



Department
for Education

DfE strategy 2015-2020

World-class education and care

March 2016

Contents

Introduction from Secretary of State for Education	3
Strategy overview	5
Our system goals	6
Safety and wellbeing	6
Educational excellence everywhere	7
Prepared for adult life	9
Our reform principles	11
Children and young people first	11
High expectations for every child	11
Outcomes, not methods	12
Supported autonomy	13
Responsive to need and performance	14
The DfE's twelve strategic priorities	15
1. Recruit, develop, support and retain teachers	15
2. Strengthen school and system leadership	17
3. Drive sustainable school improvement	19
4. Embed clear and intelligent accountability	21
5. Embed rigorous standards, curriculum and assessment	23
6. Ensure access to quality places where they are needed	25
7. Deliver fair and sustainable funding	26
8. Reform 16-19 skills	28
9. Develop early years strategy	30
10. Strengthen children's social care	31
11. Support and protect vulnerable children	33
12. Build character and resilience	35
Implementation and review	37
Conclusion	38

Introduction from Nicky Morgan

Education is the hallmark of a civilised society, the engine of its productivity and the foundation of its culture. Transforming education and children’s social care are the cornerstones of this Government’s commitments to social justice and economic growth. That’s why both are central to our ambitious manifesto. Huge progress has been made over the last five years – as we see in many exciting, innovative schools, colleges and children’s social care services around the country. But this progress is not felt in every area of England – there is still so much more to do.

My vision is to **provide world-class education and care that allows every child and young person to reach his or her potential, regardless of background**. This document is an overview of my Department’s strategy to 2020 and it outlines how I intend to achieve my vision during this Parliament. It comprises:

- three **system goals** that the education and children’s social care systems will pursue;
- twelve **strategic priorities** on which my Department will focus;
- five policy **principles** that summarise the approach my Department will take – ‘*how*’ we’ll seek to deliver the priorities.

This strategy rests on the conviction that the fastest and most sustainable way for our systems to improve is for government to empower the best leaders in education and children’s social services. We will trust them to make high-quality decisions, and will hold them to account for unapologetically ambitious outcomes for every child, which we will measure fairly and rigorously. That will mean responding to performance and extending the reach of our most successful leaders. Government will focus on setting the right conditions for success and giving the best leaders the independence to deliver it – intervening only where standards are unacceptably low. There is little wrong with our systems that can’t be fixed by what’s right with them.

Each part of this strategy must work together: autonomy demands accountability; a system led by the front-line only works if there’s sufficient capacity where it’s needed.

This Government won’t shy away from seeking the best for every child, wherever they are. But we do understand how hard it is to deliver the high standards they really need – especially in our toughest schools, colleges and communities. So we’ll do more to offer support where it’s most needed. And we’ll be disciplined in resisting the temptation to make changes from the centre. This strategy sets out our approach; we know what’s now needed is the stability to deliver it.

This strategy is built on respect for teachers, head teachers, social workers and all the professionals who work in education and children’s social care. This is a strategy not just for the DfE; nor just for professionals – we’re setting out a challenge that will need the support of parents, communities and employers as well. Only by working together can we ensure every child and young person is able to reach their true potential.

I am under no illusion that delivering this strategy will be easy. These goals set unapologetically high expectations for every child and young person. These reforms won't be universally popular and will challenge many parts of our system.

But I believe the prize is worth the challenge. My conversations with parents, teachers and social workers across the nation have firmly convinced me that these changes are necessary ones. Children only get one childhood and one chance at their education, so there is a real urgency in our need to deliver.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicky Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

Secretary of State for Education



Strategy overview 2015–2020

DfE
vision

Provide world-class education and care that allows every child and young person to reach his or her potential, regardless of background

System goals

Safety and wellbeing

All children and young people are protected from harm and vulnerable children are supported to succeed with opportunities as good as those for any other child

Educational excellence everywhere

Every child and young person can access high-quality provision, achieving to the best of his or her ability regardless of location, prior attainment and background

Prepared for adult life

All 19-year-olds complete school, college or an apprenticeship with the skills and character to contribute to the UK's society and economy, and are able to access high-quality work or study options

DfE delivery priorities

1 Recruit, develop, support and retain teachers

- Attract enough talented individuals to teach where they are needed
- Strengthen university and school-led training and accreditation, including increasing the rigour of ITT content and the proportion of ITT that is school-led
- Ensure teachers can access sufficient, high-quality CPD and teaching materials
- Foster a world-leading teaching profession, including by reducing bureaucracy, establishing a College of Teaching and increasing teachers' access to and use of high-quality evidence

2 Strengthen school and system leadership

- Support the system to strengthen training and development of executive, senior and middle leaders
- Incentivise great leaders to work in challenging areas and pilot the National Teaching Service
- Provide a clear framework for system leadership (including Teaching School Alliances and Leaders of Education) to enable effective school-to-school support across the country – preventing underperformance, promoting collaboration and spreading best practice
- Ensure each part of the country has enough high-quality sponsors and governors

3 Drive sustainable school improvement

- Embed a school system appropriate for the long term that prevents underperformance, helps all schools to improve and extends the reach of high-performing schools and leaders – while increasing the pace of academisation and clearly articulating the roles of RSCs, LAs, MATs and schools
- Intervene promptly in underperforming schools to ensure our toughest schools are run by our best leaders, especially in areas of long-term or chronic underperformance

4 Embed clear and intelligent accountability

- Reform inspection to improve its reliability and utility for parents, schools and staff, and the wider education system – while reducing burdens and perverse incentives
- Implement new accountability measures across schools and post-16 that are driven by the progress and attainment of *all* pupils
- Provide parents and governors with clear, accessible information to support school choice and help them to hold schools to account

5 Embed rigorous standards, curriculum and assessment

- Embed reforms to GCSEs and A-levels so that they are recognised as gold standard qualifications, and ensure that schools are able to deliver the National Curriculum where they choose to do so
- Improve literacy and numeracy for all, including through strengthening primary assessment measures and delivering reformed Key Stage 2 tests
- Ensure pupils are offered more stretching programmes of study: increasing the take up of STEM study, the EBacc and facilitating A-levels
- Ensure schools help all pupils progress, particularly stretching the most able pupils and supporting low attainers

6 Ensure access to quality places where they are needed

- Deliver 500 new free schools, with a UTC within reach of every city
- Ensure sufficient supply and maintenance of high-quality school, specialist and post-16 places where they are needed

7 Deliver fair and sustainable funding

- Reform school, high needs, early years and disadvantage funding by introducing fair National Funding Formulae and improve the effectiveness of pupil premium spending
- With CLG and BIS, ensure sustainability of funding in children's services and 16-19 provision
- Support all our institutions to improve financial management and efficiency

8 Reform 16-19 skills

- With BIS, deliver 3 million high-quality apprenticeship starts
- Create clear, high-quality technical and professional routes to employment that are accessible for all and aligned with Britain's economic needs
- Reform the provider base to ensure every area is effectively served by a sustainable, resilient and responsive system of schools, Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

9 Develop early years strategy

- Extend free childcare to 30 hours for working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds
- Ensure the market works efficiently and effectively, so it provides *sufficient* places for all parents to access the childcare offers to which they are entitled
- Design reforms that increase the *quality* of the early years education and childcare offered across the country, focusing on developing the workforce

10 Strengthen children's social care

- Attract talented individuals, improve training and introduce clear professional standards to create a stronger social work profession
- Build a culture of excellence in children's services by encouraging innovative, evidence-led delivery practices and strengthening governance and accountability
- Support reforms to local delivery arrangements and intervene to tackle failure through new independent social care trusts, combined authority arrangements and City Deals
- Reform adoption services, including rolling out new regional agencies, to find loving homes for vulnerable children promptly, and improve support for children in and leaving care

11 Support and protect vulnerable children

- Run a proactive, inquisitive counter-extremism function and work with the Home Office and other agencies to protect children from radicalisation
- Support schools to help children and young people build good mental health and access support where they need it
- Embed current reforms and review our strategy to improve special education needs and disabilities provision – to empower parents and children and improve educational outcomes
- Implement reforms to the alternative provision system to improve quality and outcomes for pupils

12 Build character and resilience

- Support schools to develop pupils into well-rounded, confident, happy and resilient individuals to boost their academic attainment, employability and ability to engage in society as active citizens
- Facilitate access to high-quality, inspirational careers support and work experience

Principles

Children and young people first

Ensure children and young people, along with their families and carers, are satisfied with the quality of the education system and children's services

High expectations for every child

We are unapologetically ambitious for every child and young person, and will ensure there are no forgotten groups or areas

Outcomes, not methods

Set stretching, well-measured outcomes and empower professionals to determine how to achieve them, through innovative local solutions

Supported autonomy

Align funding, control, responsibility and accountability in one place, as close to the front-line as possible; ensure institutions can collaborate and access the support they need, to set them up for success

Responsive to need and performance

Ensure institutions respond to changing user needs and performance – autonomy can be earned and lost, with our most successful leaders earning their autonomy, extending their influence and vice versa

Our system goals

Our ambitions for children and young people are articulated in three system goals that set out the overarching aims for education and children’s social care services. They’re ambitious goals for the whole system, working together. Each will be supported by several strategic priorities, with the metrics for each set out in the Department’s Single Departmental Plan.¹

Safety and wellbeing

Safety and wellbeing

All children and young people are protected from harm and vulnerable children are supported to succeed with opportunities as good as those for any other child

Protected

If we are to ensure every child and young person is able to fulfil his or her potential, it’s vital that children are kept safe from harm – whether from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, from being neglected, or from being subverted by extremist ideologies.

We made good progress in the last Parliament, from reforming adoption to launching the Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme. There is, however, much more that still needs to be done to transform the circumstances of vulnerable children.

Keeping children safe is a much broader task than it once was, especially with the growth of social media and fast-paced technological change creating new channels through which children can be vulnerable. The DfE, educational institutions of all types (whether state or independent), social care services, childcare providers, and parents need to be alive and ready to respond to these new challenges.

Increasingly, we must not only protect and safeguard young people from conventional threats, but also from the threat of fundamentalist ideologies. We must offer a co-ordinated and intelligent approach to countering extreme ideologies – ensuring children are safe but also that they have the emotional and intellectual resilience to challenge extreme views.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020>

Opportunity

Preventing harm is necessary but insufficient: we must also ensure the most vulnerable can grow up in an environment that maximises their chances to learn, develop and *flourish*. This will mean focusing particularly on groups of children that face greater challenges, like looked-after children and young people suffering from poor mental health.

This is an ambitious goal: to ensure opportunities for our most vulnerable children are *as good as those for any other child* is a tremendous challenge. It is not one where we expect to declare a swift victory. But as we reform and improve each part of our system, that is the bar to which we are aspiring. The government has a moral obligation to provide to children in its care the same support and opportunities that any reasonable parent would for their own.

Educational excellence everywhere

Educational excellence everywhere

Every child and young person can access high-quality provision, achieving to the best of his or her ability regardless of location, prior attainment and background

Excellence

This goal continues the government's drive to 'raise the bar' on the standards we expect for all children. Our best schools and highest performing areas show us how ambitious it is possible to be for all groups of pupils. Access to the best that has been thought and said need not be restricted to a lucky few, because when the bar is raised everyone benefits. And whilst many communities, schools and educational leaders are defining 'excellence' more ambitiously than government ever could, the non-negotiable minimum standards to which every young person should be entitled must continue to rise.

The last five years have seen remarkable improvements. Record numbers of children are now being taught in good or outstanding schools: 1.4 million more pupils than in 2010.² More than 8 in 10 schools in England are now rated good or outstanding – the highest number since Ofsted began inspections in 1992.³ The proportion of pupils taking core academic subjects at GCSE has risen by 78%⁴ and at the end of primary school, four out of five pupils now achieve the expected standard or higher in all of reading, writing and

² The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15

³ Inspection outcomes Jan 2015 to March 2015

⁴ Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2014 to 2015

maths⁵ – enabling that standard to become even more ambitious. One in four primary pupils now *exceed* the expected standard; up from one in five in 2012.⁶ A record 18% of new teachers starting training in 2015 have a first class degree,⁷ and 81% of teachers say behaviour in their schools is good or very good.⁸ Four years on from the introduction of the phonics reading check, 120,000 more children are now on track to become excellent readers compared to 2012.⁹ Persistent absences are down by over a third,¹⁰ we have the lowest ever proportion of young people NEET,¹¹ and a record number of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds are receiving 15 hours of free early education.¹²

But despite the improvements since 2010, one in every five primary pupils still transfers to secondary school below the minimum expected level in reading, writing and mathematics – that’s 115,000 pupils in 2015.¹³ Based on first entry, more than two in every five young people still fail to secure five good GCSEs including English and maths – leaving school without the essential knowledge and skills to maximise their success in the modern world.¹⁴ We are the only country in the OECD’s Survey of Adult Skills¹⁵ where young people are no more literate or numerate than their grandparents’ generation.¹⁶ And our long tail of low attainment compares poorly with countries with similar political, social and economic outlooks to ours: 17% of UK students fail to reach what the OECD calls “modern functional literacy” in PISA,¹⁷ compared with, for instance, 11% in Canada.¹⁸

In particular, children’s outcomes are still much too heavily influenced by where they live, their background and their previous attainment. The excellence that has been unleashed in some places has not yet spread across the whole country – pockets of chronic underperformance remain, with some areas suffering both unacceptably low standards and a lack of capacity to improve.

⁵ National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2015 (revised)

⁶ National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2015 (revised)

⁷ ITT recruitment data

⁸ NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus: questions for the Department for Education – June 2015

⁹ KS1 results 2015

¹⁰ Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014

¹¹ NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief October to December 2015, England

¹² Provision for children under 5 years of age: January 2015

¹³ National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2015 (revised)

¹⁴ Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2014 to 2015

¹⁵ Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, an international test of adult skills

¹⁶ OECD Skills Outlook 2013

¹⁷ Programme for International Student Assessment

¹⁸ OECD (2015), Universal Basic Skills: What Countries Stand To Gain

Everywhere

Therefore, the second part of this goal is the re-prioritisation of the government's focus to tackle more intensively those areas of the country that have lagged behind for too long, the so-called 'cold spots' of educational provision. This goal seeks to deliver real social justice by ensuring that *irrespective of location, prior attainment or economic or social background*, children and young people have access to high-quality provision. We must do more to support communities where underperformance and low aspiration have become endemic and ensure they can learn from those areas, leaders and institutions that are well on their way to realising *true* excellence for all their children.

The approach set out in this strategy is to increase the *support* provided for the toughest groups, at every stage of development, not just lower the bar and make excuses. We must ask how we *will* help them succeed, not default to explaining why we think they *cannot*.

Supporting all children to reach their potential brings economic prosperity for individuals and the whole country. Those with five or more good GCSEs (including English and maths) or a Level 3 apprenticeship earn more than their counterparts with lower level qualifications. And, the better-educated a society, the more productive, dynamic and innovative it can be.

Prepared for adult life

Prepared for adult life

All 19-year-olds complete school, college or an apprenticeship with the skills and character to contribute to the UK's society and economy, and are able to access high-quality work or study options

As well as securing strong educational outcomes, our system must ensure each young person is fully prepared for adulthood, the world of work and to be a fulfilled and active participant in society.

Character

As well as mastering the fundamentals – literacy and numeracy – and studying an academic core, all young people also need the skills and character to succeed academically, have a fulfilling career, and make a positive contribution to British society.

It's easy to take character traits like persistence, integrity and curiosity for granted. And it's tempting for government to overlook their importance, because they're difficult to measure. But we can all recognise when a young person has the broader qualities, values and attitudes that are so sought by parents, educators and employers. This goal

recognises the importance of those traits and the priority we invite institutions to place on them.

Skills

As young people near the end of compulsory education, it is the fluent application of applied knowledge that sets them up for a fulfilling work life and provides them with real, positive choices: to pursue their chosen career, to enter higher education or to embark on further, high-quality technical and professional study or training. In the last Parliament the quality of post-16 work-based learning expanded and improved, with 2.4 million apprenticeship starts¹⁹ and a lower proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training than at any point since records began.²⁰ But there is much more to do to offer our young people the highest-quality technical and professional pathways and relevant, stimulating routes into work. And we must do better at ensuring each part of the education system prepares every child to find and access the right route for them.

There will always be core knowledge and skills our young people need to have mastered to get on in life. But the workplaces they are entering continue to change rapidly. Whilst globalisation offers vast opportunity for those positioned to grasp it, it's threatening for those without the education to compete effectively in an ever-hungrier global market. Automation and consequent shifts in the labour market mean the number of routine, middle-skilled jobs is likely to decline. Every young Briton unable to compete with their international peers represents a huge waste of potential, on both a personal and national level.

¹⁹ FE data library: apprenticeships

²⁰ NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief October to December 2015, England

Our reform principles

Any system reform works best when there is a shared understanding of the intended direction and the rationale underpinning it. Our approach can be summarised in five core principles that set out how this government is implementing this ambitious agenda.

Children and young people first

Children and young people first

Ensure children and young people, along with their families and carers, are satisfied with the quality of the education and children's services systems

Our first principle is to ensure each policy puts **children and young people first**. We must not let anything detract from improving the lives and opportunities of those who rely on the education and children social care systems.

Much of the front-line lives and breathes this principle and many of our policies already epitomise it: communities can establish their own free schools; children have a broader entitlement to a richer curriculum; young people and their parents are at the heart of the Education and Health Care planning process.

But as we implement the strategic priorities, this principle will require us to prize the needs of our children and other users even more consciously. We will need to design based on their needs, not just in a way that is most convenient for national or local bureaucracy.

High expectations for every child

High expectations for every child

We are unapologetically ambitious for every child and young person, and will ensure there are no forgotten groups or areas

Our vision and system goals demand that every policy *starts* with **high expectations for every child** and *then* assesses what's needed to achieve those expectations. Although some children are lucky enough to receive a head-start, our best educators and children's social care providers can maintain and deliver on high expectations for *all* their children and young people. We must match these exemplars' level of ambition everywhere, and avoid the trap of designing policies that accept low aspirations for some children and young people. Instead, we must provide the support and challenge to enable every child in every area to reach uncompromisingly high standards.

Outcomes, not methods

Outcomes, not methods

Set stretching, well-measured outcomes and empower professionals to determine how to achieve them, through innovative local solutions

Our strategy is based on the notion that society is complicated and subtle; that there are few areas in which there is a single, standardised solution waiting to be imposed from the top. Our priorities encourage everyone to use evidence to innovate, in the belief that, whilst some will lead the pack, their progress will help the rest. So bespoke approaches are encouraged and our best leaders are empowered to make high-quality local decisions, held to account locally and nationally for rigorous, well-measured **outcomes, not methods**. The elected government should properly set out the outcomes expected to be achieved for the public money being invested, without necessarily specifying how those outcomes should be met. Our strategy starts from the premise that our best leaders know best what works; that good, enthusiastic people should be able to unleash their creativity, innovation and up-to-date knowledge. Practitioners must be allowed to respond to situations as they find them, using their expertise to identify and implement the most effective approaches. Whilst there will always be exceptions to any rule, the bar for *mandating practice*, rather than *stipulating an outcome* is high.

This system must welcome thoughtful innovation, respond to success and failure, share and scale what works and be able to respond to local differences in circumstances. Innovation must be rooted in careful study of what works elsewhere, not based on intuition or hunch. In a more autonomous model, sharing, accessing and following the evidence becomes even more important. Different methods will be suited to different circumstances, but any particular circumstance should have the leading available evidence applied to the problem at hand.

The international evidence suggests this approach works in schools. NFER concluded ‘the structures used in successful systems share a number of characteristics and behaviours which...are consistent with a schools-led model of support in which systems, leaders and the workforce contribute to a self-improving culture’,²¹ whilst the OECD said in 2012 ‘school systems that grant more autonomy to schools to define and elaborate their curricula and assessments tend to perform better than systems that don’t grant such autonomy’.²² To be effective, this autonomy must be coupled with a strong accountability system, as set out in principle 5.

²¹ NFER (2012), Enabling school-driven system leadership

²² PISA (2012), What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices, Volume IV

Supported autonomy

Supported autonomy

Align funding, control, responsibility and accountability in one place, as close to the front-line as possible; ensure institutions can collaborate and access the support they need, to set them up for success

Our focus on *outcomes over methods* continues to grant our best front-line leaders the autonomy they need. It aligns funding, control and accountability so our most successful leaders have the tools they need but are held accountable for their decisions.

But autonomy alone cannot deliver the step-change in performance we need. It isn't enough to unleash leaders if they can't access the people and resources to capitalise on the opportunity. To realise the system's potential we must also build capacity where it's most needed – in an approach we call '**supported autonomy**'. That means creating the infrastructure for institutions to work with and challenge one another to be more efficient and effective. And it means government doing more to *support* our front-line leaders to wield their autonomy effectively – setting them up for success, rather than waiting to intervene in the case of failure. In doing so, we will concentrate our focus and investment to our areas of greatest need, counteracting the risk of a two-tier system where more of the gains accrue to those who are already the most successful.

This doesn't mean any rolling back of freedoms for institutions performing well, nor the re-emergence of an overbearing government. It simply means more carefully developing and targeting the 'scaffolding' on which autonomous institutions need to draw. And enshrining freedoms in a well-defined, stable framework that defines the limits of what's acceptable to ensure public money is spent properly, our children are safe, and the interests of any one institution aren't allowed to trump those of the system as a whole. It also means directly intervening to commission additional support where progress is too slow, through initiatives like the National Teaching Service.

While external intervention should be necessary in only the most exceptional circumstances, it can't be avoided by compromising expectations: instead, this principle seeks to ensure as many institutions as possible have access to the capacity needed to avoid failure. This is one of the most important elements of our strategy: devolving decision-making power but providing support where sufficient capacity isn't emerging naturally or fast enough.

Responsive to need and performance

Responsive to need and performance

Ensure institutions respond to changing user needs and performance – autonomy can be earned and lost, with our most successful leaders earning their autonomy, extending their influence and vice versa

At the heart of the approach to giving leaders the autonomy to innovate and develop local solutions is the notion that only the most *effective* leaders will be empowered, by being **responsive to need and performance**. Autonomy is not the same as apathy; the nation must take a keen interest in whether the approaches autonomous leaders are pursuing work. Where they do, they should spread more widely; where they don't, they shouldn't continue forever. As communities' needs change, the system must be able to respond to these changing needs.

Indeed, in any successful system, there must be accountability for performance. We'd be failing parents, taxpayers and our nation's children if we didn't match the *supported autonomy* we're granting with effective accountability for performance – to ensure resources are invested where they can do the most good.

This principle will see the replacement of geographic monopolies with more dynamic systems, where those achieving the best results for our children grow their influence. This brings our sectors more choice, more competitive pressure, greater responsiveness to performance, and mechanisms to better innovate and scale success.

The DfE's twelve strategic priorities

Our delivery programme comprises twelve strategic priorities. These are the areas that require the greatest DfE focus and action to better enable our front-line colleagues to deliver the system goals. Covering the breadth of the Department's responsibilities, the priorities are rooted in the government's manifesto but are not an exhaustive list of everything the DfE does; rather, they summarise the highest priority areas.

Throughout this Parliament, we will be engaging stakeholders to develop the detailed policies that underpin these priorities. Over the coming months, we will continue to set out more detail on each strand. Our children's social care reforms listed at priority 10 have already been summarised;²³ and our Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper sets out our approach to delivering that system goal.

1. Recruit, develop, support and retain teachers

1. Recruit, develop, support and retain teachers

- a. Attract enough talented individuals to teach where they're needed
- b. Strengthen university and school-led training and accreditation, including increasing the rigour of ITT content and the proportion of ITT that is school-led
- c. Ensure teachers can access sufficient, high-quality CPD and teaching materials
- d. Foster a world-leading teaching profession, including by reducing bureaucracy, establishing a College of Teaching and increasing teachers' access to and use of high-quality evidence

If there is one uncontested fact in education, it's that the quality of teaching is the single most important school-level determinant of educational outcomes.²⁴ This first priority is all about making sure our teachers are the best they can be and that there are enough teachers, in the right places with the capability and confidence to deliver an excellent education.

Our approach to maximising the quality of taught lessons does not sit in a neat silo: it's the product of a wide range of priorities. But a few are particularly important. Supporting the system to strengthen leadership (priority 2) will ensure the coaching, leadership and management of classroom teachers improves their practice and boosts teacher retention. Funding reforms (priority 7) will ensure the system's resources are directed where they

²³ [Children's social care reform: a vision for change](#) (January 2016)

²⁴ Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain (2000), Teachers, schools and academic achievement

are most needed: the heads of our least fairly funded schools will no longer be disadvantaged and will be better able to invest in their workforces. Reforming inspection (priority 4) will ease the burden on teachers and reduce perverse incentives that might dissuade our best teachers from working in our toughest schools.

But at the heart of all this is schools being able to recruit, develop, support and retain great teachers. To support headteachers in that endeavour, our first priority has four parts:

1a. First, we need to *attract* sufficient, high-quality new entrants into the profession, and get them training and working in the right places. This means running high-quality teacher recruitment campaigns and offering clear incentives. And it means better allocating training places to routes and locations where they are most needed, are most likely to be filled and where training is likely to be delivered well. Through programmes like the National Teaching Service pilot, central government will help ensure a consistent supply of teachers across the country. Although teaching is attracting its best ever entrants, the recovering economy is resulting in greater competition for high-calibre graduates, the total *number* of teachers we need is steadily increasing as pupil numbers grow and we face smaller pools of graduates from which to recruit in key subjects. So the challenge is significant and we must rise to meet it.

1b. However, there is little point attracting high-potential teachers to the profession if they don't then receive the kind of quality training that prepares them for a successful and fulfilling career in the classroom. So the second – vital – component of this priority is to reform initial teacher training *content* and the accreditation requirements we set for new teachers, to ensure that they're trained to a sufficient standard. This strand will particularly focus on helping new teachers enter the classroom with sufficient subject knowledge, practical behaviour-management skills and armed with the most up-to-date research into how pupils learn, and we will ensure discredited ideas unsupported by firm evidence are not promoted to new teachers. This will ensure that both university and school-led ITT courses are truly rigorous. We will also continue to increase the proportion of ITT that is led by our best schools: those most up-to-date with what works in the classroom and with the strongest interest in maintaining excellent ITT standards.

Each year, around 10% of the teacher workforce leaves the state-funded schools sector and needs to be replaced – a percentage that has remained broadly constant for over 10 years.²⁵ To help ensure our great teachers are motivated to stay in the classroom as long as possible, we're doing more to support them, as set out below in priorities 1c and 1d.

1c. The management, development, support and retention of existing teachers is rightly the responsibility of autonomous school leaders: empowered to invest in building the

²⁵ School workforce in England: November 2014

highest-quality workforce possible, trusted to make their own decisions about who to employ and how much to pay them, with un-ring-fenced funding and less bureaucratic interference. The development of more multi-academy trusts should make this *easier* – providing economies of scale, a greater pool of talent, and facilitating the sharing of best practice.

However, schools' investment in effective CPD currently lags many leading systems, with too much CPD investment not translating to improvements in the classroom. As the nation's expectations for our children rise, we must ensure teachers can access a rich provision of effective training, in line with our *supported autonomy* approach. Complementing higher-quality CPD is access to high-quality teaching materials. That won't mean government *providing* CPD or writing textbooks, but we will do more to ensure teachers can draw on the best materials – to improve their workloads and effectiveness.

1d. As we support schools to develop their teachers, it's vital that we foster a world-leading, vibrant teaching *profession*. High-performing education systems, such as Finland, Germany and Japan, credit their success in part to a high-status teaching profession – highly educated, highly skilled and highly respected. In England, we therefore must not apologise for setting stretching goals or refusing to appease those who look to government to be told what to do. Instead, we must encourage the development of a stronger profession – one that has a professional body in the form of the new, independent College of Teaching. We must also free teachers to teach by continuing to drive down bureaucracy: stripping back unnecessary requirements and helping schools understand how to avoid gold-plating. And we must ensure the profession can make use of high-quality evidence about 'what works' through the continued growth of the Education Endowment Foundation.

2. Strengthen school and system leadership

2. Strengthen school and system leadership

- a. Support the system to strengthen training and development of executive, senior and middle leaders
- b. Incentivise great leaders to work in challenging areas and pilot the National Teaching Service
- c. Provide a clear framework for system leadership (including Teaching School Alliances and Leaders of Education) to enable effective school-to-school support across the country – preventing underperformance, promoting collaboration and spreading best practice
- d. Ensure each part of the country has enough high-quality sponsors and governors

As we offer greater responsibilities to our school leaders, it is ever more important that they are equipped to use their autonomy. Quality leadership is the second-most important school-level factor in improving educational outcomes,²⁶ so, as well as unleashing our school leaders to run their schools in the way they know works, we are prioritising action to strengthen school- and system-level leadership.

Great leaders play a vital role in almost every part of our strategy. Highly effective middle leaders are at the heart of developing the world-leading teaching profession outlined in priority 1, and we need sufficient school and system leaders to realise the school improvement ambitions of priority 3. Most importantly, it is school and middle leaders who are making the myriad day-to-day operational decisions that most influence student outcomes: which teachers are assigned to which classes, which curricula to deploy in which order, which strategies are employed in each classroom, and so on.²⁷

2a. The first part of this priority is to support leadership training and development at every level from middle leadership upwards. Our senior and middle leaders must be able to access sufficient formal and informal development to excel. As well as being the senior leaders of the future, middle leaders coach new and existing teachers, they support and challenge under-performers, they lead the development of subject curricula and pedagogy, and so on. As for senior and system leaders, opportunities and expectations have never been greater, so new training, development and skills will be needed to prepare them for leading tomorrow's schools. Much of the system's leadership development will be conducted by multi-academy trusts and within Teaching School Alliances, and the Educational Excellence Everywhere white paper sets out the additional support in which government will invest.

2b. Second, a system that unleashes and depends on front-line leaders to such an extent needs a strong, consistent supply in every part of the country. The second strand of this priority, therefore, is to focus on our toughest areas – those that particularly struggle to attract and retain leaders – ensuring full coverage of school and system leaders across the country. As well as supporting the growth of MATs (which, unlike Local Authorities, can span different regions and deploy their leaders accordingly), we will undertake more targeted interventions where needed, through schemes like the National Teaching Service pilot which, from September 2016, will deploy teachers with leadership potential to some of our most challenging areas. Furthermore, we will allocate government funding more fairly (priority 7), making it easier to recruit strong leaders into areas that have previously been short-changed, and we will continue to improve the accountability

²⁶ Day, C., Sammons, P., Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Gu, Q., Brown, E. (2010), Ten strong claims about successful school leadership. Nottingham: NCSL. Leithwood, K. and Seashore-Louis, K. (2012), *Linking Leadership to Student Learning*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

²⁷ Hattie (2009), *Visible learning. A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, *Routledge*, page 129

system (priority 4), reducing the perverse incentives for leaders to avoid challenging schools.

2c. The third component is to invest in the *infrastructure* to enable local collaboration and support so excellent leaders are helped to share best practice and support each other. This is most obviously discharged through the formation of MATs. But it also means designating more National Leaders of Education where they're needed, so school leaders – in all areas – can easily *find* colleagues able to share good practice. And it means Teaching School Alliances developing networks that promote effective school-to-school support and local innovation. This infrastructure aims to create the conditions in which our best school leaders support struggling schools to *prevent* underperformance and help more good schools become great. Such leaders have the most up-to-date expertise in what works and the closest connection with their communities.

2d. Finally, as power is devolved from local and national government to individual schools and groups of schools, it will be vital that there is a high-quality supply of school governors and sponsors across the country. Governing boards play an increasingly important accountability role, with the best injecting fresh skills and perspectives while supporting school leaders. We will support them in this role by providing them with clear, accessible performance information about their schools (priority 4c), along with tools, guidance, and by setting a stronger expectation that boards fill any skills gaps through appropriate training. We are also funding governing boards to recruit more skilled people, to support the supply of high-quality governors in every part of the country. Strong sponsors strengthen governing boards' vision, strategic leadership and accountability arrangements. Therefore, we will grow the supply and capacity of high-quality sponsors, working closely with RSCs and the sector to maximise opportunities for growth and ensure school improvement.

3. Drive sustainable school improvement

3. Drive sustainable school improvement

- a. Embed a school system appropriate for the long term that prevents underperformance, helps all schools to improve and extends the reach of high-performing schools and leaders – while increasing the pace of academisation and clearly articulating the roles of RSCs, LAs, MATs and schools
- b. Intervene promptly in underperforming schools to ensure our toughest schools are run by our best leaders, especially in areas of long-term or chronic underperformance

Despite having 1.4 million more places in ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ schools than in 2010,²⁸ there remain too many communities who are only able to access under-performing schools.

Our school improvement approach rests on the premise that schools improve fastest when they’re led by the most effective leaders who are empowered to make high-quality, local decisions and held to account locally and nationally for fair, rigorous, well-measured outcomes. Those leaders who improve their schools must be able to extend their influence over more schools, to benefit more children.

This model is closely interconnected with much of the rest of the strategic agenda. To ensure our best leaders have the skills and capacity to support our toughest schools, we need to do more to develop enough great leaders in the right places, and sufficient capable governors and sponsors to support them, as set out in priority 2. We need to ensure that each school leader has the right resources (priority 6), is held to account fairly (priority 4) and, of course, is able to recruit sufficient teachers (priority 1).

To ensure we drive sustainable improvement, this priority has two parts:

3a. The first part of the priority is to establish a *self-improving* school system that *prevents* underperformance in the first place. This school-led improvement will usually take place in groups of schools. As all schools become academies, MATs will roll out proven educational models and enable the system’s best leaders to run more schools. We expect to see most schools forming or joining MATs to enjoy the staffing, efficiency and leadership benefits of being a part of a larger whole. Schools that can viably stand alone may choose to join looser partnerships like Teaching School Alliances, where control will still sit with individual school-level governing bodies.

MATs are very different from Local Authorities: they’re not geographic monopolies; their size and influence ebbs and flows according to performance. They offer a clear, single point of accountability: the MAT has the powers and funding to bolster standards in the schools for which they’re responsible and is completely accountable for the results.

3b. Where there is clear evidence that the current leadership is not on track to transform standards without external intervention, that intervention must happen as promptly and seamlessly as possible. The turbulence of external intervention is always regrettable, but intervention takes place when doing nothing would be even more costly. Where a school has been persistently or chronically under-performing against a fair-but-stretching set of measures, it must be right that our most successful leaders are given the opportunity to turn it around. This model provides real accountability and competitive pressure, with

²⁸ The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills 2014/15

genuine consequences for performance and the means to both innovate and scale success.

When a school or MAT has been identified as under-performing, Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) can apply a range of interventions, depending on its performance and capacity for improvement. That may be as light-touch as commissioning support from Teaching Schools and system leaders, but in the case of chronic under-performance the default approach will be to broker the school into a high-performing MAT, where proven school leaders can apply models that have been shown to work elsewhere. For a self-improving system to operate effectively, it must be dynamic and open to challenge, responding to success and failure. This approach means that the size and influence of MATs will vary according to performance. The best MATs will flourish, taking over and turning around weak academies. MATs which are underperforming will be challenged and, if necessary, their schools will be transferred to a stronger trust.

4. Embed clear and intelligent accountability

4. Embed clear and intelligent accountability

- a. Reform inspection to improve its reliability and utility for parents, schools and staff, and the wider education system – while reducing burdens and perverse incentives
- b. Implement new accountability measures across schools and post-16 that are driven by the progress and attainment of *all* pupils
- c. Provide parents and governors with clear, accessible information to support school choice and help them to hold schools to account

A more autonomous system is even more dependent on effective accountability.

The fourth priority, therefore, is to ensure that the government's reforms to the accountability system are effectively embedded. That when education professionals are held accountable for the outcomes of their decisions (priority 3), they're held to fair, intelligent, reliable and carefully-balanced measures of success and failure that avoid perverse incentives, don't unduly hinder innovation and properly recognise the risk and challenge our best teachers and headteachers take on when re-locating to work in our toughest schools.

We must ensure our accountability measures cast a spotlight on where a school is doing less well for any one child than the same child would have done at another school. But these measures must be proportionate, giving schools time to improve or prove an innovation while reacting in time to avoid chronic failure that irredeemably damages any child's education.

In an academised system, where schools should be *more* locally accountable to academy trusts, with whom parents have a direct relationship, it's even more important to set up parents and governors with the tools to hold schools to account. In this accountability system, when a school is performing well there should be no interference by central government. The governing board is free to drive improvement autonomously, provided it meets national standards of propriety and outcomes. That is community-driven accountability and control: autonomy when the school is performing well and a loss of autonomy if that system fails to meet national expectations of acceptable standards.

To deliver such a system, this priority has three parts:

4a. A strong, trusted inspectorate is a vital element of any accountability system. The full range of what makes a great school can never be fully revealed through data or exam results. Effective inspection draws all available information into a single, reliable judgement that helps parents understand whether the school is performing well or not. It guards against an undue focus on a few headline data-measures. Where inspection concludes that a school isn't yet proficient, inspectors also make an important judgement as to whether it's capable of getting there without external intervention. All judgements need to be proportionate, focusing inspection where it's most needed.

Our inspectorate has taken great strides towards this model, in an environment of considerable change. Ofsted and the DfE are both determined to ensure that classroom behaviour is oriented to raising standards; that the drive for continued improvement sees inspection become still more informative and reliable, whilst unnecessary workload burdens and perverse incentives are removed. Ofsted has been clear that inspection should never be perceived as a box-ticking exercise, for which the best preparation is paperwork rather than simply ensuring that provision is high-quality and children are safe and happy. Our White Paper details reforms to make inspection ever more effective.

4b. Alongside our inspection regime we must make better use of data. We know what gets measured gets done, so it's essential to remove *damaging* accountability measures that drive unhelpful practice in classrooms, for example the '5 A*-C' cliff-edge measure that encouraged schools to focus unduly on a small segment of each cohort.

This priority seeks to embed the replacement of these measures with ones that credit heads for the progress and attainment of *all* pupils at every level of ability. A school where pupils progress well from a low starting point should be lauded; a school where pupils make little progress from a high starting point should not escape scrutiny. This priority also sees the selection of more ambitious outcomes to be measured: a larger group of qualifications in the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures; a guarantee of a properly broad and balanced core curriculum to which every child should be entitled in the EBacc; destination measures to shine a light on how well schools and colleges are setting their pupils up for the next stage, including whether they're guiding them to make the right choices.

At primary, we will complete the reforms to assessment to help ensure every child leaves primary school with the essential building blocks to succeed at secondary.

4c. Of course, accountability is not just about *the government* holding schools to account; schools should primarily be accountable to their pupils, parents and governors. So the third strand of this priority is to ensure parents and governors can access the right information – in easy-to-navigate formats – to give them a clear, reliable picture of how their schools are performing and where improvements can be made. In the digital age, families can quickly and easily find information on everything from holiday destinations to car finance. It is incumbent on government to ensure that they can do the same for their schools, so parents can make informed choices over which school is best for their child and ask questions of the leaders of the schools their children attend. Moreover, as the quality and richness of educational data grows, ‘pushing’ it to governors in a way that enables easy comparison of performance will help them better identify areas of strength and weakness in their schools.

5. Embed rigorous standards, curriculum and assessment

5. Embed rigorous standards, curriculum and assessment

- a. Embed reforms to GCSEs and A-levels so that they are recognised as gold standard qualifications, and ensure that schools are able to deliver the National Curriculum where they choose to do so
- b. Improve literacy and numeracy for all, including through strengthening primary assessment measures and delivering reformed Key Stage 2 tests
- c. Ensure pupils are offered more stretching programmes of study: increasing the take up of STEM study, the EBacc and facilitating A-levels
- d. Ensure schools help all pupils progress, particularly stretching the most able pupils and supporting low attainers

Every child deserves to leave education with the knowledge and skills that open access to the best possible opportunities in life. So our fifth priority is to embed the reforms to curriculum, qualifications and assessment standards launched in the last Parliament – giving schools and colleges a period of stability to deliver these ambitious reforms.

Establishing ‘gold standard’ qualifications and assessments at *each* stage of the education system is a core part of achieving educational excellence everywhere: it is a waste of children’s potential and teachers’ talents to deliver dumbed-down curricula. Curricula that are ambitious in their breadth and depth will support the development of the knowledge and skills so essential for further academic study, technical and professional education and a fulfilling and valuable career. Rigorous assessment (priority

4) helps government liberate schools to determine their *methods* of teaching, whilst holding them accountable for *outcomes*. This priority has four parts:

5a. For too long, the year-on-year increase in top grades at GCSE masked a stagnation in standards. At A-level, universities were expressing concern that students were arriving unprepared for undergraduate study. The government has worked hard over the last five years to ensure that GCSEs and A-levels are – rightly – viewed as rigorous, trusted examinations. Over this Parliament, we will embed the existing changes to these gold standard qualifications.

Meanwhile, to perform well in more rigorous examinations pupils need a richer curriculum *throughout* their school career. So the reformed National Curriculum sets an ambitious benchmark standard. But given its increased stretch, especially at primary, this strand of priority 5 will see the DfE continuing to provide support for schools to deliver its most challenging parts so that every school is able to teach to *at least* the standards set out in the National Curriculum.

5b. Mastering fundamental English and maths skills is vital socially and professionally throughout life. The education system's most basic failure is when any young person leaves illiterate or innumerate. If pupils do not develop sufficient reading acumen by the middle of primary school they are less able to learn other curricula.²⁹ And yet, the UK is the only country in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills where young people are no more literate and numerate than their grandparents' generation.³⁰ So the second strand of this priority is to continue implementing policies that boost literacy and numeracy, with a particular focus on primary school, so that 11-year-olds are set up for success at secondary school.

5c. A rigorous, knowledge-rich, academic curriculum benefits everyone. For too long children who were deemed 'not suited' to traditional subjects were advised to take non-academic courses that prematurely closed down their options. We reject this approach, and are asking schools to offer the English Baccalaureate to more young people, to increase the diversity and rigour of the core curriculum entitlement. As part of our reforms to qualifications, we have also increased the rigour and the depth of content in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) qualifications and will continue to work to increase the take-up of these subjects. Academic routes should prepare pupils for further study, employment and adult life, so we are developing rigorous new A-levels, including in 'facilitating' subjects (academic A-levels that keep a wide variety of options open to a young person).

²⁹ Hattie (2009), *Visible learning. A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, Routledge, page 129

³⁰ OECD Skills Outlook 2013

5d. Whilst the previous three strands will drive up standards universally, there are two particular groups on which we intend to focus especially because they have, to date, been neglected. Under previous accountability measures, schools were driven to focus unduly on students who were expected to achieve either a C or D grade at secondary school, and who were on the border of a Level 3 and Level 4 at primary. This meant schools were not credited for stretching the most able or lowest-attaining students, who didn't influence the measures by which schools were held to account. Whilst priority 4 is addressing these perverse incentives – with our new Progress 8 measure and reformed primary accountability measures focusing on the improvement of *all* children – this strand will also launch strategies to cater *particularly* for these neglected groups.

6. Ensure access to quality places where they are needed

6. Ensure access to quality places where they are needed

- a. Deliver 500 new free schools, with a UTC within reach of every city
- b. Ensure sufficient supply and maintenance of high-quality school, specialist and post-16 places where they are needed

The DfE's most fundamental responsibility – working with local authorities – is to ensure there are enough places available, in the right sorts of provision, where they are needed. We are not embarking on this challenge from a standing start; the government significantly increased its investment in school places over the last Parliament, allocating £5 billion to LAs to create new places between 2011 and 2015. But this priority recognises the importance of building on that strong base.

England's young population is growing: by 2020, we expect to be educating around 600,000 more children than in 2015.³¹ While there is still surplus capacity in our existing schools, populations are growing at different rates across the country. This means that unless more and more places are created, provision in some locations will be stretched.

The challenge is also growing: as the increased primary population that was successfully accommodated from 2010 to 2015 starts to move to secondary, the cost of creating those places will be greater. We have two clear routes to ensuring sufficiency of places.

6a. First, many of the places in the 500 free schools and University Technical Colleges (UTCs) we will open by 2020 will be in areas of basic need. Free schools ensure we can meet demand for places but also introduce local choice to drive up standards in the areas they are set up. Where free schools are not in areas of basic need they will be located

³¹ National pupil projections: July 2015

where there are currently poor educational standards as ‘challenger’ schools – with the aim of stimulating competition and injecting new capabilities into these areas, something that’s especially important in our toughest communities. Free school providers can be existing high-quality schools and MATs bidding to expand; they can be community groups that want the chance to run the provision on which they rely; or they can be successful educationalists and educational entrepreneurs from elsewhere in the country – spreading great practice to new areas. This is especially important in the Alternative Provision and SEN sectors, where one in six free schools established since 2010 resides.³²

UTCs are giving young people the opportunity to develop technical and professional specialisms and build a rewarding career from them, thanks to the input of university and corporate sponsors. This opportunity should be available more widely and the UTC model should continue to evolve so more young people can benefit from high-quality UTC provision.

6b. Second, the provision of new *schools* is only one part of the story. The majority of the new places needed by 2020 will be created by expanding existing provision, with local authorities working with all types of schools to enable expansion where it is needed. As well as expansion, we continue to maintain our school estate to preserve existing places and ensure children and young people are taught in safe, secure environments. So a vital element of this priority is to ensure the existing stock of places is well-maintained and that the nation’s investment in additional places is deployed as effectively as possible – to maximise the supply of high-quality places where they’re needed.

7. Deliver fair and sustainable funding

7. Deliver fair and sustainable funding

- a. Reform school, high needs, early years and disadvantage funding by introducing fair National Funding Formulae and improve the effectiveness of pupil premium spending
- b. With CLG and BIS, ensure sustainability of funding in children’s services and 16-19 provision
- c. Support all our institutions to improve financial management and efficiency

No pupil should be disadvantaged because their school receives less funding than a school in comparable circumstances. Therefore, it’s vital that government allocates resources fairly and sustainably to where they can do the most good. For too long, this has not been the case.

³² Free schools: open schools and successful applications

Allocating funding fairly is especially important with greater autonomy, and underpins every other part of a school-led system. Indeed, ensuring resources flow to where they're most needed is crucial to many other priorities. We can't hold schools to account for high standards for all pupils (priority 4) if we don't invest in meeting the greater challenges posed by those starting from the lowest base. Nor can we expect our best heads to take on our toughest schools (priority 3) if they're not resourced to turn them around.

Our approach to funding reform is to allocate funding directly to schools on a fair, transparent basis and leave institutions to decide how to achieve greatest value with as few ring-fences and conditions as possible. This priority has three parts:

7a. First, we must undertake an historic and difficult reform of our funding systems to ensure they are fair. The funding received by each of our schools and early years institutions ought to reflect the circumstances of the provider and its children. Funding should be based on the level of challenge, not arbitrary historical factors that in many cases are no longer relevant. The careful, well-planned design and implementation of three new National Funding Formulae – for schools, high needs and early years – is one of our highest reform priorities. These new formulae will not only underpin the financial sustainability of the sectors, but will promote educational excellence everywhere by making better use of the nation's investment. Delivering these changes with sufficient notice, engagement and careful transition will be vital.

It is not acceptable that, currently, a school in one part of the country can receive over 50% more than an identical school, with exactly the same characteristics, elsewhere. Children in under-funded schools are being denied the opportunities of their peers who win the postcode lottery, and that strikes at the heart of the government's social justice agenda.

Funding reform is also vital for our early years agenda. It will ensure we provide fair funding to support the delivery of the 30-hour childcare entitlement and create the conditions to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Implementing new funding formulae will ask the most generously funded to make a greater contribution to the efficiency challenge to support their less-generously funded peers who are least able to do so. We will continue the pupil premium, and improve its effectiveness by encouraging schools and virtual school heads to adopt evidence-based strategies, drawing on guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation.

7b. Our children's services and 16-19 sectors face particularly acute challenges. Funding per full-time 16-19 student in school is now 25% less than in Key Stage 4. This means that, whilst the government was able to go further than the manifesto commitments and protect 16-19 base rate funding at the Spending Review, careful reform of both these sectors (as outlined in priorities 8 and 10) will be necessary to ensure they are financially resilient.

7c. The final part of this priority is to ensure all institutions are able to manage their finances effectively, to make the most of their freedoms and deliver value for money for their children and the taxpayer. This priority commits the DfE to supporting institutions to improve their financial management and efficiency, including through ensuring leaders have the information they need to allocate their resources effectively. Our approach will necessarily be differentiated. For the majority, we will ensure more support and training is available and our regulation and oversight are as light-touch as possible. But we will also intervene more closely in institutions that do not manage public money effectively.

8. Reform 16-19 skills

8. Reform 16-19 skills

- a. With BIS, deliver 3 million high-quality apprenticeship starts
- b. Create clear, high-quality technical and professional routes to employment that are accessible for all and aligned with Britain's economic needs
- c. Reform the provider base to ensure every area is effectively served by a sustainable, resilient and responsive system of schools, Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

The eighth priority is to transform the 16-19 skills system so young people can access high-quality technical and professional education, leading to continued education, training, or skilled employment at 19.

Post-16 education is essential to ensure young people are prepared for adult life. During this time young people will make choices that inform their higher education and employment routes, while continuing to build on the knowledge and skills acquired throughout school.

It equips young people for further study and employment, and particularly helps the lowest attainers progress to employability. Both functions will directly drive the UK's economic growth and productivity in the coming decades. The productivity gains from this phase are significant: improved skills have contributed somewhere between one-tenth and one-quarter to annual UK growth since the 1970s; but a lack of skills accounts for up to 13% of the UK's productivity gap with France, and 29% of our productivity gap with Germany. The OECD estimates that in 2012, nine million working age adults in England struggled with basic quantitative reasoning or had difficulty with simple written information.³³

³³ OECD (2016), Building Skills For All: A Review Of England

Although we have already seen significant reforms in technical and professional education, putting employers in control of apprenticeships, removing 8,000 poor quality qualifications, reducing complexity and increasing choice, there is much further to go this Parliament: transformational reform is needed. Our approach has three elements:

8a. The first strand is to work with BIS to deliver 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. Helping more 16- to 19-year-olds complete their technical and professional education as apprentices working for great employers should boost their competence and accelerate their development of workplace skills as well as their particular technical and professional focus. By ensuring that apprenticeships are a viable and well-respected route to the highest levels of professional competence, we aim to re-shape profoundly the status and effectiveness of England's technical and professional training routes.

8b. Second, we will establish a new set of technical and professional education routes that are as clear and simple to understand as the long-established academic path of A-levels. For too long, 'vocational' studies have been viewed as second best thanks to a confusing proliferation of poorly-designed courses that have let young people down by not guiding them to high-quality destinations. Building on the post-16 reforms of the last Parliament, we will ensure each route is designed to help students meet the level of technical competency required for the occupation concerned – not in the opinion of government or of the training providers, but as judged by the employers themselves. We will focus on outcomes: completion of a route will be certified in a way that provides employers with clear signals of capability – thus having real value in the labour market and being transferrable to other pathways if the young person wants to then pursue an academic route.

We will ensure the funding system is stable, transparent and will incentivise behaviour to support the new system. Part of this will be ensuring that funding sits at the right level, continuing the national funding formula in 16-19, while routing apprenticeship funding directly to employers to purchase the necessary training.

8c. To deliver these new routes, the nation's provider-base must be supported to become more sustainable and resilient over the long-term. It must be responsive to local needs and national economic conditions. So, we will work with local areas to identify the right mix of institutions. The result will be a change in the focus of the existing provider base, bringing it closer to apprenticeship delivery and making it more financially sustainable. This will include moving to fewer, larger, more specialised institutions where appropriate.

At the same time, new structural options – like allowing Sixth Form Colleges to become academies so they can build collaborative partnerships in multi-academy trusts – will help strengthen the 16-19 provider-base. Meanwhile, we will continue to invest in recruiting more teachers for the 16-19 sector and in raising the capability of the existing workforce.

9. Develop early years strategy

9. Develop early years strategy

- a. Extend free childcare to 30 hours for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds
- b. Ensure the market works efficiently and effectively, so it provides *sufficient* places for all parents to access the childcare offers to which they're entitled
- c. Design reforms that increase the *quality* of the early years education and childcare offered across the country, focusing on developing the workforce

Education begins before a child starts school. *Effective* early education is crucial to children's life chances (particularly the most disadvantaged) and to building our national skills base. Those who attend pre-school attain, on average, seven GCSE grades more than those who don't. There is a wealth of evidence showing the difference early education can make to attainment, especially for the most disadvantaged children; the study of Effective Pre-school Primary and Secondary Education showed that it can make the difference between achieving the nationally expected level or falling behind by the end of Key Stage 1.³⁴

This priority – our approach to the early years – broadly seeks to deliver two aims. First, ensuring that children are 'school-ready' by the time they reach primary age – with a particular focus on ensuring our most disadvantaged children receive a high-quality early education from the age of two. And second, supporting hard-working families with the cost of living so they have more employment choices. Free early years provision is a vital part of the support that helps more people, particularly mothers, return to employment once they have had children, or increase the number of hours they are working. Both of these boost national productivity and improve life chances. To meet these aims, this priority has three parts:

9a. In some parts of England, the supply of affordable childcare is more limited than elsewhere, so it can be difficult for families to determine whether the benefits of returning to work will outweigh the cost. We also know the positive impact that time spent in high-quality early education can have. That's why, last Parliament, the government expanded the free early years entitlement to 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds, and why it extended the offer to the 40% most-disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Now, the first strand of this priority is to deliver the further entitlement to 30 hours for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds to support more parents to return to work and increase children's access to high-quality childcare.

³⁴ Study of Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education

9b. As well as delivering the entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare, the second strand is to reform the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall childcare market to ensure it has sufficient *capacity* to deliver all three offers to a high standard. This government is investing an extra £1 billion a year in childcare by 2019-20, including £300 million specifically to increase the hourly rate paid to providers and a new fairer funding allocation so that all providers receive a sustainable rate of funding. However, our Review of the Costs of Childcare found that, while many high-quality settings operate efficiently, this is not always the case. We will therefore develop policies that better ensure the childcare market functions more efficiently and effectively across the country.

9c. One of the most important drivers of early years outcomes is the quality of the workforce. The third strand of this priority is to boost the *quality* of provision, to better prepare children to be school-ready, wherever they live. Whilst 85% of settings are rated by Ofsted as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’,³⁵ we must take the opportunity to continue to increase standards by developing and delivering our Early Years Workforce Strategy. This seeks to improve career progression and CPD in the sector to attract and retain quality staff.

10. Strengthen children’s social care

10. Strengthen children’s social care

- a. Attract talented individuals, improve training and introduce clear professional standards to create a stronger social work profession
- b. Build a culture of excellence in children’s services by encouraging innovative, evidence-led delivery practices and strengthening governance and accountability
- c. Support reforms to local delivery arrangements and intervene to tackle failure through new independent social care trusts, combined authority arrangements and City Deals
- d. Reform adoption services, including rolling out new regional agencies, to find loving homes for vulnerable children promptly and improve support for children in care

Our reforms to children’s social care are some of the most important this government will attempt over the next five years. High-calibre social care has the ability not just to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children but to transform them completely. Just as with schools, these reforms strive to develop a children’s social care system that creates the right environment for excellent practice, is made up of skilled workers, and is

³⁵ Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 August 2015

able to adapt and respond to local need.³⁶ Of course, that system doesn't work in isolation: children supported by social care often have complex needs, so this priority closely aligns with our priority to *support and protect vulnerable children* (priority 11). And their chances will be helped or hindered by the quality of education they receive throughout their 2-19 education – to which priorities 1 to 9 all contribute. The priority has four parts:

10a. Child and family social workers hold the most significant responsibility for keeping children safe, and making the right decisions about their futures. That is why ensuring the highest possible standards for this profession is our first priority: bringing talented people into the profession, and giving them the right knowledge and skills for their challenging, rewarding work. Too often, social work education and training does not adequately prepare newly qualified social workers.³⁷ So, programmes like Frontline and Step Up are being expanded to attract the best and brightest into social work, and we are expanding Teaching Partnerships to ensure children's social workers qualify with the right expertise. The Chief Social Worker's Knowledge and Skills Statements already set out clearly what social workers at every level are expected to know and do; now we will establish a system for creating and maintaining this professional excellence. To help implement all these reforms, we are setting up a new regulatory body to ensure quality in education, training and practice of social work.

10b. The second strand is to ensure that the right systems and governance are in place to create an environment for excellent practice and where innovation flourishes. A great workforce needs to be supported by a system that can make best use of their skills. Professor Munro's review in 2011 identified that social workers' actions were too often driven by process and compliance.³⁸ To change this, we are encouraging bold approaches to practice based on an understanding of what 'excellence' looks like; for example, through continuing to fund the Innovation Programme to support fresh and effective approaches to children's social care, establishing a 'What Works Centre' to share best practice among social workers, and by backing the best and most innovative local areas to lead the way through our Partners in Practice programme. This practice needs to be set within an intelligent regulatory framework so that children are kept safe, but social workers are not overburdened with bureaucracy. Thus, the DfE will strengthen and streamline governance and accountability locally and nationally.

10c. The third strand is to ensure that children's services are being delivered effectively. This will mean using evidence to highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the system, and developing innovative new organisational models with the potential to improve services radically – creating a more dynamic and diverse range of provision for children's

³⁶ For more information on our work in this area, please see [children's social care: a vision for change](#) (January 2016)

³⁷ Sir Martin Narey (Feb 2014) ; David Croisdale-Appleby (Feb 2014)

³⁸ Professor Munro, *Collection: Munro review reports* (October 2010 – May 2012)

social care. Where local authorities (LAs) are providing excellent services, they will be given the opportunity to share and expand them. Where their services are not good, though – almost 24% of LAs inspected between November 2013 and March 2015 were rated as ‘inadequate’³⁹ – government is supporting alternative local delivery arrangements. For instance, collaborative commissioning or delivery models, devolution at the local level through City Deals and new combined authorities, and the emergence of not-for-profit children’s social care organisations all provide great opportunities to innovate and improve how children’s services are run. So, only the best providers will deliver children’s services, and failure will be tackled swiftly, creating a more effective, high-quality and financially-efficient system.

10d. Where children cannot be provided with the safety and security they need by their birth parents, we have a responsibility to provide high-quality services, relentlessly focussed on achieving the best possible outcomes for looked-after children and care leavers, in keeping with our duty as their corporate parent. We are focused on improving provision and outcomes for children in care; we are developing a comprehensive strategy to support care leavers; and new adoption agencies and changes to legislation will ease the process of placing children with adoptive families. This will ensure the right option is provided for each child and that the support offered significantly improves these children’s life chances.

11. Support and protect vulnerable children

11. Support and protect vulnerable children

- a. Run a proactive, inquisitive counter-extremism function and work with the Home Office and other agencies to protect children from radicalisation
- b. Support schools to help children and young people build good mental health and access support where they need it
- c. Embed current reforms and review our strategy to improve special educational needs and disabilities provision – to empower parents and children and improve educational outcomes
- d. Implement reforms to the alternative provision system to improve quality and outcomes for pupils

³⁹ Children’s social care data in England

In accordance with our principle of setting high expectations for every child, not only is it the government's duty to *protect* vulnerable children but also to provide the required *support* to help them reach their potential.

This priority is not an exhaustive list of the government's efforts in this area. Rather, it sets out four areas of particular focus for this Parliament; areas that should make a big difference to children whose needs are too often overlooked. This priority aligns closely with our reforms to children's social care (priority 10) which will ensure that children supported by social care are kept safe and well. Supporting schools to develop children's character (priority 12a) will also particularly help vulnerable children develop the resilience and emotional tools they need to get on in life.

11a. One of the government's highest priorities is to bring the country together, integrating communities and avoiding the spread of ideologies hostile to fundamental British values. Contributing to this, one of the DfE's most important roles is to ensure the systems are in place to keep children safe. Sadly, this now extends to protecting children from extremist ideologies as well as safeguarding them from more conventional forms of abuse. Education must never be an excuse to indoctrinate. The DfE's approach to countering extremism has a three-pronged approach. First, to take action against individuals who promote extremist views. Second, to support schools and children's services to prevent children being drawn into terrorism. And third, to ensure young people are equipped with the intellectual and emotional capability to resist extremist views. The 'Educate Against Hate' website that was recently launched is just one example of how the DfE is collaborating with the Home Office, other agencies and charities to tackle this problem. We have also brought forward proposals to regulate out-of-school education settings to ensure that children are taught in safe environments and not exposed to hateful and extremist views that undermine British values.

11b. Mental health problems can have a real impact on children's attainment and life chances.⁴⁰ At any one time, three pupils in an average class of 30 are suffering from a mental illness.⁴¹ So that all children can flourish, the DfE will support schools to promote good mental wellbeing in children to provide a supportive environment for those experiencing problems and to secure access to more specialist help for those who need it. We will continue to invest in projects and resources that build on evidence-informed practice to help schools decide what support will be most effective for their pupils; to promote awareness campaigns; and to work closely with Department of Health and NHS England to ensure that the additional £1.4 billion being invested in children and young people's mental health during this Parliament helps as many children as possible.

⁴⁰ 44% of pupils with an emotional disorder were behind in their intellectual development, with 23% being two or more years behind, compared to 24% and 9% of other children. Green et al (2004), Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain

⁴¹ Department for Health (2015), Future in Mind

11c. LAs are working to embed the historic SEND reforms from the last Parliament, but there is more to be done to improve educational outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND. There is a very wide spectrum of types and scale of need, but taken together, outcomes are generally poor across measures of attainment, progress, absence, exclusions and destinations. The continued focus on joined-up Education Health and Care (EHC) plans for every child who needs one will help provide support for children and young people with more complex needs. But there is a far broader group who have SEND but not a statutory plan – about three or four in an average-sized mainstream school class.⁴² This priority will therefore see the DfE review its SEND strategy over the coming months, to establish what more can be done to improve outcomes and experiences for all children with SEND.

11d. When children cannot be educated in mainstream provision, for behavioural or other reasons, high-quality alternative provision should be available. These placements should maximise young people’s progression and life chances – as some of the most challenging parts of the wider system, they should be beacons of the *very best* practice. Too often, though, outcomes in alternative provision are poor because pupils’ education is not well-planned, the curriculum and teaching are less rigorous than the mainstream and weak lines of accountability mean the needs of pupils are not central to decision-making. So we are outlining a new strategy and set of reforms to alternative provision, to address these issues.

12. Build character and resilience

12. Build character and resilience

- a. Support schools to develop pupils into well-rounded, confident, happy and resilient individuals to boost their academic attainment, employability and ability to engage in society as active citizens
- b. Facilitate access to high-quality, inspirational careers support and work experience

Education should prepare children for adult life, giving them the skills and character traits they need to succeed academically, have a fulfilling career, and make a positive contribution to British society. There is a strong correlation between character traits like self-control and social skills, and a wide range of positive life outcomes, including higher

⁴² Special educational needs in England: January 2015

wages.⁴³ Moreover, early employer engagement, such as work experience, can increase pupils' motivation and help some pupils improve their examination results.⁴⁴

Thus this priority sits at the heart of achieving our goal that all children are prepared for adult life, while making an important contribution to securing educational excellence for every child. It has two strands:

12a. Whilst hard to codify, we can all recognise the attitudes, traits and values that are so sought by employers, parents and educators: persistence, integrity, curiosity, resourcefulness and so on. These character traits not only open doors to employment and social opportunities but tend to underpin academic success and young people's happiness and wellbeing as well. The country's leading state and independent schools demonstrate how a concerted focus on instilling these kinds of character traits *throughout* school life is the most effective model – and the DfE has no intention of mandating how they should go about this. But this priority does ask government to do more to support the sector to share resources and details of what works, so all schools can expand the range of evidence-based character-building opportunities they provide to their pupils.

12b. In addition, we will continue to facilitate access to excellent careers provision and employer engagement with schools. We know that successful careers advice has an impact on a child's transition to work,⁴⁵ and that interaction with the world of work not only helps with understanding of the workplace, it can affect university and employment applications. So it is important that schools are able to provide a flexible, appropriate programme to all children. The recently established Careers & Enterprise Company will help broker relationships between employers, schools and colleges to ensure that young people aged 12-18 get the inspiration and guidance they need to be prepared for adult working life. We have funded the Careers & Enterprise Company's work, which includes a £5 million Investment Fund to improve support in cold spots, the Enterprise Adviser Network to provide support and advice directly to schools, in addition to developing and disseminating research on what works, to help schools, colleges and employers to maximise their impact.

⁴³ Demos (2011), *Forgotten Half*; Goodman, Joshi, Nasim & Tyler (2015), Social and emotional skills in childhood and their long-term effects on adult life, *Institute of Education*

⁴⁴ Mann, A (2012), *Work Experience: Impact and Delivery – Insights from the Evidence*.

⁴⁵ Inter-Ed (2004), *Career Goals and Educational Attainment. What is the link?* Glasgow. Careers Scotland

Implementation and review

This summary of the DfE's strategy sets out the starting point for our ambitious programme of work over the coming years.

Over the coming months we'll be setting out our approach to each of our priorities in more detail – engaging closely with the relevant sectors on major changes. We will continue to develop specific policies that will deliver these priorities whilst working with each sector to ensure every part of the strategy can be implemented as effectively as possible.

It's important that the public understands our intended direction of travel and is able to hold us to our commitments. So, our goals and the way we're measuring our progress against them are published on GOV.UK.

As we review these priorities over the course of the Parliament, we will continue to work with stakeholders, including the research and academic communities, to develop and draw on world-class analysis and research, so we can continue to improve our evidence base.

Conclusion

This summary of the DfE's strategy sets out the intended direction for the education and children's social care systems over the remainder of this Parliament. We hope that by setting out a coherent, end-to-end delivery programme, professionals in each sector are better able to understand where their work fits and plan ahead in line with the government's direction-of-travel. In doing so, we hope to set up the nation better to work together across early years, schools, 16-19 and children's services to maximise our progress toward achieving **safety and wellbeing** for all children, **educational excellence everywhere**, and young people who are **prepared for adult life**.



Department
for Education

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