

# Eastern Daily Press

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## Schools may cause concern, but there are positive signs too

How are schools in our region performing? It is a question we have had to ask frequently in recent years, as Ofsted reports and exam results have suggested many are not doing as well as we need them to.

So today's news that one-in-six Norfolk schools is in the county council's 'cause for concern' category, because their pupils' achievement is not good enough, will be a cause of concern to parents themselves, and rightly so.

After all, everyone involved in education, whether as a parent, teacher, or leader of a council or academy chain, wants the best possible education for all our young people.

The fact so many of our schools require intervention from the council to help them improve is disappointing.

But that is not the end of the story regarding the council's risk assessment of schools, and there are things that we can definitely be positive about.

Firstly, it is good the council is taking an active role in scrutinising the performance of all schools – whether they are directly accountable to the local authority or not.

It is now harder for poor outcomes at any school – or any subject, or group of pupils, within a school – to go unchallenged.

Secondly, one of the reasons the number of schools in the bottom category had not shrunk over the past 12 months is that the council is demanding more from them. We need this kind of ambition for our schools.

There have been other signs of incremental progress in education in Norfolk and Suffolk in recent months, but now that Norfolk County Council has identified which schools currently need to improve, everyone must work together to ensure this does actually happen.

## Plight of the homeless

It is such tragic news. A woman was found dead at a Norwich church on Saturday, in an area locals said rough sleepers often used.

The sad discovery was made the same day that a memorial concert was held for the late Sergiusz Meges, known locally as Sergio.

Sergio, who was homeless, was found dead in a Norwich underpass in June.

It would be wrong to draw comparisons between the two cases, but the two deaths put the plight of the homeless in sharp focus.

The number of homeless people has risen in recent years and it is fast approaching the most difficult time of the year for those living on the streets.

As the nights draw in, it is vital that we support those charities and services offering a lifeline to the homeless.

## Humble spud's vital role

It was hats off to the humble 'tater in Ely – or rather the sturdy souls who rolled up their sleeves to race through the streets lugging 50lbs sacks of spuds on their backs.

While fun and games were had by all, the potato race highlights the vegetable's vital role in the economy of the Fens.

But the best bit of all was even if you had your chips in the race, you still got to keep your sack of spuds.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Jerry Linden-Hall took this lovely picture of Cromer Pier. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## Wee dram of whisky flows through one of our rivers

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Trudgill



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You might be familiar with the well-known Scottish song which goes "Campbeltown Loch, I wish you were whisky".

If we translate this into East Anglian terms, I suppose there might be some EDP readers who would not object at all if the Great Ouse, or even the Little Ouse, flowed with whisky as well.

What they might not know, however, is that there is an interesting connection between the names of those rivers and the name of the drink.

Whisky is an alcoholic beverage which we owe to our Gaelic neighbours in Ireland and in northern and western Scotland.

The English word whisky is an abbreviated version of an older form whiskybae, which was an anglicised form of the Gaelic term uisgebeatha.

Irish and Scottish Gaelic were once the same language – the Hebrides and the Scottish Highlands were originally settled by Gaels from Ireland.

In both forms of Gaelic, uisge-beatha means "water of life", which would originally have been a translation of Latin *acqua vitae*, like the French *eau de vie*.



■ The River Great Ouse runs through King's Lynn - the name Ouse has a Celtic origin.

The second part of *uisge-beatha* comes from Old Irish *bethu* "life", which is related to the Greek root *bio-*, which we have borrowed into English in words like *biology* and *biography*.

The first part comes from Old Irish *uisce* "water", which is from the ancient Celtic root *utso*, later *usso*.

This is also where *Ouse* comes from – there are several rivers with this name in Britain.

In fact many river names in England are, like the *Ouse*, pre-English in origin, deriving from the Celtic language of the peoples who inhabited Britain before the arrival of our Germanic ancestors.

Thames was Celtic for "dark river". *Yare* is Brittonic Celtic, perhaps meaning

something like "babbling river". *Avon* is simply the Brittonic word for river – in modern Welsh it's *Afon*. We can imagine Anglo-Saxon incomers pointing to a river, asking its name, and the local Celts assuming they were just asking what their general word for a river was. So *River Avon* means "river river".

*River Ouse* means "river water": one possible scenario in our part of the world is that newly-arrived Angles heard native Celts referring to the water in the *Ouse* as *usso* and wrongly thought that was the name of the river.

*Uss* later became *Uss*, and then *Uus* or *Ouse*. So, even if the *Ouse* isn't whisky, *Ouse* and the *whis-* part of whisky were originally the same word.

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But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.

Acts 1:8

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