

SATIPS

Support and training in Prep, Primary and Senior Schools

English

A Long Goodbye

I have returned after the summer to a new role within my school and I want to do it justice. Therefore, I have taken the decision to step down from my SATIPS role and I hope someone will step up to assume the mantle.

I have always enjoyed The Broadsheet and have found useful articles and ideas on its pages. I wrote my first article in 2002, when Nigel Ramage and Geoffrey Hammond were at the helm and a lot has happened since that first article.

My association with The Broadsheet began whilst Estelle Morris was Secretary of State for Education and there have been six further ministers since. You can rest assured that you'll never be short on material if you follow the news and see what these people get up to:

Ms Morris, now The Baroness Morris of Yardley, was a victim of her own government's target obsessed policies. She became embroiled in several high profile situations; A-Level English marking and intervening on behalf of two boys expelled for threatening a teacher. The final straw, however, was missing literacy and numeracy targets that she herself had set the Department whilst holding the more junior post of Minister for Schools.

Next, was Charles Clarke: his utilitarian views on education riled me and certainly provided me with material, if needed, with which to fill The Broadsheet. Fortunately, people did step forward at the required time to provide articles and consequently you were all spared my lunatic rants! Today, he has several visiting professor posts now and I'd love to know what his teaching style is and how his lectures go down: I've never forgotten, at the launch of a set of targets to measure teachers' performance, his pronouncement that "The days of the charismatic teacher are over." They weren't then and I hope they never will be.

Ruth Kelly and Alan Johnson were remarkably benign and, in the main, managed to avoid controversy; at least within the remit of

language, literacy and English that I might have been looking for in The Broadsheet.

This is true of neither Ed Balls nor Michael Gove. Both of whom have had a profound effect upon the profession and English in its widest sense: Ed Ball's one-to-one tuition sessions, for literacy and numeracy skills, are still in place and are triggered by lower than expected performance in National Curriculum year group tests that he also introduced. Michael Gove's full impact needs a little time to be evaluated but his grammar tests have already left their mark on education and in a recent Broadsheet.

If you wish to steer clear of 'Big P' politics, keep an eye out for initiatives and consultation paper (Green Paper issues): since 'National Curriculum 2' (1999) we have had; The Reading Recovery Programme (2007), Synthetic Phonics and Year 1 Phonics testing (2010) and the grammar tests (2012, first tests in 2014.) There have also been a number of writing initiatives the most recent being 'Big Writing'. I also peruse the pages of the TES for issues that they are raising and have used them as the basis of articles that appear in The Broadsheet.

I know that many schools either maintain a watching brief on such matters or concern themselves primarily with ISEB matters. With this in mind I have always kept an eye on the 'Termly Newsletter' from ISEB and followed up any changes by reading the subsequent, more detailed documents they have produced. There are issues and perennial debates, such as unseen poetry at CE, that arise and I have endeavoured to cover these. Such issues do draw a good response from teachers and you will always get material for these!

Being a Broadsheet editor has also meant that publishers have been keen to send material for review and I have done so, not necessarily to their liking. I have always felt the role requires honesty in order to have any credibility with the teachers who have taken the trouble to read your article. 🐼

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The position has opened doors in other ways too. I have been able to use it to my advantage to gain places on courses ordinarily I might not have expected to get on; The Cambridge University Conference on Childhood Literature is one such example. I wrote about it in an issue of the Broadsheet after the event but must admit the 'buzz' came from being able to talk to the poets, authors and academics on the day.

Of course, it should not be all about the editor. I am indebted to all colleagues who have contributed over the years. Fundamentally The Broadsheet should be a means for teachers to comment, inform and engage their colleagues all over the country. The unsolicited pieces are always welcome but I'm most grateful to a group of people on my local circuit who have stepped up when asked to write a piece despite their own often hectic schedules.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to edit The Broadsheet and I hope that someone will step up and take on the responsibility. Perhaps some of what I have written here is useful to any potential successor. I will continue to read it with interest. I'm also sure that I will continue to write from time to time!

Second National Conference for English SATIPS, in conjunction with Learning Works and Oxford University Press, hosts its Second National Conference in November. It is aimed at practitioners in the independent sector and should be another good day. The main keynote speaker is Roz Wilson, architect of Big Writing. Booking details can be found on our own website: www.satips.com or Learning Works website www.learning-works.org.uk

The date for this event is the 18th November and the venue is the Moor Hall Conference Centre, Cookham, in Berkshire. I do hope you will be able to join us.