

# Nottingham City Of Literature



After months of events and hard work, Nottingham was awarded the status of UNESCO World City of Literature in 2015. Nottingham now joins 11 other cities around the world, including Edinburgh, Reykjavik and Melbourne in holding title. As with UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Nottingham will hold the title for life.

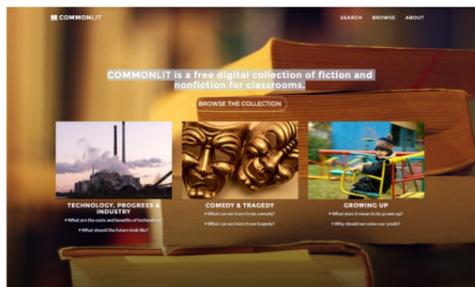
This new status puts Nottingham on the map as a city investing in literature – whether that's events, education or publishing. It is hoped that the city will attract more events and literary talent to the area.

There are lots of ways people and schools can get involved from book launches, writing master classes, 'WriteClub' and authors in conversation. There is information on their website and they want to know about anything interesting that might be relevant: do you know of a fantastic event / individual / institution that they seem to have overlooked?

Website: <http://www.nottinghamcityofliterature.com/>

## Tried and Tested

[www.commonlit.org](http://www.commonlit.org)



COMMONLIT is an American site that offers a free digital collection of fiction and nonfiction for classrooms.

The instructional materials have been created by teachers to support literacy development for students in grades 5-12 (aged 10-18 years).

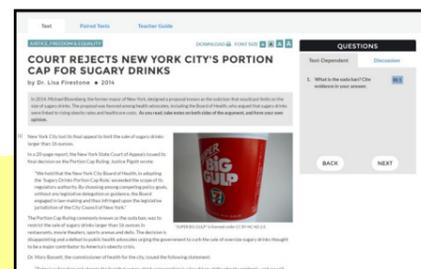
There is a searchable database of themes such as 'Identity', 'Morality' and 'Social Pressure'



You can search for a specific term or browse all the categories. Once you have chosen your theme you are prompted to choose a reading level appropriate to your pupils which then gives options of text to look at.



The texts are from different sources including news websites, extracts from literature, and historical documents. Some resources have options of paired reading and teachers notes.



There are a variety of text-dependent and discussion activities, providing pupils with opportunities to discuss what they read, form opinions, and defend their claims.

INSIDE



**Educational Excellence Everywhere:**

Where to get started with the White Paper



**Edu-blog Spotlight:**

James Theobald:  
A guide to Othmar's Trombone



**Nottingham:**  
UNESCO City of Literature



Westbury School Learning and Development Bulletin



# Relay

## Teaching Assistant Impact

Issue 7,  
March 2016

There are over 250,000 full-time equivalent teaching assistants in England, a number which makes up 27% of the schools workforce. Over recent years there have been calls for teaching assistant numbers to be reduced for various reasons; including research that suggests TAs have a negative impact on pupil learning.

When the Education Endowment Foundation first published its toolkit in 2011 it showed that teaching assistants as a strategy were very expensive for little impact. It also showed that there was limited available evidence to support TAs. There are reports of schools getting rid of their entire TA work force based on this information. Thankfully, most schools have looked beyond the headline figure and there has been a recent focus on researching the work of TAs to help schools make the best decisions for their pupils.

The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) research programme (2003-2009) reported a negative relationship between the amount of TA support received and the progress made by pupils in mainstream primary and secondary schools. They identify the way schools and teachers deploy and prepare TAs as the possible reason for these results.

This has prompted further research to establish why this is the case and to provide schools with guidance as to how they can make the best use of teaching assistants in schools.

### Key Recommendations of EEF TA Guidance Report

Not be used as informal teaching resource for low attaining pupils

Add value to what teachers do, not replace them

Help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom

Deliver high quality support using structured interventions

Adopt evidence-based interventions to support TAs

Explicit connections between everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions



# Educational Excellence Everywhere

The government announced some radical changes to England's school system in its White Paper launched on 17th March. The changes included in the White Paper will have an impact on our Federation, our families and careers in the future. There is a lot of information included in the 128 page document and there is ongoing analysis of the policy ideas and what they mean for schools.

The biggest thing is probably the announcement that all schools will be academies by 2022. There have been lots of concerns voiced about this; the speed of the process, the cost, concern for LAs and their remaining duties, issues concerning primary schools and issues concerning staff. *Schools Week* published a helpful guide answering some questions around academies which has been put up in Room 4.

Other areas of policy ideas in the White Paper include:

- Changes to Initial Teacher Training
- Remove requirement of parent governors
- CPD for teachers
- The role of Regional Schools Commissioners
- Improve effectiveness of pupil premium spending

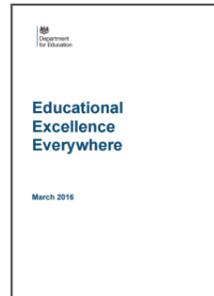
The announcements surrounding academies have been the focus of most of the coverage, however there are several commentaries covering the wider scope of the White Paper. It can be difficult to pick out the information but here are some places to start:

**Schools Week** - The educational newspaper has covered lots of areas in some detail. Articles on the whole White Paper, including a handy A4 summary of all 37 policies, and focussed on individual elements can be found online at [schoolsweek.co.uk](http://schoolsweek.co.uk)

**Keven Bartle** - Headteacher Keven Bartle has written a series of blog posts titled 'The White Paper: Not the Right Paper' covering what he thinks are the big ideas, interesting ideas, and which ones are nonsensical. [dailygenius.wordpress.com](http://dailygenius.wordpress.com) (Part 1 - <https://goo.gl/cfAYSx>)

**LKMco** - The Education & Youth 'think & action-tank' have a post which covers what the White Paper says (or doesn't) about SEND and where opportunities may have been missed. [lkmco.org/white-paper-special-needs/](http://lkmco.org/white-paper-special-needs/)

The White Paper can be downloaded here: <https://goo.gl/FSyFyG> (pdf)



# Edu-Blog Spotlight

James Theobald is an English teacher from Hampshire. He blogs regularly at [othmarstrombone.wordpress.com](http://othmarstrombone.wordpress.com) and he tweets as [@JamesTheo](https://twitter.com/JamesTheo).

It's difficult to pick just one post to highlight from this blog as there is so much content and lots covered - from resources to policy issues. Luckily James has just posted 'How to Play Trombone: A Guide to this Blog'.



The guide categorises his posts into several headings:

- Teacher decision making
- Policy and broader issues in education
- Schools
- English
- Satirical stories (and stuff)
- Starter for Five advice
- Book reviews
- Resources

James gives a balanced and considered take on many of the issues surrounding education at the moment, including political issues, such as Ofsted reform and the teacher retention crisis and tackling edu-fads and myths.

There are subject-specific posts for English that cover topics like how to choose study texts and the new GCSE curriculum, which are both opinions from experience and advice.

He has resources aimed at both English teachers and a wider audience, including the collating of knowledge organisers for subjects and topics across the curriculum (linked to in a shared Google drive).

Finally, his collection of 'Education Fables' including 'Nobody expects a British Education' and 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the College of Teaching' are definitely worth a read.

Full post with comments at: <https://goo.gl/i3lcgD>

You've been asked for some information or a pupil report for a meeting, but what do all those letters mean?

# Decoding the Diary Sheet

## RSC

There are 8 Regional Schools Commissioners for England who are responsible for approving and monitoring academies and free schools in their area on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

Their main responsibilities are to:

- monitor the performance of the academies in their area
- take action when an academy is underperforming
- decide on the development of new academies
- address underperformance in local-authority-maintained schools through sponsored academy arrangements
- make recommendations to ministers about free school applications
- encourage organisations to become academy sponsors
- approve changes to open academies, including:
  - changes to age ranges
  - mergers between academies
  - changes to multi-academy trust arrangements

Each RSC gets support from a headteacher board made up of experienced academy headteachers who advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make.

## Teaching Assistant Impact continued

The EEF guidance report 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' was published in 2014 and is an accessible overview of the current research around teaching assistants. The document is aimed at SLT, SENCOs, class teachers and TAs. The report summarises the current ways in which TAs are used in English schools and seven key recommendations (see front page) in three sections: everyday classroom context, out of class structured interventions and linking learning between structured interventions and classroom contexts. The document also provides guidance as to how school can implement these ideas.

Recent evidence suggests that working in a direct, but informal, instructional role with pupils on a small group and one-to-one basis (both inside and outside of the classroom) can lead to pupils' over reliance on the TA and time away from qualified teachers. There has now been a considerable focus on researching TA led interventions which consistently show that providing brief, regular and sustained programmes of work, with clear objectives and expectations add around three to four additional months progress. Teachers should have a good awareness of the structure and coverage of the programmes, and help pupils make connections between their learning in interventions and the wider curriculum.

Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants Guidance Report (pdf) <https://goo.gl/ErFyWP> and in Room 4