

## DfE White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere

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### Summary

The DfE has published a White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, outlining the Government's plans 'to transform England's schools and build on progress that has already been made'. It sets out seven elements to underpin its aims:

- great teachers – everywhere they're needed (including reform of initial teacher training delivery and content; a new accreditation system to replace qualified teacher status; and a new College of Teaching)
- great leaders running our schools and at the heart of our system – with more power given to the best school and system leaders (with a focus on building capacity in the areas that need it most; a new National Professional Qualification; incentives to attract the best leaders to challenging areas; and a National Teaching Service to support strong middle leaders to move to challenging areas)
- a school-led system with every school an academy (with the Government taking powers to direct all schools to become academies by the end of 2020 with all schools becoming academies by 2022; 'most schools in dynamic MATs' [multi-academy trusts]; and a clearly defined role for local authorities focused on ensuring every child has a school place, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and acting as champions for pupils and parents)
- preventing underperformance and helping schools go from good to great (strengthening the infrastructure that supports all schools and their leaders to collaborate effectively, with a focus on areas of chronic, persistent underperformance)
- high expectations and a world-leading curriculum for all ('establishing the national curriculum as an ambitious benchmark which autonomous academies can use...'; embedding reforms to GCSEs and A levels and ensuring that the vast majority of pupils study the English Baccalaureate; and meeting the needs of previously neglected groups of children)
- fair, stretching accountability, ambitious for every child (with an emphasis on the progress of pupils and their destinations; inspection increasingly focused on underperformance, and Ofsted consulting on removal of separate graded judgements on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to help clarify that the focus of inspection is on outcomes; and new performance tables for multi-academy trusts - MATs)
- the right resources in the right hands (including a national funding formula for schools, weighted by the level of challenge).

## Overview

A period of speculation about further government reform of the school system was brought to a head by the (well trailed) announcement in the Chancellor's 2016 Budget speech that he was 'providing extra funding so that by 2020 every primary and secondary school in England will be, or be in the process of becoming, an academy'. The White Paper, [Educational excellence everywhere](#) (Cm 9230), was published the following morning. (The Education and Adoption Act, under which all inadequate schools will become sponsored academies, received Royal Assent on Budget Day.)

It comprises eight chapters, summarised below: the first is an overview of the Government's vision, followed by seven chapters covering the key elements which underpin the vision and aims. The White Paper is accompanied by a document describing the [DfE strategy 2015-2020](#), an [impact assessment](#) and a [paper](#) describing the methodology for defining 'achieving excellence areas'. At the same time, [letters](#) were sent to DCSs and academy trust chairs (by the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under Secretary respectively), introducing the white paper and outlining the Government's expectations.

## Briefing in full

### Chapter 1: Our vision for educational excellence everywhere

'Education is at the heart of this government's agenda... the better educated our society, the fairer, more cohesive, productive and innovative it can be. This is vital to Britain's position in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.'

The paper sets out a range of recent improvements in education outcomes, stresses the importance of good financial management to delivering educational excellence, and draws attention to the extent to which 'the school-led system is becoming a reality'. But it highlights that this progress isn't felt everywhere, with poor children generally having worse educational outcomes at every stage, and some areas of chronic underperformance, exacerbated by a lack of capacity to improve and inability to access the key ingredients to sustain improvement: high quality teachers, leaders, system leaders and sponsors.

The goal of delivering excellence everywhere is made up of two parts: setting high expectations for all children, and a focus on intensively tackling areas of the country that have lagged behind for too long. The DfE's overarching strategy is set out in an Annex, and a fuller statement of the strategy is published separately – with more detail about plans to protect children's safety and promote their wellbeing, and to prepare young people for adult life, to be published later this year.

The white paper sets out the Government's approach: 'putting the best leaders at the heart of the school system, with the support to thrive; recruiting and developing great teachers wherever they are needed; setting high expectations for all – supported by fair, stretching accountability measures; and enabling pupils, parents, and communities to demand more from their schools... The system will respond to performance, extending the reach of the most successful leaders and acting promptly to reduce the influence of those who are not delivering for our children.'

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The paper promises to do more to set leaders up for success, particularly in areas of greatest need. 'We must avoid the situation where, over the next five years, the strong get stronger and the weak fall even further behind.'

## Chapter 2: Great teachers - everywhere they're needed

Having already given schools freedom to lead on recruiting, training and developing teachers, and given leaders discretion over pay to reward their most effective staff, the Government will:

- help schools to ensure that sufficient teachers are recruited wherever needed, and build a diverse workforce, with more opportunities for flexible working through part-time work and job sharing
  - teacher recruitment is becoming difficult as competition for the best graduates increases, more teachers are needed as pupil numbers grow, and demand for teachers in particular subjects increases; the paper outlines a number of responses
- strengthen university and school-led training, and increase the rigour of initial teacher training (ITT) content, with more focus on subject knowledge and evidence-based practice
  - following the 2014 independent review of ITT, groups are working on ITT core content and how well ITT prepares teachers for behaviour management, and the Teaching Schools Council is developing a new standard for ITT mentors; all three groups will publish reports in the coming months
- continue to move towards an increasingly school-led ITT system which recruits enough great teachers in every part of the country (currently, as a map shows, access to ITT provision varies widely across the country)
- introduce new quality criteria for ITT providers and allocate training places accordingly
- replace Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for new teachers with a stronger, more challenging accreditation based on classroom effectiveness 'as judged by great schools'
  - decisions on teacher accreditation, based on proficiency (including subject knowledge) demonstrated over a sustained period in the classroom, 'will be for schools and headteachers'; this will also enable experts from other fields to gain accreditation
  - 'academy headteachers will continue to have the flexibility to determine what requirements they make of any potential teacher for employment or promotion'
  - detailed proposals for replacing QTS will be published shortly
- ensure that teachers are encouraged to work where they are most needed, including through the National Teaching Service, which will place up to 1,500 high-performing and middle leaders into underperforming schools by 2020
- support teachers to develop their skills through evidence-based continuing professional development (CPD) and introduce a new Standard for Teachers' Professional Development, due to be published in spring 2016
- support the establishment of an independent College of Teaching, due to launch in 2016, and of a new, peer-reviewed British education journal (playing a similar role to the British Medical Journal); and continue to work in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation, which will have its remit expanded to support evidence-based teaching, character education and preventing poor outcomes post-16.

## Chapter 3: great leaders running our schools and at the heart of our system

The Government will support the school-led system to better develop and train the next generation of school and system leaders, supported by highly skilled governing boards, and act to build capacity where it is most needed. It will:

- encourage more leadership development training to be delivered by successful schools – including teaching school alliances and MATs
- convene experts to redesign voluntary, world class National Professional Qualifications to prepare leaders more effectively for the full range of leadership roles in the new system
- rebalance incentives, so that great leaders are not discouraged from working in challenging schools
  - there will be a greater emphasis on progress in the accountability system, so schools gain credit for pupils' achievements even if they start from a low base
  - 'improvement periods' will be introduced, so that where a school is judged to require improvement and a new headteacher is recruited to lead that improvement, the school will not face re-inspection until around 30 months after the previous inspection
- introduce the new National Teaching Service (NTS) to support elite teachers and strong middle leaders to move to work in some of the nation's most challenging areas; they will receive a package of support and a clear path to promotion. A pilot will start in the north-west in September 2016 with up to 100 participants
- launch an Excellence in Leadership Fund for the best MATs and other providers to develop innovative ideas to tackle significant leadership challenges in areas where great leaders are most needed
- support schools to develop a strong and diverse pipeline of great school and system leaders, funding activity aimed at groups who are under-represented in leadership positions (including women, people from black and minority ethnic [BME] backgrounds and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender [LGBT] teachers)
- create stronger expectations on governing boards to fill skills gaps, including through training, with help to recruit skilled people; develop a new competency framework for governance in different contexts; no longer require academy trusts to reserve places for elected parent on governing boards; and establish a database of everyone involved in governance. Legislation is planned to enable unsuitable people to be barred as governors of maintained schools (as can already be done in academies and independent schools)
  - 'the growth of MATs will improve the quality of governance – meaning that the best governing boards will take responsibility for more schools. As fewer, more highly skilled boards take more strategic oversight of the trust's schools, MAT boards will increasingly use professionals to hold individual school-level heads to account for educational standards and the professional management of the school, allowing school level governing boards to focus on understanding and championing the needs of pupils, parents and the wider local community.'

## Chapter 4: A school-led system with every school an academy, empowered pupils, parents and communities and a clearly defined role for local government

'By the end of 2020, all schools will be academies or in the process of becoming academies; by the end of 2022 local authorities [LAs] will no longer maintain schools. This change will help us to empower communities, putting children and parents first and clearly defining the role of local government.' The Government will:

- continue to encourage high performing schools to apply to become academies by 2020
- implement measures in the Education and Adoption Act so that all inadequate schools become sponsored academies and coasting schools are tackled
- take powers to direct schools to become academies in underperforming LA areas or where the LA no longer has the capacity to maintain its schools, or where schools have not yet started the process of becoming an academy by 2020
  - it is proposed that LAs will have a new duty to facilitate the process of all maintained schools becoming academies
  - it is expected that some individuals will leave LAs to set up new academy trusts or join existing ones
- build sponsor capacity, speed up the process of conversion to academy status, and work with the churches and faith groups to support church and faith schools to become academies
  - to ensure that land issues do not cause delays, land held by LAs for community schools which convert to academies will transfer to the Secretary of State, who will grant a lease to the academy trust; steps will be taken to ensure the education estate is safeguarded for future provision and that the existing school estate can be used more easily for new schools and expansions where applicable
  - where a school converts to academy status, the government will not take ownership of any land owned either by the schools themselves or by any charitable trust; however, the ability for maintained schools to convert to foundation status will be removed
- promote greater collaboration between schools, particularly through MATs; it is expected most schools will join MATs as they become academies and that many existing single academy trusts (SATs) will set up or join MATs
  - the DfE will publish 'design principles' setting out what is known about successful MATs
  - RSCs will have an important role encouraging high performing schools to extend their influence and recruiting and growing MATs in their region
- 'ensure that the future school system is dynamic, responding to success and failure, and that RSCs [Regional School Commissioners] intervene promptly where academies or MATs are underperforming'
  - where academies are underperforming, RSCs will intervene promptly
  - where MATs are on track to deal with underperformance, they should be left to do so; 'the default approach to tackling chronic underperformance will continue to be to broker the school into a high-performing MAT'
  - where a MAT as a whole is underperforming, RSCs should be able to set schools free to join other MATs or, ultimately, to wind up the underperforming MAT altogether



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- consideration will be given to how parents at individual schools might be able to petition RSCs for their school to move to another MAT in the face of underperformance
- 'build on the success of the free school programme to open 500 new schools by 2020'
  - these will meet the need for more school places in areas of basic need 'and [ensure] our school system offers greater choice, innovation and competition in areas where educational standards are currently lower than they should be or where parents and the local community want a new or better school'
  - to ensure sufficient new schools can be established where they are needed, we will continue to work with local authorities and other public sector bodies to secure sites for new free schools and introduce measures which will enable the Secretary of State to require the use of local authority land for new free schools, as well as clarifying and strengthening how the free school presumption works
  - University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are a type of free school, and the programme will receive further support to expand
- engage MATs, sponsors, academies, dioceses and the wider schools sector to create a legal framework that is fit for purpose for the long term
- help parents to support their child's education and navigate the schools system
  - a new Parent Portal, to be launched in 2017, will set out clearly the things that parents need to know about schools, which will help them support their child and strengthen parental choice; 'it will give parents the information they need to set high expectations and demand more of their children... [and] highlight the critical and respected role of the teacher, and set expectations for parent-teacher interactions'
  - the portal will work alongside a new performance table website, where it will be easier to compare schools across a range of key measures; Ofsted will continue to provide in-depth information on individual schools' performance
- ensure school complaints and admissions are clear and fair for parents and children
  - the DfE will provide guidance on handling complaints to help a common approach for all schools and MATs; where procedures fail, it will be easier to escalate complaints to DfE and beyond to a public service ombudsman
  - changes to make it easier for parents to navigate the admissions system will include streamlining the functions of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, so that objections to admission arrangements are resolved more quickly, and relaxing restrictions on school sixth form admissions by removing them from the Code; views will be sought on requiring LAs to coordinate in-year admissions, and possibly requiring LAs to handle the administration of the independent admission appeals function
- define the role of LAs in education: LAs will step back from maintaining schools and school improvement
  - legislation will change LAs' powers and duties, and their responsibilities will diminish as each school in their area becomes an academy
  - in future LAs' duties will be focused on three areas: ensuring every child has a school place (ensuring that there are sufficient school, special school and alternative provision places to meet demand), for which government will continue to provide funding; that the needs of all pupils are met (including identifying, assessing and making provision for children with special educational needs and disability and looked after children; promoting school attendance and tackling persistent absence; ensuring that alternative provision is available for pupils excluded from school or

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otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school; leading on safeguarding responsibilities for all children; and supporting vulnerable children, as set out in chapter 6); and championing parents and the local community (listening to and promoting their needs; supporting parents through a continuing role in admissions; providing support to navigate the local SEND arrangements; and championing high standards locally for all pupils – including, where necessary, calling for action from the RSC to tackle underperformance)

- review the responsibility of LAs in relation to children, including the implications for the roles of the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children in light of the policy changes set out in this white paper.

## Chapter 5: Preventing underperformance and helping schools go from good to great: school-led improvement with scaffolding and support where it’s needed

To strengthen the system and enable it to deliver excellence everywhere, extra support will be provided to stimulate activity in areas of the country where schools are falling behind, including:

- enable the best leaders to play a wider role by transferring responsibility for school improvement from LAs to school and system leaders to spread expertise and best practice
  - the best schools will be encouraged to form and manage MATs and the number of teaching schools and national leaders of education (NLEs) will be increased to create a comprehensive national network; legislation will place responsibility for school improvement ‘with the best leaders and the best schools’
- ensure all schools in all areas can access support, collaboration and best practice through full coverage of system leaders across the country
- improve how system leaders (teaching schools and NLEs) are designated through a more sophisticated approach based on timely and accurate data rather than relying heavily on Ofsted judgements
- ensure that the work of system leaders is focused, purposeful and evidence-based, with the right incentives and brokerage in place to encourage them to work with vulnerable schools
- provide targeted funding for system leaders to build capacity through school-to-school support, and for RSCs to intervene in failing and coasting schools
- ensure there are enough strong academy sponsors available where they are needed, and build sponsor capacity for the long term
  - new sponsors will be recruited, including high-performing schools, and more sponsors and MATs will be encouraged to expand; it is expected that some LA staff will leave to set up trusts and become sponsors
- place a sharp new focus on ‘Achieving Excellence Areas’ (where too few children have access to a good school and there are insufficient high quality teachers, leaders, system leaders and sponsors)
  - programmes, starting with the National Teaching Service, will be targeted at these areas – beginning with pilots in 2016 and rolling out the approach more widely from September 2017
  - a separate paper outlines the methodological approach, data sources and issues to establish a measure to identify these areas.

## Chapter 6: High expectations and a world-leading curriculum for all

In order that every child, wherever they live and whatever their background or needs, can receive a 21<sup>st</sup> century education that equips them with the knowledge and character necessary for success in modern Britain, the government will:

- continue to equip schools to embed a knowledge-based curriculum as the cornerstone of an excellent, academically rigorous education to age 16 – establishing the national curriculum as an ambitious benchmark that autonomous academies can use and improve
- increase support for teachers to deliver this curriculum effectively, including encouragement for greater use of evidence-based teaching materials
- reform primary assessment to help ensure that every child leaves primary school with the essential building blocks to secondary
- continue to embed reforms to assessment and qualifications, including more rigorous GCSEs and A levels, with an expectation that the vast majority of pupils will study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)
- ensure a knowledge-based curriculum is complemented by development of the character traits and fundamental British values that will help children succeed, with funding to make it easier for 25% of secondary schools to extend their school day to include a wider range of activities such as sport, arts and debating
  - this funding will be prioritised for those schools whose pupils will benefit the most
  - the National Citizen Service will be expanded, and it will be expected that schools will give every pupil the opportunity to take part
  - DfE will work with a group of leading headteachers and practitioners to produce an action plan for improving personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) provision
- publish a strategy for improved careers provision for young people and further support The Careers & Enterprise Company
- help schools provide the right support for children of all abilities, and those with additional needs – including looked-after children, and those with special educational needs and disability
- reform the alternative provision (AP) system so that mainstream schools remain accountable for the education of pupils in AP and are responsible for commissioning high quality provision.

## Chapter 7: Fair, stretching accountability, ambitious for every child

Great teachers and leaders are being backed to drive up standards in schools, so fair, robust, ambitious accountability is vital to monitor those standards, identify schools and areas that need extra support, and ensure children receive the education they deserve. The government will:

- embed reforms to primary, secondary and 16-19 accountability that focus on the progress of all pupils, and their destinations
  - new accountability measures in primary and secondary schools from 2016 focus on pupils' progress as well as performance, so schools' success will not be judged (as is too often the case at present) on the basis of their intake
- work with Ofsted to ensure inspection is fair and increasingly focused on underperformance; inspection of schools graded Good or Outstanding will be increasingly



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proportionate to a transparent assessment of risk, and Ofsted will consult on removing the separate graded judgements on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- to ensure the accountability system is not a disincentive to taking on the leadership of a challenging school, an ‘improvement period’ will allow time for improvement when a school is taken over as part of a planned intervention
  - when a poorly performing maintained school is replaced by a sponsored academy or a new sponsor is needed to drive improvement in an academy, the school will not normally face inspection until its third year of operation; where a school is judged to require improvement and a new headteacher takes over its leadership, the school will not normally face re-inspection for around 30 months, unless the head wants an earlier visit
- launch new accountability measures for MATs, publishing MAT performance tables in addition to inspection and performance data at individual school level
- publish improved and more accessible school performance data to inform school choice and help parents and governing boards to hold schools to account
- ensure RSCs are able to commission support and intervention for schools identified as underperforming; Headteacher Boards will provide an important check and balance for academy leaders to scrutinise and challenge decisions of RSCs
  - under the Education and Adoption Act, RSCs will take on new, strengthened powers of intervention in maintained schools, ensuring a consistent approach to all underperforming schools
  - ‘as we move to a system where every school is an academy, we will ensure that local communities are provided with the information they need to understand and engage with the work of RSCs. We will also set out a clearer process for how the local community can get in touch and raise concerns about RSC decisions’.

## Chapter 8: The right resources in the right hands: investing every penny where it can do the most good

The government wants fairer and clearer funding of schools, based on the needs and characteristics of pupils and the best use of funds. It will:

- introduce new, fair national funding formulae for schools, and for allocating high needs funding to LAs for special educational needs and alternative provision (DfE is currently consulting on proposals – see ‘Related briefings’)
- improve the effectiveness of pupil premium spending by encouraging schools to adopt evidence-based strategies, drawing on evidence from the EEF
- support schools to improve their financial health and efficiency through tools, guidance and direct support such as training and better national frameworks for procurement
- improve and maintain the school estate to ensure that those responsible for school buildings get a fair share of funding and have the right incentives to make effective use of the school estate.

## Letter to DCSs from the Secretary of State

In addition to outlining the main features of the White Paper, the Secretary of State’s letter to DCSs also says:

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'We are implementing measures in the new Education and Adoption Act so that all inadequate schools become sponsored academies and coasting schools are tackled for the first time. The Act received Royal Assent yesterday and we will be issuing, statutory Schools Causing Concern guidance to provide clarity on local authorities' immediate powers and duties in respect of these schools. We also want all other schools to put forward applications to become academies. We expect most schools will form or join MATs so proven educational models can be scaled and the best leaders can extend their influence by running multiple schools.

'Local authorities have a key role in supporting this vision and sharing it with maintained schools in their area. We will expect local authorities to facilitate the conversion of maintained schools into academies, and play an active part with schools and diocese, where relevant, in developing and shaping the system. Regional Schools Commissioners, supported by their head teacher boards, will consider and agree these arrangements on behalf of the Secretary of State. ...

'The move to a system where all schools are academies clearly means that the role of local authorities will change. As responsibilities related to maintaining schools will fall away, local authorities will retain very important functions in support of the school system – in ensuring every child has a school place, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and acting as champions for all parents and families. Local authorities' core functions around social care, economic development, housing and planning will also mean they have a continuing interest in the success of local schools.

'In the light of these changes, we will also be reviewing the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to children, including the implications for the roles of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children.'

## Comment

This White Paper signals the end of local government's role in maintaining schools. In a recent briefing on Ofsted inspection of school improvement work (see 'Related briefings') – which highlighted major shortcomings in the work of several large MATs, as well as some local authorities – we commented on the apparent shift of interest from LA activity to that of MATs "reflecting the Government's ambition for the school system". The account of how the system will develop in the future is far stronger on what it says will happen than it is on how many of the changes will be brought about. A lot of the challenges described are far from new, and many have proved horribly stubborn; some of the challenges which exist are barely mentioned, and some not at all; and the main agents of proposed change do not have the established record of success implied throughout the document. It is a very optimistic paper, and time alone will tell whether it can be turned so easily into effective action.

## External links

[White Paper: \*Educational excellence everywhere\*](#)

[Letters](#) to local authorities and academy trusts

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[DfE strategy 2015-2020: world-class education and care](#)

## Related briefings

[DfE consultation – schools national funding formula](#) (March 2016)

[Ofsted inspection of school improvement work – local authorities and Multi-academy Trusts](#) (February 2016)

## LGiU Blog site

[What “We will make local authorities running schools a thing of the past” might mean](#) (December 2015)

The LGiU wishes to stimulate debate via the use of its blog site about the responses of local authorities to the DfE White Paper, and the wider devolution debate. If you would like to write a blog, please contact [John Fowler](#).

For further information, please visit [www.lgiu.org.uk](http://www.lgiu.org.uk) or email [john.fowler@lgiu.org.uk](mailto:john.fowler@lgiu.org.uk)