

Press release

PM to set out plans for schools that work for everyone

From: [Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, The Rt Hon Theresa May MP](#) and [Department for Education](#)
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The PM unveils a package of measures to increase the number of good school places and ensure all children have the best start in life.



- New measures will allow for a radical expansion of good school places
- Merit, not background, to be deciding factor in how far pupils progress
- Proposals to allow new grammars – as well as giving the green light for existing grammars to expand
- Universities who want to charge higher fees to be required to give something back – by establishing a new school or sponsoring an existing underperforming school

This government is dedicated to making Britain a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

This mission is arguably more important in education than anywhere else, and today the Prime Minister will unveil a comprehensive package of measures to radically increase the number of good school places - in order to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life.

In her first major domestic speech as Prime Minister, Theresa May will make the case for wider social reform to build a true meritocracy in Britain. She will say that schools can be an engine of social mobility - giving everyone the opportunity to develop their talents, and then go as far as their talents can take them, regardless of their background.

Speaking at the British Academy in Central London, the Prime Minister will make a clear commitment to tackle the existing injustice that means too few children get the chance of an academic education. This will include relaxing the restrictions on new or expanding selective schools – as well as allowing existing non-selective schools to become selective in some circumstances.

As well as increasing the diversity in the school system, the Prime Minister will talk about the importance of raising standards across the country. There are [currently 1.4 million more children in good or outstanding schools since 2010](#) - a strong record that this government is committed to building on.

However, the Prime Minister will say that despite progress made, there are currently 1.25 million children in failing schools – and for too many children a good school place remains out of reach, which is an injustice that she is committed to eradicating.

She will say:

“ We are going to build a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few. A fundamental part of that is having

schools that give every child the best start in life, regardless of their background.

“ For too long we have tolerated a system that contains an arbitrary rule preventing selective schools from being established - sacrificing children’s potential because of dogma and ideology. The truth is that we already have selection in our school system – and its selection by house price, selection by wealth. That is simply unfair.

“ That is why I am announcing an ambitious package of education reforms to ensure that every child has the chance to go to a good school. As well as allowing new selective schools we will bring forward a new requirement that means universities who want to charge higher fees will be required to establish a new school or sponsor an existing underperforming school.

“ This is about being unapologetic for our belief in social mobility and making this country a true meritocracy – a country that works for everyone.”

The government will now consult on a number of new proposals including:

- Requiring new or expanding grammars to take a proportion of pupils from lower income households, so that selective education is not reserved for those with the means to move into a catchment area or pay for tuition to pass the test; or
- Requiring them to establish a new, high quality, non-selective free school. Requiring them to set up or sponsor a primary feeder school in an area with a high density of lower income households; or
- Requiring them to sponsor a currently underperforming non-selective academy.

As part of the wider commitment to increasing the number of good school places, the Prime Minister will also say that universities who want to charge higher fees should be required to set up a new school or sponsor an existing underperforming school.

Research shows that prior attainment is one of the biggest factors determining access to university.

Under the new arrangements, universities would be expected to use their educational expertise to do more to raise standards in schools. This will create a talent pipeline, through which pupils from all backgrounds will have a greater opportunity to get the grades and skills they need to go on to university, and help universities in their efforts to widen participation of lower income students.

A number of top universities already have successful partnership arrangements with academies or free schools - and some have already established new free schools or sponsored existing academies.

Examples include:

- King's College London which took advantage of the free schools programme to open a specialist sixth form college - King's College London Mathematics School – which supports young people across London with a talent for maths to excel. The results have been outstanding with 100% of their students receiving an A or A* grade in GCSE maths;
- University of Brighton which now works with 5 schools after successfully turning around a secondary school in Hastings where GCSE results were among the worst in the country. In 2015, St Leonards Academy achieved its best ever results placing it in the top 10% of similar schools nationally;
- University of Birmingham which after setting up a secondary school in early 2015 became Birmingham's third most oversubscribed school in the city with 1,237 applications for its 150 places for Year 7 and its sixth form.

Following the transfer of responsibility for Higher and Further education policy to the Department for Education, today's announcement marks the start of the process of bringing England's school and university systems closer together - with a culture of high expectations for all placed right at the heart.

Notes to editors

Universities now have the freedom to charge a higher rate of fees. Those institutions charging over £6,000 fees have dedicated considerable amounts of resource to widen access: expenditure through Access Agreements (which universities must agree with the Director of Fair Access in order to charge above £6,000) is expected to reach £745 million in 2016/17.

The government intends to set out the new guidance to the independent Director for Fair Access (DfA), with a clear expectation that universities would contribute to school level attainment. This will inform the DfA's own guidance to higher education institutions on their access agreements, which are conditions of charging the higher rate of fees. The government will consider what further measures are necessary to ensure all universities meet these requirements.

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Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Department for Education

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