



Clogging up the Classroom

- the jostle for curriculum content

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Context

1. What young people should be taught has been debated as long as there has been formal education. This is no surprise given that there are nearly as many views on the purpose of education as there are people, and the underlying purpose determines the priorities given to different disciplines and themes within the time and other resources available.
2. In the past children in this country received widely different levels of education in different contexts and ways. Nowadays though the vast majority are educated in school, and remain in formal education or training until the age of 18. This means that schools are about the only place where one can guarantee nearly every person under 18 will be on any given weekday for 9 months of the year – a powerful fact if one wants to have an influence on children one way or another, and catnip to those with an interest in public policy.
3. Also, virtually every adult has been to school in the past, and most will know someone amongst family or friends who has children at school currently. This ubiquity means that school staff have incredible influence in civic discussion. It also means that they engage with a society that is brimming with different views and ideas as to what children should be taught and how this should be done.
4. Politicians, government departments, quangos, charities, faith groups, professional associations, interest groups, and (of course) celebrities – it can sometimes feel that there is no shortage to the number of organisations and individuals with suggestions as to what it is that schools should teach.

The “What Should Schools Teach?” project

5. In 2018, Parents and Teachers for Excellence decided to try and better understand what some have coined “curriculum dumping” – the phenomenon whereby the near-automatic response to any social or other issue involves a call for schools to incorporate some action or idea into their already crowded day-to-day work.
6. Through daily monitoring of traditional and social media, and support from our broader network of followers, we have tried to identify as many calls as possible for additions or changes to what schools should teach. Whilst this is by no means an exhaustive approach, it has given us a huge number of curriculum proposals, and highlighted the range of voices involved in influencing schools’ decisions and actions.

7. We have been clear from the start that we are less interested in the validity or otherwise of any individual suggestion identified, and more concerned with identifying the volume and range of proposals, and their impact on curriculum demands if they were all implemented.

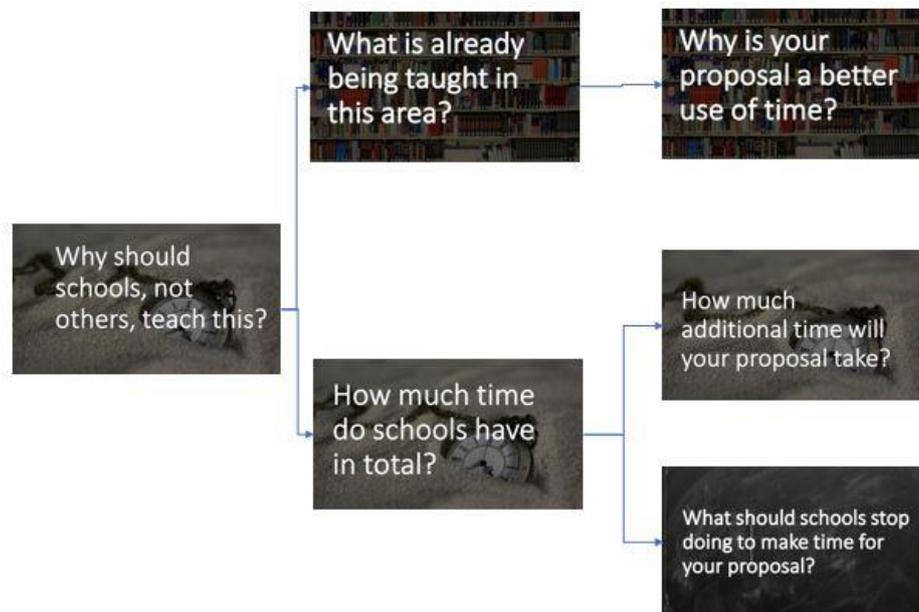
Summary of findings

8. Between January 1st and December 21st 2018, **we identified 213 individual calls for schools to teach something in addition, or as an alternative, to that already done.** The list of these, with links to original articles, can be found in appendix A.
9. There is a huge range of topics covered across these – including architecture, enterprise, pregnancy, sarcasm, resilience, first aid, internet safety. **However, there were three themes that came up far more often than any other:**
 - **Health** – with 68 proposals
 - **Finance** – with 24 proposals
 - **Technology** – 22 proposals
10. **Proposers rarely demonstrated any real understanding** as to:
 - why school should be the context for addressing the identified issue;
 - how much time schools have with pupils;
 - how full existing curriculums already are;
 - what is already covered in the area of interest; or
 - the staff and other resources realistically available for delivery.
11. **The cumulative effect of the 200+ proposals runs at least into hundreds of hours.** If campaigners were successful and all of these were implemented, significant additional time would be needed in the school year, or large amounts of existing curriculum content would have to be dropped. Several of these proposals alone require the equivalent of a week's worth of lesson time (25+ hours.)

Recommendations

12. **Proposers should ask: “why should schools, not others, teach this?”**
 - Whilst schools are the easiest place to locate and work with young people, many of the suggestions seen by us would be better addressed in a family or other context i.e. schools are being used to work around perceived issues of family capacity, rather than addressing this directly.

13. If satisfied that school is the best place to teach the specified content, **proposers should ask and answer these questions, to consider the existing curriculum and the opportunity costs of their proposals:**



14. **School staff should ask the same questions of any proposal they see advocated, and satisfy themselves that any answers provided are based on robust evidence and understanding.**
15. **Governors/Trustees should ensure that changes to curriculum content has considered these questions or similar.**
16. **Journalists should take the time to check if these questions or similar have been considered before publicising proposals for schools.**

Appendix A – The 2018 List

No.	Title	Date	Theme
1	Why We Should Teach School Aged Children About Baby Loss	03/01/2018	Health
2	Make schools colder to improve learning	03/01/2018	Misc
3	Schools 'should help children with social media risk'	04/01/2018	Tech
4	Pupils should stand or squat at their desks, celebrity GP says	07/01/2018	Health
5	MP's call for national anthem teaching in schools to unite country	16/01/2018	Misc
6	It's up to us: heads and teachers must model principled, appropriate and ethical online behaviour	18/01/2018	Tech
7	Primary school children need to learn about intellectual property, Government agency says	20/01/2018	Misc
8	Call for more sarcasm at school is no joke	20/01/2018	Misc
9	Schools should teach more 'nuanced' view of feminism, Girls' School Association president says	21/01/2018	Misc
10	Schools 'should teach children about the dangers of online sexual content'	22/01/2018	Tech
11	Schools should teach children resilience to help them in the workplace, new Education Secretary says	22/01/2018	Misc
12	Government launches pack to teach pupils 'importance of the Commonwealth'	24/01/2018	Misc
13	Schools must not become like prisons in fight against knife crime, headteacher warns	30/01/2018	Crime
14	Schools should teach all pupils first aid, MPs say	07/02/2018	Health
15	Call for agriculture GCSE to be introduced as UK prepares to leave the EU	08/02/2018	Misc
16	Councils call for compulsory mental health counselling in all secondary schools	08/02/2018	Health
17	Advisers should teach finance to the young	09/02/2018	Finance
18	Set aside 15 minutes of dedicated reading time, secondary schools told	22/02/2018	Literacy
19	Fight for your right to know all the facts	24/02/2018	Finance
20	Pupils must be taught about architecture, says Gokay Deveci	26/02/2018	Misc
21	A serious education on the consequences of obesity is needed for our most overweight generation	26/02/2018	Health
22	Teach girls how to get pregnant, say doctors	02/03/2018	Health
23	Start teaching children the real facts of life	05/03/2018	Finance

24	Schools where pupils share same cultural background must teach 'pluralistic British values'	07/03/2018	Culture
25	Rate schools on how they meet pupils' mental health needs, care commission tells Ofsted	08/03/2018	Health
26	Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales tells pupils to learn to fail if they want to succeed	08/03/2018	Misc
27	Teachers need to reach out to business	09/03/2018	Misc
28	Pupils should be taught that abstinence and celibacy are 'positive life choices', C of E says	13/03/2018	Health
29	Dragons' Den star Peter Jones looks to expand enterprise teaching to all schools	13/03/2018	Misc
30	Lessons about risks of gambling piloted in British schools	15/03/2018	Health
31	Schools should teach critical thinking on celebrity culture – former Eton head	17/03/2018	Misc
32	Train all teachers in attachment issues, says trauma expert	17/03/2018	Health
33	Pupils should spend as much time in PE as they do in English and maths - Darcey Bussell	18/03/2018	Health
34	Next generation education	19/03/2018	Tech
35	Martha Lane Fox: Teenagers should think carefully and critically about the internet	19/03/2018	Tech
36	Call for litter picking to be in national curriculum is rubbish	21/03/2018	Misc
37	Kate says 'teach teenagers parenting to help them raise resilient children'	21/03/2018	Misc
38	Give lessons on appearance-related bullying	22/03/2018	Misc
39	Teaching Citizenship in our schools is more vital than ever	23/03/2018	Misc
40	View from the House: Why more schools should teach BSL	24/03/2018	Languages
41	BBC journalists to teach children how to identify fake news	26/03/2018	Misc
42	Teach pupils about knives in maths', charity suggests	26/03/2018	Crime
43	Parents are raiding their kids' savings to pay for everyday items	27/03/2018	Finance
44	Why schools need to tackle the myths about the hymen	29/03/2018	Health
45	Why we need to talk about miscarriage	30/03/2018	Health
46	We're all responsible for teaching kids about finance	30/03/2018	Finance
47	Manchester Arena bombing: Compulsory first aid training call	30/03/2018	Health
48	Why every school should have a team of mental health first aiders	02/04/2018	Health
49	Liz Weston: How schools can teach kids to be smart consumers	02/04/2018	Finance
50	MP reveals plans for army schools to boost 'life chances' of kids in deprived areas	02/04/2018	Misc
51	Former gang member reveals how to stop teens launching acid attacks	03/04/2018	Crime
52	Obesity crisis: The UK must tackle this large problem right now	04/04/2018	Health

53	Call for toothbrushing lessons to combat child dental health crisis	06/04/2018	Health
54	Pupils should be given books on savings and debt, say Tories	08/04/2018	Finance
55	Children shouldn't learn to code. Ultimately, machines will be better	09/04/2018	Tech
56	Promote social activism' - and three other things schools can do to combat radicalisation	10/04/2018	Misc
57	Pupils should be given information on abortion, conference hears	11/04/2018	Health
58	Teachers back calls to give kids lessons in money	11/04/2018	Finance
59	Financial education should be on the school curriculum	12/04/2018	Finance
60	Teach pupils how to be healthy parents, say experts	17/04/2018	Health
61	Citizenship education in a 'parlous state'	18/04/2018	Misc
62	Artificial Intelligence Ethics Crucial says House of Lords	18/04/2018	Tech
63	Faith schools must teach Britishness, Lords report says	20/04/2018	Misc
64	Colleges should register students to vote, says Lords committee	20/04/2018	Misc
65	Do schools need to take the teaching of manners more seriously?	22/04/2018	Misc
66	Teach bushcraft skills to boost grades of poorest pupils, say Scouts	23/04/2018	Misc
67	Use CPD funding to boost pupil oracy, MPs told	24/04/2018	Misc
68	Should Kids Be Able To Tell The Time?	25/04/2018	Misc
69	If we want to tackle antisemitism in the modern world, then we need make GCSE history a compulsory subject in schools	28/04/2018	Misc
70	David Oakes: Schools should teach lesser known Shakespeare plays	29/04/2018	Misc
71	Business leader on Unity City: 'We need schools to deliver skills - this can be one of them'	29/04/2018	Finance
72	Mary Berry slams schools for failing to teach children simple cooking skills and says every pupil should learn 10 healthy recipes	30/04/2018	Health
73	AI will soon beat pupils taught knowledge-based curriculum	02/05/2018	Tech
74	We can't let the discrimination of confident women filter down to our classrooms	03/05/2018	Misc
75	Schools could be forced to weigh pupils for Ofsted obesity checks	03/05/2018	Health
76	Many revenge porn victims consider suicide – why aren't schools doing more to stop it?	07/05/2018	Misc
77	Girls should be taught how to breastfeed at school, urge medics as a new analysis reveals the UK still has one of the lowest rates in the world	11/05/2018	Health
78	Top musicians unite in call for all pupils to have the right to learn an instrument	13/05/2018	Music

79	Children should be taught the perils of gambling, a pro-betting Tory backbencher has suggested	15/05/2018	Misc
80	Schoolboy's book sets out to teach children how to be young and mighty	15/05/2018	Finance
81	Does breastfeeding really belong on the school curriculum?	16/05/2018	Health
82	Should children be taught how to grow food as part of their schooling?	18/05/2018	Misc
83	How bringing trampolines into schools could improve literacy results	18/05/2018	Misc
84	Teaching AI in schools could equip students for the future	23/05/2018	Tech
85	Schools should teach dangers of livestreaming	24/05/2018	Tech
86	Teaching students how to swear can help them to develop socially, scientist says	28/05/2018	Misc
87	Over 22,000 10 and 11-year-olds are severely obese, research finds	29/05/2018	Health
88	Money worries start from age 26	30/05/2018	Finance
89	Educate children to tackle ethnic minority donor crisis, MPs say	01/06/2018	Health
90	Call for law to make all primaries do daily mile	03/06/2018	Health
91	Calls for schools to ban fruit juice	05/06/2018	Health
92	Should we ban mobile phones in schools? After France takes decisive action, the debate rages on in UK	08/06/2018	Tech
93	Teacher launches petition to teach kids about dangers of using phone behind the wheel	08/06/2018	Tech
94	Taking children out of RE lessons should be banned, Charles Clarke says	09/06/2018	Misc
95	Children who learn thinking skills could improve their GCSE results by a whole grade	12/06/2018	Misc
96	Pupils 'lack literacy skills to spot fake news'	13/06/2018	Misc
97	New GCSEs are a poor preparation for the workplace	14/06/2018	Misc
98	Teachers need to talk about Love Island	19/06/2018	Health
99	Mobile phones should be banned from school classrooms, says Culture Secretary	20/06/2018	Tech
100	Serena Williams: Young boys need domestic abuse education	21/06/2018	Health
101	Teachers 'should tell pupils about sadomasochism'	22/06/2018	Health
102	Police chief urges schools to tell pupils about knife crime danger	22/06/2018	Health
103	Adopted children need better support at school	26/06/2018	Health
104	Schools should make obese pupils thinner says MP	26/06/2018	Health
105	John Treacy wants school PE to go extra mile	27/06/2018	Health
106	Our culture is saturated with porn – which is why we need to talk about it in schools	27/06/2018	Tech

107	They need to be learning about it as soon as they hit puberty': Sex writer says masturbation should be taught in SCHOOLS to kids as young as 11	28/06/2018	Health
108	Teach primary school pupils about finance, say City firms	28/06/2018	Finance
109	Teaching kids about money works	28/06/2018	Finance
110	Dr Miriam: We must teach girls how to get pregnant	28/06/2018	Health
111	We need lessons on knife perils	29/06/2018	Crime
112	Public accounts chair wants schools to publish clearer financial information online	29/06/2018	Misc
113	Children not prepared for working life	01/07/2018	Finance
114	Three Quarters Of The British Public Do Not Know The RAF Is 100	02/07/2018	Misc
115	Jayne Dowle: Children need money lessons - just ask my son	02/07/2018	Finance
116	Call for school trips to abattoirs	03/07/2018	Misc
117	Why we teach personal finance at KS1	03/07/2018	Misc
118	Germaine Greer Says 'We Should Stop Teaching Art' in Schools	03/07/2018	Misc
119	Give five-year-olds careers lessons, say teachers	05/07/2018	Misc
120	London school children named debating champions	05/07/2018	Misc
121	Should students teach students about knife crime?	06/07/2018	Misc
122	Secondary schools should teach students how to detect cancer symptoms, say MPs	10/07/2018	Health
123	Jeremy Corbyn says school children should be taught about workers' rights	14/07/2018	Misc
124	It's not enough to ban mobile phones in schools – tech giants must also change their ways	16/07/2018	Health
125	Teach with video games, schools told	25/07/2018	Tech
126	Relax uniform rules during heatwaves, heads told	26/07/2018	Health
127	Sherlock's Andrew Scott calls for better sex education in schools: 'We need to talk about consent and desire'	27/07/2018	Health
128	21 Things Every 21st Century Teacher Should Try This Year	29/07/2018	Misc
129	Children should be taught in school about how to make marriage work, Prince of Wales' divorce lawyer says	30/07/2018	Misc
130	CoppaFeel! founder's goal to make cancer education a part of the school curriculum is even closer	30/07/2018	Health
131	End this obsession with facts and focus on life skills	05/08/2018	Misc
132	Playground sex assaults 'are becoming an epidemic'	13/08/2018	Health
133	Monica Lewinsky: Schools must help counter cyberbullying	13/08/2018	Tech
134	Opinion: Is it time for sign language to be taught in schools?	13/08/2018	Languages

135	Teachers 'need more training on childhood trauma'	14/08/2018	Health
136	Death of teacher's dog fuels campaign to rid schools of 'toxic' teaching	15/08/2018	Misc
137	Peterloo director calls for 1819 massacre to be taught in UK schools	16/08/2018	Misc
138	Prue Leith says her accidental Bake Off tweet "was very scary and horrible"	20/08/2018	Health
139	From pasta to stir-fry: foods children should learn to cook in school	21/08/2018	Health
140	Five environmental disasters that we should make sure children know about	23/08/2018	Misc
141	Schools can be the antidote to botox culture	25/08/2018	Health
142	Stressed teenagers should think about Mars, not exams, says star physicist Brian Cox	26/08/2018	Misc
143	How to beat the Great British lending rip-off	03/09/2018	Finance
144	How Technology Education Needs To Change If Young People Are To Get The Skills They Need For The Future	04/09/2018	Tech
145	Why all pupils should learn migration history	04/09/2018	Misc
146	This Morning viewers 'sickened' by sex expert who wants to teach masturbation to 11-year-olds in schools	07/09/2018	Health
147	Religious Education should be re-branded as 'Religion and Worldviews' to ensure survival, report says	09/09/2018	Misc
148	Putting cancer on the curriculum will save our daughters' lives	10/09/2018	Health
149	We can - and should - teach children to be funny	16/09/2018	Misc
150	Chris Packham: Twin primary schools with farms	19/09/2018	Misc
151	How to Train Your Dragon author: School is off-putting	19/09/2018	Misc
152	New University of Bath facility 'will change how evolution is taught'	24/09/2018	Misc
153	We need to teach pupils the importance of sleep	25/09/2018	Health
154	Why we need to teach four-year-olds mindfulness	26/09/2018	Health
155	Outdoor education opens pupils' eyes to the world	29/09/2018	Misc
156	Ten to the dozen: teach children to count in 12s, campaigners say	01/10/2018	Misc
157	Rising debt: Why we need more financial education in schools	02/10/2018	Finance
158	V&A boss: 'Don't cram children - let them play'	04/10/2018	Misc
159	This Black History Month, let's teach young people how slavery interrupted a rich and powerful black history	06/10/2018	Misc
160	The key to unlocking cyber-skills starts at school	08/10/2018	Tech
161	School CPR lessons 'could triple survival rate'	08/10/2018	Health
162	Teach children that obesity is not inevitable, say doctors	11/10/2018	Health
163	Schools should educate children about colonialism and legacy of slave trade, says Jeremy Corbyn	11/10/2018	Misc

164	Teach children that obesity is not inevitable, say doctors	11/10/2018	Health
165	Internet should be a formal subject in schools	12/10/2018	Tech
166	Young People Want And Need LGBTQ-Specific Sex Education - The Government Must Listen	12/10/2018	Misc
167	Black History Month: Are history lessons truly diverse?	13/10/2018	Misc
168	The RSPCA launches Generation Kind, calling for animal welfare to be taught in all schools	16/10/2018	Misc
169	Teach children how to avoid dog bites, say MPs	17/10/2018	Health
170	Sir Ben Ainslie and wife call for oceans to feature in National Curriculum	17/10/2018	Misc
171	Teaching linguistics improves language skills	19/10/2018	Misc
172	Why remember the First World War if we don't learn from it?	21/10/2018	Misc
173	My first home: Melvin Odoom	23/10/2018	Misc
174	Teach Chinese instead of French, schools are urged	24/10/2018	Languages
175	Educate all pupils about menstrual wellbeing, MPs say	24/10/2018	Health
176	Children are developing a nature deficit disorder	25/10/2018	Misc
177	Dragons' Den's Peter Jones: 'Teach school kids how to set up a business'	29/10/2018	Finance
178	Hospital worker in Wrexham teaches life-saving CPR skills to pupils across the region	30/10/2018	Health
179	Financial education still lacking in schools	07/11/2018	Finance
180	First-ever financial education textbook lands in schools - funded by Martin	07/11/2018	Finance
181	Jess Phillips MP: Teach girls about the orgasm	08/11/2018	Health
182	Teach children safe gay sex, says National Secular Society	10/11/2018	Health
183	It's time to tackle the racism that lurks in our classrooms, starting with the map of the world	11/11/2018	Misc
184	Boy who helped save mother's life backs campaign to teach first aid in schools	12/11/2018	Health
185	Primary school pupils should be taught what it means to be LGBT, Royal College of Paediatricians says	12/11/2018	Health
186	Three quarters wish they received financial education	12/11/2018	Finance
187	Schools should 'take the lead' on curbing pupils' social media use	13/11/2018	Tech
188	Call for debates to be compulsory for all secondary pupils	15/11/2018	Misc
189	Can the games industry be supported by UK-educated talent after Brexit?	15/11/2018	Tech
190	Wellbeing should be timetabled alongside English and maths, study suggests	19/11/2018	Health
191	Compulsory' mental health education call to tackle suicide in Wales	21/11/2018	Health
192	Exclusive: Damian Hinds tells schools to 'get kids climbing trees' to build character	21/11/2018	Misc

193	Lipreading campaign supported by Turner Prize winner	22/11/2018	Misc
194	Should enterprise be taught in schools?	23/11/2018	Finance
195	Teach kids to debate, and you teach them not to be ignored	26/11/2018	Misc
196	Pornography and LGBT issues missed out in sex education, poll finds	27/11/2018	Health
197	Boys less inhibited than girls, says Strictly judge	27/11/2018	Misc
198	Schools Must Start Teaching Girls About Sexual Pleasure	28/11/2018	Health
199	55,000 UK children are problem gamblers – schools should step in to help, campaigners believe	30/11/2018	Misc
200	Megan Barton Hanson lifts the lid on her plans to TEACH sex education in schools as ex stripper enthuses she'd be a 'brilliant role model'	01/12/2018	Health
201	London schools teach self-defence and first aid to protect pupils from knife crime	02/12/2018	Health
202	Children need to be taught that consent is about so much more than sex	03/12/2018	Health
203	Every child should be taught joined-up writing	09/12/2018	Misc
204	Let pupils help design our school systems, says Unesco envoy	10/12/2018	Misc
205	Shortage of science-savvy primary teachers 'a disaster'	10/12/2018	Tech
206	Sir Lenny Henry: Schools should teach colonial Britain's complicity in slave trade	12/12/2018	Misc
207	We Need To Make Climate Change Part Of The Curriculum If We Are To Prevent The 'Collapse Of Civilisation'	13/12/2018	Misc
208	Majority of British people think children should be taught about orgasms in schools	13/12/2018	Health
209	We should train teachers to spot the first signs of forced marriage	15/12/2018	Misc
210	Let's get gardening onto the National Curriculum – it'll inspire a whole new generation	18/12/2018	Misc
211	Making it easy to close the economics knowledge gap	19/12/2018	Finance
212	Schools should teach 'Muslim and feminist views of Jesus'	19/12/2018	Misc
213	Parents and Schools Have A Responsibility To Teach Children About Feminism	19/12/2018	Misc