

Teachers

“We need every school to be a good school. That’s what the White Paper is about - pushing up standards across the education system”

Ruth Kelly

Secretary of State for
Education and Skills

“In the new system,
we are determined
to ensure that
improvements become
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Tony Blair
Prime Minister

Some of the proposals in the White Paper are subject to legislation which will be part of an Education Bill to be introduced to Parliament in the New Year

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION REFORM

The Schools White Paper, published in October 2005, sets out the Government vision of an education

system based on the needs of the individual – with education tailored to each child, and parents having a real say in how schools are run. In this new system, improvements will become self-sustaining because the changes will be owned and driven by schools and parents. Under the new proposals outlined in the White Paper:

- every school will be able to acquire a self-governing Trust (see box), similar to those supporting Academies, which will give them the freedom to work with new partners to help develop their ethos and raise standards
- Academies will remain at the heart of the Government agenda, with new opportunities to develop them in areas of real and historical under-performance and underachievement
- the role of local authorities will change from one of provider to one of commissioner
- independent schools will find it easier to enter the new system
- a national Schools Commissioner will be appointed to drive change, matching schools and partners,

promoting the benefits of choice, access and diversity, and taking action where parental choice is being frustrated.

IMPROVED CHOICE AND ACCESS FOR ALL CHILDREN

The Government wants to ensure that choice is more widely available to all within an increasingly specialist system, not just to those who can pay for it. Key to choice is the provision of more places in good schools, to be supported by:

- better information for all parents when their children enter primary and secondary school, and choice advisers to help those in less well-off communities exercise choice
- extending the right to free school transport for children from poorer families by giving them access to the three nearest secondary schools within a six-mile radius (beyond walking distance)
- making it easier for schools to introduce banding, so that they can keep a proportion of places for students who live outside traditional school catchment areas within a genuinely comprehensive intake. Already, some schools, including Academies, are successfully using this approach.

Self-governing Trust schools

Trusts will be not-for-profit organisations, backed by partners such as businesses, charities and faith groups, with the power to appoint governors.

The governing body will also include elected parents, staff governors and representatives from the local authority and community.

Where a Trust appoints the majority of the governors, it will be required to establish a Parent Council [see page 7] to ensure that parents have a strong voice in decisions about the way the school is run.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

EDUCATION TAILORED TO INDIVIDUAL PUPILS

Greater knowledge about how young people acquire knowledge and skills – along with more resources, a reformed workforce and enhanced ICT support – has given teachers the opportunity to tailor lessons to the individual needs of pupils. The following measures, detailed in the White Paper, will ensure more children benefit from personalised learning:

- targeted, intensive support in English and maths in the schools with the most under-performing pupils
- more stretching lessons and opportunities for gifted and talented pupils
- more grouping and setting by subject ability

Targeted tuition

The White Paper stresses the Government's commitment to small-group tuition in literacy and numeracy for those falling behind, including one-to-one support where appropriate, and extra 'stretch' for gifted and talented pupils. This also means giving every pupil the chance to extend their learning and develop their interests through extra support and tuition beyond the school day. It also means excellent, tailored,

whole-class teaching with all the resources available – from extra support staff to improved ICT – utilised to ensure that all pupils get the education they need.

The Government will invest £335 million in 2007/08 to enable secondary schools to deliver personalised learning for 11-14-year-olds. An extra £60 million will also be invested in 2006/07 and 2007/08, targeted at schools where the most pupils fall behind.

- training to ensure each school has a leading professional to develop intensive support approaches
- extended schools, offering new opportunities to learn and develop beyond the normal school day.

STRONG MEASURES TO TACKLE FAILURE

The Government has learnt the benefits of early and decisive action where schools are either failing or under-performing. Consequently, the White Paper proposes the introduction of tougher rules for failing schools:

- schools in Special Measures will be turned round more quickly; where no progress is made after a year, the school is likely to close
- schools that are given a notice to improve by Ofsted will enter Special Measures if progress has not been made in a year
- LAs will have to consider immediate radical action wherever a school fails an Ofsted inspection. They will have new powers to force a failing school to collaborate, and will be able to issue more effective warning notices if a school is coasting
- competitions will be required for new schools and the replacement of failing schools, providing a route to bring new providers into the system
- all new schools will be self-governing foundation or Trust schools, voluntary-aided schools or Academies

“Now, with the best teaching force and the best school leadership ever, we are poised to become world class if we have the courage and vision to reform and invest further”

Tony Blair

■ parents can urge Ofsted action or request new providers, and where there is demand or dissatisfaction with existing choices, authorities will have to respond to their concerns.

A LIGHTER TOUCH FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

The Government has also recognised that good schools should have greater autonomy, including a new emphasis on self-evaluation and a lighter touch from inspectors and other agencies. The New Relationship with Schools (NRWS) has already resulted in shorter, sharper Ofsted inspections and the introduction of School Improvement Partners (see box, right) as a single channel of external challenge. Other recent innovations include dedicated school budgets and the workforce reform, which has helped free teachers from bureaucracy to focus on teaching. To build on these changes, the White Paper envisages a system where:

■ good schools will find it easier to meet local needs in the way they choose, including growing in size or forming federations with other schools, in order to expand their influence and increase the supply of good places, improving choices for parents

■ the best specialist schools can acquire extra specialisms and are funded for new responsibilities, such as teacher training

■ there are more simplified funding and planning requirements.

THE SCHOOL WORKFORCE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

To develop a workforce that will benefit every child, the Government intends to:

■ train and assess new types of specialist staff to support personalised learning; enrich the primary curriculum; foster good behaviour and discipline; deliver vocational subjects for 14-19-year-olds; and expand out-of-hours opportunities

■ develop new professional standards for teachers, supported by high-quality in-school training and mentoring and effective performance management

■ ensure an improving supply of high-quality, specialist teachers and teaching assistants in maths and science, developing clear career pathways and better recognition for support staff

■ expand the Teach First programme – which recruits top

School Improvement Partners

Under the NRWS, schools will be supported and held to account locally by a School Improvement Partner (SIP) – a nationally accredited expert, usually a headteacher.

The SIP assists the school in identifying appropriate sources of support such as expertise in a vocational subject, extra training for catch-up, or specialised tuition.

graduates to work in challenging schools – to five more cities

- recognise the best headteachers as ‘National Leaders of Education’.

BETTER DISCIPLINE TO ENABLE TEACHERS TO TEACH

Many schools still face real discipline challenges because there is too little consistency in dealing with poor behaviour. The White Paper outlines plans to implement the recommendations of the Practitioners’ Group on Behaviour and Discipline (also known as the Steer report) by:

- introducing a legal right for teachers to discipline pupils
- extending parenting contracts and orders, so that headteachers can use them to force parents to take responsibility for their children’s bad behaviour in school
- expecting parents to take responsibility for pupils in the first

five days of a suspension, with fines for parents if excluded pupils are found unsupervised during school hours

- asking headteachers to use their new powers and funding collectively to develop on- and off-site provision for suspensions of five days or more.

To read the Steer report in full, visit: www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/about/learning_behaviour.cfm

ENGAGING PARENTS AND PUPILS IN IMPROVING STANDARDS

Parental engagement should not end with the choice of school – it should continue throughout a child’s education. The White Paper details the Government’s commitment to ensuring that:

- parents receive more regular information during the school year about how their child is doing, with opportunities to discuss their child’s progress at school
- parents have the chance to form elected Parent Councils to influence school decisions on issues such as school meals, uniform and discipline (such councils will be required in Trust schools)
- parents have better complaints procedures, with Ofsted able to investigate complaints about

Excellence in teaching

A thorough reform of all professional standards will set out what can be expected of teachers at every stage of their career. This will include the need for teachers to have good, up-to-date knowledge of their subject specialism as part of a clear commitment to effective professional development.

For the best and most experienced classroom teachers, access to the Excellent Teacher grade will depend on meeting demanding Excellent Teachers standard. This will require teachers to show they have developed themselves professionally and have provided regular coaching of other teachers.

‘Every child should receive an excellent education - whatever their background and wherever they live’

standards where they have not been resolved locally

- parents have access to more, and clearer, information about local schools, and on how to get involved in prompting change – including the creation of new schools.

THE SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

The Office of the Schools Commissioner will be established to act as a national champion for the development of Trust schools. Under the reforms proposed in the White Paper, the Commissioner will:

- work with national organisations and local community and parent organisations, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, spreading knowledge of what works and stimulating innovation
- provide a troubleshooting service to enable potential Trusts to put forward proposals quickly and with minimal bureaucracy
- link local authorities to Trusts, identifying opportunities for existing successful Trusts to form partnerships with more schools, and supporting independent schools wishing to join the maintained sector

- monitor key local indicators of parental satisfaction and publish an annual report.

NEW ROLE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To support the reforms outlined in the new White Paper, the role of the local authority (LA) will change from provider to commissioner. Under the proposed new system:

- it will be easier for new schools to be established, where there is real demand, as the School Organisation Committee will be abolished and its powers transferred to the LA
- LAs will work with the Schools Commissioner to ensure more choice, greater diversity and better access for disadvantaged groups to good schools
- LAs and Learning and Skills Councils will work more closely together to ensure real choice and higher standards in the provision of education for 14-19-year-olds in schools and colleges
- where schools are found to be failing their pupils, the Government will require the LA to seek parents' views, and to take swift action.

Parent Councils

Parent Councils will provide a forum for parents to express their views and influence the running of their school. They are likely to be relatively informal and engage people who may not have the confidence or desire to be a parent governor.

The Government believes they offer a good way for schools to consult parents on specific issues of concern, such as uniform, school meals or changes to the curriculum.

SUMMARY

On 25 October 2005, the Department for Education and Skills published the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils*.

The White Paper proposes a radical new school system tailored to the needs of pupils and parents. To create this system, the Government intends to:

- boost the autonomy of all schools – with less bureaucracy, and lighter touch inspections for successful schools
- provide more personalised education – including small-group tuition for children who fall behind in English and maths, and extra ‘stretch’ for the gifted and talented
- introduce faster ways to tackle school failure
- encourage existing schools to expand and form federations, and make it easier for independent schools to enter the state system
- enable every school to become a self-governing Trust school and create the Office of Schools Commissioner to promote the development of Trusts
- give local authorities a modernised role as commissioners of education services, and new powers to tackle failure and under-performance.

FOR MORE INFO:

To download and read the White Paper in full, visit:

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/schoolswhitepaper

To order copies of the executive summary or download this supplement, visit: www.teachernet.gov.uk/whitepaper