

Education Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 15 March 2011

Electoral Division affected: All

**Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" and the
Education Bill 2010-11**
(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

The report seeks to provide members with an overview of the Schools White Paper and subsequent Education Bill 2010-11.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree:

- (a) to note the report
- (b) to identify any further reports it may wish to receive on these matters

Background and Advice

The White Paper was published in November 2010. The subsequent Education Bill received its second reading in the Commons on 8th February 2011.

Some commitments within the Bill have already been put into practice (e.g. the introduction of new 'floor standards' for schools and the 'English Baccalaureate' measure and the general publication of schools' financial information).

The White Paper sets out actions under six areas, summarised under A to F below and offered in more detail in Appendix 'A'.

A: Teaching and Leadership

This section proposed changes to the recruitment, training and regulation of the teaching profession. This includes the expansion of 'school to school' support through the creation of 'Teaching Schools' and a review of reward and capability procedures. This section also suggests the removal of 'unnecessary statutory duties' on schools and LAs, such as the duty to co-operate with Children's trusts, the

requirement to produce a Children and Young People's Plan and the replacement of the existing schools Financial Management Standard (FMSiS).

B: Behaviour

This section proposes to increase the powers of teachers and schools to discipline pupils, to protect teachers from malicious allegations and to reform exclusions procedures (e.g. removing the power of a review panel to require the re-admission of a pupil, whilst making schools responsible for the subsequent provision for and performance of the pupil). There is also a commitment, over time, to transfer the funding for alternative provision for excluded pupils from the LA to schools in order to purchase or commission provision from any provider (including LAs or free schools). It should be noted that the LA has submitted an expression of interest to the Department for Education around being involved in pilot activity around the management of behaviour and excluded pupils in conjunction with groups of schools.

C: Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications

This section sets out actions intended to ensure a robust examination system which ensures that pupils achieve the highest international standards. The national curricula for the Early Years, primary and secondary schools are under review in order to reduce prescription and focus more strongly on core subject knowledge (applying only to LA maintained schools). The examinations system will ensure rigorous testing at three key points: introducing a new reading test at age 6 alongside examinations at the end of primary and secondary education. GCSE and 'A' level qualifications will be reviewed to ensure academic rigour and the 'English Baccalaureate' will be introduced to recognise those students achieving good passes in a defined set of five subjects. Vocational qualifications are under review to ensure they prepare school leavers adequately for higher education. The age for participation in education and training will be raised to 18 by 2015.

D: The New School System

This section deals with the acceleration of the Academies programme and proposes how school improvement will be supported, including for schools causing concern. Any school well above the 'floor standard' will be free to convert to Academy status, including special schools and primary schools; conversion to an Academy is the preferred solution for any school remaining below the floor standard or otherwise causing concern. There will be a presumption that any new school within a LA will be an Academy or Free School and the Secretary of State will gain increased powers to direct school closure or conversion to an Academy. The LA role in supporting schools causing concern is outlined, facilitating school to school support to bring about rapid improvement. LAs remain champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils, co-ordinating admissions and ensuring high quality school places. LAs are also expected to develop their own school improvement strategies, reflecting local needs and marketing school improvement services beyond their local boundaries.

E: Accountability

Proposals in this section are intended to confirm that schools are responsible for their own improvement, with accountability shifting from LAs to parents and local communities. Increased data about the performance, context and expenditure of schools will be placed in the public domain. The Ofsted school inspection framework will be reviewed to focus more strongly on the key business of schools, retaining a focus on different pupil groups and the most vulnerable pupils. Strong schools will be exempted from routine inspection, whilst those deemed to have significant weaknesses will be given shorter timescales in which to improve. A new 'floor standard' has been introduced for primary and secondary schools at a higher level than the previous 'floor targets', rising over time and including Science in the secondary phase in the near future. The composition and focus of school governing bodies will be reviewed (to include a minimum of two parents and the headteacher, alongside foundation governors where appropriate).

F: School Improvement

This section revisits school improvement, emphasising that schools are responsible for their own improvement and are free to find support as they see fit; removing the requirement for statutory targets and School Improvement Partners. LAs and schools will be able to access a National Endowment Fund in order to support schools causing concern and a financial collaboration incentive will be available to facilitate school to school support.

G: School Funding

A financial 'pupil premium' will be allocated to schools based on the numbers of the poorest pupils on their roll. A national funding formula will be developed, with the new Education Funding Agency (EFA) directly funding Academies, Free Schools, 16-19 provision and distributing resources to LAs to pass to maintained schools. Regulations associated with clawback and capital finding will be reviewed, along with the funding of high-cost provision for pupils with SEN and disabilities; all with the aim of devolving the maximum funding to schools.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has implications for the local authority's support for school improvement, including elements of marketed universal support and the central responsibility to support schools causing concern. The acceleration of the Academies programme and the introduction of Free Schools also have implications for future school organisation and the commissioning of school places. Changes to the funding arrangements for schools will also have implications for LA systems and processes.

Risk management

As this report is for the information of the Committee there are no identified risks at this stage.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
"The Importance of Teaching" Schools White Paper	November 2010	DfE website
Education Bill 2010-11	From January 2011 onwards	House of Commons website

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A