

overheard at the extra-curricula café

Blue sky holidays

Latté: Have you booked your summer holiday yet?

Cappuccino: I never go away in the summer.

Latté: Why ever not? It's the sunniest time of the year.

Cappuccino: Sunny – maybe; Hot – perhaps; Costly – definitely; Noisy – unquestionably; Crowded – without doubt. No-one in their right mind would take their holiday at that time.

Latté: No-one in their right mind, unless of course they had children of school age.

Cappuccino: What do you mean?

Latté: You can't take children out of school for holidays, so you have to go when school is closed.

Cappuccino: If it was up to me, schools wouldn't close in the summer, they would provide all year round provision.

Latté: So no holidays for pupils or staff?

Cappuccino: Yes, of course; you'd just have to employ more teachers, so all could have time off at different times, and that would make it cheaper to go on holiday!

Latté: Well, that sounds a very clever idea, but I have a feeling that it wouldn't work.

Cappuccino: Why not?

Latté: Simple maths really. If schools are open 52 weeks a year instead of 39, that's a one third increase in the salary bill, plus extra heating and maintenance.

Cappuccino: Maybe, but think if the results went up by one third too, to say nothing of the decreased vandalism in the summer holidays. And another thing!

Latté: What?

Cappuccino: It would prepare youngsters for the world of work, where the holidays might be as little as three weeks a year. It can be a shock to the system for a school leaver.

Latté: And for a university graduate even more so.

Cappuccino: If you've never had it, you won't miss it. And other thing. No more unauthorised absence, so attendance rates will rise and that will please Ofsted. And just imagine where we'd be in the PISA rankings!

Latté: I can't imagine you could persuade anyone to implement this.

Cappuccino: We've had far less attractive ideas – like the national curriculum and league tables, yet we all assimilate them.

Latté: Well, I suggest that you write to Mr Gove to suggest this could be a new bandwagon for him. When things are going badly, you need a constant stream of new ideas to distract attention from the failure of the old ones. But just don't forget

Cappuccino: Forget what?

Latté: Don't forget to quote your Conservative party membership number on your correspondence.

Cappuccino: Are you suggesting that Mr Gove only wants ideas from the Conservative party?

Latté: I'm not suggesting anything, but it might just help. I wonder who will succeed Sally Morgan as Chair of Ofsted?

Cappuccino: Now that this conversation has degenerated into politics, rather than the high ideals of pedagogy, I'm off. I'll see you next month.

Latté: Don't forget to bring Mr. Gove's reply for me to see, unless of course I read about it in the papers first. It brings a whole new meaning to 'blue sky thinking'.

