education Special. Dr Catherine Burke and Professor Ian Grosvenor have written two follow-up books *The School I'd Like: Revisited* published in 2003 (using data from 2001) and 2015 (using data from 2011).

There are three principal reasons for producing *The School I'd Like: 2020*.

**First**, schools will remain closed for an unknown number of months. Some schools are still open, but not for teaching: these schools are looking after vulnerable students and those with parents who fit into the “key worker” category. Most students will not be at school, nor will they be socialising with their peers. They will have time to reflect on what they feel school should be about and what sort of school they would like to return to.

**Second**, in the last decade, the national curriculum has been more tightly determined by central government. The curriculum has narrowed considerably, as a direct result of the focus on English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 and by the introduction of the Ebac and Progress 8 at Key Stages 3 and 4. Schools struggle to find time to deal with major shifts in the lives of young people. Principal shifts include: the rise and rise of social media; a corresponding need for young people to become more resilient; and the threats posed to their future, primarily by climate change and, now, by the pandemic.

**Third**, the Corona Virus pandemic, which is moving inexorably across the United Kingdom (and impacting on every country on the planet), will surely mean that what could now be described as normal service will not be resumed. Governments will have to re-engineer education to meet the new reality that is, as yet, unknown.

*The School I'd Like:2020* will gather its evidence from a self-selecting sample of children from primary, special and secondary schools and will detail: what students like about school; what they don't like about school; and how they think school could be improved. Their comments will range from the detail of their school lives to the big picture changes they would like to see.

Some of the quick wins might easily be implemented as indeed, might some of the bigger changes suggested. Some of the more radical ideas will need more reflection and time to deliver.

In addition to listing their likes, dislikes and hopes, they will be invited to submit a piece of prose, or a poem, which sets out their vision for the school they would like.

## **The School We'd Like to Offer: 2025**

Once *The School I'd Like: 2020* is complete, it will be sent to some of the key influencers in education policy for them to respond to the views of the young respondents. Their contributions will be published in a companion volume *The School We'd Like to Offer: 2025*. These key movers and shakers will be asked how they think education could and should be re-engineered in the United Kingdom to meet the hopes of future generations. In addition to reading the views of current students, these contributors will be asked to scan the horizon for new ideas about the shape of education to come.

- The unavoidable break in statutory education, with the cancellation of public examinations, means that, for one year at least, students, schools, colleges, universities and employers will have to rely on non-examination results and assessments.

Do we really need an examination at 16+ in its current form?

Is not now the time to move to a post-examination admissions system for university?

- The majority of students will have had an enforced period of online learning at home.

Do students need to attend school for 190 days each year or are there more flexible patterns of learning?

Does every teacher at Key Stages 3,4 and 5 need to be face-to-face with students for five days a week?

How can technology be employed to track pupils' online study?

- The Corona Virus is still ranging and will have far-reaching effects on the UK, both on the fabric of society and the economy.

Should we seize the opportunity to re-engineer education to enable us to adapt to a new, if not a brave world?

If you would like your students to join the discussion, please visit [www.theschoolidlike.com](http://www.theschoolidlike.com) for further details and to download the questionnaire.

If you would like to contribute to *The School We'd Like to Offer: 2025* please visit the site and complete the contact form.