

DfE White Paper (March 2016) Educational Excellence Everywhere

Executive Summary

The White Paper (124 pages) sets out the Government's plans for all schools to either become academies, or be in the process of converting to academy status, by the end of 2020. Where schools are not academies, or have not started the process by 2020, the Government will direct them to become academies so that LAs are no longer directly responsible for provision by the end of 2022. Local authorities (LAs) will be under a new duty to facilitate the process of all maintained schools becoming academies.

The Government also proposes that the vast majority of schools work in multi-academy trusts (MATs). A MAT Growth Fund will be established to support MAT expansion.

Alongside this blueprint for a system of full academisation, the White Paper outlines significant changes to teacher qualifications which is intended to give teaching the same status as doctors.

There are plans to better develop and train the next generation of school leaders and ensure they are working where they are needed most.

For schools which have been judged as requiring improvement, an improvement period of around 30 months will be applied. Where schools have been taken over by a new sponsor following a period of underperformance, Ofsted will not re-inspect until their third year. This will give Headteachers the chance to bring about improvement and change before being inspected again.

Ofsted will also consult on the removal of separate judgements on the quality of teaching to make clear that schools are being held to account for the outcomes their pupils achieve, not the teaching styles they use.

A new, more challenging accreditation will replace qualified teacher status (QTS) and will be awarded when a teacher has demonstrated classroom proficiency, including areas such as behaviour management, and subject knowledge. The decision on whether to accredit a new teacher will be made by Headteachers.

A range of support for areas of underperformance, where not enough children have access to a good school place, has been identified. This will involve giving those 'Achieving Excellence Areas' priority access to programmes such as the National Teaching Service and other initiatives that ensure they are accessing the expertise from other outstanding schools and MATs, as well as the resources they need to bring about sustained improvement.

A new parent portal will provide information on school performance, guidance on how the school system works and information on specific aspects such as a clearer school complaints and a fairer admissions system.

Other reforms include:

- A continuing commitment to support an independent College of Teaching by making available up to £5 million in staged funding as the college demonstrates its credibility, independence and support within the profession;
- Consulting on a fairer National Funding Formula for schools, aiming for most schools in line for extra funding through the formula to receive this funding in full by 2020;
- encouraging more leadership development training to be delivered by successful schools.

Why reforms are needed

One in five children at Primary school does not achieve the expected standards and around two in five young people leave Secondary school without five or more A* - C GCSEs or equivalents including English and maths. Poor children still have worse education outcomes at every stage and there is a long tail of low attainment – 17% of UK students fail to reach “modern functional literacy”, compared to 11% in Canada.

These problems are particularly acute in some areas – too many children still suffer a poor education because of where they live. There remain areas of chronic underperformance, where low standards are exacerbated by a lack of capacity to improve.

The key ingredients needed to sustain improvement are high quality teachers, leaders, system leaders, and sponsors.

Seven main elements to reforms

1. Great teachers

Recruitment

The Government will reform the National College for Teaching and Leadership in order to support and attract sufficient, high quality new entrants to the profession;

The Government will create simple web tools that enable schools to advertise vacancies for free and they will launch a new national teacher vacancy website.

ITT delivery

The Government will reform the allocation of teacher training places so that ITT is delivered by the best Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and school-led providers where new entrants are most needed and where training is most likely to be delivered well. The Government will also continue to increase the proportion of ITT offered by the best schools.

Accrediting new teachers

The Government will replace the current QTS with a stronger, more challenging accreditation based on a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom, as judged by schools. The new process will put the best Headteachers in charge of accrediting new entrants to the profession.

Deployment

The Government will help ensure the best teachers and middle leaders work in the most challenging areas by developing the new National Teaching Service.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The Government will also introduce a new Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development to help schools improve the quality and availability of CPD.

Strong, evidence-informed profession

Supporting the establishment of a new, independent College of Teaching – a professional body along the lines of the Royal Medical Colleges – that will help spread good practice in areas like professional development and the effective use of evidence in education.

2. Great leaders

Designing new, world-leading National Professional Qualifications

The Government will convene leading Headteachers, MAT CEOs and other experts to design new voluntary National Professional Qualifications for each level of leadership.

Rebalancing incentives to attract the best leaders to challenging areas

Leaders will be encouraged to work in challenging schools and areas. A new 'improvement period' during which schools won't be inspected by Ofsted will be introduced, to allow the time and stability for sustainable improvement. A school will not face re-inspection until around 30 months after the previous inspection. When a poorly performing maintained school is replaced by a sponsored academy, a new school opens or a new sponsor is needed to drive further improvement in an academy, the school will not normally face inspection until its third year of operation.

Supporting top middle leaders to relocate to challenging areas

A new National Teaching Service will be introduced to support strong middle leaders.

A new Excellence in Leadership Fund

This will encourage the best MATs to develop innovative ways of boosting leadership in areas where leaders are most needed.

Governing Boards

Governing Boards need to be skills-based and focused on the strategic functions of setting a vision and holding school leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of their schools. The Government will also establish a national database of everyone involved in governance and the Government intend to legislate to enable us to bar unsuitable individuals from being governors.

3. A school-led system with every school an academy and a clearly defined role for local government

The Government will take new powers to direct schools to become academies in LA areas which are underperforming or where the LA no longer has capacity to maintain its schools; or where schools have not started the process of becoming an academy by 2020. This process will be complete by the end of 2022.

The majority of academies currently lease their land from LAs. To speed up the process of academy conversion and ensure that land issues do not get in the way of improving schools, when an LA's community schools convert to academy status, land held by the authority for those schools will transfer to the Secretary of State, who will then grant a lease to the academy trust.

The DfE is agreeing a new Memoranda of Understanding with the National Society for the Church of England and the Catholic Education Service for the Catholic Church which will include:

- a. An acknowledgement that the Churches will expect their academies to remain part of a diocesan family of schools;
- b. Key principles to underpin and develop the strategic relationship between RSCs and dioceses;
- c. Clear protocols for agreeing the arrangements required when Church schools become academies.

Most schools in dynamic MATs:

- a. Most schools will form or join MATs so proven educational models can spread and grow, and the best leaders can extend their influence by running multiple schools.
- b. Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the smallest schools will have to form or join a MAT. But other successful, sustainable schools will still be able to continue as Single Academy Trusts if they choose to do so.
- c. The size and influence of each MAT will vary according to performance. The best MATs will flourish, taking over and turning around weaker schools, while underperforming MATs will be challenged and their schools passed to better leadership;
- d. RSCs will have an important role to play in their local area, encouraging high performing schools to extend their influence and recruiting and growing MATs in their region.

Intervention in coasting and failing schools

Where academies or MATs are underperforming, Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) will continue to take action promptly.

To ensure schools can access the support they need, RSCs work to build capacity in their local area. They encourage high performing schools to extend their influence, recruit and grow sponsors and MATs in their region, and work with teaching schools on the supply and priorities of system leaders.

As set out in the Education and Adoption Act, RSCs will take on new, strengthened powers of intervention in maintained schools. This will ensure a consistent approach to all underperforming schools. The RSC, working with their Headteacher board, will promptly intervene, turning all failing maintained schools into academies with strong sponsors and matching failing academies to new sponsors where appropriate.

New free schools and UTCs

The Government will build upon the success of the free school programme to open at least 500 new schools by 2020 – and will strengthen the University Technical Colleges programme.

Parent Portal

A new online Parent Portal will be established to provide parents with a one-stop shop setting out the information they need to know about the school system and how to support their child.

Complaints

New guidance will be provided on handling complaints to help ensure a common approach to which all schools and MATs adhere. It will also make it simpler to escalate complaints beyond the governing board to the DfE.

Admissions

The Government will seek views on a number of changes to school admissions system, including proposals to:

- Support parents who want to delay entry of summer-born children so they can start reception at age 5, and clarifying that those children can remain with that cohort as they progress through school;
- Streamline functions of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator so objections to admission arrangements are resolved more quickly;
- Relax restrictions on school sixth form admissions to align them more closely with other post-16 provision by removing them from the scope of the Code;
- Require LAs to coordinate in-year admissions;

- Consider the feasibility of requiring LAs to handle the administration of the independent admission appeals function;
- Create a single route for escalating any complaints about the maladministration of appeals to a public service ombudsman.

A clearly defined role for LAs

The LA's education duties will focus on three areas¹:

- a. Ensuring every child has a school place;
- b. Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met;
- c. Acting as champions for all parents and families.

Responsibility for school improvement will be removed from LAs to the school-led system, and LAs' role in allocating local funding will be overtaken by the National Funding Formula.

Government will legislate to change LAs' powers and duties. Instead of running schools or school improvement, LAs will focus on delivering their core functions, working as partners with the schools system of the future and champions for parents and the local community.

In the short term, LAs will continue to have responsibilities which include: employment of staff in community schools; ownership and asset management of school buildings; and responsibilities relating to the governance, organisation and curriculum of maintained schools. Those responsibilities will shrink as each school in their area becomes an academy; when every school has done so, they will fall away entirely.

There will be a number of other responsibilities for which LAs will retain responsibility, including oversight of testing arrangements. LAs will continue to use the range of powers already available to them to tackle any safety, welfare or extremism concerns that arise in their areas.

The Government will review the responsibilities of LAs in relation to children, including the implications for the roles of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children.

4. Preventing underperformance

The Government will focus on ensuring there is extra support and challenge in areas where schools are failing.

To make a reality of 'Excellence Everywhere', the Government will ensure full coverage of teaching schools and NLEs across the country by designating new system leaders where most needed.

The Government will ensure all schools in all areas can access support, collaboration and best practice by ensuring full coverage of system leaders across the country, with up to 300 more teaching schools and 800 more NLEs targeted where most needed. Since 2010, the number of NLEs has grown from around 400 to over 1,100; the number of teaching schools has grown to almost 700. These system leaders are not spread evenly across the country.

Shifting responsibility for school improvement:

The best leaders will play a wider role across the system, as Government transfers responsibility for school improvement from LAs to schools and system leaders – teaching schools, NLEs and other designated system leaders. Where schools are performing well, they will choose and organise their own school improvement support when they consider it necessary; only if they're underperforming and don't have a plan or the means to improve will RSCs do so on their behalf.

¹ See Appendix 1 for further detail.

The Government will provide targeted funding for system leaders to build capacity through school-to-school support and for RSCs to intervene in failing and coasting schools. A new Intervention Fund for RSCs will be established to commission school improvement support from within the system for failing and coasting schools.

From September 2017, school improvement funding will be increasingly routed through teaching schools in line with their core functions. Teaching schools will be held to account more effectively for the quality, reach and impact of the support which they broker. This new fund will focus on building capacity across the system and ensuring the most vulnerable schools improve and do not fail.

Teaching schools will adopt an important role as brokerage 'hubs' for other system leaders, facilitating access to improvement support by coordinating the supply and activity of NLEs and SLEs. They will be responsible for providing or brokering effective support for schools that need extra help.

Full national coverage and increased impact of system leaders

The Government will establish new and better means for brokering school improvement. They will put in place the right incentives and brokerage to ensure that the work of teaching schools, NLEs and SLEs is more focused and reaches the most vulnerable schools. The Government will also better target school improvement funding to where it's most needed, funding system leaders to help build capacity and engage with schools most in need of support, and RSCs to commission the turnaround of failing and coasting schools.

More great sponsors, where they are needed

In the new school system, most school improvement will take place within effective MATs. The Government will ensure there are enough strong academy sponsors from business, charitable organisations and existing strong schools available to transform schools that need support.

New intensive focus on the most challenging areas

The Government will focus their programmes on areas of chronic, persistent underperformance, where not enough children have a high quality school place and where there is insufficient capacity to drive improvement. From September 2016, the Government will establish and begin rolling out Achieving Excellence Areas², where too few children have access to a good school and there are insufficient high quality teachers, leaders, system leaders and sponsors.

According to the DfE's map, the areas of Kent most likely to become Achieving Excellence Areas are Ashford, Thanet and Medway³.

5. High expectations

World-leading curricula

The Government introduced a new, more ambitious national curriculum and reformed qualifications and assessment standards. The aim is to give schools and colleges as much curriculum stability as possible to deliver these reforms.

Embedding changes to assessment

The Government are reforming national assessments and qualifications, with a focus on ensuring every child leaves Primary school with the essential building blocks to succeed at Secondary.

² See Appendix 2 for an illustrative example of what activity may look like in an 'Achieving Excellence Area'.

³ Page 85, Educational Excellence Everywhere, Department for Education (March 2016)

Character and resilience

The Government will introduce more support for schools to expand the range of evidence-based, character-building opportunities they provide to pupils and make available funding so that it is easier for 25% of Secondary schools to extend their school day to include a wider range of activities, such as sport, arts and debating. The Government will expand the National Citizen Service so every pupil has the opportunity to take part. They will also work with a group of leading Headteachers and practitioners to produce an action plan for improving personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) provision.

Meeting the needs of neglected groups of children

The Government will focus on boosting the attainment of four groups of children neglected by the previous curriculum and accountability system:

1. Lowest attaining
2. Most academically able
3. SEND
4. Pupils accessing Alternative Provision (AP)

Ofsted recently suggested that Secondary schools could be doing more to support bright pupils, to encourage the brightest students to apply to prestigious universities and to broaden the horizons of bright pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds⁴.

The AP system will be reformed so that mainstream schools remain accountable for the education of pupils in AP and are responsible for commissioning high quality provision. The Government will change accountability arrangements so that a pupil's mainstream school will retain accountability for their education outcomes, including when they have permanently excluded the pupil but the pupil has not subsequently enrolled at a different mainstream school:

- Schools will be responsible for the budgets from which AP is funded.;
- High quality sponsors will be encouraged to meet the need for new AP through the free school programme;
- A minimum curriculum standard and clear expectation for all pupils in AP will be published;
- Ofsted will review how AP providers will be inspected in future, establishing clear data to support commissioning decisions.

Improve careers provision

Later this year, the Government will publish a strategy for improved careers provision for young people, setting the direction for work to transform the quality of the careers education.

6. Accountability

Fair and focused school inspection

The DfE and Ofsted will work to ensure inspection is fair and increasingly focused on underperformance, where it can add most value. Ofsted will consult on removing the separate graded judgments on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to help clarify that the focus of inspection is on outcomes.

New accountability measures for MATs

The Government will publish new performance tables for MATs in addition to the continued publication and focus on inspection and performance data at individual school level.

⁴ *The most able students: An update on progress since June 2013*, March 2015 (Ofsted) <https://goo.gl/T7lKv>

7. Resources in the right hands

Schools National Funding Formula Consultation

On 7 March 2016 the Government launched the first of two stages of consultation about improvements to the schools funding arrangements through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The first stage concerns the fundamental principles upon which the DSG should be based, the second stage (date as yet unknown) will relate to the formula methodology and weightings used to determine individual authority allocations.

The consultation proposes that the move to a national formula would happen in 2019/20, with the schools block ring-fenced in the meantime and a new local authority services block created from 2017/18. The high needs block will also be ring-fenced and the early years block will be reviewed “later in the year”.

Government has stated that its aim from the reforms is to tackle the wide variation in funding per pupil between LAs and individual schools with similar needs. Ultimately, the aim is to develop a single national formula for schools, removing the role of LAs from determining school funding. Funding for pupils with high needs would continue to be allocated at authority level with LAs deciding on local levels of provision and special needs support for individual children.

Pupil Premium

The Government will continue the pupil premium and improve its effectiveness, using the Education Endowment Foundation to identify and promote evidence-based strategies to support the most disadvantaged. It will also:

- a. Publish a model framework encouraging schools to set out the barriers to learning for their disadvantaged pupils, the most appropriate evidence-based interventions and how impact will be measured;
- b. Support governing boards to challenge schools’ pupil premium strategies through the new model framework and updated advice in the Governance Handbook.

Condition of the School Estate

As more schools become academies, responsibility for managing condition budgets will move from LAs to academies. In the interim, LAs will continue to manage capital allocations for maintained schools, when those maintained schools have become academies, this duty will fall away.

The Government are encouraging applications for special free schools. They will make available capital funding to support the expansion of existing Special school provision, as well as the development of new schools to create new specialist places. At least £200 million will be available and the Government will say more about how this will be distributed later in 2016.

Appendix 1: Local Authority education duties in the future⁵

- a. Ensuring every child has a school place:** including that there are sufficient school, special school and alternative provision places to meet demand. LAs will retain responsibility for this in a fully academised system. The Government will support them by continuing to provide substantial funding to allow them to deliver sufficient places, as well as by creating places through the free schools programme. As in the past, the Government expect that they will use their strong relationships with local schools to deliver the places needed in a local area, including planning ahead where necessary to support applications through the central free schools programme or to seek proposals for presumption free schools. Where LAs are failing in this duty, the Government will not hesitate to intervene. LAs will also work with schools and parents in developing local school transport policies, giving schools the opportunity to provide school transport services where that makes sense locally; and take a lead in crisis management and emergency planning
-
- b. Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met:** including identifying, assessing and making provision for children with special educational needs and disability and looked after children; promoting school attendance and tackling persistent absence; ensuring that alternative provision is available for Headteachers to commission for children and young people excluded from school or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school, as discussed in chapter 6; leading on safeguarding responsibilities for all children, including those in un- regulated settings, educated at home and children missing education, as well as children at risk of radicalisation; working with schools to ensure that they understand and discharge their safeguarding duties; and supporting vulnerable children, as set out in chapter 6 – for example, acting as the ‘corporate parent’ for looked after children, using the statutory Virtual School Head role to work with schools and other agencies on promoting their educational achievement and progress, and deciding how to spend the Pupil Premium Plus
-
- c. Acting as champions for all parents and families:** including listening to and promoting the needs of parents, children and the local community – working alongside elected mayors; supporting parents in navigating the system through a continuing role in admissions; supporting children, young people and parents to navigate local SEND arrangements (such as providing information, advice and support) and engaging them in designing and co-producing local SEND policies, service commissioning and delivery; and championing high standards locally for all pupils, for example, by encouraging high performing providers to establish new school places and where necessary calling for action from the Regional Schools Commissioner to tackle underperformance.

⁵ Page 19, Educational Excellence Everywhere, Department for Education (March 2016)

Appendix 2:

An illustrative example of what activity may look like in an ‘Achieving Excellence Area’⁶:

An isolated coastal town and its surrounding area in the East of England is identified as an Achieving Excellence Areas because it is affected by both low standards and limited capacity to improve. The percentage of good and outstanding schools is significantly lower than the national average and in 2015 the area was one of the weakest performing nationally for Primary school attainment.

There is limited system leadership capacity, with no active teaching school or NLE. More than 1 in 3 pupils attend a school rated by Ofsted as Inadequate or Requires Improvement for quality of leadership and there is insufficient access to high quality ITT (with no local access to a leading SCITT).

As a designated Achieving Excellence Area, the Department for Education will prioritise the area in its national programmes, to help build capacity for improvement in the local system.

Schools in the area will be given priority access to the National Teaching Service, enabling them to draw on a pool of elite teachers and middle leaders. To build a critical mass of strong leadership, these schools will also have access to places on our targeted middle and senior leadership development programmes to develop the talent already in the area. And to tackle specific additional challenges – such as a significant lack of diversity in leadership positions – the area will be prioritised for programmes bidding to the Excellence in Leadership Fund.

High quality sponsors will be encouraged to expand to work in the area, with targeted funding to support Achieving Excellence Areas ensuring that the people with real expertise in transforming schools are incentivised to work where the need is greatest.

To enable schools in the area to draw on additional high quality school improvement support, the new, more sophisticated approach to system leadership designation (separated from Ofsted ratings) will enable two high quality local leaders to be designated as NLEs. These leaders will be linked to a high performing school in the area with the potential to become a teaching school and which will be partnered with an existing teaching school in a neighbouring area. In time, this new teaching school will seek to be designated as a SCITT, to provide high quality school led ITT for schools across the area.

During this process, the DfE will engage closely with the people who know the local area best – the education leaders who work there – to ensure that the support provided through the targeting of these programmes can deliver lasting improvement.

⁶ Page 87, Educational Excellence Everywhere, Department for Education (March 2016)