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School leaving age set to rise to 18

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18 January, 2007

THE ARTICLE

School leaving age set to rise to 18

The British government is soon to pass legislation that would raise the school leaving age to 18. The new plans will come into effect by 2013. Pupils will have the choice of staying in formal classroom education that covers academic lessons, or of receiving vocational training. It is the first major revision of the compulsory education age limit since 1972, when it went up to the present 16 years old. The government hopes the additional two years of schooling or training will bolster the quality of young Britons and ensure more British youth have qualifications or workplace skills. If successful, Britain may be able to boast the best educated and most highly trained school leavers in the world, which is bound to have positive knock-on effects for industry and the economy. It should also bring down levels of crime.

Britain's Minister for Education Alan Johnson told *The Times* newspaper that it was "repellent that a youngster of 16 is not getting any training". He lamented on his mistakes of the past, saying: "I regret not staying on in education... when I left school there were loads of jobs you could walk into without qualifications. That's not going to be the case in the future." The leader of Britain's teaching union Steve Sinnott concurred. He described the upcoming legislation as "inevitable". He warned: "We cannot afford to neglect those young people who currently leave school at 16 unprepared for the rigors and demands of life in the 21st Century." Toby Ashford, a 16-year-old student from London wasn't as enthusiastic. He complained that: "It is another example of politicians trying to be Big Brother with young people."

WARM-UPS

1. SCHOOL LEAVING: Walk round the class. Find out what at age everybody left school and/or university? What age were they when they got their first job? What was it? What age were they when they got their first full time job? What was it? Find out as much as you can. Change partners often to build up your information.

2. DICTATION: The teacher will read the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again.

Self correct your work. Compare your work with your partner(s) and try to recreate the full text. Listen again to check, fill in spaces or correct mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total no of errors. Less than 5 is very good. 10 are acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than 20 - we need to do some work!

3. READING: Get students to read the passage aloud. Swap readers every paragraph.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting (circle) and which are most boring (underline).

British government / legislation / school / Britain / being 16 / education / crime / newspapers / mistakes / regrets / qualifications / the future / politicians / Big Brother

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A believe the school leaving age in Britain should be raised to 18. Students B believe the school leaving age should remain as it is - 16. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

7. SCHOOL LEAVING AGE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the school leaving age. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

8. FIVE MINUTES: Choose six of these words. Write three sentences using two words in each. Try to associate them with the school leaving age. Discuss with your partner. Spend five minutes on this exercise.

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9. SENTENCE STARTERS: With your partner(s), finish these sentence starters. Change partner(s) and talk about the sentences you made.

- a) The British government _____
- b) The Times newspaper _____
- c) Students are _____
- d) Britain may _____
- e) Young people _____
- f) Education _____
- g) Qualifications _____
- h) British youth _____

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. The school leaving age for Europe's kids is set to rise to 18. T / F
- b. The new plans come into effect in 2030. T / F
- c. Kids will have a choice of two years at school or workplace training. T / F
- d. The additional two years should have positive effects on crime. T / F
- e. A British politician regretted not continuing his education. T / F
- f. In the past, it was easy to get a job without having qualifications. T / F
- g. A teaching union leader said Britain could not afford education. T / F
- h. A 16-year-old said he wanted to stay at school, like his big brother. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| a. pass | strengthen |
| b. legislation | unavoidable |
| c. revision | laws |
| d. bolster | government interference |
| e. bound to | sickening |
| f. repellent | approve |
| g. lamented | ignore |
| h. inevitable | rued |
| i. neglect | change |
| j. Big Brother | sure to |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. ... government is soon to pass | training |
| b. The new plans will come | you could walk into |
| c. vocational | Big Brother |
| d. major revision of the compulsory | mistakes of the past |
| e. bound to | legislation |
| f. He lamented on his | have positive knock-on effects |
| g. there were loads of jobs | and demands of life |
| h. We cannot afford to | into effect by 2013 |
| i. unprepared for the rigors | neglect those young people |
| j. politicians trying to be | education age limit |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps.

School leaving age set to rise to 18

The British government is soon to pass _____ that would raise the school leaving age to 18. The new plans will come into _____ by 2013. Pupils will have the choice of staying in formal classroom _____ that covers academic lessons, or of receiving vocational training. It is the first major _____ of the _____ education age limit since 1972, when it went up to the present 16 years old. The government hopes the additional two years of _____ or training will bolster the quality of young Britons and _____ more British youth have qualifications or workplace skills. If successful, Britain may be able to boast the best educated and most highly trained school leavers in the world, which is bound to have positive _____ effects for industry and the economy. It should also bring down levels of crime.

revision
knock-on
education
effect
ensure
schooling
compulsory
legislation

Britain's Minister for Education Alan Johnson told *The Times* newspaper that it was "_____ that a youngster of 16 is not getting any training". He lamented on his mistakes of the past, saying: "I regret not staying on in education... when I left school there were loads of jobs you could walk into without _____. That's not going to be the case in the future." The leader of Britain's teaching _____ Steve Sinnott concurred. He described the upcoming legislation as "_____". He warned: "We cannot afford to neglect those young people who currently leave school at 16 _____ for the rigors and _____ of life in the 21st Century." Toby Ashford, a 16-year-old student from London wasn't as _____. He complained that: "It is another example of politicians trying to be _____ with young people."

qualifications
Big Brother
demands
inevitable
enthusiastic
unprepared
repellent
union

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

School leaving age set to rise to 18

The British government _____ legislation that would raise the school leaving age to 18. The new plans will come into effect by 2013. Pupils will have the choice of staying in formal classroom education that covers academic lessons, or of _____. It is the first major revision of the compulsory education age limit since 1972, when it went up to the present 16 years old. The government _____ two years of schooling or training will bolster the quality of young Britons and ensure more British youth have qualifications or workplace skills. If successful, Britain _____ boast the best educated and most highly trained school leavers in the world, which is bound to have positive knock-on effects for industry and the economy. It should also bring _____ crime.

Britain's Minister for Education Alan Johnson told *The Times* newspaper that it was "repellent that a youngster of 16 is not _____". He lamented on his mistakes of the past, saying: "I regret _____ in education... when I left school there were loads of jobs _____ into without qualifications. That's not going to be the case _____." The leader of Britain's teaching union Steve Sinnott concurred. He described the _____ as "inevitable". He warned: "We cannot afford to neglect those young people who _____ at 16 unprepared for the rigors and demands of life in the 21st Century." Toby Ashford, a 16-year-old student from London wasn't _____. He complained that: "It is another example of politicians trying _____ with young people."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'education' and 'school'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. STUDENT "SCHOOL LEAVING AGE" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about leaving school at 18.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| • pass | • repellent |
| • formal | • lamented |
| • bolster | • loads |
| • boast | • inevitable |
| • bound to | • rigors |
| • crime | • Big Brother |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Did anything in the article surprise you?
- c. What advice would you give to Britain's problem 15 year olds?
- d. Do you think it's a good idea to raise Britain's school leaving age to 18?
- e. Should the new legislation have been introduced sooner?
- f. As a student what do you think of this issue?
- g. Do you think British school leavers, or those from your country, are among the best educated in the world?
- h. What age can you leave school in your country?
- i. In today's world should young people study more languages?
- j. What things would you do differently if you were sixteen again?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What is your image of the British education system?
- d. How does the education system differ between Britain and your country?
- e. What mistakes have you made in your life that you regret?
- f. Should every student in Britain be required to pass a leaving certificate?
- g. Should people be able to stay at school for as long as they want?
- h. Do you think the new legislation will make weaker pupils study harder?
- i. Does school in your country prepare young people for the rigors and demands of 21st-Century life?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: 1: PRESS:

'Exclusive' TV interview with Britain's Minister of Education Alan Johnson

STUDENT A. Imagine you are a BBC / CNN television news reporter. You have an 'exclusive' interview with Britain's Minister of Education Alan Johnson. Prepare five questions you want to ask him about Britain's school leaving age being upped to 18.

STUDENT B. You are Alan Johnson. Think of five things (write them down) you want to mention to the world about your decision to up the school leaving age in Britain to 18 in the forthcoming interview with student A.

ROLE PLAY: Student A asks Student B his/her questions. Listen to their response. React to comments made.

The teacher will select some students to role play their situations in front of the class.

ROLE PLAY: 2: TV DEBATE:

A discussion on the school leaving age being raised to 18.

Team up with classmates into groups of four. Decide who will be the interviewer etc.

Role A – A problem 15 year old

You are 15 years old. You hate school and want to leave as soon as you reach 16. You are dismayed to learn you will have to stay on till you are 18. Protest!

Role B – Teacher

You are a teacher. You teach students aged 11-18. You have first hand knowledge of pupils. You think the idea to raise the age limit to 18 is unworkable for some problem pupils.

Role C – Head Teacher

As a Head Teacher you are very positive about the new legislation to raise the school leaving age limit to 18. Discuss the benefits.

Role D – Britain's Minister of Education Alan Johnson

You have pioneered this legislation so are very positive about it. You left school at 16 with no qualifications. You struggled for many years trying to get a decent job. It was hard work. With hindsight you wish you'd had more qualifications.

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Choose the correct words from a – d below and write them in the article.

The British government is soon to (1) _____ legislation that would raise the school leaving age to 18. The new (2) _____ will come into effect by 2013. Pupils will have the (3) _____ of staying in formal classroom education that covers academic lessons, or of receiving vocational (4) _____. It is the first major revision of the compulsory education age limit (5) _____ 1972, when it went up to the present 16 years old. The government hopes the additional two years of schooling or training will bolster the (6) _____ of young Britons and ensure more British youth have qualifications or workplace skills. If successful, Britain may be able to boast the best educated and most highly trained school leavers in the world, which is (7) _____ to have positive knock-on effects for industry and the economy. It should also bring down levels of crime.

Britain's Minister for Education Alan Johnson told *The Times* newspaper that it was "(8) _____ that a youngster of 16 is not getting any training". He lamented on his mistakes of the past, saying: "I (9) _____ not staying on in education... when I left school there were loads of jobs you could (10) _____ into without qualifications. That's not going to be the case in the future." The leader of Britain's teaching union Steve Sinnott concurred. He described the upcoming legislation as (11) "_____". He warned: "We cannot afford to neglect those young people who currently leave school at 16 unprepared for the rigors and demands of life in the 21st Century." Toby Ashford, a 16-year-old student from London wasn't as enthusiastic. He complained that: "It is another example of politicians trying to be (12) _____ with young people."

1.	(a)	past	(b)	pass	(c)	passed	(d)	passing
2.	(a)	plenary	(b)	planned	(c)	plans	(d)	plane
3.	(a)	choose	(b)	choosing	(c)	chocs	(d)	choice
4.	(a)	training	(b)	train	(c)	trained	(d)	bus
5.	(a)	throughout	(b)	while	(c)	during	(d)	since
6.	(a)	qualify	(b)	quality	(c)	qualified	(d)	quacks
7.	(a)	bounding	(b)	bound	(c)	tied up	(d)	strung up
8.	(a)	repellent	(b)	repealing	(c)	repel	(d)	repeal
9.	(a)	register	(b)	regardless	(c)	regretful	(d)	regret
10.	(a)	wake	(b)	want	(c)	walk	(d)	wave
11.	(a)	inept	(b)	inebriated	(c)	inevitable	(d)	inedible
12.	(a)	Scary Uncle	(b)	Little Sister	(c)	Big Brother	(d)	Silly Cousin

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. SCHOOL LEAVING AGES: Search the Internet and find more information about school leaving ages. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Write an article for *The Times* newspaper about the school leaving age in the Britain being raised to 18 from 2013. Interview your school friends to find out their view. Include the teaching union and head teacher viewpoints. (Minimum 100 words) Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Britain's Minister of Education Alan Johnson. Tell him your thoughts on the school leaving age in Britain being raised to 18 from 2013. Ask him three questions. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions. Which letter did you like best and why?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| a. pass | approve |
| b. legislation | laws |
| c. revision | change |
| d. bolster | strengthen |
| e. bound to | sure to |
| f. repellent | sickening |
| g. lamented | rued |
| h. inevitable | unavoidable |
| i. neglect | ignore |
| j. Big Brother | government interference |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. ... government is soon to pass | legislation |
| b. The new plans will come | into effect by 2013 |
| c. vocational | training |
| d. major revision of the compulsory | education age limit |
| e. bound to | have positive knock-on effects |
| f. He lamented on his | mistakes of the past |
| g. there were loads of jobs | you could walk into |
| h. We cannot afford to | neglect those young people |
| i. unprepared for the rigors | and demands of life |
| j. politicians trying to be | Big Brother |

GAP FILL:

School leaving age set to rise to 18

The British government is soon to pass **legislation** that would raise the school leaving age to 18. The new plans will come into **effect** by 2013. Pupils will have the choice of staying in formal classroom **education** that covers academic lessons, or of receiving vocational training. It is the first major **revision** of the **compulsory** education age limit since 1972, when it went up to the present 16 years old. The government hopes the additional two years of **schooling** or training will bolster the quality of young Britons and **ensure** more British youth have qualifications or workplace skills. If successful, Britain may be able to boast the best educated and most highly trained school leavers in the world, which is bound to have positive **knock-on** effects for industry and the economy. It should also bring down levels of crime.

Britain's Minister for Education Alan Johnson told *The Times* newspaper that it was "**repellent** that a youngster of 16 is not getting any training". He lamented on his mistakes of the past, saying: "I regret not staying on in education... when I left school there were loads of jobs you could walk into without **qualifications**. That's not going to be the case in the future." The leader of Britain's teaching **union** Steve Sinnott concurred. He described the upcoming legislation as "**inevitable**". He warned: "We cannot afford to neglect those young people who currently leave school at 16 **unprepared** for the rigors and **demands** of life in the 21st Century." Toby Ashford, a 16-year-old student from London wasn't as **enthusiastic**. He complained that: "It is another example of politicians trying to be **Big Brother** with young people."

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - b 2 - c 3 - d 4 - a 5 - d 6 - b 7 - b 8 - a 9 - d 10 - c 11 - c 12 - c