Adequate school toilet facilities are essential

The excellent initiative of the Community Practitioners’ and Health Visitors’ Association – that school nurses investigate poor toilet facilities – is to be applauded (news November 27).

Not only is there likely to be a positive impact on young people’s health within months of improving the facilities, but it presents an opportunity to raise awareness of health issues with teachers, support staff and parents. It is worth noting the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. This requires all schools and universities to ensure students with physical or mental disabilities can take part fully and fairly in the life of the school. Pupils with, for example, impaired mobility or vision, can be burdened or humiliated if the design or maintenance of toilet areas is inadequate.

When school nurses and governors are considering improvements to these essential facilities, it may be worth asking their young people with disabilities how their special needs can be included in any new design.

Woody Caan
Chelmsford

The UK’s loss will be my own country’s gain

Zita McGregor (perspectives November 27) has made me think. I am a foreign student and have experienced similar difficulties obtaining a visa, in my case to study in the UK.

My ordeal started with a host of phone calls to the High Commission in Canberra and to a list of other domestic government agencies, such as the New South Wales police for a criminal record check. I then travelled five hours to Canberra armed with a stack of paperwork.

After stating my case, the stony face behind the glass casually informed me I did not have enough information.

I then had to get a letter from my university in England confirming I had indeed been accepted for the course. Two days later I had my study visa.

I love England. Studying here has been the best experience of my life. It was not easy to get here and, from what Ms McGregor has told us, it will not be easy to stay, especially since my visa has a non-negotiable deadline stamped into it. I will not even get to go to my graduation.

I am told the cost of training a student to become a nurse is about £42,000. It seems strange the UK government wants me to leave after investing all that money in me. If I am forced to go home, my own country will reap the fruits of the educational seeds sown in England.

Mat O’Connor
Salisbury

NHS Professionals: good idea but it does not work

I would like to reply to Nigel Northcott’s letter about NHS Professionals (letters November 27). The trust I work for has been using NHS Professionals for about a year, pioneering the service in the south west.

I was initially sympathetic to NHS Professionals’ aim of cutting agency costs and profits. However, we found a number of problems with it.

Only a small number of nurses seem to be joining it and those that do complain of long delays in being accepted.

It is often difficult to contact, particularly at peak hours when we are desperate for staff. It has now dropped its answering phone service so I spend a long time waiting to speak to someone.

Anne Fraser
Bristol

Nurse prescribing is a step forward for patient care

It is vital that nurses move forward with Agenda for Change. Nurse prescribing in particular is a great leap in improving patient care.

Many nurses can relate to having to wait for a doctor who is on-call or at another emergency to prescribe the most basic of drugs while the patient is left suffering.

Nurses are competent and skilled practitioners and should embrace this enhanced role.

Gina Johnson
Milton Keynes

Will nurses get recognition for taking on prescribing?

In principle I agree with the idea of nurse prescribing (news November 27). There are many skilled nurses who could quite safely prescribe. However, I worry that without adequate recognition we are yet again selling ourselves and our skills short.

Steve Carver-Smith
Scunthorpe