

Speech

Nicky Morgan: one nation education

From:	Department for Education and The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
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The Education Secretary speaks at Policy Exchange about the government's reforms to promote educational excellence everywhere.



Thank you Jonathan [Simon, Head of Education, Policy Exchange] and thank you to Policy Exchange for hosting me here this morning.

It's great to see so many of you here today.

Many of you have been key players in the transformation of English education over the past 5 years.

You've been the ideas factories, the sounding boards, the testing grounds and of course the critical friends that have led and shaped the phenomenal improvements in English education over the last 5 years and more.

That transformation hasn't been easy. We've challenged the

status quo, debunked accepted truths and questioned vested interests. It takes determination, it isn't universally popular and there are always setbacks.

And it couldn't have been done without the hard work and dedication of heads, teachers and schools up and down the country. I want to thank them for that.

But for all of the challenge, that mission has been worth it.

Worth it for the million more children in schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' - children now getting off to a better start in life.

Worth it for the 120,000 more 6-year-olds on track to become confident readers as a result of our focus on phonics. 120,000 more young people who might have struggled, now on the path to success.

And it's been worth it for the 29,000 extra 11-year-olds who are entering secondary school able to read, write and add up properly, able to access the opportunities that the next stage of education brings, rather than being frustrated at the very first hurdle.

I quote these statistics at every opportunity I get, because they matter to the young people whose life chances have been transformed, and they matter to our whole country. Because good schools and a well-educated population makes our country stronger, fairer, wealthier and more secure.

There are many things on which I don't agree with Tony Blair, not least what constitutes an actual apology.

But I cannot disagree with his priorities for government: education, education, education. There can be no better investment than in our education system.

I love my job - and I suspect teachers across the country love their jobs too - because it is positive, creative, ambitious and focused on the future.

Many of my colleagues in government spend their time trying to work out how to reduce the number of people who have to access their services. And that's right - after all we all want fewer people needing to call the police, falling ill, or relying on welfare.

Education is different.

My job is to maximise participation, not to reduce it. I want to make our schools and colleges places where young people achieve more, and I want to continue to increase the number who stay on in education or an apprenticeship to 18 and beyond.

So - although we all know the spending review will be tight - this government is committed to protecting school funding and to creating 3 million apprenticeships, because we want to give the best to every young person.

That's why at the Conservative Party Conference this year, I committed to going further than simply education, education, education - with the next 3Es - educational excellence everywhere.

I want every child to benefit from the sort of education that young people get at schools like King Solomon Academy in London, Denbigh High School in Luton, and Fernwood School in Nottingham.

Schools which are the real engines of social justice. That's the sort of school that every child should be attending.

For all the successes of our reforms over the past 5 years, one of the consequences of the emergence of these beacons of excellence, has been to highlight just how far some schools and some parts of our country still lag behind.

Our reforms over the past 5 years have had an enormous impact. We gave successful schools the freedom to chart their own future - and they seized the opportunity to shine. They show us what is possible. Their success inspires others.

But these bright spots also provide an ever-stronger contrast with the continuing failure of others. And that's why some of our opponents have a problem with encouraging success and unlocking potential. Because the contrast is uncomfortable, and because the stellar successes undermine traditional excuses.

And avoiding that comparison is what led to the attitude which took hold among policymakers for the decade prior to 2010.

Rather than striving for excellence which risked exposing those schools which weren't up to the mark, they sought instead to level everyone down to the bottom.

Rather than creating gold standard qualifications they downgraded them to the lowest common denominator while inflating top grades. They prided themselves on the ever-rising results. But it wasn't real.

Rather than encouraging innovation and creativity, they sought to direct and mandate what happened in classrooms, from the literacy hour to the 'approved' 3-part lesson and the ever-expanding [Ofsted handbook](#) against which schools' compliance was judged.

As Michael Barber says, that approach can get you from awful to adequate, and maybe even to good, but it's not going to enable excellence. They said they respected teachers - but with that approach, it wasn't real.

Rather than giving children from poor families access to great education, they instead created a new cadre of pseudo qualifications, which claimed to be equivalent to academic qualifications. Teenagers got more certificates, and school results seemed to improve. But the qualifications weren't credible in the jobs market - they weren't real. They were, to be frank, a fraud on the young people taking them.

Now let me be clear, I don't think there was anything deliberately ill-intentioned about this attitude, in fact, I'd go so far as to say it was motivated by kindness.

But it was kindness driven by tacit snobbery. By a fatalistic lack of confidence in human potential. By a world view that certain kids - and let's be honest, 'kids like these' always meant kids from poorer homes - could never succeed academically. And so we shouldn't even try.

Nothing exposes that snobbery more than the fact that these politicians and policymakers were never thinking about their own children.

They weren't going to allow their 14-year-olds to settle for qualifications in study skills or nail technology; they weren't going to let them narrow their scope at age 14 by filling their school timetable with NVQs and worthless 'certificates'.

To the contrary. They made sure their children would study key academic subjects, which they told everyone else weren't essential. Looking around the room here, I'm sure most of us benefited from our parents and teachers making sure we took a balanced set of academic qualifications. And we'll do the same for our children, because we love them, and we know that a good set of GCSEs will set them up for college and adult life.

But the attitude that we shouldn't expect this of (or for) all children dominated our education system and however well intentioned it may have been, it was fundamentally pernicious.

The test that must be asked of every education policymaker is: 'Is it good enough for your child?' If you're not happy for your child to choose that track, then you shouldn't be offering it for other people's children.

I wonder how different things would have been over the past 20 years had that been the case.

Maybe it wouldn't be the case that just under half of young people in Leicester get 5A* to C grades including English and maths. Maybe it wouldn't be the case that not a single child in Knowsley got AAB or higher in their A levels this year, maybe it wouldn't be the case that in Doncaster fewer than 6 in 10 kids

leave primary school able to read, write and add up properly compared with 7 in 10 nationally.

But that's the reality we face. That is a harsh reality. It's not that the children in those areas are born less talented. It's not that parents in those areas don't want the best for their children. It's not that the teachers in those areas are lazy or incompetent - far from it.

No, it's the fault of governments over the years. They lacked the courage to do what was necessary to turn our education system around. That's what we've set out to change and it is working. Because there is nothing inevitable about the situation we find ourselves in. We can change it, and any politician who believes in social justice should want to do so.

Opportunity

Even if you don't share the moral imperative, you at least see the practical one. In an increasingly globalised world we need to make sure that young people in England can go toe to toe with their peers from across the globe and come out on top.

And what irritates me the most is the suggestion that we do this for the wrong reasons.

That we've taken the approach we have because we have some old-fashioned, outdated, atavistic view of the world and of young people.

Let me be absolutely clear. I don't care if young people choose to watch Gogglebox and the X-Factor; or if they're entranced and absorbed by YouTube and BuzzFeed.

But I do care if they've never been given the chance to read Shakespeare or study Darwin, to perform on a stage or to fiddle with a [Raspberry Pi](#) .

It's that choice that we're trying to achieve.

To give young people the chance to decide what they enjoy, what they want to do and ultimately who they want to be.

To give them real opportunity and to support them along the way.

Then they can make real, informed choices. But there can be no choice if we make lazy assumptions that narrow or eliminate their options.

EBacc

It must be right that every child studies a strong academic core up until the age of 16.

To unlock those choices, to offer those opportunities, to broaden their minds.

And that's why I think every child should study maths, English, history or geography, a language and the sciences up until the age of 16.

Not because I think these subjects are the only ones that matter - I can see the masses poised behind their keyboards waiting to be outraged by the mere suggestion I might believe this to be the case.

No, it's because these subjects are the academic core, the foundations of a good education that ultimately will keep options open for young people's future.

That's why we introduced the [English Baccalaureate](#) or EBacc in 2010. We wanted to be open about which options would equip pupils for the future, and we wanted to highlight which schools were making sure that pupils studied this academic core.

And it's worked. The seemingly terminal decline in young people studying this valuable combination of subjects reversed, almost doubling in just 5 years.

That is something we should all find hugely welcome. And yet it remains the case that overall just 39% of young people are now studying the EBacc - in some areas it's as low as 20%.

I'm told it's because the EBacc isn't right for those children. What does that mean? Who doesn't benefit from studying our nation's history? Who can't benefit and be inspired from understanding the fundamentals of science?

So once again we find adults writing off children, deciding what they can and can't do, and worse, what they can and can't go on to do, before they've even turned 15.

That's why in our manifesto we committed to introducing an expectation that every child, who is able, should study the EBacc. Today we are [consulting](#) on how to deliver this, and on better accountability for schools about the proportion of their students who take this set of core subjects. In time, I want to see at least 90% of students entering the EBacc.

Primary assessment

Of course we know that too much goes wrong before young people have even set foot in secondary school.

If children haven't mastered the basics in primary school, the rest of their time in school is a game of catch-up. Maths and English are the non-negotiables for a successful life, and children who don't master them at primary school are much - much - less likely to succeed when they move to secondary school. Only 7% of them go on to get 5 good GCSEs.

One of the most heartbreaking aspects of my job is seeing people come into my constituency office because they need help reading a letter they've been sent by the council because they've never learned how to read.

Of course we should be proud of the work that teachers and schools have done in the past 5 years to tackle the scandal of

young people leaving school unable to read, write and add up properly.

But that hasn't happened everywhere. Once again we've seen areas of the country lagging behind and some young people starting secondary school without these fundamentals.

So we're also delivering on our commitment to introduce new year 7 resit tests, to make sure children who've fallen behind in primary school are supported to catch-up at the start of secondary.

We don't want those young people to be written off. And we want to recognise and reward schools who get young people back on track.

But catch-up in year 7 is still catch-up. So I want to make sure that primary schools and their headteachers are being held to account in the right way.

In a way that is fair, and rewards those who take on a challenge.

New, more rigorous SATs are already being introduced at the end of primary school, and the new 'reception baseline' assessment has been introduced in primary schools this year.

But to be really confident that students are progressing well through primary school, we will be looking at the assessment of pupils at age seven to make sure it is as robust and rigorous as it needs to be.

We'll be working with headteachers in the coming months on how we get this right, holding schools to account and giving them full credit for the progress they achieve.

And to those who can't wait to challenge my commitment to high standards, I say this: I make no apology for wanting our policies to work together in a coherent way that works for pupils and teachers. My focus is on ensuring we can be confident every child is making the progress we know they can.

Where this isn't working

Because it's become abundantly clear to me since taking on this job that there are areas where young people aren't been given that great start in primary school, or aren't being helped to catch up or stretched to succeed in secondary school.

I am unapologetic and uncompromising in intervening swiftly to tackle educational failure wherever it lurks.

That's what the [Education and Adoption Bill](#) currently going through Parliament will allow us to do. It will allow us to turn around failing schools much more quickly.

Because whilst adults argue about consultations and fight ideological battles, young people are losing on average 13 months of their education in a school that has already been deemed inadequate, before things start to get better. That can't be right.

And it will shine a spotlight on coasting schools as well. Schools that aren't stretching their pupils or pushing them to achieve their all, even though they scrape above the floor. Because a young person's time in school shouldn't be about achieving the bare minimum. We shouldn't settle for 'good enough'. Schools should lead and inspire pupils to achieve all they can, and even things that they thought they never could. 

We'll offer coasting schools the support and challenge they need to improve. Where they rise to that challenge we'll get out of the way and cheer them on. Where they don't, we'll bring in new leadership and new sponsors to turn that school around.

Because the evidence shows that excellent sponsors are making a real difference in some of our most challenging schools.

We now need those strong sponsors everywhere, not just limited to the South East and London. It's a sad truth that when you look at many of the underperforming local authorities in our country, a

significant proportion are located in the north of England.

To try and tackle this the Chancellor announced last year the creation of a Northern Sponsor fund of £10 million to get the best sponsors to take on schools in the north of England.

Today I'm announcing the first recipients of that fund - 5 outstanding sponsors, REAch4, Outwood Grange, Wakefield City Academies Trust, Tauheedul and Bright Tribe who will set up 7 high-performing academy hubs in areas having some of the greatest need.

National Teaching Service

But having the right policies, the right structures, the right curricula and even the right expectations means nothing if you don't have the most important ingredient. Great teachers.

Everything I say and do is nothing compared to the real work of teachers on the ground - inspiring young people and changing lives. It's teachers who have made our reforms a reality.

And if we're going to have educational excellence everywhere, then teachers will deliver it. And so we need more of them

That's why we've expanded schemes like [Teach First](#) and let schools themselves take the lead in training the next generation of teachers.

I'm acutely aware that recruitment isn't easy at the moment for lots of schools, that as the economy improves and demand for graduates grows across the whole economy, I and my team need to be doing more to get more people into, or back into the profession, and keep the great teachers we have.

And we also need to get teachers into the right places. We can't simply have most of our best teachers concentrated in some areas - that isn't a one nation education, far from it.

We need great teachers right across the country.

So today I'm delighted to announce that we will be delivering on yet another of our commitments with the creation of a National Teaching Service.

A new national programme that will get our best teachers and middle leaders into underperforming schools in areas where they are needed most.

We know that the areas I've named today - coastal towns and rural areas struggle because they struggle to recruit and retain good teachers, they lack that vital ingredient that makes for a successful education.

The National Teaching Service will play a key part in solving this problem.

By 2020 it will have deployed 1500 outstanding teachers and middle leaders to underperforming schools.

These outstanding teachers will be employed by these schools for up to 3 years. They will not only be expected to bring outstanding teaching into the classroom, but also to improve the quality of teaching and leadership right throughout the school.

That programme will launch next September in the North West of England, targeting teachers and middle leaders to areas like Knowsley which doesn't have a single outstanding secondary school.

We'll continue to look at what incentives we need to attract these outstanding teachers, and how the programme can fast-track participants onto leadership opportunities.

Because I want the National Teaching Service to be a valuable, inspiring experience for participants as well as the schools they join, and - eventually - to become a rite of passage for many more great teachers.

One nation

Taken together, all of these measures should be a clear sign of this government's determination to ensure that educational excellence is available to every single child, everywhere in this country.

To make sure that social justice isn't just a buzzword used by politicians, but is something that lies at the heart of every single school.

To make sure that children in Knowsley, Poole, Derby, Blackpool, Portsmouth and other areas aren't being left behind.

To raise the bar and heighten expectations, and to give schools the support they need to meet them.

To complete the mission that we started in the last Parliament - finally to slay the soft bigotry of low expectations.

To build an education system that truly unites us as one nation.

Thank you.

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Department for Education

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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