



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

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Mr Matt Dunkley,
Director of Children's Services at Kent,
By email: Matt.Dunkley@kent.gov.uk

03 February 2022

Dear Mr Matt Dunkley,

As you will be aware, the Government yesterday published our Levelling Up White Paper, which proposes a plan to transform the UK by spreading opportunity and prosperity to all parts of it. Investing in people to get on in life and receive the best possible education is core to this White Paper and my department will work to ensure our nurseries, schools and colleges support this drive and empower learners to achieve their potential, no matter where they live.

Now that the Levelling Up White Paper has been made public, I wanted to formally write to you to highlight some of the major reforms it sets out. I also wanted to assure you that my Regional Schools Commissioners are committed to collaborating with you to achieve the ambitions set out in the White Paper, which our Schools White Paper will comment further on in due course.

The Levelling Up White paper sets out twelve missions - medium-term ambitions for the UK Government, which highlight the most important areas where the Government believes progress is needed over the next decade to succeed in levelling up the UK.

Missions are intended to galvanise the efforts of government, the wider public sector, the private and voluntary sector, civic society and the whole community to direct our efforts and resources towards improving access to opportunity across the country. The missions the Department for Education will lead are:

Education: *By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.*

Skills: *By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.*

Plans to deliver our ambitious education mission will be underpinned by proposals for **55** new Education Investment Areas (EIAs) in parts of the country where school outcomes are the

weakest. We intend to target investment, support and action into these areas to ensure children from all backgrounds and areas succeed at the very highest levels.

All local authorities which contain one of the government's 12 Opportunity Areas will be designated as Education Investment Areas, and so will benefit from these interventions. Meanwhile, the Opportunity Areas themselves will continue their excellent work – with their funding extended up to the end of August 2022.

In these new EIAs, the Department for Education will offer retention payments to help schools keep the best teachers in the highest priority subjects. We will prioritise EIAs when opening new free schools where they are most needed. This will include new specialist sixth-form free schools, helping ensure talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the highest standard of education this country offers.

To drive up standards rapidly, schools in these areas that have been judged less than Good in successive Ofsted inspections could be moved into strong multi-academy trusts, to attract more support and the best teachers. This will be subject to a consultation in the spring. We will also be providing support to schools in a priority subset of EIAs to address wider issues. For instance, certain schools struggling with attendance will be encouraged to join a new pilot programme to tackle the issue. We will confirm these areas in the Schools White Paper.

A full list of the 55 areas as well as the methodology that we used to develop them can be found [here](#).

I am particularly pleased, that since 95 per cent of these areas are outside London and the South East, it is the schools of the North, Midlands, East of England and South West that will be receiving much more support over the next decade.

EIAs will be a critical part of our approach to levelling up. However, my colleagues and I are clear that we must take wider action to support all areas of England to improve. My Schools White Paper will set out further detail on our programme of investment to raise attainment nationally, including in those Local Authorities not designated as Education Investment Areas. I will write to you about this in due course.

In addition, we will create a new UK National Academy that will support pupils from all backgrounds and areas to succeed at the very highest levels. This new digital education service will harness cutting edge technology to ensure geography or income is no barrier to being stretched beyond the core curriculum. Developed jointly with schools and experts, it will support the work of schools up and down the country entirely free of charge.

Food served at school and good food education supports children to learn and live well now and in the future. The school food standards are set out in legislation. However, we have set out action to drive a greater focus given the persistent rise in childhood obesity. This includes these key policies: schools setting out a statement on their school website explaining their whole school approach to food; commencing a pilot undertaken with the Food Standards agency to gain greater assurance that the school food standards are being met; and a pilot to support schools with content and training to enable secondary school children to leave schools able to cook 6 recipes. More information will be forthcoming in the Government's Food Strategy White Paper


To make our skills mission a reality, thousands more adults will soon be able access free, flexible training and get the skills they need to secure careers in sectors including green, digital and construction as part of up to an additional £550 million boost to expand the popular Skills Bootcamps across the country.

To better understand the skills gaps, I am establishing a new Future Skills Unit which will look at the data and evidence of where skills gaps exist and in what industries. Furthermore, the UK Government is working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to roll out higher technical qualifications (HTQs) from September 2022, which have been approved against employer-led standards as providing learners with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for a given occupation.

Employers must be at the heart of reforming local skills infrastructure. To realise this, the 2021-22 Skills Accelerator is piloting new employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans and supporting providers with Strategic Development Funding to help shape technical skills provision to better meet labour market needs.

Alongside launching a further nine Institutes of Technology (IOTs), taking the total in England to 21 and exceeding our manifesto commitment, I want to secure their long term-position as anchor institutions in their regions, on a par with the UK's world-leading historic universities and to this end, successful IOTs will in future be able to apply for a Royal Charter.

I hope you will welcome these reforms which offer the chance to make real headway in ensuring every child and adult in this country fulfils their potential, wherever they live. My officials and I look forward to working with you to deliver these programmes over the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a large loop at the end of the name.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education