

[News story: Collision with crossing gates at Penrhyn level crossing](#)



Penrhyn Crossing (courtesy of Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways)

At around 16:30 hrs on 6 January 2019, an engineering train travelling on a falling gradient was unable to stop and collided with the gate protecting the A4085 road, coming to rest across the carriageway. The gate was damaged, but no injuries were reported.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this accident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

Published 23 January 2019

[News story: Education Secretary calls on more schools to become an academy](#)

More than 50% of children in state-funded schools in England are now taught in an academy or free school, new figures published today reveal – with standards rising faster in many academies than in similar council-run schools.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has hailed the milestone as a decisive moment and urged more schools to consider the freedom and opportunities offered by becoming an academy.

Today's [figures](#), published by the Department for Education, reflect school leaders' recognition of the autonomy and freedom to innovate offered by the academies programme, alongside the increased ability to make decisions in the interests of staff and pupils. This has included measures such as altering the length of the school day or adapting the curriculum to help every child access a school that meets their needs, interests and abilities. More than 8,300 schools in the country have become an academy or opened as a free school, with hundreds of schools making the positive choice to convert to become an academy in the last 12 months alone.

The academies programme was introduced by the last Government in 2000 with the aim "to improve pupil performance and break the cycle of low expectation". By 2010, there were 203 academies – mostly in inner cities.

The 2010 Academies Act gave all schools in England the freedom to choose to become an academy and now over 50% of pupils in the state funded education system are taught in an academy or free school.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

In everything we've been doing to improve education these last few years, we have put a strong focus on handing power back to schools, back to school leaders – recognising that they are the ones best placed to make the right decisions for their pupils and their communities.

It is fantastic that 50% of the pupils in state-funded schools in the country are now benefitting from the freedom and autonomy that an academy trust enjoys. But the academies programme has never really been about structures – it has been about trusting head teachers and school leaders to run schools.

Whilst there is a huge amount of diversity in our school system – and there are great schools of all types – I want more schools to choose to become an academy and enjoy the enormous benefits it provides to schools, their staff and pupils.

Alongside "converter" academies – those schools who have chosen to become an academy – "sponsored" academies are typically schools that have been taken out of Local Authority control through government intervention because of educational underperformance. Many of these schools are improving in their inspections from inadequate to good or outstanding after they became sponsored academies. At the end of 2017, only 1 in 10 sponsored academy predecessor schools were judged good or outstanding before they converted, compared to almost 7 in 10 after they became an academy, of those who had been inspected.

Also published today is an analysis of schools that have become sponsored academies in recent years. It matches sponsored academies with similar non-academies based on inspection results and the make-up of their pupils. It shows that sponsored academies that have been open for longer have made

substantial gains in performance. The data shows, in many cases, standards have risen more quickly in under-performing schools that have become academies than in similar council-run schools.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds continued:

In the past, schools that failed were allowed to stay under local authority control for far too long. Academies have changed all that – failing schools can now be taken away from local bureaucracies who have not been able to improve them and given to school leaders who can.

We have seen many of these sponsored academies dramatically improve their Ofsted results following conversion, and this new research shows the improvements many schools have made since they became an academy.

As part of our effort to improve school standards across the country, it is important that we are clear that no school will be left to fail their pupils.

The research [report](#) on sponsored academies, commissioned by the Department for Education, summarises the latest performance data available, up to and including 2018. The key findings are:

- Thousands of pupils are benefiting from higher standards in their schools after converting to become academies;
- Standards in under-performing schools that have become academies in recent years have, in many cases, risen more quickly than in similar LA schools; and
- Sponsored academies, previously under-performing local authority-run schools, that have been open for the longest have made substantial gains in performance and are now in line with similar non-academies.

Mark Lehain, founder and former Principal of Bedford Free School, said:

I have been fortunate enough to set up both a free school in 2012 and a multi-academy trust in 2017. I've also worked with dozens of academies and trusts across the country in a number of roles.

Again and again I have seen how the greater responsibility and additional freedom that comes with academisation enables brilliant leaders and teachers to achieve things with pupils that many thought couldn't be done. As schools continue to convert, and more children benefit from teachers being in the driving seat, we can look forward to standards rising even higher in the future.

Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said:

This is an important moment. School trusts are no longer a policy initiative – a small project in a much larger education system. Half of children and young people in England are educated in the academy sector. We have come of age.

Academies are making a positive difference by turning around schools which have failed children for generations.

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic: 2019



Charles Garrett OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Charles Garrett OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic in succession to Mr Robin Ord-Smith MVO who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Garrett will take up his appointment in June 2019.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Charles Edmund Garrett

Married to: Véronique Frances Edmonde Garrett

Children: Five

2014 to 2018 Skopje, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2012 to 2013 Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Commonwealth Affairs Liaison

2010 to 2012 London 2012, Head of International Relations

2009 to 2010 FC0, Strategic Finance Team

2005 to 2009 Taipei, Deputy Director, British Trade & Cultural Office
2003 to 2005 FCO, Head, EU Enlargement Team
2001 to 2003 FCO, Deputy Head, Central European Department
1997 to 2001 Berne, Head of Political & Public Affairs
1995 to 1997 FCO, Team Leader, Central Europe and Balkans, UK Know How Fund
1993 to 1995 FCO, Section Head, Joint Liaison Group Negotiations, Hong Kong
Department
1988 to 1993 Hong Kong, Second Secretary UK delegation, Joint Liaison Group
1987 to 1988 FCO, Sovereign Debt Section, Economic Relations Department

Further information

Published 23 January 2019

[Press release: Celebrities pledge to clean up their act on social media](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has secured formal commitments from 16 celebrities to ensure they will now say clearly if they have been paid or received any gifts or loans of products which they endorse.

The influential celebrities, with large online followings, who have acted in response to the CMA's concerns, include singers Ellie Goulding and Rita Ora, models Alexa Chung and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, former Coronation Street and Our Girl actress Michelle Keegan and TV reality stars Millie Mackintosh and Megan McKenna.

Online endorsements from celebrities and influencers can help brands boost sales, as millions of fans follow their social media channels to see where they go on holiday, what they wear, which products they use and more.

However, where such stars are paid or rewarded to promote a product in their social media feeds, consumer protection law requires them to disclose that they've been paid or incentivised to endorse a brand. Otherwise, they risk giving a misleading impression that a post represents their personal view about a product or service.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

Influencers can have a huge impact on what their fans decide to buy. People could, quite rightly, feel misled if what they thought was a recommendation from someone they admired turns out to be a marketing ploy.

You should be able to tell as soon as you look at a post if there is some form of payment or reward involved, so you can decide whether something is really worth spending your hard-earned money on.

The enforcement action taken by the CMA has seen a number of social media stars pledge to be more transparent when posting online. It also sends a clear message to all influencers, brands and businesses that they must be open and clear with their followers. We will also continue our work to secure more improvement in this space.

Warning letters have also been sent to a number of other celebrities, urging them to review their practices where some concerns have been identified.

Further investigation work will look at the role and responsibilities of social media platforms.

The CMA has also published a [quick guide for social media influencers, marketing companies, agents and brands](#) to ensure they are aware of their obligations under consumer protection law. This is in addition to the joint guidance issued with the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) [“An Influencer’s Guide to making clear that ads are ads”](#) published in September 2018.

More information can be found on the CMA’s [social media endorsements page](#)

Notes to editors

1. ‘Influencer’ refers to bloggers, vloggers, celebrities and social media personalities. The influencers who have complied with the CMA investigation and agreed to change their social media practices are: Alexa Chung, Mario Falcone, Alexandra Felstead (‘Binky’ Felstead), Ellie Goulding, Holly Hagan, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Michelle Keegan and Rosia Promotions Limited, Iskra Lawrence, Camilla Mackintosh (‘Millie’ Mackintosh), Megan McKenna and M McKenna Limited, Chloe Sims, Zoe Sugg, Louise Thompson and Louise Thompson Associates Limited, Dina Torkia, Rita Ora, James Chapman and Jim Chapman Limited.
2. This investigation – which began in August 2018 – assessed whether influencers were clearly disclosing paid-for endorsements. The CMA considers payment to be any form of reward, including money, gifts of services or products, or the loan of a product. It follows earlier work in 2015 that considered online reviews and endorsements. As part of that, the CMA accepted undertakings from four companies to ensure that online advertising is clearly labelled or otherwise identified so that it is distinguishable from the opinions of bloggers or journalists.
3. The key piece of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA’s

investigation is the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs). Amongst other requirements, it is a banned practice to falsely claim or create the impression that a trader is not acting for purposes relating to his trade, business, craft or profession, or falsely representing oneself as a consumer.

4. The CMA has not made a finding on whether the influencers' practices have breached consumer law. All influencers co-operated with the CMA and volunteered to make changes to their practices. The provision of undertakings is not an admission of a breach of the law. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA can enforce the above legislation through the courts. Ultimately, only a court can decide whether a particular term or practice infringes the law.
5. The CMA is working closely with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in this area. The ASA is the UK's independent regulator of advertising across all media. In March 2018, the ASA issued a call for evidence to find out more about what types of labels help people to understand when the online content they see, hear and interact with is advertising.

Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.

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