

The Schools White Paper – what it says

The Coalition Government published its Schools White Paper, The Importance of Teaching, in November 2010. This is a summary of the main proposals contained in the White Paper.

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The Schools White Paper 'sets out a radical reform programme, with schools freed from the constraints of central Government direction and teachers at the heart of school improvement'.

Teaching and leadership

- Aim is to continue to raise quality of entrants to teaching and attract best graduates – new literacy and numeracy tests and no funding for applicants with less than a 2:2 degree.
- Initial teacher training will be reformed with more time spent in the classroom, and creation of a network of Teaching Schools.
- Bureaucratic burden will be reduced so schools focus on what is best for their students.
- New fast-track measures will enable removal of poor teachers.

Behaviour. Identified as 'the greatest concern of new teachers.' *We will:*

- Increase the authority of teachers to discipline and search students.
- Protect teachers from malicious allegations.
- Strengthen headteachers' authority to maintain discipline beyond the school gates and tackle bullying.
- On the spot detentions – rather than 24 hours notice.

Exclusions. *We will ...*

- Change the process so exclusions take less time and panels cannot compel reinstatement.
- Make schools responsible for education of excluded pupils, and use their results in league tables.
- Trial a new approach to permanent exclusions where schools have the power, money and responsibility to secure alternative provision for excluded pupils.
- Improve the quality of alternative provision and encourage new providers.

(BBC quotes Michael Gove as saying: *We will make it easier for schools to exclude disruptive children without the fear of seeing excluded children reinstated over their heads. But heads would have to ensure that there was suitable provision available for them elsewhere and fund it.*)

Curriculum and qualifications

- The National Curriculum will be reviewed, reducing prescription, refocusing on the core subject knowledge and allowing schools to decide how to teach, so it is a 'benchmark not a strait-jacket'.
- Assessment will give information about pupil progress and school effectiveness, at 6, 11 and 16.
- Review tests at 11 to avoid too much teaching-to-test in final year of primary.
- New testing agency will devise voluntary tests for 14-year olds.
- Aim of abolishing coursework at GCSE in favour of end-of-course examination.
- An English Baccalaureate will be introduced, offering a broad range of subjects at 16.
- Vocational education will be reformed and vocational qualifications overhauled.
- School leaving age will rise to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015.

Autonomy

Schools are to be autonomous institutions collaborating with each other on terms set by teachers, not bureaucrats; able to shape their own character and develop their own specialisms.

Schools will be freed from central or local bureaucratic constraint:

- All schools will have increased freedom and autonomy.
- DfE Guidance will be simplified with less prescription eg about methods and lesson plans.
- Schools will determine what targets to set for themselves, choose what forms of external support they want and determine how to evaluate themselves.
- Financial Management Standard (FMSiS) will be abolished and replaced with something simpler.

- Prescription on Governing Bodies (GBs) will be reduced, giving them more freedom over how they take decisions, eg on length of school day.

Academies:

- The Academies programme will be opened up to all schools.
- Lowest performing schools will be converted to academies to effect educational transformation.
- From January 2011 special schools will be able to apply to become Academies.
- The forthcoming Education Bill will give Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) the same powers and roles for GB as community schools, and allow them to become Academies.
- The freedoms they originally had will be restored to all Academies.

Admissions: All state schools including Academies and Free Schools are bound by the Admissions Code and will be required to participate in fair access protocols.

Accountability:

- Schools should be accountable to parents for student performance and spending of public money.
- Comprehensive information about every school will be made available to parents, and put in the public domain and online.
- Greater transparency and comparison between schools to drive performance and value for money.
- Schools will be able to adopt new models of governance, including smaller, more focused governing bodies.

School improvement:

Schools will have clear responsibility for improvement.

- Centralised target-setting will cease, as will use of 'contextual value added' (CVA) data.
- Requirement for local authority (LA) School Improvement Partner will cease.
- Schools will learn from each other, with National and Local Leaders of Education.
- Schools will have to demonstrate how they have improved disadvantaged pupils' performance.
- Schools will be supported to collaborate, with financial reward for those that effectively support weaker schools and demonstrably improve their performance.
- Innovation will be encouraged to raise attainment.
- Requirement for SEF removed immediately – but self-evaluation is encouraged.
- OFSTED is to focus on four key areas – pupil achievement, the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and the behaviour and safety of pupils (from Sep 2011).

Schools below new '**floor standard**' will receive support, and if unable to improve will be 'transformed through conversion to academy'. For secondary schools that is where less than 35% pupils achieve 5 A*–C GCSEs and fewer pupils make good progress between KS 2 and 4 than the national average. Floor will be increased over time and will include science.

Funding:

There is a real terms growth in school funding; 'money needs to be distributed fairly and spent wisely'. Funding is currently uneven, and needs to be made more transparent, fairer and progressive. 'Only around 70 % of the money intended for the most deprived pupils is actually allocated on that basis'.

- Aim is to ensure there are appropriate incentives for schools to attract poorer students and raise their attainment.
- Resources will be targeted on most the deprived students, through the Pupil Premium.
- Government will consult on new clear, transparent and fairer national funding formula based on the needs of the pupil.
- In the meantime – the amount available for the education of every child at school level will be published and more money will be passed directly to more schools as they become Academies.
- Post-16 funding for schools will be reduced to the level of funding of colleges.
- Capital spending – bureaucracy will be cut and better value for money secured.

The existing Young People's Learning Agency will be abolished and a new Education Funding Agency (EFA) set up as an executive agency of the DfE with responsibility for the direct funding of the growing number of Academies and Free Schools and all 16–19 provision.

Role of the Local Authority (LA):

Overall role:

- Strong strategic role as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils.
- Unique role in bringing together all services for children in a local area so that every child is ready and able to benefit from high-quality teaching in excellent schools.
- Use its democratic mandate to act on behalf of all its population, to ensure that the school system works for every family and to challenge every school to do the best for their population.
- Champions for excellence, promoting educational excellence by ensuring a good supply of high quality school places, co-ordinating fair admissions and developing their own school improvement strategies.

LA key roles will be to:

- Use their democratic mandate to stand up for the interests of parents and children.
- Support parents and families through promoting a good supply of strong schools – encouraging the development of Academies and Free Schools which reflect the local community.
- Ensure fair access to all schools for every child – they will:
 - continue to lead the coordination of admissions for all schools;
 - no longer be required to have an admissions forum and provide annual reports to a central schools adjudicator, but instead, set up local arrangements which work for that area;
 - retain responsibility for school transport arrangements which promote fair access.
- Support vulnerable pupils – they will continue to:
 - ensure that disabled children, those with Special Educational Needs and those outside mainstream education can access high-quality provision that meets their needs;
 - be responsible for funding provision for pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs;
 - act as the corporate parent for Looked After Children.
- Support maintained schools performing below the floor standards to improve quickly or convert to Academy status with a strong sponsor, and support all other schools which wish to collaborate with them to improve educational performance.
- Continue both to challenge schools which are causing concern and to focus on issues needing attention which cut across more than one school.
- Develop their own school improvement strategies:
 - free to define what role they will play in supporting school improvement for local schools;
 - diversity of provision, LAs encouraged to market school improvement services to all schools;
 - with a focus on school-to-school support, Leaders of Education and federations.

Councillors and scrutiny: ‘Alongside the key role of the Lead Member for Children and the Director of Children’s Services, other councillors may be engaged through the scrutiny function, for example, focusing on a particular issue of concern or inviting the head teacher and/or governors to attend a scrutiny committee to listen to concerns and to respond’.

LA as champions for excellence, will be expected to take action if there are concerns about the performance of any school in the area:

- for maintained schools – use their intervention powers;
- for Academies and Free Schools – raise concerns with the school; ask Ofsted to inspect the school if concerns are not being addressed; as last resort escalate to the Secretary of State.

Over time, LAs will also play a role in **commissioning** new provision and overseeing the transition of failing schools to new management – Government will consult on the role LAs should play as strategic commissioners when all schools in an area are Academies.

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