



Speech

Nicky Morgan: raising ambition for all

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
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Education Secretary speaks about the importance of the business and education sectors working together to raise ambition for all.



Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. It's a pleasure to be here with you today (9 November 2015) at the CBI's 2015 annual conference.

The theme of today's conference is global ambition. And it is absolutely right for our ambition to be global. Young people and businesses alike are competing with the best in the world. And this government is committed to making sure every child can compete with their international peers - securing their future, and the economic security of our country.

The government set out its own ambition in July: for the UK to

become the most successful major economy by 2030. But we won't be able to do this - as you have heard today - without improving our productivity.

Currently, the productivity gap between the UK and the other G7 countries is 17%. As a nation, we cannot afford to lag behind our global competition.

We have to close this gap. A key way to raise our productivity is by making sure we have a highly skilled workforce.

For too long, our young people were left behind their counterparts from other countries.

The last Labour government let down employers who needed a workforce to compete in a modern marketplace. And they let down young people, as PISA showed us that between 2000 and 2009 the UK fell further and further behind the countries with the highest educational standards.

Determined to raise standards for all, in 2010 we began a radical reform programme for education despite facing incredibly difficult spending decisions. Central government debt interest payments of £46.6 billion dwarfed the £35.4 billion schools budget.

Opportunity

But we were able to protect the schools budget in real terms, because we were committed to transforming our schools.

Already we are reaping some of the dividends:

- over a million more children are being taught in schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted
- 80% of children leave primary school in 2015 having achieved the expected levels of reading, writing and numeracy, compared to only 64% in 2010

But we need to go further and ensure every young person is able

to fulfil their potential.

That's why I am unrelenting in my determination that every child can master the basics, because then they can have the knowledge and skills they need to get on in life.

We committed, before the election, to make England the best place in the world to learn maths, science and engineering and for our children to be the best readers in Europe by 2020.

Rigour and core skills

For young people to capitalise on the opportunities open to them in the modern world, we have placed academic rigour at the heart of the education system.

From a stronger focus on numeracy and literacy at primary school, to computing and coding as part of the national curriculum and reformed GCSE and A level qualifications, we have raised the bar.

As part of our reforms to vocational and technical education we have introduced rigorous new standards and put an end to hollow, low-value qualifications, which didn't help the people who studied them and weren't respected by employers.

Pupils who do not gain a grade C in English and maths at GCSE, must now continue to study these subjects, because having a good grade in them is crucial to securing employment.

Character

At the same time, we know exam success and qualifications alone are not enough. Pupils who are confident, motivated and resilient will be better prepared for adult life and we believe they will get on better both in education and employment.

As the CBI has said, when it comes to getting a job and

succeeding in the workplace, the “right attitudes and attributes - such as resilience, respect, enthusiasm and creativity - are just as important as academic or technical skills.”

Many schools already work very hard to develop character among their pupils, but I want to make sure the opportunities are there for all.

We have invested £5 million in character education and supported projects to help build character, from competitive sport to work experience and links with local business.

Preparing young people for the workplace is something which organisations such as the CBI have called for particular support with. And I agree.

The Careers and Enterprise Company, which I formed last year, will strengthen links between employers, schools and colleges, and careers and enterprise organisations. And I know that Christine Hodgson, the Chair of the Careers and Enterprise Company is with us here today. Alongside Claudia Harris the CEO, they are doing a great job in getting the Company up and running effectively.

The company is rolling out the Enterprise Adviser Network to connect employees from firms of all sizes to schools through a network of enterprise advisers.

The role of business

This is one example of the key partnerships between government, schools, colleges and businesses.

Businesses, including many of you here today, are playing an important role in our wide programme of reform.

Take the academies programme. It has built on the evidence of what we know delivers high-performing schools internationally - autonomy and accountability.

It gives greater freedom to those who are best placed to make decisions about individual schools and many high-performing schools have converted to embrace these benefits.

Our experience also shows that sponsored academies can be the best solution for failing schools, where the sponsor has a clear responsibility to improve standards.

In September this year, BAE became the sponsor of Furness Academy in Cumbria, after it was placed in special measures.

As the main local employer, BAE has a keen interest in the skills of school-leavers and the academy will benefit from corporate support at the trust level, as well as leadership development opportunities for staff.

When we hear from Juergen Maier, I'm sure he will tell us about Siemens' involvement with the academies programme through university technical colleges, or UTCs.

Siemens is the sponsor or partner of 4 open and 4 future UTCs, including Lincoln UTC which opened in September last year and specialises in engineering and science.

I'm also thrilled that many businesses and individuals support academies through the Academy Ambassadors programme, which places talented business leaders on academy trust boards as non-executive directors.

Academy trusts benefit from their business advice, support and challenge. This is alongside the important role businesses can play helping with governance across all types of school, providing oversight and encouragement to drive up standards.

All businesses

It's important to remember that it's not just large businesses, but small businesses too that can make a difference. Whether it's allowing their employees to take time off to serve on the

governing bodies or helping them with careers support or the teaching of maths and financial skills in the curriculum.

I had the pleasure recently of meeting with representatives from Business in the Community - the Prince of Wales' Responsible Business Network which offers practical ways for businesses to work together with schools and other groups across the country.

Over a third of the businesses involved in that programme are SMEs, often in parts of the country where there are few big businesses or employers.

Through academy trusts, governing bodies, curriculum support and careers advice, businesses are helping us to deliver a world-class education system.

To those of you who are already involved, let me say thank you. To those of you who want to get involved or do more, I welcome and urge you to do so.

So let me be clear of my ask and pitch to CBI members. Please:

- write to me if you are interested in becoming an academy sponsor
- contact New Schools Network to discuss applying to open a free school
- speak to Academies Ambassadors about becoming a non-executive director of a multi-academy trust
- work with groups like Business in the Community who can help pair you up with local schools who need your help with delivering careers advice and finance and enterprise skills
- and, of course, you can support the Careers and Enterprise Company

Together we can help to raise ambitions for our young people and our country, to show the world that Britain does mean business.

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Department for Education

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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