

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1870

We must protect this precious teaching resource

Securing improvements in education is one of the biggest challenges facing our region.

In recent years, ministers and school inspectors have put Norfolk's education system in a harsh spotlight, although recent GCSE results and Ofsted reports have painted a picture of incremental improvement.

There has been much debate about issues such as changes to the curriculum, schools becoming academies and the quality of school leaders, but, in truth, nothing will make any difference unless we have highly-qualified, highly-motivated teachers in our classrooms.

Today's EDP survey of Norfolk teachers gives a worrying insight into some of the issues people at the coal face of education are experiencing. While it is likely that people who are dissatisfied are more likely to take part in surveys, there is plenty of food for thought here.

Headteachers have already said how hard it is to recruit high-quality applicants to fill teaching vacancies, especially in east and west Norfolk, and more rural areas. Now, it seems significant numbers of people already in the classroom are considering quitting. This could only make a difficult situation worse.

There are other worrying findings, from teachers being put under pressure to inflate results, to excessive term-time working hours.

There are few teachers who joined the profession for the money or the working hours. They are people who care, and who want to make a difference, and the fact so many are experiencing troubles should give us all pause for thought. Teaching is a job where a certain amount of pressure is inevitable, but teachers are a precious resource. We must not drive them away from their crucial role.

Legion's latest battle

They fought in the Second World War, and now they are fighting another battle: to keep the Royal British Legion alive.

Branches have merged and numbers of members are dwindling as the years go by.

Yet every year their collectors are a welcome sight as they sell their poppies to raise money for members of the military in need of help, and the RBL is working to change public perceptions and emphasise its year-round welfare work. Of course, other groups have been launched in recent years, attracting younger servicemen who have fought more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. These, too, are worthy organisations which deserve our support. But it would be a sad day if the legion faded away from lack of new members.

No time to panic

There can be no escaping the fact that the weekend was a depressing one for Norwich City fans, as defeat at Aston Villa and other results pushed them towards the relegation trap door.

But Canaries fans know all about the vagaries of footballing fortunes and now is not the time to panic. It was less than eight weeks ago that City emerged victorious from Old Trafford, beating Manchester United – one of a string of positive results over the festive season that had left the side looking towards mid-table security. There is time yet to regain that momentum.

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 14:23

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READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



■ A carpet of snowdrops at St Theobald's Church, Great Hautbois. Picture taken by Peter Jarvis. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

We're moving away from synthetic to analytical speech

Peter Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

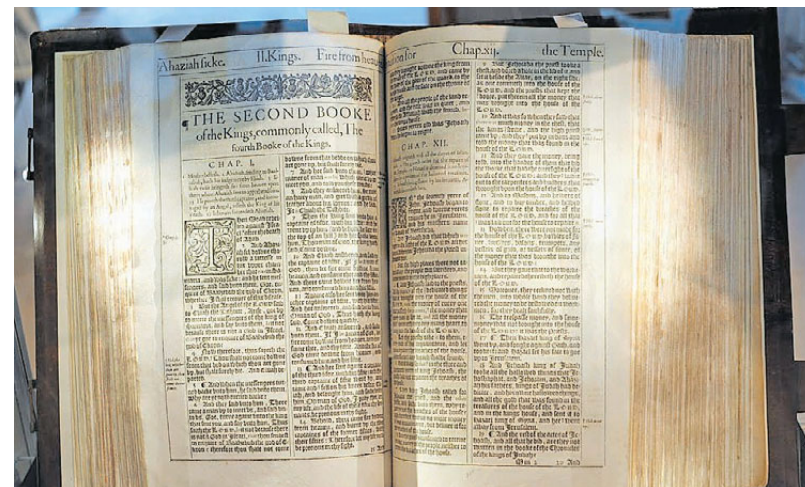
Sometimes we have a choice as to whether we are going to express things analytically or synthetically.

Here's an example of what I mean: we can either say "I don't go there often" or "I seldom go there". Seldom and not often mean the same thing, but the phrase not often expresses the two different components of the meaning analytically in two words. Seldom synthesises the negative aspect of the meaning and the frequency aspect into a single word.

I reckon that, in this part of the world, seldom is not employed as often as not often...

In the same kind of way, we can either say "I like neither of them" or "I don't like either of them". Does the analytical "not either" feel more natural to you than the synthetic "neither", as it does to me?

In the olden days, English speakers used the word thrice quite naturally in their everyday speech. Nowadays, although most of us are still familiar with the word – it occurs in the King James Bible, for instance – we never use it. Instead, we use the more analytical equivalent: three times. A linguistic change has taken place in our language, with the more analytical structure having won out over the



■ The King James Bible of 1611 was the source for many words and phrases in the English language..

synthetic. Interestingly, this process appears to be continuing. Quite a lot of younger people now seem to be quite happy to say two times rather than twice. To older people this can sound rather childish, but doubtless our own usage of three times would have sounded childish to older speakers when thrice started falling out of use.

This trend to favour analytical forms has also led to the loss from our modern language of a number of other synthetic forms.

Whence, hence and thence have for the most part been replaced by from where, from here, from there. We no longer ask

"Whence have you come?" but "Where have you come from?" We do not say "Go hence!" but "Get away from here!". Similarly, whither, hither and thither have been replaced by to where, to here and to there. "Whither goest thou?" is now expressed as "Where are you going to?"

A similar case concerns possessive pronouns such as mine and yours and theirs.

If my observations are correct, many – particularly younger – people these days are increasingly saying, not "That's mine!", but "That's my one!" Anyway, that's my feeling. Maybe your one is different.