

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

An urgent need to understand reasons for rise in exclusions

Today's revelation that children as young as three are being excluded from their school or nursery is a cause of real concern.

Although the actual number of primary school children permanently excluded in Norfolk should not be exaggerated, the fact the head of the county's short stay school has seen a "massive increase" over the past three or four years suggests that there is a worrying trend.

Sometimes it is impossible for a school to avoid excluding a child. If their behaviour endangers other pupils or staff, or prevents children from learning, it can become a necessary step. But it should always be the course of last resort.

Research has shown how important the first years of a child's life are to their progress through school, and their chances thereafter. If they do not have the right start in education, it will be harder for them to gain the qualifications they need and the jobs they deserve. What an unnecessary waste of human talent and potential.

We owe it to them to do whatever we can to get to the bottom of what is causing this rise in exclusions, and do whatever we can to address it, whether inside schools, or in our communities.

One thing that is vital is providing the right support to parents of young children.

Not everyone takes naturally to parenthood, or necessarily knows how best to bring up a child. One area that needs to be examined is whether all parents, and particularly those most in need, are receiving the advice, guidance and support they need.

Help to find Michael

Just over 12 weeks ago, Michael Seger disappeared. Since then his partner Sandie, and their children – Zhanna, Marley, Kasper and Buddy – have had no news.

Sandie's words today are deeply touching. She believes that Michael is alive and, as their children continue to grow up without him, she makes an effort to remember the family milestones – a new word learned, a birthday – so she can share them with him when he returns.

Sandie has worked hard to find Michael, searching with friends and well wishers the last places he was seen, raising the profile of his disappearance, taking to social media and receiving assistance from a charity that helps people in her situation. But, as yet, there is no news.

No one could read Sandie's story and not be moved. Someone, somewhere, must know something.

For the sake of this shattered family, do not keep it to yourself.

Wherry good to hear

The restoration of the few surviving wherries is testament to the grass roots support in this region to preserving our shared heritage.

Moments which capture the imagination and bring people together are to be treasured – and when hundreds of people lined the river bank near Ludham to welcome these iconic Broads craft home it was a sign of pride in the history of our landscape.

looking for GOD.com

So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire.

Isaiah 55:11

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READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Ringstead village bathed in May sunshine by Simon Bamber. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Different words might mean a different outcome for us



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

Norfolk is falling into the sea. We're losing large bits of the eastern part of our county every winter.

Unfortunately, our national leaders don't seem to care much about this. They have singled out Norfolk as a place they're not committed to defending. Our county may be collapsing into the North Sea; but that's just too bad.

I wonder if their attitude has something to do with the words they use. Tony Blair and David Cameron were both very keen to defend what they called our "nation" by sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. They spent vast sums on these expeditions because, they said, they made our "nation" safer – even if it wasn't necessarily obvious to everybody exactly how it did that.

Tragically, however, they and most other politicians in government seem to have no interest at all in defending the actual material fabric of this place where we live, right here. Maybe it would help if governments would start thinking of this as our "country" – instead of this abstraction "the nation". They might then be more focused on defending us here at home. In fact, it might be even better if, instead of using either of these originally



■ Norfolk is falling into the sea yet our national leaders don't seem to care – they give this fact away with the words they use, says Peter Trudgill.

French words, they could go back to Old English and start thinking of this place as our "land".

Interestingly, one spokesman told us why the government didn't want to try to save eastern Norfolk. It was another word: saving us would lack "viability". Viability is rather a new word, but it comes from the older form "viable", which was originally a French word derived from "vie", life. It was initially used of newborn infants, meaning "capable of life"; and started being used in a more generalised sense in the 19th century. Well, obviously coastal Norfolk won't be "capable of life" if the government

chooses not to spend any money to help us – because what our leaders seem to mean by "lacking in viability" is "not worth spending money on".

If the Dutch hadn't wanted to defend the Netherlands because it wasn't viable, they wouldn't have any land left by now, and therefore no country, let alone a nation. But they are defending it; and our politicians could certainly protect us in the same way if they wanted to. But apparently Norfolk is not important enough.

I wonder how viable Bayswater and Chipping Norton would be if they were on the edge of a cliff.