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Speech

Nicky Morgan: Naz Legacy Foundation

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
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Nicky Morgan speaks about the importance of character building in schools to help young people from ethnic minority backgrounds succeed.



Thank you, Harris [Bokhari OBE, son of Naz Bokhari in whose memory the Naz Legacy Foundation was established], for that introduction. It's such a pleasure to be here with the Naz Legacy Foundation tonight.

It's so fitting that you, Harris, and your family set up the foundation in the name and memory of your father, Naz, the first Muslim head in this country and an inspirational teacher with a passion for getting the best outcomes for young people.

The foundation's work focuses on so many things I am passionate about and this government views as key priorities:

- an excellent education for all so we can achieve social justice
- the importance of character building to the long-term success of individuals, which I know is a key theme tonight
- and the full integration of those who choose to make Britain their home

We have a tremendously diverse society in Britain today with a huge mix of ethnicities, faiths and cultures. In fact more than a quarter of pupils at our schools are classified as being of minority ethnic origin.

British values

The richly diverse place modern Britain has become means we have to make sure all young people learn to relate to each other and share common British ideals. That's why we have made clear the need for schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of people from different backgrounds.

This is something I believe is echoed by the work of the foundation's Diversity Programme, promoting British institutions. Last year the programme took 70 pupils from 6 schools in areas of disadvantage to Clarence House, meeting the then Deputy Prime Minister and the Prince of Wales.

They were able to take part in sessions on the importance of the democratic process and tour Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. I have no doubt they would have found the day rewarding. I hope it has sparked in them a sense of how crucial it is to engage and participate with politics and vote in elections.

The achievement of young people from ethnic minorities in this country has risen dramatically over the last 25 years. But this government recognises that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can require extra support to ensure they do not underachieve. We know that we have made progress since 2010 by providing schools with additional funding through the pupil premium, targeted where it is needed most.

One of the things we recently published [‘educational excellence everywhere’ white paper](#) talks about is making sure that no cold spots remain, so that every child has the access to an excellent education that I believe should be their birth right.

With a raft of new measures we are making sure that failing schools can be turned around quickly with new leadership, incentivising work in the most challenged areas to get the best school leaders where they are needed most, and making sure those leaders can get the best access to the most talented teachers.

The importance of character

But we know that, in order to tread a path to success, young people need more than just an excellent academic grounding. They also need to be instilled with attributes and skills like confidence, team-work and resilience – the kind of character traits that will help them to thrive by believing in themselves, working well with others and picking themselves up from disappointments. The kind of traits that give them a sense of society and, hopefully, spur them on to give back to their communities - something which feels to me to be innately British.

The new autonomy afforded to schools means they can choose to instil these character traits in young people within and outside the curriculum, using innovative new methods. The best schools are already doing this by encouraging their pupils to engage with debating clubs, team sports and other activities. The Chancellor announced in [the Budget](#) last month that we will be investing £500 million so that 25% of secondary schools can extend their school day to offer a range of these activities.

In the last year we have invested £5 million specifically in character education to fund grants to organisations to test new approaches and expand existing programmes:

- build the evidence base on teaching character
- and fund the [Character Awards](#) to recognise the outstanding

practice already making a difference in the best schools

In our [white paper](#) we outlined plans to invest in a new web presence through which teachers will be able to access the evidence base and other character resources. They will be able to add to that resource, so all teachers can share ‘what works’ with each other. The white paper also outlined our plan to work with the What Works Centres to make available to schools new tools to measure progress in building key character traits in their pupils.

And of course there is [the National Citizen Service](#) (NCS), an opportunity for young people to get involved in a community project, building and honing crucial skills while spending some time away from home and experiencing the independence that brings.

The NCS represents a unique opportunity for young people from all walks of life to interact with each other, learn about their differences and find ways to communicate. We’re spending £1 billion over the next 4 years so that 60% of young people will have the opportunity to participate in the NCS and we are actively encouraging schools to recommend it to their students.

Mentoring

One thing which has been shown time and time again to have a positive impact on disadvantaged young people is quality mentoring schemes. [The Careers and Enterprise Company](#), backed by my department in 2014, is leading a key mentoring programme, seeking to reach 25,000 young people a year by 2020, with high-quality, meaningful, careers-related mentoring. I believe those young people will have a better chance to succeed because of the reassurance and guidance mentoring brings.

We recognise that government can’t and shouldn’t do it all. That’s why the work of organisations like the Naz Legacy Foundation is so vital. Alongside its work championing excellence in education, it is placing thousands of key mentors into schools all over the

country, recognising the role models who can give young people from ethnic minorities the confidence to succeed, and promoting the integration that is crucial if modern Britain is to become the truly inclusive society we want it to be. It's no surprise that the [Naz Legacy Foundation was a recipient of one of the Prime Minister's Big Society Awards](#) just 2 years ago.

Conclusion

Naz Bokhari was a firm believer in the impact an excellent education can have on any young person, no matter their background. And he focused on breaking down barriers, celebrating Britain's wonderful diversity as one of its many strengths. He, like us, wasn't focused on where young people are from, but instead where they are going.

It has been a real pleasure to be here tonight and I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening. Thank you.

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Department for Education

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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