

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Much hard graft is still needed, but our schools will improve

Our interview today with Andrew Cook, the region's Ofsted director, and his analysis of how our schools are faring, reads rather like an account of a pupil being hauled into the headmaster's office to hear some pretty hard and sobering home truths.

Yes, there have been improvements in performance, but not at sufficient pace. Rather than steady progress up towards the top of the class, we remain, on certain key counts, languishing near the bottom.

Mr Cook does not mince his words. He concedes some areas have been getting better, but asks "is that accelerating? Is there the momentum of change that you would hope for?" His answer is a blunt "no". This is troubling for all with an interest in the future of our region - for that is what the pupils in our schools represent.

Things are simply not getting better, fast enough. For children who pass through the education system relatively quickly, there is not the luxury to allow things to improve at this slow pace. Better leadership in many schools is, it seems, the key. Mr Cook has some thoughts in this area and we look forward to seeing them in action.

We know, and our readers know, that we here are blessed with some fantastic teachers. Ofsted's own reports over recent months have shown how many of our schools have been doing a great deal better and there are immense efforts under way to continue on this path.

Much of these improvements are yet to filter through in exam results, but we are quite sure our schools have the ability to soon soar up those league tables. We may only be in the second week of the new term, but already the challenge is clear. Major exams lie ahead for our education system. Further hard graft is required before then.

An electrifying tour

What a way to end our Summer of Cycling.

The Tour of Britain once again electrified our region as it raced through our towns and villages, bringing out the crowds in their thousands. Will it inspire cyclists of the future to take up this fantastic sport? Will it help generate money for our economy? On both counts, we certainly hope so. But, in truth, who can tell? What is instantly apparent, though, is that this was a truly thrilling, exhilarating event that brought fun and enjoyment along its route as it tore through our countryside.

At a somewhat slower pace, but no less special, was the Norfolk Churches Trust cycle ride, also over the weekend, which got many more of us out and onto two wheels.

We have greatly enjoyed bringing you our Summer of Cycling series this year. Of course, the cycling will continue even if, alas, the summer does not.

Different kinds of stars

Weekend festivals tend to be pretty raucous affairs - just ask those who went to Reload.

But, as ever in Norfolk, we like to 'dew diff' runt'. So just as the impressive roster of 1980s and 1990s rock acts were finally winding up their sets at the Norfolk Showground on Saturday night, a few miles further north, what must be Britain's quietest ever festival was barely getting into full swing: the Autumn Equinox Sky Camp.

Both were great successes, but - and we mean no slight here - the stars at Kelling Heath were shining brighter.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Our reader K T Bailey says it was chilly and the sea was choppy on a visit to Southwold but the views were still stunning. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

You may be singularly confused by this explanation...

Peter
Trudgill



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The idea behind the grammatical distinction between singular and plural seems straightforward enough: singular refers to one entity, and plural to more than one.

With English nouns, we generally indicate this through the absence versus the presence of the plural suffix -s: one book, 10 books. And with pronouns we have singular forms like me versus plural forms like us.

Things are a bit more complicated than that, though. Think about the word 'both'. This does refer to 'more than one' - but it isn't just any old more than one: it refers specifically to two, and only two. You can't say "How are you both?" if you're inquiring about a family of five people. And you can't ask a couple "How are you all?"

At this point in English grammar, there's a three-way distinction: one-both-all. 'All' is plural, of course, but in this case plural doesn't mean more than one: it means more than two.

The word both is an example of the grammatical category which linguistic scientists refer to as dual. English has several other words which express dual rather than plural number. Just as dual both corresponds to plural all, so either is



■ Beautiful Slovenia where there are words for singular, two and three or more when the speaker wants to refer to 'you'.

Picture: PA

the dual equivalent of plural any, and neither is the dual form corresponding to plural none. If you were asked which one of two books you wanted, you couldn't reply "I don't want any of them"; you would have to say "I don't want either of them". And you couldn't answer "none of them"; you would need to say "neither of them". (Note that in spite of what pedants want us to believe, the word none really can be plural: it's perfectly grammatical to say "None of them are very interesting".)

Many other languages in the world have a much more fully developed dual number

system than we have. It's true that Old English used to have special dual pronouns - wit meant 'we two' while we meant 'we three or more' - but we have lost that in the modern language. But in Slovenian, si means 'you (singular) are', ste is 'you (two) are' and 'sta' means 'you (plural, ie three or more) are'. Some languages even have a category of trial number, which relates specifically to three items. In Fijian, taru means 'we two' and tou means 'we three', so the plural pronoun 'eta' can only mean 'we four (or more)'. Amazing things, languages.

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I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

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